

ARTICLES, REPORTS AND PAPERS

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A MATTER OF RELATIONSHIPS

THE FERHADIJA MOSQUE, BANJA LUKA

A paper for consideration by the Ferhadija Committee meeting: September 1st 2004

INTRODUCTION

The Soul of Europe's chief preoccupation has been, and remains, to secure funding for the Ferhadija and for the running costs of the Soul of Europe

These concerns have led to a neglect of 3 relationships:

- 1 Between the Ferhadija and the local Muslim community
- 2 Between the Ferhadija and the people of Banja Luka
- 3 Between the Ferhadija and Europe and the rest of the world

This paper explores these 3 relationships. It concludes with a proposal for a Consultation to be held in Bosnia to consider these relationships and how any proposals can be implemented.

1 THE FERHADIJA AND THE LOCAL MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF BANJA LUKA

The Ferhadija will not be a museum. It will be a working mosque. The Ferhadija will belong to the Muslims of Banja Luka (**not** to the Soul of Europe).

If our friends in Banja Luka are not involved, and not encouraged to be so, then the Ferhadija will be seen as yet another project inflicted by the international community.

So the question is: **'How do we encourage the local Muslim community of Banja Luka and its neighbourhood to reclaim the Ferhadija as their own, even as the preparations for the project begin?'**

The question is easy enough to ask. It is more difficult to answer because if the funding for the Ferhadija comes from outside Bosnia then inevitably people feel that it is not in their power to do very much.

2 THE FERHADIJA AND THE PEOPLE OF BANJA LUKA

Banja Luka is a destroyed city (not physically of course), in terms of what it once was: a multi-ethnic community. Now it is almost entirely Serb (according to the latest figures: 94% Serb, 2.5% Bosnia and 3% Catholic).

Here the questions are:

‘What needs to be done to help the people of Banja Luka welcome the reconstruction of the Ferhadija as it proceeds and once it is reconstructed?’

and **‘What sort of activities need to happen to diminish the fear of those who resent the Ferhadija?’**

Confidence building might include cultural and educational activities – ‘open days’ as the project develops and opportunities to consider of the aspects of contested history, for instance through drama (community theatrical events).

There is considerable experience in setting up confidence building measure throughout the world and we should not be afraid to draw on this. **But** any involvement of international organizations needs to be carefully thought out. Otherwise the project will be seen to be yet another ‘training opportunity’ or ‘research project’ done **to** the people of Banja Luka and not **with** them.

The aim is to take steps towards reconciling different ethnic groups. Reconciliation is not just putting up with difference, or just tolerating others, but a process of respecting and appreciating. It is a life time’s work (and many factors like politics and economics are involved): and it is a particularly pertinent matter for the Balkans where questions of ‘identity’ are important. All the more reason to try and get the process going in Banja Luka.

3 THE FERHADIJA AND EUROPE AND THE USA

It is intended to establish Ferhadija Associations throughout Europe and the USA. The aim of the Associations will be to support financially the Ferhadija and its activities and to establish opportunities locally/regionally for Muslims and non-Muslims to collaborate.

That is the aim of the Evry Association, which will be established in October. Up to 20 Associations could be set up within 2 years across Europe and the USA.

The Ferhadija becomes a focus, a symbol and a reminder of what could be.

The questions are:

‘How can Banja Luka and the Ferhadija be ready to receive visitors from Europe and elsewhere?’

Given the proposed promotion of the Ferhadija throughout Europe it is likely that this question needs urgent consideration.

‘Is there a case to be made for some sort of centre where conferences and gatherings could take place on reconciliation?’

‘Would it be possible to engage local NGOs in Banja Luka to work together to create programmes on, say, human rights and reconciliation as part of an ongoing Ferhadija program?’

PROPOSAL

The Soul of Europe proposes that there should be a ‘brainstorming’ consultation to consider the 3 ‘relationships’ and with the agreement of the Ferhadija committee, implement the decisions reached.

PARTICIPANTS

We should bring together people ‘with ideas’ (including women and those who are 35 and under). Inevitably and rightly there will be ‘observers’ and ‘representatives’, but too many of them will dampen creativity since they need to ‘report’ to their organizations.

From Banja Luka:

- 1 The Muslim Community – imams and members of the community
- 2 Serbs who are known to support the Ferhadija
- 3 Catholics and Orthodox representatives
- 4 Local NGOs concerned with human rights and reconciliation
- 5 Academics, writers and artists
- 6 Who else?

From the Federation and State levels:

- 1 Particular individuals who are known to support the project
- 2 Academics, writers and artists
- 3 Department of Architecture, Sarajevo
- 4 Who else?

From the International Community

- 1 OHR from Banja Luka
- 2 Trustees of the Ferhadija Trust and Directors of Soul of Europe
- 3 Representation from Evry and other from UK and Germany
- 4 Turkey – the Turkish Ambassador might suggest names of those to be invited
- 5 Cultural Heritage without Borders

Maximum numbers altogether would be around 40.

FACILITATOR

The Soul of Europe proposes that Peter Ashby, who facilitated the Coventry and Brussels Consultations so successfully, be invited. He has been to Bosnia. To draw on everyone’s experience a professional facilitator is necessary, particularly with up to 40 people.

VENUE

To be decided

TIMING

If possible before Ramadan; if not, after the New Year. Consultation should be for 24 hours. No longer.

INVITATION

The invitation should come from the Reis and the Ferhadija Committee

LANGUAGE

The consultation should be in Bosnian, but with interpreters for non-Bosnian speakers

FUNDING

Funding would need to be found for the consultation

PRESS AND PUBLICITY

The Soul of Europe proposes that the consultation should be held in private

Donald Reeves
August 13th 2004

A TENDER BRIDGE: REFLECTIONS ON POSSIBILITIES FOR PEACE MAKING IN BOSNIA

Lecture given by the Revd Donald Reeves, Director of the Soul of Europe at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Sarajevo on 15th March 2005

I would like to thank the Dean for the opportunity to make this presentation. When he invited me last year, he was keen to stress that he would leave the subject of the lecture to me.

I am therefore taking the opportunity to reflect on the work the Soul of Europe has been doing in Bosnia Herzegovina for the last 5 years, not in a theoretical or analytical way, but personally.

I would like to try and convey something of what it is like to have been working in your country.

Just about everything that follows is about what I have seen, what I have heard and what I have noticed.

I hope you will not be able to detect from what I am going to say my views on the future of Bosnia, the Republika Srpska, the Dayton Agreement, the High Representative, or any other any other matters of topical interest. I have, as it happens, firm views about the future of your country, but you will not be able to prize them out of me, except to say one thing, the future of Bosnia Herzegovina lies in Europe.

The reasons for this reticence are simple. I am a visitor here. The Soul of Europe, an organization of which I am the founder and director, and of which I will say something shortly, was not invited here. We just 'turned up' and have consistently but erratically been 'turning up' for 5 years. I do not think this way of being in Bosnia gives me any authority to pronounce on this or that. Perhaps in London or in Brussels I can have an opinion, but here it seems to be impertinent to share my often unthought out and therefore ignorant opinions.

The other reason is that I do not speak your language. The great English poet TS Eliot said that: 'to speak another language you have to become a different person.' So there is always a distance between you and me and sometimes a failure to convey nuances and subtleties of conversation.

The Soul of Europe arrived in Sarajevo in June 2000. I had been an Anglican priest in London for 30 years, the last 18 in the central London church of St James's in Piccadilly.

The Soul of Europe was founded in 2000. Supported by an Advisory Council, a limited company was established and my colleague Peter Pelz and I set off for Belgrade. As a result of a meeting with the religious leaders of Serbia, Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim, we decided we should come to Bosnia and with the help of young Europeans reconstruct as a token of reconciliation, a mosque, an Orthodox church and a Catholic church. These were to be 'tangible signs of hope', which comprise the fundamental aims of the Soul of Europe.

I did not appreciate then the naivety of the idea, for that is all it was. A dramatic time of learning began. I read everything I could find about Bosnia. Like so many people I was ignorant of your history and prejudiced as well. For example I believed in the official version for the reasons for the war, that it was a very complex 'ethnic' war, that had raged for centuries. This, as you very well know, is wrong both about the causes of the war, and about Bosnia's long term history. The story goes: all sides were equally guilty, there were no 'good guys' or 'bad guys'. In fact there was a clear aggressive policy to secure land from forces outside Bosnia. Etc, etc..

The truth and not the official version of what happened, how it happened and why it happened shattered my ignorance.

We visited Bihac. There we tried to establish a forum of partners, across the business and public sectors, also seeking to include religious leaders. But we tried to move too fast and with insufficient preparation. We failed.

It was in Banja Luka that the Soul of Europe found its mission. We met Mufti Camdzic. We learned about the systematic destruction of 16 mosques. We promised to help the mufti rebuild his mosque. We could do no less.

But we had become wise enough to know that to reconstruct the Ferhadija would easily be regarded by the people of Banja Luka as provocative, and our commitment has always been to work with all religious groups.

We decided to invite the leaders of Banja Luka to the International Centre of Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral in the UK. The cathedral and the entire centre of what was a medieval city had been destroyed by German bombs in 1941 during the Second World War. The Dean of the cathedral saw an opportunity to create a centre for reconciliation as part of the new cathedral. It seemed the best setting for the consultation to which we invited the leaders from Banja Luka.

It took a year and several difficult visits to Banja Luka to gather the group and persuade them to come. But they did all come, including the three religious leaders, and met in Coventry in September 2001, just two weeks after 9/11.

One of the most memorable aspects of the follow up to that consultation in the following year was the way in which we were received whenever we returned to Banja Luka. The hospitality was generous, as always in Bosnia. Everyone was welcoming and patient – that is once we were able to set up meetings. However it is always difficult to fix appointments.

I have wondered about the reasons for this.

Then I realized not only was the Soul of Europe uninvited, but we were unknown. No one in Bosnia knew who we were, except for the British Embassy who have quietly encouraged and advised us ever since our arrival. We found a third member of the team, Adnan Jabucar, who quickly became more than an interpreter and driver. His office was for two years his mobile phone.

I saw that we were being tested. Someone described Bosnia as not a country, but a project. Certainly 5 years ago Bosnia was awash with projects. As a Bosnian friend said: ‘We have become a training ground for people like you with your bright ideas.’ The religious leaders particularly were cautious. All of them had received delegations from religious organizations. Words of sympathy would be offered and then the visitors left, never to return. The Catholic bishop of Banja Luka, Monsignor Bishop Komarica, told me he had stopped showing people the destroyed Catholic communities and churches. Was the Soul of Europe just another such delegation?

As we returned again and again there was barely concealed curiosity as to who we were, and why we were there. No one knew much about the Church of England. Were we spies sent by the CIA? Were we paid by the Serbs to stop the Ferhadija from being rebuilt? Were we members of a strange sect like the Mormons or Jehovah’s Witnesses? Were we just elderly enthusiasts? And when we made it clear we did not come with any money, only with open hands, then, looking back on the months leading up to Coventry, it was only our tenacity and persistence which finally persuaded the participants to come.

The consultation at Coventry happened. For 4 days some 20 people from Banja Luka met together to consider steps towards peace, prosperity and reconciliation in Banja Luka. Vice president, now President Cavic, attended together with Svetlana Cenic, now Minister for Finance, and Pero Bukejlovic, now Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska. Mufti Camdzic accompanied by Mufti Makic from Bihac, Bishop Jefrem, the Orthodox bishop of Banja Luka, together with Bishop Komarica represented the religious communities, together with Cardinal Puljic. Others included the mayor of Banja Luka, Dragljub Davidovic and his deputy Omer Visic. Together with teachers and representatives from business and some international observers, we considered the possibilities for Banja Luka. On the last day the then High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, arrived with Zlatko Lagumdzija, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Karlo Filipovic, President of the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina, Dr Ivanic, then Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska, and Dr Alija Behman, then Prime Minister of the

Federation. Bishop Komarica summed up the consultation neatly: ‘At least now we are neighbours.’

That the consultation happened at all with such a distinguished list of participants was as much due to luck as anything else, because our arrival in Bosnia raises an important question: ‘By what right does a small organization from one country have to intervene in the affairs of another?’ Our single mindedness prevented us from addressing this question, and on reflection, our presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina might have been more legitimate had we been invited, say by the Inter-religious Council. I leave that question on the table.

Following Coventry, several initiatives were begun, to which I will refer later.

Meanwhile the reconstruction of the Ferhadija remained our priority. But it was certainly not and still is not the priority of many citizens in Banja Luka or elsewhere.

The reconstruction of destroyed mosques, libraries, churches, monasteries is not of real interest except to those concerned with preserving cultural heritage.

My Serb friends in Banja Luka say ‘of course the Ferhadija has to be rebuilt. It was part of our landscape’. But they together with everyone else have other priorities: finding and holding on to jobs, finding somewhere to live. When I sit in the café at the Palace Hotel in Banja Luka many young people, that is people under 30, want to talk: can they come to the UK to learn English, to get work. They need to earn more money to send to their parents living in distant villages. People want decent health care and schools, they need to know the police can be trusted. And Muslims and Croats should not have to experience discrimination day in and day out.

Therefore it is probably right that an organization like the Soul of Europe should be a catalyst to ensure the Ferhadija is rebuilt for not to rebuild the Ferhadija or any cultural and religious building is to deny your history.

But ‘outside’ intervention brings at least 2 difficulties.

The first is that of language. At the ceremony opening the Mostar Bridge international speakers referred to the bridge as a sign of reconciliation between Muslims and Croats. No one mentioned the Serbs. Others said that it was a sign to Europe for Islam and Christianity to live together in peace, refuting the self fulfilling prophecy of Samuel Huntingdon that the clash of civilizations is between Islam and the West.

If I was a Croat or Muslim living in Mostar I would find this language of symbols too much to bear because so much has to be done to deal with the suspicion and hostility between the ethnic groups. As a Croat said: ‘The rebuilding of the old bridge will not unfortunately reunite the town, the divisions remain in people’s heads and the bridge wont change anything there.’

So as the reconstruction of the Ferhadija begins, the benefits to Banja Luka need to be stressed, the prospect of more visitors to the city, and boosting Banja Luka as a tourist centre, of promoting the city in such a way that it will change its image and encourage investors.

The second difficulty is that of the process by which a project like the reconstruction of the Ferhadija (or it could be any other reconstruction, restoration or conservation project) begins to take shape.

There is a significant gap between the interested groups. There are those concerned with the technical aspects of the reconstruction, a commission on Ancient Monuments will want to ensure that nothing but the best will do, so every effort is made to find and work with the very best experts. No one should underestimate the time it takes to set up the project, before a stone is laid – nor the funds required to undertake this work.

Another group consists of all those who are concerned with the social, political, economic contexts in which the reconstruction will take place. If the mosque or church, or whatever it is, is to be welcomed as part of the urban landscape once again, then much work has to be done to ensure this happens through programs of an educational, civic and cultural nature.

Those concerned with the technical aspects of the building tend to be aloof from the politics, and those concerned with say issues around development and civil society, are suspicious of these reconstruction efforts: they are perceived as elitist and a luxury activity which Bosnia cannot yet afford. They forget how the reconstructed mosque or church will help to develop a sense of belonging.

What is needed is a multi-track approach to these projects of reconstruction bringing both parties together and working together. This has not so far happened with the project to reconstruct the Ferhadija.

If this brief outline of the difficulties of this sort of project is beginning to sound too technical, then imagine for a moment how Banja Luka might regard the Ferhadija once it is rebuilt and once the celebrations are over.

Who will own the Ferhadija? Of course legally the Islamic community owns the building, but I am not speaking of 'ownership' in this way.

Let me explain.

Years ago I was a priest in a parish in a part of London to which visitors never go. It was in South London – a housing estate. There lived some 30,000 people, many of them very poor. The estate is surrounded by prosperous suburbs, like Wimbledon, where the tennis

is played. People talk about 'living on the estate'. By evening the doctors, teachers, welfare workers, bank managers and solicitors, all have left, the clergy remaining.

On my second day in the parish there was a knock on the door. 'Can I see you?' an elderly lady in black stood outside plainly nervous and distressed. She came and sat down. She had lived on the estate for 40 years. She lived opposite the church, had seen it being built 6 years after she arrived there. Her husband had just died. She told me nervously: 'I wanted to ask if it was possible to bring him into your church so that my friends and family could pay their respects.' I was astonished. I had been in my parish one day. She had lived there for 40 years, yet she still considered the church to be mine, not hers, and certainly not 'ours'.

So by 'ownership' I mean the extent to which an historic building, once destroyed, and now rebuilt, becomes what it once was, part of the exterior landscape of the city, but also part of the interior landscape, helping to define what that person is, and this cuts right across religious boundaries. It is significant that non-Muslim travellers visiting Banja Luka throughout its history lavished praise on the Ferhadija, and even as it was destroyed in May 1993, it was not just the Islamic community which mourned its loss.

So to return to Coventry, or rather to post-Coventry. It was not at all clear how to proceed. It was difficult to get any considered reactions. So after some more consultations we decided to establish a Civic Forum preceded by a survey of the quality of life in Banja Luka.

The story of the Civic Forum is beyond the scope of this lecture, but it is relevant because post-Coventry we encountered serious funding problems, not so much securing funds, but having to negotiate the values which inform funding applications now from all governments, the European Union and foundations.

If you have ever started to complete an application form for funding for what is called 'developing civil society' you will soon see what I mean. Applications require a clear statement on aims and objectives. Priorities have to be justified. Activities for each month have to be described in detail and how each activity related to what happened before, and what was planned. Questions about internal and external continuous assessment have to be answered. Local partners have to provide value, and estimating and measuring the impact on target groups was essential. Every activity has to relate to every other so that the objectives of the project can be placed in a logical frame, like a complicated jigsaw puzzle.

Our application to the European Union failed. A technical and financial grid evaluated our application. That says it all. Social engineering is the core conviction, which affirms that the world out there can be analysed, observed and controlled and managed.

The language in which the work of reconciliation and peace making is couched is business speak: impact, stakeholders, fast-track, targets, bullet points, delivery, business plans, etc. The language is ugly; it is sloppy and often meaningless.

More destructive than the ugliness and sloppiness of the language are the values and assumptions which inform these applications. These can be summed up in 2 words: materialistic determinism. They do not fit the infinitely patient slow work of peace making and reconciliation.

The ways of describing the world 'out there' are based on illegitimate principles. These secular and autonomous assumptions are based on claims of power and pragmatism. But they just do not work, because they are cut off, removed from fundamental assumptions.

In the West, we find compensation in consumerism and a host of diversionary activities. But the myths around materialistic determinism do not touch people. Ultimately they are not compelling. Therefore we can say they lack legitimacy.

We in the West need not be - must not be - enthralled by 'business speak'.

We are facing a crisis of what counts as knowledge.

There is another way.

This is the way of knowing through the imagination.

Imagination is a problematic concept in our post modern world. Post modernism describes, sometimes too extravagantly, the fragmentation, incoherence and nihilism of contemporary culture. Only 'market economics' and 'the market state' remain unchanging and invincible.

So the briefest of sketches of the genealogy of the imagination will show that our present melancholy landscape has not always been so.

Once upon a time the artist used his skills and honed his disciplines to lead the worshipper to God through the image of the icon. The intense but passive eyes and stylized features of the icon focused attention of the worshipper beyond and through the image. Then the portrait painter began to create an image as a means of self expression in, for example, Rembrandt's sombre portraits which study his physical disintegration before death or Van Gogh's vivid paintings which explore his mental disintegration before suicide.

Today the pop poster revels in surface effects, incorporating at random, images, which the artist has ransacked arbitrarily from any source.

Or to put the matter differently: once the artists were craftsmen whose task was to serve and imitate the transcendent plans of the Creator. The inventor replaced this theo-centric

pattern, taking the place of God. Today he has been replaced by the artist as an ‘operator’ playing with images, symbols and metaphors.

This genealogy of the concept of the imagination – its development and narrowing of focus is well beyond the scope of this paper, except to say that it is a fleeting reminder that to move beyond the post-modern confusion we need pay attention to how we arrived at where we are, and look for a way forward.

Two aspects of that story are relevant for our enquiry into the nature of imagination. One is that we cannot renege on our responsibility to ‘the other’. The ‘face’ of the other invites and demands a response: to the victim and from the powerless an unconditional response. ‘Where are you?’ comes the question. ‘Here I am. Here we are,’ is the response.

This is the ethical imagination – an imagination which has nothing to do with daydreaming, wishful thinking or the creation of the fantastical.

But this understanding of the imagination is neither stern nor censorious. It does not sentimentalize ‘the other’, because it is balanced and informed by the imagination of hope. Imagination is that capacity to picture, portray and receive the world in ways other than it appears to be at first glance; it is a valid way of knowing. When the imagination begins to function, then we live ‘as’ if we are free, ‘as’ if justice will be done, ‘as’ if forgiveness and peace are possible. The imagination rejects as false what has been long accepted and beyond criticism. It is astonishing how a long established ‘as’ can keep people in their places until a counter ‘as’ emerges, is imagined and given a voice. Oddly, hope begins to be a strength when everything is hopeless; its expression is often unreasonable and indispensable.

There is something old-fashioned, steady and ancient about the ethical and hopeful imagination. Hopeful imagination is not about ‘pie in the sky when you die’; neither is it ‘hoping for the best’. It is a communal and public assertion in which our connectedness is expressed and nourished. Far from being separate, distant and detached as a world informed by facts of materialistic determinism, there is a striving for connection, communion and community although at every turn these aspirations are always being threatened and sometimes defeated.

The working out of the ethical and hopeful imagination in peacemaking and reconciliation has at least 3 implications:

Firstly there has to be a willingness to trust whatever emerges; not manipulating, not even searching for explanations. Attention is as necessary as analysis: stories as well as statistics. In Bosnia this is particularly difficult: the outward appearance of normality easily induces amnesia about the recent past. I am trying to convey something of the way an artist or a poet goes about his or her craft.

Secondly the process of peacemaking and reconciliation is as much the product as the end result. Time is needed – a lot of time. Those who initiate this type of work are like weavers, slowly, patiently weaving a strong new cloth. Sometimes the threads will unravel, but with patience the unraveling can resume so the weaving continues. I am speaking about the long haul, not the quick fix.

Thirdly it becomes difficult to fit the emerging developing work into a rigid log frame. The future cannot be so easily contained. There is a tentative provisional quality because if the hopeful imagination is flourishing, a new reality whose outcome cannot easily be measured is being born.

But I am speaking as a Christian to you who are mostly Muslim. Our imagination, as I have used the work, is nourished in as far as we hold on to our calling to be faithful to the will of God where justice is done. Our safety is with God whose justice cannot be defeated. We who are Christian, Muslim and Jew, children of our Father Abraham, are called then to sing a different song which transcends loyalty to our ethnic group.

This is the heart of what I have to say.

I want to end by making 2 simple proposals by sharing some ideas as to how Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox might move forward together for the welfare of Bosnia Herzegovina.

Before I proceed I suspect there will be those who shake their heads and say: ‘Well he doesn’t know what he is talking about. He doesn’t really understand our situation.’ That of course may be so, but all I can say in what I am suggesting emerges directly from what I do know.

First of all it has to be possible to create opportunities where people of different religions can begin to understand their differences as well as what they have in common. And the best way to do this is to experience what each religion does at its best, which is their ritual. As a privileged visitor I have had three experiences in Bosnia Herzegovina which immediately enlarged my sympathies.

The first was in the Orthodox Cathedral in Banja Luka, where Bishop Jefrem had invited me to speak at the end of the liturgy. The church was packed. There was an ordination so it was a special day. I looked at the congregation, many of them elderly, some quite poor, some whose faces were lined with suffering and quiet resignation. And then I heard the music, the choir singing from the depths of their souls, reaching out to heaven, such music such singing was a consolation to those people and to me. It gives them the courage and the strength to carry on, to keep on keeping on. I shall never forget those faces and the singing.

The second experience was in Presnace, a few minutes drive from Banja Luka. There on the 12th May 1995 the Catholic church was destroyed, the priest and his colleague, a sister,

were shot. Their bodies were burnt. And there in that place the present priest Father Zvonko is trying to rebuild his church with the help of Orthodox and Muslims as well as the few Catholics who still live there or who are returning. Here it is hoped to create a centre for reconciliation. At the heart of this is the presbytery in the room where the bodies were burnt. It has now been turned into a chapel. It is a place of healing and grace.

The third experience happened in Sarajevo. After a long meeting discussing the Ferhadija project Mufti Camdzic asked me if I would like to attend Friday prayers at the Begova Mosque.

I have of course attended prayers before, but this time I was caught unprepared. The mosque was full. What I remember was the silence of the congregation. Not only the silence, but also the singing of the cantor. It had that same longing, that same yearning which I had experience in the Orthodox Cathedral in Banja Luka. The worship felt natural, part of our everyday life. In fact something which all those experiences have in common is how 'natural' the prayer of worship seems to come to those taking part, whereas in my tradition, we sometimes lose that naturalness.

Why should such experiences be offered just to someone like myself? Could there come a time when with careful preparations, we begin to step outside our mosque, our Catholic church, our Orthodox church, and at the invitation attend the prayer, the mass, the liturgy. That is the best way to start.

I know how strange an experience like this can be. I was brought up in a family which distrusted Roman Catholics. I was told they were not patriotic, their loyalty was first to the Pope in Rome. Moreover Catholics were thought to be subversive. In 1604 a group tried to blow up the House of Commons. So it was better to have nothing to do with them and until very recently in Lewes, a town in the South of England, an effigy of the Pope was destroyed each November 5th, the anniversary of the attempted destruction of the House of Commons by one Guy Fawkes. So my first visit to a Catholic church was a little scary. And then I went to Mass, and then I became friends with a Catholic priest, and so on: no problem. So the first time may be difficult...

The second idea follows from the first: it is the practice of solidarity. In my country it is being seen as increasingly necessary for the Abrahamic religions to stand shoulder to shoulder. In the UK there is much ignorance, prejudice, incomprehension and fear about religion which is perceived to encourage conflict and division. So when a synagogue is attacked, then Muslims and Christians will stand by that congregation and become their advocates. When mosques are vandalized in say London or Birmingham or Bradford, then the Christians and Jews will stand by those communities and become their advocates, and when churches are attacked, our Muslim and Jewish friends will stand by us.

Given anti-Semitism and Islamophobia as a constant feature of life in Britain, I believe that is the least we can do. And for that solidarity to emerge means meeting, encouraging friendship and working together.

How possible is such solidarity in Bosnia Herzegovina? I realize how difficult this is. After all, the war heralded the collapse of public morality. Each looked after his own: family, relations and friends. Religious leaders saw their task as primarily to be leaders of their own communities. And 50 years of communism, I guess, made religious leaders even more protective of their groups.

But should this situation continue? Is it possible to envision a time where different religious communities will speak on behalf of and together with others?

This is what I mean. For many years Bishop Komarica has urged the international community to create the conditions for Croats to return to North West Bosnia, and they have not done so in any numbers. His diocese is vanishing. As a matter of justice couldn't the Islamic community and the Orthodox Church stand by him, even though the immediate future is bleak?

And if a report I have read is true that the Headquarters of the Orthodox Church in Sarajevo is being moved out of Sarajevo because of threats and intimidations to priests and the small Orthodox community, then is there not a case for the other religious communities to see what can be done to stop this intimidation?

And if there are cases of harassment of Muslims, vandalism of mosques and discrimination then again there is a case for religious communities to see what can be done in the name of God's justice.

None of these proposals will happen easily. As we know from our experience in the UK a lot of time has to be taken to develop trust, respect and appreciation.

And it will never be as tidy as I have outlined.

I read in another report that Cardinal Puljic said he didn't want to be told what to do by foreigners. It has not been my intention to tell anyone what to do. These very modest proposals, but so difficult to implement, come from my affection and respect for the religious leaders I know in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I hope they who know me and others who know of me will accept these proposals in the spirit in which they are given.

These are then my reflections on what I have seen, heard and noticed in 5 years in Bosnia. It has been and is a privilege to be here, to help in a very small way a new country, yet with an ancient history from which the rest of the world has much to learn, to be born again as it makes its way towards Europe.

Thank you for listening to me. May God bless all our endeavours.

Donald Reeves
March 15th 2005

HOPE IN A DARK TIME

PRESENTATION AT THE HARRAN MEETING, RELIGIONS AND PEACE, ISTANBUL
MAY 13 – 15 2004. THE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE PLATFORM

We are living in dangerous times. So this presentation is really a wake up call. A wake up for Muslims struggling to work out what being European and Muslim means. And a wake up call for non-Muslims, Christians in particular, to examine their prejudice, and to do all they can to prevent the growing isolation of the Muslim community throughout Europe. All of us are highly susceptible to the input of international events. This is bad news, and there is plenty of that.

There has to be good news, and there could be. We need now an alternative story, an alternative history, an alternative culture to create a counter culture, which celebrates the contribution that the 3 monotheistic religions could and should make.

I am proposing that the time is right for a ‘movement’ for peacemaking between our religions. Such a movement could contribute to the stability of the world.

I am a newcomer to the world of inter-religious dialogue and activities. I am conscious that with us today are many who have devoted much of their lives to this work – academics, religious officials, authors and journalists. There is thank goodness a growing industry of books, seminars, conferences, think tanks, round tables and a vast range of policies proposing social cohesion and inclusion across Europe.

What is missing, I observe, is a sense of *kairos*. Now is the time to draw on the best of our traditions in the pursuit of justice and making peace.

Let us go back a moment into history. It is easy to forget that Judaism, Christianity and Islam were born out of violent times. Judaism emerged out of the exodus of the Israelites from an oppressive Egypt. Christianity, in the person of Jesus, provided an alternative to the Pax Romana of the Roman Empire, and Islam began at a time of brutal tribal conflicts and brought peace to the Arabian peninsular.

The emergence of these three religions represented an attempt to deal with violence by each, in their way, recoiling from violence. They turned away from it towards an apprehension of God, to a deeper reality.

Our world today is permeated through and through with violence. It is part of our way of life.

Because of this our moral sense is being eroded and corrupted in such striking contrast to the clarity of Moses, Jesus and Mohamed.

Therefore we need to foster a counterculture, a new movement for Judaism, Christianity and Islam to work together in peace-making which will take us far beyond the bland statements, resolutions and exhortations delivered by many religious leaders. The movement will be marked in three ways:

First, it will honour the stranger. By this I mean learning the art of compassion. We are invited to stand in the shoes of the other, to perceive the world as he or she experiences it. It is as if we are invited to visit a far away country. There we absorb its life, its culture. On our return we experience our world differently, for that visit will have changed our perceptions.

There is no better way to experience the otherness of a religion than by participating in what it does best, and what is most characteristic: its ritual.

The Soul of Europe works in Bosnia. Here we are trying to create tangible signs of hope for Europe. One Sunday I was invited to the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Banja Luka. The singing of the two choirs was passionate and full of longing. This music provided inspiration for the congregation of poor, elderly Serbs, most of them uprooted from their homes in Sarajevo or Krajina, exiles in their own country.

Then on a Friday after a long meeting discussing the Soul of Europe's project to reconstruct the Ferhadija Mosque, the Reis ul Ulema invited me to prayers at the Begova Mosque in Sarajevo. I will never forget the stillness, the silence of that large congregation of over a thousand in the middle of a city which had suffered so much; nor the way in which the Koran was recited, echoing the same longings of the Orthodox choirs.

Then back in Banja Luka, one Sunday, we visited Presnace, where in April 1995 the Catholic church was destroyed, the parish priest and a nun were shot and their bodies burnt. In the parish house where this atrocity took place, a room has been set apart as a chapel. Nowhere in Bosnia have I experienced such grace, such a place of healing, from the prayer offered by Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims who are now creating a Centre of Reconciliation there.

Honouring the stranger inevitably leads to reconciliation, moving from toleration to an appreciation of the other.

Secondly, Judaism, Christianity and Islam all strive for justice and that striving is the incarnation of the love and mercy of God. This means practical action. In the UK, for example, in a mostly secular country, this means standing up for one another when synagogues, churches or mosques are vandalised. This type of solidarity arises from respect for one another's tradition. And in this work for justice, our teachers are not just scholars, important as they are, but the innocent victims. They are the teachers for educating the human heart.

Thirdly, such a movement will encourage and create inspiring, imaginative actions which everyone can appreciate. In Bosnia, the Soul of Europe has been entrusted with the reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque, one of 16 mosques destroyed in Banja Luka in 1993. This mosque, designed by Sinan, will be reconstructed exactly as it was. It will be a Heritage project. It will also be the product of a unique partnership between Islam and Christianity (for the Soul of Europe is a Christian based organization) and is now being promoted across Europe as a project which proves that the very diverse Muslim communities are truly part of the European family.

We need many such inspiring actions. These will draw on our greatest allies, the humour, good sense, integrity and generosity of spirit of the vast majority of the world's Muslims and Christians. Then extremists on all sides will be marginalized.

For this new movement we need one another: theologians, scholars, artists, community activists, young, middle-aged and elderly, women and men. The time is coming to prepare ourselves for this new movement where Jews, Christians and Muslims will work together.

I will end with Abraham. The Scriptures always confess more than they understand. They claim more than can ever be explained. For ancient Israel, so often the Bible tells stories of God who makes promises and keeps making them in the most difficult situations (think of the story of Abraham and Sarah, so old she could not bear children, and yet...). I rest in wonder and amazement at these promises. Or as St Paul puts it, reflecting on that significant story in Romans Chapter 4, this God in whom Israel believes 'gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist' (verse 17).

THE REVD DONALD REEVES, DIRECTOR OF THE SOUL OF EUROPE

IMAGINATION – CONFISCATED

A PAPER FOR DISCUSSION
BY
DONALD REEVES

*What is the price of experience?
Do men buy if for a song
Or wisdom for a dance in the street?
No it is bought with the price
Of all that a man hath, his home,
His wife, his children.
Wisdom is sold in the desolate market
Where none can come to buy
And in the withered field where the
Farmer ploughs for bread in rain.*
William Blake

INTRODUCTION

The Soul of Europe is an NGO whose aim is ‘to create tangible signs of hope in Europe’. I founded the Soul of Europe in 2000 after 30 years as a parish priest in London.

It was not until my colleague Peter Pelz and I arrived in Banja Luka, Bosnia, in 2000 that we discovered what the Soul of Europe had to do.

Banja Luka is the administrative centre of the Srpska Republic, one of the two entities which make up Bosnia and Herzegovina, and was created in 1995 as part of the Dayton Agreement. Today Banja Luka is predominantly a Bosnian Serb city. This was not always the case. Over the past 5 centuries it used to be predominantly Muslim. Under Tito the Serb population grew, the Croats stayed the same and the Muslim population, though still the majority, declined.

Banja Luka did not constitute a war zone during the war in Bosnia. The city saw no fighting, but it experienced the worst abuses of human rights in the whole country. Nearly all non-Serbs were forcibly removed from their homes. The numbers are still being contested, anything between 30,000 and 70,000. As they left, so Serbs being driven out of the Serbian enclave in Krajina by Croats took their place, as well as Serbs from Sarajevo.

Since the war the international community has made considerable efforts to make it possible for people to return to their homes. A number have returned but most sell up and leave. This is mainly due to poor employment prospects, and continuing discrimination and violence by Serbs against non-Serbs.

Banja Luka is a frontier town, about the size of a place like Nottingham. It became an important northern outpost of the Ottoman Empire, on the boundary with the Austro Hungarian Empire. The town is situated at the entrance to the Vrbas Gorge, with the mountains of central Bosnia to the south, the flat plains stretching north to Zagreb and east to Belgrade.

In 1969 a violent earthquake damaged the city. Today it is a mixture of shabby non-descript high-rise buildings and streets of small houses surrounded by mostly unkempt gardens. Banja Luka still does not

feel like home to the large numbers of Serbs from the Krajina who took over Muslim properties. This is mainly because these Serbs came from farming villages, and are not used to living in cities. Banja Luka used to be one of the most beautiful places in Bosnia, a popular vacation centre for Serbs and Muslims from all over former Yugoslavia, because of its attractive natural setting, and medieval castle overlooking the River Vrbas which flows through the city - also because of the Ferhadija Mosque, a celebrated jewel of Ottoman architecture, designed by Sinan, who built the great Sulejmanija Mosque in Istanbul. The Ferhadija Mosque was destroyed with 16 other mosques in 1993 as part of the Bosnian Serb programme of ethnic cleansing.

The destruction of the mosques, the desecration of Muslim cemeteries and the shredding of property deeds owned by Muslims sent a clear signal that history would be rewritten. The guidebook to Banja Luka makes no mention of the Ferhadija Mosque, and just refers in one sentence to the 'centuries of suffering under *cruel* Turkish rule'. The foundations of the mosques were carefully dug out. As a Serb general said: 'When they (the Muslims) see what we have done, they will leave on their own accord.'

Today Banja Luka has pretensions to be a capital city. The Srpska Republic has its own president, two vice-presidents and a National Assembly of Deputies. France, Germany, the UK and US have Embassy offices in Banja Luka. There are tree-lined boulevards typical of any town in the former Austro-Hungarian empire, along which stand municipal buildings alongside the Orthodox and Catholic cathedrals. One park has a tennis club popular with the international community.

The Soul of Europe discovered its mission in Banja Luka. We learnt about ethnic cleansing and the deliberate destruction of the Ottoman heritage. We quickly found out about the intentions to remove every trace of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

So we promised the mufti of Banja Luka, and the Reis ul Ulema, the senior religious cleric in Bosnia, that we would see the Ferhadija Mosque reconstructed exactly as it was. The mosque represented the heart of Banja Luka. Even Catholics and Orthodox loved it. One Serb told me that it was 'part of the landscape of the town'. The destruction took place with military precision. Local residents were warned by the police to keep their windows open so that the blast of dynamite would not blow the glass in. A curfew was imposed. The stones were then crushed and removed by lorry.

Once we made the decision to help the mufti, we wrote to the leaders of Banja Luka, senior politicians, religious leaders, the mayor and his cabinet, teachers and business people, to meet together to discuss what steps could be taken towards *Prosperity, Reconciliation and Peace* in their town. Fourteen months after our first visit to Banja Luka we all met at the Centre for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral. It took that time to persuade them to come. We had after all arrived in Banja Luka unknown and uninvited. We soon encountered the visceral mistrust of the west. Were we spies from the CIA? But they all came. No one walked out. We were invited to return and continue working in Banja Luka.

We said: 'We come with open hands. We want to rebuilt the Ferhadija, but we want to do all we can to strengthen the Catholic and Orthodox dioceses, to breathe new life into politics. We want to reverse history, to show Bosnia and Europe that Banja Luka can once again become a unique city in Europe, where all three ethnic groups can flourish equally, as they have done for centuries before.'

This introduction is no more than a sketch of Banja Luka. A more complete picture of Bosnia and Herzegovina would describe the progress since the war of the efforts of the international community, the UN, Nato, the EU and the Office of the High Representative, to push Bosnia towards integration into Europe.

Unless Bosnia takes its place in Europe it will have no future. Banja Luka will become an economic black hole, dominated by the mafia and a breeding ground for Serb nationalism. It has to be said that is

anyone's guess if a whole range of reforms, of the judiciary, the police, education, the system of taxation and much else being implemented by Paddy Ashdown, the present High Representative, will stick.

I will not continue to describe the activities of the Soul of Europe in any detail. Our plans for reconstructing the Ferhadija Mosque as a heritage project, a unique example of collaboration between Islam and Christianity, our intention to establish a place where cultural memories are honoured, our attempts to bring together Catholic and Orthodox communities, and the birth of the Banja Luka Civic Forum, whose central tenet is that *change happens when those who do not usually speak are heard by those who do not usually listen*; all these have been described elsewhere. (1)

IMPEDIMENTS

What I need to do now is develop an argument about how the processes by which funding is obtained compound the problems. It is not just a question of finding funds to do the work. This is common to anyone engaged in any form of pioneering activity. It is simply that the values which inform funding by governments and the European Commission contradict the aims of a small NGO committed to address the issues of justice and the slow difficult work of reconciliation.

For two years the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London supported the Soul of Europe. We have also had to rely on gifts from individuals, grants from foundations and at two critical moments, significant donations from the Libyan Philanthropic organization, The World Islamic Call Society.

The Soul of Europe prepared and submitted a bid for funding to the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, under the section: *Support for Democratisation, Good Governance and the Rule of Law*. This bid concerned establishing the Banja Luka Civic Forum.

The funding was for a 3 year project. It took three months to prepare. We submitted it in November 2002. The results of the bid were to be announced in June 2003, but not until October 2003 did we learn that the bid had failed. (2)

One of the more curious aspects of applying for funding through the European Commission is that applicants are forbidden personal contact with anyone connected with the Application. Queries can be submitted to an email address, but that vanished once the deadline passed.

The reason for this regulation is that it prevent any opportunity for bribery of officials. A proper distance has to be preserved between potential recipients and donors.

But there is another reason. Given the way applications are framed and evaluated, human contact becomes unnecessary. The Application asks, quite reasonably enough, for a clear statement on aims, objectives and strategy. And then these demands intensify. Activities have to be described in detail. Priorities for each activity have to be justified. A three year project meant that the activities for each month, month on month, had to be described in detail, and how each activity related to what had happened before, and what was planned. Questions about internal and external continuous assessment have to be answered. Local partners have to provide value, and estimating and measuring the impact on target groups was essential. Every activity had to relate to every other in order that the aims and objectives of the project could be placed in a logical frame, like a complicated jigsaw puzzle. Any piece missing and as an official told me: 'your bid will be binned!'

A *technical and financial grid* evaluated the Soul of Europe's application. The title says it all. Social engineering is the core conviction, which affirms that the world 'out there' can be analysed, observed, measured and activities can be controlled and managed. If the world beyond the project is uncertain and unstable, a successful log frame will insulate the project from all that.

If this is the way the world works then inevitably it conveys a view of human nature which is reductionist and mechanistic.

For example in Bosnia there is considerable apathy and unwillingness to take part in the many programmes, which NGOs concerned with developing civil society arrange. A friend put it: 'We had the Turks for 500 years, then the Austro Hungarians, then 2 world wars, then fifty years of communism, and you expect us to take charge of our destiny? Now we have become a training ground for people like you, with your bright ideas!' To which I would add that a few workshops on 'building capacity' while better than nothing, do not really begin to touch the problems. We are confronted in Bosnia as in so many other places with a demand to be productive: instant solutions, quick fix and rapid results. Funding has to produce concrete results, (concrete is a favourite word in NGO circles) which satisfy politicians and taxpayers.

But this one-dimensional view of human nature does not acknowledge the astonishing potential in each of us. In Bosnia for example there are hardly any opportunities for recognizing and celebrating the stories of generosity, compassion, bravery and courage of many Serbs, Muslims and Croats during the war. And one of the triumphs of the 20th century is the survival and flourishing of the cultural and intellectual life of the people of Sarajevo. If ever a testimony to the human spirit was needed, it happened there, and continues to thrive.

Of course much of this argument needs careful nuancing. Projects fail for many different reasons. There are many successful projects because the managers have learnt to play the game, which is played from the day the completed application arrives in Brussels or Whitehall. And only the most cunning managers see their projects succeed, in spite of the straight jacket of the neutral, technocratic approach which informs the process.

The language in which the work of reconciliation is couched is 'business speak': impact, stakeholders, fast track, level playing fields, resources, targets, bullet points, delivery, outsourcing, benchmarking, ring fencing, business plans, etc. The language is ugly. It is sloppy and often meaningless.

I remember an official telling me: 'Make sure you deliver the deliverables in a sustainable way!' (When I challenged him to define in what sense he was using the word 'sustainable', he could not answer me.)

Three pictures:

Two Bosnians in their twenties now living in London, refugees from Banja Luka in 1995. They arrived at a meeting of the Bosnia Diaspora, brandishing well-thumbed paperbacks on '*How to Succeed in Business*'. One of them enquired how we were measuring the impact of the project to reconstruct the Ferhadija Mosque.

In Banja Luka I sat in the Palace Hotel with a courageous Muslim woman who had stayed in Banja Luka throughout the war to be with her sick mother. She insisted: 'This is my town.' She has become a seasoned fundraiser from foundations and the EC. We had spoken personally about her experience and what happened to her during the war. Then she talked about her work. Out it poured: outputs and outcomes, concrete projects and the rest. She suddenly stopped. Her eyes filled with tears. 'I can't go on like this!' she cried.

In another part of Bosnia I visited an NGO. I asked the four people sitting in front of their computers what they were doing; preparing reports for their funders, they told me. What are you doing locally? I asked. Well, they said, we are networking with our European colleagues. At the heart of their activities there was a void. Language, yes, but no life.

People deserve better.

How have we academics, intellectuals, politicians, officials, experts in development allowed this to happen. What has gone wrong? What is the root of the problem?

Bureaucracy is not to blame. (3) Bureaucrats are the guardians of the public purse. Their task is to see that public money is spent in a way that is accountable to the public. If all that is required consists of streamlining systems then changes can and are continually being made to lessen delays and increase efficiency.

But the problem is deeper and more critical.

What I am describing is that the values, assumptions and principles informing the concept of 'materialistic determinism' do not fit the patient, slow work of peacemaking and reconciliation (anymore than they do for cultural activities or intercultural dialogue). Moreover 'materialistic determinism' has become so pervasive, so embedded in the way we operate and in the institutions we have created that they are felt as facts. (4) This it is believed is the way the world is and will be; this is how the world is imagined, described and desired. That is why it is so difficult to locate the causes of the 'misfit'. So, for example, when I speak about these matters to senior diplomats at the Foreign Office in London they say: 'we are just marionettes.' And who pulls the strings? I ask. 'Our political masters,' they reply. Talking to politicians, particularly in Brussels they say: 'Yes, bureaucracy is a problem... is there anything I can do to help?' I am grateful for the offer but decline.

The ways of describing the world 'out there' are based on illegitimate principles. These secular and autonomous assumptions are based on claims of power and pragmatism. But these claims do not ultimately work because they are cut off, removed from fundamental aspirations. In the west we find compensation in consumerism and a host of diversionary activities. Ultimately the myths around materialistic determinism do not touch people. Ultimately they are not compelling. Therefore they lack legitimacy. (5)

But there are those who say: 'It has always been like this, and it is the same the world over.' Both assertions are untrue.

I have been fundraising for over 30 years and I can name the year, 1980, in the UK when 'business speak' began to creep into the discourse about 'development' (and the arts). Before then philanthropy whether from state of private patronage has had a long and complex history.

It is also wrong to say what I am describing is universally true. Two significant donations from the World Islamic Call Society in Libya were unexpected. They showed no interest in business plans. The Libyans needed to ensure that their interests and ours coincided. We found advocates whom the Libyans trusted; the World Islamic Call Society appreciated our tenacity and persistence. What might have irritated the Brussels bureaucrats was for the Libyans, and other Arab donors, a sign of our seriousness. (6)

What we in the West have construed, we can change. We need not; we must not be enthralled by the world of 'business speak'.

WE ARE FACING A CRISIS OF EPISTEMOLOGY – A CRISIS OF WHAT COUNTS AS KNOWLEDGE.

There is another way.

This is the way of knowing through the imagination.

THE IMAGINATION

*I am the necessary angel of earth
Since, in my sight, you see the world again.*
(Wallace Stevens – on Imagination)

Imagination is like Adam's dream, he awoke and found it true
(John Keats)

*'As Kingfishers Catch Fire' – a meditation:
Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lonely in limbs, and lonely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces*
(Gerald Manley Hopkins)

The possible's slow fuse is lit by the Imagination
(Emily Dickinson)

The authentic Utopia is grounded in recollection
(Herbert Marcuse)

I would even say that it (the imagination) plunges into the most impressive tradition: that of liberating acts, of the Exodus and Resurrection. Perhaps there would be no more interest in emancipation, no more anticipation of freedom, if the Exodus and Resurrection were effaced from the memory of mankind.
(Paul Ricoeur)

*We know now we have always been in danger
Down in our separateness
And not up here together but till now
We had not touched our strength.*
(Adrienne Rich)

I make no apology for prefacing this paper with quotations: they signal a change of gear, not of direction.

Imagination is a problematic concept in our post modern world. Post modernism describes, sometimes too extravagantly, the fragmentation, incoherence and nihilism of contemporary culture. Only 'market economics' and 'the market state' remain unchanging and invincible.

So this briefest of sketches of the genealogy of the imagination will show that our present melancholy landscape has not always been so.

Once upon a time the artist used his skills and honed his disciplines to lead the worshipper to God through the image of the icon. The intense but passive eyes and stylised features focussed attention of the worshipper beyond and through the image. Then the portrait painter stressed the image as a means of self expression in, for example, Rembrandt's sombre portraits which study his physical disintegration before death or Van Gogh's vivid paintings which explore his mental disintegration before suicide.

Today the pop poster revels in surface effects, incorporating at random, images, which the artist has ransacked arbitrarily from any source.

Or to put the matter differently: once the artists were craftsmen whose task was to serve and imitate the transcendent plans of the Creator. The inventor replaced this theocentric pattern, taking the place of God. Today she has been replaced by the artist as an ‘operator’ playing with images, symbols and metaphors.

This genealogy of the concept of the imagination – its development and narrowing of focus is well beyond the scope of this paper, except to say that it is a fleeting reminder that to move beyond the post-modern confusion we need pay attention to how we arrived at where we are, and look for a way forward.

Two aspects of that story are relevant for our enquiry into the nature of imagination. One is that we cannot renege on our responsibility to ‘the other’. The ‘face’ of the other invites and demands a response: to the victim and from the powerless an unconditional response. ‘Where are you?’ comes the question. ‘Here I am. Here we are,’ is the response. (7)

This is the ethical imagination – an imagination which has nothing to do with daydreaming, wishful thinking or the creation of the fantastical.

But this understanding of the imagination is neither stern nor censorious. It does not sentimentalise ‘the other’, because it is balanced and informed by the imagination of hope. Imagination is that capacity to picture, portray and receive the world in ways other than it appears to be at first glance; it is a valid way of knowing. When the imagination begins to function, then we live ‘as’ if we are free, ‘as’ if justice will be done, ‘as’ if forgiveness and peace are possible. The imagination rejects as false what has been long accepted and beyond criticism. It is astonishing how a long established ‘as’ can keep people in their places until a counter ‘as’ emerges, is imagined and given a voice. Oddly, hope begins to be a strength when everything is hopeless; its expression is often unreasonable and indispensable.

There is something old-fashioned, steady and ancient about the ethical and hopeful imagination. Hopeful imagination is not about ‘pie in the sky when you die’; neither is it ‘hoping for the best’. It is a communal and public assertion in which our connectedness is expressed and nourished. Far from being separate, distant and detached as a world informed by facts of materialistic determinism, there is a striving for connection, communion and community although at every turn these aspirations are always being threatened and sometimes defeated.

The working out of the ethical and hopeful imagination in peacemaking and reconciliation has at least 3 implications:

Firstly there has to be a willingness to trust whatever emerges; not manipulating, not even searching for explanations. Attention is as necessary as analysis. Stories as well as statistics. In Bosnia this is particularly difficult: the outward appearance of normality easily induces amnesia about the recent past. I am trying to convey something of the way an artist or a poet goes about her craft.

Secondly the process of peacemaking and reconciliation is as much the product as the end result. Time is needed – a lot of time. Those who initiate this type of work are like weavers, slowly, patiently weaving a strong new cloth. Sometimes the threads will unravel, but with patience the unravelling can resume so the weaving continues. I am speaking about the long haul, not the quick fix.

The process is slow because all the players have to be involved. No one is excluded. It is slow because confidence and trust have to be built up between the different groups. The decision to reconstruct the Ferhadija and the beginning of the project on site immediately raises the question: what do the other groups feel about this, and what should be done to keep their trust. The weaving has to continue and momentum is established (which may be destroyed if funding is not available). As far as possible all levels of society need to know what is happening: national governments, international organizations, local governments and NGOs, all need to be kept in the loop. And always there has to be readiness to take

risks (the Coventry Consultation was one such). These are some of the strands which the weaver has to incorporate. And time is needed. (8)

Thirdly it becomes difficult to fit the emerging developing work into a rigid log frame. The future cannot be so easily contained. There is a tentative provisional quality because if the hopeful imagination is flourishing, a new reality whose outcome cannot easily be measured is being born. (9)

If what I have written is true, it requires an upheaval in thinking, and in the way international organizations and institutions, establishing democracy and working for peace and reconciliation, function. Therefore I hope it will be possible to consider this paper as a start for conversation.

Donald Reeves

NOTES

1

Reports and updates are available on the Soul of Europe's website: www.soulofeurope.org or from our office at:

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Crediton, Devon UK EX17 2AQ, Phone: 0044 1363 775 100 Fax: 0044 1363 773 911

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2

Our application received 85%. I asked for a copy of the Evaluator's Report, which I received with the Evaluator's name removed. They found little to criticise except to say 'that it was somehow too ambitious' and that the Soul of Europe had had 'no experience in handling large budgets.' A conversation, a meeting or an interview would have resolved the first criticism; and had the Evaluators taken up unsolicited references they would have discovered I was responsible for a budget of a turnover year after year of 800K during my ministry at St James's Church Piccadilly.

3

That is not quite true, because of the length of time it takes to process Applications. There are delays. The Soul of Europe had to wait 11 months before we received the result of our Application. Our work in Banja Luka proceeded intermittently because of funding processes. The effect of these delays on those who worked for us increased their cynicism about 'Europe' and reaffirmed their suspicions that they were not being taken seriously. When I informed our partners about the failure of our Application to the EC they shrugged their shoulders: 'What else do you expect?' they said.

4

'Materialistic determinism' is a phrase used to describe the world view I have been outlining. I came across it in Edward Luttwak: *The Missing Dimension*, in Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (Eds): *Religion: the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (OUP).

5

This is the argument of Jurgen Habermass in his *On Legitimization*. He is a difficult writer, and I hope I have got his argument right.

In the UK there is an instinctive and widespread distrust of politicians who use the language of 'business speak' – 'delivering resources, etc.' Voters are not impressed with this sort of language applied to Health and Education, etc.

6

I appreciated the contrast made by Professor Leonce Bekeman in his introductory report: *Europe's Duty in Intercultural Dialogue* in *Intercultural Dialogue* published by the European Commission.

'The Atlantic (western tradition) of mainstream economics lost its original sense of culture and became an abstraction free of culture, less and less inspired by the effort of understanding reality and man's place in society. On the contrary the pre-modern 'Mediterranean' tradition of economic thought perceived the economy as embedded in a complex web of social and cultural institutions regulated by religion and ethical norms (discussed in L Baeck's *The Mediterranean tradition in economic thought*, Routledge).'

Although this approach may be increasingly marginalized our experience with Libya and to an extent with Qatar, indicates that old habits die slowly. Try doing business in Ramadan.

7

The work of Emmanuel Levinas has meant a lot to me, in his understanding of *the other* – particularly *Totality and Infinity, an Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh 1969). More immediately in Bosnia, the Soul on Europe relies on this understanding. Because we use interpreters, the 'eyes', the 'face', the body language of 'the other' becomes a significant part of communication.

8

A story: One of the first actions by the Banja Luka Civic Forum was a decision to ask the mayor of Banja Luka if they could attend City Council meetings. The Civic Forum could then take the debate out on to the streets and into different neighbourhoods. The mayor refused permission. The committee of the Forum, made up of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats, were not able to handle this refusal. Two left the committee. The remainder did not know what to do. They had no experience of confronting local officials. Instead of considering different options, the group began to disintegrate. Meanwhile pressure was put on the group to produce high profile events, round tables, conferences etc.

9

Space prevents a consideration of the place of 'celebration' as part of hopeful imagination as well as ways of dealing with deep disagreements as an opportunity for building trust. Peace making is an art.

POSTSCRIPT

A CASE FOR BEING BILINGUAL (1)

This paper was written in such a way that I hope it will be understood by anyone concerned with the issues I have raised.

I write as a Christian and as one for whom Christianity matters. Had I written the paper using religious and theological language, some of my readers would have been dismayed – especially those who regard Christianity and religion as incomprehensible or inimical to the pursuit of justice and reconciliation.

However this matter will not be solved just by getting the language right - writing in such a way that theology resonates beyond the church door.

What is at stake are two epistemologies – two different ways of 'knowing'; and therefore for those who are 'religious' – Jew, Muslim or Christian for example – there is a need to stay close to home, to the roots

of their traditions, otherwise they will have nothing to offer than an echo of whatever happens to be the prevailing wisdom.

A story from the Hebrew Scriptures illustrates the case for being bilingual. It occurs in 2 Kings, chapter 18, verses 1-27. Jerusalem is under siege. The Assyrians are at the wall of the city, surrounding it. Rabshakeh is the negotiator; he stands by the city wall and shouts out the terms of surrender: 'You have no choice: your God has failed!'. Agents of King Hezekiah of Judah say: 'Speak in Aramaic; this we understand. But don't speak to us in Hebrew within the hearing of the people behind the wall.' In other words: 'Speak to us in the language of international diplomacy, which ordinary people do not understand. If you speak in Hebrew they will know what is happening and they will be terrified.' Rabshakeh ignores the request and speaks in Hebrew. This intimidation makes negotiation impossible.

There is also another conversation going on behind the wall: here the Judeans only speak to each other. King Hezekiah orders the Judeans not to answer the Assyrians directly. He goes to the 'house of the Lord'. The prophet Isaiah is summoned to pray for the city. Yahweh – the living God – cannot be mocked. And Isaiah's response is remarkable: 'Do not be afraid of the Empire.'

Two conversations: one on the wall, one behind the wall. On the wall, the language is that of politics, public policy and the project: the agenda is that of the prosperity of Empire. All other claims are excluded. Behind the wall, there is a communal language which holds them to the primal source of their faith – Israel's conversation goes deep into its strange, unique experience expressed in Isaiah's words: 'Do not fear.' The oddity of the conversation behind the wall is often forgotten – not just the emergence of the Torah (which was an 'alternative' reading of reality) but later in the reality of the Kingdom of God where sins are forgiven, the dead raised, debts are cancelled and outcasts return home – always a critique of whatever is the dominant reality.

Two conversations are occurring simultaneously, one on the wall, one behind the wall - but also together, because what is happening is too serious to be one-sided.

Those behind the wall do not, should not compromise their truth. They seek to counter what passes for official truth in the conversations by those on the wall.

Some say there is only one conversation: the one behind the wall. No other conversation is valid. (2)

Others say there is only one conversation: the one on the wall. The story that has lost its power and legitimacy is the one behind the wall.

But beyond the 'conservative' and 'liberal' is another position: that of the person who is learning to be bilingual, living with different epistemologies, so he/she is being recreated by the radical Gospel behind the wall, and is also ready to engage with those on the wall. There is nothing obscurantist about this position; but whether the Churches have it within themselves to be self critical, so clearing a way for renewal, that is a different story.

Donald Reeves
11th November 2004

1 Much of this postscript comes from Walter Brueggemann, whose writing have been an inspiration. His exposition of the story comes in *The Legitimacy of a Sectarian Hermeneutic – in Interpretation and Obedience*.

2 In the USA those on the wall have hijacked most of those behind the wall for its own version of Christian imperialism

JOURNEY TO PEC 5.10.10

Last Sunday, on a warm sunny afternoon, the new leader of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Irenjy was enthroned at the Patriarchate in Pec with that unique blend of a highly formal and informal two and a half hours Orthodox liturgy.

Three hundred people gathered in a space normally holding one hundred. Patriarchates from all over the Orthodox world were represented from Moscow, Athens, Jerusalem and elsewhere, alongside invited Catholic and Protestant leaders, three Serbian Islamic muftis and two Anglicans: Jonathan Goodall, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Ecumenical Secretary and myself.

Stewarded by twenty nuns, the Pec Patriarchate, seat of the Patriarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church since 1217, is regarded as its spiritual centre. It stands in a gorge surrounded by steep forested mountains.

Two thousand people gathered inside and many more outside to watch the liturgy being relayed by television. The crowd of old and young enjoying a day out sang a chorus of *May You Live For Ever*. Despite the solemnity of the occasion people were smiling with anticipation, waiting to catch a glimpse of Patriarch Irenjy, a slight figure with alert eyes, who had invited me to Belgrade a month earlier to discuss the Soul of Europe's work.

But we were not in Serbia. We were in Kosovo. Apart from the nuns in Pec and the monks at Decani, ten miles down the road, there are few Christians in the area. Security was discreet. No one protested except for three Kosovo Albanians who threw stones at a convoy of buses returning to Montenegro after the ceremony. No Kosovo Albanians had been invited. To do so, I was told, would be to acknowledge Kosovo as an independent state, no longer part of Serbia.

Following the International Court of Justice ruling in July that recognized the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence there has been a flurry of diplomatic activity. The EU will broker talks between Serbia and Kosovo. Both wish to move as quickly as possible towards European integration. Therefore the status of Kosovo has to be resolved; and woven into any agreement has to be the guaranteed long term status of the Serbian Orthodox monasteries.

The Serbian Orthodox Church is a significant Serbian institution: for centuries it defined Serb identity. No Serb politician would allow the monasteries to be harmed. One proposal is that they become 'extra-territorial' with their own international Swiss Guard, like the Vatican.

Whatever is agreed cannot be implemented without the active support of Kosovo Albanians. Without this support top down agreements are worthless.

At Pec I talked with the leader of the Islamic community in Belgrade, Mufti Muhamed Jusufspahic. He told me that 'doors are opening' and that it should be possible to bring the parties together, though he acknowledged the difficulties. The Soul of Europe is familiar with these. Nevertheless we have been invited to help in the process, and have gained the support of the Serbian Orthodox Church as well as Kosovo Albanian leaders. Once funding is secured we will do what we can.

Before our arrival the international police had removed posters in Pec proclaiming Patriarch Irenjy to be a 'war criminal'. These sentiments are not representative of Kosovo Albanian public opinion; there are many who endorse all efforts to break down the walls of suspicion and paranoia.

As we returned to Belgrade, a nine hour bus journey through some of the wildest terrain in Europe, I recalled a conversation with the Abbess of Pec a year ago: 'We live in a prison here.'

International agreements will make the 'prison' more secure, but they will not create conditions for normalizing healthy community relations between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians, let alone opportunities for reconciliation.

Helping to create these conditions is the Soul of Europe's mission in Kosovo.

Donald Reeves

LADDERS CIRCLES and AN EPILOGUE.

INTRODUCTION.

This is a very early consideration of what might eventually emerge as a proposal for a Research project leading to recommendations for government and the EU on the ways in which public funding could be more effectively spent in the area of peace building (I use this word in a generic sense covering the whole range of mediation, community relations and reconciliation).

I am using images rather than business-speak and jargon because I hope images allow the reader to roam around in them. I hope you don't find them irritating.

PARTNERS.

I am writing this for people and organizations who might consider being part of a coalition of NGO's who would together prepare a proposal.

THE SOUL OF EUROPE.

As Director of the Soul of Europe I am well placed to coordinate this project. The Soul of Europe has worked in Bosnia for seven years, working on different peace building initiatives. We have been funded by the FCO, DFID and Mittal Steel. We also failed, just, to receive a major grant from the Cards program from the European Commission, (The procedure was a useful learning experience for us).

I have had thirty years experience of fund raising for a multitude of activities: seeking support from local authorities, governments, foundations and rich individuals. I seem to have spent most of my life fundraising. This is one of the disadvantages of being an initiator.

THE PROBLEM.

There is an enormous gap between practice - the work of peace building, and the values which inform the work, and those who make funds available, and the values which inform their decisions.

CONSIDER THIS IMAGE.

THE CIRCLE.

On the ground there is the circle where the work takes place. The circle is open. When peace building is taken seriously there will be circles at every level: grass routes, neighbourhood, region, nationally, internationally. Each circle from different levels contributes different experiences and skills.

..

So we are not just referring to the local circle.

In many areas of the world where peace building is taking place, people are traumatized by the experience of war. Certainly the peace building process will need to involve in one or more circles the dispossessed. They wait for justice.

THE LADDER.

From the circle(s) there is a ladder. Towards the top of the ladder is where the decisions about funding are made. The higher you go up the ladder the more rarified is the air. The higher he (and it is usually a he) is, the further away he is from the circle. He sits in comfortable security. On the wall there are photographs of when he was long ago part of a circle, and perhaps some photographs. The more recent ones show him coming down from the ladder to visit some circles which he was funding.

In Brussels the funders are on the 18th floor of the European Commission building.

Those on the ladder sometimes start as part of the circle. They will refer to that experience when challenged about this or that : 'You know I have worked in the field' (another image of a sort of circle). The trouble is circles change.

Ladders are uncomfortable. To get up another rung invariably means treading on the toes of someone just beneath you. The world of ladders is competitive and hierarchical.

One of the most important issues to be addressed is DISTANCE - the distance between people doing the work and those who fund it.

To be fair some EU officials recognize problems around 'distance'. Applications for funding have been streamlined and more autonomy given to regional EU offices, but the fundamental value systems remain intact.

PROCESS.

Process is about the way people in the circle(s) relate to each other to ensure the task is completed. Crucial to the success of the work of the circle(s) is the establishing and reestablishing of TRUST. When Trust begins to grow so does RESPECT. On the way, of course, there will be DISAGREEMENT; sometimes very disruptive. This slows everything down. And of course , there will be many MISTAKES. Mistakes cannot be allowed because there has to be a guarantee of success. But as any scientist will say mistakes are an essential part of their method because that is how they learn. (That is why the Log Frame in any application is regarded as vital; it brings together everything and rules out any chance of mistakes. It is airtight.)

To get the job done WORKING RELATIONSHIPS have to grow. When this happens SOLIDARITY and LOYALTY develop. This is what John Paul Lederach means when he writes about creating webs of social relationships which include the other. ((John Paul Lederach is Professor of International Peacebuilding at the Joan B Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies at Notre Dame University, I am referring particularly to *The Moral Imagination*, Oxford University Press 2005.)

Process requires occasions for CONVIVIALITY, when there can be celebration for what is being achieved on the way. Those at the top of the ladder have expense accounts for entertaining but what expense accounts fund those significant moments when survivors of concentration camps sit down with their perpetrators?

Since I am writing about 'peace building' it is essential to remind myself that to begin the process of creating circles is time-consuming, and not always successful. Circle making in a post conflict and post communist society is difficult . Most of us are aware of the passivity of people, who prefer to 'wait and see' and who are suspicious of parachuted interventions and preconceived recipes.

Sometimes those on the ladder - particularly at the top - are unsympathetic about the 'process'. It is too 'touchy feely' with uncertain outcomes. They say: 'Why don't they just get on with it' - the implication being that this is just what they did, and look where they have arrived!

The process honours SERENDIPITY: what is not anticipated, what is discovered by accident and what happens by lucky chance.

This means that peace builders have an eye for developing peripheral vision - watchful. They may proceed like crabs. Tunnel vision, which is the way projects are often seen, might be the best way of seeing; but sometimes the undergrowth is destroyed on the way.

And of course RISK is built into the activities of peace building.

Those on the top of ladders underestimate the time it takes to get things moving. They expect too much and too quickly from those in the circle(s).

The fact that I have to make these obvious observations is distressing.

INTERVENTION

Working relations have also to be established with those 'from outside' who initiate the project. Everything above about trust, etc, applies to them as well as to those who make up the circle(s). This raises a whole cluster of questions about INTERVENTION. Beyond aid and emergency relief, people begin to ask: 'What are you doing here?' They don't put it like that, but suspicions about motives are never far from the surface. In Bosnia for example we have been asked: 'Will your work here look good on your CV? Are you spies - working for the CIA? Are you here to support your government's interests? Are you making money out of your activities? Why don't you go home and sort out your problems there?' People who ask these questions have had considerable experience of European intervention.

Of course intervention is not just about working in post conflict situations, but also for ways in which projects are started anywhere. I shudder at some of the mistakes I made as a young vicar on a large housing estate in South London.

TIME

Those on the Ladder require instant solutions and a 'quick fix'. This means that projects have to be seen to have CONCRETE outcomes, and successful ones too. Concrete is a favourite noun among my Bosnian friends who have worked for international NGO's and learnt it from them.

The Soul of Europe established the Banja Luka Civic Forum. The FCO required the forum to come up with a program of activities - to be prepared and delivered in 4 weeks. It was too much for the group. They had not worked together before. They came from different ethnic groups. The group imploded. Nothing could be done. Six months more and there would have been a functioning civic forum and many other programs. But as we were told by the FCO: 'You have to deliver, because of the politicians back home.'

The FCO only funds projects for twelve months at a time; the Cards program from the EU up to twenty four months. If a project is starting from nothing it can take up to three months before local staff are in place - even longer if you take seriously the procedures laid down by the EU (gender balance, etc). Then it is often difficult to sustain the interest of local staff for the last four months or so of their contract

because they begin job hunting (and who can blame them in a country like Bosnia with up to 40% unemployment). Those on the ladder don't acknowledge this problem.

ACCOUNTABILITY and TRANSPARENCY

The Soul of Europe has tried to be accountable to our funders. The way this happens is through the preparation and writing of reports. Whether anyone reads the reports is another matter. No one has commented on them. Face to face meetings are not encouraged and the procedures in the EU do not allow for these because of the fear of accusations of bribery. Given the way the people on the ladder think, such meetings are not deemed necessary - everything can be evaluated on a technological grid.

SPARE A THOUGHT FOR:

1. The people who make up the circles on whose shoulders rest the requirements of peace making.
2. Those who initiate peace building. They have to learn to 'do the splits' - one leg firmly in the circle, the other up the ladder. He or she inhabits two different worlds
3. The subversives in place. There are plenty of these on the ladder. They just need a bit of encouragement to hold tight and speak out. They needn't fall or be pushed off.

AIR

There is little air at the top of the ladder. What there is is stale. Everything needs to be airtight. There is no way in which windows can be opened. Nothing it seems can change.

Politicians blame the bureaucrats who in turn blame the politicians in charge. Officials and politicians claim it has always been like that. This is not true. We created this way of doing things in the 1980's. What we created we can dismantle. We do not feel we have to live in a world in which to quote the philosopher TE Hulme: 'assumptions are felt as facts'. Begin to dismantle and create new opportunities and alternatives will bring much needed fresh air.

These are some reflections about circles and ladders. What are at stake here are different world views and philosophical approaches. I outline them in my lecture *The Moral Imagination*. (This lecture was given at Lambeth Palace in May 2006 as a reflection on the Omarska project, incorporating the insights of John Paul Lederach.) Is peace building to be fuelled by the values of materialistic determinism, enshrined in the language and practice of business or is there another way, more human and more humane, through the imagination?

EPILOGUE

At the centre of what I have written is a concern to create not just proposals for closing the gap between circles and ladders (though a well thought out research project will certainly deal with this), but to create a critical theory about peace building which will help to ensure that what happens is possible and lasting (as much as anything can be lasting in a world of considerable uncertainty).

Western society is bedeviled by uncertainty. It is because we have not yet found a way to deal with the anger of small groups of people. We are fearful because we do not know who the agents of violence are, their numbers, where they are hidden, and what they want.

Inevitably this means that the very existence of these groups will be perceived as a danger to our own survival. Inevitably propaganda, migratory turbulence and fear of economic insecurity will make us

defensive for our own survival, thus making walls between communities inevitable. It is precisely this refusal to acknowledge our interdependence on this small planet which demands all the wisdom of peace builders to show another way. Never have the best insights of those who have devoted their lives to reconciliation more needed to be heard and realized.

Donald Reeves
8.9.06

LAMENT FOR EUROPE

The Soul of Europe is proposing to commission a *Lament for Europe* in words and music. The focus of the *Lament* will be Europe's refugee crisis.

BACKGROUND

The idea for this project came from three different sources:

1 *The New Odyssey* by Patrick Kingsley describes the heroic efforts of people seeking a new home in Europe. Philip Pullman's commendation describes *The New Odyssey* as 'tremendously impressive – vivid, sometimes shocking, always telling – the story of what lies behind the news from the Mediterranean has rarely been told so strongly.'

Patrick Kingsley writes: 'At a time when travel for many is easy and anodyne, the refugees' voyages through the Sahara, the Balkans, or across the Mediterranean ... are almost as epic as those of classical heroes such as Aeneas and Odysseus... just as both these ancient men fled a conflict in the Middle East and sailed across the Aegean, so too will many migrants today. Today's sirens are the smugglers with their empty promises of safe passage, the violent border guard a contemporary Cyclops. Three millennia after their classical forebears, creating the founding myths of the European continent, today's voyagers are writing a new narrative that will influence Europe for better or worse for years to come.'

2 LAMENT. The lament is an indispensable vehicle for men and women, traditionally women, to give voice to their suffering, grief and rage against injustice. For over three thousand years poets and singers have drawn on this oral tradition: Why are we hated? Did we bring these disasters on ourselves? Why do innocent people suffer and die? Why? Why? Why are we abandoned? Why has everything been taken from us? Why is God silent?

3 **SETTLING FOR NUMBNESS.** Robert Jay Lifton coined the phrase: ‘psychic numbness’. He studied the impact of large scale state sanctioned violence on the human psyche. He has investigated the impact of Hiroshima and Auschwitz. He concluded that systemic violence becomes tolerable because governments and the public fall into a psychic numbness, a capacity not to notice, not to feel, not to experience, not to care.

Psychic numbness happens because of a ‘gap of symbols’, by which he means that communities lack adequate symbols to mediate and communicate the barbarism, brutality and horror with which they either knowingly or unwittingly collude. Then when ‘symbolic’ actions in any community are inadequate or one-dimensional, violence is implemented and accepted as the ‘new normal’.

Because of round the clock news coverage where the reporting of every sort of violence has become routine, it is easy to settle for numbness. Occasionally a story interrupts the pattern. For example in September 2015 the picture of a dark haired three year old, Ayan Kurti, in red t-shirt and shorts, washed up dead on a beach lying face down in the surf near the Turkish resort of Bodrum went viral across the world. The Kurti family were trying to reach Greece and then travel on to Canada where relatives waited for them. The pictures and the commentaries momentarily made it possible to reframe the debate about Europe’s response to the migration of thousands of people. Donations to refugee agencies soared. Perhaps this could have been the start of a generous and open approach to the crisis. But within days Fortress Europe re-appeared, and forgot Ayan Kurti. As Tima Kurti, Ayan’s aunt in Canada said: ‘My heart is broken. Where is the humanity? Where is the humanity?’

THE AIMS The Lament for Europe has two aims.

The first is to celebrate the courage, resilience and determination of those who had to abandon their homes and their countries to search for a new life.

The second is to expose the shame of Europe. Fortress Europe looks away and passes by on the other side. So the *Lament for Europe* becomes our lament - a communal acknowledgment of guilt. The difficulties of representing this are legion because many European states feel justified in barring refugees. How can 'Europe' come to make this acknowledgement in a continent where support for refugees has dwindled?

As you read further you will be struck how imprecise the concept is. This is deliberate. The Soul of Europe did not want at this early stage to limit ideas with guidelines and criteria. If composers and musicians, poets and writers are intrigued by the ideas of the *Lament for Europe* their imagination should not be restricted by criteria and guidelines.

CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The composer and writer will decide on the form and style of the Lament
- 2 The music should be accessible.
- 3 To what extent the composer and writer draw on the ancient oral traditions of the lament from different cultures will be for them to decide.
- 4 The text should include the reflections of those who have made the journey; there could be a poetic commentary, like a Greek chorus. The text could draw on the Koran, the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Any formal Lament would have to be in the words of those who suffer.
- 5 Lament suggests something static. There could be a ritual element to the composition. But the Lament could also be in the form of a story - of a family on its way through Europe, whom they meet, what they experience: a story of Everyman – not heroic, but ordinary, someone everyone can empathise with.
- 6 The Soul of Europe imagines the Lament as a major concert piece, music theatre or oratorio, incorporating a variety of art forms, including film and dance. However there should also be a chamber version which can be taken to other places and performed in smaller numbers wherever there is a need or demand.
- 7 The Soul of Europe imagines the *Lament for Europe* as a European project: perhaps a partnership of say three cities, one in the UK, one in Germany and one in France. The cities provide resources for the *Lament*, perhaps university departments of music and drama working together.

Donald Reeves

LEARNING THE SKILLS AND ART OF PEACEBUILDING.

SUMMARY

This paper is a narrative. It tells the story of twelve years of learning and practising the skills and art of peace-building.

In 1998 I left my job as a parish priest in central London where I had worked for eighteen years. I established a Foundation - the Soul of Europe. Europe was regarded as little more than a collection of nation states committed to the free market. I believed then and now there is more to Europe - hence the name the Soul of Europe.

If in this cold universe we are nothing more than a puff of warm air, here for a moment, then gone, then we are either immeasurably insignificant or incalculably interesting. I take the second view. 'Soul' describes what it means to be alive, gloriously alive. However there are many for whom this idea of 'soul' is meaningless. So it is right that Europeans, Christian, Jew, Muslim, the indifferent, the rich, the poor and the very poor - the invisible underclass of Europeans - insist this beautiful truth is realised. A truth endorsed and expressed by the best of the traditions of the Abrahamic religions.

The Soul of Europe went to Belgrade in 2000. We had begun to focus the notion of Soul to the complex areas of conflict resolution, conflict transformation and peace building. Nelson Mandela's words expressed our mission simply: 'If you want to make peace do not speak to your friends, speak with your enemies so they become your partners'. The former Yugoslavia was the black hole of Europe.

From Belgrade we travelled to Bosnia, and the paper describes our work and the learning and reflection which accompanied it.

Over six years the following projects have emerged:

1. A commitment to assist the Islamic Bosnian Community to reconstruct the historic 16th Century Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka. (One of sixteen destroyed in the war). The Mosque will be opened this year, and Dr Mustafa Cerić, the former Grand Mufti of Bosnia has indicated that I will be invited to the opening and be one of the speakers.
2. The bringing together of the entire political leadership of Bosnia with the High Representative, the Mayor of Banja Luka and his cabinet, teachers, business people and religious leaders to the International Centre for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral for a three day Consultation: 'Towards Peace, Prosperity and Reconciliation' in September 2001. As a result of this initiative numerous activities started: a Civic Forum for Banja Luka, school exchanges between schools in Exeter(UK) and Banja Luka and efforts to bring together religious leaders regularly.
3. The project to create a Memorial at Omarska - an iron ore mine used as a killing camp during the Bosnia War. Mittal Steel who acquired the mine commissioned the Soul of Europe to bring together the survivors of the killing camp at Omarska - all Bosnian Muslims, together with the Bosnian Serbs who had persecuted and killed them to come to an agreement about the Memorial. The project is on going.
4. In 2006 the Soul of Europe visited Kosovo. Because of our track record in Bosnia, the think tank International Crisis Group suggested that our skills in peace-building could be useful in bringing together Serbs in the monasteries of Pec and Decani - important centres for Serbia - with the local municipalities - all Kosovo Muslim Albanians. Our intervention achieved a successful conclusion in November 2012 and plans are being devised to ensure our model of working is transferable to other parts of Kosovo.

5. Following an award which I received from the Soest Foundation - the oldest German Muslim organisation, the Soul of Europe, together with German partners is now initiating a programme to create a grass movement across Europe to resist the rapidly growing threat of Islamophobia. The project is formed around twelve European cities.

The paper will describe in some detail these projects but over the years some essential principles have been learnt, forged out of our experience in Sarajevo, Belgrade, Pristina, Prijedor, Coventry and conferences in Libya, Istanbul, Brussels and Doha - the annual DICID conference.

There are seven hard-won and non-negotiable principles. Here they are:

The progress towards Reconciliation depends on:

1. The willingness of all the parties to work together even if they disagree profoundly.
2. The readiness of all those concerned to acknowledge the truth of the events that created a conflict.
3. The desire for working out together a new interdependent future.
4. The understanding that religion can play a significant part because the Abrahamic religions recognise Hope as a God-given gift.
5. The appreciation that peace building is a process involving all the parties and not the actions of a high profile mediator sent in to 'sort out' a situation.
6. The necessity of taking as much time as is needed.
7. The necessity of major international institutions like the UN or the EU to encourage the working out of these principles.

Peace-building is precarious. There is something in human nature which is destructive and can spoil the best of intentions. Moreover events can take over so that the processes of moving towards reconciliation have to begin all over again. Success is difficult to measure. However I have learnt that if the right thing is done in the correct way, even if a project falters, then the work of reconciliation will be respected because the longing for Justice and Peace is shared by everyone everywhere. It is the way the world is intended to be.

Donald Reeves.

MANAGING CONFLICT

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 ANALYSING CONFLICT
- 3 MANAGING CONFLICT
- 4 DESIGNING A PROCESS FOR POSITIVE OUTCOMES
- 5 THE ROLE OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
- 6 A PROPOSAL

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on the Soul of Europe's experience working in Bosnia since 2000 and more especially our participation in the project to create a memorial for those murdered at the Omarska mine in 1992.

My knowledge of the Anglican Commission is limited. All I know of its present difficulties is from what I read. For example I have no knowledge of the state of working relationships between the Primates.

Inevitably therefore this paper has significant limitations.

When I use the word ‘parties’ I am referring to the Primates who seem to be the key persons.

2 ANALYSING CONFLICT

We discovered 3 approaches to analysing conflict (or disagreement to use a less emotive word).

The first is the ‘partisan’ approach, blaming and adversarial: ‘them and us’.

The second is reflective, inward – where the ‘parties’ consider their own position.

The third is an integrated approach, where the parties consider their own positions, but also recognize the need to understand the views of others.

For disagreements to be solved, a step taken away from the adversarial is necessary.

In practice these 3 approaches are not so clear cut. The closer the parties are to an integrated approach, the better the prognosis.

The analysis encourages the parties to see the disagreement through a new lens, to consider the deep-rooted causes of the problems. It is not so much about learning something new, but about understanding the situation in deeper and wider ways.

There is a standard check list of elements that would have to be included as part of any solution.

These include:

- a) The Participants: who are they? Are there spoilers? Are there single issues? Which are the outside interests and groups, etc?
- b) What are the underlying factions – what drives the participants? What do they fear?
- c) What have been the previous attempts at finding a solution? Why did they fail?
- d) What is the nature and extent of the balance of power and influence between the various parties?
- e) What is the state of the relationships between the parties? What are the mutual images each has of the other?

Perhaps this analysis has already happened. If not, how can this analysing of conflict be put in place (and who will do it?). See paragraph 4

3 MANAGING CONFLICT

There needs to be a moving away from the resolution of a profound disagreement to a more pragmatic interest in managing disagreement.

Disagreement can be positive as well as negative. Managing disagreement is the constructive handling of difference and divergence.

What could this idea of managing disagreement in the Anglican Communion look like in institutional terms?

4 DESIGNING A PROCESS FOR POSITIVE OUTCOMES

The process by which the parties reach a solution or solutions impacts on the quality of the outcome.

Intervention by 'outside' agencies or individuals is now commonplace.

Provided there is agreement among all the parties on the acceptability, neutrality and competence of a 'third party' intervention then it is possible to identify 3 types of interventions:

- a) CONCILIATION. Here the conciliation provides a channel between the various parties identifying the main issues of contention, trying to move the parties to closer interaction. There is no requirement for the parties to meet.
- b) FACILITATION. The facilitator brings representatives of the parties together. He/she chairs meetings to examine mutual perceptions and encourages communication in a safe way.
- c) PURE MEDIATION. The mediator's role is to facilitate direct dialogue on the issues with the aim of producing a solution, the mediator uses process skills to urge the parties towards a solution they themselves design and implement.

The mediators have no 'power', but they can 'withdraw'.

These brief remarks belie the amount of work required in designing a process where at different times and in different places conciliation, facilitation and pure mediation are appropriate. Considerations such as timelines, media policy, funding, and equity of all participants – these are some of the matters to be addressed.

5 THE ROLE OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

The Archbishop has shown in his statements, addresses and sermons that as far as the Anglican Communion is concerned, he understands his role as a 'broker'.

It is however impossible for the Archbishop to undertake this function directly. The Archbishop represents the 'public' face of the broker: 'there is no future unless there is a shared future.'

The work itself has to be undertaken by others.

6 A PROPOSAL

If this paper makes any sense then it will be necessary to design a process acceptable to the Primates (and/or other parties) drawing on appropriate expertise.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

On Sunday October 3rd I attended the Enthronement Ceremonies of the new leader of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Irenjy, at the ancient seat of the Patriarchate in Pec in Kosovo.

What follows is my account of this extraordinary event. But it was also a missed opportunity for the beginnings of reconciliation between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians.

This missed opportunity was down to the arrogance, ignorance and indifference of officials of the European Union.

Here is my story followed by a brief analysis of why the Enthronement was a missed opportunity, and why I feel strongly about this.

FRIDAY. October 1st. Peter Pelz advised me not to talk about the project; not to use the occasion for networking. I was a guest of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and it would not be right to start speaking about it unless I was asked. This was just the advice I needed. It was brought home to me when I arrived at Belgrade airport to be greeted by two members of the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I was whisked through passport control, and into a waiting car with a police escort. The driver negotiated Belgrade's rush hour with aplomb.

SATURDAY October 2nd . We left Belgrade at midday. In the morning I was having coffee. Three Belgrade matrons carrying all before them and well into their sixties descended on me, intrigued by my appearance (I was wearing a cassock). 'What are you doing here?' they asked.

I explained. 'We like our new Patriarch,' they told me. 'He is very simple and he is not like our politicians. We have never been to Pec, but we believe it is a very nice place,' and then they spoke nostalgically about a place they had never visited.

We travelled to Pec in three coaches - 'we' being a bunch of Orthodox Bishops from all over the world - India, Russia (a hefty delegation this one), the US and European Orthodox communities. There were a couple of Catholic Bishops from the Vatican, some Protestant ministers and Jonathan Goodall, Rowan Williams' secretary on Ecumenical affairs, and myself.

The seat next to me was empty so a number of Bishops asked if they minded if they could put their Jermyn Street hatboxes, containing their crowns, on it because the boxes were too large to fit on the racks. I resisted the temptation to try one on.

The journey to Pec takes about twelve hours. We were due to be there at 10.00 on Sunday so arrangements had been made for us to sleep in Mitrovica - but no one was sure where.

The journey through Central Serbia down into Kosovo says everything about the separateness of Kosovo from anywhere. The landscape becomes steadily wilder up to the foothills of mountains. We followed the river, and cutting through a gorge, left behind the fertile hills and valleys.

At 4 o'clock we stopped for lunch at Zica Monastery. We left the bus, and immediately entered the Church - greeted by the local bishop and a crowd of clergy and clouds of incense. I thought we were due for a long service – but no, this was just a welcome. Eighty nuns live in the monastery - and had prepared lunch for us.

We left Zica in the late afternoon, the weather warm and mild. We arrived at the border with Kosovo. 'Ha!' said a Serb Bishop, 'now we are foreigners.'

Two hours later we arrived in Mitrovica - the divided city in Kosovo. The North from which we had come is predominantly Serb and looks to Belgrade. It does not recognise Pristina or the rule of law which EULEX - the EU mission for law enforcement - provides. There is a steady stream of 'incidents'. This was my third visit to Mitrovica but the first where I stopped in Serb Mitrovica North. As we snaked around the narrow streets, the poverty, scarce street lighting and the sight of uncollected refuse spoke of neglect. Eventually we arrived at the University, home to about ten thousand students, many from the Serb enclaves in the south of Kosovo (who incidentally would never return to these enclaves, preferring to move to Belgrade or Nis). Here Serbia had spent a lot of money bringing the University up to as good a standard as anywhere.

'Fish on the left; meat on the right ' a stern monk announced, as we entered the dining room. I thought I would try the fish: fried but since we were over an hour late it was cold.

We were staying in students' rooms. I found my name on a list – with the number 4 next to it. It seemed I was due to share a room with three Orthodox bishops. The receptionists at the entrance to the accommodation had given up; they more or less threw keys at anyone who asked. I found some keys, and my room; then locked the door behind me. No one appeared, so I was spared sleeping with three Bishops.

Next day we crossed the River Ibar into Kosovo Albanian territory. Hardly any Serbs here. Bishops crossed themselves as we approached the bridge. We had a two hour drive to Pec - another warm day. We were led by a police escort. The security was discreet; local Kosovo police guarded access points.

PEC. We arrived in Pec at 9.30 - half an hour before the Liturgy was due to start. Pec is the second city after Pristina - about seventy thousand people live there. There are no Serbs - driven out after 1999 and later in 2004 when thirty Serb monasteries and churches were torched. The town was nearly deserted. A few young men stared at us as we drove at speed to the Patriarchate. Some Kosovo flags had been draped around the lamp posts. As we approached, local police had been replaced by a few NATO soldiers - nothing formidable. I noticed a couple of women soldiers, smoking and wandering around. In the car park of the Monastery there were about forty coaches, bringing Serbs from Bosnia and Montenegro.

THE LITURGY. Three hundred of us were crammed into a church normally holding about one hundred. The walls were covered in frescoes from the 14th century. I would have plenty of time to look at them during the two and half hour liturgy. We VIPs were escorted into the church and applauded by a crowd of about three thousand who followed the liturgy outside on television screens. I was steered to the right and ended up face to face with Crown Prince Alexander whom I have met several times before. He introduced me to his wife and son. We talked about the Organ recital I will be giving in Belgrade next year. 'I am ready,' he said.

Noticing that I was considered important since I had a long conversation with the King someone produced a chair. I was grateful for that! Then out of the crowd emerged two elderly women - abbesses. I recognised one of them. Both small in stature, maybe five and a half feet no more they were clad head to toe in black with little of their faces showing. They reminded me of the way some Muslim women dress. They had sticks and pushed their way passed us. They disappeared drowned in a sea of black - they certainly could see nothing hidden among those black cassocks. After a few moments they appeared. Ignoring my offer of a chair, they arrived in the front row and stood for the entire liturgy.

The President of Serbia, Boris Tadic arrived. He was the only Serb politician invited by the Church. I looked at him closely. He has the appearance of an ageing once glamorous footballer; I usually like what he says but my Serb friends are more sceptical. Later he spoke at the Banquet. He did not go into automatic pilot, and was clearly comfortable in Pec. He had one minder with him; I could easily have spoken to him but I remembered Peter's advice.

Then there was silence. This is unusual in an Orthodox liturgy, which is a mixture of the formal - very elaborate vestments - and the informal: people come in and out of the church as they wish, although once in the church it would be difficult on this occasion to get out. Health and Safety regulations had not arrived in Pec. Had there been a fire, I doubt if I and many others would have survived.

The liturgy began; the Patriarch arrived with fourteen others from around the world. Television lights picked out the jewels on the crowns twinkling. The choir sang continuously during the liturgy, the deeply moving music quiet all the way through - sometimes pleading, always plaintive. As we left we passed the choir, young people in their twenties - their faces blanched with tiredness staring at us intently. I wanted to hug them all.

While we waited for Patriarch Irenjy to appear we sat and waited. I had a significant conversation with the mufti of Belgrade who with two other Serbian muftis attracted much attention. I had met him before

and he remembered our visit. This was his seventh visit to Pec. He asked about our work and said: 'The doors are slowly opening; it will be difficult, but you can bring people together.' With the vast crowd in the courtyard we waited for the Patriarch. Sometimes people sang 'May he live forever' (a version of For He's a Jolly Good Fellow). He eventually emerged, gave a short homily, and we were then shown to a large marquee for the banquet.

Conversation was impossible because now came the time for the story of Kosovo to be told - past and present sufferings; the sound system collapsed after a bit so I think this narrative had to be curtailed. Later during the speeches someone said how much they appreciated the suffering of the Patriarch, and how much he has to bear. Irenjy, chasing a bit of meat round an empty plate, did not look as if he was suffering. He caught my eye, and smiled.

After more speeches I felt I had had enough – along with others it seemed, as half of the audience had now left. I went outside. The queue outside the loos had dwindled. A smiling nun indicated where we had to go - men this side, women the other side.

People prepared to leave. The community had gathered to celebrate a blessing on the Patriarch. Quiet chatter here and there. Peaceful. The buzz of conversation momentarily interrupted by the clattering of the helicopter as it transported President Tadic back to Belgrade. A little bit of Serbia in a foreign land.

AND THEN I REALISED SOMETHING WAS MISSING. THERE WAS NOT ONE KOSOVO ALBANIEN. NO ALBANIEN HAD BEEN INVITED - NOT ONE.

THE SOUL OF EUROPE HAD SPENT SEVEN MONTHS TELLING WHOEVER WOULD LISTEN: THIS EVENT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRING FORMER ENEMIES ROUND THE TABLE. NO ONE PAID ATTENTION - from Cathy Ashton, the recently appointed foreign minister of the EU, to her Cabinet, senior EU officials in Pristina, Belgrade and Brussels. I told them that given our experience I would ensure both the satisfaction of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Kosovo Albanian government. We would see to it that the local mayors would attend the ceremony along with the Minister of Culture, and the Minister for Communities from the Kosovo government, and that was for starters. They chose not to listen to me. Furthermore I was rung in July by Pierre Mirel, Director for Western Balkans at the Directorate General for Enlargement at the European Commission, informing me that the Enthronement had been 'downgraded'. This was not true. Either he did not know or he was politely telling me to get lost.

To return to the story: I retreated to the coach. At the back of the coach a big bishop with a bushy beard sat snoring. I felt deflated, defeated. All I wanted to do was to return home as soon as I could. It had suddenly become too wearing taking on the EU. And all we were asking for was peanuts to get this process underway.

I slept for a bit, and woke up feeling restored and determined to take this further. The Soul of Europe does not give up.

We began the journey back to Belgrade. I reckoned we would be in the hotel by 2am, but it was 4.30 before we arrived. We diverted to a town two hundred kilometres from Belgrade. We arrived at midnight, at the local Orthodox church. There was another bishop, more singing and clouds of incense, and the Patriarch waiting to greet us. After this we were ushered into a hall for another banquet. I have never seen so much food - fish of every kind from the ones whose eyes stare at you to fried squid, salads, beef-burgers, a vast range of cheese; wine galore. 'Eat, eat!' a priest prodded me, sensing my reluctance. 'It is good food.' Certainly it was, but a bit late.

We arrived in Belgrade. Just as we were getting ready to leave the bus, a bishop who spoke English fluently said: 'It has been a most solemn day for the Serbian Orthodox Church, but you - our guests - have made it

very special. We thank you for coming, with all our heart'. He then read a prayer - from the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom - which is also in the prayers set for Morning Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer:

Almighty God who has given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests. Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge and thy truth and in the world to come life everlasting.

Timely.

I got to bed at 4.45; at 7.30 the protocol team arrived; with the police escort we drove at speed to the airport. And so home.

COMMENTARY.

In July a ruling about the legality of Kosovo declaring independence in 2008 was given. It said that the declaration was not illegal. The Kosovo government expected a rush of recognition from countries that had not officially done so yet, so that it could take its seat at the UN. Nothing happened. The Serbs were humiliated since they had widely expected the ruling would be in their favour. But both Belgrade and Pristina have agreed to some sort of talks - probably brokered by the EU. There is much flurry and publicity about this.

It seems likely that Serbia will eventually and publicly relinquish Kosovo - provided that agreement has been reached about the north of Kosovo, and about the status and security of the monasteries. It is likely that some sort of extra-territorial status will be proposed with an international guard similar to the Swiss Guard at the Vatican for Pec, Decani and five other monasteries.

The Serbian Orthodox Church is a widely trusted institution in Serbia. No Serb government would allow any proposed agreement to be discussed without an assurance about the security of the monks and nuns. The monasteries have become one of the bargaining counters. However no agreement would be worth anything, not even if it is ratified internationally, unless it has genuine support locally. Both Bosnia and Kosovo have endured all sorts of bright ideas by international organisations but these ideas fizzled out. Agreements have to be 'owned'; structures have to be 'inhabited'. Former enemies have to get together. And that is where we come in.

Why the reluctance to invite the Soul of Europe to participate?

1. Top down interventions are often seen as sufficient – then: 'the people have to get on with it'. Mediation is a nice little afterthought in this scenario. There are of course 'Calls for Proposals' for building civil society - but the procedure is so cumbersome - to say the least. For me this represents an example of 'displacement activity'.

2. There is an unspoken understanding that conflict transformation is counter cultural; it goes against the grain. It is regarded as too difficult, too soft, too open-ended, too disruptive, too risky. Institutions usually think in terms of ladders; in our work we think of circles. Therefore, the EU keeps us at arms length, though if we do succeed - as with the Coventry Consultation - we become the flavour of the month. There is the added difficulty of how a large, international organisation answerable to twenty seven countries, relates to small but significant initiatives like ours.

Moreover I have noticed that officials don't find it easy to learn anything. When I have asked - how do you learn, I am told: well, there are always reports to read and circulate. The Soul of Europe has always worked at four levels: the local, the medium ground, the national and international. And we have taken

time to reflect on what we do. International organisations have their own internal dynamics - one of them fostering a sort of inertia, managementitis, which prevents anyone from taking a grip of a situation and pushing it forward. And of course there is the 'target' culture - where outcomes have to be delivered on time - no room for serendipity or mistakes. Of course a small organisation like ours has also its own problems - not least finding the 'peanuts', etc

3. There is too much illiteracy about religion in international organisations. Neutrality is the word used to describe the EU's attitude to religion. In fact, most officials I have met over the last ten years have no interest in religion, either endorsing the one-dimensional Dawkins approach or repeating the nonsense that religion is ok as long as it belongs to the private sphere. Really? So they need to be educated about religion. My clerical collar is a sure sign to provoke these responses. I can think of only two officials I have met who have ever bothered to attend the Orthodox liturgy or Muslim prayers.

When the British Ambassador in Pristina asked me what 'added value' the Soul of Europe brings, I told him: I am a religious leader - respected by Muslims. In Skopje three years ago, for example, when I was guest lecturer on Orthodox monastic culture, one member of the group met the mufti of Skopje. Learning that I was the guest lecturer he said: 'Mr Reeves is very important for us Muslims.' (He was referring to our activities with respect to the Ferhadija Mosque). And when I asked Fr Vranic at the HQ of the Serbian Orthodox Church, why I had been invited to the ceremony in Pec, he said: 'Because you are a dear friend of the Orthodox Church'. International officials need to wake up to the possibility of some religious leaders being useful in the long process of reconciliation.

But what we find most difficult to deal with is the world weary cynicism of so many internationals. A young British diplomat told me: 'At least they are not fighting each other in Kosovo.' And they talk about 'moving on' - always with their eyes on the next job. My friends in Bosnia and Kosovo don't find it easy to move on!!

FINALLY. What next? A few of us will be going to Kosovo in November to keep the project alive. We shall continue our search for 'peanuts' and I have not given up on the EU. I will also be looking for some publicity about our proposals.

Meanwhile - I guess the situation in Pec has deteriorated. Those walls of paranoia and suspicion will have thickened since October 3rd. It could have been so different. Even as I write we should be in Pec - meeting the mayor and his cabinet, meeting the Kosovo politicians in Pristina, getting their reactions at being excluded, and we should be listening hard to the Serbs - how they felt about the absence of Albanians.

Donald Reeves

13.10.2010

PARTNERSHIP

Paper written by Donald Reeves to Hartmut Dreier and Thomas Dreessen on 9th February 2011

Partnership is a work which many people use to describe all sorts of relationships. What follows is an attempt to describe partnership between a variety of different organizations that have agreed to work on a program or a project. (I have learnt about this from the International Business Leaders Forum who have pioneered working relationships between the private, public and voluntary sectors all over the world).

Partners bring different experiences, different types of resources and a variety of skills to the table. The best partnerships build on the different and complimentary contributions of each partner.

For partners to work effectively it is useful to have an informal collaboration agreement. This lays the foundation for a successful partnership where all the partners genuinely share ownership of the project and responsibility for its implementation.

Given that likely partners are busy with other priorities it helps to concentrate what each partner is committing to and what they will do.

An agreement provides the framework for collaboration between the partners. It is an informal agreement and is not in any way legally binding. When the time is ready I can easily draw up a simple format.

For a partnership to work well it requires a coordinator or broker to support the various partners in doing what they have agreed to do. He/she reports regularly to the partnership group.

It is not necessary to have a large number of partners. I guess in our project 4 or 5 partners is enough: local and regional alongside the Soul of Europe. I guess the partners will come from the voluntary sector but there maybe opportunities to develop partnership with a municipality or even with business.

SOME INITIAL QUESTIONS FOR US

Who are the partners? The Soul of Europe has to leave that choice to you.

How should they be chosen? My guess is that they have selected themselves.

What are the ingredients of the project or program of work which the partnership should mix together? It should include:

- 1 Building the constituency. These are the participants for the conference in the autumn and next year. This means identifying them and visiting them.
- 2 Understanding the process. The participants will be required to prepare for the autumn conference and after the conference commit themselves to returning to develop their proposals for presentation at the 2012 event.
- 3 Ensuring the media, local, regional and national, are regularly informed and that social networks, twitter, face-book etc, are activated.
- 4 Setting up a firm administrative base from which the coordinator would work. I do not mean a physical office space.
- 5 Establishing transparent financial arrangements. Who would be the signatories the bank account etc.

FUNDING

A major and urgent issue is to agree on a budget and then search for funding.

I hope this explains a little what I mean by partnership. If we get the foundations right then everything should follow smoothly.

PEACE BUILDING AND THE MUSIC OF JS BACH

This essay explores the relationship between what I do – peace-building – and the music I play: the organ works by Bach.

After eighteen years as Rector of St James's Piccadilly I made it a life's project to learn to play all the music Bach wrote for the organ. I have played the organ intermittently for many years and realized soon enough how unrealistic was this aim, not least because at that time I began work on the Soul of Europe, a task which would occupy me for the rest of my life: that of peace building, specifically it turned out in the Balkans. There would be less time for organ playing as the Soul of Europe, founded by a group of friends in the year 2000, was established to help those in post-war situations realize Nelson Mandela's words: 'If you want to make peace with your enemy you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.'

Peace building is like a journey towards an ever receding horizon. In this journey we are called to imagine ourselves in a relationship with our enemies. Peace building is more than a job. It is a vocation which is not so much a goal to be pursued as a calling to be heard. It is a prompting born out of a capacity to bring to both something unforeseen, which suggests a shared future into which former enemies walk together towards a horizon striving for community.

These lofty ideas informed our work in Bosnia, as we encouraged the rebuilding of a Sinan mosque in Banja Luka, one of fifteen destroyed in the Bosnian War. This work was to be a sign of Muslim Christian collaboration. Later we responded to an invitation by the owners of mine in Omarska which had been used as a killing camp, to bring the survivors, all Muslim, together with Bosnian Serbs to agree on a memorial for those murdered there during the first years of the war. (1) (For footnote see the end)

Now in Kosovo we are being invited to bring together Orthodox Serbs in the monasteries of Decani and Pec with the Kosovo Albanians who live around them. The monasteries stand isolated in a country that was once part of Serbia. These religious communities feel threatened and monks and nuns travel with armed escorts. It is unacceptable that religious communities should live like this. The monks tell us: 'It is like living in a prison.'

While involved in these tricky endeavours I have persisted with Bach. The prompting I have described is nourished by his music; particularly the music I play myself. (2)

Playing the music changes the way in which I see the world. It redresses the balance from a less bleak view of human affairs to a more sane and hopeful perspective. In peace-building this means tackling the long process of dismantling the 'victim' mentality, shared by both those who suffered and also by those who inflicted pain, in helping those caught up in the traumas of conflict, still being waged years after the war ended, and addressing the ignorance and cynicism of international bureaucrats, whose institutions hold the purse strings for 'conflict resolution'.

Bach's organ music is immeasurably life-enhancing, saturated with intimations of hope and resolution.

Listening to music is one thing; playing it oneself is another; performing for others yet another. After years of impatience with technical difficulties that pepper Bach's scores I am now realizing that learning to overcome these in order to perform them is like opening the door within a house containing many treasures. As each difficulty is overcome, more or less, and complex passages begin to feel safe under fingers and feet, so more doors open, each one reaching deeper into the heart of the music, tracking the stream of Bach's extraordinary genius to its source. Bach means brook in German. His music is in fact a mighty river; the source almost impossible to locate.

The source of creativity is an undiscovered country. Virginia Woolf said: 'We do not know our own souls, let alone the souls of others. Human beings do not go hand in hand the whole stretch of the way. There is virgin forest in each, a snowfield where even the print of a bird's foot is unknown.'

But it is possible to get close. Thus in the final paragraph of Albert Schweitzer's seminal study of Bach published in 1911 he writes to those who are performing Bach's cantatas, but true for organists also: 'Only he who sinks himself in the emotional world of Bach, who lives and thinks with him, who is simple and modest as he, is in a position to perform him properly.'

At present I am immersed in the great Eighteen Chorale Preludes Bach completed in Leipzig towards the end of his life. In the Lutheran tradition the congregation sit while singing and listen first to the improvisation, a chorale prelude, which leads into the hymn. Bach inherited and extended this tradition. Shortly before he died he collected, revised and re-wrote a selection of chorale preludes originally composed some twenty years earlier.

The average length of each chorale prelude is five minutes. They are miniatures in length only. With astonishing condensed complexity yet emotional directness Bach illustrates the words of Lutheran hymns; he empathises with the words, they are part of his very being. 'To God the glory' and 'Save me Jesus' are scrawled across the manuscripts.

The music transcends Lutheranism, in spite of the words of Sir Thomas Beecham who disliked Bach, disparaging the endless counterpoint, adding witheringly: 'and what's worse, Protestant counterpoint!' It is not necessary to be a believer to appreciate the music; however as a performer it helps to share this aspect of Bach's faith to be able to express the sheer intensity of these chorale preludes which makes them so compelling to hear.

Bach's life was punctuated by the devastation of death. By the age of ten he had been orphaned and thereafter one member after another of his close family died, including a wife and a number of his children. Much of his music, including the Eighteen Chorale Preludes, reflects a longing for death, as if death were a way of escaping his grief and being reunited with those he loved. Many of the Chorale Preludes express a longing for peace, for union with God. Some express grief and others an ecstatic longing.

But there is more. Bach had a particular affection for the Gloria. There are three settings in the Eighteen. Schweitzer wrote: 'Bach never forgets the melody is supposed to be an angel's song.' Angels herald a new order. They are here, there and then they are gone. The Gloria chorale preludes are ravishing in their lightness and sparkle. (2 see footnote at the end)

Other chorale preludes are majestic, exuberant even defiant. The conclusion of one, a Fantasia which celebrates the gifts of the spirit at Pentecost, becomes a whirlwind, a breathless agitation of a sixteen note figure, the music ending abruptly with two flourishes of Hallelujah, as if to say: 'That's that!'

Robert Schumann tells how he listened to his friend Mendelssohn play *Schmucke Dich O Liebe Seele* (Deck my soul with gladness). Afterwards Mendelssohn said: 'If life were to deprive me of hope and faith, this single chorale would replenish me with life.'

Bach's music is a testimony to the gift of hope for the human spirit; there is a quality of anticipation and unfolding as the music moves forward to a usually hard-won resolution. One of three settings of the Advent hymn *Nun Komm der Heiden Heiland*, (Now comes the Heathen's Saviour) in the Eighteen is a heart-stopping lyrical meditation on the longing for the coming of Christ. The pedals play a steady tread, leading the listener into the mystery of the Incarnation.

Peace building is not glamorous work, unlike war with its vivid drama and appalling but exciting tragedies. Peace building demands boundless patience and persistence. Set backs are frequent. The fundamental inspiration for peace building is found among those who take the risk of sitting together with their enemies.

Resolutions are hard to find, and can mostly only be hoped for, strived after. Bach's music comprehends the mystery of hope, by expressing within the composition itself the knotty complexity of our endeavours, taking the simplest themes and guiding them through thickets of harmonic and fugal problems, arguments, irreconcilable differences and eventually reaching a conclusion that is at once perfectly logical and simple, yet never easy. It is our shared humanity that provides the answer. We found that time and again in our work: the simple fact of shared lives, of having to find ways to live together where 'war is not the answer'.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 The peace-building process established by the Soul of Europe for the Omarska Project is described in: *the white house, From Fear to a Handshake* by Peter Pelz and Donald Reeves, published by O Books.
- 2 Gillian Weir's music making and her writing about music are a constant inspiration. I owe some of my comments about the Eighteen to her commentary on the sleeve notes of her CD, a marvellous recording (Organ Masters series on the Priory label).

Donald Reeves is a Director of the Soul of Europe (www.soulofeurope.org). His latest book is an autobiography: *Memoirs of a Very Dangerous Man* (Continuum Press). If you would like to invite Donald to give a talk/recital on Peace-building and Bach please contact him directly on donaldreeves34@gmail.com

PEACE BUILDING IN BOSNIA

Saturated by images of war on the media twenty four hours a day it is difficult to be hopeful about a future for our children and grandchildren.

But beneath the radar there are, in many regions of the world where there has been conflict, astonishing attempts and success at bringing former enemies together round the table.

The Soul of Europe is a small NGO working in the Balkans for 7 years. I founded the Soul of Europe after completing eighteen years as Rector of St James's Piccadilly in London. We are a very modest part of what is becoming a growing movement of peace building. Peace building is neither glamorous nor newsworthy. Anyone taking it on has to be ready for the long haul. There is no quick fix and the outcomes are always uncertain.

For example: in 2005 Mittal Steel acquired an iron ore mine in Omarska near Prijedor, a town in North West Bosnia. In April 1992 a well planned program of ethnic cleansing was put into action. Bosnian Muslims (known as Bosniaks) and Croats were unprepared and unarmed. All non-Serbs were removed from their jobs. Two concentration camps were established, one at the iron ore mine at Omarska. In three months in 1992 up to four thousand people were killed in the region.

Once it became known that Mittal Steel had bought the mine, survivors of Omarska began to demand a memorial to those who died to be erected in the mine complex, because it was in the buildings of the mine that atrocities, tortures, rapes and murders had been committed.

Mittal Steel invited the Soul of Europe to intervene and create a process of mediation which would bring Bosniaks and Serbs together to agree on a compromise for the memorial.

There followed nine months of patient work. Could we find Bosniaks and Serbs willing to meet and talk? How could we address the traumas of both sides, the rage of the Bosniaks and the denial and guilt of the Serbs? How should we handle the spoilers, those from both sides who wanted to wreck the process? These are some of the hard questions we had to answer. We succeeded in taking the heat out of a dangerous situation; our work as a third party intervening is completed. And the project continues.

Our book **the white house** tells the story of this mediation project and will be published by O Books in summer next year.

Now the Soul of Europe is preparing work in Kosovo. As I write, independence will be declared in either December 2007 or January 2008.

In Kosovo the economy is a shambles, there is over sixty percent unemployment and there are frequent power cuts.

In Kosovo there are eight working Serbian Orthodox monasteries, three of them are World Heritage Sites. They are surrounded by Kosovo Albanians. The monasteries are guarded twenty four hours seven days a week by NATO. Whenever a monk leaves his monastery he has to have armed guard security.

This situation is unacceptable. No religious community should have to survive in these conditions in modern Europe. We are therefore intending to bring the Orthodox Serbs and Muslim Kosovo Albanians together so that the walls of silence, mistrust and suspicion can be removed. Ultimately, the monasteries should become part of their communities without the need of protection. Then the monasteries will become places of reconciliation, not of division. It will be very difficult. Our first task is to secure the invitation from the Kosovo administration and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Governments do not fund this type of work. Aid and development, yes, but peace building towards reconciliation, no.

Yet a successful outcome of this hugely symbolic project will contribute to the stability and prosperity of Kosovo, because these monasteries represent the heart of what it means to be a Serb Orthodox.

The Soul of Europe intends to take the monasteries project forward as speedily as possible. We are looking for fifty thousand pounds for a two year project.

If any readers of the Old Shirburnian Record would like to know more about our work in the Balkans please contact me directly at donalreeve@aol.com or write to me at The Coach House, Church Street, Crediton, Devon, EX17 2AQ. Our website is www.soulofeurope.org. Donations of any size are more than welcome, either to the Soul of Europe, a registered company, or to our charitable arm, The Ferhadija Trust.

The Revd Donald Reeves (b 1947 – 1952)
Director the Soul of Europe
Visiting Fellow at Leeds Metropolitan University.

19.11.07



Donald Reeves with the religious leaders of Banja Luka after signing an agreement to protect and rebuild destroyed churches and mosques.



Interfaith consultation organized by the Soul of Europe at the Parliament in Brussels December 2003

PEACE BUILDING IS NOT FOR WIMPS

REFLECTIONS ON PROGRESS TOWARDS RECONCILIATION IN THE BALKANS

MONASTERIES

As we approached the monastery an armed soldier emerged from a camouflaged bunker. He introduced himself as a captain in the Italian army, his soldiers from NATO guarding the monastery 24/7. 'Are you carrying weapons?' he asked. 'No,' I replied, acknowledging the possibility I might be concealing a gun under my cassock. He waved us on to the next check point, and as we stopped again an armoured personnel carrier roared up to the bunker. After more questions and waiting as they checked our passports we were allowed to drive to the monastery, along another wall, to another bunker and eventually we entered a gate into a spacious courtyard and at last saw the great church itself.

We had arrived at Pec, the ancient seat of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate in Kosovo. The 13th century monastery with three adjacent churches sumptuously decorated with frescoes stands at the entrance to the Rugova valley. Mountains rear up beyond, their tops capped with snow even in high summer. Pec, the second largest city in Kosovo, after the capital Pristina, is now mostly Kosovo Albanian: the Serb population a greatly diminished minority after the conflict in 1999.

We saw the elderly abbess in a black wimple covering a crown leaving the church after morning service, following the twenty nuns who make up the community of Pec. She made her way towards the convent along a path edged with roses, and noticed our arrival, inclining her kindly and sorrowful face in welcome, fingers counting long strings of prayer beads hanging from her black robes. A timeless image: in dress and manner she might have been walking along this path several times each day for centuries, a scene from a pre-Raphaelite painting, a solemn presence surrounded by meticulously painted roses against the background of an ancient wall.

After she and the nuns had told us about the stress of living under constant threat of violent attack, the importance of the high walls, the necessity of barbed wire and for many more soldiers to protect them we were invited to a generous lunch of soup, curd cheese pie and salad. Several nuns peered at us with curiosity through the kitchen hatch, their faces lined with anxiety. 'We are in a prison here,' the Abbess said, raising her eyes and hands. 'Only as we look to the sky, there is freedom.'

We left the nuns to their daily rituals of prayer in a haven of ancient buildings, walking through unweeded gardens, un-mown lawns and surrounded by walls beyond which lurked menace. This small group of mostly elderly women lived isolated from the locals, in perpetual fear of them.

From Pec we travelled a few miles to the monastery at Decani which stands in a valley surrounded by thickly forested hills, the air invigorating. A source bubbles from a fountain in the monastery courtyard and runs in a stream by orchards and cultivated fields.

As at Pec we had to run the gauntlet of checkpoints, interrogations and passport examinations. Italian soldiers encased in chunky camouflage jackets packed with ammunition and wielding heavy rifles confronted us at the entrance where bunkers, netting and signs with instructions on the use of fire-arms made the monastery look under siege.

'How do you feel about being here?' we asked the soldiers.

'We are not allowed to talk to you!' they responded with grins, most of them teenagers, but quickly relaxed and chatted in broken English, telling us they came from poor suburbs of Italian cities, that being soldiers was a good option for them because otherwise they would be unemployed.

The monastery is separated from the world by a thick wall which had protected the community living inside from centuries of invasion. A massive heavy door opened onto a cobbled courtyard leading to the church, the best preserved medieval monastery in the region. Living quarters for the monks, the bishop, guests, and workshops surround the courtyard. The monks keep a herd of cows, run a dairy, make cheese, and cultivate large orchards. There are also studios where they paint icons in the traditional style, using gold-leaf.

There are thirty monks in Decani, mostly young and well-educated, and apart from working long hours they rise early for worship, which continues at regular intervals throughout the day. It is a life of rigorous discipline, and, as with the nuns of Pec, following a tradition going back centuries. They also look after guests, listening to them, attending to their needs, unhurriedly, giving their whole attention. This is an important part of what the monastery does, how it relates to the outside world, and we were impressed by the calm manner with which they met the demands of their calling.

Bishop Theodosius, the Abbot of Decani, spent a morning telling us of his determination to preserve 'the holiness' of the monastery, and its traditions and not to allow the municipality of Decani to develop the area for business and tourism. He spoke of the criminal element in the Kosovo Albanian community and how another wall being constructed around the monastery would protect the monks from 'murderers and terrorists'. The Kosovo Liberation Army had been established in this municipality. Veterans of the KLA had made it clear they wanted the monks to leave Decani, and extreme factions wanted to destroy all the Orthodox churches and monasteries in Kosovo. 'The municipality sees the monastery as a problem,' the bishop told us. 'It wants the church to be a museum. We have to resist this. Ten years ago they tried to destroy us, but these same people now regard this place as a national treasure, even saying it was built by Albanians.'

The Bishop insisted, along with the monks, that the place needed even more protection. They preferred the Italians, because after the war these soldiers had come to the defence of the monasteries telling the KLA, 'if you attack these monasteries we will shoot you.'

We had come to Pec and Decani to see if we could be of help to both sides, bringing the monks, the nuns and the municipalities, Kosovo Albanian and Muslim, together to improve dialogue, build trust and create space for conversations that were not just a list of demands and accusations, but openings for future cooperation and living with mutual respect – in short, to normalise relations. Since the year 2000 the Soul of Europe had gained experience in creating processes of mediation in Bosnia (1). Perhaps this experience could be useful in Kosovo, a situation complicated both by the ambivalence to our process by the international community (about which more later) and also by the difference of language and culture between the two main communities, the majority of Kosovo Albanians and the minority Serbs, who, before the independence of Kosovo had seen themselves as part of Serbia's majority.

Kosovo Albanians find the monks intimidating in their black cassocks, long hair and beards, and the intensity of their religious devotion, seeing them as some kind of elite, an outpost of Serb authority in their newly independent country. As Muslims the Kosovo Albanians are puzzled by the Eastern Orthodox tradition of monasticism. Few Serbs bothered to learn and speak Albanian, because when Kosovo was part of Serbia they never felt the need. Kosovo Albanians for political reasons, mainly a reaction to the atrocities and ethnic cleansing which Milosevic and Serbia had committed before NATO's intervention, did not care to communicate in Serbo-Croat, although we discovered that many could speak it fluently.

Before visiting the monasteries we had called at the offices of the mayors of Pec and Decani. The mayor of Pec, a medical doctor, offered to give us a few minutes of his time but listened for an hour, along with members of his cabinet who looked more like a friendly posse of bodyguards than an elected group of councillors, all with growing interest and some amazement to our proposal for normalizing relations

between the municipality and the monasteries. No one had come to them before with such a proposal. The mayor expressed enthusiasm, pleased to be involved and sensing the tourist potential of the Pec Patriarchate. 'What can we do to help?' he asked. We explained the process of preparing carefully for productive meetings and suggested that to start breaking the ice between the communities he should invite the nuns to his office for coffee. 'Of course, no problem,' he declared. The nuns too were delighted to hear of this invitation, all they wanted was to be able to sit down and talk with the mayor. First we would have to overcome many problems and obstacles. Given that the nuns had been 'walled-up' for ten years, how would they reach the mayor's office? Would it be safe for them to walk there? Should they be accompanied by a military escort, or would this be regarded as a provocation by the Kosovo Albanian community? Perhaps the mayor should fetch and accompany them. These problems needed to be solved, and we could help.

The mayor of Decani was less independent of his political masters than the mayor of Pec, so despite also being enthusiastic about our proposals, outlined a number of issues that were preventing normalising of relations between the monks and the municipality. He saw his priority as finding a solution to the unemployment in the region, thirteen thousand out of forty thousand. He wanted to open the land around the monastery to tourism and industry, and resented the monk's resistance to his plans, they did not understand the seriousness of his situation, and were blocking plans to build roads and factories. When we explained our process of preparing for meetings where both sides could discuss productively, rather than making declarations and demands, he realized, as did Bishop Theodosius, the possibilities of reaching agreements through mutually beneficial compromises.

Both sides were eager for us to get started. 'Can we set up a meeting as soon as possible?' Bishop Theodosius wanted to know. We then had to explain in more detail the process whereby such a meeting could only take place after careful and thorough preparation, in which we helped both sides to work in small groups on the nature of the event, its shape, questions and aims. Both sides would have to agree an agenda, decide on the number and status of the participants. We pointed out the significance of these details, also the location and length of the meeting, the lay out of the room. We hoped both parties would agree on a media black-out until after the plenary. Then the Soul of Europe including our Kosovo Albanian and Serb project managers would shuttle between the parties to agree on necessary compromises concerning these 'talks about talks'. (2)

After the meeting there would certainly be difficult matters still to be resolved, issues raised there which would not find immediate or easy solutions or agreements, such as property rights and security. A number of working groups would then be set up made up of Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs who would meet separately and then bring their reports to the next plenary.

Given the regional and international significance of the monasteries, not only for the Serbian Orthodox Church, but for Kosovo's cultural heritage, the Soul of Europe would meanwhile search out influential opinion formers and leaders in Kosovo, Serbia and beyond who would publicly support this initiative; some we had already identified and met. These would become allies of the process. We would also identify the spoilers, some of whom the bishop had mentioned. Spoilers left out of the process could create mischief. If they were approached to find out how they could be involved, at least what they were doing would be known. It would not be for us to confront the spoilers on both sides: not only extreme members of the KLA, but some might come from within the monasteries themselves, people who could not accept the independence of Kosovo and whose aim was eventual reunification with Serbia. These negotiations would have to be undertaken by moderate Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs.

We reminded the mayors, the bishop and the monks and the nuns that the Soul of Europe took inspiration from the words of Nelson Mandela to the Northern Ireland political leaders: 'If you want to make peace, do not speak to your friends. You must speak with your enemies.' (3)

The mayors had guaranteed support. The bishop, moved by these words, remained silent for a while before announcing: ‘This is a holy idea. I respect your efforts, your maturity and energy. Feelings are important, what is in your heart. We need this process you are offering.’

Also the Abbess of Pec was silent for a long time before responding, looking directly at me: ‘Yes. Please come.’

We had achieved our first objective: to be invited to create a process of peace building between the monasteries and the municipalities. Without this invitation we could not and would not have returned.

There are no short cuts in the preparations of a peace building process. Before our first visit to Kosovo we had to obtain the support of the highest authority in the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as the government of Kosovo. Therefore I visited the headquarters of the Church, the Patriarchate in Belgrade and received the blessing of the ‘acting’ patriarch, Archbishop Amfilohje. I also had a useful meeting with Dr Mohamed Hamiti, the Kosovo ambassador to the UK. Both the archbishop and ambassador used identical words: ‘It will not be easy, but it is certainly worth doing. Good luck.’

Following these meetings we wrote to the monasteries and municipalities:

‘The Soul of Europe is encouraged to produce a plan for implementing a process of peace building. We are very grateful to all those who gave their time to meet us. We are conscious that all whom we met had significant obligations, so their time and attention was most appreciated. We are also aware that many of the issues raised, particularly those issues about land and property at Decan/Decani and Peja/Pec are already being addressed elsewhere. But as far as we can tell there is no process in which these issues and particularly underlying attitudes are being addressed. A successful outcome to the peace building process will be when the monastic communities at Peja/Pec and Decan/Decani and the municipalities recognize they are truly neighbours, thus contributing to the flourishing and well being of the region.’ (4)

For our part we had to remember the huge significance of Pec and Decani not just for their manifestation of Serbian orthodox culture but also a culture which informs what it means to be Serb. ‘Destroy these monasteries and we will be nothing,’ we have often been told.

When Patriarch Irenje was enthroned on January 23rd 2010 he said:

‘Our first duty is to safeguard our Kosovo, a holy and martyred land, to help our state to defend it from those who wish to seize it.

Kosovo is our Holy Land, our Jerusalem. We must go to Pec to complete this ceremony, but can we visit our relics?’

Without them Serbia is not Serbia; without Kosovo it is deprived of heart and soul’

As we began to establish foundations for the project the question arose: ‘how was it to be funded?’ Given the invitation from Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs it seemed natural to approach the many international organizations working in Kosovo, particularly the European Union. By February 2008 the EU had donated almost two billion Euros to Kosovo and from 2007 – 2010 more resources had been earmarked than for any other region in the world: around three hundred and thirty million Euros (5).

The Republic of Kosovo was established in February 2008 and declared its intention of being a modern democratic state in which all ethnic groups and religions were welcome. We assumed the EU and other international organizations would be interested to support our process.

We were mistaken. Our approach was not welcomed. No international organization expressed interest in the Soul of Europe's initiative. It was greeted with indifference.

Here is a sketch I wrote which describes the reaction typical of the meetings we had with people whose interest we hoped to engage:

AN OFFICE IN SOME ORGANIZATION

(6) DR, PP, our partners in Belgrade/Pristina and a Spokesperson: third secretary/researcher/assistant at embassy/major foundation/European Commission

Spokesperson: Thank you for coming in (*indicating we should sit opposite at a spacious empty table. Sometimes someone in the corner is poised to take notes*).

DR: (*Looking around disappointed to see if the director/ambassador or first or even second secretary is available.*) Thank you for seeing us.

DR gives a by now well-honed, persuasive and lucid presentation of the Monasteries Project, explaining how we intend to normalize relations between the Serb Orthodox monastic communities, now protected in their enclaves by heavily armed Italian soldiers, and the surrounding mainly Kosovo Albanian municipalities; and concludes by asking if the spokesperson has ever visited Decani or Pec.

S: (*Only slightly embarrassed*) No unfortunately I have not. But thank you for your presentation. This is a most necessary and important project. Something should happen. (*Pause*) Your valiant work of peace is admirable. I am very sorry our Director/Ambassador is not here. He/She is travelling (*even though we fixed a date some time ago and we were promised a meeting*). Unfortunately we are not able to offer funding since our funds are already allocated for the next twelve months.

DR Could I ask why you cannot help us, if this work is, in your words, so important and necessary, and no one has ever tried to do this before?

S (*defensively*) We must tell you that we are already supporting many people who work in this field.

DR: Really? Please tell us about them! We would love to meet and learn from them.

Embarrassed pause

S: Your project is very difficult, and....

DR (*interrupting*) Isn't that just why this work is necessary?

S (*looking uncomfortable and defensive*) Well, we don't fund religious projects, much as we would like to...

DR Of course there is an inter-faith aspect to our work. I am an Anglican and we will be bringing together Muslims and Orthodox Serbs. But there is more to it than this. This is a project about:

Democratization – people taking charge of their situation

Security – ensuring the protection of minorities

Human Rights – freedom of movement (*the Spokesperson shows more attention, we are on more familiar ground*)

Public Relations – good for Albanians and Serbs, and the chance of long-term Economic Development for pilgrims and tourists

S: Yes, that is very interesting. (*The secretary writes something*)

DR: And of course we shall look out for allies and spoilers.

Donald then explains the mapping exercise in which allies and spoilers will be identified and brought into the project. The spokesperson looks non-plussed.

Pause

S: I have to go now. Do keep in touch. We have much to learn from you.

The secretary stops writing and stares at us blankly.

The spokesperson stands up from behind the table. We shake hands and leave.

S: Good luck.

Throughout our work in Bosnia we learned about the reasons for this indifference: the work of conflict transformation which I have been describing is regarded as too risky and unpredictable, too long-term, too emotional, too complex to squeeze into planning boxes with measurable concrete outcomes. In a word the process is too ‘difficult’.

KOSOVO 1999 –

To understand this anomaly further (after all, don’t we all want peace?) I will describe in more detail the situation in Kosovo.

Kosovo belongs to that part of our memory which is the day before yesterday. It has slipped into the black hole of our consciousness. The events leading to the intervention of NATO in 1999 seem distant; the circumstances of the intervention are unlikely to be repeated. The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan have made future interventions considerably more questionable. There are many arguments for and against the right to intervene. In the case of Kosovo was it an example of ‘Western Imperialism’ or a matter of ‘taking responsibility to protect innocent victims of oppression’?

NATO’s intervention has since been judged a success. Milosevic’s attempt at ethnically cleansing Kosovo of its non-Serb majority failed.

The four month conflict ended in June 1999. By then Kosovo had ceased to function on any social, economic or political level. Towns were deserted, shops shuttered. Smoking ruins lined the streets; there was no water, no work. Revenge attacks continued the destruction and murder. Dead bodies lay around along with garbage. For a while people starved, they could not lay their hands even on a loaf of bread. Children did not attend school. Most of the livestock in the countryside had perished. Mines made the

fields unsafe to plough. Kosovo lacked any institution of governance, the rule of law, public service structures and a functioning economy.

To make this bad situation even worse hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanians, the majority, who had been forced to flee returned to their homes, only a minority being welcomed in Europe. At the same time one hundred thousand Serbs, (half of the Kosovo Serb population) were also forced out of their homes. This mass movement of peoples was accompanied by inter-ethnic violence, rapes, tortures and revenge killing.

Kosovo is not a large region – roughly the size of Devon and Cornwall together. The UN was authorized to reconstruct a new Kosovo. Fifty thousand troops were deployed to keep the peace, one NATO soldier for every forty Kosovars. Other organizations were authorized to oversee the reconstruction of the economy, the development of democratic structures and the creation of police and an independent judiciary.

With impressive speed an infrastructure was created so within months of the end of the conflict and before the onset of a long hard winter, schools reopened, many roads were repaired, homes re-roofed, postal services and telecommunications began to function. Along with the UN and other major institutions like the OSCE a vast army of bureaucrats, experts and around five hundred NGOs appeared.

Over ten years later (at the time of writing) the energy and determination of the ‘internationals’ has evaporated. The North of Kosovo, mostly Serb, looks to Belgrade for support and refuses to cooperate with Pristina. Serbia has consistently declared that it will never recognize Kosovo as an independent state, and the legitimacy of the declaration of Kosovo as a republic has been questioned. Sixty six countries have recognized Kosovo, but the refusal of several super-powers, Russia foremost, backing Serbia, means that Kosovo’s independence remains in question.

These matters occupy the attention of analysts, commentators and Balkan watchers, while the lives of the people of Kosovo show few signs of improvement. The country is the poorest in Europe. Unemployment is officially 40% but most figures show that up to 70% of young people have no work and no prospects of work. Many would leave if they could. There is virtually no market economy. Families survive on money sent from abroad by those lucky relatives who managed to find asylum, or who were already working there.

It is therefore no surprise that increasing numbers of Kosovo Albanians want to see the back of ‘internationals’. The unemployed resent the considerable international presence visibly privileged and protected, driving around in gleaming white four by fours.

These international organizations have the task of advising, monitoring, supporting and mentoring initiatives to create with the Kosovo authorities what Peter Feith, the equivalent of the High Representative in Bosnia, calls ‘the promise of a homeland for all’.

A parliament was established in 2008 after the Declaration of Independence but Kosovo MPs are limited in their powers. Ultimately that is rested in the International Civilian Office and the European Union Special Representative: Peter Feith.

After ten years what is there to show for the huge resources poured in Kosovo?

It is beyond the scope of these reflections to chart the ineffectiveness of these international organizations. But a report by the Institute of Democracy and Cooperation: *Ten Years of International Administration – One Year of Independence: An Appraisal* makes a trenchant comment:

‘The various international and national institutions each claim their own share of legitimacy. Tensions are numerous between the international institutions, and the Kosovo authorities know how to exploit this...’ so ‘the goal of the internationals is to prolong the status quo as long as possible without Kosovo undergoing any real change.’

This ‘do nothing’ approach is particularly pertinent where the situation of minorities is concerned.

A highly critical report by Minority Rights Group International (November 2009) maintains that minority communities are beginning to leave due to persistent exclusion and discrimination. The report: ‘Filling the Vacuum: Ensuring Protection and Legal Remedies for Minorities in Kosovo’ demonstrates the emptiness of statements by members of the international community asserting the multi-ethnic character of Kosovo. So, for example, a meeting of the EUs general affairs and community relations council ‘noted with satisfaction the initial results achieved by EULEX in assisting the Kosovo authorities in consolidating the rule of law, and in contributing to a safe and secure environment for all inhabitants regardless of their ethnic origins.’ (6)

The report describes how ‘a lack of political will among majority Albanians and poor investment in protection mechanisms have resulted in minority rights being eroded or compromised in the post-independence period’ – and not just for the Serb minority; also for the smaller minorities: the Bosniaks, Egyptians, Ashkali and Roma communities.

What has happened since 1999 is that the international community has allowed and tacitly encouraged a segregated society to develop and become entrenched. The Ahtissari plan (7) which prepared the way for the eventual declaration of independence further legitimized this segregation, so that the Serbian Orthodox monastic communities were to be independent from their municipalities, guarded and protected as though they were Serb territory within a sovereign Kosovo state. The international community has ignored the difficulties faced by minorities, but proclaims success with respect to their protection. There is little political will to reconnect segregated minorities which now exist in enclaves where poverty is endemic to the mainstream of Kosovo’s public life.

Thus when a small but experienced NGO like the Soul of Europe is invited by the people themselves to help ‘normalize’ the relations between the minority Kosovo Serbs and majority Kosovo Albanians our analysis appears to contradict the ‘all’s well’ picture and therefore our activities call into question the validity of the ‘do little, do nothing’ approach. Representatives of the international community, from the Council of Europe to embassies and philanthropic organizations, all met with us unwillingly and were unhelpful, not even proposing possible contacts.

Our experience in Bosnia and now in Kosovo has revealed to us another reason for the international community’s reluctance to support this work: peace building, as opposed to peace keeping, is a counter cultural phenomenon. It goes against the grain.

AGAINST THE GRAIN

Over ten years we have discovered six requirements for those committed to peace building:

- 1 **A positive orientation is essential.** This is nothing to do with being a cheerful optimist. There is often very little to be cheerful or optimistic about. It is about having a conviction to search out and nurture hope that lies buried even in the bleakest of situations. I have met too many internationals who are disengaged and cynical: ‘done it all; seen it all.’ We were told several times by different people, including a British diplomat: ‘At least the Kosovars are not killing each other.’

- 2 **An accurate perception of human nature is necessary.** This requirement may seem too abstract, but such perception affects the way the work is undertaken. This perception recognizes the potential for nobility, goodness and selflessness, but also the potential for greed, selfishness and appalling acts of brutality. Acknowledging these contradictory notions of human nature recognizes life as it is and creates a pragmatic approach to solutions. This kind of understanding bears no relationship to the reductionist, mechanistic and materialistic interpretation of human nature expressed in ‘management speak’ by international organizations.

- 3 **The peace builder is required to work with everyone, fairly and equally,** even where there is no justice and where war has left a society shattered. It is exactly in these difficult circumstances where peace building is needed most, and there will always be ‘spoilers’ from both sides, who try to disrupt the process. I referred to these above in my presentation to Bishop Theodosius, how they must become part of the process and how the participants themselves deal with them. No one must be left out. For example: in 2001, when we were painstakingly bringing the religious leaders in Bosnia to cooperate with each other, a member of the EU parliament expressed disgust that we were being too fair to the Serbian Orthodox bishop. As far as she was concerned he had been directly responsible for the ethnic cleansing; he had influence and could have stopped it. She refused to speak or have anything to do with him. There is of course the issue of bringing the bishop to justice, and this is what she as a politician and the EU needed to do. That was her task. However she could do little to influence the political circumstances in Bosnia, agreed and signed in the Dayton Accord, so she preferred to stand apart from our process, pontificate and take a ‘moral stand’. (8)

- 4 **Attention to Process.** The process affects the quality of the outcome so the way the work is planned, and at each stage reflected on, is crucial.

There are dilemmas about the relationship between justice and peace. Certainly there can be no peace, no reconciliation without justice being done. On the other hand, peace builders have to work in particular situations doing what they can to normalize relations as fast possible in the knowledge that sooner or later the wheels of justice will have to start turning. The stability which peace builders help to create may be limited, but it is certainly better than nothing and may create the conditions where something like a Truth and Reconciliation Commission could be established.

Moreover, as Archbishop Tutu has remarked: ‘Never underestimate the importance of a handshake.’

Time has to be taken for careful listening on all sides. In Bosnia we discovered three ‘movements’ in conversations round the table. The first is ‘blaming the other’; the second is more reflective where each party considers its own situation and the third happens when the parties begin ‘to stand in the shoes of the other’. For disagreements to be solved a step taken away from the adversarial is essential.

In practice the process is messy and not so clear cut. The ‘movements’ do not progress as easily as I have described.

And before these conversations get under way, those who have been invited to be bridge builders need to be trusted; we had to assure our Bosnia friends (as they became) that we were not researching for a PhD on post-conflict trauma etc, proselytisers, or even spies for the CIA.

- 5 **Time is needed. Plenty of time.** Bringing former adversaries round the table, particularly after a bloody war, and creating webs of former enemies so they become partners takes time and infinite patience. As with all human relationships, building trust, even between friends, cannot be hurried. Time is needed to imagine and create webs of relationships within the life of communities, at the grass roots, but also at the middle range, among professionals, teachers, lawyers and business people, those responsible for building society. (9) People at the top, religious leaders, politicians and diplomats, find it easier to meet, usually at lavish expensive locations, to have satisfying discussions and sign agreements declaring peace and reconciliation. Such gatherings may have a positive purpose of keeping the issues in the public eye, but disappointment at subsequent failure to carry out what is agreed tends to make the situation worse, leading to resentment and despair. Rarely is there an attempt to link the top to the grass-roots. Hence the concept of the web, reaching out and across every corner of society. That is where the difficult work lies.

Time has to be taken to recollect and treasure nostalgia for a past when life was different. In Prijedor in Bosnia, place of some of the worst ethnic cleansing during the Bosnia War, Serbs, Muslims and Croats expressed nostalgia for a time when all communities shared this once beautiful town and surrounding landscape, churches and mosques side by side, without thought of conflict. In Pristina we met Skender Boshraka, a former Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport. He described an idyll of holidays in Decani where children from all over the former Yugoslavia, from all ethnic and religious groups, Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic, came to spend the summer months, helping the monks on the farm, spending evenings round camp fires. These memories are a foundation for working towards a positive future.

These fresh understandings do not just happen. A skilled mediator is needed to help the healing process, particularly where there has developed a culture of demonising each other, a consequence of war and atrocities. Without a mediator such healing tends to be deferred indefinitely, the perpetrators trying to avoid their culpability by declaring that healing can only take place in future generations. They are wrong: unhealed traumas lie dormant until a generation grows up with no memory of war and its deprivations, only with the burden of revenge and scores to settle and prepare for even worse wars and traumas. In this case time is of the essence. But even so, the mediator has to be given all the time needed to help the adversaries to understand each other. And the process takes time. ‘As long as it takes’ as George Mitchell said about the peace process in Northern Ireland.

- 6 **Pay Attention to Religion.** Over ten years we have met just a handful of international people who took the trouble to attend Friday prayers or the Serbian Orthodox Liturgy. Churches and mosques are routinely described as ‘cultural heritage’ as if its clerics were museum keepers. There is considerable suspicion about religion among internationals: religion may encourage extremism and sanction violence. The EU professes ‘neutrality’ about religion, because of the unspoken belief in the clear Enlightenment doctrine of universal liberties; so there is much suspicion of religious propaganda and proselytising, and working with religious organizations which are committed to beliefs not universally held. (10)
- The Soul of Europe regularly met with religious leaders in Bosnia. On one matter they were agreed: they all felt slighted and ignored by the international community. This is a serious mistake because more than politicians, religions (not so much the mosque worshippers or church goers) identify and strengthen the identities of different ethnic groups.

But religious leaders should also reflect critically on their own failure to provide witness to the fundamental values of their respective faiths.

Peace building is too important to be left to independent NGOs. Governments are already beginning to renege on their commitments to 'making poverty history' and development projects are finding it difficult to secure funding. Peace building is the poor relation.

So any strategy where military intervention is being planned needs to include peace building. This means establishing working relations between the military and civilian peace builders. In other words, the sort of processes that have been described needs to be established as soon as it is safe to do so. (11)

There is now a considerable body of experience and knowledge about conflict prevention, conflict resolution and conflict transformation. Throughout the world there are some four hundred Universities, Colleges and Institutes for Peace Studies offering courses and study in the roots of armed conflict and terrorism and the preparation of war. Peace building initiatives of the sort I have been describing need to draw on this growing body of knowledge and be properly resourced and funded, as they are no longer regarded as an 'add on' but can make a substantial contribution to the rebuilding of communities.

PEACE BUILDING – MORE THAN A JOB

Peace building is not glamorous. The outcomes are always uncertain, because the future of the processes I have described lies in the hands of the people. As catalysts and mediators our role is limited. It is not up to us to impose solutions, and in any case peace building is always unfinished: there will always be more to say and to do long after we have left.

Stamina, patience and a willingness to work with those whom we would not normally wish to meet, because of what they have done or thought to have done. These are qualities which need to be fostered alongside the developing of professional skills: analysis, facilitation, process etc..

There is always risk in this work, because as the possibility of peace or reconciliation begins to emerge, it feels safer to remain in the familiar world of recrimination, blame and revenge. Beyond these boundaries the landscape is unclear.

So why do this work? Because peace building is more than a job. It is a vocation which is not so much a goal to be pursued as a calling that is heard. It is a prompting.

That prompting is born out of the moral imagination, that capacity to bring to birth something new, something unforeseen which suggests a shared future into which those former enemies step towards a horizon on an epic journey striving for connection and community.

The developing and nurture of the imagination keeps that prompting fresh and vibrant. (12)

And yet for all the newness which the idea of the imagination suggests, whenever a moment of reconciliation is reached it seems as if it had always been like this – the enemies now together round the table. We had just forgotten what it was like.

So when the nuns of Pec and the monks at Decani sit together with their new Kosovo Albanian friends, then for all the seeming impossibilities of ever reaching such a conclusion, it will in the event be a natural, beautiful and graceful celebration.

To have had some part in bringing former enemies together is a privilege. It is certainly worth the struggle, the betrayals, the indifference, the cynicism, the threats of violence, the apathy and the pessimism which we will have encountered on the way.

Peace building is not for wimps.

NOTES

- 1 *The White House, from Fear to a Handshake* by Peter Pelz and Donald Reeves, O Books 2008, describes one such process. See also: *A Tender Bridge – A Journey to Another Europe* by Peter Pelz and Donald Reeves, Cairns Publications 2001 and *The Memoirs of a Very Dangerous Man* by Donald Reeves, Continuum 2009
- 2 The Soul of Europe is a small NGO. In the UK two full time staff, Donald Reeves and Peter Pelz. In Bosnia and Kosovo we worked with local partners. In Kosovo we work with the Pro Peace Initiative, and in Serbia with TransConflict.
- 3 Nelson Mandela's words express the aims of the Soul of Europe: working in post conflict situations in the Balkans.
- 4 In correspondence with both Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians we use the Albanian and Serb spelling of places.
- 5 From a Press Statement from the EU Press Office, February 2008.
- 6 Ian Bancroft's *The Flight of Kosovo's Minorities* (The Guardian Comment is Free) 3rd June 2009, is the source for the quote from the EU General Affairs and Community Relations Council.
- 7 Martti Ahtissari, a former President of Finland, was the UN Special Envoy to Kosovo. His team produced the blue print for the Kosovo Constitution.
- 8 *Burying the Past – Making Peace and Doing Justice after Civil Conflict* edited by Nigel Biggar (Georgetown University Press 2007) explores this dilemma.
- 9 John Paul Lederach is the Professor of International Peace Studies at the Institute of Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, South Carolina. His writings have been a major inspiration for our work. A concept is the web and the web approach, summarised as: 'the pursuit of social change initiated through spatial strategies and networking. This strategy identifies, reinforces and builds social spaces and intersections that link individuals, groups, networks and organizations formally and informally across the social divide, sectors, levels and geographies that make up the settings of protracted conflict.'
- 10 In a lecture given at the Royal Society of Arts on 12th November 2009, *New Perspectives on Faith and Development*, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, urged NGOs working in development to acquire 'a better level of religious literacy', adding that there is a need for 'a deepening fluency in the language of religious discourse'.
- 11 These ideas are developed in *Making Terrorism History* by Scilla Elsworth and Gabrielle Rifkind (Rider 2006) pages 75 -76
- 12 John Paul Lederach's *Moral Imagination* (Oxford 2005) and a lecture I gave at Lambeth Palace 18th May 2006 on *The Moral Imagination*.

I draw strength from philosophers and theologians, who particularly treasure the imagination, like Paul Ricoeur: 'I would even say the imagination plunges into the most impressive tradition: that of liberating acts, of the Exodus and Resurrection. Perhaps there would be no more interest in emancipation, no more anticipation of freedom if the Exodus and Resurrection were effaced from the memory of mankind.'

MEDIATION IN BOSNIA

From hatred to a handshake

The arguments about the future of Anglicanism are taking place behind church doors. The discussions have become torrid, repetitious and exhausting for all concerned.

Now is the time to open the doors and windows and allow the imagination and passion of seasoned pioneer peace builders to inform, enlighten and invigorate the conversations, debates and decisions.

What follows is a true story of bringing former enemies round the table. The process was undertaken by the Soul of Europe.

In 2000 following thirty years as a parish priest in London, I established the Soul of Europe.

Our aim is to realize Nelson Mandela's words to Northern Ireland politicians: 'You don't make peace by talking to your friends; you have to make peace with your enemies.'

We have been working in Bosnia for seven years. Our work has stopped, although many of our activities remain unfinished.

During those years we have consistently drawn on the wisdom and experience of 'seasoned, pioneer peace builders' and we have been inspired particularly by the work of John Paul Lederach (1)

Here is our story:

Three years ago Mittal Steel acquired an iron-ore mine in Omarska near Prijedor. Prijedor is a town in North West Bosnia in the Republika Srpska (the Serb entity of Bosnia). It is two hours drive from Zagreb in Croatia and about forty minutes flying time from Venice. In April 1992 a carefully planned program of ethnic cleansing was put into action. Bosnian Muslims (known as Bosniaks) and Croats were unprepared and unarmed. All non-Serbs were removed from their jobs. Two concentration camps were established, one at the iron-ore mine at Omarska. During the months of May, June, July and August 1992 not less than three thousand and not more than four thousand people were killed in the Prijedor region. The figures are still not certain. In August 1992 an ITN film crew with Ed Vulliamy of the Guardian discovered and reported on what was going on at the mine at Omarska and international public outcry forced the closure of the two camps.

The municipality of Prijedor was a laboratory of ethnic cleansing. Four hundred and seventy four days were taken up at the Hague Tribunal for dealing with the events at Prijedor, one tenth of the Tribunal's existence.

Once it became known that Mittal Steel had bought the mine, Bosniaks began to demand that a memorial to those who died at Omarska be erected in the mine complex, because it was in all the buildings of the mine that not only torture, rape and all kinds of atrocities been committed but also up to thousand people murdered. Again, the numbers are not known precisely.

Before the war the mine employed around five thousand people, including Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs. Today the workforce of around seven hundred is nearly all Serb. The Serbs did not acknowledge what happened at the mine during the war and opposed the proposal for a memorial.

Mittal Steel asked the Soul of Europe to create a process of mediation which would result in a satisfactory outcome to a potentially destabilizing situation. Our brief was to ensure that all three ethnic groups should agree about the memorial.

There followed nine months of intensive activity. The Soul of Europe put together a small team from the UK assisted by two local project managers, a Bosniak and a Serb, and an interpreter. Would it be possible to bring Bosniaks and Serbs together (there are barely two hundred Croats left in the Prijedor region)? Bosniaks had returned in considerable numbers to the region of Prijedor, about twenty thousand of them (before there war there had been forty thousand). These included a number of survivors from the concentration camps.

We began a search for Bosniaks and Serbs who would be prepared to meet and consider the proposal for a memorial. With the help of our project managers, both from Prijedor, we found enough people to take the project further.

Prijedor is a traumatized community. A trauma is an open wound which has been allowed to fester. When the trauma is ignored then people begin to see themselves as victims. Then no one else can be trusted. The degree of pain is so intense that it is impossible to begin to imagine the experience of others.

The Bosniaks know humiliation. Their stories of being removed from their homes, thrown out of the country or taken to concentration camps have hardly been heard. And since they have been ignored they feel they do not matter. The Bosniaks cannot get work. Many of them are teachers, accountants, lawyers, skilled professionals. And there are still fifteen thousand people missing in Bosnia, mostly Muslim. Time and again we have listened to the grief, rage and bitterness of these people as they share their experiences.

Bosniaks and Serbs demonize one another. Demonizing is described as 'projection', the transferring of overwhelming feelings on to others when we sense our survival is threatened. In a state of extreme vulnerability we feel hopeless. We split off from the unbearable feelings inside ourselves and project them on to others.

The more the victims refuse to accept his/her vulnerability, the more they humiliate others and deny those others any human emotion; they dehumanize the enemy, and attribute all kind of negative qualities to them. The Serbs are 'animals', the Muslims are 'pigs'. Gossip in Prijedor is macabre; each of the ethnic groups watches the other and prepares to defend itself. The war carries on.

The Serbs also see themselves as victims. Milosevic's dreams of a Greater Serbia failed. Now they feel they are the under-class: the Bosniaks get everything and the Serbs are neglected. Besides which the Serb community has to accommodate twelve thousand displaced Serbs from Croatia now living in Prijedor. They fear the Bosniaks, thinking that Bosnia is being turned into a Muslim state, and that they will be wiped out. There are also those Serb families who, like Bosniaks in the war, lost sons, fathers and husbands who joined the army and just disappeared. (2)

These raw deep emotions were manifested in our meetings with individuals. So often it was as if the events they were describing happened yesterday instead of sixteen years ago.

We invited the local religious leaders to join us. We listened at length to the Imam of Prijedor, the Catholic priest and the Orthodox priest. They all spoke about the demons let loose during the war, and the darkness of the war, but they were unable or unwilling to move beyond generalizations.

But we also met those who were prepared to take further steps; they were ready to consider their own lives and of their families, recognizing they had to find ways to live together. This was particularly true

of the younger generations of Serbs who were prepared to move even further and stand in solidarity with the survivors of Omarska.

One story: a freezing November day we took a group of young Serbs interested to be involved in the mediation process to Omarska. They would have been children when the camps were closed. They knew nothing about concentration camps then. One of the survivors stood in front of a shed, known as the white house, the main killing centre in the camp, and told these young men and women what happened to him there. He spared no details. The Serbs stood there in shock, a forlorn group, not knowing what to say. Some days later one of them opened up saying: 'We have no alternative but to support the Bosniaks and this memorial. The truth is what matters.'

We started to bring people together first in pairs, then in fours and then in sixes. These were Bosniaks and Serbs who talked, often with great difficulty, about Prijedor during the war, about the concentration camps, and eventually what a memorial might look like. All together some fifty people took part. Following each meeting we met with individuals to reflect on the meeting and to see if they were prepared to be part of an expanding web of Serbs and Bosniaks who began to see the only future for themselves was a future together.

What is clear, even obvious, is that without the intervention of outsiders, who eventually become trusted outsiders, these conversations would never have happened.

Yet the process was always problematic, and the outcome uncertain, because of the gradual emergence of spoilers. These were individuals who either boycotted the process, and did so very publicly, or signed up to what we were initiating, but had their own agendas and were prepared to undermine everyone else. Radical Serbs would not participate because they said Bosniaks had no place in the Republika Srpska. The Bosniaks themselves were divided. Those who had returned to live in Prijedor, including the survivors of Omarska, realized the need to cooperate with their Serb neighbours; those in the diaspora, Bosniaks who had been driven out of Prijedor during the war but who now regularly visited Bosnia in the summer vacation, took a different line. They demanded closure of the mine and that those Serbs who had participated in atrocities should have no part in the memorial.

Our task was to strengthen the centre, but also to include everyone; we went out of our way to meet and understand those who wanted to have no part in the project.

Our role as mediators was not as prominent as I may have suggested. We tried to be professional, reliable and neutral. We made a point of attending well publicized public occasions on both sides: one was the consecration of a new Orthodox church at Omarska, where the Orthodox Bishop gave us a prominent place in the liturgy. We also attended a mass funeral of fifty Muslims and two Croats murdered in the war, whose bodies had been found in a mass grave. (3)

Apart from creating a secure atmosphere for the conversations to take place, listening carefully and encouraging others to listen, we played a modest role. Sometimes we drew out the implications of a particular proposal. We would say: 'Well, if you do this, then this or that will be the effect of your actions.' Sometimes when meetings became over-heated, and Serbs and Bosniaks returned to their basic convictions, we proposed a more pragmatic approach which lowered the temperature and restored a more creative approach. So a meeting about the design of the memorial, which could easily have disintegrated, was saved by a discussion about the perimeter fence. The fence was to be placed around the site of the memorial but questions needed to be asked about its design and about access to the mine complex. At once attention became focused.

We brought one fundamental conviction to the process, that there is no place for separate development. We held on to an image of a web of people who were not like-minded, but who recognized their basic interdependence, and had to find ways to compromise so that they could flourish together. One

significant unifying factor was a strong deep nostalgia for 'the old days' when nobody worried about what ethnic group you belonged to, whether you were Croat, Bosniak or Serb. 'We just got along fine.' We encouraged this nostalgia as a way of helping people to take the faltering steps towards a society where at least people were prepared to put up with each other.

These words have been written at a time of considerable tension in the Balkans. It is conceivable that our attempts at mediation will be overtaken by events.

Therefore it is helpful to recall the words of Reinhold Niebuhr, surely a theologian for our time, when he said:

'Nothing worth doing is completed in our life time. Therefore we are saved by Hope.

Nothing true of beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we are saved by Faith.

Nothing we do, however virtuous can be accomplished alone, therefore are saved by Love.'

Our meetings ended in a conference arranged by Serbs and Bosniaks where plans for a memorial were presented to the national and international media.

Following the conference we went to the mine and visited the white house - an interrogation centre during the war. Nearly everyone who was taken there never came out alive. Their bodies would be thrown out after torture during the night and collected in the morning to be buried in mass graves.

The manager in charge of the mine in 1992 was there. He had ordered the sacking of all non-Serbs during the war and went to the Hague Tribunal to witness for the then mayor of Prijedor who received a life sentence. He had gone along with everything to protect himself and his family, but acknowledges what he did was wrong. In fact we found out he helped Muslim friends escape, warning them and even driving them to safe parts of the region. The manager is deeply ashamed of what he did and enthusiastically became part of the memorial project and mediation process, offering help and advice about the memorial, where it could be sited etc. We will never forget how at the end of the conference, as people prepared to leave the white house and the mine, he went from one survivor to the other, shaking their hands, thanking them for including him in the project. Nothing can destroy or diminish the power and significance of this gesture.

The process of mediation which the Soul of Europe used for the Omarska Memorial is not unique. Rather in regions of the world where there has been conflict or where there is the possibility of renewed conflict there are countless accounts of the processes of deep listening which I have described leading to tentative beginnings of healing and reconciliation.

The Anglican Communion has a choice. It can try to rebuild itself on its own. So far that has not been successful.

Or it should be looked at in another way. The Instruments of Communion: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Lambeth Conference and the Primates Meetings should invite some of those 'seasoned pioneer peace builders' to see how they could contribute a badly needed professional dimension.

Any such invitation has to be unanimous. Without the agreement of all shades of opinion there can be no process.

To secure that invitation will not be easy. The level of mistrust between some Archbishops and Bishops is acute. Trusted, skilful facilitators, noted for their professionalism, neutrality and reliability will at this very early stage be needed to get people to agree to meet in the way we tried to do in Bosnia, so that they will live together even as they disagree..

Look beneath the radar, beneath the headlines and there is wisdom enough for new beginnings. So what are we waiting for?

NOTES

- 1 John Paul Lederach is Professor of International Peace Building at the Joan B Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, USA
- 2 I have drawn on a lecture I gave at Lambeth Palace in May 2006 called The Moral Imagination.
- 3 An account of this project, the white house – from killing to a handshake, by Peter Pelz and Donald Reeves will be published by O Books during 2008.

If you would like to know more about the work of the Soul of Europe, or if you want to explore possibilities of working with you, please write directly to me at donalreeve@aol.com or by post to:

The Revd Donald Reeves

RELIGION, VIOLENCE AND NATIONALISM

ADDRESS AT QATAR CONFERENCE

The Revd Donald Reeves MBE, Director of the Soul of Europe

I want to thank Dr Ibrahim Alnaimi and his committee for inviting me to participate in this conference. This is my second visit to your country and I am delighted to be here once again. Thank you for the invitation and while I am standing here thank you to those who have worked so hard to ensure that this conference takes place. Thank you.

My subject is Religion Violence and Nationalism. I want to show how these three subjects are related to what has been called a 'chosen trauma'. I will explain what I mean by 'chosen trauma' and then present five proposals to address the phenomenon of 'chosen trauma' particularly relevant for the progress of inter-religious dialogue.

What I am saying emerges from seven years working in Bosnia. I am the founder and director of a small NGO the Soul of Europe (not to be confused with the Soul FOR Europe). Our aim is to realize the words of Nelson Mandela: 'If you want to make peace you do not speak to your friends you must speak to your enemies.' We have been working in Banja Luka, the administrative centre of the Republika Srpska, the mainly Serb part of Bosnia where most of the Muslims were ethnically cleansed in the Bosnia War. We have been endeavoring to raise interest and funding for the reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque, one of the magnificent mosques in Europe, built over four hundred years ago by one of the greatest architects ever and destroyed by Serbs in 1993. The reconstruction will be a sign of collaboration between Muslims and Christians for Bosnia and the world. We were also invited to mediate between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Orthodox Serbs in a dispute about a memorial for those Muslims who were murdered by Serbs at Omarska, a killing camp in North West Bosnia. The atrocities committed there became a significant factor in radicalizing Muslims throughout the world. In our time in Bosnia we also created opportunities for religious leaders in Bosnia, who are the leaders of each ethnic group, to meet together and make joint public statements of reconciliation.

So much of what I will now say is filtered through the lens of our experiences in Bosnia. It will be noticed at once that inter-religious dialogue in the Balkans cannot be easily separated from political and economic issues and cannot be detached from questions about human rights and ethnicity. We have been involved both in inter-religious dialogue (which involves as much listening as talking) and in mediation – bringing former enemies together.

So to our subject. Here is a formal definition of a ‘chosen trauma’. Chosen trauma is ‘the mental representation of an event that has caused a large group (a nation or a state) perhaps long ago to face drastic losses, feel despair and become victimized by another group, sharing a humiliating injury’. Understanding this is a key to discerning the process of the transmission of past historical events.

A nation or a state’s identity is linked in large part to what its people remember and keep alive. The trauma remembered renews itself as part of the unconscious psyche of group identity and is passed down across generations: a particular event or events are remembered in a particular way. That moment shaped their identity then and it continues to shape their identity now. In any circumstances the ‘chosen trauma’ provides justification for preemptive violence and revenge. The dates may go way back in history but they are present as if they happened yesterday. Historical time collapses into mythical time. These highlighted moments in the social landscape of a people form and shape a contrived sense of who they are, and as the same events are reconstructed yet again in the present they perpetuate a cycle of renewed violence at the hands of one side and then the other.

Here is a story of how a ‘chosen trauma’ has been reactivated for political purposes, leading to revenge and violence.

The story comes from the Balkans. There are many, particularly in the West, who consider the Balkans a special case. This is not so. Wherever there is a prolonged conflict, or the potential for conflict, the phenomenon of the chosen trauma is invariably present and is one of the factors contributing to the outbreak of violence and revenge. Religions either deliberately or unwittingly contribute to fostering these ancient memories of hurt and humiliation, because religious leaders, muftis, imams, bishops, priests and rabbis, by virtue of their office, and their representative functions, hold within themselves the identity of their group. It is not a question of the numbers who go to the mosque or church or synagogue; religious leaders cradle the nationalistic impulse.

Here is the story.

After becoming independent from Byzantium in the 12th century the Kingdom of Serbia under the leadership of the Nemanjic dynasty flourished for two hundred years. It was the golden age of Serbia, reaching its peak in the Emperor Stefan Dusan. He died in 1355 and the dynasty came to an end. Then one Prince Lazar was elected. The political power and influence of Serbia declined as the Ottoman Empire expanded, culminating in the Battle of Kosovo on June 28th 1389.

There are many versions of the truth around the Battle of Kosovo. We do know that the leaders of the warring groups were killed. Lazar’s body was canonized and moved to a monastery north of Belgrade. I have seen the body. Lazar was regarded as a Christ figure who in the night before the battle held a last supper with twelve of his knights, one of whom betrayed him.

In 1987 at the approach of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, President Milosevic, a communist bureaucrat, attended a meeting of three hundred party delegates in Kosovo where just 10% of the population is Serb, the rest being Muslim Kosovo Albanians. During the meeting Serbs forced their way into the hall to voice grievances about their lives in Kosovo at the hands of the Muslim majority. They were prevented from entering. It is now known that Milosevic staged the demonstration and even paid people to throw stones at the Serbs so he could step forward and announce: ‘Nobody, either now or in the future, has the right to beat you.’ This political manipulation of myth made Milosevic a hero to

Serbs and inspired the Bosnia War. He transformed himself into a Serb nationalist leader, saying Serbs were not a minority in Kosovo because he declared 'Kosovo is and always will be Serbia'.

Aided by the Serbian Orthodox Church Milosevic reactivated the Serbian 'chosen trauma', renewing and strengthening Serb nationalism. The remains of the legendary Lazar were placed in a coffin and taken on a tour of every Serb village and town where it was met by Orthodox priests and mourners in black. Historical time collapsed. Past and present merged; six hundred years ago became today. As they greeted Lazar's body they wept and vowed never to allow such a defeat to happen to them again. The tour of Lazar's body functioned as a daily reincarnation.

The significance of the story is this: Milosevic made space for the group to grieve its defeat at the Battle of Kosovo so as to inspire a reversal of defeat and shame. The Serb nation bonded and became suffused with a new sense of entitlement, of revenge. This played a significant part in creating a frame of mind which sanctioned war, destruction, killing and atrocities against Muslims.

I spoke of how religious leaders 'cradle the nationalistic impulse'. They hold their group's sense of who they are. I was present at the blessing of a new Orthodox church in Omarska (near the killing camp I described earlier). Omarska is a small poor community. The bishop arrived in procession with priests and the service began. Three church bells with their donors standing by were to be blessed; then as the service proceeded the bells were raised into position. Hundreds of people attended the banquet afterwards, the entire local Orthodox community. When the bells began to peal for the first time everyone stood and remained silent. The bishop recited a prayer.

The peal of bells told the people of Omarska: 'This is our place. This is our land.' In Ottoman times bells were forbidden and the faithful had to be summoned to worship by wooden planks being struck loudly together.

My description of the 'chosen trauma' of Serbia is NOT a polemic against Serbs. I have many Serb friends. Much of what I am saying needs to be more carefully nuanced. For instance it has to be stated that the majority of the Serb Orthodox Church condemned Milosevic for the way he conducted the Bosnia War. However Serb culture, literature and art, kept alive terrible memories nourishing the 'chosen trauma'. The work of Ivo Andric, the Bosnian Christian Nobel prize-winning author, became favorite reading for Serbs including Milosevic who kept by his bedside a copy of *A Bridge Over the Drina*, which chronicles in inflammatory detail the cruelty of the Ottoman occupation.

It would be instructive to examine the 'chosen traumas' which are being activated in the present conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Meanwhile I have identified five strands for the possibilities for inter-religious dialogue in the movement towards justice and a more peaceful world. Each needs to be developed. Time permits me only headings with just a few words of clarification.

1

EUROPE

One of the great difficulties we in Europe experience about inter-religious activities is that secular governments do not take us seriously. The reason for this is a legacy of the European Enlightenment at the time of scientific discoveries, industrial development and colonial expansion world wide. Religious belief could only be tolerated in this new political and social revolution if it remained a private matter. Everyone in this room knows that this is as reductionist a view of religion as is possible to be. The Archbishop of Canterbury is insistent that religious minorities play their full part in British society. He is determined to see that the rights and customs of Jews, Muslims and Hindus are respected and protected.

It is therefore difficult for those of us who are committed to inter-religious dialogue to have the resources to do our work. That most secular of institutions, the European Commission, is not interested.

2

CULTURE OF SOLIDARITY

Where dialogue happens, trust between religious leaders is given a chance to grow. In regions of the world where there is latent or endemic conflict then solidarity between religions becomes essential. Gaining that trust is difficult and not without danger. How much would it take for the Muslim and Jewish communities in Israel, Palestine and Lebanon to stand in solidarity with the rapidly diminishing Christian communities? Not to mention Iraq.

For example in Bosnia there is little trust between the religious and ethnic groups. But a successful outcome of prolonged dialogue would result in Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics standing together in the face of many and different threats. So when mosques are vandalized, then Orthodox and Catholics will continually and vigorously affirm their support for the Islamic community. When Orthodox priests and their families are harassed as has happened in Sarajevo, then Muslims and Catholics join the protest. When the Catholic Church in Bosnia is denied rights about the return of their properties, then Muslim and Orthodox will stand with them.

3

PEACE BUILDING

Politicians try to establish dialogue leading to agreement through 'road maps' and peace processes. These agreements often collapse and violence breaks out yet again. Why is it that so many countries emerging from war fall back into war? A short answer is that peace has to be established at the grass roots level; peace building requires patience and tenacity at the grass roots. The cycle of violence (through fear, grief, anger, bitterness, revenge and retaliation leading to resumption of hostilities) has to be dismantled at the level of the human heart and mind.

Religions proclaim teachings about peace (the reverence for life etc and the dignity of every human being); therefore in this process of dismantling the bitterness and anger emanating from grief – a task for generations – religious leaders in particular need to draw on the rich tradition of peace and peace making. They have a unique opportunity to assist in this dismantling of the cycle of violence.

It is sometimes necessary to bring people from outside the situation to act as catalysts in the healing process.

When a United Nations Peace Commission is formed then there needs to be also a core of people experienced in mediation and familiar with the principles of the Abrahamic faiths (and where necessary also Eastern religions) ready to be invited to establish inter-religious councils, or whatever initiatives are appropriate; provided long term resources are available to sustain them.

There is much knowledge, much experience of mediation and conflict transformation on the one hand and inter-religious dialogue on the other that this reservoir of wisdom can be drawn on in the way I am advocating.

4

ACADEMY

There are two areas where scholars can contribute to the movement away from religious nationalism and violence towards a more civilizing future.

- i) Historians can point to those times in our history when the Abrahamic faiths have lived together more or less satisfactorily. The tradition of Convivencia is one to be celebrated.

History in the West is told mainly from the perspective of the Crusades, a conflict between faiths. The well chronicled tradition of co-existence and co-operation is neglected.

- ii) What I look for in the scholars of our sacred scriptures is help in reading the texts for our own time and to be taken down to the depths and ground of my faith and to be nourished in those depths, as a continual act of the imagination. I do not want to be part of some intellectual effort which strives after what we have in common – such effort does not engage the imagination. But where there is resolve to look eye to eye at our differences with respect, always with respect, then oddly and paradoxically our differences can energize our imagination to work collectively together. (Here the practice of scriptural reasoning is a most useful beacon.)

And I also look for scholars to engage in the practice of peace building between religions, so they share their wisdom and also learn from what is happening. Is there a place for practitioners and scholars to work together? We must create such a place.

5

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Soul of Europe has been actively engaged in securing interest and funding for the Ferhadija Mosque, because we believe that mosques, churches, and synagogues do not always have to be signs of division and partition. They can also be signs of meeting and reconciliation and as these projects happen, so the relationship between those of different ethnic groups and religions associated with the reconstruction or rebuilding is itself a sign, a promise of something new and good. There should be many such projects in the world today.

These are five proposals to contribute to the dismantling of the ‘chosen trauma’. They are modest and difficult and essential. Essential because as we all know, we can see on the not so distant horizon storms approaching. I am referring to the political, economic and social effects of climate change. It has been estimated that within thirty years, maybe even less, the agricultural yield of parts of Africa will have decreased by up to 12%. This means thousands will experience famine and starvation. This means inevitable migration on a scale we cannot imagine.

I say this not to scare myself, but to remind us that we will, from all our religious traditions, need all the wisdom we can draw on to diminish the inevitable violence. So the sooner we can realize the fruits of our dialogue the better for our children and future generations.

I believe the time has come for those committed to inter-religious dialogue to be more assertive. To those who say ‘We have the truth, we will not compromise’ we have to reply: ‘Yes but there is always more to see and learn about God.’ To those who say: ‘We do not want religious minorities or other ethnic groups in our land’, we should reply: ‘Do not be afraid. We are all of us interdependent, we have to live together. And we can live together.’ To those who say: ‘We will take revenge on those who have murdered our families, the old and the weak,’ we must say: ‘We bear witness to God’s justice, because our safety and security lie ultimately with God.’

So let us be more assertive, more demanding of one another and ourselves, more passionate about our calling to the work of dialogue among our religions. For we undertake this work not for ourselves but for God alone in whom we trust.

Thank you for your attention.

RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN A GLOBALISED ERA

LECTURE FOR DICID'S 8TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF DOHA INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

OCTOBER 19TH – 21ST 2010

THE REVD DONALD REEVES MA. M.LITT. MBE

Donald Reeves is an Anglican priest. He is the founder and director of the Soul of Europe engaged in mediation and reconciliation activities in the Balkans, at present particularly in Kosovo. He is a Visiting Fellow in Peace Studies at Leeds Metropolitan University. He is an established author. His latest book is an autobiography: *The Memoirs of a Very Dangerous Man*.

Donald Reeves has been awarded the Tschelebi Peace Prize for fostering good relations between the Abrahamic faiths. The Award is part of the Zentralinstitut Islam-Archiv at Soest in West Germany. It is the oldest Islamic organization in Germany. The jury of this Peace Award consists of Muslims, Jews and Christians. It is given annually to a German non-Muslim as well as to NGOs involved in dialogue. There is a national, international and group award. This year the award has been given to Konrad Raiser, former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, and to the House of Religions in Hanover.

Donald Reeves is this year's International Peace Recipient.

SUMMARY

The paper describes the need to develop the essential practice of 'solidarity' in response to the persecution of religious minorities; it highlights the difficulties religious leaders experience in responding to internal conflicts.

'Dialogue' has lost its currency through overuse, so I describe it as a special kind of conversation. All are invited to participate – those for whom absolute certainty is a prerequisite as well as those, in the West, who have trouble working out their faith in a secular world.

The crisis of religious authority, the way sacred texts are read, the recovery of the Imagination, a consideration of the problem around 'segregation and integration' are described.

This paper outlines the huge task of challenging the idolatry of management-speak and the market which has trespassed on the territory of religion.

The paper ends with a call for opportunities for newcomers to inter-religious dialogue to learn the skills and art of dialogues.

I am most grateful to Dr Ibrahim Al Naimi for the invitation to speak on 'Religious Upbringing and Contemporary Challenges in a Globalised Era'. This is my fourth visit to Doha. I am delighted to be here and to participate in this Conference. Thank you.

I have tried to make this difficult subject as manageable as possible. I have therefore chosen a personal and straight-forward approach.

I understand globalization as a world which is being transformed into a universal free market, which transcends national boundaries. I note too that the casualties of this transformation are the weakest and the poorest.

Today we are made aware of each other's religion inconceivable fifty years ago: interfaith activity was regarded as strange, strictly for specialists.

As a boy I had lessons in religion, but they were confined to Christianity and the Church of England. I still have my note books when as an eight year old I had to write down what a church is, what a priest is. There was nothing about Judaism, Islam, Eastern religions, let alone other Christian Churches.

That has now changed. There is considerable awareness of different religions. But awareness is not the same as knowledge. In spite of the internet and, for some, easy access to travel, there is still widespread ignorance, a striking ignorance about religion. A little knowledge is dangerous. Ignorance fuels prejudice and prejudice fear of 'the other'. The stranger is not welcome.

My early memories of religious education created a vacuum ready to be filled by caricatures. Up to the time I left Cambridge University I had never met a Muslim or a Jew. My experience is not unique among my generation, nor in younger generations.

I want to propose a programme for 'religious upbringing in a globalised era'. The programme has two elements: The Practice of Solidarity, and Conversation and Study.

There is much criticism of interfaith dialogue. 'Why do you go to these solemn meetings?' I am often asked. Another asked: 'What do they achieve?' (And behind this question lay a further question about measuring: measuring the outcome). Or as I am told frequently: 'You all sit round the table on some top floor while on the ground floor a fire is raging!' Most of us are aware of these criticisms but the fires can be brought under control and inter-religious dialogue has to make a significant contribution.

THE PRACTICE OF SOLIDARITY

The context I know best is the United Kingdom, Western Europe and the Balkans, particularly Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo. So what I have to say comes out of this context.

Solidarity means standing in the shoes of the other – particularly when the 'other' is marginalized or persecuted. Solidarity is not just an attitude.

Imagine for a moment a synagogue in East London. It has been vandalized; anti-Semitic slogans are scrawled on the walls. A neighbouring cemetery has had the Jewish graves ripped up, destroyed. Then, following this vandalism, the local mosque and the local churches together express their solidarity with the local Jewish community.

Imagine an arson attack on a mosque in East London: many of the Muslim community are frightened. They feel unsafe. Then the local synagogue and local churches together condemn the arson and express their solidarity with the Muslim community.

Imagine a church in East London. The doors have been forced open; the cross on the altar has been broken. The church has been desecrated. Then the local synagogue and local mosques together express their solidarity with the Christian community.

A demonstration is organized by the three communities; it is disrupted by extremists and in spite of a strong police presence there is a sense of possible violence on the streets. But the demonstration continues on its way to each of the three places of worship, a mosque, a church and a synagogue where speeches of friendship are made and prayers offered to God.

That is an expression of solidarity, part real, part imagined. But to arrive at this point, this act of solidarity, takes a lot of time and effort. The local religious leaders have over the years taken time to get to know each other. They and their communities have often visited each others place of worship. The mosque, the synagogue and the church were accessible to each of the other communities. Slowly each community begins to have a sense of the others, their culture, traditions and their worship. Friendship grows, meals are shared. Time and again people said: 'Well I never realized what it is like to be a Jew, a Muslim or a Christian here.' This is already happening in places like Leicester in England and Duisburg in Germany. But these are the exception and not the rule.

In most places there remain problems. Some members of these communities do not want to get involved in what is seen as being too political. (The demonstrations I mentioned could well have happened after 9:11 or after the London or Madrid bombings.) Some members left their places of worship. The rabbi, priests and imams faced conflict among their communities; none of these leaders were used to handling these disagreements; sometimes the authority of those leaders was challenged and appeals to the sacred texts of those communities compounded the divisions because of different interpretations of these texts.

The emerging solidarity which I have described has also to be replicated regionally, nationally and internationally. In other words, the growing of solidarity has to become a 'movement', to resist marginalization and persecution of religious minorities.

I have been involved in peace building in the Balkans for ten years. One thing I have learnt is that peace building depends on establishing networks of firm working relationship with the 'enemy' so that those who are not like us become our partners.

This is also true of inter-religious dialogue.

CONVERSATION AND STUDY

'Dialogue' is now the word to describe many of the activities under the interfaith umbrella. But it has become overused to the point that the word is almost meaningless. In Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, recently I met an official from the European Union; I was trying to get financial support for our work of mediation, bringing together the Serbian Orthodox monks from the monastery of Decani together with local Kosovo Albanian Muslims between whom relations have been strained since the war there ten years ago. The official said to me: 'We have done dialogue.'

So there is much to be said for another way of describing the processes of talking, listening, paying attention, appreciating other religions, other cultures and traditions. This is Conversation: an art we have almost lost in the West.

I have been lucky enough to have experienced conversation, where listening is intense, but not without laughter, where conversation is real, serious but not solemn. In Bosnia the Soul of Europe had been commissioned to bring together Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims to agree on a Memorial demanded by the survivors of Omarska, a killing camp where hundreds of Muslims were murdered during the Bosnia War. Our brief was clear: we had to persuade both parties, Serbs and Bosniaks, to get round the table, to plan the Memorial. To assist us in this tricky task we invited a group of about a dozen young Serbs and Bosniaks to meet with the Soul of Europe regularly. Those conversations in Prijedor, the town nearest to the killing camp, during a hot, dusty summer in gardens and later throughout a bitterly cold winter in a smoke-filled café run by returnee Muslims, were a model of attention in which disagreements were expressed but where the listening never faltered.

Who then should participate in these conversations, and what should be their subject, given the title of this lecture: 'Religious Upbringing in a Globalised Era'?

Everyone should be invited to 'the table', not just those who are committed to inter-religious dialogue, but particularly those who might be considered 'spoilers'. I am thinking for example of those who justify terrorism by quoting from the Qur'an, those who validate settlement in the West Bank with references to the Hebrew prophets, those who ransack the Book of Revelation to sanction their government's policies in Israel and the Middle East.

Those who use sacred texts in this way regard religion as a means to restore certainty in an conflicted world.

This quest for certainty, in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is flourishing - understandably so, given the uncertain and even apocalyptic future unfolding before us.

I refer to the social and political effects of global warming with the possibilities of famine triggering movements of population; then the rapid expansion of the world's population will raise urgent issues concerning energy and food shortages. There is the persistent threat of small armed terrorist groups and the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons.

Yes those who wish to have nothing to do with these conversations have to realize, however difficult, that it is in their interest to participate. Sometimes those who stake their lives and faith on certainty are criticised for having little to do except to convert others to their way of thinking and living; whereas the rest of are too busy. I am reminded of the aphorism by Oscar Wilde who said: 'The trouble with socialism is that it takes all of your free evenings.'

The other growing and flourishing groups who need to be invited 'to the table' are those who say 'I am a good Muslim, but...' or 'I am a good Catholic, but....'

The word 'but' is significant.

Some years ago I was invited to participate in a Conference on Interfaith Dialogue in Trinidad. I described the Soul of Europe's attempt at encouraging the reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque in the city of Banja Luka in the Serb Republika Srpska part of Bosnia. We saw this work as a story of Muslim/Christian collaboration. The Ferhadija Mosque was one of fifteen destroyed during the Bosnia War in Banja Luka alone. All of them were blown up and the stones and foundations removed; a signal that the Islamic community was no longer welcome there.

When I had finished my speech a mufti from Trinidad told me: 'The Bosnian people deserve to have their mosques destroyed: God was telling them they were not true Muslims.' What is a 'true' Muslim? I have made many friends who were both Bosnian and Muslim. Some have become secularised, but they remained Muslim. One put it this way: 'I am a Muslim in my heart, but I do not carry out all the religious observances.' The question for these Muslims is what constitutes a 'true' Muslim in terms of his/her relationship to the world. I will look at this question later under the heading of 'Segregation or Integration'.

Then particularly in Western Europe there are those who say they are Catholic but ignore the teachings of say, birth control issued by the Vatican. 'I go to Mass,' a friend says to me, 'but not as often as I used to.'

Thus, apart from those drawn to inter-religious dialogue, to 'the table' need to be invited those who regard this activity as unnecessary and a waste of time, and those who calls themselves Jewish, Muslim or Christian but who have difficulties in making sense of their faith in relation to the way they live it out in the world.

What follows is the outline of a program for those committed to inter-religious conversations which need to be set up: schools, universities, academies of all kinds and religious institutions.

1 THE CRISIS OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

The crisis began in the 1960's when in the West a new generation began to say: 'We will not be told what to believe; we will find out for ourselves.' Deference to authority disappeared. 'We will make up our own minds.' This has raised difficult questions for religious leaders. If they appeal to the Qur'an, the Torah or the Gospels then there are others who say: 'These texts are not correct for today,' and will refer to others.

This is a major issue for all religions, compounded by one of the effects of globalization through the Internet. Not only is there choice for everyone, there is also scholarship and learning, so the academic's study is no longer a privileged place.

Authority is not just about theoretical questions. As I noted in my example from East London the local religious leaders were faced with intense reactions, some enthusiastic, some highly critical to the extent that a number of people no longer appeared at worship.

There is a significant question for religious and community leaders: how can they be helped to deal with conflict in their communities? Most of us are not trained to do this. But there is now a substantial body of work, theoretical and practical, on conflict resolution and peace building which should be drawn on.

A basic issue over authority needs to be opened up, to find out what is more or less relevant in this day and age. Difficult. I would mark up one particular area for discussion, but without proposing a solution: and that is the question about democracy. How far should some religious institutions embrace democracy in which the voices of everyone are heard, in order to eventually reach compromise? In different Christian Churches one can find striking differences about the way decisions are made. In Eastern Orthodoxy the decisions are made by the Bishop, and there can be no disagreement. Some forms of Protestantism also have a top down authoritarian leadership. If you don't like the decisions made then you have a choice: to live with it or leave. There are other Churches where decisions are debated and decided at every level.

Together with teasing out issues around authority comes consideration of leadership, and training for leadership.

2 SACRED TEXTS

Religious leaders often refer to their text to reinforce their arguments, but as noted earlier interpretations of these ancient texts can be manipulated for political and other reasons.

There is consequently a major task awaiting the Abrahamic Faiths to discover how these texts should be read and interpreted.

However difficult this task may be and complicated, it is necessary, and far beyond the scope of this lecture. But there is a recent development about reading Sacred Texts which promises a possible way forward for different Faiths to study them together.

This is the practice of Scriptural Reasoning. Representatives from different traditions gather to study common themes in the Qu'an, the Torah and the New Testament: for example those that concern our common humanity, the nature of friendship and issues of the world's creation. What began in America in 1994 among academics is beginning now in the UK and in the US to be undertaken outside universities, in meeting places and churches, mosques and synagogues. There is something compelling about listening to a Rabbi expounding say the story of Jonah and the Whale, and then from the Qu'an a Muslim scholar staying close to the text, expounding the same story; and then a Christian recounting the same story from

the Christian Bible. This practice is inclusive: it should and needs to include those for whom certainty is central and those who share a more open perspective, women as well as men.

3 THE IMAGINATION

A neglected area in inter-religious conversation and study is the Imagination. Religious leaders have often been suspicious of the Imagination because they fear its uncontrollable and anarchic qualities. However it is through the Imagination that one comes closer to the heart and soul of each religious faith, as it manifests itself in art, music, painting, dance, sculpture, design and artefacts used in rituals.

4 SEGREGATION OR INTEGRATION

Here is a story: it begins in the back streets of Leeds, a northern town in the UK. A hundred years ago it used to be a working class community, generation following generation down the mines and into the mills of Northern England. That community no longer exists. A Muslim community, mostly families from Pakistan, live there now. Nadia was born there thirty years ago; her parents were and remain devout Muslims. Nadia's mother says: 'We are Muslim; before everything else we are Muslim.' The parents made an important decision. To give their clever daughter the best education possible, giving her the best opportunities for a future career, and sent her to one of the best schools in the area, away from the Muslim community, but they insisted one her wearing different clothes from the other girls, trousers to cover her legs instead of short skirts. Nadia worked hard, and went to University where she joined the secular European young adult culture and left her Qur'an at home. She gained a first class degree, then a doctorate and is now a University lecturer, married to a Muslim and living in an expensive suburb of the city where she was born.

The human cost of this success story is not immediately apparent. Nadia's family, including members living in Pakistan, became extremely distressed. They felt they had lost their daughter, that she had betrayed them. Nadia's determination to succeed concealed much anguish: guilt and confusion. She had problems with her identity, was she a Pakistani Muslim or British? For years there were considerable strains at home: arguments, silences, tempers lost. The human cost of Nadia's gradual acceptance of her identity as a British Muslim was considerable, although somewhat eased by her marriage to a Muslim, a respected member of the community.

Nadia's experience is typical of many across Europe and beyond, and from different Faith communities. Her parents consider themselves Muslim, even above being British. Whenever they leave the Muslim community in Leeds, to visit the seaside on holiday or go to other places in Britain, they have learned to put up with racist abuse: 'Go back to where you belong, etc...' That is the price paid for living in a community that is effectively segregated, and therefore a target for suspicion, racist and cultural prejudice.

The local imam and the mosque supported Nadia's parents. They too considered that Nadia had betrayed her parents and turned into a 'bad' Muslim. However Nadia is proud of her Muslim soul, the traditions that raised her. The story of her life continues – now she has children of her own.

Her story shows how difficult it is for minorities. Should they allow themselves to be segregated as much as possible, in which case they will be regarded with suspicion by their host countries, and their communities become ghettos. History tells us what happens to people in ghettos. Or should they integrate themselves, and risk losing their identity? 'Religious upbringing' has to include public discussion at every level, local, national and international. The issues are too important to be put aside, not least because of the human cost, as Nadia's story shows.

5 THE WORLD – RESISTING IDOLATRY

Recently a survey of 24 year olds from London asked what these young people felt about school: what is a school for? The unanimous response was: 'to improve social skills'. Why did they think that necessary? 'To get a good job.' Nothing illustrates better the way that the 'markets' have taken over in the West as representing life's purpose. I object strongly to the way in which the ideology of the market has invaded the territory of those of us whose mandate is to provide answers to the fundamental question: 'What is our purpose as human beings?' What is it that God wills for Creation? This market ideology has

crowded out many opportunities for sacrifice, generosity and kindness – those immeasurables without which life becomes bleak and soulless.

So there is a huge task to examine the fundamental assumptions about the world we have constructed, noting how they work in practice – not least noticing the widening gap between rich and poor. The Faiths need to reclaim that territory of questions about the meaning and purpose of life; not leave the market unchallenged.

On my first visit to Sarajevo overlooking the city on a summer evening I heard the Call to Prayer: ‘I bear witness that there is no divinity but Allah.’ In other words: ‘you shall have no other idols’.

6 LEARNING THE ART OF DIALOGUE – A SPECIAL SORT OF CONVERSATION.

In a speech to the Christian and Muslim Conference of Scholars in London in March 2010 Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury described dialogue as ‘growing together’.

This is what he said:

In every single human life we see something of how the infinity of God’s mystery winds itself into the mystery of a human life and personality.

Every human face reflects something of that mystery.

Every human face is worth attending to.

Every human voice is worth hearing.

How much more so when you see another human face, and hear another human voice directed towards God. The language that the other person uses about God may not be the language you use; you may disagree and find areas of enormous strangeness between you. And you will still want to say: ‘In that attention to the other I will discover something of God’.

That is what the Archbishop means by ‘growing together’. So the question remains to be considered: How can the newcomer to inter-religious dialogue/conversation learn the art of ‘dialogue’ so that he or she experiences it as ‘growing together’.

Dialogue does not just happen. It is an art to be learnt: skills in listening and facilitating.

Therefore there is a need for opportunities for people to come together to learn and practise the art and skills of dialogue.

Many who are committed to inter-religious dialogue are modest; claims to truth are held, certainly, but they have developed an intrinsic gentleness and openness to the world.

Modesty is not weakness. If the fires I mentioned at the start of this paper are to be extinguished, then inter-faith, inter-religious dialogue and its working out in solidarity as I have described need to become a ‘movement’. Nothing less will do – not least to counter the extremists from all sides who constantly grab the headlines. As I prepared this paper, I read of a pastor in Florida who on the anniversary of 9:11 was going to burn a copy of the Qur’an. Nothing could be more offensive to Muslims throughout the world, and such an act harms Christianity itself. It could be said that this is how Christians view Islam. To resist this, those of us committed to another way have to be prepared to speak and act consistently and boldly and together.

In this paper I have described the elements in the practice of solidarity, and have proposed areas for further conversation and study. I am aware that the title of this lecture could be directed towards young people: what are we to teach them? We have to first make a clearing in the forest. Once there is some clarity about the issues I have described, about our ‘own religious upbringing’, and in the minds of those who have a responsibility for passing on our religious traditions, then the paths will be clearer for us to follow.

Donald Reeves

RESISTING THE FAR RIGHT

A CHALLENGE FOR THOSE WHO VALUE DIALOGUE, ESPECIALLY BETWEEN ISLAM AND SECULAR EUROPE

EUROPE 2011

NB Much of what follows needs to be more nuanced, country by country. So the picture I present lacks detail and references (though I have them). This is an overview.

‘Nowadays I only need to park my car slightly badly for an old lady to come up to me and shout that I’d better go home to wherever I came from.’

So said Nurham Sulkan, general secretary of the German Council of Muslims (The Observer 31.10.10)

His comments reflect a new phenomenon in Europe. A ragbag of far right populist leaders espouses robust nationalism alongside a visceral hatred of minorities, especially Muslims.

This inflammatory rhetoric has now moved into European main stream politics:

- In France the burqa has been banned
- In Switzerland the construction of minarets has been banned
- Mosques are regarded by some as symbols of ‘appropriation of territory’
- Anti-immigration laws are getting tougher
- The UK has two British National Party Members of the European Parliament
- Austria, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands known for their liberal culture and traditions of tolerance now have far right politicians in local and national governments

An international freedom alliance to link grass roots groups active in the fight against Islam has been established.

The Far Right is tapping into anxiety about the economic crisis and current austerity measures put in place to solve it, and targets Muslims as scapegoats. It is mobilising nationalism in the face of a loss of confidence about Europe now struggling to find its role in the world. Many of its leaders play into the fear of Islam. There are frequent references to the ‘Islamification of Europe’ and much use of demographic forecasts: specifically around an aging declining white population, with a falling birth rate among ‘whites’ on the one hand and on the other a burgeoning Muslim population (though these statistics are disputed). Muslim violence against non-Muslim communities in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, targeting Christians in particular, burning churches and killing worshippers, exacerbates this fear.

The problem of Islam and Europe can be expressed in two ways:

- 1 THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE. Europe is entering a period of demographic, economic and political decline: therefore finds it difficult to address issues of integration, toleration and identity. The question for Europe then is: How to find ways to integrate a ‘ghettoised’ confident and assertive Muslim minority which encroaches upon Europe’s values and identity (even these are themselves in question).

- 2 THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE. For Islam the question is to work out to what extent Muslim communities are to be assimilated (in which case they lose their identity) or segregated (in which case they become scapegoats). Degrees of assimilation and segregation vary from country to country, from region to region, but this remains a key issue. Some Muslims regard European culture, born out of the Enlightenment, as alien, focused on issues of secularism, gender and sexual liberation. These issues create tension in the younger generation of Muslims.

A PROPOSAL

The Soul of Europe with other partners seeks to address this difficult situation by creating opportunities to strengthen, deepen and extend the foundation of those groups and individuals engaged in dialogue and co-operation: particularly between the Abrahamic faiths. Over the years many friendly working relations between these faiths have grown. All faith traditions nurture a network of volunteering, and share the wisdom of their separate traditions and the rewards of friendship across the boundaries.

These working relations now need to be strengthened so they become 'communities of endurance' not shaken by the rhetoric of the Far Right.

How should this 'strengthening' happen?

- 1 The Soul of Europe will bring together an initiating group: partners who will be responsible for the project (to be outlined below). We suggest this group should consist of the Soest Institute which awarded Donald Reeves the International Tschelebi Peace Award in 2010, representatives of the Lutheran Church from the Ruhr Gebiet and a local Christian/Muslim organization from the Ruhr.
- 2 If in principle these organizations agree to our proposal then we might invite other partners, either from France or the UK, who might impress potential funders, to join this initiating group.
- 3 The initiating group once formed will be the umbrella under which the project takes shape.

THE PROJECT

- * Duration: Nine months from October 2011 to June 2012
- * Location: The participants' 'home base' and two residential gatherings at a conference centre in the Ruhr Gebiet
- * Participants: Participants will be drawn from European countries. They should have experience of inter-religious dialogue and inter-cultural activities. They could be activists, community organizers, musicians, artists, religious leaders, politicians, Trade Unionists, business people and those who advocate an open and moderate expression of Islam. Fifty is the maximum number of participants: half Muslim, half non-Muslim.
- * Process: Once the project has been agreed by the initiating group, then research will be undertaken to discover the best participants in each country. The Partnership will authorise the Soul of Europe and/or others to visit the potential participants.

The purpose of the visit is to explain the process.

The residential gathering will have four characteristics:

- a) It will be **reflective**. Every participant and group will have an opportunity to tell their story. This will describe what each participant and organization has done; where it went well, what could have been done differently, their allies and spoilers, etc.
- b) It will be **analytical**. There will be public occasions where an issue of topical importance will be examined. For example: the story of the mosque at Koeln could be told by the main players including the opposition.

- c) It will be **informative**. A range of workshops will be offered on, for example, strategies for resisting the Far Right, matters of concern for Muslim women, establishing partnerships across ethnic divisions, the theory and practice of conflict transformation.
- d) It will be **celebratory**. The nine month project will draw on artists, film-makers, playwrights and composers to nourish the imagination. It will be a wonderful celebration of our shared citizenship of Europe.

Following the first gathering (say in October 2011), participants will develop their projects. There will further visits followed by a second gathering (say in July 2012).

The process, learning from the experience of 2012, will then be repeated in another country in 2013. It should become a regular feature on inter-cultural, inter-religious dialogue in Europe.

A successful outcome will encourage the growth of 'communities of endurance' and 'practices of solidarity' between Muslims and non-Muslims which will undermine the rhetoric of the Far Right and help Europe discover its soul.

NEXT STEPS

- 1 Send to Advisory Council and friends of the Soul of Europe who have particular interest in this area and invite comments on this draft
- 2 Send to potential initiating groups. If in principle the group has agreed, then meet in Germany to search for sponsors for the nine month event.

PS A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE. The attacks on Christians in Nigeria, Iraq, the Philippines and Egypt demand a sober start to 2011. There is an urgency for Europe to demonstrate solidarity between Muslims and non-Muslims. This project could not be more timely.

STUFF THE OTTOMANS!

DONALD REEVES IN THE BALKANS, JULY-AUGUST 2006

I have just returned from 17 days as the guest lecturer on a tour of Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia. The tour was arranged by Traveler - once part of the British Museum's tour operations, now independent. They hired me to give a number of talks during the tour.

I had not realized that there are people who spend their spare cash and time traveling. We were a group of 8 - excluding myself, the tour manager and local guides. Just about all members of the group made at least 4 other trips a year - one was off to Bhutan, another to North Korea, another to the Falkland Islands, another to Peru, etcetera. All the group were single either by choice or circumstance except for a retired teacher from Aberdeen who told me that she takes 4 trips a year, and then with a giggle: 'I do go on holiday with my husband occasionally you know.'

After 17 days I still cannot understand why they came. The tour was sold as a glimpse into the culture of the Balkans through the monasteries. No one seemed in the slightest interest in the places we went to look at. We saw Roman ruins, fortresses, convents and monasteries - but I don't believe the people noticed anything. Someone said: 'Once you have seen one mountain range you've seen the lot'. At meals they either moaned about the arrangements - on the whole with good reason - or compared travel agents or talked about their next journey. I tried to get them to talk about the places they had just seen and they told me off: 'This is a holiday, not an exam'. They each paid £3000 for the tour.

Here are a few quotes which give a flavour of the experience, one I most definitely won't be repeating:

Prodding me with her umbrella, Renee, 84 years and having traveled for the last 50, demands to know: 'When are you going to give one of your little talks?' Renee quickly became the group scapegoat - people began to say 'who does she think she is?' I suggested to them: 'Do you want to push her over a

cliff?' Bottled water was part of the package, and it was noted that Renee always stocked up with several bottles at the end of each day to take to her room.

Emily, the tour manager: 'Natural loo stop - boys on the left, girls on the right' - we were traveling along the border with Albanai – forest on one side and a deep gorge on the other. No one moved.

Sanja, our Macedonian guide: 'Good morning everybody!' - and we all chirruped back: 'Good morning!' Sanya tells us: 'I am an archaeological student and we are going to see some very interesting roman sites particularly at Stobli. It is in our desert' .

Macedonian guide: 'Now we have stretched our legs we are all feeling better, aren't we? So back to the bus.' We traveled in a minibus at 50 mph, always at 50mph.

'I am finding this rather overpowering,' a retired 70 plus university teacher says to me gloomily. He had hardly spoken for 17 days. We were staying in a Soviet style hotel with rows of bars, cafes and shops in the grounds. I suggested: 'Why don't we go for a walk and see what's happening?' Too much for him!

'I am checking out,' says Debbie. She is a 40ish company lawyer from Boston. She says she has found cockroaches in her room. This is one of the Soviet hotels bursting with Serbs on their annual 2 week holiday. I could never tell if she was laughing or crying. This time she was crying. Benita a prim Viennese civil servant who didn't talk to me once for the whole 17 days said: 'I have to go to work immediately after this so I am going with Debbie.' This suddenly provoked a real conversation - 'I didn't pay £3000 to have to sleep with bedbugs!' Another said: 'I thought we were supposed to be experiencing life in Serbia.' Another said: 'In that case you should go and live with a Serbian family!' Emily, the tour leader, said: 'It is not always possible to stay in 5 star hotels'. The conversation trickled to a halt. As we left Renee prodded me again with her stick and said 'When are you going to give your talk on the Ottomans?'

'What are we doing here?' We were sitting in a car park on the edge of Nis, a town in Southern Serbia. Our Serbian guide had disappeared. We were abandoned in our minibus. Cynical and full of himself, his idea of briefing us about Serbia was to read out CIA reports. After half an hour he returned and told us he had been looking for somewhere for us to have lunch.

'How long are we going to stay here?' Here was the no-man's land between Serbia and Bulgaria - the Bulgarian minibus hadn't turned up. We were marooned between the customs on both sides. 'Anyone for water?' said Emily.

'Now then!' said the Bulgarian guide, 'We are going to the Bulgarian National Museum.' 'There' she went on: 'we have the biggest display of neolithic remains in the region.'

I don't do museums, I said to myself and sat outside watching a thunderstorm over the mountains. Emily appeared looking concerned: 'Are you alright?' she asked. 'Couldn't be better!' I said. Emily is a 30-ish born traveler - a sort of Hester Stanhope figure of the 21st century. But she was far too conscientious and making a decisions which pleased everyone took forever- 'People,' she would say, 'People can do whatever they like but we need to agree where and when to meet.' 'This is a rum group,' she admitted to me

Michael irritated everybody - he described himself as a financial journalist, now made redundant. His questions were always prefaced with a speech about economics ending with a question to the guide - 'What are the prospects for developing a market economy in Macedonia?' He occasionally interrupted my talks with the words: 'Partition! That's the answer for Bosnia.' He was patronizing about the Soul of Europe. 'Gives you something to do,' he said. I was angry and showed it. I was told afterwards that he

is tortured by his homosexuality and lives with his mother. He was very pleased to display his skill at using cash machines.

The teacher told me: 'I thought you were exaggerating sometimes in *A Tender Bridge*. But now I know you weren't.' This was at the end of a long day - we had returned from the Hungarian border - via lunch at a folly a 100 miles out of our way which was supposed to be a 4 star hotel. We arrived at 1pm – over 40 degrees. No one was around. Eventually we woke up the cooks and waiters who served a dismal lunch. Then we made another diversion - to a Slovakian community to visit their galleries of naive art. They were closed. Then we were to see the largest Protestant church in Serbia - also closed. Arrangements to visit the Patriarchate and see a famous painting about Serbia were cancelled at the last moment because of a bishops meeting. Then I offered to give an organ recital at the French Catholic Cathedral. I said: 'Please make sure the key is available.' No key. 'Well,' said Renee, 'Perhaps you could give your little talk on the Ottomans.'

Rod, some sort of company director in his fifties, suddenly said apropos of nothing in particular: 'It's all a question of listening. I am always telling my managers to listen.' He was full of curiosity - the only one in the group to be so. Whenever we stopped he was out of the bus and hurrying down side streets. I asked him what he did with all his information. 'I give slide shows.' On his return from a walkabout in Skopje he told me: 'I met the Mufti of Skopje, and told him about you. The mufti said: I know Mr Reeves - he is a very important person for us Muslims.' I think my standing rose a little when Rod told the group this story

This monastery is from the 10th century - or was it from the 11th or 12th or 13th century - the frescoes are really interesting - from the 10th or 11th or 12th or 13th or 14th centuries. The monastery was destroyed by the Turks twice or three or four times ----- all this useless information. Because the Serb agency underestimated the journey times we never had time to appreciate the ambience of these extraordinary secluded places. 'People!' said Emily. 'People must come back to the minibus, else we won't keep to the schedule.'

We stayed in 12 different hotels in 17 days

On our last evening I thought I would try and provoke some real conversation: 'Does travel broaden the mind?' 'It certainly broadens the arse!' said Hilary - somehow the only real person in the group. She told me that when her family left home she moved to a smaller flat, and liked to travel - but didn't like going alone. Her remarks failed to get the conversation going. Then I could see Renee waiting to pounce again. 'Stuff the Ottomans!' I said to myself, and went up to pack.

Orthodoxy. The guides were very helpful about me meeting monks and priests from the various places we visited. By the end of the journey I began to experience Orthodoxy as really oppressive. I have always liked Orthodox theology - it comes from the heart as well as the head. Because of orthodox belief in grace, it is quite relaxed about matters like abortion, and divorce, etc – the churches don't make pronouncements about these. In small doses I like the Liturgy - but Orthodoxy is full of superstition even more than Western religious traditions. And it is narrow minded, nationalistic and dangerous in the way functionaries repeat stupid propaganda - like the 30 year old Monk in Rohzen, Bulgaria, who told me that the war in Bosnia had clearly been started by Muslims from 'outside'.

In Serbia I renewed my contacts with the Patriarchate, waylaid a Bishop and spoke at length to 2 abbesses. The Serbian Orthodox church has become more nationalistic over the last 3 years. They have understood they will lose Kosovo, and that the Albanians will destroy their churches whatever the international community says ----- the victim mentality is being fuelled yet again.

Donald Reeves
10.8.06

THE FLEA AND THE ELEPHANT

In our Newsletter I omitted our experience of fund raising. This paper describes what happened and my reflections.

I would appreciate any comments you may have, and any suggestions as to how I take these matters further would be gratefully received. I wouldn't want these comments to get into the public arena yet, so they are confidential for now.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

The funding we received in 2002 from the FCO was for one year. In October 2002 I began the process of lobbying the FCO, meeting senior officials at the FCO. I was asked to produce a paper at short notice on our outcomes of a year's work. I did this and sent it. It was never acknowledged.

On November 10th I submitted our funding proposal for 2003. In the FCO the local embassy presents the proposal on our behalf, to DFID and the Ministry of Defence. I told the Embassy in Bosnia that before they presented it I wanted their comments. Eventually on December 12th when I was in Bosnia I received their comments, positive, but with some useful criticisms. They apologised for the delay, but the 'printer had broken down' and 'everyone was very busy'. During that month I left messages etc., and became quite agitated because people's jobs were on the line. So we revised our bid and there were more delays. On December 19th I was told that our proposals had been presented. I was told to 'think positive and be hopeful' but there was no guarantee. I had no choice but to give my colleagues in Bosnia notice, saying that the January payment might be the last.

After Christmas and more agitation I heard that our proposal had been accepted. Nevertheless it was not until February 5th that the funds arrived in our account. (The funds it should be said are restricted when it comes to funding the UK base. There are just 2 of us working from the Coach House. One office is in a bedroom. The other is in the sitting room. We do not charge the project anything for heating, lighting, rent or contribution to Council Tax, and the funds do not cover staff and office costs in the UK, only for the project in Banja Luka.)

I find the passivity, inefficiency and ultimately indifference of officials infuriating.

What I intend to do is:

- Find out, precisely, how the system works (is there a system)
- Find out who makes the decisions
- If the FCO are interested in funding the BL Civic Forum next year

Anything else I should do?

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND FUNDING

In November 2002 the S of E lodged a funding application with the European Commission. The application – stretching to 120 pages in all, is for establishing the Banja Luka Civic Forum. It took 3 weeks to prepare, and I had to hire an assistant at a cost of £2000. The outcome of this application will not be known until June 2003. Meanwhile there will be no human contact between the S o E and Brussels. It is not permitted.

What follows is a mixture of description and matters, which need to be addressed.

THE APPLICATION

The assumption on which these applications are based represent the best of enlightenment thinking, clear, rational, objective, logical, scientific – cool. Every application is evaluated scientifically and the EC provides a manual for the applicant to evaluate their own application.

THE APPLICATION FORM

The form requests quite reasonably the details of the objectives of the project, reasons for choosing them have to be spelt out. The applicant is asked to identify target groups (with the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries) and why and how these groups are chosen, and how they relate to the objectives.

The applicant is then required to outline the proposed activities the ways they will be implemented and why these activities and not others are chosen. Procedures for continuous internal and external evaluations have to be in place. Outcomes of all activities have to be listed.

All this is constantly referred back to the objectives of the projects and the programme's aims.

The applicant is finally required to produce a logical frame for the application in such a way that it is seen to be all of a piece.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APPLICANT AND DONOR

There is none.

No human contact is allowed in the interest of impartiality and fear of bribery and fraud.

AD HOC POLICY

There is no obvious strategy when bids for proposals for funding are made public.

BASIC INJUSTICE

A small new young organisation like the Soul of Europe stands little chance against well established organisations who have departments whose sole purpose is to prepare bids, often with the help of 'consultants' or lobbyists.

WASTE

There is some evidence (certainly in countries like Romania) that where donor policies happen in an ad hoc way (as in Bosnia) their effect is considerably diminished. People want jobs. Seminars on gender issues or human rights don't mean much in a society where there is 60% unemployment and where people do not live in a safe and secure environment. Economic investment, developing civil society and creating a just law and order system are essential, surely the EC should ensure that an **integrated** approach is necessary.

CONTROL

In spite of all the talk about 'building capacity' and 'local ownership', control of the EC projects lies firmly with the officials in Brussels. Accountants set the criteria: budget is everything. The EC ambassador in Sarajevo told me that successful applicants 'are required to come in', and to discuss the progress of the project with officials who have no experience of organising, peace-building etc..

COMMENT

Each of these matters deserves a more detailed critique (and one could add another: the language in which projects, applications etc., is used). But what I find most telling is first that the strengthening of civil society in Bosnia is not happening in spite of million of dollars made available for this purpose and secondly (and related to what has or has not happened on the ground) is that it is ludicrous to believe that reality can be managed in the way the application process implied.

The thinking which pervades these documents is highly reductionist. It neither pays attention to difficulties and miseries of people's lives, nor does it affirm the amazing potential of the human spirit. Instead, everyone is reduced to numbers (how many beneficiaries!) or target groups (at which resources will be made available, so these groups can deliver and thus achieve good outcomes. Spare us!) And because donors have to please those who make the funds available, there is pressure on them and thus on the applicant for a quick fix so they can be seen 'to be making a difference quickly'

WHAT NEXT?

I have started to raise all this with significant officials in Brussels. Reaction is: 'well it's the same everywhere'.

One of the questions which arises is to whom exactly is the European Commission accountable? How can I/we taxpayers start to irritate the elephant in such a way that it takes notice of the flea. We have to remember that elephants and fleas depend on each other.

Should the Soul of Europe try and get this paper or a tighter version of it discussed by MEPs? I am sure the Soul of Europe is not the first organization to have these problems.

What sort of strategy should the Soul of Europe develop to engage Brussels?

Thank you for reading this

Donald Reeves
9.2.03

THE GOLDEN THREAD 2008

Recently I had a meeting with a well known fund raising agency. It offers a range of services: developing organizations, researching funding sources, and undertaking the process of completing application forms for grants.

I was reminded of how the fund raising sector has now become a business. It is proud of its professional status; there are diplomas to be worked for, and research projects to be undertaken and professional associations established. There are trainers of fund raisers, and even courses where the applicant can spruce him or her self up psychologically before the Ask Meeting (polite but not deferential, looking the other person in the eye, etc). Emphasis in written communication is the need for brevity.

The meeting was useful up to a point. Suggestions were made about the way we organized ourselves: perhaps the Soul of Europe could establish itself as a consultancy service while pursuing funds for our various projects.

But something fundamental was missing.

There was no mention of the honorable tradition of 'philanthropy' or of the 'philanthropist'. Philanthropy is the heart of fund-raising.

Over many years I have observed three significant characteristics common to all philanthropists:

- * Philanthropists recognize that the person/s he or she might support, witnesses and makes manifest the values that they themselves hold. And this creates a personal bond - between the one who gives and the one who receives.
- * The philanthropist gladly shares what he/she has, to strengthen the witness and manifestation of the one who receives. 'Gladly' means there is no effort, nothing is begrudged. It is for the giver a privilege to be part of this witness and manifestation. There is a flow in the relationship.
- * The philanthropist becomes a learner. He/she wants to learn more about this witness and manifestation.

Like a golden thread running through past projects there have been a number of philanthropists, who have been steadfast as partners in our witness.

Now I am searching for philanthropists again. How do I discover them – where are those who may be inspired by the witness and manifestation of the Soul of Europe?

Donald Reeves

THE MORAL IMAGINATION

LECTURE AT LAMBETH PALACE 18TH MAY 2006

DONALD REEVES

I would like to thank the Archbishop of Canterbury for his invitation to give this lecture and for his presence here this evening.

I would also like to thank Guy Wilkinson, Pamela Harrison and other colleagues for the work they have done in preparing this occasion.

Finally I thank you for coming. As you leave you will receive a copy of the lecture. If you know of other opportunities or occasions where these ideas can be pursued please let me know.

Donald Reeves

THE MORAL IMAGINATION

Lost elements in the art of reconciliation and building communities.

The lecture will address 3 questions:

How is it possible to dismantle the cycles of violence which so often recur following months or years of negotiation towards a peace settlement? A peace agreement is hailed as a 'solution' but often the terror begins again.

and

Why is it so difficult to recreate the fabric of relationships torn apart by war in such a way that stability and mutual respect have a chance of flourishing?

and

What is missing from so many attempts to bring about peaceful change following conflict?

The answer to these questions lies in generating, mobilizing and building the moral imagination.

Because 'moral' and 'imagination' are not usually associated with reconciliation or conflict resolution I will begin by describing my understanding of the imagination and the moral.

I will then show how the Soul of Europe's work in Bosnia over 6 years has been informed by the moral imagination.

This lecture is unfinished. Many people have contributed to it not least the experience of our friends and colleagues in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Prijedor. So what follows is like a public conversation with myself and I hope later on other occasions with some of you.

Ever since Aristotle imagination has been regarded as an inadequate and unreliable way of knowing, in contrast to reasonable, logical or empirical discourse. And today the imagination is an even more problematic concept in our post-modern world. Post modernism describes, sometimes too extravagantly, the fragmentation, incoherence and nihilism of our culture. Only 'market economics' and 'the market state' remain unchanging and invincible.

So this briefest of sketches of the genealogy of the imagination will show that our present melancholy landscape has not always been so.

Once upon a time the artist used his skills and honed his disciplines to lead the worshipper to God through the image of the icon. The intense but passive eyes and stylized features focused attention of the worshipper beyond and through the image. Then the portrait painter stressed the image as a means of self expression in, for example, Rembrandt's sombre portraits which study his physical disintegration before death or Van Gogh's paintings which vividly explore his mental disintegration before suicide.

Today the pop poster revels in surface effects, incorporating at random, images, which the artist has ransacked arbitrarily from any source.

Or to put the matter differently: once the artists were craftsmen whose task was to serve and imitate the transcendent plans of the Creator. The inventor replaced this theo-centric pattern, taking the place of

God. Today she has been replaced by the artist as an ‘operator’ playing with images, symbols and metaphors.

This genealogy of the concept of the imagination – its development and narrowing of focus is well beyond the scope of this paper, except to say that it is a fleeting reminder that to move beyond the post-modern confusion we need pay attention to how we arrived at where we are, and look for a way forward.

Imagination is our capacity to picture, portray and receive the world in ways other than it appears to be at first glance. (2)

Imagination is an awakening to more than what is visible.

Imagination is the capacity to give birth to something new which changes the way we live in the world.

When the imagination begins to function, then we can live ‘as if’ we are free, ‘as if’ justice can be done, ‘as if’ forgiveness is possible. The imagination rejects as false what has been long accepted and beyond all criticism. (It is astonishing how a long established ‘as’ can keep people in their places until a counter ‘as’ emerges, imagined and given a voice.)

When I describe the imagination as moral I do not mean a narrow confined sense of ‘moralistic’, but in the sense of conveying the idea of an epic journey to new horizons, just out of reach. The way is signposted towards this destination: ‘there is no future unless it is a shared future’.

To respond to the moral imagination means we simply cannot renege on our responsibility to ‘the other’. The face of the other invites and demands an unconditional response: ‘Where are you?’ comes the question. ‘Here am I; here we are,’ comes the response. (3)

This is the ethical requirement of the moral imagination. It invites obedience, shaped, authorised and limited by the imagination. (4)

Ethics follow the imagination. Or as Amos Wilder put it: ‘Before the message there must be the vision, before the sermon, the hymn, before the prose, the poem.’

This understanding of the imagination is neither stern nor censorious. It does not sentimentalize ‘the other’ because it is balanced and informed by the imagination of hope. Neither is the imagination about ‘pie in the sky when you die,’ nor ‘just hoping for the best.’

And, lastly, it is a communal and public assertion where our connectedness is expressed and nourished. Far from being separate, autonomous, distant and detached in a world locked in the strait-jacket of ‘materialistic determinism’ (see note 14), there is a striving on that epic journey for connections, communion and community. (5)

Here are the poets:

*I am the necessary angel of earth
Since, in my sight, you see the world again*
(Wallace Stevens – on Imagination)

and Emily Dickinson:

The possible’s slow fuse is lit by the imagination.

and Adrienne Rich:

*We know now we have always been in danger,
Down in our separateness
And not up here together but till now
We had not touched our strength.*

And some words of Paul Ricoeur, the philosopher:

I would even say that the imagination plunges into the most impressive tradition: that of liberating acts, of the Exodus and Resurrection. Perhaps there would be no more interest in emancipation, no more anticipation of freedom if the Exodus and Resurrection were effaced from the memory of mankind.

So how does the moral imagination relate to reconciliation and building communities? What does it look like when the moral imagination is mobilized and generated?

There are four requirements.

(6) The first is essential. This is to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships which includes the stranger, the adversary, the enemy. Life has to be kept open for those who are unlike us.

We tried to meet this requirement in our work in Prijedor.

Some 2 years ago Mittal Steel acquired an iron-ore mine in Omarska near Prijedor. Prijedor is a town in North West Bosnia in the Republika Srpska (the Serb entity of Bosnia). It is two hours drive from Zagreb in Croatia and about 40 minutes flying time from Venice. In April 1992 a carefully planned program of ethnic cleansing was put into action. Bosnian Muslims (known as Bosniaks) and Croats were unprepared and unarmed. All non-Serbs were removed from their jobs. 2 concentration camps were established, one at an old tile factory at Keraterm and the other at the iron-ore mine at Omarska. During the months of May, June, July and August 1992 not less than 3000 and not more than 4000 people were killed in the Prijedor region. The figures are still not certain (7). In August 1992 an ITN film crew with Ed Vulliamy of the Guardian discovered and reported on what was going on at the mine at Omarska and international public outcry forced the closure of the 2 camps and that of a further collection centre at Trnopolje where women were being held and systematically raped.

The municipality of Prijedor was a laboratory of ethnic cleansing. 474 days were taken up at the Hague Tribunal for dealing with the events at Prijedor, one tenth of the Tribunal's existence.

Once it became known that Mittal Steel had bought the mine, Bosniaks began to demand that a memorial to those who died at Omarska be erected in the mine complex, because it was in all the buildings of the mine that not only torture, rape and all kinds of atrocities been committed but also up to 1000 people murdered. Again, the numbers are not known precisely.

Before the war the mine employed around 5000 people, including Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs. Today the workforce of around 700 is nearly all Serb (there are 5 Muslims employed in the administration). The Serbs did not acknowledge what happened at the mine during the war and opposed the proposal for a memorial.

Mittal Steel asked the Soul of Europe to create a process of mediation which would result in a satisfactory outcome to a potentially destabilizing situation. Our brief, given to us by Roeland Baan, the CEO for Mittal Steel in Europe, was to ensure that all three ethnic groups should agree.

There followed 9 months of intensive activity. The Soul of Europe, consisting of myself and Peter Pelz, assisted by 2 local project managers, a Bosniak and a Serb, with an interpreter, began a journey of

discovery. Would it be possible to bring Bosniaks and Serbs together (there are barely 200 Croats left in the Prijedor region)? Bosniaks had returned in considerable numbers to the region of Prijedor, about 20,000 of them (before there war there had been 40,000). These included a number of survivors from the killing camps.

Except for a small group of survivors who wanted to close down the mine completely and create a memorial to fuel a desire for vengeance, all the survivors who had returned to Prijedor were ready to meet and work with Serbs.

This journey was unpredictable. We developed a plan whereby a Bosniak would be invited to meet a Serb; after that initial meeting we asked each of them how they felt about it. Would they like meet again, and with 2 others? Slowly, in pairs and then in fours and more, Bosniaks and Serbs came together and started to speak about the Omarska Memorial. All together some 50 people took part. Some dropped out. Sometimes the meetings were awkward. The Soul of Europe brought the people together but we did not participate in the meetings. The intensity and concentration of those who participated was astonishing. There was a natural deference to the survivors of Omarska, but these welcomed the presence of Serbs.

Prijedor is a traumatized community, all sides, including the Serbs (9). A trauma is an open wound which has been allowed to fester. When the trauma is ignored then people begin to see themselves as victims. Then no one else can be trusted. The degree of pain is so intense that it is impossible to begin to imagine the experience of others.

The Bosniaks know humiliation. Their stories of being removed from their homes, thrown out of the country or taken to concentration camps have hardly been heard. And since they have been ignored they feel they do not matter. In Prijedor, they see the guards who worked at the Omarska concentration camp walking the streets as free men. The Bosniaks cannot get work. Many of them are teachers, accountants, lawyers, skilled professionals. And there are still 15,000 people missing in Bosnia, mostly Muslim. Time and again we have listened to the grief, rage and bitterness of these people as they share their experiences.

Bosniaks and Serbs demonize one another (9). Demonizing is described as 'projection', the transferring of overwhelming feelings on to others when we sense our survival is threatened. In a state of extreme vulnerability we feel hopeless. We split off from the unbearable feelings inside ourselves and project them on to others.

The more the victims refuse to accept his/her vulnerability, the more they humiliate others and deny those others any human emotion; they dehumanize the enemy, and attribute all kind of negative qualities to them. The Serbs are 'animals', the Muslims are 'pigs'. Gossip in Prijedor is macabre; each of the ethnic groups watches the other and prepares to defend itself. The war carries on.

The Serbs see themselves as victims. Milosevic's dreams of a Greater Serbia failed. Now they feel they are the under-class: the Bosniaks get everything and the Serbs are neglected. Besides which the Serb community has to accommodate 12,000 displaced Serbs from Croatia now living in Prijedor. They fear the Bosniaks, thinking that Bosnia is being turned into a Muslim state, and that they will be wiped out. There are also those Serb families who, like Bosniaks in the war, lost sons, fathers and husbands who joined the army and just disappeared.

We began a process of healing. I say 'began', because healing has to find it own way and take its own time.

One story: a freezing November day we took a group of young Serbs willing to be involved in the mediation process to Omarska. They would have been children when the camps were closed. They knew nothing about concentration camps then. One of the survivors stood in front of a shed, known as the

white house, the main killing centre in the camp, and told these young men and women what happened to him there. He spared no details. The Serbs stood there in shock, a forlorn group, not knowing what to say. Some days later one of them opened up saying: 'We have no alternative but to support the Bosniaks and this memorial. The truth is what matters.'

I have described at length how the cycle of violence functions at the emotional level.

When emotional and human responses to violence are not addressed, when healing in the heart and mind have no opportunities to begin, then sooner or later (even in Bosnia) the cycles of violence will return. Just about everyone the Soul of Europe met in Prijedor – with the exception of public officials who are still in denial – spoke about their suffering as if it was yesterday. We were told many times that we were the first foreigners to take seriously the experience of the traumatized people of Prijedor.

That is one reason why peace agreements fall apart: the personal is indeed the political.

(10)The second requirement is discovering not a critical mass to support a project for reconciliation, but the critical yeast. In creating a web of relationships which includes the enemy, then sooner or later, with sufficient support (kneading), people will emerge who will then move the project forward.

This is not so much mobilizing substantial numbers, certainly not possible in Prijedor, as discovering even just a small group of people, who in the right places and at the right time can make a difference. Yeast is a small ingredient which makes the dough rise. Yeast needs a warm undisturbed space to prepare itself, then, when it is ready, it activates the other ingredients and kneaded well, will do its work. The result is bread.

Gradually a number of people began to emerge, meeting informally, who offered something wholesome for Prijedor and for Bosnia. Serb employees of the mine and young Serbs from the town began to stand in solidarity with the survivors of Omarska.

Although no organization had yet been formed, the people, the yeast of the network, were characterized by an acknowledgment of our human interdependence. They knew they could not live separate lives. They spoke with nostalgia about the Prijedor they once knew, where no one bothered to which ethnic group they belonged. They spoke of Prijedor as their home, for everyone.

This nostalgia was reinforced by personal commitment. For example Miki is a Serb. He is 24, a musician performing with a successful group, recently married with a new-born baby. He took time to get the measure of us, attending meetings, but saying little. One day he told us his story. 'My brother in law is now in prison in Spain. He will be there for 17 years. He was one of the soldiers who in August 1992 took part in a massacre at Mount Vlasic, where 200 Bosniaks were shot and thrown over a cliff. He did something bad. I want to do something good. Even though my father is ordering me to have nothing to do with this project, I know my own mind.' These were his exact words.

Whenever the critical yeast begins to do its work then that web of social relationships is made more secure.

So another reason for the collapse of so many peace agreements is the failure to recognize the potential of a 'small set of the right people involved at the right places. What is missing is not the critical mass. The missing ingredient is the critical yeast.' (John Paul Lederach's *The Moral Imagination*, page 92)

Many peace agreements are just 'top down' so what is required at grassroots and local levels are flexible, adaptable, dynamic organizations. (This was the intention of the Banja Luka Civic Forum, founded by the Soul of Europe. Its slogan was: 'Change happens when those who do not usually speak are heard by those who do not usually listen.')(11)

The third requirement is honoring serendipity. This means discovering by chance something while in pursuit of something else, proceeding like a crab, developing peripheral vision. The question is not so much: what are our outcomes as a result of our inputs and outputs, but what on the way did we learn? Omarska is a small settlement by the mine. The people there were employed as guards and administrative staff at the killing camp. We met a local restaurant owner there who proposed a meeting between the Serb community of Omarska and the neighboring Bosniak township of Kozarac. Kozarac had been destroyed in the war and is now being rebuilt by returning Muslims, causing alarm and suspicion among local Serbs. This proposal from a Serb took us by surprise.

Another accidental discovery, not so agreeable, was to learn about a rift between the Bosniaks themselves, between those who returned to Prijedor and the diaspora from the region now living abroad, numbering around 3000. Most of the diaspora would like the mine closed down, but the survivors living in Prijedor will settle for less because they know the economic value of the mine for Bosnia and that they have to live with their Serb neighbors.

Serendipity makes the outcome often unpredictable. Funders of reconciliation projects and those who evaluate them need to respect the crab-like progress. (Of course, if the work becomes impossible, the crab can dig a hole in the sand and appear somewhere else later!)

Another requirement is attention to memory.

How do past and present relate to a future which has the potential and the necessity to be a shared future? How can we mobilize, generate and build the moral imagination when an entire region is traumatized? And where can we tap into that source of creativity which might transcend memories of a particular community?

I have to say I do not know the answer to these questions.

Psychologists speak about 'chosen trauma'. (12) This is an event or a series of events in which the identity of a group was almost destroyed and to which people from the group return again and again. They remember their violation and the atrocities committed against them. The memories renew themselves again and again and are passed down, so that they shape the way people perceive their lives.

In this way we can say that the past is behind us but also before us and around us.

An example: last December the mayor of Prijedor, Marko Pavic, invited us to lunch. It had taken time to establish a working relationship with this significant leader of the Serb community. He had played an important part in the ethnic cleansing, and therefore did not want mediation let alone a memorial. Nevertheless he was someone we needed to know and bring on board, however impossible the task. After lunch in which he expressed his doubts about our project he drove us to the largest memorial in the former Yugoslavia, one commemorating the massacre and eventual victory of partisans in the Second World War. Partisans were drawn from all the communities, Muslim and Croat. The partisan leader, Tito, was himself a Croat. But the present mythology of the partisans decrees that they were all Serb. We stood by the memorial listening to the mayor telling us that now we could understand who the Serbs' enemies really were, meaning Bosniaks and Croats. But at the same time we were looking at lists of names, Muslim in particular such as Osmanovic etc, which contradicted this myth. Memories of what actually happened are manipulated into myth, which then is allowed to affect our present and our future.

All we can be certain of is the past, the past which is behind us, but also before us, as our lunch with Marko Pavic showed. The present slips into the past, even as I speak, and the future is unknown.

The holders of the myths of the past are the religious traditions: Islamic, Catholic and Orthodox in Bosnia. They keep the memories of the past alive, and are therefore indispensable in the invitation to join on the epic journey to a shared future.

I know and have worked with most of the religious leaders in Bosnia, because of the Soul of Europe's project there whose primary objective is to reconstruct a jewel of the Ottoman Empire, the Ferhadija Mosque in the now Serb administered Banja Luka.

It would be possible to consider all three religious traditions, but that would take too long. Here are some comments about the Bosnian Serb Orthodox Church and the Diocese of Banja Luka (which includes Prijedor).

The Orthodox bishop of Banja Luka is a friend of the Soul of Europe. We have known him for 6 years. He and many of his clergy cling to the memory of an age which has long vanished. They fear the Catholic Church, remembering as though it were yesterday how Orthodox priests were being murdered by Catholic Croats in the Second World War. So when the late Pope, John Paul, made a one-day visit to Banja Luka, the Orthodox bishop did not attend the Pontifical Mass or even send a priest in his place (although he later appeared at a gathering of religious leaders).

The Orthodox Church is not interested in the fact that the Catholic Church in that part of Bosnia almost vanished in the Bosnia War, nor do they understand the need to rebuild the Ferhadija Mosque as part of Bosnia's cultural heritage and as a symbol of Muslim-Christian collaboration. Orthodoxy sees itself in Bosnia as the last bulwark against the spread of Islam in Europe.

The Orthodox Church is wealthier than the state, and is able to build large numbers of new churches. These are being constructed and consecrated, but hardly used, the interiors bare. They are statements of ownership: this is our land. The Orthodox Church sees itself in a state of siege engulfed by its 'chosen trauma'.

The strength of the religious traditions is not governed by those who attend Muslim prayers on Friday or liturgies on Sunday, but by their ability to hold on to the past as if it is before and around them. These traditions still provide the identity of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats.

We attended the consecration of a new Orthodox Church in Omarska last June. The bishop arrived accompanied by a procession of priests, chaplains and acolytes, one of them carrying the Episcopal crown in a Jermyn Street hat box. The entire village joined Serbs from all over the region, cramming into the church. They watched the bishop being robed in his Episcopal vestments at the start of a 3 hours service, one of the most significant moments being the blessing of the bells as they were raised into the belfry. After the service we were invited to a banquet. Presentations of an icon and an Episcopal crown were made to the bishop. We stood up in silence to listen to the bells ringing. In Ottoman times this had been forbidden, so the bells signified: we have arrived, we are not going. Though Mayor Pavic and politicians were present, and Serb flags flew, it was not primarily a political occasion, but a demonstration of Serb identity. Hardly any of the people who attended would even say they were believers, but they were proud to be Serb, defiant in the face of Catholics and Muslims.

Bosnia is always said to be experiencing 'defining moments'. One of the latest is the rejection of the reform of the constitution. This rejection can be traced directly to the holders of the religious traditions. How else to explain Serb politicians' resistance to the continued pressure on the Republika Srpska to pull its weight? The bands of nationalism are strong and no one has found a way to begin to dismantle them. Whatever the solution, the religious leaders of Bosnia will have to play a significant part.

I have outlined 4 requirements for mobilizing the moral imagination, the ability to imagine a web of relationships including the enemy, the finding and encouraging of people committed to strengthening this web-critical yeast, the necessity for process and activities across every section of a community, not just 'top down' implementation, and the requirement for attention to memory as a past which also lies before and around us. These requirements will assist in preventing the cycles of violence recurring, provided they are integrated into the necessary political, economic and security arrangements.

You may ask where is the evidence for the working out of the moral imagination? What is the framework? Where is the theory? As I said at the beginning this is a public conversation, a process. It is not finished. But I believe there is enough experience from peacemakers around the world to develop these ideas.

There is however a significant obstacle and that concerns the values which inform applications for funding and the way reconciliation projects are evaluated.

An example. In November 2002 the Soul of Europe submitted a bid for funding to the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights under the section Support for Democratization, Good Governance and the Rule of Law.

The funding was for a 3 year project. It took three months to prepare. We submitted it in November 2002. The results of the bid were to be announced in June 2003, but not until October 2003 did we learn that the bid had failed. (13)

One of the more curious aspects of applying for funding through the European Commission is that applicants are forbidden personal contact with anyone connected with the Application. Queries can be submitted to an email address, but that vanished once the deadline passed.

The reason for this regulation is that it prevents any opportunity for bribery of officials. A proper distance has to be preserved between potential recipients and donors.

But there is another reason. Given the way applications are framed and evaluated, human contact becomes unnecessary. The Application asks, quite reasonably enough, for a clear statement on aims, objectives and strategy. And then these demands intensify. Activities have to be described in detail. Priorities for each activity have to be justified. A three year project meant that the activities for each month, month on month, had to be described in detail, and how each activity related to what had happened before, and what was planned. Questions about internal and external continuous assessment have to be answered. Local partners have to provide value; and estimating and measuring the impact on target groups was essential. Every activity had to relate to every other in order that the aims and objectives of the project could be placed in a logical frame, like a complicated jigsaw puzzle. Any piece missing and as an official told me: 'your bid will be binned!'

A technical and financial grid evaluated the Soul of Europe's application. The title says it all. Social engineering is the core conviction, which affirms that the world 'out there' can be analyzed, observed, measured and activities can be controlled and managed. If the world beyond the project is uncertain and unstable, a successful log frame will insulate the project from all that.

If this is the way the world works then inevitably it conveys a view of human nature which is reductionist and mechanistic.

The language in which the work of reconciliation is couched is 'business speak': impact, stakeholders, fast track, level playing fields, resources, targets, bullet points, delivery, outsourcing, benchmarking, ring fencing, business plans, etc. The language is ugly. It is sloppy and often meaningless.

But language and bureaucracy are not to blame. Bureaucrats are the guardians of the public purse. Their task is to see that public money is spent in a way that is accountable to the public. If all that is required consists of streamlining systems then changes can and are continually being made to lessen delays and increase efficiency.

But the problem is deeper and more critical.

What I am describing is that the values, assumptions and principles informing the concept of 'materialistic determinism' do not fit the patient, slow work of peacemaking and reconciliation. Moreover 'materialistic determinism' has become so pervasive, so embedded in the way we operate and in the institutions we have created that it is felt as fact. This it is believed is the way the world is and will be; this is how the world is imagined, described and desired. So, for example, when I speak about these matters to senior diplomats at the Foreign Office they say: 'we are just marionettes.' And who pulls the strings? I ask. 'Our political masters,' they reply. Talking to politicians, particularly in Brussels they say: 'Yes, bureaucracy is a problem, is there anything I can do to help?'

The ways of describing the world 'out there' are based on illegitimate principles. These secular and autonomous assumptions are based on claims of power and pragmatism. But these claims do not ultimately work because they are cut off, removed from fundamental aspirations. In the west we find compensation in consumerism and a host of diversionary activities. Ultimately the myths around materialistic determinism do not touch people. Ultimately they are not compelling. Therefore they lack legitimacy. (15)

A PROPOSAL

Given the considerable gap between the requirements of the moral imagination and the way projects on reconciliation are now funded and evaluated, there needs to be a more nuanced conversation leading to some research to match the project and its evaluation with the money.

The research could be undertaken by government, university or foundation.

POSTSCRIPT

At the start of this lecture I described the imagination as the capacity to give birth to something new which changes the way we live in the world.

I have been describing how the work of reconciliation and peace building arises out of our imagination. We are like the artist, fashioning something out of what is a barren land, here and there soaked in blood, with memories of great suffering. But we are on this epic journey towards a shared future, otherwise there is no future for our children, grand-children and their children.

This work is risky and precarious. We live in a sacred space, at the threshold sometimes leaving behind what is familiar as we move into an uncertain future. Risk is built into what we do. As with all artists everything is demanded of us, stretching us beyond our limits. Built into working out the moral imagination there is the waiting and the watching, the pondering, the deepening of our vocation and relishing the opportunity for celebrating, even small things.

An example: at the end of a press conference where our group of Serbs and Muslims outlined agreed plans for the memorial we went to the mine and visited the white house. As I said before this was an interrogation centre during the war. Nearly everyone who was taken there never came out alive. Their bodies would be thrown out after torture during the night and collected in the morning to be buried in mass graves.

The manager in charge of the mine in 1992 was there. He had ordered the sacking of all non-Serbs during the war and went to the Hague Tribunal to witness for the then mayor of Prijedor who received a life

sentence. He had gone along with everything to protect himself and his family, but acknowledges what he did was wrong. In fact we found out he helped Muslim friends escape, warning them and even driving them to safe parts of the region. The manager is deeply ashamed of what he did and enthusiastically became part of the memorial project and mediation process, offering help and advice about the memorial, where it could be sited etc. We will never forget how at the end of the conference, as people prepared to leave the white house and the mine, he went from one survivor to the other, shaking their hands, thanking them for including him in the project. Nothing can destroy or diminish the power and significance of this gesture.

Thank you

Donald Reeves 18.5.06

NOTES

- 1 THE MORAL IMAGINATION. The title comes directly from John Paul Lederach's latest book: *The Moral Imagination: the art and soul of building peace*. Moral imagination occurs in titles and sub-titles in dozens of books. There has been a growth of interest in the imagination among philosophers and theologians, in the last 20 years. John Paul Lederach is a leading Mennonite and world expert on peace building and reconciliation. He is Professor of International Peace Building at the Joan B Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies at Notre Dame University. Much of the 'argument' of this lecture is taken from Lederach's work.
- 2 Walter Brueggemann is an Old Testament theologian. His writings have made an extraordinary impression on my life and my work. He is one of many theologians who drew my attention to the imagination. His first book, *The Prophetic Imagination*, is a passionate essay in 'nurturing, nourishing and evoking a consciousness and perception alternative to that of the dominant culture.
- 3 The work of Emmanuel Levinas has meant a lot to me, in his understanding of 'the other', particularly Totality and Infinity, an Essay on Exteriority (Pittsburgh 1969). More immediately in Bosnia, the Soul of Europe relies on this understanding. Because we have used interpreters, the 'eyes', the 'face', the 'body language' of the other becomes a significant part of communication.
- 4 Walter Brueggemann often quotes the philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, whose own writing on *Imagination and the Text* is difficult but inspirational. Somewhere I discovered these words: 'And it is in the heart of imagination that we let the Event happen before we may convert our heart, and tighten our will.'
- 5 Mary Grey, the Catholic theologian, has been another inspiration on the 'epiphanies of connection' in the *Wisdom of Fools* and subsequent writings.
- 6 This is John Paul Lederach's fundamental insight.
- 7 Bosnia lacks any Truth Commission. There can be no reconciliation without justice, and no justice without knowledge: 'knowing who did what to whom, when and where, etc.' But an NGO in Sarajevo: Research and Documentation has begun to collect records of crimes and atrocities throughout Bosnia during the war. These will begin to dismantle the myths and exaggerations that hamper progress towards peace and reconciliation.
- 8 Paddy Ashdown, the former High Representative in Bosnia, said that the right to return is a new human right. This may be so but many Bosniaks who returned to Prijedor have left again, there is no work, much discrimination and no attempt to integrate with the Serbs.
- 9 My understanding of 'trauma' and 'demonizing' is taken from *Making Terrorism History* by Scilla Elworthy and Gabrielle Rifkind, 96 pages of gold.
- 10 The image of critical yeast is taken directly from *The Moral Imagination* (pages 91-92). I am not a bread maker, but it seems about right.

- 11 The Civic Forum failed after 18 months because the Soul of Europe was under pressure to produce results too quickly. There was just not enough time for process.
- 12 *The Moral Imagination*, page 142 and reference.
- 13 Our application received 85%. I asked for a copy of the Evaluator's Report, which I received with the Evaluator's name removed. They found little to criticize except to say 'that it was somehow too ambitious' and that the Soul of Europe had had 'no experience in handling large budgets.' A conversation, a meeting or an interview would have resolved the first criticism; and had the Evaluators taken up unsolicited references they would have discovered I was responsible for a budget of a turnover year after year of 800K during my ministry at St James's Church Piccadilly.
- 14 'Materialistic determinism' is a phrase used to describe the world view I have been outlining. I came across it in Edward Luttwak: *The Missing Dimension*, in Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (Eds): *Religion: the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (OUP).
- 15 This is the argument of Jurgen Habermass in his *On Legitimization*. He is a difficult writer, and I hope I have got his argument right. In the UK there is an instinctive and widespread distrust of politicians who use the language of 'business speak' – 'delivering resources, etc.' Voters are not impressed with this sort of language applied to Health and Education, etc.

THE SOUL OF EUROPE AND KOSOVO

THE SOUL OF EUROPE

I founded the Soul of Europe in the year 2000

The organization has been working in Bosnia since 2000.

- 1 We have been the initiator and catalyst for the reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka, one of sixteen destroyed in Banja Luka in 1993. The Ferhadija Mosque was designed by the Ottoman architect, Sinan. The Ferhadija Mosque Project is a sign of collaboration between Islam and Christianity.
- 2 The Soul of Europe established the Banja Luka Civic Forum to assist the democratic process in Bosnia.
- 3 In 2005 the Soul of Europe was commissioned by Mittal Steel to mediate in a dispute between Serbs and Bosniaks.

Omarska, an iron ore mine near Prijedor in North West Bosnia was acquired by Mittal Steel in 2004.

During the war in Bosnia, in 1993, the mine was used as a killing camp.

Up to 4000 people were murdered in the region. Many of them at Omarska. The exact figures are still not known.

The survivors of Omarska (all Bosniak) demanded a Memorial in the mine complex for those who had died. The Serbs, who manage the mine, refused to consider these demands.

However the Soul of Europe managed to secure the support of all parties to engage in a process of mediation.

The process took place in three stages:

- a) Discovering Bosniaks and Serbs who would be prepared to meet
- b) Setting up meetings where the memorial project was discussed. First in pairs, then in fours, sixes etc. Between 40 and 50 people were eventually involved – half Bosniak, half Serb.
- c) Holding a conference for all stakeholders where agreed proposals for the memorial were presented.

The project is on-going. The Soul of Europe had a team of six to undertake this work, four from Prijedor and two from the UK.

It has been suggested in the light of our experiences in Bosnia and particularly with the Omarska Project, that the Soul of Europe might be useful in Kosovo.

THE SOUL OF EUROPE AND KOSOVO **CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A SIGN OF RECONCILIATION**

Our understanding is that there is a measure of agreement between Pristina and Belgrade at the national and international level on a range of issues concerning the protection zones of Orthodox churches and monasteries.

But what is lacking is lack of support for these agreements locally.

If agreements are imposed then given the delicate nature of the situation, this could create opportunities for vandalism and destruction, raising the level of tension leading to instability.

REQUEST

The Soul of Europe intends to prepare a proposal.

Our preparation requires information in four areas:

- a) Information about the Agreements, in as far as they have been finalized.
- b) Information about the number of sites – particularly those which are ‘working’ churches or ‘working’ monasteries.
- c) Information about the state of relationships between the sites and the local municipal authorities
- d) Information about any mosques to be included in protection zones.

It would be most helpful if the Kosovo Institute for Cultural Monuments Protection and the Cultural Heritage Division of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports could provide the Soul of Europe with this information. We hope this will be possible and we are most grateful for your assistance in this matter.

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

From my conversations at the Paris Forum, it was clear there is a lot of uncertainty about local arrangements for the protection zones.

I noted seven areas of concern:

- a) The relationship between the ‘sites’ and the local municipal authorities.

- b) The on-going security of the sites and how they should be protected once the KFOR have left.
- c) The need for accessibility to the sites for Serbian children, as part of their education.
- d) The arrangements for the administration of the 'sites'.
- e) The safety of those undertaking restoration and reconstruction.
- f) The need for religious sites to be included in urban plans.
- g) An answer to the question: who has ultimate responsibility for the restoration of the buildings?

TOWARDS A PROJECT PROPOSAL

The Soul of Europe's task would be to create conditions where Kosovar Albanians, Serbs and other minorities could meet together to consider and resolve these and other matters.

Our task would be to create conditions in which conversations could happen in such a way that over a period of time trust begins to develop – so contributing to the security and well-being of Kosovo.

INTERVENTION

- 1 The Soul of Europe would collaborate with partners already engaged in this work
- 2 The Soul of Europe would appoint local project managers from the Kosovar Albanians and Serb communities.
- 3 The Soul of Europe would require the mandate from the Kosovo government, and all key stakeholders before the project begins. We shall be seeking this mandate as soon as we can.

Donald Reeves
Director of the Soul of Europe

THE SOUL OF EUROPE AND THE REFERENDUM

EUROPE'S STORY

In popular imagination there is a lack of story about Europe. Europe disappears from the map after the end of the Second World War, then surfaces again at the fall of the Berlin Wall, and emerges once more with the present question as to whether the UK should be 'in' or 'out' of Europe.

This lack of perspective about our place in Europe plays into deeply held prejudices. The Empire, the Commonwealth - the English speaking peoples. This has meant that Europe, generally called the 'Continent', has never been a priority. Today there are few EU flags flying on our public buildings, unlike in other European cities.

Moreover, the European question is complex. Most politicians and economists are unable to write in plain English about Europe which makes it easy for the Far Right to make xenophobic statements about 'immigration' and 'sovereignty'.

Our place is in Europe. One of the most trenchant advocacies for the UK remaining in the EU was expressed by Geoffrey Howe, a former foreign secretary during Margaret Thatcher's administration, in an article in the Observer on the 18th May 2013. I will not repeat his arguments except to say that if the UK turns its back on Europe we will be diminished in every way - become a little England.

Because of the complexity of the institutions which have grown over the years and which make up the European Union, I will write about what I know and what I have experienced of the European Commission in Sarajevo, Pristina, Belgrade and Brussels over the last sixteen years, bearing in mind that Serbia, Bosnia and Kosovo are seeking to become members of the EU.

Philip Pullman states: 'Stories are the most important thing in the world; without stories we wouldn't be human'. And that is why, lacking a popular story, I write about what I know.

Commentators about Europe are gloomy about Europe's future. They catalogue the disillusionment with political elites. Europe is losing respect for its politicians. And leaders from the Far Right are emerging with their dangerous rhetoric about racism, islamophobia, anti-Semitism; and inhumane treatment of minorities like the Roma and refugees is becoming acceptable as part of the public discourse.

There is a structural problem. All the EU states operate independently. There is no common treasury. So when it is said 'Europe' must do something about migration, there is no agreement. Each state has its own policy on migration, and each one differs markedly from the other. Some like Sweden have a liberal open policy; others like neighbouring Denmark are strictly exclusive.

The EU is perceived as an old people's club - middle aged men (mostly) - getting in and out of cars ready for more talks in Brussels. Yet, those in their twenties and thirties take the freedom to travel in Europe for granted - ignorant of Europe's story, of its scarred history.

Meanwhile the Russian bear is stirring. Europe has not found a way to curb these disturbances. Is Russia exploiting Europe's weakness?

When there is talk of Greece leaving the Eurozone, analysts go into overdrive: the Eurozone will collapse, the EU will fall apart, and Armageddon will have arrived.

Lastly in this gloomy scenario there is the threat from Islamic State. If Christians and other ancient religions are being wiped out in the Near East, will it be our turn next in Europe?

PLANET BRUSSELS

Recently the Times and Financial Times reported that each member of the European Parliament will be receiving an additional £18,000 a year to spend on assistants. Each MEP has a budget of £275,000 for staff. This means taxpayers will face a million pound bill for a five year term. It will bring total potential spending on assistants for seven hundred and fifty MEPs to more than £206 million a year. German MEPs, vociferous in their call for austerity, particularly for poorer countries, have also been the campaigners in favour of these increases. On average, assistants in Brussels earn about £7000 a month.

Given that Greece and Spain are in melt down, it is incredible these proposals are on the table: incredible and also wrong.

Why is this? Simply because the EU headquarters in Brussels and Strasbourg are too large. They devote more attention to themselves, their positions and offices than to the purpose for which they exist.

Furthermore, the European Commission headed by unelected Commissioners, who are effectively unaccountable and control large pots of money, operates on an old fashioned model: hierarchical and patriarchal, even when women are employed in top jobs. New ways of working in smaller groups, where the lap top becomes the office, have not arrived in Brussels. The working environment needs to be more like a plate than a pyramid.

In the Balkans I have met many officials - trying to interest them in my work, and seeking advice for funding. More often than not, these officials are withdrawn and disinterested. They operate in a working environment where they are not appreciated. I doubt if they begin meetings with: 'And how are things for you?' So their energies are focused on preserving their jobs.

I cannot recall one official who is passionate about his or her work. On my first visit to Kosovo I was told by a leading local NGO that at weekends internationals depart for Vienna or Thessalonica, and return on Monday.

So when a Commissioner appears and makes a statement he or she seems to come from another planet.

Here is a story from Kosovo. The tone, the style is what I want to draw attention to. The story might be different in other countries like Bosnia, economically dependent on the EU, but the tone and style are the same.

Dimitris Avramopoulos is the EU Commissioner for Migration. Avramopoulos was minister for foreign affairs and a former mayor of Athens. He came to Pristina on March 10 this year. He met the president, the prime minister and a couple of ministers. The purpose of his visit was to discuss the mass exodus from Kosovo which had been taking place over a period of months. At its height a thousand people a day were travelling to the Hungarian border via Serbia. He also came to discuss the process of the liberalising of visas. At the end of his visit, he held a press conference. His statement can be found on his website under Announcements.

Reading his statement, ten words come to mind:

ALOOF, DETACHED, TIRED.

STERN

He comes across as a head teacher reprimanding an unruly pupil.

PATRONISING

The president of Kosovo was singled out for some good work she had done. She is a model for a head of state - shrewd, calm and unruffled. I have met her. She did not need to be commended for just doing her job.

THREATENING

'Unless you do this, I personally will not be able to recommend, etc...'

IGNORANT

He said we had to find out why this mass migration had taken place. The commissioner has fourteen full time advisors in Brussels. The Exodus had been widely commented on and analysed. But the advisors failed to notice, or failed to brief the commissioner. He also gave no indication that he knew about a long tradition in Kosovo of migration from impoverished rural communities.

MORAL TUTOR

The commissioner implied that unless Kosovo cleaned up its act about corruption he personally would not support the process for the liberalisation of visas.

The EU sets itself up as a moral tutor. But Europe is in no position to do this. In a wide ranging article in the London Review of Books, *The Italian Disaster*, Perry Anderson describes the pervasive corruption of the political class across Europe (LRB 22 May 2014).

OBSCURANTIST

In the course of his statement the commissioner said the EU is assisting Kosovo in its economic development. I turned up the EU plans for 2014-2020. I read three pages and then gave up. I could not understand what the writers were trying to say.

The people of Kosovo deserve better than this. Kosovo has been invited to integrate with Europe. Then a tired, tawdry and sclerotic way of managing puts every difficulty in its way.

The Kosovo story is an illustration of how Planet Brussels functions in the Balkans, and I guess elsewhere.

Two other matters are pressing. One is how illiterate many internationals are about religion in the Balkans. Religion is not just about what people believe and do, but is an expression of people's identity.

The second is the way in which Europe has become 'marketised'. Rowan Williams in a review of David Marquand's *An Essay on Britain Now* writes: 'The issue is whether public service or public good can be so completely translated into the language of market provision that nothing remains that cannot be rendered in business models - no goal without profitable outcomes.' (New Statesman 30th May 2014).

No wonder that the debate about the Referendum perpetually focuses on the economy and business.

To address this matter requires a huge intellectual and spiritual effort.

REFORMING THE EU COMMISSION.

The commission needs reform. It needs to be accountable, more flexible and less managerial. Its officials need to seize opportunities and not miss them.

A story from Bosnia: in February 2014 Bosnia erupted. Across Bosnia people gathered, set up what became known as 'plenums' and expressed their frustrations, sometimes violently, against endemic poverty, hunger, and resentment against politicians. The EU was alarmed. Stefan Fule, then Commissioner for Enlargement, flew into Sarajevo, lectured the politicians and flew out. What he should have done was to take time to meet the leaders of these citizens assemblies - even though they were not elected but self-appointed, and listen - listen as if his job depended on it. This was a missed opportunity.

The European Commission needs to scale down its headquarters in Brussels, and become local. Its officials need to learn to listen. They need to move out of their fortress-like offices. They need to stay close to the ground listening to the cries for help, the demands for justice and the growing protest movements. The European Commission should be advocates for all the marginalised, the forgotten and unwanted, and so find its role as the conscience of Europe.

A PROPOSAL - DOWN TO EARTH

'So on a day when newcomers appear
Let it be a homecoming, and let us speak
The unstrange word, as it behoves us here,
Move life, move minds and make
New meanings flare'.

(From the *Beacons of Bealtaine* by Seamus Heaney - written for the occasion of admitting ten new member states in Phoenix Park Dublin, when Ireland held the Presidency of the EU, 1st May 2004. Bealtine is a Gaelic holiday marking the start of summer.)

So what will it take to 'move life, move minds, and make new meanings flare'?

As I was preparing this paper, I reread Pope Francis' speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on November 25 2014. I realised that what I was writing reflected the Pope's critique of Europe and how especially his understanding of the human person, not as a cog in the economic machine, not even as a citizen, but as one who is endowed with 'transcendental dignity' - so everything must be done to recognise and enhance that dignity.

So a programme for the CONSCIENCE OF EUROPE will have at least four elements.

A first is to establish a network across Europe of those groups who are already struggling for change.

A second is to ratchet up inter-faith activities, some already well established across Europe, so those in synagogues, mosques and churches stand shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with each other for the benefit of their communities.

A third is to honour artists of every sort, and particularly film makers, who recognise and tell the stories of the migrant, the displaced person, thus reminding us of the human face of those who are labelled as this or that.

And fourthly there is the intellectual and demanding task of dismantling the marketising of the state, and looking for new ways of organising our affairs.

For myself I have always been inspired by the words of St Irenaeus, inscribed on the plaque honouring Michael Ramsey, a former Archbishop of Canterbury: *The Glory of God is the living Man, and the life of man is a vision of God.*

NEXT STEPS

A meeting is planned on how to take forward the ideas in this paper; probably to be held as an event initially in London, Birmingham and Brussels.

Please pass this paper on to anyone you know who would be interested, particularly organisations which could become partners.

We will need to get a move on because it is likely the Referendum will be in 2016.

We also need media coverage. Any ideas how we proceed?

Thank you for reading this. I look forward to your reply. Let's make this happen now.

Donald Reeves
22.5.15

THOUGHTS ON GRASS ROOTS ACTIVITY

WHAT DO WE DO ON MONDAY MORNING?

DONALD REEVES 20.6.14

Mainstream media is relentless in fuelling the Far Right's portrayal of Islam, so much so that its rhetoric is part of the way many people think and feel about Muslims, particularly those who have no contact with them.

The rhetoric is dangerous because it endorses the ignorance, prejudice, and fear which surfaces on the streets, against women, in schools, and at work. Islamophobia inevitably manifests itself locally.

Grass roots activities are locally based. Many people are fed up with conventional politics, disillusioned, angry and bitter. Communities are beginning to get organised, shaping their own futures, tackling local problems and networks through social media.

There can be no real participation unless power from the centre has been devolved; and there is no real power unless there is participation.

Local groups tackle local problems. This means organisation, and funding. The Labour party talks well about decentralising, but it will remain talk unless funding is made available with as few strings attached as possible.

It is in this environment that Islamophobia has to be challenged. Ideally Muslims should, and in some cities are, already part of these grass roots activities. It should be acceptable that they participate as UK citizens.

I am not a Muslim so I can only guess how difficult this involvement maybe for some, particularly for older people. It is understandable to remain in your own community and not venture out. But at least there needs to be conversations and discussion within Muslim communities.

What then would a grass roots movement to interrupt and remove Islamophobia look like? What do you have to do if you want to take steps in the direction, with others?

ELEVEN HEADINGS

There is a vast literature on the following 11 points. These are just headings.

- 1 Its necessary to be particular: ask the question: 'what is going on here?' Take an X ray of a community, and find out what is happening. Stories are as important as statistics. This is called analysis.
- 2 Once a problem is identified, look for allies, and possible partners, people, and organisations who will stand should to shoulder with you.
- 3 Potential allies can include those academics who are committed, especially if they are prepared to learn.
- 4 Do not forget faith communities: not the fundamentalist variety, but those who are prepared to work with you.
- 5 Work out what solidarity means in your situation. Social media is an essential tool.
- 6 Seek those who have done or who are doing this work; no need to reinvent the wheel.

- 7 Remember Islamophobia is a European problem, not just one for the UK. Create active networks.
- 8 As a project emerges look for help, if needed, for development of the project. In your planning make sure there is the possibility of one modest success and make sure to celebrate it. Any excuse for a party.
- 9 Decide how to deal with spoilers. They will surface quickly once your proposals are known. This is difficult. Look around for stories of those who have taken on the Far Right.
- 10 Keep an eye open for other grass roots activities: they could be your partners.
- 11 Take time for reflecting: the art of preparing for action, and taking a closer look at our frameworks for interpreting experience. This kind of work is not a quick fix. Be ready for the long haul. The art of reflection is rarely given enough due. It needs to be learnt and practised. It has been a tool unique to the Soul of Europe's modus operandi.

Donald Reeves

TIME FOR HOPE

DONALD REEVES

24.1.17

I am writing this in the shadow of President Trump's inauguration, the major speech by the Prime Minister on Brexit, and in the aftermath of the gathering at Koblenz of the Far right leaders from Germany, Italy, France and the Netherlands. The shadows lengthen.

There is much uncertainty, pessimism and fear in our public life. The future of the world has never seemed so precarious.

It is therefore tempting to draw the curtains and turn away - to leave these big problems for others to solve.

Perhaps we think something will just turn up, and meanwhile behind closed doors and closed curtains there is much to distract us: life has to carry on. As TS Eliot puts it in *Burnt Norton*:

Only a flicker,/ over the stained time-ridden faces/ distracted from distraction by distraction/ Filled with fancies and empty of meaning.

In 1968 I was a student at the Urban Training Centre in Chicago as part of a group of mostly black pastors learning about community organising. Our teachers were Saul Alinsky and Jesse Jackson who taught us how to stand up to the racism endemic then and now in the US. I have taken one thing from those heady days of black power, protests

against the Vietnam War, the emergence of the hippy culture and passion for civil rights. What I learnt stayed with me since then: Get Organised.

Draw the curtains back and engage in serious activism. We, that is all citizens have to join the struggle, and resist the temptations of the right with its ersatz promises laced with racism, islamophobia and anti Semitism, so reminiscent of the thirties.

Because at the heart of all this is the unshakable conviction that every person matters - that each of us whoever we are is made in the image of God. Pope Francis recognises this simple fact by calling those who arrive in Europe as refugees our brothers and sisters. Working this out politically and economically is very difficult, but it is too important to be left to politicians. The fundamental conviction to recognise the humanity of each person is non-negotiable. The understanding that each person has a soul means that each of us is more interesting and precious; we are more than just a puff of warm breath in a cold universe: here for a second and then gone. .

Our hope is invested in this vision. No matter whatever is chucked at us we nourish that hope and work it out in serious activism. There is no need for despondency or anxiety or fear but draw on that hope. The Easter story is a mighty act of defiance, pushing back the darkness. The implications of this hope are wonderful. There is the recognition of the power and moral imagination which glimpses in the ruins a new reality waiting to be born, and there discover a disposition to be hopeful as Martin Luther King said in words echoed by Barak Obama: 'The arc of the moral universe may be long; but it bends towards justice'.

We need a new counter culture, a culture of resistance to shape a more just world where we tread lightly on the earth.

Please be in touch with me if you wish to take up any of issues I have sketched briefly. Let's draw on that hope.

Donald Reeves. Donald is the co-founder of the Soul of Europe. Working in the Balkans for sixteen years the Soul of Europe practices what Nelson Mandela said: 'If you want peace, do not talk to your friends but to your enemies so they become your partners'.

WHAM SLAM WALLOP

On Saturday April 14th I was at St Endellions Church in North Cornwall (John Betjeman's and Rowan Williams' favourite church). I made a five hour presentation on Bach and Peace-building - bit of a marathon - to an attentive audience.

April 14th was also an important day - because it marked the air strikes on chemical weapon facilities in Syria by the US, France and the UK. Preparing my talks and also the music I was playing made me recognise once again how odd, how strange peace-building is. 18 years in the Balkans have taught me that peace-building is against the grain; it's counter cultural; it's an alternative, not mainstream. As a

grizzled Tory politician told me when I was at Piccadilly about the fifteen year Dunamis project we ran: 'You don't solve anything by all this talking.'

So what is so odd about peace-building. Here are eight bullet points - each need a book but brevity will have to do for the moment:-

1. Megaphone Diplomacy. Politicians shouting at each other 'in our national interest' -with an eye to their constituency and the next election.

Peace builders believe in getting all sides to listen - listening is difficult. Standing in the shoes 'of the other'.

2. Peacebuilding and Power. The Powerful - national politicians - scorn peace-builders. Idealistic, not in the real world, they say. Machismo reigns - among women as well.

Peace builders don't give up. When negotiation breaks down the peace-builder is there. As we were told in Bosnia by a journalist: 'you guys are different; you keep turning up'.

3. 'Something must be done' Anything to show we are in business. Bomb the hell out of them, and such is military technology now you don't even have to meet the enemy.

Peace-building depends on building relationships of trust between the most unlikely groups. We did this in Bosnia. Trust is key. For Trust to grow it needs time - there is never enough of it. Lots of talking.

4. Use the media for propaganda. I have a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' - learnt from the philosopher Paul Ricoeur. I mistrust the BBC, the US and Russian media.

Peace-builders must learn to be canny about the media - fake news and the social media are tricky. Probably best to do as much peace-building under the radar - otherwise trust will begin to disappear.

5. Stability is the best we can hope for. Anything we will do for peace and quiet. Ok there is no peace without justice - back to this idealism again.

Peace-builders understand that everyone is included in the peace processes not just politicians, particularly those whose voices are rarely heard. We did this in Omarska. Needs time and money. Peacebuilders bring a vision to their work - springing out of the imagination. The last piece I play in my Bach and peace-building presentation is a marvellous chorale prelude on the coming of the Holy Spirit - I see it as former enemies walking together towards a receding horizon.

6. 'Leave religion out of this - does more harm than good'. We heard many sentiments like this over the years.

Peace-builders recognise that in some parts of Europe religion is about as much about identity as beliefs. It was wonderful to see the Catholic Bishop of Banja Luka and the Serbian Orthodox Bishop sitting in the front row at the inauguration of the Ferhadija Mosque. Both bishops are good friends of the Soul of Europe.

7. Silence the spoilers: ignore them or remove them.

But peace-builders try to work not just with people you agree with but with those who violently disagree. Possible but difficult. Takes time.

8. Peace-builders should pay attention to how meetings are set up. Not the parties sitting across a table, but in circles. After some of these formal meetings I once told the President of the Republika Sprska that I had not seen his legs! He looked surprised - at the next meeting we were in a circle in the corner of his spacious office. He looked very pleased with himself.

So if you have read this far you see just how alternative peace-building is - and I haven't started to write about funding. That is something else, except to say we need whistle blowers to show that many of us have to deceive our way through to get funding. The market determines the criteria for funding. You simply cannot measure everything in terms of impact, etc. But we have to find a way to be accountable, using public or trust money. Basic thinking needs to happen. 18.4.2018

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread

REPORT OF VISIT TO BELGRADE, PRISTINA AND DECANI

2009 November 23rd – 30th

Donald Reeves and Peter Pelz



Donald with Metropolitan Amfilohje
and Mirjana in Belgrade

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE – AN OFFICE IN SOME ORGANIZATION

DR, PP, our partners in Belgrade/Pristina and a Spokesperson: third secretary/researcher/assistant at embassy/major foundation/European Commission

S: Thank you for coming in (*indicating we should sit opposite at a spacious empty table. Sometimes someone in the corner is poised to take notes.*)

DR: (*Looking around disappointed to see if the director/ambassador or first or even second secretary is available.*) Thank you for seeing us.

DR gives a by now well-honed, persuasive and lucid presentation of the Monasteries Project, explaining how we intend to normalize relations between the Serb Orthodox monastic communities, now protected in their enclaves by heavily armed Italian soldiers, and the surrounding mainly Kosovo Albanian municipalities; and concludes by asking if the spokesperson has ever visited Decani or Pec.

S: (*Only slightly embarrassed*) No unfortunately I have not. But thank you for your presentation. This is a most necessary and important project. Something should happen. (*Pause*) Your valiant work of peace is admirable. I am very sorry our Director/Ambassador is not here. He/She is travelling (*even though we fixed a date some time ago and we were promised a meeting*). Unfortunately we are not able to offer funding since our funds are already allocated for the next twelve months.

DR: Could I ask why you cannot help us, if this work is, in your words, so important and necessary, and no one has ever tried to do this before?

S (*defensively*) We must tell you that we are already supporting many people who work in this field.

DR: Really? Please tell us about them! We would love to meet and learn from them.

Embarrassed pause

S: Your project is very difficult, and....

DR (*interrupting*) Isn't that just why this work is necessary?

S (*looking uncomfortable and defensive*) Well, we don't fund religious projects, much as we would like to...

DR Of course there is an inter-faith aspect to our work. I am an Anglican and we will be bringing together Muslims and Orthodox Serbs. But there is more to it than this. This is a project about:

Democratization – people taking charge of their situation

Security – ensuring the protection of minorities

Human Rights – freedom of movement (*the Spokesperson shows more attention, we are on more familiar ground*)

Public Relations – good for Albanians and Serbs, and the chance of long-term Economic Development for pilgrims and tourists

S: Yes, that is very interesting. (*The secretary writes something*)

DR: And of course we shall look out for allies and spoilers.

Donald then explains the mapping exercise in which allies and spoilers will be identified and brought into the project. The spokesperson looks non-plussed.

Pause

S: I have to go now. Do keep in touch. We have much to learn from you.

The secretary stops writing and stares at us blankly.

The spokesperson stands up from behind the table. We shake hands and leave.

S: Good luck.

SCENE TWO – THE PATRIARCHATE IN BELGRADE

We had been told by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, next to the headquarters of the Serbian Orthodox Church – the Patriarchate – that it would be impossible to meet with anyone there because everyone was in forty days mourning for the recently deceased Patriarch Pavle. The two spokeswomen at the Foundation, in a meeting identical to Scene One, gave us this information with a mixture of pity, knowing we had come all the way from the UK to make contact with the Patriarchate, and triumph, thinking our failure would finally get rid of us.

However, as we hovered by the Patriarchate, thinking at least to offer our condolences in person to whoever might be there, for instance the cleaner who was noisily Hoovering the entrance hall, the door opened and a tall imposing Orthodox bishop came out onto the road with two priests.

D: Do you speak English?

Bp: Yes I do, can I help?

Donald explains briefly our proposal for Decani and Pec. The Bishop is not only attentive but enthusiastic.

Bp: I am Bishop Irenej, the Archbishop of the Orthodox Church in Australia and New Zealand. I am just packing to return home but have five minutes and would be delighted to hear more.

It seemed that business was carrying on as usual in the Patriarchate, contrary to what we had been told next door and despite the mourning. Forty minutes later we were still inside the Patriarchate. After giving our presentation the Bishop, fully engaged, responded to our chief problem: getting the permission from Bishop Artemije of the Kosovo Diocese, who discouraged all communication between Serb Orthodox and Kosovo Albanians, to begin the process. Bishop Irenej had organized an inter-faith conference of all religious leaders in Kosovo at the Pec Patriarchate, which by its nature as equal to the Belgrade Patriarchate, was beyond the jurisdiction of Bishop Artemije. The conference promised to improve the situation in Kosovo, but Bishop Artemije stopped any development and Bishop Irenej as an outsider could do nothing about it.

After sharing our frustration Bishop Irenej hit on the idea of persuading us to visit Archbishop Hillarion, President of the External Affairs Committee of the Russian Orthodox Church, whom Bishop Artemije held in great respect. Hillarion might soften up Artemije. This meant a possible visit to Moscow, but Bishop Irenej felt this would help the project. He and his fellow bishops had no way of influencing Artemije.

The meeting ended with an exchange of details and most importantly contact with several Serb Orthodox organizations, which could help fund the project. His recommendation would open doors, and this turned out to be the case. Mention of his name immediately roused interest and encouraged support, even with talk about budgets.

SCENE THREE - THE ROYAL PALACE, BELGRADE

Crown Prince Alexander, who does not use the title of King of Yugoslavia, gave us a warm welcome. Despite having only half an hour before his next meeting, he had official photographs taken and settled us down to afternoon tea with savouries and cakes, elegantly served by a fleet of waitresses. He listened attentively and enthusiastically to our presentation and proposal to bring the monks of Decani to sing at Westminster Abbey on the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

PA: Ah! I was baptised there. The Queen is my godmother!

We had already over-run our time, but Prince Alexander plainly enjoyed our company and kept his next guest, the outgoing director of the United Nations in Belgrade, waiting. The director harrumphed in the background, pacing impatiently, not used to being treated in this way, while the Prince continued talking delightedly with us. Telling him I planned to give a concert of Bach's Leipzig Chorale Preludes in the Catholic Cathedral to raise funds for the project, the Prince became even more animated, promising to come and help make the occasion a success.

PA: Please make sure I know about this. I want to be there!

Informing us that he knew the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church personally, he also offered to write a letter of introduction, and help set up a meeting with Archbishop Hillarion. He also offered to lend his name to our project and so encourage the various Serb Orthodox organizations, suggested by Bishop Irenej as possible sources of funding, to support us, and gave us some more names to contact.

SCENE FOUR - A RECEPTION AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL, BELGRADE

At a fund raising event for a new Orthodox church in Montenegro one of our chief and most influential supporters in Serbia, Vladimir Bozovic, made sure we met with Metropolitan Amfilohje, acting head of the Serb Orthodox Church, again. Vladimir gets on well with Donald. A successful and ambitious lawyer he is also generous with his friendship and time. He is also adept at using a mobile phone and Blackberry simultaneously, and incessantly. Following my productive encounter with the Metropolitan in May this year, Vladimir wanted me to have further conversation and confirm the Metropolitan's support for our tricky project. Since we had, and still have difficulties securing sufficient funding for the main part of the process, we needed to apologize to everyone for the delay in getting started. No one minded, all sympathetic.



Donald with Metropolitan Amfilohje,
Vladimir Bozovic, Mirjana and Ian

These four scenes give a flavour of our work. The most positive aspect of our four days in Belgrade was discovering a new much younger partner for our project: Transconflict (www.transconflict.com). We share the same objectives and are planning to see how we can work together. Ian Bancroft, from the Isle of Man, and Mirijana Kosic from Banja Luka, fixed up our meetings and came to them all. It is so helpful for the Soul of Europe to have a firm link in Belgrade. I hope we can be of use to them also.

INTERVAL

This deserves a paper to itself, and Peter will be writing later at more length about the visit, describing the journey from Belgrade to South Serbia and into Kosovo, crossing no-man's land and into North Mitrovica. There we walked across the feared and notorious bridge that separates the Serb and Albanian communities in Kosovo.

ACT TWO

We spent the weekend in Kosovo to strengthen our links with our Kosovo Albanian project manager there, Kreshnik Suleymani. He will have a key role in the project, working closely with our Belgrade partner and ourselves. We were thrilled to find that he is still utterly committed to the peace process, even though it will mean leaving his job, once we find the funding.



Kreshnik, Donald and Feha in Przren, near Decani

SCENE ONE – DECANI MONASTERY

A warm sunny day - leaves turning. Having 'registered' with the Italian guards the church and monastery beckoned me, and I enter alone. Peter and Kreshnik leave with our driver Feha to sit in cafés in Pec and Decani and do a Vox Pop about local attitudes to the monasteries.

I ask for Father Sava who is the official representative for meeting international organizations. He is bilingual, fluent in English, and I have been told how sympathetic and enthusiastic he is about our process. A monk appears.

Monk: Father Sava is ill in bed and cannot see anyone.

He shows me into a reception area where the Abbott, Bishop Teodosije is waiting for me. We already met in May to confirm his support for the project. In his late 40s he looks unusually exhausted, obviously unwell and should have been in bed also. I give him a gift of chocolates and make a short presentation.

Bp Teodosije: Thank you for coming. I really appreciate what you are doing for us. But we have a problem with Bishop Artemije. He does not like us cooperating with international people. And we are so tired of these conflicts within the Serbian Orthodox Church. So tired... tired of church politics. Perhaps you could help us develop informal links with 'ordinary' citizens.

I tell him of the possibility of a visit to Archbishop Hillarion in Moscow to intervene with Bishop Artemije. I tell Bishop Teodosije about my plans for a concert in Belgrade to raise money for the project. For a moment he cheers up.

Bp Teodosije: Please let us know when this will be! We shall all want to be there!

He is also pleased with the invitation to bring his monks to Westminster Abbey, together with representatives of the Kosovo Albanian community.

Brother Peter translates. He is a deacon monk in his mid-thirties, by profession an accountant. That is his main task at the monastery.

As he walks me to the car he looks downcast and becomes even more so as I describe to him how Decani could yet be a beautiful witness to Orthodoxy, to all of Christianity and to all faith communities in Europe. He is on the verge of tears.

Br Peter: When Bishop Artemije last visited us he was so rude. He spoke rudely. It was terrible.

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Later that day I received a text message from Father Sava, still on his sick bed:

'I am sorry myself for being so weak to see you today. Bishop Teodosije told me you have had a good meeting, and that you understand our situation very well. Let's hope you can help us strengthen our moderate approach, as in the long run we can only have more damage from this isolationist policy. We are deeply saddened that in the present circumstances and limits there is not much we can do. Hope to see you the next time you come. With the best Nativity wishes. Father Sava.'

(For those of you puzzled by the above I should explain: Bishop Artemije is the Diocesan Bishop of Kosovo. He is therefore in charge of all the monasteries, including Decani, with the exception of Pec, which is the ancient seat of the Patriarchate and therefore remains under Belgrade's jurisdiction. Bishop Artemije can and has on three occasions been over-ruled by the Holy Synod in Belgrade. Bishop Artemije supported by a small coterie of monks and 'civilians' represents the extreme nationalist Serb position. He does not recognize the independence of Kosovo, so he dislikes any connection with Kosovo Albanians or even representatives from the International Community who recognize Kosovo – which accounts for his respect for Archbishop Hillarion of the Russian Orthodox Church, because Russia does not recognize Kosovo. While we were in Kosovo he issued a press statement that he had cut electricity supplies to twenty monasteries and churches, who had now been without power for two months, just as the coldest season of the year started. His explanation: to enter into a contract with the Kosovo Electricity Company would mean recognizing Kosovo. As a result of this extreme measure, the monks and nuns in Kosovo are suffering more.)



Donald and Bishop Teodosije at Decani in May

NEXT STEPS

- 1 Our partners in Pristina and Belgrade will energetically pursue names and contacts for funding.
- 2 The Soul of Europe and Bishop Artemije. We feel that only as a very last resort should we contact Archbishop Hillarion. This is church politics at the highest level and could take much time and money. We will try to arrange some sort of mediation between Artemije and another Serb Orthodox bishop whom he respects. The only one we know is Bishop Jefrem of Banja Luka. He is a candidate to be the next Patriarch. Because of our work with the Orthodox Church in Kosovo he may be helpful, but our experience with him is that he may support Bishop Artemije even more. We have to tread carefully, as always. Much depends on who the next Patriarch will be, and he will be appointed by the end of January. There are a few liberal names, as well conservatives; and it could be that Metropolitan Amfilohje (on the pictures) will continue as Patriarch, which will help us, because he completely supports our project. The Patriarch is chosen by lot: a few names placed in a box, and one picked at random. As the Serb Orthodox Church puts it: ‘Choice is in the hands of God.’
- 3 There is another way. I am proposing to give a concert in Belgrade’s Catholic Cathedral, with myself performing several of Bach’s Leipzig Chorale Preludes and the monks from Decani singing. This concert will be in aid of the Diocese of Kosovo – an idea encouraged by Bishop Teodosije. This will be a significant event: the Lutheran music of Bach in a Catholic cathedral in the presence of two Orthodox bishops who are presently not on speaking terms. Perhaps Bach’s music will become a means of reconciliation. (Donald get practising!)

We believe that the problem of the bishop will resolve itself. People will just not put up with his ‘rudeness’ any more.

Donald Reeves

Peter Pelz

3rd December 2009

PS Travelling around Belgrade and Prishtina is easy compared to the complexities of negotiating Gatwick Airport, transferring between North and South Terminals. After a number of attempts going up and down escalators, blank faced porters pointing vaguely, some of us arrive outside a lift to the shuttle service. We pile in. We go up and the door refuses to open. Buttons are pressed. Nothing happens. Try again. Then the alarm bell is pressed. Nothing happens. A woman at her wit’s end after dragging heavy luggage presses every button many times, jabbing with increasing frustration. Nothing happens. A lurch, and eventually we move down again, then to another lift, and so it goes on...