

APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO  
RELIGIOUS LEADERS, WOMEN, AND STUDENTS



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Conducted by Stephen Goodwin

University of Edinburgh

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1. Many people cite examples of a harmonious co-existence in Bosnia-Herzegovina prior to the war. Can the effort in peace-building and inter-religious dialogue be described as an attempt towards social *restoration*? If so, can one also find a theological or ethical ground for restoration in the respective faith communities?
2. Let us assume that *peace* is more than the silence of weapons, and includes the blessing of God/Allah. Is it necessary to have a relationship (faith) in/to God/Allah before true peace can be understood and apprehended? Can agnostics and non-confessional persons experience the peace of God/Allah? Can they experience peace by living in communion with people of faith?
3. What is the relationship between individual guilt and distributed hatred/distrust? Can all peoples of one nationality be maligned for the guilt of those individuals who participated in militant nationalism? What of those who were not participant in militant nationalism? Is there a sense in which they are twice victimised, once during the war from the violence of nationalism and again after the war in being associated falsely with the war's perpetrators? Is this a crucial distinction for reconciliation and restoration?
4. How can religious faith and forgiveness contribute to the escape of the cycle of violence of past offenses?
5. Is there a place for *dhimma* in a democratic, pluralist society? If so, what does its expression look like?
6. Is there a unique or special role that women play in peace-building and restoration?
7. In what ways are the values of secular Western society in conflict with the Bosnian Muslim *umma*? Is it possible that Western military presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina will preserve and protect the Muslim community but slowly undermine and destroy it through the imposition of Western and secular cultural values?

8. Is nationalist ideology the real enemy of true faith and not the other national groups or expressions? If so, how can true faith overcome this enemy? Or, what is the role of true faith to overcome fear and hatred?
9. Local justice beyond the Hague: Will perpetrators of smaller war crimes be brought to justice, or will people of Bosnia-Herzegovina be forced to live with this injustice? What is the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina? Is it imperative to address the reality of the crimes in order that justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration be achieved?
10. What role has the communist past played in establishing nationalist ideology through the marginalisation of religion?
11. In what ways are decisions by people in Bosnia-Herzegovina individual or communal? Does the community of faith hold compelling influence on the moral decisions of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina?
12. How can a religious community participate in inter-religious dialogue and co-operation, and still maintain its own distinctives? Must the religious communities compromise their own beliefs and practices in order to accommodate the peace process?

SRG  
February 2002

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS - WOMEN

### PhD Thesis Conducted by Stephen Goodwin University of Edinburgh

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1. Were you or your family directly affected by the war?  
Yes No  
If yes, how were you affected?
  
2. Did the war make you more interested in your faith?  
Yes No  
If so, how?
  
3. Has your faith helped you understand yourself better?  
Yes No  
If so, how?
  
4. Why are you interested in religion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Is there a difference for you between religion and faith?  
Yes No  
If so, what is the difference?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Does your faith help you overcome anxieties of the future?  
Yes No  
If so, how?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Do you think that faith can contribute to overcoming hatreds and animosities in Bosnia-Herzegovina?  
Yes No

8. Do you think that women of all nationalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina were especially victimised by the war?  
Yes No  
If so, how?
9. Do you think that women play a special role in reconciling the different ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina?  
Yes No  
If so, in what ways?
10. Does your faith play a role in your efforts to reconcile with the other ethnic groups?  
Yes No  
If so, in what ways?
11. Do you think it is easier for women to reconcile with the other national groups than it is for men?  
Yes No  
Why or why not?
12. Do you sense that women generally are more religious than men?  
Yes No
13. Do you think that women must take on additional roles in society, especially in the absence of men fallen in the war?  
Yes No
- What roles do women now play that are usually done by men?
14. Please cite a concrete example of how your faith has brought

women of different nationalities together.

15. Do you think that women have a special educational role to play so that children may be spared war in the future?  
Yes No  
If so, how?
16. How does your faith guide you in teaching children about love, hatred and forgiveness?
17. Is it important to you that your children are brought up and carry on in the same faith that you have?  
Yes No  
Why or why not?
18. Do you think that children of this war will again see war in their lifetime?  
Yes No
19. Do thou think that most women see religion as the primary cause of the war?  
Yes No
20. Do you think there will come a time again in Bosnia-Herzegovina where people of different faiths can live together without fear?  
Yes No

Can faith in God help make this possible, or will religions separate and divide people?

I would like to add a few thoughts of my own:

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7. Is there a difference between religion and faith to you? Y or N
  - If so, what is the difference?
  
8. Does your faith help you overcome anxieties of the future? Y or N
  
9. Does your faith help you relate to others of a different faith? Y or N
  - If so, how?
  
10. Do you think there will come a time again in BiH when people of different faiths can live together without fear? Y or N
  - a. What will need to happen for this to take place?
  
  - b. Can faith in God help make this possible, or will religions separate and divide people? Please explain.
  
  - c. Do you think BiH will experience war again in your lifetime? Y or N
  
11. If you can, please give a concrete example of how faith has brought young people of different faiths together.
  
  
12. Do you have close friends from a different religious background? Y or N
  
13. Do you think you could marry someone from a different religious background? Y or N
  - Why or why not?
  
14. Do you think forgiveness is an important aspect of peace? Y or N
  - Has your faith helped you to forgive others who have hurt you? How?
  
15. Do you speak to other young people about your faith? Why or why not?

I would like to add a few thoughts of my own:

APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEWS OF  
RELIGIOUS LEADERS, WOMEN, AND STUDENTS

Interview with

**H.E. Mustafa Cerić**

Reisu-l-ulema, Bosnia-Herzegovina

14 May 2002

**[SG] So, I think we are on now. I have a set of questions that you may like to look at to refresh your memory. You may choose different ones, but I'm interested from your perspective...**

[MC] Well, I would advise you not to use [the term] 'Allah', as there is no need, because there is no Jewish, Muslim and Christian God. There is only one God. He is the creator of all of us. So, "I Am What I Am", right? And God is God. The nationalisation of God is not, according to Islam, is not appropriate, and therefore not advisable.

**[SG] Alright.**

[MC] So, God is God.

**[SG] With the term 'Allah' I just want to be conscious of...**

[MC] I understand. I appreciate your sensitivity.

**[SG] I would be curious, in the time the we have, if we could look at question one, question four..., I know some of your views on question five and *dhimma*,**

[MC] Uh huh,

**[SG] And perhaps number seven.**

[MC] Good. OK. Even though I think the question *dhimma*, I'm now reading two books on *dhimma*, which is written by a British citizen who is, I think, of the Jewish religion. Her name is Bat, uh...,

**[SG] Yes. Bat Ye'or. "*From something to Dhimmitude*"**

[MC] "*From Jihad to Dhimmitude.*" On Eastern Christianity, I think. And then you have the second book, which is recent. I got it from the Islamic college in London. They asked me to read it and make a review. I'm trying if I have time to read it. It's a very interesting book. I like it very much and this is very challenging for me to prove what I want to say about *thimma*. So when we come to this question, maybe we can say some more.

**[SG] Good. I know her views are not accepted universally, that's for sure.**

[MC] Yes. Okay.

[SG] I'm trying to write the thesis from the perspective of the faith communities. Much of what is happening in Bosnia is being done in structural ways, from restructuring of Parliament to the rebuilding of buildings, reconstructing society. But I'm interested from the faith communities about the issues of the heart, the things that matter to mankind in his relationships, and less in structures. This is what the thesis is really about. How can the faith communities contribute to restoration?

[MC] Yes. I think that I read somewhere that the last century was the century of oil and the next century will be the century of water. We are less, how do you say, in possession of natural water. In all urban areas, whenever you go to the hotels, you have distilled water. You cannot drink water anymore in the nature. It has to be prepared first. So, this is an additional effort we have to make. As I understand it, there are only two cities in Europe where you can drink water from the tap, which is Sarajevo...

[SG] Is that right?

[MC] Yes. Here you can go there [pointing in the direction of the spring on the Baščaršija] and drink the water, and I don't know of the other city, but I know Sarajevo is one, because I am a citizen of Sarajevo. If we want now to compare..., now, this is *natural* substance that we use. Now, if we want to see what the *spiritual* substance is, that we use for our survival, I think that so far, the last century, the spiritual substance was - it's difficult for me to be precise - but I think it was more of a flight from authority, a re-examination of the spiritual substance in the form of religion, which led to the kind of ideologies freed from religions, meaning of the last two centuries, I would say, humankind, led by Western civilisation, which inherited their wisdom and ideas from the East - you have to remember that all the cultures and religions came from the East. So, the interaction of the West with the East resulted in the creation of a Renaissance Man, or Man of Renaissance. You know that Muslims created the Man of Wisdom, or *Hakîm* Man, in Baghdad. For the *Hakîm* Man, the substance, I mean in the broader sense of spiritual - not only religious, spiritual meaning philosophy, thought, theology and everything - the *Hakîm* Man of Baghdad saved the substance of spirituality that came from the West in the forms of translations of the Greek philosophy, as you know. In these translations, the major role was played by Jews and Christians, but they served the programme of the Muslims in Baghdad. This substance that was saved in Baghdad was transferred to the West through Spain and Sicily and produced a new face, which we know. Especially at that time people were proud of the Man of Renaissance, or of the Renaissance Man. Now, we're still in the shadow of this Renaissance Man. But it is fading. This Renaissance Man is fading. So, you basically have two major interactions between the West and the East, and I have in mind the East meaning basically Islamic. I'm aware that East also means some other cultures.

Why is it that Islam and Christianity and Judaism have difficulties? Because they are so similar to each other that they compete with each other more than with those, which are different from them. This is why we have problems, because we want to prove ourselves to each other, not to someone else. Because similarity is sometimes the result of conflict, not the way of diversity, because something this different from me, I respect it. Something which is similar to me I am sometimes afraid that is not similar enough and I want to make it more similar, and then I am engaged in sometimes a violent approach to make you similar to me. This is why we have conflict in Bosnia, because Croats and Serbs wanted to make us more similar to them, or Serbs want to make the Croats similar

to them, and so on. Let's leave this aside. What I want to reach is that the first interaction was in fact flowing from the West to the East, through Greek philosophy and so on. The second interaction was from East to the West. Now we are looking for a new interaction. What is the new interaction of civilisations? This is not for religion alone, and the idea of superiority alone, and the idea of purity, and their idea of being better than others. It is not only religious. It is ideological, it is race, it is all of this.

Now, why do we tend to describe ourselves as being superior to others? This has been the habit of the Greeks, of the Romans, of the Egyptians, of the Jewish community, of Gentiles, of the Christians, and, until recently, it is the habit of the Prime Minister of Italy, who said that Western civilisation is superior over Islamic civilisation. So, you see this pattern, it is all over.

Now, this third interaction, what is the substance of this third interaction, because we are now in a vacuum. Why? Because we are or no longer impressed by the *Hakim* Man in the way of theory. We are not impressed any more by the Renaissance Man, because the Renaissance Man has eaten himself. There is no food anymore that the Renaissance Man can give or deliver. But this period..., I think what I am impressed with by the Renaissance Man is it that we have these four patterns of the Arts, if you like. You have this process from Slavery to Freedom, from Mythology to Science, from Might to Right, I mean might, the king's possession of everybody, and from the Theory Of State, which you have, Farabi wrote, for example, who started from the Plato's *Republic*. It is a theory. Al Farabi continued this *Noble City*, then you have Aquinas who wrote - I mean Augustine - who wrote the *City of God*. Then you have Thomas More who wrote *Utopia*, he imagined the city as an island where everything is OK. This is the theory of state. From this Theory of State we came to the Legitimacy of State, which is the route for democracy. So you have to legitimise your political power or rule. Now, this is the period of the Renaissance Man. No doubt about it. And now, what are we going to do? We live now in the shadow of Freedom, Right, Science and the Legitimacy of State. I'm not an expert to talk about all these four, but I am more interested in what is the spiritual substance now, so that we don't stay in our enclosed superior world, and whether it is religious, or ideological, or something else.

**[SG] Now, are you speaking from the side of the West or East or both?**

[MC] Both. I'm speaking as Universal Man. I'm trying just to present my position as a Muslim. Now, our difficulty as humanity today, is how to close the line or a border of our cultural, spiritual and religious limitations. Because the notion of the security on the one hand makes you bigger, but at the same time makes you smaller. Because, if you are superior you become limited. You exclude yourself from the rest of the world and of humanity, you put yourself in a corner. I think this is where some Muslims are making a mistake. On other hand, if you close the line and you don't mind your security, or you cultural circle, and you allow yourself to be lost in the other cultural circle, then you're making a mistake. Because, you're not interested in those who are assimilated in another culture. That's the point. And I'm not interested in those who are isolated. I am interested in the one who was integrated. Now, this is a very strong word. What is the line between isolation and assimilation? Or, where is the line between assimilation and integration? Now, I think the word 'integration' is not acceptable altogether, but the word 'co-operation' is. So I think the word co-operation.

Now coming to the ground from all these sky thoughts.... Bosnia Herzegovina, with this diversity in religions and so on, has been living in this universal world for a long time. Now, this fragmentation and segmentation is losing this universal substance, the

spiritual substance that we have had, and not being persuaded by the Renaissance Man anymore, and the way we used to be, we are now searching for a new substance, that will be common to all of us as was the Renaissance Man.

Now, if I may say, I see that the new interaction among the cultures, civilisations and religions is the creation of - not an ideal, but let's start with an ideal, so that we can come to the concrete - it is a Moral Man of the world. Because I think what we are lacking know is precise morality. Wisdom is OK, wisdom of a *Hakim* Man is okay. Rationality of the Renaissance Man is OK. But what is the glue? We're looking for a new glue that will bind wisdom, and rationality in one substance. I think that this substance that we're talking about his morality. But what is morality? Who will define what morality is? Are the politicians ready to be educated in morality, or are the moralists capable to offer anything as a spiritual substance to be reasonable, coherent to somebody, to say, "Yes, I accept your vision, your morality" in the same way that people accepted the rationality of the Renaissance Man?

This is why I think - to go back to where we started - that as the next century will be the next century of water, and as the last century it was there century of rationality, I think that the next century will be the century of morality. Now, it is assumed by this, that the role of defining what is morality is to be given to the religious people. I didn't want to say that it is going to be the century of religion, because I've heard that already, so I don't need to repeat that. It is not enough to say what it is going to be, because we have bad memories of religion, with all due respect to religion, because we need new, fresh ideas. I think instead of using religion, which means many things and sometimes nothing, depending on how we look at it, I think it could be a universal in the same way as the Renaissance Man was a universal phenomenon, accepted from all corners of the world. I think that morality, this Renaissance Man or Rational Man, needs now moral support. He needs moral substance.

Now, I'm not sure that religious people are now enthusiastic in the same way to produce a morality for the world as the Renaissance Man was enthusiastic to produce a rational world. This is our problem. The lack from religious people - with all due respect, I belong to them, and I know, I am in their circle, this is my company, if you like. But I'm not sure if they are aware of the task, I'm not sure that they are capable to produce what the world is expecting of them. I'm not sure that they are knowledgeable enough to do so, and I'm not sure that they are willing to take the risk of an enterprise that is very painful spiritually and intellectually, and my dilemma is now looking [for] who is going to be the one, or what is the group, or where is the source, who is going to be, and what is going to be the source for a new interaction between or among civilisations, cultures, to give new reason for a better world. Because I think that rationality has been exhausted. Rationality has nothing more to say that we don't already know. We came to the limit of rationality and therefore rationality doesn't serve our need. Therefore, where rationality stops, I think, spirituality begins. By spirituality I mean morality.

But, there is another thing. When Freud was speaking about his self-analysis, he used to say to his public, "My lecture is going to perhaps disturb you and I would advise you not to come and not to listen to my lectures." I wish that we would come to the position that somebody tells us, "Don't listen to morality" so that I have the wish to listen. Because the problem is, our will is so weak to listen to moral appeals that we don't know how to revitalise it in terms of different kinds of moral initiatives, such as lesbianism, homosexuality, pornography, drug addiction, because, in the West, these things are becoming moral reality or moral fact, or the atmosphere is in the process of being created, that if you're not gay or homosexual, you're not a normal person. But, I have to ask you, as a European - I am a European Muslim, and a Muslim European, so I have to do this, to

explain to Muslims what is Europe, and at the same time to explain my Muslim-ness to the Europeans as much as I can. So, my destiny is in Europe, whether I like it or not, or whether it is good or bad, or whether I am proud or not, and that you can leave to your heart. But, I tend to be proud to be a European Muslim. But on the other hand, I wonder how we can accept in moral terms homosexuality as something to be normal. This is not the future for our biological substance. And I will stop here.

**[SG] Well, you've really touched upon a couple of questions already, and I think you're really on the question of number 7, "What ways are the values of secular Western society at conflict with the Bosnian Muslim *umma*? Is it possible that Western military presence in Bosnia will preserve and protect the Muslim community but slowly undermine and destroy it through the imposition of Western and secular cultural values?"**

[MC] *Da*. Correct. I believe that as much as the theologians were the cause of the spread of atheism, I think that the secularists were the cause for the spread of anti-secularism, or, let's say, religiosity, which is the opposite to this. Because, you know, each and every idea in the beginning is an ideal. And when secularists came with their ideas of the separation of church and state and the division of work, as Emil Durkheim with that sociological work, I think it was appealing. But the problem now is that secularists are not persuading. First of all, they don't believe *themselves* what they are preaching, how then can we expect someone who doesn't believe what they say, that others will believe? Because there is a spirit of it. Because words are not dead, they are living beings, so when they pass you they touch you, they move you, and I think that secularism, as far as I'm concerned, in the first definition, and if Thomas Hobbes were to come back, I think he would be very disappointed about what he was intending with secularism and what the so-called secularists are doing today. Because, just to give you one simple example which is concrete, when I was in London on one occasion, there was one minister, former minister of culture from one European country, and he asked me, "Do you have secularists in Bosnia-Herzegovina?" and I said, "Yes. Why would you like to have secularists?" He said, "Because I am a secularist." So I asked him, "What does it mean to be a secularist?" And he said, "It means I don't go to church." So I said to him, "I'm a secularist too, because I don't go to church either."

**[SG] [Laughter]**

[MC] I go to the mosque. You see this simplification?

**[SG] Yes.**

[MC] Now, if you have this, I mean, how do say, this simplicity, or simplemindedness about major ideas from a minister who was supposed to carry out this idea, how can you expect that the common people understand what secularism is politically and philosophically? Politically, I think the future of Europe - especially in the West, and I think in some forms in Islamic world - secularism is the future in a political sense. Meaning, the division of the work, the division of the labour, if you like. Responsibility and theologians.

**[SG] And in that sense it is all right and it is sanctioned.**

[MC] Yes, of course. But philosophically, in terms of metaphysical and transcendental things, secularism has no answers, it doesn't bother with it, because secularists think that it is not purposeful to go deep into the meaning of God, because he is unknown. And because he is unknown, why should one bother about it? But, I think, - I have to say this - that politics is too important today to be left to the politicians alone in the same way that theology is too important today to be left to the theologians alone. So, I don't think that a Emil Durkheim's division of labour has particular meaning in that stricter and crude way, in that way and that you are theologian, you know, you have some role in communication with God, and if I don't come to you, then I don't have any chance to communicate with God. And then, somehow, the institution is in possession of God. But who can be in possession of God? I don't know. So, you cannot leave these matters to the theologians alone, on the one hand. On the other hand, if you're a politician, you're in a position of [controlling] my life, of my freedom, of my country, or whatever I am in terms of citizenship. So, I cannot do anything if I don't come to you. So, secularists became confession takers in the same way that theologians were mediators between God and you. So what is the difference? And then, I would like to ask Thomas Hobbes, "What is the difference between the emperor and the Pope in terms of achieving my rights and my freedom?" It doesn't make any difference for me whether I go to the theatre or whether I go to a psychiatrist who, in a way, is Freud's priest, in one way or another, or to go to the church or to the mosque, because both of them can abuse me as a person. This one in the name of God, and this one in the name of, I don't know, in the name of science.

**[SG] Well, that is precisely what I was going to ask. Is the scientist today the priest of the rational man, the priest of secular society?**

[MC] Absolutely.

**[SG] It seems that we have entrusted him with our entire being, including our soul.**

[MC] But recently, as much as I can look at them and new books coming out, I see that the majority of them are talking about history, of the prophets, talking about especially the Palestinian and Mesopotamian situation. I recently found a book from Philip Graham, what is the legacy of Moses, for example, called, "The act of God", or something, that these people, who are scientists, you know, this is the paradox. When you read the philosopher, he doesn't give you rational proofs, but he wants to persuade you so that you believe in what he says, not how he presents his material to you. But if you read a theologian, he doesn't ask you to believe, he is just putting forward that his arguments are rational. That is the paradox of dealing with the whole issue. The same thing, for example, in the past, including the Muslims and the Jews and the Christians, the main argument - which is very common - was the cosmological argument for the existence of God. They all used his argument against Aristotle's theory of the eternity of the world. But when you read the theologians of the Middle Ages, they want to be physicists, because they studied physics. But their shortcomings are very visible because they didn't know what physics was. They based physics on theory, what is the atom, whether it can be divided or not, because the atom was created, what is the substance, and its relationship with the universals, as you know, and they put the whole world in these 10 categories. And then you cannot escape from this, right?

**[SG] At least until Kant.**

[MC] Now, later on we came to this so-called 'exact science' and the use of experiments, and they said, this is out. Hume came along and said that the cosmological argument had no sense, Kant said this is also, maybe Kant is in this enough to recognise something about morality.

[SG] **Yes, that's right.**

[MC] Maybe he was some kind of a prelude of all we are talking about now. But what do you have now? This is a paradox. Now you have the scientists and physicists who are talking about God. So if you want to know God, you don't go to the theologian, you go to this Mr Hawken, what is his name?

[SG] **Stephen Hawking?**

[MC] The "Origin of the Universe", something. Now you read him, because he is now taking the position of religion. He is explaining to us the way God works or the way we should think. Not theologians. The theologians became more social workers and activists, and, let's say, the fishermen of the souls, in order to survive. And they have no agenda. Theology has no agenda for the world, because theology, somehow, has submitted itself, or withdrawn itself from the field of partners in the creation of the new world. This is why I am angry at the theologians who betrayed themselves, in this sense that they are not able to realise at the right time their mistakes. They accepted, and they *had* to accept, the corrections of their beliefs from others, and not from inside. So, in order to participate in the world, you have to come out of the Church in order to be able to be accepted and to make any sense. Not from within the circles. I mean, there is no big difference between, let's say, the circle of Muslim theologians, especially recently - I'm not talking about the Middle Ages, because the Muslim theology in the Middle Ages was more progressive than, for example, in recent centuries. In recent centuries, Muslim theologians are not creative theologians. They are imitators of what has been happening in the West in the sense of only responding in a wrong way, I think sometimes, what is happening in the West, and not offering any an initiative of how things could be better. Thus, they are in a defensive position, defending themselves because the West is always attacking. And even when the West doesn't attack anybody, some people in the East imagine that they may attack us.

[SG] **Yes.**

[MC] So we have to prepare ourselves, because they proclaim the West to be so superior that even the West itself doesn't think it is superior in that way.

[SG] **When you say attack from the West, do you mean more than military attack? You mean an economic, ...**

[MC] Yes, cultural, political, spiritual, and all these things. Of course, behind all of this is the military. Military power. If you are in one corner of civilisation, of course you measure everything. So, if you know that somebody has an atomic bomb and has military power, and if you know that this one from this part of the world is heavier, than the one who doesn't have all this. So you see, everything is relative, except God. God is the only Absolute.

[SG] I'm glad to see that we're an agreement with each other, that the world should be more integrated and not have the strict categories that Western societies have had, at least for the modern period, stemming maybe from the Renaissance, as you say. I'm curious, and you're asking the right questions, which I'm trying to ask as well, which is, "Where there we go from here?" We see the situation in Bosnia specifically. May I ask you directly, "How can religious faith and forgiveness contribute to the escape a cycle of violence and past offences?"

[MC] This is the right question. This is a very good question. But I don't know if I know the answer, whether I can say. Of course, I can give you a lot of material to my answer saying, "Yes, that in the world we need peace, everybody should be nicer, everybody should be polite, and we should live happily ever after..."

[SG] **(Laughter)**

[MC] ...and so on and so forth. But I think our world is very complicated and the question of reconciliation, you see, the messages that we are receiving from the West - I'm in the West, of course, but I can also be..., - is very frightening. Recent books and recent ideas that we have talk about the end of history. This is a pure and theological approach. So, where did Fukiyama study theology? I don't know. Who is the Pope? You know? We used to hear from the Pope, Urban I in 1091 or 1090. He proclaimed a crusade, remember, to Jerusalem. But this Pope *didn't* proclaim a crusade. We heard from politicians. Politicians and the West are now taking the role of the Pope. They are proclaiming crusades. The last example is President Bush after the 11th of September. He came out and proclaimed that they are going to engage in a crusade - I'm paraphrasing, of course - because of the attack on the United States. He came out later and apologised, and said, "We don't mean what you Muslims mean by the term 'crusade'."

[SG] **Right.**

[MC] Alright. So, now when the Muslims use the term '*jihad*', which some translators have translated 'holy war', the Muslims say it also, "We don't mean what you Christians mean." So we don't know any more what we mean at all. We don't know what *you* mean, you don't know what *we* mean, so we live in confusion. Right?

[SG] **It is as you say, the words have meaning and the words have life...**

[MC] Yes.

[SG] **...and sometimes those words kill as well.**

[MC] I wish that President Bush had never used this word. I know that 'crusade' can mean many other things. But as far as the Muslims are concerned, they think only about one thing.

[SG] **That's right.**

[MC] But at the same time, when Muslims use the word '*jihad*', for the Christians it means only one thing, and even though we can say it doesn't mean what you mean, the Christians receive the message in such a way. So what do we receive as the message from

the West? The message we receive from Fukuyama is about the end of history. We have so many theologians in the past from Muslims and Christians and Jews who were proclaiming that this is the end of the world. This is why we have this collapse of the world, or whatever. But for Fukuyama, he doesn't do this in the name of God. He does this in the name of science.

**[SG] That's right.**

[MC] Then we have Huntington, and that we live in a clash of civilisations.

**[SG] Right.**

[MC] First of all, I don't think that civilisations can clash with each other. Civilisations are not living beings. I know what he means but again I want him to say that he understands what I mean, if I can explain what I mean. Because there can only be clashes of the *memory* of history. In this way there can be clashes, because, if civilisations clash with each other, we will not have civilisation anymore in terms of violent ways. But in terms of interaction between civilisations, that is absolutely out of the control of Professor Huntington or myself, because civilisations are more powerful than me and more powerful than a book written by anyone, because civilisations are like water. They go where they find land to rest on, to disappear, and to come again, and to disappear and come again. It is like a living being. But the messages we receive from the West, we can say that something is dramatically happening in Western civilisation. Either Western civilisation is losing confidence in itself, or it is too powerful and no longer cares anymore what the rest of the world thinks, or whether it is the beginning of an invisible end of this kind of civilisation in which we live. What is the trend of Western civilisation? For a time the whole universe received the message of Western civilisation as their own. There was no distinction. Wherever you went, you received the traces of Western civilisation in the shadow of these four categories that I mentioned. But now, why do people protest against this civilisation? The attack of the 11th of September is something unimaginable and unthinkable. But, at the same time - I mean, no one has the right to moralise the victims of 11th September, as no one has the right to moralise the victims of Srebrenica. If we see it from a different and distant perspective, we have to ask ourselves "Why?" Because it is an attack against this civilisation. Even though I would not promote this idea. If I were in the position of President Bush, I would not say that, because when you say someone is against a civilisation, you're inviting others also to be against it. But we have to ask "Why?" Why, if this civilisation is telling us to provide for us in communication, space... We can fly from New York to Sarajevo in a few hours. We have all these satellites, we have mass communications, we have mobiles, we have so many facilities that are available for us. Why are such good things meaningless? There is something more important and more viable than all of these instruments that we're using to facilitate our lives differently and better. But like all civilisations before, when you're in that position, you never feel that your framework or your worldview is decaying, is collapsing; that there is something wrong. You don't want to believe this because you are so strong that you simply don't want to accept what others tell you. So, I thought that the strength of Western civilisation has always been its ability of self-examination and self-critique. I think that Western civilisation is still in that position. Still, but less than before. *Less* than before. So, losing this substance of self-examination, self-critique, self-correction, could be very dangerous for others. So, and in that way, your question was, "Where are we going from here?" At the moment, I think this is the most important

question of all, and you know that the right question is sometimes more important than the answer. I don't think we need to answer this, but to ask this question now. I think it is an obligation for all people who care about our future. This is spread all over the world and it is in the possession of everyone. I'm not sure that Western civilisation is in control itself, whether good or bad. It can come - and this is a paradox that you have from the Romans - that the power of civilisation at one point of time is the cause for its own destruction.

**[SG] You say that the ability of the West to conduct self-examination is less today.**

[MC] Yes. Absolutely. It is less today than it was yesterday.

**[SG] Is that a direct result of its increasing power, especially the increased power of the United States?**

[MC] Probably. Sometimes I am afraid that the course [of history] can be just the other way around, if you like. Can we keep this energy of freedom, right, science and the legitimacy of state, or are we now changing the road, going from freedom to slavery, in one way or another, from right to might, from science to mythology, because, I told you, many scientists are now impressed by mythologies, because mythology gives them meaning. It doesn't make them excited any more about scientific discovery, as we used to have. Now they are more excited about these old images of civilisations and gods and pantheons and so on, and we read so many things about pharaohs and the ancient Egyptians, and so on. I'm not saying that we don't also have ritual in science, but it is very indicative. For example, at the end, Thomas Mann, why did he write *Joseph and his brothers*? In a pure scientific way this is mythology; a legend. It is based on the Bible. But these mythologies became truth, in a way, as much as you are becoming familiar with them. Once the scientists wanted to take the place of the prophets, and they succeeded in one way or another, because Darwin became the prophet for evolution, Freud became the prophet for psychology, for revelation and new revelation, Max Weber became the father of the community, not any more God, who put you in community. And I can give you so many more examples. And Descartes became a priest of philosophy to explain that the basis of your belief is not God and the Bible, but mathematics. As you can see, whether we're moving now from science to mythology, and then whether we're moving from the legitimacy of state to the theory of state, because in the United States or in Washington or in Moscow, they talk about the theory, who is adaptable to the new world order, rather than whether it is legitimate or not.

**[SG] Right...**

[MC] They don't ask any longer whether it is democratic or not, whether it is cooperative or not.

**[SG] Well, one of the things that is key, especially in *this* country, is the question no longer of peacekeeping, but of democratisation and the process of democratisation. What is that? Some people say that it has resulted when a fair election has taken place. Others say it has happened when a second fair election has taken place and the process has repeated itself. So people *are* asking these questions afresh and new. It is not simply the peacekeeping effort that the military is engaged in. But is Democratisation the new imperialism from the West?**

[MC] Well, as far as Bosnia is concerned, let me be very clear. I think that the Bosnians have no ambition to prove here or there that democracy and human rights are different from the rest of the world. I think that we are part of Europe and that our destiny is in Europe. The Sultan is not sitting any longer in Istanbul.

[SG] **Right.**

[MC] The Sultan, *our* Sultan, is sitting in Brussels. But the problem is, we don't know his name. We used to know the name of the sultan in Istanbul.

[SG] **The first title I had of my master's thesis last year was "From Istanbul to Brussels".**

[MC] Very good. Very good.

[SG] **The Bosnian people...**

[MC] That's correct.

[SG] **...have been facing - since the Austrian days - they have been facing towards Vienna and the West rather than towards Istanbul.**

[MC] Yes they did. The other problem is that this Sultan is invisible to us. We don't know who he is. If you've got the name, please give it to me.

[SG] **(Laughter) We don't know either!**

[MC] I was in Brussels recently, and I said it, "I want to know what is the name of the sultan in Brussels!" So, I think that in one way or another - of course I am Muslim. You have to keep this in mind, and I am very rational when I say this. My kingdom is Kab'ba. But politically, my sultan is in Brussels. I accept this fact. And I think that Bosnia-Herzegovina must be adopted, *adopted*, by Europe, as its own child. Not to give me the story that we are an illegitimate child somehow. This is how some of them behave. Europe must admit that we are a child of Europe. The father and mother should come out and say, we are the father and we are the mother and we will take care of you, because you're a child of Europe. Because Europe has given us birth. So, I think that Europe.... But some fathers like to deny [us], because, 'success has many fathers, but failure is an orphan'. So, I hope that I am very clear, that the question of Bosnia-Herzegovina is the question of the European Union, the European Parliament, Europe and democracy. It is a European problem, and Europe should not run away, because Le Pen is in the backyard of Europe. We experienced Le Pen here, but Europe didn't want to listen to us, and that Le Pen can be produced in Europe, in France, and from France can go farther in Europe. So, you have to remove the cause. And the cause for Le Pen, I think is Bosnia-Herzegovina and Radovan Karadžić, because they are very good friends,

[SG] **(Surprised) Is that right?**

[MC] Of course! There were very good friends. So we don't know who influenced whom, whether Le Pen influence Karadžić, or whether Karadžić influenced Le Pen, but

we know what happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But as Muslims, I think, as Bošnjaks - of course we are Croats and Serbs and so on - it is not fair to ask us to be an example of democracy and human rights since we live in the context of 300 million non-Muslims in Europe.

[SG] Yes.

[MC] If you measure us in this way - and this is our right measurement, we are in the context of Europe - but if you measure us in the context of Serbs and Croats, let's say in the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina, you can say that the Muslims are a majority. But even that is relative because the Serbs are the majority in the sense that the Serbs constitute 11 million people together with Serbia, and 6 million Croats, because they get support. We don't have a king, and we don't have the sultan. We share the sultan with Brussels and others. We don't have oil, we don't have dollars. What do we have? We have only God, our mind, and our abilities to survive. Nothing else. We have no other protection.

[SG] **Well, I'm sure you're aware and that Smail Balić believes that the Bosnian Muslim has a great contribution to make to the European Muslims because they are indigenous Muslims, unlike Northern African Muslims...**

[MC] Of course!

[SG] **...in France, or Turks in Germany.**

[MC] But we don't want to talk about this, because if God has created Adam and Eve from clay - this is in the Bible by the way, but in the Bible you have different, uh...

[SG] **A different creation account.**

[MC] ...creation, but there is a statement also, that you are from the earth and that you will go to the Earth, because he was living outside of Eden and then he came to Eden and later on the serpent came and told Eve to eat the apple and then they went out of Eden. And because you're from the earth you go to the earth. So, in the Muslim [account], Adam was also created from clay. And I am Adam, so I am created from clay. Which clay? This Bosnian clay. Can you raise a banana in Europe? No, you cannot. Can you raise me, then, in Malaysia? No. So, I have to live here, because the chemical substance of me is connected with this land. So I have no need to argue or to prove that this is my land, because I am born here. Of course, if you think I have committed a sin like Adam, and I have eaten an apple that was forbidden - but I don't know who would have forbidden me - and you want to get me out of Eden to somewhere else, that is for the sultan to decide. And I hope he will not. I pray for him that he will not change his mind. Thank you very much.

[SG] **It's been a most interesting and engaging time with you. I thank you for your time. I know you have another appointment waiting.**

[MC] Thank you very much. I wish you a good dissertation.

Interview with

**Anesa Delalić**

Mostar

24th September, 2002

**[SG] This is Anesa Delalić. Did I say it correctly? She's a student in Mostar who started University on the Westside and is now on the Eastside. Anesa, can you tell me what your cultural and religious background is?**

[AD] Okay, I'm coming from a Muslim background, but when it was ten years old something was changed in my life. Actually my whole life changed. Now I am Protestant.

**[SG] Okay, we'll explore that in a little bit. Were you or your family directly affected by the war?**

[AD] Yes. When it was ten years old I was living on the West side with my family and my grandmother. That was during the war, on the wrong side for our family because the town is divided into two parts, the Muslim side, which is the east side, and the West side, which is where the Croats live. So we lived on the West Side but being Muslim was like having the wrong religion for that side. And so they moved us. Actually, they took us one afternoon to one house in a suburb of Mostar.

**[SG] Who took you?**

Croat people. Some soldiers came. We actually never saw them properly, but our neighbour's told officials that in our building there was a Muslim family living and that it would be a good idea to remove them. And on that same day the removing people from another suburb of Mostar called Bijelo Polje, and my aunt is from that suburb. And she came to visit us that afternoon and she was pregnant so mother and father said that we would go instead of her. So, they took us there and we stayed in prison for four months.

**[SG] Where was the prison?**

[AD] It was in a village called [Vojna?], which is ten minutes from Mostar. And we stayed there for four months and it was hard because I was a child and my sister went there and my father and my mother and my grandmother.

**[SG] Did you live together?**

[AD] Everyone lived together in a house in the prison. There were about fourteen of us in one room. And then another room in another house other Muslim people were all in the same situation as we were. So we stayed together except my father. He was there but in another house. He wasn't in the same house that we were.

**[SG] So, did they separate the men from the women?**

[AD] Yes, yeah, they did. And some bad things really happened there, but thanks to God, we all survived. And I want to explain one thing about that situation. After three months they told us that there was going to be an exchange. The Croats would give Muslim people and Muslim people would give Croat people so everyone could go where they wanted. So there is a mountain here around Mostar that we walked the whole night long. It connects you with another village. We walked on this mountain the whole night long and all around on the other mountains of Mostar there were Muslim people who didn't know that it was their people who were walking on that mountain, so they were shooting at us because they didn't know. And men had, how do call them? [demonstrating with hands]

**[SG] Handcuffs?**

[AD] Yes, even on their legs and they were all connected so that no one could escape. And some of the people that started that walk didn't finish it because it was hard for old ladies and for some children and so on.

**[SG] Did they just stay behind, or did they die, or what happened?**

[AD] They were just somewhere on the road. We never saw them walking back because that was like a joke that it was going to be an exchange. They just made us walk and then come back again to the prison. And we never saw those people on the road and we never saw someone dead because somebody removed them, claiming that they escaped or something, but we all know that they couldn't do that because soldiers were walking right next to us, so it was impossible to escape. And we came back again to the prison and we stayed another month. And we all survived and in that time I asked myself so many times, "Why is this happening to me? It's not fair because there is no one here at that I know. We're not from the same village as these people, so we must be here by mistake." That's how I thought about it. And my aunt, she stayed here and had a baby and that was something that we really enjoyed while we were in prison, that someone could be alive, because I don't think she would have survived.

**[SG] What year was this?**

[AD] It was nine years ago, so 1994. At the end of 1993, because we were there for the new year, so 1993 to 1994. And after that last month they told us that we were free and that we can go to the East side, but my parents said that they didn't want to go to the East side, and that shocked me because I couldn't understand this. I

thought, what is the problem now? They took us to prison and now you want to go back to live there. And I couldn't understand most of the things because I was just ten years old, but while I was in prison, I started to think more seriously than a child that is ten years old. Because I didn't have any toys to play with or anything like that. The only thing that I could do was think that if somebody died that day, whether they would come and take that person and that person would never come back to the prison. So I said to them, I was very, very mad when my mother told me that we were not going to the East side, that we would stay on the West side. And we didn't know if our apartment was free or if somebody was living there. But she said that we would go and see how things are there. And we came back to the West side to live and we were the only Muslims that came because of our friends, let's say friends from prison with whom we were together for four months, they started to hate us because we moved to the West side. And they said that you are now going to be on their side after all that they have done to you. Now what are you doing? Are you crazy? But I thought that things would be very, very bad and that I would not be able to go to school because from my name they can see that I am Muslim, because it is a Muslim name. So I thought that the kids would just pick on me. But that never happened. Maybe they didn't like me at the beginning, but later they did. So that's the part from prison.

**[SG] Did you see any violence or atrocities in the camp?**

[AD] Yes, I did. I saw, for example, there was one boy who was eleven years old. Eleven or twelve, I'm not sure at the moment. But they tried to kill him in front of all of us and in front of his mother, so he was holding a gun at his head. And we could see when the men were coming from work that they had been beaten up.

**[SG] Did they treat women alright in the camp, or not?**

[AD] No. Some of them were raped, or something. Because the main boss, the main soldier, he was just twenty three years old. And he invented some things for violence, like guys had to beat each other or bite each other's ear until they cut it, which is almost impossible to do with your own tooth. So he did that all. Yes, there were some things that...[pause]. I don't know, I will never understand them. For me, I don't believe that a human can invent those things and that they can come into their heads, some of those things that they invented for violence. But after I went to school immediately after we came from prison, within two months after that, there was a possibility for me to go to Italy for two months. My teacher told me that if I wanted to go, they can move me a little bit from the class because of the stress I was experiencing, and because of everything that happened before. So my parents didn't know where I was going and Italy was someplace where they thought that they stole kids and that they did really bad things to them, they would sell kids, or whatever they do. And partly that's true and partly not. Because I went there to a really beautiful family that really, really took care of me. And my parents, they didn't know that. In that time, they told me, "If you go, it will be better than this that you have now. And so even if they sell you, and this will be for your good." Because there is nothing that they could offer me. I mean, they didn't want to do this because they are

my parents and that is normal, but they wanted the best for me. And so I went to Italy and I met this beautiful woman who took care of me as her own child. And even know when I'm nineteen, I go every year to visit them. After ten years I still do it.

**[SG] So the war made you more interested and reflective about why they did this to you. Did it make you more interested in your faith?**

[AD] Yes. While I was in prison, my grandmother, who was Muslim, did all the rituals that she needs to do, like praying five times a day, and everything. And even in prison she was doing that and I could never understand that. What if the soldiers entered, and she was kneeling down to her God? I could never understand that. What she told me was that this is the only thing that she could do, and even if she dies for that, that is the best for her. And I thought, she is going crazy. We're here in prison and who knows what will happen later? So I tried to do it with her and I could never see something happening. For me it was just kneeling down to nothing. No answers, no better things. But I always knew that there is something because no one ever touched any of us, my grandmother, mother or my sister or me, as a lady or as a girl. And all the other women had been treated really badly. And for me there was really something, and I thought, "Oh, maybe it's God that my grandmother is kneeling to." But when I tried to do that, it didn't make any sense. But while I was in Italy, my mother became a Christian during those two months.

**[SG] And she was still in Herzegovina during this time?**

[AD] Yes, yes. I was there by myself. And she was here and she started to go to church and she became a Christian and I came back on Saturday night, and on Sunday morning she woke me up and said, we're going to church. And I said some really, really bad stuff to her. After you made us sleep here, you want us to go to church. It doesn't make any sense. So, just not to offend her up I said, "I'll go, but this is my first and last time." So she said, "OK, at least you can try it." I thought it was like a church, how can you like a church? It is just something that is impossible to like.

**[SG] Even though you didn't go to Mosque on a regular basis?**

[AD] I didn't, but I believed that there is something, but it is not in this world. You can be connected with that something. Whatever you do, is something separated from us totally. So I went to the church. As I entered the church, everyone knows me, and they are like, "Oh, Anesa came, Anesa came!" And I'm staring at these people and I'm asking myself, are they trying to be polite or something, because why are they laughing, or how can they laugh in this period that we're in this situation that we're in? How can they laugh all the time? And then they started to worship God and I thought, "Oh, what's this? What's happening?" And I started to like it because the words of the songs were so good. And they were something that I needed as a healing from everything that happened before. So I started to soften, and when they smiled at me I smiled back at them and I tried to be a friend with them.

**[SG] So you went back more than once?**

[AD] Yes, after that I went back. I think in two years I could hardly miss one service because I always wanted to be there because I never heard a testimony or anything, but the love that I could see from the Christians, that was the biggest testimony that I could ever, ever imagine. Because our actions and what we do are more powerful than the words that we can say.

**[SG] Can you tell me a little about your mother's conversion?**

[AD] Well, she became a Christian before me and she started to go to church first. And I know that it really helped her to forgive and not to think about the past and not to think about the things that happened to us. After about a year she was baptised in this church, and I believe that is a whole process of healing because of the wounds we have formed by war.

**[SG] Do you think that young people are interested in religion today, or not?**

[AD] Well, I don't know. I am one of the youth leaders now in this church, and what I do is, I'm trying to reach more young people. And I went to a Croat school and I could never give them a strong message because they knew that in my class I was a Muslim, and it was only a year ago that I went to the West side school. And I went to school with them and they always knew that there was something inside of me, that there is something stronger than just being religious as a Catholic or being something else. They saw that there's something living inside of me that is more than just religion. And what I was trying to do with them was trying to give them my testimony. But like the first Christians that I met that showed me their love and just being there for them when they need me, I think that's something that is more powerful, as I already said, than just saying some words. What I'm trying to do now is to reach those young people on the streets. I think sometimes they're interested in religion, but sometimes they don't look like they are because they experience some things of the world that look very attractive to them and they enjoy their life. Let's say enjoy their life. But there is something even better and what we're all trying to show them is that there is something better that will last their whole life. And after they are twenty five or thirty, they will not think about the things that they're doing now. It will be just trash for them.

**[SG] Can you explain part of how you became a Christian, the story of that?**

[AD] So, it happened after I came back from Italy. In Italy the woman I lived with is Catholic and she also showed me, but I never looked at her as a Catholic. She was Italian for me. And I thought that's the only thing she could be, not Catholic, but an Italian woman. And she showed me love and she's just a beautiful woman. And I came here and I saw those people and then I started to be with Christians more. They would come to my house and we would have lunch together and so I decided that I could think about it even more, even if I was just at that time eleven years old, I said to myself, "I can just think about it and try it. If I don't like it I can give up."

**[SG] Being a Christian?**

[AD] Yeah, yeah. But once you try it and once you experience a walk with God, you can never give up, because it's always something new. And so I said I wanted to receive Jesus in my life, and that is something I really want to do. But I said to the lady who was trying to explain to me more about God, and what I said to her was that if I don't like it, I will give up. But I never gave up. After two years I was working with children in this church in Sunday school and I was leading some work and we started a kids' club for Mostar and sometimes I thought, this is the only thing that is holding me in this church, and being a Christian is the only thing that, it's just about kids, and how can I help them, and show them how to forgive one another, if there is something they need to forgive, even if somebody took your toy, you need to forgive that person. Those simple things, to show to children. I worked with them for four years and in those four years I really realised that God is the only thing that can satisfy your life. And I went through a process of healing because after all the things I had seen in the war and in prison in all of my life, I needed that healing. And no doctor or psychologist and no new friends can give you this, except God. And so I was baptised at that time. Now it has been eight years that I have been a Christian.

**[SG] So did you make a prayer of confession or...**

[AD] Yes, I did, with the lady that was trying to explain to me. She is now living in the States, and she moved from here. She asked me if I wanted to do that prayer because it is something serious. And so I did that prayer and I believe.

**[SG] And it was meaningful to you?**

It was.

**[SG] Can you tell me about this process of healing? Did you sense a need for healing? Did you have hatred for these people? Or not so much hatred, just something else? Can you tell me what you think?**

[AD] Yes, yes. Well, hatred was something that I held for almost two years after I became a Christian. It wasn't even so much toward the Croat people, but toward everyone. I thought that Christians were the only ones that you could talk to, that you can live with, that whatever you need to do it's only with Christians. And no one else is good and no one else can do good things only bad things. And I hated a lot of people. I hated the guys who took us to prison, my neighbours who were living next door to us. I didn't like them. And when I was walking in my house, I couldn't even say hello to them.

**[SG] They were the ones that turned you in?**

[AD] Yeah. They were the ones.

**[SG] Had you had good relationships with them before the war?**

Before, we did. Before we were being like good neighbours, eating in each others' houses, that was a normal thing. But yes, I hated them. And I thought that just in the circle of Christians you can have friends. But after I heard that the guy that took us away, who was one of the main soldiers there, who ordered all of the stuff there, who will go here, and who would die that day, who will do this, who will do that, he died. He had a car accident or something and he died. And it was two of them. It was the main one and it was the one helping him. And I was really happy when he died. And I thought, "Oh, this is the best thing for him, because there is no judgment that he could pass ever, after all the things that he has done." But then, I believe that God really spoke to my heart, is there really any difference between you and him? And I admitted, that no, because he is a sinner and I'm a sinner and even if I am ten and he is twenty, that doesn't make any difference because we are all sinners. And then I remembered about the love that God showed me when I became a Christian. And after I saw that love, and that that love could heal me, and that that love could give me strength to live my life, then I said, "Well, I have just accused someone. And that could happen also to me. And if I die, I will go to heaven, but he died, and he went to hell." And that is not something that Christians need to..., [pause] And that is the time when my healing started. And that is the time that I experience that God really wants me to forgive. It is not something that I will forgive in my mind and that I will always remember those things, but that I will forgive them in the love that God showed me in his love. Because he forgave me, and I need to forgive them. And I forgive them. And the guy who was helping him, he is still alive, but I can't find him. He is living in a village next to Mostar and I am trying to do now at the moment, in this past year, I have been trying to do it, I'm trying to find him and give him my testimony. Because without him, without the things that happened to me in the prison, maybe I would never be a Christian.

**[SG] Hmm.**

**[AD]** And now, I'm even thankful to him, because he has shown me the difference between bad and good things. And I'm trying to find him to tell them that he can have forgiveness, and if he goes to the Hague, he is forgiven, because God forgives him. He just needs to ask for that forgiveness.

**[SG] Was it an emotional experience that you had, that when you decided to forgive?**

**[AD]** What you mean by emotional?

**[SG] Did you cry? Did you feel a feeling of release? Freedom?**

**[AD]** Yes. It was during the worship time. And while we are worshipping in the church I like to pray, and not to pray for my needs and not to pray for myself, but just to give glory to God in prayer. And it was during the worship time, and I lifted my hands and they were singing a song that our hands and our lives because of the blood

of Jesus will be cleaned up, and we will have like a white new dress, or something like that. It's an old song. And then I realise that that's something, that's the healing I need. I needed my dress to be white, and to be pure for my God. And that was the healing. Yes, I was crying because I released something that I was holding onto really strong. And instead of that hatred, I asked God, can you pour your love there, because there is a part in my heart that is empty now, and I want to fill it with good things, and the only thing that is good is you. That was during the worship time.

**[SG] That is very powerful. You still remember it clearly?**

[AD] I do. I'm writing all the things that God is doing in my life in my journal, because I don't want to forget anything. I don't know, when I die, I want somebody to have that, and to read that, and it can be an encouragement for someone.

**[SG] Do you think that a lot of young people see that religion is the cause of a war?**

[AD] Well, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, religion is connected with a nationality that you belong to. If you're Muslim by background, then you need to do all Muslim things. And if you are Croat then you need to do all Croats things. And even if you live on the East side, you're supposed to be a Muslim, because you live there. And for now, I believe it is the way. That they believe that religion is the cause of the war because it is connected. Because if you're a Croat you're Catholic, and if you're Muslim you're Muslim, and...

**[SG] So religion can't be separated?**

[AD] Yeah, yeah. That's how they connect it. And if I share my testimony was someone who is Croat, they will think that she is crazy because she is a Muslim, she's just lying, or something like that.

**[SG] They really can't understand.**

[AD] Yeah, they really can't understand that because it is connected with the religious. It is connected with your background, with something that you are on paper.

**[SG] How can you be a Christian? You have a Muslim name.**

[AD] Yeah, yeah. That's something that people, but here in our church, most of the young people that I am leading now, most of them are from a Muslim background. Some of their parents don't know that they're coming to the church because it is impossible in their minds to separate those two things.

**[SG] Now, obviously, on the West side you have people from a Croatian background in the West Mostar Church,**

[AD] Yes, we have.

**[SG] And you have Muslims,**

[AD] Yes, we have Muslims, and we have some Serbs.

**[SG] And some Serbs? So all three nationalities are worshipping together?**

[AD] Yes.

**[SG] Do they worship in separate rooms?**

[AD] No, they all worship in the same room. Because in God's eyes, on the cross, he didn't die for Croats or for Serbs or for Muslims. He died for everyone, for all three of us. And if he didn't separate us on the cross, then why do we need to separate each other?

**[SG] So you're telling me, that you're all in the same room, and that the Serbs aren't sitting on one side, and the Catholics aren't sitting on another and the Muslims on another side,**

[AD] No, we're all sitting mixed and we love it. And I'm so happy that I can hug someone who is Croat and I know that in the past he did something bad, I mean his people did something bad, but I can still hug that person and say, "I love you, brother, because we have the same God." It doesn't make any difference who you are. It is important that we serve the same God. And I think that that is amazing.

**[SG] Do you think that forgiveness plays a big role in allowing you to worship together?**

[AD] Yes. Without forgiveness it doesn't make any sense to be Christian or be religious, because in place of forgiveness comes love, and those things are connected, because without love you cannot forgive.

**[SG] Is this healing aspect that you keep referring to, is it that hatred is replaced with forgiveness,**

[AD] Yes.

**[SG] And love is what replaces the forgiveness?**

[AD] Yes. That's our works. Well, I speak for the youth and we're all together and we worship God together. And I don't think that if I hate someone, or if I don't forgive my brother who was sitting next to me, that I will be able to worship my God. Those two things are connected.

[SG] **All the time that we have been talking, you have had a smile on your face.**

[AD] I'm a happy person.

[Laughter]

[AD] I'm very happy. And I am even happy that I can speak about the things in the past with a smile on my face. I think that is God.

[SG] **What about the future. Do you have worries and concerns about the future of this country or your town of Mostar? There doesn't seem to be..., well, the bridges are back in place, so people can technically cross with their vehicles. But really, sometimes it's difficult to cross from one side to another, isn't it?**

[AD] It is, for some people. I can't really say that I'm worried about my future.

[SG] **Why not?**

[AD] Well, because I know that God is holding everything together in his plan. And I know that all of Bosnia-Herzegovina, all the youth camps that we're doing, all youth conferences that we're doing, and I believe that we will be history-makers in this country, and I think that worry is something that is really past for us. Because, yeah, I'm not worried about it. I believe that our prayers and everything.... In Bosnian-Herzegovina every fifty years we have war. I don't want my kids to have war, and I don't want to experience another one.

[SG] **Do think you will?**

[AD] I don't think I will. I believe that I will not. Because if we will be history-makers, and we're Christians and we believe in God, the only thing that I'm concerned about is how to have more people trust in God.

[SG] **You think that is the answer?**

[AD] Yeah, those are my only worries at the moment. How to make more people believe in God.

[SG] **So you believe that what you have found, others need to find as well?**

[AD] Yes, I believe that. And I will never judge someone whether he is Muslim or Croat or Serb or whoever. I will never accuse that person about being wrong or something. I respect them, but I'm trying to tell them that what I have found, they can try it. If they don't like it, they can give it up. But I don't think they can ever give it up, after they test God and after he tests them, they will never give up. Because we have a good God.

**[SG] What about outside of the believing church community. Do think the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be able to live again together without fear?**

[AD] At the moment, you know, there are apartments from the Croat people on the East side that took Muslim people, and on the Croat side Muslim apartments that took Croat people, and now they're trying to take their apartments back. And I thought that that was going to be the best thing, because everything will be on the same place, and there will not be like an East side and a West side, which I don't even like to say, because it is one town. But people are not coming back to their apartments. They're just changing them for the East side or for the West side. I'm afraid it would always be the East side and the West side and there will always be some problems between them. Because in their hands they have made, that they think the other is bad and we're good. That is just in their heads. And if they don't think about it, it would be much better. I'm afraid it will always be this way, but I'm still not concerned about it, because we have a church on the East side and we have a church on the West side, and we even have a Bible school on the East side that is working and it is in the middle of Muslim people. At the beginning they had some problems, but now it is normal. And people will think it is normal to live on both sides, and I don't think they will have a problem with forgiveness or reconciliation.

**[SG] What keeps people from taking back their apartment that they originally had?**

[AD] That's a fear of other people. And that's something that they're holding from the war. Like, they killed somebody or something like that and they don't want to go to the West side to live or to the East side to live. It's a fear that they have.

**[SG] Fear that they would be hurt again?**

[AD] Yes, or even hatred between them, between neighbours. They can walk in a building and never say hello to someone. I don't believe that I would enjoy that, like if I would enter somewhere and nobody is saying hello.

**[SG] So there is hatred and fear?**

[AD] Yes, hatred and fear.

**[SG] Fear that somebody might do something to their apartments?**

[AD] Yes, they connect these things with something they might have done in the war. So it is something that they are holding and they don't want to change the picture. Maybe they're not that way now. I mean, I live on the West side and it is normal to do whatever they do, and I don't have fear that somebody will do me any harm, even though they did before.

**[SG] Do people give you problems because you have a Muslim name and live on the West Side?**

[AD] No, they don't. No, it's not really problems that they don't like us, especially my family, those other people who stayed in the same prison as we were, but now they live on the East side and we're and West side. That's the only people who are hating us are the Muslim people because we live on the West side. [Laughter.] But I don't hate them.

**[SG] So you have more problems with the Muslims than with the Croats?**

[AD] Yeah. We never had any problems with the Croats after we came from prison.

**[SG] Do you think that religions in Bosnia-Herzegovina will continue to separate people, or help bring them together?**

[AD] It depends on how they take their religion.

**[SG] What do you mean?**

[AD] Well, let me take an example. For example, if you're Catholic, then you go to the Catholic Church. And you know all about forgiveness, and know all about being a Catholic, but you know just about the rituals and you don't know a thing about believing in God and living your life with him. And you can be a Muslim and you can do all the rituals and you can pray five times a day, but that's just religion, and it's not life. So they still have hatred, even though they know everything about forgiveness. They're teaching them that in the churches and in the mosques, and wherever they go. But they don't forgive. And that will separate them because that is religion, it's not life.

**[SG] So you're making a difference between religion and life?**

[AD] I don't like the word religion because religion is something I connect with all the rituals and I connect that with, maybe I'm wrong, I connect it with rituals, I connect it with doing things just because somebody else is doing them. But the faith and life, that's *real* life.

**[SG] Okay. So you said 'faith' now. So, is there a difference between religion and faith for you?**

[AD] There is. I can belong to one religion, but I still can have faith.

**[SG] Explain that please.**

[AD] Well, I can be a Protestant and I can have faith in God. They can be Catholics and still have faith in God, and they can live with their thoughts and they can live what they decide. But if they hold hatred or whatever they hold, whatever is that will

separate them from other people, then that is just religion. Separated from God and from everything, because I know that it is written in the Bible that he wants us to forgive our enemies, to everyone. So why should we hold it? If you belong to a religion, I believe then you are just doing something that somebody else is doing. But if you are living your life with God, and you have faith, then it makes your life much more..., it's a full life; it's a complete life.

**[SG] Can Muslims have faith?**

[AD] As to believe in their God?

**[SG] Yes.**

[AD] Well, if they believe..., here in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it they say 'Allah', which is a word for God, they connect them with religious Muslim people. But if you go to Turkey or somewhere and they say 'Allah', it also refers to Jesus and you to God because it is just the word 'God' as we have in English and we have a different word in Bosnian. It's just a word. I don't believe that if they follow the Qur'an, which is their holy book, I don't believe that they will ever see God.

[Turn of tape]

[AD] ...somewhere in a Muslim country and they believe in the Bible but they call God 'Allah', which is God in their language, then I don't think there's any doubts about it. It's the same God. As long as it refers to the Bible.

**[SG] In other words, the Christian scriptures of the Bible, not the Qur'an.**

[AD] Yeah.

**[SG] And the teachings of Christ.**

[AD] Yeah. That's something that I believe, and I believe that that is the right thing. But I believe that even Catholics, and they can have..., they will go to heaven, some of them, if they have a personal relationship to God.

**[SG] And how do you have that personal relationship to God?**

[AD] You have that by accepting him in your life.

**[SG] God?**

[AD] God. God in the first place in you life. And then you have a personal relationship with him, which means read your Bible, then follow what your Bible says, not just what you like and don't like. And there are some scriptures that we don't like in the Bible, because it talks about sin or something that we need to give up. Those are the pictures that most of the Christians don't like, because it's *their*

giving. But when it is up to God and to give to us, we are all open and we want to receive it. And sometimes even Christians are wrong because, we are to follow Bible in everything it says. If it says, 'forgive your enemies', then forgive them. Don't have any doubts, like maybe I will forgive half, but I will not forgive the other part that they really did bad. Forgive them completely. Yes, I believe in the Bible. I don't believe in any other books. [Laughter]

**[SG] Does the person of Christ have a special role for you?**

[AD] Can you explain a little bit?

**[SG] I'm trying not to put words into your mouth, but...**

[AD] No, but explain to me a little bit. I will say what I mean. I will not say what you maybe want to hear. [Laughter]

**[SG] Yeah, that's right. Well, I mean, Christians believe in Christ and that he is the saviour. But Muslims do not.**

[AD] So, there is one God in three, how do say that an English?

**[SG] Three persons. The Trinity.**

[AD] Three persons. There is God, there's Christ and there's the Holy Spirit.

**[SG] Right.**

[AD] For me, Christ came on earth to be with us, to live with us without sin. But without his coming here, we would never be with God. Then he is the connection. It is the same with God, I mean, you can't separate them. And you can accept the Holy Spirit or Jesus Christ or God.

**[SG] So Jesus is the way to God?**

[AD] Jesus is the way to God.

**[SG] Is he the only way to God?**

[AD] Yeah, I believe so. There is no other way.

**[SG] And the Muslims wouldn't believe that.**

[AD] They wouldn't. And it's hard to speak to them about that, because, yeah, they believe in the Qur'an, and I cannot accuse them like, "Why don't you just try to listen to me?" because just as I have my own opinions about my God and about my Bible and about the things that I believe in, they have their own beliefs. And for me, it would be very hard if someone came to me and said to me, "Can you become a

Muslim please?" Or to try to explain it to me. It would be almost impossible. And I believe it is so also for them. They believe in something. But I believe that praying for them can soften their hearts. God has his own ways and sometimes we don't understand them. I believe that my grandmother is doing all the Muslim rituals, and she believes in the Qur'an since she was a little girl, and now she is seventy five, I believe that before she dies, she will become a Christian. I don't know how, because I don't have any ways to give her a testimony or something, but I believe God has his own way, and he will, I hope, use me as a tool for her to become a Christian.

**[SG] Does she live on the East or West Side?**

[AD] She lives on the East side. She went there to live there with my cousin.

**[SG] Do you visit her?**

[AD] Always.

**[SG] Can you give a concrete example of how faith has brought young people of different ethnic backgrounds together? In other words, you're a youth leader. Are all the youth in your group or in your church Croat?**

[AD] No, they're all from different religious backgrounds.

**[SG] And why would they get together then, since they are of different religious and ethnic backgrounds?**

[AD] There is only one reason that we are all coming together, and that is to worship our God. And that is something that connects us. For example, if you have a football game and there's just one coach who is training all of them, and on one football team you have players from all different states or different people, they all come to the same coach to ask for advise. And we're all coming to the same God. There is no difference between us. And we never, never, never speak about being different, because we're all the same. I mean, it still hurts for me to say like..., I don't know..., I can't look at them as coming from different backgrounds, because it doesn't make any sense to me.

**[SG] And it doesn't make any difference to you?**

[AD] It doesn't. I don't know, it's normal. It's life.

**[SG] Well, you see, that's what is so abnormal. It's not normal at all.**

[AD] Yes, if somebody else looks at it, it's not normal at all. But, I cannot speak from... [pause] I'm saying my own opinion. For me it is totally normal. There is something that I cannot separate.

**[SG] But it's not normal on the street out here.**

[AD] No, it's not. In the schools it's not normal.

**[SG] If I were to go into these cafes on the West side, would I meet Muslims and Serbs and Croats?**

[AD] You will not. You will meet groups of people, Croats, Muslims, Serbs.

**[SG] Altogether, but not mixed?**

[AD] All in the same place, but all three of them separated.

**[SG] So, they would be in the same cafe, but they would be in separate corners of the cafe?**

[AD] Yeah. But for us, we go in a coffee bar all together. We go everywhere together. And I cannot even imagine it otherwise. Now as I am sitting here, I'm trying to think how it would be if we were all separated. I can't even make a picture in my head, to be separated.

**[SG] Do have close friends from another faith? I mean an outsider the church?**

[AD] I do. I have one, my really good friend. She is Catholic and she lives on the West side. And we're really good friends and for her, you know, it doesn't make any difference that I go to this church and everything. But she never mentioned that I don't like you from being was from a Muslim background or something. But maybe its just because I'm going to the church and she knows that that's something I decided. And on the East side I have an even better friend and she is Muslim, and she is like a *real* Muslim.

**[SG] What does that mean, 'a real Muslim'?**

[AD] She goes sometimes to mosque to pray. She does all the rituals, not everyday maybe, but sometimes.

**[SG] Practising.**

[AD] Yes, practising what she believes. But we're really good friends and she also knows that I'm going to church, and sometimes she will say to me like, that I'm not really a normal person.

[Laughter]

**[SG] What does she mean by that?**

[AD] She means that I am not normal because if I see somebody on the street, then I will smile to that person and hug that person, even if it's not from the church, it is a person. It's somebody, it's God's creation, and I will hold them because they look just the same as I look. So, it does bother them, who I am. They think that from time to time I am not normal, but that's just their opinion. They know that I don't care if they say that I'm not normal, because God didn't promise us roses and everything nice in our walk with him. And they need to deal with that.

[SG] **Do you think that you could marry someone from another faith?**

[AD] If he will be a Christian, it doesn't mean anything what background he is from.

[SG] **What do you mean by Christian?**

[AD] He needs to believe in the same God that I believe, otherwise I wouldn't marry him.

[SG] **So he could be a Catholic then?**

If he believes the same things, and he will follow the Bible, and what the Bible says about everything, and not making any differences or describing about or talking about pictures as he likes them and not as they mean, then I wouldn't. But if he would follow the Bible, and even if he has a personal relationship with God and he goes to a Catholic Church, I would. If we believe in the same God and the same things. Otherwise, no.

[SG] **So he would have to be a practising Christian who follows God's word?**

[AD] Yes.

[SG] **And have a relationship to God?**

[AD] Yeah. Not just being, if I can say, being religious. Doing something because his grandmother before or him did it, and his parents did it before him. But doing something because he really wants to do it. If he received Christ as his personal saviour, and if he follows his steps and it's not something that I would say, or something that somebody else would say, than yes. But if you follow something else, then I would want him to go another way.

[SG] **Okay. I think I know the answer to this question, but I'll ask it anyway. Do you speak to other young people about your faith?**

[AD] I do.

[SG] **Why?**

[AD] Because as I said before, my only concern about the future is how many people I see together in heaven. That's my only concern about the future. Then I will speak to them about God. I don't want to force them to do something that they don't want to do, or are to press them to become a Christian, but they can decide for themselves. I am here as an example with my life and whatever I do I'm just an example of God's work. And I think for me, it would be much better if I can do my work the best that I can. When I live, I'm trying to show to others, not just what I believe, that I will come to a church or something like that, but even outside of the Church, I need to show them that I'm different and that I am a Christian. That I believe in Jesus Christ.

**[SG] And that is a difference?**

[AD] That is. Yeah, and I'm trying to speak to them about God and they can say their own opinions and I will listen to them with all respect. I will never offend someone from a different background, because it is not up to me. That is what they have decided to do.

**[SG] Do they understand what you're talking about when you share these things?**

[AD] If they know me, then they understand. If they don't know me, it is like trying to say that you're something different and everyone looks at you like you live in some kind of separated world or something. But Paul wrote in Corinthians, he said, "I'm putting you in the world not to be separated from them but to live with them." And I am leading a normal life that for them is in an abnormal way.

[Laughter.]

**[SG] Very good. Is there anything else you'd like to say that we haven't covered and that you think is important?**

[AD] Oh, I don't know. We have said most of the things.

**[SG] Well, I hope you find that young man who did so my things to people in prison. And I hope you find him before he goes to the Hague.**

[AD] I hope that I will. I pray that I will. Because I think that he lives in that village all alone and he doesn't care about his life. But there's still hope. And I really believe that I will find him before he goes there, because I want to tell him that he is forgiven. And then when he goes there, then he will be another testimony to those bad people. Somebody needs to go to the Hague and show to those people and tell them that there is something that they still can believe in. And that it's not too late.

**[SG] To people like Milošević?**

[AD] Yeah, to people like them. I wish that man would become a Christian. It's abnormal for people to believe that he could become a Christian, but there is no difference between him and somebody else. He is a sinner and maybe he did some bad things, but if God forgave him, who are we to judge someone? It is not up to us.

[SG] **Even Milošević?**

[AD] Even him.

[pause]

[SG] **Well, thank you very much.**

[AD] You're welcome.

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Rev. Tomislav Dubatović**

Sarajevo  
6 June 2002

**[SG] Can you begin by telling me what your position is here, and to what degree you involved in the inter-religious aspect.**

[TD] I am currently functioning as what we call the President, we call the coordinator of the denomination of 'Baptists in Bosnia-Herzegovina and also coordinator of the alliance in the establishment, which doesn't yet exist.

**[SG] Of the whole alliance?**

[TD] Yes. It's still the beginning stage, but I think we will come closer to that. As a result, I often have to speak on behalf of the, let us say, Protestants in a wider scale, rather than just as our denomination. And then there is a number of other things, like President of the Bible Society, which also opens some of the dialogues to the Protestants in cooperation. And also, there is more. I am pretty much involved in social and humanitarian help.

**[SG] Can you describe that for me?**

[TD] We are running an NGO and helping mainly internal refugees and returnees in Bosnia and of course most of the refugees from most of the former Yugoslavia return here. In different ways we help; in food, help in organizing programmes for them, organizing things and happenings in refugee camps. Maybe as a discussion for the future, is one of the things I take part in; what do we do with them, working with them from the side of the Bosnian government. Where to help, where not to help! What will make more damage, what will help the situation, where to turn for the future to really help. Not just to give a fish but to teach people how to fish.

**[SG] That's an ongoing work.**

[TD] Yes.

**[SG] As more people are repatriated, do you find that the work diminishes these days, now that roofs are on and that nobody is really starving in Bosnia?**

[TD] Yes, well, in a way I feel that most of the urgent job is done. But there is a lot of work that needs to be done in the area of really bringing people again to life, to be able to establish their households, to be able function as a people, socially, emotionally, and job development will be a big thing now.

**[SG] Right.**

[TD] And then also some of the other things – I read through your questions – which can have a connection with the reestablishment of the possibility to live together, the different groups. When they go home, when they go to their original place. It's a complex work.

**[SG] It is. You are hitting on two questions at the same time at the extremes of this. Why don't we look at, for your sake, because of your unusual circumstance, representing the Protestant voice as such, why don't we look at question number 12 first. How can a religious community participate in inter-religious dialogue and co-operation and still maintain its own distinctives? Must the religious communities compromise their own beliefs and practices in order to accommodate the peace process? How do you see that?**

[TD] Yes. I like this question. It depends, probably, on how you read this question.

**[SG] Ok!**

[TD] I know that most Protestants would probably read this question in the light of compromise. In other words, they would think that compromise is necessary to establish any communication. I am not so convinced that this is true. So far I believe that it is possible to keep your own way of worshipping and also open yourself for communication for the other side. I mainly think that a lack of knowing about each other is a great source of distrust, and sometimes this goes much further. I would say that from my view, or, I will say, from a number of Protestants here, we feel that that is true also for other groups towards us, because they don't have much information about Protestants. They tend to be protective of themselves, and maybe to protect potentially their people from those they would consider to be, and which we would call, 'evangelists'. [laughter]

**[SG] Uh hum. Do you think they feel in some way threatened by Protestants and evangelism?**

[TD] Yeah, well, that keeps changing. For the last several years different groups would be friendly and other groups would be protective. It keeps changing. At the same time, you will find traditional Christians who are very willing to cooperate because they feel threatened in some ways by the growth of Islam throughout Bosnia and potentially Europe. But then in another period you will find a great openness from the Muslim side and protection from the traditional Christian groups. Currently I would say it is much easier to communicate with the Muslims as Protestants than it is with Catholics and the Orthodox. It wasn't like that a few years ago. I am just describing this moment.

**[SG] Uh hmm. Do you have any good estimates of how many Protestants there are now in all of Bosnia including the RS, or maybe just the Federacija is a better estimate. Any idea?**

[TD] I would guess that evangelical Protestants would be a little more than a thousand now, and together with traditional Protestants spread around the country I would guess it can go up to two thousand, because I am familiar with a smaller group of Lutherans and...

**[SG] You are? I was just having a conversation with David Lively about this. The new report in Patrick Johnstone's Operation World. David didn't know of these Lutherans that are reported, so it might be a good idea to talk with David on this because he is very interested in finding these people, where they are, whether they worship actively, and so on.**

[TD] Yes, they have a German-speaking representative here who is suppose to try to gather them, but in the moment they don't have a Bosnian representative who tries to connect people. I know of such a report from about ten years ago, before the war, but what I do know is that they often call here, asking for assistance for a wedding or when somebody dies and needs to be buried. So that proves there are a number of them spread around.

**[SG] So you do funerals and weddings for some of the Lutherans?**

[TD] Yes, I did. Yes.

**[SG] How about that. Excellent. [Pause] Good. Let's go back to question one then. Question one assumes, I suppose, that there is inter-religious dialogue and that peace-building efforts here are moving in a positive direction. Some have challenged that assumption. But I wonder if you would describe this as a positive experience following the war, or is it a continuation of the breakdown of Bosnia. And can we in some way fit it into a theological or ethical framework.**

[TD] Uh hmm. To answer this question my thoughts are going in the direction of whether this was a religious war or not.

**[SG] Uh huh. Right.**

[TD] Somehow I see that hidden in this question, and that you simply didn't want to ask the question [laughter].

**[SG] Actually, I ask that question elsewhere. No, that really wasn't the intention of the question. The question is really less about the war and more about the rebuilding after the war. But, if you want to interpret it that way, fine. You know, I am interested in using the questions as a springboard to hear your own thoughts on the subject.**

[TD] Well, what is interesting is that, my father, a number of years ago used to pastor in Brčko in Bosnia-Herzegovina. What I hear here from people in Sarajevo, from the years I wasn't living here, that they had a great coexistence together. Sometimes they would even go into the areas of worship. Maybe you heard of the legends they have here, such as somebody would have a great disease or something,

like cancer, and people who were very religious would go and pray in each of the places of worship of each of the main religions, to the mosque to pray, to the cathedral to pray, to the Orthodox church to pray, and they believed that if you went to all of these places and prayed to God that the person would be healed. I just recently heard that from one of the Franciscans, which was very interesting for me. But I know that in other areas, such as Brčko, with which I was familiar, we would still feel a strong definition of the religious groups, even among the evangelical Protestants. I remember that when my father started to pastor there, he brought a Croatian bible, and quickly he was asked – because the church existed mainly in an area of people with a Serbian background – to not to read from that Bible for the worship service, but to read from the other translation of the Bible. And I know that also in Brčko there was a good measure of, I would say, ‘definition’, to use a positive word, between the Muslims and the Christians, the Orthodox, during that time. So, I am really not 100% convinced of the excellent coexistence before the war.

[SG] Uh hmm.

[TD] In fact, other people would say that maybe Bosnia was the place where you would know the best who is who, whereas, in some of the other ex-republics, people were not even aware in peacetime. But here, you would always know who is who.

[SG] **Is that right? Is that true maybe in places like Brčko but not true in places like Sarajevo?**

[TD] It’s possible.

[SG] **There was a lot of intermarriage here, and it is urban,**

[TD] Yeah.

[SG] **While in the provinces, so to speak, outside of the capital city of Sarajevo, there was more awareness of who is who, but when people began to mix in the urban setting, there was less concern for that.**

[TD] Yeah. Yes, I could agree with that. It is very possible. But then when we come to the wartime, I really wouldn’t want to answer, what type of war it was [laughter], because it had some elements against the definition of a religious war. I wouldn’t know for myself what to decide. What was it? But then we come to today and to religious dialogue. I would say that when I stick to politicians and people who are not religious leaders, they have a feeling that the religious communities will have a major role in the building of trust and coexistence again. I can agree to that, because even if this wasn’t exactly a religious war, the religious communities are playing a very significant role. And because of the ties between the national definition and the religious connection, such as all Croats all being Catholics, or the Orthodox and Serb being the same thing, and the Bošniaks being Muslim, this is a good way to start building coexistence again. I believe today people are more defined by their religious background than they used to be.

**[SG] Can you give me examples of how the religious communities are making positive contributions towards rebuilding society?**

[TD] Well, when I see simply the leaders of the different religious groups sitting together, for example, in the main news, I think right away that this is a great thing for people to see. Because if they see that the religious leaders can sit together and talk together, I think that people will start to think that it is possible to sit together again. Then, something that we have here, for example, is when we have a season of prayer together, and we will take part in that. We will go the different religious groups and worship place...

**[SG] Including the Muslims?**

[TD] Well, the Muslims would come sometimes. I am not aware that anyone prayed in a mosque, so far. But I know that on some of these meetings, which we were part of, they were there on some, and other times they sent a nice letter of explanation of why they were not able to come, but we believe that they wanted to be there. We want to believe that [laughter]. And so the Orthodox, Catholics and we would all take part in it.

**[SG] And they happened in different places of worship, in the Orthodox church, the Catholic church...**

Yes.

**[SG] And I think they had asked Saša if he wanted to participate at one point, at the Evangelical Church, and have they come here as well?**

[TD] Yes. Yes, we had prayer here together.

**[SG] Right.**

[TD] And that also answers your last question we were discussing, whether we have to make compromises even a worship service in order to do that. And my answer is no. We had here Catholics reading the text the way we read, or taking part in the singing the way we do without any addition or colouring there. It can work.

**[SG] I'm glad you have answered this far in the question, and as I say, the question is not really about whether it was a religious war or not. My personal feeling is that it was not a religious war. That is what I was taught in Dresden in East Germany's foremost thinker on Lenin, but his whole framework for interpreting a lot of the Yugoslav conflict - at that time the conflict was only in Croatia, it was 1991 and early 1992 - his whole framework was a Marxist ideology, and for him the war here was exclusively a religious war. But once I came down here I saw the effects of many years of communism in which people just frankly weren't that religious, and even though people claimed to be, you know, Catholic or Orthodox or Muslim, many of them were hard pressed to even explain what that meant and how they could distinguish themselves from**

other versions of Christianity. So I think the last thing that you would find is that people were so religious that they would fight from a religious basis – it is really nationalism that incorporated the factor of religion as a demarcation for identity. Now, of course, people have become more aware of their identity through their faith, or their cultural heritage that includes their faith. That is why I think that Bosnia is so interesting, because in other places that have these sorts of ethnic conflicts and nationalism, there seems to be clear demarcations beyond religion that show that this is a Serb or that this is an Albanian. There is a cultural-linguistic demarcation, and even in Scotland and Ireland, or Ireland and England, there are linguistic markers of dialect – and history. But here in Bosnia, you can't necessarily pick out who is who by looking at them or by listening to them. And so, the place in which it is most obvious of who I am and who I am not, is the place of religion. So religion has been raised as an indicator of identity in Bosnia that is unlike other places in the world with such conflict. That being the case though, I wonder if there is a way in which we could see a theological framework for restoration. In other words, why do you do what you do? Why do Protestants, or the Baptists, or Tomislav, why does he do what he does in terms of participating in inter-religious dialogue or what you preach, or how you deal with people, or why you are spending millions of dollars over several years to help people? Why do you do this? Is there a theological framework for it?

[TD] Well, for me the question is really easy. I know that some evangelicals have a hard time and will not even pray together with a Catholic, but I think we need to read carefully what the Gospels and the epistles are saying, being aware of the verses that say, 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' And then you put your question to this, 'OK, how can I be blessed as a peacemaker?' What would bring peace here? If I am very aggressive in evangelism, which I believe I should be, how should I do it, and would it really bring us to any peace? Or a better question is would these people really have fruit through becoming a born-again Christian, in accepting Christ. And if see that you really are bringing simply more computers and more bread, then you are *not* accomplishing what you believe God was sent for. I think that is a good problem to face, when you can start to think of some of these things. Also, in the area of social work. I am 100% convinced that the way read the bible that we cannot bring good news without bringing a physical good news. I will not quote all these references. You cannot say to somebody, 'God bless you' when he is hungry. We need first to give him food. With the response that we are getting from people, I think that we have an even stronger conviction that this is the right thing to do, that this is what Christ was like. We even found that there is a good theological basis in simply observing what Jesus and Paul and others did in the bible. They had to face other religious groups. The evangelism that Paul did, counterpoint, confronting the other religions and saying that they worship idols, and that this is a terrible thing, so you should repent from that and turn to the real God, well, it is a little bit different from that [laughter]. I would say that in this period I would like to say more of who we are than to say what is wrong with the others. I think that is the key. There is a place for both. There is a place for respecting your neighbour and also saying who you are without bringing a new conflict in. How do we live Christ's words? It really depends on the situation, and also, it is not just through words, but with action.

**[SG] So there is a place where proclamation and action – kerygma and diakonia – go hand in hand.**

[TD] A very simple example would be, whom do you help when you give physical help. Who do you select? Let's say the government administration gives you a block of the city and says that you can help this area. You have some Catholics there, you have some Orthodox there, you have some Muslims there, and what happened with some of the traditional groups and their aid was that they would help their people. But we said no to that. We don't want to help only Protestants, we don't want to help only Christians in the broader sense. We want to help everybody, and we don't want to know who they are. We just want to give them aid. That speaks a lot to people because they are aware that Tomislav from the Baptist church cannot go to Muhammed, but a Muslim Bosnian can come to my neighbour or our organisation and receive help. Now, there are thousands of areas in just the mainstream of life. And we teach our people that this is what they have to do, or this is how we understand that this is what Jesus was like. The example, when he feeds a multitude of people, five thousand people, whom does he feed? The disciples, or only those who were in favour of the disciples, or the whole crowd? These are interesting questions that we can put on the table. Sounds very simple, the question *is* simple.

**[SG] Question 2 is about peace, but more from a faith understanding of peace. You will often see peace by policy makers as the absence of war. You see peace by peace organizations or NGOs talking about it as a process. But I think that we as religious leaders, we see peace not just related on this plain of the earth among each other, but that there is also a peace that extends to the transcendent God. The question is trying to understand, what is our response to people who don't have this understanding of God, or don't have a place in their lives for the transcendent. They are agnostics or atheists. They are simply living a life without God. Is there a way that peace can be extended to them by proximity, or that their proximity to the community of believers brings some blessing to them? How do you see something like this?**

[TD] Well, I had a chance to speak on peace at one of the inter-religious meetings. And what I said then I would like to repeat for you. There is no real peace without God, or there is no external peace without internal peace. This goes in line with your statement that peace is more than the absence of war or conflict. But my experience was here, also with those who don't have any faith. They still think that peace is something more than the absence of war. Maybe they understand it psychologically or sociologically, but I think that the people here are aware of one thing, which may come together with some further questions. The simple question for every Bosnian is, what will happen if the international community pulls out? Would the war start again? And many have answered this question, and what they know is that the war would not start again if there were real peace, what they would call real peace. It is interesting to hear somebody from our perspective who is not an evangelical believer who talks about real peace, because my conviction is that real peace is that you have Christ in your life. So what can real peace be for a nominal Muslim or Orthodox or Catholic or even atheist? But this is where I find that they have some definition in

mind. I would maybe define it as the absence of distrust, absence of hatred, which they would define as real peace. Real peace for them would be that there is no more tension.

**[SG] And do they experience that? Do they have that peace?**

[TD] I would say that it seems to me that most of the normal people in some way would have that. Sometimes we meet people who are not believers in any way who are tired of hatred, tired of the desire for revenge, and for some strange reasons, for us, they say, let whatever happen, just so long as we don't have conflict in the future. Which also brings in a way some syncretism in the religious area of work, where people like to view now all the ways as a way to God, just for the sake of not having future conflicts. They will say, 'It is great that you are Baptist, God bless you, that is good for you. I am a Muslim and I keep my thing and you keep your thing.' He is different, but we can still all live together. They step right away into the theological area, saying that we all believe in the same God anyhow. Now, probably most of them don't actually know what they are saying, but this is what they love to believe.

**[SG] Can you explain that a little more? I would like to hear your thinking on this.**

[TD] Yes. Well, for me, when you meet a theologically educated person from the religious communities, such as a Muslim theologian, he would not necessarily agree 100% that we believe in the same God. In fact they have a logical problem with Christ being a God and for them, the whole trinity [indistinguishable] is not equal. Maybe it is easier in functioning between, let us say, the Roman Catholic Church and the Islamic community, as they try to compromise a little bit. But then, supposedly, the Catholics and Orthodox and we all believe in the trinity the way it is defined. We don't have a theological problem between us. So if there is serious thinking, including theoretical thinking, then it would be impossible to say that Allah is equal to any of what the Christian communities believe. And I would extend it to the area of the Jewish people as well. But anyhow, simple people, there is a great distance between the theologians, and I would say even the religious leaders, and the people. People believe what they choose to believe, somehow. You can teach them whatever you want to teach, but what they believe is something that is hard to change. So, approximate Bosnian beliefs, I would believe, especially in Sarajevo, when you talk with them, there is one God and everyone follows the same God, so there is no major problem, and everybody can be equally accepted. So again I would just say that it is running away from future conflicts, especially among the younger generation.

**[SG] So it is really a desire to ... Or let me back up and say this: That the real issue comes down to Christ, doesn't it?**

[TD] That's right.

**[SG] And then the trinity. Actually I am finding both on the Muslim side and the Catholic side and some Orthodox who say that we all worship the same God.**

**And these people are theologically educated. But as soon as I ask the question about Christ, then they want to back up to Abraham,**

[TD] Yeah.

**[SG] But even Abraham's sons are the point of departure between what we consider to be Jews and what eventually became the Arab nations, and then the difference between the Jews, which you also point out, that, with Christ, it is a different situation.**

[TD] I don't know how to explain it but, somehow, for who knows what reason, when I sit together with the Muslim theologians, they will quickly go into that area, into the area of Christ and the trinity, than they would with the Catholics and the Orthodox. Maybe that was individual cases and not a general tendency. But somehow I would say that they view Protestants and evangelicals as placing more focus on Christ being God, than maybe somehow the others do.

**[SG] And when the common person talks about this, that we all worship one God and that we should thus get along, the theologically uneducated, so to speak, they are really saying, if I hear you correctly, 'No more conflict. Let's just find a basis upon which we can get along and live together.' So, they are willing to concede theological points that we would consider non-negotiable, just so that they can live with some sort of peace, as we described it, without the hatreds and conflicts.**

[TD] That's right.

[long pause]

**[SG] What about this question number three on the relationship between individual guilt and distributed hatred or mistrust. Sometimes I hear, 'Oh those', and then they name a certain ethnic group here in Bosnia, 'They are all bastards' or, they will use terms like Četnik or Ustaše or Turk, for the different groups. So the entire ethnic group is maligned or pushed away because of the acts of certain individuals. How do you respond to that?**

[TD] Yeah, I would say that my experience here is that people haven't even developed a sense for individual responsibility. It is all generalising all of the time, and it is truly hard to live with that. I remember the time that we moved to Bosnia, my wife and I, right after the Dayton peace agreement. As you know, there were conflicts between Croats and Bošnjaks, but somehow, even to us who were not Catholics, did not live here during the war, I mean, there weren't any reasons, you would find people being unfriendly and not open for communication. It was really hard, especially the first months that we were here. They were very sensitive on the language that we were using, so I had to change as much as possible, buying all the newspapers and magazines in Bosnian and to pick up the differences in certain words, and as I remember correctly, it took me at least three months to learn what was previously what was the same language, to learn enough not to hurt anyone! But

my general feeling is that people are just talking about the groups. It is really the exception if you find a person who talks about the individual. I would say that you will mainly find people with the understanding that the individual has the responsibility among the highly educated people. Among the other citizens, this is really not the case, not even really possible to find. It is all just, 'Oh yeah, the Serbs attacked us.' Not the Yugoslav army, not the extremists. Nothing like that. The Serbs attacked us, and the Serbs were keeping Sarajevo surrounded. Or Četniks, as you said. It is a very simplified explanation. Although there are some people who tried to describe the war as being the Serbs or Croats inside of Sarajevo. These people were afraid for their lives. We have some church members in mixed marriages. We have, for example, a Muslim husband with a Serbian wife and they were telling me their stories during the wartime, and several times she was in line for a camp or for execution, for no reason, just for being a Serb. And he risked his life, as a Muslim to save her, and he talks about this regularly and starts to cry and you can see that this is not something that he is just telling as a story. It's really his experience. They lived in a downtown area of Sarajevo during the war. This is what I can say.

**[SG] That is the very nature of this next part of the question, which is, what about those who were not participant in militant nationalism? Is there a sense in which they are twice victimised, once during the war, from the violence of nationalism, and again after the war in being falsely associated with war's perpetrators? Like this woman. She wasn't fighting as a nationalist. She was maybe searching and finding water like everybody else. Snipers, who were of her own ethnic background, were targeting her too, because nobody was wearing labels as they were going for water. Do you think this is a crucial distinction to make for reconciliation, that there is a difference between those who actually committed these, what shall we say, these crimes, or who perpetrated the conflict, and those who were victims in it, even though they might have been of the same ethnic background.**

[TD] Yeah. Well, it was a hard decision for those who were of the 'wrong' [parenthesis indicated in conversation by speaker] nationality to stay in the 'wrong' territory. But I think that today, this is a real difficulty for reconciliation, because today when you say, 'OK, not all of the Serbs were that way. Look at the number of them that stayed in Sarajevo.' Now this is the argument for peace, and to change the view from the one of over-generalising to individual guilt. This helps today, but it was a high price during the war. That would be my opinion, and I would also say to part of your question, in some cases, people are paying the price double as well. They took a risk, they suffered and it would be easier if they moved to certain territories. Today they are again put together with certain groups, and somehow it really doesn't matter what they did as individuals. They will always be guilty.

[SG] Yes.

[TD] So you have both of these in the picture.

[SG] **That is a high level of distrust. Let me ask two related questions to this. They are questions 11, ‘In what ways are decisions among Bosnians individual or communal?’ Perhaps there is an urban/rural distinction as to how decisions are made. And then, secondly, ‘Does the community of faith,” emphasis on community, ‘hold compelling influence on the moral decisions of Bosnians?’ In other words, do people think individually, or do they think as a family, or as a Muslim community or ethnic community, or Croat community?**

[TD] That would depend, in my opinion, on what community you talk about. My experience is that the Muslim community is very united, although I am aware of some differences in the theological area, with at least three main streams. But in a way, one of the Muslims is probably good to quote, maybe you received the quotation from somebody else, but one of the Muslim leaders said that the Malaysian Muslim is closer to him than is a Croat from Sarajevo. That was his public statement. In a way, it is that way. They are very much defined as a community, as a religious community.

[SG] **Interestingly, I received just the opposite quote from a Franciscan. He said that he has more in common with the Muslims in Bosnia than he does with Franciscans in some other country.**

[TD] That goes in line with the second part, which is that the Croats seem to be the most divided, but this is a positive thing for Bosnia. They are really able to define themselves well. Maybe this one is about Croats who are living in Bosnia because they would not find such strong support in their own nation. After the strong party, the HDZ, all these smaller parties, each going its own way for the elections, how they lead people, even in the hardest period you had at least two parties on the political scene. I would say there is something positive in the Franciscans, especially in the Catholic Church generally here. They are really trying to find a way how they can stay here and live together, and I think that people are really following that. They are really trying to define themselves more as citizens of Sarajevo or as citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Unfortunately it wasn't that way all of the time. There was a period when there was a strong connection especially between the Croats in Herzegovina and Croats in Croatia and if you know the politics somewhat better, the way that Croatia became independent, there was great help and support from especially Herzegovina and because of all of these ties, and I am not going into the details, you probably know a lot already about it, there was a greatness of Croats being Croats and ignoring Bosnia-Herzegovina as their country. Later on, when the first Croatian president died, the sense of being Croats as belonging to Croatia was quickly removed.

[turn of tape]

[TD] They had to find their identity as a part of this country. And I think that is good for peace. A third major side is the Bosnian Orthodox, or Bosnian Serbs. It is really hard to define. As Protestants we have very few churches there, far fewer than in the Federation. Maybe we are not even very much aware of the reality of the

Republika Srpska. We have some opinions but again, we have few experiences, so it is hard to speak about that.

**[SG] The other related issue to this question of community hatred and distrust and individual guilt is the one question number nine: Local justice beyond the Hague. The Hague has already stated that they have a time frame in which they will close the trials. It will be extended, as everyone knows, but there will only be a certain number on this list, which will only seek to bring justice, or at least bring to trial, certain leading offenders, leaving many offenders, leaving many people here in Bosnia alone, shall we say. How do people feel about the fact that some of these people who have committed such crimes? Sometimes it is nothing more than neighbour against neighbour, but does this not add to the distrust that someone once entrusted the neighbour with the house key and then he came and killed his family and raped his daughter. How does one overcome this kind of injustice? There is a Truth and Reconciliation Committee that has been formed in Bosnia, which, as far as I can see, does not function, or does not function well, especially compared to South Africa. What about local justice? How does that add to peace and reconciliation?**

[TD] I would say that local justice is even a bigger key for peace than the Hague. As you said, the Hague will take a small number of people, those who are most known, but when you try to define the crime, those people who are in the Hague, many of them did not physically commit the crime.

**[SG] That's right.**

[TD] I would say, most of them, maybe a very few of them. But they were giving the orders or closing their eyes, and by that they allowed the crime to happen. But then you have the real people who did the crime, and they are here, and most of them will never be called there, and maybe you have people who killed other people, who are sitting in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We had a member of the church here, who was of Serbian background and he was fighting in [indistinguishable] during the war. Just the things he was describing, that were happening with the people he was with, are terrible. I mean, it is hard to talk about such things. He talked about some individuals killing many, many people in very brutal ways, and then the raping, and a very long list. The main thing that should happen here is that the individual groups should take their people to court as opposed to somehow doing it from a central place inside the country in order to make it simple. If we had established in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina a war code – just imagine that we had it, such a thing does not exist, maybe it will never exist, but if it existed, if you had, let's say a Muslim judge, bringing to the court, assuming a Serbian war crime, again you would be bringing more conflict, because that would be viewed the wrong way. In reality such a thing happened between Muslims and Croats. Just last year and the year before, the Croats called for an accord here in Sarajevo and that became counter-effective. The Croats were more united and were protesting in Mostar, turning over vehicles, almost throwing bombs – they didn't, thank God, and it is viewed the other way and brings tension back. But if the Croatian government in West Mostar would open the cases and bring the court to look at individual Croats who committed war crimes,

that brings another light, and this is what needs to happen. The Serbian government in Banja Luka should take to court the Serbian war crimes, the people I was describing, and the same should happen here. I think that would bring some peace for the future and would lead to reconciliation. As opposed to that you can choose to ignore the thing...

[SG] **Yeah.**

[TD] ...sort of the way, 'forgive' the thing.

[SG] **'Brotherhood and Unity.' We can sweep this under the carpet.**

[TD] Yes. You have a number of problems. First of all you have people who were terrible criminals running businesses or are even part of the police or government or who knows what, and you don't want to keep such people in the positions because once they have committed the crime, I mean, now we can go into the psychological and sociological areas. Anyhow, at least we cannot talk about how they lead, people cannot trust them, because people are aware of this. Perhaps this is hard to imagine, but people here, I have members in the church, for example, who are from Foča, which is Srbinja today, and she knows exactly who beat her father, she knows the house, she knows the family, she knows everything. People know these things. They will hear from friends or other neighbours. People almost know who killed whom. Unless these people end up in court, there is no chance for the future. In a way, I would conclude that you have to clean the past to be able to go on in the future.

[SG] **How do you clean the past? Confront the truth in your own community?**

[TD] That's right. So, they should confront.

[SG] **Yeah. Well, this is what I really find lacking is an ability or a willingness to be self-critical about what one's own community did. The fingers are always pointed at somebody else and what they did to us.**

[TD] But then we have another problem, which I observed in Croatia. Once a new Croatian government would bring to the court the war criminals who are not called to the Hague, there were people who liked to interpret that as a betrayal of the nation, or likened it to terrorists and those who were protecting the country. They put such a complicated light on it that it is almost an impossible task. I mean, I can think, for example, of Banja Luka today, because I know that it is hard to work in that territory. Imagine if Banja Luka would sue some of these guys.

[SG] **Yeah. But you pointed out another aspect of forgiveness, that we should 'forgive' and you used this in quotation marks. It's not really forgiveness in that sense, is it? We sort of dismiss it and leave it aside. We are not going to deal with it. Absence of dealing with it is not really forgiving, is it?**

[TD] Yeah.

[SG] **In some ways, that is what happened after the Second World War, is it not? Yugoslavia really didn't deal with some of the Second World War issues.**

[TD] Yeah. I would agree with that. This is not true forgiveness. And then again you have the seed for future conflict.

[SG] **Precisely. Let's ask that question. How can religious faith and forgiveness contribute to the escape of the cycle of violence of past offences?**

[TD] I love this question! I think this is the area where now the religious communities can step in and teach forgiveness. I heard some of the traditional religious leaders from the bigger groups here saying things to their people about forgiveness. This was encouraging. Although, as evangelicals, we tend to think they do not have, let's say, the complete truth on this. Still, they are communicating forgiveness. And I think even the Muslims, if they would choose to do it, can bring about peace. Setting aside the for a moment the question of being saved or not being saved, and all of our evangelical type of questions, I think that if the religious communities were able to communicate to their people, the religious leaders, people would follow. If the Muslims here would develop their way of theology, although different from their theology in some other areas, and if they would teach forgiveness as opposed to revenge, and I know that the Catholics have been doing a good job speaking about forgiveness, again, I am not aware enough of how the Orthodox are doing this, I think it would be good. I would say that many people do have a sense of forgiveness. They can understand the definition of this in their way. I heard some politicians speaking about forgiveness, which was very funny for me.

[SG] **How so?**

[TD] Speaking about forgiveness, well, this usually comes from the religious community.

[SG] **Yeah.**

[TD] And it is hard for me to put the absence of faith and forgiveness together. Somehow, in my mind these don't fit together. But again, as we were talking about the other matters, probably that is also possible on some psychological basis.

[SG] **Yeah. I have heard the comment from the Muslim community that the Christians always want to talk about forgiveness, but we Muslims are interested in justice. I think that reflects the legal system and the way Muslims operate differently than Christians in their own way that they look at society, not having this disparity between politics and religion in society. But is also a reflection, if I hear this person correctly, that the Muslims weren't the perpetrators,**

[TD] Uh hmm.

[SG] **...they were the victims.**

[TD] Uh hmm.

**[SG] And now the perpetrators just want to talk about forgiveness, which is to exonerate or just not look at the issues of what they did to the Muslims, wanting only to get on with life. And so those who did the crimes get off by not dealing with the issues. Any response to that? I mean, it's justice vs. forgiveness.**

[TD] Yeah, if I may just for a moment add an appropriate theological reason for the Muslims, which is that 'Our God is a just God' and there is no real sense of forgiveness in a religious way. And it might also be a reflection of that, that always justice is their thing, as opposed to the Christian community, in whatever form, which follows a God who is a merciful God, loving God, forgiving God. There is a sense of forgiveness that is already developed. But then I would agree that if you are a victim, it is hard to talk about forgiveness. If somebody attacks you, then of course he would like to be forgiven! But again, for me, this is very much connected to the definition of the war. What was it? Was it a civil war or was it from outside? If it was a civil war, then everyone should forgive everyone else. There should be guilt on each side. Often I find, especially among the Orthodox, the Serbs, actually, people who believe that this was a civil war. Probably the strongest voice against this view comes from the Muslims or Bošnjaks who say they were attacked both from Croatia and Serbia. Which again, when you look at the facts, it is hard to prove. When you look at the data it is hard to prove. I guess this is one of those many complex questions with almost impossible answers. But my opinion would be that forgiveness should come from each side, from all sides to every side. Unless that happens, how far can you go with justice?

**[SG] Let me ask you about your own worship community here in the Baptist church. Do you have mixed ethnic backgrounds represented? All ethnic backgrounds represented?**

[TD] Yeah. We were trying to count the number of ethnic groups that we have, and it is at least seven or eight. So we would have people from Bosnian Serb background, from Bosnian Croat background, from the Bošnjak background, from Czech background, from other minorities that were living here. We also have a number of mixed marriages. I mean, we have just a great mixture in every sense. This local church in Sarajevo has a specific name, 'House of Prayer for all the nations', which is quite literally that. But interestingly, to add to that, I had two Muslim students of theology here a few days ago. They read the name of the church and the way that they understood was wrong. They were thinking that this was a higher house of prayer for all of the religious groups, because they are kept together, religious group and nation. And I had to explain to them that this is a house of prayer for all the nations, but not for all the religions! [laughter]

**[SG] So there really isn't the distinction in their minds between nations and...That's what makes the Protestants rather unique, isn't it? I mean, you really do have all of these different ethnic communities here. What is it about this community that makes this possible where that is not possible, say, in the Orthodox church or in the Mosque or in Catholic churches?**

[TD] Interestingly for me, is that when you go further than Bosnia, all of the religious communities, there are religious communities for every nation, you have British Muslims, you have Turkish Muslims, you have Arab Muslims, you have Muslims in America. Why? Inside the borders of Bosnia should be just the Bosnian Muslims. You have a number of different Orthodox churches, Russian Orthodox church, Serbian Orthodox church, Greek Orthodox church, etc. And then you have Catholics in every possible country, from Latin America, Europe, and further on. So, for me, why in the mind of the Balkan person, or let's say, the ex-Yugoslavian person, each Catholic should be a Croat? Why should every Orthodox be a Serb? And why should each Bošnjak be a Muslim? Even people in the Sandžak, who are clearly Serbs, and [indistinguishable] and in this war start to believe they are Bosnians. But then they didn't know how to answer the question, 'Why then are Albanians in Kosovo not Bosnian, if they live inside of the ex-Yugoslavian borders, and they are Muslims, if the Sandžak Muslims are Bosnians, then *they* should be Bosnians. No, no, they are not Bosnians, they reply.

**[SG] When you say Bosnians, do you mean Bošnjaks?**

[TD] Bošnjaks, yeah. And so, I would like to understand, because I do not understand that mindset. I think I understand the way they understand, but what I don't understand [is] why they have that assumption! [laughter] And then, when we come back to the question, how is it possible for a Protestant to have all sorts of nations and the others cannot have it, well, simply the question is already answered with this thing. From the first people, we would have people from different backgrounds, and so when the other person comes in and hears by the name and sees that there are people from different backgrounds, they find that this community is being friendly to them, or accepting of them, especially those from mixed marriages. So, if you start that way, it has its own appeal in that way. We considered some of our other churches that started in a specific area, and if they would have a good number of people already from the same background, then it becomes harder for them to reach people from different backgrounds.

**[SG] So, the Baptists are, shall we say, along with the Evangelical church down the hill, are ethnically inclusive?**

[TD] Yeah. That's right.

**[SG] Is there a dynamic, I mean other than, well, you've mentioned that you give aid regardless of what their background is...**

[TD] Yes.

**[SG] ...that they are accepted once they get there, but is there something about people's mind that allows them to be ethnically inclusive? What is the dynamic that facilitates this inclusion?**

[TD] Yeah, somehow they believe, without anyone saying to them, that unless you go to an Orthodox, Catholic or Muslim community, everybody else is accepting everybody. I don't know where the origins of this is in their minds, but I see that from the starting point that they would assume that the Protestants would include everybody. Just two days ago I was in another country, and no one spoke to those people. There was a young couple who was looking to leave this country, they were in the Muslim Centre, she is a Kosovar Albanian, he's Serbian, they both lived in Belgrade before becoming refugees. They could not continue to live there because of the pressure from the community. They do not know much about the faith, but their question to us was, 'Ok, we come from different backgrounds, and we did not faithfully follow our religions, and so we decided to become Baptists.' My immediate thought was, Who told you this?

That you can become a Baptist? [Laughter]. Of course, we then developed a conversation about the gospel and what it really means to become an evangelical believer and things like that, but the starting point was interesting to me. Somehow there was the assumption, if we cannot be part of the Muslims, if we cannot be part of the Orthodox, then for sure we can together be part of the Protestants.

**[SG] It's interesting because, well, there is a relatively long history of Baptists in Bosnia. I think your first baptism was 1869.**

[TD] That's right.

**[SG] And the church has been established since the middle of the 1860s, so there is a long history here. But if we take this same principle to Poland, then to be Polish is to be Catholic,**

[TD] That's right.

**[SG] And if you are Polish and Lutheran, then you are really German,**

[TD] Uh hmm.

**[SG] ...as the borders changed after the Second World War. And if you are Polish and Baptist you are really American,**

[TD] Yeah.

**[SG] ...indicating ethnic background along with faith. And here, the Baptists have been here long enough that people understand it as multi-ethnic. What about the issue, getting back to the idea of faith and forgiveness, inside your community. Do people shun other people because they come from a different ethnic background? Is there forgiveness, are there similarities enough in worship where a dynamic around Christ and the gospel that people are able to forgive?**

[TD] Yeah, that is an interesting question. Somehow I would say that maybe from the point when people decide to come, even as visitors, something has happened with

them that made them able to go in the way they have, they have turned from insisting on their nation and hatred towards others. But sometimes we had to go through the whole process with some people, although they would be willing to sit together in the same room, worshipping the same God as friends before becoming believers, there are many situations in which we had to talk to people about forgiveness. You could still feel something. A group of young people from this church went a month ago to see one of the war movies. You could still see something hidden. They love each other, they love the Lord, but something is hidden, how they are for or against some of the things that were playing in the movie, according to their background. It almost brings me to the conclusion that, in a full way, you cannot erase the background. True forgiveness can be there, but the awareness and maybe some level of emotion, whatever they lived through, sticks. So, I am not sure I answered your question.

**[SG] No, that is a very honest answer to the question. I think that there are residual results from the war itself and from how people are victimised.**

[TD] Yeah.

**[SG] The dissertation is really about those who can overcome some of those hatreds through their own religious faith. Sometimes it is a third element, like Ivo Marković, as you are well aware...**

[TD] Yes.

**[SG] And his choir, bringing people from each of these religious groups -and non-religious people – together, because of their love of music and love of singing, and the orchestra is from Banja Luka. For some people who have not believed in God, this is the first step. Through singing religious music of all the different communities, they begin to understand who God is in some way. The acceptance of the people, because of the understanding of their faith and if they understand the worship of the same God, which is often the case, then they understand that we are all created by the Creator God, who is a God of peace. So, you have not only an ethnically inclusive choir, but they are singing each others' music. And I am interested in the dynamics that allows people to do that, because you know there are people in that choir and you know there are people in your church, in your worship community, who have experienced extreme trauma and are not over that trauma, and yet they are able to forgive, or associate with or cohabitate the same area, without fear.**

[TD] It's amazing to see that. For example, our students of theology. You have two guys from Banja Luka studying together with another student whose father was killed by the Serbs. But they are very good friends, they study together, they live in the same room, and I haven't ever heard them having any type of conflict because of their backgrounds. This leads you to the conclusion that there was some forgiveness there. Otherwise it wouldn't be possible. But in reality, almost every family in this country lost somebody, and there is a great need for forgiveness. And you need to continue to live, this country needs to function.

**[SG] Is there a dynamic of liberation, of freedom, in forgiveness?**

[TD] Yes. I would agree with that.

**[SG] Can we say that, insofar as people hang on to their hatreds, they will be captive?**

[TD] That's right. When you choose not to forgive others, you actually keep yourself in captivity. In other words, for [your] sake, you should forgive! [laughter] For selfish reasons, if not from the bible!

[Laughter]

**[SG] For selfish reasons you need to forgive!**

[TD] I mean literally, you find people who, because of hatred, their lives are a disaster.

**[SG] This question number eight, 'Is nationalist ideology the real enemy of true faith, and not the other national groups?' In other words, often the conflict is defined in terms of, as we said before, 'those Serbs, or Četniks, those Croats, those Muslims, the 'others', defined by the other. But if we look deeper, can we actually find that it is extremists or nationalists who are opposed to civil society, are opposed to Bosnia and its development, and not 'those Muslims', not 'those Serbs', not 'those Catholics'? You are nodding your head in affirmation. The tape can't see that [laughter]. Can you describe that a little bit?**

[TD] Well, again I see a connection of the religious community and the national definition here as being the problem. Somehow it almost goes into the negative era where being very committed in some religious groups somehow has negative nationalism towards the other groups. Maybe some people are seeing things exactly the opposite of the way you and I would look. They would think again, that religion is the enemy, and...

**[SG] Yes, that is probably the way most people understand it.**

[TD] ...and that if we push aside the religious communities, it will be easier to build peace. But then we want to prove that the religious communities actually play a great role to bring peace. And then if we ask the other question, 'Is the nationalist ideology the real enemy of true faith?' In some religious groups, yes. In others, no. I know for us it is impossible. There is no way to be a Baptist and a nationalist. No way. First of all you sit with the other nations all the time in the worship service. In other words, what does this say about your spiritual life? But then, in some of the religious communities, we don't have to name anybody, but in a way they are taught to be such a way, that actually encourages somehow its people in the area of being nationalistic. For me, that would be the answer to that question. The enemy of faith will link arm to arm with faith. It's a real dynamic, depending on who we talk about and what they do. I see the second part of the question is about overcoming this

enemy. This is my position, when I have an opportunity to talk on this topic. I try to convince people that, if they are to be real believers, if they are to have real faith, they would not be able anymore to be a nationalist, they would not be able to seek revenge, they would not be able to hate, because true faith will bring them to God, and true faith will change them. There again, the definition of the true faith becomes a problem. Who really has that true faith and who doesn't? And how much can you expect without having true faith, but being somewhere on the way? That is a good question for us as evangelical believers.

**[SG] What is true faith to you? Would you use that term? That is the term I have on the paper, but would you use a different term?**

[TD] Yes, well, in one of the services together I went so far as to speak about being born again and explaining being really changed completely, because when we use our terms for some other people, it can be really hard to understand. To be internally changed, this is what I was talking about. For me, and for us, the true faith would be when you really accept God and your life is committed to him. Now the problem becomes complicated when you talk with some of the 'other' people. I have an experience with the church where I attended as a kid, where I went to Sunday School, it wasn't our church, it was the other church, the Evangelical [denomination] church, in my hometown. And in the wartime, the pastor left the church and went to the other side together with people from his national background. It was a great shock to us. So, although you have a pastor who is a very committed Christian, a person I love a lot, and yet he decided to go with his national group to another territory and leave the church. It is hard to explain things like that.

**[SG] That was in Croatia?**

[TD] That was in Croatia. And I know that in a way similar things are possible still among us evangelicals in all different sorts of situations in the Alliance.

**[SG] But is it against the teaching of evangelicals?**

[TD] Yes, it is. True, true. But really, if we would love the Lord with our whole heart, and even if some of us had suffered personally, forgiveness has to come. In my third and fourth grade of the secondary school, that was a few years before the war, I was sometimes travelling to school with a pistol, with a gun. The other people from the other nationalities were talking about me and making jokes about me as Ustaše and stuff. It was very hard and stressful. Then I had to travel the other way, travelling three times longer, and going through a different town from where I was supposed to go.

**[SG] Rather than pass through Serbian...**

[TD] ...to pass through Serbian territory.

**[SG] This was in Croatia?**

[TD] That was in Croatia. And I know that God had to work in my life to be able to overcome that, because this is very serious stuff. Although you are a committed believer and you love the Lord with your whole heart, and you want to forgive, you choose to forgive right away, but it brings some emotions. I mean, we are talking about serious stuff. I remember professor Miroslav Volf teaching in 1992 at the seminary about the theology of forgiveness, and some of my colleagues were people who had to be part of the war. For them, many things, many topics, were very hard, and these are all evangelical believers who love the Lord with their whole heart. And then we expect, probably, a lot from Roman Catholics when you don't have many born again, or the Orthodox, or even the Islamic community, where we, as evangelicals, we don't believe they worship the real God. What should we expect, actually? And so, I would say, the big thing for me is to start with your own yard, or to start with your own heart!

**[SG] Well, I think we've covered it here. Is there anything else that you would like to add that you think is important for me to know? I mean, probably we could talk for days or weeks on this topic anyway, of restoration, reconciliation.**

[TD] Well, maybe, I don't know, I know mostly what you write about. Maybe one of my questions is one of your conclusions.

**[SG] I don't know what my conclusions are yet! [laughter]**

[TD] Well, to come back, my real question is, if we were to talk about the Protestant community, evangelical believers, I would be very much convinced to say that the faith community is able to bring peace.

**[SG] Uh hmm.**

[TD] In other words, there is still a question whether or not the religious communities we have here are going to bring peace.

**[SG] Hmm.**

[TD] And I am very concerned with peace now. I am very much committed to peace in my theology. Most of our local churches work in an Islamic context, so we come back to the question of how do they function here in the main strengths. You talk about the people who were important during the war, you talk about habits, you talk about the Islamic saints, and you can easily conclude that there is no way to have peace through the faith that they are proclaiming. In fact, if you talk about those lines of Islam, I am not saying that everybody is that way, maybe 30% of Bosnia is that way, then you have things like support for Al Qaeda, and after September 11<sup>th</sup> people have noticed here they come on the streets not with the green flags but with the black ones, which means 'holy war', protesting around the city. And then you have to ask the same question whether the religious communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina are really the thing to bring peace.

[SG] Well, I think you are raising exactly the right questions. At this point, I am finding that it is a very small minority. Even the Franciscans here in Sarajevo kind of shake their head at other Franciscans or at other Catholics in Herzegovina.

[TD] That's right.

[SG] Sarajevo is different. Sarajevo has always been different. It has been more conciliatory, it's been more urban, it's been more secular.

[TD] That's right.

[SG] And yet, you find more religious leaders here ready to talk and meet with each other than you would find in other places of Bosnia-Herzegovina. When you go to Banja Luka, it's difficult to find..., well, the Dayton Accord hasn't helped. In a sense it has divided the ethnic groups. It is hard to understand how on the one hand you can say we want a multi-ethnic society, but all of the Serbs have to live on this side of the line and those of you who are not have to live on the other side, and that refugees can go back home, but when they try to do that, it is on the wrong side of the line.

[TD] Yes.

[SG] So, there are some very contradictory things about the accord. More and more criticism, as you are well aware from the media and in academic circles, want to re-examine the Dayton Accord and are asking whether it will ever do what it needs to do in the civil society.

[TD] That's right.

[SG] But it has also helped to keep the religious parties, the national parties, partisan groups and religious groups, apart, so that they are not talking with each other.

[TD] That's right.

[SG] And I don't see that, without the dialogue process, how people, and especially the religious leaders, who are supposed to be spokesmen and representatives for their people, and also leaders and influencers of their people, how they will actually accomplish reconciliation. What their scriptures teach, what their theology holds, what their ethics is supposed to secure, I don't see how it is going to work until people begin the process of dialogue and advance a further understanding of each others' views.

[TD] Yeah, yeah, you are right. There are very few religious leaders who are actually for dialogue towards peace. And there is a lot of trying to justify their actions. A few days ago I was sitting with the Catholics and Orthodox and some Muslims, and there was a discussion about the blessing of soldiers and blessing the

guns. They were really challenging the Serbian priest. And he said, 'No, I didn't bless any guns.' They replied, 'Oh, how is that possible? We saw you on TV blessing them.' And he said, 'Well, this is what happens.' – This is just one example maybe for you to understand – 'A soldier goes in the war and he is very afraid and he comes with his gun. He is afraid that he is going to die. And although he is not very religious, he knows one thing from the day he was born. That the priest is here to give you a blessing when you are sick and when you are afraid to die. So he asked for a blessing.' The priest said, 'this is what I was doing, and this is what my colleagues were doing, so we were actually blessing these frightened people who were going into battle.'

**[SG] There is one priest in Kosovo who has asked the soldiers to keep the guns outside of the monastery, that the church is a place of sanctuary. He was also one who protected Albanians in the face of the paramilitaries.**

[TD] But then, if that could be true, let's say that this *is* true, then the other religious groups, especially the Roman Catholics, for example in this case with the Muslims, should respect such an explanation, accept it for themselves and say, 'OK, we were assuming you were doing something else, but now we understand better.' But this is all in the course of dialogue.

**[SG] That's right, that's right.**

[TD] As far as I could see, it is unlikely that they would ever be willing to accept any argument.

**[SG] Most of the religious leaders I have talked with have the dual responsibility of protecting their people and...**

[TD] That's right.

[end of tape and interview]

Interview with

**Branko Erceg**

October 2002

Banja Luka

**[SG] We're here in Banja Luka and why don't you just give me your name and your position as a church leader. That would be a good way to start, I think.**

[BE] My name is Branko Erceg. I am 28 years old. I am a missionary in this town but I'm also involved in the ministry in some other places, mainly in this northern-eastern part of Bosnia called Republika Srpska. OK, I think that's enough.

**[SG] OK. And you're Catholic?**

[BE] I'm Protestant. Sorry, I am Evangelical. If you want I can say the name of denomination.

**[SG] Sure. That would be great.**

[BE] Something to explain?

**[SG] Yeah.**

[BE] OK. The Church that we belong to is called Protestant Evangelical Church but it's the Pentecostal denomination. That's our background, that's our theology.

**[SG] OK. And you're a missionary sent here from where?**

[BE] From Novi Sad which is in Vojvodina, which is in Serbia, which is in Yugoslavia.

**[SG] All right. Well, let's take a look at the questions and see where we go. So, many Bosnians cite examples of harmonious coexistence in Bosnia prior to the war. And now we see efforts towards peacebuilding that involve inter-religious dialogue. And I'm wondering if we can look at this in some way as social restoration, yes or no, whether you see it that way. And if there's any theological or ethical ground for restoration from the perspective of faith and the faith communities.**

[BE] Before I say anything about this first sentence I would like to add to what I said about myself that I'm from here. The fact that I was sent as a missionary means that I came from somewhere else. I was born here and I grew up here...

**[SG] In Banja Luka?**

[BE] Not in Banja Luka. I was born in Doboj but I lived in Sarajevo until the war. So I'm from here, I'm local, I was just there [in Vojvodina] in theology school and then I was sent as a missionary but...

[SG] **So you're really Bosnian?**

[BE] I'm local. And this is true. I know about these things, about a lot of examples of harmonic life in Bosnia before the war. Actually that was at that time Yugoslavia. But I also remember a lot of negative examples of tension between national groups, ethnical groups. I grew up in Sarajevo. It's an urban area. But in rural areas tensions were always present since the Second World War and even before then. So it's true that we had a good life but as well, something was always present. What I think is, maybe this will lead out of this question, but I think national question wasn't resolved in the right way in ex-Yugoslavia. It was a communist country. Nationality was put on the side, so I think it was pushed down and in one moment it came up. It came up very strongly and very badly. All these things... all efforts in building the peace and inter-religious dialogue I think they can be described as a tendency to renewal and restoration. ... I'm sorry. My mind is stuck now, I don't know why for English. I think all the efforts that people are doing concerning especially this inter-religious dialogue have their place. I think they can contribute to successful solving of some things. Do you mind if I mix? You don't mind. What I'm saying is that I see all these efforts as something good and that can benefit renewing and re-establishing the peace in this country. I understand this question as a question about things that people do without connection with religious communities. In the second question I understand that you are putting the accent on religion to see that. That's what I understand from these questions. But I think the very important thing is that it is necessary to find a theological and ethical foundation for this process. It has to be part of this process. I think as a people we can do some things but without this, without the second part, without this aspect that you mention in the second question, I think it's hardly possible. Because these things are very dominant here and they are the factor of division.

[SG] **The religious elements?**

[BE] What I know from sociology and how I understand the nation, ethnic groups, there are some categories of how different nations are distinguished. We have so many common things. Now we are trying to separate and to make our languages different and people are putting a lot of effort towards that. A lot of those things are objective categories, but of course nationality is a subjective category. I can feel like a Russian and I don't have anything in common with Russians. But it's my right to feel that way and I can put beside my name that I'm Russian even if I'm not. Or American or whatever. But looking to those objective categories I think we have a lot in common, but what is always present in our divisions is religion.

[SG] **So religion is...**

[BE] It's a very important factor in here.

**[SG] It's that which identifies you as different.**

[BE] Yes. During the history our national development was going... well, I'm not denying that there're different ethnic groups, that we're one nation, I'm not denying that. I'm Serb. But I think the religion had very important influences in developing us... maybe I cannot explain this in English. But may I use an example?

**[SG] Sure.**

[BE] In the past there were not many Slavic nationalities, Slavic national groups. We were all Slavic. But because of some factors and some influences from different sides, Slavic groups of people developed into several so that now there are over 10 nations that belong to the same group in this region. But I think the most important factor was religion. So in reconstructing the peace I think that that is very important.

**[SG] So religion needs to be part of the peace process because it has been part of the dividing process.**

[BE] Yes, because trying to do that without this second aspect... we were trying that in the last 50 years but we couldn't. Many good things we put accent on, well... not we I think, not my generation, but our parents and grandparents during the communism, which is non-national, which is anti-religious, which is atheistic. That was put on the side and they wanted to build society here ignoring that. I think that was counterproductive. And we can find theological and ethical foundations for that because in all religions present here there are the aspects of peace, loving neighbours, even if they are different that's present in every of these religions: in Islam, in Judaism, in Christianity, in Western Christianity, in Catholic Christianity, Eastern-Orthodox Christianity. It's present. So there is a base for that and I think that's necessary.

**[SG] And do you find ethical ground for restoration? In other words, you mentioned there are several things that our religions have in common and how we treat other people. Just let me pursue that a little bit more. In other words, each of these faiths find common ground in how we should treat each other and in terms of what sort of ethical elements of what we ought to do and ought not to do. There are similarities. For instance, views we find common in abortion, views we might find common in prostitution, the drug scene, the black market, and with the criminal underground that's here. I think we would find a common basis as well in creating society together from the religious basis that supports an ethical foundation. Would you agree with that?**

[BE] I understood the words but ...

**[SG] In other words there's a common agreement among people of different religions in Bosnia-Herzegovina where we agree on different ethical situations...**

[BE] When you say 'ethical' you look at ethics like something different from religion, not particularly religious ethic.

**[SG] It's really the practice. I mean we have different doctrines in each of our faiths, in each of our religions, but we can agree, we have similar principles on praxis, on practice, such as the things like prostitution, drugs. These sorts of things.**

[BE] So, here's not just a question about religious ethic. It's about ethic in global. What is the ethic of people in here because they are not all religious people. I think, so it's connected with the culture of this people, mentality, I think there is something in mentality. We had a very bloody and barbarous war, but still I think this is a civilised society. So even people, especially people who are believers, without regard to which religion they belong, I think there is a theological base for building the peace. There is something in their religions that can and has to be used in building the peace, but also people who are not interested because there are still too many atheists, unbelievers in all of the ethnic groups. The heritage of communism was partly bad but partly good. The ethic in communism was also similar like we have in some areas, especially in relationships between people. In the context of this question about peace and building peace, I think people, even if they are unbelievers, should think the same.

**[SG] OK. Very good. It makes sense. I'm not interested in imposing my views, I'm interested in knowing your views. And the questions are suggestive. And if they don't fit then you should...**

[BE] But the fact that this is... in all questions it's mentioned religion and that you're talking with me now as a religious...

**[SG] ... leader...**

[BE] OK, let's say leader. That's the reason why I took this ethic as a part of religious ethic.

**[SG] Yes, and that's the perspective...**

[BE] In the other room you mentioned that you do not want to expand your research to Jewish group so I think you are probably not interested in unbelievers but anyway... it's good to mention...

**[SG] No, it's.... there are a lot of groups who are doing work among agnostics and want to do it from a secular perspective, but my dissertation is from the perspective of religious people and religious leaders. Even those who I'm interviewing who are not religious leaders, women and students, are religious in their own way. OK? There's a plenty of people and NGOs who are doing it from a secular perspective, but mine is from a religious perspective. So, and that's why I come to the religious people, whether they are students or women or religious leaders such as yourself. OK? But that's the difference from a lot of**

what's happening in Bosnia because there are plenty of, what shall we say, secular efforts here to reconstruct society, change society, but a lot of that is intentionally, purposefully trying to leave out the religious. So it's a different form of atheism than what you've experienced under communism, but it's a Western form of atheism, secularism. These are both modernistic experiments that leave out God but communism is something of an Eastern experiment in modernism and the West has its own experiment in modernism that is also atheistic.

[BE] Yes, it's maybe better to say for communism that it isn't just atheistic, it's sometimes, not sometimes, it very often was anti-theistic, not just atheistic.

**[SG] That's right. And others have pointed that out. That's a very good point that it was anti-theistic.**

[BE] About ethic, different... out of religion we had a phrase... I don't know... can you understand that in English, does it make sense? Society morale. That was called, that was the phrase for ethic, moral...

**[SG] Building a moral society?**

[BE] Yes, and moral rules but characteristic for secular-atheistic... you know, we had a Christian morale, as Christians we had a Christian morale, but ...

**[SG] The socialists had their own.**

[BE] Yes, it's called society morale. Morale of citizens. It's hard to translate. But my point is that although there is a base, it's also an ethic that supports the peace.

**[Translator] The same way these NGOs are doing. But they are excluding God from it. And the question in society here is, is it possible to make this dialogue and successfully rebuild the peace without religion?**

[BE] Yes, but I think that religion is the most important part. And I'm saying that there is also a base, I'm just explaining what you want to tell me. But theological...[pause].

**[SG] I think theologians would say that the basis for moral society without God is not completely honest because they've actually extracted principles from Judeo-Christian society and they've simply, you know, decided to cut off the transcendent and revelation that societies before have tried to give.**

**[SG] Let's look at question two. For many people peace is simply the stopping of weapons, stopping the shooting. People who are involved in the peace process might see peace exactly as a process. But can we as religious people, or would you as a religious person see peace as more than these things? And then, how is it related to God.**

[BE] Yeah, I think so that the peace is more than just absence of the war. And here it is mentioned that it includes the blessing of the Lord. I agree and it's in accord with what the Bible teaches. In the Old Testament and in the New Testament both words for peace include more than just quiet weapons, *shalom* and *eirene*, and for true peace, this second question is formally [indistinguishable] it's mentioned true peace. I think we can experience true peace only if we have a relationship with him.

[SG] **With him?**

[BE] With God. With Jesus.

[SG] **Jesus specifically?**

[BE] He spoke about that... well, do you want me to mention some...

[SG] **Please, yes.**

[BE] ... some Bible verses. OK. Jesus mentioned that he gives real peace, true peace like is mentioned in this question. There is no such peace in the world. He doesn't say that there is no peace in the world. There is no such a peace in the world so I believe and I agree to all those efforts what we talked about that are mentioned, that are happening all around us, by NGOs, by government, the International Community. It's good, but this is very important. We have to use, I'm not saying anything against all these things, all these efforts. I think we have to use everything that is available. I mentioned a minute ago about abortion. I'm looking forward to seeing different people involved in this fight. I'm not trying to make them Christians and then to fight against it. I'm trying to accept them as they are, what they are, and to use their ethic. It doesn't matter religious or non-religious... even their feelings sometimes. I'm using their feelings when they saw the pictures I'm trying to use what I have to fight against it. That's the reason why the pro-life war is very often out of the church. And I think there is a bigger perspective for it out of that. But I'm also always putting a Christian perspective in that.

[SG] **Why?**

[BE] Why? Because I'm founding my attitude on that. It's the main point...

[SG] **Because you think that's essential; it's important?**

[BE] Yes, I think that's essential.

[SG] **But what about agnostics and non-confessional persons? Can they experience the peace of God in some way? Maybe living in proximity, closeness, to people of faith?**

[BE] Yeah, I think they can. They can. Very often in the Bible we can see that the blessings that some people get can be spread all around them, on other people, their neighbours. Well, probably you don't want me to quote now these chapters and these

verses but there are many, many examples... Abraham, there is example even in marriage. If someone is a believer there is a kind of blessing for his wife or husband who is not believer. And I think believers in relationship with God have true peace. And it can be transferred to others. Maybe not 100% but they can enjoy in the blessing that we have because peace is a blessing and includes many things. So, like I said, it's not just the absence of war, but includes blessing, accepting, forgiving, good relationships.

**[SG] You just mentioned forgiveness so why don't we go down to number four. How can religious faith and forgiveness contribute to the escape of cycle of violence of past offenses?**

[BE] Teaching about forgiveness, developing a theology of forgiveness... forgiveness is present not just in Christianity, it's present even in Islam. And I think all religious groups and communities have to put an emphasis on that. It's not new theology, it's not something new but I think it's necessary to put an emphasis on that. All over the world there are different directions in theology. I don't know... for example in China there is a big emphasis on the theology of suffering. The Church is always in persecution and there is a lot of teaching on the theology of suffering and it is very developed there. It's very present, it's very strong if you understand me.

**[SG] Sure.**

[BE] In some other parts there is a theology went in the direction of prosperity, theology of prosperity. And some other directions. I'm not judging now which is right and correct. There is place for those things. And I think here the direction of our theology, not direction but emphasis, in our theology has to be on that way in which all religious communities can help.

**[SG] On forgiveness specifically, do you think, here?**

[BE] It's very strong. It's very strong. So, teaching about that...

**[SG] And can that assist in stopping the cycle of violence and revenge?**

[BE] Yeah, I think...

**[SG] I mean there is an assumption in the question that there is a cycle of revenge and a cycle of violence in former Yugoslavia.**

[BE] I agree.

**[SG] OK. And do you think forgiveness can stop the cycle?**

[BE] What can stop it? I think it can be stopped by power and by forgiveness. I think power is a short-term solution and forgiveness is a long-term solution. That's what I think.

**[SG] Do you see this actually happening in former Yugoslavia? In this part of the Republika Srpska or places you lived?**

[BE] Well, I can see some things but it's too far from what can be done by religious communities, by religious leaders. They can and they should talk more about that.

**[SG] But they are not? Or they don't...**

[BE] They do but not enough. It's too far from, I guess from what they can do.

**[SG] Are they demonstrating it, I mean, besides talking about it, do you see any demonstration of forgiveness?**

[BE] Do I see? I think there is lot of small examples. Their fruits are not so obvious, but I think there are fruits. I don't know what to say. Well, it happened sometimes that they gathered all together to talk about that, I mean Roman Catholic leaders, Orthodox leaders and Muslim leaders, including the Jews leaders. But as I said I think it can be more and more. And here I agree with people... you mentioned there are people who believe that peace is a process. I agree with that. I think there is always something to be... there is more space and there is more place, there are more things to be done even if they do a hundred times more than they do now, I think there is still a place for such activities. But the short answer is, they can help.

**[SG] Let's go back to number three. In this relationship between individual guilt and those who committed some sort of act of hatred, and distributed hatred and distrust. In other words you often hear people in Bosnia-Herzegovina talk about all those Četniks, all those Ustaša, all those Turks, and a whole nationality is with these terms maligned and hurt. And yet not all Serbs, not all Croats, not all Bošniaks were guilty of committing crimes. So this is a question of who actually did these crimes and castigating or putting crime on a whole people group. What's the relationship between that? And can a whole nation, nationality be guilty or is it only an individual who is guilty?**

[BE] Here are two questions but there are so many questions hidden in them. OK, let's talk about that. I think it's not a question: can they be judged or accused. They can. It's question: should they be... or I don't know what you want. I'll talk about both options. And I think even this relationship mentioned in first question in between individual responsibility and... how you say in English...

**[SG] Individual guilt and distributed distrust or hatred.**

[BE] Distributed hatred. I think relationships between these things are very complex. So it's not so simple. I think... they shouldn't be connection. Individual guilt has to be separated. But that is what should be. But here it's very often very connected. When I say very connected I think it's very often like you said, that people, because of individual crimes, they consider all ethnic groups as that. But I

would like to add something else. That individual guilt came out from distributed hatred.

**[SG] OK. Can you explain that?**

[BE] The circle that we mentioned it's not from yesterday. It's present here for years and years.

**[SG] How long?**

[BE] It's hard to say.

**[SG] Thirty years? Back to the Second World War? Or longer than that?**

[BE] Before the Second World War. It was present in Kingdom Yugoslavia, it was present before that while Turks were ruling over this country.

**[SG] So for centuries?**

[BE] Yeah, it's hard to locate. Maybe not always the same tension but tensions were always present here because this is the place where different cultures and religions met. And I think that individual guilt, when we say individual guilt we consider that someone did something bad. Why did he do that? Where is he from? Who is he? Who told him to do that? Do you understand me? Why he is doing that? I think that's going out of the second phrase.

**[SG] The national hatred...**

[BE] And I think these two things are feeding each other and that's the circle that we talked about. It shouldn't be like that but I'm telling you what I think what should be but also I'm telling you what the present situation is now, what the facts are on the ground, in this country. And it's the same for second question. A nation shouldn't be accused for something that was done by individuals. But also it's not fair just to say they are guilty. It's hard for me to accept that. I'll give you an example, but that someone can become murderer without the background. You know, there are some other factors and some other influences that caused people to do such things, yes, to do that.

**[SG] So historical...**

[BE] ... to go back, to the context of these questions, those so-called war crime people...

**[SG] ...war criminals...**

[BE] criminals, yeah, in English criminals... I'm repeating myself now because... I don't know how to express it, but I hope you understand me what I want to say.

**[SG] Yes, that individuals commit crimes, but that past offences in history from past ethno-religious conflicts have contributed to individuals' thinking that motivates them.**

[BE] Yes, you asked about the relationship between those two things. This is one of the relationships that I see that is present here. I'm not defending someone who did such things, but I'm talking now about that, I'm giving you my opinion, what I see. And I said that there is individual [guilt], I agree that should be individual guilt not distributing that to the whole ethnic group but also I have to add with this objection I'm telling in between the lines there is some kind of collective responsibility, if you can understand me.

**[SG] Very good. I do. That's exactly the right way of phrasing it.**

[BE] I'm not bringing that up... this should be, we have to think or talk about that. I think the main thing, the most important thing is to talk about the individual but we have to go to the causes of that. And I think it's possible also to talk about collective responsibility.

**[SG] Do you think there is a collective responsibility to stop this for the future?**

[BE] Yes.

**[SG] And how would that happen? What would that look like?**

[BE] Well, many things have to be changed. The individual and collective are always connected. We need individuals who will give us new direction, who will give us... people who will bring new examples, new patterns of behaving. According to the Bible, Bible teaches us that there is... God was punishing individuals but also sometimes there was punishment for community. You know, Old Testament, there are a lot of examples of that. So, I believe it also has to be considered but not on that level: they're all the same. We have to think which ground produced such a fruit that someone became a war criminal or that all those massacres happened. I think you get the point what I want to say.

**[SG] Yeah, I do. Question... skip number five. We're going to number six. Is there a unique role or a special role that women play in peace building and restoration?**

[BE] Well, I think everyone of us is able to build peace. I wouldn't say that a special role may be different.

**[SG] How is it different?**

[BE] It's different... while concerning the role, the place of the women in this society... in that way...

**[SG] Traditional roles of where women are...**

[BE] Still this is more a man's world, patriarchal...

**[SG] Patriarchal society...**

[BE] ... patriarchal society, so maybe women are not so present in politics, in some places to do the same things like men which doesn't mean that they shouldn't or that they cannot do it or that they don't do it. There are women who are involved but proportionally it is still far from equal, if you understand me. Like we all, I think, they have their place... not their place, they should be at home... no, I'm not saying that. But it doesn't matter where they are, I think they have their responsibility to benefit that process, to help in building that process. It doesn't matter if they're emancipated or if they are accepted in society or not, or if they are just mothers at home. I think there is always a place, there is a role for everyone in this society. On all levels, everywhere [peace] has to be built. Trying to do that just on some levels, even on top, if you're trying to do that on top [alone], that house will not stand, it's just a roof. We need all to be the part of that, to invest in that. So, I think there is place for women.

**[SG] Do you think it's easier for women to reconcile or not?**

[BE] To reconcile?

**[SG] Reconcile or forgive or build bridges in society?**

[BE] Well, I don't make a difference between... It depends on the circumstances. Sometimes women can find a common language, a common ground with other women, sometimes they can't. I don't see any roles for women or...[pause]

**[SG] ... for men...**

[BE] ... or for men, yes.

**[SG] It's a responsibility of us all?**

[BE] As a woman they shouldn't be necessarily connected and easier to make bridges just because they are women. Its not so easy making the bridges with people just because they are men like I'm a man.

**[SG] OK. Number eight. Is nationalist ideology the real enemy of true faith and not the other national groups? If so, how can true faith overcome this enemy? And what is the role of true faith to overcome fear and hatred?**

[BE] OK. Nationalism can be understood in different ways. I think it can be positive, and it can be negative. Negative nationalism, national ideology, negative national ideology is the enemy not just of true faith, it's the enemy to everyone and

to everybody else, even to its own ethnic group. Not just to others, but I think that that's the bad thing and that can damage others and those who believe so.

**[SG] Is there a way, for instance, that you as a person of faith, a religious person have more in common with people who are also religious than those who are nationalists? In other words, nationalism here has used, as we say co-opted, has abused religion for its purposes and so religious leaders or religious people have become involved in nationalist ideology which is really contrary to their own beliefs about religion. In other words, if they had known more about their own religion they wouldn't have done some of the things they did because they would have known that their religion teaches against such things. And, as you said before, in each of our faiths - whether Jewish or Orthodox or Islam or Catholic - there are fundamental things teaching us how to treat other people, our neighbours. And yet it seems that nationalist ideologies were stronger than our religious identity so that people actually do things against their own faith. Any thoughts to that?**

[BE] Well, I agree. Let me speak about religions here. In some of previous questions I mentioned that in our history, in our past, religion had a hand in distinguishing the national ethnic groups. So those two things are very connected here. Sometimes religious people will say, "No, we are out of nationalism." But sometimes they will use it. They will stick together. Very often they are mixed, when they need to be separate they would say, "No, we are not, we are different, we are straight, we are right. Those extremes, we don't want to have anything with them." But very often they use national feelings in forming national identity, they were influencing the formation of national identity and everything is close together. For example, the Serbian Orthodox Church, in name of the Church there is the national prefix.

**[SG] So it's a national church...**

[BE] It shows how it is connected, how those things are connected. The Roman Catholic Church is more international and universal. But you can find that there is no Croat as a prefix in the name of that Church. It's very connected, they're using national feelings and it's very present.

**[SG] The Serbian Orthodox Church is centralised around nationhood whereas the Roman Church is centralized around the office of the Pope, person of the Pope and Roman history.**

[BE] If I understood you well, I agree with you. But let me say a few more thoughts and you will get my picture. In other parts of the world Roman Catholicism is a more international church. But present here is a kind of spirit of idolatry of the nation. And it sticks together with religion. You know, the Serbian Orthodox Church, even the name refers to that. When you looked at Croats you cannot see a Croat Catholic Church, but it's obvious.

**[SG] Is there a place...**

[BE] It's obvious. Visit their holidays, visit their gatherings... and what I think about that, that marriage is always bad. Children out of that marriage, nationality, state, and the church - that's bad. I don't think that that can help in building peace.

**[SG] Is there a place where that national identity becomes wrong. I mean, it's good up to a point, you can be a Serb and Orthodox and good but there's a place where the nation, the nationalism becomes bad and begins to be bad for Christian principles where nationalism becomes stronger than principles of Christianity?**

[BE] Yeah, I think so. It happens here very often. But I wouldn't talk about that. Sometimes it is wrong or is sometimes good. The first concept of that, putting those things together – I'm talking from Christian perspective and from Christian point of view – that concept is wrong.

**[SG] Why is it wrong?**

[BE] The Church is international. The Church is for all people. Jesus died for all nations, all people, every tongue. There are some, I don't know how to say, excuses, not excuses, but some like arguments that support, for example, the Serbian Orthodox Church. I know a lot about them and I'll speak mainly about the Serbian Orthodox Church. There are some arguments that this is good. Through the history they kept a national identity, they kept people together like Judaism, like Judaism kept Jews together to keep them from assimilation. And that's true. That's positive. But I think, as I said, I wouldn't ... first beginning, just concept of that is wrong, besides those...give me a second to formulate it in English.

[Discussion in local language follows between translator and interviewee]

**[Translator] There are some benefits when nationality is protected by the church?**

[BE] Some people are trying to present some benefits and to bring arguments, to support this concept.

**[Translator] And you don't see those benefits?**

[BE] I can see that, but I wouldn't get involved in the game, you know, to argue about that.]

[BE in English] It's my fault. I'm involving him to translate and then I'm talking in English. Sorry. But, can you catch my point? I'm trying not to be involved in that. I think from the very beginning that's wrong.

**[SG] Why is it wrong? Because Christ is Saviour for all people, not just the Serbs or the Russians?**

[BE] Yes, and he gave us an example. He was accepting people. He didn't want to make them to be Jews or to adopt something from their culture, from their customs. Nor the apostles later, Paul, Peter – they were accepting people who they are...

[SG] ... regardless of nationality?

[BE] Yes.

[SG] Can you think of a Scripture reference?

[BE] For example, First Council [of Jerusalem] was about that. They were told to keep themselves away from sin, from... a few more instructions, I don't know how to say in English, from the blood, from...

[SG] So, there was really an acceptance of Gentiles among the Jewish movement.

[BE] Yes, which means different nations, different languages, different cultures, different customs. I think that's Christianity. Very often we are mixing our cultural nationality... some other things mixing with Christianity.

[SG] Paul says, "There's neither Jew nor Greek, neither Jew nor Gentile."

[BE] I'm afraid I couldn't tell you everything that I think but maybe we can stay a little more on this question. But I mentioned at the beginning that nationalism, negative nationalism is the enemy of everything. Not only of true faith, Christianity, it is the enemy of those people who practice that. For example, when I mentioned that I think that the whole concept is wrong - what we have today with Serbian Orthodox Church, we have a new schism in it. There is now the Montenegrin Orthodox Church. Macedonian. Why? Because they brought up national concept. Are they Serbs? They are not Serbs. OK. Why do they expect them to be the part of something that is, in its first place, national. Don't get me wrong. I'm a Serb.

[SG] But you think that Christianity is sometimes...

[BE] But I think these are right, these people are right. Montenegrins and Macedonians.

[SG] To have their own church?

[BE] To have their own church.

[SG] Because they are not Serb?

[BE] I'm not supporting divisions in the church. In the churches. A division is something bad. I think always there is devil in divisions. It doesn't matter which kind of problem we have as a people, as Christians, especially as Christians. But this is something that they are reaping, reaping what they sowed. If I make one foundation,

if I make a foundation like this, my building on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor cannot be like a circle or this big, not big, wide, if you can get me. This is something that they traced. They traced their own way and they came to this point. Now they are sorry, they think why is this happening, they are all against us, they are nationalists.

**[SG] And it simply makes sense when the foundation was a national foundation for a church. It makes sense if you are Macedonian or Montenegrin to have your own church because you're not represented by the Muscovite or the Greek or the Serbian Church. Was that what you mean?**

[BE] Yeah, I'm defending Macedonian Orthodox Church.

**[SG] I understand.**

[BE] I'm against that principle. But this is something that happens...

**[SG] It's a logical conclusion of the structures...**

[BE] ... and consequences of what they started. And so, maybe, if we live and survive as a civilization and the world, if Jesus doesn't come, if he won't come maybe next two or three centuries... imagine new nations, a nation of Republic of Serbians or something like that.

**[SG] The Orthodox Church in America is quite divided. The communities are...**

[BE] ... on national base.

**[SG] On national basis. And two of them claim to be the correct one in America. And of course they are related to the nationalities that have arrived to America. I understand, it's a natural, logical consequence of the structures that were set up. And that this antithetical to Christ, who died for and was there for all nations.**

[BE] And that's the enemy of true Christianity, to his sacrifice to his plan, to his vision for his body. But also, like I mentioned, it's enmity to people who practice it. For example, that concept of nationalism, of such a nationalism mixed with the Orthodox Church, so the final result is that the Serbian Orthodox Church is also the enemy to Serbian people. Sometimes they were the keeper of Serbian national being, but very often they were enemy. I think that besides those arguments of support that they use, I think they caused damage to many. For example, so many Serbs were different religious. I'm facing that every day.

**[SG] How are you facing that?**

[BE] I'm facing that because people are trying to push me out because I'm not from the Serbian Orthodox Church. I don't belong there and I'm always... they are always trying to kick me out. Daily.

[SG] **Even though you're a Serb?**

[BE] Yeah. They don't accept that that I'm Serb.

[SG] **What are you for them?**

[BE] Traitor. Nothing particular, but you know... you're not a Serb.

[SG] **They know you're not Croat, but they don't accept you as a Serb either.**

[BE] Yes. They don't accept me. And on that way I think that damaged Serbian national being, corpus, because they lost so many people because of that in the past, during the centuries. Who knows how many people. That's the fault. So I think that's wrong on different levels. In different aspects – in spiritual, in national, in different ways it's wrong.

[SG] **And in building a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious Bosnia it's going to have difficult consequences as well. Is that right?**

[BE] I think so.

[SG] **Do you sense that people here want to have a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina once again or not?**

[BE] In this part people don't.

[SG] **What do they want?**

[BE] They would like to be part of Serbia.

[SG] **They want to secede and have Serbia's boundaries drawn that include Republika Srpska?**

[BE] They didn't want to go out of Yugoslavia. But in last 10 years a lot of things happened, war and then negotiations. Right now they are trying to keep this autonomy. That's the main goal for the future. At least to keep this autonomy to be... to have this entity, to have some...

[SG] **... in Bosnia-Herzegovina?**

[BE] Yes. Because there is no space, there is no room for realising what they wanted before the war. They wanted to stay in Yugoslavia. But then Bosnia was recognised as a country, as a separate state, and they found they had to make compromises. I think Dayton is good. I think we spoke last time about that. I think Dayton...

[SG] **In what way is Dayton good?**

[BE] It brought compromise. The country is one but there is some kind of autonomy. From my point of view, I think it was an injustice that Croats don't have some kind of autonomy, too. But it's not my business, I'm not a politician, it's my personal opinion. I was curious why they were not allowed to have it, but someone who was in charge decided so. National leaders signed that agreement.

**[SG] So you have something newly created that was similar to Montenegro, or Kosovo for the Albanians, within the former Yugoslav constitution. Is that what you mean? So it was good...**

Kind of autonomy. Yeah.

**[SG] And that's positive, in that sense it's... the semi-autonomy allows you to have some freedom for yourselves.**

[BE] Yes, to do something on different levels that are not in common with others in the same country. For example, Vojvodina had autonomy to do some things which are characteristic, particularly for people who live there and are not common for people in Serbia. That gave them...[pause]

**[SG] ...rights and privileges?**

[BE] Some rights and privileges because of they're specific,... they are different in some way. And I think that shouldn't be bad. But people are always fighting against that. Some are for autonomy, others are not. Like here. Some Bošniaks are not for autonomy, they are for a united country, for one country. Serbs are not, Croats are not. There is always tension but... and it's hard to make a solution that will satisfy everyone. This solution for now I think is fine, in Dayton. But I always have to add this is a good human solution. We miss one very important factor in it.

**[SG] Which is?**

[BE] Which is reconciliation, forgiveness.

**[SG] OK. That was my next question. If we want to keep the inter-ethnic border is there a need for reconciliation at all or just live parallel lives? Do people here want to reconcile with Bošniaks and Croats?**

[BE] You mean, do we need reconciliation if we set the borders?

**[SG] Yeah.**

[BE] I think yes. It depends how people understand borders. I don't see them as something... as walls and there is another dimension, "I don't have anything with them".

**[SG] So we still need to reconcile in our hatreds, in our fears but we can keep the borders?**

[BE] I think so. Especially if you are talking in context of Bosnia and Herzegovina because that inner border is not a border like other borders.

**[SG] Where you need a visa?**

[BE] No, no, you don't need a visa. It's just administrative border especially because it's another with the points where you can cross the border, you know, where you need a visa, where there are police, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It doesn't matter that we have that border or not. We have the border, it's a fact, but we still need reconciliation. It's not, I think it's not there to separate us, to live separately without mixing. It's to solve some other problems, to bring some kind of compromise.

**[SG] And yet that is still what's happening – as people...**

[BE] Do you understand me? I don't see the border as the end of the world for me. I don't see any border like that. I would answer you with one question: Do you think we need reconciliation with Croatia? Even that border is international border. We need it. You would probably say we need it.

**[SG] It's probably not important what I think but...**

[BE] Yeah, for this it's not important. You're thinking about Bosnia. Do you understand my point?

**[SG] If we were to ask the question this way: Should we re-create the borders of Yugoslavia with the different republics I don't think we would say, "That's what we want to do today." Maybe they would here. But I know what you're saying – that the border should not stop us from reconciling the people and breaking down the hatreds and the animosities.**

[BE] Let me say one thing. What I see here is that sometimes borders are set and when people are aware of that, then they accept those borders as a fact. Here is the end. There is no more moving. This is ours, this is yours. It's easier to reconcile then. My objection is partly the answer to you question, "Do we need [the border]?" Sometimes it might be easier for people to accept others, to accept the facts on the ground, to communicate until there is disagreement, until there is a kind of laying down the rights – this is mine. No, this is mine. There is always tension. It's hard to be reconciled.

**[SG] Let me just clarify in my mind what you just said. You believe it's easier to reconcile if there are these borders.**

[BE] No, I'm not saying that. What I saw and what I'm seeing is that very often it helps. You formulated your question "Do we need the borders?" then if we

reconcile. Sometimes those borders helped in reconciliation. If you understand me. I'm not saying this is the rule and this is the necessary. I think reconciliation and borders can be all together. It depends on how we see those borders. I see the border in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a kind of compromise. Well, actually all borders are a kind of compromise. Some wanted to stay in Yugoslavia, some wanted to go out. How to solve that problem? To separate them? It didn't happen. To put them together? It didn't happen. Compromise was together and that inner line brings some kind of autonomy.

**[SG] What about Serbs who had homes in the Federacija or Muslims who had homes in what's now Republika Srpska? Should they come back? Should Muslims come back to the Republika Srpska and claim their land? Should Serbs go back to the Federacija and claim their land or should they sell their property and just move?**

[BE] I think they should do what they want to do.

**[SG] And they should be allowed to do that?**

[BE] And should be allowed and supported to do whatever they want to do. I'm not in a position but even if I were in a position I probably wouldn't force anyone to do anything. Neither to go back, neither to sell or... I think it's up to the people, but I think the responsibility of the International Community and our state and our governments and politicians are to try to provide the possibility to choose, which they try to do. There are a lot of things happening and I understand all people who want to go back, who want to sell their property. It's not mine... for me it's a private thing. We have different experiences during the war and we're all different people. The decision is personal, I mean individual.

**[SG] Of course, many people, whether you're a Serb or Bošniak, are afraid to move back for fear that they will experience more...**

[BE] Yes, I know that.

**[SG] ... animosity. It's one thing to have the legal right to go claim your property. It's another thing to go claim your property and have people call you up at night and threaten you or throw bottles through your windows.**

[BE] Yes, maybe no one will kill you but those phone calls can be very upsetting, can damage all your life, your entire way of life. You can stop functioning normally because of one phone call. So, it's not polite when you see eyes with hatred in the store, on the street. So I'm fine with everything what people choose.

**[SG] You really entertained that question very thoroughly, more than anybody else has.**

[BE] About the borders?

[SG] **Yeah. And I really appreciate that. Well, you've already talked about number ten.**

[BE] May I say something else? Yugoslavia had a war inside of itself because nations were mixed and, you know, they wanted, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Well, in Croatia as well but, you know, that was the main problem. There was no line, it wasn't clear and they were fighting to make the line.

[SG] **Or shift the lines that were there?**

[BE] Shift?

[SG] **To move the lines.**

[BE] Yeah, or shift the lines, to move the lines. We didn't have a war with neighbouring countries. With countries that are separated from Yugoslavia, ex-Yugoslavia, by borders old 50 years. People get used to that. There is Romania. There is nothing...

[SG] **Or Hungary...**

[BE] Or Hungary or Austria or whatever. It was easy with Macedonia and Serbia. There is a line, there was no mixing and they accepted each other easier. So I'm going back to their lives and sometimes that can help.

[SG] **Yeah, it's...**

[BE] In this case I think this inner border also can help. Some are not satisfied with them, with that border. This is a good solution. Sometimes compromises are very often sources of dissatisfaction. Many people still don't see this as something that is a halfway point in national interests and in national desires and wishes.

[SG] **It's not an easy question, that's for sure. Well, let's jump down to number nine. We looked at this a little bit but maybe we can talk about it more. The Hague is putting people on trial at the highest levels and yet there will be smaller war criminals who will not ever go to The Hague. They will not even be put on the list to go to The Hague. And what will happen to these people? Are we forced to live with this injustice of people who have done such things and living in our midst free? Or what should happen with them? Will there be local justice?**

[BE] Justice and peace are very connected and I think there is a very important, there is a strong, bigger connection between them. They can support the peace process or they can damage it. I mean such things that you mentioned – taking people into the courts and trying to analyse what happened and to punish them for crimes. I don't know if it will happen. I hope it will. I don't know. We'll see.

**[SG] Do you think that people of Bosnia-Herzegovina whether they are Bošniak, Serb or Croat can give better justice than people from outside? Like The Hague?**

[BE] Hard question. I think it's very hard at the very moment to provide such trials in here. Because of everything we spoke about in previous questions, we spoke about borders. Try to bring two persons from Federation and Republika Srpska and to put them together to talk about these things. Everything is still fresh, hot.

**[SG] So if we're going to have justice we do need outsiders?**

[BE] And I think we need time to pass on that we will be able to provide such trials in here. The process of peacemaking, of renewing the peace has to be raised from where it's now at in the present moment before we can start with such things. To try to provide the justice, here, on our own ground.

**[SG] What about the truth and reconciliation commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina? Off tape we spoke just a bit about this.**

[BE] Yeah, we mentioned it. I don't know a lot about that committee. I'll repeat what I said before recording. I saw on TV that they established that committee. You told me it doesn't work so much because there is a lot of obstructions. Serbian authorities are not involved in that.

**[SG] Well, that's what I'm told from people in Federacija. Maybe if I spoke to people here about it, they would tell me the opposite.**

[BE] It's very often that you have different versions of a story in the Federation and the Republika Srpska.

**[SG] In other words, it doesn't work for whatever reason.**

[BE] OK. You will probably speak with someone else about that who is more... who knows more about that committee from Republika Srpska but I think it's a good idea, it's good to have something like that.

**[SG] I think that... what the truth and reconciliation commission is supposed to be doing is confronting these issues of who did what in the country.**

[BE] Excuse me, can you repeat...

**[SG] Yes. The purpose for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to actually confront those who did these things inside the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina as they are doing in other places. And in confronting them then they can bring local justice and they can bring local reconciliation. That's the idea behind it, that these things must be confronted, they just can't be pushed aside. That's perhaps they were done after the Second World War. Any thoughts on that?**

[BE] I'm not sure that I catch the point.

**[SG] Do you sense there is a need to confront the injustices or shall we just get on with life and not confront the injustices, the crimes, the war crimes?**

[BE] I think we should confront but it's not the question should we or... for me it's not a question should we or not but I would rather bring the question when and why. When and how, not why. When and how. For example, family life, family example. If I have something that I argue with my wife, if I cannot solve that or with someone else, if I'm trying to build a relationship with someone else who doesn't like me and I don't like him but anyway... OK, let's try, let's try to do what we can do. As a beginning at least to meet each other, to see each other, to talk. If he doesn't agree about something, OK, let's put that on the side. Don't fight and argue about that now. It's another principle that always works. Some things have to be solved, some things have to be, you know, confronted, of course. But I wouldn't now give some kind of diagnosis and therapy, you know, this has to be three times, and tomorrow do that or yesterday you should do ... The question is when and how.

**[SG] When and how. And the timing is not right, you're saying, now.**

[BE] It depends for what. You mean particularly for confronting the crimes?

**[SG] Yes.**

[BE] I think it's possible. It's possible, it has to be done but I didn't think about that a lot. I'm just now giving my thoughts and comments about that, to say a few more words about that. And to repeat, maybe, something. I think it's good to have such a things, I think it's good to have leaders, religious leaders because as far as I understood, these are just religious leaders.

**[SG] Well, they are politicians, too. But at least in the South African example the clergy, the religious leaders, are leading it.**

[BE] Yeah, but here, also if I understood well, they are leading persons and politicians are there to help them.

**[SG] I don't think it would work if you didn't have political leaders behind it.**

[BE] Anyway it doesn't matter who is there. I think it's good to have, to start, to try, to do what we can do and what we cannot do. Where we can go, in which direction or ... probably there will be different seasons like in everything in life.

**[SG] So you're saying it would be good to have something like this to see justice, forgiveness, reconciliation move forward in Bosnia-Herzegovina? The purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is first confront these things for truth, truth telling, truth exposing, if you will so that reconciliation then is possible. In other words reconciliation will not happen until we confront**

**the truth. There's a process that truth has to be exposed, confronted first and then reconciliation.**

[BE] Truth and reconciliation. We spoke about the possibility of it happening, that people will be here in local courts, trials. I said I don't know. But I didn't say what I think about that. I think that would be good to happen but at the very moment the level of reconciliation, of peace process, of forgiveness, daily politics is still in such a condition, it's hard for me to see and to imagine it happening now. I think it has to pass something. But I think it will be very good. It will test our reconciliation, it will test our objectiveness and our faithfulness to truth and to justice instead of some other things, for example, like nationality. During the war people were faithful to nationality, to nationalism, and all others were bad. I think Herman Hesse said, "During the war you're not able to read good German books or good English books just because you are on the other side." There is no objective view on things like this in time of peace. And I think that will be good test for us, not just the courts, for our judges and lawyers but for publicity. And it will be an indicator, test and indicator to show what happened. Like The Hague shows us what we think and where we are. It expresses, it brings on all three sides expression, people give some comments, governments are making some laws about that. Everything speaks...

[End of tape and interview]



Interview with

**Prof. Dr. Nedžad Grabus**

Sarajevo  
March 2002

[...]

**[SG] So, you were saying that Orientalists or persons from Islam studying in the West began to look at *dhimma* merely from a historical perspective and then [Islamic] development began to stop or to retard.**

[NG] I said that the problem of *dhimma* cannot only be looked at from this perspective. We have to look and understand *dhimma* in the part of the 6th century after Christ. This was the first time in history that people were trying to talk about different understandings of protection of other people. At that time the prophet Muhammad [a.s.] for the first time in history tried to protect the rights of others. Even he recognised them. As you know, at that time, Jews did not recognise Christians, and Christians had many problems and so on. When the Muslims came, many different problems existed between peoples. And *dhimma* was one of the ways to protect the rights of others, and not only because of the principle of *dhimma* between Christians and Jews, but also of those who believed in one God. And other persons also had the right to live together with them because, in the Islamic understanding of life, the individual life is under the protection of the government. Nobody has the right to kill anyone. This is so not only because they are afraid of Allah, but also, of course, the government can prosecute all crimes. That is the one side. Secondly, we cannot talk in terms of *dhimma* for today. We cannot compare the circumstances of life in a democratic society with the circumstances in the 6th century after Christ. That means, that today we have a different society.

**[SG] So, *dhimma* has no application for today, is that right?**

[NG] In the Bosnian situation, it has no application. But if you talk with different scholars in is that the Islamic world, they are trying to protect this kind of understanding of others' rights. They are trying to look at this problem from a historical perspective. But we have to go farther than this. We have no right to stop at this point. Before God, people today are the same, of course. In front of God we are the same. Allah will say to me and to you whether I was good or not good. But among people today, there are so many things that we can discuss about that. But *dhimma* in the Bosnian situation has no application. If you talk today, for example, about Saudi societies, we cannot even compare Saudi societies with Egyptian societies. I cannot remember the author of book in politics of Islam, but you can find the book in English, I think his name as Edward...

**[SG] Edward Said?**

[NG] No. He wrote about Orientalism and other books. I have that book in my home and I can give you the right title and name of the author, but he wrote about the different perspectives and understanding not only of Islam, but of understanding of social life in different countries. You cannot compare Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and other countries. We especially cannot compare Bosnia with these other countries. Historically we are definitely Muslims, but our circumstances are absolutely different today. We, as a part of European culture today, in the Bosnian situation, we can teach all of our students who are children in the schools about the history and the beginning of protection. I don't know how to say it, to understand different circumstances of protection societies.

[NG] We can talk in May about different questions, as this is only a step towards other things to think about. So this is to talk about *dhimma* and Muslims. There are absolutely different approaches to understanding forgiveness, and even violence, and some other questions on restoration, nationalistic ideology. You have so many different approaches in the Bosnian situation. If you talk from the Catholic perspective or the Orthodox perspective, they're trying to talk about forgiveness, and the Muslim insists on *adel*, and that's a kind of, what is that in English, I cannot remember. In Bosnian it is *pravda*.

[SG] **Do you know what it is in German?**

[NG] Perhaps 'law'.

[SG] **Or maybe 'righteousness'?**

[NG] Yes, perhaps 'righteousness'.

[SG] **Being a righteous person.**

[NG] Yes. Because who has the right to forgive somebody? What kind of understanding of the law or among people can we have? There are so many different approaches, which means I think it is better to prepare some questions. I read all of these questions and found some of them very difficult even to answer. I have to think about some of them. Even from these from the Islamic perspective, it is not easy. For instance, I can talk about *dhimma* only from a Muslim perspective, but somebody tomorrow can say this is his own opinion and therefore he does not understand the question. That means I have to argue my opinions and my sentences and that will definitely be my understanding. Maybe I am not just such a typical person who understands all these things from a historical perspective.

[SG] **Well, First I am very pleased that you would take the questions very seriously.**

[NG] Excuse me. This word is 'justice' not 'law'.

**[SG] Secondly, I am writing this from somewhat of a Western perspective, but I am interested in the context and your perspective. Thirdly, you may find that I may ask a question, which doesn't quite make sense. It may provoke a better question that you would rather answer. The questions are here as a means of stepping to somewhere else. And if you want to expand on it in a different context, that is where I am really headed; that is what I need. So, we needn't be fixed with just these questions. These are to provoke other ideas. I am very curious about the idea of restoration on a social plain because that is what the dissertation is about, and the uniqueness of Bosnia in its geographical, historical and cultural location. It is simply unique. But also, it raises the question, is there a - what shall we say - from a Christian perspective, is there a theological framework of restoration? From an Islamic perspective, is there an ethical framework for restoration? For me, the primary question is question number one.**

[NG] We may also find some expression of Muhammed, [p.b.u.h.] and from his own word from the *hadith* and we surely can find some other expressions from the Qur'an in some ways. But seriously, I do not know, you're coming from a different culture than the Bosnian culture. Some Bosnian Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims are more similar than Muslims from Bosnia from other countries, and Catholics from Bosnia and the Catholics from other countries because historically we had many connections. Sometimes people even from the West cannot understand why Franciscans had such good relations with Muslims. That kind of understanding can also be interesting for people from the West, and not only from the West but also from the world also. Bosnia can be an example. Bosnia is not a paradise. But Bosnia also is not hell. It was a hell to put the aggression in Bosnia, but today you can also find different stories of many, many people living together again and then they're trying to talk about their own problems. But can Bosnia survive by itself? No. We need help from outside, and different people will understand the Bosnian situation, not only to use the Bosnian situation to explain their cultures, that they help people in Bosnia. That means we need people who understand theologically 'forgiveness', 'justification' and so on. As believers we believe in God but there are also groups, agnostics and others, who do not believe in God and probably they have a different approach. But in our situation, because we had a communist past, the atheists and agnostics are or very proud, I can say. They're trying even today to lecture people who believe in God and say that they made a mistake because they are believers and they blamed the war on them. But for many, many facts you can find that most people, maybe 80 per cent, I'm not talking about 20 per cent of people, 80 per cent of the people are a believers, different believers, Catholics, Jews, Orthodox. If so many people believe in God, then maybe they don't know a lot of their own faith really. Like people in the West, tradition is very important in the lives of people. Maybe they don't know more about their faith. Maybe someone in the past said to them that they have to hate Muslims or they have to hate Catholics, or something like that. And traditionally and historically people follow that. They do not have time or they don't care to read about something and to learn about the differences. But the situation in Bosnia, we definitely have to find different ways not to prepare for a new movement but to prepare some steps to have a same phase. Definitely not. We have to stay

Muslim in our own faith, as Catholics must stay in their own faith. But as good Catholics, as people who believe in God, they must recognise others. Sometimes we will tolerate and others will say toleration is not enough. We have to recognise different persons. But in the Bosnian situation now, also in other lands like Ireland, in Palestine, people have to read again and again the holy books in order to understand what God wants to say to people. To kill somebody? No. To steal from somebody? No. To make different problems? Not at all. But do people really understand what God said to us, do we understand that? Not only Muslims, but Christians, Jews and everybody. Even agnostics and atheists, if they're talking about values, even in their beliefs you have to respect the lives of other persons. Is that clear?

**[SG] That's right. And there are human rights, which play a part, although from a secular understanding.**

[NG] Yes. We can find many, many expressions in our traditions and in our books. People do not understand that, and they are not people of the future, they are people of the past. And if you want to look at the past, you will find much blood. The person who killed or who can fly an aeroplane or something like that, is he educated? Definitely he is. But the person who kills from an aeroplane, for an example, or like in New York, was it personal faith? No! Because, nobody has the right to kill innocent people. I'm not talking about military power today. And I'm not so crazy to talk that we can have peace and justice in the whole world. That can be only in paradise. But my duty is to understand the situation in my country, and to help the sometimes very common people to understand. Not only Christians. It is not my responsibility to talk about Christianity. My duty is to talk about the Islamic understanding of life. That means it is my duty to explain to Muslims what is our approach to Muslims. And not all Muslims because I'm not the Reis-ul-ulema, I'm not the leader of the Muslims. As a person who is a professor of Islamic Studies, my duty is to teach people of Islamic faith, *akida*, Islamic beliefs. And the other problem is sometimes many, many people in churches, in mosques, in synagogues are talking about others. It is the duty of any priest in the Church. From my perspective, if I say that these Christians are not good believers, that they are going directly to hell, will I be a good or better Muslim? No definitely not. So many different problems [derive from the fact] that people don't really understand the kind of circumstances a man from different parts of the world. Maybe I cannot be a good teacher in Saudi Arabia or Egypt, but I definitely can have a very important role and this, my country. That is my understanding of the situation.

**[SG] Well, let me say that we can do this in May and then I'll be in contact with you by e-mail when I have more firm dates.**

[end of interview]

## Interview with Prof. Dr. Nedžad Grabus

16 May 2002

[...]

**[SG] That's the first time I've heard such a definition of the word 'Balkan'. Most of the definitions I have encountered relate less to the etymology of the word and more to the perceived history of the Balkan Peninsula.**

[NG] Linguistically the etymology of this word, some people say the meaning of this word Balkan comes from the 'bal' and 'kan', which means 'honey' and 'blood'. In other words, everyone likes this place because it is a nice place to live, but it is very bloody, because every 10 or 20 years people are killing each other. I don't know why. And it's not only a problem between different religions, but also it's a problem between different denominations within the same religions, for example, between the Orthodox and the Catholics. They believe in Jesus Christ, yet they have many problems with history here. The other problem is also between, for example, during World War II, Muslims and Catholics were on one side and the Orthodox were on the other. It means different religions worked together against the Orthodox, or Orthodox against Muslims and Catholics. In the last aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina there were also many, many problems between the different religions. But you can also find many people who were in the same place and they were trying to help people. Even today there are so many different places where you can find, for example, where Muslims helped Orthodox or some Orthodox helped Muslims, or Catholics helped Muslims. It's a small understanding of this word Balkan. I'm not talking again now about historical division in this region.

**[SG] Do the Balkan mountains in Bulgaria have reference to this Turkish word at all, do you know?**

[NG] Yes, I've heard this, but it's maybe better to consult somebody educated in the Turkish language. I think so, because so many historical evidences us can be found in Bulgaria. The Ottoman Empire was in Bulgaria. You can find, for example, in Sarajevo, yesterday I talked to my friend, he is writing books about soldiers who were killed during the last war in Bosnia and he is trying to find different [indistinguishable] in Bosnia. And if you look for example when the Austro-Hungarian Empire came to Bosnia, there were a lot of Turkish names for many [indistinguishable] in Bosnia Herzegovina, mountains, rivers, fields, and so on. During the 10 centuries with Serbia, or the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was established and after that the Republic of Yugoslavia, many [place names ?] were exchanged. For example Sarajevo there is a place where people meet every day. And when the Serbian Empire took power in Bosnia, there remained this place it became a part of King Dušan, the Tsar Dušan. And so many, many streets, - look for example on the Baščaršija. There were different names. If you go to Vratnik, it was the street of

Miloš Obilić, the Serbian hero from the time of the Turkish conquest. It was very near this Faculty and School of Vuk Karadžić and his street, also.

[SG] **Right. How long ago was this?**

[NG] It was between 1920 and 1980s.

[SG] **Were these mostly Serb names?**

[NG] Yes, mostly.

[SG] **Similarly with more recently...**

[NG] Even in a heart of a Bašćaršija you can find so many names from Serbian history. Today some streets are renamed. Actually, people have returned the old names.

[SG] **We saw that in Dresden as well. When we lived there in 1991 and 1992, shortly after the reunification of Germany, all names were still the communist names. Then, in a matter of months, all the names were changed again to what was for us new names, but for the Dresdners were old names, the pre-communist names.**

[NG] Yes. There's another problem. For example if you look towards the [indistinguishable] in Belgrade, they didn't change so many names from the Turkish times. For example, you can find *Terazia* and so many other place-names. Those old names are from Turkish traditions and the Turkish language. It's not a problem here if you have this same name, for example, for one town. Even from last war you can find for one town the same name Foča. It's not only a Turkish name, it's a local name. They renamed the town in Serbian to Srbinja. And some others. This is the phenomenon. It's not only a problem of a local question. Can we change our history? Vuk Karadžić is also part of *my* history.

[SG] **That's right. A very important part of a linguistic history.**

[NG] And in the secondary school and university education that I had, I had to read some books about this person. I cannot say today that Šipški is not part of my tradition, because he is universal or global name. He is a very important person here and in the world. I am not talking about Miloš Obilić. He was a hero on one side. It is the same today if you talk about Sultan Murat. He was on the side of the Turks and Miloš Obilić was on the side of the Serbs. I'm not talking about those persons. Ivo Andrić, for example, is a very famous person. I'm not only talking about his tradition. We can talk about his using some different problems and different information in his literature. And that means we cannot be in our job and in our understanding of a situation of Bosnia between different people on the top. We have to do something deeply to read different things, to analyse, to compare different things, and so on. That is the only way to understand the situation here.

**[SG] Is that a sort of “cultural genocide” that takes place here when, for example, street names are changed?**

[NG] Yeah, definitely.

**[SG] When I first came here I saw the mural where Gavril Princip assassinated the Archduke.**

[NG] Yes.

**[SG] But the plaque was already gone from the street. I wasn't here during that time. But I've seen pictures of the wall mural in books. Now nothing of that is there. It is as though he never existed in history. In that sense history is changing once again to annihilate some of those historical facts.**

[NG] Sometimes I think it is a problem that we're not talking about facts, but we're talking about interpretations. We cannot forget facts. But maybe you have one type of education and I can have another. That is the other problem. Definitely Gavril Princip was a person who killed innocent people, Ferdinand and his wife, and many say his wife was pregnant at the time. And we can say we're ashamed because Gavril Princip did that. He is not a hero for me. For some people he is probably a hero. But the fact is, he killed those people. And if we want to show those facts to others, we have to have some place like a museum where people can visit or something like that. That means that today we have a different interpretation of different things from Bosnia. Fact is that so many people were killed, 200,000 people were killed. Those are the facts. Some people from Britain, they will have one interpretation, people from France will have another, people from the States, people from Bosnia, people from other countries can interpret this. But the fact is, Mladić and Karadžić killed between 9000 and 10,000 people in Srebrenica in three days. Those facts we can't interpret in different ways. Facts are facts. And you talk about cultural genocide - you can't say cultural genocide – every day you can find people in some totalitarian regimes who are trying to forget their history. I don't know why. Maybe they were hurt. They did not have the opportunity in a totalitarian system. But it is very important today to show to children, to show what has happened, for example, to Jews what happened in the Holocaust during the Second World War.

**[SG] Very good. And I don't know how much time you have here, so I want to be conscious of your time. Can we move to some of these questions? I know we won't be able to speak to each of these, and I don't intend to. And as I mentioned before, I think I've tried to list them and the order of importance. The first question is really put in a big framework. It's not ideology...**

[NG] Yes.

**[SG] ...but is there an ethical or theological framework that we can put this co-existence of Bosnia into? Is there a way in which what we're trying to do in reconciliation builds or leads towards restoration?**

[NG] Yes, maybe this first question about the Bosnian example of harmony and of co-existence prior to this conflict... I'm not so sure that people who are coming from the outside of Bosnia can understand our style of life. It was not only a question of human rights or the freedom to express your religion. It was really a style of life for everyone to live and obey his God in the way that he wants. Definitely today there are so many initiatives to rebuild a style of life that existed prior to the war in Bosnia. And we're trying in so many different ways to explain to people that there is no way for living, not all in Bosnia, but in the world as a whole because the world became a global village, to respect others and to try to understand others. Personally, I don't have any problems with this kind of life because I was born near a church that stood about 200 metres from my house, and maybe a hundred metres from that was a mosque. At the same time I have experience in the Christian style of life and Islamic style of life because every day I met it in school. When I was a child in elementary school, [most] children were Christians. At that time it was the Communist regime. I was born in 1968, but also people really respected all Christian traditions. Where I was born and is close to Travnik and near there is a place called Guča Gora and it is a very famous Catholic place in Bosnia Herzegovina. Franciscans have been there very long in that place. And we were together. It means we definitely had our own style of life and the Catholics had their style of life, though we didn't have very many problems. Now today you can say something against your own brother. At the time maybe some people were talking against Muslims or Catholics or someone said something against Catholics. But there weren't so many problems between common people. And I think that people were religiously educated, and people will understand their own religion, they can help the process of restoration because if we help people who don't understand their own religion, they will always be against the other religion. And is very important not only to educate people in their own tradition, but to also explain to them the right way of the other religions.

**[SG] So we can help in the restoration process?**

[NG] Yes, definitely. Definitely. We can also help by not talking against others. It's not our position, is not my position to explain what Christianity is. It is my position to explain to my students what Islam is because I'm a Muslim. Sometimes Christians are trying to explain what Islam is. And Muslims are trying to explain what Christianity is. It's not our position as believers. Our first position should be that we explain our [own] religious traditions. And after that, we can invite somebody who is from a different religious tradition and say, "Look, my friend Goodwin, could you explain what Jesus Christ means in your tradition?" But it is not for me to explain. Also, I cannot ask you what you think of Muhammed [p.b.u.h.]. That's your opinion, and that's the only way first to discuss it between people.

**[SG] You say in the first order, we explain our own faith. The question is, if we leave the explanation of someone else's faith to that other person, or we invite**

**them, this is not happening today [in Bosnia-Herzegovina]. This is so, especially among the Orthodox when, you know, Bosnia is very segregated today. You have the two entities. Are we inviting the Orthodox to explain their view of Christianity or their view of their mythology, and their understanding of historical events?**

[NG] Well sometimes we have prejudice. Many people have prejudices about many different things, not only Christians about Islam, but Muslims about Christianity, about Judaism, and so on. But from my perspective I can say I have met very good people from the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. I'm not talking about people who are or in the very high positional levels. Sometimes they don't explain religion. They explain political views of different political parties. I'm talking about people who are really educated and trying to explain their own religions.

**[SG] Such as what you're doing on the radio?**

[NG] Definitely. It is not my position to explain to the people what, for example, SDP political party means about religion. I'm not interested as a Muslim or as a believer in this, but as a citizen of Bosnia-Herzegovina, I am very interested to know what SDP thinks about religion. The other side, we can talk about different problems by using different religious expressions and a sense indifferent political ways. Today, we can also invite some educated people from the Orthodox faculty who will explain to me what it means, for example, if somebody who is a Christian who believes in the Holy Spirit and his son and so on. What does the Trinity mean. If I'm a good researcher or person who wants to know what the Abrahamaic tradition means, if I want to know that, I have to know from the different perspectives expressions about Abraham. For example, about criminal law, about moral life, about so many different things and themes that we can talk about. But people talk only about differences. People vary, and they're not ready actually to talk about similarities.

**[SG] Right.**

[NG] I did not ask you, do you believe in God?

**[SG] Yes!**

[NG] Yes. I believe also. That is the first step that we can talk about different problems.

**[SG] That's right.**

[NG] That's right. You have your own way to believe in God and I have my own. But we also all believe in this somebody who is the greatest,

**[SG] Transcendent,...**

[NG] Yes, transcendent and so on. There are so many similar names and so on for God.

**[SG] And that's it. Not to ignore the things that are different about our faith, but to find a commonality is...**

[NG] Yes.

**[SG] ...and to work with that which is common. I think that is the very nature of the thesis, which has to say...**

[NG] It's not - maybe this is very important to say - it's not our position or duty to build a new religion. There is no way to make a new religion in Bosnia Herzegovina. But to interpret and to talk about your own tradition and the traditional ways. Here in Bosnia Herzegovina there are so many beautiful expressions and so many beautiful facts of how people lived together and how they are trying to solve their problems because they were believers. I'm not talking about some so-called new believers who became great professors in one day and they can explain all things from their religions. You have so many things from your religion and from your tradition that you cannot explain even today, even as I have also. But I'm trying to explain to people our position is first, to understand our tradition and after that other traditions.

**[SG] Your first statement about Bosnia was the case that people lived side by side in a peaceful fashion and that they were allowed to worship their own God as they saw fit. It was not an issue of human rights. It seems today that it is becoming more of an issue of human rights, and that this is the basis of freedom of expression rather than the understanding that God allows us that privilege.**

[NG] Yes. The times have changed. People are talking today about human rights. They're not talking about the common sense that we had before the war, that it is our duty to respect our neighbour.

**[SG] That's right.**

[NG] Today we talk about this problem, for example, in Bosnia Herzegovina it is not only a theological-ethical question, on this position we have to talk from different perspectives. Today we have to respect European tradition, that we have to talk about respect for human rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina. If we respect human rights, the law will protect our lives, and the state and all the bodies of the state will protect all people. We have the same rights. You know, from my tradition, all people have the same rights. The differences people are making are made by people, not by God.

**[SG] Is it the case that God is removed as the basis for respecting each other?**

[NG] Yes, I think that some people remove the understanding of religion and removed even, if I can say it, God from our lives.

[SG] Yes.

[NG] And I can say that even in Bosnia-Herzegovina as agnostics and non-confessional persons, that is the other question then we have to analyse in our societies. How can agnostics and non-confessional persons in our society respect believers? During the 50 years of the Communist regime, when they had power, the agnostics and non-confessional persons didn't at that time respect the confessional persons. You know, Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox and Jews or others. Today we have to open dialogue between non-confessional persons agnostics and believers because most believers are on the same side today. Some people in Bosnia-Herzegovina are trying to make a new religion because in Europe if you talk today about mixed marriages, people will think about someone who is married to a white person or an English person who marries a Pakistani person or an African person or a French person who marries an African and so on. In Bosnia-Herzegovina a mixed marriage means between different religious groups. I say in some way every marriage in Bosnia is a mixed marriage if it is not between the same sex, between man and man and woman and woman. Because all marriages are mixed marriages, is that correct? And today in Bosnia-Herzegovina you talk about mixed marriages that means some Muslims are married to Christians or Christians are married to Muslims and some people are trying to talk about new religions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a religion of mixed marriages. I'm not sure I'm ready to talk on that vein. Everyone has a right to marry whoever they want, Christian or Muslim or so on because this is a civil state, and we have to respect our law. But also our religious communities in churches have the right to talk about the problems. If you're in a mixed marriage, what will happen? That is a question of your rights. From our perspective today in Bosnia-Herzegovina and from my perspective also in Europe, it is not always a problem to respect your own religious tradition, it is a problem whether people are believing today or not. Are they are going to Church just from a traditional sense or because their fathers and mothers and grandfathers went to church or the mosque? Are they really understanding what it means to be a believer or to follow something which God gave us.

**[SG] I think you're addressing question number eight. Is nationalist ideology the real enemy of true faith and not the other national groups and expressions? In other words, the commonality that believers have, whether Orthodox or Muslim or Catholic, each believes in God, versus those who are agnostic or non-confessional. And it seems to me in many ways that you have many people who were really non-confessional or fairly ignorant about their own faith who became engaged in the nationalist quest. And so, is it so much that the animosities are Serb Croat, Muslim, whatever. But is it the case of people of faith versus people of non-faith who are nationalistic? I'm not trying to dismiss those people of faith who also were involved in the nationalistic ideologies. But there may have been fewer of them than the common person who just went along with the nationalist causes.**

[NG] We can mention, for instance, Milošević. He is not a person of faith.

[SG] **Right. That's exactly what I mean.**

[NG] Yes. He said he doesn't believe in God. But who supports his activities?

[SG] **Yes, that's a problem isn't it?**

[NG] Yes. Sometimes agnostics and non-confessional people from the same tradition and confessional people are together against other groups. Unfortunately we don't have a community of believers from different religious groups, of different religious traditions who are doing something together. Maybe that is the other question of a Bosnian future. Can people who are believers, Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox, can they really do together something against people who are trying to use their own traditions against others? And maybe that is a new challenge.

[SG] **That is a very good question.**

[NG] Yes. And a challenge for the Bosnian community, because if I were a believer for example, you are a believer also. From my perspective, you're closer to me than somebody who is not a believer, even if he is from my tradition.

[SG] **That's right. We see this in America. There used to be great animosity between the Protestants and Catholics. A lot of it was residual European understanding stemming from religious wars. Today we find Protestants and Catholics together, in the context that is decidedly less religious, more secular, that Protestants and Catholics have far more in common with each other, and they're doing more things together, especially in the ethical realm. They still have theological differences...,**

[NG] Yes, definitely in dialogue we cannot argue about the theological problems because theological problems divide and split. But we're not starting with these questions. Somebody a long time ago started with this. We have other problems to talk about. I absolutely agree with you.

[SG] **I think that each of the religious communities are united on issues of prostitution, pornography, drug abuse...**

[NG] Absolutely, absolutely.

[SG] **And other such societal ills like the black market economies. There is a lot to unify us as religious people. Especially when the media then tries to divide us.**

[NG] Yes, yes, I absolutely agree with you. We shouldn't talk about theological divides. And in our programme on the radio, we're not talking about theological arguments but rather what it is better to believe in monotheistic way as a Muslim or as a Christian. That's your religion, you have chosen your own religion. I'm not trying to explain your religion. That's not my duty. It's my duty maybe to express our

opinions as to different issues. Or, for example, tonight we're going to talk about water in the holy books and the crisis of water is very important, not only for agnostics and non-confessional persons. But in Bosnia-Herzegovina sometimes people are non-confessional or people who are agnostics, and they used believers and their own traditions against others. Because the sense of religion is very interesting and it is important to be part of a community. And people are trying to express their own views and understandings of problems through a wrong way, through religions. And people forgot their own duties to religions. Our duty is to express to all people, to mankind, love, not only hatred, because we have to respect mankind because they are creatures created by God. God created us, and that is the only way we can understand or explain our position.

**[SG] Right.**

[Pause]

[NG] This is a very interesting question for our situation. Is there a place for *dhimma* in a democratic, pluralistic society? If so what does its expression look like? Did you talk about this question?

**[SG] Yes. A couple of different people, Ifet Mustafić, spent some time discussing this issue. I did not talk with His Eminence Cerić about this because I have heard his views a couple of different times. In fact, I think Ifet really expressed his views. We gave some expression to this last time some. But maybe we would like to review that.**

[NG] Yes. *Dhimma* is the Islamic concept of respecting others.

**[SG] May I take off my jacket?**

[NG] Yeah. Do you want something to drink?

**[SG] Yes, I would, actually. Water would be great.**

[NG] Water, or tea?

**[SG] Water. I mean, that's the theme for today isn't it?**

[NG] Coffee?

**[SG] Yes, sure that would be great.**

[NG] Bosnian or Espresso?

**[SG] What are you having?**

[NG] I don't know.

[SG] **Bosnian then.**

[NG] Yes. The concept of *dhimma* is originally an Islamic concept. It was really revolution[ary], that somebody said in the 7th century that you have to respect others. I'm not so sure that we can talk in a democratic, pluralistic society about the concept of *dhimma*, because it is not a concept of democratic society.

[SG] **Right.**

[NG] Even today, we cannot compare that concept, because that was the first step. Today, even we as Muslims have to accept this concept of respecting all peoples in the same way, from my perspective. And that was the first step in history. Things are changing from time to time. Today, we are in a democratic society, I think there is no place for *dhimma* because in a democratic society, people have the same rights. Today that means..., and *dhimma* was the first attempt to the respect others. That's maybe my very short answer on this issue.

[SG] **It was a legal basis for protection.**

[NG] Yes. Legal basis.

[SG] **Okay. Yes, we did talk about that last time, and in fact I have that transcribed.**

[NG] How can religious faith and forgiveness contribute to the escape of the cycle of violence?

[SG] **Yes, I'm very curious about that answer.**

[NG] Sometimes I think that we, when we talk about forgiveness, we forget the problem of the war criminals and who can forgive all people. From my perspective, only God can forgive all. You as a person can forgive somebody and it is very important from traditional textbooks of Islamic perspective, and nobody has the right to take the law in his own hands. You have to respect the bodies of the states at all levels. You have no right, from the Islamic perspective, if somebody kills your cousin or your father, you have no right to kill. You have to try [to find] the solutions in court. That is the only way. The other problem is the moral question. Who do you forgive? Somebody who is guilty for killing your sons, for example? Could you forgive? You can, maybe, or people will say, "Yes, I will forgive, but I'm not ready to forgive." Definitely you have no right to kill anybody if he has killed someone close to you.

[SG] **Now, I interject there, because we have discussed the Balkans, and that is bigger than Bosnia. And the cycle of revenge is actually stronger in other centuries in other places. Montenegro and Albania have a strong sense of**

**reciprocal justice, a cycle of revenge, blood feud, that is well known and documented in the Balkans. Less so in Bosnia, which is...**

[NG] In Bosnia that is not so. Even in Serbia or with the conflict of Albanians in Kosovo and Montenegro.

**[SG] Yes. And largely the blood feud and the cycle of revenge has been a means of, as I understand it, and maybe it is an incorrect understanding, is a means of trying to prevent a reciprocal violence in the absence of civil courts. In other words, when a legal system was not in place that broadly controlled all of the people, or a fair system that would consider all of the civilians of your area. It was more of a family...**

[NG] Yes. But even there we have some problems. We have to promote respect for civil courts. That is our duty also. It is not only a question of will you respect it or not? Without it, people would take justice in their own hands and then definitely everyone will have problems. Not only our people, but others.

[Coffee interruption]

[NG] There is also another issue. I'm not so sure that women have a good place in any religious tradition in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**[SG] How do you mean that?**

[NG] Well, if you look to the Orthodox or Catholic Church or Jewish community or Islamic community, there are few women who were highly educated in their own religious tradition. I'm not so sure but maybe you can ask others. Are there any professors among the Orthodox women or as Orthodox theologians, or among Catholics or among Muslims. Also, there are not many women who are highly educated. That is the first problem. The second is women in the leadership of the Islamic, Catholic and Orthodox communities. It's not a problem, really. I'm not so sure that they cannot be priests. But a woman cannot be an imam in Islamic tradition. But they can be a teacher, they can be a journalist, they can be a person who can educate children in a different way. And the role of all women is very important to me. It's very important in my community, because if you look at women, more than 50 per cent of our society is women, possibly more, and the role of a woman in the process of rebuilding Bosnian society is very, very important. I'm not so sure that we understand these problems, not only from of an Islamic perspective, but also from the other religious traditional perspectives. Maybe we can talk about agnostic and non-confessional persons. Maybe they can understand these problems better than people who are believers. Sometimes people do not really understand these problems.

**[SG] I'm in full agreement with what you're saying about the education of women. They have not had the same advantages in the society. Often not in the West either, at least not until recently. I'm not certain that that's the first**

requirement, that they be highly educated [in order] to be the voice of reconciliation. It seems to me that in two ways women play a very important role. Women in the conflict played a lesser role. I mean, in the first order, they were not the ones who carried the military weapons. We all know that there were women involved in the conflict, especially politically or ideologically. But in the first order they were not the ones who carried the weapons. Beyond that, they were the first to cross barriers because they were less suspect. If, for instance, in Mostar today a Croat young man crosses over to the East Side or a Muslim man crosses over to the West Side, he is still quite suspect. He may be attacked. Yet women can cross. They can trade, they can go to each others' markets.

[NG] Yes.

[SG] That's the one thing I'm looking at. So, women have more freedom. Although in society they have less freedom, in these situations they have more freedom. Secondly, in the absence of men, men who were killed in the war, whether it is a father or a son, women have had to play and take on an enlarged gender role, they are taking on the roles of men, and they are being employed in men's jobs. That's another area. But I'm also thinking of, as you have mentioned, the education of the next generation; the responsibility of raising children in society.

[NG] Yes, I agree. Sometimes women can go in places where men cannot. But I can ask the other question. Do women support their husbands or their sons or their cousins in their bad deeds? Did a man have support from women during the last war? And you can find, for example, if you look to a different problems in the Bosnian situation, I was very angry when I saw some women in the Serb parliament in Banja Luka. The women are engaged in all processes of understanding among people. Another impression, most women have a good role. But they can also be persons who do not support some activities. We do not have other possibilities. We have only the possibility to co-operate and to have dialogue and to have different perspectives and to respect others. Without that we will have a new war.

[SG] **Do I understand you to say that women, in trying to protect their family and their way of life, also have been complicit in the violence?**

[NG] Yes, sometimes. Because we didn't have much of a voice. I'm not in favour that we can split our lives, men and women. No. We are all creatures of God and we have our own duties here. But sometimes I have overheard women talking in favour of the war. This is so even if their husbands their sons and their cousins were in the war. We have to encourage them to talk against the war, to listen to their voice again such things. For example, the Women in Black in Belgrade had a bigger role to educate against the war. This was so not only in Bosnia but also in Kosovo. And there are some other groups even in Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia. The women have had a very important role in our lives. Even now in our theological texts, God created Adam and Eve. From our theological perspective it is very important to

understand what is the role of women and men in Islam. We have a common future and common responsibilities.

**[SG] Do you sense that in a new Bosnia there will be a civil society with equal rights, whether it is human rights or gender rights? Will women play a larger role in your Parliament and in your society than they have traditionally played in the former Bosnia?**

[NG] The problem is not only in Bosnian society. For example, women in Switzerland, are they so important? In other countries, we can talk about different countries in Scandinavia. Today we talk about gender rights. Today we have different problems in different ways. But from the Bosnian perspective, we can talk about our problems, I think that women have the same rights as men. Maybe they don't have as many positions as men. Even today in Bosnia there are so many women among Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox who are not educated. That is the problem of Bosnia-Herzegovina. I'm not talking only of elementary education. That's not the question. How many are educated in the sense of computer science or other things, or their understanding of human rights? So many people even today are laughing when I talk about human rights because some of them say that human rights is the new ideology today, not all in Bosnia but in the world. It is a new ideology. Yesterday we had a Marxist ideology, today we have a human rights ideology. I don't agree with those ideas because the respect of human rights is absolutely different from than a perspective of the questions of Marxism and socialist regimes. But maybe we can organise together some symposiums or some other types of discussion among different groups, or among different religious groups for women also. For Muslims, for Catholics, for Orthodox, to talk about their own role, not only in [their] communities, but in Bosnian society. There are so many examples from all over. Our Catholic Church, for example, many sisters from many different orders, work in hospitals and other efforts, and they help Muslims and all kinds of humans. Because, if I understand the right way the question of non-marriage in the Catholic tradition, you have to respect all mankind, not only men. They say yes. The other problem is that sometimes people don't understand in the right way, for example, sisters in the Catholic Church work. Or why Muslims today, we have Muslims today and they ask, "Why don't they work?" Or so many men today in Bosnia stay in their homes because there is no work. But the problem of Bosnian Muslims, we cannot compare ourselves with other Muslims in Europe, especially immigrants. I respect immigrants, I respect others. It is not a problem of respect for human rights. But people sometimes forget that Bosnian Muslims have a long tradition in European culture and civilisation. And I have no problem with the style of living if I go to London or New York because it is very similar. There are some differences from those from the villages, not only between countries. But the role of women in Bosnia-Herzegovina from all religious traditions is the same. I think the problem is [too little] education and the problem of not understanding religions in a new style. Today we have an absolutely new system and people cannot understand. Even the people in power do not understand today. Why is this so? Those people are the children of those from the Communist regime and they are trying to be democratic. How can a Prime Minister or a minister of foreign affairs be democratic? I cannot

believe that because he had many opportunities in the last [government], he had at everything and many people didn't have anything. Even today most people who are in power, today, I'm talking about, are children of the past regime. And many women who are now in their forties or fifties are the children of the past regime and they cannot understand the role of a woman in the new day. And we're looking today for someone to explain to us the problem of human rights in Bosnia Herzegovina. Is this supposed be a role of those from the totalitarian regime? There are so many affaires in Bosnia Herzegovina, so many problems among different parties and different persons. The role of the media is also very important. I don't know if you have a question about the media here or not ...

**[SG] No, I don't. If you want us talk about that, that is fine.**

[NG] This is also really a problem.

**[SG] Yes, and it is such a complex problem.**

[NG] Do journalists respect any ethical background?

**[SG] Are you speaking of Bosnian, or of Serbian?**

[NG] No, No. Bosnian. About Bošniak, Serbs and Croats, because it is the same problem. Do they respect any ethical background in the media? Do they respect the differences are among people and so on? For example, in Bosnia Herzegovina, if you look to the faculty of medicine or medical science, they don't have the subject of ethics. Or in the Faculty of Journalism. Maybe they have started to learn the subject last year. I think it is very important. Sometimes this is more important than law in some ways, because the other problem also is that we don't have any programmes about the role of women and society, but also in,

[Telephone interruption]

[NG] For example, the director of this radio station has said many times that our programme is very important for Bosnian society. I'm talking about our religious programme in the radio on Radio BH1. Because I told you each week we have one programme and we are talking about the same subject from a different perspective. It is important that listeners can listen and discuss about different perspectives and ways. Because I am a Muslim I'm not your enemy. Because you are Christian you're not my enemy. That is the problem of different theological parties and different groups and different communities who are trying to help. People are trying to imitate or copy God. And many people are trying to be false gods in this world. And that is another problem between people and that is a problem of the media. Many media are trying to explain to us that all believers who are not part of our society or against us. That cannot be a good way, not only for our civilisation, that we obey some scientific, for example Huntington, and maybe if I can say Fukuyama, were trying to explain that because we're not the same and then we will have war. No. We have to respect our differences and I am talking of local situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. So

many people even today are trying only to explain that the others are enemies. No. That cannot be the way to have peaceful co-existence in society. And that way we will always have only problems between people.

**[SG] Do you think these people are trying to describe the situation as they see it, or are they trying to prescribe the situation as it should be?**

[NG] Both ways. That means that there are so many good steps and other situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There are many, many media and some are better than two years ago. Today the music is very important. People exchanged different music styles and different registrations it on the TV and many people from different cities are going to a different part of Bosnia-Herzegovina and talking with people. Five years ago it was very difficult. For example, two years ago WCRP organised a conference in Banja Luka about Inter-religious dialogue and it was also a subject about media in that process. I was part of that group from Sarajevo that went there, and we're talking about these problems. It was a period when it was really difficult to be in Banja Luka even. Today it is much different. People go there and many people from Banja Luka come to Sarajevo and so on. Now, you know, a new TV station has started, BH TV 1 and we have a new radio station BH Radio 1, which started one year ago, and so on. There is so much good news from Bosnia Herzegovina. That means, from outside sometimes people get very tired of the problems of Bosnia and the Balkans and of Bosnia especially. But I think we have a new life in this country. And the other problem is that a common problem in this country is that many people don't have a job and they have to go find their cousins or family who were killed in the last war. Today this is not a paradise, but it also has not hell! [*Laughter.*] This is something like between paradise and hell.

**[SG] Like Purgatory or something. [More laughter.] Well, I'm happy that you say that because, when I talk to young people and students, I don't get that impression from them. Most of them are absolutely despairing about the future.**

[NG] I'm not a person who spreads pessimism. I as a believer, I have to believe in a better future than our present circumstance. And the media has a wrong way of informing persons here. That is maybe the problem among students, which is that everyday they can only read bad things from our society. This is the role of media. The other problem is that we have to spread optimism among believers because Christians, Muslims, Jews also believe that they will live forever when they die. Is that right?

**[SG] That's right.**

[NG] That means that fate is very important to encourage people to do good things in this life, in every stage of their life. Not only for one day, but throughout a person's life as a duty, to do good things. And students are sometimes despairing because they are listening to all people. People who are only talking about bad things. I'm not so sure, but people in Bosnia Herzegovina didn't have as many cars as they have today. Nobody is so hungry that they are dying because they have no food. No. The problem

is that before the war it was a different system. For example, a person was working in one factory all his life. Today, you have to fight for your own future. You have to find your own job. Nobody will say this is your job for you. They don't make a steel factory in Zenica which hires 25,000 people just for one company as was the case before. Zenica has maybe 50 or 100 thousand inhabitants. That is not New York or Hamburg which has 15 million people and if you have a company with 25,000 people, but is OK. But in Zenica you may need only 3000 people, but if you give a job for 25,000 people, and then you will sleep during your job. And that is the problem with our news situation because we cannot follow all of the dynamics in our society. And that is a problem with our professors in the faculties. They are children of the past regime. They do not spread optimism among the students. Rather, they spread pessimism. This is not our position. We have to fight for our own lives. Do you know how many people don't have jobs in Germany? I'm not so sure, but more than 3 million. In France many people don't have jobs. In other countries too. But the problem sometimes today, films and movies from different countries are showing us only the good side of life.

**[SG] Especially from America and Hollywood, right?**

[NG] I cannot be aggressive [ambitious?]. I cannot have a million dollars for today. I have enough for life. Of course, I will not be in Hawaii on holiday. I will be in Bosnia. I have to be here. In the summer many people from Scotland will be in their own countries, in their own homes also because they don't have money to go to Hawaii. Is that correct?

**[SG] That's right.**

[NG] Also, this is a problem of Bosnian society. People don't think with their own minds. No. If someone says something, most people will follow. That is another question that we can encourage people to think about.

**[SG] As religious people, you're saying?**

[NG] Absolutely.

**[SG] This is really a remarkable difference in the new Bosnian society where the media has played such a large role, is that, religious people have a reason to be positive about the future, to be optimistic.**

[NG] Absolutely.

**[SG] And one of the tasks of religious people is to spread optimism and be optimistic because they have a reason to be optimistic. They have a basis for a trust in God and therefore the future.**

[NG] Absolutely. Well we have, for example, a problem as believers, Muslims and Catholics and Orthodox, with very dirty streets. It is a problem not only in Sarajevo, but also in Pale, in Banja Luka, in Mostar...

**[SG] New York! New York has very dirty streets.**

[NG] For example, and you know were the source of the river Bosnian is? It it's in Ilidža. I don't know if you have had a chance to go there.

**[SG] Well, I know where Ilidža is. So these mountains right here nearby.**

[NG] Yes. People from different countries came to clean this area, also other places, and our people went there and littered paper and all sorts of things. As believers we have to spread the positive side of life. Things will be better.

**[SG] I would be curious about question number three, since you are a professor of ethics. It is about the relationship of individual guilt and distributed hatred or distrust. I don't think we talked about this last time.**

[NG] No, absolutely. From my perspective, individual guilt is the only way we can follow all of these problems. There is no collective guilt. If you look to the holy books, the Qur'an and the Bible, sometimes you can find some groups who accuse others of being guilty. And our history in different periods, it was the instrument of lies of both sides from different perspectives because people didn't have enough information, but they used it against others. But from my perspective, individual guilt is the only way that you can accuse somebody. A whole nationality or religious guilt group cannot be accused of anything. That is the perspective of our ethics and attitudes and definitely on a theological, Islamic perspective.

**[SG] Right. But on the street, it is commonly heard that all the..., and you place the nationality in the blank, are...**

[NG] ...Are the same.

**[SG] Those dirty, whoever. How do counter that?**

[NG] Because there was propaganda. It is not only a problem in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I can show you some books or some articles that are talking about last September in the United States or in some other places. We cannot say that all Arabs are the same. They are all dirty or they are all against democracy. No, we can only talk about totalitarian regimes of people who name those people. Even today, from my perspective, as I said, Boško can't absolutely even be compared with Milošević. He is Orthodox, he is Serb, but they are absolutely different. We can make a difference between people only with their own deeds. If you did that, then that is your deed. But somebody who helped people, whoever he was, is a good man. And people sometimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina were under great propaganda against others. For example, if you look, it was very interesting some news from 1993 or

1994 in a different radio station. It was terrible news. If you look in Bosnia-Herzegovina of how Serbs used Muslims in very bad ways calling them Turks, *Balia* or,

**[SG] What does *Balia* mean?**

[NG] *Balia*? It was a special class in the Turkish Ottoman Empire. They were people from villagers who were not educated.

**[SG] Peasants?**

[NG] Yes, peasants. And today they used this term for all Muslims. Like Muslims or Bošniaks sometimes used for Serbs that term Četnik or Vlasi and so on. All Croats, they are all, you know, that during World War II Muslims were Croatian flowers. You heard about that?

**[SG] Is it the way they were executed?**

[NG] No, no. It was the period where Pavelic said that Muslims were the good part of the Croatian nation. They are our flowers. And he used his own flowers against the Serbs. There are so many different names. We are encouraging people to understand that everyone has his own soul and that we are creatures of God. Only God creates originals. If you look, for example, to aesthetics, the theory of aesthetics, and they say that it is very important in that field of science that all persons imitate God. Only God creates originals, because in every person there is part of the soul of God. And that understanding in our tradition, the Islamic tradition, is that is a bigger sin to hurt a person than to destroy the Ka'ba. And you know what the Ka'ba means for Muslims. It is a bigger sin to hurt a person because every person is God's creature, but the Ka'ba is built by man. And it is very important to respect every individual. And you, as an individual, are responsible for your own deeds. The Qur'an says, and there are some other sentences in the Qur'an, that say that God will not ask you about the deeds of your parents or about your cousins. You will answer for your own deeds. There are so many statements such as this in the Qur'an.

**[SG] This is a beautiful concept that needs to be better known.**

[NG] Yes. I don't agree and I don't support ideas that all people from one nation are the same. No.

**[SG] Correct. That wouldn't be from the Qur'an.**

[NG] Yes. Definitely. It also cannot be from the Bible. And we cannot say that all people from Israel are like Ariel Sharon. That cannot be. And we cannot say that all Muslims are like Osama bin Laden.

**[SG] Right.**

[NG] What that means, it is impossible way to explain such things. Or Osama bin Laden is, for example, an Arab. How can someone who is Muslim be like him?

[SG] **Well, even his own family isn't like him.**

[NG] Yes, that's right. People are trying to use certain problems to create a special image about such things.

[SG] **That's right. That's all another topic about Islam and images and the media which should be fascinating, but for which we do not have time. When you talk about aesthetics, imitation, we are really getting back to creation and the creator once again. This is a picture, this is an image, even though no one was there to witness it, we have a thought, an illustration, an image, if that is not a bad term, of how things looked or how things ought to look ethically.**

[NG] Yes.

[SG] **Justice. Legal systems that were built on ideals. And that is in essence what I'm trying to look at in frameworks of restoration. I've had problems with this word because for some people this means restoring the communist period. That's not what I mean. For others it means bringing back the old times as something else. I think what I'm trying to get at is on two levels. One is that in some way Bosnia had multinational communities here that lived peacefully together. So that is an element of historical restoration that we can look at. It was observable and it was documented.**

[Telephone interruption.]

[SG] **The larger framework that I'm looking at is not located specifically in a historical circumstance. It is the concept of 'to make whole again', and the picture is that of creation. We have an image, an illustration, an idea - not an ideology - but an idea of what things ought to look like and this is what we are working for; and that religious people, because they have this picture from God, from a transcendent God who is a creator in each one of us and in our society, then we are participants in this restoration process. Does that have any resonance at all with you?**

[NG] Yes. That is very important, because as a person who believes in the creator, but I am his creature and he created me, there is a part of my creating in me, not only in me, but also in you and all persons. The Qur'an talks about that. Definitely no problem about a certain justice and about trying to have a peaceful co-existence of among people in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a problem of comparing a prior life of the last regime. Many people in Bosnia Herzegovina, especially believers, they don't have the sense that it was a period that was very lucky or happy for believers. They had many problems. Even with their own people, not only with the regime. This was so in the churches, mosques and synagogues. Many of those people of that period were only spies of the regime and they were trying to talk against religion, because

religion was very unpopular at that period. And then were talking about new challenges facing people in Bosnia Herzegovina. How can we try to build a new system and a new style of life? How can we be a part also of the system that will encourage us to have the same style of life that way have experienced from the last regime? Sometimes I think that people who were very educated in Bosnia Herzegovina cannot make a difference between different terms because in this period in science you have the so-called scientific terms. Even this term, 'restoration of justice', sometimes it is not acceptable for people and they don't understand the right meaning of this term.

[SG] **Right.**

[NG] This term can help us to have a better understanding between people. Definitely God will help us with specific day of justice. He will give us justice.

[Knock on the door. Interruption.]

[NG] In our situation we cannot understand this term, that we have to follow ideas from the holy books.

[SG] **Right.**

[NG] That every one has the right to live and express the religion in his own way. If God created us and gave us religions, I am not responsible because I wasn't born in Scotland or in Indonesia, I was born here, and that is the choice of my creator. That is not my choice. I didn't choose my parents. I didn't choose the time I was born. The Creator gave me and created me and my duty today is to explain not only to my fellows, but also to my friends, that they have to follow everything that God suggests to us. Sometimes we follow different suggestions from different political leaders from different people and so on. In our situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 'restorative justice' is interesting, but it is a new term. People don't understand sometimes the term and definitely after you have finished your dissertation it will be very interesting to us to know more about the term and what you have said.

[SG] **And what I mean by it!**

[NG] Yes, of course.

[SG] **Well, I hope that term is also characterised by the experience here and the context. It is not something simply Western that comes from Scotland or America. The term 'restoration' should actually have meaning in its context.**

[NG] Yes. Sometimes people are trying to compare the situation in South Africa with the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And they had this Truth and Reconciliation Commission and people are trying to make a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Bosnia Herzegovina, but that commission cannot function without different parts

of our society. Every member of our society is important and our understanding of Bosnia-Herzegovina has all changed.

[interruption]

**[SG] That's right. You mentioned just before the interruption a very important point, that we know, as religious people, each of our faiths have not only the creation, but also the culmination of history in God's justice.**

[NG] Yes.

**[SG] This is also part of the picture. In other words, we live between this tension of creation, it's fallenness, and a future, which we know will again be restored...**

[NG] Yes.

**[SG] ...in a just way, in a whole way - again, to use that expression, "to make whole". And that is the framework I'm trying to put it in.**

[NG] Yes.

**[SG] Not that it will be accomplished by us without God. I mean, that would be another idealism, that is, that it would be accomplished on our own.**

[NG] That means only people who pray every day to God - I'm not talking about people who are traditional pray-ers, but people who understand their own prayers, and why they pray to God - they can understand what justice means because we're asking for justice from God. We're asking for forgiveness. We're asking from God, then we have to understand when somebody is guilty, for a example, if he is my neighbour, and had prayers with me, how can he be guilty if doesn't believe as I do. Our faith and our understanding of religion should be not only to understand people from only our tradition, but to understand others also as God's creatures. It is not our position to only understand our people and to assert that they are the best. No. That is childish. You can find evil persons from history as an example of this. Also, we talk about the prophets. There are some wonderful examples of history from the lives of the prophets. They had many problems. And they tried to solve those problems with their own people and even with different people. As you know, what Joseph said when he was in prison and after that. "Today you are free", he said to his brothers, "I will forgive you." In the same way Muhammed, [p.b.u.h.] said this when he went to Mecca. He said, "OK, all of you are free. I have nothing against you for the deeds that you did." In Bosnia-Herzegovina, we have to protect and we have to support all of the activities of the court in the Hague because this is the first time in Balkan history that somebody from outside has tried to explain to all peoples what has happened here. Not only to one nation, but also to all the nations. And they're doing their job and we have to do our job. Sometimes I think we do not have good financial support for some activities or projects to implement here in Bosnia-Herzegovina. If

we had some financial support then we could organise projects here in Bosnia Herzegovina in order to educate people in a different understanding about restorative justice, forgiveness, and justice from different perspectives and different communities. People don't make comparisons. It's very important for someone to understand justice. After justice we can talk about forgiveness, because God is very concerned with justice. In the end he will hear and judge at the end of our lives. But also, everyone on this earth has a duty to explain to people what justice means among people. There are three kinds of justice in the Islamic understanding of life. That is an ethical question. There is justice between God and man. That is the first level. The second level is justice between people, and the third level is justice between people who are alive and people who are dead. That means we do not have a right to talk about bad things of people who have died. Even, for example, if someone has died who is our cousin or father or son, and they had some obligations towards others, we have to finish and complete those obligations. For example, if my son died and he has some duties or he has to return money...

**[SG] Legal obligations.**

[NG] ...yes, legal obligations, then I have to finish that. Those are the three kinds of justice. Justice between God and men will be in the other world. Today we say that nobody can go to the other world without finishing all problems between people. We have in our theological understanding that in the other world, God will ask us to finish our problems among ourselves and after that he will be our judge. That's very important. And definitely - there is a sentence in the Qur'an - you have the right to ask for justice. And it is better for you and this is closer to the high level of the spirit to forgive. Close to the *taqwa*, behind the level of obedience in this world is *taqwa*. In every period of life God is present, and the meaning of God's importance in your life. And we talk about those problems in our understanding of our religion. The only way, if you cannot find justice, is to forgive.

**[SG] I understand.**

[NG] Yes. That's the understanding of Islamic tradition. And there are some sentences in the Qur'an that support this.

**[SG] Do you sense that there is freedom in forgiveness?**

[NG] Freedom in forgiveness? There is some kind of freedom in forgiveness, but we cannot ask from a [whole] nation to forgive. Forgiveness is an individual thing. That means that every individual can forgive. We cannot say to all Christians, "Will you forgive all Muslims", or to all Muslims, "Will you forgive all Christians?" No. The individual is very important in our understanding of our religion, and if the individual has agreed to face the different problems, then this can be the first step of understanding the problem.

**[SG] You raise a very difficult question at this point. A couple of years ago Christians from the West made a pilgrimage across Europe to Turkey, retracing**

**the paths of the Crusades, requesting forgiveness for their forefathers who committed the Crusades. I have always wondered if that had any meaning at all in the Islamic understanding of justice and forgiveness. I think most Christians today are embarrassed by the Crusades. True Christians. They should be. But at the same time, we feel a helplessness to do anything about it. It's history. And I think this is an expression of true desire to see a better relationship with the peoples of the Islamic faith and to actually state that this is our confession. We're sorry for this and we beg your forgiveness.**

[NG] Yes, with that question I think that many people, even religious people, use different things, the Crusades for example, and Muslims use against all Christians some facts that happened in the United States or other places. In other places many, many Christians, even priests, use this against Muslims. Look, and they are even ready to destroy all of which our civilisation is raised to. I think that is a very wrong perspective. From my perspective it is very important that every individual understands what is his duty in this world. And in this way they are trying to educate and to prepare all other persons to understand what is happening. What is this drama in this world? What is life? Why do you believe the way you believe? There are so many questions to ask ourselves. I have many questions, am I so good of a person that I can go to Paradise without any problems? No, I'm not. If I look at my life I would find so many bad things. On that level then I can be, if I can say, a decent person, a person who in the view of Allah or God is satisfied with me and I'm satisfied with God, then I am ready to forgive somebody, because even Jesus, Isa, peace be upon him, said, "My God, forgive them for they know not what they do." So many people are doing what they do because they simply follow others. Many rural people and others in urban areas will follow political leaders because they believe they're good or they believe that he has some understanding different from others. But he uses and manipulates different people and makes so many Muslims and does so many terrible things. And if we teach people about faith, then everyone has to say some words. That means, I believe in God and I will respect and obey God, or I respect others, and so on. That means after that you will follow in some ways of very important teacher and the books that you read. You can read some books whose writings are against others and you will go in that way. If you read books of a different author, my position is first to read the holy books and good interpretations. You can, for example, read in the languages of the ex-Yugoslav nations different things. If you read it, for example, about the Draga Mihailović, or about Vuk Karadžić, those are different persons. Or if you look at today at [author], who was the inspiration for Slobodan Milošević, but there are so many other people. For example, [indistinguishable], a singer. He was very popular in Bosnia during the war. He has a wonderful thing about Grbavica. But in Grbavica in that time most of the people were Serbs during that period because it was a line between the two parts of Sarajevo. He as an individual said no, this is not my style of life. I will help these people. So many people in Britain, and in as States too, during the war in Bosnia said OK, this is no good. We have to do something. But many, many others are sleeping so well that even today they are sleeping while people are dying in India or in Palestine or in other places. We have to be on the right side even if it is against our own fellows. We mustn't follow our fellows. We have to be leaders. People will

understand. Sometimes many, many people gather in front of imams or priests and that is very interesting. And many priests and imams follow their own. That cannot be good for us. We have to be people who will explain and have distance between our fellows and bad deeds. That is the way of our structure of justice. Of course, we can theoretically discuss this and we can go to people and ask them what they think. Many people will say I am not sure. But if you look to the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina, today is better than three or four years ago. Only that we need a visa for every country.

[Laughter ]

**[SG] Vjeko Šaje, I don't know if you know him or not. He is doing work among the faith communities in reconciliation. He mentioned that today army generals who were in the JNA and fired upon Sarajevo are now able to buy apartments here in the very city they tried to destroy, without being brought to justice. And this is happening without any particular outcry from the people because there is such weariness about the war. People just want to get on with their lives. Is there a sense and which justice is only going to be done at the Hague?**

[NG] Well, that is the problem. The other issue is that many people are trying to forget.

**[SG] Yes.**

[NG] Maybe in the next 20 years in some way we will say again, "OK, *you* committed these wrongs." There are many theories about Bosnia-Herzegovina. I don't if you have the book by David Smith about countries and the war and peace between 1991 and 1996, I think. He is a British scientist but he lives in Norway and works for the Peace Institute in Oslo. It is very interesting. He characterised the wars in Slovenia and Croatia as Serbian aggression against Croats and Slovenians. And then he was talking about the war in Bosnia and he said that the war was a civil war. Civil war! And we asked him, OK do know where Srebrenica is? He said to me, yes. Do you know where Belgrade is? He said yes. Is Belgrade in Bosnia-Herzegovina? No. Who commanded the action in Srebrenica during July 1995? Who? Who supported them?

**[SG] It's from Serbia, of course.**

[NG] Definitely.

**[SG] It's not wholly a civil war that was internal.**

[NG] There is an absolute difference between justice and morality. If you as a general of the ex-JNA army, if you were on the hills of Sarajevo ordering the siege in the war, and maybe destroyed your own apartment and because there is no justice in this country, you can come and buy your own apartment without any problems.

That's not only a question of justice. That means this person is an immoral person. But justice and morality are not the same. It cannot be the same. Morality is very important for all believers, but I don't believe that people who are killing civilians on the hills can be moral. I cannot believe that. Maybe some of them can be. But that's immoral.

**[SG] Is it immoral for the citizens of Sarajevo to do *nothing* about these immoral men?**

I don't know which way we can use, or I am not a person who can say that only one group or nation or religious group, they do not have a right, and so on. But it is very difficult, for example, 10 minutes ago my friend from [indistinguishable] phoned me. Originally he is from Jasenica. That's a small town in Bosnia-Herzegovina near Tuzla. Today it is under control in the Republika Srpska and Muslims from that town, most of them are buying and selling their own homes. They do not even have the right to live there. This is 2002. So some of them will return to villages. They will not return to towns because the JNA general will buy these apartments. But many people - not only Muslims, but also citizens of Sarajevo - others, Christians have the same problems because they lost their own flats. It is a question of morality. I believe that most people in this situation don't have respect for morals. They respect power. And power and morals cannot be in the same field. Sometimes we have nothing to give the people. But if you preach all the day and every day only about morals, people will not follow you. In spite of that, we have to continue our mission. Everyone has a mission on this earth, to promote good deeds and to promote the respect of others. That is our tradition despite a lot problem here in Sarajevo and other places. But Vjeko's point is very interesting and Vjeko is a very good boy. I know him. I can't say boy, of course, he's not so young.

[Laughter ]

**[SG] Professor Grabus, thank you for your time.**

[NG] I don't know if I helped you very much.

**[SG] Very much. By far you have given the most thought to these questions and the most insightful answers. And it is my responsibility to make some sense of many voices.**

[NG] Yes.

**[SG] And I don't know what the results will be, but you have made a great contribution to the effort.**

[NG] Yes. When you finish your job, you will send me a copy of your dissertation.

**[SG] Of course, of course. Now, you may not agree with me, [laughter], but that will be my fault!**

[NG] No, it is not a question of whether I agree with you or not. You have to do a job and I do mine also. My suggestion is that you respect all differences here. You as a scientist from outside, you should only have facts here. And I think also you should encourage people to face their own wrongs and deeds and so on. The future is in front of us, God will help us, I think.

**[SG] I think so to. Otherwise I wouldn't be doing this.**

[NG] Yes.

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Jelena Ilić**

SOC archdiocese offices, Banja Luka

9 October 2002

**[SG] I am speaking with Jelena Ilić who will be answering some questions from the women's questionnaire. Thank you for helping us in this way. First, why don't you tell me a little about why we've met here, where you work here in the offices and what your role is here?**

[JI] This is a voluntary work. I am in charge of finances, secretary work, treasury.

**[SG] The tape doesn't tell us where we are. Where are we?**

[JI] It's an NGO as a part of the Orthodox Church – the archdiocese – in Banja Luka. It's an NGO of young people, so the main goal is..., we can say it's modern day missionary work. That's what we do through different panels, going to different journeys, like pilgrimages, different monasteries, social gatherings, helping poor people, children. We organised an Easter concert for kids, the education of Sunday school teachers in order to prevent kids from using drugs. We didn't do it in a regular kind of way, through leaflets. We printed a book so we can help Sunday school teachers in a practical way. In a contemporary way we tried to explain to them what LSD is all about, and ecstasy. There was this professor from Belgrade who came and then 150 different priests attended that and it was a big thing for them. They were fascinated by the lecture in a modern way but we tried to make it understandable for them.

**[SG] Well, I want to ask some questions about the role of women in society towards reconciliation and how they may help in society in positive ways. It really is for women who are religious, not just women in general. And how our faith, our belief in God, positively affects us in this direction. So I would welcome it anytime you want to bring in your thoughts on faith, belief, God, the church anytime you like. One thing you mentioned is Sunday school. How does that actually function? Do you have the liturgical worship then do you have a second hour where the children come?**

[JI] Nothing is happening in the church itself but it happens in schools. So as just another subject in school. In Belgrade, Serbia Sunday school is now introduced in schools, only in the first grade of primary school. But later on kids come for some workshops that are organized within the church.

**[SG] So this is what we call religious education. It doesn't happen on Sunday at all.**

[JI] So there are these NGOs that are organizing these different workshops for kids. We have, now we organized this kindergarten that started just recently within the church.

**[SG] Good. Are you originally from Banja Luka?**

[JI] Yes.

**[SG] So some of these questions I ask about the war might not - since you're from Banja Luka - might not be quite appropriate. Were you or your family directly affected by the war and if so, how?**

[JI] Thankfully none of my family took part in the war. I was not affected or my family, there was no destruction of my home or anything. Maybe some friends got killed or acquaintances in war, of course, but otherwise no. Of course it caused some pain and poverty and things like that.

**[SG] What sorts of things did you see happen here in Banja Luka?**

[JI] I studied in Belgrade. I was actually spared being here during the worst time here.

**[SG] What years were you in Belgrade?**

[JI] From '92 till '96. We didn't have anything like a real classic war here in Banja Luka. But it happened that for 45 days Banja Luka had a black out. So poverty was just growing then. You could find obituaries of young people, young men who died throughout the city. All those convoys of people, Serbs fleeing the Krajina in Croatia, they were all going through Banja Luka. So the streets were full of people, many of the refugees sleeping in the streets. People of Banja Luka were making tea or coffee for people. People were literally sleeping on the floors in apartments.

**[SG] Were you particularly religious, practicing your faith before the war? Or did the war in some way make you more interested in your faith?**

[JI] It was a time of maturing in '92 when the war started and I finished high school. It wasn't so much that the war influenced my interest in faith but it was just because, it just happened so that the war started and I finished the high school and it was the time of maturing and that it just happened.

**[SG] So did the war make you more interested in your faith?**

[JI] I don't think so.

**[SG] And why are you interested in religion?**

[JI] It was a part of my upbringing in my family. My father was a JNA officer. He was a believer and we lived in this apartment building of 12 floors and literally everybody was communist. And we experienced problems because of that. From a very early age I was taught to have respect for faith but also with this process of maturing came this interest for faith. There was a certain amount of spite because we lived in that kind of environment among other officers and communists, so maybe we did it out of spite. There was nothing bad actually in that because it was just this thing that was in a way forbidden for me to confess openly, which actually just aroused more interest in me.

**[SG] Because it was forbidden?**

[JI] Yeah, in a way because I was a little kid and then I went through my teenage period.

**[SG] Is there a difference for you between religion and faith?**

[JI] Yes. Faith is something personal that's between me and God. I'm not a theologian, that's how I see it. Religion is church as an institution, priests, then customs and habits and everything, tradition.

**[SG] Then I'm going to use the term faith in the discussion since that relates to you more personally. Does your faith help you overcome anxieties of the future?**

[JI] Yes.

**[SG] How?**

[JI] I'm not a theologian.

**[SG] That's why I'm asking you. I don't want a theologian's answer.**

[JI] A part of the reason is that I actually joined this NGO and this modern missionary approach to the whole thing that people will at least read portions of the Bible and see it through these eyes.

**[SG] So reading the Scriptures is important to you?**

[JI] I think it is even though I didn't read it myself a lot. Liturgy as well. Also we had this seminar "Liturgy after liturgy".

**[SG] Good. Do you think that faith can contribute to overcoming hatreds and animosities in Bosnia-Herzegovina?**

[JI] Yes. If we were all believers I don't think that this kind of bad thing would happen.

**[SG] Orthodox believers?**

[Translator] Believers in general. I think of all. If the Muslims were believers and Catholics...

**[SG] OK. Let her say it.**

[JI] Yes. Exactly what he [Translator] said.

**[SG] No, no, I want you to say it.**

[JI] I think if all of them were believers, Muslims as well, if they didn't leave their religion and church, the whole thing wouldn't have happened. The Serbs were the ones who actually left their church most, in great numbers.

[SG] **In the communist period.**

[JI] Percentages and statistically it's proven that this was the case.

[SG] **And if people came back to their respective faiths then the war wouldn't have happened if they practiced their faith more?**

[JI] That's my opinion.

[SG] **Let me ask you several questions about women specifically. Many people want to say well, this nationality, say the Muslims, suffered the most, or the Orthodox community suffered the most or the Croats suffered the most. So the division and nomenclatures are split by nationalities. But if we look at it differently we might be able to split it more by gender, men and women. And do you think that women of all nationalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina were especially victimized by the war?**

[JI] I think so.

[SG] **In what ways?**

[JI] First of all a woman is a mother. And many of them lost their children. They weren't killed in great numbers themselves but just by the fact that they lost their children. Of course they were victimized by means of rape and other things. But first of all it's because a woman is a mother. And a sister, that is very important.

[SG] **Well, do you think that women can play a special role in reconciling the different ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina?**

[JI] Yes, they can but they don't have it. This is the Balkans and it's this mentality. Women were not seen in politics before the war and women are just not..., you don't think about women, you don't ask her anything. Now it's a somewhat different situation.

[SG] **Do women need official positions to be reconcilers?**

[JI] She has a great influence on upbringing of her kids and within her family. But she would have to be present in these official positions so that maybe these things that happened would have been prevented. In different ministries and the police so she could spread her positive energy.

[SG] **Let's talk about that just a little bit. You use this term 'positive energy'. What is that? How does it work?**

[JI] I think that family is a very important thing for women. That's the first priority for me. I'm not talking about students or anyone but I'm talking about women. By that very fact she fights for her family. And if she's in politics then she will be more committed to whatever she's fighting for in the regard to her country or whatever. I think generally women are more joyous, happier, more positive, and men are really not.

**[SG] So, when you talk about this positive energy that women have, it is in contrast to men who do things differently?**

[JI] Women express themselves more freely in their conversations, they are subtle. They engage in conversation in a more spontaneous way. It's not good to generalise things, though.

**[SG] But it's probably true that women think of the family first even in politics. What do men think of first? What do you think? In politics...**

[JI] I think it's career. My father died when I was a kid but he was a wonderful father. But when I look at my husband or my friends... he spends his whole day at work and he can be home by 6 o'clock but then he can stay a little longer. He'll stay for another hour but a woman will say, "It's six o'clock and I have to go home because my kids are waiting for me." I don't have children myself. I recently lost my baby at the end of my pregnancy. Even though I don't have children at home I hurry home because of him and still my husband, even though he's a wonderful husband, he can stay at work just a little bit longer. I still think that women just have this different kind of attitude towards family. For me personally that's the most important thing. And I think that the Orthodox faith actually is putting a very big emphasis on family.

**[SG] So, maybe this is an overgeneralization, but if men think about career first they're thinking of themselves first. If women are thinking of family they're thinking of others first.**

[JI] Yeah, I think so.

**[SG] Do you think it's easier for women to reconcile with other people?**

[JI] Yes. Men are stubborn.

**[SG] And women aren't?**

[JI] It's more often said that women are more stubborn. For the sake of the peace in the house I think eventually women will loosen up.

**[SG] So they'll come to some, what shall we say, diplomatic arrangement for the sake of peace in the home.**

[JI] Just as the way she would bring peace in the family and also reconcile and forgive faster she would do the same thing in politics.

**[SG] Do you have much encounter with other national groups of Croats, Bośniaks?**

[JI] Yes. The best friend I ever had is this friend of mine who lives in Vienna and I see her twice a year at least and she's Muslim. She left Banja Luka at the beginning of the war in '92.

**[SG] And you see her a couple of times a year but maybe there aren't very many Muslims here now and they don't know the situation that well. It's difficult to have too many relations when they're not here, right?**

[JI] Actually, there are very few Muslims left in Banja Luka and maybe a little bit more Croats, so I'm in touch with Croats much more than with the Muslims. My husband also comes from a mixed marriage because his mother is a Croat.

**[SG] Before the war though you had friends with Croats and especially your best friend was Muslim. That was normal.**

[JI] My mother's side of the family actually lived in this other part of Banja Luka called Mejdan across the river and that's predominantly Muslim, that used to be a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood. But we had really good relationships with our neighbours because they used to come to us for Christmas or different occasions and then we went to them for Ramadan.

**[SG] Do you think that women are generally more religious than men?**

[JI] No.

**[SG] Men are more religious than women or it's about the same?**

[JI] I think about the same. There are different reasons why women and men become believers.... like women can become a believer also because of some emotional things or because of her family or because it's tradition, but when a man becomes a believer then he studies his faith very meticulously and when he becomes a believer then he *is* a believer. I'm talking about true believers.

**[SG] Do you sense that since the war women have taken on additional roles in society, especially roles that normally were done by men?**

[JI] Yes. I think there has to be more women in these official positions. I was delighted to see yesterday for the first time in my life a woman taxi driver in Banja Luka. We didn't have in our family male and female things to do, like work. I have an older brother, he used to cook. And I was painting windows and doors. In Banja Luka that's not the case and in Bosnia-Herzegovina in general, women are supposed to do women's jobs. Mom cooks meals and father reads newspapers.

**[SG] And those rules are changing somewhat, aren't they?**

[JI] Yes.

**[SG] Let's talk a little bit about children since you work with children. Is there a way that your faith can guide you in teaching children about love, hatred and forgiveness?**

[JI] Yes.

**[SG] And that's probably what you're doing. Is it in some way, besides teaching about ecstasy and marihuana, you're teaching about...**

[JI] We didn't do a lot on this part of... it was more of a help for children. We didn't do many of those workshops, we are planning to do them, but we haven't done them a lot. There are more artistic forms of expressing... We work much more with youth than with kids. It's our plan to work with kids. There was this event on promoting this album "*Songs Above East and West*" in this Hard Rock Café. The words, the lyrics of the songs were those of archbishop Nikolaj Velimirović and the lyrics were his words, his texts but they were done in a rock music fashion.

**[SG] This is Nikolaj in Sarajevo?**

[JI] He died some years ago. But he was one of the biggest theologians and a spiritual man in the Orthodox Church. There were a lot of young people present there and for the first time the Orthodox Church was represented in that kind of way. And the very title was "*Songs Above the West and the East.*"

**[SG] That was here in Banja Luka?**

[JI] Yes.

**[SG] There's a Hard Rock Café here, too?**

[JI] It's not the real one.

**[SG] I trust that you will have children again another time. May you experience God's blessings in that way. Would it be important for you to bring your children up in the Orthodox faith?**

[JI] Yes.

**[SG] Why?**

[JI] I saw many of my friends during the communist period who were not brought up that way. They were lost practically in that respect that they were not believers at the beginning of the war. Because they didn't believe in God, they were unbelievers, they let all kinds of ideologies to be taken by these things. And to go to this other bad side and to commit many, many bad things. That's a lesson for me so I'll try hard that my kids don't experience that.

**[SG] Do you think that children of this war or the youth of this war in your case will again see war in their lifetime?**

[JI] I hope it doesn't happen, but if the International Community leaves this place then it's possible to have another war. My Mom experienced the Second World War and then this one now. And my grandmother she experienced three wars. So I don't have really high hopes that we won't have another war. I think this approach that we are like modern day missionaries among our people but also those on the side of Muslims, Catholics, I think that's one of the solutions. So that they attract many more people because real

believers, true believers would not engage in war. And bringing back faith into families. So we don't let that thing that's happening in the West happen to us, too, that there are so many broken homes.

**[SG] You used the term, it is right, I mean that's the problem... many people think that the West is the answer. Their understanding of the West is very superficial. It's very one-sided views usually oriented towards, you know, what things you can have and positional things.**

[JI] The thing is that we should accept those things that come from the West that are good and reject those that are bad, but countries like Russia or us here that are in transition the problem is that first those things that are bad come.

**[SG] And unfortunately often the things that are bad are most attractive. I wanted to ask a question, you used the term missionary, or at least that's what the translation was. Would it be your wish to see Muslims become Orthodox?**

[JI] They used to be.

**[SG] You don't want to see them come back to the church?**

[JI] What happened, happened.

**[SG] So your understanding of the missionary is that you're ministering among your own national people.**

[JI] The situation is specific here because Serbian people left the church. So we just need to bring them back.

**[SG] Do you think that women see that religion was the cause of the war?**

[JI] No. Personally, myself, I don't see it. And women around me don't see it. But I think unbelievers think that religion is the cause of war.

**[SG] And therefore would have a hard time actually coming back to the church if they think that the church is the reason for the war?**

Not just women but both women and men.

**[SG] Do you think that there would be a time again in Bosnia-Herzegovina where people of different faiths can live together in harmony or without fear?**

[JI] I think we could live together but without this brotherhood and unity element all of us within our own groups.

[phone interruption]

[JI] So that these differences is something that we put an emphasis on. I overheard your conversation with Vlada [SOC deacon] and he said it actually the way I would put it as well. I cannot remember exactly what he said but I know that he said it the way I would say it.

**[SG] So do you sense the inter-ethnic border here in Bosnia is helpful or a hindrance?**

[JI] I think it's a good thing.

**[SG] So there's a sense in which each has their own space and they live within it.**

[JI] A lot of bad things happened, a lot of crimes were committed, so if we live together again as if nothing happened, I don't think that's possible. People from the International community actually don't understand that and they want to put us together, to bring us together again at all costs. We will be one country Bosnia-Herzegovina and it's better for us just to leave us like this with two entities. You would have to understand that when the Yugoslav team is playing, when Yugoslavia won the basketball championship in the United States, Banja Luka was literally set on fire. I have no feelings whatsoever when I see the Bosnian flag when Bosnian team is playing. It's something new, a new country, a new flag, it didn't exist ever before.

**[SG] Do you feel yourself more Serbian, more Yugoslavian in the sense of Serbia-Montenegro?**

[JI] Not just me. But I guarantee you that everyone in Banja Luka would say the same thing.

**[SG] I go back here to your best friend in 1992 who's Muslim. These days are gone?**

[JI] No. She was here recently and we spent a couple of days together.

**[SG] No, but I mean in terms of living side by side and going to school.**

[JI] I'm maybe not the best person, I am somewhat of a nationalist here and I don't think it can happen.

**[SG] So your child when it grows up wouldn't have the same experience you had?**

[JI] I don't know, maybe it will have it. I never had problems with Croats or Muslims personally. I have people, friends, who I know that live in Sarajevo who left Banja Luka and when they are here for business we get in touch, we talk, we get together. But it's just getting together, there is not this intimate relationship anymore, it doesn't exist. A lot of time has gone by and a lot of bad things happened. My friend in Vienna is an exception.

**[SG] But you do have separate lives now. I mean that's part of the thing, your lives are just being drawn in different directions.**

[JI] I don't think there's anything wrong with being a nationalist because you love your nation as long as you are not a chauvinist. There's this difference because a chauvinist hates or doesn't like really the other nation, but a nationalist loves his nation.

**[SG] OK, we would use the term racist, I think. Chauvinist in English is more between sexes.**

[JI] Many people from the outside like Westerners would take nationalism as chauvinism or as you said racism.

**[SG] OK. I think I understand. And there is a positive side to nationalism. Again in English we have a different word because nationalism - even though nationalism has a positive side to it - it often has a negative side, too. If we want to express the positive side of nationalism we use the word patriotism. All these linguistic terms... I would finish with the question about religion, faith. Do you think that religions and faith will continue to separate people or that will help maybe people live together again?**

[JI] I hope that it'll happen, that faith in God will not separate people and divide people but bring them together. There was a school organized in Kotor, Montenegro, "Liturgy after liturgy". It was the Orthodox world representatives from Bulgaria, the Balkans. There are differences between the Greek Orthodox Church and Bulgarian Orthodox Church and Serbian Orthodox Church. We were all united even though there were differences, there were a couple of NGOs within the church and other religious representatives of these different churches, but we were united. So through the faith in God we were able actually to come to terms with all these differences because the Montenegrin Church had these problems within itself and then the Bulgarian Church actually helped this Montenegrin Church to be separated. Yet, even though they were present there we were all united. I'm talking about church as an institution.

**[SG] So at least within the Orthodox world, religion helped bring you together. What about Muslims and Croats? Will religion help them?**

[JI] I think it will help. This was my experience within the Orthodox Church this summer. If we managed to agree on different things within the Orthodox Church I don't see the reason why it shouldn't or couldn't happen with Croats or Muslims.

**[SG] What about the Ferhadija mosque?**

[JI] Most of the people in Banja Luka, believers and original people from Banja Luka, would tell you that it was the biggest stupidity to destroy that mosque because, if not for other reasons, then it had a very big historical value. And for the fact that it was a place of worship, a holy place.

**[SG] It would be difficult to replace that historic mosque because it is so destroyed. The most they can do is collect a few of the original stones...**

[JI] Uneducated people did that actually. And I'm sad for the fact that they just look through that single act of destruction and they judge other Serbs. I am supposing that your next question would be what happened that day when they were laying the foundation stone.

**[SG] No, I'm not interested in that specific day. I know what happened, but I'm interested to know in your opinion: Would it be a good thing to rebuild it? Even though the historic mosque is gone, would it be an important symbol to have that mosque? Or is it just going to be a big problem?**

[JI] My thinking is that the mosque should be rebuilt. It's not going to be that old as it used be. If only five Muslims were left to live in Banja Luka then they need to have a place of worship.

**[SG] Anything else you want tell me? You speak on behalf of all women in Banja Luka.**

[JI] I don't know what kind of answers you expected but I'm not a theologian. When I joined this NGO here they called me actually because I'm a realistic person and I'm not a fanatic type of believer. So sometimes I serve as a voice of reason because theologians tend to go to other spheres.

**[SG] Let me just assure you, I don't have any preconceived expectations of how you should answer. That's what the research is about. And I would expect your answers to be different than other peoples'.**

[JI] I wanted to say maybe I'm not the best sample. I'm a big nationalist and my family really comes in the first place in my life and I grew up without a father. Maybe I'm not a typical representative of a woman from the Balkans.

**[SG] Well, when you say that you're strong nationalist, would you again applaud and approve of paramilitary action to get the remaining Muslims out of town? Or the Croats?**

I don't hate others, of course, but I just love tradition of my people.

**[SG] There is a big difference between... I mean you would approve of the mosque being rebuilt here. There are clearly people in this town who don't. And, as we have seen are willing to kill to prevent it. I think there's this continuum of how nationalistic you can be and there comes a point where it's not only dangerous for other people but it's dangerous for you, too. Because when you threaten other people it usually ends up threatening you, too.**

[JI] That's what we talked about already. We see this term of nationalism differently. I love my people and my history and I put that in the first place and I don't want anyone to come to me and just come up with all kinds of stories.

**[SG] Good. Thank you.**

[end of interview]



Interview with

**Vanja Jovanović**

Deacon, Serbian Orthodox Church  
Sarajevo

June 2002

**[SG] Many Bosnians cite examples of a harmonious coexistence in Bosnia prior to the war. Can the effort in peacebuilding and inter-religious dialogue be described as an attempt towards social *restoration*? If so, can one also find a theological or ethical ground for restoration in the respective faith communities?**

[VJ] When we talk about the Orthodox Church, its teachings well compensate the answer.

Regarding the first question, it's hard to give a short answer, but all of this is necessary to understand what you ask. Simple answers would probably lead to some misunderstanding of these things. So, I will tell you what I wrote.

[VJ] The true, real dialogue of believers, but real true believers, imply in itself the absence of conflict, if some substitute of religious feeling is not in question. If it is a substitute, then we do not speak about what religion or teaching is, but we speak about something else that is not religion. Seeking for a theological or ethical foundation implies people of goodwill who want to find that. If we speak about an offer of theological and ethical foundation from our Church in this case, then we speak about the mission of the Church, that is, about doing mission. However, every man is an individual, and adopting that offered theological and ethical foundation, again depends exclusively on that person. That means, a living faith, knowledge in any person, besides all offers by Churches and religious communities, can, like fire, be lighted or moved only by that person with their will and desire. So, we need to make a distinction between religion, its teaching, Church and faith community, religious feeling, from substitution or counterfeit, that look like Churches and faith communities from outside, but in the essence they are not such. For example, there are individuals who seek to resolve their neurosis or psychosis by cloaking it in religion. The appearance of religion is used for some other goals as well, and so on, but anyway we cannot speak about what level or degree of religious feeling it is.

[VJ] Inter-religious dialogue, what is that? If two street cleaners of different religious backgrounds, for example Muslim and Catholic, or Orthodox, in the morning, say to each other, "Good morning", "Good will to you", "God helps" isn't that an inter-religious dialogue?! Are some deep theological, and general theological discussions of some kind necessary for a simple and natural relationship towards your faith? This question depends, in great deal, on what kind of believer we have in front of us. For example, it can be to satisfy one's own conscious, some at the time "modern" intellect or aesthete who experiences Church as an institution of satisfaction of tradition - biological, ethnic, artistic – and feels good when s/he comes

there, likes nice singing, painting and so on. And all that without a concrete adoption what he or she hears in it. Isn't that a nowadays fruit of the West? Let's take, as an example, Churches and faith communities that came to the point to rent their "sakralne" (holy) buildings for sport and similar things. All these years, it is rare that a week passes without someone from the international representatives coming here to ask us or suggest to us to have such an influence on people. On the other hand, the same representatives, the same West, temporarily, make every effort to stop religious education in the schools. The West also avoids donating to Churches and religious communities. For example, flats or houses of returned refugees are being rebuilt, but the flats or houses of a priest or religious minister will not be repaired. We didn't get any help or support for the reconstruction of a ruined church or any other of our buildings. Besides this we are blamed for the war. But, what everybody does not see is that we do not have such influence that is attached to us. We are accused of being the guilty ones, and everything that is not good is associated with us. By the end of the year a great part of foreign organisations will leave Bosnia and Herzegovina and will have achieved some economic and social security. For us, it means good salaries for local population. Right now it is the case with UN here. And, certainly, this economic social situation will be even worse. What are we to expect for hungry people that we already have? Isn't this, generally, the concept of inter-religious dialogue and these conditions too one-sided and unreal? Shall we be the guilty ones for any possible riots of any kind, social, economic, etc. again? Probably we will be asked again to put out that fire. Maybe we should preach about poverty in this case. What ethical foundation are we to give and ask for on behalf of starving people who live in somebody else's flats, which are in the majority of cases in very bad condition. An ethical foundation between different Churches and religious communities exists, it was never destroyed, so it doesn't have to be renewed. It refers to the first part of your question. A proof for that is the Inter-Religious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina that has existed and worked for a long time, but without special influence. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is no official law about religious communities and churches. Legally, we, as a Church, and the Roman Catholic Church as well, do not exist here at all. The Metropolitan's diocese of Dabrobosanska, which has existed since 1219, is located here in the flat of the Metropolitan. On the other hand, we, that is the Church, pay all bills and other obligations towards the state as a company. We pay the Church's bills for water and electricity as though we produce something. In an aim of resolving this problem, the Inter-Religious Council established its law-expert group (PEG), which in a period of two years made a draft proposal of the Law about Churches and religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina about which we all agreed. We made a joint promotion in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We invited respected lawyers from the States and England to help us in making this law because we want to hear about experiences of others and their suggestions. You yourself probably know that there is no uniform law and that the relation towards Churches and religious communities is not solved in the same way. It's very different from country to country, but we made it. To this day, no one has taken that law's proposal seriously, although everybody has it. No institution of any authority in either of the entities, no international organisation that knows about it have wanted to go out to meet us and help us. Of course, I intentionally shared this so that you can form a picture in what conditions we work with regard to these high questions about ethics and inter-

religious dialogue. Certainly, the answer would be different if we had no connection between the state and the religious community, in what you are actually interested, in making the everlasting peace.

**[SG] While you are on this, I sense there is a correlation between what you just said and question seven, if we change the Muslim community to the Orthodox Church. What I hear you saying is, the international community is in some way jeopardising the community of the Orthodox.**

[VJ] Yes, we have had raids, looking for war perpetrators. You know that SFOR's soldiers recently raided a church looking for one of the defendants. They broke the door, and in the part where the altar is, they made a mess breaking glass objects. If they had asked for the keys of the churches from us, we would have given them over and opened [the church] without breaking in. We do not have anything against the West, especially because we took a great part in the building of Western civilization. But, for example, when we had talked about nationalised property, I was free to ask an American: "Why do you want those things that are considered illegal in your country to be legal here?" I want the Western system of values, economics, law, social security, art, philosophy, literature; I want rights for myself, as a Frenchman has in French and a German in Germany, but I do not want a distorted image of that here. And we have that.

**[SG] What is it that you are referring to that illegal and someone else's country trying to distort here?**

[VJ] Isn't the law about private property on the West, let me say in this way, a "law above laws"? But on the other hand, the first offer was that the Churches and faith communities [give over] our property for peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

[VJ] In a second case is, for example, we had an incident with one high foreign official on Easter last year. Just before the Holy Liturgy our church was closed. We all were waiting outside while a security group was checking if there were any mines. We didn't know at all what was going on. After some time they let us in our church, during our biggest holiday. Then the Holy Liturgy started. After some time the manager of protocol of that high official came in the church, in the altar and asked us where that gentleman was going to sit? That was more reflection of disrespect than ignorance. When I speak about the West, we want the positive values of that West here, and not such and similar cases, not such thinking about property, about the law or anything else. The West works here in a different way than at its home. What is the reason? Probably some conflicts of interest. So if I would put the Orthodox Church in question seven, the answer is that we want the West here, but not bad things from that secular West. And that's my answer.

[VJ] I think that some higher goals are more important and much more different than one clean relation towards us. You remember the demonstrations in Belgrade, which lasted for three months and were against the results by which Slobodan Milošević won re-election. International representatives in charge of the elections came to Belgrade and confirmed that he won the election although people claimed he

hadn't. It was very bad because people there expecting help and they didn't get it. Why? What was the goal? Not long after that NATO dropped tons of bombs on that country. And they didn't hit only the military targets; they hit everything. And children suffered, and people suffered, civilians. During the bombing I was in the centre of Belgrade, in a part where there are private houses and flats. There is only a civil population living there. A bomb that fell on a house one night, killing almost everybody in it although there was no military building near it. I want to tell you that something that we think is spontaneous is not that spontaneous. We are grateful to International Community for stopping the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and stopping the suffering. That's something very important to us. So our question is not only our question, that's what I want to say. It's not all that simple in the sense of good and bad guys fighting, so let's do something about that now. There is an audience, managers and cameras and so on. Right now an average American doesn't even know what Bosnia is and where it is. He or she knows what the Oprah show is and similar things. That's a fact, and that's natural. Of course, it's not sad nor should we go back, but we should live on and find a way somehow. The experience of the West is good and we want it here but we want the rule of law to be conducted here, justice, and everything that extols that same West.

**[SG] On question one, I have an impression and I would like you to say, "Yes, that's the right impression" or "No, it's not". The process today that's going on in the post war Bosnia: could be described more in terms of a continuation of social disintegration?**

[VJ] I think it's more a question for a politician. We try persistently to go to the Kingdom of Heaven. And that's the reason why I wanted to put more theology in the first part of this question. Personally, I do not know in this sense all that is going on.

**[SG] Is there in Orthodox theology the idea of restoration?**

[VJ] Transformation.

**[SG] I am thinking on a particular document written in 1983, the big question was whether or not the Orthodox were going to join in the ecumenical movement. The question was about peace at that time, so the framework was really the cold war period definitely, but the framework of peace was put in a context of creation and eschatology. In other words, there is a world that we can contemplate theologically, God created it and created it in perfection and that the world in some way is fallen and corrupted. But we also have a picture from the Scripture, and from our theology that the world, one day, will be restored.**

[VJ] Which one, this world or the one above? We do not believe in restoration of this world, in an eschatological sense. We have the eschaton here as a taste of the future. The Future is already here in little doses, proportionally to us.

**[SG] That's precisely what I am getting at. Exactly, you described it perfectly. And Protestants have a similar understanding, that a new world order established by Christ Himself one day will come, but the Church, His people,**

**are participant in changing and making that world better, anticipating that time when Christ come and reign.**

[VJ] Does this transformation refer to the second coming of Christ, actually before or after it?

[SG] **Both. It doesn't mean that we expect world peace before He comes.**

[VJ] What I feel it is going to be, I already make here. Is that what you mean? Or it has another theological sense?

[SG] **The Protestantism view is very broad....**

[interruption]

[SG] **Let us assume that *Peace* is more than the silence of weapons, and includes the blessing of God/Allah. Is it necessary to have a relationship (faith) in/to God/Allah before true peace can be understood and apprehended? Can agnostics and non-confessional persons experience the peace of God/Allah? Can they experience peace by living in communion with people of faith?**

[VJ] The concept of a person is indivisible from God for us, as well as the concept of peace, peace in general. First of all I think of peace in the soul. So, peace is a spiritual category, indivisible from the life of our inner being, actually from our soul. Of course, as such, it is reflected in the world, on environment of a particular person, that is, on other individuals. There is not one person, one person is equal to none. Only through other person, my personality can be formed, (my personality can be alive only through other persons), through what I recognize the world. For example, take a mother and a child. Something happens to that child and he or she dies. For her, in that moment, the picture of whole world is changing and it's almost unimportant. This is a drastic example of what I want to say. So, I also have to have somebody that I can be formed as myself. It cannot be a stone, wood etc. And that's inter-personal dialogue and, in it, peace is reflected as well. Peace from the soul of a man, the soul that comes from God. On the other hand, every man and woman is created by God, whether he is an Orthodox Christian or not. Thirdly, everybody tends to be a human being, a person if it's possible. The concept of atheist I do not accept. What is the atheist? Is that a Darwinist for God? If it is, why then do they consider the question of whether there is a God or not? I personally have had the longest conversations just about God with atheists, who shouldn't naturally have that feeling of God. On the other hand, the concept of anti-theist is acceptable, the one that is against God, who knows for what reasons and on which level. So, human beings are "homo religiosus" by their nature.

[SG] **What is the relationship between individual guilt and distributed hatred/distrust? Can all peoples of one nationality be maligned for the guilt of those individuals who participated in militant nationalism? What of those who were not participants in militant nationalism? Is there a sense in which they are twice victimised, once during the war from the violence of nationalism and**

**again after the war in being associated falsely with the war's perpetrators? Is this a crucial distinction for reconciliation and restoration?**

[VJ] An Orthodox Christian, theologically, is called neither to blame nor to judge. He is there to understand and forgive. The concept of repentance is accessible to everyone and that's his personal relationship with God and in God and God in him. The concept of national issue is secondary to the Orthodox Church. In general, it is not that important. There is no male or female, black or white, as the apostle Paul says. Nation is there to be a guard of faith and not vice versa. Why am I saying this? So that you understand the existence of autonomous churches in Orthodoxy. Being based on this, the concept of nationalism is unacceptable. Even an Orthodox Church, cannot be organized as independent in any region on the basis of a nation. It never could. There must be some other reasons for one Orthodox Church in certain region to get autonomy. At one time, the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria asked for autonomy on the basis of the nation. And they didn't get it. They were convicted for ethnophylitism. The concept of people for us means "laos", a Greek term meaning, 'the believing people of the church' and within it, again, every person is separate and unique. Every person with its soul is authentic and cannot be compared with another one. Division between good and bad, in sense of your question here, is a construction of political dialogue and is not acceptable to the Orthodox language and way of thinking. Does this, with regard to the question, mean that if you and I lived in Christ's time, that we would not have been Christians, that is His followers, as we are today, from a simple reason that a majority of people of the time had been against Him. So if we were average we would have been against Him. Would we, if we lived at the time, have accepted the verdict of Him, as the majority of people of the time did? Connecting further to the question, if we lived at the time, would we have condemned Paul to death, who, before he became a Christian, had been Saul and who had fought hard against Christians, as you know, and had thrown a rock at archdeacon Stephan? And here we come to what you asked me about the transformation of the interior of the soul. Since everybody has that possibility, I do not have any right to condemn, if you understood me.

**[SG] Let me just ask the question little differently. We are both familiar with the situation in Bulgarian church at the time of national independence, which the concept of phylitism was condemned. We know what the official Church doctrine is on this. But the fact we have this official statement by the Church condemning something shows that something actually exists. And in this case, it's issue of nationalism and building a national church based on ethnicity. So, the question here is not about what is the official church doctrine.**

[VJ] Before you continue with the question, just to say that we should make distinction between nation and nationalism. These are two different things.

**[SG] I do not have problems with that. So far I think you used the term correctly. I do not have problem with certain kinds of nationalism either. In America we have another word that is positive word, which is "patriotism".**

[VJ] Everything can be positive or negative. It depends of man's will, which can be with a good or bad intention. I try to put that difference in this sense. I am absolutely aware of what you are trying to say. I am here in Bosnia, and I live and work here; I understand and accept what's happening around me; and on the basis of what is in me, actually on the basis of my faith, I have to have a certain reaction, some opinion. However, in what is here is reality for me in the same way as it is in what is above. I historically belong to the corps of Serbian people but I am an Orthodox who believes in God and who hopes to be saved by Him. With one leg I live here and with another one I live above. And when I meet, face problems, I do not face the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its problems. I understand these problems, I justify some and do not justify others. But what is expected from me is a personal encounter with a man in the Church and with his/her living soul. My part is to suffer with them, to rejoice with them and to help them to make that soul alive and lift it up where it belongs. And every case is special and unique in that relation with a soul. And that is the Church. If I have not worked in that way, I would have no purpose here. So, in general, I think very little about problems of Bosnia and Herzegovina, only that much as I need to have a contact with a problem of a man and his /her soul in accordance with the Church. For, Christ called me to saving a soul- my own and of others. Judas was an extraordinary believer, but he also was a great nationalist. He believed his nation more than Christ. He was more a national man than a Christian. If I had felt a member of my nation for a millimetre more than Orthodox, I would maybe choose whom to talk to. And for me there is no difference here, and that's my way, that's where I want to go. I do not want to make any difference because it's dangerous and it's not faith. Of course, in all Churches and religious communities, there is sporadically other thinking, but that's not Church, that's not faith, that's not religion. There have been wars always. All in all, through these 2000 years, how many years were there wars? Very little time the world spent in peace. From that reason, I do not have any relation to condemnation of anything, for I can be the last one. I do not care what will happen here. Salvation of my soul, of course, depends on things here, but what I can give here is only love that saves others and me, and that gives a possibility of transformation. Your question requires yes/no answer. I cannot give it. That's why I said that you might not be satisfied with my answers, for, if I had had concrete answers on your questions, I think, I would have been far less Christian. And if you had found somebody who would give you concrete answers on these questions, don't mind me saying this, but it's a question how much there is true faith in there. I try to find ground, and in the essence of the Christianity, in love, I want to concentrate on a concrete person. If I know a Muslim woman whose child was killed and I also know a Serb woman whose child also was killed, I cannot make any difference because the pain of their soul is the same. And to answer this question, I have to observe people in general and that answers that.

**[SG] I think that's a very good explanation. And there is a lot of tension in the question. On one side there is the issue of the community verses the individual, there is the tension of individuals who have done things wrong and the role of the priests in the case who is confronted with this individual and his sin. There are legal and secular implications of what should be done for justice versus the role of the theologian and forgiveness.**

[VJ] I am trying all the time to give a theological sense to everything. Because that's the only thing through which I want to look. It's impossible to give an average and simplified [answer] in this anarchy. And now, one concrete thing that is the closest to the answer you, as it seems to me, look for. If somebody who is accused of war crimes comes to me, that is, in the church to do confession, what should I do on the basis of this question? In the sense of secular justice, I should call SFOR, or some departments of authority and say, "you know, the one you accused is here"? But I am a Christian priest and in principle, his soul and his salvation are important to me.

**[SG] I am exactly with you as theologian and as a pastor. In fact in our law, the priest or the pastor is one person who, if the perpetrator confesses to the priest or pastor, he doesn't have to give this knowledge to the police.**

[VJ] I must not say a word.

**[SG] The question is not so much that as... Let me ask the question this way.**

[VJ] For me, a crime depends on the measure of desire of a man to repent. Imagine, now, that somebody like Saul, later on apostle Paul, lived in Bosnia and that he persecuted people as Saul persecuted Christians. What would I say now, "I pass a judgment on you, you are meant for the Hague." Excuse me, but even Christ didn't do that, but He turned Saul to go another way. Then he started to preach and he became the greatest preacher in the Christianity. That is the foundation of my faith in me. I cannot observe people in a general way. The social aspect in the Church is in the second drawer, on the other side, because salvation is on the first place. We say there should be social justice as well. If you are rich you should give to the one who is in need. And we do not preach communism with that. If you can understand me in relation to these questions.

**[SG] I am very satisfied with these answers. And I would answer the same way. A related question is, let's go back to the idea of phylitism and the fact that the Church condemned this action. Now we are talking about a community role, not the individual confessor. The Church then made a decision that we are going to speak against this type of nationalism.**

[VJ] And, why only against nationalism?

**[SG] 'This kind of' nationalism, which was in that situation, the historic situation was that Bulgarian Church tried to establish itself on ethnic grounds, some people being worth more than others. And I think that question that interests me on this community level, theological level is, does the Church today have the similar role to the condemn bad nationalism, militant nationalism?**

[VJ] The Church has always called people to peace and against war as much as it could and as much as the conditions allowed it to do so. Patriarch Paul came to Bosnia in the midst of the war and called people to peace and also called them to forgiveness. He was a Bishop in Kosovo for a long time and he travelled from monastery to monastery by bus. And sometimes Albanians got him out from a bus,

as a Bishop, because he was an Orthodox Bishop. He never said a word, but went out and said: "O.K. another bus will come." What now? This was not said by him, but some former students who went with him told me about that. He was more than 20 years in Kosovo and he never raised his voice against anybody or condemned anybody, although he experienced many bad things. We had different cases of persecution of nuns in Kosovo, and demolishing churches and sacred things before all this that happened. We always had problems down there.

**[SG] The question is not about other ethnic groups. It's about our own people, our own community. In what way is the Church a corrective of our own sins?**

[VJ] The story about present Patriarch is one of those answers. We are a community in "putir" (a holy cup for the Communion), in a sacred thing. And what we can do is the invitation for the way to God. So, we do not have to talk specifically about nationalism, drugs, prostitution, all that goes without saying, but we have called people to go even against that. We call people, for example, to go back to their homes.

**[SG] So, the role of the Church is to call people out of these things.**

[VJ] Christ didn't list sins when He said, "come out", but He just said to the evil one "Come out". He didn't say, "Come out, adultery, come out drug addiction" and similar, but He just said one "Come out" without listing particular sins. For, the point is the core, all evil we list comes from a basic evil against which we persistently fight, and we do not have to list all of the fruits of that evil always. If we have two of Christ's commandments of the New Testament, it's needless to philosophically and psychologically treat every sin individually, if you understand me. The question of nation and nationalism is not a question for me to say that this and that are not good. My part as a priest is to teach them, if they want, what the faith is and that the Church is not a guardian of the nation. That means my part is to educate them in what they are, to understand Orthodoxy as it is and not as what they think it is. It's the same with Roman Catholicism and Islam. And with that, when you give somebody a healthy concept about something, all of these other concepts, that go with each other, are lost. Those are the passions that never come alone, they are always added to one another. They go together, and always fill each other up. Passions of stomach, passions of authorities, passion of adultery, passion of despair, sorrow, passion of lies, it's infinite. But for us a sin is not a fact that happened. We cannot heal facts that happened; they already happened. I have to heal what caused that - to find a cause in the soul of that offering something else, offering salvation, if you understand me. I cannot speak about nationalism to the faith community if they, who listen to me, do not understand me, I have to get to the cause of such identification. One question, not because I am an Orthodox Serb. What if we take all people to the Hague, what if we put all of them who did lower level crimes in jail here. Have we solved the problem in Bosnia? And we haven't affected the consciousness of the people, we haven't found the reason in their souls, experienced with them their suffering and together got out to a better way, the only way that saves. That is the problem.

[SG] **It's a big problem.**

[VJ] Just because of that I say we have to get into the reason, the cause of that.

[SG] **I agree, I think justice is only one side of it what I am pointing out at the thesis, which I am surely aware is how do we restore people, how do we bring wholeness again. It's a much bigger question than justice in Hague or locally.**

[VJ] That's exactly what I am trying to tell you with such an answer. There is no "Yes" and "No" answer. Deep and entangled constructions of the human soul are in question, in spite of whom we are talking about. For a crime is a crime and a victim is a victim. And we cannot say generally like this or like that.

[SG] **How can religious faith and forgiveness contribute to the escape of the cycle of violence of past offences?**

[VJ] You have God as eternal winner but you also have Satan, still not overcome. Of course, Satan was an angel of God who fell away from God because of pride, which is the core of sin. And now we come to the question - to whom will a man show an inclination. That depends on his free will. If he leans on God, it's needless to speak about that violence. That means that if he is in faith, then there is no circle of violence; there is a circle of goodness.

[SG] **Is there a unique or special role that women play in peace building and restoration?**

[VJ] A man and woman, together and only together make a complete mankind-male and female. And I think that's the answer to your question. What is noticeable in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that a great number of women participate in authorities, different departments of authorities. Of course, they are very active. Let me go back to the foundation for a woman and what is concern of woman only- her realization as a woman, that is motherhood. And of course, it depends on them greatly what kind of children, and then adults, we are going to have tomorrow. The other day I was on a meeting of the organization called "A Woman To Woman" and I spoke about that. I said that motherhood could bring fruits not only in a concrete relationship with their own children, but with all children. Also we talked about protection of their rights as women, as mothers, about evil in family and other things. Only a woman, a mother, can give magic to a child, which is called giving birth and warmth of growing up. You, in the States, had the hippie movement at one time. I am telling you this as an example, what was the point of that? Mothers wanted to be friends with their children. That was "one contemporary issue", a fashion, but a child asks for a mother's love and that's why a movement of dissatisfied children appears, emotionally dissatisfied children who, in community, found love, beauty of living and so on. And again that what happened in the States and what's going on in here (and this is Balkans) and in Europe is disintegration of patriarchal family. We have to have understanding for some of the reasons why the patriarchal family was disintegrated. One of them is that man started, in one historic period, to misuse his role as the head of a family. It happens again here today because the war favoured

the man in one special light. Today when living is very hard, he cannot make his right of a maker. On the other hand, he is burdened by the war that was here and he often mistreated his family. Maybe that is the special role: Women fight to protect themselves and children.

**[SG] In what ways are the values of secular Western society in conflict with the Bosnian Muslim *umma*? Is it possible that Western military presence in Bosnia will preserve and protect the Muslim community but slowly undermine and destroy it through the imposition of Western and secular cultural values?**

[VJ] I have already answered this question.

**[SG] Is nationalist ideology the real enemy of true faith and not the other national groups or expressions? If so, how can true faith overcome this enemy? Or, what is the role of true faith to overcome fear and hatred?**

[VJ] Any ideology is opposite to the Orthodox Christian principles. The concept of nation appeared relatively late, with the French revolution, before which Christianity had already existed. The concept of fear is, of course, a spiritual category and it connects to God. So, fear is the first step to God. Fear is the beginning of wisdom and of course - then love comes which is the essence of the Orthodox Christianity. So, from that point, the hatred is untypical to the Orthodox thinking. It's about the distorted heartbeat. Actually we speak about slipping out of the man and from that you can make a conclusion about the role of true faith to overcome fear and hatred.

**[SG] Local justice beyond the Hague: Will smaller perpetrators of war crimes be brought to justice, or will the average Bosnian be forced to live with this injustice? What is the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina? Is it imperative to address the truth of the crimes in order that justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration to be achieved?**

[VJ] It's a question of the daily political world public. The Hague is a question of this world, while our designation is, exclusively, the kingdom of God. Our politics is heavenly Jerusalem. That means that the category of our being is spiritual in general. The Orthodox Church hasn't had Crusade wars, nor inquisition, nor Nuremburg, nor does it have the Hague in its feeling. Because of such attitude of ours, we are condemned again, but we cannot give up our theological principles. The concept of justice, for us, is exclusively connected with God and his love that transforms.

**[SG] What role has the communist past played in establishing nationalist ideology through the marginalisation of religion?**

[VJ] Communism was and is a religion, one kind of religion. The state of consciousness that is present even today was not the nation or something national. Because it was religion, communism forbade other religions. It terrorised. The concept of Tito attached some divine attributes to a man, and he was made a god. Invisible, and, for example, this is from poems we had to learn by our heart, "Tito is the father of us all." "Tito is in us all. Tito is trees in a forest. Tito is a stream. Tito is

flowers. Tito, that's us all." This is religion and nearly more priests were killed during communism than during the Second World War. That is communism. A Bosnian, actually a Yugoslavian during that time, grew biologically without any knowledge about religion, even about national issues. On the other hand, by the time the same man found out that he belongs to something biologically, that is, he knows that he is a Serb- Orthodox, a Croat- Catholic, Muslim. A false identity was made without correct information. When that identity was shaken he found support, with footing in hatred, of course. So to protect himself he had to attack another one. That was the role of communism which even communists were not aware of.

**[SG] In what ways are decisions among Bosnians individual or communal? Does the community of faith hold compelling influence on the moral decisions of Bosnians?**

[VJ] A moral decision in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a relative notion. Sometimes, the International Community behaves as a market seller, and sometimes a Bosnian behaves as an unreasonable man of spite. Outwardly, Bosnia is beautiful today, but inside almost nothing concretely has been done. The West invested a lot of money, but also a great part of that money it spent on itself - because from that money all the troops, organizations, foreigners and so on, were supported. Outwardly a nice look was made and everybody praised themselves that something was done. Actually, it was done more than it is. Of course, thanks to the West, the war was stopped. The world's kingdoms reign and in them those who have money are powerful, and money is the god of this world. Is this moral or not, is the questionable for me. The concept of morality is also, for us, a spiritual category connected exclusively to God.

**[SG] How can a religious community participate in inter-religious dialogue and co-operation, and still maintain its own distinctives? Must the religious communities compromise their own beliefs and practices in order to accommodate the peace process?**

[VJ] Inter-religious dialogue is not relativising of religious stylings, teachings and so on. It is just a dialogue that exists. It is respect toward others, and not changing others. It is based on the belief of believing people that we were created by God who gave us authenticity and the right to make decisions by ourselves.

**[SG] That's an important point of the end because there are some who engage in religious dialogue so that the other would change, or the others who compromise their own doctrines.**

[VJ] That's the world's process, globalisation, which says that everything can be one - one unique currency, unique thought, unique justice, unique taste, aesthetics, and now it can be even one unique religion. Varieties do not bother us. Varieties are creative and make us richer.

Interview with

**Kristina Kovać**

Šipovo, Republika Srpska

14 October 2002

**[SG] Can you introduce yourself and how long you've lived here?**

[KK] I'm Kristina Kovać and actually was born in Šipovo and have been living here for 53 years. I work in the elementary school "Nemanja Vlatković" in Šipovo as a teacher. And I teach children that age from 7 to 11. Šipovo is a little town and it's built on three rivers with beautiful natural surroundings. Before the war it had about 15,000 people. Now there are about 12,000 with the surrounding area. The town itself has about 5-6 thousand people. Before the war the Serbs were in majority and Muslims were about 18%. After the war the majority of people came back but were mostly older people. There are some younger people. But they are those who didn't adapt in the places where they were as refugees. So they were forced to come back to their homes. And they, along with other people who live here, do not have good living conditions. Before the war Šipovo had nine factories. Even if it was a small town almost all people had jobs. During the war all the factories were destroyed, burned. After the war, and right now there is no factory that works so neither the remaining population and those who are coming back have jobs. Simply put, Šipovo was really a nice little town where everybody lived nicely and in harmony, no matter what background they had. The war did its work. Not only in Šipovo but in the whole of ex-Yugoslavia. Everything was destroyed. People are forced, especially young people, to run away, to go to the West. They just go somewhere else and they think that it will be better anywhere but here, and I have the same opinion. Even if I work at school but still salaries are not that high, not high enough to live normally. During the war, in April 1992 the war started in Bosnia, so different things happened. I think there were sufferings on all sides. Because it was a majority Serb town until September 1995, Šipovo was in the Serbs' hands. On September 9, 1995 the Croats drove us from here so Serbs and Muslims ran away together. Then the Dayton Accord was signed and then we came back on February 4, 1996 to Šipovo. It was destroyed. Probably about 80-90% of the town was destroyed. Everything was burned. And I can say concretely about my family, that we lived an average life. We had everything that was necessary for life. That was before we left. But when we came back everything was destroyed. This apartment where we are now was in ashes. There was nothing left. Everything, all the furniture, was burned, and even the walls, everything. So when we came back I personally was thinking not to come back at all because everything I had was destroyed. We had to start from scratch (from the spoon as we say). We had to have strength to start from the beginning again. And my daughters were of age when I was thinking that I should take care of them. Because in Šipovo nothing was waiting for them, they didn't have any future here. And my older daughter, stopped attending school. She had been studying in Sarajevo before the war. And the younger one went to the grammar school in Banja Luka. She was supposed to stay there and finish it. And I was thinking about 6 or 7 months. And my husband was actually leaning more towards coming back. I hesitated to come back because the flat was burned and we didn't have a place to stay here. And some friends

actually helped us. Their apartment wasn't destroyed. It wasn't burned but there was no furniture inside of it. My husband and I got two mattresses from the Red Cross and we slept there. And our daughters stayed in Banja Luka because I led that humanitarian organization called "Sisters of Srpska". I worked in Banja Luka while I was a refugee there. I helped our population who were refugees in Banja Luka. Beside all the circumstances where my family lived, I just rose above everything and started to help everybody regardless of the nationality. Through humanitarian organizations from Banja Luka I started to bring the first aid to Šipovo. At the time there was no storehouse anywhere to put these things from the humanitarian aid because everything was devastated. When we came back, only SFOR was here. And I think the first humanitarian aid that I brought from Banja Luka was on February 24, 1996. And as I said, there was no storehouse here, so the SFOR helped me to organize all that and we informed the population that we were at the bus station and then organised this distribution. And there were packages of food and these other things needed for cleaning, and the second time it was flour and we put that on the SFOR base because there was no space elsewhere. After that, shoes that we got from the States. And mostly this aid came from the States or our people who lived in Germany, Italy, Greece, Canada. At the beginning it was like that and people were satisfied to get any food or shoes or clothes. At the beginning there were a few humanitarian organizations who helped but after that it was less and less and less. So today here we do not have any humanitarian organization in Šipovo. And also I want to say that many things were promised to Šipovo. It was the first town that was announced as an 'open' town in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And from what we were promised to get we actually got just a little bit of that, very, very little. Now, I personally am not satisfied. Few houses were rebuilt, companies and factories do not work. Only those who work in state institutions like schools, police and such things, they maybe have their salaries regularly, but sometimes not. I work in school and this year I took the first grade and interviewing, asking my children what school their parents have and these children of parents who finished high schools or even universities. And when I asked them where their parents work it was really astonishing when I heard that people who had university degrees. They work - we call like physical work, but this is the hardest kind of work. And you know yourself what takes to finish and to get university degree. It is like that right now but I still cannot see a good future as well. I think that if we would get visas for the countries that 80% of people would leave. I think it's not only in Šipovo but I think it's the same in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I had a chance to talk to young people from almost the whole country and all of them had such thinking.

**[SG] Very good. That's part of what we want to talk about in terms of the relationships of people back and forth. There's a great deal that's being done with reconstruction and frankly, more has been done in Federacija. But I'm also interested in the relationships and how people are dealing with each other. So you said that this was the first 'open' declared, the first open city in Bosnia-Herzegovina and that Muslims came back, older Muslims came back relatively soon.**

[KK] There are some younger ones and I have them in my class. As I said, these are people who didn't find themselves as refugees. Those who left and ended in the West they didn't come back. They just come here in order to sell their property. But those who were refugees in the Federation came back. As I said in my class there are some Muslim kids. But the parents of these children were refugees in Federacija, they didn't find jobs and so they came back. As I said in the beginning, all of the people who came here at the very beginning, who came back, they still also don't have jobs and also these who came back

right now don't have work to do. And those who live in the surrounding villages live from the agriculture but it's really poor. And there are just a few refugees who maybe got donations and they opened their own small businesses but that is also not working well. So I think it's really hard for anybody who was a refugee and now coming back in any part of Bosnia-Herzegovina and with any background. Concerning Šipovo we all were refugees. Because we all were persecuted when the Croats came and then we came back, first the Serbs because the Croats never lived here before. Maybe there were a few mixed marriages but let's say there's 1% of Croats.

**[SG] Good. Well, you've explained a little how your family was affected by the war, your apartment was burned and your husband, as I understand, was also in the army.**

[KK] My husband was in the army as was everybody else, I will concentrate on Bosnia-Herzegovina, only those who went to the Western countries who were not on the battlefield. All other men were on the battlefield or they had some work to do. And that was in all three nations.

**[SG] And did the war make you more interested in your faith?**

[KK] Unfortunately yes.

**[SG] Why do you say "unfortunately"?**

[KK] Because when I was born in that time in which I know who I am and what I am. I finished elementary and high school and I had friendship [drugarstvo] with people from different backgrounds and different religions. But we never went to details and said: "OK, you're of that faith or religion, I am from that and so on." Simply we respected and helped each other. They celebrated their feasts, we celebrated ours. They kept their customs and habits, and we did ours. We never harmed each other. We helped each other and also visited each other on these different religious feasts, holidays. It was like that until the war. But the war did its job. Simply it divided the three nations, three religions, three faiths. And then there were some people who increased the hatred between these religions. So I can characterise this war as a civil war, as a religious war and actually hatred between the nations were made. The war made the hatred between nations and religions. Whether you want it or not you were in that position to turn away from others and go to your nation, to your religion. The time was such that we all just separated from each other. And even that was not good. Simply if I looked at somebody, and even today I look in the same way, in a nice way, it doesn't matter from what background he comes, but in the war all of us were somehow drawn into ourselves. You were not allowed to contact other people from a different background, because of somebody else, simply was afraid of somebody. And when I say nation, religion comes with it as well. In me, personally, during the war and after the war I just stayed the same. And I tell you now I teach children of another religion as well. For me they all are the same. And I look to give them the best. I don't know if you misunderstood me, but I said unfortunately because it came to this division and the hatred was created among people. Simply people didn't trust one another any more. In this building there were three Muslim families. We protected them. They didn't go to the battlefield. As soon as they had a chance they left, some for England, some for Sweden. They were people who were not interested in war, they had university degrees and now they live a good life. This year they came here to buy their

flats. And my personal opinion about those who ran away they really ended very well. I talked to them personally. First, they kept their health, they were not on the battlefield, they also kept their whole family. They earned money in the West. Now they can buy their flats, to sell their houses and go back again to the West to work. Now I talk to Muslims who stayed here with us. They don't have that as well as Serbs who stayed here. So it doesn't matter if you are a Serb, Muslim or Croat who went to the West they earned money.

**[SG] Why did you protect the Muslims in your house here?**

[KK] In the war everybody was divided: Croats on one side, Muslims on the other, Serbs on the third side. They didn't feel secure as every minority anywhere. First, I was not secure. Everybody had guns, there were different people, drunkards, sick people, everybody had guns. I really didn't like to go out. Imagine those who were the minority how they felt. Because it doesn't matter, those in minority are afraid of those who are the majority. Nobody knows what's going on in somebody else's head.

**[SG] Was it your faith or goodwill or what motivated you to protect them? Just they needed help?**

[KK] Faith and goodwill is the same for me because my faith taught me to help all people of goodwill and to forgive those who did wrong.

**[SG] Is there a difference for you between religion and faith?**

[KK] I would connect these two terms. Religion is the belief in God and it's connected for me.

**[SG] And faith would be?**

[KK] Believing in God and religion is teaching about God as a science. But faith in my opinion is believing in that divine being. Because the true believer if he believes in God will never do a bad thing. He will respect others, he will help others who are suffering. A true believer fears God and he considers if he does something wrong that God will punish him. But unfortunately, during the war there was just a few true believers, it doesn't matter what nation we speak about. That's my opinion.

**[SG] You have spoken about how difficult the time is now here in Šipovo. Does your faith help you to overcome the anxieties for the future?**

[KK] If I don't believe, then I wouldn't hope for the better. Because every time I get up or go to bed I pray to God and I say: "It will be better." My daughters start complaining, "Mom, there's no jobs." First my parents taught me that and now I try to teach them and say, "Daughters, it will be better." And actually that is what our faith taught us, and faith in God keeps us. Without that, thank God I have a hope. That's what keeps a man, a human being. And I think that a man should believe in something in his life. And I think that people who do not believe in God, they actually brought this situation. The worst thing is that many hide themselves behind this faith and they say that they are true believers, but they are not. And I also think that among those who preach there is a difference, because I know that when we give some comments in school, I compare things

with myself. People who live in monasteries, monks. On one side are those monks and for me they are really true believers. And all others who finished other schools in spite of even the priests, imams, my opinion, it depends how they really do their jobs. I don't think on those who are in monasteries, who really dedicated their lives to God because for me as I said they are true believers. Because if he really denied everything, even the family, and decided to serve God and help others, they are true believers. But all others, priests and imams, everything depends on their conscience how they will do things. In the same way as I work in school you have different kinds of teachers. Also I think if these priests and imams, if they were like those who live in monasteries, I think that they could be a great influence on all this that was happening not to happen. Even today when I look at TV these religious gatherings it doesn't matter what religion they are, and what I don't like with these priests and imams is that they also take part and they enter into politics. And politics actually brought us to the war. And that's why I say there's just a few true believers.

**[SG] Good. Everything you said so far is very clear. You have already said that you think that true faith can help in this situation those people of true faith.**

[KK] These people are people of goodwill. They help everybody. We helped each other before the war but politics did its thing because they enter into religion and separate people.

**[SG] How can they help? One way is to stay out of politics?**

[KK] Of course, their preaching. A true believer, as a priest and imam, so those priests and imams who are true believers, they will teach their people in their holy places not to do evil things and do right things.

**[SG] We actually have many people who preached that they should do evil things but I understand from what you're saying is that these are not people of true faith.**

[KK] For me they are not true believers. But whenever I was in the church and listened to these preaching my priest always said, he never said "Hate others" but "Help others". But as I said it depends how much these people do their work and on their conscience. It depends how much actually these people, I mean they are sent by God, but still they can misuse their positions.

**[SG] Kristina, I'd like to turn to issues that deal specifically with women. Do you think that - this is question number 8 - women of all nationalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina were especially victimized?**

Yes. In every sense.

**[SG] Can you give an example?**

[KK] First, if they are married, their husbands went to the battlefield. They were left alone to take care of the family. Secondly, they had to care about a husband who was on the battlefield and still has the family. It doesn't matter where people were. In the war everybody was armed, I don't know how they got these guns. I was afraid of that, we never had that in my family. And even my husband was not a hunter so we didn't have

one. And the girls were not free to go out to cafes or cinemas or theatres. They were not secure even among these guys who got drunk and then go to the battlefield and they didn't know what was waiting for them. And at the end what is the worst part is that women of all nationalities were raped. It's really horrible and I don't think there is a worse thing than that. I think it was worse for women because men went to the battlefield and the only thing they had to think about was to stay alive and probably they think about their family, but the first thing was to just think about himself to keep his head. The war was everywhere. I know it was hard for them but still it was hard for us. We were free in some way, we could move but it's a question how big that freedom was. Because for me it is not a freedom if you cannot go out to walk in the evening, or to go to a café or anywhere. That was not a freedom for me. In the war even if I go out to walk I didn't know who I would meet, if that person has arms, a gun or not, if he's drunk or not and how he would react towards me. That has stopped now and I can go out for a walk or go to my friend's, young people can go to cafes. During the war when it got dark you couldn't wait for dawn to come. Because everybody was afraid of the night and didn't know what was waiting for him or her.

**[SG] Well, do you think that women can play a special role in reconciling the different ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina?**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] Have you witnessed that? Have you seen that yourself?**

[KK] Right away after people came back we started to hang out together. And I think that women were the first ones to take part in humanitarian organizations and they crossed the lines while the man was afraid to do that.

**[SG] Was it just Serbian women or was it mixed?**

I'm thinking of the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina. And I think that women contributed through these humanitarian organizations and having friendship [drugarstvo] among themselves they contributed even for men to get closer to each other.

**[SG] What were the men doing while the women were doing the humanitarian aid?**

[KK] They took part in that gradually. Because right after the war there was not that much freedom. Those who really dared to travel from one entity to another were really brave. I was in these seminars of inter-religious dialogue from Bihać, Brčko, Šipovo where believers took part. And when we went to Bihać in '97 or '98 where Muslims lived, there Croats and Serbs were supposed to come I will always remember that scene. For me it was really something unthinkable that I had to be followed by UN and police, because before the war you were not afraid of anything. And we were supposed to come to Bihać with full security. I didn't do anything to anybody. But that person in Bihać didn't know who was coming. So one meeting and another meeting with high security and as the time passed, as a year passed I now move freely. And still I can say that women actually contributed to this a lot.

**[SG] We talked already a little bit about how faith helps in ...**

[KK] When we had this inter-religious dialogue in Šipovo and now the Muslim women from Sarajevo were supposed to come here and one of them was covered. They called me and said, “Kristina, would that be a problem if they come?” And I said, “Don’t worry. I guarantee your safety.” Because it wasn’t like that before the war. And I respect that.

**[SG] What year was this when they came here?**

[KK] Maybe April ’98 or ’99. She said that she is respected if they decide to cover. In the hotel there was the seminar. And then she said, “I have a feeling that everybody is looking at me.” And I said, “Don’t worry about that. This is a little place and people know each other. And anyone who is not from this place is looked at. Then we organised a visit to our church. And then we walked actually from the hotel to the church. They didn’t have any problems. And then when they wanted to go back she thanked me. She said, “I have to be honest but I really was afraid.” Because she was covered. That was her... maybe she thinks like that and maybe the environment where she was had such thinking. But if somebody decides to cover herself, I don’t mind, that’s her personal thing. But now the time has come that we can move freely. But right after the war it was not like that. Because we were not sure who you are going to meet. Especially those who lost somebody during the war. They will never forget that.

**[SG] You mentioned that right after the war that women first began to work with each other. Now that things have calmed down a little bit do you think it’s easier still for women to reconcile with each other from different national groups or do you see men doing that, too?**

[KK] Again women.

**[SG] Why? Why do you think that?**

[KK] Because women are more emotional, they are more flexible. I think that their thinking is quite different than men’s. They are more flexible. There are also nice men but [most of them] are stubborn and they need time to put that in their head, to settle that in their head and then come to the conclusion that we women are right. Even today I say that if women were more in the positions of authority and power that the war wouldn’t have happened. In general, in life if they don’t agree they fight. And they solve problems with fighting. And women are those who will solve problems with dialogue. There are a thousand ways to solve a problem without a fight.

**[SG] Do you think it’s significant that it’s a woman, Biljana Plavšić, who has said “I did it.” and that men haven’t said this?**

[KK] I cannot judge that. She was a politician. Those were her beliefs. But it will be a show when the trial is finished. I think there were a lot of political beliefs.

**[SG] Do you think that women are generally more religious than men?**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] How can you tell?**

[KK] When I visited this religious ... churches, mosques you can see mostly women there and just a few men. For me, women are a stronger sex, even though men are considered stronger. Maybe they are physically stronger, but psychologically and in everything else women are stronger and braver. In everything. And a lot of them admit that. And when I talk to some men that I know and when they talk about their problems I cannot understand as a woman that they cannot solve that problem. It doesn't matter ... any problem in the family that they should... Maybe I'm like that but I think that in general women are like that. Every problem I have I consider slowly and take step by step and think about how to solve it and I think it can be solved.

**[SG] Do you pray about the problems?**

[KK] Yes, of course. I pray often but when there's a problem then I pray most. And I also say to my daughters whether it is an exam, if this older one has problems at work I always tell them, "Daughter, go to the church. It will be easier to overcome that." And often they come to me and say, "Mom, you were right."

**[SG] Because of the war do you see that women have had to take on additional roles in society? Roles that generally men had?**

[KK] Yes. For example, in companies and these local authorities if men were taken to the battlefield then women had to take these roles. And during the war many, many things or jobs that men did, actually that men had, were done by women.

**[SG] Number fifteen you've already touched on because you're a teacher. Do you think that women have a special educational role to play so that children may be spared of war in the future?**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] Can I ask how maybe you're teaching children, what are you teaching children so that they won't see war?**

[KK] If I don't show favouritism and division among children from different background and nation I did a lot. I think that says a lot. And in my class where there are twenty children two of them are Muslim. When they have this faith education, religious education, for the Orthodox, and because these Muslim children they don't have their religious teacher, so I tell them, "Go home." And then other children ask, "Teacher, why are they leaving?" And I tell them, "Well, their religious teacher didn't come." What else should I tell them? They can attend if they want but because their parents do not agree with that why should I force them to stay? And I respect that. If there are more of them, if more of them come, of course, probably it will be made possible for them to have their religious teaching. And if I do not show favouritism in the class between these children, and if I teach them to have friendship [drugarstvo] with each other and to help each other, to play together, and when they do certain exercises or tasks to help each other and I never say in any moment, "Don't play with them" because they are Muslims. No, they are all the time together. And as much as I try to have boys and girls together regardless of religion, in the same way I try to make these children of other backgrounds sit together with the others, not to separate them. If I were to take these two and make them sit together separately from others, that is division. But in my class the two of them sit with

the Serb children. And I think even in that way I did a lot. And also working, teaching I never said, "You should hate other children." It would be great if we would have money to organise different kinds of competitions in dancing and in other subjects among entities. In August of this year we had a soccer competition where children from three different towns came and it was really beautiful, like before the war.

**[SG] It was both Federacija and Republika Srpska?**

[KK] If we would have money it would be really nice to organise such things. Also, when I went to the seminar in Prozor, for example, I really had fun, or Brčko, Bihać, it doesn't matter. Of course, all children like to play, to have friendship [drugarstvo].

**[SG] Do you think that the inter-entity border is a help or a problem?**

[KK] It's not a problem. Until now I didn't see any problem, once the economy got connected. You find many people from the Federation buying supplies in Republika Srpska because it's cheaper here.

**[SG] So people who live close to the boundary cross over quite a bit.**

[KK] I don't have any problems, I go freely.

**[SG] Were there problems before the license plates were changed?**

[KK] I think these plates are really a good choice. Before the war all these plates had the town signs so when I go to the seaside, to the coast, before the war, everybody grouped together, it was not grouped by nation but by town. If they saw by the plates where you are from, then all people from Jajce would be together, those from Sarajevo, Banja Luka, they group together. But thank God now nobody knows where I am from. This is the proof also that there was no religious division before the war because we didn't look to group by nation but by town and we had the plates of Jajce and we looked for this and then we camped together and we gathered together all three nations and sang. It's especially important that you are from Jajce or around Jajce. And now they recognise that we are coming from Bosnia-Herzegovina by the plates if we go to Serbia, or Montenegro, or Slovenia, or Croatia. But they don't know what town and it's really a good thing. During the summer Croatia usually doesn't ask Bosnians to have passports. We could cross the border with our IDs. It's really good to have that and I don't know why they don't keep it like that so that I can go to Zagreb to buy things and come back without passport.

**[SG] You've already talked about your daughters. It's clear to me that you would like to see your daughters brought up in the faith and that they have the same faith that you have to believe in God. Well, what if one of your daughters marries a Muslim or another marries a Croatian. Would that be a problem?**

[KK] That is their choice. If they like that then I'm OK with that.

**[SG] I know this is a difficult question, but do you think that children of this war will again see war in their lifetime?**

[KK] It's a hard question. Everything depends on politics. I think for common people, if we think of them, that the war would never come, that you have these politicians and people with these heads, greedy heads and maybe International community as well. Different influences that make people to hate each other. So, it could be that way in future as well, I cannot guarantee anything. I start from the point of every normal person who has a family and children, and think that no family would ever do anything to encourage war. And if I don't like to live here or in some other place that can be solved in another way. If something oppresses you in an environment where you live or you don't like something, you can change the environment. Or find some gradual solution so that war is prevented. But I really think - actually this is repetition - I think 99%, maybe even more people here do not want war. But just these few heads, a few of them who want to make this hatred.

**[SG] Do you think that religions will continue to separate people or can they bring people together?**

[KK] I already said all true believers, if they respect others they can make people come together, because if I respect others and their habits, then they will respect me, and I said that only true believers can do that.

**[SG] Thank you very much for your time. Before we turn off the tape I would like to give the opportunity to say anything more, if you want, that you think I neglected and needs to be heard?**

[KK] Because we talk about religion only I just want to say that true believers will never allow the war to come ever again. Because the true believer will never do evil to anybody. Because he fears God and he's afraid of God's punishment. Let's hope that there will not be war again. It would be great if all were free to go without visas and passports. That I can go freely to see England and not to wait for a year to get a visa just to see my family. Let's hope that better times will come. And I think that faith in God will keep us. And I think that only wicked people can bring war and can take us to the war.

**[SG] Again. Thank you very much for your time. I wish you God's blessing upon your house and your family. May you remain strong in the faith and may your pilgrimage and walk with God grow stronger and closer each day.**

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Revd. Karmelo Krešonja**

President of the Presbytery  
Evangelical Church of BiH, Mostar

September 2002

**[SG] Karmelo is the President of the presbytery of the Evangelical Church of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We'll just go into the questions then, Karmelo.**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] Question 1 is really about the way Bosnia is perceived. Maybe it is not a full or correct perception. Many cite that there was peaceful co-existence between the different nations in Bosnia Herzegovina and I wonder if you see the peace building efforts here in Bosnia-Herzegovina can be framed in terms of restoration, or what you see by restoration. And then, if you see any theological or ethical grounds for what is happening, or is it purely a structural reform by the European Union and the Western international powers.**

[KK] Well, I was born in Bosnia Herzegovina but I didn't grow up in this country, so I know something about the war.

**[SG] Where were you born?**

[KK] In Jajce.

**[SG] Oh, in Jajce. I didn't know that.**

[KK] Yes. My mother is from there. So we would come through in the summer for a couple of weeks and in the winter for a couple of days so I knew it was pretty different from Croatia. And yes, there was a harmonious life in all of Yugoslavia. There were, of course, extremes, jumping here and there, of people moving around. People were trying to encourage people in their national identity, but I think it was also somewhat forced down or suppressed by the Communist Party and by Tito in that era. We should live in 'Brotherhood and Unity' together, so nobody could actually express themselves. Most other people, because the generation passed from the war time, the Second World War, all the way through and because of what happened and what Tito did to make changes, I would say pretty good changes in the country, to develop the nations on their own. Also taking money from the East or from the West, or wherever he could. He was a pretty tricky person, I would say, so that is the way he was guiding the whole country in unity. Some things were forced but some things were quite good.

[KK] Through this last war many, many things came to the surface, which were probably buried deep down in people. Before I became a believer, even in my childhood, I don't know why, but I somehow had hate against the Serbs. That was very popular in Zagreb. You know, hate the Serbs because they were keeping all of the high positions in the companies, they were controlling all the money that was going to Belgrade from tourism, or the industry. So we were taught in that way. So I would say that was buried somewhere deep in the people, and which they would not express on the street. Maybe was spoken in their homes.. I don't know exactly how it was in Mostar or generally in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but I believe these hatreds did not come to the surface just like that [Karmelo clicks his fingers]. It was buried somewhere in the people. So, you know what happened through the war, I'm not going to spend time on that. But as the question goes can some efforts be done, efforts to build up peace through Inter-religious dialogue as they try to effect social reconstruction and rebuilding. I think it is possible. But I see great obstacles also. I heard a very good expression. Every national group in Bosnia Herzegovina is doing in their way, in some way presenting their way of keeping the Dayton peace agreement, but are doing it in their way, that one day the European Union and the international troops will come to the conclusion, look, it didn't work. They all tried but they cannot live together. I think the leaders are working that way. I am looking at political leaders and I'm also looking at the church or religious leaders. I can either say specifically for each of them. You see in some places more loose and easy way to co-operate between different religious groups, such as in Sarajevo. I can be with friends with the Roman Catholics in Sarajevo, but not here, because they don't want any kind of relationship. Even when we come to the common places or speaking about the round table where we speak about the different issues, it's either political or social or religious life, we sometimes only come to the places, usually it's like that where we can fight somebody else. So if we can find some common sense or consensus fighting against the Muslims, then we will be together. But on any other area, we are different, we're opposite, there is not any fellowship, I would say. Even on a private basis.

**[SG] Between religious leaders?**

[KK] Yes, between religiously leaders.

**[SG] And you are involved in some of these round table discussions?**

[KK] Yes. For example, for religious education. Each of them agree that it must be in the school, except for the Jews and the evangelicals, which were not in favour of religious education in the schools because of certain issues, and we feel that it is the manipulation of children, because they are in some way forced so that if they do not attend certain religious education they are offended by other children, or other things. So there was only common interest in that because the town is divided so the Serbs have a certain group of their own children, the Muslims have theirs, and the Roman Catholics have most of them on the west side, so that's the only place I saw agreement. On all others where we met there were regular, I will not say fights, but in a nice way, big disagreements. So I see for the first point that there is not an openness or willingness from the religious leaders for the bringing of a reunited town

or for bringing people back or those things. They do not support that. Maybe sometimes politically or in newspapers they will say that, but they don't do that in reality.

**[SG] Mostar remains one of the most divided cities in Bosnia-Herzegovina...**

[KK] Yes, that's right.

**[SG] ...and these things that you're saying are true generally, but it's especially true for the religious leaders, is that what you're saying?**

[KK] Yes, exactly. The same for the religious leaders. We do not see the commonplace to meet. SFOR was trying to do that, actually when it was IFOR or UN, I remember from the years 1995 or 1996, they were trying to come together. I think they saw the willingness of their mufti from Mostar. We were ready to come to those meetings to share and see what was going on. But then it was difficult with the Roman Catholic Church, sometimes they would like to come, sometimes they would not. The Orthodox were never ready to come, so it never happened on that level under the sponsorship of the UN.

**[SG] Is there a priest here from the Orthodox Church here in Mostar now?**

[KK] Well, he doesn't live here. I think he lives in Nevesinje, which is 40 kilometres away from here. He comes from time to time to do some funerals and other obligations. I think they have no trouble in east Mostar which was reconstructed since its destruction in the war. So they don't yet have the church rebuilt, the one that was built from the 15th century, which was completely destroyed.

**[SG] Besides the Franciscans, who among Catholics are in Mostar?**

[KK] Well, there are Jesuits, but I'm not sure. The Bishop is their main leader so we have two streams in Mostar, the Franciscans and the Jesuits, but they don't get along so much together either.

**[SG] How do you feel theologically or ethically about reconciliation and bringing different peoples together? What are your thoughts on this? What do we need to do?**

[KK] Well, we would say that when we look at all religious groups, we would be honest and, if people were really devoted to that, it would be possible to have a life together. That's my opinion. But we're not. I think there is too much politics involved in the churches. That's the first obstacle. So looking at their history, which you know much better than I do, you know, whenever the Church came into the politics and the society in the way of dealing with the state problems, it weakens, say in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In this war the church was pretty much involved. And still, whenever I see it on the TV or anywhere else their commentators or someone like that, still nobody says that people were guilty of doing something wrong, you know.

And we have not come to the point where we admit that *we* didn't do whatever we could, so if *we* are taking part of the responsibility for this war, as the Lutheran Church did in the Second World War.

**[SG] That's a good point.**

[KK] Yes, that was a great thing when they apologised for not doing anything to stop the persecution of the Jews or anything else. They asked for forgiveness from the people. Nobody did that here yet. We tried to do that in 1994, 1995, 1996 during reconciliation meetings. Sometimes Germans would come and share their experiences. Some choose to show up, but nobody else. At that time we were not able to call the Serbs. They were far away and it was impossible for them to travel. We called several occasions to the Catholics and nobody came. Even as a representative, there was no response. From their side for those meetings. You speak and

**[SG] You speak of the Jews in the town. Is it a large or small group?**

[KK] No, it is pretty small. 20 to 40 people only now. They all left.

**[SG] I see. Do they have an active community with a synagogue?**

[KK] They are going to rebuild a new synagogue. The previous synagogue was in east Mostar, not too far from the east Mostar Church. The synagogue is transferred now into a puppet theatre. Now they're going to build just across from the Franciscan church on the Boulevard.

**[SG] On the West Side?**

[KK] No, it will be on the east side, across the street. So on the other side of the boulevard, behind the first building. But they are pretty open, I would say, pretty Inter-religious, well we cannot say they are religious people. They are more like a community of Jews. They do not have a rabbi. They follow some of their holidays, Jewish holidays, more as tradition than any religious sentiment. But they are open and they think pretty much as we do in terms of reconciliation of the town and of religious meetings.

**[SG] It's interesting that you say that because I think there is some commonality there in that in both situations, the Jews and the Protestants, if you want to use a larger category, are more or less out side of the conflict. Would you say that?**

[KK] Yes, yes. I would.

**[SG] In that sense, do you see that both groups, let's use the Protestants since they're an active community and function that way with churches in both East and West Side, Do you see that Protestants can be involved as a bridge builder, because they are outside of the conflict?**

[KK] Yes, I would say so. Because we're not stepping into anyone's side, I think we can be used as a tool. Secondly, all our churches have all of the national groups represented in the town or in the country. That's the second thing.

**[SG] Can you explain that a little bit more? Can you describe the church and how it's come about?**

[KK] Well, even through the war the people who were in most need were previous communists or socialists, so I think at once they were lost in...

[Doorbell interruption]

[KK] They lost their identity, and actually in that gap they found trust in the Lord in a completely different and new way of ideology, from what they believed before and to the point of where they came. So they would share the good news with other people, so then they would be involved with all three national groups. Nobody from our church looked at that time at who was who in the war really. And the love of God changed our attitudes and perspectives and all of that. So, Muslims would come because they were persecuted, Serbs would come because they were persecuted, nobody wanted to help them or they were still afraid, Croats were lost or do not agree with the national politics or such things. So, it was actually all mixed up. Even at this present moment on our side we have mostly a population of Croats. We have maybe mostly Serbs and Croats and Muslims, but even in the war or it was pretty much the same. I don't now, maybe now it is around 40 percent of Serbs, maybe 30 percent Croats and then maybe 26 or 27 percent Muslims, or something like that. I don't know exactly.

**[SG] This in the West Side Church?**

[KK] Yes, this is the West Side Church.

**[SG] But nobody bothers to count?**

[KK] No, No. Nobody cares. We don't even want to care about who was who, you know, because we don't want to come to the point of calculating and thinking and doing some sort of management.

**[SG] Yes, this is a highly unusual circumstance, don't you think? What is the difference that the river or actually the boulevard divides the city so profoundly that you have different phone systems, or that it is sometimes dangerous for a young man to cross over to the other side alone, and yet you have a whole mixture of people together in community.**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] What is the dynamic that is going on?**

[KK] Well I wouldn't say that it was never dangerous. It was. We were threatened many times, that a bomb would be thrown in or something like that. But still really...

**[SG] But not really threatened by each other in the Church?**

[KK] No, no. Never. Never threatened. We were praying for each other. We were praying for the national groups in the town, really for reconciliation in order to bring back the life of the town. So, slowly the people started changing their minds and their thoughts and their views and they started reaching others in the same way. I think that a part of that is maybe the Communist heritage when everybody thought they were at the same level, so many of them found that in the Church, in a new way, I would say, in a new way.

**[SG] So their identity has been transformed or change somehow?**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] And their identity is changed in some way from communism. Well, you can't take away your cultural identity...**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] ...but what is their identity that makes them...**

[KK] I believe that nobody in the Church looks at others to identify who is who from a national group. They are trying to help each other. They are visiting each other. Many times when we do evangelism, for example, we mix three ladies from three different groups, so people are shocked. If they come to a Croatian, they say, how can Serbians and Muslims and Croatians be together? Or are how was it that a Muslim is now sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to me, or such things. So, it is a challenge really for the people to start thinking. Because people are surprised when the Muslim knows more about the Bible than a Croatian does, or the Serbian does!

[Laughter.]

[KK] So they start to think, you know. There must be something deeper there to change those people, because in their mindset, for so many Croatians, for so many Serbians or for Muslims, there are certain areas that people just cannot cross over. They start to think it can be a good feeling to live together. So they lose their barriers, and we see people are crossing them and actually changing. As you said in the beginning, Steve, what the European Union was trying to reach in a way through money and through jobs, sometimes enforcing such things, but it still did not happen. It still did not happen.

**[SG] And still hasn't happened today.**

[KK] No.

**[SG] At least not in Mostar.**

No. We see also with these elections, still, we see - we will have elections on Saturday - still it is the promotion of the national identity. Unbelievable! Seven years have passed since the war, and still you hear the same story. Still you see the people living in poverty without jobs and still there are voting, probably -I don't know what will happen and I hope it will not be the same as the last elections - but they're voting for the national groups, which are actually, when you look, they say they are for economic progress or agricultural progress, but they don't present exactly the facts. But the main message is still national identity, and many people go for that.

**[SG] When we drove down to Mostar from Sarajevo today we were greeted by a whole section of Croatian flags when we came into Mostar, as though we are driving across the border into Croatia.**

Yes.

**[SG] It's still very much a part of what Mostar is like.**

**[SG] Would it be safe to say that people in your church have, I don't know if it is proper do say that they have an additional identity, or a new identity, in Christ or in the Church? How would you describe it?**

[KK] Yes, we have a new citizenship. Because everybody recognises citizenship here. Croatians are proud to have citizenship from Croatia that they can travel all around the world. Serbians have a Serbian or a Yugoslav passport so they can travel where they want. And then there are Bosnians who have mainly a Bosnian passport, which pretty much limits them on travel. So people are pretty proud of what they have. Our people in the Church look at their identity as new creatures in Christ.

**[SG] Let's look at question number four, since we are on this question. How can religious faith and forgiveness contribute to the escape of the cycle of violence of past offences?**

[KK] I would say pretty well. I don't agree with the Muslims and their theology, but still, if we look at the basis of the Qur'an and their teaching, and we go away from the extremes that we have in every religious group, probably, you're now close to Northern Ireland and you say what Catholics and Protestants did to each other, well, then they would teach a loving God, obeying God, helping people. So I would say it can have a great impact on the change on the violence and the offences of the past. But then I'm coming back. When the church and when the religious groups will admit what they did wrong in the past, that's the starting point. Asking forgiveness of others. The Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church asking for forgiveness for what they were doing in the war, or the opposite the Muslims in this or another way. That would be the turning point, I believe, for this country.

**[SG] Confronting one's own offences?**

[KK] Yes, yes. And really quite a few people who were in charge during the war have left. Even from the religious groups. Or they were moved, for this reason or for the safety of their lives the structure has pretty much changed, so I think they can be a great influence on society and changing the mindset of the people. Because still today, when we look at the elections, there is still the involvement of the religious leaders in those elections because they have interests and because they will have greater favour in the area in which they live if a certain party is elected, and if a certain party is looking for their roots, which would be supported by the Church. I don't know what happens in the church services but many times people ask me for whom shall we vote or what shall we do? They ask their religious leaders for advice. So we see a common interest between the Church and the different areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina where the church is or where the group is. So that is a very great obstacle that we still confront. But this can also be very bad for the country as well, keeping it divided. If that could be switched from a minus to a plus, it would completely change the climate of Bosnia-Herzegovina. So, I would say the religious leaders have a greater responsibility for what they're doing in this country.

**[SG] And if they were the first to come out and admit some of their own wrongs, this would set an example for others to come forward?**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] Question number 9 asks about local justice beyond the Hague court. Will smaller perpetrators of war crimes be brought to justice? And what is the role of the Truth and Reconciliation committee, which is established here in Bosnia-Herzegovina but doesn't really function. What I am getting at is this: Is it imperative to address the truth of the crimes in order for justice, forgiveness and reconciliation and restoration to be achieved? I think you're really answering that question, yes, we must face up to the truth of the crimes before these things can begin to...**

[KK] Yes, yes we do. Will this happen? I'm not going to say I am like Thomas as an unbeliever, but looking at 10 years and how little progress has been made, it seems difficult to imagine that smaller crimes will be brought to justice. First of all, there is so much corruption in all kinds of the structures of this country. This is a part of what holds on to this country and hinders bringing in real prosperity and a healthy country. So I doubt this will ever happen. So will people have to live with this? For sure they will have to. It will not be easy. That alone will stop many people from returning to their homes. We probably still have about 1 million refugees outside of the country who are probably planning not to return until the climate changes. I heard some people outside the country say that they are willing to come back home to die here because they still feel very much like foreigners there, not being received as they expected. In the beginning it was compassionate, but in time that disappears. So probably the next generation, the children will be accepted there, but the first generation still hopes to come back. Will they be able to come back in this environment? I'm very doubtful about that.

**[SG] Let me ask you this question. When you drive south of the city in the direction of the coast towards Čapljina, we see new homes being built. Who is building those and are these returning people?**

[KK] No, those are usually, at least in the sections that I know, they are Croatians from Bosnia, Croatians from the middle part of the country.

**[SG] So they are really being redistributed internally. What do they have to do? Do they have to evacuate homes that are now in the RS?**

[KK] That's right. Not just in the RS. It can be Mostar, it can be Čapljina, because they probably thought that they probably would stay forever in those homes, but the EU is taking more initiative and putting pressure on those who are occupying homes illegally. In this state of, I'll say, Herzeg-Bosna, they gave free land and some initial building material for building the foundations of a building and some of the walls, and the rest they have to do on a home. So those are people who are not planning to return. Most of them are Croatians. And they also are changing the structure of the area. If you look, in many of these areas Serbs were previously the majority. That is on the way to Stolać as well.

**[SG] Let me ask another question, which I think is obvious to us, but for the sake of the narrative here, the officials of Herzeg-Bosna are inviting *all* of the nationalities to settle there? Who are they inviting?**

[KK] Only Croatians. That was the plan in the war, the division of Bosnia Herzegovina so that the southern part would be connected to Croatia. Even though that never happened, yet still it is more or less the plan that Croatians will live south and in certain areas like Kiseljak or Kreševo or Vitez or some other places like Jajce, where the majority of the people were Croatians, that these become more pure Croatian areas. That is happening also in the Republica Srpska and in some Muslim parts, but we're now looking in this region. So, many Croats are supported in their efforts in order to stay in this section of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**[SG] So, the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina is continuing to be more and more segregated, it is not becoming more integrated, even though the international community has desired that for a long time?**

[KK] It is happening in some towns. Maybe in Sarajevo, where people are going. But even Croatians there or are, if they were living so far in Mostar, they are very supportive now by others to exchange apartments in Sarajevo for Mostar or some other town like Čapljina. So they are seeking to do that, or even changing their home for somewhere in Croatia. So we don't see very much integration. Only people who are forced to come back to their homes, where perhaps they don't like to live, because they don't have any other solution. Whoever has another solution is taking advantage of that solution.

**[SG] Good. Let's go back to question number two. Let's assume that peace is more than the silencing of weapons. It includes the blessing of God. Is it**

**necessary to have a relationship or faith in God before true peace can be understood and apprehended? In other words, can agnostics and other non-confessional persons experience the peace of God? Or can they experience peace by living in communion with people of faith?**

[KK] I would say the latter. They can experience peace by living in community among people of faith. It is better if they come to the Lord and then they experience their *own* peace, but I believe that when we look at where faith is expressed, or like in the United States, I don't believe you have peace in your country now because of the goodness of your people now, but I think you inherited the peace of other people who were really devoted to God. I think you have that heritage and that you live in that environment where you can express your faith to God.

**[SG] I'm glad you think that way. You are probably in the States more than I am, so I take your voice as one of authority. [laughter]**

[KK] But where people are against God, we were taught during the Communist time, most of the things we were taught were against God or against expressing your faith, so it was all your private issue if you even think in that way, you could not express yourself publicly. Usually no one would ask you anything about your religion because that was not a subject about which you spoke publicly. Only in a smaller, friendly environment among friends, such as a birthday, or something like that, but never, never publicly.

**[SG] So your faith was very privatised in Communist times?**

[KK] That's right. Even though there was a freedom of faith. Or only if you're in some key positions. For example, I was a machine mechanic and I came to the highest position that I could come. I even still got additional education above that because my father was in a high position. Even though I was not a communist I came to the highest that I could, but I could not become the boss of the whole unit for the development of that section of the company because I was not in the Communist Party. Even though I had enough knowledge, enough experience and enough education, they would not allow me to come to that position because I was not part of the Communist Party. But coming back to the point, you must be more to peace than the silencing of the arms. Because now we don't have arms threatening us, maybe some shooting on weddings, that's all, but still we do not see any kind of blessing, I would say generally over Mostar or over Bosnia- Herzegovina because there's so much tension. Many politicians who are put in positions of power abuse the position, many of them speak about what they can do for Bosnia-Herzegovina. My question is always, why don't they just do something, even if they are not elected, because in a private way you can do so much. Many of them say such things such as we could employ 300,000 people, we could make jobs for people, and they are just saying such things, you know. Even when they come into power we don't see the fulfilment of the promises. So most of the things are based - I don't know of it is too harsh to say that they are based on a lie, or based on things which do not exist or not even planned to happen. And people were living in those lies after the war. I remember 1994 when the UN came, 1995-1996 the European Union came. Everybody had trust in those

people, but finally people were very disappointed. Then elections came and people trusted in this process. Today, when you speak to people about the elections, many of them are very doubtful, many, many, especially if you look on the new generation, that anything will change. So looking at the people, there is no hope for them, generally speaking, if they were to be very honest.

**[SG] So if there is no hope, then we are talking about a situation of despair and there really is no peace if you're despairing.**

Yes.

**[SG] So how do we get to a place of hope? How is that possible?**

[KK] For some people, what I know, it's God. They come to hope in that. But even in the midst of all circumstances they can have peace, they can have blessing and they can have everything sufficient for their lives, I think generally speaking, once moral standards..., and if we speak about that, there must be some foundations of the Bible, even if the people are unbelievers. My grandfather's brother was a very well known Communist leader in Yugoslavia, and he always said that if he were in charge of something even bigger, he would put the Ten Commandments from the Bible as the law for the whole country and that would be very sufficient for every case that you would encounter. So he knew the Bible even though he he was a devoted Communist. And I would come back to the Word of God and to the foundations of creation.

**[SG] Let's take a look at question three. What is the relationship between individual guilt and distributed hatred or distrust? Can all peoples of one nationality be maligned for the guilt of those individuals who participated in militant nationalism? In other words, what I hear on the streets is, 'Oh, those Četniks', or 'Oh, those Ustaše', or 'Oh, those Turks', and a whole class of people, our whole national group is maligned for the offences of a few.**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] Is there a communal guilt, or is there only an individual guilt?**

[KK] Through the war, when people lived here, it was very hard to express something else from what was heard on TV. First of all, there was a manipulation of the people. If you hear information only from one source, you will be deceived. That is very obvious. If you're constantly fed by the same food. Here, I would sometimes say in a nice and polite way to the people that it cannot be that all Croats are all good and all the Muslims and Serbs are bad. Well, many of them would not agree in the beginning because I would hurt their feelings about their national recognition as Croats, which they were very proud of and would do anything for.

**[SG] So they would accept that all Croats are good, and blindly so?**

[KK] Yes. I was recently in Prozor in that section of the country and I tried to share with the people. But they were offended and were furious and they just could not hear what I was saying except what they thought was the only truth, because they would say, 'All Muslims have done this and this in the war, and Turks came here like 500 years ago and they were ruling for 400 years, and then the Serbs were doing this and they invited communism,' and all that. I would say that we cannot say that all the people are guilty, but the people from one community must recognise that people in their own community who are guilty and who are their leaders and who were poisoning them. It is very hard. For example, I was recently in Montenegro and I saw a some T-shirts that were for sale. And a lot of people were buying them. The T-shirt said, 'Karadžić the Serbian hero', or 'Mladić, the only good Serbian hero.'

**[SG] Where was that?**

[KK] In Budva in Montenegro. You could buy them on the streets on the coast through the summer time. Many people think in this way because they are deceived. And if you say something against that, they would not agree because that is common sense to them to think in that way. So still, until the climate is changed, it is hard to say many things. Probably a lot of people now at this moment are thinking, 'I was wrong,' but they're not yet ready to speak about this publicly.

**[SG] So if I hear you correctly, I hear you saying there is a community responsibility. Individuals are good and bad and accountable for their own actions,**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] So there isn't such a thing as a communal guilt, but there is a communal responsibility to address individual guilt among the community?**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] Is that proper way to describe it?**

[KK] Yes, yes.

**[SG] And so far, that is not really happening, is it?**

[KK] No, not yet. We are seeing that in Croatia at this time. President Mesić went to give testimony against Milošević, but he also addressed some things from the time of Tudjman, which many in some parts of Croatia didn't like. I think that if this were ever addressed in any section of Bosnia-Herzegovina it would be very hard in that case for Mesić to come back to Bosnia-Herzegovina. His life might even be threatened. For example, he had one big company from Široki Brijeg that made a product called Leonovići. He has started to stand for the unity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, even though he is Croatian and his part of the Croatian Party. Nevertheless, he said that we cannot kill Serbs are Muslims. And I'm not sure that it isn't part of his business strategy because he is selling his products in all parts of

Bosnia Herzegovina! [Laughter], including in the Republika Srpska, or whether it is really his ideology. But when he said that, and the same evening, in front of his home in Široki Brijeg, actually in Trn, his car was blown up. Immediately we saw graffiti in Široki Brijeg that said, 'Leonović you are a betrayer', 'you are against the Croatian people', etc. Immediately this all happened. He made his statement on the afternoon of one day, in the evening his car was blown up and the next day we saw graffiti.

**[SG] So it is life-threatening to actually confront the wrongs of your own community?**

[KK] That's right, that's right. Still there is this pretty strong national climate, that even those who could lead those into a healthier environment...

**[SG] Who have leadership, they have commercial wealth, they have recognition, these sorts of community leaders, could do it, but their lives would be in jeopardy.**

[KK] Yes. I believe there are people who deeply love this country. Everybody can ask for a part of the cake, but if I want to give most of the cake to other people, why shouldn't I, if I have enough for my wife? I think there are people like that in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But still, I do not see that the time has come that people can honestly express what they believe, what they want, what their vision is, and what their strategies are for this country.

**[SG] Do you think that time will come?**

[KK] I hope so and I pray for that. I hope it is in the very near future, otherwise we will face another war. I can say this very easily. We saw recently that grenades were found in east Mostar, So...

**[SG] Stockpiled, not just leftover grenades.**

[KK] No, they were made in 1996 and 1997. Some people say it was for export as a business. I don't know, I cannot say anything to this, but I assume there are still so many weapons here in this country, I cannot say for any one side or each side or for which side, but I believe this is the case because still, when I speak with people, there is still a great deal of hatred in them, that they are ready to fight. And they're not ready to live with another national group, because still they leaned to a certain group of nationalist leaders.

**[SG] Do you want to look at question number seven? As I said, the question is really directed to the Muslims about the Muslim 'umma', or community, but maybe you want to say something about the Western military presence in Bosnia and its effect on what the Bosnian - I don't mean just the Muslims, but I mean Bosnian and Herzegovinan citizens - is that Western presence actually imposing Western and secular culture that is not helpful to religion and faith? Maybe you don't even want to talk to the question.**

[KK] No. I can say that Bosnia-Herzegovina is some mixture between East and West. I grew up in Zagreb, which is very, very westernised. The way of thinking, the mentality, the kitchen are very westernised and very influenced by Vienna. And the southern part of Croatia is very influenced by Rome and Venice, and then if we look eastern Slavonia, it is very influenced by Hungary. So it is very westernised in its way of thinking. When I came here I was having quite a conflict in my mind and the way I was thinking, constantly thinking that I can do it better than they can. It took me two years to adapt to the situation here. [Laughter.] But I would say that Bosnia-Herzegovina is a mixture of the East and West, looking at lifestyle. They have pretty mixed opinions of people. So, will there come a conflict? Probably there are certain issues where there is a conflict, but I think even more than a military presence here is forcing or enforcing Bosnia and Herzegovina into being immersed in a westernised culture is the economy and the way of doing business.

**[SG] Can you explain that up a little more?**

[KK] Well, the whole mentality, if you come to Bosnia-Herzegovina and you live here, you see that everything is slowed down, slow motion, you know. [Laughter.] Nobody is in a hurry. Just a couple days ago we had a meeting about the Bible school and its future and usually we wait for some brothers pretty often a long time. They were late by about 25 or 30 minutes and we called them all on the mobile phones and they said they would be here in 15 minutes. A half an hour later they arrived. So we spent a full hour waiting for them, and that is nothing! People don't usually apologise for that. It's like a normal thing. In the West, you're very offended and you think they don't respect you if you're late, you know. Well, recently the social party of Lagumdžija was speaking about the whole of society has to be changed in Bosnia and Herzegovina because of a new way of doing merchandising and management and that everything is now done by computers and everything is done on time and if Bosnia-Herzegovina wants to come into the new millennium or into a competitive business, it has to do this. We have to understand that Bosnia-Herzegovina is stuck in time in some way.

**[SG] What time would you say they are stuck in?**

[KK] In the Communist period. Companies were working for the market of Yugoslavia, so everything was sold and planned to be covered. For example, in Bosnia Herzegovina, there were many companies that were not productive. But the Socialist mentality was that everyone should be employed, so even if there are better companies in Slovenia, Croatia or Serbia, they should cover the expenses of the companies in Kosovo or in Macedonia or in Bosnia. So everyone was employed. And every one still has memories of how they had work and how they could earn money and how they could go every summer to the coast, maybe in the longer term they could put away some money or take credit from the Bank and buy a house where they could go for the weekend. Those are memories from the past that cannot work today. Because, first of all, you have places like the Philippines and China where the labour force is much cheaper, so the parties that really want to bring Bosnia-Herzegovina into a - let's say - a productive mentality, are forced to think in a Western way. So I think more than being frightened by the military presence or the

money from the EU, or anything else, the fear will be with the new parties forcing people of this country to go towards the Western way of thinking, working and all of these things if they want to see prosperity in Bosnia Herzegovina. This is especially so when the EU became, I will say alive, or they now have no interior borders, they will start forcing this country into changing its currency. That's where it's headed.

[SG] So that is a specific tension and challenge. Will people ultimately be better for it or is it hard to say? What if some of these traditional ways are lost?

[KK] Well, they will have to be ready to pay the price. I remember in Yugoslavia many people would go to Germany and work there and they would work very, very hard, but they would be paid well. But because so many were paid so well, they were prepared to give up their fellowship, drinking coffee, their holidays or Saturday, such as having a barbecue, or maybe on Sunday they would go to church, and they were prepared to give up on all of these things just for the money. Well, I also saw people who said, I would rather not have the money and these things and still work in a company which is losing money and still get some money and to still stay as I am. So there are these two confrontations, you know. I believe the next generation will start to lose their identity of Bosnia-Herzegovina people, because they will be forced to step into that, and probably many things will need to be changed in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**[SG] If I hear you correctly, you're saying Bosnia-Herzegovina becomes more like Western Europe.**

[KK] I think so.

**[SG] And the ways and traditions of Western Europe will compel them to change. Will that also be something of a method of intervention, which helps to stop the cycle of revenge that goes on here because of traditional ways of doing things?**

[KK] It all depends what they... Under communism, somebody thought that everybody loves, until a new war happened, you know. I still think that there is so much buried in the younger generation, hatred against others still. They are trying to do reconciliation in some places in the schools and to help them see the real advantage of being together, and the potential in the people. But I think still in their homes, what the children here, is slightly buried. It is some kind of resistance. It is the resistance of being completely honest. They can be good friends, maybe you are Serbian and I am Muslim, and we will be friends, but there will always be a certain invisible wall that we are not ready to cross. Will that happen? That is the issue for the leaders and that is the point of the schools. For example, when I see in the United States the children in kindergarten, the children are also looking to the flag of America, so they are trained from an early age that they are living in the best country, that they have the best president in the world and they have the best army in the world. And they believe that. Because it is rooted in them. If they're coming from Mexico or from some Hispanic country or from Africa, or they are some other type

of Americans, they all believe in certain things. Here it is not a common thing in Bosnia Herzegovina, which we are facing.

**[SG] Here they salute their own national identity.**

[KK] Yes, the national identity. So you will see the Bosnian flag, which is given by the European Union and maybe the design will be changed, you will only see it on some buildings in Sarajevo. You don't see them in Mostar. Maybe on some buildings in east Mostar. You don't see these flags in Banja Luka or Trebinje. It is very hard to see them. Maybe they enforce them to put them up in the event of a politician coming through, but they would take it down as soon as they could.

**[SG] And then they would put up a national flag?**

[KK] And put up a national flag. So people see all the time their own flag and thus have their identity. So everything will probably change. The Internet, computers, I think this is a big thing. I see advantages and disadvantages in this. Sometimes I long for my childhood when there were no computers. Life was much simpler.

[Laughter.]

**[SG] I see that recently you have given up year cell phone too.**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] We've landed more or less on questions 10 and 11 together. In what ways are decisions among Bosnians individual or communal? And the corollary question is, do the communities of faith have compelling influence on moral decisions of Bosnians? In other words, you as a pastor, do you want people to make individual decisions, or do we as a church want to make communal decisions? And what is your role as a pastor to lead them in the decision-making?**

[KK] Well, probably God's opinion. But it's up to them to make the decision on each individual issue. So, if we're speaking about the elections, I would say, we were praying yesterday for the elections, I have no wisdom from God as to which party you should vote for. [Laughter.] But you should pray and you should vote on what is the best and what you sense from God. I am not saying that I am for any party or against any party. I know that some members of the church are members of certain parties, but I never compel them or discourage them from what they are doing. But they should make their own decisions.

**[SG] And in terms of national identity, you continually encourage people to think in terms of their new identity, their new citizenship in Christ.**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] Is that a good way of putting it?**

[KK] Yes! I would put it just that way. We believe that we should have a new identity here on earth but also we should think of a united Bosnia-Herzegovina. We say we are not against any part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but we think globally. So I would also express that I believe that one day the Republika Srpska will disappear, because we believe it is the will of God that Bosnia-Herzegovina is united and that all people can come to faith and that we will not see the barriers between the people and that we will not be looking on their social income or something like that, but we will be looking at their identity in what they really are.

**[SG] That's really a big question, whether the integrity of the borders of Bosnia Herzegovina remain as they are today or whether the Republika Srpska secedes to Serbia. Serbia-Montenegro. There seems to be a big segregation in Bosnia Herzegovina today because of the Dayton accord and the partition that is, I think, hurting things more than helping things at this point. So you are expecting people to make up their own minds, and yet you live in community.**

[KK] That's right.

**[SG] What about traditional people who may live in a Croatian community or within a Muslim community on the other side of the river. If they made individual decisions to change and to do things differently, to say, I'm not going to be just nationalist, I'm going to see what is best for this country, or I make my own decisions. Is there a lot of pressure to remain within the Croatian community and its strongly nationalist mentality or within the Islamic community and its nationalist mentality, or the Serbian community in its nationalist mentality?**

[KK] Well, I think that these manipulations are disintegrating because there are leaders who want something different. They're tired. For example, the Croatian community is dividing into smaller communities and some of them are really pointing toward other things other than national recognition. There are still those who say that they shouldn't do this and that they should stay together and fight together as an entity, but there are those who are leaving. And I would say they are very prominent, influential people, well-educated. So, if they stay and live what they say, then there is hope, not just for Croatia, but for the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, because those people think globally, they don't think only on their certain small community where they are isolated from the others. Because I believe they want the good for all the people in Bosnia-Herzegovina. So that is the hope and they believe that people follow slowly.

**[SG] But it will take the leaders to step out first.**

[KK] That's right.

**[SG] Karmelo, question number six. Is there a unique or special role that women play in peace building and restoration? Have you witnessed that in your own church community, or not particularly?**

[KK] Yes, especially, well through the war we had fewer men. Much fewer. Even still today, it's a pretty common thing that there are more a ladies than men in the church. So, yes they do play a role, because when I speak with the husbands who were not believers, in many occasions they think very highly about the church and what the church stands for. Secondly, many of the men say that it is not a Church of one nation and that it is the Church of all the nationalities. So that speaks to them a lot. And when they see that people can live together and love each other and respect each other for who they are and not hate each other, even if they have different opinions, that speaks a lot. So I cannot say that they do not have a special role, because they do. They are sharing in the community in Mostar or in Bosnia-Herzegovina what they believe, or what they are, or what they have experienced in their lives. So they have a role. I saw recently on the TV that they have built a ladies party, which I heard of for the first time, and which there are only ladies. I never saw something like that in my life. The ladies party of Bosnia Herzegovina, fighting for the rights of ladies in Bosnia Herzegovina.

**[SG] And men can't join?**

[KK] I don't know, I only saw it on some promotions of their party, so I don't know the whole story of about that. Well it depends in what area they are. If it is in a fundamental Muslim environment, there is less possibility that they will express or share, because their voice is not so loud as the man's because of submission to men, but in some other areas we see the ladies as leaders. In Croatian areas and in Serbian areas. Also in Sarajevo it is not hard for a woman to have a leadership role. For example, I think now of the Minister of the foreign affairs is a lady, so she has a pretty big role. And in other areas we see the ladies involved in this country.

**[SG] What about the role with children? Do you think it can go either way? Do you think that it can help instil hostility in children or that it can help get rid of some of the animosities?**

[KK] Again, it depends on the area and it depends on the culture. Because now we have all mixed areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina because if we speak about Croatians, they are or slightly more accepting of culture from Croatia, and Serbs or the same from Serbia, that mentality. They certainly have influence with the children, but it depends on how much freedom they have in a home as to what they can say. Because we see in many cases that for some ladies in the church they are not ready or they are offended or they are silent in the homes and they cannot express really what they believe. So they also cannot bring that to their children. I would say it is true also in the secular world in a different areas and in different ways. They have maybe different ways of approaching things with the children. Sometimes it's what they believe, sometimes it's what their husband believes, or sometimes it's what the community believes.

**[SG] So they are repeating sometimes just what they hear being said, or what they hear on the streets?**

[KK] Yes. So I wouldn't say that in all of Bosnia-Herzegovina that ladies have complete freedom. I wouldn't say so.

**[SG] Question number 12. How can a religious community participate in Inter religious dialogue and co-operation and still maintain its own distinctive? Perhaps you think they can't. I would like to hear thoughts on that.**

[KK] Well, there certain areas in which we can express what we believe, or we will have some common things. Now most other religious leaders are not for the war, they are against the war. They would speak on the moral standards for the people. When we had a round table, others were afraid of saying things, but I said how much is the Church today relevant? Or the religious group? To stand against pornography, which everyone would, Muslims would say they are against it, Serbs would also, from the Orthodox Church, and the Roman Catholics would also. How much would we be ready to stand against drugs, against child abuse, not just sexual abuse, but many times it's abuse of the children as they have to beg, or they could be sold somewhere. I don't know about those, what you call them, homes where there is prostitution, how much children are involved in that. How relevant are the religious communities in the town of Mostar? Nobody wanted to touch this question. Then I was really challenged by this Socialist Party, the SDP, you know, whose leaders were previously communists. Because they started asking these questions. These were not comfortable questions for all of the religious leaders. But we can find some of these things, even if they don't want to express things openly with their vote, or to say openly that they are against this or that. But I think we can, as I am sharpens iron, we can sharpen each other and really challenge them to start to come out of their safe zone into an unsafe zone, and really start thinking and fighting for what they believe.

**[SG] So there is an ethical imperative and that the morals help us to raise the standards of the community. It really does force them out of a safe zone, because you're talking about confronting the underworld, the corruption inflicted by violent people. And this is something we can work on together.**

[KK] Yes, I believe so. We can work with those things that we share. I'm not sure that they are all ready to do that. Maybe around the table they will say this, but in reality I don't know how much they will do that. But at least there is a step taken that now we can move forward. Some other people said they would like to bring President Carter and quite a few religious leaders were for that in Mostar. So, we will see if that happens. That can be one of the tools by which we can come together. I know on quite a few things we have disagreements. Quite a few. Probably more with the Muslims even though they show themselves more friendly, like the mufti from Mostar, than the Roman Catholics or the Serbs towards us or towards other communities. We will also probably have agreement with the Jewish community. So there are certain points where we can do co-operation.

**[SG] Without losing your distinctives?**

[KK] Yes.

[SG] **And are your distinctive respected in these dialogues?**

[KK] They say so! [Laughter.] But I don't see that so much in life, you know.

[SG] **You don't sense that you have to compromise your own beliefs and practices in order to accommodate the peace process?**

[KK] No, no I don't think so.

[SG] **Can you say the opposite, which is, that your beliefs and practices, because you hold firmly to them, actually contribute to the peace process?**

[KK] Yes. Yes. I never have seen that compromise of your beliefs that you do something especially good. That is, if your beliefs are not evil. But if you stand on what you believe full as the Bible, for example, I can see that, and I can believe that it will bring fruit towards Mostar and towards Bosnia Herzegovina.

[SG] **Thank you, Karmelo. Is there anything that you would like to say that you think I ought to hear or that you think I have overlooked or neglected? There are so many things that we could say, but I want to give you an opportunity to say what you wish.**

[KK] Not at this moment. I believe that many times we say that we want to save the whole country or something like that. I don't know if that will happen or not, but I'm pretty sure that influence of the newborn Christians is big even if we see that the churches are very small. We would like to see them bigger and with more influence in a political way and to see that there is formation of the community through the church and influence of the church in a positive way, not becoming a religious or traditional church, but really one of that is bringing light and his kingdom to Bosnia-Herzegovina. I believe that is the way that transformation and a healthy situation can happen in Bosnia Herzegovina.

[SG] **That's a good word, transformation. That's really what it is, isn't it?**

[KK] Well, if any country needs transformation, probably Kosovo also very much, but this is the country which really needs transformation, because of all that happened through the war, all that was before the war, and all that has been happening after the war also. I believe that, this is my personal opinion, 80 percent of the people here in Bosnia Herzegovina are thinking, if I can do something that will benefit me in some way, even if it is not good for other people, I will do that. So there must be the transformation. Transformation of the mindset, transformation of standards of believing and behaving towards other people. Because on many occasions we will see that the people are behaving in a nice and polite way. That's Bosnia Herzegovina. It is very well known for its hospitality. But when you come to deeper relationships or when we want to speak into the lives of people to help them, not to offend them, they're not ready for that. They're not ready for change. They have a standard of being a good people and polite, but don't tell me what I should do

what I should change. I want to stay what I am, even if it is not good and even if it is not good for their family.

**[SG] And even if they know it is not good?**

[KK] Yes. Many occasions it is like that. We are facing that as a church and I would say that if people were ready for those changes that we would have at least 1200 people on the west side Church now. These are people who passed through the church, stayed one month or three months or two weeks. But when I came to the point of speaking into their lives and make them disciples, followers of Christ, not in the sense of being fanatics, but being changed with different standards in their lives, they were not ready for that. They were not ready to give up on these things. It's not changing the culture. It's changing their insides, their personality. They're not ready for that.

**[SG] Is it something that the Church can do, or is it up to the Spirit of God that does it within them?**

[KK] I think it is the Spirit of God.

**[SG] But they need to want that themselves...,**

[KK] That's right.

**[SG] ...to have the will to do that.**

[KK] That's right. I would say on many occasions, it is that deceitfulness of the people. And they are trying to deceive others. On many occasions they want to give a good impression, which is not true in reality on many occasions. When you become their friends after a longer time, let's say, maybe four or five months, to realise some things were on many occasions it happens that they have expectations that if I am doing good to you, then you will return this in the same way to me. And if you don't return it in the same way that I expect, then there are problems. It is very hard for them to understand unconditional love. If I am doing something to you, then I don't expect anything back. But I expect that you would do it for others.

**[SG] There is a strong sense of reciprocity in the culture...**

[KK] Yes.

**[SG] ...that if I do something for you then you must do something for me.**

[KK] Yes. So, I believe that is one of the tools that happened in the war. Many of them could not understand their neighbour who was drinking brandy with them or eating lamb with them or having fun together. It was very common in the previous times that if one neighbour started building a house, all of the neighbours would take either their vacation from their jobs or take their weekends and help build the house. Of course, later he would roast a pig on a spit or something out of gratitude to them.

So they would have fellowship together. But there was a certain thing in the people, it's not just the national built-in hatred towards others, but something inside of them which brought them to a position which they could do ethnic cleansing. On many occasions it was neighbours, so it was very hard to believe. And that is the reason it took more victims in Bosnia-Herzegovina and then in Croatia because people were trusting people and they never came into any real degree of depth in their relationship and then suddenly they found that they were being kicked out of the apartment, pushing them or killing them. So I see that. It was very hard for me to understand in the beginning, but I saw it through the war and through these years that I have spent present here in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**[SG] So a lot of levels of trust were fairly shallow?**

[KK] Yes, I would say so.

**[SG] When it came right down to it, if your life were threatened, or perceived to be threatened, it was easier to protect your own family by becoming the aggressor.**

[KK] Yes. So I believe it is pretty much also..., maybe it is common in all of the whole of the former Yugoslavia, that we see betrayal in people. I believe it is also reflected in business practice. So people are pretty hesitant. In many occasions, when people come to the place of business you see that people involved and are not so much the experts in the business that they need, but it is more relatives. People go to those who they can trust.

**[SG] Karmelo, thank you very much for opening your home and for your thoughts. I'm very grateful to you.**

[KK] Thank you also, Steve.

[End of interview]

Interview with

**Seka Kundačina**

West Mostar Church, Mostar

28 September 2002

**[SG] First off, can you give me your name? Your last name. I know your first name is Seka. I want to get the spelling right.**

[SK] Anica Seka Kundačina.

**[SG] Anica? Right. What's the Kund...?**

[SK] Kundačina. That's her surname.

**[SG] That's her surname?**

[SK] Yes.

**[SG] What is this name here?**

[SK] First... like...

**[SG] And Seka is just a nickname?**

[SK] Yeah.

**[SG] Oh, OK. All right. Kundačina? All right. Very good. We're here in West Mostar in the Evangelical church where the tape is being done. And Seka is the mother-in-law of Branka. Seka, we'd like to talk about how people respond to hatreds and evil that was done especially here in Mostar and how their faith or religion has helped them overcome those hatreds. So, can I ask how were you and your family directly affected by the war?**

[SK] That's the most painful question in my life. To answer this question I rarely like to go back. But I like to help with that answer. In this war I lost a member of my family, my own son. It couldn't be more tragic than it is. Because my husband and I and my daughter-in-law are losers, and most of all my granddaughter, because she remains without a father for the rest of her life. And this loss cannot be replaced with anything. But praise be to the Lord for his mercy because with his mercy we can overcome all of this. The miracle that happened to me is that I don't hate anybody, not just now but never. I didn't want any judgment especially when I met God when God promised me that he is eternal and just judge. Then I got relief and I got great encouragement. And praise be to him.

**[SG] Can you relate a little bit about how your son was killed? What year it was and what was the circumstance? Was he a military, a soldier?**

[SK] The tragedy is that he was not a soldier or he didn't have any contact with the war. He got killed in front of his house, as a civilian from a grenade. That happened in 1992, on June 14. I wasn't in Mostar at that time and for a long time I had no clue that this happened. I was far away about 50 kilometres from Mostar. I had a ranch there, my husband and I, and my granddaughter. At that time she was three and a half years old when we went there on April 19 to our farm, our ranch. At first, even when it was said that the war will happen in these days you couldn't see it. It was so quiet and peaceful. And we decided to visit our land to do some work there, just to prepare the land for the farming in the next season. So we just had on sports clothes and we just took our granddaughter with us. Just for a weekend. For example, we went on Friday and we thought we would be back on Sunday. And we were just 12 kilometres from Mostar, to Buna, we saw a lot of soldiers there. And they stopped us. These were the people from former Yugoslavia. By dialect you could recognize to whom they belonged. They asked us, "Where are you going?" And we said, "We are going home." And then he asked us, "Where is your home?" And we replied, "In Mostar, that's the place where we live." And he asked us back, "Do you know what is going on in Mostar?" And we said, "No," because while we were in our farm we didn't watch TV or listen to the radio because we were constantly busy. And then he replied to her, "You know that we will destroy Mostar until it is flattened." And then I replied to him, "Mister, you are joking." And then he said, "Ma'am, I'm not joking, I'm serious." And in his voice I could hear that he was not joking. I was quiet, and then they started to talk to my husband and then he told him like, "Brother, go back with the wife and the kid, go back to the place where you were. And you take your gun and come to the front. We didn't have another choice but to go back. And very soon the war started in Mostar. And there was no chance for us to come here. We went to Bileca - that's the town near our ranch - just to call our children. My son and his wife were in Mostar but we just couldn't reach them. Till July 12 we were there and we had no clue about what is happening or what happened. On the other side we had a son that was studying in Belgrade, he was studying engineering. And we thought, 'Maybe it's better for us to go to Belgrade because it's a bigger town and we might hear something.' And about when we were ready to go, the sad news reached us. My daughter-in-law somehow sent that information to us, that our son was killed. She also said that our son from Belgrade will come to visit us. In that moment I really didn't know what to do: should my son come to me or should I go to Belgrade. And again God had his part in this. Even I didn't know him personally at that time but I know that his hand was upon me. I asked the man that came to give me this sad news just to go to the military base there in Bileca because there was no phone - you couldn't phone from anywhere - and [I asked him] if he could phone. Just to call Yugoslavia. I knew where my son stayed. I gave him his address, his phone number. Just to call him, to tell him not to start his trip to visit us but that we will come to see him. We would go to see him it doesn't matter what cost we had to pay because it wasn't very safe to travel at that time. And then my husband's brother came from a village to Bileca when he heard the news. And he said to us, "I will go with you, and I will drive you." At that time a nurse came to me and my husband to help, the doctor's help, just to give us some medication to calm us down. But we didn't want to receive anything. We wanted to go through this period very consciously. And that how it happened.

**[SG] How old was your son when he was killed?**

[SK] 32. He was married, he started to work and he started a family and 4 years he was in this marriage. And when we thought that this is the most beautiful part of his life, than this happened.

**[SG] Thank you. I know it's difficult to share. Seka, did you consider yourself particularly religious? Let me start another question: Is your religious background Catholic?**

[SK] Yes. My background is Catholic. I was born in this family, and am also raised in this family and I accept everything that I should accept in this family, like I was baptized and all other things you have to do. But it didn't take long until I was 7 years old. Then I had a brother, and he is coming now to the church. He lived in Mostar. He came to our place, Derventa. So, this is when I was 7 years old until the point when my brother came and he said to me, "Oh, Seka, you come with me." So, I went with him to Mostar when I was 7.

**[SG] How old was he?**

[SK] Five or six years older than I am.

**[SG] So not very old. And you came by yourselves?**

[SK] He was here studying in the police school because at that time they would take younger guys that age, and that period of studying was very long for the policeman so that's why he was here. And then my Dad came to Mostar not long after we left because he was working in the train station and Mostar had a train station, that's how he could move here. So we were all together again.

**[SG] And did you attend church regularly when you were a child and then as an adult?**

[SK] Yes. But later I would go sometimes together with them and what is interesting is that my sisters were telling me that I was always somehow different. I remember when my mother was begging me. She would say some words, some prayers and I would laugh at her and that wasn't very nice. And very often they would kick me out because I would laugh at the rest of my brothers and sisters around me. And sometimes it would be raining or snowing and it wasn't really pleasant to be outside. When I was standing outside I would think, "Why am I doing this? Ok, next time when they pray I will bite my nails so I won't say anything." And many times I would do that. That tradition or religious faith I wasn't concerned about and I didn't know much about it. I don't know why but this is how it happened. I was 17 and a half years old when I married my husband. On the other hand, he belonged to another nationality. He's Serbian. And when we got married he told me, "You know what? No more Serbian or Croat – we are now atheist." At that time he was working, at that time it was called SUP, and it was ministry of internal affairs, now. But at that time it was called SUP. And because he was working in that place he couldn't believe so he said, "No God." And I said, "Ok, no God."

**[SG] And he was not religious apparently, either?**

[SK] No. Also as a young child he went to schooling so he didn't believe much. So we became atheists and we entered the so called 'party'. Communist party. So we continued to live in this way and we even came to a point when we were placed in a higher position. So we had our sons and they were not baptized, they were not going to church or anything. They had no clue about traditions and the name of God was not mentioned in our house.

**[SG] Did the war and the death of your son make you more interested in your faith?**

[SK] Yes. When I went to Serbia I stayed there for a full five years with my granddaughter, too. And also there nobody mentioned God or even believed in God. I even judged God sometimes and to ask him why he did it. That's all that I could say to God, "Why did you do this to me? Why did you divide my family? Why did you take my son?" I just couldn't understand why this happened to me because we didn't do anything wrong, we lived a life in our home full of love.

**[SG] So, even though you had consciously decided to be atheists, you still believed in God?**

[SK] Maybe it stayed with me in my subconscious as a child, but later on as I grew up I would think of God as distant and then I would say, 'Oh, why then would he care about me? And I would leave it as it is. I didn't consider that God is everywhere and that he is not limited by time or space. I thought this God is some distant God. And even my conscience would say to me, like if I would ask, "Why God?" then in some point I would still think that God existed. But I would judge him, 'Why should this happen to m?' I remember when I said to God, "OK, God, I have two eyes, which would represent two sons, and you take one of my eyes."

**[SG] So in the situation where you felt helpless to do anything, you turned to God because he could do something. At least to ask, "Why is this happening?"**

[SK] In my background something would tell me that he exists and I would only talk to him with the question, "Why?"

**[SG] And do you think your faith has helped you to understand yourself better?**

[SK] Yes. If I can just continue with the story. My daughter-in-law Branka started to go to this church and in 1994 when it was possible for the post, for the letters to go, because her daughter was with me, that's Ena, she would send to us letters and these little brochures. And I would read this. And I would read to Ena aloud when she would go to sleep. And even when I would read these little brochures I would forget afterwards what I read, probably because of my other problems that I had. Because the greatest burden that I had, was the girl that was with me, my granddaughter. I had the problem thinking like, "How can I come to Mostar and give her to her mother?" Because I didn't have any intention to come back here. Because for me Mostar was something that didn't matter to me because I knew I left my son here, healthy and good, and he doesn't exist any more. And then I would think, "What would I do in Mostar now?" And one other of my hard situations was that the other son in Belgrade was a top student, and other five together with him, and they were chosen to go the last year of engineering in Canada. And he went

to Canada in 1994, in April. And at that point my life didn't make any sense anymore. For the first time in my life I thought I saw that I'm helpless and that I can't do anything. And I thought at that point, "OK, my husband and I and my granddaughter are staying in some world we don't know. And even she is not with her mother where she should be and I'm not with my sons." And this was really a hard time for me. But praise be to God for Branka because she would send us letters from time to time and she would really encourage us not to be afraid and that God would find a way somehow that we could be back in Mostar. I would tell her, "Oh, it's easy for you to speak to us. Your child is good and healthy, and my son was a man and now he's gone. You will see your daughter somehow and somewhere and me, I will never see my son again." And we decided to go to Canada to our son, my husband and I. We started to collect the documents that we needed, and we should give our granddaughter to her mother at any cost, because we couldn't take somebody's child with us. And we informed Branka about that and she somehow was in contact with this government in Mostar. We made photocopies of our documents and we sent them here. Because my husband was working in that ministry of internal affairs and there were no problems because in the past he was a good worker there. And they said to Branka, "Say to your father-in-law to come back and he won't miss anything." And she, of course, informed us about that. And we again say to her, "It's easy for you to tell us that." Because we didn't have any desire to come back here. And then she told us, "OK, you fix it with the Yugoslav government, like they could let you go near Dubrovnik, it's called Debeli Brijeg, that's the border and I will fix it here on the Croatian side." And that's how it happened. On April 25 we had our meeting, at 12 o'clock to pass over to Debeli Brijeg to go to Dubrovnik. Branka was so faithful to God because she believed that God would do the things so that they could, that the things could be worked out well and also that God would work things that we didn't want, the two of them. And she was praying to God in the direction that they wouldn't go to Canada but to come to Mostar. And God was on her side. And that's why I'm here now. When we come to Debeli Brijeg, the Montenegrins said, "Oh, you can go. We won't bother you. But you should know that the Muslims and Croatians now are fighting there. Serbians are moved out and these two nations are now fighting."

**[SG] In Mostar?**

[SK] "And you as Serbians would have no chance to pass in that town very easily." And that was another reason why we wouldn't want to come here. But I believe that this was God's plan. I believe it now. We passed through the border with no problems and we even took our car that was not registered for four years. Even God closed the eyes of these police officers they even didn't look into our registration plates. I know that now but at that time I didn't know. God is really a mighty and good God. And that's how we came to Mostar. When I came to Mostar the most difficult thing for me is to come in front of the building where that grenade landed.

**[SG] Where your son was killed?**

[SK] Yes. Even I passed through that. When I came, pastor Nikola waited for me in my apartment, his wife Sandra, Branka and Jasna, and Branka was with us. And immediately he started to talk with us about God and to pray with us. At that time I did a really unkind gesture. I was really ashamed of Nikola. I said to Nikola, "Leave your God on the side. If your God is good as you say, he wouldn't take my son that I delivered." And then Nikola said to me, "You know what? Persons like you, that kind of person God loves the most."

And I was really shocked when he said that. Because I thought, "How God can love me when I think so ugly things about him?" And then I said to Nikola, "You know what? I don't believe in anything. And even as a child I didn't believe." And he said to me, "Great is the mercy of God, sister." My denial of God lasted over the period from April to June, maybe a little bit after the anniversary of my son's death had passed. And even when Branka would take the Bible in her hands to read or something then we would just move out to other room or we would just go out. And even we would judge her because she is going to some sect. And then we would think, "OK, we heard about Orthodox religion, Catholic, but we never heard about evangelical." It was such a foreign word to me. And then I would think, "Oh, my God, to whom I would give this child? She wouldn't be even Orthodox or something like Catholic, but it will be something else." And sometime in May I stayed home alone. Branka went to Crkvenica to some kind of seminar for the church. I was alone with Ena. And I found there a Bible for children. And I would say to Ena, "Would you like to go to sleep?" And she would say, "Oh, yes." And then I would say to Ena, "OK, let me read some stories for you because when she was a child we would read stories for her. And then I would start to read the children's Bible. And then when Ena fell asleep I would start to think like, some emotions came to me, some feelings and I would say, "Well, this is not that bad. Look how it's wonderful." And some words would really have an effect on me. And on the corner I looked and I saw the big Bible that Branka would read. I closed my eyes and then I said, "OK, I'll open it, whatever." And I will never forget that day. Acts 16:31, "Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your house will be saved." And I would say to Drago, my husband, "Come and see this. Read this." And then he would read it. And then he would say, "Oh, wife, leave it alone." And then I said to him, "Oh, this is saying something to me. If we can save what is left, for 55 years we were living without God. Now let's try to believe what it says here." And then I started to look again. And then on John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him would not perish but have eternal life." And then again I called my husband, "Come and see." And then he would read. And then he asked me, "So, what does it mean to you?" And then I said to him, "OK, if God so loved the world then why wouldn't he love us?" And then he said to me, "You believe whatever you want, but it doesn't mean anything to me." Then I said, "OK, I'll give God a chance so that I could check up if this is true." And Branka was there for 7 days. When she came back I said to her, "I want to go to that church with you." And then she said to me, "It's true. Whatever God promises he will do it." And I went to church one evening and when I entered the doors - it was the former place that we had - some kind of music that I never heard before hit my heart. It really touched me and I wasn't even in the door, I was standing on the stairs. And when you [meaning SG] were preaching the other day and when you said "Jesus is Lord" that was the first song I heard. And my heart was so on fire even when you were explaining that Jesus is Lord. And when I entered to the church and when they start to sing I was crying the whole service because I would say, "Oh, blessed you, because you will be able to sing again, but I will never be able to sing again." And worship ended and the Word of God began to be preached. It was everything nice to hear but I could hardly wait to go out because I was really choking in my tears. When Nikola said, "Is there any testimony to be given?" then Branka came out and she testified that I said to her that I had opened these two verses. And then Nikola asked me to come in front. I came out and my granddaughter was with me and he represented me to the church that I am the mother-in-law of Branka and that I was in Serbia and he asked me if I could say something, but I wasn't able. I said no. So, the whole congregation prayed for me. And that's how that ends. And when I went back home I couldn't say it was peace like some kind of peace but somehow I was broken. That was really the touch of God at that time.

And in the next 15 days I was reading the Bible secretly because I didn't want my husband to see or even Branka. And even more as I read the Word of God more I was encouraged. And when I was coming to the book of Revelation at the verse that says that God will take away all of our tears. And then I said to God, "OK, you said you exist and that you can do it and now take away my tears." And then I came to another verse that says "Believe and it will be given to you." And I believed that this was really the voice of God. And God worked so quickly on me and soon after I found the peace of God, I received joy from God. I started to sing in church and praise God. I was really praising him in my heart with all of my heart. And even today I would like that this fire of worship would be given back to me. And then in the meantime Karmelo [the pastor who replaced Nikola] came. And then I said, "Oh, I would like to be baptized if it's possible." And then Karmelo said to me, "Sure." And then he said to me, "OK, come four times for the seminar and then we will see how you will go on in this." And with joy I would start to come. And even when I would pray the words would just come out and how that happened even today I'm not able to figure out. And then he gave permission for me to be baptized and on August 14, 1995 I went to the Neretva [River] and at that time I made the greatest lie I could do. I said to my husband, "I'm going to some kind of a picnic." because I wasn't able to say that I will be baptized. And then he would say to me, "OK, for all of the time I have been with you for picnics, why can't I come now?" And then I told him, "Only ladies. What will you do with is?" And then he said, "OK, if ladies are going, then you go." And then I went with Ena and Branka and from the congregation there were many people and with me nine sisters were baptized. Regularly I do my hair, and my husband is used to seeing me like that and I'm returned home from the picnic and my hair was all a mess. And my husband said to me, "What happened to you? What's happened to your hair? I hope you were not swimming?" And I decided to tell him when it was a better time. Ena said, "You know what, Grandpa? Karmelo took my grandma and he pushed her in the water and he almost drowned her." And then he said, "What a maniac! How he can behave so immaturely to a grown woman. I will give him spanking when I see him." I was so afraid for him not to meet Karmelo and attack him. And I told him, "You know what? God wanted me to tell you the truth. I tried to lie to you and I wanted to tell you this when would be the right time. I believe that God wants me to tell you now that I'm baptized." And he said, "What did you say?" "I'm baptized." And he told me, "You know what, wife? I always considered you a clever woman but I see that you're now completely crazy." And I told him, "We'll see who is crazy. And the time will come when you will do the same thing." And then he told me, "Never!" At that point I really figured it out seriously the call of God upon me that through me God can touch many people.

And one day here was some humanitarian aid action giving out clothes. I came because they told me to come and that I can take whatever I needed. They let me in but I didn't know whether it was because of Branka or they just wanted to welcome me, but they let me into the storage room. I didn't go to the regular aid where they normally would put ladies to go but they sent me to the storage. And they said to me, "Take whatever you want." And this was also a plan of God and I looked in the one corner and I saw lots of wool and yarn. And I heard a voice saying to me, "You see that, you take it because this will praise my name." And I thought, "Oh, what is going on in my head? Maybe I'm really crazy like my husband said to me." And I again heard it, "Take it." And I didn't take anything and I came out and I found Ivona. And I asked her, "This wool and this thing that you said, what is this for?" And she said to me, "Take as much as you need. That is to take as much as you need and everybody is taking it." And I said to her,

“Something is saying to me that this wool and the rest of these things can give praise to God. And I can hear this and I need to use it.” And then she would say to me, “Let’s pray and see what God wants.” And then we entered into prayer with a few more sisters and we really prayed so that God could say what he really wants with this. And again I heard the same words, “Take and use it. Use it and use it.” Three times. And I said to them, “OK, I heard the same voice.” And they asked me, “OK, you still maybe don’t recognise it because you’re a young believer. But do you know how to work with some things like knitting?” And I told them, “Yes, I know.” And she told me, “Because I believe that what you know you should share with the others.” And then I asked her, “Can we make part in the church where the ladies could knit and then we could make this design.” And then she said, “Yes, you can. Just tell us whatever you need and you can use the place whenever you want it.” And then with two other sisters I decided to go and to pick up this wool and to find a place where we could store it. And I prayed to God, “OK, if it’s your will then I really give all myself to you and if it’s your will then I’ll make a covenant that I will do it.” And that is how it happened. With two other sisters I started to work and Karmelo helped me a lot and Ivon because they prayed for me. And in a service he gave information that whoever wants can join me and we can start together to work. And at first only our sisters from church would come the sisters that knew how to work with wool and those who didn’t know. And the prayers were really strong and we wanted to do something with it. And later ladies that are not Christian started to come. And in 1995 this group started to work really well. And many that were needy would come to our group just to receive this wool so that they could make something for themselves and their family. And some really had a desire to learn how to do it. And God was with us every time when we had this meeting. We were so blessed and from three sisters the group has spread to 32. And almost all of them - maybe not 4 or 5 of them - gave their life to God. All of them believed in God. And from all religions they would come to our group, Serbians, Muslims, Croatians, atheists like me. And at first when we would meet then we would like say to them who we are, what we are doing, what is our goal and then we would pray and maybe most of them said that they don’t know how to pray. And then I would say to them, “Listen. Maybe God will help you and reveal to you. And I know that all of you can say something like ‘Thank you, God, because I’m here now because I could come here, because I can be with you, because nobody’s asking you who you are, where you come from.’ And that for how long this takes that really the hand of God was upon this group. And God gave us wisdom and material because we never stayed out. And we were never without work. And in February we stayed, last year, without material. And I had here prayer. Slavko and three sisters were here. And I said to him, “Oh, we have to pray seriously for these ladies. I don’t have anything to give them but the Word of God.” And then Slavko said, “Give them the Word of God.” “And I’m doing it,” I told him. And then God answered in a special way. Before we would pray and praise God and from that day on I started to prepare the Word of God and to speak to the ladies from the Bible and then to talk about it. So each of them had a chance to say what they like, what they don’t like, what they would like to do. And that was some kind of new revelation of God that is even today mighty and powerful. And at first when we met: first, the Word of God, prayer needs, then we praise God with a few songs and then we start to work. And I’m so glad that God brought me from a woman that wasn’t breakable to be a person that is breakable by God.

[SG] **That’s a fantastic testimony.**

[SK] And that he gave me authority to teach his words and that he can teach me. And I can say only "Praise to God."

[SG] **That's fantastic. Well, let me ask you a couple of questions because you've raised a lot of issues in my mind.**

[SK] Maybe I was too long.

[SG] **No, no, that's not... as I say, I've got more tapes. One of the reasons I'm focusing on women in the study is precisely because of the kind of story you described. You didn't know it, but that was my suspicion, that women are doing these sorts of things. And I just wanted to ask you a couple of questions about this. First, do you know of other women in the group who were similarly hurt by the war either husbands or sons or fathers?**

[SK] There are a lot of them. Especially the women that lost children. And they really cursed other mothers because their son was killed. And with these women I would have a special conversation.

[SG] **Wait. Let me go back. I'm not sure I understood what you said. Who would they curse?**

[SK] They would curse other mothers whose children are alive because their own son was killed, like her son. Like neighbour killing neighbour.

[SG] **Is that nationally related or do they know directly the killers?**

[SK] None of them said specifically. But they know the nationality.

[SG] **So they hated these women because they were maybe Serb and they killed...**

[SK] Yes. I would let them first talk and then I would say to them, "I feel sorry for you." Then when a lady would come with the problem similar to mine and when she sees me then she sees me as a happy person with no problems and maybe she gets the feeling that I'm without problems and everything is OK. And when I say to them what I have experienced... And from one lady she said to me, "Oh, it must have been that you didn't love your son when you can speak like that." And then this lady replied to me, "I will go, I will kill and I will revenge for my child." And I would say to her, "That's why I feel sorry for you. I, as a mother, can I wish for you to go through the same situation as I have. The heart of a mother cannot allow me to wish to you as a mother to go through the same things as I have. And as long you don't forgive, as long as you seek revenge you will eat yourself inside because you will have bitterness, and that must go." And then I told her, "You know, you cannot defeat hatred with hatred but hatred with love. And that's what I learned from the Word of God, to forgive and you shall be forgiven, don't judge and it won't be judged to you." And I would really say to her the verses that were speaking to my heart. I told her, "Can you speak blessing and curse from one mouth?" And I told her to bless, not to curse. And I couldn't see any change in her. She was confused. She left and she wasn't there for awhile. I would meet her on the market. And then I would ask her, "Where are you?" And then she would say to me, "Thank God that I met you. As you said to pray and to bless and not to curse, can you imagine I have easier sleep when I go

to bed.” And then I told her to continue to do that and I told her that she would see a change. Because nothing happens without the control of God. God knows everything because he sees everything. He doesn’t have barriers because he has everything revealed. And today that lady is my best sister because she really was broken and I can say that she is today sharing the Word of God very powerfully.

**[SG] Did you also go through this when you lost your son and you had hatred? Anger?**

[SK] I was angry. But my son was killed by his own nation. So I couldn’t really hate because I loved my husband and I loved everything that was his. And even in this nation, Serbian nation, I was more trusted than in my own nation. I couldn’t judge and even this man that pulled out that grenade and launched it had no clue that he would kill my son. I felt more sorry for my husband because his feelings were more difficult because his own nation killed our son. But my husband would say, “If this had been done by another nation I would say it was done because of hatred. But how can I hate my own nation?” Maybe this is good what has happened because I don’t have hatred towards another nation. Or when we were in the communist time then we all were together. And there was no hatred because we had no clue about who is Serbian, or Catholic or Muslim. We were one. And maybe this church has drawn me because all the nations are in there. And most of time I would stop on Genesis because it says clearly that God created man and his wife, that God created man from the dust of the earth. And I would say to my ladies in the group that God has created a man, not a nation, and that we are one. That’s why for me you don’t exist like this nation or that. We are one in the eyes of God. He loves man but he hates sin. And that’s the difference, there’s no nationality. God created man, not nationality. In my group there is maybe one or two Croatian ladies and the rest are Serbian and Muslim. I told them that God loves them, that God doesn’t have... and I told them that God wants us to give up our sin. And me, I was in the past a proud woman and I wouldn’t let anybody tell me that I’m a poor woman with some troubles.

**[SG] You’ve already mentioned that your group is mixed with all three nationalities. And I want to explore this a little bit. Do you think that women of all nationalities are especially victimized by war? Let me explain that. In some ways people are saying the Muslims are most victimized or Croats are most victimized or in some cases the Serbs are most victimized. But if we look at it in terms of women, it didn’t really matter whether they’re Serb or Muslim or Croat. They all suffered and they all were victimized. Is that something that you can agree with, do you think that’s true?**

[SK] Yes. It’s like that. They all were victims.

**[SG] And that’s something that draws you together?**

[SK] Yes. That’s why we have a good fellowship. In this war there is no winner, because all three nations have suffered. And most of all, mixed marriages have suffered because they were suffering from one or the other side because they were really hurt. And many married couples have separated just because of the words that they said “You are Muslim or you are Serbian and I’m Croatian.” And I think in this war the only winners are those that managed to stay in a mixed marriage. And this was a winner for me, because

we wanted to stay together as two nations because we didn't want to listen either side, this or that but we stayed together.

**[SG] In this sense then women can play a special role in reconciling the different national groups. Because even though their nationality separates them, the issue of children can draw them together.**

[SK] For me it's important to talk to children about love and to raise them up in love. Just to love man as a man, not man as a nationality.

**[SG] Like a person?**

[SK] Yeah, like a person.

**[SG] I do have some questions about children, too. But let me go back to the men first since you mentioned the marriages that have suffered, mixed marriages that have suffered. You told me before we turned on the tape that you and your husband have a time together of sharing God's Word and praying with each other. But you came to Christ before your husband did. Probably you don't need to tell the whole story but I'm just wondering: Do you sense that women are in some way more religious or able to express their religious feelings better and that therefore able to reconcile easier than men?**

[SK] Much greater. They really can do it.

**[SG] Explain that for me.**

[SK] Like raising up your children. First, women are raising up children but also they make easier communication to other women. Because a woman is not only a woman. She's a mother or she's a wife. She is raising up, she is working, she's a worker. And she is more gentle and she can understand more. Maybe it is easier for her to go to some other group of people. She's thinking more than men. Like in our context the men are always thinking, "I'm a man and I can do it."

**[SG] It's an issue of pride and self-sufficiency?**

[SK] And if you would ask the women, they would never have started the war. But the Bosnian woman is still left on the side. There are a few of them that are sitting and deciding about big things. And I think when they would give a possibility to women so that they could also be involved in great decisions in one state, then it would be more sufficient and much better for us today.

**[SG] You mentioned also issues of the children and raising children. You want to raise children teaching them love. Are women also raising their children to hate?**

[SK] Me personally as a mother I wouldn't be able to teach my child to hate and even some ladies to whom I'm speaking I heard them that they couldn't teach their kids to hate.

**[SG] Do you think that children of this war will again see war in their lifetime?**

[SK] Only God knows that and even if God's love would reach out, if lots of people would know the Gospel and if they would have opportunity to hear it then there shouldn't be. because if they would turn to God... not just for them to say "I believe that God exist" but that they say "I believe in God." because in my neighbourhood I have a lady that goes constantly to church but when she would come to church then she would react very badly on her children. I even don't want to mention the word. That's not faith in God. That's not faith for me, because a true believer he cannot hate. If he hates then he is not a believer, because he doesn't have love of God in him.

**[SG] So there is a difference for you between religion and faith? What would you say is the difference?**

[SK] The difference is that we say "I believe in God" and that person does those things that are not right. But those that say "I trust in God" they do things right and if they make mistakes they know to ask forgiveness because the Holy Spirit... Maybe these other people have their idols because they are praising creation not the Creator, because we know only praise God in the... because they should pray to God in truth and in the Spirit not to the holy [saints], I don't know, Ante or whatever, because only God is holy and when they are praying to those saints and then, 'What does it mean to praise a living God?' It doesn't mean to come every day to church but it means to live in fellowship with him and not just to believe to God and do things that are not right. And I can make a personal example. And praise God that my God used me to bring my own brother to church and because his wife and his children are saying that Franciscan church is their church. And my brother would say, "If you would listen to me I would just say to you to come to this church because you can hear a living God and you can hear the living Word and the presence of God is felt. And you go to church maybe and you are there for 45 minutes, you listen and you come home even worse because you didn't feel it. Until people understand that the church is not a building, that the church is the people of God and while they don't separate that we are the church, that the church is people of God. Maybe they think church will save them and maybe they think this church is good or that church is good but I would say that the good church is the one that is teaching you the truth. They are divided among themselves, 'I belong to this church,' 'I belong to that church'. And I'm saying this for the Catholic world. And I believe that the same thing is for Orthodox. I had an opportunity to go and deliver books like when we had a time of evangelism through movies. And I entered into one house. Jesus was on the cross. And the prayer beads were on the wall. And I started to share with them and I gave them books "Peace with God" and some other literature. And they said, "You're a sect. You don't believe in Holy Mary." That's an example that I have experienced. And I told them, "Just tell me one thing." And they said, "You don't pray to God like we do." And then I asked them, "Would you like to show me how you pray to God?" And she said, "Yes, I will." Then she prayed the prayer of God, the Lord's prayer, that's what Jesus taught his disciples. And then she prayed like, "Holy Mary, the mother of God...", 'Hail Mary'. And then I let her to pray, to go on. And then she said, "Hail Mary, the Mother of God. And then I told her, "OK, stop, what did you say now?" And then she said, "Hail Mary, the Mother of God." If you know that Mary is the mother of God why do you pray to Mary, why don't you go directly to Jesus?" She didn't know what to say to me. And I asked her, "Who died for you on the cross?" Mary got her place from God because God saw her heart. And then I asked her, "Then who died on the cross for you?" And then she replied to me, "Jesus." Then I told her, "Go directly to Jesus." And that's why you say that's different. I told her, "Our cross is empty. Jesus is not on the cross. And your Jesus is still

on the cross. If Jesus is on the cross he wasn't resurrected. Then it's for nothing for what you believe, because Mary can't help you. You have to believe that Jesus has died for you, he was raised up and he is the only mediator between man and God." She stayed confused. And then her husband said, "You know what? How come you know all of that?" And then I told him, "I read the Word of God." And then I asked him, "Do you have the Bible?" And he said, "The Bible?" And then I told her, "OK, lady, go and fast for 7 days and then you'll see what your organism will go through. But if every day you have your meal, you will have strength sufficient for all your needs. But if you don't read the Word of God every day your faith is in vain. That's the difference between my faith and your faith. I have a living relationship with God because he's alive and you don't have it because you trust in your saints. And her husband told me, "If you need something just call me, I want to talk." And he took the address, and he would come and he called me later. And then he called me one day and he told me, "OK, that's all nice and beautiful but how I will tell my mother or father that I'm in this church, my pride doesn't let me." And then I told him, "That's the problem because we're proud." That's the pride of humankind and maybe men are even more proud than women. What his neighbour or somebody will tell him, because my husband was the same. My husband and I are constantly together. We have an ideal marriage, if I can say so, and we are everywhere together. For a long time he wasn't coming to church, I was alone. And my prayer was always, "Bring my husband where I am. If you want me, bring him too." And now my husband is here. My children accepted Christ. When they came here...

**[SG] So your other son?**

[SK] Yeah. My other son was visiting me in October last year and his wife. And both of them have accepted Christ. And that was a great victory for me. My whole family belongs to God. And that's the desire of every mother. And that's why we started to talk about women and the children because every mother wants the best for her child. Through the phone and through letters I would send my son words and Dan [a missionary in the church] would help me through this. Dan helped me a lot. He brought a Bible to my son and I would talk to him on the phone. My son was not convinced that much of the change that I had when I talked to him on the phone. But when he saw us he just couldn't believe. And that was a testimony for him because he knows how we were before, because we didn't believe in anything. When we had our meal together my husband took the hands of my daughter-in-law and my son. And my husband prayed. My Saša, that's my other son, he was staring. He just couldn't believe that he was hearing his father praising God because his father never praised..., because that's the man who told him "No God" and he accepted it, and that's what has changed his life. And we as Christians can do a lot just as we want... because God told us to go and testify because the Word of God won't come back to us empty. Maybe sometimes a month or years will pass while the seed grows. And I believe that even this time while we are sitting here is not lost, because time with God is not lost.

**[SG] Thank you very much. This is an obvious question from what you've given me but maybe you have comments to it. It's really two questions, which are the last two questions. Do you think there will come a time again when people in Bosnia-Herzegovina of different faiths can live together without fear?**

[SK] It will come. I'm an optimist and I believe it will come, especially if the Word of God will go forth. And the churches would be raised up and the Christianity would go up

and even when people would give their living testimony so that other people could see what they're saying they're living it. And each of us in their community could change. And if we will do this it would come. God made wonderful things in Bosnia-Herzegovina and this time of peace among all nationalities will come. But we need to do what is our part, to speak and to go to women, to children, to men with no difference of nationality.

[SG] **Very good. Thank you so much.**

[end of interview]

Interview with  
**Svetlana Kurjak**

Banja Luka  
10 October 2002

**Let's begin. Can you again tell me your name and... we're here in Banja Luka on 10<sup>th</sup> October sipping some coffee at the Bosna Hotel, a favourite pastime. And if you could tell your name and what faculty you're with, what school.**

My name is Svjetlana Kurjak and I'm on the faculty called DIF or faculty for physical education or culture. And the first year. I'm 24 years old.

**That's here in Banja Luka.**

In Banja Luka.

**And what do you hope to do with that degree?**

My degree, I'm going to be a professor of physical education and I will have a diploma and I can be a trainer, or a coach.

**And do you have a specialty a sport that you would like to...**

Yes, I would like to be a coach of fitness. I'm working in a club here in Banja Luka. I like it very much.

**And you are Orthodox in your faith? Are you a practicing Orthodox believer? Do you go to church?**

Yes, I'm going to church. As much as I can... as my time permits me.

**So how often would that be? Would that be certainly Christmas and Easter?**

No, I'm going on Sunday, every Sunday if I can and on the evenings for some saints' days.

**Very good. Well, you're just the kind of person I want to talk to in this survey. Well, can you tell me where you were during the war? Were you here or were you somewhere else?**

I was born in Zagreb. When I was in Zagreb in 1993 and I came to Banja Luka. We changed our house with people from Banja Luka. They went to our house in Zagreb and we came here.

**So, you're of Serb background and you switched homes with someone who's Croatian. So you've made a permanent move now to Banja Luka. Was that a difficult time to do that sort of thing?**

Difficult time...

**Let's see, you were ten years old at the time?**

No, I was 14 years old.

**Sorry. Right. You remember that well.**

I was fourteen. Do you think it was difficult as an experience, like a traumatic experience?

**Yeah.**

Yes, it was. It was difficult when I came to terms with it so I was supposing it would be like that. That was that kind of situation because I just wanted my Mom and Dad and myself to be OK.

**Was anyone of your family hurt in the war besides losing the home? You made a good exchange apparently.**

No matter of this who lived there they had to leave actually Croatia and they had to come either here or Serbia. My uncle actually got killed, my father's brother. So that was this terrible experience. My father got killed some six years ago but it wasn't in the war, in a war setting.

**Sorry to hear that. Your uncle was killed. What year was he killed?**

In 1991. December.

**So when the conflict first began in Croatia.**

Yes, but he was not fighting. He just stayed in his home and my Grandma and old people from this village and the whole area went some other place, they have to go there to be refugees...

**Is that in East Slavonia?**

No, West Slavonia.

**That was so early in the war. A lot of people didn't know what to expect at all.**

We thought they would stay there.

**Do you think that the war made you more interested in your faith?**

Not really. Both my mother and father were not really religious, they were not really believers. And they also live in this area where Serbian Orthodox is not really... they used to observe like Christmas day and Easter day and some saints' days and stuff like that but they didn't go to church regularly. My father used to be a bigger believer than my mother and I

used to go with him to church. I used to go with him since I was 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grade but it wasn't as much as when I came here.

**And why are you interested in your religion, in Orthodoxy?**

It somehow just came spontaneously. I just went inside the church and I felt like I had a need to go inside and light a candle and believed that I had things to learn in church.

**It wasn't a particular search for identity for you, like going to your roots?**

Yes, it was. I didn't have religious education in school. I wanted to stay after the liturgy and hang out with people that I could learn something from. So I didn't go maybe another wrong direction.

**Do you think your faith has helped you understand yourself better?**

Yes.

**And given you an identity?**

Yes.

**How do you describe yourself today?**

Today? Now I can deal with some situations with a little bit more patience. Something that's terrible it will not last forever but there's going to be a better time. There's this feeling that I'm never alone and especially when I think of my Grandma, my Mom, my sister, wherever I go I'm not alone.

**You describe yourself today as, well, people before the war, many described themselves as Yugoslav and that identity is mostly gone now. Do you describe yourself as Serb, as Christian, as student?**

I [unintelligible] Bosnian Serb, then Orthodox Christian.

**Do you think your faith has helped you understand the war better?**

Maybe.

**In what way?**

The whole situation.

**The conflict?**

Especially the conflict.

**Do you think the conflict was a religious war?**

No.

**What sort of war do you think it was?**

I think that differences in faith was just one small like a spark for those people who didn't really know anything about their faith, or very little. So that's how it started. I don't think it was a religious war. It seems so, that's my thinking that those differences actually are to blame for the religious war.

**Are most young people, students like yourself, interested in religion or are you unusual?**

Not all. I don't want to judge anyone but some of them are saying that they go to church and that they think they are believers but they are far from it. They say they are believers but they don't go to church, everything they do indicates that they are not believers. I think most of them are interested in religion. I have my best friend who's almost absolutely identical like me in everything, we go together to church. That's just one of them, but two other friends are like not interested at all in religion. Other people that I hang out with, that I meet, age up to 30, they are interested in a way, but when you mention church then they think that's something weird, that's something abstract, old-fashioned.

**So some or even many young people are interested in the church, but probably more are not interested...**

Sometimes you see the very same faces in churches, but now there's a growing number of people that go to church. Especially the young people and I see them on Sundays at least in the church.

**Is there a difference for you between religion and faith?**

Religion and faith are the same for me. Religion is something we confess and faith is something you believe in.

**I may use these words interchangeably but probably I will use the term faith more often so it's something you believe in. Do you think your faith helps you overcome anxieties for the future?**

Yes.

**How does it help that way?**

My personal problems. I think I have grown in faith just a little bit so I'm not worried that much. I do have anxieties about the future but faith helps me to stand firm just a little bit.

**Can I ask what sort of concerns do you have about the future? What difficulties do you see in front of you?**

As a student I'm thinking when I finish my faculty if I will have a job. 'Cause the majority of young people are actually looking for an opportunity just to leave this country. Students are here a passive group of people. There's only just a handful of people who are doing

something in this city and the great majority is like doing nothing. They're students, I mean just students, they just go to lectures, they are students and they don't do anything else beside that. So I'm concerned about this material side, will I survive here. Another concern is just about peace, if it will last here.

**You speak very good English. Why haven't you left?**

I don't know. There was an opportunity but not to go to some countries where I can speak English. I was supposed to go to Germany. I have a nephew there but there's some difficulties with visa. But I don't know, I couldn't leave somewhere far, far from here. I don't know, maybe in the future. I would like to go out but to come back here maybe to get some, to develop myself in some new knowledge in my education. To get specialised in something, to get all the knowledge I can get and then to come back here. That's my sincere wish. Materially here it's a terrible situation. The system of education is as such that you cannot really study at the same time and work. I am too old to ask from my Mom to give me one mark for coffee. I don't like that.

**Do you have concerns about who you will marry one day?**

Yes, I have.

**Are you in a relationship now?**

No, not now.

**I'll get to that a little bit... I just wanted to... Does your faith help you in some way relate to people of other faiths, like Muslims, or Croats who are Catholic?**

Even though I am a refugee here, I left Croatia, I just socialize with other people. It doesn't bother me if I socialise with a person of another faith in spite of what happened in Croatia. Maybe I don't know that it's because of faith. But it doesn't bother me.

**Are there very many Muslims or Croats you can actually be around or be friends with?**

Not many.

**They are not here, right?**

They are not here because of the war. But I have a friend from my high school. She was my best friend because we didn't hang out with each other so often because we are not so close but it isn't not because she's a Muslim.

**And she is Muslim?**

Yes.

**Do you still have contact with her?**

Yes.

**Where does she live now?**

She's in Laus, a neighborhood in Banja Luka. Another girl who's in Kotor Varos but she's studying here. Larisa, she's Muslim.

**So she is remaining in Banja Luka?**

She was here all the time.

**What do you think of the Ferhadija mosque being rebuilt?**

I think it must be built. It was here all the time. I'm sad because it was a monument and it was so old and they trashed it. It is terrible. Never mind it is Ferhadija or something Orthodox or something from history or something from long time ago. It must be here. But I don't know if Ferhadija is not built here some Orthodox or Catholic churches can be built somewhere in Muslims area so it must be equal. It must be built.

**And on the location it was at?**

Yeah.

**Do you think that will bring Muslims back?**

In some way, yes.

**Is that good? Or bad?**

It is not bad. But I don't know how they will be accepted here. I can say you can come here, it's your town, but would somebody else say it also, the same thing? I don't know.

**So you wouldn't tell Muslims that they can't come back?**

I wouldn't...

**You personally think it's all right if Muslims come back?**

It's all right. Maybe I can say in a year in the future I would like to live in Zagreb again. My relatives stayed in Zagreb, my uncle, my aunt.

**What would you say to someone who says, "I don't want the mosque to be rebuilt and I don't want Muslims back in my town." What would you say to them?**

Maybe I would say nothing but maybe... I can't say, "What's bothering you?" You can get the same opinion from the people as I, but some wants to say or have very opposite of me. Never mind if today have somebody hurt in war or I don't know... never mind... they just... We have chauvinists but I think they are minority here. Me and my friends are not really burdened by this so we don't talk about this very much.

**Do you think there will come a time - it's question ten - again in Bosnia-Herzegovina when people of different faiths can live together without fear?**

Yes. I hope that time will come.

**Maybe I should ask in Republika Srpska whether that won't or will happen.**

I think yes. I think they can but I'm not sure. Many people are returning now. Some people are protesting because these others are coming back...

**Because who is coming back?**

The Muslims. There was this woman in my street who left first her house but then after the war she was coming back just for summers and now I think that she will be back for good. A couple of other families, they're back now and they just live a normal life here, absolutely normal. We were OK with them, we didn't do anything so we can really now look them straight in the eye because we didn't do any wrong to them. Because we came here when they were still here during the war and nothing bad happened so they can return.

**So you talk really about a future time and that it can happen. What would really need to take place, time will need to lapse, but what will need to happen in this time for people to come back and live here without fear? Is it just the matter of time or thinking changes?**

No, it's not matter of time. Everybody should stand firm in his or her own religion if we are talking about religion. We need to stand firm in our own religion so we can better understand ourselves first and then others. And then we can live together.

**Do you think that's a part of the problem as people don't understand their own faith?**

Yes, I think.

**Can you tell me more about that?**

People tend to say, "I'm an Orthodox or Catholic or Muslim." And that's the only thing they know and nothing more. It's not the matter of just being in the church or mosque or whatever, physically there present. They would need to read something from the Bible or Qur'an.

**And understand the basic principles of their faith?**

Yes, the basic principles so that we can understand... if I can understand myself, if I can understand what is religion, if I can understand why I am going to church. It's not just to light a candle, it's not just like look on the icons around, it's not just kissing the cross. It's not just like it. I think it's here. I think they know it.

**It's inside your heart?**

Yes, inside, in your heart. It's not in some books that say that you are Muslim or Orthodox. You have to hate some other religion or something like that. You must know the basic things and about ourselves and a little bit basic about other religions.

**Do you think that if people were more religious that the war might have been prevented? If they knew about what their own faith said about other people, about their neighbors and about peace?**

Maybe just a little bit.

**Just a little bit more about their own faith and the war might have been prevented. So in many ways we could say that, you tell me if you agree with this or not, or tell me what you think, that people are victim of ignorance, they're victim of not knowing about their faith. Would you say it's something like that?**

Something like that, yes. They are victims of ignorance.

**Could they also be victims of communism since communism tried to suppress...**

I'm not that old so that I can really discuss that period of time. I can know what somebody told me. My parents didn't really fill me up with these things. We were just living a normal life. I wasn't burdened by that at all. It was an ideology that lasted for 50 years and then people were exalting that ideology. It was doing good but then in the end there's another result. So during that whole time actually it was proved not to be good.

**I think you know more than you think you do about this period. At least your analysis is consistent with other people who have lived during this period and understand enough about that situation and today to give the same analysis. Well, we already sort of explored this, but let me ask question 10b again: Can faith or how does faith in God help people overcome their fears of other people like Muslims or Croats? Or, will religions continue to divide people, that's the main way of identifying each other through religion.**

I think faith can only help. If it's faith it cannot just unhelp you. If the majority is narrow-minded people. That wasn't a very short period of time, it was long time so they were quite aware of the situation. And many bad things happened. They didn't have to go to church like regularly all the time. What's needed is that they feel what they do is good. But what's really good in practice. If they are conscious of what happened I don't think they will let bad things to happen again. I think faith can only help in this process. We have religious education in schools now and we have parents now with their kids who are like 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. When they finished their secondary education like when they were 18 or more they went out of the system without any religious education. Now we have kids who say to their parents, "Look what we learned this and that in our religious class today." So that's just a small situation that's cute and it sounds promising.

**So, you would be in favour of religious education? And is it important that religious education not only teaches something about Orthodoxy but a little about Islam and Catholicism? Judaism as well? I know that this is a difficult question to even think**

**about let alone formulate an answer, but do you think that Bosnia and Herzegovina will experience war again in your time?**

All I can say is that I hope it won't. But there's always a fear about war. That line that goes all the time... just it's enough to remember or is enough to say 'war' or to read it somewhere or always a fear about it. I hope it won't happen again.

**Do you see the only thing you can do is hope? Is there anything you can do?**

Yes, of course.

**Like what?**

Just to stand up for... I think just enough to say, 'I don't want to live like that anymore.' Not just say it, to stand up for it. I don't want to experience it again. Any of my friend will say the same thing.

**I hope students will stand up and become active and really change the thinking ??? Can you give any examples that you know of where your faith has brought... of how faith has brought young people of different faiths together? You mentioned your Muslim friend but are there any things happening in the city that brings Muslims and Catholics and Orthodox together?**

No, in this town nothing. Nothing is happening here. Nothing is happening in that way that we come together.

**Do you know of any Muslim students on your faculty?**

No.

**Any Croatians?**

Croatians... I'm not so close with them. She was studying actually medicine school first. Yes, and I'm on the faculty of physical education and I don't know students.

**That's your first year?**

Yes, my first year and we are three days... just three days from the beginning.

**Do you think that would be an important thing to have happened when Muslims begin to come back, to do things together with Muslims to try to bring understanding or is it better just to be separate?**

Oh, it is not good to be separated. I think it is a normal thing when they come back to live here. It shouldn't be like said, you know, over the speakerphones and just, you know, like, "Hey, they are back." I think in due time it will all settle down. It will become natural to come to their homes. I think everyone who has built a home here who have lived here for several years or their whole lives they have to be back here. Or if they don't want to their houses, their properties will be returned.

**What if you found a job in Sarajevo?**

I would go there.

**Yeah?**

If it's better I would go there, why not.

**Do you have any fear of going there?**

No.

**No?**

I think no.

**Canton Sarajevo just recently voted SDA. You're smiling. The tape can't record your smile. What do you think of that?**

I don't know what to say. I don't like to speak about politics. I'm not so...(pause). It's terrible thing for me to say I'm not so in politics, you know.

**Did you vote?**

No, I didn't. It's terrible thing. I know.

**[Indicating the translator] He didn't vote either.**

[Translator] I wasn't registered, OK?

OK, I wasn't either.

**And I didn't vote either. So none of us voted here. You mentioned you have a close friend who's Muslim and from time to time you still see that person. It wouldn't be a problem for you to have Muslim friends again if you saw some on the faculty or they were a part of your fitness courses?**

No. I have all kinds of people in there, in club and it is important that we hang out together there and that we have a good time and have exercises. We don't bother... you are Muslim, you are Orthodox, you are Catholic. It really doesn't matter.

**Do you think that one day you could marry someone of a different faith?**

I'm thinking about that. I was asking myself, "What if, I don't know, some guy comes... I don't know. I think it wouldn't be something bad. I don't think so. It would be unusual because all in my close family are Orthodox. But nobody, I think, wouldn't mind. Maybe it would be, "Oh, Svjetlana." But not think terrible would happen. I think if it is really love, if it is someone with whom I can spend my whole life I wouldn't matter. I think so.

**Would you become a Muslim? Change your faith?**

I don't know. I think if... No, I don't think so. I wouldn't change my faith.

**What about children?**

So terrible to think about it. It's hard for me because I don't a boyfriend now. But if it is a real person, a good person I think nothing would be "Oh, you must, you must, you must, something must happen." It would be all right like it is.

**A difficult question.**

It is difficult question. Because now when.. I don't know, I didn't meet someone who is another religion in that way. But it can happen another day...

**Say it would be easier if you married someone who is Orthodox.**

Yes, it would be easier. I don't say it wouldn't be. It's of course different. We would have ... in the same day we're celebrating in our family, we would have together Christmas.

**What if you married someone who were Orthodox but didn't really attend church like you do?**

Yes, it's also terrible thing. Yes, it's terrible.

**Is it? Why?**

There are different ways of looking at it, there are really differences, it's total, total, total difference.

**And so it would be difficult to actually marry someone who's only ...**

Absolutely not a believer...

**... not a believer. He doesn't go to church, he doesn't care about God.**

It's also terrible thing, yes.

**What's so hard about that? I mean you would still have the same 'slava', you would have Easter and Christmas together...**

Yes, but it would be someone... so I would... then it must be so brave and so... I have to be strong in my faith and to tell my husband... it's not like that... I don't know... I don't think that I'm like super person, but I believe you should live your life in faith not just, you know, to be called, you know, a believer.

**So it'd be best if you found someone maybe even in the church that attends like you do who comes fairly regularly in the church.**

Yes, maybe, but also he must be a believer, not just going physically to church.

**So let me get back to that. I mean, a believer, that he's had some inner experiences, is that how you would describe your experience or when you talk about a believer what is it that you're saying?**

I mean to live a normal life. Normal life, I think, obvious not only to go to church and to go home. Just see life in a normal way, I mean to do something not unmoral not to hurt people, to think... that he just lives immoral life, he lives good life, he protects his family, he doesn't do any harm to anyone. To respect me, kids, himself, whole family, how to provide for all of us, for his family. If he understands these things through faith to be a good man...

**Can you understand those things without God? To be good person, to care for your wife and children?**

Many people are good, they don't go to church. You don't have to go to church necessarily but faith is there just to help us like enhance this understanding. I'm not saying that somebody is bad if that person is not going to church. I'm not saying that.

**Do you think that forgiveness is an important part of peace?**

Yes.

**In what way?**

I think that we are the ones who have to forgive first. So that somebody could forgive us we have to forgive first.

**Are you talking about other Orthodox people, Muslims, or Croats?**

In general.

**Is there a relationship between God and forgiveness and you?**

Sorry, can you...

**Right. Is there a way that you understand forgiveness in relationship between God and you or God and people?**

Yes.

**How does that work?**

Hanging out with my friends, going to church, meeting priests but not just meeting people on the streets that they tell me something and then I take it as such. I'm not taking things for granted. Learning about faith and then learning from others I try to learn something about forgiveness. Yes, I connect forgiveness and faith together.

**OK. Yeah, I understand. Do you think the Bible has a lot to say about forgiveness? Holy Scriptures of Orthodoxy?**

Yes, I think... I don't ... like a whole Bible... but in any case yes. Like everything in our lives you are interested in you read it well and if there is a right person to tell you about it and to describe something background of the words which are written if you cannot understand it. And everything I'm interested in is in the Bible, I think.

**Do you... you say you occasionally read the Bible.**

Yes.

**OK. But nothing comes to mind about what the Bible says about forgiveness or peace or neighbours?**

I don't read Bible all the time, OK.

**OK.**

I don't have time for the... it's terrible to say I don't have time for Bible or something like that, but everything in that is about forgiveness is in it. I have my opinion about something I read. And if I'm not sure I would like to [indistinguishable] someone about it I will ask.

**Do you sense that... you said that forgiveness and peace are important and that faith helps you. Can you think of a specific instance in your own life where your faith has helped you forgive somebody?**

Yes. But it was my... I don't know... ordinary things... I don't know... I think if I do something wrong, if I get mad about something, if I think it's serious but it is not serious... I don't know... things about I think love, boyfriend and something like that...it's not worth it... something like...

**It's not life or death situation.**

No. No.

**Well, fortunately at least today most things are not life and death situation. But about your uncle?**

My uncle.

**Yeah. What do you think about that?**

It is really, really terrible thing. I can't say... it was terrible in the beginning when I found out about it. It was terrible for me to look at my father who was suffering because of it. He didn't tell us about it in the start so we were asking about my uncle, "Where is he? Is he alive?" or something like that. And we find out... I was 14 but... I don't know... it's terrible for those people who did it. I don't know why they did it. It was something they wanted, I don't know... I'm not testing what if, what if... I can't...

**And you don't know who did it? You don't have names or...**

No, I don't want to know it. It doesn't matter for me.

**Do you sense any ... it's a terrible thing certainly but do you have feelings of hatred or do you...?**

No, it's not matter of time. I don't have hatred towards those people. I don't know what to say about them.

**Do you have feelings of forgiveness for them?**

Yes, of course.

**You say "Yes, of course." Was there a process or was there a point where you did hate them at one time and now you forgive them?**

Only feeling I have I was sorry that my uncle wasn't alive any more. I don't know what to say. Maybe they did many wrong things beside that so they have to deal with it. I hope they will manage somehow to live with that. I hope that terrible feeling they maybe have or will have in the future will ... something will help them to go on further with things they did. I'm not saying I want them dead... I don't want... or maybe people say "Oh, let them their families in future have misfortune..."

**Like a curse.**

Yeah, like a curse or something.

**Do you sense there's a relationship between forgiveness and freedom?**

Umm..... yes...

**Maybe you never thought about it.**

Nobody asked something like that.

**Do you think there's a relationship between hatred and slavery?**

Yes. Yes, I think. If you hate someone it's a kind of crazing... you know, you are obsessed with this feeling, I think so. Maybe you're obsessed with this feeling of hatred, and unforgiveness and it's kind of crazing, it's not freedom, it's freedom to be not obsessed with those things.

**And forgiveness?**

And forgive is freedom. I think so. I related that way.

**Do you speak to all the young people about your faith or is it more of a private thing for you?**

Oh, it is not private. I am not hiding that. I ... you know... I'm proud to be in Orthodoxy. I'm talking about it with [indistinguishable] in church. We have ordinary lives, we are not so special from other people. But when I talk about it with my friends and my neighbours like maybe who are not in church they are not interested so I don't speak with them.

**They are not interested in your faith so, so... OK.**

There are situations where we can discuss about it and everyone who's in faith hope they want this feeling to have with other people. I think this. Everyone who is a good believer. But if someone doesn't want to know something about it, if he doesn't want to speak about it, OK, I don't want to push anyone.

**Would you wish for some people to have the same understanding about other people that you have because of your faith?**

Yes.

**And so peace and forgiveness and hope for the future?**

Yes, I would like to be, I'd like that would be global feeling but it can't be in the whole world. I hope it would be more that 50%.

**And that your faith, what you have discovered, would also be good for other people?**

Yes, it would be good. I'm sure it would. Maybe it sounds... I don't know... it sounds like a cliché or something I would like to... I would like all the people in the world to be happy, to live this life, to be healthy, maybe it sounds like.. sounds... I don't know... I think this is kind of stupid, but I really think so. I hope more people would think so also.

**Let's put aside the question whether it's a cliché or not, ok? Because that's really what other people might think of it but you really do think that people would be happier if they were people of faith.**

Yes.

**Well, that's a very serious thought. It would motivate you to do certain things in life and not do certain things in life. And it would change people's lives, wouldn't it?**

Yes, it would.

**And if we really do wish people to be happy in life whether it's here in Republika Srpska or in Federacija or somewhere else in the world, but we think that faith can help that. That's maybe a message worth talking about?**

Yes.

**And even if it sounds cliché, people think it sounds cliché, that's what you have experienced.**

Yes.

**And you can say, "I'm a happier person, I'm a better person." I'm putting words in your mouth where I'd like to hear you talk about it little bit.**

Yes, but it is... I agree with you. It's not something you say and I say, "uh huh, yes, yes."

**But, I mean, you really think this?**

Yes, I think so. I hope from my answers you can tell so.

**And when you encounter people that don't experience the same peace or joy or happiness that you have, maybe your faith could help them, too?**

Yes. When someone sees me happy or something... sees me if I do something good and if they see me strong when it's too hard for me and all, everyone around me sees a difficult situation in my life is they see me strong enough to be normal, to have a smile for the neighbours to say, "Hi. Hello. How are you? A nice day." or something... I think something telling them there's something about it.

**So it does give the strength.**

Yes.

**I think that's a very important thing. I'm glad that we had... that we said that in this conversation. And I don't think it's a cliché.**

No?

**I really don't.**

I'm glad you think so.

**And in fact I think... I think if people were bolder to say that about their faith and enough people said it, that they said it often enough and perhaps even loud enough, some of the tragedies that we witnessed in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia would have been prevented.**

It could be, yes.

**And that we might prevent future tragedies in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, wherever in former Yugoslavia in another generation if enough people are bold enough to say something about their faith.**

Yes, especially in future.

**Thank you for the interview. Is there anything... I don't want to shut off the tape if there's something you think I've missed and it's really important for me to know that comes to mind. I give you that opportunity.**

I think... nothing comes on my mind now. Maybe if I think of something. And if you think of something...

**OK.**

You have my number.

**We haven't let you drink your coffee yet. It's probably cold.**

I'm drinking it slow.

**OK. All right. Well, thank you. Let me just say 'Thank you' once again for spending your time with me and giving me help to the dissertation.**

[end of interview]



Interview by telephone with

**Peter Kuzmić**

29th November 2003

[incidental conversation]

**[SG] Please feel free to use the questions as a springboard to anything you might like to say. They are suggestive, in other words.**

[PK] Okay. I have a question about your first question, ...

**[SG] Yeah.**

[PK] ...namely, that you said, "harmonious co-existence in Bosnia." Co-existence, yes. Whether it was harmonious, I am not sure, because one needs to understand that...,

[pause]

Well, let me put it differently. I will ask a counter-question. Why is Tito so popular in Sarajevo? It's not a harmonious co-existence because the three religions, ethno-religious groups, decided to live together in harmony, but it needs to be seen in a broader political context, and especially the vision and care Tito paid to Bosnia. He gives, as you know, the Bosnian Muslims an ethnic identity to give them strength in their case, which is unusual for a communist leader...

**[SG] That's right.**

[PK] ...to think that of their position in relationship to Serbs and Croats. There is also the role that Yugoslavia played - that Tito played - especially in the non-aligned nations and, as you know, so many of the Arab nations were part of the non-aligned nations. The support received from there and the protection of the Bošniaks played a role in this co-existence as well as downplaying both ethnicity and religion and therefore, how shall I put it, neutralised. That led to an increase in tolerance because it was basically a secular or a semi-secular paradigm, ideologically imposed, understood in this international context of non-alignment, etc., on the multi-ethnic, multi-religious Sarajevo and Bosnia. So, when you say in the same question, "the attempt to social restoration", it could not possibly be the restoration of that because you don't have the context for it. When you have a different context you cannot have the same text.

**[SG] Are you saying then that the harmony....**

[PK] I lived in Bosnia. I would not use the word 'harmony'.

**[SG] How would you describe it? I see what you're saying in terms of power balance and minority expression...,**

[PK] They lived peacefully with each other in a semi-totalitarian state where the ruling ideology minimised the ethnoreligious identities and this created a more conducive climate for tolerance and co-existence.

**[SG] And they did so through suppression, is that right?**

[PK] Well, suppression is too strong of a word. Yes, suppression in the earlier stages of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. But during the self-management and the non-aligned movement, there was not so much suppression. But it was through education, through administrative restraints, and so on. There was suppression, but I don't like to use the expression because it was not like it was in the Soviet Union where ethnicity and religion were invalid. But it became suppression if any of the nationalists would promote a vision of the exclusive ethnoreligious identity, and that's why Alija Izetbegović went to prison.

**[SG] Right.**

[PK] Because of his *Declaration*. The other thing is, Tito did suppress the Croat Catholics especially in Herzegovina in the Mostar region because of the atrocities they committed. And to some extent the pro-Četnik Bosnian element. So what you have, and I noticed it somewhere else where you asked about the Communist period, where was that question that somehow related to this?

**[SG] It's on the second page, number ten.**

[PK] Number ten, yes. You see, whatever Communists suppressed, exploded when communism was gone. That's natural. And the two supreme examples are nationalism and religion. And it is interesting how they coincide and create some kind of almost medieval symbiosis. We all know, and I am repeating something that is so well known, that Communists were not only creating an international society - the "workers of the world unite". You know, the *Internationale* is their hymn. So of course national identities were suppressed, because you're building a new international order. That was through Lenin, and then Stalin mercilessly tried to impose that. That was true with Tito. That was even true in Czechoslovakia. They were just lucky that once communism was gone they had Vaclav Havel. If they had had a Meciar-type leader on the Czech side, they would have had violence too, like we did in the Balkans.

**[SG] Yeah, that's right.**

[PK] But when it comes to religion, it's no secret that the ultimate aim of a Marxist understanding of history was not only a classless society, it was also a religionless

society. So you have the diminishing role and the control of both, the ethnicity and religious identity and religious expression. And that's why you have what I call a semi-secular, multi-national, international, multi-confessional peaceful co-existence in Sarajevo. One should not romanticise that as though that was the perfect expression of a perfect order, because it was not - within the space of freedom - a willing, or as you call it, "harmonious" co-existence.

**[SG] Very good. You've given a very detailed answer to what has actually come across as a common theme, that Bosnia wasn't as harmonious as outsiders assert.**

[PK] It would be the common folks who don't know that much history and don't have political discernment, and when they remember how all those people lived together twenty years ago, it's normal that they would come to this kind of conclusion, that we lived beautifully together, etc.

**[SG] Yes, and talking about their good days under Tito.**

[PK] Yes. But you really need to scrutinise the whole thing in that context of the ruling ideology, the role of a party, education, media. You know, there was no hate language permitted on the radio or television or in *Oslobođenje*. Remember *Oslobođenje* the famous Sarajevo newspaper?

**[SG] Yes, of course.**

[PK] Well, it was by order of the Central Committee of the party that they had one page printed in Croatian Latin alphabet and the second page in Cyrillic Serbian, and so they alternated. I lived in Sarajevo for a few months, and I liked what we then called Brotherhood and Unity. And that was on the slogan of Tito's programme.

**[SG] Sure.**

[PK] Brotherhood and Unity.

**[SG] How do you respond to a professor here at Stirling who is from Zagreb originally, who says that in fact Tito and the Communists didn't want to create a Yugoslav identity and marginalise national identities, they didn't want a Soviet style citizen, and those that did go along with the Yugoslav moniker were mostly those from a mixed marriages who couldn't decide between one nationality and another. In fact, what they tried to do was raise the conscience of national identity and allow them to be Moslem so Macedonians or whatever.**

[PK] Of course, and Tito was wise here. The problem was a high rate of inter-ethnic marriages. In Sarajevo I think it was over one third. So who are they? They are not Muslims, which was at that time synonymous not with religious identity but with this new oxymoron, socialist-created ethnic identity, or are you Serb Orthodox, or Croat Catholic? So if you had mixed marriages it was normal. There were a very

high number who declared themselves as Yugoslav. So he did not want to abolish ethnic identities in favour of an imposed Yugoslavism, which would be impossible anyhow. But on the other hand he tolerated that as a helpful mechanism when people crossed the ethnic lines and created new family's that could not keep the old identity without doing violence to the other partner in the family. There are still many people there who would consider themselves Yugoslav.

**[SG] Yes. And that's mostly a default mechanism because they can't decide a more firm identity in a single ethnicity, is that right?**

[PK] And besides that, the identity at that time for people became less and less important. I mean, it was not as important as it is now, definitely. I remember, or I lived in Belgrade for two years, I lived in Bosnia and in Banja Luka and Sarajevo and in Croatia, I was born in Slovenia. You know, very often I say I am the best example of a Yugoslav. I write Latin and Cyrillic, I speak these languages, I can switch even between Croatian and Serbian or whatever, but of course that became anathema with the Renaissance of nationalism following 1989 or '91.

**[SG] Yes. So as far as the first question, you don't see a befitting example...**

[PK] Well, if I were in your place, I would put 'harmonious' in quotation marks, or would look for a less symphonic simile.

**[SG] Yes. Okay. Do you see this, what is happening now in any way in a theological sense of restoration or as a theological idea?**

[PK] I don't think so. I don't think it's possible because - it might be possible somewhere down the road - because of the way theology in the immediate post-communist era became a servant of the ethno-religious agendas rather than discovering - and now this is related to your second question - rather than discovering the a shared humanity and the common parenthood in God. So I don't see how you can relate the two when it comes to Bosnia.

**[SG] Okay. Good well as long as we're nearing number two, why don't we head that way.**

**Let us assume that peace is more than the silencing of weapons and includes the blessing of God or Allah. Is it necessary to have a relationship of faith in or to God before true peace can be understood and apprehended?**

[PK] Well, I think we must first rediscover shalom, the full dimension of peace. If we speak here Christianly and biblically, peace is never just the absence of violence. Peace is the whole being, peace is community building, peace is roots for forgiveness and wholeness, fulfilment and a joy in community. So if you relate the biblical concept of peace or shalom to the implied aspects of community building and reconciled community, then you've got a theologically very potent word here. I have not studied the meaning of peace in the Qur'an, but considering how and where their

language and religion comes from, I'm sure there's considerable correspondence with the Hebrew shalom.

**[SG] That's right.**

[PK] When it comes to the question, the answer lies in the discovery of the fact that we are all bearers of the *Imago Dei*. So you have to go back to the creation, to the theological anthropology, to the creation and then therefore to creation ethic and ask the question what is the divine intention for humanity? And it is obviously not to exterminate each other and to hate each other, but to build a shalom type of community. And I think that is the theological and ethical starting point. And that is where we discover the shared humanity. And if I may insert here, Steve, this reminds me of the question I was asked at Beijing University in 1996 when a number of us as international scholars were asked to advise and be resource persons in several areas and one of them was at the [Nanking] Institute, one of the eleven graduate institutes of Beijing University. And some of these old scholars - and they must have been in their eighties, who had spent decades in prison due to the Cultural Revolution and the persecution of intellectuals and religious leaders. Now, out of persecution people become either bitter or purified in a noble sense. And pressing the question of the future of China, they asked, "Can we have Christian ethics without Christian doctrines?" And one of my evangelical colleagues rushed to answer, "That's not possible because you cannot separate the two." And I openly disagreed with him. Now, this is pedagogically unwise, what you're doing here with the neo-Marxist humanists, and that's not the way to start. Let's not start with Christian ethics, let's start with creation ethics, because that's where all of us share humanity. All of us share *Imago Dei*, and all of us have a common original parent in God. And so, based on that, you can look for common ground, and then you can address, as you said, the agnostics and non-confessional persons also, because they are also created. They also are bearers of the *Imago Dei*. They also are created in the image of God.

**[SG] Even if they don't recognise God or that image in themselves?**

[PK] Of course. They still belong to God by the very act of creation, by that very gifting of conscience and mind, and on and on, and all of the transcendent dimensions of existence. That's what makes us human. It's a search for common humanity, which becomes a search for shalom or for peace, even in a multi-religious or even atheistic or agnostics setting. And when you do that, then, it seems to me, you can take the next step and that is to, what I call, 'de-demonise the enemy', because what has happened here in Bosnia, or between Serbs and Croats in Croatia, is demonise the enemy. That is what we have done through ethnic cleansing. We couldn't throw out the demon and yet we demonise the people to such an extent that we couldn't live with the demons, so we either killed them or drove them out by force or through fear. And I am saying, let's de-demonise the enemy, and make the enemy into a friend. Who was it, St Maximus the Confessor - if you go back to Orthodox ethics - who said that the best way to treat the enemy is to make him a friend. And I think Jürgen Moltmann has taken that a little bit further and says, make him a partner. I think that's the process that must continue, because reconciliation and the

search for peace is never an event. It's always a process. If you de-demonise the enemy, then you can go to the next stage and that is to re-humanise him, because by demonising the person we have dehumanised him. By de-demonising the enemy, we are in a position of re-humanising him and returning to him the dignity that God the Creator has given him and recognising in him, or her - sorry for the exclusive language here - again recognising the *Imago Dei*, coming back to this foundation for theological ethics in theological anthropology.

**[SG] When you say 'de-demonise the enemy', who is it that you are actually addressing? Is that the enemy or is it your own people who have done the demonising?**

[PK] Both. You treat the enemy and to talk with him, showing respect, and when it comes to Christian attitudes it is more than respect, it is an act of love, and later we have to come to forgiveness. But both. The enemy, by treating him not as a demon or enemy but as a fellow human being who bears the same image of God and so shares the humanity with me, and most broadly speaking is my brother or sister, because if we go back to the original parents, and leave the evangelical vocabulary of born-again aside, but also your own people. I mean, when I told the Croats you have no right to call all Serbs 'Četniks', that is a demonically-loaded term to the enemy, to designate him in such a way that you cannot approach him except on the battleground. Or to tell the Serbs and the Croats that calling Muslims *balija* - you've come across this term?

[SG] Yes.

[PK] Horrible! *Balija* in this name-calling is demonising. '*Balija*' is the equivalent of 'Četnik' on the Serb side or 'Ustaša' on the Croat side.

**[SG] Yes, and 'Balija' conveniently rhymes with Alija, as in Izetbegović.**

[PK] Unfortunately. So you have this horrible new poetry of hatred written by people without a poetical gift.

[Laughter.]

**[SG] Very good. Let's move to question three. It's really a question about individual guilt and distributed hatred and distrust and how we deal with this. In some ways you have already addressed this issue with the last question. Can all peoples of one nationality be maligned for the guilt of those individuals who participated in militant nationalism?**

[PK] If you go to my article in *Christian Century* on the whole issue of Bosnia, I think they entitled that *Peace in the Balkans*, or something like that, although it mostly deals Bosnia. I think I made a very strong statement that war criminals, the leaders, the chief engineers, have to go to the Hague so that we stop the collective blaming, or what you call 'all peoples of one nationality being maligned'. Of course

not. All three sides have sinned - or however many sides you have; Bosnia has three sides - but not all of them have sinned equally. And the leaders are the most responsible, and they must be or made answerable for their atrocities. And this is why it is an atrocity upon an atrocity that Mladić and Karadžić are still free.

[SG] Yes.

[PK] Because the process of reconciliation and inter-ethnic bridge building and confidence building, and so on, becomes much easier once the blame is shifted from the collective of the nation or religious group and is transferred to those who are really most guilty, to the leaders. Then the people in the villages will find it much easier to forgive each other. Even when they themselves were victims of national propaganda and picked up arms and did horrible things to their neighbours and so on. That's what you're asking.

**[SG] That's right. And do you sense that when people make these grand assumptions about the guilt of a nation, people who did not participate in a paramilitary activities or the hatred, although they may have been guilty by identify with some those actions, do you sense that they were maligned twice, meaning that there is this hatred during the war, and now they are being maligned in society even today?**

[PK] Yes, and you have now individual cases of revenge where innocent people suffer.

[SG] Yes.

[PK] Because innocent people said, well, we can let them into our home although it is controlled by the so-called enemy because we didn't think they were enemies and their hands are clean. They returned and you have the fanatics and the militants who will kill them. We've had several cases on all sides [of people] that participated in these activities.

[SG] Yes.

[PK] And there are so many other aspects here that I don't think you and I have time to discuss on the phone.

**[SG] That's right. I wish we could have done this together over dinner or something. But this is one of the distinctions though isn't it, because the enemy is amorphous. In other words, outside of the few faces and names, who are ...**

[PK] Where you have a national guilt is where a national leadership has accepted the programme, let's say of Greater Serbia.

[SG] Yes.

[PK] And that's where I blame the Serbian Orthodox Church, because the bishops have supported, have blessed the weapons, the majority of them, and there are exceptions, like Bishop [Pavrenti] of [ ], and several others, but the majority of them have accepted the Greater Serbia concept and have blessed the weapons, and have made those horrible bellicose statements in public like, 'wherever there are Serbian bones is Serbia', etc. And so, if you have a national leadership with political or religious leaders pushing the propaganda, .... And then in terms of the way the American government or, say German nation was guilty following Hitler, and so on. But again you cannot treat a common soldier in the same way that you would treat an army general who had thousands killed, say those who were responsible for Srebrenica.

**[SG] Right. I think of the common person who has never had association with it any of these military leaders, doesn't know them, never met them, and has to live with the so-called enemy as his neighbour and...**

[PK] Well, that's where religious communities should have a greater role in peace building, by affirming these people of different ethnicity or different religion in their neighbourhood, showing up publicly with them. You know, I told a Catholic priest who came back to his parish in Bosnia where there are Serbian minorities, and they were asking whether they should return or not, and he was not sure that he could insure their safety because of what had happened to some Croats who might be tempted to take revenge. I told him, look, why don't you show up when they move back? And tell the media to come and welcome them, and call them 'our Serbian brothers have returned' but of course, ecumenicity is not that far advanced in our part of the world.

[Laughter.]

[PK] I would even invite them to the mass and introduce them at the beginning to the faithful, and say, these people have clean hands like so many of you. They have not done any evil and we want to help them. Take an offering for them. Buy them a cow, help them in ways to feel welcome and do it openly so that your parishioners - because of your moral authority in your village - so that their parishioners will say, "Well, if a priest does this, then we had better follow." And show that this is part of the Gospel, forgiving. And in this case there isn't even something to forgive because they're not guilty, but accepting them and loving them and protecting them.

**[SG] Yes. Yes we do need more of that, don't we? Peter, I sense that we are on question four. Let's go to that. How can the religious faith and forgiveness contribute to the escape of the cycle of violence of past offences?**

[PK] Yes, this is a key question. On the one hand how do we stop...

[Phone connection breaking up.]

[PK] You know, that is a very difficult question because religion unfortunately, when you look into history - and you and I both know that, because we have studied theology and Church History - how much violence has been committed in the name of religion. I mean, look just at the German history.

[Breaking up.]

[PK] ... of the Reformed and what the Lutherans did to the Anabaptists, not to speak of what the Catholics did to both or all of them. And so the question is how do we purge religion of its violence, considering its history, and to make it an instrument of peace rather than an instrument of hatred and violence; of reconciliation instead of revenge. I think there are several things here that have not been sufficiently done in Bosnia. You may want to look at my article on Bosnia in the *Encyclopaedia of Christianity*, I think that's in volume one under Bosnia. If I recall, I cannot find my copy this morning, but I surveyed the history of Christianity, and to answer more practically your question, it is so much related to the past, which has a heavy burden. We need to come to the realisation that we cannot improve our past. Who was it in Germany, was it the Catholic Bishops Conference that brought the historians together, Bosnian, Serbian and Croat historians together, trying to help them to think differently about history because everyone was trying to promote their own history, which is a selective reading and writing of history, downplaying the negative of one's own history and playing up the negatives of your neighbour's or enemy's history. Somewhere I have come across that beautiful statement that "There is no reconciliation and no forgiveness if you do not give up all hope of a better past." And I have suggested this in some of these political and religious meetings, that these conflicting histories, especially as they appear in the texts of children, are potential for future conflicts. The best way would be to bring in foreign scholars or ex-patriots - people who know the languages to write or at least revise the texts of history. Otherwise you'll have a new outbreak of the cycles of violence. Now this has more serious things that we can do. This is a major task. You know, the other problem in Bosnia is all these myths about the ethnogenesis of all of these groups.

**[SG] You know, that's why I am spending lot of time in this area, and on the meta-narratives, because I think...**

[PK] But look at the ethnogenesis, the theories and the way they come up in history and even in the popular mind. Because the Croats would claim that Bosnia, you know Bosnia, not just as a territory, but as the people, are Croats. And Serbs claimed that they are Serbs, and there are other theories. If you combine this use of ethnogenesis within the more contemporary national interests, then you have a sadly...

[Turn of tape]

[PK] If you confuse the mythical ethnogenesis with the more contemporary national interests, you have a deadly combination leading to violence. So I would move the second part of my answer to that question. The first part is history and the

second is rhetorics, language. You know, I gave a lengthy interview for DANAS back in 1989 the week after Milošević gave his speech down in Kosovo. You know that history. One million people...

[SG] Yes.

[PK] And among other things, he said, we will resolve the Yugoslav question constitutionally or extra-constitutionally, peacefully or by other means.

[SG] Uh huh.

[PK] But what can it be, 'peacefully' or by what 'other means'? So I wrote and said - and in a radio interview as well, and in print, I said in Croatian, "*Čuli smo retorik u rata*", "We have heard the rhetoric of war." Wars begin with words and the hand of the potential killer is in the air. Somebody better stop him before it is too late." And three of my Serbian students walked out and left the seminary, because one of them was from Sarajevo and two from Serbia, because they said that I was maligning their great leader Milošević, calling him a killer. And I said no I didn't call him a killer, I said *potential* killer, because you need to listen to words. War has always begun with words. And so I think there has to be some kind of monitoring of the words in the media. We've alluded earlier in this conversation that Croats or Bosnians will call all Serbs 'Četniks', and others will call all Croats 'Ustaša', and an together the Serbs and Croats call the Bošniaks 'Balijas', or for example, the Muslims and the Catholics, and the imams and the Catholic priests will call the Serbian priests 'Byzantines'.

[SG] Or 'Turks', for the Muslims.

[PK] But that, of course, evokes the history. So what I am saying is that this is bellicose rhetoric that leads to violence, and the way from the bellicose rhetoric to *bellum*, to war, is short. So how can religious faith and forgiveness contribute to the escape of the cycle of violence? I would say, watch how history is written and taught and instrumentalised, used and abused is one, and secondly, watch the language. And then thirdly maybe make appeals to educate the silent majority. I still believe that all four among the clergy, and especially among the laity of the religious communities you have a silent majority who don't speak up, either because they're insecure or because their intuition is better than what they hear their leaders saying, because most of the people are not war-like and bellicose. And the question is how to mobilise and awaken the great potential, which in democracy is important, because every one of those people has a vote. If not a voice, then at least a vote.

[SG] Yes.

[PK] And how to mobilise those peaceful resources against bellicose rhetoric and against language and acts of violence.

[SG] Is there some special contribution that religious people can make to this?

[PK] Well, I think that the evangelicals..., I was told several times, even by secular political leaders, once they got to know us as a Protestant minority, they said, 'Hey, you're the only ones who don't have a national deity and don't serve what I call tribal gods. And I think this is where, and as you know, this is where...

[breaking up]

[PK] ...because we believe in the universality of the love of Jesus and therefore the results are the internationality of the community of the redeemed, of the Church, of the religious community. I think we're in a unique position to build bridges and help the clergy, and hopefully the laity on all sides, to understand what faith is all about. It is not to be used and abused, that the name of God should not be used or abused for a bellicose rhetoric and violent politics.

[breaking up]

**[SG] Sorry, you are breaking up again, Peter. I think we're on number six. Is there a special role that women should or could play in peacebuilding and restoration?**

[PK] Definitely. If women were ruling the world, we would have much less warfare. Women, especially as mothers, have an instinct and appreciation for the gift of life that men very often lack. So, women by their very vocation given to them by creation have a unique role or a better role than men. We've seen that on the ground.

**[SG] You're talking in terms of prevention of war, but also own terms of reconciliation specifically?**

[PK] Yes. Let me just give you some examples. The most influential peacemaking and conflict preventing agencies have been founded by women. You've heard of Dr Katrina Kruhonja?

**[SG] Yes, at *Centar za mir*, right?**

[PK] That's right. The *Centre for Peace and Non-Violence*. She and I served together on the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. I got to know her well. She is a physician and specialist in radiology and gave all of that up and lived a simple lifestyle before they got their funding. By the way, did you know that she received the alternative Nobel Prize?

**[SG] Yes. I met with her briefly.**

[PK] But she is not the only one. Vesna Teršavić in Zagreb at the Zagreb Peace Centre was founded by Vesna Teršavić. And in a number of places on the ground where we were involved in peace and reconciliation missions you would find these brave women. It is just that in these patriarchal male-dominated societies, they don't get the microphone as often as men do, and neither are they as political to get a

hearing. I have personally an enormously positive experience with women in peacebuilding and restoring normal life conditions and so on.

**[SG] Do think that they have some liberties that men don't have?**

[PK] I'm not sure that 'liberties' is the right word. They certainly have something in their conscience and inner motivation that men don't have.

**[SG] Well I'm thinking along the lines that men usually were the carriers of weapons where women were not usually suspect in that capacity.**

[PK] Maybe there is an advantage there, you know.

**[SG] How about question number eight.**

[PK] I am not sure what definitions you're using here for faith and religion as they are used here interchangeably.

**[SG] Well, on this matter I specifically ask people for their differentiation between religion and faith when we come to this place, so let me ask you this question. What is the difference for you between religion and faith?**

[PK] Well, there are a number of different definitions here. As an evangelical I would go with the biblical concept of *pistis* for faith first, and then go with religion in the sense of an institutional framework and history, and so on that go with faith, at least in that context. If you adopt a definition of a faith community, and what 'true faith' is for them, then you will come to different conclusions because a 'true faith' for the Catholics is defined by the historic creeds and the Second Vatican Council, and for the Orthodox it would be rooted in patristic theology, but not divorced necessarily from the patriarchal concerns, at least in the Serbian and Russian variations. We're in a forest here where we need further delineation and precise definitions. But when it comes to the question itself, I would come back to my interview done back in 1989 and even that little editorial in *Christianity Today* on religion, to point out the danger of religion or faith instrumentalised by nationalistic ideologies and therefore reduced and stripped of its universal truth claims. And we have seen it all across Eastern Europe in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of Communist totalitarian states. So you have Communist ideologies similarly replaced by conflicting nationalistic ideologies supported by the nationally employed religion and faith communities. That, of course, is a betrayal of faith. Now, if we were to talk with Protestants, I would go immediately to those Protestant principles, one is *ab fontis*, return to the sources, which of course, the Catholic Church called for too in the call for the Second Vatican Council. And the other Reformation principal is *ecclesia reformatas semper reformanda*, always reforming. And I would add *semper purificanda*, not only reforming itself doctrinally, but reforming itself morally, ethically. This is what I think people like Thomas a Kempis in his *Imitatio Christi*, what is it the English, *Imitation of Christ*?

[SG] Yes.

[PK] His classic that has been published, is second only to the Bible as a bestseller, I believe. A hundred years before the Reformation a Kempis calls for an ethical reformation, moral reformation, purification. And part of that process is reading what you call here 'true faith' to be cleansed of its political and nationalistic and ethnic overtones and discovering its original message. And the original message is certainly not a message of the hatred and warfare, but of forgiveness and love.

[SG] So, you are calling not for ethnic cleansing, but for faith cleansing.

[PK] I am calling for 'ethical cleansing', rather than 'ethnic cleansing'.

[SG] Right.

[PK] I have written several articles back in the eighties, especially when nationalism became rampant after the death of Tito, I wrote quite a few things on that, and some of that was published in secular journals where I said we must differentiate between 'ethics' and 'ethnics', and we need to bring the dimension of ethics into the realm of ethnic, or we will have warfare, or what Miroslav [Volf, Peter's brother-in-law] would call the practice of exclusion rather than the practice of embrace. But I would add another dimension here. I'm looking at your questions here on number seven about the Muslims. A statement I made to Newt Gingrich and several congressmen a year after Dayton when they were discussing whether they should release funds to prolong the US presence in Bosnia. And I think you have heard part of that, but I was pleading that they would develop a 'staying strategy', because a Republican controlled Congress against a Democratic administration was saying that they didn't have an exit strategy, and I said you don't need an exit strategy, what you need is a staying strategy. But anyway, in that context I told Newt Gingrich and several of his fellows that - this was off the record because it was not politically correct language, I guess - that the Western and especially US presence in Bosnia saved Bosnia from the radical Islamic option when they insisted that the Mujahedin leave. Bosnia would look different today if it were not for the US-led Nato presence. This is more of a political than a religious statement, but you cannot divorce the two here.

[SG] No, you really can't.

[PK] But back to question eight. One thing that I would emphasise, and here from an evangelical perspective, you ask, "What is the role of 'true faith' to overcome fear and hatred?" In addition to your classical answers that you receive everywhere, you know, provide counselling, teach peaceful attitudes, etc, I would go a step further and say that we evangelicals need to develop a 'spirituality of engagement' because we are marked by a spirituality of withdrawal because of our pietistic background, because of our lack of comprehensive worldview, because of the way we claim that piety and politics don't mix, etc. We have developed a spirituality of withdrawal and I now have a series of lectures that I gave at a consultation organised by the world

Assemblies of God Fellowship. And I said look, if the Pentecostals are as strong as we claim to be worldwide now, we cannot play this ecclesiastical ghetto, this subculture, role any more publicly. If you have twenty plus Pentecostals in the Assemblies of God, *Assemblia Dios*, in the Brazilian parliament, you have a major public role, political role.

**[SG] That's right.**

[PK] So we had better develop a political theology, some kind of a spiritual engagement. Now back to Bosnia, how does it play there in that context of your immediate concern? All three religious groups have abused religiosity of their ethnic compatriots and have developed a spirituality of aggression, of militarism. I'm saying that we, as evangelicals and Pentecostals have to do it, and I am going to do a major thing on that, based on some of my lectures here and elsewhere - here meaning Gordon-Conwell, we must develop a spirituality of engagement that will be constructive and peace building and peaceful. That is a major theological task.

**[SG] Yes, it is. Something that the WEA should take up.**

[PK] Yes, they should. It certainly needs to be done on the global level. I am going to turn some of my lectures hopefully into chapters of a book dealing with that and describe my own journey because I've come out of a pietistic, legalistic subculture and upbringing with the reduced theology that didn't have much room for public engagement. I have reflected a lot on that in recent weeks, but my brethren have advised me against entering the political realm because they think that is the equivalent or synonymous with backsliding.

[Laughter]

[PK] But it comes out of a deficient understanding. It doesn't take seriously the lordship of Christ over all reality. And it is related to our escapist and very often sensationally-shaped eschatology as well as our narrow, vertical-alone soteriology. So if we develop communities of faith where, back to your term, the 'true faith' that is lived out truly in all its dimensions, but is reduced to a piety that turns the Church into a waiting room for heaven rather than a transformative agent in the world, a community of faith that is both salt and light, to use the or metaphors of Jesus. Well, enough about that one.

**[SG] Very good. I appreciate that good answer.**

[PK] On number nine here I could go on rambling, but that's not very helpful, because you have Jakob Finci, you know Jakob Finci?

**[SG] Yes.**

[PK] He heads up the Bosnian equivalent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He carried the whole burden. Jakob is a wonderful man.

[SG] **Unfortunately the Truth and Reconciliation committee doesn't really meet.**

[PK] Well, he has done a few things and he and Zdravko Grebo, who I mentioned to you earlier.

[SG] Yes.

[PK] And then you have the blind Muslim leader that is almost like a saint and several of his works are published in English. We served together on this regional committee for cooperation, which is really a secular thing and I guess they wanted a Protestant so they got me and there were Macedonians and Serbs and Bosnians and Kosovars and Croats and Jakob Finci is on it and Zdravko Grebo was on it, both from Bosnia. Talk to Jakob Finci about number nine.

[PK] On number ten I would like to add just one thing. Some of us have been saying it for ten years. The worst thing in Bosnia - of course, there is no danger any longer - but the worst thing would be if you are moving from an atheistic state to some kind of, as some would call it, theocratic state. I'm not sure I want to be quoted on what I'm going to say now: I wish we had a good dose of secularisation all across the Balkans.

[Laughter]

[PK] We now need a healthy dose of secularisation. Then we can talk about the 'true faith' from our more narrow but important evangelical perspective, talk about evangelism and so on, because these mythically-based, ethnically-enslaved religions remain more of a danger than a hope.

[SG] **Well, I agree with you there. You know, Marko Oršolić is saying the same sort of thing, that sectarian fundamentalism, whether from this group or that group, is as bad as any Marxist ideology.**

[PK] Of course, it's a danger certainly to peaceful co-existence. OK, let's go on to number eleven. They are more communal right now than individual because of the way communities have been homogenised along the ethnoreligious lines. Another reason for secularisation is right here implied, because secularisation sets individuals free, as Protestantism does. I know that in its extreme forms it can be destructive of community, even of the most basic unit of community, family, as we witnessed in Western societies. But a dose of Protestantism and secularisation would help these nations to come to a greater, you know what Carl Gustav Jung calls an 'individuation', the process of individuation, that cannot happen without secularisation and without Protestantism and sometimes Protestantism is a bridge to secularisation, unfortunately. On the other hand you have to take into account where certain processes lead if they are not balanced by the right kind of spirituality and spiritual accountability and communal accountability. But that is a different

issue although very much related to this one. And your question, “Does the community of faith, or communities of faith, hold compelling influence in society?” I would say, influence, yes. Compelling, no. To me it is an issue of credibility. Compelling influence bearing force and imposition that violates human rights and individual consciences, the influence you're implying here by the communities of faith, depends on their credibility. And in my opinion, they have all lost their credibility because to a great extent they have been compromised. There are, of course, individuals like Ivo Marković or Bishop Komarica, and they are on all sides, and we know some and could name them.

[PK] Without genuine renewal, I don't see how they can have compelling influence on moral decision making.

**[SG] Explain to me what you mean by 'renewal', because isn't nationalism a form of renewal? Do you mean *metanoia*?**

[PK] I'm talking about the communities of faith and their influence. It is coming back to what you imply in number eight by 'true faith' and that's where you and I theologically agree because we, speaking now evangelically, we do have a credible gospel, also we have a credible Christ, and we have a credible word. The question is whether we have credible communities and whether we use credible methods in our ministry and whether we live credible lives, because I don't see how you can have more influence if you're not credible communities. Credible communities of faith can exercise moral, or what you call 'compelling influence' on moral decisions of Bosnians. The strength of the faith is in its internal witness not the external imposition or threat or whatever mechanisms religious communities use, such as the sacraments. Influence is in some ways, especially a moral influence, commensurate to our credibility. And credibility is a question of authenticity, it is a question of compelling evidence of the loving, forgiving, reconciling, direction-providing, etc are of your faith and your faith community. There has to be internal evidence by transformed lives and therefore transformed communities of faith. And if you don't have that transformative power in individual lives and in individual communities, modelled by the clergy, of course, above all, because they are the most visible representatives of religious communities, if you don't have that, how can you speak about moral influence? It goes back to the old question of salt and light. Salt has to be salty before it can provide both the taste and preservation for the meat. It has to be qualitatively different, and that is the question of credibility to me.

**[SG] Well, thank you Peter. I think we've handled a number twelve and I'm mindful of the pressing time commitments that you have just now.**

[PK] For number twelve, I have made a mental note on 'dismantling the barriers' in the search of reconciliation, and don't erect new barriers. Let me give you an example of what I mean by dismantling the barriers. Many of us have seen many times those huge crosses, especially in Herzegovina...

**[SG] Yeah.**

[PK] ...put on mountain tops facing Islamic communities. I was involved in a polemic with bishop Perić, Bishop of Mostar, on that very point, because he said these are signs of evangelism. I said no, these are signs of political provocation. They have nothing to do with the cross of Christ, absolutely nothing. They are political provocation, not signs of the evangel of Christ. One that we have named the 'rocket church' downtown there in Mostar, and many other barriers, when talking about physical and visible barriers that are related to Christian symbols. Because there are dangers. The symbols speak of the triumphalism in our heart and triumphalism is a cousin of aggression. And so triumphalism easily leads to militarism because it is a verbal or visible or symbolic expression of an attitude of aggression. It is a form of aggression. Those signs are a form of aggression. As are mosques. Huge mosques in predominantly Christian communities with the minaret going higher up. I have recently travelled from [indistinguishable] to Bihać where we have a fledgling church and then to Banja Luka and then across the highway to Osijek, and it is horrible from one community to another. They're competing whether the minaret or the church tower is higher.

[SG] **Yes.**

[PK] This is horrible. Okay, let's stop here.

[SG] **Thanks, Peter. I appreciate your input, especially with your limited time.**

[end of interview]



Interview with

**Mojce Leban**

Director *Abraham/Ibrahim*

Sarajevo

15 May 2002

[ML] And they are trying to do, well, it depends, because the Jewish community and Islam, they are doing more humanitarian work than really having religious practice, because they have Shabbat, for example, on Fridays and they celebrate all of the big holidays, Jewish holidays, but they don't have a live community.

[SG] **Yes, right.**

[ML] They are more of a community than this system of a Jewish society. So that's that the reason they are more connected with the situation than other religious and communities. We have this system, hierarchies, and this system is very much present in our religious communities.

[SG] **Well, it is interesting that you say that because..., well, let me first to say that my study does not include the Jewish community. Often I wonder if it ought to. The reason is because I have of limitation of words for the dissertation and to include another whole community and to describe it takes probably 15 to 20,000 words of 100,000 word limit, and I don't know if I can afford to do it. It may be that I need to do the interview, to talk with some of the people and to have an understanding of what they're doing without including it in and the thesis, because in some sense, they are really removed from the conflict, much as the Protestants are. They aren't shooting Protestants or Jews, this time.**

[ML] Yes, they were protected on the one part, but for example, the example of their situation for them today is hard.

[SG] **For the Jews, you mean?**

[ML] Yes. Because there aren't many of them left. That is the first thing. The second thing, you are talking about the returning of property and much of this whole street was Jewish. These buildings were Jewish buildings.

[SG] **Well, that's true all over here in Central Europe, isn't it?**

[ML] Yeah.

[SG] **I mean, I lived in Dresden in Eastern Germany and all the finest buildings; the nicest properties in wonderful cities are all Jewish.**

[ML] Well, here it was Jewish and Orthodox, and today for them we have this conflict. For example, we have all those radical movements and radical Islamic communities. These movements hate the Jewish community. And they're organising demonstrations in front of the Jewish community,

**[SG] In front of the Jewish community?**

[ML] [Indistinguishable]. [laughter]. But according to this conflict, Israel belongs to Palestine and it is a conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and they are also becoming like enemy number one.

**[SG] Yes.**

[ML] But I think that it will be very good. For example, just to mention them as a part of society because they are representing a peaceful voice in a society and even though they are a small,

**[SG] How many are we talking about? Are we talking about 150?**

[ML] Maybe 300. But maybe half of them don't practise the Jewish religion anymore. They have simply this feeling of belonging to the Jewish community and to be Jewish, but they are not in fact actively involved. In the past, what was very interesting, that happened also in other religious communities, that the women usually married, because we had mixed marriages even before the First World War in the past also, and the practice was that women changed their religion. So, a lot of Jewish women changed their religion when they married Orthodox or Catholics or Muslims. And they changed it. So we have a large number of converted.

**[SG] You or mentioning hierarchies. I think you're right. That is one of the things that the study must do. It must talk with the leadership and engage those involved in hierarchies, because they are the official voice, you know. Of course, they are also doing a lot of official teaching.**

[ML] Yes.

**[SG] It is important to have that voice there, but it is important to hear other, pedestrian voices, such as women and student voices, for the thesis. It is interesting that you talk about hierarchies in terms of the Islamic community, because they're not supposed to have hierarchies, and yet they do.**

[ML] Yes. They have them because that is the only way to really have this official approach. And they are also trying to make this hierarchy even stronger, because the mentality, the Bosnian mentality, is like part of it is obeying, in one way. And you need charisma and a charismatic person that the people will follow them. And also every religious community is trying to create such a person to be very important and to be very involved and all those social processes in the country. Also, even though according to Islamic law you don't have described in such terms and those stages of power as we have in the Roman Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church, they also have some kind of power concentrated on one person.

[SG] Yes.

[ML] And I think that is the role of the Reis-ul-lema.

[SG] **Yes, that's right. It's a relatively new role,**

[ML] Yes.

[SG] **...since the late 19th century or so.**

[ML] Yes. I think it is very important to understand here one of the very specific situations. Here in Bosnia we have a very close connection between nation and a nationality and the religious confession. And today we have the situation today in which Croats and Serbs have been reborn and in their nationality. They aren't Yugoslavian as in the former regime. We are now Croats or Slovenes and we have our own nation such as the Bosniaks. And their nationality is based on religious belief.

[SG] **That's that the primary feature of distinction when you don't have a linguistic or cultural distinction. That's why Bosnia is such is interesting study, because even if you were to do this in Kosovo, there are very distinct demarcations of who is who...**

[ML] Yes.

[SG] **...and religion is just one of many identifiers. There are linguistic elements, there are cultural elements between the Kosovars and the Serbs. So, Bosnia is exceedingly interesting because you don't have those general identifiers.**

[ML] I don't think it is a very good experiment. I think those Bosniacs, as a nationality, OK, for me as a Slovenian it is not normal. For me, it is not normal in one country like Bosnia-Herzegovina, to have three nations. And we don't have a Bosnian- Herzegovinan nationality and that that is the problem for me, because they diversify us and that was the experiment of the International Community.

[SG] **I see, so the result of the Dayton Accord and the Inter-Entity Boundary Line, yes.**

[ML] And then that line is even deeper and at the border is becoming very, very strong.

[SG] **Yes. Essentially what the West did, and here I really mean the Americans at the Dayton, was to, in an effort to end the fighting, was too capitulated to the ideology of Greater Serbia.**

[ML] Yes.

[SG] **And Milošević accomplished on paper what he was already doing in the military arena.**

[ML] Yes.

[SG] **So we created a new republic for him.**

[ML] Yes.

**[SG] And who knows how long it will be before annexation happens, or the war...**

[ML] Yes, I connect Dayton with not knowing about the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina before the war.

**[SG] You mean personally that, in other words, that the policy makers...**

[ML] The international community didn't have a clue...

**[SG] That's right.**

[ML] ...about the historical cultural, linguistic background, about the mentality. They just created something to achieve that goal and that was it. And now they are not prepared to admit their mistake.

**[SG] Well, I think they learned their lesson in Kosovo. I really expected Kosovo to be partitioned like Bosnia.**

[ML] Yes, but with Kosovo it is easier. You have two sides and they are very different.

**[SG] Yes, they are, but how do you draw the lines where the monasteries were everywhere in Kosovo, and a that this is the heart of Serbian identity?**

[ML] Not just Serbia. For example, in Albania, that's the difference, in fact, because Albania is Albanian. It doesn't matter which religion or which religious community a person belongs to. He is Albanian and he recognises other Albanians. They have a very strong national identity and also a religious identity. But religion for them is not a cause to divide them.

**[SG] Well, that's right. The divisions among Albanians are tribes.**

[ML] Yes, tribes. But, for example, when you have an outside enemy, and they are not thinking about the religious background or tribal backgrounds or whatever. But here you do. It's completely different when you have the enemy inside us, and not from outside. And that is the problem, because they are sharing the same space and sharing the same country and the same school system, everything. This system is trying to divide us. This is very important for Inter-religious dialogue, and that we know each other, to learn how to respect differences. To tolerate each other and also to find similarities. Not just about Bosnian heritages but also about differences because differences are what people look to if people are trying to create a conflict. They will find in the first these differences. And you can also make a conflict of similarities as well. And that is the problem.

**[SG] That they're trying to find differences?**

[ML] Yes. Because, for the people it is very difficult for them to accept something different, and the system here in Bosnia-Herzegovina doesn't help you very much with that.

**[SG] So, is its tradition, you're saying, it is very set, or a custom?**

[ML] No, it is not about tradition. I think tradition can be very useful if you can actualise tradition.

**[SG] Yes.**

[ML] Like, take tradition and somehow assimilate in this present moment that we're speaking about. Because tradition is not something absolutely negative.

**[SG] No, certainly not.**

[ML] But, we don't know how to use it, how to make it for today, and not yesterday. We are always talking about how we used to, but we cannot come to this moment that we are.

**[SG] You are approaching now the question I asked in the dissertation, which is the primary problematic of the thesis, which is, Can we describe what is happening or what needs to happen here in a framework of restoration? I'll let you answer that and then I'll come back with what may be a different solution. But I would like to hear your thoughts. You're saying, we used to be something, but we don't know what the future ought to be, if I hear you correctly.**

[ML] Yes.

**[SG] And by the way, and I am asking these questions of you as a theologian. You fit several categories, but the student category or of the theologian category both fit, but since you have theological training, this is why I have given you this set of questions.**

[ML] Yes. Maybe I think today I will talk about the present moment because I don't want to talk about the future in Bosnia. It is very hard to imagine a future here.

[Interruption]

[ML] It needs to be one country. That means without the Republika Srpska. The story about entities, [Pause]..., I am idealising somewhat, but this is not an answer, this is not the way. We can talk about regions, but not entities. We are not as rich as Switzerland, for example, to have entities and to have a big religious war about Protestantism and Catholicism and which kind of practice we should have. We are not that rich. We don't have the banks. We are a very poor country with a lot of people all around the road, with large numbers of people without any future or any picture of what the future can bring. I think if I may talk like a woman, we are working in peace in NGOs, helping people. One way is trying to find an economical strategy that people will work, because work saves. That we can connect with reality.

**[SG] You are starting to talk like a Marxist.**

[ML] No, I am not.

[SG] **I was just teasing. [Laughter]**

[ML] Even then Jesus said, I have forgot how to say it in English, about work. I think it is very important to satisfy all of the basic needs. That is one thing when we talk about the economic viewpoint. I think long term for me, it is very important to be equal, to have the same rights, because still be in this country six years after the war, all those international communities with all their international representatives, we still have people in really bad positions. This country cannot give them the environment to realise or maybe to realise their own rights, rights not to be hungry, or to return home, or whatever.

[SG] **You are really talking about the concept of citizenship verses nationality. So far, well, the political parties are very nationalistically-minded, so you vote for SDA or SDS, depending on whether you're Moslem or Orthodox.**

[ML] Yes.

[SG] **So each of the political parties are very nationalistic. There really isn't any true national citizenship that takes these things into account.**

[ML] No, because nationalism is always turned against another nationality present in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For me, if you have a nationalistic party, for example, in Slovenia, and they hate all the strangers. They don't make a distinction. But if you have a policy of SDS, their propaganda is very, very, I don't know, full of hatred towards Muslims, Bosnians, and a little bit less towards the Croats. And that is the problem. For example, in Mostar the country in the last elections, the SDP won, the party for more social party, but they didn't do enough. I spoke about two weeks ago on one seminary with a few professors on the political sciences faculty and they told us that they are very afraid that the national parties will come back again. And that's my fear. You know, if you were hungry somebody is always going to eat your soul just to put you in this position as a manipulation. That is one problem. The second problem is that, for me, for example, today in this country, we really have a lot of problems with uneducated people. That's one of the big problems.

[SG] **How so? Can you explain it?**

[ML] For example, if you have finished college or higher education, then you are always trying to go somewhere because they are not prepared to stay and be paid 300 KM per month.

[SG] **Yeah. So, you have this brain drain, as we call it...**

[ML] Yes.

[SG] **...where all professionals are leaving the country.**

[ML] Yes, leaving the country.

[SG] **Mm-hmm.**

[ML] That's the one thing. We also need human rights. The state, as Bosnia-Herzegovina needs to satisfy that. Also on the economy and education. Today in our country we have a lot of uneducated people who, for example, for the country this is basically the problem because you cannot go farther. If you are talking about basic values, they were clearer during the war. Yesterday I was a little sick and my son came to visit me and we spoke about the war. He spent some time in Sarajevo during the war. He said, you know Mojce, the situation is even worse than in the war. Under fire you do not know what will happen the next minute but you know what is good and what is wrong. People have values. They know that they will see those values exercised, because during the war there were only a small percentage of people who stole food. In Dobrinja for example, they made like bunkers under the buildings. And all of their life was spent there and they had their rules and their values and that is also the reason they survived because it was completely closed for maybe a whole year. And today we don't have this. Nobody is really thinking what does it mean to be honest or loving. For example, we're losing the sense of love and its place in the society. It is more like a weakness than something positive. That is also a problem. Do you understand what I'm talking about?

**[SG] I think I do, and that is why I am asking questions from a framework of the faith communities and belief and values, because I think these are the sources of what is being lost in Bosnia. I didn't here during the siege, but I think I understand what is being said when they say that things were clearer back than, things were more discreet. And this is bad and this is good. And today,**

[ML] You don't know.

**[SG] You don't know. And when you say that love for one another is lost, that it represents more of a weakness than a strength,**

[ML] Yes.

**[SG] Well that, this is one of the most devastating things I have heard so far, because the values are completely upside-down. I don't know whether that is a cause of the war or an affect of the war, that the war has made us so much like pirates that we will take whatever we want from whomever we can get it because we are so desperate, either emotionally or psychologically, physically with hunger or spiritually. The term bankruptcy is legitimate in reference to some of the Communist values towards religion, or a bankruptcy that invaded and permeated the religious communities to some degree. People did not respond to the true nature of their faith, which says love your enemies.**

[ML] Yes, love your enemies. You know, it is really sad that when we are listening to the messages of our religious leaders, they're always speaking about of love in the public arena. But it was here [indicating the cathedral] this is in parenthesis that Cardinal Puljić was talking about love, about saving people, about helping each other in front other media. But when you are going to the mass in the cathedral, it is very, very rare that you will have that kind of a message or presentation.

**[SG] So, you're saying that that face to the media and the face to the public are different...**

[ML] Yes.

[SG] **...than the message...**

[ML] Yes.

[SG] **...to the insider.**

[ML] Yes. Well, it depends on which part too. I don't want to over-generalise things, but this is so. It is very much connected with the nationality and the amount of participation in national issues in this country. It's like, saving my nationality is saving my religion, and saving my religion is saving my nationality, and that you can use whatever means you want just to achieve this, save my religion and then save my nationality. For me, I feel like I live in the times of the Inquisition.

[SG] **[Indistinguishable].**

[ML] No, really, I feel like I live in an inquisition state, you know, you will be burned because this cannot be, it is not happening. [Laughter.] Those are the paradoxes. Losing these values in this country is connected to communism and the Communist Party's ideology.

[SG] **Right.**

[ML] But now we have another problem in the war. People trying to survive made you create new values. And also religion, in one way. But the religious communities, the religious institutions played a really big role in the war. And after the war they really struggled to keep that position of being really important. But they also were not prepared to take responsibility for their actions in the past. They just wanted to be one of those main social powers in the country but they weren't prepared to accept the responsibility and to take those responsibilities and say publicly that they are willing to take some of the responsibility for the war and what happened in the war. Now, in this situation six years later, a lot of people in the society are confused in this process of radical secularisation. It is true, we have a large number of Croats who are Catholic, but who really practices their religion? Because they are disappointed in one way. The religious communities don't offer them food for the soul. They are simply saying, come here and you will be saved.

[SG] **Yes.**

[ML] And that segment of reconciliation, that segment of forgiveness, that segment of love, all of those things are just slipping away, perhaps into the future. But nobody is talking about it today. The third thing is, religious communities, if I am talking about the Roman Catholic Church, it has a problem, that it doesn't respond very quickly on the present social condition, for example with the situation with homosexuals. Homosexuality. Like what happened in a few months ago.

[SG] **Yes.**

[ML] It doesn't respond very fast, and you can see the same thing here. For example, I can speak about the Roman Catholic Church. They don't respond very fast on social

moments. They don't have a good sense of the present social situation in the country and with their people. As a result of their losing their role in the community and here at this moment they don't have the right approach. They are not choosing the positive part of their tradition. That is my understanding. They are staying the same. They just want to put themselves in a position that nobody will be able to move them from even if this position is far, far away from real life, real religious life, it doesn't matter. And that can be a problem, because if you were talking about religions, everybody, when they talk about nationality, they're talking about national religion. But nobody really speaks about religion itself.

[SG] **Or faith?**

[ML] Or faith.

[SG] **I mean, does that make a difference? Does that make a difference, when I say faith does that make a difference to you? Does it mean something different to you?**

[ML] I don't like to speak of faith in that term because after the war - I'm not talking about Inter religious dialogue - everybody felt a responsibility to mention whether they were a bigger or smaller believer than someone else, that your faith is bigger or that your faith is not enough or that you're not a real believer, and we cannot judge that.

[SG] **Mm.**

[ML] For me, it is very hard to speak about faith because I cannot judge that according to my religion and my belief.

[SG] **Of someone else, you mean?**

[ML] Yes. If someone has...

[SG] **I guess the distinction I'm trying to draw, perhaps artificially, maybe it doesn't fit here, is the difference between religion as often understood in the West, which I think would include Slovenia and at least part of the former Yugoslavia, which is that the structures of the church, its hierarchies, its leadership, its buildings, its dogmas versus the understanding of the individual or community to its relationship to God with the priests in between. In other words, 'I have faith' is a different statement than 'I have religion.' Religion here often means nationalism. When you say faith, does that mean something besides nationalism? Does that mean I have personal...**

[ML] Faith.

[SG] **Yes, faith. Yes.**

[ML] Yes, yes, yes. I know what you mean, but that is the problem. You can very quickly come into conflict because of *your* faith. But when I talk about religion, for example, if you go to church and meet people and ask them about this, I am really very interested in what kind of answer you'll get, because you will see after a while most of these people do not have a clue that, according to the Roman Catholic Church and its

dogmas, that you can marry a Moslem. They don't even know, for example, that, in 1991 I wanted to be baptised and they told my mother that I could not be baptised because she was not married in the Church. And this is against Roman Catholic law. It seems to me that the religious communities are trying to keep their people in the dark. And then we can speak about faith. What is faith?

[SG] **Well, you're saying some very dark things here.**

[ML] Yes. That is the way the situation is here. I cannot present something different.

[SG] **I think we both know and can point to sources that demonstrate how religion was complicit in the violence and the war, how religion acted against itself and its own teachings by encouraging the defeat, the demise and the genocide of someone else. This is completely un-Christian, whether you are Catholic or Orthodox.**

[ML] Yes. It's not human.

[SG] **It's inhuman, and un-Christian in any sense but the word.**

[Turn of tape, interruption at door, incidental conversation, end of interview]

Interview with

**Vesna Liermann**

Director, *Centar za Mir*

Osijek, Croatia

7 October 2002

**[SG] ...Centar za mir in Osijek and before us is Vesna Lierman who will answer some of the questions about the work here in Centar za mir. Now, Vesna, some of these questions are about women who were injured in the war in some way and may not fit your situation. But you can answer these questions as you see fit. Were you personally affected by the war? Or was that in some way how The Centre started?**

[VL] I come from Osijek. I was born in Osijek. I'm a single mother. The war started in this place where I used to work outside of Osijek, place called Nemetin. There were a lot of shelling and bombarding. It was very tense and there was fear in my family. My very first concern was how to put my mother and my daughter in a safe place. So in September of '91 we went to Germany where we have some family. I came back because I didn't want to leave the place where I worked. I had lot of time to think about reasons it came to this war when we were hiding in basements. I was struck by this hatred around me and I was asking myself maybe if I was also a part of the whole thing. Maybe also before the war there were opportunities where I could have affected things in a positive way by addressing them but I didn't and there was a lot of negative energy and tension before the war. In 1992 when my family got back here I heard about the Centre for peace and they were working on building peace. I wanted to be part of that right away but not until a couple of years later was I actually a part of that Centre because their work seemed to me as very important. My task was to work in areas that were under occupation during '91. It's about this place Tenje, very close to Osijek. At that time they were talking about this program of peaceful reintegration. It was quite dangerous for us to go to those places at that time because of people who stayed there throughout '91, mainly Serbs. You couldn't think at that time about people returning to their homes, predominantly Croat, because everything was destroyed. My focus was to work with women, with Serb women, who stayed in Tenje throughout the war and at the same time I also worked with Croatian women refugees in this area of Osijek. We had a lot of workshops working with both groups so that when they meet, when these go back to the place where they lived could function together. It functioned quite well but at first there was a lot of fear and mistrust. Groups that we worked with and that we organized at that time still are functioning, some as fellowships or individual groups.

**[SG] You said you worked with Serb women particularly. Why Serb women? Are you Serb background or Croatian?**

[VL] I'm a Croat.

**[SG] Why Serb women?**

[VL] Our first goal was to prepare the ground for people who were exiled in '91 so that they could come back. We thought it was very important to work with them on this task when Croatian women come back because it seemed that Serbian women were open for that. Another important thing was that these women lived in some kind of isolation and they didn't dare come to Osijek. They had these fears that they would be asked why they stayed there and that there was going to be a lot of rejection because they stayed where they stayed and that's why they shut down themselves.

**[SG] Was this a difficult work for you to undertake with Serbian women being Croatian?**

[VL] At the beginning, yes, because I myself had to flee from this war situation. But these prejudices just fell down very quickly when I saw the problems they were facing and what they experienced during that time and how they survived the war.

**[SG] Did the war make you more interested in your own faith? And if so, how?**

[VL] I would put this question differently. It didn't happen during the war because I'm a believer for many years. But my faith did help me a lot in this endeavour. I come from a Catholic background but during the war I was very much interested in some Gospel truths that I was able to use in this work. I went through the Bible a lot at that time because Jesus was doing a similar thing 2000 years ago working on reconciliation and non-violence so I wanted to explore that more and try to use that. I used to go through articles and books about Ghandi because I looked at him as a model of non-violence and building peace.

**[SG] You used the word faith when you expressed yourself in a personal way. [Question] Number five. Is there a difference for you between religion and faith and if so, what might that be for you?**

[VL] I think there is a difference and it's a big difference. Religion for me is when you belong to some church as an institution. But faith is something much deeper and it's about spirituality. I would see religion as some kind of theory but faith would be a way in which to engage into some kind of practice.

**[SG] Good. Then I'll use faith in the rest of the questions because that's I think what we're really wanting to know. I know we're restricted by time here so I'll skip maybe a couple of these questions. Number seven. Do you think that faith can contribute to overcoming hatreds and animosities? And the question is really related to Bosnia but obviously can work for here, too.**

[VL] In some ways situations in Bosnia and Croatia are identical. It is certain that faith can contribute to overcoming hatreds, if we believe in that strongly enough, and if we believe that hatred is something that destroys not just the spirit of a man but also the mind and body. It's not a simple thing to do.

**[SG] Number eight. Do you think that women of all nationalities were especially victimized by the war? In other words, many times we see people looking at nomenclatures that are national; in Bosnia it's the Muslims, or it's the Serbs or it's Croats who are victimized the most. But if we change the nomenclature and look at**

**women vs. men it doesn't matter whether you're Moslem or Serb or Croat, it seems that women were victimized in any case. I wonder if you sense that or agree with that.**

[VL] Yes, in Bosnia-Herzegovina they were victimized but I wouldn't call it that they were victimized by men but by the war situation. But it's a fact that men were those who victimized and raped women of Srebrenica. But I think, it's my opinion, that regardless of sex, like if they are women or not, this war situation brings a lot of negative energy with itself and then it affects both groups, men and women. So it's the matter of your build, the way you are built and the way you react to these situations.

**[SG] Similarly do you think that women can play a special role in reconciliation, reconciling the different ethnic groups? Do they have a special role to play?**

[VL] I think they do. For a period of time I worked in this island of Brač especially with women from Srebrenica and their kids. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that these victimised women were more tolerant and they were ready to be a part of these peace efforts, reconciliation efforts. I saw that also in Tenje with these women. They were ready to make the first step always. We also worked with their husbands but as men, of course, they weren't as open as women. It was as if they withdrew themselves for some reason. I believe there's a desire to make such efforts but just showing emotions, to make also that first step is difficult for men. I just noticed that women were more ready to make those first steps.

**[SG] Why were they more ready? And why were these women most victimized most ready?**

[VL] It's difficult to answer that question. Maybe the way they think is just very different from the mentality of thinking of this world. There's this subtlety in women that they don't want to spend time or be in hatred; they want to go out of it and maybe that would be the reason. Maybe after that model that a man who went through bad experiences doesn't want to spend much time in that and it forces him to do better things, to build something much better.

**[SG] Number twelve. Do you think that women are generally more religious than men?**

[VL] I wouldn't say so. I didn't have such experiences. I believe, it's my personal thinking, that we're all believers in some way, there are no atheists. Some of them are just faster, quicker to recognize faith in himself or herself. So I wouldn't put it that way, between men and women.

**[SG] Have you noticed that women take on additional gender roles as a result of the loss of men in society that they are now doing things that men traditionally have done?**

[VL] Yeah, she is just forced to have this other role.

**[SG] Does society accept women in this new gender role, this expanded gender role?**

[VL] Is it about Bosnia or here in Croatia?

[SG] **Either, I guess.**

[VL] I don't know about Bosnia-Herzegovina but here in Croatia I think the society changed its opinion and attitude towards women. So out of my practice, my work I see that that's something that's accepted because it's necessary.

[SG] **Number fourteen. Can you cite concrete example of how faith has brought women of different nationalities together?**

[VL] It was interesting to work with women who didn't identify themselves as believers but they were coming from different national backgrounds. They were trying to work on this inter-national..., they were working among different nationalities on reconciliation. Faith wasn't an issue at all and we didn't have this sense that they were active in their churches. It was our desire to work with women who would work together in their communities and then their sense of faith would wake up at some moment. After they spent some time together with different groups they have this desire to look over to the other side and learn more about other religious groups. That was interesting. It was some kind of inward guidance, it was just interesting to see that they wanted to work together.

[SG] **So they were, in a spiritual way, they were drawn to women of the other nationality. Can we also say that they, in a spiritual way, were drawn closer to God?**

[VL] I think in that way, yes. You don't have to be a card-carrying believer but the way of life can testify to that. Sometimes we do things instinctively and I put these two things together, man and God.

[SG] **Let's look at the matter of children and how faith guides our teaching of them. Number sixteen. Does your faith guide you in how you teach your child or if you see how faith helps people teach, give guidance to their children?**

[VL] That's something that I put in the first place personally. And just the way the question is put, faith guides me in this. There's this chaotic situation in valuing things with children and it's very important to teach children about love, hatred and forgiveness. So I try to put a lot of this into whatever I do. Maybe I can tell you a concrete example. I work in Vukovar at the moment in schools and we are working on a survey about the educational system. So there are two educational programs actually, Croatian one and Serbian one. Not just programs themselves but also school are physically separated. We see problems because of separating children in this way. Those kids know very well who the Croats are and who the Serbs are. It's my thinking that at their homes they're taught that. They are not taught hatred but in some way separation. So there's a lot of violence and conflicts over there. At their young age they become drug addicts already. There's a great difference, big difference between the area of Vukovar and Osijek. It is especially the case with places such as Vukovar, Dalj and other places – they were in the midst of terrible war situations. It is critical to work on creating again this atmosphere of reconciliation. I feel weak whenever I go there because it's a frustrating experience for me whenever I go there because I feel sorry for those kids. Faith can just boost my interest to

work more in this direction but I think we don't have programs to offer to these kids and their parents as well.

**[SG] Let me just finish, conclude by one more question which is actually the second part of question twenty. Which is: Will religions continue to separate and divide people or can faith in God help reconciliation? Simply, religion is the main way of identifying who is this and who is not this. So it in many ways divides people. But can faith in God vs. religion actually help reconcile people if it is possible?**

[VL] I think yes. But the situation on the ground in Bosnia-Herzegovina and here show something different. I think that people of all different denominations mix these two terms, religion and faith. I think that they live on this level of religion, they don't go any deeper into faith. It would help a lot if representatives of different religions would go deeper in their faith and read their Qur'an or Bible where they can find a source, helpful source how they can build peace. And if they believe in that sincerely and start to put it into practice then the result would be this kind of reconciliation and peace. If faith stays just in this religious level, superficial faith, then nothing will be changed.

**[SG] Vesna, thank you. It's been a delight to be with you and I can see our hearts beating for the same area and for the same people. I know you have another appointment so I'll let you go but I let go with my great and deep appreciation and thanks.**

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Fra Ivo Marković**

Sarajevo  
4 March 2002

[IM] I find that the use of the word 'restoration' here in your question, in place of other words like 'reconciliation', 'renewal' or 'revival', 'restoration' is something ideological. Restoration means 'to bring the situation from the past into the time of the present'. And 'restoration' always makes dictators or oligarchs; groups of people who would like to have the same situation of power as they once had. This is 'restoration'.

[SG] I see.

[IM] For me, restoration is very ideological. I recommend the use of the word 'reconciliation' or 'revival'. Restoration here, you know, we can't repair the situation we had. Restoration is always technocracy. It is the power of a small group of people. Therefore, I think we can speak with restoration in the sense of renewal of life and reconciliation and so on in Bosnia.

[SG] I see.

[IM] Therefore I think it is necessary to change this word of restoration in your title of the work. In our language 'restoracija', 'restoration' doesn't mean..., I think I described very correctly what restoration means.

**[SG] That's important for me to know. Because in that which you have described, that is not what I'm looking for. It's not what's happening. We don't want to see the Communists or the old legends come back. There is a new movement in the English-speaking world of Christianity of a theology of restoration, which comes from a justice sense. Part of it comes from the rehabilitation of prisoners. In other words, not just locking them away and shutting the door, but bringing them back into society, forgiving them and making them useful people in society. We restore them to society as opposed to shutting them away. In a theological sense, it has the idea of regeneration and is located in the concept of creation. In other words, the act of restoration is a recreation of an order that was once there. An order that God created, an image that, well, you're the one that said we need to clean the face of Jesus. That was your image...**

[IM] Yes.

**[SG] That's the image of restoration that the English world has, is that we need to get back to what God created us for.**

[IM] Yes.

**[SG] I've already been warned by one other person, however, that if we mean by restoration that we are going back to the Communist time, then this is absolutely what we don't want.**

[IM] Yes, that's absolutely right.

**[SG] And restoration...**

[IM] Excuse me, the word restoration you're using more on a personal level, or for individuals. Restoration of the life of individuals before their sin, before they lost their reputation in life so here it is meant as a restoration on a social level. It is something that is needed to distinguish the right meaning of these words.

**[SG] That's right. Maybe I'll need to change the word. What of the word 'regeneration'? Does that mean...**

[IM] I understand that in the English language it is different perhaps.

**[SG] I'm having difficulties with the word 'reconciliation' from the Muslims. I'm informed that they really don't have this idea, it's something that, well, as one professor says, it is a new term that has come to them from the West and they don't really have it as a Moslem term. So I'm struggling to find the right term that describes what is going on. Professor Grabus was speaking of the ethics and politics of how Muslims treat others and where this source is. But in terms of reconciliation, it's a foreign concept in Islam. Nevertheless, of course, he is participant in reconciliation issues and working together, but reconciliation is a hard term for them to use since it is not part of the Islamic world and tradition. I'll have to fight for the right word, or at least make clarification.**

[IM] Perhaps one small remark on [the use of] the word 'reconciliation' by Muslims. I think Islam and Christianity and Judaism normally, as revealed religions, are very similar in the heart of the way they function. They're very similar. But they're different civilisations. Islam built one civilisation, a just, Islamic civilisation very far away from Western Christian civilisation. Thus, we use different language, different experiences, at different horizons of this experience is what we have. But we have to just find the content of both sides.

[phone call interruption]

[IM] You can find the same content of reconciliation in Islam. They speak more in terms of politics and use political terms, because Islam is not only religion but it is also politics. They use more the utterances of justice. We Christians are more idealistic and that this image of God through Jesus and who is a God of love, it is contrasted to a God who forbids, which is more often stressed in Islam. Very often I say Islam is more practical, especially related to their tradition. They organise society

along these levels. Our Christianity is often more idealistic. It is poetry sometimes, such as prayer.

**[SG] Right. It's not easy to find a common ground. Let me go to something that you said in our last meeting that isn't in the questions, but is maybe helpful in finding the locus of this view. You said early on that you had written an essay on how Islam, Christianity and Judaism share the same God.**

[IM] Yes.

**[SG] But now the basis for discussion is really what you called an 'Abrahamic ecumenism'. Two questions really. The first is, I think I understand what you're talking about when you say they all worship the same God. But, in fact, are the Muslims and Jews offended when we talk about the deity of Christ? Would they disagree about that when we talk about a common God? That would be the first question. The second question is, is that the reason you move to the common basis of Abraham and an Abrahamic ecumenism?**

[IM] Excuse me. I didn't understand the second question. Would you repeat the second question?

**[SG] The second question is, we talked about Abrahamic ecumenism. You're the one that used the term; that this is the basis for working together, that this is the basis of belief - the person and faith of Abraham. I'm trying to find a common basis that draws these faiths together. And I think that this is the locus that you gave last time we talked.**

[IM] Normally Judaism, Christianity and Islam are very near because they come from the same revealed root, from Abraham. When we stress monotheism, one God, that is the same God revealed in the Old Testament, the God of Jesus Christ, the father of Jesus Christ, and Allah, God of Muslims. On this level, we can accept this monotheism by all three sides. That is, we agree on this level, there is one God. But the Jews, and especially the Muslims, are offended when we speak about Jesus Christ as God, that Jesus Christ is God. They don't like such utterances, or when we speak of Jesus Christ is the Son of God because it offends the monotheism they adore so deeply. And I think we Christians, we should..., we have mostly in our theology, in our language, it is scholastic language. And we should be using rather the language of the Bible, or of revelation. This is more ecumenical. This language goes back especially to the beginnings of Protestantism. We Christians experience that God revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. In that sense, Jesus Christ for us is God, is full of God. All of these utterances I think the Muslims can accept, that in Jesus Christ God was present, especially based on a full way, that this is the revelation of God. I also have personal experience. When I speak with Muslims they don't like the Trinity and so on. But such utterances when I use it, then they can accept it.

**[SG] That Christ was filled with God?**

[IM] **Full** with God, so that in Jesus Christ we recognise a personal God. People who met him, etc. But this scholastic language, but this is not the language of the Bible. For example, to speak about God, one God and three persons, these are conclusions.

[SG] **Yes, the word trinity is not in the Bible, for instance.**

[IM] Yes. We can conclude it, but it is our conclusion, it is not from revelation. We speak of our revelations as being different. This is something we have to distinguish. In each case the answer is, it is better in their ecumenical dialogue, or in inter-religious relations with Jews and Muslims, to use the language of revelation. Such language is in the Old Testament and in the New Testament and in the Qur'an. But scholastic is something that we should change. It is one part of our Christian tradition, but it is not all.

[SG] **So, don't use words like deity, trinity, etc.**

[IM] Yes, yes. Just tell them exactly that it is or Christian conclusions, it is our Christian piety, it is our relation to God, but that we respect God who is one God. Just monotheism. We speak about it, but the Muslims are very sensitive on such use of words because it is fundamental to them, I want to stress that it is fundamental.

[SG] **You are then advocating this not in terms of rejecting historic Christianity...**

[IM] There's nothing to reject....

[SG] **It's for the sake of dialogue.**

[IM] Theology is always changing. Language reflects experience. Now we have today we have to enrich our language with the dialogue and communication of other religions, especially Judaism, Christianity and Islam, so that we come nearer; so that we come to understand each other and ourselves. We have to look for language that we can understand ourselves in. Sometimes in situations of conflict it is normal that we look for language that the other side is the enemy and *cannot* understand us. That they *can't* understand us. Now in Croatia and Serbia they are creating a language - they have the same language - but now they create language so that they cannot understand themselves.

[SG] **Purposely.**

[IM] Yes. In the wars between Christianity and Islam it was the goal that we have a different theology than the Muslims. It was the goal that we don't use the same utterances. Today we have to change our orientation. We have to look for the language of understanding, not the language of misunderstanding. That is the language of ecumenism; that is the language of inter-religious understanding.

**[SG] In fact, what you're saying is exactly counter to what is happening. I mean, in society today, the Muslims are using more Turkish words in order to create a new identity and to give some separation from those with whom they have always lived with, the Croats and Serbs. So you are advocating that we need more communication and to use terms that we all understand.**

[IM] Also, Muslims now have - if you live in the environment of enmity on all sides - the Muslims tried to have their own language, which is extremely different from the language of the Croats and Serbs, which is the same language. We're in such processes. But it is just after the war. Already now, for example, I and so many other people in Bosnia go for a different process. The issue of language here in our environment in the Balkans is very important, because nationalists used the language for misunderstanding, but we reconcilers would like to revive good relations that we had before the war. We look for one language of understanding. I will not use, for example, new words that were created in Croatia. I cannot understand this, especially between the Serbs and the Muslims. I do not use it. I look for language that helps understanding. I have to use the words that and that you understand. Sometimes I am reproached because my language is not Croatian enough. I think I speak very fine Croatian, but my language is different because I insist that Muslims and Serbs understand my language. That's it. I want to have a language of understanding, not misunderstanding.

**[SG] When I come to Bosnia I never know which language I am supposed to be learning. In some places it is bosanski, in other places it's hrvatski and in other places it's srpski. For instance here [in the Franciscan monastery], I made the mistake of saying that I needed to learn more bosanski and I was corrected that I was learning hrvatski. So, language is beginning to be one of those distinguishing features that separate.**

[IM] Yes, yes. You know, we have here Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages. It is *one* language. And for a standard of all three languages let's use this Bosnian language, so-called štokavski language. Now, I read just today, in Croatia, then they insist for a Croatian standard not the language of Bosnian Croats but a different standard so that they distinguish differences to Muslims and Croats. It is for me evil, it is the violence of a language. Now they will do it. Also, and there such ideas in Serbia. And I think today there is a need to resist such ideas. From your perspective, you can just say that you're learning a Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian language. It is one language, really. But we are different. As a language it is one language. But as cultures, as civilisations, as a spirit of one nation, they can be distinguished. But as language, it is the same language. So the differences you can correctly compare with English and American English languages. That is the differences we have.

**[SG] Yes, you certainly can understand each other.**

[Pause]

**[SG] I found your answer to this second question about peace, and whether those people without faith can experience peace, quite interesting. In the real sense of peace they cannot be people of peace...**

[IM] Yes.

**[SG] ...but very often atheism and agnosticism do not deny God. And that there is a witness of the believers to them. Is that correct?**

[IM] But, to explain it. European atheism and agnosticism have social roots, not philosophical roots. Atheism came to exist not because they believe there is no God, but because they protested that they were against the Church. Atheism came to exist in encyclopaedias before the French Revolution, Diderot, Voltaire, and so on. The goal was, the *Church* was bad for them. And to start to destroy the Church, they started also to deny also the God of the Church. They produced a different God, *deus*, the God of deism. And it is extremely important to know that all atheism in Europe, is a secular atheism, communistic atheism, all atheisms we had in Europe have social roots. [They were] protests against the power of the Church. That is extremely important. Also today, after such a terrible witness of religions in this war, because religious were used for the war, for dividing people, for bringing enmity in the people here in the Balkans. It happened and it was terrible. You know this connection between religion and nation is so deep that it was very easy to make such a connection between faith of religion and the war. And after such an experience, we have here in my choir, I have concrete atheists, agnostics, who were very proud because of their atheism, because they don't have these problems which these people of the other nations have in each of their religions. But their atheism is a positive atheism, an ethical atheism. They chose atheism because of their tendency to have clean, as a rescue to the person, not to be a slave to nationalism and nationalistic relations.

**[SG] Which was related to religion.**

[IM] Yes, yes. For example, there is one mother in my choir. She is so consciously an atheist that it is impressive to me. I said to her, "For me, you're not an atheist. Your atheism is the same for me as my theism."

**[SG] That's right. It's a belief isn't it? It's a faith.**

[IM] Your atheism is like a poor man's road to God and you're looking for truth, for something deeper and something that is cleanest in us. I look for it also in my theism. Our roads are very near. Only, you don't know that our goal is God. I name the goal God and you give it a different name.

**[SG] She's non-confessional, she's not any of these faiths.**

[IM] Yes. This atheism and agnosticism in Europe are ethical, not because of the denial of God. Their goal is not to deny God, but to help human beings live normal lives, without slavery produced by religion in the name of God.

[SG] **Right.**

[IM] I think now you understand me.

[SG] **Yes, I think that's an important concept because even in the stronger Marxist countries, or communist countries - because Yugoslavia is the soft form of it - it really was, the [goal of] atheistic communism was meant to liberate the social realm, which they felt was oppressed by an oligarchy supported by politics and religion.**

[IM] To liberate from relations which were patrons of the Church.

[SG] **In that sense, the Church was participant in what was seen as the bourgeoisie.**

[IM] Yeah, yeah.

[SG] **Now, I don't know in Yugoslav terms how ideological that was. I know in the Russian sense - and in the Polish sense, as well - that there was a very atheistic oligarchy of its own in the political arena. And yet in Poland there was a very strong Church, Catholic Church, and in Russia a very strong Russian Church that helped the people. And so the Church became in some sense the saviour of the people against...**

[IM] Yes.

[SG] **...a new oppressor, which was no longer the Church but was...**

[IM] Yeah yeah, communism.

[SG] **How was it in Yugoslavia, or especially in Bosnia? What role did the Church play for the people?**

[IM] I think during communism..., you mention this comparison with Russia. In communism, the Church was criticised from one side and there was a direct rebuttal against the Church. Communistic atheism here was not atheism, but was **anti-Church**, against the Church because it was, how do call it, it was anti-theism. Anti-theism, not atheism. There was a fight against religion and the Church. But the communists had power, which was fine when they didn't have so much power and they only had ideas. But later when they had a power they committed terrible crimes, they offended human rights and so on, and the Church became one sign of justice and of liberation. So the Church in communism had really very good opportunities to convert people to God, not to convert people to their own ideology or a new ideology. For example, I remember when I was a young chaplain, I had a lecture in middle Bosnia, how to preach to Communists. And then we would meet, for example, people from the Bank. How could we use these opportunities for preaching? And we did it. They were people of reputation. And we worked very

well together. The conclusion is, it is easier for the Church to be a cleansing Church when the Church has a cross. In communism our Church had a cross.

**[SG] [After unclear word] Cross - of Christ?**

[IM] Yes, the cross of Christ. Yes, we suffered. It is easier to belong to Christ. Now, after this came the nationalists. And the Church found itself in its own environment. So practically the Church gave its reputation to nationalists. The Church for me was bought. The nationalists gave money to the Church and they used the structures of the Church for their goals, mostly selfish goals. And after 10 or 12 years now, the situation is terrible. Now our Church doesn't have the reputation we had before the war.

**[SG] Isn't that something.**

[IM] Yes. Spiritually, the situation is worse now than practically before the war. The Communists had many people and they had so much real atheism and destruction and many who participated in this forgetting programme - when they worked hard trying to get people to erase the memories they had. They worked so much on it that they created a really terrible situation. But in such a situation, the Church could very easily preach. She could witness. But today, we are in a very bad situation. Now I see that it is very needed to find an approach to people who look for God. Concretely, my choir over here, I meet many such people and very often they criticise religions and the Church. And I always tell them that I agree with them. I agree with this criticism. It is OK, and then I bring people back to the gospel. They need faith. That is the problem. Today I think the Church of faith is specifically very stressful. People here need faith and they look for faith, but I think there are terrible problems that when they look for faith and very often the Church gives them structures. For example, youth programmes. You have to go six months to this course and six months introduction, you know, and when they see that this is practically ideologisation in the name of God, they look for God and they see ideology, they will not eat. And I have personal problems when I introduce people in faith. It is on a personal level. It is OK. But when I sent people to find community, where to live their faith, it is very difficult to integrate these people into the Church. The Catholic Church concretely. And here is the advantage of a small Christian community, they don't have such terrible structures, they accommodate themselves to the needs of people. I think we Franciscans, we are very independent from the Church, it is easier for us to work in such an environment. But our Church with these institutions and parishes with its statuses and functions, it has really terrible problems. Because we have a new generation of people will have grown up outside of any influence of the Church. I'm speaking of the Catholic Church here.

**[SG] I'm reminded of the Polish situation when I lived there and the Church was so respected. It helped the people.**

[IM] Where was this?

**[SG] In Poland.**

[IM] Ah, yeah? The same situation in Poland?

[SG] Yes.

[IM] Only the difference is that in Poland they didn't have such a terrible war as they had here.

[SG] That's right.

[IM] And in the war here the reputation of religions was terribly destroyed.

**[SG] Along this line, Ivo, you were talking about faith as being relationship to others, relationship to Christ. Can you make for me a distinction between faith and religion? Are we meaning here by [the term] 'religion' the structures, the history, the programmes, and faith as relationship? Or would you care to make the distinction?**

[IM] Yes. That is a standard distinction. Faith is personal experience of the faith. We have experience in our spirit, in our person, that a person needs God and has a need from God to be protected. We have answers of where we come from, that we have love, and that we have perspective in love. That is our personal experience. We have such need in experience and that in looking for such needs, we come into contact with the transcendence, and that there are transcendent influences on us, that we have experiences of grace when grace is clearer. Such experiences are very difficult experiences, and they are terrible influences on our life. On the one side, we have our experiences of faith. On the other side, our faith needs society. I can't be a believer alone. Faith is for other persons. Faith is an inter-personal experience, not personal. Faith is it love, hope, I need another person for faith. I cannot go to God alone. Now, when I converse with you, we're a small Church confessing to one another speaking about our experiences and looking for God, looking for a sense of life, and so on. Faith can live only in such interpersonal experience. But further, in society, this faith needs society; it needs groups. And then in society this faith has its institutions, has its external phenomenon. And then it can happen that this external signs of the faith become more important than the religious experience. For example, nationality, which can be part of my personal experience of faith or culture or so on. But then, slowly, during life a person or one Church can give stress to the external signs of the religion, and that religion becomes more important than the personal experience of the faith. And that is, for example, in sociology and theology it is very finely and very often analysed, mostly by us we use this German philosopher Weber. He speaks about intensive faith and reduced faith. Here that is the tradition of Churches, as it is of the Catholic Church and of the Orthodox Church and in the Islamic community, their tradition is more important than practical faith or evangel [gospel]. That is a problem. And Ernst Bloch, who wrote the book *Atheism and Christianity*,

[SG] Yes.

[IM] Well, we were experiencing it now in the war. For example, when we were arrested in a seminary by Četniks. One Četnik conversed with me and Luka Markošić, and in one moment he said, "You see, you are Christians, also Catholics, Christians just as we Orthodox people are. It means that we together should go and kill Muslims." You see, for him, his faith, his Orthodox faith, is to kill Muslims. You see, this is ideology. He accepted that he is Orthodox and he belongs to the Orthodox Church, but he has no faith. When we said to him, "If we are believers we should not kill anyone," he was completely surprised. It was something very special. That is pure atheism in faith. This atheism is just the worst that it can be. That is a very good distinction and description of atheism in the faith. And very often now I study a French philosopher and theologian and Jacques Maritain, he wrote before the Second World War about Russia. I read it maybe 15 years ago. He wrote that, in Russia, the best situation for faith was during the time of the war.

**[SG] Because of Stalinism.**

[IM] Yes. He expected Stalinism, Leninism, that this programme of communism, would destroy these traditions and prepare a situation for pure faith.

**[SG] In the mid 80s, 1984, I was in Copenhagen and we were studying Kierkegaard with a fellow student. And we got into a conversation with another student who said, "Well, if you want to see a personal faith like Kierkegaard talks about come to Western Europe, then pray than Marxism takes over." Of course, that shocked our American ears...**

[IM] Yes, yes!

**[SG] ...but I think I'm hearing the same thing between these two existentialists, Maritain and Kierkegaard.**

[IM] Yes, yes. That is the power of tradition, and did it is terrible. So people accept only traditions but not the heart, what is behind these traditions. Now, for example, I preached last Sunday about the cross. We Christians glorify, we divinise the cross of Jesus Christ. We adore it. But very often it is a piece of wood. We forget what is behind it. We forget that the cross is life; that it means to take on our own responsibility for our world. You see the alienation here with the cross. Now, for example, each Friday here in the Church we glorify the cross of Jesus Christ. But when you look a little bit deeper in this piety, it is alienation.

**[SG] Yes.**

[IM] It is easier just to speak about the cross than to live with this cross. That is tradition. Tradition can have very bad sides.

**[SG] Good. I make that distinction because I thought that this is what you meant. Because some people may like to say there is not a distinction between religion and faith, or that in some communities there is no distinction, such as perhaps they have in the Moslem community, there is no distinction. And**

**Wilfred Cantwell Smith tries to draw some very distinct lines and yet with the Muslims fails so draw those distinct lines and calls it something of an exception. So, I'm just trying to clarify that for future relationship with the Islamic faith.**

[IM] Excuse me. In this case there can't be faith without religion. But here we speak about negative possibilities. How can religion become something without faith.

**[SG] It becomes a surrogate or a substitute.**

[IM] Yes, yes. The same is true of all of these religions and Judaism, Christianity and Islam, they are so similar in their inner mechanisms and functions. They are extremely similar. All phenomena, which you will find in Catholicism, for example, you can find in Islam. Normally Islam is very different, with the horizons of experience, in language and in theology and so on. It means that way have to struggle more to understand Islam and to describe it accurately.

**[SG] In any case, there is potential in each of these faiths for faith and personal experience to be counterfeited by institutions.**

[IM] Yes, yes.

**[SG] Let me ask you this question. What about this issue of the individual guilt of those who participated in the war and in the conflict and the distrust or hatred of the community which they represent. What I mean is, if an individual from a certain community actually did something, then the person who was the victim of that is likely to distrust all those people of the community from which he comes. That's sometimes true even though not all the people are guilty for his crime.**

[IM] Yes, yes.

**[SG] You mention in your notes about the community aspect of the crime. Can you talk to me about this and the responsibility of the individual to resist this inclination?**

[IM] I tried to describe here, first of all as Catholics, we are a collective religion. But in the sacramental life, in our life of faith, we have a very individualistic faith. For example, in each sacrament, the human being is practically alone. Baptism happens to a single individual. He is not integrated into the community. So it is with all sacraments, and also in our sin. If I personally commit a sin, then I go to confess. But it is something which is, it is a very bad individualism in the Church. My sin is not only my sin, it is also the sin of my community, of the people I live my faith with. Today, after Vatican II we have stressed the integration of the life of faith more in community. And in this sense we can also compare the crime committed by one individual and one nation. First of all, it is an individualistic crime, and then also it is crime of one group. *All* of them are responsible. And if they don't *resist* this crime, then practically they are supporters of this crime. If someone resists this crime, then

we call it in our language a '*pravедnik*'. I found in the English language [the definition] 'a righteous human being'. It is a person who became persecuted in their *own* group because he resisted the criminalisation of her own group.

[IM] Up until 1992 we supported Croatian National Party [HDZ]. But then we saw what Tudjman was doing, that he started to have a politic of ethnic cleansing. When we saw this then they turned against Tudjman and were very often persecuted in their group. For example, during the war and now after the war I have more security to go among Serbs and Muslims than among some parts where Croats are a majority. I don't have security there because they look at me as a traitor. This is just because I was against such politics. So, you know, I can't speak with some people on my own side who are Croats because they are rightists. But also many people who are Serbs. I communicated with many Serbs in Belgrade when I was there to visit my friends who worked against Milošević for 10 years without any success. I was always amazed by these people. They wrote, they worked and organised people against Milošević. After more than 10 years they finally succeeded. They are righteous human beings. Not only this, these people have the nothing to do with the crimes of Milošević. But others, who practically wanted to hide it, they are perfect supporters. I think many Serbs had to recognise their own sin because of it. Also many Croats and among Croats many in the Churches, many bishops who also now are supporters of HDZ, which is a fascist political party. I can tell you, when I came back from the Zagreb - I was a refugee in Zagreb during the war - I went to my bishop and asked him, I am one of your priests and I have the right to ask something of you. I insist that you openly right and give a message that the Croatian National Community, the HDZ, is not a Christian Party and that they commit ethnic cleansing, they are racist, and so on. You have to tell people, we cannot give a voice of support to this party. He agreed that this was so, but he said to me, "If I do it, then 90 percent of Catholics would be against me." He didn't choose the prophetic role, you know?

[SG] **Well, that's it, isn't it?**

[IM] That is so, that is so. How many of our bishops are frightened of Milošević? Milošević co-operated with the Church. They didn't resist enough against him, you understand.

[SG] **Well, that's a fantastic answer. So there is very much a community role and responsibility to stop these perpetrators who act as individuals, and when the community does not stand in the way, then they themselves are participant in the guilt.**

[IM] Yes. That is just so, just so.

[SG] **You use some very fine examples of HDZ and Milošević and Serbia.**

[IM] If I see for example in my Franciscan community, that someone does something very bad for my community, then I have to resist it. I have to tell about it. I am not behind it. I don't stand behind it. I'm against it. It is not just positive to tell about it. If I don't do it then I support it. Practically it is one type of support. I allow him to do it.

[SG] **And this is a prophetic, perhaps lonely, solitary but prophetic role...**

[IM] Yes, yes. That is the cross we have to take.

[SG] **You and I are very much an agreement on that, I must say. It's a hard stand to take but probably not enough of that took place. Well, I have probably taken enough of your time here, I wonder if there is just one more...**

[IM] Excuse me, I need to finish very soon because I have next meeting soon.

[SG] **I'm reluctant to take more of your time, and I see that you have already put in a lot of time to answer these questions in writing, and I'll refer to that.**

[IM] I didn't manage to answer at the last two questions. Can you read them and see what they're about?

[SG] **Well, it is more of a social and cultural question. Actually you have answered it today. You have said that the Church today has a very much a hard a time influencing the people today than under the communists and because of the role of nationalism versus the role of communism. And that is the nature of the question.**

[IM] Concrete, the Church today has greater power than under communism. But unfortunately it is not a power for preaching the evangel [the gospel]. It is just power.

[SG] **It's just power.**

[IM] But Jesus didn't choose power.

[SG] **That's right.**

[IM] Jesus chose serving.

[SG] **So, the Church's influence on the common person is less...**

[IM] Less, yes.

[SG] **...because people resist that sort of power.**

[IM] Yes, yes. And people see and understand it, for example, if now in Croatia they live very poorly, and they know that Croatia received money directly, that also when nationalists had the power they gave large sums of money to the Church. And today you see how many Churches and mosques are being rebuilt in the post-war time, but so many refugees can't repair their homes. Many of them know that money for their homes was used in the religions.

[SG] **So they see the same thing happening.**

[IM] Yes. People see and know. The Church from one side in this war was the only structure that functioned in the war and this was very positively used for humanitarian help. But sorry, unfortunately there is also the other side now that the Church took the big sums of money for their service in the war. I think is a great sin of the Church, not only the Catholic Church, but also Islam. It is as I said, the mechanisms and functions are very similar. I think the sin of the Islamic community is bigger. I think the Catholic Church is more open and couldn't be so involved in such crimes as the Islamic community in politics, for example, or the Orthodox community.

[SG] **Very good.**

[incidental conversation]

[end of interview.]

Interview with

**Revd. Bernard Mikulić**

Pastor, Evangelical Church in FBiH  
Čapljina, Herzegovina

9 September 2002

[BM] Yes, I can say how society in Bosnia-Herzegovina is somehow trying to accomplish restoration. I will not go into a discussion even if I have my opinion, or of what they're doing, because the part of what they're doing publicly is one thing but what they're doing behind the scenes is something else.

**[SG] I see. So there is a public, but there are ulterior motives to their efforts?**

[BM] Yes. There are still the national paroles from the background. I'm not sure it is still like that and why it is the case that religions and politicians don't support the unity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Slowly new political parties are coming into existence, but their prominence is seen when they make speeches and promises but later these things are forgotten. They are trying to have restoration. On the question of whether it is possible and what would be the foundation for restoration Bosnia Herzegovina, I believe it is possible. And I will answer how. First, with all that has been done by politicians and the religions for many years towards restoration, it is still a question as a how it will turn out. And my own opinion is that we will again see conflict in this region because nobody is leading us in this country through a love of this country. We participate together only because we are forced to by the European Union troops to remain in some kind of peace. So it appears that one day we could have war again. And my assessment is that this country is without hope and, if I could look at it from our theological perspective, this country gets another war every 58 years on the average. Perhaps the next generation can forget what has happened in the past. Maybe one day Bosnia-Herzegovina will be in the European Union and can be anchored with the other nations and thus be able to forget its past. But in this moment I do not see that. To forget something, for me, it is possible only when you forgive. But I see how people do not forgive. Actually, I did not answer about the one part that you ask, which is true, that before the war people lived in peace. This is true, before the war people lived in peace. I know, I was born and raised here and both of my parents were Croat and I was also raised like that. And we never looked to see who was Muslim and who was Serbian. And that was quite normal.

**[SG] Did you go to church?**

[BM] At Christmas time or something special. But like my friends, if the Muslims had a holiday, I was there or with the Serbians, then I was there to participate. And they would come to us when I had Christmas and things like that. But I wasn't going

to church regularly. But many people were raised that way and many people were raised by a their nationalist thinking and so when it came to war, everyone felt how they were different. And I find it now too in myself. I am Croat and I belong to this group and I don't hate anyone, but you put yourself in the group in which you belong. And the way I grew up in my family and how the war came and what I saw there, hatred came to my heart, and I started to hate others. Even during that time, when I thought about my friends, I didn't hate them, but I hated others of the different nationalities. But in that time Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided into three groups. And if you look at the groups then you can hate the group, but if you look at individuals in the group, you don't hate them. After the war - I won't go through my testimony now of how I met the Lord - but when I met Jesus, I got the experience of how he forgave me of everything. So, when I came back to Mostar, because I wasn't in Mostar at the time, I found a group of believers who had the same experiences as I had. And I came there [to the church] and found all three different nationalities. And if you think about God, you can't imagine how God can have different colours or nationalities. It's a normal understanding about God that he loves all of us. So when I found this group it was like answering questions for me.

**[SG] This was in the church?**

[BM] Yes. I saw ex-Muslims, ex-Orthodox, ex-Catholics and others staying together and worshipping the same God and they didn't lose their identity, and I realised they had the same experience of forgiveness in Jesus Christ and a new fellowship in him. So I started to participate in the church. In one house group meeting, one lady who was Serbian came and said, because of the [need for] reconciliation in our country and in ourselves, we need to step away from our nationality and ask for forgiveness from others for what we have done to them, and also say I forgive you for what you have done to us. And my thought was, "Why do I have do this? You Serbians started the war! Not me!" [Laughter.] But God's spirit worked really quickly in me because I was a young Christian and I was so happy that Jesus met me and it was easy to give up my rights, even now if I see that it wasn't my right, but it was really God's right. And that night I was really released of my hatred of the Muslims and the Serbians. And I could love them again, somehow. And I started to look at them differently. The wounds that you have are still there, they are scars, but the offences or forgiven. And I realised that my nationality, even if I didn't do something wrong personally, I realised that I represented my nationality and I should ask forgiveness of them.

**[SG] What year was this that you came to Christ?**

[BM] The end of 1995.

**[SG] So right about the time that the Dayton Accord was signed.**

[BM] Later on I realised how much I hated Croats more than others because during this war those who were really on the low level of this war, those who were criminals, became rich men and they became important in society. And I fought

much more with the corruption done than I did with the nationalist issue until I came to the Lord again and asked him, "Please help me Lord." Because in my head I was going and killing them, looking for my rights.

[SG] **So this was for you a tension within your own Croatian nationality?**

[BM] Yes.

[SG] **But it was really directed at people who were Croats but more evil men.**

[BM] Yes.

[SG] **Unrighteous people.**

[BM] Yes. And those who received something in the wrong way. And when you see this injustice in your own country and you sense this need for justice, then you want to do something. But God helped me to forgive them and to love them to. I'm just sharing this, it may not be part of the question, but those are my feelings.

[SG] **No, No. That's just fine.**

[BM] My really deep trust in God and faith in God is for this, because I know that Jesus is the hope for any country, but especially for Bosnians and Herzegovens, and this is really the only hope, because this country will not exist without him. Because I cannot see a future here. Maybe that is wrong but that is what I feel deep in my heart. And that's what I share with people and preach, is faith in him. And even during the time when I was participating in *Agape* to try and help people through that humanitarian aid, I tried to come closer to them. I tried to demonstrate that for me it is the same that even if you were a Croat or Muslim, it doesn't matter who you are, for me you're the same to me. And even trying to explain how they become the same through forgiveness and through Christ. Many of them couldn't understand forgiveness, even my cousins, because I lost through this war three uncles and one aunt, and my cousins cannot understand how I no longer can hate the Serbs who killed them. And I was trying to be a testimony to them because I could not forgive them without Jesus, and I tried to show them that they could not forgive either without Jesus. Because this is the only way that we can do it. And that is the only way that this country can be united, which is through Jesus and through the Holy Spirit.

[SG] **So Bernard, you're able to forgive because you sensed a powerful act of forgiveness yourself ...**

[BM] Yes.

[SG] **...in Christ Jesus?**

[BM] Yes.

**[SG] Do you think that is part of the dynamic, that they must feel forgiveness first before they can forgive, especially the forgiveness in Jesus?**

[BM] I think so yeah. I think so. Because, you know, [pause] it is hard to answer that question, but I believe this is so. Because if I am not forgiven, then how can I forgive someone else? And human forgiveness is not the same as God's forgiveness. I can forgive someone, like my wife. But when she does it again I will say, "Yeah, but I'd told you last time!" [Laughter]. But God is not like that. When he forgives, he forgets. And friends can sit together again and forgive each other and we can exchange forgiveness, but if we don't forget, [pause] you know. I don't know how it will work.

**[SG] Can you forget?**

[BM] That's a good question. How can I forget? It is not a forgetting like to lose your memory. But to forget the pain that caused the war and the pain was caused to you, yes, I can forget that. And I lose the pain. And I remember that I don't have the pain. Does that make sense to you?

**[SG] I think so.**

[BM] I remember everything. Actually, some memories go on, but actually I remember everything. But when I think back, I don't have pain. I was recently reviewing everything and how it happened, but among my emotions I had no pain.

**[SG] The Lord's Prayer informs us that we should ask forgiveness of our sins even as we forgive the sins of others, or the debts of others. So there is a sense in which we are talking to God for forgiveness for what we do, but which is also extended to other people, that we need to extend to them.**

[BM] Yeah.

**[SG] Is this the kind of dynamic you're describing?**

[BM] Yeah, because when I received forgiveness, actually you also need to forgive others. But it is not a momentary thing [snapping of fingers]. It is a process. It is like I told you. First I went to a meeting and became aware of how I needed to forgive the other nationalities. And later found the same hatred in myself for people of my own nationality. That surprised me. I didn't know I had this hatred. And I needed to be forgiven for that. And this does take place. You start with big groups and then you come to particular persons, perhaps you need to include in your parents or your girlfriend or someone who has hurt you, and I believe it is really very important to release that forgiveness, and if you're able to do that personally, then that is best. But if you're not able to do it personally, then it needs to be addressed to God through the Holy Spirit.

**[SG] The next step beyond forgiveness is reconciliation. Are people then more able to embrace you as a person and you as a Croat or even you as a Protestant in this land? I mean, there are other barriers here beyond forgiveness. You can forgive them and, if we can say, erase the barriers, but how do they respond you when you extend forgiveness to them?**

[BM] Look, who isn't looking for forgiveness? Even if you extend forgiveness, sometimes it is not received. You can find people who are kept in hatred and they don't want to stop hating. For some it is like food for these people. I can go and forgive someone, but if they don't receive the forgiveness, and they are not looking for peace, you know, it doesn't matter. I was looking for forgiveness. I had a burden of something which was killing me. And when I met Jesus, then somehow, when he forgave me that burden was taken out of me and released me. But if I didn't look for forgiveness, then probably I would never have been released from it, even if somebody said that to me, I forgive you, I would have responded, "Yeah, yeah, thank you" and think maybe that's something for later. I wrote a couple of poems before my conversion and they helped me to find out where I was. In one poem I wrote, "This is the time without peace and if you have joy during this time without peace, then how can you find peace for yourself?" Something like this. I'm not sure how it translates into English. And, you know, this took me back. At the time I was taking drugs and living a very free live as I wanted, but I didn't receive peace. And I was looking for peace in my heart but I was looking for it in the places where I didn't have peace. And when I wrote down that this gets me out, if you enjoy it this, you can get what you're looking for. And I think there are two different kinds of people who are looking for peace, and who doesn't want to have peace? If you're enjoying something else.

[Interruption]

**[SG] Question number two.**

[BM] Yeah, question number two. Actually, I understood you were asking me about peace and maybe here it would be a good question, what is peace?

**[SG] Yes.**

[BM] And what gives you peace?

**[SG] Yes.**

[BM] I was speaking about this recently, "What is peace?" And I wrote another poem! [laughter] After many years I wrote another poem. "What is peace?" Is the name of the poem:

*Is peace somewhere where war is, but you are not?*

And the point of the poem is to draw out the question of peace when a whole area is being pressed down and oppressed, but you are absent from these affairs.

*Or is peace when Sodom and Gomorrah captured the heart of the city, but you're not there and you're on the entrance like Abraham and Lot. Is that peace? Or is peace when others go hungry but your garden is full? Or is it peace when the moon rises and the shade comes over the hills, but you still have peace because you know how the love of Christ is like a dew forever?*

[BM] Something like that. So it is a good question, what is peace? Some people can say I have peace [because] I have money. I'm living a good life, but sometimes they don't look deep in their hearts. They're too busy. Peace is when you are sure that when you die that you will come directly in the presence of God, not to be judged, but into his joy. That is the difference. And that is a big difference. And a common question today is what's happening with you, and a lot of people don't know what to answer. But God knows and I know God knows, but the biggest discovery for me was that Jesus gives me an answer for right now, not when I'd die, and he gave me an opportunity to have peace about my own death now, which gives me peace about that now and not on the day that I die. That definitely costs me something. I need to be humble and I need to ask for forgiveness and to realise that I am a sinner and then I need his help in order to come to a place that I want to be. When I share with someone about my faith, I divide people into four different groups. The first group is for those who are just looking for this day and to enjoy this day. That's what it's all about, is to have a good day. It's about having fun. The second group is looking how they should make money and become rich. They will do anything to get that million. The third group is a group of people oriented towards other people and they want to do something so they might be remembered for doing something good. And they organise their life in that direction. And the fourth group of people [are those] who believe in life after this life and they're eager to know how they get there and what is the route to do that and how to live for this, and they will do anything to get there. I'm a person who wants to get to heaven and I'm now getting the answer through Jesus Christ and his gift of mercy and I can have peace about that when I go there. So I believe I have already answered these kinds of questions. You cannot get peace, you cannot come to heaven, you cannot experience the joy of God if you don't receive the mercy of God. Most people will say, I don't know, God knows and I will know one day. But the real answer is now God gives us that possibility today and you can have that answer if you will receive it.

**[SG] Well what about those who don't believe as you do, Bernard. What about those who won't come to this living faith that you have. Can they somehow all live in peace, can they live in harmony or at least in non-violence with others because they live in proximity to people who believe? Or not really?**

[BM] Everybody believes in something. People can be divided into these four groups. The person who is in the first group, then, wants to have fun on this day, if you speak to him about the issue of heaven, he will reply that he doesn't care because he lives for this day. But if you change his day he will fight with you. The one who is trying to make a million, he doesn't mind moral teachings and he won't argue with you about it. But if you touch his million, then he will fight with you. People are like

that. Everybody believes in something. Nobody wants to fight. But if you touch what he believes in, he will fight. That is also a religious question. If you touch someone who was very religious and it is meaningful to, then you fight for your religion. But if you believe in Jesus, you will not do that. Why? Because Jesus said don't do that. If you do that you don't belong to me and he will not come into heaven in some way, because it be don't follow me, you're following something else. Jesus said I know what righteousness is. Don't look for your own righteousness. And if he touch my religion or faith I will turn my other cheek. But it was always a big question for me how I could do that. I could do it once or maybe twice, but how could I keep doing it? After the third time or so I'll give it back to you. But now I can do it because I am not looking for my righteousness and I believe this is God's thing for me. And I think that is your answer.

[Interruption]

**[SG] This is question number three.**

[BM] This is about who doesn't kill in the group. And we're coming on the question of sin. Is it sin just what you have done is it sin for what we would have liked to have done? That is the question. I didn't kill anyone and I can tell you today it is God's mercy on my life that I didn't have to. But I was guilty because I hated. Even when I lived outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina and living in Croatia I was guilty because there I was still hating and I approved of all the things that were done here. Do you understand my position on this? It is a big question to talk about the individual person and the group. It doesn't matter only what was done, it is also a matter of thinking. Everyone belongs to that. I can speak with people of other nationalities or even my nationality and in one moment they can agree about some things but if I start to show hatred to them or others, then they will agree about that. Because this hatred is like a disease. I'm not sure why but maybe because it is the need to have to feel like you belong to a group or a larger community. And on the way you somehow find through the division where or you belong. It's true of political groups or ethnic groups nationality groups religious groups, the whole world is divided into these groups. It shows our need to belong somewhere. You lose that need to belong to some group when you belong to heaven. You find a larger value than that group when you belong to heaven. It is the same as what I did, which was to try to divide the groups and to explain the question. And in the same way, we can ask, what is our goal? For what are you searching? Where are you going? And I know people who are not too concerned with politics. They want to make only just enough money and live their own life and they don't care much about nationalism, but they became politicised when someone told them how they could make money and it is hard to make money if they don't belong to group. If you connect with the group that was connected with you then you naturally identify with them and you identify with those people even when they hate. It is really an issue of sin and it soon takes on a form of the groups. And as I used to say I'm not guilty of the sin of the group but it still is a issue of sin for the person if they identify with that.

**[SG] Would you say that your identity in Christ gives you a new identity?**

[BM] Yes.

**[SG] Is it above all other identities?**

[BM] Yes. Because I'm still a Croat. I'm not a Catholic anymore, but I'm still Croat and I cannot lose that destiny. And it's in my passport. But in my identity I belong to God as a child of God and I have the peace of someone who is going to heaven one day when I die.

**[SG] And this is a new identity?**

[BM] Yes this is a completely new identity, giving me an idea of how I should live. You're not living anymore in this society. Your whole evaluation has changed when you meet Christ. This was also a big surprise for me. Everything that I valued, those things which I thought were moral and good, you know, how to live, when I met Christ, everything was opposite.

**[SG] Turned upside down.**

[BM] Yes.

**[SG] Question number six.**

[BM] Whether or not women have a special role they play in reconciliation. I believe that men and women both have the same and equal job for reconciliation.

**[SG] The responsibility is the same?**

[BM] Yes, the responsibility is the same. Because it is not by your looks or whether you're female, it is in your heart.

**[SG] Are there special roles, however, that women can play, given the tense situation here? They are less suspect, for instance?**

[BM] I believe it is equal. We are talking about peace and sin and what causes us not to have peace. It doesn't matter if you're not involved in war or whether you're male or female. I believe we are all the same in reconciliation because we need to bring forgiveness and receive forgiveness in order to get peace, and it doesn't matter who you are.

**[SG] Question number nine.**

[BM] We are talking about the Hague and the justice there. For me it is good to show people how you cannot do wrong things and live without being judged for them. It actually shows us also on a level that we cannot live in sin and not expect to be judged by God. But what will help this? I spoke already about how sin is not just

those things that we do, but that it is also something, which we have in our heart. If we work with this concept, it means that if we don't receive the judgment on ourselves, then we will not recognise the need for forgiveness. The Hague will be good to bring judgement upon certain people, but it will not bring peace and reconciliation in this country if a person doesn't receive judgment upon themselves. And who can judge everybody? That is a personal question only God can address. And only when you see that you were guilty will you recognise how much you want to get away from your guilt, and it is only offered in Jesus Christ.

[Interruption]

End of interview.

Interview with

**Ifet Mustafić**

Office of the Reisu-l-ulema  
Sarajevo

March 5, 2002

[SG] ...and I see Bosnia as a nation of historic tolerance, by and large. I mean, it was known as an oasis among the faith communities. But it's had some very turbulent history, but you don't really see any other faith communities - until recently - trying to assert themselves over the other. And even in the recent times it's then more of a nationalist question. Not a religious question. Now, I had some, I think, rather unfortunate teaching in the former communist East Germany where the professor saw all of the Yugoslav conflict which - at that time was 1991-1992, so it was really the Croatian conflict - he saw the entire conflict as a religious ideology through a Marxist ideology, and I don't see it that way.

I am also not a person who sees this as a clash of cultures along the lines of Samuel Huntington. And fact, I think it has been an example of just the opposite. He uses Bosnia as an example of precisely where these clashes of cultures come, and he has a picture of Bosnia in both the Journal article and in the book. You know, I think if you talk to enough Bosnians I think you find that this is not the case. Nevertheless, because of nationalism which is really a modern issue, a modern construct, nationalism has co-opted religious communities and religious persons, especially since here in Bosnia the primary means of distinguishing people is their faith. Usually you have a linguistic identifier, or some other cultural modifier, but here the primary one is religious, so unfortunately some of the religious leaders have been involved in some of the nationalist objectives. But I see Bosnians by and large as, historically they have been under the protection of Istanbul, and then later under the Habsburg Empire, then within themselves under the Tito era. But since then, and gradually since Austria really, I see that Bosnia's protectorate has been Western Europe moving away from Istanbul. Now, there is obviously communication that happens with Turkey, there is perhaps a lot of parallel between as much as one-third of the Turkish population that wants to be Western, that wants to be part of the E U, and a moderate presence of Islam here in Bosnia.

[IM] There is irony in the fact that Turks as co-religious fellows with half of the Bosnians have been present here for six centuries. That's one fact. And another fact is that the Muslims, the Bosnian Muslims, when the Turks left they actually were left alone for at first for the whole time of the Habsburg Monarchy presence here and after that also when the Kingdom of Slovenia and Serbs and Croats were in power. And then in Tito's regime until these days Turkey was the connection between

European Muslims and the Eastern Muslims, Muslims from the Arabian peninsula and other Muslim countries. But the fact that most of these Muslim countries were not aware of European Muslims including Bošniaks primarily, until this recent aggression on the country, you know, proves that the fact that we tend to use the term but not in the full meaning that Bosnian Muslims were, let us say, *betrayed* by Turks, by Turkish Muslims, were left alone not without any physical and spiritual help, but also were forgotten because the Turks knew about or of the European Muslims because they were here. But Arabs, they didn't know, or Persians, they didn't know, because they weren't here. But Turks, when they left here, they left as though they hadn't left any Muslims. So that is the irony because everybody tends to believe that we're not too far from the Turks, or Turkey. Turks were here for centuries and everybody tends to believe that we have strong support from Turks and Turkey, but that's not really what was the case. Especially not during the Hungarian time, during the old Yugoslav time, not during Tito's time. We were almost forgotten. Of course, there were connections, but I have my experience when I went to Egypt. It was 1987, I believe that was the year, and I was talking with some Egyptian youth and they realised that we were not Arabs, they realised we were not Egyptians and they asked us where we were from. We said we were from - that was at the time of Yugoslavia - and they asked what nationality we were. We said we are Muslims, because it was forbidden for Bošniaks to use the national name in Tito's Yugoslavia, so they gave us a religious name with a capital 'M'. We told those people in Egypt we are 'Muslims'. They told us, that's not a nationality, that's a religion, but still they accused us that we don't have the nationality because we didn't actually tell them our nationality. But also they said there are no Muslims in Yugoslavia, there are only Communists there. They did not know, and they're university youth, and you're supposed to know at least where you can find your religious fellows.

**[SG] Especially in Egypt, as they have two schools there that ought to know.**

[IM] They have paid attention to history, but there you are. So that as one ironic fact in this situation.

**[SG] What is the relationship today with Turkey?**

[IM] Normal diplomatic relationships. More diplomatic than anything else. Even though we have..., Turks have built many, as you are probably are aware, many mosques and all of them are in the Turkish style, but a lot of them were destroyed in this last aggression. And Turks haven't really repaired any of them.

**[SG] Is that right?**

[IM] That's the fact. They will probably be involved with the *Ferhad* project in Banja Luka, but until now it's been five years and Arabs have built new mosques and many other Muslim countries have helped to repair or rebuild destroyed mosques all around Bosnia, but they didn't.

**[SG] Is it because financially they're not as wealthy as the Arab states?**

[IM] No, I don't know, maybe that would be the fact. But there is another fact, probably. They proclaim their country as a secular state, but there is irony in that too. They finance the Islamic community in Turkey. And they appoint most these and all leaders of the Islamic community, and they pay their salaries and the head of the Islamic community in Turkey is ranked as a minister. But still they say they are a secular country. Another thing is, they are trying to become members of the EU but they will never be, because you ask them to be democratic, it to become a member, but if they you would become democratic, if they would be a democracy, they would be an Islamic state, a Muslim state, not necessarily in the literal meaning of the word, but you would have the voice of Muslims in that country. Now they play between these two sides all other Muslims, especially we in Europe, suffer because of that, because they don't expose themselves in helping Muslims, trying to stay secular. They'd to have very good relations with the States, which is because the state is diplomatic. As a nation, as a country, they have projects on the state level, and that doesn't include religious projects. So that's a summary of the relations between Muslims as a religious group in Bosnia and Turkey as a Muslim country.

**[SG] I've done a lot of reading of Smail Balić, who, at one point, says that the Bosnian Muslim can be the example for the European Muslims because they are indigenous Muslims, whereas Algerians living in France, or Turks living in Germany, are part of the diaspora, are part of a contingent that has moved out. But the Bosnian Muslim belongs here.**

[IM] Exactly.

**[SG] Of course, it's a different situation here in the Balkan peninsula than say in France or in Germany, because in many ways the Balkan nations are not Western European in mentality either. But what do you think of the idea of the Bosnian Muslim as an example for Muslims in Europe?**

[IM] Yes, I would clarify with you that when Balkan nations are not to Westernised or nations of Western Europe, and I would like to know if that is meant positive or negative.

**[SG] I'm not sure I am trying to say that that is qualitatively good or bad. I think what I'm trying to say is that Western Europe in terms of its the Christian church as having an impact on society, is really past that period, so that they Church plays a very marginal role, religion plays a marginal role in their society. They also did not come under the auspices of Soviet hegemony. In that sense, south-eastern Europe, especially the former Yugoslavia or, while it was separate in its own identity, in its own form of socialism or communism, has more identifiable features with Central Europe than Western Europe. In terms of religion, whether it is the Orthodox or Islam or Catholicism, it seems to be stronger here in this part of Europe. That's the distinction I'm making. The other big distinction I'm making is that it is not as wealthy.**

[IM] Yes of course Western European countries are more one-nation countries and that probably helps them to make a distinction or to move away from the Middle

Ages from those times when the Church had the biggest role in the state because they developed from that time. But these Balkan countries, Balkan nations, they didn't have a chance to do that, probably for two reasons. They never had a chance to have the Church fully in charge because there was no one Church present. You had different churches. So that is one reason. And another reason could be the time of communism when all religions churches and religious communities were suppressed and were put aside. They were not allowed to develop, so people, I believe, every nation and that need to go through those stages and these nations didn't have a chance to go through that, let's say, religious revivalism stage to feel or experience the limit of religion in political, social life and to recognise that link and to move on, recognising the role of religion but not putting it in front of everything. And also a difference between Western European countries and Balkan countries, especially Bosnia, is that most of those countries don't have the experience of multi-religious, multinational communities as this country does. So if we look at that fact we could say that this region has an advantage that Western Europe doesn't even though we are taught these days by Western Europe how to live together, even though Western Europe doesn't, have a clue as to how we should live together.

**[SG] That's precisely right.**

[IM] But you raise some questions regarding the role of religion in these conflicts and how does religion actually have a leading role. I don't know..., I mean, even though I believe that Muslims have the most personal approach to religion. When I say personal, they don't have anybody between them and the creator, that is probably the most direct approach and the most direct understanding and the most correct implementation of religion in their lives. As the most..., I know how Muslims in this region actually operate as a people, as individuals. Religion isn't for them the leading force. Religion gives you strength. Whatever you do, if you do any kind of work, you can find the strength in religion in connection with God, or with someone who is all powerful, almighty, and this not only spiritually. Of course, spiritually it will strengthen other means for anything you do. That's how I, in short, understand the essential meaning of religion. But even Muslims during the Communist time, that spark of religion in them was almost turned off. Of course, the same was with others, even though, as far as I understand Christianity, both for Orthodoxy and Catholicism -you are, of course, much more knowledgeable in that field -for Christians it is easier to stay a Christian in difficult times than for Muslims to stay Muslims in a difficult time because Christians can stay Christians by doing nothing publicly. A Muslim cannot because a Muslim is asked to do things everyday. Even in good times you can be a Christian from a public point of view just by doing two things going to the Church on Sunday and doing two things in the Church, taking Jesus blood and ...

**[SG] Baptism?**

[IM] Yes. Doing those two things. I have read some of the teachings of St Paul who says there it is enough to recognise that Jesus is the son of God and to taste the wine and to taste the bread, so the blood and his body. That is enough to make you a Christian. Of course, there are so many other things, but if you do those things

regularly, you are a Christian. For Muslims, it takes much more. Public acts are involved. But anyway, during the Communist times none of us were totally free to do those things, and people were blackmailed. If you wanted to do anything with your life you better not be seen to do anything with the priests or with the Imam or anything religious with the congregations. So people were calculating if they wanted a career, then they would stay away from religion. That's what happened with a few generations. But when that was over, most of the people were not really, really religious. They *did* belong to religious groups by name and by birth, but they didn't have the sense of religion. I'll give you one example. Bajram, or Ramadan. That's the day we have two festivities. One is after Ramadan, and the others after of the Haj. These are the days of celebration, of cheer. People are supposed to celebrate those days. But you know what is ironic? Actually those two days were turned into days of the dead, as you have in the 11th of November or is it the 1st November?

**[SG] A, yes it's the 1st of November.**

[IM] That's the day of death, to visit your dead at the graveyards, which is no day of celebration. You cannot celebrate at the graveyard.

**[SG] And under communism that was changed?**

[IM] Exactly. Because under communism they were not allowed to celebrate, because it's a religious festival, and they knew at that time and that nobody can actually say it's a religious act if you go visit to your ancestors, some of your dead, at the graveyard. So they put those together and instead of celebrating it they were marking that day by going to the graveyards and visiting the dead. And probably those first who people were doing that were believers, and they did that for the purpose of keeping their [indistinguishable] in their lives in a different way. But the second generation didn't know anything about the real [indistinguishable], and the real purpose. And so on, and that's the reason how real faith was lost in that period. Why am I saying this? I'm making the points that religion has really nothing to do with this conflict. Absolutely nothing, because they were not religious. But there is a big 'but'. Religion in its formal appearance, churches, mosques, priests, and so on, it was used by people who had their own agendas. Also, all the religious feelings,

**[SG] And non-religious agendas too, I imagine.**

[IM] Of course. Totally non-religious, expansionistic agendas. I've read some historical books on movements, big movements, big changes in history, big historical milestones, were actually caused by the interests, mostly economic interests, which some of them more followed by expansion or wars, but in the middle were the interest of a nation or country in order to gain more property or land or resources in order to improve their own economy and in order to gain some market for their economy. All of those...

**[SG] Self-interest, driven by self-interests.**

[IM] Exactly. In this area you had the same thing, and nationalism was another, let say, self-interest of nations that live in these areas. And when you put together the nationalism, which here means a lot of things that are forgotten in Western Europe. Nationalism, for instance, I'll mention Serbian nationalism. Serbian nationalism means revenge for something that Turks did to them six centuries ago. They beat them at the Battle of Kosovo, for instance. The era of nationalism is built on those legends and myths and calls for revenge. Constant revenge. They don't have Turks here, and they expelled the Turks from Serbia during the Austro- Hungarian Empire from Bosnia. But Bošniaks and Turks have something in common with Islam, and, with no reason whatsoever, they blamed Bošniaks for the problems they had with Turks. They cannot blame it on Turks anymore, because they cannot do more to them than what they did, so they continued to do the same thing to other Muslims in their neighbourhoods. And that's the bad side of nationalism. It's really bad because it's not just..., it's not right. You can be national. That's alright. Everybody has a nation, everybody loves their nation. That's beautiful. I used to live in Australia and they probably have with the United States the biggest number of different nations in a country. And they have grants and the government helps some ethnic programmes. Money is given for ethnic languages, or cultural programmes, and so on. They don't suppress the different ethnic groups. They help them grow and to enjoy their national or ethnic identity. But all of them are Australians when it comes to the state. But here that is not possible. Having this experience from Australia, I am dreaming of Bosnia having the same state as Australia. And those respecting all nationalities as they used to be - in a different way, of course, in a different era - but not giving advantage, all were giving preference to one-nation over another. In my view, we should be citizens of Bosnia and as citizens we should have a vote not as Bošniaks or Serbs or Croats. That's the only way to keep some sort of credibility or equality to all people. As much as I love this country, I have pride in that country. I cannot hate one country and enjoy the same rights and still enjoy the same rights as those who love that country. In some cases those people will hate, of course, not just by their hearts but by their deeds. In some states they are in prison. It's normal in democratic countries. But anyway. The people who had the nationalistic and expansionistic agendas, used everything they could. And the religious communities with their religious infrastructure and everything else were among the first to be used. Because in the theory of states and legal systems, you have one theory that says that when a party comes to power, the first thing they tried to do is to try to get the religious communities under their control, to influence public through them because they are one of there most powerful media for those in power or those who seek power. In this case they were people who use the religious communities and religious people to get into power and to accomplish their own goals. It's not hard to clarify what those goals are. Those are historical facts. We know that Tudjman and met in Karadjordjevo and made some agendas, and we have some documents by Serbian scholars who proclaim 'Greater Serbia' which covers almost all of the Balkans. And they never gave up their idea that is a very nationalistic idea. And when they saw the chance to do that, they jumped in. And Bosnia was, I think, innocent of mostly all of those things, but during the long period of time, Croatia and Serbia had those agendas over a long period of time, even during the Turkish and also during the Hungarian time and during that time of what was old Yugoslavia, a time under

Germany, and a time under communism, always they had these agendas, and there are evidences for that.

**[SG] Written evidences.**

[IM] Yes, written evidences. Probably they had the best chance at this time when the last Yugoslavia collapsed. They had a chance to fulfil some of their appetites or reach some goals from those agendas and to satisfy themselves they decided to take part of Bosnia for each of those countries, Karadjordjevo was the final proof of that. But anyway, they couldn't do that from Serbia and from Croatia. They had to have people inside Bosnia who would help them in many ways. First, you had to have public opinion for something. For instance, if you want to have a strong independent country here, you have to have most of the population for that cause to work for that. The first attack was from Serbia to diminish that public power in Bosnia. And they didn't vote for independence but they didn't stop the rest of Bosnia, the Bosnian population to get the independence vote for the country. And the second hope for both of these countries, even though Croatia was playing the game, as a mouse, they didn't want to go in unless or until they were sure their eastern partner would respect their wishes too. Because they had a war with Serbia earlier. So they hesitated to go in. And another reason for later joining in by Croatia is that Croats in Bosnia, Bosnian Croats, they were more pro..., uh,

**[SG] There were more nationalistic?**

[IM] Actually, at the beginning they loved their country.

**[SG] Bosnia, you mean?**

[IM] Yes, Bosnia. They thought that Croatia would play their historical role towards Bosnia, and be a brother or sister to their country. They didn't have a reason to think that they would be opposed to the country in any way. But anyway, we have Franciscans in the country who are as Bosnian there as Bošniaks, and therefore of this country. And also many sincere Catholics as well, as if this country is their country, because it *is* their country. And Franjo Tudjman had difficulties to convince these people to go for his goals instead of their own goals. But Milošević didn't have that many difficulties. He simply used Kosovo and other things.

**[SG] Do you make a distinction when we talk about this between the Bosnian Croats of Herzegovina, for instance, because there you have this entity of Herzeg-Bosna, which is maybe more nationalistic than the HDZ of Croatia?**

[IM] Actually, we call them Herzegovčiks, they are from the Herzegovina region in Bosnia. They are special people. All of them, regardless of nationality. I knew a Muslim who would say to me, he would rather give his daughter - he was a Muslim - he would rather give his daughter to a Croat Catholic from Herzegovina than to a Muslim from Bosnia, from this northern part of the country.

**[SG] That's how strong he was in his national identity ...**

[IM] Not national...

**[SG] Regional identity?**

[IM] Yes, regional identity. And that region is a different climate region from this part and people are different. But this is just an example that these people are, I would say, even strange.

**[SG] [Laughter.]**

[IM] It's very easy to make them radical, it's very easy to make them extreme. And of course, Tudjman has succeeded with them.

**[SG] Is that true for Muslims as well as Catholics, do you think?**

[IM] At the beginning when they actually didn't know all what they final goal was, they thought they were fighting the aggressors. Because Mostar was surrounded by tanks and guns, almost all Muslims went to the HVO, there was almost no Bosnian army which was in other parts of the country. There was HVO, which means 'Croatian something'. Almost all Muslims with no hesitation went right to them because they were defending the country.

**[SG] From Serb aggression.**

[IM] Exactly. And they didn't feel oppressed because it is Croatian. No, it didn't matter to them. But when that army turned against them, turned against Bosnia. They put them in camps, some of them right away, but none of them left. But anyway, the point is, they, the Croats from Croatia and the governments of Tudjman and Milošević from Serbia, used Catholics from Bosnia and Bosnian Orthodox to help them to reach their own self-interest goals in this country. And those goals were very obvious later, to divide the country. They were all talking but they could probably leave one small island for those who were not Catholic or Orthodox. But those people are more than 50 per cent of the population, and if they were in one part of the country, that could probably be done. But they were mixed all together. I was told by one of my friends lately - she was visited by a foreigner, I don't know where from - and he asked her, looking from her window to another building across the road, and he asked her, "Who lives in these buildings? Bosnians, or Serbs, or Croats?" Then she said, "What kind of question is that? Everybody lives in that building. All three of them." They all used to. In my building where I live, on my floor you have two Muslim families - and there are five of apartments - two Serb families and my family. And the whole country is like that. You have small villages, which are Muslim, Catholic, or Orthodox, but the next village is another denomination. And that was no problem. And everybody has no difficulty of understanding, if that was the case, and people were living together, how could it happen that those people one night, and suddenly wake up in the middle of the night and run to their neighbours and kill them? How can that happen? I know one thing, actually I have heard this from a Vietnam veteran. He was interviewed and he said...

[tape turned )

[IM] ...villages, at least 50 percent are women and children, but they still bombed them and fired at them. Do you know what he said? He said that everybody believes that the strongest weapon in the hands of people, especially soldiers, is the most sophisticated weapon. But that's not true. The strongest weapon that one can have is the idea of others as enemies. If you believe that they are enemies, you don't need weapons.

**[SG] You'll do anything.**

[IM] You will kill them with your teeth, if you have to. Because you believe that if you don't kill them, they will kill you.

**[SG] That's right.**

[IM] And how happened that, I mean I can very openly say Serbs, at first, and later on, Croats, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats - because no Muslim attacked Serb neighbours, because you can, by careful research, come to the conclusion that Bošniaks didn't have any reason to do that. Bosnian- Serbs and Bosnian Croats on their own *also* did not have any reason to do that. And I don't think that they did that on their own and for their own agendas. But the agendas were put in front of them by their, by Serbia and Croatia, and in their heads was but the idea of Bošniaks open [unintelligible], and between the two, Serbs for Croats and Croats for Serbs, our enemies. You know I was in Sarajevo, it was 1991, at the beginning of the year, and all around Sarajevo they were putting tanks and large guns. It was like this day. No hostilities even in Croatia or Slovenia, nothing had started yet. And they were putting these guns around the city. And people saw that and newspapers were writing about it. They were asking the Yugoslav army about this, asking them, "Why are you doing this?" The answer was, "We're doing this to protect the city from attack." But the second question was, "If you're going to protect the city, why don't you turn those guns *away* from the city, not *towards* the city?" Because those guns were turned towards the city. How can you protect the city in that way? That is the proof that they already had the agenda. The Yugoslav army was under the command of Milošević and through that a lot of Bosnian Serbs were in that army.

**[SG] It was pretty much controlled by the Serbs.**

[IM] Yes, the command structure was more than 70 per cent Serbian. They were indoctrinated with that, and through them and through other channels and other political parties like SDS, the people were turned against their neighbours. If they would be honest, and they would be the best to tell the story to hear this of what they were told. But we know today what they were told. They called, for instance, Bosnian Muslims 'Turks'. That's a very good example of how they think of us, you know, and they hate us. Even though I don't question their right to do that, because they were governed by Turks for six centuries, but does that give them the right to hate them? That's up to them. But we have to be under the same rule. We were, let's say, from one point of view in Europe, we now are coming today at *thimma*. We

could say, or anybody could say, that we were privileged in away. In another way, and they were privileged. For instance, people say that no Muslims in Muslim countries had *djizja*, that's a poll tax...

**[SG] poll tax, yes.**

[IM] And you know, that's discrimination. I, as a Muslim didn't have to pay that. But is that all about the *djizja*? Why do you pay it and it I don't? The *djizja* is the tax for those who don't serve in the army. And all we Muslims served in the army, all we Muslims go to battles, to wars and you sit there home. Instead you just pay the *djizja*, a tax, which wasn't something that would cause you to lose your business or something. Something equivalent to not going to war and not being in a position of being killed. *Anybody* would do that today or in the last 10 years. *Anybody* would pay a *djizja* to not be killed, even the Serbs, Croats or Muslims, anywhere. Anyway, people had the right to love, like or dislike.

**[SG] Is there a place for *thimma* today? What would this relationship look like today in a multicultural, pluralistic, democratic society?**

[IM] First of all, *thimma* is something that has meaning in a Muslim country, a Muslim-ruled country, and was a dominated country, which has a large population of Muslims and Muslims are not the minority, when Islamic law is applied. Then you have *thimma*. *Thimma* basically means, protected, or, people who have *thimma*, have a Muslim government promise to take responsibility to protect five basic rights of those people. First, is that right to life. Second, is the right to property. Third, is the right to religion. Fourth, is the right to freedom, not to be a slave. Fifth, is the right to dignity. Those five rights were guaranteed for non-Muslims. I know that the *Reisu-l-ulema* very often likes to say, when he has an opportunity to speak to international audiences somewhere in Europe or the States, these religious meetings, "We would like it if Muslims, for instance, were given the same status in Europe ..."

**[SG] Of protection?**

[IM] Of protection. In Spain, in other parts of Europe. And even during all these times after the Ottoman Empire in these Balkan countries. We would be exactly, we would be the most happy nation in the world because we wouldn't have 200,000 people killed or, we wouldn't have almost 1 million displaced persons outside of the country, and we wouldn't have half of the country destroyed. We would have someone to take care of us. The International Community, Brussels, the United Nations, they all knew what was going on because this is the era of electronic correspondence and you know everything that is happening in the world. So you cannot say that you could not know what was going on in Bosnia. And they have all power. They have NATO, and they have the Security Council, they have all-powerful armies of the United States with them as well. Still, *none* of these rights were actually protected where the Muslims were concerned. The Muslims were really a small island within the Christian environment, within Christian Europe. They are a small island. We might be a majority in this country, which might no longer be true, but globally we..., it doesn't mean anything because we have an Orthodox

country on the East and a Catholic country on the West and we are surrounded. Plus we have the rest of Europe, which is mainly Christian. And *that* Europe didn't do anything to protect those five rights or anything of those rights of Muslims for three or more years.

**[SG] I think you're right in that assessment, or the *Reisu-l-ulema* is right in that comment. However I don't think these countries, America included, see themselves as Christian nations working to benefit, you know, a non-Christian nation. They see themselves as secular nations, and that is the difference I'm trying to make. Even when Ataturk decided to he wanted to Westernise and he made enormous changes starting in 1926, he chose secularism as the official state religion, if you will. He didn't choose - when he went to look at the West - he didn't say we're now going to be Christians. He said we are going to be secular. And so, the terms under which the West would protect or not protect, or would be guilty for or not guilty for some incident, would be human rights, not religious, per se.**

[IM] Definitely. I didn't mean that. But there is a question. I'll take Turkey as an example. What does secular mean? Because in Vienna where last year I was part of a religious meeting and I was talking about us here actually fighting for or believing in, we believe that nobody should be forced into religion, his own religion or a different religion. But also nobody should be forced into *no* religion, into secularism. And I mention Turkey as an example that they are, and they say they are secular, but as I mentioned, but they finance the Islamic community, but they keep the Islamic community under control. And I tried to explain what I meant, we don't want to be forced into secularism. That kind of secularism. Because Turks say they are a secular state. But they rule the Islamic religious community. So that kind of secularism we don't want. We don't want to have a government in Bosnia which will take over the religious communities and appoint the Imam's, bishops and other religious leaders.

One gentleman had a complaint. He said, from a sociological point of view, that's not secularism, because secularism in its own meaning has the meaning of separation of state from religion and the religious communities. So, as much as one state has been separated from the religious communities and religion, it is secular, and vice versa. This is not, however, the case. Which gives me the right to put the question, what is today's understanding of the term secular state? Because if, for instance, in Germany the state collects this religious tax, and there is religious tax.

**[SG] Well, in 1906 in Germany it was changed from a *Staatskirche* to a *Volkskirche*, and it is now voluntary. People, if they are of confession, Catholic, Protestant, or whatever, they can participate in it. But they can also sign up to not pay it, and frankly today people are lining up like crazy to not pay it. It's only a couple hundred marks a year, but people don't want to pay it.**

[IM] Yes, but there are many questions. For instance, when the President of a country goes to the Church, or to the mosque publicly, or shows that he is religious, does that mean that the country isn't secular anymore, or does the secular except that kind of..., I think that is not just really a term, secular state, is not really defined in the best way

[SG] Yes,...

[IM] Because people don't know that. You cannot say that this country is secular and this one is not secular. In Bosnia for instance, it is as secular as the United States. I believe even more. Why? Because in this country religion doesn't exist. The religious communities don't exist because there is no law under which any religious community, Church or community exists.

[SG] Not yet, anyway, but that's in progress.

[IM] Yes, we are working on that. But that's the fact. Another thing is, you don't have any religious party, you don't have any religious group in any kind of government or organisational structure. It's totally non-religious. Regardless of the fact that people may or may not be religious, but this doesn't make a government a religious government if a person is religious.

[SG] That's probably the distinction. I mean, there are different forms of secularism. One of the discussions is whether a not a state is secular by its politics, in other words, it's secular because its Parliament or whatever runs the government, is separated from the Church. You don't have, for instance, a bishop or a cardinal making political decisions. And that would be a secular state in that sense. There is another distinction however, and that on common ground, that the people are not very religious, that the people are becoming more and more secular. That is the wilful choice, that people no longer desire to be associated with the religious communities. For instance, in Germany, the people who don't want to be confessional any longer, who say, my family was Lutheran, or my heritage was Catholic, but for me and my family we choose to be non-confessional, *ohne Bekentniss* is the proper term, which means, that they are secular. And that is a different level of secularism. In some cases you have both. You have a secular state and you have an ideology, for instance, that wants to marginalise the religious communities.

[IM] Actually, that is a very good point. Secular state and secular ideology. That is very good to distinguish. Because I hope every state in the world to be secular. That would mean that those rights that were reserved for *thimma*, those states would be divided up among all people, would be reserved for every citizen of the country regardless of religion. But I'm not, as a believer, not for secular ideology. That it should be a private thing, as religion is, or a private decision of every individual. If you want to be religious, be religious. If you don't want to be religious, don't be religious. But don't be anti-religious and don't be anti-non-religious. That is the point, because you will find some religious people who are not satisfied only with them being religious. They want you or me or somebody who was not religious to be religious. You can *wish*, as a religious person, or for someone to be religious as you are, but you cannot force someone to be religious. We ...

[SG] To impose your reviews.

[IM] Yes. I can say this on behalf of Islam because Islam states that, in the Holy Qur'an, that you cannot force anybody into religion. I mean, that is a *sin*. You can do whatever you want with your own self, be or not to be affiliated with a religion or have those feelings, but for others, you must respect their decision. Also, in the Communist understanding, you cannot be against religion. If you choose to be non-religious, that is your decision. But don't force me to be non-religious, or secular, to fall into secular ideology. I am for the secular state, but not for a secular ideology.

**[SG] For the sake of freedom of expression?**

[IM] Exactly. For the state which will recognise and respect human rights for all human beings regardless of skin colour, regardless of nationality, regardless of religion. We, in the Muslim tradition, have very good examples, especially in the first time, let's say it in the spring of Islam, when the Prophet was still alive, because he was the best example and he was the best interpreter or of the Qur'an and the meaning of the whole of religion. For instance, there is a statement of his in the last of his visits to Mecca before he died. He said, there is no difference between Arab and non-Arab. National and racial characteristics don't apply to the respect of human rights. There is no power of one over the other, and vice versa. Of course, in the practice, which followed after that time, you have so many good examples of respect, of human rights of non-Muslims in Muslim states, in Muslim environments. Of course, you have bad examples as well, because they are not always what they proclaim it to be. Karadžić was going to Church, he was next to the Patriarch, he was blessed. When you look at that time from the religious point of view, some say he is a messiah. But he is a war criminal. He used those symbols, which people respect, even those who were not very religious, they respect the cross, they respect the bishop, they respect the Church. And he used those symbols to get their attention, to get to their support for his very evil ideas.

**[SG] Arkon as well. He did the same thing. He received the blessing from...**

[IM] Many, many people tried, and many people succeeded in misusing religion.

**[SG] It's important for me to understand that you see that as misuse of religion.**

[IM] Exactly.

**[SG] Because I think there are many people who don't, perhaps, know enough about religions and what they stand for, to understand that that doesn't really represent the true faith, if we can use that term, I think you used that term before.**

[IM] Yes.

**[SG] And it's really using, as you say, religion for their agenda.**

[IM] Exactly.

**[SG] Which is part of the distinction I'm trying to draw in the dissertation. Many Westerners either see religion as meaningless in this whole thing because they themselves are not religious, especially the Western media, or they think they religion opposes or suppresses people in its natural expression, or, on the other hand, they see religion as the culprit; it is the cause of this problem, for instance, as my Professor in Dresden ...**

[interruption in room]

**And thus it becomes important to make those distinctions; that this is not a true expression of the faith. What I am trying to do is to draw out how, then, does the true confessing Church, how does Islam, deal with these problems.**

[IM] Let me say one more thing. I believe that those two theories, both are extreme, and both are or very little true, that religion is the cause or that religion has nothing to do was that. Because religion was there, religion, religious communities, religious symbols, they were there. I say they were misused. But the question is still, how could religious communities and religious leaders allow anybody to misuse them personally and that which they represent?

**[SG] That's a difficult question.**

[IM] That's a difficult question, but there are some [indistinguishable] on that question. For instance, those who were trying to get the church on their side for their agenda, and they would do anything to convince them. We will never know what would happen if the Church said no. We will never know. But I believe the story of these nationalists was, we are here to protect you. The Orthodox Church has a lot of monasteries, and spiritual people who take care of others. They live by support of people, as the Islamic community does as well, and of course, when people will swear to God and kiss their hands, they say we have power, we have an army, and we are here to protect. So, all that we ask of you is that you bless us publicly. That's enough. People will see the church is behind us. And then we will go and kill the whole village. And they say they will never confess that they did that; and I won't tell. You know, the story that Milošević is telling these days is that he is trying to explain why they were expelling and burning the villagers, because they were defending themselves

**[SG] Yes, yes. some threat to them, claiming victimisation when they're really perpetrators.**

[IM] Anyway, and that's the story in which the Church explains, as a knowledgeable religious authority, how they allowed themselves to be misused.

**[SG] I heard a BBC report, which still resounds in my head as a clergyman myself, that is just very indicting and profoundly black. The reporter is talking with Patriarch Pavle about Karadžić. Of course, he is the one who blessed both Karadžić and Arkon. The reporter asks him, "What do you think of, Karadžić?" and he says, "Well, I believe he is an honest man." and, you know,**

for someone of the Christian faith as I am, ordained in the Christian faith, I know that that isn't - even though it's coming from a high official in the Serbian Orthodox Church - that isn't the Christianity I represent.

[IM] That it doesn't represent Christianity.

[SG] And there are those in the Orthodox faith who say that this is not true [faith] either. In fact, in 1872 they had this problem with Bulgarian nationalism, and they had formal documentation denying this sort of expression of nationalism that includes a certain people group and which excludes another people group. It's the problem of phyletism. They made a formal declaration. What's happened now, 100 years later, 120 years later, is very much the same problem as what was happening between Constantinople and Bulgaria at the time. It was condemned, but you see it time and time again.

That's really the criminality of the situation down here and I'm not here to defend them. Obviously, in many ways as a Protestant I am very removed, and as an American, who is not even of this country, I am an outsider looking in. Frankly, my sympathies - maybe I shouldn't tell you this - but my sympathies lie with the Muslims in this case because I see them as the most victimised.

[IM] Unfortunately, I would rather that you not have sympathies for the Muslims. Now, of course, I wouldn't like you to see the Muslims as perpetrators. But when you have somebody's sympathies that means that you had to suffer something, so...

[SG] Well, in the sense there is obvious right and wrong and that wrong has had a day of victory, I sympathise and feel. I mean, nobody can watch what we saw on CNN even from a distance - I was in Germany at the time - just as people have sympathy for people in New York with what happened with the Trade Towers. I mean, my first response when I saw, I mean, I'm from New York, when I saw those Trade Towers, which is my home, my first response was, I remembered two towers in Sarajevo on fire. So, just as people have sympathy with what has happened in New York, I remember here and have sympathy for that. And that's why, in some marginal way, I got involved. My effort is to, among the sphere of influence I have, among the Protestants that I come in contact with, both inside this country and outside this country, is to try to understand the situation first, that is my first responsibility, and secondly, to try to hear all sides fairly, which is part of understanding, and third what, then, ought we to do in order to prevent something like this in the future? What is our role to stand out as a prophetic voice, as a people committed to their faith. Again, I make this distinction between simply acknowledging the institution, the history, the buildings and structures of our faith, which are necessary, but also the personal relationship, as you say, to the creator, that ought to dictate how we conduct our lives. And I think that is the place where our faith needs to overcome fear, our faith needs to overcome the enemy, our faith needs to overcome evil.

[IM] If I may add, you know, faith is moving power within the person who is close to God, in his beliefs, mind and human actions. And as I mentioned in the beginning, it is something that gives you strength, gives you courage to overcome any difficulties in your everyday life and in extreme situations as in war, temptation of any kind. That's, from what all I say, if you can follow, faith you see as something without hands, without eyes, without legs, something inside, something that keeps you alive. But there is a method or methodology of living, I wouldn't say of expressing belief.

For instance, you have people who speak loudly. That's how they talk, loudly. That's their methodology of expressing their thoughts and even sometimes their feelings. When you give such a person something and not something nice to say, even to read from a holy book, for instance, God's words, he will try, because that's the way he does things, that's the way he reacts. Of course, you can teach him that those words in some other situation so you should lower your voice because even though it is a habit, your way of talking, you can practise differently. You can adopt another way and a method. Why am I saying this? You have people, for instance, with extremely strong faith, and good intentions, but very, very wrong, very bad ways of expression and methods of dealing with outside community and society in the world. Some people are violent, not intentionally, but in the way of acting. When you offend one person, one character will say excuse me but you've offended me, and you will apologise for that. Another character will offend you the same way without warning in the same way. The third character will punch you for that. You did that with words, we will do this [strikes his hand] with force. We will return the favour with force. These are three different methods of reaction to their same thing. All of them felt offended and felt that they had to react. But they reacted in three different ways. Why am I saying this? It is not enough to teach people religion and faith; to bring faith to their hearts. It's very important to teach them the way to express their faith, their feelings, their thoughts and everything. That's very, very important.

**[SG] You're right. Especially when one confronts this sort of opposition. In other words, it's easy to live your faith among those like yourself, or who believe as you do. But when you're confronted with someone of a different faith or a different belief, or especially someone who is a perceived enemy, whether they are or not, they are perceived, then we really need to be able to...**

[IM] To learn how to...

**[SG] ...ahead of time to deal with that.**

[IM] We're coming to some very important things in regard to what to do to rewind things to the better times. One of the major things is education, which is the opposite to ignorance. Because one of the reasons the people were easy to convince that others are enemies, is because they were ignorant. They were ignorant of others' religion, or others' culture, others' everything. People were ignorant. Sometimes they were discouraged to search for those specific identities because we all had to have one identity in the communist time. But in other times before and after that particular time in history, people were not actually told about others. They were kept ignorant and they were told only those things, which, if they even happened, which are the

worst of things about others, so that they could be kept at the some distance from others, and not only a distance, but that they would undermine others as second-class people or as enemies. So, if we wanted to do anything, we can create Switzerland as a state, as people like to say, but if we still have in people's minds those ideas about others as enemies and lack concrete and correct information about others, of their religion, or part of their values, we do nothing. Because people constitute good or bad; Prosper[ous] or undeveloped community or country. People..., because you can give idiots the most valuable thing and they will destroy it. And if you give smart and good people something that is no great thing, they will develop it into something.

The essential thing is that, especially religious people have that duty, and people who believe in education and religion, have a responsibility to work on people to educate people. Regarding the idea of others as enemy, exchanging the idea of others as at least *potential* friends. A potential friend is less of a potential enemy. That's one thing that should be done. I also believe that in order to move forward..., I know that the basic thinking in Christianity is about the same as Islam, maybe not as the first, but among three firsts, definitely. But it doesn't matter. What I am trying to say is that, what I see as a mistake of the International Community, political community or anybody who is trying to help, or at least in a way trying to show his intention to help reconcile, or heal anywhere in the world, this applies to anywhere in the world where there is conflict. I think it is wrong to try to make people to love each other, different people. I am not trying to debate, but even Christianity says love the closest one...

**[SG] Love your neighbour, yes. *Bližnej*.**

[IM] Actually *bližnej* is not exactly a neighbour, because a neighbour can be a..., a neighbour is a *bližak*, by geography. *Bližnej* doesn't have a thing to do with geography. A *bližnej* can be in New York, but not my neighbour. But this is not the point.

**[SG] Which, in the context of that which Jesus teaches, he demonstrates precisely the point which you are making, which is that it's not necessarily the one who was living in a location next door, or geographically next door. He actually picks someone who is of an ethnic difference, who was hated, and demonstrates how love for that person is the neighbour. So your point is...**

[IM] Beside that, I wanted to come to another point as well. Especially after the tragedies happened to some people as it happened here. I think it's not productive to ask those people to base their future on the notion of loving each other. If nothing happened, I don't know how much - of course Christians probably wouldn't really agree with me, but I'm just being realistic - I don't know why I would or how I could love somebody who's not, how do you say that, who doesn't think the same as I do, doesn't feel the same as I do, doesn't believe the same way I do. These three things make us different and make us in a way distinct. Not close. And as I understand love, you cannot love someone that you don't know and that you don't understand and that you're not close with. That's the point of love. If I speak from the male point of view, I don't love every woman. I can love only one and that one has to be the one that I know and I understand, that I am compatible with the most ways. That is the point of

love. But that is the fullest meaning of love. There are so many others stages of..., you can even call it love, or appreciation or friendship, so many other things. Especially I would say in these situations, mutual recognition, as equal...,

**[SG] Dignity?**

[IM] Yes dignity. Respect for your values. You're values don't have to be my values. I'm allowed to not respect them as my values, but I can and will respect them as *your* values if you take them as your values. That's the way we should look into the relationship between peoples. If we tried to make them love each other and then on top of that build any future, we would wait 100 years. That's one point. Another point is, what can we do instead of this? What is the guarantee of prosperity? Not love. Love can come if it can. But it doesn't have to come ever if we have respect, and respect for human rights generally, and respect for each other. I have respect for you as a Protestant, you have respect for me as a Muslim, and you don't have to love me in the way that you cannot be 24 hours without talking to me or seeing me, you know, that kind of love. But you don't hate me. We are in very good relations. We say hello when we see each other, we do things together. We do projects together, we go to school together, we work together. That is appreciation and acceptance. And that's what people from outside, and we from inside, should push for.

And one more thing that the International Community should push for, is to build the rule of law. The state that is ruled by law. Not by feelings, not by national ideas, but by law. The law secures my rights regardless of my religion. That kind of state enforces just laws. That's what you should do because if, for instance, if I believe, or a have sense that the law doesn't protect me, then the logical [conclusion] means that I have to find a way to protect myself. And there are many ways. I will either move away from the danger, or I will destroy the danger, or at least intend to destroy the potential danger, or at least I will hate this source of the potential danger. And none of these options is right. Nobody can look forward to any of these. They just push us away and back in Bosnia. I don't know, really, from the Christian point of view if this can be clarified as an approach, I don't think that we have to allow in the full meaning, not in the profound meaning, in a full meaning of love, and that I can hug a person and feel really close to the person. Just to give my dignity and my name to his hands without fearing, it's too much. If you have a brother and not all brothers have that kind of trust and love. How can you ask people who are of different backgrounds to have that sort of trust? But there are things that you can ask them to do. Like to respect human rights. That's something that we recognise in each other, to get informed and to learn about each other. In that sense you cannot respect someone if you don't really know who he is and what he represents.

**[SG] That's right. There's a common knowledge between all peoples regardless of their faith, even, for that matter, their culture and their religion, which ought to demand respect from all of us. Which gets back in some sense to the first question I'm trying to pose here, which is at one level..., I know we've been here awhile, and I want to be conscious of your time. Bosnia has been heralded, prior to the conflict in the nineties, as an oasis where people *did* get along, they *did* respect each other. They *did* recognise the distinctions between each other, but**

**that was fine. There has been more conflict probably between Serbia and Croatia than there was in Bosnia. And then you have the additional element, not only of these two groups, but now also the Bosnian Muslims. This first question is, on one level, is reflective of that which is going on now, a need for going back toward social restoration, looking back at this peaceful history that you have. That's the one level. But is there from a faith point-of-view, from a Muslim point of view, as I think can be made from a Christian point of view, that, indeed, we can go back to an idea of the creation and how we are created in God and how we are meant to be, that we are participant, that you and I are participant in a restoring process of that which was lost from the creation? Does that make any sense to you from your perspective?**

[IM] I know that if Cardinal Puljić were listening to you, his first reaction would be, of course with good intentions, we don't want any syncretism. And actually that's the first point I want to say. I don't believe that you are having any troubles with that, but syncretism isn't really an option for any of the conflicts from escaping from any kind of unpleasant social situations. But there is something that involves going back to the roots of religion or to the basic ideas, the basic points of religion. But not hand by hand from all religions. Each religion itself should go back to its own roots, for the simple reason that, I, as a Muslim, cannot really teach a Christian about a religious point, or a general religious point. But a Christian theologian can do that. Of course, you can trust me.<sup>1</sup> But all I say is from the Islamic point of view and even though there are so many common values between Christianity and Judaism, there is still the Islamic point of view, and you will understand it better and accept it better as your own way of life later on. Or if you are told the same things by a Christian theologian. What I mean is that, Christians, Muslims, Jews, theologians, they should look back at the roots of their own religions and the basic elements of the religion regarding other creations, God's creations on the earth, and the role of God. Because Christians, Muslims and Jews all believe in the same God, they believe in one God in different ways. I am always told by Christians, Protestants as well, that we believe in one God, we are all monotheistic religions. What does this one God stand for? What do we believe he wishes us to do in regard to others? I know from Islam, of course, and there is nothing evil that we are told when we believe in God. Because we believe God is a Muslim God. I, as a Muslim, believe that God is the God of all people and he didn't create only Muslims; he didn't make Muslims special. Because there is no Muslim nation. Anybody can be a Muslim, not by saying okay I'm a Muslim. You are not a Muslim by the name. Muslim it is derived from the verb, and that noun is made up from the verb. And people used it as a name. That is not a name, that is a description of your relation to God. 'Muslim' means the one who submits his will to God's will, who serves God in his life or doing his everyday things, he is aware of God, and tries not to contradict his will. That's a Muslim. And there are so many Christian Muslims in that sense, or if it is the same thing with Christians, which I don't know, if some description of a Christian has the same root, meaning someone who is respecting God and loves God who follows God, you can say there are Muslim Christians. So if we try to find *those* roots, *then* we can reconcile. This is an example. [IM begins to draw] You have a well. This is the same water. Here, at this

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<sup>1</sup> Meant here is that a person can trust someone from one's own religious community.

point, that water, even though it is in three different rivers, is pretty much the same. But as it moves away from the well, it becomes different water. It's much easier to make a channel here and to put them together, to mix them here, than here, where it's much more difficult. The farther you go from the well, the more difficult it is to reconcile. The harder it is to make you think they are from the same well. So the point is, each of us, go back as much as we can, towards...

[Turn of tape]

...in Islam, in Judaism. And then, when we recognise those ingredients, it is easier to make these channels or to reconcile, because we will know each other better, we will understand each other better. It is a more proper way to do it and to place it in reality. That's what each religious community should do to teach in their congregations. Let's say, Catholics in Bosnia. Don't forget your Croatian identity. But as a religious people, move from that identity, move from the country, which places you somewhere, move from the continent, move from time, go to your religious roots and find out what God teaches you about other creations. And the same for Muslims.

**[SG] I think you're expressing the concept of the dissertation. This illustration, which I like very much, by the way, when you say go back to the source. And that the source for all those is the creation and to understand, like you say, don't give up what you are today, as an American, as Croatian, Bosnian, whatever you may be. But understand that you're *true* identity is formed by God, by the creator. That's precisely what I'm getting at.**

[IM] We should find out what we have forgotten about ourselves. Not to lose who we are.

**[SG] The apostle Paul, in a very tense Balkan situation 2000 years ago, says something similar to the people of Philippi, which was under the region, under Philip the Great, Alexander's father. He says to them, there is neither Greek nor Jew, but you're citizenship is in heaven. Citizenship, of course, was defined differently than it is today, but the realm of the Roman Empire had a meaning for Philippi because it was one of the city states that came under the Roman Empire. For them it became meaningful to say, look, we know there are these tensions and problems between the Jews and the Romans, we know there are tensions in the provinces outside of Rome or outside of Jerusalem. And yet, in you're citizenship, your identity, your true belonging is in heaven. It's the place where your real identity comes from and stems from. I find it interesting that 2000 years ago in the Balkan realm we had these sorts of identity questions, which, in some ways, we are still trying to answer.**

**That's why I think, for instance, that reconciliation is part of what is needed here, but it is only part of the picture. If we say, I can live with my neighbour again just as they used to back before the war 10 years ago, I can be reconciled, and I don't lose those thoughts of what has happened I don't forget those thoughts, but in some way I forgive and moved on and move forward.**

**Nevertheless, because of my faith, I am able to reconcile and there is something bigger than just reconciliation. It is going back because of my faith of who I am in my identity in the Creator. I'm part of the restoration process, and that says, not only do I need to reconcile, but I need to help my environment to reconcile. So there is a bigger element at play here, which is restoration.**

[IM] As you said, there's going back to their roots and reviving the real picture is one part of the whole process, because people are not angels. People are people. God has created us as people, not as angels. And we have other needs, like people needed to know about something. People have a need to have some sort of justice in their lives, to them and to others. In this process, the Inter-Religious Council, the religious leaders among the four, agreed about some principles, which are stated in a three stages, or three words. The first is the *truth*. The truth means you cannot do anything about something if you don't know what that something is or you don't know what really happened. People have a need to know the truth. In some ways, that is even enough, simply to know. For instance, you have some cases where parents don't know the whereabouts of their children five years after the war. The mother's, sometimes we see them on television, they say, "Only tell me, where my son is. Nothing else, I forgive you everything, just tell me where he is, to know of his grave or to make his grave known." That's the truth, which people need to know in order to rest. In some religions there are some teachings, which say if you don't bury the body the soul doesn't rest. That's the truth.

The second step is justice. All of us know, of course, that only God gives full justice. But there is a justice in our human sense or in this worldly sense of the word justice. Justice to be done upon the truth. You cannot do anything outside of this circle of truth. Justice can only be done on the basis of this first step, to know what happened. So let's do some justice. As I mentioned, some people can rest even knowing what happened to their loved ones. Of course, most of the people would like to see, if it's possible, those who did that [perpetrated the war crimes], punished. So we should attempt to see as much of this justice as possible done. Even today we can see 50 years after the Holocaust some justice done for the sake of those who suffered.

**[SG] That's right.**

[IM] We don't see that it is necessarily done today or tomorrow. But we need to recognise that justice has to be done, and open the process. We have a very bad example here with Karadžić and Mladić and it shouldn't have happened. They should have had it done in some other way, because it is a shame, it's very shameful to have those, not only indicted, but even proven guilty of war crimes, free. That gives you a very false sense of values, worldly accepted values. Some people will see that criminal activities have value. Even some important things. They should be at least brought to the trials so that the trials will [either] convict them or free them. But at least you will know that they're not guilty. But anyway, and that's the second thing. Justice. People need to see justice done, or at least at first to have justice done.

**[SG] And you mean not only at the Hague, with obvious war criminals, but also at the local level?**

[IM] Of course. I mean, we in Bosnia have so many examples of... it doesn't have to have anything to do with particular crimes in the past in this aggression. It has to do with crimes against human rights even today. That's injustice. So that justice should also be done because bad injustice here, and in some cases, in some areas of the country in progress are easily linked to the criminal acts of those in the Hague. It's not independent injustice. You just need to connect that or affiliate that, so you need those injustices to be dealt with and the same sense or a same part of that justice there should be done on the way to reconciliation. For instance, 50 years from now, when somebody violates human rights, they will have nothing to do with what happened in 1992-95, because that will be another time. But everything that is happening today in the Republika Srpska is directly linked, all violations of human rights are directly linked to what happened in the war from 1992 to 1995. For instance, if you're not allowed to rebuild a mosque, which was destroyed in 1993, that is part of the same scheme. You cannot make a distinction between these two. And I relate this as independent event. No, it has the same connection. So it has to be dealt with, all citizens. Even the people will believe they are victimised in this after war process, but don't believe those who really are war criminals, are war criminals. Even for them it is very good to see that they are not criminals, but that the particular persons are war criminals. Not the entire nation or entire religion. Just these individuals. Because these individuals played a very scary game. And they played these people. Of course, they allowed them[selves] to be played. But anyway, they are playing them into their game, but these people would protect them from being tried because they tell these people that they will not be tried as individuals, but the whole people will be tried with them if they go to trial, it will be a trial for the whole nation. It's like a mutual protection programme; you protect me, I will protect you. But if they would be brought to justice, and if they would be punished for it, for their deeds, these people will see the difference between these individuals, and they would see that they are not the same and that they shouldn't suffer for their sins.

And of course, those people who lost loved ones and properties, etc., will be satisfied in a worldly sense, of course. Nothing can bring back their loved ones. People are people and they need to see justice. I think that is common for all of the world. And then, after that, when we have justice, not all justice done, but when we have a very clear process, which nobody is trying to dismantle, or stop, or prevent from happening, is going on, then it means that justice will prevail. It doesn't matter how long it will take. *Then* you can talk about peace, peace that has the platform for reconciliation. Because you cannot reconcile through guns or rockets. Jews and Palestinians, they cannot reconcile. They shoot each other. In that environment there is no reconciliation. So it has to start and this way when we have the truth and when we have some justice and an open process for justice, we can have peace. And as a crown of that, we can have reconciliation among peoples. It's hard to expect, for instance, those people from Srebrenica to reconcile with their neighbours, with Serbs, until it is clear who was responsible for 7000 deaths and until those responsible are punished. Nobody can expect them to reconcile. The first issue is the truth, and the second is justice, and then they can reconcile.

**[SG] Let me ask you, understanding that truth and justice are part of a process leading to peace, what does peace look like that you're referring to here? In one of the questions I ask, I make a distinction between what policymakers may mean by peace, which is simply removing the guns and bringing some quiet to the arena, compared to a peace which is a Shalom or Salam, which is a religious definition. What does this kind of peace look like for you?**

[IM] What I understand when I use the term peace, it's a state when different people don't see others as enemies and don't feel insecure or are among others and don't feel the need to protect themselves individually or in groups from others, which, at the same time, means some other parallel things. One is that people know the truth, not only what I was talking about earlier, but also the truth about each other. If I know the truth about Catholics or Orthodox, the truth that makes them not an enemy to me, I wouldn't regard them as enemies. According to what they did, I regard them as at least enemies in the past because they were bad. We were talking about why that happened. But we have to revise that process to make, to replace those ideas in people's minds. Those are false ideas. People are not basically enemies, especially now, on the grounds of religion, even nationality or race.

If you go to the atomic analysis of any of these constituency religions and nationalities, you will not find anything, which actually pushes you against somebody else. Nothing. But what pushes you against something else? Because you want something that they have and I don't. It has nothing to do with religion or nationality. You have a good coat, I don't. I'm going to steal yours. That's very simplified, but that is what will make them do that thing, not religion. People do this for self-interests and that leads to conflicts, and they used everything they could to back up their actions. But peace, as I said, means reviving the truths about others, building the state and system which protects everyone, which lives without any need to feel insecure and to feel the need to protect myself. The state that protects me. If I do wrong, the state will punish me. But if I do right, I am protected from all those who would do evil or at anytime would try to do evil. The state will do that. That's something that also should be considered. The point is that this is the state of peace along with the other things I have said, not the silence of the guns or sweet words of politicians. When I feel insecure, for instance, when I drive to Banja Luka, or when I drive to Bihać through Mrkonjić Grad, or when I drive to the coast through Čapljina, if I don't look around or if I don't drive as fast as I can, or if I hesitate to stop, that's not peace. But if I'm free to go to any part of the country and feel free and secured everywhere among anybody, regardless of the fact that if I know who the people around me are or don't, or just feel insecure, and feel that there is somebody thinking about my security, which is the state or institutions of the state, that's the kind of peace that I refer to. I believe that you can have that kind of peace and to have, in a bigger extent, fulfilled these steps. To emphasise and establish the truth, not always about what happened, but about each other, who we really are, do we really want to eat each other for breakfast, and then do some justice. Because you cannot move on. So many bad things happened, so many people were killed. 200,000 people were killed, and so many sacred monuments were demolished, so many bombs. You cannot really say what's done is done, let's move on, nobody has guilty. No. Somebody did that! Especially if you know some of these people. I may not know

any of the war criminals, but people know their neighbours who did these things and they have to go back to their neighbourhoods again and live with them! It's impossible. You cannot really ask them to do that. So justice has to be done. There and then you have peace as a very good environment when you can ask people not only to tolerate each other and their presence, but also to greet each other, to have coffee with each other. Slowly, to go back to those times when people were celebrating each other's whole life, holidays, religious holidays, together. Catholics and Orthodox would come to the Muslim houses. They would have, of course, Christmas and other holidays, but especially the Orthodox, and they have a lot of Saints. And Muslims would go with some gifts, mostly food or something, to their neighbour, to be with them to celebrate with them. And there was something that was going on. There is a story about one of the Jews, who likes to tell this story. He's an old gentleman, I don't know if you've talked with him. He said that when he was a kid, that's probably 60 or even 70 years ago, when he was coming back from the religious instruction and a rabbi, mufti and the Orthodox priest or bishop were sitting together, as was a regular occurrence. It would have been somewhere outside and they would have been talking. And the man passed by them, saw the rabbi and is obliged to greet him. He also intended to greet the others. The old man related that when he greeted the rabbi, the rabbi knocked him on the head and said, "You donkey (a term older people used for kids)! Don't greet me first! Go to the mufti and start with him." You know, that is the attitude that people used to have here.

**[SG] To show respect to the other.**

[IM] Exactly. And they were meeting each other, and they had high respect of each other. That's something which, I don't now, isn't lost forever, but it is damaged.

**[SG] It is damaged very severely. Perhaps even as you talk of justice as a long process, it may also be a long process even as we see restitution still being made for the Second World War, perhaps it will be a full generation or longer before we see some of these situations healed, when the memory is no longer so fresh.**

**Well, you have given me a great deal of time. You have been extremely honest with me and forthright, and I appreciate that. You have also given me a lot to think about. And that is what I had hoped....**

[Incidental conversation]

[end of interview]

Interview with

Drina Nikolinović

2 October 2002

Sarajevo

**[SG] First, can you tell me your name and where we are? And I think that would help us get started?**

[DN] OK. My name is Drina Nikolinović. We are now in my husband's working place, Evangelical church.

**[SG] And the microphone's quite good so you can relax. It'll pick you up from back there.**

[DN] And maybe,... I will just give you some details about me. Actually I'm coming from Muslim background. When I say Muslim background it really means much more nationality than let's say Islamic background because my parents were atheists as far as I know, although they are both with Muslim names and Muslim nationality - actually nationality is not Muslim, it's Bośniak. My father got some education in Islam when he was a child but they never practice any religious things or something. So I was really, I don't know, we say that I had surgery to remove religion out of my brain. And they were communists and from mother's side, her whole family was involved in Second World War as partisans and as communists and actually they were ones of the carriers of communist ideas, you know, moralists and things like that. So I was really brought up in that environment. The other thing is that I was born here in Sarajevo and living all my life in the city. So I really... if there are some questions asking me to say something about some rural parts of Bosnia I'm not very well informed. And I was just looking at this first question and... yeah, first to say that during the war I was not married, I was studying and I finished my studies after the war. I finished mechanical university so my profession is mechanical engineer. So I was living with my parents and my parents are living in the house where four of brothers live, that house was built by four brothers so there is a house of four flats. And these four brothers were my father and his three brothers. So actually, by case or by their choice, we were living like a larger family. Although we all had our apartments our life was very corporate. For example, we never locked a door. We were quite close. I know that's not the case with, for example, Americans to be so close with their family or something. During the war I lost the youngest uncle. That's the youngest brother of my father. My father was the oldest one in family. And...

**[SG] And how old was he when he was killed?**

[DN] He was around fifty, let's say. He was around fifty or maybe forty-nine or something like that. Middle age. But the point is that, although as I said we are Muslims, my family, he was killed by a Muslim in the war. He was killed actually by a neighbour. And... so that's our first loss in our family and although we had this war and we were attacked by Serbs and after we were in war with Croats, I lost uncle because of Muslim actually. And because of neighbour also. So it was like this, this guy was on duty in the

army or in military police, I'm not sure, and my uncle was driving a car for Ministry of health in that period. Actually, to be honest I think all of them were trying to, avoid army in some way, although my uncle already played a role in the army in one of the biggest battles for the city. So he was coming back home and it was dark and this guy stopped him. This guy was on duty in a patrol or something and he, you know, just opened the door of the car and it was not allowed to drive with lights on, because it was dark and it was near the first line and as he opened the door, the small door light automatically turned on and the guy said like, "Turn off the light." My uncle started to walk out of the door and this guy just shoot him in the heart. So it means that this guy had intention to kill him. Not to wound him or something because he could shoot his legs or something like that. Honestly I never wanted to know who that guy was. I mean I never wanted... I was not a believer during that period but still I never wanted to know what's his face, what are his daughters or sons or something like that because I really didn't want to hate and it's easier when you don't even know the faces. That guy was never convicted because there is another neighbour in our neighbourhood who was a doctor for alcoholics and things like that. So she gave him some paper that he was not completely ok with his mind when he did that. But I don't think it was like that. But anyway, in my family it was quite a shock. Because that was the youngest child, the youngest son of my grandma and he was the youngest brother of my father and as far as my father is concerned he was quite, I would say, reasonable man. It was hard for him, for his heart, that loss and everything but he lost his brother and that was it. But the other brother, the other uncle of mine, I think he's still living with such a great unforgiveness because of that. And he totally changed.

**[SG] How did he change?**

[DN] I don't know, he talks less than he talked before, for example. And he's very closed. Anyway, but that was before I was believer. So that's interesting, you know, because I never lost anyone in a way that a Serb killed him.

**[SG] Well, you say you weren't a believer then. Did the war make you more interested in your faith and if so, how?**

[DN] I wouldn't say that war was that initial, little flame that would really make me search God... I wasn't a believer, I was always fed with that philosophy, you know, that there is no God and my mom who had a great influence on me in that way, she was of opinion (and she still is) that everyone who believes in God is little bit crazy, you know, is not complete with his mind. So was I, but, on the other hand, I could not call myself atheist in this teen-age period when I started to think about everything, about world around me. I wasn't believing in some God but still I wasn't sure that there is no God. Because I remember when I was supposed to do this exam that is going to, decide whether I'm going to be received to study on my university or not. Because when I was applying to university... I was very good student in secondary school and I was applying to very popular university during that period, and it was not very easy, to get through selection and I did what I, needed to do, I prepared myself for the exam. But still I prayed. I remember I prayed to God. But who was God, I had no idea. Actually, about Jesus I had no idea at all. Now it's a little bit hard to remember what I thought about Jesus during that period. But still I know that I had no idea. I just knew that he... that some... there is some cross and there is a man on that cross but why is he there, what... Maybe if you asked me in that period who Jesus was, maybe I would even tell you he was the Son of God. But it was just a phrase, I had no idea what it meant. I mean, actually, I could not know because

no sources, no literature was ever available in a way that would be interesting. And I was never interested to read Qur'an or Bible or something like that. I was rather interested to read some books or something. And, so I just... I can't say that war had any significant influence on flow of thoughts about God in my life.

**[SG] What prompted your interest in God or Christ? What were the events...?**

[DN] It was a friend who found the Lord and then he started to testify and I saw his life and everything. And, you know, it was witnessing one on one. And then eventually by force he put a New Testament in my pocket because I didn't want to take it at all. And then I started to read, it was really Holy Spirit who slowly worked in my heart, and clarified the truth about Jesus Christ.

**[SG] It was during the war?**

[DN] Yeah, in... no, that was after the war. The very end of the war and after the war. The very end of the war was when Saša [NB: now her husband, and pastor of the Evangelical Church, Sarajevo] get back to the church, because he was converted before the war but I never knew. We were friends during the war and doing all kind of stuff that would never make me think that he was believer. So when he got back to church it was quite a shock for me because I've never heard out of his mouth church, God, Christ – anything like that. And now it was just a shock, he said, "I was baptized and I believe" I said, "You are fool. What are you doing?" But step by step, he was witnessing to me and then he gave me that New Testament. I started to read and it was really Holy Spirit. And I had no idea how I came to the moment to believe really. It was just Holy Spirit. That was after the war.

**[SG] Do you think your faith has helped you to understand yourself better?**

[DN] Yes.

**[SG] In what way?**

[DN] Because, you know, as I said before, I was born here in Sarajevo. And I live here in Sarajevo. And I don't know how is it with other places in Bosnia. But here in Sarajevo, in there is kind of jet-set, and, I don't mean, those ambassadors or things like that, but just among people who are hanging around in the city. So I was young (I'm still young,) while I was going out and, hanging out with friends that were cool, in some way you always knew which kind of people are going where and which kind of people are doing what. So in order to belong to some group you had to act in a certain way. So honestly, now, when I look at my life I was never myself because I knew... I thought, "I'm not stupid. I'll learn how to act in certain way in order to be accepted among people." And I just... I knew... and I was very good, I was accepted... I did it good. But it was not me actually. And now when I know Lord and when I know that I just cannot fool him because he knows who I am, I honestly I don't have any need to ...

**[SG] Be somebody else?**

[DN] ... act in certain, different way, yeah, to be someone else, or to prove something.

**[SG] And you don't miss that lifestyle?**

[DN] No, honestly, I found rest in just being myself. And not putting emphasis on what people expect you to be, moved pressure of my life. I know Almighty accepts me, and that gives rest to my soul. That helped me also to know myself better because it's definitely the other kind of light – light that God shines onto you when he shows things the way they really are.

**[SG] Do you think there is a difference between religion and faith?**

[DN] Definitely.

**[SG] Well, what would that difference be? How would you describe it?**

[DN] In my opinion religion – I don't have any good opinion about religion, you know. And I would never consider myself religious. Religion, in my opinion religion is set of rules. This is how I experience that way – religion. It's just set of rules. And it doesn't have to do a lot with real faith, with what you really believe. And why I think like that? This is, for example, this is example. Very often when I start to talk about my faith with my parents, for example, they are secular and they are well educated, with university degrees, they always try to persuade me how we are not good testimony of our faith. Because, for example, you heard about Marko Orsolić, you know who is that?

**[SG] Yes, I know Marko.**

[DN] For example they will always give example of Marko Orsolić. Like he is such a good man, like he is so tolerant. When I see Marko Orsolić I don't, honestly, I don't trust him that he believes what his Holy Scripture says. Because if he believed, you know, that Jesus is the only way to the Lord he could not act in this way, for example, you know, to say, "Muslims, yeah, your way is also good," because it's not in my opinion, Bible says there is only one way. So this is, in my opinion, that's bad testimony of faith because he is not living what he says he believes. He believes Bible is a Word of God and Bible says Jesus is the only way and he doesn't act like Jesus is the only way, then, how can I trust that he really believes what he says?. But it's very hard to explain for my parents. So that's religion.

**[SG] I have an interview with Marko tomorrow.**

[DN] Oh, don't tell him.(joke)

**[SG] So what then is faith for you by contrast to religion?**

[DN] In my opinion it's relationship to the Lord.

**[SG] Relationship to the Lord?**

[DN] Yes. And it's knowing God. It's something that I'm growing in during this period. But very often when I speak about my God it's... I know him. I mean I know him as I know my friend or something. And still God can surprise me, you know, but it's relationship. It's not like... it's also in very simple way, it's also being interested. Because I'm very interested to read Bible and you have religious people in Islam or in Catholic

church or Orthodox church – they are absolutely not interested to read a letter from the Bible or from Qur'an. But they consider themselves believers, diligent, you know, there is not a single try to know something more from "God's Word", whatever they consider god's word to be. That is a phenomenon, in my opinion. You can talk to people about religion, about tradition about customs whatever. When it comes to God, it is finished, they won't talk about it. They can not talk about something they know almost nothing about. Talk about religion and tradition, culture, customs, that is ok, they are on domestic terrain. But mention God and you are finished. If God could only open their eyes to see that everything is about Him! But to define it, faith is relationship in my opinion. Or giving a definition from Hebrews. No. In this context faith-religion, it's relationship.

**[SG] OK. Then I'll, since you do make a distinction, I'll probably use the word faith in the conversation here. Does your faith help you overcome anxieties of the future?**

[DN] Yes. But still sometimes although I know God says that we are not supposed to be afraid of future or something. But sometimes, I feel just weak in this area. But still, of course, I believe for myself. But as I think, for example, on some global future sometimes I'm concerned. I mean, I know it's in God's hand and everything. But for example when we speak about reconciliation, this is really on my heart, and sometimes I just don't know what to say but I feel such a big burden. Because, you know, you are just looking around and see nothing is actually happening in order to improve situation. And sometimes I think "Oh, this is good. This is going to be a little step forward." Then you come and say, "Oh, it's very interesting that Orthodox are not interested" and then it's just... pooh... put you down again, you know. I mean, my faith is helping me and my family, but... and... yes, it is helping because if I have that burden on my heart I'm going to pray. And what I have also on my heart is to motivate other people to pray. But without this really, without this intercession it doesn't look good, in my opinion. That's why I feel big burden and I'm speaking in this way. maybe some other people who have some burdens for some other things would not be so interested, but I think we have to make some breakthrough.

**[SG] Well, your interests go beyond family. I mean, you're a mother of two small children...**

[DN] This is really in context of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That's what is really on my heart. And that's what we are trying to do and maybe we are not very good in it now. But we are really looking to improve our prayer network and this is something also what we are aiming to do. And you are informed that we really try to motivate people to pray and it's always, for example, it's always reconciliation, it's always forgiveness, these topics that are to be prayed for. Because we still don't see some big improvement. But until we see it we are going to pray. Really. We are not going to give up.

**[SG] So you see prayer as a way that faith can contribute to overcoming hatreds and ...**

[DN] Definitely yes, but it's not just prayer...

**[SG] And what's that dynamic, what's going on there in terms of your faith and praying and reconciliation that God leads you to people who want to talk about reconciliation or can you give me an example of how this interaction works?**

[DN] Well, it's really hard to speak to people who are not believers about reconciliation and about forgiveness. I found it hard. I found it hard to say people, you know, "You've got to forgive." Why? Because God forgave us. They don't really believe that God forgave us. So it's not a good reason for them, for example. But what we're really trying to do is to prepare things in prayer. And then to make another step is reconciliation among like representatives of certain nations among believers, to have this statement of forgiveness, to have this statements of willingness to reconcile and things like that. Because I really believe in spiritual sense that it's important. Because, when I look around me there is not much willingness for true reconciliation, and I think about verses in Ezekiel, when God pours His heart telling that he seeks for someone who will stand. And there is a place where we, believers, can say "we will stand, if none wants we will stand!", because I do not want God to say further like in Ezekiel, "but there was none". And then, you know, to go a step forward. But we are... I don't know, it just seems that we are still not came to that point, you know. Maybe I can say these are just beginnings.

[SG] **Right.**

[DN] I'm not sure. I don't know. I believe that God called me really to pray and to motivate people to pray and to improve prayer in this direction. But still I don't have all clear steps. But I believe God will lead us, really I believe.

[SG] **Let me ask you a couple of questions specifically about women and their role in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Would you agree with the statement that women of all nationalities were especially victimized by the war? In other words, often we say, you know, the Muslims are most victimized or somebody else is most victimized. But in some ways it didn't really matter if you're a Muslim or Serbian or Croat.**

[DN] Yeah, I agree. I cannot say anything more... I do...raping and, you know, widows and women that lost their children or even husbands and children and I have compassion really. And I believe that they are in very special way victims of this war.

[SG] **It's in fact maybe a part of what brings them all together in some common way is that they were all victimized with the men.**

[DN] I don't know how will... I don't know presently how is it bringing them all together, you know, because still there is a lot of hatred among women, also. I can see it. I can see my neighbours, for example, who would say, like 'I would kill the child in a cradle of Serbian nation', for example. And she is a wife and a mother and, I mean, speaking secularly now when I am a mother I would never kill anyone's child. No way. Even though if I were not believer but still you have those women. And I know that they are not just you know, just single one but there are many who think that way. and maybe they would not actually kill a child, but sometimes it is enough just to hear her saying, and those words will feed hatred in the hearts of people.

[SG] **Do you think that women play a special role in reconciling different ethnic groups or maybe they don't? Any way you think that women can do this in ways that men are not or will not or cannot?**

[DN] They definitely could if they wanted to. The right question is: do they want to? in my opinion. Because... I don't know... you have, for example, now all those gatherings of women, for example, Mothers and Wives of Srebrenica or, for example, Serbian Sisters or something like that. You just can't see that all these gatherings are again very limited by the nation. And, OK, they are sharing their pain but they just decided to share it within their nation, you know. For example, if we want to share our pain no matter of nationality - I don't remember that I saw it anywhere, for example, on news or something like that. So, I don't know, but for example when I hear of, for example, Serbian Sisters or such kind of gatherings, just makes me sick. Because I don't think that that's a step toward, you know, bringing some peaceful ideas, actually. Women could, really, if just they wanted to. Because... especially for the future, you know, because they are the one who influence their children most. And they are ones who are bringing up the next generation. But I'm afraid in situation that we have now this generation brought in this time are going to get a lot of poisonous idea out of their mothers. I'm sad to say this but it is true.

**[SG] That's interesting you say that because that is one of the questions above, maybe we can jump to that question since we're there which is about children. You said children will see war again as result of what their mothers are teaching them or in part because of what their mothers teach?**

[DN] Could be. Could be.

**[SG] Who knows, right?**

[DN] Yeah, who knows. Who knows how far we will go. And we are going to pray that it never happens again. But now I'm speaking about present situation and about set of minds in people that are right now present here in this country. And as I see it now children are taught to have another war for fifty years. Not literally in that words but still you have schools, for example, where are just Croats and Muslims are not supposed to attend that school or something like that. Children are not allowed to mix, for example, in many places. That's a crime in my opinion, you know. And that is... it's so normal that it is going to result in another war. It's normal, it's to expect in my opinion. You cannot expect anything else.

**[SG] And you're speaking of the Sarajevo situation as well?**

[DN] OK, Sarajevo is a little bit optimistic but still... Sarajevo is better, yeah, it is. But still, you know, you still have people who went out of Sarajevo so Sarajevo is also not the same as it was before the war. And the structure changed and my neighbour that I spoke about she is from Sarajevo, for example, you know. And she declares herself as a Muslim and she is, she is practicing Islam from the time I knew her - so it means during the communism also. That's also, in my opinion, that's also a testimony of her faith and her religion, you know, because she is strong Muslim, she is fasting every month of Ramadan, she is doing all those sacrificial, you know, slaughtering and everything, you know, and then when it comes to that point she said, 'I would kill a baby in the cradle of Serbs.'

**[SG] Did she have a personal loss herself? She lost a husband or son?**

[DN] No, she has three daughters which are very alive and she has husband who's very alive and everything. Maybe she had some loss on some cousins or something but nothing very significant actually.

**[SG] Do you think that women are more religious than men?**

[DN] Yeah. And I don't know why.

**[SG] Well, I mean, did you observe that in the mosque or in the churches or anything like that? Or in your own church. Are there more women in attendance?**

[DN] Yes, there are. In our church there are more women than men. I think. I don't know why. Maybe they are by nature more likely to commit themselves to something. I don't know. I really cannot find any reason for that. But I know that also in our church I think, yeah, I think there are more women than men.

**[SG] Well, I might suggest the connection if we do think that faith has a role to play in reconciliation and that if women are more religious than .... that there is a special role or greater role that women of faith can play in reconciliation.**

[DN] I wouldn't compare it. I wouldn't say greater but great definitely. I wouldn't say greater because I would not enter those area... greater or more or less or something like that because I actually don't know and in my opinion the rule of church of Christ is rule of whole body and I would not discern men or women... you know, it's just...

**[SG] What about in Bosnian society, I mean, the role of women here, how would you describe it?**

[DN] In Bosnian society in my opinion role of women is very insignificant because look at politics, I don't know, there are no many women in my opinion. What do you think? I don't know because actually till this year I thought and I was raised in that thinking - as a woman I'm completely equal to every man. That there is no difference or no hindrances for me because I'm a woman or something. And now, in this year we had some guests from UK at our house, some very dear friends, and speaking about women and role women in the church and things like that and situation in our church and everything, they said 'As we can see...' and this is not the first time that they are here and this is not that they are not very well connected to Bosnia, you know, they are very interested to pray and all information that they can get so they know things about Bosnia, said, actually, not she said, both of them said that women are in very bad position here in Bosnia. I haven't thought in that way, so that was really surprising for me. 'Cause I was always raised to feel like I'm equal, there were no limits, for example, to have a driving license, to have university finished, to speak foreign languages, to educate myself in any way possible. I was a single child and all money and all efforts of my parents were toward me, myself so I was centre of their life. So I never thought that I am limited in some way just because I'm woman. But no, for example, I got married and get kids now I can see, you know, how hard is it for women actually. It makes a difference now.

**[SG] The expectation is that the women will take care of the children.**

[DN] Yes.

[SG] Now I have been told that as many as of the local NGOs...

[DN] What's NGOs?

[SG] Non-government organizations...as many as 90% of the workers are women.

[DN] Oh, really.

[SG] Nine out of ten.

[DN] Really? Great.

[SG] Well, and yet when you look at parliament there's been suggestion that 50% on parliament should be women which didn't get anywhere at all. And then another suggestion that 30% should be women and still not anywhere close to that. So there's a great disparity between official roles that women play in society and unofficial roles. And unofficially they are ones who were doing a lot of helping roles. And as it might suggest that, I don't know, I mean I can only speculate, might suggest that men are unwilling to play these roles, that men would be seen as not very masculine if they played these roles. Or it doesn't pay enough to feed their families if they did these roles. But that women feel compelled to do it because somebody has to do it, children need to be fed and clothed, homes need to be repaired and so... and especially in the absence of men in some cases who have fallen in the war that are taking on some of these roles. Unofficially they are quite engaged in some of these things. Which is actually question, Do you sense that women... I've already told you what I think, do you think... have you noticed that women are taking on, number 13, that women are taking on additional roles in society in the absence of men for perhaps in Sarajevo, I know there are quite a few organizations here that women lead teaching them more western roles for women. Have you noticed that at all?

[DN] Yes. Start with family, you know, in family where a husband is dead, women is taking the both roles of father and the mother.

[SG] Yes. Precisely.

[DN] And then just projecting that into the all society, as the family is basic cell of society I think that it's just that situation, you know. And for example when you said, I don't now, they suggested 50% women in parliament or something like that, I don't think that's good idea. I think that good intelligent, educated and clever people are supposed to be in parliament. Are they women or men in my opinion... it doesn't make any difference. Because whenever, you know, this is what led to war actually. OK, you are going to be on this position because you are Muslim and we need one Muslim to be on that position in following mandate. It doesn't really matter if you are incapable, just as long as you are Muslim because this year we need Muslim on this place. And next year we are going to need Croat so we will take any of Croats, it doesn't matter if you are able to accomplish the task of that position or not, but you are Croat and you need... we need you here. So if you have this, you know, standard like 50% women in parliament you can take 50% of incapable women and bring them in parliament so what would you have?

**[SG] Just say your numbers are...**

[DN] In my opinion it's nonsense. You need to have capable people on positions and, I don't know, equipped people to do the task of the place where you... of the place where they are put. And are they women or men it doesn't really matter in my opinion. In my opinion I just said. Because I know that was a pattern in former Yugoslavia, for example, with nationalities, you know, and I think...

**[SG] So this pattern is the same today even...**

[DN] Yeah, you know, and they are doing it again here in Bosnia because they are so, you know, blinded by that nationality so they have to do it now because all people are blinded, and their first thought is, What's his nationality? or What's her nationality? Wherever they see people it's first thought and it's not thought, 'Is this person capable to do the task that she is appointed to or he is appointed to?'.... and they are just taking that pattern again, you know, and it's not going to be good because it can't be good at all. It's nonsense. You can have a church, let's say in church conditions, you can have a church with 50 members and, I don't know, with 15 men who are not strong believers and then 20 women who are strong and like pillars and then just because pastor is supposed to be a man he'll take some man, who is not capable at all, nor anointed for the task, but it's not wise. You need to have capable person on those positions... and then especially when we speak about some places of responsibility. If we follow that pattern we are going to come nowhere and we are following it now in this country again. I see it.

**[SG] I can see you and my wife would really get along.**

[DN] I think... I don't know, it's common sense in my opinion.

**[SG] So let me just go back because one thing provokes my thinking here is because people have said, 'It used to be that nobody cared and nobody asked what nationality people were. They just got along together.' And now they always ask the question.**

[DN] Yes.

**[SG] Now they always look at the last name to see if they can determine the nationality. In fact, what you're saying is that in official positions of government, for instance, there was a way of balancing the power structures depending upon nationality. But in terms of friendships you didn't hang out with other people just because they were Muslim. You hung out with various people.**

[DN] I don't, but some do care. Yeah.

**[SG] Today they are more segregated.**

[DN] Today... I will tell you. My cousin would never marry a girl who is not a Muslim. I mean, maybe it could come to pass that he falls in love with some Serb and who knows what would happen, you know. But there would be great problems. But a lot of people are taking care, for example, about their spouses, future spouses. That's definitely like that. And I know when I was going out with a guy, I was not still believer, and during whole

war I had a boy friend and he was a Serb, actually he was from Serb-Croat mixture, you know. And people suggested me, you know, 'You should think twice about dating him', or something... that reason was not good relevant for me. But I'm minority in this country. And also, you know, to make a friendship. There was a saying during the war, "Never turn your back to Serb because he could stab the knife in your back" or something like that, you know, among the Muslims. So I would question if some Muslim who is, you know, with those nationalistic thought, I would question if you would have some really good and reliable friend who is not a Muslim now. Really. I really think so. I don't know, maybe some people are going to say different but I really think so now.

**[SG] So what's the difference for you? I mean you are Muslim background.**

[DN] I am from Muslim background but particularly my parents do not have any prejudices and I was not raised in that environment.

**[SG] ... and married somebody who is not Muslim?**

[DN] No, but the fact I married a priest was hard for them.

**[SG] Yeah, so that's a different tension. Especially for atheist parents to go marry someone who's quite religious.**

[DN] That was a failure in their life. I'm their failure.

**[SG] They haven't accepted that quite...**

[DN] No. They were dreaming about different life for me. Their ambitions sunk.

**[SG] Well, does religion or faith actually help us overcome some of these national prejudices built on nationalities?**

[DN] Well, it isn't the question...

**[SG] It's not a question on the paper. Is this one of the things that our faith can do?**

[DN] My faith can, and in our church we have all kinds of people, we have Bošniaks, from Muslim background, from Orthodox background, from mixture background or something, you know, we have all kinds of people, you know.

**[SG] And they are all mixed or are they segregated with Muslim background here in...**

[DN] No, they are all mixed. Honestly, for many people I don't know what is their nationality at all. Because I don't take time to think about it. It's always easier to mark who is Muslim because they have some particular names and you can always know when you hear the name you always know if it's Muslim name or not. But Serb and... Orthodox and Catholic it's very similar and I'll never know. But anyway, speaking about religions, speaking about Islam, Orthodox and Catholicism I think that they are just making those

differences even bigger and that they are just suggesting people not to mix at all just because of their nationality. OK, I would not marry unbeliever.

**[SG] And by that you mean what?**

[DN] By that I mean non-Christian. I don't think I would ever marry Muslim or Croat or Serb, you know.

**[SG] OK, Croat would be Catholic and Serb will be Orthodox. What do you mean by believer? I just want to make...**

[DN] I mean Christian, born-again Christian. So, but you know, you have people from Muslim background who consider themselves being Muslim, but they are not religious at all, for example, but would never marry Serb or Croat, Orthodox or Catholic, who are also not religious at all. And church or mosque are always going to support them in that opinion. Our church is also going to support our member not to marry person who is not born-again Christian, OK. But I know what is the root of that suggestion, you know. And this root...

**[SG] What is the root to that suggestion?**

[DN] It's in the Bible 'What does light have with darkness?' or these kind of verses. And it would be very hard for a person to marry unbeliever anyway who is not born-again Christian. But the root of suggesting of those other religions I think it's nationalistic, it's not rooted in the Bible or in Qur'an.

**[SG] In faiths... in the religion...**

[DN] I don't think so... maybe, yeah, there are some verses in Qur'an that are... but you know, if you have person like, for example, like some catholic priest who says, 'I don't actually read the Bible, I don't actually know anything about the Bible' and then he is suggesting, for example, 'Do not marry someone who is not Catholic', you know. Where is his suggestion rooted? It's definitely not in the Bible, because he doesn't even know. It doesn't have anything to do with God. But it's somewhere else. That's what I wanted to say.

**[SG] Would you say, Drina, that the kind of faith that you practice as a Evangelical, born-again Christian gives you a different identity besides, you know, your Muslim background or your nationality?**

[DN] Yes, it is.

**[SG] And that's a more important identity?**

[DN] Yes, that's the only important thing actually in my opinion.

**[SG] How would you describe that new identity?**

[DN] As child of God or, I don't know, as Jesus' disciple.

[SG] **OK. ‘Cause that...**

[DN] And I would never say, and this is something that I really believe God told me. I don't know if you are going to understand it. During the period when we were in former Yugoslavia, you know, nationalities were Serb, Croat, Muslim, I don't know, Macedonian, Slovenian and things like that. So, and there was also nationality Yugoslavian. I was always choosing to declare myself as Yugoslavian because I never wanted to declare myself as some of these. And honestly I would shame myself to declare as something like this. I was always Yugoslavian and it... and when I heard about someone that he's declaring himself Yugoslavian it was giving me a credit about that person. Because I thought he is wider [NB: Broad-minded]. And when Yugoslavia disappeared in this borders, now we had to choose, you know, what to be. So I wanted to be Bosnian and then they said there is no nationality Bosnian. And I would say later what is my opinion about that. So now there was Muslim, Serb and Croat. And then eventually they found out that it's inconvenient to have nationality Muslim because Muslim determines you as a believer, you know, of Islam. So they said, 'Those who are Muslims they will be Bošniaks.' So this is now nationality is Bošniak and not Muslim. So now we have Bošniaks who are Muslims, and you have Croats who are Catholics and you have Serbs who are Orthodox, you know. And I strongly believe that as a prophetic act I'm supposed to declare myself as Bošniak, you know, because it doesn't have to mean that I'm Muslim if I am Bošniak. It just means that I belong to that nationality. And now I'm Christian but I'm Bošniak. And why did I do that? And this is the thing that I found one of biggest evils here. There are people in Bosnia who are Orthodox and who are Catholics, you know. They call themselves Serbs and Croats and actually they have no connection to Serbia and Croatia at all. All of their grandpas and grandmas, all ancestors and all of their family are living in Bosnia for thousands of years and just because they are Orthodox they call themselves Serbs. But they are not related to Serbia in any way actually. And it doesn't make any sense, you know.

[SG] **Well, that's what makes the Bosnian context so difficult to sort out.**

[DN] Yeah, so if I were a President I would forbid people to declare themselves as Serbs, Croats and Bošniaks. They would all be Bosnian. And then you have the freedom to say what is your religion. OK, you may be Orthodox...

[SG] **What about the term Bosanka?**

[DN] Or 'Bosanka', yeah, for women. Bosanka is feminine form of Bosnian

[SG] **Bosanac.**

[DN] Bosanac that's masculine form of Bosnian

[SG] **Is that a better term than Bošniak? Because Bošniak or Bošnjak is now... means really Muslim, doesn't it? We are not getting rid of the Muslim...**

[DN] Yeah, but that's also a stronghold in my opinion. Because Bošniak should be nationality and it means it is a matter of a way you were born and it's not a matter of your choice. Muslim should be a matter of your choice; if you chose to believe in Allah then you are Muslim. But I choose to believe in Jesus and I'm still Bošniak for I was born as a

Bošniak. It doesn't make any difference and that is something that I do know. I declare myself as Bošniak because I am, I was born like Bošniak, I cannot change it and I don't want to change it. But still I have freedom to choose what am I going to believe. And I'm Christian because I've chosen to believe in Jesus.

**[SG] So you would like to see the labels change that reflect the republic, the state, a nation's state identity rather than a religious...**

[DN] Because in my opinion this doesn't make any sense.

**[SG] Yeah, it's difficult.**

[DN] In my opinion it doesn't make any sense that, for example, I don't know, someone call himself Croat just because his family somehow and some times were Catholics. And still now he can even be an atheist or something or, I don't know, and his family is living in Bosnia for ages and his family was never living in Croatia actually and now in the world he could be a Croat? How come?

**[SG] Well I've been wondering now the term Bošniak is not even a new term. It was tried back in late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Habsburgs give this as you're just saying to give them identity separate and distinct from the religion. And I wonder even today the term Bošniak: How do the Muslims of Herzegovina feel about the term Bošniak as it refers really to Bosnia or the Muslims of Sandžak, do they want to be called Bošniak...**

[DN] Yeah, what do they have with Bosnia, for example also? It's just because they are Muslims they are going to call themselves Bošniaks but they have nothing to do with Bosnia. They are living on territory of Serbia. It also in my opinion, doesn't have much sense. All those things do not make much sense to me. And these are the roots of all this evil that happened to us. So I really, to say again, this is what I... referring to my pride I would never choose to call myself Bošniak. I would always, you know, put myself on a higher level, you know, above all this. But this is really prophetically, I'm going to be Bošniak because I want to see many Bošniaks in Kingdom of God. I am going to be Bošniak and Christian. It doesn't have to be that every Bošniak is Muslim.

**[SG] Do you have any fear that you're going to be misunderstood as a Muslim with that term though?**

[DN] No, because every time when they ask you, not every time, but you know, when they ask you in those questionnaires and things like that, it's separate – nationality and religion. So I have opportunity to put my religion. Religion... OK, they call it religion so I am putting it like that.

**[SG] And one choice is Protestantism?**

[DN] Yeah, or Evangelical Christian.

**[SG] OK. Can you cite any example, number 14, how your faith has brought women of different nationalities together. You say that's true within church. Are there other ways that this kind of faith brings, you know, former Muslims, former Catholics, former Orthodox women together.**

[DN] Yeah it doesn't matter if we were atheists or Catholics, for example Enver's wife Stana she was Catholic and then, Enisa, she had some experiences of Muslim, I don't know, those education for children and things like that. And we all come from different backgrounds but we all have actually same experiences about vanity of those things that were put on us before we met Jesus. So it doesn't really matter where you belonged to because actually it all comes to be same – lie, that was lie that we were living in. But actually it's not very revolutionary here in church because in Bosnia we used to live together. And it's not very 'wow' that we are now all together gathered because in my opinion it's normal. It's normal because still you have in this city a lot of people who are interested in living together, and also there are those who will choose specially Muslim or Croat or someone for friend, but still you have a lot of people who are going just be friends with everyone, you know.

[SG] **Well, yes, at the café, in the disco, at...**

[DN] So it's not a big deal actually.

[SG] **That's true especially here in Sarajevo but if we go to the Catholic church we won't see Muslims there. If we go to the mosque we won't see Orthodox.**

[DN] No. This is in my opinion, this is big testimony of our church that we have all people gathered around one God.

[SG] **Yeah, it is because in Bosnia as we said the labels are difficult and the primary label is a religious label of identity. So it's played the role to divide people, the religious role, religious label has divided people. And so to see through this curtain of religiosity, of religion to real faith, is indeed a very big testimony where they can say, you know, there is more to this faith than what you think there is. And, here, come I'll show it to you in my church where all of us gather together because there's a new identity and that new identity is in Christ.**

[DN] For example, when we have... some people who are interested to come as missionaries or some missionaries coming, and they like, you know, train themselves working with Muslims. We found the easiest way to work with Muslims because in my opinion sometimes it's much easier to witness to Muslim than to Catholic or Orthodox. And sometimes missionaries or people from outside think, 'Oh, it's Bosnia, we have to learn how to deal with Muslims, how to witness to Muslims.' But it's just... sometimes it's even easier. For example, in Zenica you have mostly Muslim. In our church you have very big percentage of Muslim people. And just... actually it didn't make any difference.

[SG] **You have two small children. Both of them in diapers.**

[DN] I cannot escape from them.

[SG] **Is it important to you that your children are brought, this is question 17, that your children are brought up and carry on the same faith that you have?**

[DN] Yes.

[SG] **Why?**

[DN] Yes, because it's the matter of life and death. Because if they don't, you know, if they don't know Jesus they are going to hell. So I know how important it is to bring them into relationship to Lord. And I'm nervous about it because I don't know how to do that.

[SG] **Does your faith, your own spiritual life, guide you in teaching children about love, hatred and forgiveness?**

[DN] Well, I'm going to lean on that. But still they are too small to understand everything...

[SG] **At this point they are.**

[DN] At this point... I mean verbally. I still... Fedja who is the older one he still doesn't understand anything but simple yes or no, actually.

[SG] **What about other children in the church who are older and can understand these things? Does the faith guide children in how they should respond to other people different in themselves in terms of love and hatred, forgiveness?**

[DN] I know that we and those brothers and sisters who have older children they are really working on it. So we will see the results. I cannot speak about others. I mean I don't know how do they relate. Children are... that's the most difficult task in my life I ever had. I was dealing with all those equations and things like that on university and during studies but now I'm more nervous than anytime. You know, because you cannot protect children of influences from all other sides. I mean I am the one who is going to raise them but still my parents are going to influence them, street is going to influence them. They will be a mixture of influences and I'm nervous how to deal with those influences, with those influences, with those bad influences. I am going to give the best I can and I really count on Lord because I have no idea how to do it.

[SG] **Yeah. Well, one last question. Actually it's two parts. Do you think that there will come a time again in Bosnia-Herzegovina where people of different faiths can live together without fear?**

[DN] I pray. But that reconciliation is possible only in Jesus, really. I don't see any other way because maybe you can have some temporary reconciliation that cannot be called actually like that. But I don't think... all those gaps that were made, this is not a human task. I mean it's too big to be overcome only by human strength. In my opinion it's too big. Because it's rooted so deep and it's, in my opinion it's impossible. With human strength and with even forgiveness and everything it's not possible.

[SG] **So this is a way your faith gives you superhuman strength in some ways.**

[DN] And superhuman reasons, you know. Because you have also... it's the question of motives also. Because Jesus is only eternal motive. You can have some temporary motives that are going to relate people to one another maybe but when that disappears again what?

**[SG] Well, you sort of answered the very last question which is: Can faith in God help make this possible or will religion separate/divide people? But hear you correctly, you're saying that religion and people will naturally remain divided and distrustful except through faith in Christ.**

[DN] Sorry to say that but it's like that.

**[SG] Why are you sorry to say that?**

[DN] So maybe sorry to hurt someone's feelings because maybe some people think, 'we have strength to overcome this', like for example my mom, she thinks I am good person, I am nice person, it's possible for me because I'm nice, I don't want evil to anyone, you know, but I'm sorry I don't think that it's going to work.

**[SG] Well, what about the fact that Evangelical community here might be a thousand people in over three million people in Bosnia-Herzegovina today. What about all those people who are not Evangelical Christians? Will they...**

[DN] I believe society can be impacted even though they are not all saved. I believe that we as a church can have influence. I mean if I didn't believe that I don't know how would I get any strength to, you know, believe even... I mean for something. Because I really... yeah, I really believe that we have to have some influence on whole society. Because I saw that you as a person, as an individual, as Christian, you can have good impact on some people even though if they don't give their life to Jesus. I saw, for example, it's simple, but I saw that some people in my presence do not curse. That's a good influence. They didn't give their life to Jesus, they are not saved, it's still ahead but still they are acting much better than they did when I was not Christian. So that is influence. So if I can influence someone, then church can influence society in my opinion. I really look forward to see it, you know.

**[SG] Very good. Is there anything else you want to add that I ... you think is important that I should know about?**

[DN] I hope that I gave you something useful.

**[SG] Oh, yes.**

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Mirheta Omerović**

Sarajevo

16 May 2002

(...)

[MO] We were trying to find a way out of Zagreb because my uncle wanted to help, but he couldn't do anything for us because there were so many refugees in the city. There was a long queue for everything and you had to be very patient for the papers. My uncle had everything to get us out, but we couldn't go, so I stayed in Zagreb for five months. I stayed in a mosque, but we lived in the stairwell. They didn't give us anything, just a place to go inside and wait. It was very difficult because I was waiting for my aunt in Holland who was waiting for us with coffee and sweets and food, and I dreamed of the possibility to go there and rest and to continue with my education. So in Zagreb I had to carry on with my papers and communication, to go to certain places in order to get an identity card in order to prove that you who you say you are. And then when I was in the mosque, you can imagine, I prayed, I read some books, and I got some other books because it's a long journey to Germany. We didn't have money to go anywhere to eat or to go out to have fun, I mean, you always have to be in a group because you were so afraid to disperse. At that time I met some French journalists and they recorded my story with videotape. And it was kind of a surprise so I became kind of famous due to that time in 1993, because it was at the end of the month of January. After five months I went to Jordan. At that time I had my will, how you call this, because I heard already that my father died. That he got killed, and not only my father but some of my relatives, and it means in Islam it is when you kill yourself, but it's when you hear that you lose somebody, it means in this situation when you don't have money, you cannot go out, you can't get a visa to go to Holland, you were only by yourself and you become reflective, and you ask yourself, Oh, my God, what am I going to do? What is going to happen with my existence? It's over. Who was going to earn money for me? Again, I'm thinking in materialistic ways. It means there were no ways forward. I lost my father, my money, no life, there's a war, no work. I thought, OK, I'll just get up and let's kill ourselves. It means we will take our hands and walk on the tramway, and lie down and wait until the tram runs over you. And we had been thinking about this, and I was asking myself, what shall I do? But I recalled everything I had done on this journey to survive, walking night and day to get out from Goražde and to reach my mother. And I said, this is not life, but maybe there is hope. And my mother was crying a lot, ever since we were in the camp. And we met someone in that camp who said, 'Look at me, I lost three sons, but I'm not killing myself. I am just caring on with my life.' So when we were in that camp, I met a lot of people, women who had been raped by Serbs and by Croats. I mean enemies, and again, it was very difficult. I mean, there are stories. So, I was very ashamed of my thoughts because I felt my

story was nothing compared to other people's stories. So at that place there was a *mekteb* where we could go inside and learn from the very beginning the Surahs, because if you want to learn how to pray, you have to know some Surahs, and learn how to pray five times a day. You have to wash yourself. So we learned these details and this was for me a spiritual way to carry on with life. So I was among my mother and brothers and there were some strong people there, and those who had a lot of energy and power to carry on with life. And I met a lot of people who came with humanitarian help, and I used my French language abilities, so I could earn some money from the beginning. At the beginning it was food, like in Zagreb. But when I went to Jordan, for me it was like a miracle, I mean to be able to share our stories, and everything was different, the language, the food, the people and how they dressed, how they behaved. I met a lot of people who had their stories and at the beginning I couldn't speak with them at all in Arabic and we had to rely on the translator, and afterward I could speak some Arabic and some English. Those people who went to Jordan were also people who had lost somebody in the war, widowed mothers with children, and those who had been in some of the camps. Some of them stayed for five months and then later on they moved. They went to the Red Cross and started to send messages so that they could join their families in America, Canada, Australia, Germany. But those who stayed and had no place to go, and they just stayed there. The plan was that we just received food and shelter. Later on we applied to carry on with our schooling for the children, for the first grade through the eighth grade. They could provide professors because some of the Bosnians who were living in Jordan could provide something. But I couldn't carry on with my secondary school. So again, I started learning the Arabic language and of course the Qur'an, because to learn Arabic allows me to learn the Qur'an, and the more I learned the Qur'an, you know, the writing and the letters were like Chinese to meet. It was new for me. So at that time I can tell you that I had some beautiful days because there was no war and no danger and I had plenty of food. So I had time to think about how to carry on with my studies, so I concentrated myself on my education. Every school made an agreement to accept two or three or four Bosnian children and the whole programme was the British system. Then means all of the professors were Arabs but they speak like British. When you look at them, they are Arabs, but they speak English. So you can imagine how hungry I was for food, it was the same for books. Oh, we didn't give up on my studies. We had everything, maths, sciences, history in both the Arabic and English language. But it was very difficult. It wasn't easy for us because first of all I didn't have a Bosnian dictionary, so I was doing English to English, but they had patience with us, you know, step by step from the very beginning until we slowly had achieved the first level and the second level. So I had my G C, we had literature, I remember *Jane Eyre* and *Charles Dickens, Great Expectations*. It was very interesting for me. So, to carry on with my education was very important for me, and also I cared very much about religion. I read a lot of Islamic books in English, and I attended lectures. There were lectures about the *hadith*, or about the prophet, or about his life, about the history of Islam, you know, when you read the Qur'an, there is a proper way, without making mistakes. For example, we want to read English on the television or in the radio you have to do it and a proper way so that people can understand you. The same is true when you read the Qur'an in the proper way so that it will be understandable for others. I mean, for

us it's something like theology but it's something else. So, I also didn't mix with men. I was in a women's society. It was very nice because we can talk openly about some topics, you can relax, you can take off your scarf because if I am always sitting there, I cannot take it off because this is the way I accepted to be, so I couldn't wait to get rid of the men so I can be with women and we can talk and laugh and sit. And I've learned how they lived their lives, which is completely different than the Bosnian way. The Bosnians are very close to Europe and, let's say we have still more freedom there. There I didn't do anything wrong or anything unusual. I liked very much the life there. What is difficult is that it is very hot and also learning the language. Even when you learn the language you cannot be part of them, part of that society because you're still a foreigner, so it is something not negative, but positive, but still I wanted to be closer to them, but I was afraid when they couldn't understand why I wanted to understand them so much. Maybe because they had many wars because of the problem in Kuwait and the Palestinian situation, because a lot of Palestinian people came from Palestine and Kuwait, and so this is a difficulty. But they were very nice to us. Then the money we were receiving everyday wasn't enough to cover the cost of the books, especially some of my dictionaries and grammars. So many of these were given to me for free, not only for me, but for other Bosnians. So, year after year, of course I have been in touch with the situation of what was going on in my country. I imagined Bosnia like Hiroshima. Believe me, every day you heard about bombardments, so in my mind, it was like Hiroshima. So I asked myself, will I ever see Bosnia again? And then suddenly in 1995 it was over, and there was peace and they said to us we have to go back. And the directors came and then my uncle explained what the situation was there and they said if you have any extra money, put it away. You can't carry on here, because it was very difficult after the war in Sarajevo. To tell you the truth, I was very afraid to come back to Bosnia. I was afraid because now something else was going on. Because my father died, there is a certain category for families, we call them the family *sheheda*. There are many categories. There are people who died as civilians, and others who are in the morgue. When people come, these people are supposed to receive some kind of help. And now they're saying, "You're lucky, you're very lucky. When you go there everything will be waiting for you; apartment, a job and school, everything will be waiting for you and will be free for you. You're lucky because you lost your family and how many members of your family have you lost?" Now you can imagine how I was feeling. At the beginning of the war people had the fear of death and now after the war the concern is money and materialistic gain, and that we were going to get everything, free education, free books. It is absurd. I said, "How can she say this?" I am going back to Bosnia and I'm going to have to face my feelings that when I went out of Bosnia I knew that my father was alive and how am I going to survive this now, and to see the emptiness, and the reality that I am alone now. That I'm alone without my friends, without the life I had before, and I will be like a stranger in Sarajevo. Because those who stayed in Sarajevo, I know that some who went out of Bosnia, of course they succeeded. Those who went to Germany and Austria, but those who went to Jordan, I mean, they gave us food because it was very cheap, and clothes from day-to-day, but I couldn't put any money away because I could not work and I could not work because I didn't have an education. So I was very afraid. I wanted to stay longer in Jordan just to carry on with my education,

thinking that if I had my diploma of secondary school that when I come back to Sarajevo I could work. But I couldn't stay in Jordan, we had to leave, some representative of the government came and said we had to leave. They said well, the war in Bosnia is over so you have to go back. So we had to pack our things and they said that those who stay, they will stay at their own expense. So it was a big expense, I mean who was going to pay for me? I wouldn't have food anymore, I wouldn't have a flat, nothing. I would just be on the street. So we got on a plane and came to Sarajevo. And when I arrived, my mum was terribly sick and barely conscious. But she wasn't herself. And it was wintertime in Sarajevo. It was cold and there was snow in the hills and I looked at my friends and I said, "My God, where are we going to sleep?"

**[SG] And what year was this? 1996?**

[MO] 1997. It was April, but still the situation was still very fresh. And the people who waited for us, their eyes were very cold and unwelcoming. There were looking at us and saying, "Look at them. They have been outside while we were suffering." I understand that, I was outside, but I didn't have fun, believe me. I was only surviving and when I came back my pockets were empty. They could search me and not find any extra money. But you know, people suffered so much in Sarajevo, so they think that everyone that went outside had gone to Paradise, you know? That everybody was making money. But it wasn't that easy. You had to work hard for the money.

**[SG] Yes, I think those who went out to Austria, Germany or Switzerland fared a lot better.**

[MO] Yes, yes, I know that. The system of the government of Germany could provide them with a lot of things. But still some of them were in camps. I know some who were in Germany who said they did not have a very good experience. It depended on the social security system and the programmes, and when you came with the asylum system.

**[SG] Yes, I know the German system quite well.**

[MO] So every country had their own system and it depended on the system and when you came and how you came, whether by a group or whether someone sent you there. So I was very afraid, [not knowing] what to do. In Jordan we had someone there to take care of us. But here, everything was from zero. Normally, nothing. So I can tell you that I was very afraid. We heard of this war and how difficult it was. First, I said to myself, how am I going to face the reality that I'm not going to see my father? Because somehow I was holding out hope that he was somewhere alive and that he is waiting for us and that all of this was a very long and bad dream. But it wasn't a bad dream; it was reality. So I can tell you we went to a certain place. We didn't have any help like they had indicated. It wasn't like people said, that we are going to be lucky. We didn't receive anything in the way of benefits or help because we were children without parents. So my brother found my mum and us and he took us and put us in his own flat. So it was very difficult, but my spirit was still, as a

Muslim, I had hoped that things would get better, I was optimistic, you know. I carried on with my prayer each morning to each evening. I searched in Sarajevo from door to door to translate my papers to be accepted. Because again, the system here doesn't approve any system, any school that is finished somewhere besides Bosnia. So another problem was that all my years that I spent in education elsewhere, studying night and day, would not be accepted here. But thanks to God, it was accepted. And my education and my brother's education was finely accepted. And then the next question was how we as Muslims were going to communicate and live with those who were trying to kill us or hating us. It was very difficult.

**[SG] Why did you feel a need to do that?**

[MO] Not everybody is the same. I believe some Serbs and Croats who stayed in Sarajevo were helping and they didn't approve and accept what was happening. But I didn't know how to talk to them. I felt hurt. We have to talk with them. You have to deal with them.

**[SG] Why do have to talk with them?**

[MO] Because they're your neighbour. It is not polite to pass people and not say anything. Or for example, is someone needs help, I cannot just leave her like this, I want to help her. I mean, this feeling, this is very difficult to hate, because for Muslims, we are supposed to forgive, because in the Qur'an, its says even though they did harm to you, only God can judge people. You see, he's the one who is forgiving and you have both love and hate, but we are supposed to carry on with love, because what happened was the madness of the war. So when I came to school, my Professor was a Serb. She is very nice. She was my headmaster and she talked to me, and asked my name, and so life was just going on. But my feelings in myself, all I had to say to myself, you know, I have to find somewhere else. I wanted to talk and find out what happened. But I couldn't hate her. I couldn't, and I don't because the command is that she is also a human being like me, and so on. But I don't know, it was very difficult. Very difficult.

**[SG] But there were people who did hate and continue to hate.**

[MO] Well, to tell you the truth, I don't know what to say.

**[SG] How was it for you?**

[MO] I felt hurt and I was very sad. And also I was preoccupied with other things that help me to carry on. For example, if you wanted a doctor, the doctor was Serb. So what was I going to do? I had pain, so I had to talk about what is the priority and why I am sitting there and what I want from her. Also in school, for example. I need my marks, I need my notes. I don't have time to quarrel with her who did this and that.

**[SG] So this is the necessity of life.**

[MO] The necessity of life, yes. For example when you go to the municipality to do you papers, they ask for your identity card. There are all sorts of papers. And you just simply have to function and this communication goes by itself. This is life, this is reality. In Sarajevo we have a lot of mixed marriages and people were working there.

**[SG] So your faith didn't really have too much to do with overcoming these difficulties, it was more just functioning and live?**

[MO] Well, to tell the truth, when I went to the mosque, I cried and I prayed to God to give me the strength to carry on and not to hurt anybody, because if I am hurt, I didn't want to hurt anybody. Because those people who did this I hope that their consciences, that they will realise inside themselves what they did, and I hope that they will understand that it is possible to live and carry on and that they are not the masters of this world. They cannot control the earth or the sky or the sun. It is impossible. But maybe they think that if they can get rid of the Muslims that they can control God and so on. So I went deeper into my thinking, and I said to myself maybe after all these things and actions, you see, you talk to this one and you talk to this one. And I realised I didn't do anything wrong because I didn't hurt her, and so I went deeper and deeper. And I realised it didn't matter what they are. Even if they did bad things. But what use is it if we just keep carrying on carrying the hatred, because maybe that woman in front of me is a Serb, but she is not the one who did this to me, you see? It's difficult, really.

**[SG] What would happen if you knew who killed your father?**

[MO] Well, that is impossible.

**[SG] Yeah, it is. But I'm asking a hypothetical question. What if you knew who it was and you confronted them?**

[MO] I don't know what to tell you. I don't even think about that.

**[SG] Well, don't then. I don't want to put that in front of you if it's not necessary.**

[MO] Only one thing, I can say this. For me, I think it is very important for people to talk between themselves and not to have prejudice. It is very important to carry on and to be positive with people and to read and discover and to be tolerant. Not to believe everything that people say. For example, what I know, they always carry on with the story of the Kosovo battle with the Turks. It means that it is the fault of the Turks who have to pay. I mean, if they want to make a war, what don't they go to Turkey and make war over there because the Turkish soldiers were here a long, long time ago and *they* were killing them, not the Bosnians. So what do the Bosnian Muslims have to do with what happened in the past? This is what I'm asking myself. But again, the reality is that here I am in Sarajevo. I live with these people who carry

on with their life, and we talk again about exams, and about life, and about a apartments, about no work, no money, no food, and they are also facing the same things. And so we're blaming our own government, and this is life.

**[SG] Can I explore your own pilgrimage in faith a little bit more?**

[MO] Like what, for example?

**[SG] Like when you lived in France and even when you lived in Bosnia, you were not particularly religious. I mean, you didn't go to the mosque.**

[MO] No, I didn't go to the mosque, I didn't pray, I was just fasting. And eating sweets [laughter]. I couldn't wait to eat food and to eat these sweets. Well, in that age, I think that even if I did do it, I wouldn't have caught the sense.

**[SG] Yeah.**

[MO] You know, in Islam, there is a degree of understanding. Even though you are twenty or twenty five, you're not like when you're thirty five. When you're older you catch something else. So I think my faith in God and in Islam, everyday there is something that you work on yourself, because in Islam, it is always I, I don't do this. For example, I cannot tell to others, don't do this and do that, if I am doing it. It is wrong. So I'm always working on myself. Yes, working on myself. Everyday. So in that time, help yourself and others to do good things. So day-by-day I found myself, and that I am believing this almost nine years and I'm feeling all right. At the end of my journey I'm searching within myself, what did I do? Did I help? Did I do any good? If I did something wrong, and the wrong might be only something that I thought, or something I didn't do properly, in the proper way, and so on. Because everybody says Islam is very difficult. For me it is very easy. You have to pray five times a day. When you think about praying, you don't have time to think about hating. You don't have time to sit hours and hours and drink coffee and backbiting, or something. It means you're always doing something. Praying may only take you five minutes or ten minutes, but afterwards, it is always reminding you to do something, you see? When I came to Sarajevo I met with one person because she needed this place or that place. I told Enisa [research assistant] how I met this Organisation 'Woman to Woman'. Well, at the University there's always a placard informing of something, so I tried to be really active besides my studies. So I attended several meetings and after the meetings I would take an address or phone number and I would meet people and they would tell me of events. So day-by-day I am discovering in Islam and in my ordinary life.

**[SG] And you started to become religious when you left Bosnia and became more religious once you were in Jordan, is that right?**

[MO] I would say that when I really wanted this so much, and when I was in urgent need for this, it was when I heard that my father died. It was in the summer of 1993.

**[SG] And that was in Zagreb?**

[MO] In Zagreb, yes. At that time I took the Qur'an and I was holding it. It was like taking something like a crystal, or something magical, and you want to have some kind of power, some kind of extra power that is not from this world but from another world. That is like asking for help. It is like grabbing your mother or your father and to say, "Help me, and protect me." I wanted something to rely on, you see? I don't know how I can help you understand this.

**[SG] No, that's fine. I think I have a good idea, but I need to hear it from you so that I don't assume things about you. Can you help me with what you really mean by 'faith'?**

[MO] Look, Islam..., personally, I wanted to be religious because I was afraid of what was going to happen to me. But also, something was pushing me, and I was asking myself what is really Islam? Why do they really hate us so much? Why do they hate us so much so that they want to get rid of us? I mean, I'm sure that in Višegrad they killed everyone. Not only the imams, and at that time there were no Mujahidin, or al Qaeda and I don't know what, no extra soldiers. Everybody was drinking. Everybody was eating pork, I mean, we were mixed like this. It was like one body, one part. But now after that, after the war was over, I have really been thinking and asking myself why is this happening? So there are many questions which are deep. I live today and tomorrow and I will just keep reading and asking questions to go deeper and deeper. I'm asking you, I am asking others. As a Muslim, I practise Islam, I'm not doing anything wrong. I mean, we pray and in our prayers it is not only prayers for myself, we're always praying for peace, for love, because we're human beings and we are all going to die, so why do we have to push something that is going to happen? Anyway we're going to leave this world, so why do we have to cut somebody's life, cut it and destroy somebody's life? So I have been asking myself why did we have to lose houses, why do we have to kill people, babies and women, and men who didn't do anything wrong? Maybe a killer is doing it because somebody has done something wrong to him, but we didn't do anything wrong and yet we're paying something. We are now without a home. My life has completely changed. My plans that my father had for me, they didn't come true. Before the war I studied something else and my father had money for me and I'm now facing a very hard life and nobody's giving me money for a scholarship or something like this, and you have to go along with your life and it is very difficult. I'm finding in faith like [sabir], which means 'patience'. So in religion you can also find tolerance and patience, to be patient, because if you cry and waste and energy, like religion is always telling me to be patient. If I don't have this, I will already be satisfied with what I have. I will go step by step. This is for me religious Islam, and praying and to have faith.

**[SG] That's a very good answer, actually. Can I explore a little bit you're relationships to people of other faith or to people of no faith? Do you have relationships or friendships with people of other faiths?**

[MO] Yes, I have.

**[SG] Are they Catholic, Orthodox, or non-confessional?**

[MO] Most of them here that I know are from mixed marriages, you see. They are very tolerant, they're very nice, very friendly, they talk with me at the University and the libraries, in the France Centre, for example. And we have very good terms. For example, I mentioned about Abraham Institute Centre. I just started going there. We have some training every Saturday and Sunday and also there are some Catholics and Muslims and Bosnians and Bosnians were Muslims who are Bosnian Muslims only by name, but this is also.... We talk and we carry on with life. It is all by accident that I meet these people. For example, you know I studied French and sometimes we have lecturers and some of them come from Paris and they call on me to be a translator. And sometimes people just ask me to translate materials and I can see by their name they are Catholic and then they ask me where did I learn French and they ask questions about me. It just happens. I don't picture the place when we become friends, it just happens they we're together and then when we see each other on the streets, then we wave hello and we laugh and we are happy. Sometimes when you're walking you're thinking to yourself or you are tired and hungry, and then you meet a person you know and you smile. Then they smile back and sometimes we exchange books. I like to read and unfortunately many books, because of the war, are burned, so maybe somebody has a private library. So I like to exchange books. And sometimes they say, "Oh, do you know about the seminar?" I was on one seminar or about crystals and meditation, and I was so happy to meet these people because I am curious and I want to discover more about Indian meditation. It's always step by step. Building reconciliation. I would wish people would be like me because I said to myself, we cannot change the past, but we now have the present and the future, and this we can change. But to change it we have to have a lot of energy, and to be patient and love and to really believe that it is possible to live together, but only if the other side works on himself and I work on myself. It won't help if you only talk and talk and write books, but inside your heart and mind you don't work with this.

**[SG] Ah, so now we're getting to a very important part. So there has got to be more than dialogue. So there's got to be a change of heart, change of attitude, a change of self.**

[MO] Right, a change of yourself. Like, if someone is raised that they all listened to their mother, and I believe only what they said, I'll say to them, wait, try out the same question elsewhere, trying to find the answer in a book, or from other sources. Because everything is changing. For example, look at the computers. In 1995, there was war. But now in 2002 everything is changing, and we have to change because technology is changing. For example, why don't we switch roles, let's switch places. But to our thinking and our understanding. But then think how we feel, let the Catholics feel how we feel as Muslims when everybody hates us, and everybody hates us and wants to get rid of us. And my God, can't they feel even a little understanding, some pity some understanding, some love and compassion, to say I

don't have the courage to say to this person that I hate this person. And I want to help people, so why do they hate me? Especially without reason?

**[SG] What you're suggesting is actually what people are doing, that is, that they are switching roles in order to listen to each other's stories and to put yourself in the other person's position. So I think you're very much on the right track. Let me draw this to a conclusion, but invite you to continue your thoughts, more specifically towards this questionnaire.**

(...)

**[SG] There is a question on here that I hope you're not offended by because it's not tended to offend anyone and I'm asking it of all students. The question is, do you think you could marry someone from another faith? Why, why not? Now, I think I know the answer to that, but I'm getting very different responses.**

[MO] Really? Well I can tell you, because I lived in France, some of them said, "Well, this is life, you know, someone likes me, and so on." And then they ask a question like this, and I said, "Well, in Islam, they have to convert to Islam. That's just a Muslim, that means praying, don't drink alcohol." This is my answer. I don't know what the rest say.

(...)

[MO] And I like connections with other people. I like international connections. I don't want Bosnia to be closed. It is important for us to have people from everywhere, from America, from Italy, from France, it's very important to meet other cultures, the clothes, the music, everything. Because this is changing the narrowness of the people, they are opening. I was in England, in Manchester, and I saw how beautiful it was, the mix of people of black people and of yellow people and everything, it's so beautiful. Also, for me being here is like a mission, I take it seriously. So anyone I meet I want to talk with them, I want to know them and I want them to know me and they don't want us just to forgive each other. It's so important for me to be here and perhaps from the people I meet I will learn something and they will learn something from me. And why are we putting up borders when it is not needed? Because if the borders were really needed, then God would put up the borders. Even in the Qur'an there's a very important verse, "I created diversity, so that people meet." I have milk, you have wood. I have gold you have silver. I feel upset because people are fighting for something that is going to be behind themselves. So let us remember the beautiful things, and the bad things, let's just put it away.

**[SG] Well, you do have a mission, you do have a cause, you have a purpose in life.**

(...)

[MO] I think is also very important in Islam, I couldn't do it all by myself, all of this, what I have become myself. Maybe because I have had a chance always to meet strong people. By chance I was surrounded by people who were very positive, and had positive energy, and in their thoughts, and so on. No matter what religion they are. I also know of other people of another religion, or have no religion, but they have a lot of energy and somehow I who have learned to take them into my reserve. They are not always of my age. Sometimes I am with people who were twice my age, a professor or somebody. And I want to be corrected when I am wrong, and I will say that I am wrong when I am wrong.

(...)

**[SG] Well, your thoughts would be worth writing down in some reflections and perhaps some day you would be published.**

[MO] In shala.

(...)

[MO] I am really afraid to go back to Višegrad, to the Republika Srpska. I am really afraid to go. Because can you imagine now, what it must be like after 10 years, those people who have lived alone without their neighbours, their Muslim neighbours? Not only Muslims, but without Catholics, without someone who is normal? So imagine those children now. How will they respond? How will they react? Only through festivals, only maybe through seminars or maybe through talking like this people will change, perhaps. I don't know. Because it is really difficult when you live in only one society, with only one kind of people and you always hear just the same things.

(...)

[MO] Sometimes we think that we're strong; we're people capable to carry on. But I understand too, that my wounds are fresh. So I really wish not to go back to Višegrad. It is also very difficult in the city because there are people from everywhere and they carry on their mentality and they carry on their traditions. So we don't want to get rid of their thoughts but they want you to change yours. They are also a very dangerous group of people. And it is difficult to tell them that their role.... [pause] Sometimes the situation makes it difficult to say something because I realise what the reaction will be if I say something, but I will also realise their reaction when I don't say something. Sometimes, however, just some simple words will have an effect on people.

**[SG] Very good, thank you. You have given up your time, you have told your story, and in some ways that makes a contribution not only to the dissertation but to the people of Bosnia.**

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Fra Marko Oršolić**

Director, *Zajedno*

Offices of IMIC, Sarajevo

October 2002

[Responding to question number one]

[MO] It is certain that a harmonious life in Bosnia-Herzegovina existed before the war. But that life was not built jointly upon a consciousness about faith in one God but in spite of the religious differences. Now is the time, since theology advanced, because in our post-communist society there is again the presence of religion in public life. That is why I think the chance is big that people become theologically and ethically enriched so that this restoration would be complete. Hierarchies of religious communities should be pushed to be aware of that first, which is achieved through the Inter-religious Council of religious leaders since 1997. But at the same time you have to start working from the bottom, from something that is not hierarchical, which should be done by seminaries, universities, upbringing and things like that. And non-government organizations. The third element is the International Community and society and the country and political parties, which was partly achieved. The Social Democratic Party of Bosnia-Herzegovina designed a new program that actively engages religion and it became aware that religion *per se* can help the restoration of the society in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In one document that was signed by both the OHR and the Ministry Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina there is a promise that has to do with the ethnic restoration of the society. On the occasion of a national holiday our organization organized a so-called Spiritual Call for Monotheistic Religions under the auspices of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina. That means that the highest positions of power in Bosnia-Herzegovina are doing something practically. On November 21 in Bruselles the Council for the Implementation of the Dayton Accord will offer guidelines for the total reconstruction of the educational system in Bosnia-Herzegovina where all the things I was talking about will be discussed. I hope that our citizens according to, and not in spite of, religious differences will be made firm or restored. Those differences in religion will not divide citizens but unite them. World ethics should be developed there.

[SG] **So this is based on Küng's work, for instance?**

[MO] We theologians have to make efforts in this respect as well.

Question two. The role of agnostics in this process is very big. We do not know who a believer is and who is not because the line between the believer and unbeliever goes through people and not between people. That is why agnostics can contribute a lot to the role of religion. They can help religion play a positive role given that they take religion seriously. It doesn't mean that they have to accept religion. They will experience peace that comes through religions in that way. I don't believe they will become believers. Here religion is too much of a tradition and emotion. But it has to be more of a thought, light, spirituality and that's what's missing both here and in Eastern Europe - that dimension of religion. Hierarchies of religious communities are to blame for that, too, and the establishment religion.

**[SG] Let me just ask you..., you are talking about the spiritual and the ethical... Is there some way of a covenantal relationship between people of faith that could cover or embrace agnostics, non-confessional persons through a covenant?**

[MO] There is no covenant, it is practical living and dialogue. Here, agnostics are not organised like atheists in the Soviet Union. They are on the margin of the religious life. They respect religion but they don't practice it. The problem is to make religious communities a subject of that restoration. Our people understand that religion per se can contribute to the restoration. Religions as such as Leonard Swindler said: They have three elements: faith, cult and ethics. They also have organization. And that organization falls on the essence of the definition of faith today. And that is often forgotten.

Question number three. First of all, there is no collective guilt. We analysed this clearly in a workshop organized by the *Academy of Science and Arts* and said that there is no collective guilt. There is no national guilt. There's individual guilt. But there is responsibility that is not only individual but in a way collective. That means there's responsibility of political parties, religious leaders, intellectuals, and the media. All of them are responsible in a way for our condition. I think when we become aware of that and we start supporting The Hague Tribunal we prepare the ground for real reconciliation and forgiveness because these two things go together. Politics has to have this general amnesty as well as punishing war criminals. But the rest of us also have to deal with the process of forgiveness and reconciliation because all justice cannot be done in court. Without forgiveness there cannot be real reconciliation. I think that people in Bosnia-Herzegovina are so good and that they know how to forgive but they can forgive only when the guilty person is clearly pointed out. In this process faith is irreplaceable. Only faith has these categories of forgiveness and reconciliation. Only faith can penetrate a man's heart because eventually God is the one who forgives. With his grace we can forgive. Every other kind of forgiveness will be tactics or fake compromises. I think it's a chance for religion so that it can teach people how to forgive straight from the heart of faith, by the argument of faith, because God forgives us and we have to forgive others.

**[SG] Let me just ask you a question. You used both terms *vjera* [faith] and *religija* [religion]. Can I ask you to make a distinction for me on that since some people, the Moslems, do not make that distinction?**

[MO] There *is* a distinction between faith and religion. First, there's theological distinction. Faith is accepting of what God revealed in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. God revealed himself by the fact that he created the world, he gave us the Holy Scriptures. But he also reveals himself through our conscience. Faith is an individual act of acceptance. Religion is a structure of thinking, a heart of a civilization, a habitual law. Religion without faith is like a body without a soul. This distinction is not made quite often. Monotheistic faith, Jewish, Christian and Islamic, is faith in the real sense of the word. Religion is a natural thing.

**[SG] Number four you've already addressed in terms of forgiveness. And number five is really for the Moslems.**

[MO] What is *djimme*?

**[SG] Sometimes it's spelled with 'dh', *dhimme* ... It's an Arabic word for... it's a social contract that the Moslems had to protect the Peoples of the Book, Christians and Jews.**

[MO] In the pluralistic society *dimma* is not enough. Especially not in the post-communist countries. God created all people in his image not just those who belong to the monotheistic religions. That formulation from Qur'an comes from the historical point of view or context. Here from the understanding of monotheism, faith in one God... people were atheists, they have human rights just as believers do, regardless of their faith or absence of faith. Otherwise we come to the religious fundamentalism as a dangerous ideology.

**[SG] So, the social contract of protection between peoples of different faith is now human rights. Is that another way of saying it?**

[MO] Yes, but *djimma* is not enough, it is anachronistic. Human rights are a necessity.

[Question number six] Women have a big role in building peace. First, to remove male monopolies from the world and historical scene. They make more than a half of mankind and quite often they don't make compromises because they are close to life. Women who are mothers can strongly oppose any kind of militarism much easier than men who start from the positions of power, not life. It is very important for women to be represented in parliaments and processes because it's a criterion of whether a certain society is democratic or not, how it treats women.

**[SG] And then religious hierarchies?**

[MO] That's another issue... if women, like in the Catholic Church, can be in the hierarchy and priests. That's both a theological and practical problem. In my opinion it's not that important. What's more important is their role in society.

**[SG] Number seven is also for the Moslems. Why don't we go to...**

[MO] It is possible for the International Community to protect Moslems in Bosnia-Herzegovina and it did. I know that some people thought that Christians failed when it comes to Srebrenica. But Srebrenica didn't happen because of the differences in Islam and Christianity. It's just a speculation. I think that the Western society is secularised a lot and that it acted as righteous as possible and that was the question of a political judgment. For the fall of Srebrenica the West is not to blame but Milošević. To be more precise, Mladić, who gave the orders. The guilt is individual here. Could Srebrenica have been avoided? Yes. Many are held responsible for it, but Mladić and those who killed are guilty.

Question number eight. Nationalistic ideology is a real enemy of true faith, because it is a false god, which tries to abuse faith itself. True faith in its essence is anti-nationalistic; it is universally globalistic. The Bible says that God created man, He created them male and female, and that is man's real identity. Other kinds of identities, including the national one, are historical products. I know that some religious leaders show in practice that politics is more important than faith, when they won't take part in the reconciliation process or meet representatives of other religions. And they won't pray to the same God if the other one doesn't make a political move. The idea that we are all God's children is the key thing we have to hold to. And at the same time observing human rights.

Question number nine. Smaller war criminals will be brought to justice, that's for sure. And that's a matter of the law and of the International Community, too. But we cannot punish them all and full justice cannot be carried out. We have to turn toward the future and punish only those who are stumbling blocks to our brighter future.

Question number ten.

**[SG] Let's skip that one... Let's skip the rest. I would like to ask just a couple of questions that aren't here that you might have some insight to, because I know your views on these other questions. One is, and if you don't want to answer this one on tape, I'll shut it off. In our conference in Dubrovnik there were a couple of issues that were raised that I was wondering if.... One is the question of the necessity of reconciling history in order to reconcile peoples. Do you see a direct relationship there or can we move towards the reconciliation of peoples even though the history remains just...**

[MO] The history can never be reconciled or the ideology. But people can and should. Even those who belonged to different and even wrong ideologies. Fascism is a racist ideology. Religious fundamentalism is a completely wrong ideology, worse even than racism itself. And there cannot be any kind of reconciliation. What St. Augustine said, "Always against the sin and never against the sinner." A different subject is how you can be against an ideology. You cannot fight wrong ideology with guns but with arguments. That's why this dialogue is so important. The moment those ideology influenced people accept dialogue, they are half way through the problem. That means they accepted the argument and dialogue. This process can take a long time.

**[SG] Good. Thank you. The second question I have is a little more difficult. I wonder if you're aware of anyone in the religious communities who has been set aside from his position in the clergy because of militant or violent nationalism? Have they been removed from their position?**

[MO] You know, a priest is a priest forever. But some have been removed tacitly, transferred some place else. I think that religious communities are fighting extremists, but they are one step behind the politics. We would like them to be one step ahead of politics. And that's the problem now. It's a pity that that is the case both here and in Eastern Europe - that spirituality does not contribute enough to the victory of good. It doesn't act prophetically but politically.

**[SG] Marko, thank you for your time. I know you're very pressured for time.**

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Vladislav Radujković**

Deacon, Serbian Orthodox Church  
Serbian Orthodox diocese offices, Banja Luka

October 2002

[VR] These questions are the reasons why we started this organization [SOZ, *Svetosavska Omladinska Zajednica*] in the first place.

**[SG] I would indeed like to hear about that, but as you well know for research purposes, I need the same standard of questions to permit comparisons. For me, the questions are in order of importance, so the first one is far more important than the last question. And if we don't get through all of them, that's fine. I'd be delighted if we just did the first page, for instance.**

[VR] I noticed in some of these questions some illogical things, at least for me. On some questions I will answer and some I will skip because I think they are more relevant for Muslims.

**[SG] I don't want to ignore what you want to say though, I'd be very happy to hear it. Just for the sake... you understand, I need to be able to compare your answers with Franciscans, Muslims and other Orthodox, for that matter.**

[VR] It may be that not all of us from the Orthodox Church will agree on certain things. Why do I say this? Because there is a completely new, younger current in the church. Because the theological school itself that, not just me, but most of us who finished in the last 10 years have a completely different approach to theology unlike the way it used to be before.

**[SG] Can you explain the difference?**

[VR] Yes. That current is much less nationalistic than before. It is turned much more towards the unity of the Orthodox churches and at the same time towards the unity of all people in the world. The very approach towards the Orthodox theology presupposes something that we call liturgical renewal. The liturgical renewal presupposes returning to the roots since we, the Orthodox, are known as an orthodox current which does not leave their roots. That, of course, presupposes an active understanding of a liturgy, of a service, and an everyday life in accordance with the liturgy. Let me be more concrete and say that we, unlike previous generations, accepted theology as a personal relationship with God that lasts 24 hours a day. We look at God in the first place as a person who reveals himself to people and addresses them, and who expects people to address him in a personal way. But all that presupposes a strong fellowship. That fellowship is, in fact, a reflection of a fellowship of God Himself in three persons. We, here on earth, need to play that role

as a fellowship that should be united in love in the first place. Of course, love does not have boundaries; no national prejudices, no colour of skin, no other kinds of boundaries. One of the most important questions in this war in Bosnia is the fact that many people around the world - and here, too - understand it as a religious war. Of course, I disagree and most of us as believers disagree with this statement because of one simple reason: we strongly believe that those who led the war did not have the slightest idea about their religions, no matter which one. This first question about a harmonious coexistence in Bosnia before the war was an official way of showing a communist way of life without God and something that could be seen and could exist only in public. That harmonious coexistence in Bosnia presupposed an atheistic approach to life and an approach of subjection from those in power at the time. Here is my personal example. My father is an Orthodox priest and those of us who are children of Orthodox priests had big problems during elementary school. I know that children of *imams* and close relatives of Catholic priests had the same kind of problems just like the rest who wanted to express their faith publicly. That restoration of a former harmonious coexistence must presuppose a public expression of faith, and then going back to some values that were in their place before. I start from the Orthodox point of view and my personal conviction that God is a person who together with me coexists in my midst and, vice versa, I am the one who coexists with God. I am under constant surveillance and I don't have any right to do anything that would hurt another human being since all people are created by God. What the Orthodox theology insists upon is something that we in the Orthodox theology call a 'theory of a personality'. A personality is not the way someone was born, but who, by his/her active life and work, becomes a personality. A personality is someone who lives in a community, in accordance with that community, and expresses his/her personality solely in a community. Let's take a personal example: I'm not a priest or anything else unless I have a community where I serve as a priest. I'm not a doctor or whatever unless I have a community where I am what I am. On the other hand, if the community does not accept me or enrich me, I don't exist. Many people interpret this term 'community' differently and wrongly. For some people community is only my religious or national community, and for some it is the whole world. I stick to the second one and I believe the majority of us should do the same. I mentioned at the beginning that we started this youth organization that was founded for one simple reason: to teach young people on the one hand what the Orthodox faith is all about, and on the other to teach them how to actively live with it and live out their faith in real life.

**[SG] I think that all makes sense and this is the first explanation like this I've heard. But I met a couple of probably your fellow students, including Vanja and Boško in Lukavica, but I hadn't ever heard this kind of explanation, so it's very interesting.**

[VR] I have to add something in regard to how people understand community. We, of course, belong to a community called a Serbian community nationally and to the Orthodox community religiously. We understand it as a place where we preserve our knowledge and tradition. Throughout our history the terms Serbian and Orthodox are one and the same thing. In the last 60 years we had a separation of these two things and now we have something called non-Orthodox Serbs, someone who separated

himself/herself completely from what we are talking about now and as such he/she becomes a tree without roots.

**[SG] They've separated themselves from the church, as you say.**

[VR] They separated themselves from the church and from the kind of life I was just talking about. What does it mean in practice? It means that people hide themselves behind some good values that we used to have throughout the history but they don't have them in real life and all that we saw in this war concerning crimes and illogical war habits. I have to attach these things to such people because I simply can't understand that someone who understands who God is can do such things. And I think I can say the same thing about other religious groups, other national communities. That's why there is this wrong image about this war as a religious war. I'll go back to what I already said: I think that people who were hiding behind religion led this war and didn't know the basic things about their religion.

**[SG] I would indeed be interested in talking with some of the young people because I think they are a very important part of the study. I'm also interested in talking with some women. Maybe she [indicating the office assistant] would speak on behalf of the women's voice. But I think it would be a separate interview.**

[VR] I can say something about the Orthodox point of view of the role of women in the world.

**[SG] That is actually [question] number six.**

[VR] For me the most interesting question is number two. What does peace really mean? Through the Orthodox faith and services, through the liturgy, we mention the word peace a number of times and we pray all the time for peace in the world. It could be that the understanding of the word peace and through the question that describes two different ways of understanding peace, peace as the silence of weapons and peace as a blessing from God. Of course, I will speak about the second aspect. Christ himself taught us when He said after the resurrection "I give you my peace". I didn't say after the resurrection by accident because it is the greatest moment in history of mankind as a final victory over three important elements: our human nature, death and final death. Our human nature is the way it is and to build true peace, God's peace, means to defeat our nature, to elevate ourselves above our natural needs. I don't need to explain what they are. It can be that I want what you have. So, we have to elevate ourselves above these things, above death, and we understand it as being separated from God as a Creator and source of life. And finally, death as a mystery and what happens once we cease to exist. Maybe this is a longer explanation but I want to say that the resurrected Christ appears to his disciples with words "I give you my peace". He said: "Peace that is not of this world", not as a silence of weapons, but as a personal, inward peace that is a condition for the peace in this world. We, as Orthodox Christians, think that it is our responsibility to build peace in our soul so that we can build it around ourselves. I made the answer long, but this was interesting for me to make the word peace clear.

**[SG] I think we as religious people do have a different understanding of what peace is, distinguishing it from those who are diplomats and policy makers. And it's interesting to me that Richard Holbrook's book is entitled To End a War but it is not 'to bring peace'. This is to me where the big gap is in diplomacy and religious efforts, whether it's through restructuring the parliament or bringing an open-market economy, there seems to be a big gap between what diplomats, political leaders and economists are doing and what we of religious orientation are trying to do. At the same time it's a concern of mine, and certainly I would expect yours as well, for the many people who are of the 'non-orthodox' - as you put it - who for a long time now have been agnostics or non-confessional people. Many of them have actually rejected the church or Islamic faith precisely because they believe the war was religious and witnessed religious leaders who were complicit in the problem. I'm wondering whether or not they can experience the peace of God, the blessing of God, by living in proximity to the community of faith.**

**[VR] Yes, they can under one condition: those who call themselves believers should be believers in practice. Something just crossed my mind in connection with the first question but explains this here. A number of years ago, in the middle or towards the end of the war, I travelled to the Arab world, to Egypt, and I had an opportunity to meet a kind of Islam I never had a chance to see before and I really liked that kind of Islam. People are happy, simple and relaxed there with calluses on their foreheads from praying. They don't see that as some torment, but joy, I guess that's the way it should be. I was sad when I saw all that beauty of Islam and compared it with some Muslims that I know here. But I noticed that I learned something about my Orthodox faith. We have something in our jargon that we call traditional believers and true Orthodox believers. Traditional believers are the ones born as Orthodox believers, whose great-grandfathers were Orthodox, but who simply carry that title and nothing else. I compared these two things when I learned something about Islam. I can say that everything that I'm talking about now is about different religions. And what you said earlier, I think that we agree that the difference between an agnostic and a believer is hard to define since many agnostics consider themselves to be believers, regardless of [the presence or absence of] faith. I have to admit that I met here, in Bosnia, a few Buddhists who are from here, local people, who at one point had a chance to obtain some literature on Buddhism and then claimed they were Buddhists. Unfortunately, it turned out that I knew more about Buddhism than those who claimed to be Buddhists. That is the reason I'm giving this explanation because I think that the difference between a believer and a non-believer is strange, i.e., those who call themselves believers and those who are believers in practice. If somebody would ask me for solution to this situation in Bosnia I think that one of the key things is religious education. And I think for all religions. Sometimes a good Catholic is closer to me than an unbelieving Serb.**

**[SG] Can we go back to number one just for a moment because I have a question about... I take it from what you said that looking back only as far as the communist period that you would disagree that there was this harmonious coexistence, or that the harmonious coexistence of Brotherhood and Unity was**

**built on a faulty foundation. But yet you've seen in the younger generation of the Orthodox clergy the training is different, less nationalistic, and so I'm using my word, but this is a sort of a 'renewal' within the Orthodox teachings.**

That's the way we call it: liturgical renewal.

**[SG] OK. I'm using the term restoration in a sense of 'to make whole again.' In some ways it takes us back to the origins to what the faith was all about to begin with and it goes back much further than just the communist period all the way to the creation. And we get our image of how we should live among one another by the origins and intentions that God had for us in the creation. It isn't what failed about communism or what failed about the Ottoman Empire that we need to correct. It's rather what's good about the creation as God interacts with his creation, his humanity that motivates us.**

[VR] That's where the origins are. I'm a Sunday school teacher among other things. I have my favourite lesson which I put into other lectures that I give. That's the psychological side of the first man's fall. There is God's intention when He created a man and an idea about that man because God had in mind people not just that one man when He created him. God created him as His friend, as a being that is closest to Him. But there's something called pride. That's the same reason why Satan separated from God and he talked the first man into the same thing. Just before you came I was writing a radio programme on the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment. I said it again in that programme that a man rejected God's intention out of his pride and wanted to subordinate the world to him and that's why he fabricates gods he can rule. Even today, just as it is the case throughout the history, there's this desire that a man rules over God and that he subordinates the whole of God's creation to himself. There's this constant battle between a wider point of view on the world and the narrow one from the first man until today. And in that battle people come up with different names such as nationalism, racism or different kinds of politics throughout history. I absolutely agree with you that the entire problem originates from the creation of the first man.

**[SG] That's really the thesis in a nutshell. I'm trying to place what we do as religious people in this healing element between the creation and the eschaton and that we, as the community of believers, are active to do God's will, and that he works through us to effect His kingdom. As we are instructed by Him, as we learn from Him, as we become part with Him, we are able also to embrace a world without Him. Now, obviously the Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants and Muslims differ on some of these issues, and our doctrines are different on some of these things. Even the creation account of the Muslims is quite different from that of the Christians or Jews. But even some of the Muslim staff at the Islamic Faculty find resonance with the creation as the starting point. So I'm trying to use this term 'restoration' that illustrates that we are trying to restore the order in the image that God first created in us. Certain elements of the Western church, Catholic church, want to use the term 'liberation', but I see it less as liberation and more as moving from 'struggle' to 'rest'. That's the intention when we are in the embrace of God.**

[VR] I understand that as the task of all Christians. In our services, in the church singing, we always call Christ a new Adam. Christ came to show on His example what Adam was supposed to do and how the world would have looked like if Adam hadn't done what he did or if he did what he was supposed to do. We still live in the world where both Adam and Christ coexist. I think that Christians have this task, whether they're called Orthodox or Catholic or Protestant to show on their personal example what Christ came for to live here on earth. So that Christians could show to these adamic people in their personal example how they should live.

**[SG] I think we're on the same wavelength here. We might use different language, it might be a part of your language and we might use other language, but I think...**

[VR] Throughout our history a lot of things collected upon that root. I think that our common task would be to clear away those layers. There are some good and some bad things that collected.

**[SG] I think one of the things I want to avoid with this term 'restoration' is that people think I'm only talking about returning to the communist period so that they can get their pension back. We can't ignore history in Bosnia, or shall I say the histories of Bosnia, since there are disparate accounts, but I'm not just relating things to the communist period or the first Yugoslav period or the Ottoman period. I'm trying to return to our origins and use this idea 'to make whole again.'**

[VR] I agree. I think the story about our history that we like to tell a lot here in Bosnia... even though we must not neglect history. But in the history itself there are many things that were written by the winner. Winners were coming and going throughout the history here. I think that Bosnia is unique in the world by the mixture of different winners throughout the history even though we, the Serbs, claim that we got here first. But the Jews left Israel 2000 years ago and they went back there and they cannot neglect that period of 2000 years and those who live there now. But this is now the sphere of foreign affairs.

**[SG] I'm delighted with our conversation so far and I feel very good resonance with what we are talking about. Can we look at number four and then number three?**

Religious faith? I understand the question but I wonder if this is a bad translation?

**[SG] Well, again it's phrased in such a way that it would also be an acceptable phrase for the Muslims since they don't make a big distinction between religion and faith.**

[VR] That's also the case with Christians. We claim for the Orthodox, and I hear others claim the same thing for their religions, that Orthodoxy is not religion at all,

but a way of life. That opens up other questions about coexistence of different ways of life.

**[SG] Can I just ask for a clarification on these terms: religion and faith?**

[VR] Personally, I understand religion as a knowledge that God exists and a relationship with God who is close to me. And religion is one form of that relationship with God. I think our differences come because of these forms. I have to be honest and say I know very little about Islam. When I talk about different forms I think of us, Christians: Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants. I think we all can agree on some things easily. I'd like to know more about Islam and about their way of life with God. I have to admit that my personal feeling is that here in my midst very few Muslims know something about Islam in a concrete way. I guess we could easily agree with those Muslims who know Islam much better. That's my personal thinking – faith is knowledge that God exists, and religion is a form of that relationship with God. As for the question how religion and forgiveness can contribute to the escape of the cycle of violence of past offences, I'm afraid that from what I said one could conclude that we would divide into believers and non-believers. I'm afraid that one could conclude from what I said that there are four different communities here. Let it be so for now. So, there are Orthodox, Catholics, Muslims and non-believers in Bosnia. I think that the first three categories would come to some agreement, but we can face some problems with the fourth. Why? Because all those who strongly believe that God exists know the reason why they should forgive people. But if people don't believe that God exists then the reason why they should forgive people is foggy. That's why I come back to one of my solutions and that's religious education. Even those who claim that they are unbelievers and who will certainly stay that way must know what we believe and how we function. When I say we, then I think of us as believers of different religions. That would be my answer to this question.

**[SG] In number four there is an assumption that there is a cycle of violence. Do you think that assumption is a correct assumption? There is a cycle of violence in Yugoslav history?**

[VR] Yes. As a matter of fact, I'm saying the whole time that there is a cycle of violence and there are people of all nationalities and faiths that call themselves [believers] but they are not what they think they are. I think of them as people of the lie, as Scott Peck called them. I suppose you know about whom I'm talking. That's the cycle of violence. Those are the people who live in a constant lie towards themselves and others. I think such people exist in the whole world. The thing is that the law functions much better in certain countries and they fear the strong law of a strong country. You understand me if I compare this with some people in Spain or Northern Ireland who hide behind so-called separatist ideas but that isn't the meaning of their battle. I think they are the people of the lie who have to come up with a way of expressing their problems. The same problems Adam had when he separated from God in order to subjugate other people under his rule. On the other hand I think it is a part of human nature and that faith teaches us to elevate ourselves above that nature.

**[SG] And forgiveness and faith, does forgiveness specifically... What sort of specific role can forgiveness play?**

[VR] Someone who has elevated himself from that nature can forgive. I think of true forgiveness and not just the word. You know that there is confession in Christianity, that many people answer a priest's questions with "Yes, I repent." The question is how many people really mean it. The same way people in everyday conversations forgive each other or they apologize to each other, but I think that in today's world it all came down to just a word of politeness. There are very few true feelings in the whole thing. Simply, there's no action.

**[SG] Let's look at question three perhaps. I'm interested in a relationship between individual guilt and distributed hatred or distrust. In other words, here in Bosnia you often hear words like all those Četniks, all those Ustaša, all those Turks, those Balija and in these terms a whole community is maligned even though, of course not everybody is nationalistic, not everybody has committed criminal offences. The question is: Can all peoples of one nationality be maligned for the guilt of those individuals who participated in the war?**

[VR] Of course not. That's the thing I'm talking about the whole time. There are people who hide behind some national or religious titles who are to blame for the fact that certain group hates the other group. It happened quite often during this war that people claimed that they belonged to one religious or national community. They even convince religious leaders that they are as such, and they do what they did. And the other group sees this community that way. In order to prevent such things in the future I think that every religious community is in a way responsible to clean their house first. Here's an example: I work here in this church. That's the main church for the Banja Luka region and since it's the main one in the capital of RS, so all the important religious holidays and important people who take part in these holidays should be there. If the media and TV cameras are there, there they are. If there's no media and TV cameras, they are not there. I think of these kinds of things. Someone who at one moment represents certain national community or a group within that national community here it means that he/she has to have a stamp of approval of his/her religious community and they used to take that approval by force most of the times. When I say by force I mean pushing through to the front rows, and the war times are not the best times when the religious leaders settle accounts with the national leaders because at those times it would mean in a way the weakening of that nation that is at war with the other nation. I shouldn't have said this. Of course, this can be said of all nationalities in Bosnia. That time is gone now and now is the time for everyone to do some cleaning in his house.

**[SG] So if I understand you correctly - I just want to clarify this - the first idea is that we only have individual guilt, we don't have corporate guilt. But secondly, we do have a corporate or community responsibility to correct the wrongs within our community and that this responsibility takes priority over pointing out the wrongs of other communities.**

[VR] Before we point our finger at the other communities we have to point our finger to the individuals within our community.

**[SG] Do you sense that's happening in Bosnia-Herzegovina either here in the Republika Srpska or in the Federacija, not only in your community but other communities?**

[VR] I think it's happening but very slowly and timidly. How can I put it in one sentence? Religious leaders - and I don't think of the top ones. I am a religious leader, too. I have a group of people whom I lead in faith. So, I don't think of the bishops, patriarchs. I think of regular religious leaders what in communism used to be called the base. I think that things should start from there. We shouldn't expect these things from those top leaders. But in order to move things out of that base everyone, as a religious leader, should examine himself first. But in this chaos we are individually lost in our own personal problems economically, status wise, and sometimes because of these problems we get lost and neglect the reason why we are what we are. Here's an example: many priests in the Orthodox church in this area, since the Orthodox church went out of the previous period completely ravaged, their task is to build a minimum of the religious space and unfortunately often times it becomes the only thing they do. You know how churches are built, from believers' donations. And you know who gives the biggest donations, not always those who are the strongest believers, but the richest ones. There's some kind of blackmail. I personally think that this country could help religious communities in regard to returning of the property that was taken away. In a practical way a priest would be doing his job and not something that is not his job. He would deal with spiritual matters more, and less with material matters, which are not his job. This is one of many examples. I think that in this time and situation where we live, we priests, regardless of which religion, deal with some unimportant matters.

**[SG] I think we've already addressed question number eight and I still want to ask question six but if I'm going to ask this of your colleague I want to avoid her hearing your answer so I can get her answer. But maybe we're at question nine for now which is still on this issue of justice and individual guilt.**

[VR] Again I don't know who the 'Bosnian' is. Since Bosnia is a place of several nationalities this term is wrongly translated. I'm not insulted by this term but I'm afraid that this term could be understood as deleting of the differences and I am personally in favour of unity among differences. I think that's how Bosnia should look like: united community of different communities and different entities.

**[SG] Can you explain that a little bit? How should that picture look?**

[VR] The way it was planned to be. Bosnia-Herzegovina is one country made of two entities and several nations. A Bosnian does not exist but a Serb, Croat, Jew and Bošniak.

**[SG] The way I'm using the term Bosnian here is not as a member of a Bosnian Muslim community but as a Bosnian citizen and that's of course the**

**Western phrase. You're right, it's really not a good way of phrasing it. Again this is the same document that I give to the Muslims and to the Catholics. It's hard to find the term that will fit everybody acceptably with the same question. But I'm looking at ... it doesn't quite exist in people's minds yet, but Bosnian citizens, the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the ones who vote. OK? Anyway, I appreciate that distinction and it could be phrased, but...**

[VR] So, local justice beyond The Hague. Personally, I hear from this [Truth and Reconciliation] Commission for the first time. I think this is more of a political question. It's a matter of the organization of a country in a judicial sense. But any kind of decision is better than no decision at all or a legal procedure for that matter. Whether it happens in The Hague or in Bosnia I think that the most important thing is to have a fair trial. So if someone committed a crime, that person should be brought to trial. It doesn't matter where - in The Hague, in America, in Bosnia - the most important thing is that the trial is a fair trial. That both the defence and the prosecution have the same rights. In those chauvinistic... I always make the distinction between nationalism and chauvinism because the word nationalism doesn't have to have a bad connotation necessarily. But here people very often mix up these two terms. Right after communism there was this awakening of national ideas that were suppressed in the former period because of the [emphasis on] 'brotherhood and unity'. I cheer the awakening of anyone's national feelings unless they are chauvinistic to someone else. Here the distinction between the two is always very small. I think that all three nations, or four or five nations have a beautiful long history here. But with the awakening of the nationalism this chauvinistic spirit from the Second World War to this day awakened, too. I know that in that nationalistic euphoria very few Serbs were talking about St. Sava from the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century, and everybody was talking about Četniks from the World War II. This is just a bit of an explanation about what's assumed in this question. So we know now the difference. As for the trial for the war criminals, regardless of their nationality, I can't say regardless of their faith because they certainly don't belong to any faith. If they had been true believers they certainly would have never done those things. So I let the judicial system have a trial for them whether it's The Hague, or Bosnian, or entity or municipal judicial system but only if the goal is to find out truth. Personally, I think that Bosnia-Herzegovina is not up to this kind of tribunal but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't start working on it because these kinds of tribunals will have to start working. There are many personal crimes committed in the last war, which will be coming out in the next 50 years. I agree that for now The Hague tribunal serves to bring to justice the top criminal offenders but there will have to be one day a tribunal that will deal with "small" crimes. What do I mean by "small" crimes? Perhaps someone killed somebody else's cow but if someone's child cried because he/she didn't have milk, that's already a crime. I think the courts of this kind should start existing in Bosnia-Herzegovina so that one day we can come to an end with these kind of things. I guess that's why there are things in law that are not court cases but certainly made people's lives bitter here. Once we have the judicial system for these things only then can we be a strong and stable country.

**[SG] I appreciate that you would extend yourself to answering political questions. I'd like to ask a couple of questions about this, maybe just your**

**opinion, but I'm going to try to ask your impressions about people here in at least Banja Luka, and even in the Republika Srpska. Do you sense that people here think that The Hague Tribunal is a fair court, or is it subjective and unfair?**

[VR] I think that the majority of people here don't have too much of a positive opinion about it. But I personally think that it perhaps has nothing to do with the Tribunal itself, but with our media.

**[SG] Are the entire court trials broadcast or just portions of them broadcast?**

[VR] I think only portions. But even if it is a bigger portion still it's not the entire trial. On the other hand, it is my thinking that it lasts too long, it's too slow. I don't know, maybe we are being emotional and would like some things to happen overnight. In the recent history people took part in some good but also wrong things in an emotional way. On the other hand, people got used to believing in the personality cult because of the history of this area. That's why trial of some people in people's heads means at the same time trial of all of them who were in the same positions. I personally don't like Milošević because I lived in Belgrade for 13 years when he was in power. I took an active part in all the student protests.

**[SG] I remember those cold nights on TV.**

[VR] That was the time when students were stopped in Kolarceva street, if you remember, my face appeared on CNN.

**[SG] That could have been dangerous for you.**

[VR] In a yellow jacket. I say this because I'm not particularly upset because Milošević is in The Hague. But the question was how people think here in Banja Luka. They are very emotional about this trial and I think that the trial is the most popular program here on TV. In every home you can feel some kind of hatred towards the Tribunal. The reason is because others are not [also] there. That would be a general picture of the situation here.

**[SG] Others from the Croatian and Muslim community?**

[VR] Yes. I think that's how the majority of people here think. And they understand justice as justice for all. That's one of the reasons why The Hague Tribunal is not popular around here. There's this thinking among the Serbs that mostly Serbs are there. That's the general idea of what The Hague Tribunal is all about.

**[SG] The reason why I ask this question is also because... well, I'm very careful not to make too many comparisons between the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa and former Yugoslavia. There are many differences so I'm not trying to draw too many parallels. But the Truth**

**and Reconciliation Commission does exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina at least on paper.**

[VR] I never heard of it.

**[SG] Jakob Finci is president of it but it doesn't really function. But what is interesting to me about the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa, which does function successfully, is that it while it has politicians involved in it, the Committee was largely started and led by the clergy, the most prominent of which is bishop Desmond Tutu. And I think in many ways they understood this is too big of a problem for the courts to handle alone. The courts would never handle anything else. And we just can't have the whole country in jail. But we must... the religious community has felt that there is a real role that they can play in confronting some of these crimes and bringing the religious element in the terms of truth, justice and forgiveness. And there's a reason why the order goes truth and reconciliation, that there is a process involved and that truth must come forward before reconciliation can proceed. And that's the sort of thing that I would wish to see persons of faith involved in, as you say, confronting the things within our own community. And I am asking: Do you think that this would be an important role that religious people, whether it's official clergy or others, could play in reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina?**

[VR] In other words, is it important to call out individuals? I don't really understand the question. [Translator reads the question: Is it imperative to address the truth of the crimes in order that justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration be achieved?] Of course. Nobody in this world should neglect crimes for any reason. Because there is no end that could justify such means. We Christians know that Christ forbade Peter to defend Him. At that moment He told Peter: "All those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword". Christ let us know in a clear and concrete way that we cannot achieve a good end by bad means. The truth is our Christian imperative. Christ says: "I am the truth". To hide the truth for us Christians means not to proclaim Christ. If someone in our midst did something wrong, and we know it, than we commit two crimes by hiding his wrongdoing. I think it's clear that every crime has to be revealed and that shouldn't be questioned at all. It's a question of technicality as to who will do it and how, the court address. There is no big difference whether the court is in The Hague or Bosnia, whether it is called the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. I think that what you said is very important, that believing people should be the ones leading these courts. But there's another kind of problem here. We Christians repeat Christ's words all the time, "My kingdom is not of this world". And this world has its own laws. That's why we have to have some people of law whether they are believers or not. But I think that, if they are believers, then there's a great advantage to that. If I addressed the question at all...

**[SG] I think so. It's a difficult question. I think that the issue of justice points out rights and wrongs, offences, and points to possible restitution ... paying back what's been taken away is the principle of restitution ... if someone kills your cow then you replace the cow. And so the legal system goes so far, but there are limits to the legal system where the religious community can say: "All**

**right. We see these wrongs, but now we want to move towards forgiveness, we want to move towards reconciliation. This is really beyond what the court system can do or will do.**

[VR] I personally think that it shouldn't be something the court would handle. The court should do its job and convict the criminal. But the responsibility of every religious community is to alleviate, by way of forgiveness, his crime over his victim or alleviate pain for the victim of that crime. If the Serbs oppressed the Muslims or the Muslims oppressed the Serbs, some tribunal, The Hague or some other, will convict the criminals on both sides. But the task of both the Orthodox Church and the Islamic religious community is to work on reconciliation of these two peoples through sincere forgiveness. But we cannot put the criminals in the category of forgiveness. I'm afraid we would give our support to the future criminals. As Christ says: "If my eye makes me stumble, I will tear it out". It's my personal thinking that it's better to convict a criminal to the death penalty and by that act stop future crimes although I as an Orthodox believer have to fight for life. And I have to forgive my enemies, as Christ puts it. But it's a kind of sacrifice. I think of that criminal.

**[SG] I'm not asking us to suspend justice but that even through the justice system by the conviction of criminals doesn't necessarily end there. Forgiveness and restoration of this individual to society once his penalty has been paid is also part of what we do as religious people.**

[VR] There's a genetic difference among us. For generations, for hundreds of years people here are used to a royal, absolutistic regime, strict, monarchist approach to solving problems starting with the Serbian kings over the Ottoman Empire until Tito's regime. We are used throughout generations and our genetics to understand justice in this way. It may sound strange that I as a priest say this, but justice is understood here as an instant decapitation. According to that, the judicial system in general is understood as a short and quick and simple solution. That's why our people think of The Hague Tribunal as an unnecessary dragging out of the whole thing. In communism you had secret trials and execution and that was it. Communist dealt with Četniks, Ustaša and others that way who lost the war. With this awakening of nationalism the conscience about the former unfair regime awakens, too. And this goes back in history; every regime was unfair to the previous one. Now we have come to democracy which people here are not used to. We are out of solutions. One of the reasons why I'm telling you this is that there were a couple of attempts of both the authorities of the Republika Srpska and the international community to gather young people and ask them what the solution would be according to them. Such gatherings are sometimes discouraging because young people don't see any solutions. And older people see the solutions even less. So I think that this talk about the judicial and legal system that is presented to us by the West where it has been done for generations by the majority of people here is strange. Because ties with the Western Europe were broken for a long time. The general education about life in the West is something that we need here in that respect, too. And of course in this legal sense.

**[SG] We have been talking here a long time. I hear the bells ringing, that means we've been doing this for two hours. I want to ask you question number six as a conclusion and then let you say anything you want to say that you think I haven't really addressed. But I wonder if we could do that without your colleague present because I would indeed like to interview her.**

[woman colleague exits]

[VR] The Orthodox interpretation of the special role of a woman in society isn't something new that you haven't heard before. But in order to make it clear, this relationship men have towards women and vice versa in Orthodoxy is best seen when you enter any Orthodox church and take a look at the iconostasis. Christ is on one side, and Mary with Christ is on the other. You will never see Mary without the baby Christ. She is always a symbol of a mother, the primary role of a woman who brings forth life and in that respect her role is much bigger than the man's role. People tend to look at things from the wrong side in Christianity, in Orthodoxy. They think it is very bad that women cannot be priests. But they don't look at that from the positive side that a man cannot be a mother. The role of a mother who gives birth to a child is much bigger before God than the priest who represents people in prayer. There's an eastern influence concerning women because Eve, supposedly, was the one who first took the fruit, something that has nothing to do with Christianity. Was it Eve who took the fruit first? In any case, they both took it. But since we the Orthodox live very much exposed to the influences of the East then that role of women in Orthodoxy is looked on as a lesser role. The role of a man is to be a priest, but not every man is a priest in a formal way. But every man is a priest in his home. He is the one who takes prayers to God on behalf of the family. Some men are priests in a formal way so they take prayers to God on behalf of the entire nation or community. But women are the ones who do the rest. From birth, through upbringing and everything else that is needed for living a normal life. I can freely say that a woman's role is more important than a man's in the church. A man is a priest because he cannot do physically what a woman can do. The church is made up of personalities, it's a community of personalities. In order to be made up of these personalities that's why we have the role of a woman who gives birth and brings up that personality, i.e., individuals so that they could become personalities. That would be the shortest possible explanation of the role of a woman in church. There are those totally wrong explanations according to my opinion that a man is the one who represents the church, leads the church, brings life into church because, supposedly, God is a man. I think it is a totally wrong explanation that you will hear it here from many people.

**[SG] So, if I may clarify that I understand, women play an extremely important role because of their maternal role. They are bringers of life.**

[VR] Here's an example: of all the people in the whole world only one person is closest to God. That's Mary. There's no man closer to God who did more than she did.

**[SG] Let me just pursue this line of thought a little more in terms of specifically the war, peace building and restoration. Understanding that they**

**are life bringers whether it's Mary, who is the theotokos, or whether it's women who bring life into the world, or, better said, bring people into the world. Is there then a role that women play as life restorers? If women are life givers, are they also life restorers in the sense of peace?**

[VR] Of course. The role of a woman is to give birth, but that's a small thing on the list what she's capable of doing. The most important is that upbringing and love she gives to her child and that's how she influences the future of a community in the first place. But if a woman is in politics, I personally think she could achieve a lot only if she has a personal example of a successful family behind her. On the other hand, a woman is more engaged than a man because she has this double responsibility: on one hand to be a foundation of a stable family, and I think it's enough work for a lifetime, and on the other hand to be successful at work and equal with other men. That's why I think that such successful women are more successful than men who only have their job. That doesn't mean that in politics we shouldn't ask the question about family matters and family situation of every man. That means that he can be a respectable person in the public life but on the other hand he's a destroyer of his family. A woman has much more things to do and by that fact in this area on the eastern part of Western Europe a woman is traditionally more active. And I respect her as such very much.

**[SG] Thank you. I want to really conclude with the questions there, but if there is something you think you want me to know that I haven't asked in the questions that is important for me to know, I'd like to give you that opportunity.**

[VR] I think that one of the most important things... I did talk about our relationship with God, but I think it is very important to say a couple of sentences about the Orthodox way of that relationship. What does the Orthodox church presuppose by that? Though we said a lot of things, both of us did. But let us not repeat the Creation of the world account and Adam's sin and the coming of Christ as a new Adam. What is very important is that Christ as new Adam who resurrected and defeated those three elements: our human nature, death as separation from God and the final death as non-existence. There's a way how we can do it, too, following Christ's example. We won't do it by just imitating Christ but by personal unification with Christ through communion. We become one with Christ through the communion. By that act we become a part of Christ, He also becomes a part of us, but it's much more important for us to become a part of God.

**[SG] Christ became human that we might become God.**

[VR] Saint Athanasius the Great. Exactly! And the whole thing is concentrated in the act of communion. On the other hand, why did I say that the Orthodoxy is the way of life? We must not understand communion as going like we are going to any other place and doing like we are doing anything else. Our life is a life between two communions. We prepare ourselves for that unification with Christ by the way we live our lives. We must not forget another important thing that after Christ's ascension the Holy Spirit lives in the church and by the act of baptism the Holy Spirit indwells us as He indwelled the apostles. Every kind of thinking, political, economic,

any other kind, presupposes these two facts: that we are baptized, that we are carriers of the Holy Spirit, and that as such we are capable to unite and keep uniting with Christ. All other questions such as relation towards other people in the world come out of these two facts. For example, Christ said: "I didn't come to save the righteous but the sinners. By the Holy Spirit the apostles are going and preaching to all the nations. Or Christ came to suffer for every human being. So if we are carriers of the Holy Spirit or if we keep uniting with Christ then we are uniting with all people who have the image of Christ in them. In that kind of unification there is no male or female, black or white. All the questions directed to the Orthodox Christians and Christians in general come out of these two important facts. Everyone who knows this and lives with it feels a need to be an active part in that life. Someone who knows this and feels that way cannot be a passive observer of the world around him. Those are the questions on which a whole point of view of the world is based. That's exactly what we call a liturgical renewal in the Orthodox theology: going back to what Christ taught the apostles and other people around Him and clearing away those layers of time that came upon it as less important things which influenced us so that we think they are more important than this. I think that this is the main point of Christianity.

**[SG] I appreciate your sharing that with me.**

[VR] It was my pleasure.

**[SG] There's a lot of room where people of faith can work together. And there's a lot of bad history between churches and religious people. We both can name a dozen instances of that. But I think when we look at the new image of Christ once again, and look upon His face, look upon his visage - we see this icon of Christ here [indicating the icon on the wall], which I think is the same one at Mount Athos –**

[VR] Yes, from Hilander.

**when we see Christ's face I think that helps us see the world in different ways and allows us to forgive.**

[VR] Since I do a little bit of iconography, painting of icons, this icon is unique in the world because everyone notices something of his/her own image, a personal feature, everyone sees himself/herself in it. That's the point – Christ is a part of us and, what is more important, we are a part of him.

**[SG] This has been a very refreshing and invigorating discussion and I thank you for it.**

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Sandra Rakić**

Sarajevo

May 2002

**[SG] First, can you explain if your family or you were directly impacted by the war and how?**

[SR] Yes, we were. The whole time we were in the midst of the war except one sister who went to Belgium with her family. And as all other people... the first, you know, I was glad because there was no school and I didn't have any idea what the war would mean and what it would bring.

**[SG] How old were you when the war broke out?**

[SR] Seventeen. When that started and already after maybe 10 days I said, "This is enough of holiday. I want to go back to school. I want a normal life." But that kept going on and on. I come from a mixed background and no one in my family at the beginning of the war we didn't have any... we were not aware who is against whom and who, you know, is involved in this war, what's going on. And probably for the first three or four months we didn't have any idea what was going on. And I was close to one factory that produced army tanks and after two months they started, the Yugoslav Army started to take tanks out, you know, and take them somewhere, to Ilidža... I was happy because our army is going to do something. At the beginning we all believed like that. But after that actually the war really started and till that time we had electricity, water, phone, everything... it was little bit fun, you know. And then people started to get killed. And I had many friends who were killed. First the hatred in my heart was against God. I didn't believe God at that time. And then I asked, you know, "God, why are you doing this? Why did that person have to be killed?" And then there was this propaganda and then I also found out that there were Serbs who attacked us. And all that hatred that was born in my heart over and over again every day was actually against Serb people. And from my balcony I could see the Serb front line because I was close to them. And every day I could see how they shoot from tanks and other kinds of arms. And then there was no water anymore, there was no electricity and then some most dear people to me were separated from me. Especially with my sister and her son. They went to Belgrade and then we just tried to make them to get out of Belgrade because Serbia got sanctions around that time. And then she left with her son and we didn't know where she was. And her husband, my brother-in-law, they lived at that time in Vogosča . Then Vogosča fell under the Serbian army. And he is Muslim. And all his family lived in Vogosča and only my sister was not Muslim in that family. And we didn't know anything about him and his family either because there was no communication. And in 1992 the first thing that left a great wound in my heart was when my best friend was killed. And I'm cry now because I didn't have a chance to talk, to tell him about God. And his death was I think the key and after that I was... all my being was in hatred. And then

I started to hate everything that was of Serb. And this suffering as we had... you know, going to take water, and then try to find some wood. Then you don't have food. And every moment, you actually were not sure if you were going to live or not. But for me that was the least problem, you know, to be killed and somehow I thought nothing would happen to my family but I didn't know why I thought like that. Somehow I lived in that kind of security, nothing would happen to us. And then we find out that my brother-in-law was in the town so escaped from Vogosča and that he lost his leg. My oldest sister and I, we just decided, "We are going to town to find our brother-in-law," and we didn't know where he was and then we ran over the airport. And only by God's will did we find him, I know now. In the whole city we found him, we didn't know where at all. Thank God he actually didn't lose his leg, he was wounded very hard and he has one part put in his leg but he didn't lose it. And after that he also went to Belgium to meet my sister, I mean his wife and his son. But the whole time I hated Serbs because they divided me, they separated me from my family. Because we were really very close to each other. And why I couldn't be there while my nephew grows up. And after that in 1993 my Dad was killed. And at that moment, when the grenades were falling down, I just knew that he was dead. I knew they came from Ilidža and I don't know how but I knew. I just told my sister, "Let's go home," because they were somewhere, and I just went to my bed and didn't say a word. And when they came to let us know that night and my Mom was in shock and she woke us up and said, "Get up. Your Dad was killed." And my Mom told me later because I was, you know, still sleeping but so I just stretched out my arm and I said, "I knew it," because somehow I really knew it. And that was the last drop in hatred and everybody could see it. Actually I just wished if I could find that man and just, you know, take him apart in little pieces. And when there was a funeral I said, "The war will stop and I know this can be done. I know that my hatred will lead me to do this. I will find out who was on [the line] that day at that kind of placement, and then I am going to kill that man, but slowly, so that he would suffer." And after that time until the end of the war that led me in some way and I said, "I will find that man and I will return to him." And the whole time of the war my friend Enisa told me about some God. Actually she started to talk to me about Jesus. Enisa was a Muslim from an ancient Muslim family in Hrasnica. I didn't understand it all, but still I took many books from her. I didn't ask her anything. But I read a lot. And there were some books about forgiveness and maybe that stopped me from coming to Jesus for some time because I didn't want to forgive the Serbs. But as God leads us, at the end, on September 10, 1995, I gave my life to Jesus and I was really happy. And of course I couldn't forgive right away. Actually not for a long time. And the first time that I forgave was maybe a year after that, and it was really a slow process, maybe even two years, I'm not quite sure. First, I forgave that man who killed my father. And I really cannot forget the moment when God brought forgiveness into my heart. Even now I would really like to find that man, not to kill him, but just to tell him about Jesus who loves him and who wants him to be saved and to tell him of this powerful love that can erase all of that hatred. But still after that this was not the complete forgiveness towards the whole Serb people, a nation. And I loved them only because it was God's commandment that we have to love our enemies and all other people. And it really was a slow process, and in the church there were many sermons and seminars on inner healing, healing of the soul. And I always again and again brought that before God. I still don't know when this came,

when God really changed all that and so that there was no hatred anymore. I knew all the truths of God and that the ruler of this world is Satan but still there was a little hatred. And maybe with this truth that Satan is, you know, the ruler of this world and maybe that actually took so long and maybe with that I pushed the whole, I mean the complete forgiveness somehow, I pushed it in my heart and left it, you know, somewhere a little bit. I didn't have problems with brothers and sisters in Christ who came from Serb background. They were my brothers and sisters and I love them. But I had a problem, for example, to just go to the place where only they were living, you know, or pass that place. And always I would say, "I have no need to go there. Everything what I need I have in the Federation." Maybe this complete forgiveness actually came when I was passing through the Republika Srpska when I went to Bihać because there were some parts where it is necessary to go through the part that belongs to the Republika Srpska. It was in 1998 and when we were passing on this street maybe just that heaviness and darkness that I saw there actually bore love toward them. So even today I don't have any need, I mean, to go there I'm connected for Sarajevo but one day, you know, you never know where I will go. Now I know that I could go to any part of Bosnia and Herzegovina and I wouldn't have any problem to share with anybody, you know, God's love and this message of God's love and also hope for eternal life. And I do not separate any nation right now neither Serbs nor Croats nor Muslims. I'm aware that all three nations, people from all three nations need God. This winter I was thinking, "Do I have any bitterness in my heart of going maybe to some part in Republika Srpska." There's a difference between just passing through the land and to go there and live or do something, but it doesn't matter. We did this drama for children and we needed to go to Pale which is in the Serb's part. And at that moment when they decided that they would go I knew that I didn't have any bitterness because I was really glad that we could go there and share with children and that was maybe the last confirmation for me that everything is clean. Also on the other hand I love children more than adults. All children. So I cannot say when this forgiveness was really complete. It lasted for a long time for six years or some but now it is complete. But now I can say it's finished.

**[SG] Thanks for sharing that. I know it's been difficult to do. Let me ask just a couple of background questions. You say you're from a mixed background.**

[SR] My Dad was Orthodox and my Mom was Catholic.

**[SG] Did you or your parents go to church, holidays or anything, celebrate any of the festival days?**

[SR] Actually we were all atheists in some way but still we had some days like Christmas and Easter that we celebrated. More because of customs and habits but that was all.

**[SG] You didn't celebrate 'Slava'?**

[SR] No.

**[SG] Let's go back a little bit to the time when you became a Christian. Is that the term you use, is that the term you like to use 'became a Christian' or 'convert' or 'born again' or how do you describe it?**

[SR] All that together.

**[SG] Well, can you tell me a little about your conversion. You read a lot of books, didn't ask too many questions but what actually was the dynamic that took place here?**

[SR] I know that in all of that Enisa had the hardest time. She talked to me for three years. But I'm a person that will really look, you know, in details and really just examine and examine from all sides before I decide something. And in these books many times I saw at the end there were these prayers for conversion. And when I came to them I was looking at that prayer and I just knew that I had to come to the Lord because that was the truth. I realised that that was the truth. Enisa gave me the books, which were messages on the book of Daniel, the whole book, and she gave me that to read. To me that was not [being, becoming] a Christian. But that was just, it drew my attention because it spoke about the future in some way and I also liked these things. Also astrology. Stupid.

**[SG] You didn't at the time think that astrology was stupid or wrong or anything like that?**

[SR] I don't know what I exactly thought, but it was more fun to me. Then also I could have fun with friends through that. Because I was looking in Nostradamus and some Indian [gurus?] and finding the sign in the horoscope and then, you know, the sub-sign, something like that. That was fun but actually I didn't believe in that so much. Because reading my horoscope sign I could find many things that were like me. But when I looked in something else that was not my sign, not my sub-sign, I still could find many things that were like me. At that time I also thought that it was more like some kind of psychology or something like that. Something where every man can find himself, something general, universal. But I still didn't believe in these daily and monthly horoscopes. Although I read them, I didn't believe them. I always read them just to have fun.

**[SG] Did you go to Enisa's church at all before you became a Christian?**

[Enisa's words: Actually, we were separated because I was in Hrasnica alone. When I started Faculty I found a church. Once Nikola [the denominational leader] visited first the church in Sarajevo and then I asked him if he could stop by at Hrasnica because my cousin, who became a Christian before Sandra, wanted to be baptised, and Sandra and Biljana attended on that day. There was no church at that time.]

[SR] Before that I went to Catholic church in Hrasnica. We had some kind of war church. Actually the Catholic priests who were in the army came and gave a mass. In SFOR they had a Catholic priest and he came to Hrasnica to give a mass.

[SG] **So he was from Bosnia?**

[SR] No, he was French.

[SG] **French? OK. And he did a mass in your church?**

[SR] It was not the church but it was a theatre where Catholics went. But in that they had Sunday services. But it was really funny to me to go there, especially when they started to pray. Because he said, "Father in heaven" and then the others repeated it, and it went so fast, everything was funny to me, I didn't know what they were talking about. And then he said, "Hail Mary full of grace..." that was really funny to me. And what [turned me off] - and I think that I told this to Enisa - was when the mass was finished and then people get out there was so much gossiping, cursing, jealousy, there were, you know... where everybody looks at others, and so on. That [repulsed] me somehow. But somehow I thought that that was the same Jesus that Enisa told me about because they also talk about Jesus.

[SG] **Is there a difference to you between faith and religion?**

[SR] Of course.

[SG] **What's the difference?**

[SR] I was not religious. I was a bad believer because every time I needed something, I knew that, you know, there was a God. If I was in school and I didn't learn enough I said, "God, God, please, don't let the teacher ask me anything." Today when somebody comes and tells me, "You changed your faith," my first reaction was always, "I have never had faith." I didn't have faith, actually. Concerning religion, I come from a mixed family, but that was religion that is something you cannot choose, that you are born in and that's it. You are born in an Orthodox family and you have to be Orthodox. Or vice versa, or a Catholic. But faith is something... should I quote Hebrews 11:1? I know today that I know a living God, that I have the relationship with the living God and that nobody pushed me or forced me to do that. It is something that I chose. It's a big difference.

[SG] **What does your mother think about this process you've gone through and the fact that you don't attend a Catholic church? I know she is not religious particularly but how does she feel about it?**

[SR] Somehow she followed us. When we started to go to Catholic church she also started to go there. And when [my sister and I] came to the Lord, we called our Mom and said, "Hey, Mom, we converted." She didn't have any idea what that was. So she didn't know, but by our voices she knew that that was something nice. And somehow Biljana, my sister, and I were always good girls and so she never thought that we would do something bad and she knew that we would only make good choices. Whatever we did it was good. In November... a preacher from Germany came and he stopped by as well in Hrasnica. Because it was a long line and, you

know, they had to wait, Sandra and Biljana took him home and then he talked to their Mom and she gave her life to Jesus. She knew it was good.

**[SG] So she is in the church now, too, isn't she?**

[SR] Yeah.

[SG] Do you think the war made you more interested in God or religion or was it more Enisa or both?

Maybe both. And when the war was...[pause] What I thought about God was always, "Why, God? Why this?" So I thought about him but probably if there were no Enisa who told me about him I don't know what would be. I cannot say that I don't believe I would find him because when God chooses somebody, he leads him to himself. But I think both. And in the situation, you know, when you are in the war, you just saw that you are alone and somehow you just start to think about God more. And then if you have somebody who will tell you about him...

**[SG] Do you think that young people today are interested in religion, or not so much?**

[SR] Half and half. Either they are not interested at all because unfortunately there are many other things that just draw them away from God, like drugs, alcohol, getting out. And on the other hand there are those who are really extremely religious.

**[SG] Do you consider yourself extremely religious?**

[SR] No.

**[SG] Not extreme. But how would you describe yourself? You go to church every week.**

[SR] We are not religious. I cannot connect religious and living faith. So that's why I don't think that I am religious, you know. Religion is something else and living faith is another thing.

**[SG] Do people think you're fanatical because you go to church on a regular basis?**

[SR] Yes. In that way I am [extreme]. Especially if I say that almost every day I go to the church. And all my life is connected with the church. Whether it is going to the services or working [with the children's ministry], or just having, you know, fellowship with friends in the church. And every time when somebody else outside of the church asked me anything about my life, everything is connected with the church. Many told me that this is too much and fanatical. [Laughter.] That's not normal.... I have a friend who in some way envies me because of these things that I have. Because he sees that I have something different. I told him a lot about God,

the Gospel, and I gave him books and everything. But I think that God wants him probably to see that. And often when we meet he said, "Oh, lucky you, I wish I would be like you."

**[SG] What's his background?**

[SR] He is a Serb.

**[SG] But not practicing Orthodox?**

[SR] No, not exactly. No.

**[SG] All right. I think from what you've told me I know the answers to some of these questions but I need to ask them anyway for purposes of comparison with other people and what answers they give me, OK? Do you think that your faith helps you overcome anxiety for the future, fears of the future?**

[SR] Certainly. And I think that that is maybe the most effective and what my friends see in me. Because I see hope in front of me. And the majority of people here see only the black wall in front of them. And I don't have any worries. So when I tell somebody that, you know, I don't have work, I don't have any income which means in the terms of the world that they view, and in their view, for the world, the money and to have job is some kind of security. They cannot believe that, you know. And when I say, "Well, God will take care about that and provide." And just also in the past, all the time I say to people how God provided this or that for me because of these things. And I don't have any fear. Maybe just sometime when I'm down, you know, when I feel down, but...[pause]

**[SG] OK. You've already shared how your faith helps you relate to others of a different religion or faith, the Orthodox. Can you relate to me how your faith is or is not related to nationalism or the issues that are on the war? Let me ask this question first. Do you think that the cause of the war was religious?**

[SR] I have no idea. For me, that time and now, whenever I think about it, is really something very stupid. Maybe it's possible that it was one of the main causes but I don't know. Maybe, because people thought that they are better than others and that others are bad, worse than they are. But I don't know.

**[SG] Do you see your religion or your faith or your belief related to national issues somehow?**

[SR] With God's nationality only. We are God's people.

**[SG] Who is 'we'? Protestants? People in the church?**

[SR] Born again Christians.

**[SG] So, in a way, do you think that your faith can help overcome some of these national problems?**

[SR] Yes. I think that the only key for overcoming and for the victory over these divisions is a living faith in Jesus Christ.

**[SG] Is it hard to tell Muslims that?**

[SR] It's hard to everybody. In any religion, I mean Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, especially after the war people are somehow really hard.

**[SG] Hard-hearted?**

[SR] Yeah.

**[SG] Do you know friends who were not particularly religious before the war but now have been attracted more to being Muslim, or being Orthodox and being Catholic?**

[SR] Yes. The majority of people before the war didn't practice anything. But now most of them do. Somehow they turned toward their religion. And I think that that is something that was the consequence of the war. That people somehow turned back toward their "faith" [indicating quotation marks].

**[SG] Why do you think they did that? Because, well...**

[SR] Because probably all of them think the same about God. And also it's logical, you know, because of their religion if they are born as Muslim that they would turn toward Islam and others the same. And as I said before, we are better than other faith and religion.

**[SG] You're better than... in what way?**

[SR] No, I mean that for Muslim, Orthodox, Catholics because they call their religion faith, that's why I say in quotation [marks].

**[SG] In quotation marks which we can't see on the tape. If I understand you correctly, I just want to make sure I understand, that each of the faiths believes that they are better than the other. Is that what you're saying?**

[SR] Yeah.

**[SG] Do you think that faith in God will help bring people together and understand these difficulties or do you think that religions will continue to divide people?**

[SR] Not religion. Religion can divide people and it divides them even today. But I think and I believe that only the living God that I know can bring people together and to this all differences, religious differences that people made.

**[SG] So you think that faith in Christ can bring people together, but religions will continue to divide them in Bosnia?**

[SR] Yeah.

**[SG] Do you think that Bosnia will experience war again in your lifetime?**

[SR] I believe it will not. We will pray against that. Now there are some of God's people here and we will not allow that.

**[SG] Are there people, young people in your church that are of different nationalities or different faiths?**

[SR] Yeah.

**[SG] Do you have any problem talking with them or being with them?**

[SR] Not at all.

**[SG] Why?**

Because we are like one family.

**[SG] Do they have problems speaking with you?**

[SR] We talk the same language. I don't know how to say it. No, nobody told me that.

**[SG] You say you speak the same language.**

[SR] The language of faith.

**[SG] Language of faith. You still hear clearly dialect differences, do you, when people from different backgrounds speak in the church? I mean, you know someone comes from a different background...**

[SR] We don't have different dialects with different backgrounds here. Only if people come from Serbia, from Croatia or a different town, you know. In towns it's a different accent but in Sarajevo everybody speak the same. It doesn't matter what background.

**[SG] So you don't know by language what background they are.**

[SR] No.

**[SG] What about by name?**

[SR] Yeah, you can.

**[SG] You said an interesting thing that you have a language of faith. What's that about?**

[SR] I cannot testify, share with people from the world the same thing I share with my friends, for example, about the Holy Spirit, what he does in my life. Because people in the world they wouldn't understand what I say. They say, "What's Holy Spirit?" And for example, if I have a problem, I will not speak to the people outside of my church. Because I know they cannot help me. But if I speak with somebody from the church, in the church, that person can pray for me, encourage me, help me in some way.

**[SG] Your sister's married with one child?**

[SR] For now. The second is on his way.

**[SG] I see. OK. And your brother-in-law has been severely wounded but he didn't die. Is he now ... is he in the church?**

[SR] No.

**[SG] He doesn't believe?**

[SR] Neither sister nor my brother-in-law nor my nephew. They are not believers.

**[SG] So this is a different sister?**

[SR] Yeah. [NB: Sandra has three sisters.]

**[SG] I see. All right. I was confusing sisters. So can you describe that family dynamic where two of the girls in the family are in this church, and your mother is in the church and yet there is still, what, two other girls, two other sisters who are not? Can you describe that for me?**

[SR] It's the one who is in us who is stronger than the one in the world. Sometimes there are problems. Sometimes they provoke us, they make fun of us. But we really pray for the rest of the members of our family to come to the Lord and that God's Spirit will be in our home only. In spite of Daniela, who lives with us and who is not a Christian yet. That is the third sister.

**[SG] And you live with your mother. I mean, you and your mother and three girls live together. Is that right?**

[SR] Mom and three girls are with me together. And the fourth one is in Belgium. It was just normal. In spite of Daniela being a non-believer, we have home groups in our home and it was normal to start a Bible study group. We call them home groups. Somehow it went, you know, there were no physical attacks or anything. Once Daniela hit Biljana. But that was only once.

**[SG] Do you think that you could marry someone of the different faith,...**

[SR] If you asked me a couple of years ago,

**[SG] ...someone is Muslim or Orthodox?**

[SR] He can be Muslim background but Christian. In that case, yes. Or Serb or Croat, it doesn't matter.

**[SG] So the criterion for you is that they have Christ in their life in a living, active faith? And whether they are Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic...**

[SR] It doesn't matter.

**[SG] That doesn't matter.**

[SR] Just to practice faith in our home. Living faith. And other things are not important.

**[SG] Do you think that forgiveness is an important aspect of peace?**

[SR] Yeah.

**[SG] Can you relate this to me? How do they work together? What's your experience?**

[SR] Before I completely forgave, I couldn't have the complete peace in my life and I could have peace but whenever somebody mentioned anything of Serbs, you know, in that moment there was no peace in me any more. But after I forgave, it's complete. Non-forgiveness actually was a hindrance for me to have complete peace in my heart.

**[SG] Can you say that forgiveness brought a certain kind of liberation?**

[SR] Yes.

**[SG] Can you explain that for me?**

[SR] You are just like relieved, you got some freedom. When you forgave actually then you realise how non-forgiving was a really great burden on you. You can breathe easily. And while you have non-forgiveness in your heart then you cannot even look at everybody in the eyes. In my case, if I would look at the Serb then there

was something inside that happened. But when you forgive them, all people are the same to you and you can look at everybody. And that's something that stopped me to go, to progress, to go forward. And when you are set free from that you are really set free to move, to go further.

**[SG] And I know the answer to this last question but I need to ask it anyway. Do you speak to other young people about your faith?**

[SR] Yes.

**[SG] Only when they speak to you about it or do you...**

[SR] Whenever I can, I do that.

**[SG] Why?**

[SR] Because I know the living God and they do not know him. Because they need salvation as I need it. And I'm not better than others and I know that God loves all. Because of what God did in my life and not only because he told me, "Go and make disciples" but because of what I experienced, I want everybody to have that. That freedom and everything that I got from God I would love everybody to have.

**[SG] What if you met this group of men who fired the grenades on your father today?**

[SR] I would love that. I would really love that. Because I hated that man so much. All Serbs were Serbs but he was on one side and I had a special hatred toward him. That's why I would really like to meet him especially to tell him what I have now. And maybe to tell him about all that hatred I had, probably I would tell him about that and how God can change all that.

**[SG] Do you think because you had a special hatred for that one man that you also have a special forgiveness for him?**

[SR] Maybe. I hated him particularly and so I particularly forgave him and to all other Serbs I forgave, you know, like in common, in general.

**[SG] Do you think Bosnia would be a better place if people did forgive like that?**

[SR] Yes.

**[SG] What do you sense is the biggest barrier for people? Everything you described here is good, you no longer hate, you have freedom, your life has meaning, you have no fear of the future - all of the things that are critical in this society you have faced and you have confidence. If the story is so good then what are the barriers for people accepting the good story?**

[SR] It's the same as with all of us, the enemy wants us, Satan wants people with him.

So, he is the problem.

**[SG] He made them blind and deaf.**

[SR] Is there anything else you want tell me that I've missed or do you think is important?

**[SG] I don't know. I'm really glad and appreciate every chance when I can share what God does in my life.**

[SR] Well, I wish you every God's blessing for sharing and that people have eyes to see and ears to hear. Thank you.

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Vjeko Šaje**

Director, Centar za Religijski Dijalog

Sarajevo

4 March 2002

**[SG] ...Bosnians living side by side, and that that harmony is now destroyed. I'm wondering about the question of restoration. Can we call the process of peace building and of Inter religious dialogue toward that end as a means of social restoration? Do you know what I mean by restoration? To restore that which was once there.**

[VS] We have to also be careful about this term of 'restoration' because some people become frustrated when it is mentioned, something to be restored, like to restore communism.

**[SG] Oh, right.**

[VS] In that aspect, restoration would not be welcome in Bosnia. But, and my point that I always return to, is that we should restore the appreciation that lived here for centuries even in very hard times when we were under occupation or under the authority of someone else, even those times there were certain rules and ways that people made communication, different religious groups and ethnic groups were able to communicate and even to make life better together. A typical example is the Sarajevo bazaar, which has got that kind of Turkish image, but it was always a place where different ethnic communities lived and worked together. It was a bazaar where Serbs would do their trades, the Jews were also a prominent community at one point in the history of Sarajevo and Bosnia, they did their part building Sarajevo and Bosnia. Even now we call one area of this old part *Latinuk*, for those who were Latin or Croats and Catholics, and even the bridge connecting the two sides of the river called *Latinskija Čupria*.

**[SG] That's here in Sarajevo, not Mostar?**

[VS] No, No This is in Sarajevo, Latin Bridge. The name has been brought back because for many years it was called Gravrilo Princip Bridge, offending many Sarajevans when it was imposed by the regime of the ex Yugoslavia.

**[SG] So, there is a long history of living together, cooperation.**

[VS] Yes.

**[SG] Even as you mention in hard times when there was a government of imposition**

[VS] Imposition, yes, exactly. When it was Turkish or Austrian or the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was also an oppressive regime, still people found ways to be together to work together, and to enjoy themselves together.

**[SG] And what's happening today? Are the processes you are involved in trying to restore, to use that word, to restore or in this understanding of the way Bosnia has historically been for centuries?**

[VS] Exactly. Because what happened here, four years of terrible suffering of people and atrocities and imposing very different ideas to people, and extreme ideas, it was a kind of challenge. Some people, because of suffering so much and losing a lot, they became more extreme than one would like or expect, but one must understand those feelings as well. The process of restoration is not just for one month or one year. It is a long process. It is a long process of building this new relation and making relationships better. Probably it will not be the same as it used to be, but it can have some other values, and maybe some appreciation at different level and maybe more open with more respect of the other.

**[SG] Do you find that the religious communities are particularly hopeful in this process? You are involved in the religious communities. Why are you involved with religious communities and not with, whatever, UNHCR or UNO or NATO or other NGOs? Why the religious groups?**

[VS] Because religion became, in this transition period of transition from communism to a market economy, religion became something very important to people in order to identify themselves and to find what was lost in those 50 years of communism, because religion was not forbidden, but it was considered as something strange, even abnormal. People who would attend mass or go to prayer on Friday would be considered weird. So, whenever I had to go to church with my family, I was not able to share the experience with my fellows in the classroom because it would be something that they would make fun of or tease me about. So the whole society was directed in that way, that religion is not something that one should of serve or appreciate.

**[SG] And yet, religion..., How is religion related to this process of reconciliation? Do you find it important in this process?**

[VS] When I look in the past, I remember that our best friend or family, one man, his name was [?], he was a religious Muslim. And he was the first always to come and greet us for Christmas and for Easter and he was the most welcome person in our family on that day. That's the way I see the restoration of relations in Bosnia. I would like to see..., and it's happening. I see it, even now. I see it in my family. But I'm not sure it's an experience everyone is having, and I would like this to become more and more present in our future life.

**[SG] I wanted to address especially with you the idea of the cycle of revenge, since you're the one who brought this to my attention most directly. Do you think that religious faith and forgiveness is an essential part of getting past the cycle of revenge? In other words, how does religious faith and forgiveness contribute to overcoming the cycle of revenge?**

[VS] From my experience, from my life, and also from the experience of the seminars and workshops we had with religious people, I am convinced that the people who really are devout in religion, and also people who'll are in the clergy, they're not likely to have this feeling of revenge so much. Because somehow religion helps them to overcome that dangerous feeling of revenge. Because revenge can only lead you to more suffering, more troubles. We see that now in them Middle East. The cycle of revenge is constantly causing suffering and death of people and nobody knows where is the beginning and where is the end.

**[SG] So, you see this in those who are devout people and in the clergy?**

[VS] Yes, not everybody. Not everybody, but the majority of people who attended these kinds of workshops in which we elaborate the cycle of revenge and how to get out of that cycle and into a spiral of conciliation. Really, they understand and appreciate what they discover through that process.

**[SG] And you see changes in these people as a result?**

[VS] Definitely.

**[SG] Definitely. Can you describe some of the changes or give me an example of someone you have seen changed?**

[VS] For example, one Imam from Fojnica, after certain number of workshops he attended, he became the leader of a community in helping Catholic Croats to come back to Fojnica. And he encouraged his believers also to help these families to come back. Fojnica is very close to Kiseljak and both cities suffered from ethnic cleansing for different reasons and in different periods of the war.

**[SG] At the hands of Croats, in this case, in Fojnica?**

[VS] In Fojnica Croats left because the same thing happened with Muslims in Kiseljak. Muslims from Kiseljak were taken out and went to Fojnica and the Croats had to leave Fojnica and go somewhere else.

**[SG] I see.**

[VS] It was also because of a kind of revenge, you know. If you do this to us, we will do it to you. And some people were just afraid and they have left because they thought if they did this to Muslims, then Muslims will do this to us and they left.

**[SG] Which is exactly the cycle of revenge.**

[VS] The cycle of revenge, yes.

**[SG] What about the concept of truth. Of actually confronting what people did? What I mean is this: the truth and reconciliation committee in South Africa has stated assertively that it is absolutely imperative, they must confront the perpetrators with the deeds that they did. Now, without going into a long history of**

Yugoslavia, we know a lot of the atrocities of the Second World War were never addressed. They were, as we say, swept under the carpet.

[VS] Right.

[SG] **And, all were considered equally guilty, in other words, to go on, you had this Brotherhood and Unity, and none of those things were ever confronted. Is there a need, in your opinion, to confront the issues directly and not just do the same after the Second World War; to get these crimes into the open so that they may be dealt with either with the sense of justice or the sense of mercy?**

[VS] Definitely. It is necessary to discuss about the truth, and to discuss it on time. Because if you hide some of the facts it will just show up in the future and someone will interpret it in his own way and you will have a game. You'll have some kind of feeling for revenge, like it happened in Serbia, that Serbs just became so enthusiastic about revenge for the loss they had 600 years ago in the Battle of Kosovo. And Milošević was an expert in...

[SG] **Yes he was.**

[VS] ...in doing this. But it showed that it didn't pay. I mean, the Serbian nation lost so much credibility and dignity in all of this warfare.

[SG] **Well, now you raise a very important point, which is that the manipulation of truth ultimately does not pay the dividends that you hope.**

[VS] Yes, definitely.

[SG] **Would you say that's true?**

[VS] That's definitely true. And also what is important to say in our case is that during the Communist time, there was official truth and there was also truth that we would realise through the stories of our grandparents or our neighbours or are friends, and people would form their own kind of truth and history, and they would believe in that, and they would pretend to believe in the official truth, you know. So there were double standards. And when all this happened with the fall of communism, or actually when Yugoslavia started to disintegrate, then everybody had their own truth and everybody also wanted to fight for their own rights, and that led us to a terrible suffering.

[SG] **Is your work addressing..., I mean, one of the difficulties I find is that when you raise the question of what people actually did, then it becomes an argument with one side accusing the other, and you get right back into the cycle of revenge, or cycle of who did what to whom. How do move out of, how do confront the perpetrators with the truth and not simply just get back into a cycle of accusations?**

[VS] Well, a definitely very hopeful methodology on our workshops is telling stories. And even if the stories are very difficult to hear, it helps the other group a lot to hear what those people. And then they also tell their part of the story and somehow it brings things to a balance. Some people are sometimes frustrated because it is a kind of equalising of guilt. But also for the other side to realise that it others were also suffering. It was not just

black-and-white. Then we go to another step, forward with telling positive stories from the war and from the time of suffering and the other members of the other community helped those who were in jeopardy, and it brings people closer and helps people to understand that there is a future. When you see positive examples in the midst of all these troubles, then you see there's hope.

**[SG] When people understand each other better,**

[VS] Yes.

**[SG] They understand the truth has many sides and not just their own side, but that there are different perspectives on truth and a reminder that this is the way it used to be, or hear something that happened during the war that helped one another.**

[VS] Exactly. I think I told you want time about our seminar with the Moslem community last year. The seminar really brought all the imams from Bosnia Herzegovina to the session. It started with telling very difficult stories about suffering and how one imam was mentioning that 40 members of his family were killed. Everything started with very dark stories and there was a kind of moment where we wanted to do something else, so we started telling positive stories to encourage ourselves. Then we realised that two imams started to tell stories about how the Moslem community just before the war in Prijedor was helping the Orthodox community to build a church. Another example was that the Orthodox community helped the Muslims to build a church in Sanski Most just a few weeks before the war started. And those are notorious places where big and genocides happened. So it shows that the religious community or religious people were not so much involved in what was coming after.

**[SG] So without the nationalism, before the ideologies took over, the religious communities were helping each other.**

[VS] Yes, yes.

**[SG] The religious communities in general, led by religious leaders and religious people.**

[VS] But the Lords of war when they want war, then they just make some excuse and make some atrocities in one village. They can even pay somebody to do the atrocity and then the war starts.

**[SG] Vjeko, there is a lot of distrust in Bosnia today because of the war. I'm interested in what you think about the concept of individuals actually being guilty and doing the wrong, and yet there is mistrust against the whole people group. I'll give you an example. It may be the case that the entire Serb, or most of the Serbs, are not trusted for what some Serb nationalists did, or Croats, or Muslims in a lesser sense. I don't mean to equalise the guilt or to say this group did this and that group didn't do that, but is there a way of singling out that these acts were done by individuals and yet there is distrusted in people's minds against the whole people or against the religious group? Do you sense that this is true, first of all?**

[VS] Well, you know people are still cautious about the other group. Hence, it depends also on how much people suffered. For me, it is much easier to make a relationship with a Serb or a Moslem because I didn't have any direct loss. I lost some friends in the war that were killed by shells, but who knows who fired the shell? I mean, you don't know who fired the shell. Maybe I would hate the individual if I knew who it was. But for me, it is easier to make a relationship with the other because I didn't suffer directly a loss in my family or in my neighbourhood. But for people who've suffered a lot, it is difficult and they also tend to blame the entire nation and the whole group of people and I think it will take a lot of energy and time to overcome this kind of feeling. At the same time, I also..., I'm not sure completely what I think about collective guilt related to individual guilt. It's not only here the problem, but also in your country. If you elect your President you are also guilty if he is committing genocide, because you elected him. So we have the same feeling about Milošević. Now in the Hague, they're saying this is individual guilt, but who voted for him all of these years? He didn't come from Mars, he was elected.

**[SG] So, democracy, or the way democracy works, is in some ways complicit in collective guilt?**

[VS] Yes. Yes. I wouldn't say that collective guilt doesn't exist, although I here that in some articles there are some ideas that there is only individual guilt and no collective guilt. But what is the issue of voting and election and all those things?

**[SG] And an army is certainly a collective of people.**

[VS] Yes, a collective of people.

**[SG] You say that it will be a long time before this is overcome. Do see a way..., so you sense that it can be overcome?**

[VS] Yes.

**[SG] How can it be overcome? Through the same methods and methodology? Are you dealing with individuals or are you doing with the collective, and say, look all these people didn't do this, and we can show you that this people group that you hate, also suffered. Or how do you do that?**

[VS] Basically, I'm convinced that making relationships is one way of fighting with these feelings and fighting with those ideas, because once I make a relationship with the Serb, he will find the human in me and I will find the human in him and it will allow us to communicate and probably it will prevent us from hating each other and killing each other in the future. That's also what we do in our workshops because sometimes people need for the first time after 10 years of different nationalities, of different ethnic backgrounds, of different religious communities, and they realise that they are all humans. They're not bad guys. There are some good guys with whom you can communicate and exchange some ideas and make some projects.

**[SG] So relationships...**

[VS] Building relationship is most important.

[SG] **Which is really an individual process, isn't it?**

[VS] Individual process, but also can be organised in a sub-collective setting. Youth programmes are very important. Cultural events also.

[SG] **This is really what you're engaged in, isn't it? Bringing these people together and building those relationships, even if it is for a weekend or a week, it is that correct?**

[VS] Yes.

[SG] **They may never see each other again, they have been brought in from different areas...**

[VS] Usually they see each other again.

[SG] **Is that right?**

[VS] Sometimes they come to another event, or I suggest that some people will attend my seminar can go to other events. For example, Abraham asked me if I thought some of our people could come to their event or their workshop. Or W C R P.

[SG] **So they do see each other again?**

[VS] Yes. Sometimes we help getting scholarships for somebody. I know somebody from the United States who could get money for students who were studying theology or some other programme or some other project, I just give the names and information.

[SG] **I see. And do these people live in each others neighbourhoods or not?**

[VS] Sometimes they do sometimes they are very far apart, depending from which area there are coming.

[SG] **Let me ask this. It's question number eight, which we didn't talk about last time. Is it the case that national ideology is the real enemy of true faith and not the other national groups? What I mean by that is, you have nationalists who are, let's say, Serb or Croat or some who may even be nationalist Moslem. But they don't really represent those who are devout in their faith. And those who are devout in their faith don't really identify with nationalists even though they are all Serb or all Croat or all Moslem. So, is it the case that those who are devout have a common enemy which is those who are militantly nationalist? Is that clear?**

[VS] It's clear. But the answer cannot be clear because what we face in our society now is that we definitely have different levels of religious feelings from people. Some people will claim to be very religious are just using religion for their own purposes. So it is difficult and I don't think anybody should define anybody else's level of religion or religious feeling, but there is definitely a case where some are religious now just for their own interests. But I strongly believe that those who are devout Christians, Muslims or Jews, there [their?] national feeling is not driving them to hate others. But I can tell you at this point, there are many people with different feelings and different way of expressing

their religion and nationality. Probably that is part of the process. Somebody is religious just to get some money or a position.

**[SG] So it's convenient to be religious?**

[VS] Convenient, yes. To belong to a religious community, but I doubt the religious feeling of that person.

**[SG] So, it's kind of opportunistic?**

[VS] Opportunistic, yes.

**[SG] What about local justice beyond the Hague? In other words, even people who have devised the Hague, never mind whether Milošević is right, or if it's a proper process, or if it's sanctioned by the proper authorities. It will only be able to deal with the key leaders who were involved in genocide or acts of crimes against humanity. What about the lower level person who also was, let's say, a paramilitary or who went in out of fear or anxiety and did some criminal act to their neighbour, yet will never be put on the list for the Hague, and is still living in the community? How will that person be found? Is there a need to find him and bring him to justice? Or in some way to confront that person, or must people live knowing that these people are still in their neighbourhood?**

[VS] Well, I think that there are some trials on the local level regarding some people who did some looting or some atrocities, local level. But we cannot expect that everybody will be caught and brought to justice. And I think that we've also had a general amnesty for the lower level soldiers. That was one of the compromises that we had to accept.

**[SG] Which essentially says, that there is guilt on all sides and that we live with that tension?**

[VS] We understand that it is for the sake of the future. For example, even the former J N A officers can come to Sarajevo and claim flats and live here, if they want. And I didn't notice any kind of riot against this action. And it's happening now.

**[SG] So people are accepting this now?**

[VS] People are accepting this. I am accepting this, I'm not happy about that. But actually I became completely indifferent to that, and most of the people became indifferent to this fact, because they are fed up with the whole history and all it that has happened and they just want to live.

**[SG] There is a weariness, can we say? Do you know what I mean? They're tired?**

[VS] Yes, exactly.

**[SG] They're tired of all the past and they want to get on with life. So they are willing to say, forget it, let's just move on.**

[VS] Yes. You cannot persuade everybody that was wrong. The same is probably true in the United States with the question of racism. Probably there are so many people who can't stand blacks, but they have to accept the fact that they have the same rights.

**[SG] There is a Truth and Reconciliation Committee in Bosnia. But I don't read much about it from where I am in Edinburgh. I note that it exists and I know that some people were put on the committee. Do you know anything about it and whether it functions very well?**

[VS] I heard at the beginning that it was formed, but I haven't heard much concrete results so far. I know that Jakob Finci [Jewish leader in Sarajevo] is strongly involved in this and I believe this is necessary and that it will solve some of the issues in Bosnia. The issues of history, the issue of history many years ago, and of recent history, and it must be once and forever clear to everybody what happened in the past. How many people were killed, by whom they were killed, and then we will be able to keep on living. That's one of the things that I really expect to be solved, and the question of language and the question of education should be part of that process. Because everything is from the case of convention. Even history is a convention.

**[SG] There's a lot of argument because of the Second World War and some of this was never done. Some of the education was never brought forward, the accounting of deaths is still disputed. So, you are advocating that things be different this time, and there's got to be better accounting of the dead and the perpetrators so that a better history is recorded for future generations?**

[VS] Yes. And also, for example, I can give you this example of Gavrilo Princip, you know who he is?

**[SG] Yes.**

[VS] For many years he was considered a hero and we were forced to consider him a hero. Of course now, everybody can consider him whatever they want. I know that many Serbs, even moderate Serbs with whom I speak, still consider him a hero. I personally consider him the first terrorist of the last century. So there is still a need to reconcile about that and put him in his right place.

**[SG] I remember when I first came here to this city and there used to be a big plaque on the sidewalk and a big wall mural at the place of the assassination...**

[VS] Exactly.

**[SG] ...which, of course, is completely gone now.**

[VS] It was almost like a small shrine.

**[SG] And I know of at a picture in a history book in which the Mladi Bosni were honoured for their work in the first part of the century. So it shows that there has been tension here for a long time. How we reconcile the history, especially when someone like that is held up as a hero is sometimes difficult to account for. Well, I**

**hope it in this generation, with this war, you're right, that there is a better accounting. Not only on the good side, but also the bad side.**

[VS] Yes also the bad side.

**[SG] Let me ask a question which we talked about last time. That is about the special role that women play in the process of reconciliation and restoration. First, do you sense that it is the case that, of all people who were victimised, that we can say that women were among the most victimised, because their fathers, brothers, sons went off to war, were the ones who were killed primarily? And whether you are Moslem, whether you are Serb, whether you're Catholic, women suffered very much the same fate because of their loved ones? Would you agree?**

[VS] I would agree that women suffered a lot during this war. Those who lived under the siege of Sarajevo, I mean, for example, women and men suffered almost the same way as far as the shelling and sniping and hunger and all of these things, but, of course, women have so many obligations to take care in the family to get food and everything, and in some places where the army managed to conquer parts of the city, they suffered from rape and humiliation and terrible things happened to the women in this war. On the other hand, I wouldn't say that all the women are innocent, because even in history you can have many examples where women also played the role of organising all kinds of genocide. Even in this war we had some leaders who were women like Biljana Plavšić, who was very much involved in this generation of war. So I wouldn't say that if someone is a woman, she can immediately bring peace. I don't believe in this theory. But I believe that women can really be a bridge between two groups, which was happening. I really noticed that when the Dayton Agreement was signed, women were the first to cross the border lines, to cross the bridges, to cross the checkpoints because they tend not to have so much of the legacy of the war and fighting against each other. For them it was easier to cross the lines and they were the first to bring people together and to exchange news and different kinds of information.

**[SG] Is there a sense in which women also build bridges to the next generation through their children?**

[VS] Sure. This task can be understood in two ways. If the woman happens to be a nationalistic kind of woman, she will bring up a child in the way that the child hates the other group, which is happening quite often.

**[SG] Is that right?**

[VS] Yes. So there is an importance for a woman, also as a mother, to realise truth. Only in that way will she be able to educate the children here in an normal way and acceptable way.

**[SG] Very often we notice that religion, women practise religion more than men. I don't know if that's true in Bosnia or not to. But frequently religion touches women in ways that it doesn't touch men. Do you sense there are ways in which the religious communities have been able to address the needs of women? And do religious women feel a compulsion to work toward reconciliation? In other words, the question is not just about women in general, but pious women or religious women.**

[VS] Well, religious women are usually considered by secular people and secular women as having fewer rights. But when you get close to families and see how they operate, you can see that religious women in a religious environment and a family are respected in some kind of special way that cannot be easily understood by secular people. So, the secular woman would consider the religious woman as a prisoner, but you really have to live close to these families to understand that it's not like that.

**[SG] And that they have exceptional freedom?**

[VS] They have some kind of freedom that we cannot appreciate.

**[SG] Can you give me an example of what you mean?**

[VS] For example, in the Moslem society, the woman is not likely to communicate with some strangers coming to her house, and this is considered a lack of freedom by secular people. But for her, it is some kind of basic feeling to be oriented to her family, and she is free in that. She wouldn't feel free if she were forced to shake hands with the man or a foreigner or a stranger who was coming to the house.

**[SG] So, there is a certain amount of protection for her?**

[VS] Yes, there is protection and I notice in some devout religious families that men appreciate women in special ways. They protect her, they cherish her in a way that maybe we cannot completely understand. And then we say she's not completely free. This is not always in the case in Moslem culture. You have this tradition also in Catholic tradition. A woman is not so much open to the outer world. She is more focused upon her family and somehow it is not understood by the secular society.

**[SG] You're really touching upon an interesting aspect of the culture, that I intended to address primarily to the Muslims. But you're dealing with all of the cultural groups. Maybe it is a good question to look at with all of them. It is not altogether unrelated to question number seven: In what ways are the values of secular Western society in conflict with the Bosnian Moslem, or the Muslim community? Is it possible, that the Western presence, through its military, which is there to protect the Moslem community, but the values of Western presence actually undermine the Bosnian community, because there is a value conflict and that people will slowly accommodate to the values of Western Europe, and therefore the traditions of the Bosnian Moslem community are slowly eroded. And that, long-term presence will actually destroy the community that there Westerners have come to protect? What do you think on this?**

[VS] Well, it's connected with this question of globalisation. It's always a question of how much and what quality of the general ideas one should acquire and give up as their own way of life and ideas. It's not only a question of Muslim society, it's with any society which is not Western. So, I think that most of the young people that I deal with in Bosnia tend to accept many values from the West and from Western culture, which is not always bad. I mean, why not except music or something? On the other hand, I like also to have a society in which we are aware of music coming from China, from Japan, from India, from Arabic countries. I lived five years in Iraq and it was a chance to meet and learn some

completely different cultural and musical tastes. I didn't know that there was classical Arabic music, and I started to admire that. And I always ask myself, why can we listen to Mozart and Beethoven and the Beatles but why can't we be patient enough to try to acquire something also from other countries? It's not always in music and film, it's also history and literature and everything.

**[SG] So, there are a lot of positive things to globalisation.**

[VS] Definitely. But this should be in all directions, not just globalisation coming from the West.

**[SG] Do you sense, however, that the values of the West, I'm speaking specifically of the secular values, where there's a strong separation between faith and politics or faith and leaders in the community..., I mean, Europe has had its own tragic history with religious wars, mostly because faith and politics were mixed together until the Peace of Westphalia in the 16th century. So, we experienced that in our own Western culture too, and that's part of the reason why Western Europe has divided these two relationships. It's part of the reason in my own country why we have the division between Church and State. In the Moslem sense, however, there isn't this division between faith and politics, and that these relationships are seen more as one. Especially with the values of secularism, which doesn't..., we've talked about the how secular people look down upon women of faith as being not as free. Is there a sense in which the values of secularism undermine the values of the faith community? I mean, it involves all sorts of areas, not simply whether you go to the mosque or whether you go to church, but you're relationships, marriage, how many partners you may choose to have, how the family will be taken care of, if there are several men involved or women involved. Is there a breakdown in society in some sense when secular values are adopted rather than the religious faith communities' values?**

[VS] Well, we are all exposed to secular values and that is part of globalisation as well. But each society is trying to solve this problem in its own way. You have the same problem here in the Mennonite or Amish communities in the United States fighting with secular environment trying to get in. But there are ways and mechanisms in which they resist. Maybe I can find it more in the Amish community there than I can find it in a Moslem community here, which is, I feel, more open than what I've experienced with the Amish in the United States. But, of course, there are some communities here, which are also resisting this kind of secularisation. And the hierarchy of that church and the Muslim community is against that [secularisation]. And they definitely don't encourage different partners and they encourage more children, and they are against contraception, and all secular things. If you get your instructions from the religious hierarchy, then you'll get the same answer about such decisions. But real life is something else. I would say that 70 per cent of young people are likely to except the secular kind of life.

**[SG] One of the questions is how much compelling influence the religious community has on the people of Bosnia in general. Here I mean not just the of Bosnian Muslims. Do the faith communities have much influence in society after 40 years of communism? And you say 70 percent of the youth have really adopted a secular worldview, Western world view.**

[VS] It depends where you take this research. If you go to a village community, whether it is Orthodox, Catholic, or Muslim, the influence there is much bigger than in the city. So, if you go to Rama, for example, where the majority are Catholics, you can feel the influence in every aspect of life by the Church. Which is good. The church is not teaching them something bad, and I see that they live their lives in a very traditional and kind of balanced way.

**[SG] So there's a big difference between the cities of Bosnia and the villages?**

[VS] Yes.

**[SG] And this would be typical of all of the world, actually.**

[VS] I think it's kind of a global thing. The small city in the United States is completely different than New York.

**[SG] Well, this has been terrific. You've clarified some questions that we've raised last time when we talked.**

[VS] But you have also helped me to clarify some of my thoughts. It's a process of course.

**[SG] Of course. And this could go on and on with more questions, but I don't want to leave out the possibility that I've neglected some area that is important or that you thought of, maybe from the questions, or from your home, that you think I really ought to cover and which I have in some way neglected. Is there something that you think I need to deal with more, especially with the concepts of restoration and reconciliation?**

[VS] Maybe to deal with, I think I mentioned last time about the question of small religions, new religions, sects, and how the three main traditions now are treating these cases. There is a lot of resentment to new religions and small religions.

**[SG] Such as where we are meeting right now for instance?**

[VS] Exactly. For example, the Orthodox Church is completely against these kind of things, and we had two incidences in two seminars. One was in Šipovo and one was in Brčko, where the local priest rushed out of the seminar room saying, "I heard that there are some Baptists going around our community. I have to prevent our people from meeting them!" You know.

**[SG] I'm not sure where to go with this question**

[VS] Just to be aware of the situation at this point about this. There are some conflicts about new religions, and there is a big conflict about the Wahhabi Muslims and the official Islamic community here. And the Reisu-l-ulema here does not recognise these Wahabi Muslims at all. He is against them, and they are against him. They don't appreciate him, they don't recognise him.

[SG] It raises, then, the question of where Bosnia goes in terms of its religious law or laws. If it goes Western, there would be freedom of religious practice, religious conviction, in so far as it does not compromise the liberties of someone else. So, do you foresee that the Wahabi faith and the new supposed sects. or groups..., the Baptists actually, the Baptists and Mennonites, the Adventists, are old-new.

[VS] Old-new, yes.

[SG] I mean, they were here in the middle of the 19 century, as opposed to the Wahabi, which are much newer, a twentieth century organisation, or, I think, the other groups like the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, which should be newer groups, I think. Do you think there is going to be freedom in Bosnia to let them stay and carry out their activities?

[VS] I think it will be, and it should be. But I'm talking about the situation in the moment, in this moment, many of the religious, actually I would say most of the religious communities now are against the new, as newcomers.

[SG] So there is a new tension in the community.

[VS] Yes.

[SG] Not only of the established, historic, cultural faith ethno-religious groups, but tension of the new people. May I say that the intention of proselytising or evangelising is perceived to take people out of their churches or from their mosques?

[VS] Just the same as stealing people, that's how they consider it.

[SG] And so there is a tension. So, there is a different sort of conflict.

[VS] Yes.

[SG] It's not a military conflict...

[VS] It's considered as a big sin. I even know some people who change their religions in the United States in their life. For them there it was not such a big problem, I feel, as it would be here.

[SG] Here it would be a big thing if people would change your faith?

[VS] Yes.

[SG] I think it was Ivo who mentioned a case up in Croatia. I don't recall which way it went, but a Croatian woman wanted to become Orthodox or a Serbian woman wanted to become Catholic, and they just looked at her like, "Well, you can't do that!" [laughter] You know, this is not possible! And ultimately, they rejected her even though no one was trying to change her mind, she was simply wanting to do it herself. And that would be true of Bosnia as well, wouldn't it?

[VS] Again, it is completely different in the city than it is in the village.

[SG] Yes.

[VS] In the village I think it would be a terrible thing. In the city you can do it and nobody can actually see that or recognise that so easily.

[SG] Yes, communities are a broader, and broader minded.

[VS] Yes.

[SG] And there is a mixture of marriages, and plenty of people without confession...

[VS] Yes, no confession.

[SG] So, what you do is up to you. Well, that's an important point, which I have left out. So there is this tension that, if these groups, whether Wahabi or Baptists, or Protestants in general, are involved in reconciliation.... I mean, in some ways, the Protestants are outside of the conflict. I don't know about the Wahabi, because they have a certain agenda for Muslims. But the Protestants, for instance, are really outside of the conflict. Nobody is shooting at them because they're Protestants.

[VS] Yes.

[SG] Is there a way, because they are outside of the conflict, that they could be involved in the reconciliation process, or are they seen as such an outsider, and their work is stealing people, so they're not going to be seen as part of the process?

[VS] Until now they are considered a threat to the major religions here.

[SG] I see.

[VS] But I do definitely consider them as a factor of peace.

[SG] How so?

[VS] Because, as you said, nobody is shooting at them, and they're not shooting at the others. And they can be like the Jews here, crossing the cultures.

[SG] So, you perceive that if the Protestants were involved in such ministries as this, it could be a positive help?

[VS] Yes, yes. And also, the main traditions must be faced with some people accepting the other religion.

[SG] Well, I'd like to see that. As a Protestant myself, I would like to see that there is more understanding between the faiths.

[VS] Yes.

[SG] I know that many times my own Protestant friends are afraid of the other groups. They don't understand very much of what they're about, they have never been to a worship service of the other, they have never been inside of a mosque. There needs to be better understanding, and that may be the case on both sides.

[VS] Sure.

[SG] Excellent. Now, I have a couple more mechanical questions for you. We had talked earlier that I could possibly go with you and visit some of the round table discussions with people. You said the next one was going to be in April. I'm not going to be here in April. I'm going to be here again in May for a month. Would you again welcome my presence among you, and if you have something in May, can I come along with you?

[VS] Sure, sure. Just inform me in time and we can organise it. If there's not a meeting, maybe we can go and meet some people.

[SG] Well, that would be excellent. There are really three kinds of groups I'm looking at. One is people like yourself who are doing this professionally, so to say. Clergy persons involved in reconciliation. So, Ivo and a professor at the Islamic Faculty ...

[VS] Did you speak with Nedžad?

[SG] Yes. I have an interview with him on Wednesday.

[VS] He can help too, maybe with a place to stay, within the Islamic community.

[SG] Alright. I will ask him on Wednesday, when I see him. The other groups are, you know, people that you are dealing with. Especially young people, who have been profoundly affected by the war; the loss of a loved one or loss of property, or something. And yet because of their faith, because the seminars of reconciliation, they have come to terms with their situation and have come to a point of forgiveness or come to a point of acceptance.

[VS] Yes.

[SG] Those are the people I would like to interview. They would be rather anonymous in the study, but nevertheless very important. And possibly the third group would be women. And I'm not sure why yet. But I think if I get to talk with enough women I will have enough insights to know why they should be brought out in the study.

[VS] Talking about this, maybe you could try to find a book, are you familiar with Swanee Hunt? She was the former ambassador in Vienna and she was very much involved in Inter religious dialogue here. She helped in organising the first meeting of religious people, I think I told you about that last time, perhaps I didn't, in Vienna. We all went to Vienna. Swanee Hunt was the facilitator, and we brought religious heads from Bosnia there. They formed in the Inter religious council with the help of Swanee Hunt.

**[SG] What's her first time?**

[VS] Swanee. She's a teacher of women in politics at Harvard now. At the Kennedy School. She published a book about women in Bosnia. She interviewed dozens of women and Bosnia to get the ideas about the war and peace in Bosnia. The title of the book is, *This Was Not Our War*.

**[SG] Is it in English?**

[VS] I have it in Bosnian, but likely she has that in English. You have to somehow make contact with her in Boston. It's easy to find Swanee Hunt.

**[SG] I'll check with bookstores and see what's available. That would be an invaluable resource.**

[VS] That would be something very, very useful to you.

**[SG] Or write. Then let me stay in contact with you by e-mail.**

[VS] Sure.

**[SG] I don't have my dates fixed. I need to..., I need to go home to my family first!**

[VS] As far as I know, I will be here in May.

**[SG] Do you know if you have any seminars in May?**

[VS] Not yet. For May we haven't made any plans.

**[SG] OK.**

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Entoni Šeperić**

Offices of Oči u Oči, Sarajevo

24 May 2002

**[SG] I wanted to spend a little more time with you and try to understand what's behind what you do and why you do it. That really is what I'm looking for. You're the kind of young person or student that I'm searching for.**

[ES] Actually, I was born in Sarajevo. I'm 25 years old, and a child of a mixed marriage. My father is a Croat Catholic from Croatia and my mother is Bosnian with Muslim background. I experienced diversity already in the beginning of my life, in my childhood. I was not raised in Catholic tradition, because my father was in Yugoslav army and it was unimaginable to be raised in any faith within a system opposed to religion. He was an officer in the Yugoslav army serving in Croatia. He graduated from the Academy, the military academy in Zagreb. There was always a conflict between my father and me, because he was raised during the Communist regime, totally opposed to faith, although his family is of strong Catholic background. His father, my grandfather, was a member of Croatian quislings, the forces of former NDH, which collaborated with Nazi's, and my mother's father, my other grandfather was in the Partisans. So it is very complicated and very mixed background. I finished primary and secondary school in Croatia. Although I was born in Sarajevo, I lived in Croatia for a long time.

**[SG] Where did you live there?**

[ES] Several places. For instance, I lived in Petrinja, it is a small city on the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina, and I lived in Koprivnica, on the border with Hungary, because my father always, or in most cases, was stationed on the bordering areas, and I also lived in Rijeka, which is a port city in Croatia, for seven years. That is the longest. There in Rijeka I finished my secondary school and then decided to study theology. Basically that was in 1990 and 1991 and the crisis in Yugoslavia was already there before the war began. As a result, my family split. My father and my mother divorced.

**[SG] Did they do this because of the ethnic difficulties or were other issues?**

[ES] It was mixed. My father was very strict, and raised with totally different ways and values. He joined the Croatian army when the war began and left the Yugoslav army and became a strong nationalist, Croat nationalist. And that affected me, of course, because I have different views of the situation and I completely disagree with his point of view. My mother moved to Bosnia, but that was later, when the Dayton Accord was signed. She settled in central Bosnia. She is also a native Bosnian, born in Sarajevo. I lived in Croatia until the fall of 1996 and then I decided to come to Bosnia and to work with people.

**[SG] Did you attend a theological school?**

[ES] Yes. I finished the first year of theology in Rijeka, where there is a school of theology, and then I decided not just to come to Bosnia but to join the Franciscan order, here in Bosnia, in order to become a minor brother. So I came here to Sarajevo. I also was in Livno for a time, during a probation year. It has been very inspirational for me because of the atmosphere. As you know, Bosnia is neighbouring area to Herzegovina. There were always prominent nationalist tensions, Croat tensions.

**[SG] Is Livno actually in Bosnia, or is it in Herzegovina?**

[ES] It's on the border. Some say it's Herzegovina, some say it's in Bosnia.

**[SG] My impression is that it is in Herzegovina.**

[ES] Geographically, yes, but the mentality of the people is typically Bosnian.

**[SG] It falls, I think, in the realm of Herzeg-Bosna.**

[ES] Yes. It is in the most southern parish of the province of Bosnian Franciscans. And there I experienced what it means to be Franciscan in Bosnia. What are the problems and what are the issues that you have to deal with. Basically, it is a rigid nationalism among Croats. It was provoked, and it is always a twofold situation. Most of that nationalism comes as a result of specific history and experience throughout the history of the Croatian people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is beautifully described by Ivan Lovrenović, who is a historian. He recently wrote a book on Bosnian Croats and what has been going on in the last 10 years. And he perfectly describes things in such way that I almost totally agree with this description of the situation, at least concerning the historical development.

**[SG] Ivan....**

[ES] Ivan Lovrenović. [...] Basically, that was the first aim, to work with people. And then I met Fra Ivo Marković, who was to become my Professor at the Franciscan seminary here in Sarajevo, and he inspired me with his work. He inspired me and we spend a lot of time together discussing what we as Franciscans can do. As you know, Fra Ivo Marković was already starting with his mission here in Sarajevo with his Inter-religious service when he came back from Zagreb, where he created a Christian Information Service, providing information during the war, providing a link between Sarajevo and Zagreb. Actually, the mission of Fra Ivo initially shaped my career. Then I met John and Karin Kaufman-Wall, Mennonites, and that's how I came across peace theology – throughout the Mennonite brothers and sisters who were working here.

**[SG] Did it affect you at all that this was a Protestant theology?**

[ES] No. Actually, there is a significant similarity between Franciscan spirituality and Mennonite peace theology. There is a tradition of peace theology in the Church. There is something similar in Mennonite theology to what St. Francis did.

**[SG] Yes.**

[ES] Especially in relation to Islam. St. Francis is very inspirational person. During the Crusades he was the one who went to the Sultan and actually tried to mediate and to communicate. This experience was very strong for me. Personally, I had to find a way to get along with my twofold experience. My mother was a link with Bosnia and a Moslem heritage and my father was a sort of link with Croatia and a Christian background. So there was a kind of gap.

**[SG] Just to emphasise that, did you find that your father, as a *military man*, became a nationalist as well?**

[ES] Yes, I would say so. When he joined the Croatian army, he was drawn and inspired by the policies of HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) at that time of President Tudjman, who I personally dislike. Since then, we could never communicate because of this. I tried to do that, but their position was very strong. I still wait healing. We have met twice since then. Once in Zagreb when I went with *Pontanima* choir and one other time. This kind of situation is true for many people, many of my friends that I have in Croatia. I think the process of healing has started in Croatia. The process of healing has begun. It has a long way to go.

**[SG] Is there a time that is right for you to struggle and to take up arms?**

[ES] Yes. I was always, as you know, things are very complicated legally in our country. There is no chance since last year to serve in the army, I mean to oppose military service and be a consciences objector. Basically I would never take up arms.

[Missing on tape.]

**[SG] What drew you to study theology? You obviously had some..., [pause] I don't want to speak for you, but did you have a calling or some process...**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] Was it a thought process or experience that brought you towards studying theology?**

[ES] Basically I can say that it was a calling, a clear calling. It started probably 10 or 12 years ago when I attended masses in the Franciscan church. Basically I started in Protestant churches, in a Baptist church in Rijeka.

**[SG] No kidding!**

[ES] Yeah, because one of my best friends is Baptist and we actually went to school together. I remember he was kind of a black sheep, always pushed aside because he was different.

**[SG] Yeah.**

[ES] And he is like a brother to me. We developed a very close relationship and we both wanted to, well, we started praying together, being different also. At that time I was

reading a lot about Catholicism, mostly about Franciscans and the Franciscan movement. And it really drew me. And St. Francis is a remarkable person in the history of Christianity. And then I started co-operation with the Baptists also. I acted as a small link between them and the Catholic community there and actually we succeeded as you know in Rijeka in becoming one of the main ecumenical centres in Croatia. There are strong relationships between the local Orthodox community, the Catholic community and various Protestant churches. But a link was missing with other religions. There is also a significant Islamic minority in Rijeka and when I came to Bosnia, I was drawn more into inter-religious dialogue. I wanted to participate in that and so I discussed it with Fra Ivo Marković. And Sarajevo is something special. Just walking around you can feel the difference.

**[SG] Well, that's true. I have just come back from Banja Luka and things are very different there. I always suspected Sarajevo was something special and different; it always has been and continues to be so.**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] And of course, the Inter-ethnic border is very close to Sarajevo and is part of Sarajevo, taking part of Sarajevo off into its own little entity. There is not much mixture, but the farther away the border gets the less interaction there is between the people of the Federation and the Republic of Srpska. There seems to be less contact now because of the Dayton Accord although the Dayton Accord wants to have a multi-ethnic, multicultural, multi-religious society, all of these things, the Dayton Accord Inter-ethnic border seems to preclude that that is actually going to happen anytime soon. You're probably well aware that there is a call now to redo the Dayton Accord and disband with it entirely in order to build other structures and to rebuild and integrate civil society again. Being up in Banja Luka was an experience for itself, to see how much animosity is still there. We were in the Moslem community there and I was just astonished to see just how destroyed the Ferhadija mosque really is.**

[ES] Yeah.

**[SG] There are really only a few pieces of rubble left and nothing else. You know, that is the way most people would prefer it to stay.**

[ES] I agree with you. I think that the post-Dayton division is very serious trouble because some of the problems, some of a crucial problems in Bosnia were not solved with the Dayton agreement, because it was a political solution, and a temporary one. I wouldn't say that we have to be very aware to understand this. It would be a mistake to think that all of what happened in Bosnia is simply a religious war or something like that. The mainstream religions and faith communities were drawn into the conflict, as they were in many other cases. If you falsify religion then you have strong arguments for division. Basically the problem in Bosnia now is that the identities are very isolated with basically no communication or interaction.

**[SG] Right.**

[ES] And this only fosters xenophobia. When you mentioned Banja Luka, I remember when we [Pontanima] sang in Banja Luka, it was a month before the situation with the mosque happened there, which was a huge problem. And I remember my own experience when we had to sing at the Banski Dvor, which is basically the political centre of the Republic of Srpska, which is in the centre of Banja Luka, and we managed to sing two Islamic songs there. We were *very* afraid of what might happen, but we were astonished because the audience, the public, wanted Islamic songs. And most of the Serbs who came, some came to us after the concert and said this was something they really wanted. For me it was quite, well, I did not expect that..., that people would respond that way. I think that when you become an advocate of isolation, which is the main problem here, it is hard to break that down.

**[SG] Well, *Pontanima*, with its orchestra especially from Banja Luka, is a great co-operative effort.**

[ES] That co-operation was a very clear sign to those who are agreed on division. Because basically there are people in the Republic of Srpska and the Federation who agree with the division, and as I speak with my friends, most of them do not want to live with Serbs again. Nevertheless, they want to see Bosnia as a whole, but they don't want to communicate with Serbs. So, it is weird. Most of them lost their relatives and it is very hard to communicate now, to rebuild that communication.

**[SG] Let me ask you a couple of questions. One is a difficult question that I would like to pose to you as a religious person. And if you don't want to answer it, that's fine and I hope you don't get angry at the question. But we both know that, especially on the Christian side, there has been a combination of nationalism in which the religious leaders themselves have been involved and are therefore culpable. How do respond to that, that fellow clergyman..., I mean, I am a clergyman myself...,**

[ES] Right.

**[SG] How do respond to the accusation, that fellow clergymen are part of the problem. They are fellow religious leaders that ordinary people would respect, and yet you realise that there are obvious difficulties with their position. Shall we call it sin or what description should we use? How do you respond to this?**

[ES] Yes. I agree, that is a hard question. I, as a Roman Catholic, Franciscan, I agree that some of the leaders, some of leaders were very close to nationalism and the national policies. And as I said before, the reason they were clinging to this can be found in various reasons, and are deeply rooted in historical experience. The Catholic Church in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and most of the Catholics here, is taught by some religious leaders that their business is to keep Croats together as a culture, you know, a specific western-oriented culture. I would say a counter-culture to the eastern spirituality that is coming through Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy. So basically they were keepers of the national identity. Identity is very important. We have to be aware that there are differences in Bosnia-Herzegovina, ethnic and religious differences, but also there is diversity and unity. And the difficulty is how you understand the diversity and unity,

**[SG] And how to bring them together in some harmonious way?**

[ES] Yes, and also the difference between culture and religion, and most of the leaders in Catholic Church in Croatia are more national workers and preservers of national identity, which is obviously false. If you recognise Christ as your model, then nationalism is totally wrong. I wouldn't say that Christ has nothing to do with nationality and difference, because the idea of nation has Jewish origins and Jesus was Jewish and has a strong witness to them. But also, the basic issue is how we deal with that. I think that reconciliation is more about spirituality and if you think that some of your brothers sinned against what you think is original Christianity, then the first thing that you can do is to pray, if you believe in the power of prayer, then you can do much. I also think that for me personally, it was very hard to pray for those leaders to whom I could not relate to as a moral standard for me. But also, the only thing that you can solve is to be clearer yourself of what Christ is for you and to pray for those who sinned. I think we lost the sense of community here in Bosnia, community as a whole... sometimes I struggle with Bosnian Catholicism as a religion for the masses. Masses are not communities. We never had strong local communities. If we had strong, local communities involved with problems and not just leaders, then we could do much. But at the same time there were initiatives, initiatives in local churches, mostly Franciscan initiatives that helped to preserve the mission of Christ. As you know, the church is a community of sinners and who can claim that he is right?

**[SG] Is it fair to say than that these religious leaders - and I accept your point that there were *some*, but not *all*, involved in the nationalism - that some of these religious leaders who thought they were the guardians not only of faith but culture, but that they perceived a very real threat to both culture and faith...,**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] ...and probably less through Islam and probably more through Serbian nationalism?**

[ES] Yes. I think that is the point. Also, Ivan Lovrenović, mentions this. He said that the Eastern Orthodox Church in Bosnia-Herzegovina connected with Serbian nationalism has very much affected Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I think that is very true, because Croats were always imitating Serbs in that point.

**[SG] How do mean that, that they were always imitating,**

[ES] Catholicism as an ideal cannot be intertwined with national ideas so much because in its origins it is universal.

**[SG] Yes, it is catholic.**

[ES] Catholic, yes. And when you build up your own identity and are opposed to another, then you *become* another, something else. And there's some kind of psychology in this too. If you tried to protect yourself then you don't build identity on positive elements, but always in relation to others, then you become very much like them. I think

that there are a number of reasons why Croats in Bosnia have undergone that kind of trauma.

**[SG] It's really a struggle between the Kingdom of God and an earthly kingdom...**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] Their identity of people, nation and culture versus the universal church that includes all of these people, all of these cultures...**

[ES] There is also a permanent problem in the Catholic Church because the Catholic mission was predominantly intertwined with imperialism and I think that after Vatican II many things changed, but it is a slow process.

**[SG] I think you're right. I think the Catholic Church since Vatican II, it almost seems as though it has gone to the other extreme to accommodate other religions where it no longer has the voice of proclamation or doesn't want to have the voice of Christian proclamation in some ways, because it *appears* to be imperialistic.**

[ES] Right.

**[SG] Let me move from this dark nationalistic agenda to what do we do about it? How does your faith, how does your spirituality, as you're saying, in God, be it personal or communal, help us forgive, help us go forward, and help us overcome? I'm sure you have thought about this a lot.**

[ES] Yes. That's a very interesting question. As a Christian I believe in the triune God and that is the basic witness, that God is himself in community, then there is no unity without diversity and if God in itself is communication, then it has to do something with who I am and what I can do. That is the spirituality which I'm trying to build and if you follow the concept of the triune God and dialogue, then you can also do that personally in your life, because if you tried to communicate with the other, there has always a third part in it and it is basically always a triangle.

**[SG] Can you draw that triangle for me?**

[ES] Yes. When you're trying to communicate, you are open to the other; I and the other. But it is never just like that...; it is always open to the third element.

**[SG] This is God here?**

[ES] Yes, this is God. And God is in itself a community. For me, as a Christian, that is important. But I also will face problems in communicating with people who do not accept God as a community, like the Muslims.

**[SG] Right. They have problems with that.**

[ES] Yes, they have problems with that, and I personally have a problem communicating that. But that is a witness, something that must be exercised.

**[SG] That is the diversity we have.**

[ES] Practically, I think for Christianity is important to acknowledge that there is no unity without diversity. That's where the story begins. That's how *we* came to know God, through the other. For Christians there is no direct revelation, it is a person with a name and a history. It is a person. God is mediated. So basically that is what holds me and inspires me. If you draw prayer into it and spirituality, it enables you to work with people. It is sometimes hard, but I think the devil chooses the easiest way.

**[SG] Do you have a vision yourself or an image, or do you draw upon images of what things ought to look like. I mean, we're talking about ideals here.**

[ES] Do you mean in Bosnia?

**[SG] Yes, here in Bosnia.**

[ES] In other words, how to solve the problem.

**[SG] Well, not necessarily how to solve the problem, but how ought we to function? I'm not looking for the mechanisms that lead us to that, but is there a vision for you saying this is how we ought to live together in community, and a community in Bosnia?**

[ES] One of my professors, Fra Mile Babić, also inspired me in one way, and this is basically the answer. There is no recipe for communal life. You have to compete only in love and loving the other. And that is what religions here have to do. There's nothing to compete in, except in doing good things one to another. But there are also problems with that. Actually, because of the war crimes, not all religious traditions accept love as the ultimate point or the ultimate goal.

**[SG] How do you respond to a Moslem who says, Christians talk about reconciliation and forgiveness, but we Muslims are really interested in justice. How do you respond to that?**

[ES] Yes. I was always asked the same question. I have numerous Islamic colleagues and some theologians, and I always tell a simple story. If you have a son and something happens so that the son is killed by another person, you want retribution, you want justice. For you justice is to kill the person who killed your son. But how do you know that the person who killed your son is of the same value for his family? Basically there is no retribution because against whose merits do you measure this? I don't believe in retribution.

**[SG] So this is not a good method for establishing justice?**

[ES] No, No. I don't think so.

**[SG] OK, but I don't sense that the Muslims are actually saying, 'Look, you killed my son so I need blood revenge,' because they simply don't respond that way.**

[ES] I think that is a radical example.

[SG] **They're really looking for some sort of restitution,**

[ES] Uh huh.

[SG] **In other words, you knocked the roof off my house, put it back on, and they know they can't have a lost member of their family restored to them. But they *are* looking for the perpetrators to be found and brought to justice.**

[ES] Yes.

[SG] **And what I hear them saying really is two things. First, that their concept of faith and religion is different than ours is, which is far more integrated between their legal system and their faith, so justice plays a big role. And it also may have a lot to do with the way they view God.**

[ES] Yes.

[SG] **Secondly, they're saying that the Christians are really at fault here. In other words, Christians are the perpetrators, Muslims are the victims.**

[ES] Uh huh.

[SG] **Now, you can argue about that one for a long time, depending on how far back in history you want to go.**

[ES] Right.

[SG] **Thirdly, before we can get to reconciliation and before we can get to forgiveness, justice is a measurable first step. Would you agree with that?**

[ES] No, I wouldn't, and I would never agree with that. I, as a Christian, and I try to be that, I tried to be a witness of the Christian faith. There is something unique about the Christian faith. I understand my Muslim friends when they were so aware of wanting justice to be done and the need for justice. But at the same time, there is no person who has not experienced injustice and there is no person who has not done an injustice to another. There is also a very clear distinction between just and unjust.

[SG] **Which is at a very prominent point in Christianity.**

[ES] Yes, it is. Also, there is something unique in Christianity. Muslim understanding of justice, as you said, is more oriented toward restitution. I would say the Christian perspective is more oriented toward restoration. I think that there is nothing to do with the criminal system, because criminals *should* be charged and prosecuted for the crimes they committed. But the ultimate goal of Christianity is to reconcile, is to restore the relationship, no matter how hard it is. But the ultimate goal of Christianity is not restitution; I can falsify Christianity by saying that justice is what ultimately matters, but I

basically don't believe it is. And if I find that hard to do myself, I cannot falsify Christ. There is something unique about Christianity, because I remember Søren Kierkegaard said that it is very pleasant and healthy to think that before God you're never right. And this compels me. There is no just person. [pause] There is no just person, because we all commit injustices.

**[SG] Yes, that's what Romans teaches us, that all have trespassed before God.**

[ES] Yes, but also I think that there is a unique relationship in Christianity and that is the way in how to reconcile people with God and with one another. And I believe that happens through Christ.

**[SG] Tell me about that. How does that happen through Christ?**

[ES] I remember also from Romans that there is a point where Paul says that God reconciled us with him while we were enemies. So the initiative is on God's side. It is always the victim who makes the first step. From this point of view, we were the ones who were committing the injustice to God. But the victim makes the first step forward. And that also has something to do with the process of healing in Bosnia-Herzegovina. No persecutor will begin with the process of healing. The victim has the important role in healing. I think it is more about the victim because the victim and perpetrator share the same story. It is a story of violence. But how to come *out* of that violence, I think that we are very, very much in need of understanding the role of the victim. I can describe this concept to you. I wrote a kind of schema.

**[SG] Yes I would very much like to explore that with you.**

[ES] If you want to look at that.

**[SG] But, let's do that a little bit later, however, because you or talking about theological themes that I am trying to expose in my dissertation. Do you think there is something liberating about forgiveness?**

[ES] Liberating? Yes, if you experience that. The person who experiences forgiveness knows this enormous power. It is enormous power if you have been forgiven even once in you live, then you can learn a great deal about forgiveness.

**[SG] You know, you used the word restoration, which is the key word that I'm trying to use in my dissertation. It is *not* reconciliation. Let me give you the sort of scheme and try to approach it in a different way without putting words in your mouth. I think that each of our faiths, the Islamic faith and various forms of the Christian faith, in this case, Orthodox, Catholic *and* Protestant, which is the perspective I'm coming from, each has a common or similar image of the creation, which is of a world which was created good...**

[ES] M hhm.

**[SG] ...by the Creator.**

[ES] Right.

[SG] They are different accounts between the Christians and Muslims, and we have a different account what it will look like at the end. But each of us believes that in some way what we experience today isn't what it was originally created like or intended.

[ES] Yes, right.

[SG] And that God's act in this world, we as Christians would say, especially through his son, Christ, is an act of redemption and restoration. Also regeneration, to restart, or to begin a new. And I'm trying to use this word restoration as both descriptive and in some ways prescriptive...

[ES] Mhmm, Mhmm.

[SG] ...of how God acts in *us* and through us to rebuild this vision. Now, the problem here in Bosnia is that the term restoration for some means going back to the Communist period.

[ES] Yeah, yeah.

[SG] In a longer historical period, for some it might mean going back to a time when Islam and Christianity lived side by side in some kind of symbiosis and harmonious co-existence in which they traded happily together, and each profited from each other's existence. The image includes a Jewish existence as well. So, we have an image of Bosnia from our history books which shows this kind of vision and this kind of history.

[Turn of tape]

[SG] ...something of a Bosnian local vision of working together. But there is a creation account which gives us an image, I want to be careful about the use of the word image because of the Muslim understanding of images, but even they have some picture of what the creation is like. And at the other end is the eschaton is the image of what it will be like. And of course, we all believe that that is a period reserved, in the case of the Jews, when the Messiah comes, for the Christians when Christ returns, and for the Muslims when paradise is actually here. And so it is reserved for the future. But in the intermediate period, it is a way in which Christians and religious people are working faithfully, responsibly to the voice of God to the principles of their holy books to restore this image and this picture.

[ES] Yes.

[SG] Here, I mean it restore in a sense of 'to make whole again.' Not in terms of bringing back the communists.

[ES] M hmm.

**[SG] Can you give me some feedback on that?**

[ES] You pointed out that there are similarities. There are similarities in the beginning and the end, I would agree. Especially in the monotheistic religions Judaism, Islam and Christianity. All of them agree on how the world was created. I was astonished to see that the Muslims also believe a lot of things that the Christians hold will happen in the eschaton, in the future. So we have the same beginning and a similar end. But what makes Christianity totally different is the intermediate. Why am I saying that? Actually, when you're saying all of that about restoration, I remember when I was reading Walter Wink's trilogy on powers, and he described it in three very distinct and simple sentences: powers are good, powers are fallen, and powers are to be redeemed. So, the redemption for me as a Christian comes through a person, God as a person. And there is something strange happening here because of some of the Jewish and also Islamic theologians who stress that Christianity is always a religion of a book. I wouldn't say so. The holy scriptures for Christians are a medium; it is a book in order to get into a relationship with the person.

**[SG] It is a means to an end.**

[ES] Yes, yes. The person is there and that person is Christ. And if you meet Christ as the power, then no book can restore a relationship because restoration is basically an interpersonal category. Only in interpersonal communication can you achieve restoration. I think that is what basically makes Christianity different, but not in the imperialistic sort of way, because we as Christians need to be humble. We are to give witness to this calling, not to say that Islam is false or that Judaism is false. We have to witness our way, and not trying to convert. I don't think that Muslims are wrong. I just think that the power of witness, of Christian witness, in interpersonal relationships is stronger.

**[SG] You're saying, if I understand you correctly, that the difference between Islam and Christianity is the intermediate period. While there are similar periods at the beginning and at the end, for us, the difference is a person, it is Christ...**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] ...and the Muslims would not accept Christ as redemptive and the means of acceptance with God.**

[ES] Yes, of course [not].

**[SG] But you don't want to affirm that that this is a fault or that this is a difference in Islam. I mean, it is a difference, but...**

[ES] It is a difference, but there is something that is ...

**[SG] I'm trying not to put words into your mouth and I want to understand your meaning here.**

[ES] Yes, yes. What happens now in Bosnia and other places, there is a new religion called Tolerance. And in Bosnia it has become intertwined with political issues. But tolerance, basically, is no Christian virtue, and we cannot accept that as Christians. Not

that we cannot tolerate others, but tolerance is just a basic relationship and if you follow the etymology of the word, it is basically to tolerate the other. For instance, if I disagree with you, I simply tolerate that you are different. And for Christianity that is, Christ is the power, a *performative* power that changes relationships.

**[SG] I had someone up in Banja Luka tell me yesterday, speaking about this word tolerance, that tolerance really means in Bosnia, that it is a synonym for ignorance.**

[ES] Yes. I agree with that. I agree with that.

**[SG] And there really needs to be a respect for the difference. That's closer to what tolerance ought to mean, but it doesn't mean. At least not in Bosnia, especially if tolerance really means 'ignorance.' I wrote that down because as I talk with different groups of people, it seems that there is a lot of talk about Inter-religious dialogue, but the fact is**

[ES] Tolerance is lack of interest. It can be.

**[SG] Yeah.**

[ES] It is totally different from what Christianity offers, because the interpersonal relationships, or let us take us, for example, if we met each other. The relationship has a kind of performance. It never leaves you where you are. You always go farther. And I think the concept of tolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina has a different origin and it has different goals. It serves division, it serves division.

**[SG] Explain that to me.**

[ES] Because as that person pointed out, I don't know who he or she is, the ideal for many here would be to *not* be interested in the other person. It is basically to tolerate the very existence of that person, and that is the barrier. We cannot go anywhere with tolerance. If I tolerate you, it means that there is no communication in faith or no communication at all, because by tolerating the other I cannot communicate and I cannot give witness or even to *receive* witness from another person.

**[SG] Basically it is a philosophy of live and let live?**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] Do you know this expression, you know, 'Live and let live,' but don't really interact.**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] Live side by side. In fact, isn't that rather a more accurate historical description of what has happened in Bosnia? We seem to find even extremes in the books in which Bosnia, or the Balkans in general, has had nothing but a bloody history. OK, that is the one extreme. The other side is that no, Bosnia has been tolerant and peaceful with all of these religions living together in some kind of**

harmony. But when you examine the history more closely, it seems that yes, indeed, people traded together on a market place, but it was more of a side by side relationship...

[ES] Yes.

[SG] ...it wasn't really a strong integration. And when there was the integration, such as during the Communist period, to which your own family is witness of,

[ES] Uh huh.

[SG] It was, the basis was really ignorance.

[ES] Yes, yes. That's true.

[SG] **The lack of expression of one's faith rather than the practice of one's faith.**

[ES] Yes. I agree with that. I agree with that. Because in Bosnia-Herzegovina we never found it a model of how to connect the identity and difference, which I think, are the two main categories for the future here in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One cannot go without the other. So, I think this story is how to communicate differences and your own identity within these differences. So, it is a burning issue, and not just for Bosnia-Herzegovina, I think it is for the global community.

[Long pause]

[SG] **Let's relax a little bit in the conversation. [Laughter]**

[ES] Yes.

[SG] **Because this has been very fascinating, and I must say I have talked with a number of interesting religious people, but this is as dense and as engaging as any conversation.**

[ES] Mhmm.

[SG] **I mean, Ivo has also been very honest and self-reflecting, and I found most religious leaders to have the right words but not to be particularly self-critical.**

[ES] Yes.

[SG] **They have been more defensive of their own expression of faith. But you and Ivo have been particularly thoughtful in the expression and self-critical. And you, I think, you have been particularly biblical....,**

[ES] Yeah.

[SG] **...whereas others have been more historical in their Christianity and its expression. Which, from a Protestant perspective, we want to see the prominence of**

the Bible, God's word, is put forward, because we believe that God has spoken through his work and to his people. Let's turn the corner a little bit. You're working with Oči u Oči,

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] You work with young people. How to get this message across? I mean, I take it that most young people are not going to have conversations like we're having.**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] Are they interested in religion to any degree, or are they really more interested in the things of this world? How do you bring this across, to actually affect some sort of reconciliation? What can we do?**

[ES] I think that young people in Bosnia Herzegovina are generally interested in spirituality.

**[SG] They are?**

[ES] Yeah, they are. You would be surprised how many young people want to discuss religion. But there are also and numerous problems connected with their understanding of religion, what religion really is. Basically, what I said to you, I always tried to witness that with my friends also, but in different words, because..., how do you say.., you always have to accommodate, not to accommodate in a way to falsify it, but to remain faithful both to the modern world and the ancient revelation. What that means is, if you tried to remain biblical, then you are less a judge and more a common brother. I am trying to be a brother to people of the same age. It is hard to work with them. There are many burning issues. Most of them lost their credibility, the mainstream religions and communities. A lot of Catholics also.

**[SG] You mean they don't respect the leadership?**

[ES] No. No. They don't respect the leadership and because they don't respect the leadership, they don't respect the message. It is always connected. It is false. But you can always do something about that. If there is a strong spirituality or a sense of community, then you can build upon that. But I think that young people here are confused, very confused, and some of them, I have met beautiful young people who were engaged in Inter-religious issues and also in peace work and in restoration. I can say that those were persons of strong spirituality.

**[SG] Young people seem to have a keen nose, if you will, for truth and hypocrisy.**

[ES] I think it's just a matter of being young.

**[SG] Do you think so?**

[ES] Yeah, I do. Somehow, well, as I said before, who can say for himself that he is just and good? I keep myself from doing that because I know that the strongest witness comes

from those who were wounded, and if you were healed as a sinner, the strongest witness came out of sinners, because as a Christian I believe God came here to heal sinners.

**[SG] When they meet somebody like Ivo, do young people sense that there's something different there?**

[ES] I think they do. Many people desire to be in Ivo's company. They like his company because he is a very relaxing person. Also, he has a story. He came out of these wars and prison and he lost a number of his close relatives, but he found a way how to restore relationships even among those who persecuted his family. And I think that is what gives him credibility, and like many young people, they feel the difference here in their interpersonal relationships, because there is a difference. And this gets us back to the point of the meaning of interpersonal relationships as interaction. It is very important, how do you communicate with the other? On which basis? And with Ivo there is always a third person involved when he gets into communication. You don't get the sense that you're alone, you always sense God working through him. He is a strong witness.

**[SG] He is, in what he says and what he has experienced. And, as I said, he has been self-critical in his own expression of faith and about his own community of faith, the Franciscans, and Catholicism as whole, and this is very unusual.**

[ES] It is unusual.

**[SG] I think there is an honesty there that is disarming and vulnerable at the same time. It is profound in its witness and in its expression. So much of the other expressions of faith are shielded, protected...**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] ...and are ultimately self-centred...**

[ES] Mhmm.

**[SG] ...and self-serving. Which, for the Christian, is not Christian.**

[ES] Yes. Because if you take Christ as a model, he is one who came not to be served but to serve.

**[SG] Exactly. Precisely.**

[ES] That's the model. As Christians, we always have to be aware not to falsify Christ. If we fail, the witness for Christ still has to be strong. If I fail, I am a failure as a Christian, but Christ does not fail. I do not have a right to falsify Christ because of my own inability to do what he did. That's basically a key how to communicate with people. And most of the people sense that. If you pretend to be a perfect Christian, you will fail. That is the point. I never pretend to be something special because I'm not. We all share the same story. And if you feel that Christ is your brother who helps you, then there is a difference when you feel worn out or when you feel down, there's always someone who picks you up

and puts you on your feet. We always think that we are bad or something, but God is more satisfied with us than we are satisfied with ourselves. That is the main point.

**[SG] Do you sense that there needs to be more interaction between young people in the two entities here? I mean, I hate to use that term, but that's what officially the words are. And would this be a step forward in bringing young people together?**

[ES] I think there are good signs of a changing situation. Basically I can say the Fra Ivo also tried to do something with young people within the choir [Pontanima]. For instance, last year he had a project bringing together young people from different faith communities. He took one bus of, let's say, Catholic children to be guests in an Orthodox parish, or to be guests in an Islamic community and vice versa. And it had remarkable results. He feels that division is spiritual. It can also be emotional. That also inspires me in my work. I tried to do the same with students and I can say that most of the students, from the Franciscan Theological Faculty, they will have friends in the other entity, let's say, and the relationships are not created on the basis of race or colour of skin,

**[SG] Or which so of the line you live on?**

[ES] Yes. That's the point. If you're ready to get into that adventure, of meeting the other, then you can be surprised. But if you keep yourself within the borders, [pause] there is nothing you can do.

**[SG] Then you yourself are impoverished.**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] What is your future? Are you intending to go on in ministry?**

[ES] Well, my spirituality is Franciscan... and in Catholicism, as you know, to become a priest there are numerous obstacles, at least for me personally because I want to have a family and Catholicism is strictly celibate. But, yes, there are numerous ways of being a minister of God where you are and in every circumstance. I'll stay here in Bosnia and will continue with my studies and I plan to stay here and work here with people. I want to understand what happened here and how serious it is and how I can help restore people.

**[SG] Well, Entoni I have been very invigorated by this discussion, truly. I can't tell you how many conversations I have had where, how shall I say this, I don't feel invigorated, I feel frustrated.**

[ES] Of course.

**[SG] That the very people I think should be trying to overcome some of these difficulties are complicit in continuing to build walls. And I sense there is a real honesty about what you're doing and who you are.**

[ES] No, but, sorry to interrupt you but for you personally, this is a good thing in this because God teaches us to expect the unexpected and to expect it somewhere at the margins. That's where life happens. That's why I believe something will be done here in

Bosnia-Herzegovina. Some people talk about changes but they don't do things. But significant things always happen on the margins. And that is the Christian message.

**[SG] Well, and that is where you are. That's where you and Ivo are and you will not always be understood, you'll encounter many false accusations. I think you need to have a big chest that will sometimes attract many arrows.**

[ES] Yes!

**[SG] But that is the nature of Christianity and that is the nature of Christ who was our model. It is sacrificial.**

[ES] Yes.

**[SG] And I hope he will not tire and become weary in your belief and practice, because it is certainly a difficult thing to continue day after day. It is easy to capitulate to easier methods or easier ways. So I hope you will continue and the spirit and power of God.**

[ES] Yes. I hope so too. And basically what holds me is that I have community. I have people will work with me and I have people who help. And what I have learned, I am not so old, I am a young person still, but what I have learned in the story of Bosnia-Herzegovina makes me think that in fact conflicts are good things, because they help you to..., although I am very sorry that these conflicts resulted in war, but basically conflicts in interpersonal relationships are very good things, even chance, *Krisis* in Greek - it is always a chance for something. And you can always overcome the ultimate separation or the ultimate destruction, in the conflict.

**[SG] That's a very strong statement.**

[ES] Yes, it is. It is. And you can also build up strong communication qualities so that conflicts never arise. But being human, I think conflicts are inevitable. But as a Christian, I also believe that you're not left alone in conflicts.

**[SG] Yes, and we can be changed through conflict.**

[ES] Yes. As I said before, if you build your identity as opposing the other, that is the wrong thing. But you have to have a position. You have to have interest in the other.

**[SG] Well, thank you for your time. I'll get back you with the transcript so that you can clarify any of these issues in written form.**

[ES] Okay.

[Incidental conversation.]

[Description of his schema follows]

**[SG] So this is your schema on forgiveness and reconciliation?**

[ES] Yes, this is about forgiveness and reconciliation. It's a kind of schema and a product of my own experiences and thoughts here in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The fact is that it is very hard to forgive. That's a fact. It is almost something inhuman to forgive. Basically, forgiveness is crucial personal criteria, the only personal criteria that you can do. The decision to forgive is a free decision, a totally free decision. You cannot be compelled to forgive; no one can force you to forgive. Basically, this is the Christian message. Forgiveness is the Christian message and witness. That's what Christ commands us to do, always, anywhere, and to any person. So, the basic Christian issue here in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as far as I understand it, is how to give an answer to injustice. What is the Christian answer? And there are two phases, or we can describe it as too basic concepts in the schema. I will try to describe it. In the middle are justice and injustice and we experience two extremes: hatred and love, as metaphysical truths. On this level going towards hatred is revenge, retribution. And the other is guilt, and I don't know how to say this in English, *zadovoljstina*, [satisfaction] so devotion, that's where expiation, when something is done to and you want, not retribution, but you want to personally do something about it, and when you sin and you want to do something about it.

**[SG] To expiate our propitiate, are the theological terms.**

[Note: probably this word is 'contrition.']

[ES] And I would say that 'tolerance' comes somewhere here, more related to hatred. On the other side is 'fear of God' as a positive element.

**[SG] Can we also say 'awe'?**

[ES] Yes, awe. That's how Moses felt when he encountered the burning bush. The same feeling. Here is 'redemption' and 'grace' at this point, and 'forgiveness'. And forgiveness is down below because redemption is more than forgiveness. These are positive movements and the other side is negative. I would say that tolerance is pseudo-religion, or secular religion, also here in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**[SG] You could start a good fight with that idea.**

[ES] Yes, I know! Oh I say that because there was a book here called Tolerance And Tradition. It was here in the former Bosnia and it came up with this book and they did not even understand that tolerance is something very, very, it is not a good foundation to build something on. And 'awe' already has signs of love. Try to relate how Moses felt in front of the burning bush. He took his shoes off.

**[SG] Yes, a sense of holiness.**

[ES] Yes a sense of holiness. That's how I feel whenever I meet the other person. It's like a burning bush.

**[SG] I see... It's a revelation.**

[ES] It's a revelation. And how you relate to it is to take your shoes off and wait for the calling. That's how you meet the other. That's the feeling. I think that 'injustice' and 'revenge' come out of hatred and hatred is something mysterious. And some people can live from their hatred. They don't necessarily hate that person but they have feelings of hatred. Once you feel hatred, you always have to find another motive.

**[SG] In order to justify your actions.**

[ES] In order to justify your actions. And with love, it is totally different because it is focused. Hatred is not focused. And hatred is like a parasite. It looks like a parasite on good things because it lives out of opposition. That's why it is mysterious because people who hate, some say they can be very strong persons, because hatred gives you the strength. It does.

**[SG] Yes. It motivates.**

[ES] Yes, it motivates. So how do we relate to this? What is the Christian answer to this? Christianity is religion of personhood and of personal relationships.

**[SG] Not too many people understand that, however, even within Christian circles.**

[ES] I don't understand that, but I came up with this schema of a process. It may not be correct, but it is how I think and what I have experienced in meeting other people, those people who feel hatred and still hate. It is very hard to break this circle once you get into this spiral of violence; it is hard to get out of it. That's what makes reconciliation a practical spirituality, because you cannot force people to forgive you. It is the deepest personal decision when you say 'I forgive'. But there is always something remaining once you forgive. There is always a sense of something left, something left over, you know? Can you follow me?

**[SG] I'm not.**

[ES] There is always...,

**[SG] In other words, you're not forgetting?**

[ES] Yes. I wouldn't say just memory. It could be memory. But there is always *something* remaining and I think there is going to be solved in the future.

**[SG] I have related this to others and I have talked with a couple of my legal friends, some lawyers, one of which is now an ordained minister in the Church of Scotland. And we looked at this idea of forgiveness and in the prayer of Christ, the Our Father where it says forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against this, or a forgive us our debts as we forgive or a debtors. There is a certain balance in this statement. Forgive us, as we forgive others it tells us, this triangularisation that you're talking about.**

[ES] Yes, yes.

[SG] **And yet, there is a sense in which forgiveness is, as you say, an individual prerogative. In fact, no one can make you forgive. And when you choose to forgive, there is, I believe, *legally*, a unilateral, one-sided contract, social contract. Even though there is this, forgive us even as we forgive others, which is a dual contract, a reciprocal relationship, when I choose to forgive you for an offence, you may still hate me, but I choose unilaterally to forgive you. There is then a one-way contract that proclaims that we start anew. We start on fresh ground as far as I'm concerned. How you view me is up to you. But I have contracted with you unilaterally to forgive you and it is as though it has never happen.**

[ES] That is why I also think that, although forgiveness is good on this positive side of interpersonal relationships, it is not yet complete, because it can be unilateral.

[SG] **It is unilateral.**

[ES] Yes, it is unilateral.

[SG] **But *reconciliation* is something different.**

[ES] Yes, that's something different. Reconciliation always creates community.

[SG] **That's right.**

[ES] And that's how Church is created.

[SG] **But just as you can't force or demand forgiveness, because it is something that you and issued from within, neither can you force or demand reconciliation. Even as much as you may want to reconcile, and I think of interpersonal relationships of husband and wife, or separated or divorced persons, as much as one person may want to re-unite, he or she cannot force the other person to reconcile.**

[ES] That's what I think also. That is a clear sign where we see a healthy community, when and where reconciliation has taken place. And when you see Bosnia as a healthy community, you will know that reconciliation has taken place or has begun. But there is no community now. We don't yet live in a community. So the stories about reconciliation, in these terms, are false, because reconciliation always creates new community. I'm not saying it has to be a community of faith. I'm just trying a parallel. If you see Bosnia-Herzegovina as a society, to live a communal life, then it will be a good sign that there are positive things happening here.

[SG] **At this point it is hard find people who are willing to say, 'Forgive me', in a confessional way, which is the admission of wrongdoing. So the first step hasn't yet but then taking, so there is a long way to go before this community can be started.**

[ES] Yes, that is true. It has a long way to go but I still believe in it.

[SG] **And that is why I am doing this from a faith perspective. As you realise, it is not economic it is not political, although it tries to be.**

[ES] It is a faith issue.

**[SG] It is a faith issue. It is motivation from within. It is not a structural issue such as 'Let's fix the buildings or restructure parliament', it is an issue that is a motivation from the heart and will. And what we find the power? The imagery for this we find in our religions and in our personal expression of faith.**

[ES] Yeah. Religious people can do much. I also think that Christians can do much more, once they acknowledge this, that they can change things. They can't do it alone but they can participate in changing this world.

**[SG] Well that is what my dissertation is about.**

[ES] Well, I wish you luck with that. I would like to read it.

**[SG] Yes, you may be one of the few that would actually read it!**

[Laughter]

[ES] Yes, perhaps so. Well, I am also writing for some local newspapers. Well, we have to understand that good friends read each other's writings, and that is good, and if you establish good friends and manage to get into communication with your friends, then it spreads. That's how it works. If you are inspired, believe then that others who read it will also be inspired.

**[SG] You have inspired me today. You have encouraged me because sometimes I feel like I am so far off what people were saying, that they don't understand what I'm getting at, and that I am trying to write something that is contextual and useful for Bosnia-Herzegovina, at least from a Protestant perspective in the marginal communities that Protestants represent, because I don't pretend to speak for the Catholics or the Muslims or whoever else. And it has been largely discouraging to be so misunderstood.**

[ES] Yes, I know, I know.

**[SG] But I think with you and with Ivo, I have been very encouraged. Let is stay in contact.**

[ES] Yes, yes.

[Incidental conversation, end of interview]

Interview with

**Zilka Šiljak**

Offices of *Zajedno* (IMIC), Sarajevo

5 June 2002

[SG] *First, can you briefly explain a little of your background? You are a graduate of the Islamic Faculty?*

[ZŠ] Yes. I graduated the Islamic Faculty here in Sarajevo in 1991 and after that I went to Zenica where my parents lived when the war started in Sarajevo. For half of a year I worked in the Islamic community with refugees because Zenica was a transition centre for refugees in 1992. After that I was involved in a Women's Organisation called Medica in Zenica.

[Interruption]

[SG] *What was the name of the Organisation?*

[ZŠ] Medica. It was a German feminist Organisation, which came to Zenica and opened, first of all, an association and then a small clinic for refugee women, for raped women, etc. I stayed there during 1993 and 1994 I started working in the Ministry for Education and Culture in Zenica and I am still there, but last year I started with my MA of Human rights and democracy at Bologna University, but lectures take place here in Sarajevo. So I moved to Sarajevo because we lived here before the war. We renewed our flat that has been destroyed during the war.

[SG] *I see.*

[ZŠ] That's all. I am married and have a daughter who is seven years old.

[SG] *Seven years old! I have a daughter who is nine and another who is five.*

[ZŠ] Yes. She is the only benefit from the war, from the last 10 years of my marriage and of my life because everything was terrible around me and she is the only delight in my life. Thank God for her.

[SG] *So she was born during the war.*

[ZŠ] Yes, she was born in 1994, but I was pregnant in 1993 when everything was closed and we were surrounded from both sides, Serbs and Croats, but after delivering my daughter in 1994, the situation was improved.

[SG] *Did you go through the tunnel then? You must have.*

[ZŠ] No, I came by the UN.

[SG] *I see. By escort.*

[ZŠ] Yes. Because I have a Blue Card and I had experience with Chetniks near Sarajevo with my colleagues from Medica Centre. Actually, we travelled to Sarajevo by car, but as we didn't know the way for Igman (mountain) to Sarajevo, we came to the first crossroads near Igman where BiH army soldiers supposed to be present, but they left their usual position and we simply drove towards Hadžići and Lukavica. [Laughter.] So, after three barricades of UN forces we saw soldiers and we first thought it was the BH Army and that it was all right. And then we saw that the RS on their sleeves and we were surprised, but even this didn't make us think that we had made a mistake. We thought it is OK. It is RS check point and that BH Army check point follows a few hundreds metres away. We did not aware of dangerous situation we have been...

[SG] *So you got all the way to Lukavica without any...*

[ZŠ] No, they stopped our car, asked for documents, and asked where we were going. We answered to Sarajevo to a conference, etc, on behalf of Women's Medical Organisation. Then they asked about our occupations. It happened that I was dressed in black clothes combination; as I used to dress according Islamic religious regulations, but this time in black accidentally, and also I was pregnant. I told them I was a theologian. Perhaps the policemen did not hear well or understood that it was some kind of technical profession. Our driver was Serbian and he was so afraid for himself if they asked him why he didn't join to their army. In the end they didn't allow us to pass to Lukavica and we had to return back to Igman. When we found the BH Army soldiers, we told them what happened and they didn't believe us. They couldn't believe we returned back alive. So that was really an interesting experience. Our multinational company consisted of Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian, leaded by Islamic theologian had good luck that time. I am obliged to God...

[SG] *I see.*

[ZŠ] But during 1994 and 1995 I travelled around Herzegovina to Mostar, Livno, and Duvno. Nobody gave me a problem.

[SG] *Is that right? Even in Mostar?*

[ZŠ] People couldn't believe, yes, even in Mostar. People couldn't believe that from Split I've travelled a long through Livno, through Duvno, Mostar, nobody even said to me an ugly word. Everything was OK, so I was happy because many people had problems, great problems.

[SG] *You're very fortunate. Well, let's look at some of these questions if we can. You say you have some answers written down which means you have already given some thought to the questions, which is great. I gave you the women's survey, didn't I?*

[ZŠ] No, you just give me the questionnaire for students.

[Pause]

[SG] *I can see from what you have told me that I should have given you the women's survey.*

[ZŠ] I don't know, you just...

[SG] *Some of the questions are the same.*

[ZŠ] Yes, it's OK. It doesn't matter. You can ask whatever you like.

[SG] *Let's ask some of these questions anyway since you have already put some thought into them. Then maybe we can look at the women's questions. Yes, so, did you experience loss during the war? Family or property?*

[ZŠ] I lost my husband's family. He lost a flat and all property here because we lived in Sarajevo, and our flat was near front line. During the first days of April 1992 we saw all the people shooting from riots there, and as Chetniks troops was approximately hundred meters of our home, and nobody had weapons to protect people ( genocide in Bijeljina had happened before that), we decided to go to Zenica at my parents. My husband's father stayed with his brother in old town Sarajevo, and his sister went to relatives in Turkey, and we were divided from the beginning of the war. Ten days later they fired on those flats and our buildings and grenaded the flats so that everything burned. Everything... All our books, clothes, everything we had. The only important thing is that we stayed alive. During the war my husband and my two brothers were involved in the BH army, but nobody was killed and nobody disappeared, but my husband's family in Rogatica and Foča, most of them disappeared and a lot of them were killed on the Drina, like his grandfather during The Second World War, because his origins are from Foča. So the history repeated itself again and again.

[SG] *Were you already religious before the war?*

[ZŠ] Yes, we were. My family is a religious family and I am religious from my childhood, from six or seven years. But, it was some kind of traditional way of religion, mainly worship and customs. I had no chance to read a lot or to learn about religion from TV, or in school. We have been taught by our imam. But after elementary school I decided to go to Gazi Husref-begova Medresa in Sarajevo.

[SG] *Yes, yes I know.*

[ZŠ] It was my own choice and I didn't want to go to any other school, and thanks to God I had an opportunity to be chosen on the basis of the preliminary exam because we had to pass a preliminary examination. And afterwards I decided to go to the Islamic Faculty in order to study theology. It was my main interest then and it is now my main interest, even if I work in culture or more in education, but still my main interest is religion, Islam. Especially now I am interested in women's rights in Islam. If God allows me, I will deal with this issue in the future.

[SG] *Right. Excellent. I know you have quite a bit of work to do with women. That's why it would maybe be good to come back in September and ask you a different set of questions related to women. Now, you're already attended medresa before the war, but when did you attend the Islamic Faculty?*

[ZŠ] Also before the war.

[SG] *Before the war!*

[ZŠ] I am an old lady, you know!

[Laughter]

[SG] *No, I don't think so.*

[ZŠ] I finished the faculty in 1990-1991, but I passed the graduation exam in 1994. My professor delayed it because of Ramazan (month in which Muslims fast) when most of professors are going to holiday and as nobody could supposed that war would start, it was regularly delay my exam for a month.

[SG] *Do you think that your faith helped to understand the war or yourself better?*

[ZŠ] Not much. Alright, my faith helps me every day. In all things. But, I saw during the war a lot of abuse of religion, and...

[SG] *Can you give me an example of that?*

[ZŠ] An example? People offered some money or some help if you became a member of an organisation and would work for them and for their aims and goals. For instance, in Zenica there were some Arab organisations offered me to participate in their organisation and to be a member of an active Islamic Organisation. But I refused that because I saw that they dealt more with the politics than with the religious issues. They wanted only to impose their opinions and way of practicing religion and to convince you to work just as they wanted without any discussion. So, I didn't want to work with anybody who would impose on me anything. And also I saw a lot of uneducated people, ordinary people, who accepted their offer and sold themselves and their faith and even their daughter.

[SG] *Sold their daughter to them?*

[ZŠ] Yes, a lot of ugly things happened. There is an example, namely I met one day a man in front of building where we lived, he was so angry and suddenly said to me, what were you acting here? You were pretending to be some kind of Moslem and you wear the Islamic clothes and a scarf, but you're not a true Moslem. I asked him why, what has happened to you? He was so angry because he sold - I asked a round to some people - he sold his daughter during 1993, after an exodus from Srebrenica, I am not sure, and came here. They didn't have anything in life, so some Arabs came and asked for their daughter and they gave him DM 10,000 for their daughter, who was 13 or 14 years old.

[SG] *And they took her away to Saudi Arabia?*

[ZŠ] Yes. People came here like the Mujahedin, but most of them were not fighters. They stayed here as humanitarian workers in order to help in some social activities and to educate people or to print books, working as missionaries, and also to marry our girls. I was so embarrassed with these things, first of all because of our people. How could parents allow such things, to give them their child? This wasn't our tradition to marry such young girls. But some of them did that because of money. For money and food a lot of people became bigger Muslims, going to the mosque every day and saying Salaam at each step. It was strange to me. After that in 1995 and 1996 these people returned back to their previous life. [Laughter.] So, I saw a lot of things. And this is only one side. The other

side is that politicians used religion to homogenise people, to influence people [against those] who are supposed to be our enemies because they are not Muslims, or are not something else. We had a lot of abuse here. But in essence, each religion consists of messages of peace and love and respect to all human beings, and there is no a basis for crimes. Besides that people can abuse sacred words to achieve their goals.

[SG] *Do you think that you saw a lot of abuse on the Christian side too?*

[ZŠ] Of course, it could be found an abuse on all sides. One of my professor (Bianchini) wrote an article about Political Culture in the Balkan area, and explained that the biggest abuse was on the Serbian side, their Church supported openly Karadžić and Mladić. You know about that. Then, Catholic Church in Sarajevo also openly supported the HDZ, and *Islamic community* supported the SDA. So they supported openly, the nationalistic parties and nationalistic ideas. And even during the elections I saw some imams saying to people, 'You know, you have to vote for SDA party because they defend your interests and your nation,' etc.

[SG] *I don't want to get into the politics too much because...*

[ZŠ] Yes, but they were involved in politics. It's obvious.

[SG] *Yet all the national parties were nationalist, were they not? I mean, there was the party of Adel Zulfikarpašić that only took two votes in the first election.*

[ZŠ] Yes. The Moslem Bosnian Party.

[SG] *Yes, right.*

[ZŠ] He was in the first election together with Professor Filipović and Alija Izetbegović in establishing the SDA party.

[SG] *Right. Was the subsequent party that he founded the only non-nationalist party?*

[ZŠ] In the beginning, no, it was reformist orientation, but the reformist political orientation had difficulty in identifying effective symbols and needs appropriate for homogenisation of less-educated people. They didn't recognise the need for symbols. Also, they did not have enough financial support and media support. So the nationalistic orientation prevailed in that period.

[SG] *Yes. It was hard not to vote for a nationalist party.*

[ZŠ] Yes, but after communism, after pressure, people thought that they had, finally a chance to be on their own, on their land, language, religion, leaders, but it was wrong.

[SG] *Nothing emerged.*

[ZŠ] Yes, and also because the war started in 1991 and 1992, so it was the time when the most effective parties homogenised the people. We could not think about reforms or anything else during 1993 and 1994. Only to defend ourselves. And the SDA played the significant role during that period.

[SG] *Do you see that religion was the cause of the war?*

[ZŠ] No. In my opinion, religion, religion cannot be a cause for war. Religion can be abused, but it can't be the cause for the war. We can see around the world people in Afghanistan or in the Middle East are using Islam for their aims and for terrorism. In essence, no religion can be a cause for war. We're not in the Middle Ages! We are in the 21st century, so I don't know, especially here in BH, it was not religious caused war. It was political and economic goal influenced also by great state project from both sides towards Bosnia. It was obvious.

[pause]

[SG] *Is there a difference to you between faith and religion?*

[ZŠ] That is a very difficult question. But according to my opinion, religion is a view of believers, attitudes towards life and it is my own way through life. Also, through religion I see the world in which I live and everything around me. It is my view through which I live my own life. And also, it is some kind of meeting the sacred, to God. This is what it is to me, and accordingly, my whole life has a religious dimension. I am not religious only in the mosque. I am religious now when I am sitting here and talking to you. It is a whole way of life for me.

[SG] *There are two terms, **vjera** and **religija**...*

[ZŠ] Yes, there are two terms, but to me there is no difference. It is the same for me. You can make a distinction sociologically, but for me my own faith is everything. It is my life.

[SG] *I need to ask that because...*

[ZŠ] Because my faith determines all things in my life. All things.

[SG] *Right. Because there are some who make a distinction between religion and faith.*

[ZŠ] Yes.

[SG] *Some make a distinction between a personal faith, what they have, and religion being the institutions of the Church.*

[ZŠ] Yes. You can do it that way.

[SG] *Sometimes I will hear people from this area, a Moslem or Christian, will make more of this European, or Western distinction, shall I say, between these two words, and in some places they don't make a distinction whatsoever. Yet there are these two words in both English and in your language.*

[ZŠ] Yes. I told you what faith is for me.

[SG] *Well, how does you or faith help you overcome anxiety or fear of the future? Do you have fear of the future?*

[ZŠ] No, I have no fear of the future because I was a witness during the last 10 years that nothing is in our hands. Everything is in God's hands. So I do not know what will happen with me. I have problems like everybody in life, but my faith, or my religion, always helps me. We have our destiny and also our destiny, part of our destiny is in our hands. So we have to do what we can. It's our duty, our obligation, but the rest is in God's hands, so I do not have much fear about that.

[SG] *I met you here at the Zajedno offices, so can you explain a little bit of why you're here and what role you have and how your faith helps you relate to people of other faiths?*

[ZŠ] I came here because first of all I heard about this centre and about Marko [Oršolić] and their activities. Once they invited me to give a lecture about women and Islam and everything started from that. I was interested to become a member of this centre because I realized that we had to work together with people from other religious backgrounds, and there was no other way. And on the other hand, our official faith communities don't work much on it, or work very little. We have a multi-religious council ...

[SG] *The Inter-religious Council?*

[ZŠ] Yes, the Inter-religious Council here. But, they meet each other, shake hands, drink coffee and make statements to the media and that's all. They are doing nothing, I can say simply, because they don't want to go among the people in BH and to talk with them and to tell them openly that they support multireligious dialogue and each believer is obliged to contribute to these processes. But this centre is trying to go among the people, to talk with people, to give lectures, to do workshops. You know, you can't speak about reconciliation or about life, a multi-cultural, multi-religious life here, if you do not go to Livno or to Banja Luka. You have to go there and to see people and to talk to them and to find out what they think and what they want. That is the best way but that is the hardest way. We have a lot of experience. We travel around and talk to people but it is very hard. Some people fear, or some people don't want to talk. Some people don't want to forget, or others don't want to forgive. But our duty is to try again and again and again.

[SG] *So you feel the real work of reconciliation must be done more at the grass roots level?*

[ZŠ] Yes, at the grass roots level. Exactly. Exactly.

[SG] *And also Zajedno is really addressing...*

[ZŠ] *Zajedno* and a similar organisation like *Abraham* and other organisations that work with people, especially young people, *Abraham* works with young people. Mojca. You met her.

[SG] *Yes.*

[ZŠ] It is the best way. I know that in a women's centre we had a project of gender studies, and young people were interested in religion very much, but they didn't know about their own religion, or very little. I was traditional heritage inherited from their parents or their family. Nothing more. But they really wanted to learn about other religions. I was surprised when half of them decided to write essays about religion. So it

was a sign to me that they're really interested, even after all these things, they're really interested to know about others, about ourselves and to understand how to live our future. So we have to deal with young people and to talk to them. My strategy is to not force them because young people don't want to be forced. I work with young people in Zenica in the cultural community *Preporod*. We had a radio programme, workshops, making poetry nights and all sorts of things. In the beginning only 10 young people came to participate in that activity. But, later when they saw that we didn't want to force them or impose anything on them, they relaxed and they invited their friends to come and to enjoy us. In the end we had 56 members who were very happy with our activities. When I left *Preporod*, they called home every day to ask when do we start again. And I told them they could work without me. I told them that they had enough courage to do these things by themselves, but I don't know what is with young people. They need some initiatives. I can't explain it. They look like some old people in sixties who have no perspective in life, just sitting and staring at the wall. I asked them why were they not singing or dancing? Why didn't they go outside? Why didn't they organise a picnic or a trip? They said yes, we will, but then in the end they were waiting for me. I can't understand it. When I was young, I was doing all of these things.

[SG] *So you have no explanation for it. I have watched the same thing with students...*

[ZŠ] Well, and they have no perspective. They have no zeal for life.

[SG] *Perhaps they are not motivated.*

[ZŠ] Yes, yes. They are not motivated for life. I don't know what is going on but...

[SG] *We're getting old aren't we? Because I see the same thing. Well, why don't you organise this yourself? You can do this.*

[ZŠ] Yes, when I was a student we organised all of these things. We were so happy. We travelled around. It was the best time in my life. So when I saw them, they are like imaginary tired man. [Laughter.] Really, I don't know what is going with them. So, they are also not interested in politics because of these attitudes to life.

[SG] *But you say they are interested in religion in so far as people don't try to impose their views on them.*

[ZŠ] Yes. And also during the war, they saw a lot of things, as I saw them. They have a little fear about people, from the official religious community. I spoke with them. They don't want to go to mosque, or that someone would see them go to the mosque openly. They don't want to tell you that they are believers openly. 'No. It is my private life. It is my intimacy and I don't want to talk about it.' So when I saw that, I talked about music and sports and everything, but not about religion. When they felt a need to talk I was ready. And I think it is better. Our officials from the religious communities are making mistakes because from the beginning they started to appeal and to impose. It is not a good way, especially with young people. And for instance, cultural activities, something that is connected with religion, is a good way to get their confidence. They have some kind of fear, but I can't explain what it is exactly, but they fear a little. And some of them have a complex, and shame their religious origin. When Osama bin Laden did what he did, they said, 'OK, I don't want be a Moslem anymore.' It is not OK.

[SG] *Perhaps they see very few options that are different from politics or religion.*

[ZŠ] Yeah, yeah. I don't know. And some told me that they saw a lot of hypocrisy...

[turn of tape]

[SG] *So then, you see a lot of hypocrisy in the people who claim to be religious?*

[ZŠ] Yes, yes. Yes, of course. They tell me, you know, I know some of them are going to the mosque and saying 'salaam' and some send their children to the mosque, but they just pretending and using religious feelings to achieve their goals.

[SG] *Yes, right. [Pause] Do think there will come a time again and when people of different faiths can live together again without fear?*

[ZŠ] People in BH will live together, but not soon. We need time and perhaps in 20 or 30 years.

[SG] *A new generation, when the war is forgotten.*

[ZŠ] A new generation. Two or three days ago I saw on TV a programme, and a journalist, probably from England, was travelling around the Republika Srpska and asking people about Karadžić and those things. Most of them said that Karadžić was their hero and they don't want him to be caught and sent to the Hague. So when you see this, you can not imagine that those people can build a common society and a common life. Perhaps their children can. In my opinion we need some kind of catharsis on all sides. First of all on the Serbian side. Croatian and Muslim sides after that. Because, people need to be ready to face the crimes that they committed. They have to tell and admit that 200,000 people were killed. Who killed them? 50,000 women were raped. Who did that? They have to be ready to face the truth. It is the first step.

[SG] *It is the first step.*

[ZŠ] It is the first step to admit that it was a mistake, but it was a crime. We have to continue our lives together, but we have to clarify events from past.

[SG] *You know, I agree with you on that. A problem I face when I talk to people however, is that when they talk about the truth, it is only their view of truth. I hear, 'this is what they did to us.' I don't hear people being self-critical. I do not hear people say, 'this is what we did as a community.'*

[ZŠ] Yes.

[SG] *And each community needs to be critical about where they were wrong, not where the others were wrong.*

[ZŠ] Yes. When I was in South Herzegovina, I talked with Serbian people there about truth and reconciliation. I said OK, when we're ready to talk about this we can start talking of cultural heritage. Start with factual overview and tell 1100 mosques were

destroyed and 500 Roman Catholic churches were destroyed, but only 50 Orthodox churches were destroyed. These numbers tell a lot. Who was the guilty party? All of us were guilty in some ways, but not in the same way. If 1000 mosques have been destroyed, and eight years later Serbians in Republic Srpska do not allow renewal of mosques, it can be concluded that it is systematically planned

[SG] *Right. So that we start at least with objective data.*

[ZŠ] Of course, of course. But first of all start speaking.

[SG] *That to me is the right starting point. If I may bring in the other Truth and Reconciliation Committee from South Africa. I know when I raise this issue people don't want to talk about this because it is such a different situation than Bosnia. This, of course, is true. It is a different situation entirely with a different background. Nevertheless, what is interesting to me about this process, and that is what it is it is a process, is that it has largely been led by religious people, by the Church and in that case. They don't have Muslims there in any significant number. And what you have here is that there is a genuine lack of reconciliation and the lack of confrontation. The next move is towards reconciliation, and the church and religious community are saying politically correct things, but they are largely leaving this to the international community to undertake. And the international community by nature is a secular organisation...*

[ZŠ] Yes.

[SG] *...that is going to restructure parliament and deal with trade ...*

[ZŠ] Yes, rebuilding institutions.

[SG] *Yes, and it will do things with justice in terms of war crimes. But it is not really going to do much what reconciliation. It's going to do more with justice, I suppose.*

[ZŠ] I don't know, really. I don't know, but I am so sad because when I saw Orthodox priests, they didn't want to tell openly about war crimes,

[SG] *Yes.*

[ZŠ] Some of them said, 'Yes, we support him, as other Serbian people here.' Some kind of political answers about them. So, it is impossible if their religious leaders don't want it to be open and honest. But can you expect that from ordinary people? So the former major said about Ferhadija, that it was in the wrong place. And nobody reacted against that. It's ridiculous.

[SG] *That the mosque was in the wrong place in the city?*

[ZŠ] Yes, in the wrong place. 500 years long it was in the wrong place. [Laughter.] So it was really interesting. And also many other things in Banja Luka, like the foundation of the stones for Ferhadija. Nobody reacted after that.

[SG] *After the violence.*

[ZŠ] Yes, after the violence.

[SG] *Well, that kind of leads to the next question. Do you think you will experience war again in your lifetime?*

[ZŠ] I hope not, but we had pan- genocide in ex-Yugoslavia. And in each case Bosniaks suffered, Bosniaks suffered the most and after them Croats and after that Serbs. But I think that in the future they will not have a chance for a new war because of the international community and international policy for this region. And, also we have no longer strong military factor as we had here before. The JNA was the 4th strongest army in Europe before. Now here in BH you have three armies, which is like a new child. There is no real power in the military forces. And I think that everything will depend upon international strategies and policies for this region. For the whole Balkan region, not just BH. We're just one little entity.

[SG] *So there is the sense in which the prevention of war is really in the hands of the international community, yet the very establishment of peace, true peace, Shalom, sala'am...*

[ZŠ] Yes, but they don't want to make real peace here. They just want to manage peace here.

[SG] *Containment.*

[ZŠ] Containment, yes. Everything must continue here, but it under control. Everything is under control. So they don't really want to make a real peace here. That is my opinion. Just stop the war and ...

[SG] *What is real peace to you?*

[ZŠ] Real peace here, we can't have real peace here with the Dayton Peace Agreement. We can't have it with that constitution. Nobody knows such kind of constitution in the whole world. And this constitution is imposed by the international community on our people, and according to the Dayton Peace Agreement we have an obligation to repatriate people and allow them to return back to their homes. But nothing has happened, or very small number of people have returned back to their previous homes. And after this decision of Petritch about the constitutionality and agreement signed here in Sarajevo that Serbia can have some kind of council if people will not return back to their previous home in two years, then they will make a new census. So the ethnic cleansing and the aftermath of the war will remain in place. If I cannot return back to Foča and other places Višegrad, if Karadžić and Mladić are still walking round, or if war criminals are still free in some towns, then this is not peace. After seven years, what can we expect? It isn't real peace. They stopped the war but they're only talking about peace.

[pause]

[SG] *I can see I need to give you a different set of questions. I have questions for theologians. I will do that because I sense that, in talking with you, you have a broad perspective you are theologically and religiously trained, you deal with people in high positions and you deal with ordinary people. You deal specifically with women and young people and some of the things you are addressing I ask in the questions that I pose to religious leaders.*

[ZŠ] I don't want be a religious leader. [Laughter].

[SG] *Well, you will see the nature of those questions.*

[ZŠ] I don't want be in their place.

[SG] *I'll give you a set just so you can see the nature of the questions. And that doesn't mean that we will interview on that but there might be something that you choose to speak to.*

[ZŠ] Okay.

[SG] *I don't want to impose my questions upon you. But I do what ask you some questions about women's issues, if I can. Do you sense that women of all nationalities in Bosnia Herzegovina were especially victimised by the war? In other words, what I mean by that is, generally, those who fought, or took up arms, were men. And men died whether they were Serb or Croat or Muslim. In that sense, women were victimised by the war on all sides.*

[ZŠ] Yes, of course.

[SG] *Do you sense that they were most victimised of all people? I mean, leaving the ethnic situation aside, people like to divide up who was victimised by ethnic or religious nomenclatures, but in fact if with look at it in different ways, women...*

[ZŠ] Yes, women in BH suffered and were victimised on all sides. But also we have to be honest and tell that on the Bošniak side, we have the most victimised women, especially through rape. But on all sides we have data that women are victimised. They suffered first of all because they lost their family, their sons, their children. Also, some of them were raped and in the end some of them were placed in camps. I don't know, I think it is better in this world being a man than being a woman because you can get a weapon and go on the lines and fight with your enemy, but our women had to stay at home and wait to see if Chetniks or Croats or the BH army were going to come and take them away to camps or kill them or rape them. Also, they were obliged to provide food for their family. So, women on all sides suffered a lot. I saw that. And also I spoke with women from Banja Luka. They also have data about how all women are victimised, especially. It was related to women from the Krajina. So, I can tell you that women from all sides suffered, but Bosniacs women were systematically raped (50.000 raped)

[SG] *Right. Do you see that women can play a special role in reconciling the different ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina?*

[ZŠ] I think they can because they are the main factor in the family. So they can do a lot. They can tell their children - if it is possible - the truth. But not only from our perspective or our point of view. Trying to tell our children that not all Serbs are Chetniks. My daughter asked me about this. They had a Serbian children in her class. So she asked me, are they Chetniks? Why aren't they Chetniks? They are children six years old, you know. And I tried to explain, that they not. Why not? Why people in Pale are called Chetniks and their class friends are not? I am trying to explain to her that not all Serbs are

Chetniks and not all Croats are ustashe because a lot of people who stayed here in Sarajevo didn't shoot on the town. A lot of people left BH and went to other countries because they didn't want to be involved in such things like shooting their friends and neighbours. You can't blame them. And also, we have to give a chance to people to live the best that they can, even if they were on the wrong side, when we talk about these things. So I am trying to tell to my child that not all people here are guilty for crimes of the war, because I believe in individual guilt and not in collective one.

[SG] *What motivates you to do that? Why did tell your daughter this?*

[ZŠ] Because I believe in that. Because I believe in that.

[SG] *Why do believe that?*

[ZŠ] I know that Milošević and Karadžić and Mladić couldn't do such things without support of the majority of their people. I know that the majority of the people supported them but some of them have been forced to do that. Some of them. I know some of the stories from the villages, Serbian villages, where people were forced. When the war started in Bijeljina, when Arkan and his forces came, they told the Serbian people, 'If you do not want to kill Muslims, then we will kill you. This is an opportunity for you.'

[SG] *What do you say to a woman who is doing the opposite of what you're doing with your child? She is teaching her child that all Muslims are Turks, for instance.*

[ZŠ] I don't know what her mother is teaching her. I am responsible for my children. I don't know what her mother teaches her, but I am responsible for my child and I don't want to put inside her, [pause] how to say..., [pause]

[SG] *Hatred?*

[ZŠ] Yes, hatred. I don't want this because it isn't good. I know a lot of things from our history which demonstrate how family can influence on their children teaching them about stereotypes and prejudices of others. An old professor from Sarajevo as a young person was a teacher in Serbia.' It was by decree. After World War II, Communist party told to people to go to a certain village and teach. He was send to a Serbian village and [the professor said] 'I, as a Moslem, I gave a task to the children to paint a [picture of a] Moslem. How do imagine Muslims to look?' It was third or 4th grade, as I remember. And all of them painted Turkish people with turbans and a sword in one hand and killing Serbians, killing their grandfathers. All of them, all of them.

[SG] *Where was this at?*

[ZŠ] In Serbia. At small village in Serbia. He was embarrassed by this. He tried to talk to people and when they accepted him as a teacher after five years or more - he stayed there many years - some of them told him that they taught their children that Muslims were Turkish and Serbian historical enemies killing Serbs in Kosovo. I don't want to teach my children this. I don't want to tell my child, OK, something happened here. And we have in our history Chetniks and this and that. You will learn about these things. But you also have to grow as a human being, as a normal human being without hatreds. And I

don't know if this is a good way, to put in our children from the beginning, division based on religious and etc.

[Long pause]

[ZŠ] So, women can do a lot. From the family first and also in women's associations. We have a lot of women's organisations here. A lot of NGOs. And 90 per cent of staff in NGOs here in BH are women. It is very interesting. So, they can do a lot.

[SG] *Are you talking about 90 percent as foreign workers? Or are they to local people?*

[ZŠ] No, no, no. No, this is in local NGOs.

[SG] *90 per cent of local NGOs.*

[ZŠ] Yes, local NGOs because women from Banja Luka investigated this and they have such data about women and their participation in NGOs. It is very interesting that 90 per cent of women are enrolled in such activities.

[SG] *Yes, it is very interesting.*

[SG] *I know. That's the question. How do you encourage a different perspective for those people who would prevent their child from associating with a "Turk." How do you get them to have a different perspective?*

[ZŠ] I don't..., I don't know.

[SG] *I mean, I agree with you. We have to teach our own children, but in some ways, if we're going to have reconciliation, if we're going to see civil society built, we must not only be responsible for our own children, but as a community, as a nation, we must communicate and have some responsibility for our neighbour, and for the other, even for their children.*

[ZŠ] Yes, but I do not know the way how to manage this and open new perspective if your neighbour is not ready to talk to you. For dialogue and coexistence we need two or three sides, but for war one is enough, but I believe in the human being good. So, there are no many Serbian people at this moment who want to live together and stay in BH. But we have to work with those people who want, who opted for this. They decided to stay here. I have a colleague who is from Priština in this course and during the break I talked with a colleague from Belgrade, Ivan. And after that [the colleague from Kosovo] asked me surprised, 'You were talking to Serbian people?' And I answered, 'Why not?' 'After all that has happened here in BH, you are talking with them?' 'Yes, why not?' 'We in Kosovo don't want to talk with them. Nothing. No contact at all.'

[SG] *Yes, I know that that is true.*

[ZŠ] There is no way for them, it is impossible.

[SG] *Or to use the Serbian language.*

[ZŠ] Yes, it is impossible. And I told him, 'I cannot blame Ivan for the situation here. He came from Belgrade, but he is unrelated to the crimes that were committed here.' Also, we have a lot of Serbian people who stayed here the whole time, we don't think like most of those in the Republika Srpska. What is the war really about? Because most of the people in Republika Srpska don't want to give up the option of their own state because Karadžić gave them the Republika Srpska, their own dream during the history of their own making, so they are grateful to him. So, I don't know how things will go here, but I am always an optimist and my attitude in life is, 'act when you can, everywhere, and do what you can.'

[SG] *Do you think it is easier for women to reconcile with the other national groups than it is for men to do that? I mean, 90 per cent of the NGO workers...*

[ZŠ] Maybe. Because women communicate easier in daily life. I communicate with other mothers in school easier than my husband and also in the market and in stores. Everywhere. So it is easier for them to make some connection than for men. Men are more interested in political issues, or in political representatives here but, as I told you, through the women's associations, they can do a lot. Perhaps even more than our politicians.

[SG] *Yes. I don't think there is any question there. [Laughter.] Do have a general sense that women are more religious than men? Or not?*

[ZŠ] I don't know, really. I don't know really.

[SG] *Do they talk about their faith more? Or not?*

[ZŠ] It depends with whom you're talking. I can't make a distinction.

[SG] *One of the things I'm interested in it is the new gender roles that women assume, either because men are fallen in war, or because the international community is urging them to take on new or gender roles. Any thoughts along this line?*

[ZŠ] Here in BH?

[SG] *Yes.*

[ZŠ] Women's role and status in society is based on gender stereotypes and division responsibilities (men-public sphere and women-private sphere) Women have to fight to improve their position asking their rights, to be equally represented in political sphere and decision making places. It is in process now and our organisation is participating in that work, so the last session we finished a section on men's attitudes, that they didn't want to allow 50 per cent of women participate in politics, because they didn't know what the man would do then. Women answered, the same what we were doing.

[Laughter.]

[ZŠ] So, you know, [more laughter], it is very interesting. They are educated people, intellectuals, but they have traditional views in their heads, you know. Division of labour

roles where women are in the private and domestic sphere and men are in the public sphere, especially in politics. And they didn't want to allow that because women have to stay at home. It is their primary task and not to be so involved in politics. Some of them as a figure[head], but under control of International Community Election Law is changed and quota system was introduced. Women started to think about political participation seriously and everyday we can see more and more were interested to participate because they are convinced that it is very important to be involved in making decisions. If a man makes a decision for you, it isn't always good for you. They know that well. So I think that gender roles here in BH are changing and will change even more in the future. But with other things we need time because we are a traditional society. Even when you see in the streets that people are going out together and behaviour like modern emancipated persons, but their minds are burdened by traditional way of thinking.

[SG] *Are you talking specifically of the Bosnian community or all of them?*

[ZŠ] All of them. Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim.

[SG] *It's still very traditional.*

[ZŠ] Yes. You know, our friends, when they come to our home to sit with us when we speak about this topic, I just say my opinion and they laugh at me and tell my husband that it is not good for him to have a woman such as me because I have my own attitude. In their own lives, the women do not have their own opinions. The men speak in the name of the women. The women can speak about dresses and that sort of...

[SG] *Cooking, children,*

[ZŠ] Yes, cooking and such things. But on serious topics...

[SG] *How does your husband look at this?*

[ZŠ] [Laughter.] My husband, thanks to God, is normal and he supports me a lot and I couldn't have done anything in my life without him. Honestly. I have family and a lot of obligation and he has helped me much and the most important thing is his attitude about everything. He has not got the traditional way of thinking about the man's role, so he is OK. But there are not many husbands like him. Really. A lot of my colleagues suffered when we had to go to a seminar or somewhere. Their husbands didn't allow them to travel.

[SG] *Is that right?*

[ZŠ] Yes. And they asked me how my husband always allows me to travel wherever I need to go. I don't know. I believe him and he believes me. So, our relationship is based on mutual trust,

[SG] *It's interesting that you bring that into this context because I'm wondering if that's something they teach at the Islamic Faculty. Do they teach traditional roles for women?*

[ZŠ] No. In the Faculty, no, but it comes from family background. So you can be a friend with him, going out for a coffee or to a movie, everything. But when you talk about marriage, they're a totally different person. [Laughter.] Totally different.

[SG] *Let me bring the discussion about women and their changing roles into the arena of faith and religion. How does your faith guide you in teaching children about love, hatred and forgiveness? How does Islam inform you and how do you inform your child about these issues?*

[ZŠ] You know, I told you how I teach my children. I have messages from my holy book, from the Qur'an, about that, and I have to respect and follow that. First of all, we have to respect followers of the holy books, Jews and Christians especially. But according to other Qur'ānic passages, we have a lot of messages about respecting all human beings, all human creatures. God said,... we know that God created us into a man and woman and divided us into two tribes, races and nations to meet each other and to learn from each other. So, the best person is God-fearing. In another place the Qur'ān says that if he wanted to create us in one religion he would have done this. But he wanted to create us different. It is some kind of wisdom. It is an opportunity for us to learn from such differences. It is not a deficit. It is good for us to live and meet different persons and to learn from each other. So we have to show respect to all human creatures because human life is sacred. No one has the right to kill other people. According to Islam, if you kill a person with intention, it would be as if you killed all mankind. And God is teaching us about love because God gives love to us every day. Why don't we give it to other people and be merciful? Regarding forgiveness, we have in the Qur'an two options. The law of Talion, eye for eye tooth for a tooth. You can answer on the same way, but it is better for you to forgive and because your enemy may be your friend in the future. You don't know. Only God knows what is good for you.

[SG] *You're aware of this because you have studied the Qur'an. A lot of people have not studied their own holy books.*

[ZŠ] Yes, of course.

[SG] *Whether they are Catholic, or Orthodox or Moslem. And each of the holy books talks about peace...*

[ZŠ] Yes, especially the three monotheistic religions have the same background.

[SG] *So, is there a way that education about our own holy books or about our own faith is necessary so that we can get on with each other better? A good deal of the abuse of religion is ignorance of our religion.*

[ZŠ] Of course, I told you when I speak with young people, they don't know very much about religion. Just about their traditional heritage. But this isn't much. The official religious communities are obliged to do something to teach people. They tried to do something with religious classes in school, but I don't think this is the best way, because you have to teach your own children, but you also have to teach them about others. If you just teach them about Islam, then you don't know anything about Judaism or about Christians, but in daily life you live with non-muslims. I think we need different educating for children in schools. Some kind of history of religion or ethics or I'm not sure what we should call it. But it is a good way to give them a chance to learn. When we travelled around Bosnia, some old people from workshops and lectures told me that [they never knew that] God says in the Qur'an, that we have to respect each person and etc. You can't hate somebody because they aren't Moslem. This isn't a good reason. He is a creature of

God, he is a human being and he deserves respect. And you have to do this. Especially when I told people that you have to respect Christians and Jews, people looked at me like I had told them some sort of nonsense.

[SG] *Is that right?*

[ZŠ] Yes. And I told them that God says this in the Qur'an or that you have to do this, that you have to respect especially Christians and Jews, people don't know that. We have to do a lot on education.

[SG] *So the forms and structures of the faith.*

[ZŠ] And nobody talks about others. Nobody. And children are sitting with Orthodox and Catholic schoolmates.

[SG] *So they're living a kind of parallel life with the other people?*

[ZŠ] Yes, parallel lives. Yes. Yes. Because if they tell them, that they have to respect them because they are God's children and they are created as part of God's picture, then nothing.

[SG] *I don't want to offend you with this next question, but I am curious how you might answer it. And if it is offensive to you, then I apologise to you ahead of time, and you needn't answer it if you don't want to. You have already talked about how you want to raise your daughter and the education that you want to give her and how it is different than before. What if your a daughter grows up and marries someone who is not Moslem?*

[ZŠ] It isn't an offensive question because we have an exact provision about that, about mixed marriages. You know, probably, about the Islamic attitudes towards mixed marriages. A man can marry Christian and Jewish women, but women cannot marry [non-Moslems] because of the children. It is a matter of the children. If you marry someone outside of the faith, then the children can't be Moslem. That is our tradition. So it isn't allowed that a Moslem woman can marry a person from another religion. So, I accept that.

[SG] *And yet, it happens a lot in Bosnia.*

[ZŠ] Yes, it happens a lot. During the Communist period especially. Because it was some kind of politics. I can't blame those people, but they were under pressure atheism was imposed on them. Communist proclaimed brotherhood and equality, but 50 years later it is obvious that only Muslims believed in it. that I know a lot of people in mixed marriages. What is really interesting is that most of them, if it is a marriage between a Moslem man and an Orthodox woman, for instance, most of them give their children Orthodox names, or in the end they decide to go with their children to church. It is better than to remain atheists, for me. It is better. But, also we have a lot of young people here who don't know who they are. A man who asked me and a man from the Jewish community, what should I do? My father is Serbian, my mother is Croatian and they are not believers. But my grandmother, who was Orthodox taught me something about her religion and I don't know what to accept. What is good for me? Is it alright for me to accept her teaching? So both of us told him that it was better for him to accept anything of religion than to stay in atheism. But it is most important for him to think about it. When you grow up - he was 16 - when you're 20 or 22, you will learn about it and see if it is OK

for you or not. But it is better for you to be on the road to God than to stay away. So, it is a problem with such children. One of our authors wrote about Travnik. He said, 'my father prayed in the mosque and my mother is a Christian and she prays in church, and I stayed like a stone and don't know what to do.'

[SG] *Who was the author?*

[ZŠ] Ivo Andrić.

[SG] *Oh, Ivo Andrić.*

[ZŠ] Yes, it is a very interesting book. I don't know, really. Is it a solution? I can't blame anyone, but what I teach my daughter to marry a Moslem. It is normal because I follow the provision of the Islamic attitude about it.

[SG] *I think I know the answer to this last question, but I want to ask it anyway, in case you surprise me. The international community is a rather secular organisation, and the media doesn't think that religion is important and mostly ignores it, probably because most of them are not religious themselves. And the international community is largely secular in nature. If religion has played such a sharp role in the conflict, is it best just to get rid of religion?*

[ZŠ] I am for the option of the separating of state and religion. I'm not for a religious state. It isn't a solution. Even if we talk about the Islamic situation. We have some good examples such as Saudi Arabia and the Sudan. It isn't a good solution because we have human rights violations there. Nobody can do anything because they just tell you that it is according to Islamic law, but it is according to their Islamic *interpretation* of the law. So I am for the option of the separation of state and religion, but religion has to stay in civil society. It has to remain in society, among the people, especially for its moral background. It is important for our society. Not just to give up religion or to get away from it because of ugly things we have seen in the war. We need religion.

[SG] *A free practice of religion and free expression of religion.*

[ZŠ] Yes, of course. But as a state, no. Because people can abuse it again and again. It is a very good thing to be behind religion and to help it work. But there are some ugly things behind the curtains of religion, so I don't want to live in such countries.

[SG] *Thank you very much for your time. We've talked a couple of hours here now.*

[ZŠ] I'm sorry that I couldn't explain well everything that I had on my mind. But I'm trying.

[SG] *Well, I understand you very well.*

[incidental conversation]

[end of interview]



GInterview with

**Nikola Škrinjaric**

Zagreb, Croatia

5 October 2002

[NŠ] I'm telling my story from the perspective of a believer.

**[SG] Of course, that's really what I want, is that you give your perspective of a believer just as Franciscans give their perspective, the Orthodox...**

[NŠ] Of course.

**[SG] All right. We are here with Nikola and Sandra. We are in Zagreb and this is the 5<sup>th</sup> of October. Well, you've read the questions so let me just jump in on them and maybe you could say how long you spent in Bosnia-Herzegovina first and where you were in each case.**

[NŠ] We were in Bosnia, almost nine years long we spent in Bosnia living there, arrived there, moved into Mostar beginning of '93 and moved back from Bosnia last September, last year. Six years in Federation, in Mostar, and almost three years in Republika Srpska, in Banja Luka.

**[SG] So you moved there in amidst the war, right during the war?**

[NŠ] For the first time I visited there Christmas time '92.

**[SG] While everybody else was trying to get out you went in. Why?**

[NŠ] My first initiative, first step when someone was mentioning Bosnia, my first idea wasn't to move there. I would be scared to do that. But the idea was to bring aid, to deliver the aid with a truck. So that was my first assignment to do with Bosnia. But as I came there, to Mostar, I felt during the night, I was awake, and I felt God was telling me about the situation. And I felt God was telling me that he wanted me to come and live there. So for my first reaction from fear my feeling started to change and I felt some kind of fulfilment and even silent joy in this situation.

**[SG] Very good. At some point I'd like you to say something about Banja Luka, as well, but maybe we can do that in the course of explanations of some of these things. And maybe you can even make comparisons, I don't know, I've never really talked to you about your ministry in Banja Luka. First, question one. Many Bosnians, or Westerners for that matter, point to Bosnia as an example of peaceful coexistence before the war. And now we see a lot of peacebuilding efforts that are trying to put back a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-national entity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Can this be in some way seen as a social restoration? Or how would you describe it? And then, secondly,**

**do we see any theological or ethical grounds for this reconstruction and restoration?**

[NŠ] I've given a lot of thought about what Bosnia is going through now. And nothing new is happening. It's like a cycle, things are repeating. For the fifty years, during the communist period, Bosnia was the longest period without a war after the Second World War. So, it seems like remembrance on good and old times, it's just one part of Bosnia and Bosnian history. I was born not far from Bosnian border in Croatia and I knew, I've heard people telling stories from history. And after the Second World War it was the same situation like... we can compare it today. Lot of hatred and bitterness and lot of financial problems and poverty. That's the reason why people can't rest. And it seemed, it took one generation to die, to disappear from this earth for the next one to start to live different. So the next generation can build bridges, different bridges, and experience a certain degree of harmony again. And it is under the question how harmonic this, how idealistic this society was before the war. Because through this picture of today's situation of course it was much better but people always look at that like old, good times, you know. We have a saying about old, good times when people are thinking about the history with what we call idealistic glasses. And maybe communism developed this because it suppressed this national and religious... the churches were not free enough to express... so... we can say religious groups instead of church because we know what the church is all about. So sometimes you could find religious groups as generating this nationalism because they are connected with certain national ethnic group.

**[SG] So, what you're really saying, you're calling into question this perception that it was harmonious?**

[NŠ] Of course, I even think...because always certain degree of mistrust even through the peaceful times. So I would really, you know, put that under a lot of suspicion. I became Christian from communist time. And as I developed a new identity in Christ was easier for me to recognize those things and be dead of my national feelings.

**[SG] How do you see what's going on now in Bosnia-Herzegovina in terms of reconstruction. The elections were today. You say it's more of a cycle of the same... do you see more international, Western, influence there? Can you see that as positive or negative?**

[NŠ] Yeah, that's like a two-edged sword. It is positive because when they are there soon after the war if they were not there pretty much soon some battles would develop very soon again. But also a negative thing is that people from the outside they think that they can regulate everything through the laws, you know, that the justice can come through the system. Because people cannot, if they don't experience changes within them, in their heart, they can't see like a nation-wide change. They can pass out laws and the people can obey laws but it's just enforced.

**[SG] So it's structural changes but it's not internal changes?**

[NŠ] That's exactly.

**[SG] Good. Let's look at question two. Perhaps we're already there a little bit. Let's assume that peace is more than the silencing of weapons, that it also includes the blessing of God. Is it necessary to have a relationship to God before true peace can be understood and apprehended?**

[NŠ] Yeah, this is yes and amen for me. This is something that really, really can happen. Everything else is... it can bring a lot of efforts from the outside and it can be enforced. Because the only changes, true changes, if you can have a peace with your enemy, the only person can have that when they are, have true peace with God. When they can comprehend their neighbour or their enemy or person from another ethnic group as their brother and God's creation. And I think our church in Bosnia-Herzegovina is an example, it's a model of this... And God was showing me that we have to lay stress on that and we have to build on that foundation. And in Mostar, when the war was going on on the streets we had different ethnic groups together and they were really having peace with one another. Of course some of them they had personal problems, you know, within the groups sometimes, but they really had this peace that comes from above. And they had been in peace worshiping the Lord together. And I think it's a big responsibility for religious leaders. We experienced death threats and they've told me that I called Četniks and Balijas my brothers. But I never withdraw even one inch from that. I stood on that ground. And one military man was threaten me in front of group of people that he would kill me for dessert, after everything is finished because of this reason. I don't know whether I would today have the same strength to pass through this again. But at that point that was supernatural and people are drawing strength from that. And some of them of course, they had their own bitterness, their own problems in their lives. But they saw this model in the church, they accept it that this is possibility for their life as well. And little by little they experience love and help from someone, from another ethnic group and people who didn't ask them, you know, they didn't look at them through these glasses of... national glasses. Because everyone is judging crime, no one would... within the church community no one would justify crime of any kind.

**[SG] Did you sense that people understood a new identity? You already spoke about it, that new identity in Christ supersedes their national identity.**

[NŠ] Yeah, and this is a task of the church. The church has a big responsibility. I don't know how much Islam can proclaim this idea, what kind of... And also proclaiming just something it doesn't mean if you're not living it from within your heart, from out of your heart. The Bible says as we are a new creation. I'm not biased. And I have to say from our perspective people in Islam they cannot experience this... within this boundary of Islam they are not born again. Or traditional other religions like Orthodox, but this is my personal conviction.

**[SG] Let me stretch it one step further. In society the Protestants, or the born-again Christians, be they Baptist or Evangelical, are very small in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Can agnostics and non-confessional persons experience the peace of God, especially by living in communion with people of faith?**

[NŠ] I don't think it is possible for non-believers to experience true peace with God, as the Bible says, and I think that they can notice that peace on believers but I don't think they can live in true peace themselves.

**[SG] Take a look at three. I'm trying to explore the relationship between individual guilt of persons and a distributed or national distrust or hatred. Since you hear people say, "All those Četniks", "those Ustaša", "those Turks" and use 'balija', all sorts of names to malign an entire national group. But can all peoples of a national group be maligned for the guilt of a few?**

[NŠ] Of course it's not just to blame the whole nation for it. And also, again I think it's religious leaders have bigger responsibility, they are even sometimes, their responsibility is bigger than political leaders, that they have to stress on that there is no national guilt, there is no... And from our personal experience in Mostar during the shelling from a Serbian side... through this shelling from a Serbian side the most persecuted groups were exactly Serbs in Mostar who were not guilty for anything because they didn't have any guilt of them, just by staying they proved they are not doing, they are not having any connections with what they called enemies. But they were persecuted because people were living in terror of shells and ethnic cleansing and everything else that were happening around them.

**[SG] So in some sense you're saying they were in fact twice victimized. First, because of the shelling and then, secondly, the hatred.**

[NŠ] Not only them but different nationalities in different areas of Bosnia. And especially mixed marriages as well. Because many, many marriages were under such a stress and strain. And that was the only reason why they left Bosnia is just because of that.

**[SG] Do you think it is necessary to confront the people who actually did these crimes in order for reconciliation to transpire?**

[NŠ] Of course I think that those who did specific big crimes that they have to come to the point that they have to be responsible in front of a court or a local court or international court. But I don't think it's solving a problem itself. Because there is a vicious circle of hatred and mistrust and it's a wider problem than just that. Because even...

[Sandra Škrinjarić ] can I add one?

**[SG] Sure, Sandra.**

[NŠ] Even in our own life when we were unbelievers just seeing someone who was victimising us and harming us, when we see them suffer it didn't help us. The biggest effect would be if one well-known war criminal or someone who would confess and admit their guilt and face the truth that would bring far bigger results on nation wide than the hundred years of imprisonment. But the problem is always like a human nature problem is that people always they are defending their own crimes or guilt.

**[SG] We're really on question nine. So maybe I'll jump over to there. Do you think that smaller perpetrators of war crimes can be brought or will be brought to justice or will the average Bosnian be forced to live with this injustice?**

[NŠ] I don't think it would be possible for everyone who has committed war crimes that they would be prosecuted. And also there is a question suspicious of what the authority of the high court or Den Haag court or something, because the big bosses, you know, that those who had real power they had also... still they are exercising their power around them. So they have like some kind of support from certain either group or, you know, community. And they are still within their ethnic group they are still national heroes. But when the nation is faced with truth and when they start to feel ashamed of their own...

**[SG] ...actions?**

[NŠ] Yes, actions, of their representatives, of their leaders, then there is a beginning of change. And my personal conviction is that only true believers they are ashamed and they're praying for their people who did those war crimes and they are ashamed of being the same national group of this people.

**[SG] Well, you really answered the second part about the imperativeness of, necessity of addressing these things and being ashamed before justice, forgiveness, reconciliation can happen. Number four: How can religious faith and forgiveness contribute to the escape of the cycle of violence of past offences? In other words... we've already indicated that period of the greatest peace in Yugoslavia and in this part of the world has been under the communist period and yet we see that it was a time of repression. If we look back farther in history then we see that there is practically every generation a cycle of war.**

[NŠ] Minimum one.

**[SG] And every time there's been a change of government, there's been at least a two-year war. And for the last four changes of government. So how do we get out of this cycle of the violence of past offences and how can religious faith and forgiveness contribute to that?**

[NŠ] I believe it is illusion to believe that there... that we are now out of this cycle just because that the peace is reinforced and it's kept for some time. On the contrary, I believe that the war would come if something significant doesn't happen on a wider scheme of society. Something like a national revival or something... at least partial revival. Some kind of movement of new ethnic, moral criteria. I might be called fanatic, but this is my personal conviction. I don't think the way out of it. Because I've seen results of what I'm talking about.

**[SG] On individual basis?**

[NŠ] On individual basis. And we think comes from, you know, certain individual, from individual... If Bosnian believers would see how important, how valuable they are, and I believe that they would go around to cities and villages and bring good news of reconciliation and forgiveness.

**[SG] You are one of the few couples that I know that have lived both in Federacija and Banja Luka, in Republika Srpska. And that's extremely unusual.**

[NŠ] So, we were working from Federation on both sides.

**[SG] Yes. Can you say something about this work? I know it's very different and difficult to make comparisons or contrasts.**

[NŠ] And especially because we were there in different times. Some changes took place. Even in order for us to get into Srpska.

**[SG] And the fact that you're really Croatian and of course you would have been better accepted in a place like Mostar than in Banja Luka.**

[NŠ] If we are to look for personal safety I think in time scheme it was far more difficult for us in Mostar than in Banja Luka. But when we compare the perceptiveness for Gospel in different areas it was far, far more difficult in Banja Luka as well. We spent over two years there, almost three and what was left there is a small, still tiny group of believers. And during the war in West Mostar we've seen within one year 200 believers coming to the church. It is true it is not the same time now but it happened like that.

**[SG] What about... that was one of the questions I was going to ask you, is receptivity to the Gospel or to the message of Christ and hope. What about the perception in Federacija vs. Republika Srpska about the need for reconciliation, the need to get together again?**

[NŠ] What is the question?

**[SG] The question is: Are there differences in perceptions in Federacija about reconciling with perceived enemy and let's say – do the Croats and Moslems that you know of in Mostar want to come together as a single entity Bosnia and likewise – do mostly Serbian people of Banja Luka, for instance, want to come together as a single entity in Bosnia with the Moslems and Croats?**

[NŠ] So, basically whether they still see themselves the part of the same country.

**[SG] Yes. Is there a willingness to get together, basically?**

[NŠ] If they have a choice somehow they are thrilled about it. But if they have no choice but ordinary people they want to build bridges, we talk about ordinary, normal people. Because it's a normal human principle - it is far better to be good with your

neighbour because sometimes to have a good neighbour is much more important than have a brother or sister somewhere around. So it's far better to have a good neighbour than have no neighbour whatsoever. Or have like neighbour as your enemies. In Republika Srpska they are extreme in some senses, yes. But they defend their attitudes but because they are ethnically the most pure area, you know, that's why they stand together, you know, like we don't need you. Similar attitude you find in Herzegovina where you have like ...

**[SG] ...Herzeg-Bosna?**

[NŠ] Yeah. People... they feel strong when they have like... in a more pure... what they call pure ethnic group that they feel they can do it themselves. But they are forced to communicate and I think people started to build bridges on economic plan. Because if you are... because of market and economy people have to start to build bridges and it's breaking ice I think.

**[SG] Do you sense that people in Republika Srpska, at least in Banja Luka what you know better, would rather secede to and become a part of Serbia proper? Much like those in Herzegovina...**

[NŠ] I'm not sure about this. Some still, yes, some don't. Because they know that standing on their own, like Serbia under sanctions, they went into extreme of economically. So this is one of the reasons. People in Republika Srpska are still living better than those in Serbia. So even though they look at them as like a big brother they still... it's a big factor of being on a higher economic level.

**[SG] So it's still on economic...**

[NŠ] It's the same question like in Herzegovina, you know, because when you have like state functioning within laws and everything, they would like to be, some of them, they would like to be part of Croatia, but when they see as a thing... to be under this laws they still wouldn't like to pay all the taxes like you have to do in Croatia. You know, about smuggling and all things they do.

**[SG] So, they are trying to play both sides?**

[SŠ] Yeah. But I think it is still, as Nikola said, it's more extreme in Srpska because they were isolated and are still more isolated than the rest.

**[SG] Right. Number six. And I really would like to solicit both of your answers here. If there is a unique role for women.**

[NŠ] I don't say this that you can separate men or women role. Maybe for women it's specifically they can easily communicate with other women. I don't think that there is a big change between the sexes. We were good example of them in Mostar. Well, if I...

**[SG] Do you want to go into the other room and give your answer?**

[SŠ] No, no. I just can add one [thing]. I mean, you know, because women are known being richer in emotion. They can hold a lot of unforgiveness and bitterness especially I empathize with those who lost, you know, children or, you know, many children in Central Bosnia when I hear stories of children being killed on a playground, you know, things like that. Or children taking a swim in the Sava and then being shot at. It is terrible tragedy to face. But still on the other hand I think it is somehow easier for women to build bridges. Somehow, somehow, I don't know.... maybe I'm not right, but I think sometimes they are less stubborn.

**[SG] Do you want to know how the answers have come out so far on this question? I can tell you how, when I ask people this question, how it comes out. Would you be interested?**

[NŠ] OK, yes.

**[SG] It's almost exactly how you've answered it. Almost always the men say they don't see a special difference. And every time the women say there is a special difference. I'm not saying that you [Nikola] are right or wrong, I'm not saying you [Sandra] are right or wrong. I'm just telling how the answers come out. Then, of course, when I talk to religious leaders the question always comes in the role of women and then the hierarchies of the churches and/or for that matter the Muslims. And the role of women is quite low in official channels.**

[NŠ] Within religious circles?

**[SG] Yes. So it's usually through unofficial channels that women are doing most of the efforts in reconciliation.**

[SŠ] I think women are usually in our culture not encouraged to do what they can.

**[SG] One person told me, and I need to check the statistic, but told me that 90% of the workers for local NGOs, that's Bosnian, you know, international groups, 90% of the local NGO workers are women.**

[NŠ] It might be true. And in churches as well, usually women are in churches.

**[SG] But it's almost always through unofficial... they don't have the title, usually the man carries the title and a woman does the work.**

[NŠ] Wise woman can bring Gospel into their house and change the home situation.

**[SG] Number eight. Is nationalist ideology the real enemy of true faith and not other national groups or expressions? If so, how can true faith overcome this enemy? And what is the role of true faith to overcome fear and hatred?**

[NŠ] OK, so we come back to what we stressed before that ... enemy of the true faith and even an enemy of the possibility of changes in people. And also as a principle of sowing and reaping, you know, the same thing... the worst thing happen to those who stand high, you know, raising high their voices in this nationalistic ideology. So, it really goes back to them. Experiencing ourselves from Mostar, how true faith can overcome fear and hatred. We literally, we were free of fear through that time and people couldn't comprehend that...

**[SG] That you were married right in the middle of the war?**

[NŠ] Yeah, that's right. And day after day, you know, stand under the shelling and not knowing whether we would, you know, statistically, realistically we were in the situation not knowing whether we would be there by the end of the day. But it's really experience that it's supernatural experience, you know, like a true love cast out all fear, really.

**[SG] Was that something... can you describe that dynamic to me? Was that something you gave up or something that was removed from you?**

[NŠ] Yeah, I'm talking about natural fear, natural reaction, when the shell explodes somewhere of course your first reaction is that you hide against the biggest wall in the house or something like that. But what moved me toward the people... and He's given us peace even though we react, physically react under the circumstances. And it was realistic, there was a chance to die any minute of the day. But that really didn't matter to us, didn't even touch our life during that time. We were like, we were acting during that time like we were under... what's the word... under the glass bell, you know, that nothing can touch you. We were really living like that that nothing can touch you. Some people doubted that this... whether this is true or not. But, you know, it showed that we... I mean, just if you want I mean, just two examples, like we were going to people instead of people coming for the meetings to us or somewhere else because that was safer for them not to expose themselves. We were taking all the guests, foreign guests, because they were... first of course, there were no hotels, but even if there was limited accommodation in hotel "ERO" during the war, but still it was far, for being a foreigner in that situation, not knowing what's going on around the corner, it was far, we thought the safest place in Mostar was our house. Yeah, literally like that.

**[SG] And not in the... do you have bomb shelters in the Mostar buildings like you do in Sarajevo?**

[NŠ] I haven't seen even one in Mostar. Not even one time. So, even we've seen damaged, you know, on every house around us but nothing happened anywhere near us where we lived.

**[SG] It's amazing, huh?**

[NŠ] Yeah. That was reality. With our lives we proved the power of the Gospel that was so present. Some people are saying, "You are heroes, you are our example"

and so on. It wasn't about it, you know, it wasn't about your own. But you really need to be really rooted into this flow. And out of that the fruit was coming out. And it is difficult to see how churches, how church generally speaking, churches that they don't have power. And everywhere people are longing for power, you know, and they talk, they preach about first-day Christians, you know, first-century Christians and they long for power but it seems that this is not happening anymore. And during that war, during that period, the centre of happening and life was within our church community. It was generating life, you know. I understand it is a different time frame now but I believe like in those times... I believe it is possible to have life springing out so the most alive place is in you church. I believe it's a good model, it's a biblical model but it seems it's not happening.

**[SG] Let's pop down to number eleven. In what ways are decisions among Bosnians individual or communal? In other words, I'm looking at this dynamic of Western thing, Western primarily individualism and people make their own decisions and yet Bosnia seems to be a mix between traditional and more modern ways of thinking. Individualism is there but there's also a consideration of family, there's a consideration of community that's still there. And let me just let you translate it. Yeah, now you're talking about the community of faith and how they respond during the war and how they respond now and the question is really about: does the community of faith, in this case the church, hold compelling influence on the moral decisions of Bosnia?**

[NŠ] So, it's written here 'forced influence'.

**[SG] No, compel is...**

[NŠ] Because it's written here...Can you read me in English that part?

**[SG] Yes, sure. 'Does the community of faith hold compelling influence...' It's not so much that it's forced influence, 'you must do this,' but that people feel obliged within the church, we should do this.**

[NŠ] I think it's a delicate question. I think people are under lots of strain, confusion... talking about traditional churches, traditional communities like Orthodox, Catholic, they try... if this Christian traditional community they try to preach Gospel out of the Word first, you know, everyone knows what the commands, what are the moral principles, but they are... the rest is... they feel, they openly talk about politics and I think people are manipulated and I don't know how they perceive their own role. It's not authentic. It is a confusion, I think, in people because if you were, if you don't restrain yourself from nationalism and some religious leaders they are pushing people into this, but even if they didn't restrain, you know, not to talk about it or ... they lost, I think, authority to talk about moral virtues. And I don't know whether this is a good answer. I as a Croat, if I put my national identity above moral or God's commands I cannot be authentic or I can't have authority. And somewhere deep within there is some kind of red light saying, "This is not really true." There is no.... it's not right to say, "Muslims are worse than Croats". It is individual. There are bad and good people. And that's really where religious

communities lost their authority. Because they are generating, usually they are generating negative influence on people. They lost the power to influence people they should have. Taking an example of Jehovah's Witnesses, they are a sect, of course, and I'm not... but just looking... they are multi-ethnic community. There is a positive side into their attitude towards other ethnic groups, other nations because... So, they are more positive than any Catholic or Orthodox church in Bosnia. I hope that this is not going to be misunderstood.

**[SG] No, I think that's fine. Let me ask specifically about that you know best, your own churches. I'm speaking specifically of Mostar and then Banja Luka. I think we would all agree that we don't want to force our own ideas as a way of indoctrinisation on our people, people of God, the flock. But are people compelled by the preaching of God, God's Word, and the Scriptures and Holy Spirit working in them that they should act in such a way toward their neighbour, that it allows them to forgive? What contribution does the community of faith help in changing ideas and helping to encourage people in making right but unpopular decisions?**

[NŠ] First of all I think that the language of love is most understood. It's a key thing in everything. And that there is a principle in Bible that says that is a love above all. Even though you face in someone very bad attitude, nationalism, bitterness and all kinds of things when they face love but real love, authentic love, not acted love, something happens within. Some people came to me, they said that they are talking about me that I'm not normal. Because only someone who is not normal can do things like that. People can see that it is possible when they face it. And that out of that changes come. So that's why I think that the role of Christian community, not only for Bosnia, but on the wider geographical map, so what he wanted to say the role of Christian community and Christian workers it is such a responsibility, they hold such a responsibility.

**[SG] Good. How can a religious community participate in inter-religious dialogue and co-operation and still maintain its own distinctive. Can it?**

[NŠ] It is difficult. And I have to admit that I haven't done very much on that level. Maybe it wasn't possible to do more. My attitude is that if I hold on to... that with our own example if you do in your own community, in your own religious groups or your own church and you do things in our own church, if you lead them correctly and you preached the Word and you lived that and you... then you can influence people outside as well and other religious groups at least they have to admit that something good is happening in your midst. At least they have to recognise that there is nothing negative to be said about you. I was present at some meetings with other... I was seeing our brother Kuzmić coming on lots of, lots of meetings and he is into dialogues. How do you call it? Inter-religious dialogue. But if you sum all of it the results are nothing. When they split nothing has been done. We are enemies to, enemy in their eyes, to Moslems and Catholics and Orthodox. They always look at others with this negative attitude. Because if you live the Gospel you really point on their weakness. I can put some effort to be a friend to a person, but I cannot compromise the principles of Gospel. Then I lose my authentic belief or my

authority. We can make a mistake or go astray or whatever but if we are consciously, you know, doing what we think it's will of God in our life. I can't say that there is a formula in any situation in areas where we've been that it gives any results. Talking about Evangelical communities they have a dialogue themselves, you know, they are... something more can be done on that level. Because there are lots and lots of things common to us, that there is not a reason that we are not in communication or we're in bad relation because of a few different doctrines or so. I think for me it is ridiculous to pray together with 'hodža'. Maybe I'm extreme in my... even with Catholic priest when they pray "Holy Mary", you know, and then... I just can't say 'Amen' on that prayer. Then it's not... I work against myself. And I have nothing against them in their church within their walls they pray in the way that they learned. But I still can preach Gospel to one 'hodža'.

**[SG] From what I hear you saying, and I hope I hear you correctly, I hear you saying that it hasn't prospered or helped this really in your efforts at all.**

[NŠ] It seems when they are around the same table they are all like good actors, you know, when they come together they are polite to each other. When they split, they are still enemies. And the next question I ask myself is that when they are around the same table I ask myself whether they are able to be something more than actors. If I hold his god, you know, wrong, you know, or, you know, if I can't say that we have the same Father I can be like a politician and I'm not a politician, you know, I'm not a diplomat.

**[SG] You're a prophet. Prophets are not diplomats generally. I wanted to pursue the question a little bit more, though. Can other [religious communities] profit by knowing more about what you are doing through inter-religious dialogue?**

[NŠ] Can...

**[SG] Can they profit, can they become more knowledgeable about what's happening in your church and can they be better as a result?**

[NŠ] Probably they can, what I said before. But the next question is how not to compromise my own belief and still has open to dialogue and good communication. It is very ... With my attitude I seem extreme and there is always ... the tension with the different ones.

**[SG] Well, I want to give you an opportunity since we're here and the tape is rolling to say anything else you would like to say that you think that I have neglected.**

[NŠ] I remember the day when God showed us that the Gospel would flow out of Mostar to different areas of Bosnia. That was just the beginning of the church, it was just a few believers present on meetings. And today church of Jesus Christ in Bosnia seems huge, you know, in comparison with those days and it comforts me to know, to see that God can do what we people cannot. During this difficult days and few

believers and people hearing that they thought it is really not possible. And today we still can say we have a witness of Gospel in every bigger city of Bosnia. And I think that what is missing today's church is fire and oil, only. And that it's possible to change the situation. When something happens in spiritual realm that the things would change in natural. And everything else is that what we call just dead work, something that is not going to live, bring out good fruit or good results.

**[SG] Very good. Thank you.**

[end of interview]

Interview with

**Boško Tošković**

SOC Deacon

Lukavica, Republika Srpska

21 May 2002

[BT] In inter-religious radio, they wrote about seven minute texts that were read by a speaker. So, it was not very interesting, although it was broadcast over several radio stations. This program on radio BH1 has lasted for a year now. It is the best show of this radio by inside critics. For the people who work on BH1 it is the best show. Nedžad and Marko are the best I could choose, because they are educated and very tolerant. And whoever listens to this show, they will notice that there is always a positive background, though many themes we talked about are quite controversial. But we talk about these themes from our own perspectives, so the show, on one hand, has a sense to show a possibility of dialogue and a chance for everybody to talk about his faith from his own perspective. And on the other hand is unaffectedly educational. So, we already have our regular listeners who critique us. We have not dared to have a contact program yet, because that would bring us to an unpleasant situation. Somebody could be provocative or vulgar. In the first show the phone rang in the beginning but we didn't answer and from the very beginning we had such a posture. Our listeners gave criticism to us out of the show, or they called the staff in production but they are never let into the show directly.

**[SG] Why do you think it would generate too much conflict?**

[BT] We think that somebody would be provocative. And in that way they would mar the atmosphere. Realistically, there is a danger for that. We even thought to record questions people ask and then let them into the show. That would be the only possibility, but technically we cannot do that right now.

**[SG] You sense that you have a good wide listening audience?**

[BT] I think that those who listen to us come back and listen to us again. How do I know this? Because my fellow workers or friends tell me that some people they know listen to us. And we always come to the show with a comment by somebody. Although, it's probably not the show that would be popular as music one.

**[SG] And from what I could understand and what I found interesting is that the topic of the past week about water and wine was very interesting. Maybe we can look at some of these [dissertation] questions.**

[BT] Before we start that, let me just ask you what faculty you are on?

**[SG] This is the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.**

[BT] Is that philosophy, theology?

[SG] It's theology.

[BT] Are you a theologian?

[SG] I have three degrees of theology. Bachelor's, two masters and now I'm doing a PhD.

[BT] So, you belong to Anglican Church?

[SG] No, I attend the Church of Scotland right now. It's Protestant church. There's a Catholic segment in Scotland, but it's mostly Irish. In late 1920's Scotland had similar problems in their country. They were trying to decide which people are Scottish and which not. And the way they decided, this is simplified, was that whoever belonged to the Church of Scotland is Scottish. And the question was what about those who are Catholic? They must be Irish, so they kicked them out. In my city, Edinburgh, and in Glasgow, that are the biggest cities in Scotland, each town has two football teams, one Protestant, one Catholic. And the Catholic one would not hire a Protestant and the same, the Protestant would not hire a Catholic. There is a lot of history there in Scotland, and they understand this sort of conflict. Fortunately, nobody has a serious war.

[BT] You are a Protestant from the States and not the English, that is, Anglican?

[SG] That's right.

[BT] Then these topics we are going to talk about would be more understandable now. I didn't know that you have a theological education.

[SG] Along with a lot of studies in Protestant faith and Catholic faith, so the western churches, I've done a quite a bit of reading in the Orthodox world as well. So, I do know pretty good background on the Orthodox theology, and history here in the Balkans, especially over Bulgarian Orthodox Churches. I do not know much about Greek Orthodoxy, I know something more about the Russian Orthodox history.

[SG] Maybe it's important to tell you what would happen with this tape. I am actually interviewing three groups of people: religious leaders such as yourself, students and women. Religious leaders are the voice of today, and students are maybe the voice of tomorrow, and the women speak for today but also have a responsibility with the distant voice. And with the religious leaders, I would like to use the material and actually cite names. And that's in contrast to students, I get their opinions but basically they remain anonymous. But the tape is really a mechanism for the transcript. And what I will do is to transcribe this and then we give it back to you, so you have a chance to scratch out things and clarify things. And when you are satisfied with it, that gives me permission to use it in the dissertation. In other words, I am not a journalist looking for a story, and I am here on research, inquiry and I do not know what the outcome is going to be. And I am not trying to make one side look bad in contrast to another, but I am really trying to see how the

**each of the faith communities can make positive contribution towards the reconciliation. And there really isn't an enemy in this study. I don't try to take sides. But if there is a contrast, there will be two contrasts, which would be, maybe the west would be one contrast, which either thinks that the religion is the cause of the war, on the one extreme, or on the other extreme, which is often the voice of media, that religion isn't important whatsoever. The other contrast, if there is one, is maybe those who are non-confessional, do not practice their faith. Because, the study is, really, looking at people of faith, and what the contribution is there. So, are there any thoughts to that, is that clear?**

[BT] I see that the questions are very intelligent and concrete and that they hit the topic completely. In some questions there is something that has a political connotation. And what is official, then a man should stand behind that responsibly. We have a kind of inner church discipline. So, something what is official, if we want to publish something, I have to ask for a blessing, a permission, from my metropolitan, and then I can offer that to you. And regarding your dissertation I can give you my own opinion that you can use. For this, there has to be some historical information so that everything is understood, for this situation has its genesis. So I brought a book by Ivo Andrić, A Nobel-prize winner. That's his PhD and the title is "The Development Of Spiritual Life In Bosnia Under The Influence Of Turkish Rule."

**[SG] I read this dissertation in German.**

[BT] Then it will be easier to understand the cultural context that is here in Bosnia.

**[SG] So, you hold that as a very important background study for Serbian understanding?**

[BT] Yes, I do. I think it's very important. It's important because it doesn't take sides, and because he was a man who analysed just that problem and he worked on that all his life. And probably that was his most high-quality work.

**[SG] Did he wrote his PhD in German and submit it to Vienna? I think he wrote it in German.**

[BT] It's possible.

**[SG] As far as the questions go, there are twelve. I don't anticipate that we will get through all of them. And I sort of prioritised the first six, they are most important to me. Number five and seven are really questions for the Muslims. And they also, I should say, if the question isn't asked correctly, or if you want to go somewhere else with the conversation I am happy to go there. I am an outsider looking in, so I don't pretend to know thoroughly what question ought to be.**

[BT] The historical data that we can find in this book speaks about the genesis of nations in this area. In fact, they speak about which level the genesis had come when Turks came, that is, to which level the national development came, what Turks found when they came here. And they found two Slavic tribes, Serbs and Croats. In the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Bosnia lost its independence, and fell under the Ottoman empire. A little bit before that Serbia fell under Ottoman empire and after Bosnia, also

Montenegro. In this book there is a law, made by Turks, by which they act. It was about how they should behave in conquered countries and what was allowed to Christians.

**[SG] It's actually question number five which I asked Muslims, about the concept of djimma.**

[BT] Let me read you this law for Christians and Jews. Christians and Jews in conquered countries must not build churches. They must not repair their churches. Those who live in a neighbourhood of Muslims can repair their houses only in a case of necessity. For passengers' needs they will widen gates of monasteries and churches. To all strangers they will give hospitality for three days, here they firstly mean those who are Muslims. They will not receive spies in their homes and if they recognise a spy, they have to deliver him to Muslims right away. They must not teach their children about Qur'an. They do not have any rights to judge among themselves. They must stop anyone from their environment to become a Muslim. They have to behave with respect towards Muslims. They have to stand up when a Muslim comes in and give them a seat of honour without complaining. Regarding clothes and shoes, they must not dress as Muslims. They must not learn Arabic literature language. They must not ride a saddled horse, or carry a sword, or any other weapon, neither in a house or outside. They must not sell wine nor have a long hair. They must not carve their name into a ring with a stamp. They must not wear a wide belt. Outside their houses they must not have a cross or the Holy Scriptures. In their houses they must not ring a bell loudly, but just moderately. Also they can sing only half-loudly, they can pray for the dead only quietly. Muslims can plow and sow on Christian graves if they are not used for burying any more. Neither Christians nor Jews can have slaves, buy Muslims servants, nor must enter the houses of Muslims. In case that a Christian, or a Jew is abused by Muslims, Muslim has to pay a proper fee. This canon was regulated by Kalif Omar Al Katab for Christians and Jews in conquered Damascus in 1635. Also it was in effect in a mild way in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Some segments were aggressive, but it was let[?] time, because of different favourable conditions, to make people convert to Islam. And other religions couldn't develop. A damaged church could be repaired only with wood, or with material that is not so firm. And for that you needed special permission, which had to be bribed. And there is also illustrations for that here.

[BT] Cultural development what is more important in this book- the Slavic language was spoken and the Slavic alphabet was used. You probably know that the Slavic teachers who taught us to write were Cyril and Methodius. Cyril was buried in Rome in 869 and Methodius died in 885. That happened before the division between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. And you know that happened in 1054. So, Slavic literacy could not be an antagonism according Serbs and Croats. Serbs do not feel Cyril as theirs more than Croats. Today there is no consciousness about that, because at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Latin or alphabet was introduced as Croats' alphabet and today in the Bosnian language as well. And Franciscan priests fought really hard against introducing the Latin alphabet, because they had to pay double or three times more for printing their books. But because the Slavic national corps was connected to Russia as the biggest Slavic country and still Orthodox, then the Latin alphabet was imposed to Croats, who also already were Catholics, as their alphabet to take them away in cultural way from Slavic being. The same thing is happening with Muslims today. There was "Bosancica" as Muslim alphabet, which was a de facto Cyrillic. Also there were 17 poems by 11 authors, Muslims, who wrote in the Serbian language but with Arabic symbols and that alphabet is called

“Arabica”. So, there were political reasons to introduce to the Slavic language another alphabet. To understand the Serbian national corps, the Kosovo battle has to be observed from which the Kosovo myth was made.

**[SG] Let me just to stop you here before we go to Kosovo. I’ve done a great deal of study on all the background in history, the names, the peoples, the battles of Kosovo. I know what are you saying in terms of language, and culture. So, I am trying really to move, I take that all as background. I understand how both, in some ways, the Croats, and especially the Muslims in the Ottoman period, have subjected Serbian people. And, I really believe we could be here for weeks talking about this. And we could be here for years if we brought some Muslims and Croats. Just as you are trying to do with the radio program, you are trying to make it quite contemporary. As a matter of fact, my Master’s degree was on all this background information. So, I am trying to move past my master’s degree now to some of these questions. And I accept all what you’re saying, and Ivo Andrić and many other authors. And if you are willing I would like to look at some of the questions more directly instead of looking at all the history which I think it’s known to both of us.**

[BT] I am aware how this is huge and that it would be the main topic and not digression. I agree completely that, here, it is talked about, these questions, in a kind of fear which is a hindrance to the dialogue. There is a connection, because I think it’s needed to speak about that, so it could be understood what happened. Because it didn’t happen just like that, and in the process of reconciliation that historical inertia must be taken.

**[SG] I fairly understand that, I am spending three whole chapters of the dissertation, about 40 000 words, on the background history**

[Here the tape was stopped.]

**[SG] I am in complete agreement, there is no way you can understand the Bosnian situation without understanding the hundreds of years of history.**

[BT] Why it’s important in Bosnia is maybe similar to what you mentioned about Scotland. Nation and religion are identified together here. The name ‘Bošniak’ had its genesis in the last ten years. Before that there was a nation “Muslim”, which was given by the Constitution in 1974 during the Tito’s rule. Also it said who belonged to that faith confession. It was unusual to have “Muslim” as nation and Islam as faith confession, religion. And now you have “Bošniak” as nation, though the language is not Bošniak language but it’s Bosnian. These were, actually, two synonyms Bošniak -Bosnian, and now there is a difference. The concept of Bošniak consists of nationality of Muslims, and Bosnians are Serbs, Croats and Muslims who live in Bosnia. Religion certainly impacted the war in Bosnia, because that kind of antagonism exists; but I wouldn’t say religion by itself, but in the given situation it was used like that. Here there was a process of fragmentation to see clearly the identity of each national group. In the process a war happened which was morally horrible. It was horrible because of victims as well, but morally it was much more horrible. And the International community sinned regarding this war in Bosnia. It, by my and general opinion, impacted the beginning of the war, they decided its rate, the end of the war and their position after the war; especially between Serbs and Muslims who have very similar mentality. Islam in these areas has a lot of Orthodox customs that do not exist anywhere in the Islamic world. Muslims in Bosnia

have prayers when somebody dies after seven and forty days of their death. And that is a Christian custom. They also visit graves, even Muhammed's grave, as the founder of Islam, is not a subject of religious cult and they do not visit it. Many Muslim, in their homes, keep a hidden icon of their patron saint. Serbs and Muslims share a similar humour, the feeling of honour; they are quite simple-minded. And it can be easily said that there were many friendships between Serbs and Muslims and Croats in these areas before the war. That was normal because people were looked at by their personal qualities, values. There were many mixed marriages, and in this war, maybe they were damaged most, because they found themselves in a fissure between general, national and their personal [identities]. And even in themselves, their unarticulated past spoke. It's very important to state the collective unconscious, identity that was not clear to them, but which historically still was present. Communists thought that they could erase everything and start from one point, though in the background, in the highest political circles, the borders were made and over time, they became stronger by cultural, economical, political processes, so that, at the end, the state would have been broken on these borders. During the war there were paradoxical situations that were, probably, possible only here.

[BT] Would you like me to tell you my view of the war in Bosnia, from the point of suffering of an individual?

**[SG] I am actually more interested in what you're saying in terms of commonalities and how that might be..., I am not really interested in general cultural things at this point. I am really interested in, because these things I know from many books, using some of these things in common that works for reconciliation instead of division. This is my situation. I am ready to come another day if you think this is more important. I would really do that, but I want to be conscious of this time as well.**

[BT] This refers directly to your third question.

**[SG] I must say that it's not often I get a chance to talk with someone from the Serb side. It's easier to find someone who is Catholic or Muslim. So, what you are saying is fascinating, from this perspective. I think it's important that someone documents this. Only, I just want to be conscious of your time.**

[BT] I was thinking about this topic. And my principle is to philosophise this situation, which was just the preface. And by my opinion this was very short preface, but hoping that you are familiar with this, we'll stop it, at Kosovo.

[BT] And now I wanted to say how that, what happened here was manifested psychologically. Number one, I think there were some aspirations to know clearly, in Bosnia, who belongs to what group, if you followed the situation in Bosnia. In the beginning there was established a concept of civil state. On the basis of referendum of citizens, Bosnia and Herzegovina was accepted as independent state in UN. Now, you can see how much that was a democratic principle. Serbs organized a plebiscite right away that overlapped with the number of population from the census of 1990. Their will was to know clearly the Serb role in Bosnia, because there was a realistic fear that in such kind of civil state, they (Serbs) would be out-voted and manipulated. The beginning of the war was such that the Yugoslav Army was on the Serbs side, but that was a natural process, because Croats and Muslims stepped out, because they didn't want Yugoslavia. They wanted a new state where they would be seen. Croatia separated. If Bosnia separates too,

then it had to be known what would happen to Serbs in Bosnia. Serbs had ownership of 64 % of Bosnia and Herzegovina by properties, land. That was the Vance-Owen plan. Croats were for their own entity at the beginning. And when that should have happened, Croats and Muslims were invited to Washington where they made the Federation. As the war progressed, Serbs from Yugoslavia, Serbia, that is Yugoslav Army, moved back out of the borders of Bosnia. But they left the arms, so the Serbs had supremacy in the beginning of the war. Then a paradox was created in the situation, that Muslims were politically aggressive and Serbs had more arms and in the beginning of the war they were dominant. It's very clear that civil war happened here and not aggression of Yugoslavia on Bosnia. To have aggression of Yugoslavia on Bosnia, that would include that there were no Serbs here. The fact is that there were volunteers from Serbia who came here, as the fact is that "Mujahedins" from Islamic countries came as well and numbered about 14 or 15 thousand, and many members of Al Qaeda. Those people, for sure, didn't fight for civil Bosnia. But, Sarajevo, which was a Serb, Muslim and Croat city, by nature of things, stayed occupied, because Serbs lived in places around it. There they had their houses. They defended their homes. In the city there were forty thousands Serbs left. During the war there were concentration camps in the city, like "Viktor Bubanj", and as well as cellars in private houses. Serbs were mobilized against Serbs. Over seven thousands Serbs disappeared. It's true that Serbs grenaded the town in an arbitrary way, so not only on army targets. There was no strong control over these people who did that, who could throw a grenade on the city, just to celebrate their birthday, for example. But grenades that fell in the street Vase Miskin and Markale market place, about which you probably heard, by the analyses of the army experts, were not thrown from the Serbs' positions; that was arranged by the military to be used in media. After Vase Miskin, Serbia got sanctions. And after Markale, security zones. Have you heard about Srebrenica? About twenty days ago, there was a show on Federal TV in which the mayor of Srebrenica spoke, the one that was there before the war, and who was Muslim, and he asked why the political authorities in Sarajevo were silent about Srebrenica, why the Dutch army moved back, why the International Community didn't protect the city, once it saw armies which were heading towards Srebrenica, why some important people, like Oric who was in military, was taken away from Srebrenica before. Muslims themselves have a need to review this event. A few thousand innocent people were killed by Serbian Army. This event was used in media, and two days after that the whole Krajina in Croatia fell, so, in the media that was not even noticed. These are only some of illustrations that were political agreements in this war, which were arranged after that by military. From that side the war is horrible, because innocent, common people died. My uncle was in the city during the occupation. There were those who persecuted him, but there was a Muslim family a floor above him who never ate their meal before calling him. For example, Serbs burnt my house, and the reason was because they robbed it before. So to hide their traces, they burnt it and said that Muslims had done it. But the traces were seen clearly, because they left some pieces of clothes and that was towards the Serbian positions. The paradox of this situation is that people knew each other. So in a trench beside you could be a man who hated you personally, because your house would not be burnt by somebody who loved you, and you shot a man, and you are shot by somebody, who is your good friend. That's why it's very important to talk about religion, to bring that in a sphere of rationalism, that people are educated in that. Because when something is known, then it can be articulated and you cannot manipulate with that very easily as with a danger that a common man cannot identify. In that sense, I think that the religious dialogue is irreplaceable in order to break prejudices. And prejudices are always a treasury, a dark treasury from which you can take out those phantoms from the past and use them today. And even more important is that

identity of each nation should be by that which they are inside and not be an identity as a negation of the other. I am not a Serb because I am a non-Muslim or a non-Croat but because, in true way, I inherited my own culture. But that must not push me to hate others. In Christianity you know that there is an imperative to love our neighbour. And you know the story about the good Samaritan. And that is the imperative. A Christian has an obligation to love his neighbour. So, that's not an issue of sympathies, but that is the imperative to build peace and to be an authentic Christian. And here it can be said that Muslims are to us like Samaritans, because you probably know how Samaritans were created. Now I am trying to understand the attitude of Islam and also Roman Catholics, and understanding things from my colleagues I would emphasize this ethical foundation for restoration of trust and dialogue. And our principle, in this radio show, is that there is no syncretism but about principles of inter-religious dialogue. And the first basic principle is to respect human dignity, especially as God's creature and that we must never enter a psychological position to behave as gods and to make others by our measures. Religious feelings are holy feelings that people are especially sensitive about, and you should be maximally tolerant towards them. And in that way, we will respect the other one as he is and we will get used to co-existence in these conditions. There is no need to be somebody else to be able to communicate. There is no need to act that we do not care about that. That would be the answer on the first question.

**[SG] Do you see that there is a possibility of restoring Bosnia, the way it once was where people lived without fear among their neighbours?**

[BT] I think that there should be made a firm relationship with all political instruments of one democratic society without over-voting, without negating the will of anybody. That's a foundation of a healthy organism, of a healthy relationship. If that is so globally, so in that way, the honest way, the common relationship will be regulated (or arranged). If that is solved in an honest way, then by the nature of things, personal relationships will be developed. You will buy a car from a Muslim because he will not cheat you, and you will not buy it from a Serb, only because he is a Serb. You will avoid suspicions. And even now people communicate and move, because there is a clean relationship there. However, if you would do that by force, to reshape the demographic picture of population, then again, that would be a source of conflict. The process that is going on in Bosnia is that Serbs sell their own land (properties) in the Federation and buy properties in Serbian entity, and ...

[end of the first tape]

[BT] People are afraid of the war subconsciously and also right now consider that the standard of their freedoms in everyday private life is greater among their own people. They will not be afraid to practice their own religious customs. They will not think that, by doing that, they would irritate somebody else.

**[SG] You should have liberty to do that, in other words. Your ethic in your faith, in your politics should liberate you to do that.**

[BT] Yes. For example, for the first time, I was at a Muslim funeral three months ago. A mother of a Muslim, that I very much respect, died. And we prepare each other a treat for our religious feasts. We communicate very well, because people are aware that this war brought most evil to individuals and these personal relationships, correctness, honesty,

trust, these things develop feelings of reconciliation, trust in which a man can feel comfortable and free to have fun and a good time with somebody.

**[SG] You are hitting on one of the questions that are I am keenly interested in. Do you sense that people accuse the entire national groups, they accuse all Muslims, or they accuse all Serbs, or they accuse all Croats, for the sins of the few for what they actually did?**

[BT] Among our people there is a proverb which says: "To somebody a war and to somebody a brother." Some people were damaged a lot during the war, while others profited a lot, because during the war they became very rich, rapidly rich. Those who became rich collaborated between each other. And you have a paradox of the situation. Minister of internal affairs in the Republic of Srpska and Minister of internal affairs in the Federation are very good friends. And this one from Federation ran away to the other one who is in Belgrade now. You should know that, in Sarajevo, a half of a kilo of cheese cost 20 KM or 1 kilo of coffee cost over 100 marks and it is known who could have imported it and sold it. And that money, which was practically grabbed from people, ended in the pockets of politicians. The same thing happened on Serbian side where they had their private companies through which they finished the State business. For example, from Sarajevo grenades fell on Vogosca, that belonged to Serbs. These grenades were actually produced in Vogosca in 1993 during the war. It's true that there was a real and justified tendency that I approved to Muslims - that they have their own hat, to be their own, so not to be, in any way, assimilated either to Serbs or to Croats, as they also have to realize that Serbs do not want to be only Bosnians because at the first place they are Serbs, and then Bosnians. Serb is a nation and Bosnian is a geographical concept.

**[SG] Where do you place the church in that?**

[BT] It's hard to explain, for example, to a girl or boy whose father died during the war, that he (the father), among other things, was a victim of political manipulation. Whoever gave a sacrifice wants to have a holy relation towards it. And that sacrifice was given for the freedom of nation. Here the media played a terribly dirty game and they were instruments of these politicians. The role of religion is to avoid polemics or convincing who is guilty, or listing the number of victims, who gave more victims and, in some other but still harder process, to build a platform from which the situation in Bosnia will be seen. All those politicians that show up on TV and who aggressively accuse others, that creates hatred and just they are those who had profit from the suffering of people. I think that every step of good will, which maybe is not seen immediately, is still very important and needed and that it has its own power, which is against the antagonism. Because the way is to witness, to be able to respect others, honour them, lift a level of dialogue, which is needed in religion. And below that level, it is possible to talk about religious themes, as it is possible in politics. Religious dialogue, if it has an element of offence, excludes itself. We will never have this dialogue by negating other religions. But we will talk about that what is inside of our religion that pushes us to build peace and love towards others.

**[SG] Can I go back to what you've just said, to make sure I understand. I think I heard you say, or I understand you to say that if religion is a participant in the offence, damage, that it disqualifies itself from the process of reconciliation.**

[BT] Yes, in the process of reconciliation, but also it is not a characteristic of the religious dialogue. I will support this with an example. A Muslim can think that I, as a Christian, am a polytheist because I believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and that he doesn't want to listen to that these are three persons of the one nature. As a Christian, I can say that Christ is not a prophet but Son of God and that the last prophet was John the Baptist, which excludes Mohammed as a prophet. But everybody should choose a faith through which he thinks that he can be saved. I cannot decide that for anybody. If our dialogue went towards that direction, then it would exclude itself. However, as an authentic believer from inside of myself I should testify love towards others, and not to create it according to myself. For, if all people had been of the same religion in the whole world, for example Orthodox, it's a question how authentic they would be that. Or they would just be called that. Because it's important, and before all other things it's important, how much everybody built themselves in virtues, because it's one thing to confess faith formally and the other thing is true faith that actually permeates our being.

**[SG] So, it is conviction versus the outward rituals?**

[BT] Of course, the inner conviction is much more important about which we can talk. And the outward form is not even our domain, for these are the world religions. So, even if we would like to, we cannot change them. But what can we do? We can say that it is not allowed to destroy a mosque, because in that way we wouldn't be authentic Orthodox, because in that case, I destroy somebody else's temple. The same thing is true for others. A Muslim can't claim that he is an authentic Muslim if he destroys an Orthodox church. We can talk about that in our radio show but if we talk about examples that somebody somewhere broke windows of a church or mosque, then in that case we would do daily politics and arguing. And that is not the way towards peace. The way towards peace is to build a platform, not judging or accusing anybody specifically, but from which you can see what are to do and what not.

**[SG] By saying that, you raise two questions in my mind; the first, I want to be sure I understand, what you mean by the word 'peace' because, these helicopters flying over would indicate that the weapons are no longer shooting, that, is that real peace? What is peace to you? Is it simply the stilling the weapons?**

[BT] Peace is an incredibly great value. In inter-personal relations, it is seen as stopping of shooting, stopping of killing and wounding. But if a man could look at that spiritually, that man is not only a material being, that he is a being that has spirit, if he would look at that from a perspective of eternity, then he could see how much peace is important for himself. Because that is the value that man carries in his own spirit. A man that has inner peace, then he also has peace with other people. A man who has some anxiety inside of himself and who would like to make quasi paradise for himself and a group of people who has the same thinking as he does, which would include some ambitions of this world, that they have to sacrifice other people for that peace, such a man will not find peace either on the earth, which is just passing away by all philosophies, and he will harm and affect his soul very much. Our peace is not built on negating others. If it's needed that others disappear so that I can be happy - can something like that be built in any kind of happiness?

[BT] Dostojevski said one very important ethical question, actually a statement, 'If happiness of the whole mankind were based on even one innocent tear, I would have denied such happiness.'

[BT] We in the Orthodoxy have never understood Christ's sacrifice as wages for sin but as love towards fallen man, as a stretched hand of God's eternal love but which also obliges us on ethical excellence. We should respond with love on love, and that still doesn't mean I can sin because somebody paid my sins. As much you have inner peace, that much you will have peace among people. And I am convinced, and also from the biblical foundation, that God as he answered to Abram, that he will save the whole place for 10 righteous people. So, it's more important to have quality than quantity.

**[SG] The other element that you mentioned in couple of times is that you felt that religion's task is to build a platform for peace and forgiveness. I am not sure I actually got what you said correctly, but the issue of the determining who is at fault and how much someone is it fault is *not* the place of religion.**

[BT] Yes.

**[SG] Then I understood you correctly.**

[BT] I think that in inter-religious dialogue that segment is excluded completely because if I say that you are guilty, your mind will be busy to think then about what *I* am guilty of, and what gives me the right and what my credibility is to tell *you* that you are guilty.

**[SG] Presuming that I am not Orthodox.**

[BT] Yes. And then it's polemic and it's not goodwill. Everybody should examine himself. If you were in conflict with somebody, you feel remorse in some part of your conduct. If you ask for forgiveness for what you feel guilty about, probably you will cause the same feeling in somebody else. And in the process of him forgiving you, he will recognise in himself things he did wrong towards you. And these are the laws of conscience. It is true that every man has a conscience. And you can keep a foundational ethical attitude - do not do anything to others that you don't want others do to you. I think that the process that is going on here, that in Hague, political leaders of only one nation were accused. And that lead neither towards peace, nor to the true search for justice. Rather, I think that it is also political instrument in accordance with the will and might of the great world powers.

**[SG] You are moving me too fast to that question. I am very interested in this discussion, but I want to ask a related question still about the role of religion and confronting truth, or confronting sins. I am sure you are well aware of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa. I really don't want to compare these two, Bosnia and South Africa, they are very different and my study does not make that comparison. At the same time there is a couple elements in the South African situation with the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, which, I think, are very important elements for faith and religion. One element is that the clergy, religious people, are very strongly involved in the process of truth and reconciliation. Although it's true that it couldn't happen without politicians, a moral voice is**

coming from the church. Politicians are important to make the changes that are going on but the moral voice is coming from the church. And the clergy is not really accusing the other people, black or white, with what they did wrong, but they are asking *as a community*, their *own* community, “What have *we* done wrong?” What you are saying on the individual level, which is that every man before God must examine himself, is there a place where *you* as a religious leader need to motivate your people to examine as a community of Orthodox believers, what have we done wrong? And so the Muslims, so the Croats.

[BT] I can say regarding Orthodox Church, that this is the base principle. Whoever sins is a slave to sin. And our sin and our guilty should concern us most. It is important to us because of God. You cannot be a perpetrator and good Orthodox at the same time. The borders of Orthodoxy are never the borders of territory. A man cannot be a good Orthodox if he conquered some territories to bring Orthodoxy there, because in the material world, you can witness something that you will take to eternity. In Orthodoxy there is no “the end that justifies the means”, but our goal always has to follow Christian means for achieving that goal. And because of people themselves, it is very important, as well as for individuals, to recognise their own sins in order to be healed. And we should be afraid only of that. You probably know from the Gospel when Christ says, “Do not be afraid of the one who can destroy the body, but the one who has the power to take your soul into the hell”. A man who is free in his spirit does not have fear anywhere.

[SG] **You mentioned the Hague. I am very curious about the Hague as objective mechanism for justice; I question whether it is an objective mechanism for justice. And I agree with you, at least at the beginning, that it seemed to be a case where they were only going after Serbs. Now, of course, they accused, captured and convicted Croats and Muslims, all three and you’ve indicated that you think that it’s more politically motivated. Is there a better way that Bosnia can see justice served in its own country, on its own territory or in a completely unrelated country, that is not associated with the Western powers?**

[BT] I don’t have any illusion about [the accomplishment] world justice and I don’t think it will ever happen. I am a Christian and I believe in the Gospel. I believe that until the end of the world, till Jesus’ second coming, injustice will be multiplied as Christ said. That doesn’t mean we should be indifferent towards that, for those people who are going to build peace are those who extend the sense of existence at all; because when sense no longer exists on the earth - and evil is not sense - then I think the second coming of Jesus will happen. When nothing concrete can happen, because also in the suffering for justice there is something high, which is the testimony of Christianity since the first centuries; you know that that the most authentic Christians were those until the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. , who were ready to give their lives for their faith, and still, they were not aggressive towards anybody. And concerning Bosnia, if there would be honesty, at least a little bit, it could be asserted that in the First World War, Serbs, for the freedom of their nation, sacrificed a half of their male population. The date of the Battle of Kosovo was the date, which was repeated later through the history, and the intention of the First World War was the assassination of the prince and that happened in Sarajevo. And that parade that he organised had its own symbolism, which was to conquer Serbs on the very date of their greatest sacrifice for freedom. In the Second World War, Serbs were victims of fascism. They were on the side of the Alliance. The Independent State of Croatia joined Germany, and Muslim units were also together with Croats at the time. Only in the

concentration camp of Jasenovac about 700,000 people died, over 500,000 of which were Serbs. In this war of 1992, these relations were repeated, with Croats and Muslims on one side and Serbs on the other side. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbs were the last ones who organised themselves politically. There was a law that in the political parties must not be a national sign, that is, there must not have national characteristics in a political party. So, Muslims organised themselves in the party of SDA (Party of Democratic Action) and from the name you cannot see it's Muslim. And only later Croats and Serbs organized into HDZ and SDS parties respectively. Alija Izetbegović was in jail for more than 10 years before the war because he was accused as a Muslim fundamentalist. Was that a man for civil Bosnia? Were "Mujahedins" for civil Bosnia? Were Serbs not killed here? Is that honest, fair to try Karadžić, Mladić, Krajisnik and others and not to try Alija Izetbegović? Isn't this political protection? Doesn't this have a connotation for the whole nation, because Serbs do not want to make themselves distinct in everything from Karadžić and Mladić. They can separate from the crime in Srebrenica but they cannot separate themselves from political organisation when here Serbs were threatened by political annihilation. I think that there is also a fundamental responsibility for political movements, which were the cause of conflicts and here also people from European Community are not without responsibility. In fact, I think they have a great responsibility for that, although there is no mechanism for them to be brought to these trials, because they made them (trials). But also there are elements here having specific responsibility for the victims of the war, about whom political leaders were knowledgeable, and even approved of such responsibilities or gave orders for them (victims). So, politicians sinned against the conventions of war. And one of them is, for sure, Alija Izetbegović.

**[SG] I'll take these comments as your personal view and not referencing the church.**

[BT] Yes, yes.

**[SG] I think we covered just about all of the questions...**

[BT] This shouldn't be said somewhere in public, I do not have right to say this. This is my contribution for your studies to be better. I think you are a man of logic and you can check if I speak the truth or make things up.

**[SG] And I appreciate that. And I want to honour that by, as we mentioned, giving back the transcript if you do not want that to appear in the statements we can strike it. There is one question, I think, remaining that I would really like to hear your opinion on. It's a question number 8. It's maybe easier to look at and read than to translate it. I think, actually, that he has answered the second part of the question. I can ask the question the other way which is, "Is there something in common that all of the religious groups have that is uncommon or separates them from nationalism?"**

[BT] There is an interaction between nation and religion. It's a dynamic relationship, so we should observe it in that way. Religion is something that is broader than nation. Orthodox Christians are not only Serbs, as Roman Catholics are not only Croats or, as Islam is a world religion, not only these Bosnians are in it. But in developing a nation, as inner inspiration, religion is one of the most important factors, I would even say crucial. There is one definition of nation which is close to me - that nation is a moral historical and cultural organism. We have that in the Old Testament during the time of Elijah, when

he said, "Take me, oh, Lord, because there is no one who hasn't bowed before Baal, the god of Syria". God answered to him, "I kept 7000." And they were ones who carried the continuance of faith that they received. They kept it and they gave it. So, I think this is the same for all these nations and that it is what connects them or divides them and that stands independently from us and is true faithfulness. The church is an organism that lasts through time. And because this is so, the best example is Jews. They first lost their country, then they didn't speak their own language, but what kept them together is their conscience that they were descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. So, it's the same in every nation. As our ancestors morally defined themselves in the past, that defines our identity now, whether we testify to the values that they gave testimony of or whether we denied those values. We are not only genetically or by name members of a nation, but we are organically connected to our nation. There is a great difference between nationalism and chauvinism. Nationalism is positive - that means "love your nation" and that is affirmative. Chauvinism is from the position of my nation to hate other nations or to think that my nation is better than the other nation. At the end God created nations to create equality. Isn't it nice and aren't we glad when we look at the folk dances (customs) of another nation. Can anybody be cruel towards that? Can anybody be cruel towards sports competitions? Can anybody blame somebody else for cheering for his country's representatives? And I think from that a quality is born. And chauvinism is, still, something quite different - and that is to consider oneself better and that somebody else has to disappear, and that is dangerous.

**[SG] You drew a good parallel between...**

[BT] Sorry, this seems very simple but many do not understand that.

**[SG] You drew a good parallel between the nation of Israel and its cultic identity in Elijah's time and ability to preserve itself through the centuries. I would be curious how you see Paul's words when he says, "There is neither Greek nor Jew" and that "our citizenship is in heaven" as he says in Philippians chapter 4.**

[BT] There is no male or female but we will live as angels in heaven. So, this is not in present scenario. We testify to that, which is very important for our nation. The Orthodox Church is organised by a national principle referring to the Gospel, which says, "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So, in this life, we have our own ministries; we are children of our parents, we should be the best children as is possible. Then we became parents and we should behave ourselves as good parents. We are members of our church and we put our efforts in that to be as good as is possible. We have our occupation in which also we should be as good as is possible. Then I can say that we are also sons of our nation and we should not be afraid of that feeling because that's a positive feeling. Every mentally healthy man will admit to everybody else the importance of that feeling and he will allow others to be proud of their own nation and that he has love for his nation. That doesn't mean that he negates me (as a member of another nation). It's the same as when somebody loves his family. These are complementary loves. Somebody can love his wife and children and still love me as friend. And this what you said, that 'there is no Greek or Jew' speaks about general human principles and that still at the end we are sons of one God.

[BT] And now we come to a question of persuasion (faith confession), the means by which we are saved, and it is a question for itself, by which criteria we choose that, but that is not our topic now. [laughter]

[SG] **I'll order more tea! [Laughter]. Boško, I very much appreciate your time. We have been here through good weather and then bad weather and now good weather again. I think if we stayed here longer, we would be here through the change of seasons.**

[BT] Yes, yes, yes.

[SG] **I can see that you have put a lot of thought into these issues and you have a great responsibility for your people and with your people. I know talking about this with a westerner is like exposing yourself sometimes and maybe it is sometimes uncomfortable, so I respect that and appreciate that and will protect that. I just want to let you know that you'll hear from me again, so we can get the material back to you for review and we can send you a photocopy of the transcript as well or, if you want me to, e-mail it to you.**

[BT] I don't have e-mail.

[SG] **O.K.**

[BT] I would just like to say something. Socrates was the first who started to deal with ethics, asking what is the common morality, which is not under the influence of time. He considered that man did evil because he didn't have knowledge or consciousness of evil. But we Christians think that some people, when they know that they do evil, they have a division of will, that they do that by their will and not that they don't know that it's evil. But I think that a role of a Christian is to bring other ones to the consciousness that he does evil, because then the complete responsibility is on that person. As Jeremiah says, "I spoke and I saved my soul." That's why it is so important as a relation of energy. That's why for man's soul, it is very dangerous to have power and still not to have moral responsibility. That would be like an epilogue of our conversation from me.

[SG] **That is a good end.**

[BT] And at the first sight, I liked you as a human and while I was talking to you I didn't feel bound because, if a man feels that the other one negates his attitude or that there is no understanding, then he cannot express himself.

[SG] **Good. I am relieved. I probably wouldn't be a very good journalist because I am too interested in the truth. Thank you for sharing your heart with me today.**

[BT] I wish for you to finish this dissertation successfully.

[SG] **Thank you. I have a lot of work ahead!**

[end of interview]

Interview with

Monsignor Dr. Mato Zovkić

20 May 2002

Office of the Archbishop, Sarajevo

[MZ] As you know, my name is Mato Zovkić. I am 65 years old or young, a priest of the Sarajevo archdiocese, born in Bosnia. I finished my theological education in Croatia and my dissertation was on the Ecclesiology of Vatican II, which brought me into the ecumenical field, and to the attitude of the Catholic Church towards non-Catholics and non-Christians. I teach here in Sarajevo at the Theological Seminary in the area of the New Testament. Since the time of the nomination of the current Archbishop, Vinko Puljić, who took office in 1999, he asked me to be his delegate in inter-religious meetings and inter-religious conferences: that I am informing people of what is going on here and elsewhere, and that I may produce his voice and his opinion when it is asked.

**[Stephen Goodwin] Yes.**

[MZ] So this is a new task in my intellectual life, and I love it. The fruit of this new field of work is a book of mine on inter-religious dialogue in Bosnia -Herzegovina from the Catholic point of view. It was first published in 1997, but I continue visiting conferences and thinking and reflecting.

[MZ] First of all, I would also like to warn you that being a person in Bosnia, you are always somehow prejudiced. When you see the whole from your home point of view, ethnicity and religious identity do impact one's way of thinking. So I am going to tell you about my view of Bosnia as an ethnic Croat, Catholic who is a citizen of this multi-ethnic country. My reconciliation concept is going to differ from what a Muslim Bošnjak feels, from what an Orthodox Serb says. This is important to have in mind when you listen to us. Fine. We now can go to your questions. The first question

**[SG] I would say as well, if we don't have time for all these questions, I actually don't expect that we have time for all of them, but I have put them in order of importance.**

[MZ] From my side, I didn't plan anything before six. So, it is up to you how much time you want to dedicate to this meeting and to this interview.

**[SG] I am at your disposal.**

[MZ] I propose that we go this way because I studied your questions and I made some small notes to remind me what I wanted to say.

**[SG] Right. Excellent.**

[MZ] So the first question, the so-called co-existence in Bosnia prior to the war. My view of this is a bit critical, because co-existence was pretty much mythicized by former communists as privileged class who neglected the ethnic problem in Yugoslavia. Peaceful

co-existence meant many times the domination of majority; the domination of Serbs or members of the Party from two other ethnic communities. But, on the other side, there is an experience of good neighbourhood in Bosnia. I would emphasise the experience of good neighbourhood. Those of us who have been born in Bosnia and would like to remain in Bosnia have to find a way to relate to our neighbours who may be Muslim or Orthodox. Therefore, good neighbourhood, yes; but co-existence must have a question mark: if it includes denial or neglect of one's ethnic and religious identity – no. During the communist regime “co-existence” involved the Party slogan “Brotherhood and unity” which in many ways meant denial of one's roots.

In the second half of this question you ask about the attempt towards social restoration. We differ about the concept of state and therefore about the concept of social restoration.

**[SG] By ‘we’ you mean Bosnians?**

[MZ] The citizens of the three ethnic communities. Serbs and Croats feel in danger for their ethnicity. Therefore, they say: if restoration means unitarianism, central government and a mathematical democracy so that in a couple of years we would become a minority here ruled by Muslims, we don't want such a restoration. You see, we differ in the concept of how to restore society and how to make the state functional. We need a certain degree of autonomy and a guarantee that ethnic values will be practiced and preserved. At the same time we need a society, which serves the needs of its members. This is crucial I find. For example, when the Dayton Accords were signed, the Muslim side kept talking about restoration. We are now disintegrated and quasi two states. Serbs and also the Croats of West Herzegovina ask why reintegration if we are going to be subordinates of Muslim majority?

**[SG] So you sense a genuine fear in that direction?**

[MZ] Yes, yes. Especially we Croats. We are the smallest ethnic community, especially we Croats of Central Bosnia who are living among the Muslim majority. Croats of Sarajevo are a tiny group among Muslim majority inhabitants and there is a sharp discussion about the language we speak and write. Muslims say this is Bosnian and all citizens of this country should speak Bosnian and call it Bosnian; the “others” shouldn't call their language Croatian or Serbian, and so we feel this is a serious problem. If they speak Bosnian, what is my Croatian? A foreign language? Am I a foreigner in my own country?

**[SG] I never know what to call your language either.**

[MZ] [Laughter.]

**[SG] Inevitably I make a mistake.**

[MZ] Foreign people serving in Bosnia say it is the local language. “How do you say in your local language...?”

**[SG] Yes, it avoids the whole question.**

[MZ] Now can we go to the second question? Peace is more than the silence of weapons, indeed. Biblical concept of **shalom** includes God's blessing, openness for God and for fellow humans. But are our agnostic fellow-citizens able to experience the peace of God? Can they

keep peace by living in communion with people of faith, respecting their civil rights? would say that peace with God influences my way of living. It influences my way of relating to my neighbours. If I take seriously my faith, I should find a way to be honest and respectful towards my neighbours. And since I come from a so-called socialist state, where citizens of the first rank were agnostics or atheists, there are still very, very polemical atheists. We believing citizens are still a little bit angry and mad at them. I did meet during my military service in the Yugoslav army, which took place in Belgrade, honest agnostics or responsible atheists who say I love my family, I'm willing to work for the education of my children and to be a good member of society, but I don't feel the need for God, or for a religious affiliation, and so on. So I **do** accept the fact that agnostics exist. They can contribute towards peaceful living in this complicated country, but we need more tolerance towards each other. They blame us believers now. The state that all of the evils we now have are the consequences of stupid use of religious freedom. There was no limitation. Therefore, it was the religious persons who produced the recent war. Therefore – they think - if we now limit the influence of the religious communities in public life, we will resettle to normal and begin to be a normal society. So I see much hostility in the minds of agnostics on one side, and from religious fundamentalist persons on the other side. I am a rare Catholic in my own community who is in line with Vatican II, what means accepting pluralism, accepting the fact that somebody doesn't need God, doesn't need religion to be a decent, wellminded person. But I am a minority among my own fellow Catholics.

Many non-tolerant believers and unbelievers say: you can live your own identity if you somehow make a caricature of others. It is very hard to be a really tolerant and open person in a time after ethnic conflicts. You have to be very mature in your heart about your faith in order to practise your faith and to respect those who are different. How to be real believer among other believers? It takes time and years to mature, to grow up in your own faith because religion or faith is always a choice, personal choice. If you impose it by whatever instrument, government or family or cultural milieu, it is always something played, not lived.

**[SG] Is there a difference to between religion and faith, between vjera and religija?**

[MZ] I would say yes. Vjera or faith is personal consent to God and his revelation; religion is institution serving spiritual needs of its members and presenting its values to “other outsiders”. I know that in the USA society there is an inter-**faith** dialogue. We Catholics prefer inter-**religious** dialogue because religion is organised faith which has its institutions, its truths, you know, its own body of doctrine, its moral teaching, the schools, and so on. By inter-**faith** dialogue one understands giving up one's faith for the sake of tolerance for the common good, this would not be acceptable to most believing persons and communities who are convinced that their faith is not just one of faith communities but the best one. Therefore I am fond of inter-religious dialogue, but not so of inter-faith dialogue, because it would somehow mean I give up half of my faith you give up half of your faith and we meet for the sake of common living. The problem is, how do I stick to my faith and religion and yet intermingle with those who are different, and have the right to remain different? I would say that inter-faith and inter-religious are the same.

**[SG] And keeping those distinctions, to honestly admit that we have distinctions...**

[MZ] We **deeply** differ in religious doctrine. Here I live with Muslim people and the more I live here - I was assigned here to Sarajevo in November of 1968 - the more I live with them the more I see important differences. But not so essential that I couldn't bear living with

them, otherwise I would have moved out. So we are at a level when each religion sticks to its own body of doctrine. My religious community does not permit syncretism. Can we move to the next question?

[MZ] Yes, I would also like to go back to the phenomenon of the marginalisation of religion. Religious persons, regardless of how all brilliant and clever, were marginalised because of their faith during the atheistic regime here. And we are now in a kind of attack. I feel I can contribute towards building up a better society. Give me a chance as a religious person. And this is where we meet with our fellow agnostic citizens to rehearse a little bit more tolerance.

**[SG] And do you sense in the new Bosnia, the post socialist Bosnia, that, despite the war, there is more freedom to do that? To practise tolerance?**

[MZ] I would say yes, there is. We still have a weak state, which cannot influence greatly its citizens, and this is the fact, the state is quasi non-functioning. And there are former Communists who are now again in the ruling majority who have to use different tactics, otherwise they will lose the next elections. They are not so anti-religious or hostile towards religions. This is the fact. But, they cannot ignore us any more.

[MZ] No. 3. Individual guilt and distributed distrust. Accusing the whole ethnic community because some members of that ethnic community killed my neighbours or my family members. I hope you've talked to father Ivo Marković.

**[SG] Yes.**

[MZ] And as you know, his father was killed and many of his relatives were killed and he had to face a time of crisis. How do I continue practising my faith, my priesthood, in front of persons who killed my loved ones? So he did mature. But many of his relatives did not. They say he is a naive, foolish person who trusts the enemies. The next time, if these enemies would have occasion they would kill him too. So, the atrocities, which were committed during the war by members of an ethnic community here, Serbs, Bošniaks, Croats, **do** influence our feelings of distrust. There is a temptation of distrusting all members of that community. You have to live for years with, I would say a good Muslim, and good Serb, good Orthodox, in order to experience just **him** as a trustworthy person.

I will tell you of my own experience during my military service. You know, I grew up in Bosnia in a Croatian Catholic family, my neighbouring village was Muslim. The south side was Orthodox Serbian. We were brought up, that you greet people, but when you mingle with them, don't discuss politics, don't discuss religion, don't discuss World War II because you will have trouble. Ustaša were bad soldiers or good soldiers, and so on. So, we were educated to live in peace, but not much mingling, not much trust. When I came into military service, I met several trustworthy Serbs. One of them was from the Šibenik region and a candidate to priesthood in the Serbian Orthodox Church. We had time to talk about faith, about families, about plans and our dreams. It was there that I gained trust in this person because I discovered he was a normal Serb for whom Christianity came first and then his Serbhood. They are rare, but there are such Serbs, you know. Then I met a professor of English who was also a Serb. A normal Serb. And then I met many others. After this experience, at that time the military service took 24 months, you know, I now know there are good Serbs, well-minded Serbs. But for most people who lived in Bosnia it is very hard to

say all Serbs are good except those who have committed crimes. In my Christian thought there is still a little bit of caution regarding the members of other ethnic communities. Similarly it is so with the Muslims. I was here during the war, in 1993, when the conflict between the Croats and Muslims broke out. Before these months we were welcomed by our Muslim neighbours with, "Good morning neighbour, how are you?" When this broke out they were cursing my Catholic Croatian mother. The same people! Because Boban, the leader of the Croats in Herzegovina, was killing their people in Herzegovina and putting them in jail. So there is a mechanism of transferring distrust to the whole community because of crimes perpetrated by members of that community. It will take years before we educate ourselves, and I will talk about this later on.

Right now there is a phase in our Inter-ethnic relations when we stopped to accuse the whole community because their members have killed and burned down our houses, and so on. I remember, in the first weeks after the Dayton Accords, the Reis Dr Cerić kept repeating "There is no reconciliation before the Serbian Orthodox bishops say our people committed crimes against your people." They never said it. He now meets with the Orthodox Metropolitan Nikolaj and others. He expected the bishops, the leaders the politicians the Serbs, to excuse themselves in front of Muslim people for the crimes committed by the Yugoslav army or individual Serbs in this war. They didn't do it. It will be years before such steps are taken and seriously uttered, these apologies. It will take years.

**[SG] I realise this isn't part of the questions, but do you think this is imperative actually come to the place of asking, to come to the place of confession - to use theological language - and to ask forgiveness before trust and reconciliation can be built again?**

[MZ] I see this as a necessary step, but in our circumstances this is extremely difficult unless you want simply to make a show. Because such a person should be a kind of leader trusted by his own congregation or political body. So when he says such a confession of failures against the neighbouring community, his statement should be shared by his own community. He is our leader, our representative, when he speaks, he speaks on behalf of the community. Here we have a conflicting view of what happened in the recent war. As you know, the Serbs keep saying "We did not commit an aggression, as you Muslims and Croats accuse us. We defended our property in Bosnia. You decided in a referendum to be independent from Belgrade. We need Belgrade in order to cherish our ethnicity. Therefore we defended our property". This is their view. How can you bring the large part of Serbian people to follow their leaders - I mean Serbs in Bosnia - to follow their leaders if someone is courageous enough to say: we have committed crimes? We did it. Not just Karadžić and Mladić. It will take years. Similarly in the Croatian community. I am a Croat and I know about Croatian crimes committed during the war, but I am an individual and in private conversation I can tell it, but I'm not entitled to recite such a confession of sins on behalf of my people. My fellow ethnics will say, "You're foolish, you are blind because the other side have committed much worse crimes against us." So, this is an important question and it will take years. Being a Croat, I know that Serbs somehow justified their present atrocities through what happened to Serbian people during World War II, Ustaša pro-Nazi regime. Being Croat, I did expect that the Catholic bishops, at least the bishops, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War Two would write a more courageous Pastoral Letter. They did write a letter saying: many innocent people have been killed; we are sorry some Catholic members participated in such killing. We are sorry, you know. This is not enough. Serbs say this is nothing. This is empty words. But we need time.

[SG] **You raise the point of World War II. I suppose from my outsider's view looking at this that World War II could be repeated in which there was really no Aufklärung, no working through of the issues of guilt and justice after the Second World War.**

[MZ] The reason is the Communist dictatorship, you know. They seized power, they threw out the former regime or put outstanding political leaders in jail or killed them and only socialist recitation of the permanent guilt of all Croats, who as people were on the side of the Nazis, was promoted. Nothing else.

[SG] **Could it happen again that these issues are brushed under the carpet?**

[MZ] I see now in Croatia a new atmosphere. They are prepared and willing to discuss because Croatia is suffering from the remnants of its internal conflict. There are leftist Croats and rightist Croats, Ustaša type Croats, and left minded Croats. They are all Croats, citizens of the same country. It is now time to discuss openly what happened, who are the guilty and how much guilty, and how do we go forward. This can take place within Croatia as a democratic country; now they are an independent state with a democratically elected government. Open discussion is not forbidden. It is not a crime to discuss the killings committed by Partisans after World War II. Thousands of innocent people were killed. So far, it was not permitted. Therefore, I do hope that in Croatia there will come a new movement for internal reconciliation that will produce somehow an honest confession of sins towards others, Serbs, Jews and others. It could influence things here in Bosnia.

[MZ] Your number four question: How to escape the cycle of violence of past offences. As a religious person, I would say through serious acceptance of God's mercy and the proclamation of the mercy of God. God wants us to reflect his mercy. I know that the Christian concept of God is that God is a good father who created us in his image. For the Muslims God is a kind of ruler who is good, just, but a ruler. And they recite everyday, "In the name of God the merciful, **rahmanir-rahim.**" So there is a feeling for God's mercy also in their faith and if we as religious citizens in this country say, I believe in a God who is merciful, then we should do the next step. How do I enact God's mercy in living together with those who are different, who have wronged my community? This is where I see the chance of religious communities and religious people in society. I wouldn't like to have Bosnia as a religious state, no state religion anymore. But we have a chance to offer to our society the service of responsible believers. This is what I would like to do, this is what I strive to do.

[SG] **You use the term 'proclaim.'**

[MZ] Yes.

[SG] **Can you expand upon that term, and put it in the context of Vatican II?**

[MZ] Yes, as you know, the Christian term for the New Testament **Kerygma** is proclamation. We proclaim the creating and saving actions of God; God created, God sent his prophets, God sent Jesus, and so on. When I speak of proclamation I also mean witnessing, you know. Because a void or empty words ranging does not matter anymore. We live in a Europe of the 21st century where the remnants of history are still alive, so religions

have to offer, not to impose. We have a choosy public and therefore we can proclaim an offer, but not to ask why the state is not more religious.

[MZ] No. 5. Non-Muslims as protected minority in a Muslimmajority state. The **zhimmi** or **dhimmi**, or whatever way you pronounce it...,

[SG] **This is really more of a question for ...**

[MZ] ...and pluralistic society. I must tell you a fear of mine. About four weeks ago I participated in a round table on religious communities and state policy. It was organised by W C R P in Sarajevo, which is a New York centred international organisation with its branches here. They brought some politicians, theologians, sociologists and agnostics and we discussed. During that discussion a Muslim theologian was asked by a Catholic priest Marko Oršolić, maybe you have met him...

[SG] **Yes, I have.**

[MZ] Why does not SDA, which is Izetbegović's party, publicly state, "We do not want to create a Muslim state in Bosnia." Say it loud. Let us know that you are not about to create a Muslim state. The SDA member of parliament said: "There is nothing written in our programme, that we look for a Muslim state." But he was not ready to say "No, we don't want it". An employee of the Bosnian Moslem community here said, "According to our theology, Muslim and democratic state is possible." I must say I am afraid of such a view. I don't see what type of Muslim state he means, whether an Iranian type or Libyan type or Egyptian type, I don't know. Are you familiar with the fact that even in Egypt, which seems relatively democratic, it is a crime against the nation to change your faith? If a Muslim becomes Christian, he is a criminal. So what does it mean Muslim and a democratic state? Therefore, I don't believe that a **zhimmi** Muslim state is acceptable in Bosnia, especially in central Bosnia. I belong to Christian minority and I would be treated according to Shari'a guidelines, not according to European standards. Therefore, it is not clear. I think these times of **zhimmi** states are over.

[SG] **You bring Shari'a into the conversation. But Bosnia has never followed Shari'a. Would it today if it were a Muslim state?**

[MZ] I don't know if you have read this book [pointing to a book on the table] by No Malcolm?

[SG] **Yes, I have.**

[MZ] then you know a little bit of this Turkish type of Islam. The will of the ruler, who was in Constantinople, and the local **Paša** were more important than Shari'a. This was a Bosnian Islam. If the distant or the near ruler is a good person and just person, then his citizens are OK. But what about if he is a greedy person, as happened very often here, the **Pasha** was sent for three years term to become rich as soon as possible, exploiting, and return. So he was braking his own laws, his own Muslim laws, in order to get rich. Bosnian Islam is Turkish Islam and therefore more secular, I would say. In that sense it is less frightening for us than let's say Iranian Islam or Pakistani Islam. There is a discussion about possible partial **Sari'a** law system, because during the Austrian rule in our country (1878-1918), there was a part of a juridical section of life under the Shari'a law. There was a Shari'a law school

Sarajevo, paid and organised by the Austrian government and judges who were educated in that school were state employees in matters of Muslim citizens property, and in matters of marriage. They were in charge. We had a 40 year period of strict Shari'a rule for Muslims of this country. One of the present members of the Muslim community made his doctorate on this period, so he is very familiar with this problem. Some of them agree, if you have a Muslim canton, why not organise public life and society according to the Shari'a? There is also such discussion among them and now Sarajevo is eighty percent Muslim. All important decision makers are Muslim.

**[SG] So you think you it would be possible, even marginally possible...**

[MZ] Theoretically yes. But, if we remain within Europe, if Europe is strongly present here with its structures, then there is no possibility at all. But if we are left alone so that we will have in central Bosnia a territory where Muslims are absolute majority, Shari'a, or Muslim way of organising society could be applied in cities like Sarajevo, like Zenica, like Tuzla, Visoko, Travnik, and so on. We would have judges, Shari'a judges, and they would follow their guidelines.

**[SG] I would like to ask you, if you would, to return to is Izetbegović and the SDA. Do you think that he did not make such a public statement about a Moslem state because he needed to keep the Moslem community together, and that if he had said something like that, such a statement would have divided them? In other words, do his personal views differ from the views of some other people who would like to see a Moslem state?**

[MZ] I took part in a conference about reconciliation in Hungary, in 1998. I have the book of essays from that conference. There were sharp discussions there about Izetbegović's public and secret views. Serbian theologians cited the famous **Declaration** of Izetbegović as his conviction, and his political programme, that he wants to have a Muslim state in Bosnia. Marko Oršolić said, no, it was just poetry. It was a dream when he was in jail. He was dreaming how nice it would be if we had a state anywhere for Muslims. I must say, I don't know. The more I live with them and follow some of his statements, the more enigmatic he is to me. Did he really dream of a Muslim state for Bosnia, or did he just discuss this as a theoretical question?

**[SG] In fact, he never mentions Yugoslavia or Bosnia, is that correct?**

[MZ] Yes, in his **Declaration**.

**[SG] He mentions Turkey, he mentions Morocco he mentions Indonesia. But he never mentions Yugoslavia or Bosnia.**

[MZ] Well, because it would be too dangerous. In Yugoslavia there were only 3 million Muslims in a country of 23 million. So it would be really very dangerous. How does he feel now? Is his electoral body behind him? I really don't know. But I know some Muslim intellectuals who dreamed of such things. I admired Alija Izetbegović during the first election campaign here. He was the new person who spoke with respect about faith and who promised that if you elect me, you will not be a second-class citizen because of your faith. And I loved it.

**[SG] Are the views of Adil Zulfikarpašić more acceptable?**

[MZ] I recently attended the presentation of a book about him and his work outside of the country during the war. I don't know much about him. He is an intellectual who has suffered. He was a communist and collaborator of Tito, then persecuted then went away and lived for nearly half-a-century outside of Bosnia. So I don't know much about him. He is also a **bey**, as you know. Aristocratic, like Izetbegović. Within these Muslim families of **beys**, there are certain dreams. And they think they can give to their ethnic community something that is nice, an extension of their roots, Muslim roots, Bosnian roots, and at the same time they are special, and they feel they should be treated as special. So, I see Mr Zulfikarpašić as a **reborn Bosnian bey**.

**[SG] He's very commercially informed, he is a businessman, a Westerner, and wants to see Bosnia come into a market economy, and he is not particularly religious himself, although he has a Moslem background. I mean, his roots are, of course, cultural and Moslem, but he was first part of the Communists.**

[MZ] I don't know all about this. It is very hard to say. I read an interview with him, but this was very general about the situation of Bosnia, his childhood and his life in emigration. And I do remember a statement when his book was presented: one of the compliments was that he was not questioning whether Europe will accept me. He feels European and keeps being Muslim. Whatever he meant by a Muslim identity in his concrete case, I know that he is a business person and European and I would like as far as possible such persons to influence their own ethnic community. You know, Muslims of Bosnia are not immigrants. They are Slavic population speaking their Slavic language and have no place to go. This is their homeland, Europe is their home.

[MZ] We go to the next question. The special role that women play in peace building and restoration. I met about three years ago a US woman doctoral candidate who learned the local language in order to speak to Muslim or other local women. I asked her about her experience of these women and such associations. There are plenty of Women's Organisations founded both during and after the war. And her revelation was that they are too ethnic. You have only Muslim women who associate and take care of their own needs and the needs of their ethnicity. Serbian women and Croatian women do similarly on the other side. So, women are influenced by men and there is, as you know, in the Christian world a lot of discussion of women and on women, women theology. I don't see this healthy influence of women's movement of the West here, because socialism proclaimed that women in socialism are already liberated. There was no need for creating more freedom. What do you want? And I still feel such a mentality is with them.

**[SG] The reason I ask this, just to give a little background. I'm looking at three groups of people: the religious leaders, because their voice speaks with power into the matters. People are meant to follow them. Second, the students, who represent the new generation of leaders in Bosnia. And women, it seems today - and I'm still exploring this possibility - women seem to me to be victimised on all sides. They also seem to be able to cross barriers more quickly than men who, if a man crosses a barrier, he is suspect right away. Evidence, for example, Mostar, where a young man crossing to the other side can be hurt quite severely still today. And thirdly, women, in the absence of men, because of the war, have to adapt to expanded gender roles. They take on the roles of that which traditionally has been given to men. So without even a feminist movement, they have to play those roles, as is often the case in post war situations. And**

lastly, very often the care and education of children is usually entrusted to women. This is important for the influence they have on that generation. What are they teaching? So those are some of those thoughts. I haven't talked with enough women yet to know if this is the case.

[MZ] You're on the right path. This is speaking and dealing of women from their own selfhood, you know. This should be so and I would be most glad if this is so. But I am not an expert, and my ecclesiastical work is not with women apostolate in my diocese. So I don't even know much about women in my own diocese on this matter.

[turn of tape]

[MZ] There is a lot of women secular associations in our country right now. You should get interested in what they are doing, but don't be seduced. Mostly officials who represent associations recite their programmes. How far it is it effective? There is the question.

**[SG] To actually see what they're doing...**

[MZ] Yes.

**[SG] ...and not to just listen to what they're saying.**

[MZ] Yes. Now, No. 7, the Bosnian **umma** and secular Western society. There is a slogan often recited by Dr Cerić when he says, "A secular state yes, secularism no." What does he mean by secularism? He probably means Western moral corruption. They ask, is this democracy? Do you want to bring here or produce pornography, paedophilia, and other evils of Western society? I often discuss this with Western theologians. They say that this is not the essence of normal society, these things are by-products. There is much more to secular society. I believe that the **umma** is ready to lead their congregation towards living and feeling comfortable in Europe. They want to be accepted in European society. Therefore, they will accept secularism, meaning the separation of state and religious communities, three religions in a free state, a certain level of co-operation, at the level of ministries or whatever. We should keep in mind that they are of Turkish descent. This type of secular Islam was with them always. For example, I know a British imam who is Pakistani born and now living in the United Kingdom. I have met him in different inter-faith bodies and I meet him several times a year. He says: secularism is normal in European societies and he understands very well the concept of a Muslim state. He feels fine in such a European secular society. And the Muslims of Bosnia would like to be accepted. They understand that this is their chance. If we remain a secular society, this means equal chances, equal duties, equal rights for all of us. Which is good.

**[SG] You're citation of His Eminence Cerić is exactly what he was emphasising to me. I was just transcribing the tape with him this morning. And he asked this very question about some of the evils of Western society, of pornography and homosexuality. He really is not interested in having this influence at all in Bosnia. And yet the tension is to genuinely identify with Europe, meaning Western Europe, without all the difficulties of Western Europe.**

[MZ] Yes, this will be his difficulty and his task, along with his immediate collaborators. How do you bring up your own congregations who are living in such a secular society, and

to be a Muslim, behaving properly. Yes, I go back to this imam from the United Kingdom who says that the Bosnian Muslims are known in the Muslim world as sinners because they drink alcohol.

[SG] [Laughter]

[MZ] Sinners, you know! [Laughter]

[SG] **Well, that's the tension, isn't it?**

[MZ] Yes. No. 8. The real enemy of authentic faith is nationalism, and not the other national groups or ways of living. You know, the problem of Bosnia is the coincidence of religious and ethnic identity. This is our terrible problem. Nearly all Croats or, more precisely all **Catholics**, are ethnic Croats. So if I as a Catholic priest want to please my congregation, I am supposed to support the ethnic cause. I have to speak the standard Croatian, not Bosnian. Similarly, with the Serbs. As you know, the Orthodox Church is the national church. There is no head of the Church outside of the nation. Their priests are expected to be more attached to their congregation's ethnic than religious identity. Situation of Imams in our case is similar. Generally, in Islam first comes the religious identity and ethnicity is the second **Rank** or second social degree. But here in Bosnia they have been forced to unify their ethnicity and religious identity. So having in mind our Bosnian situation, it is very hard to cherish your true faith and to neglect your ethnic cause. In cherishing primarily your ethnic cause, you develop into a nationalist. It takes a lot of internal self-education to respect your ethnic identity, to study your poems, your writers, your history and at the same time to get informed about the poetry and history of others, and to live together in one nation.

You know, I don't see here in your questions something about public education programmes. Education here is a terrible riddle. We have three programmes, Bošniak, Serb, and Croatian. There is a movement toward making it 80 percent common and 20 percent different, in so-called ethnic subjects. But so far it is just discussion. It will take years before we agree on how we evaluate the recent war - a war of aggression or civil war? How do we evaluate 400 years of Turkish presence here? An aggression or a golden period?

[SG] **Is there a way to teach all three views? That certainly has been discussed as well. Or will that simply generate more argument?**

[MZ] I don't know. I believe this is possible to write, but only with much courage. I remember I once attended a conference in Thessaloniki where experts for history were talking about how we present the others in our history books. And a Turk was present who was teaching in Germany and has a good salary, a western salary, and he taught on the Ottoman period. He says, that the Ottoman Empire was an ideal empire; it did not invest in cherishing the ethnic identity, faith, and so on but otherwise it was just and fair. The problem was when the Greeks and Serbs got poisoned from Western Christians: "Get independent. So they fought and they got independence. And then the Romanian historians said, "No! The Ottoman Empire was corrupt!" Corrupt, you know.

[SG] [Laughter]

[MZ] And this was the end of the discussion. They cannot produce good books where the neighbouring people would be decently presented in their own books.

**[SG] So the dialogue begins to fall apart when you bring in the other ethnic groups.**

[MZ] Yes. Here it is very sensitive.

[MZ] Question number 8. Local justice beyond the Hague. Again I go back to the first years after the war here. Muslim religious and political leaders kept repeating, "First truth and justice, and then reconciliation. We must know who killed first, and how many innocent Muslims were put in jail; then we can talk about reconciliation." We Christians proceed differently, especially we Catholics, encouraged by the Holy See and the Pope who spoke about reconciliation here during his visit in April 1997. Along this line, we say, "We can do both – reconciliation and truth. Let us start reconciling and inquire about the criminal perpetrators."

**[SG] At the same time.**

[MZ] Yes, at the same time. This is at least a Catholic approach. Is it possible, local justice beyond the Hague? As you know, there is a limited period and funds for the Hague. They will not finish prosecuting all of the criminals during their period whenever they finish. But here the judicial system is corrupt. It is a communist system. Judges were instructed to judge according to the guidelines of the comrade secretary. We now need to reform our judicial system and have more Western judges present in the bodies, for example. I believe this would produce some good effect here. If we improve our judicial system we would start trusting our own judges. This would be good.

**[SG] There is a Truth and Reconciliation Committee here in Bosnia, which began in May of last year, I believe. Does it function?**

[MZ] Yes, this is a good question. I remember that the religious leaders were not friendly to the idea immediately in 1998 or 1997 because they didn't believe that we would have members who would be trustworthy in such a commission. Local, domestic members. If you have foreigners, then they should speak the language. As far as I know, there is now another movement, the Commission should be established by the parliament, its members nominated by Kofi Annan. The proposal about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was prepared by Mr Jakob Finci, who is the Jewish leader here, a good person. The project was then handed over to Parliament and it was not taken into procedure so far. So I would say the Commission exists **in pectore**, what we say in Latin theology, in the mind, in the heart, but it doesn't function.

**[SG] Do you see a positive future for it, or is it going to be...**

[MZ] I'm afraid it's going to be delayed, delayed, delayed and to die out before it really starts functioning. The parliament is an electoral body and I know that the Serbs are not interested in such a truth and reconciliation. So if you have 49 percent of the members who will invent difficulties, for example, improve this and improve that, then it will take years.

**[SG] I notice they have one in Serbia as well, but I don't know if it functions there either.**

[MZ] I don't know.

**[SG] And it was started with some very prominent Serbian people, but I'm not sure that it's going very far.**

[MZ] Can we move to No. 10? The role communism played in the establishment of nationalist ideologies through the modernisation of religion.

**[SG] You actually have spoken to this...**

[MZ] Yes, I did speak about it. I would like to make a general remark. During the existence of Yugoslavia, the Royal Yugoslavia, ethnicity was neglected. And during the Communist regime it was forbidden. So there was a **“bratstvo i jedinstvo,”** "Brotherhood and Unity" slogan, just a slogan, which meant: "Don't disturb the ruling class, the Communists!"

**[SG] [Chuckle]**

[MZ] So, neglecting the ethnic side of our identity, all of a sudden these communists saw that they were losing power, and they turned into nationalists. Now they say, there is no Bosnia without such and such rules.

[MZ] No. 11. In what ways are decisions in Bosnia individual or communal? Do religious communities of faith hold compelling influence, OK. I see now what you mean.

**[SG] Yes, I'm trying to ascertain whether most people in their own minds are compelled by the community they live in or are they individualistic as they are in, say, Western Europe or America.**

[MZ] We are more, how to say, bodily thinking. Because ethnicity **does** matter for our three ethnic communities, mostly for our rural population. So people do think in a collective way, not so much individualistic as in developed western countries with stable democracies. Even if some of us see the need for being different, not extremists in their ethnicity, it is always at the question, how would you be accepted. It is hard to be a dissident or reject a prophet in your community - suspected by your own and not trusted by the others. This is the danger of pioneering thinkers. You ask here, how can faith influence the decision making and behaviour of the membership? I'm afraid our believers are more influenced by collective ethnic thinking than by religious faith or their official religious teaching. We Catholics have our doctrine on forgiveness and so on. The Muslims and Orthodox have something similar. Therefore, faith is precious to me but I would say that you have to be an extra religious person, a kind of religious charismatic, in order to be guided by your faith in everyday life, public statements and in public behaviour.

**[SG] So nationalistic mythologies and ideologies are probably stronger than living faith.**

[MZ] Yes, that is what I would say. This is my experience among my fellow Croats and therefore I think it is a similar situation among the Orthodox and the Muslims.

[MZ] No. 12 How can the religious community participate in inter-religious dialogue and co-operation and maintain its own distinctiveness? Must religious communities a

concerned with building up their own membership, but religious and cultural pluralism is a fact that cannot be ignored. I would say there are several levels of dialogue and co-operation. First of all there is, as I mentioned, the dialogue of good neighbourhood. We have an experience of living here as different for centuries. And we respect the laws of good neighbourhood in normal peaceful times. So this is the first and very important level of our life dialogue. We need the others who are nearby. When in a neighbouring family somebody dies or marries or is being born, there is a way of expressing your good wishes or sympathy or condolence to your neighbours who are different. And when somebody's family or a son or daughter finishes his or her education, there is a public celebration about it. Next, we have also institutions for dialogue, or should have theological schools and commissions for inter-religious dialogue. I must say as a theologian, that I am not content with this. We need a content-full, meaningful inter-religious dialogue in Bosnia, but we as Catholics, Muslims or Orthodox are conditioned by our view of the state. We bring politics into the faith. A Muslim theologian will say, if you are pro-Bosnia, you're welcome to religious dialogue. Serbs and Croats will say, if you are too much for unitarianist Bosnia, how can I make a trustworthy dialogue with you. Indeed, we have institutions for official dialogue, religious dialogue, but mostly they perform solemn ceremonies and occasional programmes. But there is another chance. I, with my archbishop, keep proclaiming when I am at inter-religious meetings, about the unique chance of weekly worship. The whole argument is to meet once a week when we bring together our respective congregations for prayer and religious teaching. We religious ministers have a unique chance to educate our own congregations for dialogue and for respect of others. We live in a traditional country where the example and words of the minister mean a lot. If the imam and the priest have friendly relations, which means they talk to each other, their flock will meet and talk. If I never use hate language in my sermons, I influence my congregation. This is what I try to propose to my colleagues when we meet. I say, let's stop criticising the other who have committed crimes and so on. Educate your own people for peace and we will have peace. This is what I hope for.

**[SG] So there is a very important pastoral role towards peace.**

[MZ] Yes.

**[SG] So it is not just a political or economic role, or inter-religious dialogue, it is intra-religious. It is pastoral counselling from the pulpit, if you will?**

[MZ] Yes.

[Telephone interruption. ]

[MZ] Having a mix of society as Bosnia is, the safest way to tolerance is educating one's own congregation. No other way.

**[SG] That is the importance that religion plays in this nation. On the one hand, it seems to me that many find religion complicit in the difficulties, the hostilities, the violence. And there is some truth to that. But there is also that other side, which is what I'm trying to get at, which is, that the religious communities, because they are so intertwined in the whole process, can have this pastoral role, and this proclamation role, and this prophetic role of the Church.**

[MZ] Yes, this is what I would hope. We have a mission in society as religious person groups, citizens. My faith has to do not only with heaven or paradise; it has also to do with this earthly life.

[SG] Exactly. [Pause]

[SG] **Thank you very much for her entertaining these questions. I wonder if there is something that you feel that you would like to say that is important for me to know which is not indicated by the questions, such as the education issue you raised.**

[MZ] Well, first of all I was afraid a little bit that if you were another sociologist, who makes a dissertation about religion in society. And then I discover that it is a Divinity Faculty ...

[SG] **Right.**

[MZ] Then I was pleased in helping. This is part of my mission. If my faith qualifies me to live in peace, I am glad to share this view with you and especially if you're writing about conflict and reconciliation in my country. What else should I do for it? The questions are well prepared. They have been done after you have done some studies, so if it is necessary, write your professor a commendation, let me know. I will write it because he should enable you to finish your work, and to produce a book, and I would be glad to have a copy of the book ...

[SG] **Well, thank you.**

[MZ] ...with your remarks, critical remarks, and also conclusions, proposals, what you think.

[SG] **Well, you flatter me. I appreciate that in a very human way. I am in fact an ordained Protestant minister. I don't think that disallows me from talking with persons of other faith communities. I enjoy it, in fact. It challenges me and challenges my thinking. I don't have answers yet, and it is difficult as an outsider, especially one who knows the language in such a limited capacity, to understand what you understand as an insider. So at this point I am still very much a listener, trying to make sense of all of this. There is maybe in a element and way in which I can contribute because I am more objective.**

[MZ] Indeed! And more distant in a positive sense. You're not so directly involved. Therefore you can see better, see a way out. I must tell you a positive experience of contact with foreigners. I have a friend who is an Australian, now a retired priest in Australia. During his studies in Rome he used to come to our seminary and we kept in touch all of his active years. His first reaction was always critical towards certain tiny things he saw in the seminary and in the churches. And I was a little bit, you know, mad, "Well, you are a foreigner. You know nothing about this, coming here to give lectures." But he was very patient and very kind. And I must say he is a most deserving person for me, to be open to others, for other views, for different approaches. Through his patience he, in a way, **converted** me to real Catholicism, I would say. Christianity is an open religion.

[SG] **Yes.**

[MZ] So I go back to this being a foreigner, 'outsider', as you say, a very nice word, a very kind word, and studying the problem of Bosnia. We need such outsiders who understand and who propose, who think with us. We domestics are too involved in the problems. Each one wants the whole of Bosnia for himself.

[SG] **[Laughter.]**

[MZ] Hundred percent Serbian, hundred percent Croatian, hundred percent Muslim. No, it isn't possible. How do we go on? So if we are assisted by Europeans, by outsiders, USA included, we might heal sooner.... May I now introduce you to some of the books that I have?

[SG] **Yes, certainly.**

[end of interview]

(Authorized by Mato Zovkić in Sarajevo, September 6, 2002)