

DUST

BOOK TWO

PART ONE

MAPS, COMPASSES AND MINEFIELDS

A BOSNIAN IN WALES

The last luminous leaves of autumn hung swollen gold from the dark branches of tall trees around Trigonos, the house by a lake in North Wales. Slate-grey waters lapped the shore in the shadow of the cloud-shawled curves of Snowdon.

Ros Tennyson, now our advisor on partnership, had invited us to Trigonos to discuss the next stages of the Soul of Europe's work in Bosnia. Donald and I met with Adnan, our colleague from Sarajevo, and Mirza and Samir who had translated for us at the Coventry Consultation in Coventry. Mirza and Samir had fled Banja Luka during the ethnic cleansing when they were boys, and had now settled with their parents in London.

Mirza, a twenty year old with a compact physique delicate and tough as porcelain stared across the dining table, dark damp eyes smarting from recollected pain.

'I don't care to stay in the past,' he said. 'The future is what matters, how we change our lives, how we make our country a richer and better place.'

His family were among the last to leave Banja Luka towards the end of the war. The writing had been on the wall for several years, many Muslim friends having already left or disappeared. But eventually the time came when Bosnian Serbs turned up at their house with guns and ordered them to leave.

A bus took them to the border with Croatia. Mirza had just turned fourteen, but a slight growth of dark hair on his chin and upper lip made him look eighteen, which turned out lucky for him and the other passengers. More Bosnian Serb soldiers stopped the bus along the road to Croatia. 'Are there any Muslim men under eighteen?' one of them asked. 'If so they must get out here.' The soldiers were culling Muslim boys. Mirza tried to keep a low profile, feeling the intensely protective and frightened gaze of his mother urging him to be silent and not move. 'If you don't hand them over and we find any boys on the bus we will shoot all of you,' the soldier threatened. But before he began his inspection an incident on the road distracted him, and he gave only a cursory glance over the passengers. He did however pause at Mirza. But noticing the ghost of a moustache on the boy's face he allowed the bus to move on. Mirza's premature hairiness saved his life and also the other passengers. The bus disgorged the refugees by the wide River Sava, where they were left to fend for themselves. Fortunately UN troops patrolled the opposite bank, so although Bosnian Serb soldiers cocked their rifles waiting for opportunities to kill a Muslim for the Holy Serbian Fatherland, the refugees remained relatively safe.

Eventually boats took them across the river to Croatia and Mirza's family made its way to the UK. A devout Muslim, Mirza observed Ramadan, so during his stay at Trigonos he only ate and drank in the evening. He told us how being a member of the Banja Luka

Choir he had been one of two Muslims who performed at a concert in front of Radovan Karadjic, sitting prominently on the front row next to Bishop Jefrem.

He remembered the special beauty of the Ferhadija Mosque. He used to enter whenever he felt sad or stressed and the warm space and exquisite wall decorations would inspire him. After kneeling in prayer he would look up at the dome and feel peace in his soul.

Then one day he cycled past and saw the mosque in ruins, rubble everywhere, the minaret lying in pieces on the ground. He now remembered the people passing by, many of them Serbs, stopping in their tracks and staring in stunned silence at the desecration. No one could grasp the enormity of the vandalism. 'I am the only one here who remembers the Ferhadija Mosque as it used to be, and saw its destruction.'

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Some months earlier Denis Arifovic, our contact person in the Bosnian town of Bihac, visited Trigonos and made friends with Ros Tennyson's youngest son Addy. Addy, like most young boys, thought of war as glamorous and exciting. Denis spoke to him of the daily experience of siege and survival; how hard it was to come by shoe-laces, for instance, wearing the same clothes day-in-day out. He spoke of discomfort and deprivation. This shocked Addy, whose only knowledge of war came from films with their adoration of massive artillery, fast action and inevitable triumph.

'What do you think we missed most?' Denis asked the boy.

Addy paused thoughtfully, taking in all that he'd been told and came close: 'Sugar?'

'Coca Cola!' said Denis.

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RETURN TO BOSNIA IN AUTUMN 2001

ONE MAN'S EVIL IS ANOTHER MAN'S GOOD

'If you get Bishop Jefrem to meet Mufti Camdzic in Coventry I will personally buy a ticket for you to have a holiday in Hawaii,' Reis Mustafa Ceric had joked with us before the Coventry Consultation. He assumed along with everyone else that we would fail.

So we arrived in Sarajevo expecting an upbeat reception.

However the Reis looked depressed. 'Is it better to be alive or dead?' he asked rhetorically as he strode into the room. He was referring to the invasion of Afghanistan, terrorism, Bin Laden and Islamophobia.

We had been waiting as usual for several minutes in his austere furnished reception room where a little light filtered through the barred windows into the chilly gloom. The only picture on the walls was a small black and white photograph of Alija Izetbegovic, the Bosnian Muslim leader, kneeling in the Begova Mosque.

A young woman wearing a hijab served us Turkish coffee on individual brass trays.

Trying to resist the Reis's melancholy mood we launched into a discussion about the follow up to Coventry and talked forcefully and positively about future developments in Banja Luka and the possibilities of rebuilding the Ferhadija Mosque.

'The difficulty is working with the Republika Srpska,' sighed the Reis, not sharing our enthusiasm.

It now dawned on us he had not expected to see us again. We had become a nuisance. The positive outcome of the Coventry meeting had wrong footed him. His fez was

perched slightly askew above a sad and perplexed face; he must have put it on hastily without checking in a mirror.

Ifet Mustafic, his chef-de-protocol, attended the meeting, sitting solemnly on a chair by the door. Normally busy with other matters, his lean and monk-like presence indicated the importance of this occasion. Ifet wrote copious notes and bestowed an occasional friendly nod and smile, rare gestures which came only when deserved.

After the meeting of political and religious leaders in Coventry the project to rebuild the Ferhadija Mosque had suddenly become a reality. The Reis looked uneasy about this, but not wanting to discourage us he set out to warn us of the immense problems ahead.

‘The Republika Srpska is a result of ethnic cleansing. The choice is simple: you either cancel out the Republika Srpska or you give in to Karadjic. The Dayton Accord may have stipulated conditions to establish peace, but the present demography and political divisions in Bosnia are based on Karadjic’s vision and hopes for his people. Accepting the Republika Srpska means acknowledging Karadjic and his policy of ethnic cleansing as a given fact.’

‘You don’t give up!’ exclaimed the Reis, exasperated at our persistence. ‘We have to do things for ourselves and need to learn how to take responsibility.’

He told us about a recent ceremony in Trebinje for the laying of a foundation stone for a destroyed mosque. Trebinje is in Southern Bosnia where Serbs and Croats had massacred many Muslims and burnt their homes. Jacques Klein, then the United Nations Representative in Bosnia, drafted a statement to be signed by all the religious leaders. The Orthodox Metropolitan complained but grudgingly agreed. Klein, though good at

twisting arms, could not change attitudes however many documents might be drawn up and signed.

The Reis considered the best way to proceed in our project might be to present everyone with a *fait accompli*, but then reverted to his former pessimism: ‘Don’t expect outcomes. As Hobbes said, make an effort and try not to be hypocritical. Tell your Prime Minister Mr Blair that to secure a good future for Muslims in Europe only professional, not voluntary, representatives of Islam should be allowed.’ By voluntary he was referring to the dangers of self-appointed imams with personal political agendas setting themselves up as teachers and influencing disaffected young people in their communities. He continued: ‘Europe must help Muslims establishing their own schools, train and educate imams in Europe, not importing them from distant parts of the world where they have different traditions and cultures. They are embarrassing for Muslims who are now European. But those who live in Europe must respect European traditions. So don’t import imams. This is the job of governments. Muslims must be part of the system. At the moment only the voices of the extremists are being heard. We have to open up serious dialogue. In New York no one heeds the messages. The European Union and America must understand that the problems will not be solved by arresting Bin Laden.’

The Reis now warmed to his argument: ‘I hate my friends coming to talk about reconciliation. Sometimes I prefer lemon to sugar. In a time of crisis it may be better for men to be unpleasant. Is this a time for revenge and retaliation, or not? And the Palestinian issue has to be resolved. The Ottoman Empire collapsed because it was blind to changes in Europe. Now the West is blind. The Arab world is changing. There should

be no isolationism, no assimilation, but integration. It is good for Europe, good for Muslims and good for the world!’

The Reis then brought the meeting to an unsatisfactory conclusion with a Bosnian riddle: ‘A father wants his daughter to marry a rich man, but she declines, leaves home and marries a poor boy whom she loves. There is no benefit in compulsion.’

‘Obnamite, celamite!’ he concluded like fist on a table. No one translated for us.

RESPECT

Ambassadors changed frequently in Sarajevo. We got to know two well in the seven years we worked in Bosnia.

First came Graham Hand, an old fashioned hands-on ambassador, tall and gracious, urbane, witty and forthright. He behaved like a perfectly groomed diplomat, keeping a distance from disputes, protecting British interests, encouraging economic ties, doing what was expected of him but, in private, his sharp tongue excoriated politicians and religious leaders whom he considered criminally involved in the war. His advice and political analysis saved our skin frequently and without his generous support, entertaining us, arranging meetings and suppers, we would not have achieved the gathering at Coventry.

A younger breed of ambassadors was now being sent around the world to represent the Cool Britannia of Tony Blair. After Sarajevo, Graham Hand found himself without prospects. Despite impeccable manners, his independence of mind meant the Foreign Office now posted him to dangerous places like Algeria.

Ian Cliff took over in Sarajevo. His bookish, modest manner and his slight figure were in marked contrast to the bullish Graham Hand. His predecessor enjoyed sparring. Ian Cliff preferred to immerse himself in statistics, his hobby being the devising of train timetables.

‘I know about this in great detail,’ Ian Cliff told us pointedly the moment we sat down in his office. He had been briefed by the Foreign Office, but listened attentively to everything we said, cautiously keeping his counsel, wanting to learn as much as possible before giving an opinion.

We described the outcome of the Coventry Consultation: the plans for a partnership forum in Banja Luka which would introduce democratic processes into government and local authorities. We spoke about the Ferhadija Mosque, the search for European partners in this project which would be a rare example of co-operation between Muslims and non-Muslims and establishing a board of directors for the eventual rebuilding of the mosque. Ian doubted the efficiency of our organization, which consisted of just two people travelling to and fro across Bosnia. The Foreign Office, though astonished and admiring of what we achieved at Coventry, understandably feared that we might burn ourselves out trying to complete a multiplicity of projects. So they rejected most of the proposals made in Coventry, such as organizing a consultation of mayors from all over Bosnia. They avoided everything to do with the Ferhadija Mosque because it had too many religious connotations for the government’s twenty first century secular outlook. Since ‘bringing democracy’ to all parts of the world had become the new political mantra, the Foreign Office preferred to limit their support to our plans for a partnership forum. Graham Hand

and Ian Cliff did all they could to support our efforts because they understood the political, social and cultural significance of the Ferhadija Mosque.

Our main project had been clear from the first visit to Bosnia: to rebuild the Ferhadija Mosque. This was about Islam and Europe, not religion. We were not Muslims and neither of us had any interest in building mosques.

Rebuilding the Ferhadija meant acknowledging a period of history when the East impinged on the West. Just as our empires influenced and altered the lives of nations in all other continents, so an Asian empire affected Europe, despite attempts to preserve the continent as an exclusively Christian entity. Given the fluidity of movement between peoples across the world today, mutual respect has become a priority for good relations. To permit the destruction of such an important cultural monument as the Ferhadija would declare a lack of respect: its existence didn't matter. That Europeans should initiate its reconstruction as an act of reparation would at least acknowledge the importance of justice. Respect is a word used frequently among minorities with chips on their shoulders who feel ignored, oppressed and sidelined.

The project to rebuild the Ferhadija Mosque became the main purpose of our work. It justified the name we gave to our organization: the Soul of Europe.

However the religious connotations became the main obstacle to raising money and attracting interest in Europe. Those who managed the purse strings in London and Brussels, though sympathetic, refused to spend money on what they considered irrelevant.

Therefore the only substantial money we received came from the Muslim world where religious traditions inform every part of life, even secular business and political dealings.

Libya, then still a pariah state described by America as part of an ‘axis of evil’, provided the bulk of our funding. For this reason Daniel Fearn, the ambassador’s deputy, quiet and thoughtful, sat in on our meeting so he could report back to the Foreign Office.

The Libyan money had been given personally to Donald to cover expenses and debts incurred by the consultation in Coventry. Mr Abuaisa arrived in London with thirty thousand pounds in notes ready to hand them over in a restaurant.

‘We did not want to disappoint you,’ he said with a broad smile. ‘I have it here!’ patting his pockets.

Alarmed, Donald proposed that the money be transferred through the Muslim College accounts in London. The Libyans liked to encourage Christian-Islamic dialogue in Europe, and approved our plans to create a network of associations across the continent which would support the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque.

The Foreign Office was relieved that the Soul of Europe did not depend on government money. We, on the other hand, hoped the Libyan money might shame the Foreign Office into helping us more.

Ambassador Ian Cliff then accompanied us downstairs to show us out. Even the guards and officials at the front desk looked impressed.

AN AUDIENCE WITH ALIJA IZETBEOVIC

The whole Islamic world always knew that the Bosnia War was about ethnic cleansing of Muslims. The West however preferred to see the conflict as a civil war between three communities who bore historical grudges. Each community had its warlord. Slobodan Milosevic led the Serbs, traditionally Orthodox Christians with strong ties to Russia.

Since Belgrade the former capital city of Yugoslavia was the main city of Serbia, Serbs took possession of the national arsenal based there. Milosevic presumed he could threaten and beat the other communities into submission, so creating a unified Greater Serbia encompassing all regions of the former Yugoslavia. Slovenia, sensing this takeover, swiftly made itself independent and, despite firing some missiles from Belgrade, Milosevic could not resist their claim to independence and so ceded to that northern region. Macedonia also seceded from the Yugoslav Federation. Montenegro, being Orthodox Christian and with large numbers of Montenegrins living in Belgrade, some in positions of power, remained an ally of Serbia which left Croatia and Bosnia claiming independent status.

Franjo Tudjman led the Croats - Catholics with traditionally strong ties to the Catholic community in Europe, specifically in Italy, Austria and Germany.

Appalled by Western reluctance to protect Muslims in Europe, the Islamic world could not allow brothers and sisters to be wiped out of Bosnia. Mujaheddin arrived to defend Bosnia's Muslims.

So the West identified Alija Izetbegovic, leader of the Bosnian Muslims and desperately trying to save his community and country, as the third war lord of the conflict. Describing the conflict as a civil war exonerated Western powers from responsibility for the carnage. Croats were still considered victims. Most governments in Europe, including the British, respected Milosevic's aims to unify the Yugoslav Federation at whatever cost.

Then news of appalling atrocities, torture and killing in concentration camps committed by Serbs changed public opinion. The Croats managed to evade censure, despite brutal

ethnic cleansing in Southern and Western Bosnia. Grudgingly, and too late for the Islamic world, the West began to express pity for the sufferings of Bosnian Muslims.

But the West still regarded Izetbegovic with suspicion for allowing Mujaheddin into Bosnia. The arrival of these extremists challenged the embargo Europe imposed on arming Bosnian Muslims. Describing the conflict as a civil war meant Izetbegovic could be bracketed with Tudjman and Milosevic as a war criminal. However Tudjman and Milosevic, being 'ethnic Europeans', 'one of us', continued to be supported by European politicians who treated Izetbegovic with less respect, the message being: 'You are not one of us! And moreover we don't trust you because of your links with Muslim extremists.'

Tudjman and Milosevic represented their respective people's nationalist aspirations as military leaders and rulers whereas Izetbegovic represented his people's survival. The faces of Tudjman and Milosevic dominated the streets from massive billboards in Croatia and Serbia, in the manner of former communist leaders. Izetbegovic, on the other hand, displayed a more modest profile.

By the time we visited Sarajevo, Izetbegovic, now old and weary, had begun handing over the running of his party, SDA, Party of Democratic Action, to Sulejman Tihic, whom we had invited to Coventry along with Serb, Muslim and Croat delegates from Banja Luka when he was deputy-speaker of the Assembly there. In order to isolate Mufti Camdzic at Coventry, the Serb leaders of the Assembly scheduled important meetings on those dates to prevent Tihic coming. We had been prepared for Camdzic being made to feel vulnerable and had therefore invited Mufti Makic from Bihac to keep him company. We had hoped Tihic would be coming as well, but guessing the Serb tactics it came as no surprise when he did not arrive with the other delegates.

Now Tihic wanted to make up for this disappointment by inviting us to meet his boss and mentor, Izetbegovic, a man who would remain forever a hero to Bosnian Muslims for steering them through the war without help from the rest of Europe. Although unable to stop massacres and the destruction of Muslim towns and mosques, nevertheless his leadership had prevented total genocide.

Before ushering us into the presence of their leader, Tihic, lean and watchful, and his assistant Sehada, entertained us in another room with Bosnian coffee and cakes. They apologised profusely for not coming to Coventry. Tihic had initially been suspicious of us, and doubtful we would make any headway with the Serb nationalists. Now he treated us with friendship and gratitude, sitting at the edge of his seat, hanging on our words and gazing at us, eyes shining with goodwill.

For the first time we felt part of the Muslim family, not outsiders looking in and being watched with suspicion. Up to now difference created a barrier. Though we would be sitting in the same room we could have been on separate continents. For the first time we sensed the wall between us crumbling.

Sulejman Tihic would eventually become president of Bosnia. When we first met in Banja Luka his air of formality was sharpened by discomfort at having to deal with Bosnian Serb politicians who had tried to kill him only a few years earlier, and he seemed to be constantly looking over his shoulder or past us, as though expecting a knife or gun. As deputy speaker he had no authority, the post was a formality to abide by the rules of the High Representative that all administrative posts in every part of Bosnia should be shadowed by an appointment from a different ethnic community. So a Muslim mayor in

the mostly Muslim Federation would have to accept a Serb speaker at the local assembly, and a Serb Speaker of the national assembly had to put up with a Muslim deputy.

However everyone knew that power resided only with the top man who paid scant attention to his deputy. In some cases the deputy might be a thorn in the boss's side, and a skilled politician like Tihic could quietly manipulate the system and create openings for change which wrong-footed his less clever enemies. But these were dangerous and ruthless people, so he needed to be subtle and dogged, qualities that defined him as a politician.

Unlike in Banja Luka, here in Sarajevo Tihic did not feel uneasy, and so did not feel the need to deliver speeches but instead relaxed into an easy flow of conversation, his bald pate glistening, hands gently rubbing long, delicate fingers together.

We discussed the doubtful probability but necessity of rebuilding the Ferhadija Mosque, emphasising the project's international European aspect and the possibility of finding high-profile patrons. Tihic stressed the importance of publishing the declaration signed by the three religious leaders and making it widely known. We should also promote the fact that the Reis had appointed Donald, a Christian, Vice-President of the project.

To our surprise Tihic dismissed the significance of the well organized protests against the Ferhadija earlier in the year on May 7, when Muslims and their guests from the international community, ambassadors and diplomats, were attacked with rocks and stones at a ceremony for laying the mosque's foundation stone. The ceremony had to be abandoned as the frightened mufti, Bosniaks and guests rushed for cover in the Islamic Centre, the only building standing on the site. A rock hurled by a schoolboy killed an elderly Bosniak.

‘May 7 was the last eruption of extreme nationalism,’ Tihic reassured us. ‘Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks have agreed to cooperate in the Republika Srpska.’

Perhaps he spoke as a politician, having to consider developments in the most positive light. Or maybe he was taking a long view, seeing beyond present obstacles and problems to a future where life could become normal again in his country.

‘It is now law,’ he explained. ‘We have every confidence in the constitutional changes helping the process of reconciliation. It will not only be for the Serbs but for everyone: the constitutional changes have been made and must be enforced.’

These words partly explained his absence at Coventry. In the same week as the consultation there Tihic had helped steer important legislation through the Banja Luka Assembly. He needed to be present and alert because he knew that these new laws would improve life for Bosniaks in the Republika Srpska.

We talked about the international aspects of the Ferhadija Mosque project and how they might help reduce the influence of extreme nationalism. Tihic advised us to help with the rebuilding of the Orthodox monastery of Zitomislice near Mostar, which had been destroyed by Croats during the war. The Orthodox in Banja Luka would then appreciate the even handedness of the Soul of Europe.

He approved our plans for a civic forum in Banja Luka, start of a process of community regeneration. He told us of small businesses and handcraft associations already being established by Croats and Bosniaks there. These returnees used to own shops and businesses, and wanted to start up again. They needed financial support: about five thousand pounds each to employ up to fifteen people, and of course these investment costs were hard to find. We told him how at Coventry had opened up opportunities

especially for meetings between the mayor of Banja Luka and the Birmingham civic authorities, schools and businesses and that we intended to follow up these links and make sure they continued.

Tihic then emphasised the importance of the three religious groups being seen to cooperate, in full media spotlight and with dissemination of all statements and agreements made.

‘Now is the time to broadcast!’ he insisted. ‘Show pictures! Bishop Jefrem has to be seen by his constituency to be reading the statement made at Coventry – to help build confidence.’

Then Tihic took us to see the former President of Bosnia in the next room, lined with books, modestly furnished, comfortable and airy: the office of an academic.

Alija Izetbegovic, a slim, tall gentleman with the elegant manners of an aristocrat greeted us warmly. He knew about our work and had wanted to meet earlier, but illness and age sapped energies already frayed after ten years of political stress. He had to ration his engagements, so meeting him constituted a special privilege.

His words echoed those of Bishop Komarica in Banja Luka: ‘Don’t give up, whatever the challenges.’

Serbs in Belgrade blamed the suffering of the Balkans equally on the three warlords, Milosevic, Tudjman and Izetbegovic. Distributing blame exonerated them from responsibility for specific atrocities. Conversing with this quietly spoken, cultured man who showed no trace of bloodthirstiness, I thought back over forty years to my time in Germany.

Then I had worked in the Porsche factory in Stuttgart, earning money for my future studies at college. I made friends with my German co-workers who similarly laid equal blame for the Second World War on the three warlords: Hitler, Stalin and Churchill. My friends were well-mannered family men proudly showing snapshots of their children, and thoughtfully presenting me, a student of literature and history, with books of poetry written in Swabian dialect celebrating the region's beautiful woods, hills, fields, streams, nightingales and moonlight. During work breaks they noticed me reading books in preparation for my studies. The books included Isaac Deutscher's biography of Stalin and this provoked particularly heated discussion. For them Stalin was worse than Hitler. Twenty years earlier Stalin had been a crucial ally of the UK and the US. Without him Hitler might not have been defeated. The sacrifice of millions of Russian lives in that war laid the foundations of eventual victory. So attitudes to the Soviet Union tended to ambivalence. The world knew about Stalin's purges and the gulags across Siberia, the oppression and slaughter of yet more millions. Isaac Deutscher argued that on balance the wickedness of Stalin paled before the enormity of Hitler's murderous nationalism.

Discussing these two war leaders with my co-workers, and initially shocked at having Churchill brought into the equation, I realized that their argument about shared responsibility for war expressed an intolerable weight of guilt still felt by Germany. I encouraged and respected their opinions in order to understand them. Besides which I was fond of my co-workers, who were so kindly taking me under their wing, keeping a watchful eye on this callow student, helping me deal with technical problems, teaching me car-making skills.

Later studies in history at university taught me the extent of shared guilt throughout the whole of Europe, not just Germany: a mesh of anti-Semitism, anti-communism and power games beyond the simplistic politics of these Porsche car mechanics. Finally I realized that their solicitous friendship to me was a way of saying sorry, and this realization moved me with unexpected poignancy because their subtle act of reparation to this Jew boy in Stuttgart became their way of planting a seed of hope for the future.

Izetbegovic represented a Churchillian figure to Muslim Bosnians. He fought for the survival of his people in the face of genocide. But not only his enemies in Croatia and Serbia now liked to implicate him in war crimes, the rest of Europe's political leaders also joined in the equalizing of guilt. 'He should be at the Hague Tribunal,' Serbs told us in Banja Luka. Listening to the quietly spoken, modest, intelligent and dignified statesman I tried to understand the reasons for the contempt shown him by English politicians like Douglas Hurd and Lord Carrington, who openly supported Milosevic, the Butcher of Belgrade. Hurd dismissed Izetbegovic as 'a nasty little man'.

The entrenched hatred and suspicion of Muslims by European politicians throughout and after the war presented a formidable obstacle to our attempts at gaining the trust of the Reis, muftis and other Muslim leaders in Bosnia. Why should we be any different from the rest? Had they not suffered enough from western prejudice? Serb nationalists could still count on it. Graham Hand, the British ambassador in Sarajevo, visited Banja Luka shortly after 9:11. The speaker of the Assembly, Dragan Kalinic, delivered an anti-Muslim speech: 'Now you know what we have been fighting against!' The impunity of expressing this opinion showed the depth of prejudice in Europe. The equation of extreme fundamentalist terrorism with the Muslims of Bosnia was as simplistic,

erroneous and pernicious as the equation of Stalin, Hitler and Churchill by Germans after the Second World War.

Before taking us to see the former president, Tihic informed us that the Muslims had suffered ten attempted genocides in under a century since the Ottomans withdrew from the Balkans. A large painting in his office depicted a medieval Bosnian town, a place that had been Muslim for over five centuries. Now, he told us, Catholic Croats had destroyed the town and put crosses everywhere.

A RUSSIAN, AN AUSTRIAN, A SPANIARD AND AN AMERICAN

Among the internationals assisting the Office of the High Representative in the years immediately following the Bosnia War we met Anwar Azimov. This Russian from Uzbekistan and special advisor on inter-ethnic conflict to the High Representative attended the Coventry Consultation as an observer. Anwar put off coming at first, fearing a fiasco, but once he arrived and saw for himself former enemies talking together he became our most ardent admirer. Effusively affectionate in a typically Slav manner, he would throw his arms around us, as far as his short stocky build allowed, and declare: ‘Ask anything of me! I will do what I can. Whatever you need, just ask!’

His glowing reports to the High Representative persuaded the chief political leaders from Bosnia to attend the final day’s presentation.

Now Anwar wanted us to meet allies in the Office of the High Representative who would support and help find funding. We sat in a small ante-room round a table piled with plastic cups and bottles of mineral water and fruit juice. While we waited to meet people Anwar informed us that he had been chosen to be next Russian ambassador to

Kabul in Afghanistan. Given Russia's catastrophic recent history in that country we concluded the appointment to be either a punishment or acknowledgement of his superior diplomatic skills.

Eventually the door to the High Representative's office opened, secretaries bustled and Wolfgang Petritsch greeted us warmly. After the success of our consultation in Coventry we had become welcome guests rather than tiresome nuisances. We met this Austrian diplomat regularly at Vienna airport where we changed flights to reach Sarajevo. The last time we saw him there he surprised his fellow passengers, which included the American Ambassador to Bosnia and senior politicians, by breaking rank, walking over to us and shaking our hands. It occurred to me that a terrorist bringing this plane down would have annihilated most of the present government of Bosnia.

Anwar sat in solemn silence next to the High Representative throughout the meeting while Petritsch questioned us about how we planned to carry forward what we started in Coventry. 'Who is taking the first step? All are waiting,' he said.

Donald commented on the stultifying tradition of rhetoric: statements being made by opposing sides but no one prepared to listen and discuss, there being no tradition of following declarations up with action.

Petritsch sensed an improvement in the political situation. A forward thinking Orthodox bishop in Serbia had recently told his Church: 'You can't build your identity by destroying another's.' The mood in Belgrade had changed and Serbs there were even discussing the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque as a symbolic gesture of reconciliation between the Orthodox and Muslims in the Balkans.

Feeling simultaneously encouraged and disappointed we spent the next hours in the ante-room with Anwar who introduced us to several significant officials in the Office of the High Representative.

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First we met Daniel Ruiz, the Spanish Special Envoy's operations officer to the Office of the High Representative. Tall and strikingly handsome he sat and smiled broadly at us, teeth gleaming, dark eyes sparkling. Daniel Ruiz belonged to that breed of solitary restless individuals, intrepid journalists like Jason Burke, Ed Vulliamy and Maggie O Shea, explorers like Gertrude Bell and Lawrence of Arabia, secretive mercenaries and valiant operations officers, who roam the most dangerous areas of conflict, not for honour but because they need to stretch their souls and bodies. These people would wilt in less stressful conditions. Their effortless glamour is not cosmetic but emanates from the centre of their being. Sexually irresistible they can never be held down. Daniel Ruiz worked at the frontline in situations of extreme conflict. Already Bosnia had become too peaceful. He talked of his next posting to Afghanistan.

Meanwhile he had taken part in the recent ceremonies of reconciliation in Srebrenica and Trebinje which he helped organize. He sustained injuries from bomb blasts and shelling. But these pains and traumas far from discouraging him, only spurred him to more perils.

Daniel Ruiz dwarfed everybody, physically and in candour, giving contacts, making suggestions. In comparison, the other people we met were pale with limp handshakes, half-smiles, apologies and excuses.

Sprawled across the sofa, blinding us with his smile, a flicker of mockery glinting in his eye, he observed the procession of officials, embarrassed by our presence, which put pressure on them to do something problematic, having to congratulate us on our success in Coventry, thanking us for persisting in our work and regretting that they could not help except with advice.

Individuals like us were useful fronts, giving kudos to British presence in foreign places. But politics demanded security of national interests and pragmatism in the face of international terrorism, gangsters and corruption, which thrived in unstable places like Bosnia. So we had to be kept at a distance in case we disturbed the international community's alliances with strong local leaders, who happened to be criminals.

By mistake Anwar invited Mike Engelking and his assistant from the World Council of Religion and Peace. They disapproved of our methods, saying we were too political. Emphasis on rebuilding the Ferhadija Mosque favoured Muslims, who were now the chief enemy of the West. The World Council of Religion and Peace in the Balkans followed the international community's preference for the Serb Orthodox ethnic groups, the strongest in the region, but publicly declared their concern in keeping all ethnic groups happy in a non-political way. They flatly refused to help us persuade Bishop Jefrem from Banja Luka to attend the Coventry Consultation, where he might be subjected to criticism.

Like Reis Ceric, Mike Engelking had not expected us to succeed or to see us again. Resentful at being summoned by the Office of the High Representative, he hesitated in the corridor before entering the ante-room, and then showed no pleasure in meeting us.

Mike had perplexed us. Friendly at our first meeting he then cooled. Trained in the military, he seemed to be ignorant of basic facts about inter-religious relations in the Middle East. For instance he had not heard of Balabat in the Lebanon, site of a unique college for the study of Orthodox-Muslim relations, something anyone running an organization for peace between the world religions would automatically know.

As soon as Mike had sat down, Anwar proposed that the World Council for Religion and Peace might offer the Soul of Europe office space at their headquarters, if a desk could be spared. Mike Engelking spluttered, almost choking on his coffee. 'I'll look into the matter,' he muttered, 'but can't promise anything.'

As the conversation continued, discussing post-Coventry proposals, he began to realize we were short of funds, and this cheered him, knowing the impossibility of finding money for our kind of work. 'I wanted to congratulate you on Coventry,' he announced, standing up to leave, 'but never got round to it. I congratulate you now.' Adnan, our translator and driver, who had been such a decisive, and heroic, influence at the Coventry Consultation, was desperate for an office to continue his work with the Soul of Europe, and persisted with the matter of the desk. He proposed contacting the World Council for Religion and Peace to discuss it further. Mike Engelking shrugged his shoulders silently and dismissively, as much as to say: 'You can do what you like!'

Anwar laughed at this display of non-cooperation and declared: 'I don't think we'll get anywhere with him!'

Daniel Ruiz then proceeded to encourage us and gave us a contact that would prove the most productive for our main project. He may have then sadly disappeared from our

lives, but this single meeting with him became the foundation block for the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque.

The contact turned out to be a wealthy Swedish NGO, Cultural Heritage Without Borders, which gave money and expertise in the rebuilding of historic monuments. We eventually met Tina Wik, a Swedish architect with experience of reconstructing destroyed mosques and churches throughout the Balkans, who would take charge of the project and despite the constant obstacles, political and practical, lead it to fruition. The fact that Tina Wik and Daniel Ruiz were friends only served to seal the bond with our project, which he encouraged her to take on.

Meetings with other officials at the Office of the High Representative became increasingly and painfully unproductive. Those on short-term employment could only repeat familiar and now vacuous advice about ‘getting all religious leaders on board’. Their repetitious and superficial observations about religion being a pretext for nationalism reminded us that we now knew more about the region than they did, as they flitted from one posting to another, using Bosnia as a rung up the career ladder. At least they would write encouraging letters of support for us to their respective governments, and in the case of Germany this eventually raised some funds for the Ferhadija reconstruction.

Mathias Sonn, the German deputy to the High Representative, welcomed us warmly into his own brightly-lit, tastefully-designed office, served fresh coffee, and provided a respite from stressful encounters in the ante-room. We chatted amiably while sinking into comfortable yellow armchairs. Most of the time he talked about his next diplomatic posting, hoping it would not be Afghanistan.

We then returned to further discussions with Anwar and those from the Office of the High Representative. When the High Representative came to shake our hands in the ante-room we were beginning to grasp the seemingly insuperable obstacles to our project.

This was not simply a matter of a mosque being destroyed by Orthodox Serbs. In fact Serbs became the least of our troubles and were among the first of the project's supporters. Our toughest obstacle became the Muslim community itself, and here the recent history of Bosnia and foreign interference from all sides played a decisive part. Indifference to the fate of Muslims in Bosnia during the war led to the arrival of fundamentalist Mujahideen from the Middle East coming to their rescue. The political alliance with extreme Islam continued long after the war, despite a feeling of revulsion on the part of most of the Europeanized Muslims in Bosnia towards Islamic extremism. A typical example of a Bosnian European, Adnan behaved like an educated westerner, drank and was agnostic. A cosmopolitan, he rose above ethnic difference. His girlfriend happened to be a Catholic Croat, and he had many Serb Orthodox friends.

Since the end of the war the Bosnian debt of gratitude to the Mujahideen meant a resurgence in mosque building, not in the traditional Ottoman style with its emphasis on harmony of proportion with soft curved dome and delicately ornate minaret, but following the severe and basic Saudi model, a square gym-like functional room for worship with a spiky minaret at its side.

There were 'incidents' when the foreign soldiers confronted and assaulted the westernised Muslim women, criticising them for following provocative modern fashions, peroxide hair, tight jeans and skimpy blouses and demanded to know why they were not wearing the hijab. Outraged, the women resisted these attacks on their freedom and after

the war most of the Mujahideen returned to their own countries, disillusioned with the brothers and sisters they had come to protect.

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Hostility between Turkey and Arab countries in the Middle East had its roots in the history of the Ottoman Empire and stretched back to the Middle Ages. Consequences of liberation from Turkish domination at the beginning of the last century, events made famous by the exploits of Lawrence of Arabia, and aggravated subsequently by Western interference, driven by economic interests, continue to destabilize the whole region.

Post-imperial Turkey secularized. Other Arab states developed a blend of western influenced modernisation and traditional Islamic practice, from the tolerant and easy-going to extreme fundamentalism, inspired by nationalist and post-colonial movements, varying in intensity from country to country across North Africa and throughout the Middle East.

The mostly ethnically inter-related Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim communities in Bosnia considered themselves European, although Ottoman traditions meant continuing if tenuous bonds with Turkey. Our ignorance of conflicts within the world-wide Islamic community, differences complicated by issues of wealth, American supremacy feeding political grievance at the same time as economic dependency on the West, threatened to undermine our project before it had even begun.

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The first attack came during our next appointment the day after meetings at the Office of the High Representative, and caught us off guard.

A GRENADE IN THE LAP

We were barely seated at the Turkish Embassy in a comfortable room full of books, pictures, photos and a large desk overflowing with papers, when the ambassador, an intimidating burly man, burst in, greeted us peremptorily and, eyes flashing with anger, flung a file on the coffee table in front of us.

The file contained detailed architectural drawings of the Ferhadija Mosque.

‘We have everything necessary,’ he announced. ‘But we will not help you as long as Kemal Zukic is in charge!’

Who is Kemal Zukic?

The ambassador explained, trying to keep his temper, the crimson of his face deepening. He told us Kemal Zukic had been appointed chief architectural advisor on the committee for the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque by the Reis, the committee of which he had also appointed Donald Vice-President.

The previous week the ambassador had met Kemal Zukic to discuss how Turkey could help the project. Zukic behaved insultingly, telling the ambassador: ‘You are the enemy! We don’t want your help!’ The ambassador took this as a diplomatic insult and demanded an apology from the Reis who shrugged off responsibility, saying: ‘My advisor is entitled to his opinions.’ Now there was stalemate in relations between the Turkish Embassy and the Reis.

The ambassador grunted, stood up and we had to leave.

‘Sometimes I’m so fed up with my people,’ Adnan our translator declared.

The ambassador had taken a grenade from his pocket, removed the pin and chucked it in our laps.

The explosion accompanied us on our drive from Sarajevo to Banja Luka.

The ambassador had not informed us that Kemal Zukic wanted to keep close to the Saudis, who were donating considerable funds for the rebuilding of mosques throughout Bosnia, paid directly to the Reis, and the architectural advisor could take a substantial percentage for his services, as did the Reis.

Bosnian Muslims found themselves caught between the more open traditions of their Ottoman past, represented by the Turkish ambassador, and the hard line fundamentalism of Wahabi Saudis who now exerted more influence, due not only to generosity of funding but also a debt of gratitude for assistance in the war.

The Ferhadija Mosque, a jewel of Ottoman architecture, had become a pawn in this political stand-off between Turkey and the Saudis.

This stale mate suited the Reis who could use the destruction of the mosque as a stick to beat the Serbs. Meanwhile Saudis could build their own style of mosques. Even the deputy Bosnian ambassador in London, Radomir Kosic, a Bosnian Serb representing the Republika Srpska, suggested a Saudi mosque could be erected in the narrow space between the Catholic and Orthodox cathedrals in Banja Luka. This idea suited the politicians who could be seen to be equally fair to all the communities.

Such a mosque would however be an insult to the Islamic community in a city which had for centuries been majority Muslim and for whom the Ferhadija represented not only its religious but also its cultural heart, for Serbs and Croats also.

Now we understood the deeper reason, behind the one he gave us, why the Reis wanted the Soul of Europe to take responsibility for administering the rebuilding of the mosque. He told us the Christians had destroyed it, therefore Christians should reconstruct it.

However Saudis, not Christians, were replacing destroyed mosques all over the country. The Ferhadija project had become too hot for the Reis to handle.

Added to his problems, the Soul of Europe had made the rebuilding of the mosque into a symbol of reconciliation and peace not just in Bosnia but for the Islamic community across Europe.

Furthermore the educated and clever Reis understood, unlike Radomir Kosic and his blinkered cronies, that the project presented Banja Luka, now firmly in the grasp of the Serbs who had so successfully cleansed the city of its Muslim majority, with a chance for economic regeneration. A Saudi mosque could never achieve that.

The need to lift the project from this political quagmire, made us realize the urgency of establishing a network of Muslim and non-Muslim dialogues and active communities across Europe who would take responsibility for rebuilding the Ferhadija.

The exploding grenade exposed our dilemma: dealing with the Reis having to satisfy Saudi demands and keep control of his community, devastated by ethnic cleansing and a war that lost Muslims control of half of their country. We also had to pacify the Turkish ambassador who could not fail to understand the political dilemma of the Reis.

We set off for Banja Luka.

In 2001 we had needed to sharpen our intuition to find ways of allaying the fears of the Bosnian Serb nationalists and bring them to Coventry. Now the same was demanded from us just to keep the trust of the Bosnian Muslims. We had to find ways of helping and relieving their burden without taking responsibility for the Ferhadija from them.

DONA NOBIS PACEM

‘I have a treat for you!’ Adnan had announced on our arrival in Sarajevo three days before.

On long drives through the Balkans we would listen to tapes of Bosnian pop, but had asked Adnan to put on some Bach organ fugues for a change. He complained that the music made him sleepy while driving. Since he prided himself on never being overtaken, not even by international turbo charged jeeps, drowsing at the wheel was a risk too far. So to satisfy our longing for classical music he had bought tickets for a performance of Mozart’s *Requiem* in a packed stadium, used mostly for sports events and seating fifty thousand.

As the crowds crammed into the stadium, taped Handel organ concertos played over loudspeakers. A local choir and orchestra gave a vigorous performance of the requiem, making it sound angrily defiant rather than sadly submissive. *Dona Nobis Pacem* came across as a demand: ‘Give us peace!’ not: ‘May we have peace please?’

At the beginning of his anti-war film *Les Carabiniers (The Soldiers)*, Jean Luc Godard has one of the characters playing and replaying the haunting first bars of the *Requiem*, where Mozart gives the contra-bassoon a consoling melody over a melancholy syncopation, a striking effect which welcomes death as salvation, a lover even: ‘Do not be afraid ... I am what you long for ...’. In the film the young soldier listens in awe to these bars, then lifts the stylus and places it at the beginning of the disc, over and over again, while his comrades listen raptly.

Requiems reflect the essence of each composer. Verdi’s monument to his master Rossini and the novelist Manzoni is dramatic with extremes of emotion from abject terror

to sublime acceptance, often within a few bars. Fauré's more intimate Requiem expresses a longing for peace and heaven, with no sense of judgement or punishment; the soul can enter paradise without fear of being unworthy.

Despite an acute awareness of mortality, suffering and loss, Mozart's *Requiem* is optimistic. The damned call out from the depths and celestial voices immediately comfort them. The demand for peace, expressed in a strapping fugue, comes from confidence of the individual's control of his or her own destiny. Grief can be heard in the modulations of the *Lachrymosa* and *Agnus Dei*, but ultimately light triumphs.

This music sounds a turning point in history, a revolutionary belief that individuals, when united in a civilized society of equals, could make the world a better place, cleared both of superstition and the negative influence of inherited privilege supported by corrupted religion.

People continued to acknowledge the potency of sacred texts, not in the commands of an almighty God filtered through ecclesiastical institutions, but through the words of poets, prophets and visionaries, who contemplated and gave expression to the universal mysteries of creation and death.

Just as we were about to leave after the din of thousands clapping and shouting drowned out the final notes of the Requiem, a local pop-star, with dishevelled hair and wearing grunge gear, shambled on to the stage. Seizing a microphone and contorting his body in simulated agony of effort, he led the other soloists in a cross-over rendition of Schubert's *Ave Maria*, so far removed from the original that it became a new piece of music, barely recognizable. He strained at top notes, his strangulated screams turning into howls, orchestra and soloists valiantly keeping up so the prayer became a cry from a whole

community. They dragged this delicate song, one we know Schubert himself valued highly, across two centuries into a contemporary expression of hope, painfully relevant to Sarajevo's all too recent suffering.

The transformation did not end when the singers stopped. The melody gradually disintegrated melting slowly and mysteriously into what seemed to describe a quiet day break over the city. Out of the hush, as from a far distance, came the muezzin call to prayer, a moment as startlingly moving as the *Requiem* itself. At this point the whole audience rose to its feet, clapping, stamping and shouting its appreciation hoarse.

BABIES

Plivyot... a kuda zh'nam plit? We sail... But where then are we sailing to? (Pushkin: Autumn)

Along the road to Banja Luka autumn covered the forests in russet and gold. From a clear ultramarine sky the sun glittered on harvest meadows, rivers and distant landscapes, illuminating every detail to the horizon. People strolling along the roads appreciated the views no longer obscured by dusty summer haze.

Pushkin's favourite season nurtures the imagination. Spring stifles the soul with the sudden rush of blood and sadness, summer torments with discomfort of heat and flies, and winter for all its snowy pleasures and festivities lasts too long, even bears get bored in their dens. Autumn stimulates the body and the spirits. Pushkin describes its modest qualities, the undervalued season, like an unloved child; the sumptuous beauty of nature as it expires in glorious colours, like the sudden burst of life in a dying consumptive, alive today, gone tomorrow; the resurgence of appetite and desire; the longing to explore wide open spaces and return home to a forgotten hearth where the fire once again flares

up and glows. There the poet reads and ponders, forgetting the world, surrendering to tranquillity, then inspiration is aroused and the mind fills with images. Rhythms rush to meet these thoughts and verses flow freely.

The imagination is like a great ship, becalmed. But suddenly sailors rush up and down the masts, sails unfurl and the monster moves, cutting through the waves.

Pushkin ends his poem on a question: 'We sail. But where then are we sailing....?'

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The High Representative allowed his driver to take us to Banja Luka, and on the long journey over precipitous mountains and along river valleys, thoughts about the project buzzed and clashed in our heads.

'Mein Gott! Mein Gott!' Bishop Komarica had shouted on our previous visit, slamming his fists down on the table with frustration at the local authorities' stalling on the return of Catholic refugees to his now depleted parishes. His chunky episcopal ring added extra thud. The first person we met on our return to Banja Luka, because we needed to see a friend first before anyone else, the bishop was in fighting form as usual. The situation had not changed but he would not let the matter lie, particularly not after the consultation in Coventry where so many worthy statements had been publicly made.

We looked for encouragement from him, fearing that few if any of those who came to Coventry would come to the planned upcoming meeting.

In a situation where three parties coexist, the least-represented, not necessarily the weakest, can act as a go-between. The outcome of the Bosnia War meant the Serb Orthodox had replaced the Muslims as the dominant group in Banja Luka. The creation of the Republika Srpska legitimized this violent displacement. The Croat Catholics had

always been the minority there, though a substantial one. Thanks to the irenic personality of Bishop Komarica, unique among the Catholic bishops in Bosnia, who were as fervently nationalistic and pugnacious as the Orthodox bishops, the Catholic diocese of Banja Luka had long been a mediating influence.

When we entered the vice-president's office, expecting to see only Vice-President Cavic and Svetlana Cenic, his economics adviser, it came as a surprise to find almost all the participants at Coventry already there, beaming and pleased with themselves.

Previously the government building had been a nationalist fortress, a massive Republika Srpska flag flying from the roof. This underlined a fact that the government did not consider itself part of Bosnia. Intimidating guards inspected every unfamiliar entrant. Here Mufti Camdzic, prominent in robes and fez, moved animatedly through the group and embraced me vigorously, planting a bristly kiss on my cheek. Cavic and Svetlana smiled broadly as though to say: 'So you see, we can do this! We can make it happen!'

Only Pero Bukejlovic, dubbed Mr Economy at the Coventry Consultation, looked depressed, not uttering a word. Perhaps the mufti's presence in the vice-president's room represented a step too far.

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The world was all before them ... Milton Paradise Lost

The meeting opened with a private announcement.

Father Vladislav, had recently become the father of twin daughters and showed everyone a photograph of him holding the two tiny babies each in the crook of an elbow.

‘This is the future!’ Donald declared. ‘This is what we are working for. For these two girls. We are going to make Banja Luka a great place for these two to grow up in. Everything we do now is with these girls in mind.’

Babies are born guiltless. Whatever their nationality, religion or ethnic group, babies are lovable. Human protectiveness overrides ideology. The babies then turn into children and, doing nothing but grow up, become the enemy.

A universally loved baby cuddling at his radiant young mother’s breast eventually grows into a nationalist soldier, a Muslim terrorist, a Christian fundamentalist, a Hitler. When is the turning point? At some stage innocence becomes guilt with no crime committed, simply by the fact of a person’s existence. To be an ethnic Jew, a Muslim, a Christian, coloured, gay, or a woman in a world which discriminates against you does not involve any conditioning. It is fact, a circumstance, a matter of genes and being born. Ethnic cleansing is a logical outcome of discrimination. Ethnic cleansing understands that babies constitute a future threat that must be eliminated. Herod’s massacre of the innocents made the error of all ethnic cleansers: it does not matter how many people you annihilate, some will always escape and constitute an even greater threat in the future. And there is the consequence that violence breeds retribution.

Europe could not rid itself of all Jews. Nor today can the western capitalist democracies wipe out Islam. The project to remove Muslims from the Balkans and rewrite several hundreds of years of history, the memory of dozens of generations who considered the place their home, with nowhere else to go or return to, might temporarily terrorize a community into vacating the space, but can only be a policy doomed to fail. Descendants and relatives of victims return and remember, committed to vengeance.

And each generation begins with babies.

The Christian religion worships two images: the suckling baby and the same child, grown up, nailed to a cross, bleeding. Both images are united in the deposition from the cross when the grown man, tortured and killed, is once again placed in his ever youthful virgin-mother's lap. Violence and suffering are accepted facts of life. The baby grows up to be a victim. Or killer. Or both.

The two cute babies lying in the crook of Vladislav's arms stare at the new world. They have no idea what is to come. But grown ups know.

If only I knew the way back, the cherished road to childhood!

O why did I go seek my fortune and let go my mother's hand, let go my mother's hand?

How I want to sleep, and awake to no more stress!

Close my weary eyes, softly swathed in love, softly swathed in love.

Striving for nothing, searching for nothing,

Just dreaming sweet and tranquil,

Not watching time and alteration,

To be a child again, a child again.

If only I know the way back, the cherished road to childhood.

In vain I search for happiness,

All around is desert shore

Desert shore! Brahms song after a poem by Klaus Groth

Figuratively ever since that primal act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden, narrated in the first chapter of the Old Testament, when man and woman eating forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge were cast out into a world of labour and survival, people

have multiplied and fought over the world's resources. The gruesome story of subsequent human conflict is peppered with laws and pleas from prophets to return to the harmony of our creation, the moment when we were at one with nature and God.

The poet of unfettered intellect and political freedom John Milton did not view the expulsion from Eden necessarily as a punishment. The babies in Vladislav's arms hold a future of hopeful possibilities:

The world was all before them...

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The photograph reminded everyone of Donald's plea during our first visits to Banja Luka that we should think beyond present grievances to make a better world for our children and grandchildren. His words finally persuaded the participants to attend the consultation.

Now in the vice-president's office everyone wanted a say. Each person insisted on making a long speech full of flowery expressions of respect, repeating the complete agenda of the consultation, while the rest of the group sighed impatiently, drumming fingers on the table awaiting their turn.

The chasm between a present reality of discrimination, injustice, unfinished business from a recent war and hopes for far-reaching changes can create apathy and cynicism. So we emphasised the importance of making small steps, achieving realistic aims. At the consultation they had tried to reach agreement on seemingly insignificant projects such as cleaning graveyards, but were intimidated and even threatened by the politicians.

Personal avowals gained significance only in the context of Banja Luka. People used to democratic processes and civil rights in the rest of Europe might consider these personal

contributions tedious and sentimental. But they would underestimate the importance for these representatives of formerly warring factions being in the same room, listening to each other, staying together if not yet trusting one another, without fear for their lives.

Elderly Anton Ruzic, a Catholic Croat, rose to speak and everyone kept quiet. His sick heart had caused alarm during the consultation, and would kill him within the coming months. So everyone listened carefully, knowing these might be his last words.

‘In Coventry we made a big number of friends, because of Donald,’ he said. ‘I believe the friends will be for ever. From these friendships will begin a journey to other goals that will become reality for everyone and on every side.’ Looking at us directly he carried on: ‘You were sincere and because of that you never doubted us and even today you can see the results in the number of us who have come together again. Today gives us a security that we will meet more. After so much unpleasantness it is good to meet good people who helped through bad times in my life...’

The old man talked slowly, forcing everyone to go at his pace. His words expressed a moment of history in his city. He had witnessed ‘unpleasantness’, a polite understatement, and now appreciated the significance of small gestures which brought enemies together.

Bishop Komarica then introduced an acerbic note into the proceedings. ‘Nothing happened! What was said in Coventry should be considered an obligation for all of us. We agreed on a press conference, but that did not happen. Only the mayor gave his own press conference. The whole group should have been there. I did not even know about it until after the event. And what happened about the decision to give the mufti a house?’

‘The mayor and the vice-president don’t want to give me a place to live!’ exclaimed the mufti gruffly.

We later learned that the mufti had submitted designs to the local authorities for a residence in opulent Ottoman style, something so large that they refused permission.

Bishop Komarica turned to us and said with a sigh: ‘So you understand the size of effort required to make any decisions come true. But you kept your promise to return to us.’

Vice-President Cavic took a back seat at this meeting. He had arranged the chairs in a large circle, as we had insisted on doing in Coventry, so transforming the traditionally rigid protocol of audiences with people in authority into a more relaxed atmosphere where all participants felt equal. It felt like school children invading the headmaster’s inner sanctum.

‘This is a special moment,’ Cavic eventually announced. ‘Soon we will be having three big religious celebrations.’ He was referring to Bajram, the Catholic and the Orthodox Christmas, both on different days. ‘Before Ramadan I want to invite all the religious leaders to a meeting here in my office. I will host it and there will be a press conference to show that there is religious tolerance here in Banja Luka. My doors are open for everyone individually, for anyone who needs to talk to me, whatever the problem. It doesn’t matter who you are. My authority is limited, because my position is constitutional, but I will do everything I can.’

These words represented progress from our first visit a year earlier, and we now feared the reactions of his own nationalist party supporters, few of them likely to take kindly to the idea of all three religious communities living in tolerance together in a town they had so painstakingly tried to ethnically cleanse only a few years earlier.

‘First we had dialogue in Coventry,’ the vice-president continued. ‘During the next months there will be regular meetings like this and everyone will be invited.’

He paid tribute to us then turned on Bishop Komarica saying: ‘We can’t say that nothing at all is changing. Everyone has tasks each in his own area. We need help with the first steps. Everyone is doing everything for everyone in all three groups.’ He was referring to the division of issues at the consultation: returnees, education and the economy.

‘Something can be achieved without media attention, without causing waves. I can appear like a person who wants to help the joint events take place. We are the people who can make a difference.’

We were surprised at the degree of understanding and patience displayed by everyone except Pero Bukejlovic, Minister for Trade and Commerce, Mr Economy, who as expected, eventually lost his cool and whined in desperation: ‘We need investment!’ All the discussions at the consultation had passed him by.

Omer Visic, the Muslim Vice-Mayor, talked about the Ferhadija: ‘The problem is the rebuilding of religious monuments. Just two days ago I asked the mayor about what concrete steps were being taken. The drawings for the mosque are complete, the foundations need to be laid and the process for rebuilding small mosques in the region needs to be sped up. The technical plans for three such mosques have been completed and we should have permission in the next week. After that the mufti’s house should be built.’

The school headmistress spoke of her delight at being in the same room as the vice-president, and did not seem intimidated anymore by Pero Bukejlovic who had threatened her during the consultation for proposing a clean up of Muslim graveyards.

The mufti, seizing the opportunity, had brought a lawyer, a woman who had survived the war. She launched into a speech about problems with regulations, plans and drawings for the Ferhadija Mosque. But not having attended the consultation she felt embarrassed at being the odd one out in the group and spoke falteringly. No one listened. A sense of hope, pleasure at happy memories, and having achieved something they all thought impossible made them tolerant of the mufti and his lawyer. In other circumstances there would have been a row: Pero Bukejlovic would have declared this not to be the time or place and the mufti would have stormed out of the room.

‘The Soul of Europe will return for at least two days a month for the next six months,’ Donald promised. ‘We will establish a partnership forum consisting of different organizations from the business world, civic society and religious leaders. The idea is to work on problems together with several goals. The ultimate goal is the welfare of Banja Luka. The Banja Luka partnership forum should emerge in June next year and if all goes well the Soul of Europe will appoint a broker, a person who will help the partnership grow. A forum is like a box. In this box new ideas are put and opportunities for new ideas emerge. In this way we improve the image of Banja Luka.’

We were referring to a burning issue at the consultation: the politicians and city authorities underestimated their city’s bad image since the war, particularly after the demonstrations at the laying of the mosque foundation stone in May. They needed reminding that in the *Guide to Eastern Europe*, Banja Luka remained top of the list of worst places to visit. Pero Bukejlovic constantly complained about lack of investment, not realizing how much Banja Luka’s bad image discouraged this.

We noted the absence of Bishop Jefrem who had sent Father Vladislav in his stead. With the most powerful figure in Banja Luka withdrawing, leaving the weaker ones to protest without being heard or attended to, the group had already begun to fracture.

Big statements had been made in Coventry and now the group needed to work out how to move forward. The same problems existed in England, but in Bosnia they were exacerbated by chaotic post-communist, post-war conditions. We suggested small steps, building friendships first and then cross-sector partnerships between individuals, businesses, establishing a round table, a civic forum – ideas discussed at Coventry.

‘The Soul of Europe is about our children and grandchildren. That is what we are about: improving society,’ Donald explained. ‘So the question now is: what do you think this group can work on together? In small steps. Make a start...’

‘Nothing can wait,’ interrupted the mufti impatiently. ‘Everything has to happen now, immediately. I need everything. I have no mosque, no house, no office, no school!’ Bishop Komarica smacked his lips and raised his eyebrows as much as to say they had been too many times down this road.

Elderly Anton Ruzic pointed out that the country was in transition and the jobs and economic infrastructure must take priority.

Bishop Komarica then launched into an attack on the international community for hesitating to exert power and influence to pressure local authorities and politicians: ‘We don’t have enough power ourselves, so people cannot return to their homes. It is disgraceful. I insist that people get their jobs back. This is reasonable. There is not enough authority ... people are not serious ... I am sorry, but we need concrete assistance ...’

The bishop became incoherent with despair, his words trailing off; sentences unfinished. After so many years of repeating the same demands without receiving answers or seeing progress, people gave up listening.

The headmistress tried to be positive: ‘What can we do for ourselves regardless of the international community?’

The vice-president, after responding to the bishop’s plea by remarking that lack of funds prevented a solution to the returnee problem, promised to fix a public meeting between the three religious leaders as a priority. Then he described himself as a refugee: forced to flee his hometown of Zenica now in the Federation. Only one member of his family remained. Svetlana had moved home seventeen times in the last ten years.

‘So everyone has experience with these problems,’ the vice-president announced, wanting to draw a line through this argument by indicating that people should forget about particular grievances, in his view shared evenly across all the communities.

‘We will solve these problems through dialogue,’ he continued. ‘There are still many problems on our backs and we have to share ideas. My doors are always open.’

We pointed out that though the vice-president might be deemed the only ‘considerable’ person in the room, everyone there was ‘considerable’. Before we returned in December we hoped some of them would have invited the mufti for coffee and a talk about his problems. They should then share proposals with us.

After piously agreeing to give priority to the problems of young people, discussion returned to the stressful conditions for returnees and the lack of jobs. Few people were returning, and these mostly elderly people desperate to return to their old homes regardless of poverty.

Father Vladislav then announced that because so many Orthodox Serbs were now living in Banja Luka, Serbs mostly ethnically cleansed from the Federation and Croatia, occupying houses and flats that once belonged to Muslims and Catholics murdered or driven abroad, more Orthodox churches needed to be.

Bishop Komarica had one bit of good news. Donations from Catholic parishes mostly in Germany and Holland had made it possible for the Catholic Cathedral in Banja Luka to be completely rebuilt and the bishop invited everyone to the opening celebration on December 1.

The meeting ended positively with people agreeing to meet privately, the vice-president promising to tell the mayor to provide the mufti with a house and office. Along with the Orthodox Bishop Jefrem, Mayor Davidovic, also Orthodox, had not attended this meeting. We envisaged him greeting the vice-president's message with a resigned sigh. No one else seemed to be in a position to help the mufti; but Vice-President Cavic promised to invite the three religious leaders to a meeting in his office soon. Everyone sat subdued by the weight of difficult tasks ahead. We encouraged them to consider themselves as a core group, not necessarily involved in building up the partnership forum, but finding and encouraging others to do so, particularly young people who had been noticeably absent from the consultation. We promised to start looking immediately for a broker so that the partnership forum could be established as soon as possible. The group should consider itself a board of advisers, elders to whom the partnership could turn.

These words energized everyone and the meeting ended with people talking animatedly.

Intimidating formality normally reigned at meetings in the vice-president's office. Every time in the past when we left a private audience with the vice-president, a sinister looking man with stubbly chin, sharp eyes and threatening demeanour eyed us suspiciously as he showed us out. It felt like entering and leaving a lion's den. Svetlana, always present, would stride ahead of us imperiously, tossing her mane of jet black hair.

This time the atmosphere had changed in the room. Chairs were moved around, the vice-president and Svetlana relinquishing control became two in the crowd.

Only a month ago this same group of people arrived in Coventry, suspicious and nervous, barely talking to each other. Now it seemed they had begun to trust each other. Only Pero Bukejlovic did not change his attitudes, and still regarded the mufti with suspicion. He wore the forlorn look of someone left behind, everyone else running ahead discussing the future.

ENVER CERIC

As we left the meeting at the Banski Dvor, housing the presidential office of the Republika Srpska, a slight figure, smiling nervously, approached the steps. We recognized Enver Ceric, father of Samir, who had been one of the interpreters at the consultation in Coventry. Enver had attended the final presentation and filmed it on video cam. This turned out to be a boon, because we were able to transcribe accurately from the recording the declarations and statements of the politicians and religious leaders.

Furtively, intimidated by the guards, Enver came towards us as we descended the steps. He shivered in his great coat though the sun shone warmly. He looked downcast.

Svetlana then came out of the Banski Dvor, nodded and smiled at us and entered a waiting black Mercedes to be driven quickly away. Cavic followed shortly after, speaking on his mobile, he climbed into another waiting black Mercedes and shot off with outriders.

Enver watched them. His eyes filled with tears. We hugged and invited him to join us.

He had not expected ever to return to his hometown, but the consultation encouraged him to investigate. Specifically he wanted his house back. Serbs now occupied it and the authorities were dragging their feet. 'We have enough problems with our own people,' the Serb officials behind the desk told Enver, 'and now you people return from abroad and create more problems for us!' The implication was that Enver and other Muslims should stay in England or wherever they had landed in the world, all much better places than Banja Luka. Why would anyone want to return? The Serb authorities found it impossible to remove fellow Serbs even if they lived illegally in other people's property. Depressed at being brushed off by strangers in his hometown, he wandered the streets of Banja Luka before arriving at the Banski Dvor, where Samir told him we were meeting participants of the consultation. His hometown had changed completely. He hardly recognized the place. Gone were familiar faces and landmarks. The streets were untidy, the people unfriendly. This was no longer his home. The trauma of his wretched departure and painful return shook him more than he expected, like the soldier described in an ancient Chinese poem, who had returned home after a campaign lasting many years in another part of the world. He recognized no one: family, house, friends all gone, dead.

After attending a service with Bishop Komarica and a crowd of expectant elderly women in the basement of his residence, the cathedral not being ready for use, we took

Enver for coffee in the Hotel Bosna. Adnan was finishing his exams in Sarajevo, so his girlfriend Daria came to interpret for us. Daria a Catholic, Enver a Muslim, Donald an Anglican and I a Jew sat together in the main hotel of Banja Luka, where a few years ago an attempt had been made for all but Orthodox Bosnian Serbs to be ethnically cleansed.

On a previous visit to the hotel a few Karadjic warriors were watching Milosevic on TV being arraigned by the Hague Tribunal. They did not cheer, and looked even ashamed of him, though quietly growling their support. Today just a few young people sat scattered at far flung tables. Enver looked steadily at us with a mournful gaze.

Despite the gloom, the situation made me feel upbeat.

It reminded me of the time I took tea in Berghof, the luxury residence Hitler had built for himself on top of a mountain in Bavaria. Most places connected with the dictator were razed to the ground immediately after the war to discourage veneration by surviving Nazis. The victors spared this unique place. It had been an expensive feat of engineering to build in the first place and could only be reached by bus, driving along a steep curving road cut into sheer precipices, where pine trees held on by their roots.

A spacious, glistening brass-lined lift rose with a quiet hum up through a shaft, gouged out of the core of solid rock, to a residence and terrace with a panoramic view of mountains and valleys stretching for miles. Home movie footage shows Hitler stroking his pet Alsatian and entertaining guests while his wife cavorts and poses flirtatiously on the terrace in front of the spectacular backdrop. Now everyone, non-Jews and Jews, can take tea where the dictator had planned to spend his final years in a world purified of undesirables. Some of the visitors were indeed unashamed neo-Nazis come to pay their respects, but my presence testified to the failure of ethnic cleansing.

While imbibing the luxury Hitler had designed only for himself, I thought of my grandparents and remembered their savage murder in Auschwitz. Fury and triumph alternately seethed and glowed in me. The coffee and cake with whipped cream tasted all the better. I drank and ate in the company of ghosts, including my smiling grandparents, all bathed in the sparkling cerulean alpine sky and snow-capped peaks along far horizons.

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We invited Enver to join us for supper at the Castle Restaurant overlooking the River Vrbas. We had also invited Roy Wilson, the British Ambassador's representative in Banja Luka, who had helped us so much with the Coventry Consultation, and Georges Bordet, the Deputy High Representative and Head of Office in the Republika Srpska. We discussed the pleasures of living in Banja Luka, Georges Bordet enthusing over the beauty of the woods and hills all round; how he planned for his family to visit from South Africa, and share his delight in the place and enjoy Bosnian Serb hospitality. Roy Wilson, ever diplomatic, kept quiet, but we knew he preferred the occasional break in Zagreb, away from the poisonous political situation in this town, however idyllic its appearance.

Enver arrived looking frightened. People had recognized him in the street and shouted insults: 'Why have you come back? Fuck off!'

He then smiled bitterly as he told Georges Bordet that a Muslim friend had once owned this restaurant before fleeing abroad when the troubles started. This former owner had been famous in Banja Luka, a popular figure, a star member of the local football team. He now ran a flourishing business in America. He had fled from persecution to success.

Reminded of the achievement of his friend, Enver wondered why he himself had bothered to return. The town had changed beyond recognition. However he needed to

reclaim his house, as a matter of justice. His wife had doubted the wisdom of this visit and he now agreed with her. Not even his son Samir showed any interest in returning.

Next day the autumn sun shone brightly. Enver wanted to leave Banja Luka as quickly as possible and asked to be taken with us to Sarajevo. The High Representative's jeep drove into the high mountains, along the River Vrbas and Enver gave a running commentary on his memories, every stretch and turn of the road familiar to him, including the spot where a heavy branch falling from a tree narrowly missed killing him and his father. He shared nostalgic memories of cycling with friends to remote country areas where they spent long summer days swimming and playing; of courtship, marriage and taking his wife and sons on holiday in Montenegro, driving along this same road.

We stopped as usual in Travnik for lunch of smoky barbecued cevapcici. The streams of Travnik cascaded in thundering torrents from the surrounding mountains and foamed over mill wheels.

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Listening to the waters' roar, I remembered a voice, like a face from the distant past in an antique photograph, unblinking dark eyes staring out from misty landscapes and olden times. A century ago a great singer, Sena Jurinac, was born in Travnik. She delighted audiences in opera houses across the world with her expressive lyric soprano and vivid acting. In Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs* her voice alone conjured sunlight on the rippling waters, dark green forests and craggy mountains of her birthplace. Ivo Andric, the country's Nobel prize-winning writer, also lived here then. He described blood-drenched panoramas of Balkan history, narrating the struggles between Christian and Muslim conquerors, the ruthless brutality of the latter locked in perpetual battle with the

stoic resistance of the former. Ivo Andric stirs up nationalism and nostalgia for past heroes who lost to the overwhelming might of a larger empire. By his bedside in prison at The Hague, Slobodan Milosevic kept a copy of Ivo Andric's *Bridge Over the Drina*, with its detailed descriptions of grisly Ottoman tortures that were later inflicted by Bosnian Serb militia on Muslims and Croats in killing camps.

Voices and music transcend events. But art grows out of a specific history and tradition. Sena Jurinac trained in Central and Eastern Europe, part of the Austro Hungarian Empire, whose iron fist compelled a Bosnian insurgent to throw a grenade that resulted in world war and imperial collapse. In its heyday this empire had nurtured a glorious and influential tradition in the arts. Sena Jurinac, like so many fine artists before and after, gravitated to Vienna, contributing Balkan temperament as well as beauty of voice to this tradition.

In Travnik's city centre the imposing grey stone Austro-Hungarian municipal buildings, heavily encrusted with sculptures and decorations, stood next to more modestly proportioned Ottoman homes with covered wooden balconies, intricately carved, and beyond them, dozens of minarets poking up the steep hillsides. The empire suppressed political independence while celebrating national differences. Viennese culture appreciated the spice of individual tradition from the time it enthusiastically copied Turkish cuisine even while the Ottoman armies besieged the city, and Mozart incorporated exotic marches in his music: Hungarian Czardas, Bosnian cevapcici, the inter-marriage of Slav and Teuton, copious splashes of Mediterranean hot blood and insinuating gypsy rhythms and sounds threading the differences, while the educated liberal intellectual elite meeting in convivial coffeehouses nourished understanding of the

human condition... and sowed the seeds of its destruction. Vienna was the home to Freud and Hitler. In his short stories Artur Schnitzler observed with acid playful Viennese irony the contrasts of high culture and corrosive bigotry across the classes a generation before the Second World War and the Holocaust. The tradition of cultural differences continues in Bosnia; variety visible in the architecture, the manners of people on the street, the cuisine, the music.

A few artists like Sena Jurinac, through quality of voice, intensity of utterance and force of personality, keep reminding us that such differences are our human condition, and can be held in balance, allowing each to inspire the other. I saw her once. She performed at the Vienna State Opera well into old age. In Janacek's opera, *Jenufa*, about a girl's seduction and pregnancy by a village Lothario, Sena Jurinac sang the part of the girl's mother who, to protect the family honour and allow her daughter to marry decently, kills the baby. It is a part that dominates the opera, and Sena Jurinac portrayed her as an intimidating Balkan matriarch, laying down the law, making decisions regardless of anyone else's feelings. There is a final scene of forgiveness between mother and daughter. Tight-lipped, seething and baleful, Sena Jurinac then stood on a dais at the back of the stage and out-stared the audience over the heads of the rest of the cast. By then her voice had lost the lyric sweetness and agility that are heard in her recordings. It did not matter: rough edges and acidity suited the role.

Now in Travnik, through the roar and splash of streams, I heard in my mind's ear the limpid tones of the young singer pouring like the fresh mountain waters:

In dark caves

Long did I dream

Of your trees and blue breezes,

Your fragrance and birdsong.

Now you spread before me,

Clothed in sparkle and jewels

Drenched in light

Like a miracle.

You know me again,

You seduce me tenderly,

Your blissful presence

Quivers through all my limbs.

Hermann Hesse/Strauss:

In Spring

I remembered again the final scene of *Jenufa* and the defiance of Sena Jurinac's matriarch, face and demeanour hardening to stone at the final curtain. This unwavering resolution can be recognized in those powerful women of the Balkans: Mrs Milosevic and Ceca, the pop-star widow of the assassinated war lord Arkan, defending their husbands' honour regardless of the fact they had committed acts of genocide and atrocities, refusing to acknowledge or take responsibility, let alone apologize for, those who died and suffered, and absolutely convinced of their rectitude and honour.

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Enver left us in Sarajevo, wanting to be let off by the central market, place of one of the war's worst massacres when Serbs fired shells into crowds of shoppers, leaving forty

three dead and seventy five seriously wounded. He smiled wanly and felt immediately more at home.

MORNING RAKIJA

Before setting off for Sarajevo from Banja Luka we called in on Bishop Jefrem. He welcomed us warmly, joking nervously that he hoped he would not be receiving another scolding. We were usually made to feel it an honour to be allowed an audience with the bishop. This time he seemed genuinely pleased to see us, speaking about his visit to England in glowing terms, an experience of a life-time.

We took the opportunity of discussing a plan discussed in Coventry to send Orthodox theology students to England for post-graduate studies, exams and experience. The bishop had now back tracked, aware of the consequences of such a scheme. The priests would be suddenly free from their cultural isolation and rigid education in a particularly enclosed theology. They would come in contact with new ideas and ways of thinking, like meeting women priests and gay clergy. We offered to prepare a paper with proposals, but the bishop had already resolved not to send any priests to England.

Back in Banja Luka the religious leaders had withdrawn each into their own ethnic group, no longer willing to deal with other concerns. Bishop Jefrem brightened only when we spoke about the Orthodox Monastery of Zitomislice (which translates as 'thoughts of wheat') near the city of Mostar. He agreed to introduce us to Grigorije, bishop of Trebinje for the past three years, who planned to rebuild the monastery that had been destroyed by Croats in the war. 'He is a young man; we have different opinions,' Bishop Jefrem observed with a wry laugh. We could not make out whether this implied

Grigorije was more or less nationalist and conservative than Bishop Jefrem, but assumed he might be more liberal in his attitudes.

Bishop Jefrem wore a large chain, glittering with jewels, which he kept stroking and rearranging nervously over his chest.

A priest served us coffee along with whisky and rakija, potent but not as throat scouring as Bishop Komarica's. 'It keeps you healthy!' the bishop joked as we raised full glasses. The priest had on our former visits looked morose but now greeted us with a warm friendly smile. The bishop must have given a glowing report of his visit to Coventry. We were now treated as welcome guests.

Then we insisted on discussing the agreements reached at Coventry, and told him about the vice-president's offer to host a meeting of the three religious leaders in his office. Bishop Jefrem appeared to agree it should be televised and made public.

'We all have problems,' he commented cautiously but severely. 'The Orthodox are not without problems. The international community is always dictating about the sufferings of Catholics and Muslims, but what about our tragedies? I believe our three religions will last for ever. If we don't achieve peace in this generation we will in the next. My motto is always to do the best I can.'

Donald laughed, saying: 'I'm impatient. I want things to have changed by yesterday!'

The bishop continued: 'I am now a senior religious leader, but want to be equal with the others. The majority should be responsible for the minority. By chance now the Orthodox are in the majority and can not be happy if others are not happy.'

The two little words 'by chance' disguised the true reason why the Orthodox now comprised the majority in Banja Luka. However, this veiled admission by the bishop marked conspicuous progress.

He then reverted to caution: 'Things are moving positively, but slowly they are progressing. The problem is politics, making problems between people, blaming each other from different sides.'

We finally talked about the consecration of the Catholic Cathedral on December 1. The Orthodox and Catholic cathedrals stood next to each other. Bishop Jefrem made no comment about whether he would attend the consecration, but asked his priest if there was a liturgy on that day. Then he suggested building a wall between the cathedrals. Realizing this sounded hostile he added that there might be a door in the wall. In fact before the war there had been such a wall, and also a door. The three religious leaders used to meet regularly. The mufti of Banja Luka had been the senior church leader then. Bishop Jefrem must have remembered these meetings, but he made no mention of them.

Despite his negativity the bishop remained cheerful and friendly towards us. Hearing we would be in Banja Luka for the consecration of the Catholic Cathedral he invited us to attend the Orthodox service on December 2, the day after, saying: 'I will be happy to present you to my priests and believers. Really I had a good time in Coventry. I was very happy with the atmosphere there.'

We commented that this new spirit might be a sign of hope. But the bishop became nervous again as we left. Perhaps he had said too much and insisted we take small steps for all our ambitious projects. He then embraced us warmly.

PLAYING AT GOD

Our meeting reminded us of Sabira Husedzinovic, the feisty woman who had, at risk to her life, taken incriminating photographs of the destruction of the Ferhadija Mosque and produced a well researched, documented and illustrated treatise on the mosque, its history, design and construction. She described the chasm between words that come cheap and actual readiness to make things happen, to get projects off the ground.

After bewildering us with detailed information on the correct materials to be used, opening up sheaves of papers, pictures and designs from a bottomless bag and telling us about the dangers of installing a modern heating system while preserving its historic context, she raised the question already exciting Serb Orthodox and Catholics, of there being an ancient church under the remains of the Ferhadija. Catholic Croats were already claiming that mosques and Orthodox churches had been built on what used to be Catholic churches and without waiting for evidence or planning permission, were constructing churches on top of mosques they destroyed in the war.

It is well chronicled in the history of the Ottoman Empire that Muslims were generally careful not to offend the religious sensibilities of the people they conquered and governed, even raising money for the building of churches for their Christian subjects. Ottoman architects always expressed concern about ‘purity of ground’, in other words not building on other people’s sacred sites. So it would be unlikely such a desecration took place on the site of the Ferhadija. Sabira’s careful research discovered a thirteenth century document about Roman remains being unearthed under most of Banja Luka, and mention of a Catholic church where the Ferhadija used to stand. Catholics and Bogumils inhabited this region before the Orthodox or the Ottomans arrived. A Romanesque

watchtower used to stand behind the Ferhadija – it can still be seen in the photographs Sabira took secretly of the destruction of the mosque. But Ferhad Pasha, the Ottoman conqueror of the city, made no mention of a church there in the detailed list of buildings he made of Banja Luka when he arrived. As a scrupulous recorder of everything he possessed and inherited this meant that there can have been no church there, so he felt able to order the construction of his mosque on previously unconsecrated ground.

‘It is fascism. This should not be happening in the Republika Srpska,’ said Susan Antelic, a Serb journalist who had joined us to discuss the Ferhadija, and commenting on the violent demonstration at the site that resulted in the killing of an elderly man. ‘Today it is old Muslim men being stoned and killed, but tomorrow it could be any old men. It is escalation of hate. Young people are now modelling themselves on fascists. It is the fault of the media, propaganda and their parents who see violence as being normal. The state is based on the foundation of genocide. We have to break this pattern. The religious leaders themselves have been politicised and need to change.’ These remarks were all the more trenchant coming from a Serb.

Susan Antelic had recently written a feature article about the people responsible for blowing up the Ferhadija Mosque. She could not name them but met one of the ringleaders who, for financial or political reasons, had felt slighted by the others, and in revenge decided to spill the beans. Since most Bosnian Serbs rejected responsibility for atrocities (‘we were the only ones to suffer’) and any wrongdoing (‘what mosques?’), this confession blew the gaffe on denial.

We discussed ways of marginalizing nationalist extremists, and proposed a meeting with the people who had blown up the mosque. Susan Antelic doubted the possibility let alone

wisdom of such an encounter. These people had committed a crime, were in hiding, and there were warrants out for their arrest. However she understood the necessity of persuading hard-liners to support the idea of rebuilding what they had destroyed. Acknowledgment of their crime would be good for the whole community, a gesture towards reconciliation which would improve the future of their country in terms of international support and economic regeneration. However as recently as January 9 2002, the president of the Republika Srpska, Mirko Sarovic, declared he had no regrets about what happened in the war: 'When we look back to the past we have nothing to be ashamed of. Our path was right and if we had to choose again, the choice would be the same.'

Mirko Sarovic would resign his presidency on April 2, 2003, faced with accusations of organizing trade in illegal arms.

Throughout our conversation with Susan Antelic, Sabira looked on grimly. She defined her task solely as being guardian of the Ferhadija, to keep the idea of the mosque alive by preserving all information, material and documents pertaining to the building.

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Senad Pecanin, the Bosnian journalist whom we had invited to Coventry to observe, report and then share his opinions, looked at us with pity tinged with admiration. However he agreed that our methods of cooperation, partnership and persistence were the only way forward and as thanks for inviting him to Coventry he took us out for supper in a restaurant on a hill overlooking Sarajevo.

He had written a scathing attack on the Republika Srpska participants at the consultation, describing how Vice-President Cavic presented the mayor of Coventry with

an Orthodox Serb icon as a gift from Banja Luka, a mainly Muslim city before the war. Senad considered this choice of gift to be a gesture intended to offend the non-Serb participants. Senad also reported that one of the Bosnian Serb participants had tried to cheat on his expenses. Svetlana expressed to us at the previous day's meeting in Banja Luka her disappointment with this article, considering it unnecessarily hostile, but not expecting anything else from a Muslim journalist in Sarajevo.

In contrast, the Orthodox mayor's gift to the mayor of Coventry implied a different story: a book about Banja Luka dating from before the war, chronicling, in photograph after photograph, the rich multi-faith culture of a city where Catholic and Orthodox churches, even two cathedrals, stood next to mosques, bristling against the hills on either side of the Vrbas Gorge.

Looking out over the flickering lights of Sarajevo, sitting where just a few years previously Serb militia had fired mortars on the civilian population, we talked about the nature of evil: what drives people to destroy.

Senad considered it a waste of time to try and reach indicted criminals, those responsible for blowing up the mosque. Better to meet one of Radovan Karadjic's friends: an intellectual who, after the war, had the courage to admit his error of judgment and now used his energy and influence as a professor to attack nationalism. Senad offered to set up a meeting with this significant person on our next visit.

Gigantic posters were displayed on hoardings around the main square, advertising an exhibition from Israel on the theme of reconciliation. Cartoon images representing co-operation of different colours and creeds grated. A murderous conflict between Israelis and Palestinians now convulsed this small country on the eastern edge of the

Mediterranean. Young Hamas supporters tied explosives to their bodies, stationed themselves in a crowd of Israelis and blew themselves up, killing as many people as they could. Israelis responded with heavy military bombardment of the Palestinians, also killing many people: men, women and children carrying out their daily business. There was no co-operation of colour or creed in Israel.

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The innocent looking civilian who ties a bomb to his person and becomes a sinister threat to the public makes an early appearance in a novel by Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*. Until the moment of detonation, the man nurtures it lovingly under his clothes like a baby, enjoying the power it bestows on him, an ordinary looking person moving unnoticed through the crowded streets.

A lengthy passage of the book describes the man travelling by bus across London contemplating when and whether to detonate. The sensation makes him feel like God. Alfred Hitchcock turned the novel into a film thriller, *Sabotage*, which explores the dysfunctional relationship between a weak-willed terrorist and his depressed, harassed wife, who guesses the truth about her husband, but only takes action when her own son is in danger. Though Hitchcock gets his fine actors to provide subtle portraits of dour people in an unfriendly city, it is the tense ride on the bus which is the most memorable sequence, the bomb and the boy not knowing what he is carrying that turns Conrad's metaphysical musings into a thriller. There is a nostalgic innocence about the film that cannot contemplate the reality of terrorist carnage. The boy escapes, the wife stabs her terrorist husband, and we are entertained. Conrad's story however is accurately prophetic. He foresaw the future and the consequences when man plays at God.

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Terrorists now rarely work on their own and communities are no longer unaware of the danger in their midst. Modern Islamic terrorism is the continuation of a belief going back centuries that soldiers, engaging in battle, welcome courageous martyrdom as a swift entrance to paradise. The tradition gained currency in the periods of conflict with Western colonial interests throughout those regions of the world where Islam also held sway. The battles then as now were more about politics and economics than religious differences, which are, nevertheless, exploited by both sides to justify violence, and so encourage young men to sacrifice themselves. Meanwhile governments protect and defend their economic interests by going to war.

Today's suicide bombers, mostly disenfranchised young men and women incensed by the arrogance of controlling and invading world powers, operate like soldiers in a military hierarchy. They are pawns fixed in an ideological framework; trained and commanded to commit their final acts by higher authorities who remain alive, safe and distant from the consequences. It is these masters on both sides of the conflict who play at being God.

REWRITING HISTORY

Back in Banja Luka a solitary brochure about the town lay on the reception desk of the Firenze Hotel. It stated, in one brief mention of the city's Islamic past, that the cruel tyranny of Ottoman rule in Bosnia had now been eliminated, the place purified of its Muslim culture and presence. The rest of the brochure, describing the social life and history of Banja Luka, dealt only with Orthodox Serb traditions: cuisine, arts and crafts -

no mention of Catholics. The guide presented a fait accompli: a cleansed city celebrating its ethnically pure nature. A stranger reading this guide would learn nothing of the city's past. Banja Luka appeared to be a place without history.

A Serb waiter poured me generous slugs of plum brandy from a thickly frosted bottle and sighed about the sad changes in his country. He dreamed of visiting Sarajevo. He was implying that the war of ethnic cleansing had been a crime committed by a few fanatics. The young generation mostly felt no sympathy with nationalism and racial bigotry. It seemed that a long tradition in Bosnia of 'live and let live' was surviving the violence that had just ripped the country apart.

Adnan flirted with Dragana, who greeted us effusively with loud cries of happiness and hugs whenever we came down to breakfast, then went to prepare omelettes. She stroked his head and whispered something he did not translate.

On a later visit, Adnan drove up to Banja Luka by himself to meet Dragana for a date. He told us how she took him up the hill to the Second World War memorial that overlooks the city and spoke about her problematic relationship with a husband she had married too young. She and Adnan smoked and chatted as though the war had never happened, as in the old days when people made friends regardless of ethnicity.

From the war memorial they would have then, before the Bosnia War, looked down on a Banja Luka where churches and mosques stood side by side and watched the River Vrbas snaking out of the great gorge north to Croatia, to join the River Sava which then flows east to meet the Danube, on its own way through the Balkans to the Black Sea.

AN ARABIAN NIGHT

We had returned to attend the opening of the Catholic Cathedral. Only a month earlier the place had been without floor and ceiling, the shell-shocked walls flaking plaster. Now we seemed to be sitting in an Arabian Night where a genie on command made a fully furnished and decorated bejewelled palace materialize in seconds. The marble floor glistened, the colours in the stained glass windows glared, elaborate mosaics covered the sanctuary walls, and every chair, every inch of stone had been dusted and polished to a dazzle. Bishop Komarica laughed at my mention of the Arabian Nights, seized my arms and buried his head momentarily in my shoulder saying he too expected to blink and discover everything to have been an illusion.

Generous donations from the Catholic charity Caritas in Germany and the Netherlands, had made this rapid reconstruction possible. Nuns working day and night were responsible for the immaculate sheen.

Mufti Camdzic sat near the front of the packed cathedral, his fez as conspicuous as Bishop Jefrem's absence. The mufti greeted me with a friendly smile, but when I tried to cheer him up by looking forward to celebrating the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque saying: 'We will all be sitting there together!' he turned to his neighbour, the chairman of the Islamic community in Banja Luka, and guffawed as though to say: 'What an idiot!' He knew how long the road would be to this seemingly impossible dream and the sarcastic laugh might have been a howl. He then invited us to celebrate Bajram with him in the Islamic centre later in the month.

While the congregation packed the cathedral, dozens of large, white-robed, elderly men, grasping mitres, jostled and shouted gruffly at each other in the hallway of Bishop

Komarica's house. They resembled a flock of aggressive giant sheep in skull caps.

Cardinal Puljic's crozier went missing and he sat slumped on a throne, his mournful head sunk sideways over his chest, while minions searched in a panic. Eventually a harassed priest rushed up triumphantly, screwing the separate portions of the crozier together.

Then the Catholic bishops from all over Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia marched into the cathedral where a large choir, conducted vigorously by a nun, greeted them with a loud hymn.

Sitting on either side of the altar, the bishops presented a formidable display of pugnacious machismo. Grizzled faces set on burly frames glared defiantly at each other and the congregation. They were military leaders in vestments. It would not have surprised anyone if they had been packing machine guns under their robes. Bishop Komarica was different. He smiled at the congregation then lowered his eyes modestly, his trim frame hemmed in by the surrounding belligerence, menacing mitres and wide flapping chasubles.

Behind the well-upholstered bishops stood several rows of priests from all over Bosnia, emaciated young men with ravaged faces. Their colleagues had been tortured and murdered in the war. These pallid and traumatized survivors presented a striking contrast to their ferocious bosses sitting in front of them on crimson upholstered thrones.

Throughout the service, photographers in dirty jeans and black leather jackets, bare bellies sticking out from under tight vests, bustled around the clergy and congregation, jostling each other, old-fashioned flash bulbs popping like explosions.

The ceremony reached its climax with the consecration of the altar. Nuns lit oil lamps on various parts of the massive block of marble. Several times they lifted the lamps and

laid white cloths, smoothing them down carefully; then removed the cloths. They poured candle oil over the marble, rubbing it everywhere, lit the candles again and blew them out each time. Throughout this ritual, the nuns and priests repeatedly bowed and rushed round the altar, genuflecting at each circumnavigation.

The mufti left before communion and, after the mass, the congregation milled around outside the cathedral. Vergers distributed fresh baked buns from large baskets.

The bishops and guests gathered in a large refectory for a celebratory feast. Young priests and seminarians served wine, rakija and juices. Then everyone tucked into chunks of cold lamb, pork and chicken, garnished with rice and potatoes.

I sat next to a retired Dutch woman, a doughty character, who never took no for an answer. She had first visited Bosnia immediately the war ended and being told that shoes were needed, returned to Holland, then drove a vanload of footwear to Banja Luka. Ever since, she had encouraged small handicraft businesses by buying quantities of cheap lacework and selling them at high prices back home, so raising substantial funds for rebuilding Catholic churches in Bosnia. No one dared argue with this woman. When she took out of her handbag a tiny lace doyley, depicting a donkey under a palm tree, and demanded I give her ten euros for it, I unquestioningly handed the money over.

The speeches began and one bishop after the other stood up and paid tribute to Bishop Komarica. However when his turn came to speak everyone sighed, knowing they would be in for another lengthy harangue about the present injustices, the need to pressure the international community for changes, supporting returnees and above all the need for reconciliation. The bishop of Mostar picked his teeth and glared. The cardinal frowned and everyone else concentrated on eating. By the time Donald rose to speak, people were

paying no attention, chatting and joking. When he mentioned the Ferhadija Mosque, suddenly everyone fell silent. Donald spoke about our intention to rebuild the mosque and to alert the rest of Europe to the plight of non-Serbs in Banja Luka, including Catholics. The guests stared at him as though he were crazy. Bishop Komarica however nodded in agreement and the Papal Nuncio smiled encouragingly, putting his thumbs up. Afterwards he suggested we meet him in Sarajevo.

When the bishops had left and people were gathering in small groups, reluctant to leave, Bishop Komarica suddenly launched into a folk song and a group of parishioners joined in. Singing in a light well-tuned baritone, he conducted them with a seraphic smile.

Three seminarians in jeans collared Donald and wanted to discuss the future of the Church in Bosnia. They did not have the battered look of the lean and haunted priests, who had stood like a line of tormented ghosts behind the pugnacious bishops in the cathedral. Those priests were coping with the collapse of their communities, having barely survived the war and aware they had only just escaped the fate of colleagues: six priests and two nuns murdered or disappeared without trace, probably lying in unmarked graves, burnt or left in remote fields and woods, never to be found.

The seminarians were thoughtful, realistic and ready for challenges. They managed to be hopeful; old enough to have experienced the horrors and deprivations of war, they were not so naïve as to be deceived by the nationalist politics of their elders, and still young enough to resist the temptation of apathy and cynicism.

A NEW JERUSALEM

The day after the consecration of the Catholic cathedral we attended morning service at the Orthodox cathedral. Both buildings yards from each other, but on separate planets.

Winter had arrived in Banja Luka with sharp frost. Hundreds of people crowded into the small space. The prospect of a long service on such a cold day, surrounded by Bosnian Serbs who probably knew about our intention to rebuild the mosque they destroyed, made me uneasy. A priest threaded his way through the throng and we were led to the front where three chairs had been placed for us on the left side of the iconostasis, prominently set aside in full view of the congregation. Adnan swiftly disappeared, muttering that he could not bear a lengthy worship service, though the third chair had been set aside for him, a fact which touched us, because the bishop knew Adnan to be a Muslim from Sarajevo.

The moment we sat down, the crowds thickened and more than a thousand people crammed into the cathedral.

Orthodox worship is often associated with elderly women in headscarves, kissing icons and gazing at the officiating priests. But mainly men, young and old, made up this congregation and young women outnumbered the elderly. Many of the men in their thirties and forties must have fought in the war, but most were refugees from the Krajina in Eastern Croatia, driven out by the Croats. These exhausted faces, lined and old before their time, looked mournful, even desperate. Perhaps some of them had taken part in atrocities. Maybe criminals stood in this crowd and even people who had destroyed the Ferhadija Mosque.

As the worship progressed over two hours all faces became ever more melancholy. I had expected them to look at us with suspicion and reserve; instead their gaze expressed gratitude for our presence.

The service began with a fiercely sung hymn from a large choir crowding on a balcony at the back of the cathedral. Then the priest who regularly greeted us at the bishop's residence emerged from behind the iconostasis singing in a powerful high baritone, a steely edge cushioned on a velvet tone, simultaneously strident and consoling. He led a procession of five priests and acolytes. The singing continued with soloists and choir seamlessly flowing one into the other, the effect being of a single movement, starting on a note of high ecstasy and continuing on the same exalted level to the end; a sharp contrast to my experiences of Orthodox services in Kiev, Belgrade and Paris, which dragged on interminably, choirs singing feebly, seeming to fall asleep and priests also losing voice and spirit. Not in Banja Luka. Liturgy was important to Bishop Jefrem and he conducted it with utmost solemnity and commitment. The intensity of the performance did not let up for a moment, several hours passing as a single breath; eternity in the blink of an eye.

The congregation remained silent throughout the service. Tears stood in the peoples' eyes as they listened and watched the priests and bishop intently. Though not participating, the worshippers were absorbed in every detail of the liturgy. The priests moved around, often disappearing into the sanctuary behind the iconostasis to perform private rituals; sometimes singing from there, creating an ethereal echo, from the next world.

Moved by this soul-stirring performance of the Orthodox liturgy, remembering the vigorous singing in the Catholic cathedral the day before, and thinking of feisty nuns running a community hospital and schools for the poor, a New Jerusalem suddenly entered my naïvely susceptible imagination with startling radiance. Two strong traditions existed side-by-side in this derided European city. They once joined a third great tradition.

The Ferhadija Mosque soared before my inner eye in all its former Sinan splendour: an exquisite example of Ottoman art. The mosque had been rebuilt exactly as it used to be and Banja Luka immediately became a unique city. Visitors arrived from all over the world to wonder at the traditions of three major cultures manifesting themselves at their best.

The success of Banja Luka lay within the grasp of its people. It required so little. Looking at the rapt faces of worshippers, all hanging on to every note sung at the Orthodox liturgy, it did not seem an impossible vision.

The city had everything going for it: the beauty of its position on the edge of a mountain range and by a river with warm healing pools and spectacular scenery as it alternately gushes beneath towering cliffs and then flows smoothly past lush meadows.

Before the war Banja Luka accommodated three religious traditions in relative harmony: a unique culture in a world fractured by inter-faith and inter-ethnic tensions. The war shattered that concord. It needed to be repaired to resurrect a tradition which had become more precious than ever.

Visitors would listen to the expressive intensity of the Orthodox liturgy, admire the work of a socially committed Catholic bishop and his community, and marvel at the

harmonious proportions of a mosque constructed by a culture at its peak of refinement. They would see Banja Luka not as the worst place in Europe but one of the best.

Banja Luka could seem a dreary place, unimportant and pretentious in its desire to be recognized as a capital city. Banja Luka lacked character, due to the destruction of so many of its most significant monuments and the depressed economy. Its politicians moaned about lack of investment by international big business, and could not acknowledge how recent history might be a disincentive for such support.

Their moaning reminded me of a Russian proverb: ‘The person who constantly looks back at history is blind in one eye; but the person who refuses to look back at history is blind in both eyes.’

We were taken behind the iconostasis to witness a private ceremony, the ordination of a deacon, taking place beyond the view of the rest of the congregation. A pressman managed to sneak behind the screen and photograph the rare sight of two Englishmen standing in the holy of holies. Father Vladislav suddenly appeared, summoned to explain what we were about to witness.

The ceremony began. Bishop Jefrem led the deacon around the sanctuary altar. The deacon kissed each corner, genuflecting, then finally had his head pushed forcibly down in front of the altar by the bishop while the chanting continued louder and with increased intensity. After several long minutes, Bishop Jefrem released the head. The deacon, now a priest, stood up, flushed with ecstasy, tears in his eyes and prepared to be robed and blessed. Then Bishop Jefrem threw a glass of rakija over him and the newly inducted priest ran fast around the altar three times followed by the other priests, robes swishing.

Either they were chasing the devil away or fleeing him. After this, they all embraced one another, beaming, eyes sparkling, before processing solemnly back into the church where the worshippers had been waiting patiently. The new priest went first and the others followed, thoughtfully smoothing the crumples in his robes, brushing them down with gentle motion of their hands.

Once again in front of his congregation, Bishop Jefrem delivered a sermon about his experiences in Coventry, describing how the ideas of reconciliation and regeneration had inspired and moved him.

He then invited Donald to speak to the congregation. A priest found Adnan waiting outside the church and the young Muslim stood next to Donald translating to the quietly attentive crowd of Orthodox Bosnian Serbs. Donald spoke about the need to rebuild the Ferhadija Mosque, for all religious communities to live peacefully together. No one protested; all faces turned to us.

After this we were led out of the cathedral through a back door and into a vestry where a priest served us coffee and rakija. The service must have ended immediately, because, only seconds later, Bishop Jefrem appeared, flung himself exhausted in a chair, wiped his brow with a flamboyant gesture and exclaimed: ‘Now I deserve a drink!’

After we thanked him for the privilege of what we had experienced, he spoke about sending priests for training in England, to widen their horizons. As the months went by he changed his mind. He feared losing control of them, which accounted for his prevarication. The priests later complained how he refused to allow them to socialize with fellow non-Orthodox Christians, let alone with muftis or imams. But, for the

moment, Bishop Jefrem, still inspired by the consultation at Coventry, kept an open mind and was ready to consider a more cooperative future.

The priest, who had been the liturgy's lead singer with an exceptional voice, embraced us warmly as we left. The lengthy and intense performance had elated, not exhausted him.

WESTERN EYES

Slippery politics followed religious exaltation. While meeting Georges Bordet, the High Representative's Deputy and Head of Office in Banja Luka, for lunch at the tennis club restaurant, we observed Prime Minister Ivanic talking with the new Minister of the Interior. According to Georges Bordet they were discussing corruption, endemic in Bosnian politics. Western representatives kept insisting that Bosnian politicians clean up their act and deal with the sleaze. Since gangsters were in effect payrolling them, these politicians could only pretend to be solving the problem, while playing for time, knowing the international community would not be in their country for ever.

Georges Bordet, a jovial person enjoying his term in the Republika Srpska and looking forward to retirement, counted himself a friend to Bosnian Serbs. A recent International Crisis Group report on the current political situation in the county had questioned the legally ambiguous position of the Republika Srpska, now demanding its right to be considered a country independent from the rest of Bosnia. The region had been created by Radovan Karadjic, who wanted all of Bosnia, but, facing defeat by re-armed Muslims, was prepared to settle for half of the country. In order to bring the war to a rapid end, Dayton ratified this construct as an autonomous entity to be administered by Bosnian

Serbs, as Karadjic wished. The ICG report interpreted the Dayton Accord in a way that implied the Bosnian Serbs were being rewarded for their crimes. ‘Wages of sin?!’ exclaimed Georges Bordet scornfully, his bonhomie suddenly disappearing for a moment. ‘What rewards?!’

He saw his job as ‘righting the wrongs of yesterday and preventing the wrongs of tomorrow’, which meant cooperating with the people in power, whoever they might be, whatever crimes they may have committed. He described to us the unsophisticated attitudes of Balkan people in general to issues such as corruption, war-guilt, denial and self-justification. For instance, Bosnian Serbs now only recognized Sarajevo in a small portion of the city, a suburb they still controlled, ignoring the rest as though it didn’t exist. A number of international representatives supported and encouraged this attitude, the French in particular. To ingratiate himself with the Serbs, the French Ambassador’s deputy in Banja Luka claimed loudly in public that he only lodged in the Serb part of the capital city when he had to travel there, and was cheered and applauded.

While Prime Minister Ivanic and the Minister for the Interior continued to discuss corruption and how to keep the international community off their backs, George Bordet wanted to talk to us about the largest mass grave yet found in the Republika Srpska and if we could help him devise a special ceremony at which all three religious leaders would be present. Over four hundred bodies, mostly Muslim, had been recently discovered buried in a field near the town of Prijedor in Northern Bosnia, an area notorious for its killing camps, including Omarska. Georges Bordet felt that, after our triumph at Coventry, in which we had brought the three sides together, something others had failed to manage, we might achieve equal success with such a ceremony.

This needed unhurried consideration: handled with insufficient care and time the ceremony could become a divisive rather than a reconciling event. The success of our work always depended on gaining the trust and friendship of all sides. Focusing on one group's crime might jeopardise our credibility as being impartial mediators.

Provisionally we agreed on an event of mutual acknowledgment and forgiveness rather than a ceremony specific to the mass grave near Prijedor. We called the project *Burying the Dead* and hoped it could make a significant step towards reconciliation.

The Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior finished their lunch and, passing by our table on their way out, told George they had made good progress. The Prime Minister's reticence and dry though polite demeanour implied the details of their discussion did not concern us and that the international community should stop interfering.

Georges Bordet agreed with this unspoken assumption, once again criticising the International Crisis Group report and pointing out to us that the international community had helped create this state of affairs and should stop wagging fingers and making accusations. 'We have to work with these people!'

He could not help us financially, but recommended some Canadian sources of funding and generously offered to let us use the Office of the High Representative's jeeps to transport us round the country. Adnan advised us not to accept, pointing out that visible association with the OHR or any part of the international community in charge of Bosnia could hinder our projects. We needed to be seen to be independent.

We accompanied Georges Bordet to his offices, an isolated group of shacks in a field on the outskirts of Banja Luka, surrounded by barbed wire and with a well-guarded entrance, like a concentration camp.

Georges Bordet preferred to work on a Sunday because there were fewer distractions. He missed his family in South Africa and looked forward to retiring after this, his final posting, speaking wistfully about studying and working in another remote part of the world. He loved Banja Luka, even in its present depressed state. His rose-tinted view made me dream about what the place could become, how easy it would be to resurrect its former glory. Then, remembering Prime Minister Ivanic in the restaurant only minutes earlier and the chilly reserve that concealed a web of politics, obfuscations and contrary interests, my dream about Banja Luka that seemed so straight forward was shown to be naiv and impossible.

FALTERING FIRST STEPS

Together with the reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque, establishing a civic forum became the most challenging of all our projects. Advanced countries in the Western world are impatient to establish their systems globally. Self-interest and control are the drivers. Democracy took centuries to develop, and requires constant vigilance to deal with corruption, injustice and political manipulation. Bosnia reeled from a double-whammy. After decades of totalitarian communism, this country had emerged shattered from a bloody brutal conflict. Democracy would not happen overnight.

The story of our project's ultimate failure is a lesson to the international community and a reproach to those who want quick fixes and results. What governments and organizations constantly overlook is that they are dealing with people, not figures. Failure came not from misunderstanding, nor from the people who tried their best, but from pressure to show 'concrete' results. Each country has a particular history, often imposed

unwillingly on its people. The traumas of war and persecution, of loss, struggle and survival need special care, a lot of wisdom, encouragement and patience to heal.

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Bishop Jefrem declined to come to our second meeting on the civic forum,

Pero Bukejlovic also refused to attend, not even sending an apology. He felt we were a waste of his time. Constantly demanding foreign investment and subsidies, he ignored the poor reputation of his country in the international business community, and disapproved of partnership forums. He was also at the centre of political manoeuvres. The removal of the current president on corruption charges meant that Pero Bukejlovic would soon take his place.

Mayor Davidovic, the other Bosnian Serb heavyweight from the consultation in Coventry, could not come because he had been invited to Germany. Vice-Mayor Omer Visic deputised. Though a token Muslim in the mayor's cabinet, Omer Visic was mayor of Banja Luka before the war. Then a man of considerable influence he now found himself sidelined in his own city. A number of his colleagues had been murdered in the Omarska killing camp, and he lived daily in the knowledge that he only just escaped a similar fate. However his cultivated manners, tolerance and friendliness gave no hint of the tragedies he witnessed or the trauma he himself suffered.

The Minister of Faith, who attended the consultation in Coventry at the insistence of Prime Minister Ivanic, had been named in Senad Pecanin's report as being one of those trying to cheat his expenses and felt too embarrassed to be seen in our company, so absented himself from this meeting. Dragan Cavic, the vice-president, arrived late.

The absence of so many significant players, all of them Serb, at this second crucial meeting where decisions about the civic forum needed to be made, indicated how far we still had to go, and the effort required to create a new atmosphere of cooperation and community in Banja Luka.

However, Svetlana Cenic's presence made up for the lack of Serbs. How long she would continue depended on how much help we could give her in improving the reputation of her party and persuading the international community to support the Republika Srpska. She also wanted to make a good impression on the British Embassy, and cultivated friendship with Roy Wilson. Unlike her male political colleagues, she knew that the Serb nationalists in Banja Luka needed all the friends and connections they could find.

Apart from Bishop Komarica, the only other Croat in the group was Anton Ruzic. Trouble with his weak heart had alarmed us at Coventry, and this would be his last meeting. Speaking slowly and at considerable length about removing corruption from politics in Banja Luka, he put his finger on the nub of the problem, and we made the mistake of hurrying the meeting. He spoke too long. Aware of the shortness of time, with several participants having to leave early, and all wanting to speak, we cut his speech short. Offended, Anton Ruzic announced that since his words were not appreciated he would no longer be part of the group. We should have allowed him his say. He was right. Corruption rotted the heart of Bosnia. Without stamping out the local mafia and permitting justice to rule, whatever we or anyone else tried to improve in Banja Luka did not stand a chance. As a Bosnian Serb driver succinctly put it to us later: 'Italy have the mafia; here the mafia have Bosnia.'

Svetlana defended Anton Ruzic. More than the others in the group, being a central figure in Republika Srpskan politics, she had direct experience of corruption and understood what he was trying to say. Corrupt politicians were the bane of her life, and even she could not remain unscathed. Though never accused, questions would be raised in the coming years over her own business dealings. Far more intelligent than her colleagues, she knew that until Bosnia cleaned its act up it would not be taken seriously by the international community.

We apologized profusely to Anton Ruzic and Svetlana promised to take care of him. We never saw him again. He died over the New Year.

Vice-President Cavic then arrived, announcing proudly that he had kept his promise to us and had hosted a meeting of the three religious leaders in his office in the presence of the American ambassador and the Jewish representative of Banja Luka. The rabbi had complained to Svetlana about not being invited to Coventry. At the time he had shown no interest, but given the publicity around the consultation he regretted missing out.

Agreement had been reached on the rebuilding of churches and mosques, providing the mufti with a home, the removal of obstructions to returnees reclaiming property, and religious teaching in schools to include Catholicism and Islam. The televised meeting received wide publicity. This seemed to indicate a significant step forward. Since the war and up to now, the Republika Srpska television had refused to mention Islam.

However, as usual, this impressive sounding agreement remained empty words. We later learnt that Samir Cerić's father, Enver, had returned to England having failed to regain occupancy of his home from the Serbs now living there. The religious leaders made no further effort to meet each other and ministered to their separate parishes. The

politicians persisted in appealing to their own constituencies. The Minister of Faith, Dushan Antel, a hard-line Orthodox nationalist, stalled cooperation between the faith and education ministries, despite the agreement reached in the vice-president's office.

Despite awareness of these currently intractable issues, Mufti Camdzic seemed hopeful at this meeting. Now at least people talked to him on the street in stead of passing by as though he were invisible. He was even invited to gatherings and felt safer in Banja Luka. 'Welcome to all!' he announced formally, but with feeling, and described the consecration of the Catholic cathedral. 'Things are improving in Banja Luka,' he went on. 'I hope things get better. I am especially happy that Bishop Jefrem gave support to the teaching of Islam in schools.' He then complained about Dushan Antel, the Minister of Faith, not turning up. Dr Balaban from the mayor's cabinet and Svetlana promised to chase him up and ensure permission for religious education.

Only Bishop Komarica refused to be upbeat, recognising reality when words fail to become action. 'We are still knocking on doors, begging, asking. People want to return to their homes and have nowhere to go. They are promised houses and goats. We have asked for medicines. One thousand sixty five people want to return, applying on a daily basis. We need to find fuel, food, also doctors. This is my task. And I will continue indefinitely if necessary. There is not enough care for people!'

The discussion focused on the immediate need to stop the dissemination of nationalist literature in schools, material steeped in anti-Islamic bigotry, accounts of gang rapes of Serb maidens and oppression of faithful Orthodox worshippers.

This reminded me of my meeting on our first visit to Banja Luka with a young Serb teacher from a small town several miles outside the city. He had talked about the need for

Muslims and Serbs to have their own countries. ‘They will never get on together,’ he declared, adding chillingly: ‘I have nothing against Muslims personally, but I will not permit my sons to serve in an army commanded by some Osman.’

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THE SERPENT IN THE PARDESS

As I write the first draft of this book, Israel is celebrating sixty years of being a nation state. Western leaders unite in congratulations. This is a sea change from those early years, a time I remember, when most people couldn’t give a damn about Jews or their country. Jews were always a nuisance. Not grudging sympathy over pogroms, nor even the Holocaust, altered most people’s perception of Jews being interlopers, unwelcome guests. So founding their own country appeared to solve a problem. ‘Here we don’t have to feel like guests any more.’ a woman told me in the kibbutz Netzer Sereni, speaking for all her Jewish compatriots. Nation states and their rivalries caused two world wars, so the establishment of a new country defined by race seemed anachronistic. At a time when international borders opened up to the movement of peoples, races and religions after the Second World War, and the continuing collapse of colonial empires, with all their baggage of history, and its social, economic and political consequences, surely the main problem had to be finding a way for different groups to coexist in the same country – not to be exclusive.

Israel did have that opportunity in its early years, but failed to take advantage. Zionists founded their nation state in a land belonging to another people. The Palestinians made up a small nation to the south of Lebanon on the edge of bigger Arab groupings: Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Iran. These countries did not then respect the rights of

Palestinians as vociferously as they do so now. In fact the first battles over Israel were about conquest. Egypt and Syria had their eye on this valuable land situated strategically on the Mediterranean. For decades, Palestinian refugees were not welcome in many of the Arab countries where they landed. Rejection hardened Palestinian resolve. The Arab terrorist movements of the latter half of the 20th century, and now continuing well into the 21st century, were forged in the crucible of the Palestine/Israel conflict.

In the early days of settlement, Jews had once worked alongside their Arab neighbours with little hostility. But after the foundation of the Israeli nation, committed Zionists stopped trying to coexist with the people whose land they usurped, and treated them as the enemy, a pariah in their own home.

In stead of working towards some joint ownership and administration of the land, sharing resources and creating a new kind of governance involving Jews and Arabs an opportunity that could have helped solve issues of inter-racial, inter-religious rivalry, an example to the world, Zionists either drove Palestinians from their properties and homes, or turned those who remained into second class citizens.

I witnessed the first consequences in this in the 1960s, before two fierce wars marked Israel's decisive military ascendancy in the region and secured its borders. Israel gained the West Bank from Jordan, and, from Syria, the strategically vital Golan Heights, which gave extra protection against the powerful and hostile Arab states to the East, and the Sinai desert as a buffer with Egypt. During my time there Israel was still a slender, tiny country, vulnerable and threatened on all sides. I worked side-by-side with Palestinian workers in the orchards and vineyards, noting how they were cold-shouldered. When the Israelis saw me socialize, they made their disapproval clear.

Chances for reconciliation have been ignored ever since. The continuing illegal building of Jewish settlements on the West Bank, an area meant for the Palestinians to create their own state within a state, exacerbates the divisions and makes peace impossible.

A concrete wall separates the two tribes; the world watches a perpetual cycle of attack and defence, mutual bombings and incursions. The conflict divides the rest of the world. America backs Israel to protect western interests in the Middle East. Everything feeds Islamic terrorism.

The orange orchards of Israel were the pleasantest places to work. On sun-dazzled afternoons, after filling baskets of plump fruit in the shade of fragrant trees, we picked up the fallen bruised ones, biting through soft skin into zesty flesh, squeezing and sucking the mellow sweet juice, then throwing the half eaten oranges wastefully away.

The Hebrew word for orange orchard is ‘pardess’: paradise. Israel Palestine is the land of pardessim.

After the grey gloom of Lancashire winters and unreliable summers, this was indeed heaven. In Netzer Sereni, the kibbutz which my father’s cousins had helped create, I spent my gap year emerging from an adolescent shell, shedding northern grime, and fell in love with everyone and everything, my heart thumping and bruising while the Middle Eastern sun warmed and tanned pale skin. Netzer Sereni’s electrician took me on as his apprentice. He had survived Buchenwald, and his gentle demeanour, tall, slim build and full lips made him known locally as Motek, ‘darling’ in Hebrew. He taught me how to repair broken radio sets and lamps, never mentioning his terrible history; Israel had become home, a haven. He took tender care of me: never shouting, explaining everything

patiently as to a child. Motek's big brown eyes looked mournful, perpetually haunted by what they had once witnessed. His blonde daughter, the Kibbutz beauty, had the unapproachable manner of a star.

She was a 'tzabra', the first generation of the new nation, named after the local prickly cactus plants. Protected by thorns, as long and sharp as spears, the cactus fruits are soft and sweet, once you are brave and persistent enough to reach them.

An 'ulpan' was a school for Jewish immigrants from places of persecution all over the world: South Africa, South America, North Africa, Eastern Europe, Iran (then Persia) and Iraq. We spent the hot afternoons learning Hebrew, after working in the fields in the morning, starting just before sunrise, after which, rapidly increasing heat would inhibit outdoor labour. The immigrants from Eastern Europe were mostly poor and uneducated, slow learners; those from Persia and Iraq came from good families, and were well-mannered and bright. They helped everyone at lessons. We entertained ourselves in the evening, crowding in each others shared bedrooms, telling stories about our disparate backgrounds and being forced to speak our new common language: the best practice.

Intense friendships smouldered under the fiery sun and through sweaty sleepless nights. Nothing was kept secret in Netzer Sereni, a community ruled by old-fashioned morals and shocked by any transgression.

Meanwhile the rhythms of daily life continued, the early risings, the unpleasant task of helping big Moshe, on his tractor, empty the trash in a dump outside the kibbutz, the pleasanter work of picking oranges or repairing appliances in Motek's workshop, with a break for breakfasts in the middle of the morning. The harvest of kibbutz labour covered

the tables with freshly baked bread, eggs, meats and piles of fresh fruit, salads and avocado pears.

After siesta came the dreary lessons: slowly learning a strange alphabet and new sounds, trying to concentrate in the stifling heat, struggling to keep awake. Evening entertainment for the kibbutz consisted of circle dancing, chanting patriotic songs about Eretz Israel (Land of Israel), and occasionally riding on the open back of a pick-up truck to concerts or filmshows in Tel Aviv. On religious feast days the kibbutz staged home-made concerts, at which people performed sketches they had rehearsed for weeks. Cool nights were spent romancing and transgressing: who wanted to waste these refreshing hours sleeping?

As far as the kibbutz elders were concerned, within the barbed-wire fence existed the realization of an idealistic social dream: communal living, a pooling of expertise, agricultural, industrial and cultural, to which each person contributed his or her individual skill, so creating and sustaining an organic self-sufficient entity. Moshe, the bin-man, and Dvora, the kitchen helper and child minder, were equal with Motek, the electrician, Jakob, the teacher, and Schmul, the agricultural manager and intellectual: the uneducated and the intellectual elite side by side. But all were white Europeans in a country where Jewish immigrants came from all over North Africa and the Middle East as well as from Russia and the Americas. Such a utopia did not last beyond the first generations who tried to make this dream real. Its demise came as a consequence of human frailty, the demands of business, and the profit urge to expand the kibbutzim beyond what is manageable on a human scale. Above all, these utopian communities did not escape the

effects of politics and the circumstances of this new nation. The bubble of idealism could not be hermetically sealed.

Outside Netzer Sereni, nomadic Bedouin pitched their tents on their long trek across the Middle East: rare appearances of an exotic people, who had lived here before the settlement fenced the productive pardessim with barbed wire to keep these indigenous people out. I never had the courage to ask Motek how he felt about this fence. It once kept him under threat of death inside, and now it protected him from the outside.

Tel Katzir was a new kibbutz established by young Jewish settlers on the eastern shore of Lake Galilee to the north of Israel. They relied on Palestinian labour bussed in from outside to work the vineyards. The Arab women labourers laughed at me, a stranger trying to be friendly, but the men were more sympathetic to my efforts. The kibbutzniks glared at me disapprovingly when I chose to make conversation with a young Palestinian, as we took a break from picking grapes and sat together on the hillside, above the expertly cultivated rows of vines, sagging with massed bunches of succulent fruit, ripening under the clear blue sky. The founders of Tel Katzir had chosen a dangerous spot to establish their kibbutz. Intensely serious about their responsibilities, young couples raised their families in the line of fire from Syrians across the border. To guard against frequent raids, Israeli soldiers were constantly posted there: young men, who talked about art and music between shifts. One of them, a clarinetist, scorned my inability to play the piano from memory: what kind of inept musician was I? All of us felt terror at approaching the border, a plain barbed wire fence that marked the separation of Israel from a country which resented its existence. During the night Syrians would descend from the Golan Heights and try to cut through the wire. Several of my fellow

workers were killed by Syrian attackers in the months after I left Tel Katzir. Then, shortly after, the 1967 war broke out. Israel resisted Arab attacks and gained control of the Golan Heights. The country would never allow Syria access again.

A young immigrant from Morocco, educated and idealistic, befriended me. I began to feel accepted. Then three cockney lads arrived for summer work-experience. They needed my help as a translator. Idle, drinking heavily and openly contemptuous of the settlers, they behaved loutishly. The kibbutz cold-shouldered the four of us. The Moroccan would have nothing more to do with me.

Crestfallen by my experience at Tel Katzir, I returned to Netzer Sereni. At Tel Katzir the settlers impressed me with their stoic determination to build a safe home for their children. My Moroccan friend and Palestinian fellow grape picker touched me with their fleeting friendship. The young soldiers filled me with admiration for their readiness to patrol the border, despite their evident terror.

The snow-capped mountains of Lebanon reared up in the north. At the border the railway line to Beirut suddenly stopped, cut and buffered. In the distance, smoke rose from large refugee settlements. These tent cities lay under heavy clouds of dust. Everyone knew they were full of people uprooted, unwanted and invisible, so others did not have to acknowledge them as being human.

My family wanted me to stay and become an Israeli. But Israel seemed to be a cursed country. Where one side saw a hard-won paradise, a land of milk and honey, others were excluded. And hostile countries all round just wanted to drive the new state into the sea and annihilate it for ever. These neighbours, so many of them, were talked about as diabolical enemies, people to be feared, resisted and defeated. My family and friends

there had no time for argument. For them Israel was home. They had worked hard to settle and make the land productive. ‘We were amazons,’ my aunt told me, and witnessing the prosperity of the kibbutz, they had reason to be proud of their achievements.

At last a ‘tzabra’ welcomed me into his home on my final evening in Netzer Sereni. He talked long and sadly about the future, which he could only see as full of bitterness. Born there, he carried the burden of his parents’ sacrifice. A living crucifixion, this thoughtful and sensitive young man gazed forward on to a lifetime of problems for a country he felt obliged to stay and protect.

The road to Eilat on the Red Sea runs for over a hundred miles through the Negev Desert, passed kibbutzim turning sand and rock into tomato plantations, mirages of emerald green strips suddenly appearing in the parched valleys. Eilat sat at the northern tip of the Red Sea, in a narrow corridor, between the smouldering crimson Adom Mountains of Jordan to the East and the barren hills of Egyptian Sinai to the West. I strolled among the black boulders on the border with Sinai. Heavily armed soldiers suddenly confronted me, forbidding me to walk further. I had accidentally crossed into Egypt. Back then, before Eilat became a crowded international resort with high rise hotels, the small town consisted of a few streets and houses on the edge of a turquoise sea. Exquisite tiny shells of every colour and shape covered the almost deserted beach.

At the end of my year in Israel, I set sail from Haifa without looking back. Angry and confused by the year’s experiences, swearing never to visit Israel again, on my return to England I wrote an article, in which I described the plight of Palestinian refugees. It was rejected by the New Statesman. The issue was deemed to be of no importance.

A decade later, the first major act of Palestinian terrorism at the Munich Olympic Games compelled a shocked world to remember the displaced people on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean. I had not foreseen the ferocity or the degree of organization and determination coming from those dust-shrouded refugee camps across the border between Israel and Lebanon. But it did not surprise me.

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Another ship from Cyprus carried me and a mix of Turkish and Greek passengers on a nocturnal voyage to Athens. As dawn broke, the mysterious islands of the Aegean Sea floated dreamlike in a haze on a polished sea merging as one with the sky.

In Athens I strolled around the Parthenon, deserted but for a few tourists and shawl sellers, and was for a while followed by several persistent shoe shine boys. I touched the stones that represented the birth of democracy. While this place breathed freedom and clarity, the city below lay shrouded in a toxic haze of traffic fumes. Suddenly a monumental sadness engulfed me.

Relief at no longer being in Israel went together with nostalgia for a paradise lost.

On many evenings in Netzer Sereni I played trios with two retired musicians, survivors of Buchenwald. The cellist's wife explained what Israel meant to her: a home where she was not a guest. Robert Frost's poem, *The Death of a Hired Hand*, describes home being the place where you don't have to say sorry, a place they can never turn you away.

As I sat by the Parthenon, the stones reminded me of an incident towards the end of my time in Israel. The road north climbs up from the Red Sea into the mountains of the Negev. On my return from Eilat, I looked back over the tomato fields of the kibbutz below, shining like emeralds in the surrounding desert. A young German, son of a Nazi,

had left his homeland for ever, to settle there and help create this paradise. He had renounced his country, and laboured hard in an act of atonement for what Germany had done. There were a number of young Germans like him in Israel: men and women who had made the same decision. He wrote me long letters about life, literature and work, in the earnest manner of Germany's great romantic poets and thinkers of the European Enlightenment, educated, humane, idealistic and respectful of all traditions, East and West.

Nazi book-burners, mockers of modern art and pen-pushing bureaucrats who ensured efficient implementation of the Holocaust, almost annihilated this tradition. My new friend did not consider Germany home anymore. However, between the lines I sensed unease about the political situation of Israel in the Middle East and the price of the new nation's survival. He seemed to imply that by transforming desert into fertile land, Jews might prove to their neighbours and displaced people that they had earned the right to occupy the land. The young German's enthusiasm was tempered by anxiety for the future of a country he had chosen to make his home, and which had been founded in nationalistic fervour at a political cost that no one knew or could foresee.

The view from the high Negev stretched south from the kibbutz to the Red Sea glistening in the distance. I could make out, on the other side of the border, Aqaba, where Lawrence of Arabia and local tribes began their insurgence against the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East just over half a century earlier. Wanting to sit down and take in the view of paradise longer, I moved a rock. This was foolish. Under it, a poisonous snake lay coiled, asleep, but now disturbed it began to wake.

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‘Muslims and Christians cannot live together. They should each have their own country. We can trade with them; we can even have good relations. But never can we share the same land.’ These words of the Serb teacher in Banja Luka brought back memories of Israelis saying the same of Palestinians: in both cases the dominant group speaking about a minority each wanted to get rid of.

The international community acquiesced to Bosnian Serb demands in the Dayton Accord, creating an autonomous region for Serbs in the same way as it approves a road map to peace which gives Israelis and Palestinians control of their separate territories. But the winning side is not prepared to deal fairly, because it claims control of the whole, and the other side should disappear. The Republika Srpska had not been ethnically cleansed thoroughly enough. Bosnian Serb killing camps were discovered by investigative foreign journalists and closed down, so putting an end to the planned genocide of Muslims. Now Muslim refugees were coming home in large numbers, not wanting to settle in Europe or America, places which treated them with suspicion as possible members of Islamic terrorist factions. On their return they demanded not only memorials to those who had been killed but restitution. They then armed themselves in preparation, to resist future attempts at being ethnically cleansed, and to prevent any attempts by the Republika Srpska splitting from the rest of Bosnia and becoming part of Greater Serbia. Meanwhile, Israelis persist in building Zionist settlements that need constant police protection on the West Bank of the River Jordan, so depleting and fracturing territory that the Palestinians should consider their own, making it impossible to administer, and so gradually paving the way for annexation.

Two world wars caused the demise of empires and weakened rival and previously hostile nation states. To prevent a third war, Europe began to make moves towards a continental federation: the strongest countries like France, Germany and England controlling the mainly economic spheres of influence. Gradually, but generally unwillingly and with suspicion, people were prepared to call themselves European first, before acknowledging their own nationality. Immigration from former colonies and the growth of mixed cultures and ethnicities make a return to pure ethnicity and single cultures impossible. Increasingly the residents of European nation states come from different countries and continents.

Yet it is in those very countries with the longest multi-cultural traditions where the different branches of the Abrahamic faiths coexisted for centuries: in Bosnia and Israel, where this anachronistic desire for single ethnicity and culture is at its most virulent. Instead of calling on their matured traditions to create harmonious, shared and stable societies, being beacons and signposts for a world struggling to learn how to live with diversity, these two countries choose to narrow their vision for the future, even if it means perpetual, unresolved conflict.

Bosnia is one country with three major communities and traditions: one history with three different perspectives. However, 'We are one country with three different histories,' several Bosnian Serbs told us. Semantics lead to wars. As a historian, I wanted to tell them that history is one whole, starting from the beginning of the universe and continuing to the end of time. It is how people interpret what happens that creates the different stories. Forgetting the whole, concentrating only on one single perspective, prepares the conditions for conflict.

The first consequence of a blinkered interpretation of history, which justifies one's own community and damns the other, is amnesia towards the other side's suffering.

It is the 'enemy' who committed all the outrages, murders and tried to drive 'us' from our land. The battle for Jerusalem in 1947 was chronicled by both sides. Israelis accused Palestinians of massacring Jews, showing pictures taken by an American journalist of looting, and soldiers in Arab gear storming through the streets; a Palestinian photographic archive depicts Palestinian homes being destroyed, and families fleeing. The Israeli story of the battle for Jerusalem mythologizes the suffering of Jews, once again being persecuted and driven out. History records a battle which the Arabs lost.

Bosnian Serbs responded to accusations of killing Muslims in concentration camps by denying the atrocities and publishing books chronicling Muslim massacres of Serbs. Encouraged by international opinion that the conflict in Bosnia had been a civil war, rather than ethnic cleansing, the Serbs claimed that crimes had been committed on both sides. Leaving aside the asymmetry, since more Muslims died in the war than Serbs, this interpretation of events as equality of guilt erased the need for justice: the other side did as much. 'Let's draw a line under the past and make a fresh start, but in separate countries.' When the defeated minority complains, the oppressors claim victim-hood. The Shoah of the Second World War becomes the Zionist's shield. Serbs remind the world of their betrayal and defeat at the Battle of Kosovo over half a millennium ago, and their martyrdom, over centuries, protecting Christian Europe from Islamic conquest. The history has yet to be written incorporating the different perspectives of the same events. First steps towards reconciliation need to be made through the thorny tangled thicket of disputed memories and nationalist mythologies.

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Those who had taken part in the Coventry meetings now gathered to take further the decisions they made together. Conflicted history hung heavy over the mixed group gathered in the vice-president's office in Banja Luka. The mufti and the Catholic bishop could only think of their own communities, decimated by mass killings and persecution. The teachers worried about daily survival: regularly not receiving their measly monthly salary. They also had to tread carefully, for fear of politicians who might disapprove of them not taking a nationalist enough line. The politicians ducked and weaved trying to stay in power, avoiding being stabbed or shot in the back by rival colleagues, while at the same time engaging in dubious business dealings with the mafia that controlled them.

Separate stories provided each group with grievances and purpose. Already the war was being mythologized; the numbers of dead and missing being exaggerated or reduced, to suit either side. Causes and effects were fabricated and questioned, waters constantly muddied by politics. What united them was the longing to create a stable society, to end the cycle of violence and retribution, and be able to just get on with life.

A civic forum in Banja Luka could be a means of clearing a way through the thorny thicket of disputed history, the three communities communicating and cooperating in a common purpose, monitoring the pressing issues of the country, uncovering and dealing with corruption, bringing justice to victims, and helping politicians and administrators push through reforms towards a new democracy. First they needed to unravel conflicting mythologies and prejudices, a heritage of centuries of shared but contested history that made cooperation fragile and prone to collapse.

Meanwhile the international community led by the United Nations, influenced mostly by the big players United States and the European Union, took on the role of policing Bosnia. It made demands on the civic forum the new members could not meet. The need to show progress: to tick boxes, account for every penny given, inputs and outputs, business plans and the expectation of immediate concrete results, placed too much pressure on the group which not only had no experience of these methods of operating, but was still exhausted by the untended trauma of war and decades of oppressive totalitarianism.

We talked to the group in the vice-president's office about establishing a civic forum, training and appointing a 'broker', a representative for the group. We explained cross-sector partnerships between politicians, businesses, the public, private and civil sectors, consisting of religious, education and voluntary organizations.

We described our objective as helping to open Banja Luka to Europe, building on the links already established in Coventry, persuading the European Union to release resources: financial help, expertise in education, welfare, business development, art, training, encouraging and finding employment for young people – in effect, everything. As we spoke, the group that had been so lively and optimistic began to tire and look withdrawn. We told them about a similar project in Krakow, Poland, where a businessman, an academic and a non-government organization collaborated on an environmental issue which had divided the city. The group listened and looked haggard, each participant depressed, realizing how far they were from such cooperation.

We tried to lift their spirits once more, reassuring them that this partnership forum would help improve the situation in Banja Luka, though it would take time to establish its

authority and that all we asked of them was to be champions and god parents of the organization. We explained that their experience at Coventry put them in the position of advisors, able to provide support and encouragement to those who would carry out the forum's work.

We also expected those members of the group who worked for the mayor's office to help provide office space for the new forum. Members of the group became animated again, understanding that we were not demanding something too strenuous, and feeling better at the thought of being advisors.

Father Vladislav announced that, as secretary of an Orthodox youth organization, he could help the project. The young people there were well-educated, skilled and had links throughout Bosnia and the rest of the world. Since the forum encouraged returnees, he promised to speak with Bishop Jefrem about space and resources to help those in need. The deputy mayor, Omer Visic, announced that he and the mayor would look into finding space for the office.

We stressed the importance of appointing a 'broker', acceptable to all three communities, and that there should be a successful project, however small, to encourage the group to persevere with the larger and more difficult tasks ahead. Something practical had to happen soon, to establish the credibility of the Coventry Group and the Soul of Europe, as well as the forum.

Among feasible proposals, we suggested that the mufti should get a house, some small businesses be developed and the schools improved by throwing out nationalist material and getting in more books. The 'broker' would drive the partnership forward, interrupt

empty statements and start something new. The forum could be seen as a box into which issues are put and discussed, and ways found to make sure decisions were acted on.

We proposed that the forum take a couple of years to establish itself, after which time it could function without our support, though we would work with them, act as catalysts, for as long as they wanted us.

Talk of his house excited the mufti. This matter concerned him more than any other. He had been promised a permit from the city council to build a new home. The mayor would give instructions in the coming weeks. Now basking in friendliness and support he went round the room inviting everyone personally to Bajram, the first celebration of the feast in Banja Luka since the war.

Bishop Komarica warned about rushing economic assistance for a corrupt government, and we pointed out that the civic forum would address this issue by providing a safe and transparent mechanism through which to operate funding. Such forums functioned successfully in countries with transition economies.

The meeting ended with groups discussing animatedly, making arrangements. We needed to appoint a broker urgently to harness the energy and determination of the group, before everyday anxieties and problems ground their optimism down. Svetlana seemed a good choice, because she understood the principles of a civic forum and had won the trust of the different communities.

We invited her to attend a training program established by Ros Tennyson at Cambridge University. Past affiliations with Karadjic, however, raised questions about her judgement. The British Government might refuse to fund her.

CROAT

‘I could use an afternoon in Zagreb,’ Roy Wilson the British Embassy representative in Banja Luka had declared, picking us up from the airport on our return in December. Banja Luka’s airport only operated short haul flights to Belgrade. Zagreb was the nearest international airport, a three hour drive away.

To help us build on the achievements of the Coventry consultation, he organized two private lunches at his home that week: the first with Vice-President Cavic and Svetlana Cenic; the other with Georges Bordet, the High Representative’s deputy in the Republika Srpska, and a Dutch political advisor to the Security Forces. Roy welcomed any opportunity to escape the stress of dingy Banja Luka, and enjoyed strolling round Zagreb’s large open-air market by the cathedral, where he could buy curd cheese, a regional delicacy.

The three countries most heavily involved in the Bosnia War had developed in separate ways, each with its own defined character. Serbia seemed imprisoned by the infrastructure of its communist past, the pervasive use of Cyrillic script emphasising links with the former Soviet Union and the Orthodox Church. Massive brutal blocks of residential estates dominated and surrounded city centres. Bosnia, still crippled and devastated by the war, felt like a Third World country in Africa, not part of prosperous Europe. Croatia on the other hand was rapidly rebuilding itself as a shiny new Western European nation, with smart office blocks around the capital sporting acres of reflecting glass, the city wearing Raybans like a gangster, film star or dictator.

After its particularly brutal involvement in the Bosnia War, Catholic Croatia rejected exotic Balkan traditions it associated with ‘uncouth’ Orthodoxy and ‘devious’ Islam. Croats declined spicy cuisine in favour of blander fare. They shed the trappings of a defunct communism and modernized. Croatia wanted to join the European Union, and focussed westward across the Adriatic to Italy, and north across the Alps to Germany. Zagreb’s elegant boulevards, flanked by Hapsburg Empire edifices and monuments including an opulently decorated opera house, helped one forget the savagery of the Croat military machine.

Rapid rebuilding programs funded by the European Union left few signs of the depredations of war, and these confined to the Eastern border with Serbia, a no-man’s land where the autobahn’s smooth surface deteriorated, pitted, as though the authorities could not be bothered to repair damage, and wanted to forget the part of the country so close to the enemy. Here Vukovar had been reduced to rubble in a battle of attrition between Serbs and Croats. Thick forests on either side of this stretch of the motorway were cordoned off because of landmines. No sign on the motorway indicated the destination might be Serbia. At the border, a small piece of wood, shaped like an arrow, with ‘Belgrade’ printed in small lettering, stuck two fingers up in an easterly direction.

Meanwhile Zagreb and the Adriatic coast with its tourist-friendly ancient towns, cities and islands shook off memories, guilt and grief. The markets flourished with fresh produce, mounds of glistening fruit and vegetables, large jars of differed flavoured honey, and, wrapped in its muslin, kaimak, the local soft white cheese favoured by Roy Wilson. Behind Zagreb’s market the Catholic cathedral towers above the city, an imposing gothic building with tall spires like Stephansdom in Vienna.

- A wealthy plainspoken Croat landowner woos the elder daughter of an impoverished Viennese family in Richard Strauss's romantic comic opera *Arabella*. This suitor's bluff manner reflects patronising Hapsburg attitudes to the foreigners in its empire: uncultured but salt of the earth. Croats, like Serbs, were known and feared as fierce fighters. The Hapsburg Empire exploited Croat enthusiasm for ruthless warfare. When a Serb terrorist's gunshots killed the Hapsburg Archduke in Sarajevo in 1914, Europe at first treated the assassin as a typical Balkan hothead. But attempts to localize a problem ('just a bit of civil unrest'), that flared up on one of the world's politically most dangerous fault lines, failed to prevent a sequence of international diplomatic blunders, and hardening of nationalist attitudes as rival powers rushed enthusiastically to war.

Strauss and his librettist Hugo von Hoffmansthal wrote *Arabella* nineteen years after the assassination in Sarajevo, and against a background of National Socialism establishing itself as a respectable political force in Germany. The opera is set in the decades before the First World War and depicts Hapsburg Empire as weak and ripe for attack.

Arabella chooses the Croat. His machismo trumps the effiteness of her Viennese suitors. At the end of the opera, in a sublime duet, she approaches him with the glass of water, a tradition of his homeland, symbolic of her readiness to be an obedient and faithful wife. This conclusion disturbs. A spirited woman gives up her independence and becomes submissive. Furthermore, the transaction reeks of exploitation and grasping opportunism as the marriage has solved her family's financial problems. This perception is characteristic of the composer of *Salome* and *Electra*, both about monumentally dysfunctional families. *Arabella* gains property, a magnificent house and acres of rolling

hillside and forests, vividly described by the Croat suitor to impress his future in-laws. The way he describes doing business with Jews and gypsies living on his estate, hints chillingly at policies that were well on the way to being activated in the year of the opera's premier, 1933. The satiric libretto and luscious orchestration, constantly spiked with acid dissonances like cracks in an opulent façade, reveal the bigotries, injustices and corruption which eventually made the world wars of the 20th century so vicious and destructive. Ironically, the Viennese family is depicted as the poor relative of the empire, and the once subjugated Croat the successful entrepreneur who saves them.

However it is a secondary character, and not the bluff outsider, who reveals the hypocrisy at the heart of the family and the empire itself. Forced to masquerade as a man so as not to add to the family's problems of having to find another suitor, Arabella's sister takes advantage of her disguise to express what she really feels and shows up Arabella's narcissism. The sister carries the cross of family dysfunction that reflects the demands and ethics of Empire. Her behaviour shames both.

My Jewish step-grandmother survived Nazi persecution by fleeing to England, returning to her beloved Vienna after the war, to find her non-Jewish husband and to rebuild their life from scratch. She took me to an extravagantly well-mounted and dazzlingly sung performance of *Arabella* at the Staatsoper. Nervous at how she was responding to the dark undercurrents of the opera, I glanced at her in the middle of the first encounter between the father and his daughter's suitor. The Croat waves wads of money under the nose of the desperate father, who is eager to seize what's on offer, but, at the same time, tries to control his desperation and greed, and behave with propriety. The Croat repeats over and over again: 'Teschek! Bedien' Dich!' – 'God dammit! Help yourself!'

I watched my grandmother leaning on the upholstered balcony rail, smiling indulgently, tear-filled eyes brimming with love and sympathy for the father. This was a human situation she understood only too well from her own experience of losing everything, falling on desperate times, making do, pulling herself up by her own efforts. No one ever offered her wads of notes. She appreciated, more than most, the excruciatingly embarrassing comic situation, performed with refined understatement by one of the popular resident stars of the Vienna opera, a person aware of every nuance of shame and need. She laughed out loud at the way he alternately reached out for the cash, then withdrew his hand, shaking his head with a wistful smile, yet eyes fixed constantly on the riches being so freely offered.

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Now Croats were creating an image for themselves as sophisticated and cultured European entrepreneurs in contrast to two of their immediate neighbours: on one side third-world Bosnia, where young people from Zagreb and Ljubljana could go on weekend jaunts to take advantage of the cheap beer, and on the other, hated Serbia where no one went if they could help it, and where Croats were unwelcome anyway.

Roy Wilson drove us down the motorway crossing the sparsely populated flat plains of Eastern Croatia, turning off at a sign to a local village but with no mention of Bosnia or Banja Luka. Croatia seemed to pretend their embarrassing neighbours didn't exist. We passed some war-battered houses and crossed the bridge over the River Sava. On the other side, Bosnia seethed with activity, local traffic jamming the narrow roads, and people crowding the streets.

The main purpose of this visit was to attend the first Bajram celebration in Banja Luka since the war. Because all the mosques in the city had been destroyed, the celebration took place in a sports hall, and it marked a significant change in attitudes since the war. Banja Luka would acknowledge the presence of the Muslim community and its right to exist without persecution. Mufti Camdzic intended to turn the verbal agreements reached at Coventry into concrete form, by compelling all politicians to recognize the Islamic community as an integral part of Banja Luka life.

To raise interest in our work, Roy Wilson had persuaded the Brigade of Gurkhas, which made up the British contingent of the UN forces in the Republika Srpska, to give us a benefit concert. The pipes and drums of the Royal Gurkha Regiment had offered to perform in the Banski Dvor, a concert hall in the basement of the government buildings. Roy had taken care to invite politicians and representatives from all ethnic communities, so we looked forward to seeing who would turn up.

Night fell as Roy drove us across the border where a few miles along the road to Banja Luka we were surprised to see, in a previously empty field, a new mosque pointing into the evening sky. The Saudi style building had been decorated like a Christmas tree for Bajram, lights twining up the minaret and shining in the darkness for miles around. The mosque said: 'We are here!'

Since the departure of Ambassador Graham Hand, who had kept him on a tight leash, Roy Wilson could now voice his opinions freely, and surprised politicians in the Republika Srpska with blunt advice, telling them to cooperate with the international community or their country would disappear off the map. This new forthrightness

attracted Svetlana, and he found himself spending more time with her than he expected. They made an unlikely couple, she robust and expansive, a mane of glossy black hair and pale skin setting off the dazzling white, or vivid scarlet, of her twin-sets; he fastidiously groomed, understated and trimly elegant. She phoned him regularly and treated him as a confidante, providing him, and the British embassy, with useful information and details about the Serb political leaders. She matched their cunning, but her intelligence was far superior to that of her pugnacious nationalist colleagues. In other circumstances she would be a political leader, but strict stipulations from the international community about balancing numbers of nationalists in ministerial positions, meant that the vice-president could only appoint her as an 'advisor'. Eventually, when Cavic became President of the Republika Srpska, he appointed her Minister for Finance.

She kept silent about her past, having been with Radovan Karadjic, during the war, in Pale from where the Serbs were shelling Sarajevo, then disappearing after the war, moving from place to place, changing home seventeen times, with a mother and daughter in tow before settling in Banja Luka.

How could such an astutely intelligent woman ally herself to the self-evidently lost cause of Bosnian Serb nationalism, which, even if it had triumphed, after all the ethnic cleansing and destruction, could have no future within the international community? Perhaps she took a gamble that failed. During the war, Serbs and Bosnian Serbs fought together to evict all Muslims and carve up the region with Croats. This war had no victors. The Republika Srpska aimed at separating from the rest of Bosnia and becoming part of Serbia, or independent. Not wanting to be seen annexing a region which belonged to another country, Serbia kept silent on this matter. However, Bosnian Serb politicians

commuted regularly to and from Belgrade, in the same way that Mufti Camdzic and Sulejman Tihic had their base in Sarajevo, and Svetlana made regular excursions to Belgrade.

Roy once joined her on one of these. They dined in an expensive restaurant where a band of musicians were performing. She commanded them to play folk songs which she sang raucously, banging a hundred Deutsch Mark note, then the equivalent of fifty euros, on the table. When they wanted to move on, each time she put another note down. A hundred Deutsch Marks then represented the average monthly salary in Banja Luka. Her performance begged many questions: where did this quantity of money come from? Why did she need to buy attention? What about her past and present life, and her ambitions? And what happened to her daughter's father? Who was he?

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A crime report in a local paper inspired Nikolai Leskov to write *The Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* about a beautiful, bored housewife who reacts against her husband's bullying family by taking a lover, and together they murder both husband and father-in-law, are then punished and sent to Siberia.

The novella inspired a Shostakovich opera and a Wajda film. All three refuse to judge the anti-heroine, a woman of passion and intelligence, trapped in an unhappy marriage to a weak husband, and with a bullying father-in-law. Even the handsome worker on the estate, who easily seduces her, turns out to be shifty and unreliable. But rather than allowing herself to be oppressed, she takes charge, ruthlessly and violently.

The final image of Leskov's unsentimental narrative, ignored by opera and film, which both insist on portraying her as a tragic victim, is of the scorned woman dragging her

lover's new mistress under the icy waters of the River Volga. Leskov pulls no punches. At the start of the story, Leskov describes a pretty young wife, sensuous, bored, and content to tantalise and arouse the attentions of her husband's workers. She has no compunction killing the men in her way and at the end dies defiantly, drowning her lover's new girl, rising one last time above the water 'like a pike' overpowering its prey.

The story has a disturbing visceral quality. Like Genet in *A Thief's Journal*, and Hubert Selby Junior in *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, Leskov turns conventional morality upside down. By creating an alternative morality, in which lawbreakers are perceived as saints and the act of crime a sacrament, Genet's perverse perspective shows up hypocrisy in a society that stands aloof from the life of those who reject its values. Society's shadow-life follows equally strict codes of conduct, but it is transgressive and violent sex that binds these outcasts in mutual trust: an alternative family. The losers in Selby's New York lack this framework for survival but their emotional candour and vulnerability reveal and shame the thin veneer of respectability coating the surrounding urban affluence.

'What a waste of passion and energy! Just imagine what this woman could have done if she had been free to choose.' My mother put her finger on the startling prescience and modernity of Leskov's novella, written in the middle of the 19th century, well before the Russian Revolution and the liberation movements of the 20th century.

Resolute, attractive, intelligent, talented and full of energy, and undeterred by the crushing oppressiveness of a macho society, Svetlana persisted on her ambitious path through the murky morass of Balkan politics, fuelled as they were by blinkered nationalism and self-preservation.

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When we arrived at Roy's apartment, two cooks were already preparing a substantial meal. Looking fresh and unruffled despite the long drive, Roy, ever the perfect host, mixed substantial cocktails in big chunky glasses.

While Vice-President Cavic sat hunched in his car outside, waiting for Svetlana to arrive, Natasha Bolger, a research assistant sent by the Foreign Office in London on a fact-finding mission, talked to us. She looked barely old enough to be out of school but spoke with knowledge and assurance.

Svetlana appeared, and Cavic sent his bodyguards to a café round the corner.

They both seemed less at ease than in the government offices, where we normally met them, and barely touched the food. Despite Roy's talent for hosting, the evening dragged, with the vice-president avoiding eye contact and repeating familiar speeches about his country's need for investment.

Roy used the occasion to spell out political and economic realities. The vice-president looked even more crestfallen, and Svetlana made no comment.

At this stage in our work they both considered us worth cultivating. We could be useful in giving the Republika Srpska a better image. Vice-President Cavic hoped we would support his attempt to bring Bosnian Serb nationalists into the 21st century.

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The vice-president seemed relieved to depart. Svetlana cheered up at the prospect of settling down for a long late night chat with Roy and Natasha. She kept studiously quiet about her relationship with Karadjic. In later years she told us, without emotion or regret, that 'if Karadjic wanted to serve his country he should give himself up to the Hague Tribunal.'

Karadjic's trial in The Hague would eventually reveal how leaders of the international community, particularly Western democracies, supported him, 'a man we can do business with', reminding everyone how they helped his military objectives by placing an arms embargo on Bosnia, so Muslims could not defend themselves against the huge military arsenal possessed by Serbs, and so deliberately abandoned them to their fate: 'Don't dream dreams that the west is going to come and save you,' Bosnian Muslims were told by Lord Owen, the British Social Democrat politician, assigned the task of brokering deals with Serbs during the war. Such attitudes, widely shared in the European community, opened the doors of this part of Europe to the Mujaheddin, the only people prepared to protect and fight for their Muslim brothers and sisters in peril. European disinterest in the fate of Bosnian Muslims shocked the international Islamic community into a profound suspicion of Western democracies and their international agendas. This fed extremism that also led to Islamic terrorism and the new world war.

Bearing in mind our invitation to attend Bajram early the next day we left shortly after the vice-president.

Snow lay thick on the ground, concealing the grey monotony of Banja Luka. But bitter cold did not discourage youngsters walking across town to cram into a disco opposite the hotel. An insistently aggressive beat kept us awake until the early hours, then at two in the morning the revellers emptied onto icy pavements, yelling at the cold, lurching home.

BAJRAM BY THE VRBAS

Fresh snow fell as we arrived at the Islamic Centre before dawn the next morning. We expected to find the mufti huddling together with no more than half a dozen worshippers.

The room set aside for worship, the first Bajram since the war, had filled with about five hundred men and boys who crouched together in their socks, silently and apprehensively waiting for the celebration to start. Sorrow hung over the crowd like a dank fog, but some of them managed to smile and nod affectionate greetings to each other. The women were elsewhere, so we reckoned the worshippers in all to number over a thousand. They had no place to pray except this cramped meeting room which had been furnished with a make-shift mizra and pulpit.

The worshippers were fearful for a reason. Mufti Camdzic had rigged a loudspeaker outside the Islamic Centre, so the whole of Banja Luka could hear his sermon. The snow and cold outside would probably deter demonstrations. The mufti had given Cavic warning of his intentions, and the vice-president spent hours on his mobile making sure the Ministry of Police protected the Islamic Centre. The mufti intended his sermon to be provocative. The congregation might wish him to tone down any inflammatory rhetoric, since they had to live in Banja Luka, whereas the mufti returned to his home in Sarajevo, but pleas were in vain. They could not challenge his authority.

Having removed our shoes, we were given chairs, Donald next to the mufti, both facing the congregation.

The high pitched voice of an elderly imam shrieking an introductory prayer opened the worship and everyone responded with loudly repeated chants of ‘Allah Akhbar’ rising in different keys. Roy commented afterwards how medieval it sounded. Different chants were interspersed with a series of readings and prayers, everyone bowing at the same moment, boys and men prostrating themselves in a gesture of spiritual and physical submission to God, their heads touching the ground, behinds in the air. The intensity of

this worship matched that of the drama we witnessed in the Orthodox and Catholic liturgies.

Adnan, who stayed in Sarajevo to celebrate Bajram with his family, told us later what a privilege it had been for us to be invited to attend the celebration, let alone for Donald to be allowed to speak at it.

Mufti Camdzic then delivered his sermon in a loud hectoring voice which the loudspeakers broadcast over the surrounding quiet morning streets, across the River Vrbas and down the main road leading to the Republika Srpska's administrative and municipal offices. The congregation looked uneasy and shifted around on the floor. 'You all have churches!' the mufti bellowed, 'We do not have a single mosque. We are not allowed the rights of worship that you take for granted. The Orthodox can have bells, but we cannot have the Muslim call to prayer!' Some of the men looked at each other, raising their eyes to the ceiling as much as to say: 'Here we go again! Why can't he be quiet and diplomatic? It is we who are punished afterwards!'

But the streets were empty, no one demonstrated. The mufti softened his tone. He began to speak about the Soul of Europe and the need to be reconciled, everyone living at peace together. The boys cast shy curious sidelong glances at us, nodding, and then grinning sheepishly, embarrassed.

Donald spoke and Emir, a pale teenager, translated. The men and boys sat silent and expressionless. During the sermon, a man peered round a screen which separated the worship area from the cloakroom. He winked and grinned mischievously at everyone and appeared to be playing the role of a clown, a Bajram version of Father Christmas, because he began to throw sweets at the congregation. He placed a bar of chocolate on

my shoulder and balanced another on Roy Wilson's shiny head. Roy grimaced at me. However most of the sweets were meant for the boys, and he scattered them like confetti, which they received with outstretched arms and wide grins.

After the worship everyone came up to wish the mufti, three imams and ourselves a Happy Bajram each repeating the greeting: Bajram Serif Mubarek Olsun, embracing, kissing and. This community, which had recently been on the brink of annihilation, now breathed a deep sigh of relief at still being alive.

Grief of survivors is compounded by an undertow of guilt at being still alive, when so many friends and family members perished: what is special about us, that so many better men and women, our children full of promise, parents who worked so hard to give us a good life, have been murdered just because of their ethnicity? Why was I spared? The imperative to find justice stirs the anger and sorrow into an even thicker brew. After the Second World War a group of young Jewish survivors formed a secret commando unit tracked down Nazis, pursuing them on every continent and killing them. These Jews had watched the post-war world, which had initially been horrified by the death camps, rapidly wanting to forget this nastiness, to put it in the past. There were more important issues to deal with than justice: rebuilding the world economy and destroyed countries, fighting communism. Justice denied turns to revenge. So these young Jewish fighters kept their activities secret, to avoid attention and criticism from people in power, who were busy saying: 'Forget the past, it happened; it was terrible, but now we must move on, live and let live.' So these vengeful furies descended on those who had been involved in carrying out the Holocaust. Like the Eumenides from a Greek tragedy, they suddenly appeared when the fugitives thought they were at a safe distance from the scene of their

crimes and had been forgotten. The Jewish Furies stalked their prey, preparing the ground for an uninterrupted session, then announced their presence, read out the charge sheet, delivered immediate punishment and vanished, leaving locals to find corpses, in their homes, on the street, on wasteland, sometimes in cars: presumed victims of an accident, or a local feud.

Given the lenient treatment meted out to a few captured psychopaths, and the general amnesty enjoyed by the rest, maybe a young generation of Bosnian survivors are preparing rough justice. Too many of the men in their prime having been killed or left the country, those mostly elderly men and boys whom we saw at Bajram in Banja Luka looked too exhausted and debilitated to carry out any acts of revenge.

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Two aspects of the war are already having a brutalising effect on the next generation: the enormity of the horrors themselves, which defy psychiatric treatment and counselling, and, secondly, the inadequate meting out of justice. The war ended in a scarring division of the country. Bosnia disappeared off international radar. While Croatia and Serbia, most of their crimes forgiven or forgotten, were being fast-tracked into the family of Europe, the people of the country which suffered most were warned to fend for themselves and warned not to expect favours. Large sums of money from the European Union poured in, to repair infrastructure. Meanwhile, broken, damaged families faced disinterest in the processes necessary to begin healing their trauma. The next generation of children, growing up in the ruins of war, learnt the harshest lesson of survival, that, with the exception of a few non-governmental organizations and charities struggling for funds, no one cared for them, that there is no justice. Like Jews at the end of the Second

World War, the unspoken message they heard from a disgusted and shamed world was:
'You shouldn't be here. Why didn't you all die?'

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In 2008, thirteen years after the war ended, the Bosnian theatre director, Haris Pasovic, brought his adaptation of Nigel William's play *Class Enemy* to the 2008 Edinburgh Festival. He had famously worked with Susan Sonntag on a candle-lit production of *Waiting For Godot* during the siege of Sarajevo; the city surrounded by Serb snipers, who also cut off water and electricity supplies. *Class Enemy* portrayed children growing up into feral youngsters. Violence among school children in Bosnia, a decade after the fighting ended, had become the norm. A generation forged in the aftermath of war and an absence of justice, routinely used knives, guns and even bombs at school. One of the performers brought his mother, a teacher, to see the play: 'So shocked by the rudeness of it all she couldn't feel her legs. But what disturbed her most turned out to be how close to her experience of the classroom it was.'

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On that shivery winter Bajram morning in 2001, seven years before Haris Pasovic's production, the children had yet to grow into violent teenagers. They were perpetually bewildered, locked in shock and trauma.

In 2003 we met Haris Pasovic to discuss a theatre piece for Banja Luka. He declined. For him, Banja Luka remained beyond the pale, a place lost to Muslims and firmly in the grip of Serb nationalist fervour. The Serb administration would not welcome his theatre group anyway, and even if they allowed him to work there, he could not bring himself to perform for his former persecutors.

In 2001, time of the first Bajram in Banja Luka since the war, his life might still have been in danger.

Even mentioning the Ferhadija Mosque on the streets invited attack.

After the Bajram celebration, we were taken to the mufti's office upstairs, where some older Muslims sat round a large table and were served coffee, orange juice and pitta bread stuffed with cooked minced lamb. They looked at us, eyes deep set in wizened faces, and told their stories. Teenager Emir translated.

One old man in his 80's had been imprisoned and tortured three times in his life: first during the Second World War, then during the communist period, and finally during the Bosnia War. He stared at us with melancholy intensity. Like a haunting spectre his expression mutely asked: 'Why? Why? Why?'

Despite their grief these survivors welcomed us warmly.

We were then taken to a Bajram reception in a sports hall by the River Vrbas, on the outskirts of town. After the worship, this party constituted the main event of the day for the mufti. Government officials, other religious leaders and foreign representatives had been invited. The celebration marked the return of Muslims to Banja Luka. This would be the first step to start rebuilding mosques. In retrospect, the consultation at Coventry helped make this event a success, and so encouraged the subsequent rehabilitation of Muslims in a place that had intended to eliminate all traces of them. Eventually they could start rebuilding mosques.

This sports complex provided a rare example of resistance to the Serb take-over of the city. During the war the Muslim owner refused to leave or allow his business to be given a Serb name. He turned the tables on his persecutors who arrived to evict him. 'You may

kill me,' he told them, 'but we know where your sons are...' The Serbs were frightened and left him in peace.

A feast of cold meats, breads, cheeses and appetisers covered a large table in the middle of the main reception area. Of the Serb politicians invited only Svetlana appeared, and eventually the Orthodox Minister for Faith, Dushan Antel, who tried to be invisible. Considering that most of the nationalists in charge of the Republika Srpska still resented the presence of Muslims, and regretted that the ethnic cleansing had not been completed, Svetlana's presence represented a brave act of solidarity, knowing as she did that it would be given prominent news coverage, especially in Sarajevo and the rest of the Bosnian Federation. We thanked her for coming. 'The mufti invited me, how could I refuse?' she responded. Mufti Camdzic, bustling about nervously, looked at her gratefully.

Georges Bordet and other international dignitaries stood around stiffly. Bishop Komarica, still in his cassock, had hurried there from mass at the Cathedral, and shook hands with everyone, moving politely from one Muslim to another. Doris Pack, a German MEP from Brussels, accompanied him. Press photographers snapped pictures while a television crew taped interviews. Adnan watched the filmed report on television with his family in Sarajevo, and regretted not being with us; especially as he noticed young Emir translating, which made him worried about being made redundant.

Overwhelmed with excitement and stress, one of the imams, a tall slender man, fainted and had to be carried out.

The German MEP Doris Pack noted the absence of Bishop Jefrem and spat her contempt; but we never expected him to be there. Father Vladislav apologised to us on the bishop's behalf, saying that this year's Bajram happened to be on a Sunday with a

particularly long Orthodox service. We vowed to bring the bishop to next year's Bajram party, but Doris Pack would hear nothing of it. 'The Orthodox Church is guilty,' she declared, 'and until they acknowledge their guilt I want nothing to do with them!' adding with a loud snort: 'He never sees anybody anyway!' We discussed our plans for a partnership forum in Banja Luka, bringing together people from all sides, whatever their opinions or guilt. Politicians do not like to be told what to think. They have their own opinions and stick to them, or hold a party line. Doris Pack did listen, and promised to interest a group of MEPs, back in Brussels, and invite them to meet us.

Svetlana took a ride in Roy Wilson's jeep, asking to be dropped off in the town centre, from where she would walk home.

Roy joked with her: 'Ooo, I don't know about that! What will you get up to on the way?' 'Just give me a nice Serb man with a brain!' she cried out, in mock despair. 'In that case I'll take you home,' said Roy, timing his reply neatly. We laughed, but they were making a serious observation. This talented woman felt her energies being sapped by outdated nationalist bigotry, hampering progress, and by mediocre colleagues. She admitted they would give her stick for attending Bajram, but that was nothing she couldn't handle.

Svetlana wanted to be in a position to make a difference. 'You should be Prime Minister,' we said. She shrugged as much as to say: 'Give me the chance', and expressed keen interest in attending a training course on new models of business partnership being established by Ros Tennyson at Cambridge University. Though not poor, thanks to her various activities as business adviser, she asked that we find the funds to pay for her attendance. This presented us with a problem. The British ambassador had already

explained that, because of her former links with Karadjic, our government would not fund her.

Roy drove her through the snowy streets of Banja Luke directly to the door of her home, a smart house with a small garden. A daughter and mother waited inside; no one knew who the father might be. Roy had met the family, and noted how they held Svetlana in awe, like the rest of us.

RAKIJA, SLIPPERS AND THE POPE

Bishop Komarica continued to bang on doors and sent letters repeatedly to everyone who mattered, and who might help. He gave long speeches across Europe, accepted prizes in recognition of his courage during the war, and, all the time, doors remained unopened. No one replied to his letters or listened to him.

We talked about establishing a group of bishops and cardinals, who would write letters and speak on his behalf. They should come to Banja Luka, learn at first hand about the situation of the Catholic Church there, and work on a plan of action.

Bishop Komarica spoke confidentially, lowering his voice, in case the walls of his study had ears, about the possibility of the Pope, then John Paul II, visiting Banja Luka. It was a long shot and we should keep it under our hats. However the Pope had expressed a desire to visit Bosnia again, having famously been to Sarajevo after the war. Banja Luka seemed the right place, considering the plight of non-Orthodox people there. He wanted to encourage inter-faith dialogue and relations. The Pope also needed to apologise on behalf of the Catholic Church for criminal acts committed by Croat Catholics against Orthodox Serbs during the Second World War. One psychopathic Banja Luka priest,

punished after the war, had whipped up a frenzy of violence: a slaughter of men, women and children, atrocities that festered in the memory of Serbs. We promised to visit Rome, and persuade the Pope of the importance of coming to Banja Luka. Bishop Komarica pointed out this could be a big coup for the Soul of Europe.

Our conversation about the Pope, and going to Rome, lifted the bishop's spirits and he did not want us to leave. He appeared to live on his own in the large house, with the nuns scattered in lodgings across the town. During the war, the main part of his former residence, next door to the office building, where he now lodged, had been turned into a clinic and hospital. Everyone was welcome to use the facilities, run mostly by nuns, and with local doctors working for no pay. Patients who could afford it were asked to contribute, and others were treated for free.

Bishop Komarica summoned Sister Mirna, a dentist, whom we got to know well over our years in Bosnia, to show us around. Always radiant, like Audrey Hepburn in *The Nun's Story*, Sister Mirna was straight backed and immaculately turned out. A pale beautiful face, with warm dark eyes, gazed candidly from under her wimple.

She gave us a tour of one well-equipped room after another, the place spotlessly clean, and, it being Sunday, empty of visiting patients. Funds, mostly from Catholic parts of Germany had helped pay for the clinic.

Finally she led us to a large reception room on the top floor of the building, and we stood by what looked like a bar. Bishop Komarica leapt onto a high stool, slammed his hand on the top and, with a loud laugh, shouted: 'English pub!' Sister Mirna produced fruit juice from a fridge, and emptied nibbles onto some dishes. We sat on the other stools, swinging our legs, and talked about the fun times at Coventry.

As we left, he grasped our hands in farewell and looking straight into our eyes begged us once more not to tire, to be persistent and not to lose heart.

He then piled presents into our arms: a pair of hand-woven slippers each: 'to keep your feet warm this winter,' for which we were grateful, given the plummeting temperatures outside now reaching minus ten degrees. He presented us also with two bottles of his potent home-made rakija: 'to warm you inside and kill all germs!'

SUPPER WITH CANADA, HOLLAND AND ENGLAND IN BANJA LUKA

Giving us every opportunity to meet representatives from the international community in Bosnia, who might help our work, Roy Wilson invited us to supper with Canadian Georges Bordet, Dutch Robert in den Bosch, with his assistant, a tall, dark, handsome Englishman, who brought along several bottles of champagne and port, to celebrate a fresh promotion to another part of the world.

The same cooks, from the night before, rustled up another feast and the conversation proceeded inconsequentially, cracking jokes, joshing. It seemed strange to be talking as though we were in a London club and not in Bosnia, no one mentioning the situation for fear of spoiling the atmosphere. They discussed future jobs: George Bordet retiring to South Africa, Roy being moved to Yerevan in Armenia.

We dreaded losing Roy for good reasons. He had become our faithful ally, sharp in his observation and advice. He managed to be critical without being discouraging. Bosnian politicians could not hoodwink him, and he combined withering judgement of them with sympathy for the victims, both expressed with surprising candour for a diplomat. He was contemptuous of Bosnian Serb nationalists, with whom he had to deal on a daily basis,

and generous in pity and outrage at the plight of Samir's father. His successors in Banja Luka, though claiming to be encouraging, became obstacles to our progress.

As we drank champagne, Georges Bordet spoke indulgently about the nationalist leaders of Republika Srpska, and again praised the beauty of Banja Luka: the tree-lined boulevards and the surrounding countryside. Listening to him, it seemed nothing terrible had happened in this town; that it suffered unjustly from international criticism.

CHILDREN, BOOKS AND GUNS

Next day, the mayor of Banja Luka looked defensive and stern, as he used to be on our first meetings. Having mellowed at Coventry, he now found himself surrounded by nationalist interests, forcing him to hard-line policies protective of Serbs, and antipathetic towards Muslims and Croats. However, he promised to support the civic forum, and agreed to find an office for us, despite not understanding our plans: 'What actually is the role of your NGO?' he asked in a disparaging tone. 'People are always asking this question, and I keep telling them it will be a slow and difficult process. They have to get used to it.' Out of gratitude for the Coventry experience he wanted to give us the benefit of the doubt, to understand the project, but as a Serb nationalist, aware of crimes committed in his name only a few years ago, he used his authority to avoid thinking about these matters. Memories of Coventry, where, not having to be perpetually on guard, he could talk as a person, and not as an official, softened his demeanour toward us. I thought of his gift to the mayor of Coventry of a precious and rare book about Banja Luka published at a time when mosques and churches stood together: the city then a pride of the Balkans, and not the eviscerated, neglected and soul-less place it was now. He had

allowed me to turn the pages before he presented it to the mayor of Coventry, who showed little interest in what was, for him, just another token gift about an insignificant town somewhere in Eastern Europe. I gazed at the black and white photographs, taken only decades earlier, of attractive streets, delicate minarets, and grand cathedrals; the Vrbas snaking through a harmonious blend of Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman town houses, against a backdrop of hills and forests.

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After the formality of our audience, sitting opposite Mayor Davidovic across a long polished mahogany table, with flower arrangements placed in the middle, creating an extra block to communication, we drove down the shabby streets of Banja Luka to the High School, a cold wind blowing through its echoing concrete corridors. Children played on the site of the Arnaudija Mosque which had once stood next to the school. This mosque, built at the same period as the Ferhadija, had been no less of a jewel, but there were no plans to rebuild it. After being dynamited, its stones were removed and thrown away, along with those of the more famous mosque.

Slavica Njesic, the headmistress, had enjoyed coming to Coventry more than most, despite being momentarily frightened when Pero Bukejlovic, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, bullied and threatened her for supporting a proposal to clean up vandalised Muslim graveyards. She invited us to address a group of fourteen to sixteen year olds, gathered to listen and ask questions about what we were doing in their town.

They eyed us challengingly with adolescent suspicion and curiosity. Donald shocked them by immediately launching into a proposal for rebuilding the Ferhadija Mosque. We knew that the parents of most of these children had wanted its destruction. ‘We have to

learn to reconcile and live in peace with each other,' he declared. A group of boys at the back of the class became restless and angry. They muttered about Banja Luka not needing Muslims. Donald strode up to them wagging his finger: 'If you carry on this nationalist nonsense,' he told them firmly, 'you won't have a city. You won't have a life. You will be finished. There is no future for this nonsense. Wake up! The rest of the world will have nothing to do with you! It's over! Finished!'

Jadranka Mornar, the teacher who accompanied Slavica to Coventry, hid her face in her hands, but cast me a nodding glance from between her splayed fingers, as much as to imply these things needed to be said, however painful for the children to hear. Donald's words stunned the children into silence. Some seemed to agree with him, but they had never heard such opinions voiced with such vigour, and without fear of retribution.

'Is it not a bit too soon for such changes?' an older boy asked, sitting on his own.

'You may be right,' Donald said thoughtfully, lowering his voice, 'but we have to start.'

The boy and many of the others nodded.

An observant girl, pointing at the copper bracelet on my wrist which I had been persuaded to wear as a healing charm after injuring my back, and noticing that Donald wore the same, wanted to know if we were members of a religious sect. After explaining the meaning of this New Age frippery, Donald ripped his off, saying it had made no difference to him anyway. He threw the bracelet on one of the desks and the boys and girls sitting there recoiled as from a poisonous snake. It lay there untouched when we left.

A Pushkin poem tells of a talisman. A sorceress in a southern land hands it lovingly to a young man saying: *Treasure this talisman, it has special properties. It will not save you*

from misfortune, accidents, storms or hurricanes. It will not give you wealth, nor will it make you world famous. It will not transport you from south to north, from an unfriendly foreign place, to the warm embrace of one you love. But, when deceitful eyes suddenly charm you, and unloving lips kiss you at night, then my dear: from crime, from new heart ache, from betrayal, from oblivion, my talisman will protect you.

The discussion continued with the children talking about their town, sharing hopes and desires for the future. The list included jobs and school equipment: they had just six computers to share between over a thousand pupils. Apart from the expected demands for more sports facilities and music: ‘Can you send Coldplay from England to cheer us up?’ they expressed concern about the people who had been forced to flee Banja Luka in the war and their right to return. Given the predominantly nationalist convictions of their parents, it surprised us to hear these children speak about reconciliation and justice for all people whatever their ethnic group. The dissident group at the back were muttering, but when we laughingly took them to task for having a separate meeting, to our surprise they responded that they were not disagreeing with us. They were talking about what Donald had said.

Before the group disbanded, the observant girl announced she was president of the youth association, talked about a youth parliament, which discussed health matters, among other things, and offered to help us in our work. We only had to ask. Others also wanted to be involved. Perhaps the headmistress had picked the most amenable children in the school whereas the majority were hard line nationalists not interested even to meet us.

We had not expected to come across such positive attitudes and, withdrawing to the headmistress's study with Jadranka, discussed the possibility of twinning with schools in England and the rest of Europe, the idea being to open the minds of those still stuck in nationalist ways of thinking, and introduce them to more liberal views. Then the teachers shocked us by announcing they had not been paid for over three months. Wondering how they survived, they then embarrassed us by giving us a woollen scarf each for Christmas. All we could offer in return was a copy of our book *A Tender Bridge*, which explained how we arrived in Bosnia. The headmistress then presented us with an English translation of Ivo Andric's *Bridge on the Drina*, President Milosevic's favourite book. The teachers decided to use *A Tender Bridge* as a text for the children to improve their English, and I tried to imagine how they would react to my scurrilous descriptions of Brussels, though meetings with Patriarch Pavle in Belgrade, and our eventual presence in Banja Luka, might intrigue them.

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Few locals attended the Ghurka concert, organized by Roy Wilson on behalf of the British Embassy, but this came as no surprise after we had learnt how people were not being paid. No one could afford to come except internationals. Republika Srpska politicians had been called to a meeting, so only Svetlana and Cavic turned up, the vice-president looking grim, but peering at us over his shoulder shyly, as though soliciting our approval. His presence at the concert indicated its precedence over the meeting. The Muslim vice-mayor, Omer Visic, also turned up. His job being nominal with no specific tasks, he had time on his hands. A few embassy officials represented the international community at the concert and the organizer could not conceal his disappointment. His

band was accustomed to larger audiences. Roy sighed, knowing the score. He had gone to no little trouble and expense with refreshments.

Seasoned professionals, the Ghurkas performed as though they were in a packed Albert Hall. Numbers included a Suppé overture, followed by arrangements of *Big Spender* and selections from musicals. The best part of the evening came when they danced Ghurka rituals: leaping gracefully, waving handkerchiefs and clashing swords delicately, the tender gestures contrasting with their reputation as fearsome fighters. Then pipes and drums delivered a rousing finale.

We raised enough money to help furnish the civic forum's office.

Early next morning Darkan, the tall and taciturn British Embassy driver, took us to Zagreb airport. A Croat and former netball star, before injury halted his sporting career, he gradually warmed to us sufficiently to smile and joke occasionally. We remembered the story told earlier about what happened when NATO forces bombed Serbia two years earlier. Roy Wilson happened to be in Sarajevo when Bosnian Serbs attacked the British Embassy office in Banja Luka, so Darkan had been left alone in charge. Darkan had then phoned the Embassy in Sarajevo asking what he should do. 'I have a gun,' he had announced, evidently prepared to shoot anyone who succeeded in breaking through the thick wire fence surrounding the office. Roy told him to 'remove himself, and his gun' as far away as possible.

PICKING THROUGH THE RUBBLE

Bosnia January to February 2002

Approaching Banja Luka in the North of Bosnia from the South, climbing the high mountains of central Bosnia, and descending through the steep, deep gorge of the River Vrbas, the historical significance of this particular region of the Balkans becomes apparent.

When the Ottomans colonized South Eastern Europe over six centuries ago, geography determined the extent of their empire. The sparsely populated, and often impenetrable, mountains of Central Bosnia provided a bulwark against attack from the North.

For centuries, the battle lines between Christian Europe and the Islamic Ottoman Empire shifted along the River Danube. Lazar, our first interpreter, a Montenegrin, announced solemnly in 2000 as he drove us from Hungary, past Novi Sad, fifty miles outside Belgrade: 'We have now crossed the border between West and East.' The battle lines also moved across the flat plains of Croatia and the Vojevodina region of Serbia, as far as Vienna where the Turkish armies laid siege, before being repulsed and driven south again. Banja Luka became a Muslim bastion facing northwards, protected from the south by the Vrbas gorge and the rocky mountains of Central Bosnia.

Three of the world's five continents are bounded by surrounding oceans. Europe and Asia share borders that have been disputed ever since the beginning of written history. Homer's *Iliad* describes the Trojan War in mythic terms, and is an early record of a conflict which has continually festered and erupted between East and West: a clash of tectonic plates between peoples and cultures. Sometimes the West conquered and spread

eastward; at other times, Asia got the upper hand and penetrated into Europe. The border between these two continents divides Russia along the Ural Mountains. Further south, another natural border is between Istanbul and mainland Turkey; the city itself, one of the major capitals of the Islamic world, sits half inside Europe, extending its influence across the Balkans, so our interpreter Lazar could declare the border to be north of Belgrade.

Eventually, Europe identified itself as a Christian continent. The border with Asia became defined as a separation from Islam. However, from the time of the Moorish invasion of the Iberian peninsular, Islam has always been part of Europe.

The expulsion of the Moors from Spain closed a chapter of North African Islamic political and cultural influence in a predominantly Christian Europe. However the Turkish Ottoman conquest and settlement in the Balkans opened a new region of conflict in the continent's history, lasting over five centuries and providing a perpetual reminder, to this day, of Europe's failure to preserve ethnic cultural Christian purity. Along this fault line between two different cultures, though both offshoots from the same Jewish roots, it was the Orthodox Serbs who declared themselves with pride to be the frontline troops engaged in a never-ending battle against the East, protecting the rest of Europe. The extent of their role as martyrs for Christendom led to the popular belief that Serbs make up the majority of souls in heaven.

In the war-zone between north and south, west and east, the Austro Hungarians and Ottomans battled for control of the shifting borders of their empires. The Austrians sacked and burnt Banja Luka, but the Ottomans prevailed and built a thriving city.

The Bosnian Serbs of Banja Luka in the immediate post-war years wrote Islam out of their history, having destroyed all the mosques and expelled the Muslim majority. They

declared the centuries of oppression and suffering under the Turkish yoke to be over. There is no doubt that the Ottomans could be ruthless and cruel: conquerors needing to subjugate and destroy insurgence. Exaggeration of Muslim cruelty, illustrated to inflammatory effect in the writings of Ivo Andric, helped create a myth which inspired the Bosnia War, bringing former enemies, Catholic Croat Tudjman and Orthodox Serb Milosevic, into an alliance, intended to drive out all Muslims from the former Yugoslavia. However, the myth could not hide the fact, visible in towns and traditions across Bosnia, that, under the Muslims, the country flourished in relative harmony while part of the Ottoman Empire.

Standing at the crossroads of European and Eastern influence, Banja Luka in the North of the country became a place of strategic, economic and cultural importance. The Ottomans accorded each ethnic group equal respect, as evidenced on old photographs showing streets lined with elegant houses in both the Hapsburg and Ottoman style.

For centuries travellers visited and admired the beauty of a town: its broad streets, lined with trees, and bristling with minarets, most prominently, at its centre, Sinan's Ferhadija Mosque next to the castle, overlooking the River Vrbas. Between the two World Wars the still predominantly Muslim authorities in Banja Luka permitted the erection of an Orthodox cathedral, but the invading Germans destroyed it, and raised a monument to the glory of the Nazi Reich in its place. After the war this monument was torn down and the Orthodox cathedral rose again. During the Bosnia War, Serbs shelled but held back from completely destroying the Catholic cathedral. The complete removal of all the mosques was deliberate. Catholic churches were attacked and wrecked rather than destroyed to drive Catholics out of the country, and discourage them from returning. As Bishop

Komarica reminded us, most Orthodox churches and monasteries had taken over what had originally been Catholic many centuries earlier. Perhaps this explained why Bishop Jefrem now embarked on an extensive project of building new Orthodox churches all over his diocese. These characteristically Orthodox buildings, rapidly constructed, were mass produced facsimiles. Saudi mosques, square and dome-less, but with vertical minarets sticking up stiffly across the Federation, replacing those destroyed that had been in the Turkish Ottoman style, were also mass produced facsimiles, small and functional. Catholic churches and the cathedral were mostly in the mid-twentieth century Corbusier style, functional with occasionally flamboyant features, such as curving concrete walls and towers. Their modest interiors, with glass stained in garish primary colours, gave not a hint of the splendours of Europe's Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque past. This Catholicism related to peasant traditions, the pious sentimentality of farming communities, which populated inaccessible rural regions, being mostly ignored, and existing far from urban centres of influence and culture.

Before the war, the buildings of Orthodox and Muslim religious denominations expressed their particular character, within a centuries-old tradition, of historic and aesthetic interest to visitors. Now they reflected the lowest common denominators of faith: tinny echoes of what they used to be. The new buildings, though sturdy and pointedly plentiful, seemed plastic and without substance, as though hurriedly put there: a gesture rather than a necessity: a retort, a signal of territorial rights: 'We are here. You will never get rid of us. Drive us out, we will return. Destroy our places of worship, we will rebuild them.'

In the past, visitors from the North would have descended the Alps in Slovenia and approached Bosnia across the plains of Croatia, finding the city of Banja Luka nestling on the edge of a rugged mountain range, where bears and wolves roamed through deep ravines and forests.

Those approaching from the South would have travelled mainly from the Ottoman Empire, Turkey, across Bulgaria and Macedonia before crossing the wild mountainous terrain of Bosnia, and following the gushing torrent through boulders and below sheer precipices of the Vrbas Gorge. Beyond the town with its dozens of minarets, they would look over the flat Slavonia plain stretching towards the River Sava and further north eventually to the River Danube, beyond which lay the rest of Christian Europe.

Post war Banja Luka showed no hint of it having once been a vibrant attractive city admired by travellers from all over the world. Now the town lacked landmarks or any striking edifices, around which communities traditionally congregate and settle: no church towers or minarets, just dingy offices and shops. The soul had been ripped out of the place. For this reason Lonely Planet's *Guide to Eastern Europe* put it at the top of the ten worst places to visit.

The Bosnian Serb majority now claimed victory over vanquished Islam by re-building the Orthodox Cathedral with a tower that had to be taller than the minaret of the destroyed Ferhadija Mosque. Hemmed in by the municipal offices of the mayor on one side, and the government offices on the other side, attempts to turn the cathedral into the town's focal point looked pretentious and futile. The hub of the town's social life used to be further down the road, around the castle, shops and restaurants along the River Vrbas.

An old photograph shows the Ferhadija Mosque rising tall over a busy market. Where it stood is now a flattened square of ground.

For all the money being spent on the cathedral and new office buildings, Banja Luka still felt like a place stunned by the trauma of war and ethnic cleansing. It stagnated for lack of interest from the outside world. The collapsed economy had led to a society controlled by corrupt politicians, a handful of ruthless profiteers, converting their loot into glitzy new hotels and funky gas stations. The rest of the town's infrastructure remained in a poor state, the roads, houses and areas of empty ground, where mosques once stood, now unkempt and neglected. People wandered the pavements, bored from lack of work but defiant

During the two decades after the Second World War, Germans avoided all reminders of the past. American aid focused German skill and intelligence in restoring the prosperity of their country: what they proudly called the 'economic miracle'. The bleak new conurbations, swiftly rising from the rubble of once beautiful town centres, that used to express civic pride and cultural values, now indicated a numbing of all the senses, lack of confidence and defeat, both in material, imagination and spirit. The popular films of the period, mostly in bright colour and starring pretty blonde girls perpetually upbeat, like Doris Day, tried to be as innocuous as possible for fear of stirring memories. Even sentiment had to be carefully negotiated, so as not to remind people of a nostalgia now tainted by Goebbel's propaganda for the Nazi German homeland, Heimat, purged of the weak, diseased and unwanted. Occasionally, stars from the war years, such as the deep-voiced Zarah Leander, appeared in melodramas about people who take a wrong turning in life, want to be forgiven and permitted a new start. Zarah Leander's popularity was so

great that most people forgave her alleged relationship with the Nazi elite. No one could yet face the truth about such connections, preferring to keep silent. The next generation grew up knowing nothing about what their parents had been involved in. Two decades later, the shock of discovery, feelings of guilt and shame once again shook Germany, but this time the authorities were prepared. The new affluence, assiduously worked for, and which the majority of Germans had no wish to jeopardize, meant that any dissent would be handled ruthlessly.

The new towns and cities, the clean well-organized modern homes and barred windows whitewashed the past: let's start again, forget the past, the unpleasantness; we must now look only to the future.

Similar sentiments were now being expressed in Banja Luka, by people who were prepared to admit the war had been atrocious, but more often with a shrug of the shoulders, denial, and a sense of injustice that the town had been unfairly castigated. Germany had emphatically lost the war, and Germans had to find ways of dealing with the shame of defeat. The Bosnia War had been forced to a conclusion with neither side being able to claim victory. However the division of the country implied a partial victory for the Bosnian Serbs. This situation encouraged them to feel neither shame nor any need to apologize. Besides, the other side had committed atrocities too, so, at the least, guilt could be shared equally. This fundamental attitude would effect issues of justice for years to come. Why go through the purpose of crime and punishment when all had taken part? Best to forget, shut and bolt the door on the past, and carry on to a future where each ethnic entity could run their own affairs separately: a victory for the Serbs.

What about the 'soul' of Banja Luka? Where to find that quality of place which is created over time and involves a variety of influences? This quality makes each town and city particular and unique: a mixture of style, human intercourse, the smells, sights and sounds of urban life.

Leni Riefenstahl's documentary account of the Nazi Nuremberg Rally in 1934 *Triumph of the Will*, is a juggernaut of propaganda, celebrating the pure-blooded German masses, ecstatically preparing for the arrival of their Führer, and then marching past him stiffly saluting, cohort after cohort. The film opens with a portrait of the city in its medieval splendour, as the fifteenth century poet Hans Sachs and artist Albrecht Dürer might have known it, but bigger and noisier. Crowds of cheering people line the narrow streets; families lean out of windows in multi-storeyed beamed houses, crooked with age, balconies brimming with flowers. Radiantly smiling women and girls in traditional dirndls, and boys in lederhosen, all wave at the men processing through the narrow streets below. The camera then soars above the city, tracking the shadow of the Führer's plane, as it descends over the ant-like crowds on their way to the stadium.

A decade later the shadow of other planes followed the same route and the Nuremberg of Sachs and Dürer would be in ruins. The Germans were determined to restore its former character. The result is anachronistic, a Disneyland version of the original. The traditions, which Riefenstahl caught on her discriminating lens in 1934, had been extinguished. People live in modern apartment blocks outside the city centre which is devoted to trade, business and tourists. Tramps and unemployed youths lurch into the path of shoppers, and throw bottles when the streets empty at night. Greek and Turkish immigrant workers

populate the suburbs and one can walk for miles without reading a German sign. The ‘soul’ of old Nuremberg, that the propaganda film celebrates, exists no more.

So it is with Banja Luka. Eviscerated in the Bosnia War, the emptiness is a wound. Raising a new cathedral cannot replace the mysterious soul of place, and the new building’s presence only emphasises what is missing.

Nationalism in Nuremberg and Banja Luka focused on a racial purity that never existed. For ethnic cleansers in Banja Luka, the war became a reason for removing all non-Serb influence which stained the place’s history. Yet for most people, including Serbs, the multi-cultural aspect of their town constituted its charm. Post-war people began to look back with nostalgia, not on some mythical purity of folk, but on a mixed and lively community, which existed in relative harmony. Banja Luka, far from being the worst place to visit in Europe, had been a popular tourist destination. People from Belgrade came there regularly for holidays, and to take the spa waters. What happened to the town in the war became itself a stain on Banja Luka’s history. Not only were crimes committed, but its citizens were shocked that anyone could even have thought of destroying Banja Luka’s reputation.

NOSTALGIA AND HOMELAND: CANNONS AND LEMON BLOSSOM

Because of my fair hair, no one considered me to be a Jew when I visited Germany in the early post-war years. People liked me. The camaraderie of the Nazi years still flourished. Young people went on long group-walks, slept in well-appointed youth hostels, played sporty games in the late afternoon and spent evenings singing folk songs to guitar accompaniment. Their voices filled out enthusiastically in rousing hymns to

blood red skies and sacrifice for the fatherland, and these would be sung with exceptional vigour, as though everyone could not accept the war was over, yet with evident pangs of bitterness as they acknowledged utter defeat. The dozen or so years of Hitler's rule gave Germans a romantic sense of homeland. They left messages, glorifying the view and their country's destiny, on mountain tops. The persecution and discrimination, the wars and murders, were something else. No one talked about that. But the nostalgia for countryside, the land of forests and poetry, of music and fairytales continued. Spirit can not be extinguished with the ease of towns being bombed and millions being murdered. However, now that the cities of Dürer and Bach were flattened and being rebuilt, in an aesthetic these artists would not have recognized, this nostalgia had become tainted and eventually no one dared express it. The once seductive notion of Heimat embarrassed the next generation who derided it as sentimentality.

Edgar Reitz's epic film *Heimat* divides into three distinct parts, each taking a different perspective on the history of Germany from the end of the First World War to the eve of the new Millennium. *Heimat* deals specifically with issues of culture, identity, and having to come to terms with a new post-holocaust world, narrow nationalism giving way to global interaction and inter-dependence. Part One examines a community in which everyone's story plays an equally important part. Part Two focuses on the development of a single character, a composer, in the manner of a German 'Bildungs Roman', the 'education of a young man' and the way people and events influence his life and art. Part Three widens to include international political developments in a world where national, racial and traditional boundaries are radically changed. The epic avoids judgement and neat conclusions and cannot avoid anxious pessimism about the future. Wars and politics

fracture community, and challenge those rebellious few who want to change the world. Youthful iconoclasts forge a new language and with age turn into wealthy professionals, moving on from their adventurous experiments, and end up performing the classics as museum pieces to appreciative wealthy audiences. The fall of communism, expanding immigration, and the violence of Bosnia disrupt the security of their comfortable lives, which continue, unaffected by the sufferings of others. *Heimat* compels the viewer to consider the future consequences of these and other global events. The final frame of this open-ended chronicle of a century shows a young mother staring out of a window on a chilly world. Her eyes are full of foreboding.

Shortly after the Second World War, my great aunt Fritzzi came across Erich Kästner, the German satirist, poet and children's author, in a Vienna book shop where she was buying me a copy of his classic *Emil and the Detectives*, and persuaded him to sign it. The Nazis tried to suppress his anti-war writings, such as a parody of Goethe's *Mignon* poem:

Kennst du das Land wo die Zitronen blühen (Do you know the land where the lemon trees grow) changing it to Do you know the land where the cannons grow? You don't? You soon will. The Nazis could not ban *Emil and the Detectives*, a perennially popular tale of a resourceful boy and his group of friends, in a determined hunt to retrieve money, stolen from him on a train by a sinister smartly-dressed man. The thief turns out to be a bank robber. The book ends with three satirical moral statements: Emil claims that he has learnt never to trust anyone; the mother declares people should not travel alone on trains and the grandmother says sending the money by post would have been safest, a naïve assertion, as laughable then as it would be now. The story itself contradicts Emil's moral conclusion. It is the trust and cooperation of the disparate band of young 'detectives',

including a feisty girl, which help Emil recover what was stolen from him. By the time my formidable great aunt Fritzi collared Erich Kästner in the Vienna bookshop, he had survived intellectual persecution, watched helplessly as Germany fulfilled and exceeded his darkest prophecies, and, in the post-war years, became a respected man of letters.

However all he could talk about to my great aunt was his grief at the devastation of Dresden, his beloved home city, one of Europe's architectural jewels. In the same way another eminent German, Richard Strauss, mourned, most of all, not the death of colleagues and millions of others, but the destruction of his beloved opera houses.

In the rubble of cities and opera houses lay also the confidence of a nation. The deep-rooted feeling for place and tradition, for what inspired and roused people, evaporated in the flames, and lay buried under bombed buildings.

German Jews in exile could discriminate between culture and politics. They cherished the comfort of music, art and inspiring word, which had been their heritage too. For them it was untainted. The television series *Holocaust*, a soap-opera version of this violent chapter of European history, which shocked and disturbed a generation who knew little about it, includes a telling, if crude, exchange. Waiting to be deported to Auschwitz, the mother, a piano teacher, declares that because Germany is the land of Mozart and Beethoven, nothing bad could possibly happen to the family. The father responds: 'Well they are not here to help you now!' In other words, culture is of no use when politics go wrong: a simplistic soap-opera conclusion, that side-steps disturbing issues about the intimate relationship between culture and politics, which Edgar Reitz explores to charged effect in *Heimat*.

When the soprano Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, who laid the foundations of her stellar career during the Third Reich, gave a recital of German Lieder in New York's Carnegie Hall ten years after the war, the many Jewish listeners in the audience wept out of nostalgia. Her meticulously prepared and beautiful performance returned a music and poetry to them that had been an essential part of their education in a country which had once been their home and had then evicted them. They even forgave her lapse of judgment, when she attended the reception afterwards, wearing, not an elegant gown, but the flounced dress and cleavage-enhancing frilly white blouse of a dirndl, which the Nazis had designated the national costume of pure blooded Aryan womanhood.

Schwarzkopf may not have intended this fashion choice to be a statement; she always insisted on having nothing to do with politics, declaring that she focussed all her attention on improving her art, which she did with legendary ferocious discipline. She was, however, being somewhat disingenuous, because her success depended on seizing every chance to further her career, and this, of necessity, involved political compromises, such as becoming a paid-up member of the Nazi party. Being a superior and gifted artist, Schwarzkopf may have intended to use her status and fame to reclaim the national costume, unwilling to miss an opportunity to restore Germany's cultural standing in the world, notwithstanding Jewish sensibilities. The dirndl is as German as the music you are hearing me sing, she may have meant, not Nazi.

Twenty years after the war many Germans began to complain about being still forced to feel guilty for what happened. Brought up to be the master race, they were proud of their achievements, in war and peace. One old soldier once stroked my blonde hair and told me, with regret, what a good SS man I would have made.

Serbs never stopped feeling this kind of national pride. As martyrs for Christendom they were used to taking heavy losses on the front line of battle, of being used and manipulated, derided and criticised. They did not feel tainted by the atrocities, massacres and destruction, committed by them, and in their name. A reputation for excessive brutality was a badge of honour for these chetniks: it meant people would fear and avoid conflict with them.

Along with this pride in being fearless and ruthless fighters, with a reputation for extreme cruelty, went a core conviction that they were also martyrs, in a perpetual state of suffering, like Christ on the cross. The Orthodox Church blessed their killing sprees. Even while committing atrocities, they wanted the world to acknowledge their victimhood. For centuries they had surrendered their freedom to vastly superior numbers of conquerors: Muslims from the East and Catholics from the North and West. Serbs shed their blood so the rest of Europe could preserve an Orthodox, emphatically not a Catholic, Christian identity. This sense of being the brave selfless victim informed their whole history from King Lazar, defeated by the Islamic hordes on Kosovo's Field of Blackbirds in the 14th century, to the Bosnia War at the end of the 20th century. It authorized massacres against Muslims and Catholics. Such atrocities were interpreted as justified acts of self-defence and survival. Serbs were 'the chosen people'.

Nationalist politicians, who had risen through the ranks in the final years of communism, exploited this mythology to preserve their power base when the Soviet Union collapsed, and the satellite countries, including the former Yugoslavia, demanded their separate democratic identities. Slobodan Milosevic, the chief instigator of the Bosnia War, cunningly manipulated mythology when he announced to the minority Serb

population of the mainly Muslim region of Kosovo: 'You will not be beaten anymore!' simultaneously paying demonstrators to throw stones at the back of the crowd to emphasise his point. 'You will not be beaten anymore' conjured up, succinctly, a long history of victimhood, starting with the Serb defeat on the battlefield of Kosovo on June 15 1389.

Many of Milosevic's co-leaders in the war still held high offices throughout the Balkans. Complicity in war crimes made them determined not to relinquish these positions. Surrendering meant punishment, being reviled and the end of careers and influence. Clinging on to power was all they had left. For that reason, we would find even the smallest change of heart and policy hard if not impossible to achieve.

All this explains why our present visit to Bosnia turned out to be difficult, dispiriting and finally despairing. At one point even the perennially upbeat Adnan felt like giving up: 'It is like when you prick a balloon, and you are left with nothing,' he groaned. The politicians uttered promises, but made no concessions. Words come cheap. Returnees continued to be blocked by the authorities. Harassed Catholic and Muslim religious leaders became impatient and desperate, so people closed their ears to avoid paying attention to them.

Those in work barely survived on unpaid salaries, and the large numbers of unemployed young people crowding the streets knocked on doors that remained locked to them. International cynicism, apathy and disinterest preserved this state of stagnation.

CANNONS BACK INTO LEMON BLOSSOM

Elizabeth Schwarzkopf's Carnegie Hall recital became an event as historic as any battle. She performed Hugo Wolf's mighty version of Mignon's song: *Do you know the land where lemon trees blossom?* – the one parodied by Erich Kästner as *Do you know the land where cannons grow?*

Is it possible to convert cannons back into flowers?

Schwarzkopf showed nerve performing in America's leading concert venue, a place where singers expelled by the Nazis because of their Jewish affiliations, either by blood or marriage, had been cherished throughout the war years. Germany's loss had been America's gain. Memories of these classic performances would be in the ears of most of Schwarzkopf's audiences.

On the one hand this concert honoured the singer, and gave the Americans a chance to hear her exceptional artistry. It represented also nothing less than the cultural rehabilitation of Germany. Schwarzkopf's ambition, self confidence, superlative technique, intelligence and beauty of voice made it possible.

Her husband, Walter Legge, a leading record producer and musicologist, helped prepare the programme: its variety, light and dark, frivolous and serious, grand and sublime to show off every aspect of his wife's formidable gifts. A brilliantly executed Mozart operatic aria early in the recital brought the house down, and from that moment on the singer held the audience in the palm of her hand.

Hugo Wolf's *Herr Was Trägt der Boden Hier, Lord, What Burden does the Ground Bear*, a spare and grim depiction of atonement, opened the second half of the concert. Christ takes on the world's suffering, receiving thorns for himself and handing the sinner

flowers. This song had been carefully chosen. Schwarzkopf was plunging the audience in at the deep end. As always she performed everything only after painstaking rehearsal so the music and words became part of her bloodstream. To watch her sing Hugo Wolf in particular was to experience the act of creation itself, the singer just allowing the music to flow directly from deep inside her, every word, every note considered and, take it or leave it, as perfect an expression of what she wanted the listener to hear. This Carnegie Hall event was about this particular song. To convert cannons into flowers requires overwhelming persuasion – there must be no doubt, or vagueness of purpose. The performance did this. Time suspended. No one could doubt the seriousness and wider significance of the occasion.

Encores were received with cheers. By the time she announced Robert Schumann's *Der Nussbaum (The Nut Tree)*, an audible sigh of gratitude and anticipation rose from the audience. This song had been a favourite of refugee singers in the war years. Schwarzkopf's and Germany's rehabilitation was complete. Sounds of cannon were obliterated by the gentle whisper of leaves suggesting love and consummation to the girl sitting in the tree's shade.

Then, in a marked contrast to the first Wolf song about atonement, Schwarzkopf tossed off the same composer's witty taunt of a girl driving her lover crazy with a precisely enumerated list of rivals in towns all over Italy (*four in La Fratta... **ten** in Castiglione!*). You can hear her turn to the accompanist for the brilliant postlude, depicting the girl's wild laughter.

The recital had begun with Mozart, composing an evening scene: the setting sun inspiring thoughts of love and eternity. She ended the program with Handel's slow aria

Care Selve, (Beloved Woods), leaving the audience in awe of her untiring breath control, but also bringing everyone back, from guilt and atonement, to the concert's quietly ravishing beginning: the individual in ecstatic contemplation of the universe.

MUDDY WATERS

'The sun always shines when you come,' announced Adnan meeting us at Zagreb airport.

The snows from our last visit had melted and the countryside was waking from a sleep, the first plum blossom spiking on spindly black branches.

A Skoda was the reason for Adnan's high spirits. To hire a car for our journeys through Bosnia and Serbia turned out to be costly. Insurance payments in this part of Europe were excessive, for understandable reasons: not just war and mines, but also widespread theft with small chance of recovery. Nigel Newton, the Bloomsbury Press publisher, donated money specifically for a Soul of Europe car in Bosnia. The gleaming turquoise green among the surrounding drab vehicles made it seem conjured up by the boy wizard. Adnan kept a nervous eye on the car, like a mother over a new-born baby. In the middle of meals he would leap from the table, and hurry outside to check on it.

He drove us to Bishop Jefrem, our first meeting.

We were met at the gate by the bishop's chaplain, the one with a dark intense gaze whose musical and penetrating baritone had featured so prominently and with stridently poignant effect at the Orthodox liturgy we attended in December.

Bishop Jefrem's timbered residence, reminiscent of the motel in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, was built in the style of a small gothic mansion where the Addam's family might feel at

home, haunted by ghosts of killers and their victims. Thick curtains covering the windows, hiding the inside from prying eyes, reminded me of mill-owners' residences on hills in Lancashire, where I grew up: dark, private, late-Victorian mansions, surrounded and concealed by overgrown rhododendrons. I used to deliver the parish magazine to solitary elderly widows, sitting out days on end silently in the gloom of spacious living rooms where thick dark drapes covered mahogany tables, grand pianos and all other furniture as well as windows, through which the thick bushes outside let in only a small amount of grey light. Apart from me, the only visitors were charwomen from the cramped terraced houses in the mill town below, on the other side of the railway line.

A small gazebo opposite the main entrance to Bishop Jefrem's residence suggested that guests could enjoy a drink and conversation on warm days, but it looked as though no one ever sat there. Whenever we walked up the desolate path to a house shuttered perpetually from the outside it always seemed nobody was at home, even though we had fixed an appointment.

This time, the usually dour chaplain greeted us with a smile. He had appreciated our presence at the service, and remembered our special admiration for his performance. He led us into the residence, which was well-appointed, stylishly decorated, and as scrupulously ordered as the bishop's celebration of the Orthodox liturgy. Large green plants adorned the staircase, and ornaments had been placed, with meticulous attention to detail, in every room. We had been told the bishop shared his home with a family of refugees from other parts of Bosnia, but we heard no sound and saw nothing of them. Either they were in the basement, out of sight and earshot, or absent whenever we called.

Bishop Jefrem met us in his office and sat smiling at his desk, empty but for a decorative inkwell.

We sat round a polished table and the chaplain served us Bosnian coffee with glasses of local brandy and whisky. Old icons hung on the walls alongside portraits of bishops and patriarchs. A small television peeped out from an antique bookshelf. The picture of Karadzic seemed to have been removed, or may have been in another room, but a bonsai flag of the Republika Srpska stood in the middle of the table.

As usual, the bishop looked at us anxiously, wanting to be friendly and polite but hoping we would not criticize or attack him. He kept tidying himself, brushing the sleeves of his black cassock with long nervous fingers, and adjusting the brightly coloured pectoral cross.

We began by discussing again the possibility of Orthodox students, graduates from Banja Luka, attending semesters in Oxford or Cambridge, to open their minds and become more tolerant.

Once enthusiastic about this idea the bishop had now cooled and recommended we see Bishop Basil of Bjelajina to discuss such a proposal. We remembered our meeting with this belligerent leader, who had blessed weapons in the war against Muslims and still scorned reconciliation. Bishop Basil represented the extreme wing of Bosnian Serb Orthodoxy, a warrior bishop on the front line of the battle against Islam. Bishop Jefrem's recommendation reminded us that he too stood on the extreme right wing of his Church. However, Coventry brought some small change in his attitudes, and personally he had grown at least more sympathetic to us, if not our proposals, unlike Bishop Basil, who remained hostile to them and us.

Since Bishop Jefrem represented the isolationist wing of the Serb Orthodox Church, which strictly forbade communication between his Orthodox priests and Catholics, it would be hard persuading him to allow his priests to travel abroad, and be contaminated by intolerably liberal notions. Inviting him again to the UK seemed a safer option. He resisted all proposals. In response to an invitation to address Anglican Orthodox organizations, where he would receive a sympathetic audience, he suggested we find a cleverer Orthodox representative than himself. It became clear he had no intention of accepting any invitation away from his constituency.

It turned out that apart from going to Russia to study, he had never travelled out of the former Yugoslavia before coming to Coventry in September 2001. This had been his first exposure to a society beyond the realm of Orthodoxy and Eastern Europe.

Having had his arm twisted by the politicians, he came to enjoy and appreciate his first, and seemingly only visit, to England more than he expected. So while indebted, he also felt threatened. For all his aloofness, protected by his episcopal role, immaculate robes and adornments, nevertheless the laws of traditional Bosnian hospitality meant he had to express his gratitude in a suitably munificent manner.

He deftly dealt with our schemes without committing himself to any of them, and then silenced further pitches with an unexpectedly generous and touching proposal. In May he would personally take us round his diocese and visit several monasteries.

I looked forward to getting to know Bishop Jefrem, the person behind the episcopal robes.

One of Chehov's short stories describes the final days of a bishop whose position and sanctity has distanced him from the lives and sufferings of ordinary people. While dying,

he remembers the ecstasy of a faith, which had overwhelmed him from earliest childhood. Like Bishop Jefrem, his life as a dedicated seminarian led naturally to a future in the Church, and eventually being anointed bishop. People approach him with awe - even his own mother, who is tongue-tied in his presence. She is a poor peasant, desperate for financial help, but as much as she cannot speak to him, he also cannot respond to her needs. So he dies knowing that, however respected a bishop he had been, he has failed as a human being. Chehov rarely provides a neat conclusion to his stories or dramas. Judgement is only ever implied. With Mozartean craft he describes relationships and issues, all observed with unblinking eye. This particular story ends with the mother. After the bishop's death she returns home and, in the years to come, occasionally lets on to her peasant friends that she once had a son, who had been a bishop. '...and this she says timidly, afraid that she may not be believed. ... And indeed there are some who do not believe her.'

Missed opportunities, failure to engage, self-delusion and subsequent disappointment provide much of the tragic-comic substance in Chehov's work. Politics rarely intrude. Religion dominates some stories as an inescapable backdrop to everyday life, but Chehov is less interested in dogma, and more curious about the interaction between people, and the emotions roused by ritual, as in his meticulously observed description of the Orthodox liturgy in *Easter Eve*, where the people of the congregation experience ecstasy, each in their own way, a response to the condition of their individual lives, hopes, fears and disappointments, while priests attend to the ritual in a detached manner.

Politics and religion affected the course of Bishop Jefrem's life. He may have been ambivalent about the former. On the one hand, he could not fail to be grateful to the Serb

nationalists, who made a point of rehabilitating the Orthodox Church after decades of oppression under communism, so forging a mutually sustaining alliance between politics and religion. How did the bishop feel about accommodating himself to the policy of ethnic cleansing? In war and social upheaval, people from every level of society adapt just to survive. Did he use episcopal influence to temper the atrocities carried out with the blessing of his Church, or did he surrender all responsibility?

Having silenced us with his generous invitation, the bishop launched into a speech about the dangers of political instability. Politicians were not fulfilling their obligations. 'It is not a matter of poverty,' he said, 'we are not as poor as people make out.' He then proceeded to criticise the international community. 'We are always wondering what new experiment will be done to us. The international community is not familiar with the essence of our problems, so I think they should allow nation states to take responsibility for their own rights and obligations. Politicians are always waiting for others to solve problems, and this encourages passivity. Progress must come from within institutions. People from the outside can help, but no more than that.'

He may have been referring to past experience of communism and, at present, the attempt to force democracy on a people not used to freedom of thought. Perhaps he was criticising our proposals for developing a civic forum in Banja Luka, the main purpose of which would involve local people in new democratic processes, claiming the right to make decisions about their own lives, and so side-lining Church and State. The bishop mistrusted political representatives, from Europe, the United States and the United Nations. These made incessant demands, trying to enforce democracy on the nationalist government of the Republika Srpska, and preventing nationalists from

completing ethnic cleansing. This 'sacred task' was blessed by the Orthodox Church and halted by the war's ending, imposed by outsiders. The region however depended on international support while its economy recovered. But nationalist politicians robustly resisted any compromise imposed by outside powers. So stalemate and economic stagnation now led to the 'domestic passivity' the bishop talked about.

The stalemate had a purpose. Bosnian Serb nationalists were biding their time. Once the international community stopped governing their country, as it would have to eventually, they could be left to their own devices, and finish the task.

Victims and minority groups welcomed us as allies and friends, who might help them find justice; but to those in power, including Bishop Jefrem, we were an irritation. They felt no guilt about anything, but frustrated at having been interrupted, angry at our interference.

Then we mentioned the matter of a mass grave that had just been discovered near the town of Prijedor about thirty miles from Banja Luka. Over four hundred bodies of mostly Muslim men, women and children, had been dumped and buried in a field outside the mine of Omarska. The High Representative wanted to mark this gruesome discovery with a ceremony. Given the enormity of the crime we felt such an event needed careful preparation, and that the Orthodox Church should be involved.

The bishop began drumming the table with his fingers. 'It is not a difficult issue,' he said nervously, the drumming turning into a virtuoso riff. 'Of course we must discuss these matters,' he said in a low voice. 'But in such cases it is important to suppress all emotions and only use our brains. We can't help the victims any more, but we should not be unhelpful to those who survived. You are right to take time over this. At some future

date maybe, in different circumstances, the idea of a ceremony might be fitting. But now is not a good time. On the 3rd February there will be a commemoration in Banja Luka for two thousand Serb people murdered during the war, everybody from babies to grandparents were brutally slaughtered.’

Shocked by this piece of news, we wondered why we had not learned about an atrocity against the Serb population in a place known chiefly for its ethnic cleansing of Muslims.

Then the bishop explained that the massacre had taken place in 1942, sixty years ago, during the Second World War. When the Orthodox refer to ‘the war’ they are talking not of the Bosnian War, but of the Second World War. The bishop continued. ‘Modest ceremonies, prayers – the victims deserve no less. They do not deserve politics, which were responsible for their death.’

We tried to understand a way of thinking which claimed justice for one side’s distant past suffering on the one hand, and refused to acknowledge recent injustices against the other side, as though they did not count. The bishop smiled indulgently at us, aware of what we were thinking and said: ‘The Orthodox Church has a sense of the eternal; it is in our liturgy and we do not believe in immediate responses.’

The Orthodox Church has always been swift to denounce what it perceives to be an attack and outrage against itself. Acknowledging its own crimes was a different matter, however, and issues of guilt could be delayed indefinitely to the distant future, when the perpetrators were dead, and justice no longer mattered.

The bishop again read our minds and continued: ‘Historically we were always slaves. We need to achieve new forms of reconciliation and know that politics influence us. The Catholics for instance always wanted to try and convert others. Trust is power.’

We sat perplexed. He explained further: ‘This war, from our point of view, made us even more suspicious of western influence.’ We could not be sure whether he was referring to the Second World War again, an event which seemed to him to have happened only yesterday, or to the Bosnia War, or maybe to the NATO attack on Serbia.

The discovery of the mass grave near Prijedor led to us being asked to mediate between Serbs and Muslims in the area two years later, a process described in my book *the white house: From Fear to a Handshake*.

The bishop’s unwillingness to discuss the matter persuaded us to change tack, and Donald brought the meeting back to the current situation in Banja Luka, speaking about the advantages of being a ‘powerless’ leader. We could be useful. Relieved that we no longer talked about the mass grave, the bishop responded warmly: ‘We feel that power is in good will, not in a person’s position. We appreciate your modesty and, probably more than you can see, we understand that you left your home and peace just to help us – particularly as we ourselves can’t do what you are managing to do. Being weak can be strength. It is important to be good.’

WHERE HAVE ALL THE BRIGHT PEOPLE GONE?

Dust clouded the air in the classroom, where we met Dr Zivanovic, Professor of Sociology at Banja Luka University. A small desk and table stood at one end of the room, and chairs lined the walls. Just one picture hung in the centre of one of the walls: a harsh geometric painting with sharp points in black and grey. The professor made up for the depressing environment with his expansive, welcoming and enthusiastic presence. He had been recommended to us as a possible ally in our plans to establish a civic forum, a

partnership of committed men and women from all groups. Specifically, he knew most of the non-governmental organizations in Banja Luka, and we hoped he would introduce us to possible allies and partners.

‘We are an abnormal society,’ he informed us. ‘The war destroyed our middle class.’

This statement of fact explained one of Bosnia’s main dilemmas.

The backbone of a country, made up of the best-educated and trained people who help make it function well, had been broken by the war. Those with talent, brains, ambition and enterprise, who had managed to survive the killing, if they had not already left the country, were now making successful careers for themselves in other parts of the world, and had no intention of returning to a wrecked country.

In Banja Luka, Muslims and Catholics had been the majority of those professionals, doctors, lawyers, teachers and artists, who make up the middle class of a flourishing society. Now the ethnically cleansed city had become the fiefdom of politicians who considered they had won the war, and, feeling they were not receiving due international respect, depended on corruption to keep them in power. The middle class had been decimated, leaving a working class made up of mostly unemployed, disgruntled and poor people, who resorted to petty crime just to survive.

America and Great Britain benefited from the influx of brilliant Jewish scientists and doctors, fleeing persecution in Europe before the outbreak of the Second World War. Einstein and Freud were just two of a host of big names. A German official stamping Freud’s passport told the father of psychoanalysis not to criticize the Nazi system. ‘I can recommend it,’ said Freud. The irony probably went unnoticed. By the end of the war, Germany was bereft of a thriving middle class. The dearth of professionals, and a

pervasive cultural deadness, indicated a collapse of confidence, as well as a lack of intellectual and creative enterprise. Bright people were just not there.

This dearth lasted a generation, ending when the children of the immediate post-war period grew up, and began to express rage and disgust with what their parents had been involved in. Anger fuelled the imagination. Germany for a while became alive with dissent and dangerous ideas. Films by Rainer Fassbinder and Werner Herzog dissected and criticized bourgeois values: the former in social and political satires, the latter giving voice to shunned and feared outsiders. Elderly cleaners had affairs with black immigrants, rebellious gays and idiots savants showed up the hypocrisy of a morally bankrupt society, while raving visionaries and criminals routed smugness and the feeling that all would be well, if people just didn't delve too deep below the surface, and ask questions. Popular music kept within the bounds of easy listening, but modern classical music shrieked and clattered, shocking the ear as though pinching listeners into wakefulness. Paintings splashed, scratched and exploded on vast canvases, sometimes literally in faeces; one artist, Georg Baselitz, eventually turned the world on its head, painting figures upside down. The effect of this cultural iconoclasm shook the country into thinking about the past and present. Those who were impatient with the slower fuse-burn of subversive art took to violence, and for a short period the Red Army Faction terrorized Germany. Their punishment far exceeded that meted out by the German judiciary to those responsible for massively greater crimes during the Third Reich. The extent of state repression proved that Nazi ruthlessness remained in good health: authority clamped down on dissent. The youthful urban terrorists, a mixture of angry mostly intellectual men and women, spoiling for a fight, were dubbed Hitler's children,

even though the philosophy behind their violent actions was an attempt to repudiate their parents' generation's Nazi past. The rebels correctly diagnosed the state authorities as not having been cleansed of ideological and personal guilt, many officials prominent in the Third Reich still occupying important posts. The culling, persecution and expulsion of those, who made up the best part of the professional classes in the pre-Nazi era, created a vacuum which could only be filled by many who had worked hard to get rid of them. The victims who survived were understandably in no rush to return, especially as many had found secure employment in other countries.

At a recent exhibition of Bosnian art organized in London by the Bosnia Society, most of the artists, enjoying successful careers in America and Scandinavia, no longer lived in the country of their birth. They spoke with diffidence, shame and nostalgia about their childhood home, now a place foreign to them; a Bosnia vanished, a never-never land. In the same way my parents, kicked out of Germany and Austria while still teenagers, no longer felt kinship with these now alien countries of their birth and childhood. They immersed themselves in a new language, eventually writing published books with the fluidity and ease of born and well-educated English people. They refused to raise me bilingually. In the first years of life in his adopted country my father first taught himself English by sitting all day in cinemas, watching the same film over and over again. He then read aloud the works of great poets and writers, including Wordsworth, Blake, and Yeats, as well as the whole Bible in English, and studied theology.

Jeremy Seabrook, in his book *The Refuge and the Fortress*, describes the influence of refugees like my parents on the country which adopted them. As Jon Snow claims in his foreward to the book: *One of the most critical elements that has made our country what it*

is today is the vast pool of intellectual capacity brought here by academics in flight from war and repression elsewhere in the world...

Some of my parent's refugee friends had difficulty adapting, and continued to speak English with strong Middle European accents. This had the effect of accentuating their German-ness. It was not a failure to adjust to a new culture. Accents were a continuing reminder of a culture which they loved, however harshly it had treated them. In the same way, Mirza Basić, who accompanied us to North Wales, treasured his Bosnian heritage. He formed a choir out of the refugee community in London, accompanying them on his accordion, and became expert in Sevdah, traditional Bosnia folk music. He gave performances dressed in a fez, loose shirt and waistcoat: a figure seen in photographs and paintings from the country's now rapidly receding past.

The artist Zeljka Jović, living and working in Northern Europe, created an installation at the Bosnia Arts Festival in London. This artefact took its inspiration from a memory of her Bosnian childhood. It represented a mill wheel. These can be found throughout Bosnia, in particular the mountains round Travnik, where torrents gush down steep slopes. The wooden framework stood in a darkened room. As the wheel slowly turned, it powered a machine, which then projected images of a young woman performing gymnastics on to small screens fixed to each rung. The faster the wheel turned, the quicker the girl moved. The flickering images of her perpetual acrobatics implied simultaneously, and paradoxically, both liberation from and enchainment to the past.

Professor Zivanovic described the evisceration of his country's society, and the room felt haunted. The harsh painting seemed to have killed everyone who should have been there; the dust cloud made up of bodily remains turned to ashes.

The professor undid some recent rewriting of history by reminding us of the fact that, before the war, all religious leaders met regularly. This may have been no more than mutual solidarity under communist repression, but it had the positive effect of bringing the communities closer together, and turned out to be an unintended result of discouraging religious dissent. Tito would have approved. Banja Luka had been famously tolerant throughout Bosnia. Here all three religions had substantial congregations. The Jewish community was small only because the Nazis in the Second World War had killed most of it. Special institutions had operated for many decades to protect minorities in the region, including gypsies, of whom there used to be around a hundred thousand in Bosnia. However, Bosnian Serb Orthodox politics put an end to such tolerance. The professor described how at meetings of the National Assembly during the war, then as now predominantly Bosnian Serb, the Orthodox bishops would be seated in the front row of the audience. Karadzic and other leaders made a point of acknowledging their presence. The bishops appreciated this attention. After decades of communist hostility and indifference to the Orthodox Church, they were seduced by nationalism, which they then actively supported. The politicians took advantage of them.

The professor said it was now time for reconciliation, and to take care of minorities.

The meeting ended promisingly with a decision to convene a meeting of the most important and relevant NGOs, when we returned to Banja Luka the next month: those concerned with ecological and humanitarian issues. The professor agreed to set the meeting up, and to invite women's organizations in particular. He knew of a women's union, with members from all over Bosnia doing good work; also a centre for human rights in the university, and a department for the democratization of civil society.

Milodrag Zivanovic was the first Serb we had met who claimed not to belong to the nationalist party, and who spoke about the need for a multi-ethnic society. We were constantly being told that most Serbs in Banja Luka also wanted this, but were too afraid to speak out. In Germany's Third Reich, the majority of Germans apparently followed the Führer, although Hitler only received a minority vote, achieving power by political manipulation, terrorizing and violently eliminating his rivals. In the same way, Serb nationalists in the Republika Srpska maintained their authority.

Since the war had been neither lost nor won, and the perpetrators governed the country, we had to work with them. Historically, countries that lost wars were punished and re-ordered. In this case the Dayton Accord did no more than stop the fighting. Beneath the surface of words and perpetual negotiation with the Office of the High Representative, both sides simply waited for an opportunity to continue the conflict.

A partnership forum, with people like Professor Zivanovic, would help regenerate the society. Without the forum, Banja Luka would continue to stagnate, fester, and Bosnia become ever more isolated.

AN INSPECTOR BY A MASS GRAVE

Inspector Ken Corlett came for breakfast.

This real-life Inspector Morse had been sent to Bosnia to winkle out murderers and those responsible for the massacres and atrocities of the war. Relaxed and amicable, his eyes remained fixed in the distance, watching for signals, barely blinking in case they missed a fleeting appearance of a wanted criminal passing by. His tall lean frame seemed perpetually taut, like stretched elastic.

Ken Corlett came from the North of England: down-to-earth and a straight talker, no performance; just a man doing his job. Unpretentious and modest, he could have been an electrician or bus driver.

He spent his time at the sites of mass graves, trying to identify victims, and then informing relatives. For him the hardest part of his job was dealing with distraught wives and mothers, waiting for years for final evidence of the death of loved ones. The rest of the time he chased killers, who now appeared to be saving him the effort, because they were turning up at his office to confess.

These war criminals handing themselves over were not experiencing belated pangs of conscience. On the contrary, they remained convinced of the rightness of what they had done: no atrocity too appalling in the holy task of ethnically cleansing Greater Serbia. Nor were they tired of hiding from inspectors like Ken Corlett. The easy option beckoned. If they surrendered to the Tribunal they could expect leniency and sympathy for their courage and apparent sincerity. They saw from television broadcasts that they would be received at The Hague in a civilized manner, and, whatever the punishment, be able to lead a more comfortable and secure life, even in jail, than they could expect in Bosnia. Besides, the maximum sentences rarely exceeded ten years. They would be home again in a relatively short time: heroes, ready to begin the next battle.

Ken Corlett spent most of the meeting with us talking on a mobile, explaining patiently to one journalist after the other the exact spelling of a certain Dusan Fustar, latest of his arrests, and telling them to apply elsewhere for further information. These 'minor' criminals, who had probably killed 'only' a few people, maybe no more than a dozen, did not excite media attention. The journalists even sounded bored having to chase up details

about a relatively unimportant person. Only the arrest of Karadjic and Mladic would create a stir. Few journalists considered the specific nature of guilt and responsibility. A dividing line remained between those who ordered massacres and atrocities, leaders whose hands were not actually stained with blood, and those less significant people who behaved like psychopaths, indulging in the messy business of torture, rape and murder. Milosevic in The Hague was already distancing himself from these acts of violence. His attitude made a mockery of the judicial process, which tried in vain to pin ultimate responsibility on him. These lesser people, who committed murders, could distance themselves too from their crimes by claiming diminished responsibility, defiantly asserting that they were only obeying orders, even claiming they could have faced punishment for not carrying out massacres. These murderers managed to appear like victims, claiming to be traumatized by the massacres they carried out, yet also expressing pride for what they had done.

So who takes responsibility?

This remained a central issue of the Nuremberg Trials at the end of the Second World War. *Night and Fog*, Alain Resnais' celebrated documentary, concludes with a series of haunting images: 'I'm not guilty!' one camp guard says after the other. Resnais surveys the mountain of skeletal corpses, each of them a life snuffed out, being shovelled like household rubbish into a massive pit. 'Then who is guilty?' Resnais asks as the screen goes black.

Towards the climax of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, just before the crucifixion of Jesus, the chorus shouts with increasing fervour: 'Crucify him!', then presses the crown of thorns on his head, and spits on him. Immediately after, the same voices sing the Passion

Chorale: ‘O Sacred Head Sore Wounded.....who spat on thee?’ This sudden and unexpected juxtaposition compels us, on the one hand, to recognize our complicity in the crucifixion, then in the same breath to empathise with Christ’s suffering, and by implication, the suffering of the entire world. One moment we are encouraging violence. The next we beg for forgiveness. The power of Bach’s music and sense of drama compel us to take responsibility.

Both sides come together in what many consider to be the sublime climax of the whole work when the chorus who have just been baying for blood suddenly become aware of who is on the cross, and, discordant anger transformed into beautiful harmony, sing: ‘Surely this must be the Son of God’: transfiguration in a halo of sound.

Guilt and grieving dominated our discussion with Ken Corlett. The discovery of mass graves, containing hundreds of bodies of men, women and children, demanded some kind of national acknowledgement.

We talked about the possibility of organizing a war graves’ ceremony, bringing both sides together and called the project: Burying the Dead.

Ken Corlett, while agreeing that such an event should happen, expressed doubts about Serb participation. It would take time for them to face the enormity of their crimes, especially while they still resisted accepting guilt, continued to be defiant and while justice still needed to be done.

Two years later when we embarked on the project bringing Serbs and Muslims together, to discuss a memorial for the hundreds killed and found in the mass grave near Prijedor, described *the white house – From Fear to a Handshake*, one of the main problems we

encountered centred on the time required to allow for people to deal with the past.

Perpetrators insisted that it needed at least a generation; survivors demanded immediate attention.

The point was made succinctly in a TV drama about the Irish problems, *Five Minutes of Heaven*, in which a killer reflects on the damage he did, not only to his victim's family, but to his own life. 'They say time heals,' he says. But he has discovered the exact opposite. Guilt and pain kept growing, not lessening, over the passing years – stifling his spirits, turning him into a difficult lonely man. Meanwhile, the surviving victims of his crime, the family, cannot come to terms with their lives blighted by grief, and a consuming need for revenge. Reconciliation is far from their agenda.

Another point made by the film is the observation of how violence, particularly killing, does not start and end with the individual; it grows out of and binds a community. The killers do it to be respected by their peers, to move up the pecking order.

This explains the phenomenon of guilt being shifted between those who give the orders and those who carry them out. All are inextricably bound by responsibility, though each blames the other. Shifting blame, however, takes away individual responsibility and perpetuates the vicious circle of crime and revenge. Therefore the process of facing the truth of what happened, and dealing with the consequences cannot start soon enough after any situation of conflict. It is constantly said: time heals; forget the past and concentrate on the future; in a couple of generations all will be forgotten and people will be reconciled. This argument for forgetting is not only wrong, it is harmful. The poison has not been expelled. It prepares the next war.

STAR AND CRESCENT AND CROSS

On the now frequent drives from Banja Luka to Sarajevo it became a refreshing tradition to stop at Travnik.. Minarets and mosques all over the town, and up in villages scattered across the steep slopes of the mountains surrounding Travnik, indicate that this heartland of Bosnia remains predominantly Muslim.

After the tensions and challenges of Banja Luka, and before the bustle and stresses of Sarajevo, Travnik with its rushing streams, turning mill wheels and invigorating mountain air, became for us a place of calm and reflection, as well as the best cevapcici: savoury smoke rising from charcoal ovens. During these restful moments, Travnik, situated at the heart of the country, began to feel like the still centre of the hurricane that had raged throughout Bosnia. The town's houses survived despite shelling, pock marked but still standing: everyday life carrying on as always against the backdrop of mountain slopes, villages and farms, a landscape unchanged in centuries.

A crescent moon, a Star of David and a cross were linked in a symbolic sculpture hanging on the wall of the prayer room in the International Multi-religious and Intercultural Centre in Sarajevo. Surrounded by photos of the Pope and other major religious leaders, along with framed awards, it seemed a fragile, if defiant, gesture: fragile because the centre was a small token office, in a gloomy building, not far from the place where Gavrilo Princip shot the Archduke Ferdinand, less than a century earlier.

The centre had been founded in 1991, after the collapse of communism and just before the Bosnia War broke out. Sarajevo had wanted to show itself to Europe and the world as an example of religious harmony and co-existence. People crowded the streets in a

communal glow of hope and new possibilities, that would be brutally extinguished by the old guard of former communist leaders, now turned into nationalists, whose main political aim was ethnic cleansing.

Marko Orsolich, a friendly and enthusiastic man in his fifties, expansively spilling out of an old cardigan, sat on a sofa in the reception room and offered us traditional Bosnian coffee. We were joined by an elderly Orthodox priest and a Muslim woman wearing a hijab head-scarf. The priest planned to return to Banja Luka the next day, and would probably have been in breach of orders from his bishop, who forbade meetings between his priests and those of other denominations and faiths.

After discussing the issues of war criminals still at large, the need for honest dialogue between the faiths and concrete action, Marko Orsolich said that orthodoxy in any faith nurtured fascism and quoted Cardinal Puljic who had recently announced: 'We can't trust Muslims.' This statement contradicted our recent experience of the cardinal at the Coventry Consultation, but we were coming to realize that people said different things in different places and at different times. Marko Orsolich seemed to be taking issue with his boss, and came out with his own agenda for this meeting: our financial help in arranging concerts for the Pontanima Choir, recently founded by Father Ivo Markevic, a Franciscan priest, and made up of Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim and Jewish singers.

'There should be a concert later this year,' Marko Orsolich explained, looking at us expectantly. 'It would only cost twenty thousand euros.' I realized again, that people like Marko Orsolich were only welcoming us in expectation of funding.

We learned about Catholic behaviour in the war. The Franciscans in the region were traditionally fiercely nationalist, which did not fit with their peace-loving image. But

now the order supported Marko Orsolich and Father Ivo Markevic's inter-faith music project. The head of the Franciscan Order, Father Nikolai, a reliable man in their judgement, had a tainted past because of his support for Karadjic and Orthodox nationalist priests. Given that Catholics and Orthodox had been fighting and killing each other during the war, we could not understand why a Franciscan would ever have been a supporter of Karadjic. But now this same person encouraged multi-faith activities like the Pontanima Choir. Marko Orsolich knew the Reis ul Ulema, Dr Cerić, well. Despite making internationally acceptable pronouncements, the Reis suppressed theological dialogue. Like Cardinal Puljic he had been tainted by politics, 'too close to the fire'. All the leaders professed themselves to be good ecumenicists, but were two-faced in their attitudes, because of their indissoluble links to the nationalist elements in their respective communities. However, Catholics, unlike the Orthodox, and to some extent Muslims too, were never a homogenous group. Father Nikolai may have supported Karadjic, but the Franciscan bishop of Mostar during the Second World War had been killed by the Croat Ustasha for being anti-fascist. The present bishop of Mostar, 'now a Catholic Taliban', was an extreme Croat nationalist by conviction. On the other hand, Bishop Komarica of Banja Luka followed a tradition of tolerance.

Finally we were told not to cooperate with or trust anyone, and we should beware of the media, 'now a brothel'.

Marko Orsolich represented a generation of dissidents raised under repressive communism. Through the decades, these committed people kept alive the ideal of free speech and the right to belief, at risk of imprisonment. In the Soviet Union they would have ended up in the Gulag Archipelago. Now they found themselves free but needing

financial assistance. In the past they learnt to survive spiritually. Now they struggled to survive materially.

At the consecration of the Catholic cathedral in Banja Luka we had met several young seminarians who invited us to visit them in Sarajevo. We accepted the offer with the intention of winning Catholic support, especially from the young, for the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque.

Adnan regarded them with suspicion: why would any healthy young man want to live a celibate life? Were they gay? Ilja and Oliver acted aggressively heterosexual, keen on football, their dormitory walls plastered with pictures of Britney Spears and sports stars. Adnan could not understand why these seminarians would want to forego sex and a normal married life.

The seminary was a large building, in the Hapsburg Empire style, close to the city centre, with grand colonnades and marble staircases lined with portraits of formidable looking bishops and deans. We tried to interest Ilja and Oliver in our projects, but it being the weekend, and not wanting to think about serious matters, they preferred to sip cappuccinos and chat in a desultory way, watching their mates play billiards in the students' basement café. They offered to arrange a lecture we could deliver on a future visit, then showed us their cell-like rooms, where the obligatory crucifixes were overwhelmed by lurid posters of Britney Spears challenging the seminarians to 'hit' her up 'one more time'. 'It is good to sleep under the devil,' Ilja said jokingly, excusing his secular tastes. But these only confirmed Adnan's suspicions that studying theology provided a more agreeable alternative to unemployment or boring work.

Popular and easygoing, self-confident Ilya basked in the admiration of his less handsome fellow seminarians, who couldn't resist squeezing his shoulder whenever they passed, patting his behind, muscular from playing frequent football matches. His future as a priest had limited options. Would he be sent to a remote provincial parish, consisting mainly of farmers and poor people? The gaunt priests we saw at the cathedral consecration in Banja Luka came from poor villages and small towns across Bosnia, and looked not just crushed by work: their eyes had witnessed horrors, and the memory, as well as the fear, would haunt them forever. Ilja might exercise his irresistible charm and side-step such an unattractive future stuck in a backwater. He could become an academic, or move away from Bosnia.

The smiling students saw us off and leant against the sun drenched old walls of the grand seminary, not seeming to have a care in the world, nor thinking about the future. They were after all in Sarajevo, a city which had survived a sustained attempt to destroy its famed tolerance, and felt safer there than in any other place in the former Yugoslavia, where the unattended traumas of war still festered dangerously.

Sarajevo's famous library had housed treasures from all religions, including most significantly one of the most beautiful ancient manuscripts in the world, the Haggadah, a medieval illustrated Jewish Bible. The history of this book symbolized the city. Serb soldiers had tried to destroy this unique artefact by deliberately and persistently bombing and burning the library, so the ashes of the books fell 'like snow' over the city. Mysteriously, the Haggadah survived, as had happened on many occasions over the centuries. Individuals saved it in time, protected it, passing the book secretly from hand

to hand. After the war it just as mysteriously reappeared: like the city and its traditions, indestructible.

DREAMING THE MOSQUE

Universities in Bosnia seemed disorganized places, students waiting for lectures or tutorials, hanging around desultorily in small groups, kicking their heels, or squatting on weed infested grounds strewn with rubbish. Tutors and lecturers might not appear, terms did not have specific starts or ends. Exams and vivas could be called off at the last moment: examiners not appearing. What with stipends rarely being paid because of the economic and financial crisis, how did people survive? Why weren't they dying of starvation? What kind of secret activities did students have to engage in just to carry on from day to day?

We had fixed a meeting, at Sarajevo University's Architecture Department, with Professor Hamidovic, appointed by the Reis to oversee the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque. He had already prepared drawings to show us.

The university rooms were sparsely furnished and decorated, each with a few chairs and a table, a flip chart and a board.

A kindly man with a perpetually worried expression, Professor Hamidovic, beard trimmed, wore an old cardigan, glasses and neck-scarf. He had walked the corridors of the university for many years, through different regimes, and learned to have no political views, focusing only on his subject.

A fine oil painting of workers in a stone quarry dominated the room, but the piece-de-resistance turned out to be a huge roll of paper which the professor unfurled along the

table, the length of the room, to reveal the working drawings for the mosque: one elaborate design after the other depicting the building from every angle. Each stone had been marked, no detail ignored. As the roll opened, the Ferhadija Mosque seemed to appear as in an Arabian Night, becoming substance once again. One could almost touch the stones and appreciate the proportions of the tall minaret and the dome, the courtyard with an elegant water feature as well as the fountain in the wall, which would, once more, refresh passers-by, whoever they might be, citizens of Banja Luka, as well as visiting strangers.

The professor reckoned the mosque would cost around three million euros. The Reis ul Ulema and Mufti Camdzic now waited for us to provide the funds.

Resisting the unspoken pressure, but overwhelmed by their expectations of the Soul of Europe, we shifted the discussion to ancillary issues: the benefits of workshops attached to the project, teaching stone masonry crafts and other skills related to the building of traditional Ottoman mosques. The professor talked about a similar large scale project now under way and supported by the World Bank: the Mostar Bridge. But most large international organizations, as well as governments, refused to support religious projects, not even if they were cultural heritage. One international heritage organization, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, SIDA, did however buck this trend, and had already helped rebuild a mosque in Maglaj, similar to our project in Banja Luka, but not so big and nationally significant. SIDA would eventually become involved in the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque, but, for now, the prospects of funding looked bleak and a sense of being the focus of expectations from the Islamic community in Bosnia alarmed us. We were frightened by the enormity of the task we had taken on.

The professor told us that the citizens of Maglaj were involved in dialogue with the international community, as well as with different groups in the town. The construction of the mosque would be quick, but the preparation slow: up to three or four years. He thought the Ferhadija Mosque would require the same amount of time. This turned out to be optimistic: but the foundations of the great mosque in Banja Luka would begin to be laid, indeed, just four years after this conversation.

Meanwhile, we needed to face the political reality in Banja Luka, the attitudes of the nationalists in power, who had sanctioned the destruction of the mosque. A desire to be part of Europe tempered the more extreme elements of nationalism, which would resist any return of Islam. 'Everything is relative in the Balkans,' Professor Hamidovic murmured, uneasy at having to think politically. 'To be European is a realistic not an idealistic option. Cultural heritage has to be without borders.'

However, the nationalists were stirring up controversy about the site of the Ferhadija Mosque, saying there had been a church there before the Ottomans invaded. Historically, the Ottomans had on the whole been sensibly careful, for political as well as religious reasons, to avoid desecrating sacred buildings, so as not to provoke their new subjects unnecessarily, and the sultans had ordered that mosques should not be erected on the ruins of churches. Similarly, where mosques once stood, that site could not be used for any other purpose. For instance, the castle on the way to Cazin, near Bihac, could never be turned into a residence, hotel or business despite its superlative position with views across the Una Valley. A mosque had once been part of the building, which Serbs destroyed during the war. For the present, the place would remain a ruin.

However there were exceptions to this rule, as we noticed in Bihac where we looked at a mosque that had been grafted onto a former church, in a similar manner to the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, where in a formerly Christian cathedral, large banners, with quotations from the Koran hung between crosses and images of saints. The building had changed hands and been converted into a mosque. The issue of whether mosques or churches owned their particularly site, remained unsolved in Bosnia, and throughout the Balkans. When Kosovo gained independence from Serbia, the Orthodox monasteries there, among the most significant holy places for Serbs, found themselves immediately in conflict with the new government over who owned the property. Before the collapse of communism, and for centuries, land and property had not been as big an issue as now, when ethnic and national identities were at stake.

Meanwhile in the Bjelajina region of North East Bosnia, the Orthodox Bishop Basil specifically ordered churches to be built on the sites of destroyed mosques. These new churches were meant not only to discourage Muslims returning, but to re-write history: 'Here there were never mosques; and if they had been they should not have been.' Following this train of thought, nationalists in Banja Luka had demanded the excavation of the site of the former Ferhadija Mosque to find evidence of a church. Digging to a depth of a metre in width and depth revealed a human bone but nothing else. No one could prove or disprove anything as yet, but the professor surmised there would have had to be something on that particular site, the centre of the city, and a prime piece of ground, that overlooked the river. There could be relics going back to Roman times.

Despite being Muslim, Professor Hamidovic assured us that the Banja Luka urban planning authorities were behaving correctly by demanding that the Islamic community

come up with exact drawings and acceptable proposals for the rebuilding of an important monument. Perhaps the professor was used to mollifying authorities, whoever they happened to be: anything to avoid criticism and unpleasantness. He did not want to consider that the authorities in Banja Luka might be creating obstacles to the rebuilding. Furthermore, he encouraged us to win the support of the Serb Orthodox Church by contributing to the rebuilding of the new cathedral.

Meeting the gentle and hard-working professor strengthened our determination to invite international partners of the Ferhadija Project to a conference. These representatives of communities throughout Europe and beyond, specifically interested in inter faith dialogue, would be able to learn first hand from us, and others, about the situation in Bosnia, and be inspired to join in the project.

It would take a couple of years before such a meeting took place in Brussels.

Meanwhile we continued the perpetual search for funds and supporters. For this reason we visited the Canadian Embassy in Sarajevo to meet Almir Tanovic, the embassy's program officer. Canada had expressed an interest in such a conference, provided we submit a detailed program with costing, but we were in competition with a variety of local and international NGOs concerned with civic initiatives, such as women's groups (particularly rape counselling centres), national youth councils throughout Bosnia, construction companies for returnees, and non-nationalist parts of the media, which remained suppressed and inaudible. Only ten out of ever five hundred proposals were accepted, so even though our activities dealt with a favoured issue, peace-building, and we offered quality and a high profile, we could not expect success.

Almir Tanovic, a sappy Bosnian, could not hide his delight at landing such a prestigious well paid post, ahead of hundreds of failed applicants. Well schooled in business speak he relished giving us a list of criteria we must meet. He lectured us on the need to establish a firm local base in Banja Luka, to link our project to ‘outcomes’, such as a partnership forum and student exchanges across religious and ethnic divides, and to focus on youth issues.

He beamed from behind his desk, at last being able to patronize Westerners; encouraging us with vague hopes of finding Canadian funding, but remaining non-committal about our chances.

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Outside, on an unseasonably warm early Spring day, sun brightened the walls of buildings, still pitted with shell explosions: scars on an otherwise attractive face. The sun shone on narrow winding alleys and staircases leading to little mosques and churches and over the surrounding hills scattered with houses and gardens.

We passed the central market where forty three citizens had been killed by a Serb shell in one of the worst massacres of the siege of Sarajevo. They had been queuing for bread.

Adnan mentioned quietly to us, as though in parentheses to downplay his part in the horror, that moments before the attack he had been at the same place. He was just leaving the market, carrying a loaf of bread home, when he heard the explosion. He sheltered, frightened and shaking, in a shop doorway.

To this day he has never told his mother.

‘It would kill her.’

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A MUSLIM FROM BIHAC AND A MUSLIM FROM BLACKBURN

With hindsight, our work in Bihac, which, for a while, constituted our most important project, turned out to be a diversion. The misjudgments we made there became part of the story and lessons of our time in Bosnia.

In the process of building trust and friendship with people, even the most intractable problems have at least a hope of solution. We learnt that by the time we embarked on our project attempting to raise a memorial for those murdered at the killing camp of Omarska.

We passed the station of this notorious town on a slow train journey from Sarajevo to Zagreb, then the only railway line open in the country, and the first to be repaired since the war. The sign gave the same shock as Oswiecim (Auschwitz). The station had a fresh coat of white paint, and the platform was decorated with flowers in pots. The name itself signified torture, rape and murder.

For the past year in Bihac, the main city of the North Western region of Bosnia, where the River Una flows through fertile valleys, surrounded by wooded hills from which ancient ruined castles look down on more recently ruined villages and farms, Ros Tennyson had been training our young Bosnian assistant, Denis Arifovic, in the skills of establishing a business partnership forum in Bihac.

We had first met Denis on our second visit to Bihac where he used to work for Christian Aid and took us on a tour of the ruined villages surrounding the town, specifically Krneuscia, where a few Serb families were slowly returning to rebuild their derelict homes.

We invited Denis to Sarajevo to update us in person on his work establishing the business leaders' forum, and to meet with representatives from Islamic Relief Aid, a UK based charity working in central Bosnia. The charity had expressed an interest in providing loans for businesses in Bihac, an area they knew little about because of its remoteness, beyond their area of influence, which was mostly around Sarajevo and Mostar. The charity had doubts about working in Bihac, which, since the war, had a reputation for extremism and corruption. Muslim war lords pulled strings in the administrative centre of a region, known as being part of a safe route for illicit drugs, sex-trafficking and arms trading. Lazar, our first interpreter and driver, a Serb, had feared for his life taking us there. The charity wanted to meet Denis before committing help.

Groups of refugees sat patiently in the reception area of the charity's office. A mother and child were shoed out of their seats, to make room for us, though we tried to stop them. We were considered important visitors, and the mother bowing respectfully to us, refused to sit down again. Agaz Ahmet, who ran the Bosnia branch of Islamic Relief Aid, was a young, bright, widely travelled and well-educated Englishman from Blackburn in Lancashire, near to Bolton, where I had been brought up forty years earlier. I witnessed his grandparents' generation's arrival there, to take on low-paid jobs. Such families worked and saved to enable their children to have better lives. His grandfather could have been the ticket collector on my school bus. His grandson now devoted his life to charity in dangerous regions of the world, where Muslims were in need.

Agaz Ahmet stared at us intently, the whites of his eyes surrounding dark pupils so they seemed to be popping out of his face. The idea of a partnership forum appealed to him, and he considered that Bihac might be a good area for Islamic Relief Aid. But he needed

an intermediary there, because of the physical distance from his work base, in central and southern Bosnia. However he warned us that the bosses of Islamic Relief Aid were strict about repayments of loans, so he had to be sure about the situation in Bihac before committing funds. Being a micro-finance organization, Islamic Relief Aid had no set criteria, but repayment of loans was not negotiable. Denis assured him the ground had been well prepared, but that a start had to be made. Agaz suggested we look for grants from other organizations, which gave one-off loans without strings and gave us names. Denis promised to prepare meetings in Bihac for when Agaz would visit and we agreed to be there at the same time.

As we left, Agaz and Saleh, his quiet solemn assistant, the head of the Sarajevo office, accompanied us to the door, enthusiastic about being our partners, not seeming to want us to leave. They welcomed an opportunity for good conversation, a break from having to deal with wretched refugees, depressed farmers and would-be businessmen. We spoke briefly about football, which fortunately forged a bond between them and Denis, but their conversation went over my head.

This new partnership would test Denis and our plans in Bihac. Agaz had listened carefully to us, and he understood the purpose of a partnership quicker than most people we met. But he needed convincing that Denis could be a suitable representative in Bihac.

IS THAT SO? TALKING TO AMBASSADORS

From the modest Islamic Relief Aid office in a side street of a Sarajevo suburb, we proceeded to the top of the smart headquarters of the European Union, in the city centre, to find help from Hansjorg Kretschmer, the EU acting ambassador. As we spoke about

our projects, an ironic smile flitted across the tall young German's otherwise stony features. Stuck alone in a spacious eyrie, his secretary on the floor below, he welcomed an entertaining interlude in a dull day.

'Is that so?' he kept intoning monotonously as we regaled him with one topic after the other: the successful wooing of Bishop Jefrem, the consultation in Coventry, the broker for a partnership forum in Banja Luka, etc. The European Union ambassador looked both bored and amused at our pathetic enthusiasm for the lost cause of Bosnia. Dutifully, he then reeled off a number of names of people in Austria and Germany for us to contact, and warned us of diplomatic issues. For instance the Austrian ambassador, Valentin Inzco, did not see eye to eye with his Austrian colleague, Wolfgang Petritsch, the High Representative, so we should delay seeing the ambassador till after Petritsch had left office. However, at subsequent meetings with both these diplomats, who turned out to be educated, charming and committed to their work, not career politicians like most we encountered, there seemed to be no fundamental disagreement. Well versed in the traditions of dealing with these former regions of the Hapsburg Empire, Bosnia having been one of Austria's most prized possessions, both these diplomats understood the political history and psychology of the Balkans better than anyone. However, few internationals bothered to listen and learn from them. These two Austrians were among the wisest of all the international diplomats we met there, both of them pursuing a peaceful and non-hectoring approach, which would allow for slow but sure development of relations between the communities, and especially the two entities of Bosnia, which is why they, above all others, appreciated our similar strategy. Impatient enforcement of agreements by the subsequent High Representative, British Paddy Ashdown, turned out

to be counter-productive and even divisive. Paddy Ashdown would not have encouraged the Coventry Consultation to the extent of Wolfgang Petritsch, who not only gave us his time, but attended the consultation himself, and made us welcome to see him every time we came to Sarajevo, even when we were untried and unknown quantities. Valentin Inzco and Wolfgang Petritsch treated us as equals with respect, and never patronised us. This happened with most of the other international diplomats, including Hansjorg Kretschmer, who saw their elected role in Bosnia bestowing on them a privileged position, above non-governmental organizations and international do-gooders.

Like other diplomats, constantly guarded and therefore out of direct contact with the grass roots, Hansjorg Kretschmer tended to give second-hand advice and information that we already knew, and, in the case of Valentin Inzco and Wolfgang Petritsch, faulty. The German EU ambassador warned us that Doris Pack, Member of the European Parliament and the elected head of the European Union delegation to South Eastern Europe, sympathised mainly with Croat Catholics and constantly attacked the Orthodox Church. We already knew that from meeting her at Bajram in Banja Luka, the previous December. She had spoken contemptuously of Bishop Jefrem and refused to take into account the political situation and history of the Orthodox Church, which would explain its defence of Serb nationalism. She accused the Orthodox Church of being as guilty of the war and ethnic cleansing as the politicians, claiming that Orthodox religious leaders were successfully evading justice.

As for Donald being invited to speak to the steering group in Brussels, European Union acting ambassador Kretschmer warned that this might not be the best occasion to talk about the Soul of Europe. Our work did not interest him; international politics vis-a-vis

Bosnia and the Balkans concerned him more, and he did not want us influencing decision-making. There were highly political issues on the agenda, he told us, and there might be a risk of minimum attention. Listening to his discouraging words, we recognized the scenario from our first visit to Brussels in 1999. Improving lives and relations between communities, took a distant place behind the more important priority of personal political manoeuvring between the various members of the European Parliament and committees, single-mindedly intent on their careers and survival.

However the acting ambassador did, reluctantly, vouchsafe two names for us to contact in Brussels: Catherine Magnant and Tim Clarke of the European Aid Office; but then implied we would get nowhere with them. He cheered up at the thought of leaving Bosnia in June after four years as chief delegate from the European Union. As with many international representatives we had met so far, the two Austrians being striking exceptions, the date of departure could not come quick enough for him. Bosnia had been a step on the ladder to better positions elsewhere in the world. He smiled hopefully when we mentioned the possibility of embassies in Paris, New York or perhaps London. A stint in Bosnia seemed to be the equivalent of a war medal.

Leaving his offices, feeling discouraged, I could not help reflecting on previous German influence in this region. Germans had successfully manipulated inter-ethnic tensions during the vicious struggles of the Second World War. These divide and rule tactics led inexorably to the vengeful eruption of the Bosnia War. The partisans in the previous war were eventually victorious, but not before tortures and concentration camps, where people were allegedly boiled alive, had led to depressingly long death tolls. Haughty and regarding themselves as culturally superior they patronised the Bosnians.

The next meeting restored our confidence. Ian Cliff, the new British Ambassador, considered us to be a useful legacy, inherited from his predecessor, and turned out, like the Austrians, to be one of the few diplomats from the international community who never patronized us. He had only recently arrived in Bosnia, and although well briefed, he appreciated the opportunity to listen, and hear our take on the many issues complicating the political and social situation. His engaged attention contrasted with Hansjorg Kretschmer's cynicism and disinterest.

Ian Cliff came from behind his desk and sat with us informally, taking notes on a pad. He focused on two issues: the first concerning Catholic and Orthodox reactions to our Muslim-friendly priority in rebuilding a mosque. We would need to find suitable projects of rebuilding Catholic and Orthodox monuments, to match the significance of the Ferhadija Mosque. The other issue concerned economic regeneration. Bosnia desperately wanted to attract foreign investment, but the degree of corruption and the dilapidated state of most of the country, particularly at points of entry into the Republika Srpska, where these areas looked like demolition sites, could only be a deterrent to international business interests.

Ian Cliff had been deputised by the Foreign Office to oversee the budget proposals for our project establishing the civic forum in Banja Luka; so he needed to be sure we were qualified to complete the task, and keep a reign on us, while listening to what we could teach him. Mainly he had to be a school-master, and mark our work.

Finally we talked about Brendan Simms *The Unfinest Hour*, a book exposing British policy regarding Bosnia before, during and after the war. Our politicians from the former

John Major Conservative government were portrayed as ignorant and bigoted, giving enthusiastic support economically, militarily and morally to the worst criminals such as Milosevic, Mladic and Karadjic, while mistrustful of the Muslims; in effect siding against them. White Christian Europeans, even war criminals, won British admiration because they were people ‘we could do business with’, and ‘could be trusted to clear up the Balkan mess.’ Ignorance and a partisan approach to history, which cast the Muslims in the role of Ottoman invaders, aliens in Europe, went together with a sentimental attitude to Serb ‘nobility and courage’, romanticised in celebrated books such as *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* by Rebecca West. The author passionately admired Serb nationalists under the leadership of Chetnik Draža Mihailović, rather than the multi-ethnic Communists under Tito, whom she mistrusted. She cited documented accounts of Chetniks fighting alongside Allies during the Second World War to defeat the Nazis. The reality of a complex intermingling of faiths and communities, which had created a unique culture in Europe over more than five centuries, had yet to be more widely understood and appreciated.

‘Inaction was **not** evil,’ commented Ian Cliff, putting emphasis on the ‘not’, but ruefully admitting that Britain had made mistakes, adding that Milosevic and Tudjman had manipulated ignorant European politicians. This assessment of British involvement in the Balkans explained to some extent why the Foreign Office grudgingly supported our particular venture: it might make up for earlier mistakes.

Following Foreign Office policy, he supported any project which would create a balance between the three main communities in Bosnia, possibly linking Banja Luka, Sarajevo and Mostar. The project to develop a civic forum in Banja Luka would at least divert

attention away from support for the Ferhadija Mosque. British politicians still could not bring themselves to see the Bosnia conflict as anything other than a civil war, in which all sides were evenly matched, and equally innocent and guilty. Accepting the fact of it being a project of ethnic cleansing, by both Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs, to clear the land of Muslims, would mean that British politicians and others in Europe had, at the very least, tacitly supported genocide. For this reason they could not risk bringing Radovan Karadjic and General Mladic to justice. The leaders who masterminded the ethnic cleansing would certainly implicate their friends and supporters in England, America and throughout Europe, especially France, whose diplomats still openly avowed their allegiance to Serbs. Denial persisted in the international community even more than among Serbs and Croats, who had no qualms about saying nothing happened, while simultaneously boasting of what they did: making heroes of their leaders.

Ambassador Cliff, by acknowledging Banja Luka on the same level as Sarajevo, indicated that despite evidence of all the crimes committed, Karadjic had achieved his aim of international, including British, acceptance of the independent state he had carved out of Bosnia through war and atrocities.

Despite our fundamental differences of perception about what happened in Bosnia, Ian Cliff generously offered to make a presentation to the steering boards in Brussels about us.

His suggestion that we bring Turkey on board indicated that he still had to learn about inter-Muslim politics, and the antagonism between Ambassador Erozan and Reis Ceric over the issue of loyalty to Saudi Mujahideen, who were the only foreigners to come to the aid of persecuted Muslims in Bosnia during the war..

As well as offering to arrange meetings with leading Bosnian politicians from all groups who would support the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque, including, surprisingly, the present president of Bosnia, Serb Orthodox Zivko Radisic, Ian Cliff agreed to help us host a meeting between the Republika Srpska political leaders and Reis Ceric in Banja Luka, at which Dr Dragan Kalinic, Karadjic's representative and Speaker of the Assembly, could be present. Despite the Reis's understandable reservations, a consequence of the violence at the first foundation stone-laying ceremony, when Dr Ceric felt he only just escaped with his life, Dr Kalinic would have to be included in the project. The political consequences of this meeting which did eventually happen, but without Dr Dragan Kalinic, would have positive outcomes for the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque.

The Reis's reservations brought the conversation with Ian Cliff to the vulnerable situation of the weakened Islamic community in Banja Luka, a small, disorganized and neglected group, which seemed to have been left to fend for itself by the Reis. The violence at the first laying of the foundation stone had confirmed the Reis's suspicions that Muslims could not depend on the international community to protect them, or their interests. He therefore preferred to ally himself closer to his Saudi allies, who were supporting him financially and politically.

THE MEAN STREETS OF BANJA LUKA

The journey down the Vrbas Gorge into Banja Luka seemed to take longer than usual. Our feeling of dread grew, as Adnan drove along the winding road, under beetling crags

on either side of the ravine, through which the river gushed foaming, and intensified as we approached the border with the Republika Srpska.

As Adnan negotiated the twists and turns over piles of rubble on the pitted road and through collapsing tunnels along the narrowing gorge, we discussed the unique past and a positive future for Banja Luka. Naïve and hopeless fantasies have a positive purpose: keeping alive the human element in our work, which so often submerged itself beneath the flood of cynicism and administrative necessities. We were dealing with people, whatever ‘crimes, follies and misdemeanours’ they had committed; and without touching that humanity common to everyone, our work could not hope to succeed. In the words of Ernesto Sábato, the Argentinian writer: *Only those capable of envisaging utopia will be fit for the decisive battle, that of recovering all the humanity we have lost.*

Such utopian daydreams informed our vision of Banja Luka as a New Jerusalem. Then when we arrived, driving through the dingy city streets, the place looked neglected, soulless and heartless. All thoughts of the city being a golden example to the world seemed naive and vain.

A visit to the Islamic community in Banja Luka confirmed these impressions, especially after a friendly meeting with Mayor Davidovic, who had formally given us either icy or cautious welcomes. Now he smiled encouragingly and together with Omer Visic, the Vice-Mayor, promised to continue supporting us, and both expressed gratitude for our continued presence in their city.

In case we were becoming too optimistic about the progress of our work in Banja Luka, the following meeting with representatives of the few Muslims left there reminded us that

their situation remained bad and was deteriorating, with perpetual harassment, and inability to find work. Serbs, now running the place, refused to employ them: a deliberate policy of social exclusion intended to discourage them staying, pushing them to leave... but where to? No one wanted them. Our work had not even begun. The war continued, regardless of an official ending to hostilities seven years ago. Later in our visit, the teachers would confirm this impression. Lack of support from the Islamic community elsewhere in Europe and the world, intensified the loneliness and vulnerability of Banja Luka's surviving Muslims. They were forgotten and ignored, as though they didn't exist. Adnan could not contain his rage and despair: 'Why isn't Sarajevo helping these poor people?' he shouted afterwards, adding darkly with venom: 'Why has the Reis abandoned them?' His tone reminded us of what he told us when we first met that after the war the Reis decided Banja Luka had been lost to the Muslims, and turned his back on the place; in fact our presence now forced him to reconsider his attitude to the community there, however reluctantly.

Because Mufti Camdzic was travelling to a remote village in the hills, we were able to get to know the Muslim community in Banja Luka without his intimidating presence. We talked with Reshad, the community leader, a kindly, polite man who, whenever we had met before, seemed to be wearing the same grey trousers and jumper. His face looked older than his years.

We discussed strategy, how to help the mufti in his difficult task of dealing with the authorities, who didn't want him there, getting his house built and eventually the mosque. 'All the mosques should be rebuilt,' exclaimed Reshad, reminding us of the fifteen other mosques which had been demolished.

For now, the foundations for the Ferhadija Mosque were being dug and prepared. An expert would make them safe, and a vibrating machine needed to be brought in to test the ground. Project designs and a construction permit were all ready, and after thirty days they would officially have permission to start building... with luck.

A lawyer, Meliha Filipovic, joined us. She also looked older than her years, appearing to be a frail old woman, though still in her prime. She wore an elegant scarf and kept her coat on because of a cold. At first she listened to our plans to win over the extreme nationalists at the Assembly. After wishing us well, Meliha Filipovic coughed painfully, and began to tell us about the present persecution of Muslims from every level in the Republika Srpska, especially the media. The nationalists had been outraged at the mention, in one of the Islamic Board's documents, of the presence of university buildings built in communist times on land belonging to the Muslim community. The media were angry about the community's alleged plan to remove the buildings, and were whipping up hysteria among the Serbs of Banja Luka. However this had not been the community's intention. They were simply claiming to own the land.

However, the main issue Meliha Filipovic wanted to discuss with us concerned the land immediately surrounding the site of the Ferhadija Mosque. The local authorities were in the process of passing legislation to allow the building of twenty-storey office blocks all round the mosque, which would completely hide it once it had been rebuilt. Meliha Filipovic had been spending the past months fighting the authorities, trying to persuade Mayor Davidovic to abandon the plans. She organized a protest at the Institute of Urban Planning. Sabira Husedzinovic from Sarajevo, the woman who, at great risk, had taken pictures of the mosque's destruction, made a presentation, and the officials promised to

consider the situation. However, in a television interview, the same officials stated categorically that they would not support the Islamic community. When asked about the position of the mufti's house, which had previously stood next to the mosque, the Institute's spokesman declared: 'The building can not be put there.' They were refusing to cooperate, and when asked about the rights of Muslims, they answered that other ethnicities had to be involved in the decision. Serbs were now the only people living and working round the site of the mosque. The absence of Muslims around the area, where the mosque used to stand, meant that Serbs, who now lived there, must take precedence. This statement avoided the issue of ethnic cleansing which had created that situation.

Reshad informed us that the metal fence recently put round the site of the mosque, as a pre-emptive gesture to discourage vandalism, and to indicate that the mosque would be built, had been constructed by mostly Serb workers. 'We welcome Serbs in our group, men of good will,' he said, adding with a sigh that Muslims, who used to own the land around the mosque, were not allowed to return.

Despite our confidence-raising suggestions, such as organizing small events, concerts, exhibitions and meetings to help people get used to thinking about the project, and assist in the process of preparing all communities in Banja Luka to welcome the rebuilding of the mosque, Meliha Filipovic shook her head. Even if the permits were given, and the project went ahead, twenty-storey blocks would be built around the mosque. What was the point? Thirty years ago, long before the war and the ethnic cleansing, a plan had been passed by the authorities to preserve the old town centre, exactly as it was, dominated by the mosque. Now the nationalist Assembly intended to overturn the plan, and give legal permission for a new one. The Bosnian Serb Orthodox Church had meanwhile

successfully gained permission to expand their position in the part of the town surrounding the new cathedral, involving the demolition of existing buildings, and so creating a new city centre, to include the Town Hall and the Parliament. Once all these permits had been given there would be no reason for Muslims to return to Banja Luka, and the surviving community would die out. 'It will be the end for us,' announced Reshad. Meliha Filipovic looked sadly at the plans she had brought to show us. 'Please help us,' she begged. 'Talk to anyone, to everyone; get them to stop.'

Outside the Islamic Centre, Reshad showed us the site of the former mufti house, a modest building, which Mufti Camdzic was hoping to rebuild on a grander scale to include meeting and guest rooms, but all within the boundaries of the site. Reshad smiled wanly, pointing out where the twenty-storey blocks were meant to stand, within feet of the mosque, so they could overshadow it and prevent it becoming once again the focal point of the city.

The policy of the government of the Republika Srpska clearly aimed to complete the task of ethnic cleansing, carried out violently during the war, now just as ruthlessly, but quietly, under the eyes of the apparently unconcerned international community: people appointed to see that precisely this should not be allowed to happen.

THREATS AND GRAFFITI

'I have an important matter to discuss with you!' Shamed by the neglect of the Islamic community in Banja Luka, Donald felt a need to challenge Georges Bordet, the outgoing Deputy High Representative in the Republika Srpska, who joined us for his farewell supper at Roy Wilson's apartment. Georges retreated to the back of his chair, having

expected a good-humoured drink before leaving office, and vanishing to South Africa next day, not an onslaught of criticism. Roy smiled wryly, and turned to me with widening eyes that said: 'Donald doesn't waste time, does he?' and quickly prepared more stiff gin and tonics for everyone.

Muttering about people always trying to bend his ear, as though this didn't come with the job, Georges had no choice but listen to Donald's complaint about the international community's apathy about the fate of Muslims in Banja Luka. Georges grudgingly agreed to visit the Islamic Centre and give them his support, to show they had not been forgotten, but it seemed unlikely he would find the time. Meanwhile we had rung the Office of the High Representative in Sarajevo, and pressed Anwar Azimov to force a change of mind among the nationalists at the Republika Srpska Assembly, concerning the buildings planned for erection around the Ferhadija Mosque. A decision would affect our future work in Banja Luka. If the Muslims were to be finally forced to leave, then our work was meaningless.

It turned out that our bullying did achieve a postponement on the decision, which gave the Islamic community time to rally protest and, with luck, and support, prevent another decision being passed.

Roy approved of us putting the Deputy High Representative on the spot. In Roy's view, Georges had not pushed the nationalists hard enough, being too polite and kindly towards the politicians, who ran rings round him. Georges Bordet's successor in Banja Luka, Graham Day, would be more forceful. We had witnessed Georges Bordet's indulgence towards the nationalists at a lunch in one of Banja Luka's more exclusive restaurants on a previous visit. Prime Minister Ivanic and the Minister for Police were having lunch at a

neighbouring table, ostensibly discussing the issue of corruption, on the orders of the OHR. Afterwards the Prime Minister on his way out greeted Georges Bordet with a patronizing wave of the hand that implied: 'Lay off! We've done what you asked!' and saying the meeting had been 'productive'. Georges nodded approvingly and shook their hands warmly. To us it seemed the business had been conducted minimally; Ivanic to the Minister of Police: 'The OHR has asked me to tell you to clean up your department and put an end to corruption.' The Minister for Police to Ivanic: 'Yes of course. Leave it to me. Now, tell me, how was your trip to the UK?'

Having grudgingly taken on board Donald's complaint on behalf of Banja Luka's Islamic community, Georges once again spoke ecstatically about the beauty of Banja Luka, its tree-lined streets, the river and the surrounding hills and forests. He regretted his family's reluctance to come and spend holidays there. No one, least of all the Muslims who had been forced out of the city, would have disagreed with him. He praised the Bosnian Serbs for their good manners, kindness and hospitality. He ignored the consequences of grim recent history: the pain of victims, corruption, denial and guilt.

On the last day of this our latest visit, George Bordet's rose-tinted view of Banja Luka blurred, as we learned about the reality of life for ordinary people in Banja Luka. The teacher, Jadranka Molnar, and her headmistress, Slavica Nesic, took us out for supper; coincidentally at the same restaurant where the Prime Minister and Minister for Police had been 'discussing' how to stop corruption.

To our dismay, the teachers insisted on paying for us, as thanks for our hospitality in Coventry. At least we managed to cover the drinks bill, aware that they had not been paid for three months: the meal representing half a month's wages for the headmistress. We

wondered how they could pay, and asked how they managed on a day to day basis. Usually when we asked this question, people remained silent: out of shame and not wanting to tell the truth. Slavica and Jadranka at first answered enigmatically: ‘We manage.’ Professional people, like doctors, nurses and teachers, throughout Bosnia had got used to not being paid. Jadranka spelled it out clearly towards the end of the meal. ‘The situation in the Republika Srpska is two-tiered. On top is the mafia; below the rest of the people are poor criminals. This is the way we survive.’ She left it to our imagination what kind of petty criminality, black market and bribery, staved off starvation.

We discussed school exchanges between Banja Luka and Exeter, and this would become one of our successful smaller projects. Slavica suggested we write to Boris Vukobrat, a brilliant former pupil and now a millionaire, who had made his fortune starting private businesses before the war: a chicken farm in Dubrovnik, and a Peugeot factory. He now lived in Switzerland with his Muslim wife, also from Banja Luka. The last time Donald had spoken with this elusive rich man, Vukobrat had joked on the phone: ‘I’m in Deauville, at the races... why don’t you come over and join me?’ He then broke contact and we never managed to reach him again.

The teachers described two recent events, both of which trounced Georges Bordet’s positive spin on life in Banja Luka.

Slavica’s Muslim neighbour, a thirty seven year old man who had decided not to flee the city during the war because he needed to care for an aging sick mother, had been stabbed on the street outside his home a week earlier. He almost died of the wounds, and now lived in terror for his life. These attacks were meant to frighten Muslims and warn others

not to return. The police refused to arrest anyone. Nationalists considered such violence to be patriotic. Traumatized by the stabbing, the neighbour was too scared to leave his house. Slavica and her husband now looked after him.

The other event affected Catholic Croat Jadranka personally. She had returned home a few weeks earlier to discover graffiti scrawled over her front door: HDZ, the initials of the Catholic Croat extremist party, the equivalent of the SDS Serb nationalist party in charge of the Republika Srpska. Serb neighbours were trying to frighten her into leaving. 'I am not afraid. I live here, it is my home. I am a teacher. No one will get me to leave.' Her experiences as a single Catholic woman had been turned into a semi-fictional book in Sweden: *Maria's Silent War*. Jadranka expressed reservations about her life being edited to suit a melodramatic story, but fortunately her name did not appear in the book, so no one could identify her. Life was dangerous enough.

We never found out what happened to Slavica's neighbour.

Jadranka stayed only a few years more in Banja Luka. On being offered a teaching job in Croatia she left her home country for good. The school exchanges continued.

TREADING DEEP WATER DENIS IN BIHAC – LATE FEBRUARY 2002

The coal black eyes of Denis had burnt into me ever since our first meeting, two years earlier in Bihac, where he worked for Christian Aid distributing food to outlying villages. He had then looked at us with the ironic detachment of a Bosnian sizing up international aid workers, figuring out what self-interest had brought us there, and what might be got out of us. His lack of trust became a challenge. However, the large sad dark eyes were the painful wounds of war that had messed up his life. They were the silent howl of a

sensitive young man trying to find his way in life. He lacked the self-confidence and ambition of Adnan, but responded to our project with similar intelligence and involvement. Initially the two of them got on, but concern about the security of each one's relationship to us made them mutually suspicious. Denis (named by his father after Dennis the Menace from *Beano*, a British comic, popular also in the former Yugoslavia) accepted his secondary role. On our recommendation, Ros Tennyson invited Denis over to England several times for training at the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum to prepare him for our next project: establishing a business forum in Bihac. Christian Aid released him from his contract, because they had moved elsewhere, and wrote him a harsh letter saying they had not been satisfied with his work. He let us read it, shook his head, but made no comment. This should have been a warning to us, but we were determined to help him. We had witnessed how well he related to the people he looked after: former enemies, Serbs and Croats, who only a few years earlier had been trying to kill him. His laid back manner, in no hurry to get things moving, relaxed and thoughtful, struck us as being an advantage in situations where ineffectual quick fixes wasted time.

He attended a course in Turin and made a good impression there, grasping the basic principles of business enterprise partnership. He quickly established a trusting working relationship with the Union of Small Businesses in Bihac, run by a former mayor who gave him an office, for which we then sent money to furnish with pc, fax and phone.

Then nothing seemed to happen. Developments stagnated. Denis said that lack of funding meant that ideas, created in the business enterprise partnership forum he had helped set up, could not be put into practice. They were basically waiting for us to bring money and plans. He wrote occasional reports - brief and saying little more than that he

had met with such and such a business man, but gave no details as to what they discussed, or what needed to be done to progress the forum. We tried to be understanding: Denis was sitting alone in his office in Bihac, having to instil a new way of thinking in a town traumatized by war, and situated in a far corner of Western Bosnia near the Croatian border, far from the capital Sarajevo, and therefore difficult to control. Corrupt leaders turned a blind eye while making private fortunes from drugs and people trafficking. In these circumstances how could ordinary people earn an honest living? Banja Luka suffered international neglect because of the stranglehold of nationalism, which made most Bosnian Serbs resistant to change of hearts or mind. Bihac's isolated position in the North West of the country, closer to Banja Luka than to Sarajevo, meant that this place too tended to be ignored. The tourist friendly sea coastline of prospering Croatia lay only miles away, and affluent Western Europe was tantalisingly close, so the young people of Bihac, Denis's contemporaries, spent days and nights planning how to get out of their country. Yet Bihac stood in one of the most beautiful regions of Bosnia: the possibilities for tourism and agriculture were apparent to any visitor.

We needed to understand Denis's problems with establishing the project. He vaguely outlined several proposals. These included a plastics factory supplying folders for stationary to the local government and a package firm supplying local produce to the catering trade, as well as bee-keeping and other traditional agriculture. These seemed sensible proposals, developing the idea of self-sufficiency. Since the end of the war, the region had imported all these goods and other necessities, including dairy products, from abroad, at an expense which could be better spent producing them at home.

The point of our meeting with Islamic Relief Aid in Sarajevo, and our discussions with Agaz Ahmed, the bright young man from England, was to secure support and funding for the Business Forum in Bihac. Islamic Relief Aid required detailed documentation and guarantees for security, regarding repayment of loans, and, even more importantly, a trustworthy capable representative to distribute, control and administer the money. Though Denis should have ideally fitted the post, he needed to improve his presentation and reporting, be more detailed and practical. His vagueness and dilatory manner did not reassure Islamic Relief Aid, but Agaz Ahmed had confidence in us, especially Ros Tennyson and her experience with the Prince Charles' Business Leaders Forum, so was prepared to give Denis benefit of the doubt. The name itself gave people confidence. To prepare Denis, we decided that I should visit Bihac on my own, and face to face, sort out his failings and build his self-confidence.

The nightmare that followed turned into the second serious mistake that threatened our work and reputation in Bosnia. The first had been Lazar, whose interventions almost destroyed our projects before they started. The visit to Bihac re-enforced awareness of the incalculable extent of the trauma that crippled Bosnia. Painfully, I came to realize the counter-productivity, and absurdity, of laying a heavy weight of expectations on the shoulders of people trying to find their feet and recover from war. This episode represents a significant failure on my part. For this reason the story needs to be told: it serves as a warning to myself, and to others, who wish to work in this field. Governments and international organizations focus on immediate concrete outcomes, tangible returns for money spent, and are impatient with slower processes of healing, in which results take time and cannot be guaranteed.

Countries and peoples possess a variety of inherited behaviour patterns, due to social conditioning, politics, and geography etc. Bosnians take their time, place emphasis on knowing people, observing strangers, then make judgements and decisions only when they are ready. This meant that we had to conform to their more flexible timetables. No meeting could be arranged in advance. They made their priorities on the day itself, behaviour which played havoc with our diaries. Foreigners, bringing aid, place a burden on second-class poorer countries, which are sensitive to patronising attitudes. This leads to apathy and a sense of futility. Decisions are weighted with guilt, problems over obstacles, and constant reminders of dependency on others: particularly on foreigners with money, who oppress with an air of superiority and 'doing good'.

Only people with Adnan's driving ambition and self-confidence could break out of this torpor. Adnan constantly expressed contempt for his compatriots, who stagnated in a morass of self-pity and despair. He came from a family of achievers, and naturally followed the example of his father, who, as headmaster, was a leading figure in the community. Adnan had ambitions for his country.

Denis also came from a family of achievers: his father a lawyer and mother a teacher. Denis did not yet know what he wanted for his future, and, in other circumstances, would have spent years at university, and made life-decisions after study. War prevented that. A sensitive young man, the experience of fighting, the fear and violence, traumatised him. He gave the impression of needing to break down and howl, to release all his sorrow and anger, and then hopefully be liberated to carry on with life. No one gave him that healing opportunity. In stead, he suppressed his feelings, applied successfully for jobs which

utilized his language skills, and drifted from one to the other, dreaming of a pleasanter future, in a distant part of the world, as far from Bosnia as possible.

We needed to discover the cause of Denis's reluctance to commit to the work: was it lack of interest, or a blockage, due to issues too painful to deal with?

Denis met me at Zagreb airport. He looked flustered and anxious, fixing me with his coal black eyes. Had we lost faith in him? Did we intend to sack him? Was I going to be the tough boss?

All chances of privacy to talk and reassure him evaporated when, immediately after greeting me at the arrivals gate, Denis introduced me to Sanel, a slight and sickly man, who had taken advantage of the ride to finish some undisclosed business in Croatia. Denis always kept his cards close to his chest, so we never knew his mind or his motivation. He used to disappear in the middle of conversations, even during meals, always needing to see someone else, or complete an unspecified job. He always asked politely to be excused, and there seemed no reason to refuse him, but this time we needed to take all the time necessary for a talk about his work for us.

Sanel sat silently at the back of Denis's smart white saloon car, recently bought on hire purchase. We stopped on the way for a traditional Bosnian meal of lamb roasted on a spit. Both Sanel and Denis smoked incessantly, and talked about their pleasure in taking any opportunity of going to Zagreb with its bars, girls and lively street culture, delights that always escaped my notice on my visits there. The city, attractive but dour like its women, seemed devoid of such activities, apart from brass bands playing Strauss waltzes in the park on Sundays, or displays of folk dancing for tourists in the main square.

In an attempt to move the conversation back to the work in Bihac, I suggested they try and make Bihac swing more. Even melancholy Sanel cheered up at this prospect, and we discussed the idea of a coffee bar that would also be a meeting place for young people, hosting exhibitions, music, poetry and forums. They listened attentively to me and made forced efforts to be agreeable, which made me uneasy: what was their agenda?

My hotel in Bihac overlooked the River Una, flowing placidly through the town centre. Next morning Denis picked me up for the all-important meeting with Agaz Ahmad, who had arranged to drive up from Sarajevo especially, to investigate Bihac, and discuss the possibility of Denis becoming a representative for Islamic Relief Aid. Denis, reserved and suspicious, seemed nervous about the meeting. We sat in a nearby café, and waited for Agaz's phone call, meanwhile discussing Denis's work, what he enjoyed doing most. Apart from composing music on his computer he spent time with friends. Making vain attempts to persuade him to open up to me I lost track of time. Suddenly I realized we hadn't heard from Agaz, and anxiously asked Denis to give him a call. The mobile was dead. Perhaps the battery needed loading, or the Post Office had cut him off because he had not paid his bill. Later, Denis claimed that the Security Forces policing Bosnia were trying to capture Radovan Karadjic, just one in a long series of bungled attempts, and had disconnected all Bosnia's mobile networks. We hurried round to Denis's office and discovered a note from Agaz slipped under the door. It said that he had arrived three hours ago, two hours before the agreed time, because the journey from Sarajevo took less time than expected. He and his driver waited for the next two hours trying to contact Denis and now decided to return to Sarajevo. Denis immediately rang from the main line in the office, begged them to stop at the earliest opportunity, and wait while we caught up

with them. Their mobile phones seemed to be working fine. We drove at speed in a panic up the mountain side to the south of Bihac and along the high plain towards Sarajevo. We found Agaz and his driver sitting in a jeep by the roadside and began to apologize profusely. In a café, further down the road, they listened quietly, but were not impressed by our explanations. Agaz laid his cards on the table and said that he would need some persuading that cooperating with us in Bihac was worth his while. I went into overdrive explaining the importance of our project and eventually Agaz agreed to give us one more chance. He invited Denis to a course in the head office at Sarajevo later the next week. Denis should bring documents about the small businesses in Bihac, and perhaps Islamic Relief Aid would take things further. Then they drove back to Sarajevo.

Realizing the extent of that morning's fiasco, we began to shake with nerves. Apart from our mistake not waiting for Agaz at the office, rather than in a café, Denis should already have completed the documents Agaz had asked him to prepare two weeks earlier in Sarajevo. We should also have provided Agaz with an opportunity of meeting representatives from the Union of Small Businesses in Bihac, so he could return to base with more information about the size and purpose of the businesses we were asking him to finance. Agaz must have reckoned his journey to Bihac to have been a waste of time: bad for Denis, for Bihac and for the reputation of the Soul of Europe. With shock, I realized that Denis had not even bothered to prepare himself, despite his training. To make mistakes with the documents, to need and not ask for help, which we were always ready to give, was one thing – but to do nothing at all, and not to care?

Demoralized, we spent the rest of the day in desultory fashion. Denis took me home, where his father, now retired, bored, melancholy and wandering round the apartment like

a ghost, made us coffee. Denis played me a recent composition on his pc, the music spaced out and interminable. The sleepy sounds, the cold wet weather outside, and indoor fog, intensified our depression and the sense of having failed and lost.

We then picked up Sanel and his girl friend Julia to continue our discussion about an arts-centre coffeehouse in Bihac.

Denis had to remind me I had met Julia two years earlier. She had then been a pretty slim woman, fresh faced, lively and intelligent, planning to move to Canada with Sanel. Both were refused visas, and now reconciled themselves to remaining in Bihac. I did not recognize her. In shock I looked at an anorexic, with sickly complexion and grey skin. She stared back at me through hollow eyes, acknowledging my horror at her present appearance. I had never seen such rapid deterioration in a person, and did not immediately guess the cause. I assumed despair at their situation had sapped all life and hope out of her.

As the conversation meandered on, my sense of horror intensified and deepened as I began to intuit the reasons for Julia's decline and Sanel's lassitude. Talk about running a coffeehouse was in vain when these two wretched young people could scarcely pour their own drink. They were floating in some pipe dream and seemed to be in a waiting room for death. The hours crept by and I tried to encourage and inspire them, cracking jokes, warning them of the pitfalls running a coffeehouse. Suddenly I found myself warning them not to use the place to sell drugs. I could not understand why I mentioned this, because it never occurred to me that drugs were even available in Bihac, but hardly had the words left my mouth when the atmosphere changed. They looked at me steadily, holding their breath. It hit me like a rock, falling in slow motion from a great height, that

these two poor wretches were addicts. A sixth sense kept pushing me into leading conversations, because, without realizing it, I had recognized the symptoms from my years in Central London, where addicts, using St James's Church garden to shoot up, left the soil around plants dangerously littered with syringes. Julia looked like the cinematic cliché of someone in the final stages of heroin addiction. But drugs cost money. How did these people afford them? How could this be happening in Bihac? Denis was also watching me intently, the blackness of his eyes intensifying. I could not countenance the fact that he might be supplying them. He had a new car. He took regular trips to Zagreb. These absurd suspicions needed to be quashed immediately. Surely, Denis could not be that kind of guy? So the conversation carried on, after an awkward hiatus, when all these questions hung in the air, and with bated breath they expected the roof to fall in on them.

I wanted to like them. The reality of their life situation disturbed me to the extent of wanting to give them every benefit of doubt, so I delayed reaching any conclusion.

In contrast to his friends, Denis looked relatively healthy. Suddenly he put his arm round me and, in an exaggerated display of affection, declared, moist-eyed, how happy he was to know me. He talked of taking me on hikes and picnics in the mountains, by the River Una. He joked about avoiding bears and wolves, and described how we would spend long evenings together getting drunk on whisky and rakija. Julia and Sanel now withdrew into their private world and paid no more attention to me. I considered how devastated Denis might be feeling about the state of his friends. Perhaps he looked after them the best way he knew how. I dared not consider my first suspicions. Later, I asked myself the hard question: why did I do nothing to help them?

Realizing the pointlessness of Julia and Sanel running a coffeehouse, I moved the conversation on to experiences they may have wanted to share: war, fear and facing death. Acknowledging that, compared to them, I did not know the first thing about war and its horrors, I told them about my encounter with the threat of violent death on a rail journey from Kiev to Berlin ten years earlier, when a group of modern-day highwaymen stopped and boarded the train near a suburb of Warsaw. They checked the passports being held by the guard and made a beeline for the 'rich Englishman'. I had locked the apartment but they had a master key, calmly opened the door and waited for me to hand over money I did not have. The leader, a well-groomed and sleekly overweight man in smart suit and designer shoes on his strikingly small feet, did not believe me. 'It's simple,' he said patiently: 'your money or your life.' Fortunately they found a slip of paper left by the customs officials. This record of currency in my possession proved that I had only a few notes, having given most of my money to friends in Kiev. I shook with terror and hoped the gang would do whatever they intended as quickly and painlessly as possible, but realizing they were on to nothing, they wasted no more time and left immediately. I also remembered my shame afterwards when they entered the next compartment to threaten a man and his wife, and the woman boldly shouted at them: 'We have no money! Kill us if you want!' and were immediately left in peace.

This story released a flood of similar life or death reminiscences.

Sanel spoke about his time as a captain in the army, a seemingly incongruous position for him to have held, looking as frail and pallid as he did now. He admitted being immune to fear, but watched other soldiers succumb alarmingly. One young man was so terrified, that, in the middle of battle, he lost control, leapt from cover and tried to escape,

grappling with branches on the slope of a hill, stumbling over rocks, sweating, screaming and running all over the place until a bullet eventually hit him. ‘The bullet always finds you if you have to die,’ said Sanel, echoing the fatalist in Lermontov’s *A Hero of our Time*. However, I would have been that terrified man.

Listening to Sanel’s dry telling of a terrible incident, I realized that death comes in different ways. The war killed Sanel’s spirit as surely as bullets killed his soldiers. War damage can never be overestimated. We should be wary of expecting too much from a traumatized people, especially as no one seemed to be helping them heal and recover their lives.

Back in Sarajevo I sent a panicky email to Ros and Donald, sharing my suspicions, and, reporting the fiasco with Islamic Relief Aid, hoping they would restore good relations. Agaz might be having doubts about us. A highly educated young man, a PhD, with wide experience of the world, having worked in South America and Australia, before devoting his life to Bosnia, settling there with wife and children, he had sized us up quickly. For all my apologies, he lost confidence in us. If Islamic Relief Aid shared my suspicions about Denis, it would reflect badly on our work in Bosnia.

Ros reacted firmly. She demanded that Denis attend the course in Sarajevo, that he take the documents required. He had benefited from our support, both materially and with training: now we expected a return for our investment in him. He wrote back in alarm, surprised at her harsh disciplinarian tone. From then on he emailed polite and regular memorandums, reports of his activities with the message: ‘have a nice day’, attached ironically, as much as to say: ‘I’m doing what you ask; it’s what I’m paid to do. Don’t expect more.’ He ignored my own messages, wishing him well, thanking him for the

good times we had. But whatever friendship we had was over. I never found out what happened to Sanel and Julia.

Adnan joined us for our last meal together in Bihac. He had just arrived and wanted to drive me back to Sarajevo immediately. Denis behaved like the master of ceremonies. Adnan glared at Sanel and Julia who, despite eating with voracious appetite, seemed to be fading into the air around them. Adnan could not wait to take me away. We all drank much rakija and whisky. When the waiter presented the bill, I stared befuddled at the unexpectedly massive total, two or three times what would normally be charged. Had we consumed that much? What were the extra items? The bill reflected my experience in Bihac, where nothing was as it seemed, and it felt like I had been treading water, waiting for my feet to touch bottom, and not feeling secure enough to swim.

CONCENTRATION CAMPS OF THE MIND

BOSNIA AND SERBIA MARCH 2002

MAN AND NATURE

The whiteness of snowfields, glistening in the Spring sunshine, contrasted with surrounding dark grey jagged rocks below the plane flying over the Alps to Zagreb. Rivers cut through the deep valleys of Slovenia, down to densely populated foothills, where villages spread in a tight web over meadows and slopes, wrapped round by forests.

Astronauts have described our sapphire planet swathed in cloud veils looking ‘fragile and vulnerable’ when viewed from space.

From several thousand feet up, our world looks calm and ordered. Roads link towns and villages, enveloped by forests, meadows and rivers: a place for settling and making a home, to raise families, and create a secure future for generations to come. At this remove from the earth's surface, it is not possible to see the effects of wars, violence and destruction grubbily scarring the planet's organic wholeness, only the features of centuries, millennia even, of a co-existence between man and nature.

Breughel, the 16th century Netherlands artist, whose career coincided with the Spanish colonization of his country, adopted a wide and deep perspective for many of his major paintings, lifting the eye just that far enough above the ground to expand horizons, without losing the detail of what humans are up to, and allowing nature to provide a context of eternity, in which they can be observed in all their temporary strivings, playing, labouring, fighting, thieving, partying and suffering. An artist's viewpoint provides a clue to understanding the bigger picture. For instance in *Las Maninas*, Velazquez's monumental self-portrait as court painter, he lifts a brush from work in progress, while royal children and dwarfs play next to him. The picture gains in significance when viewers realize they are standing where the King and Queen are posing, glimpsed in a distant mirror. The royal children, the dwarfs, dogs and the artist are looking at us. Yoshiro Ozu, the Japanese film maker, shoots his films from floor level, gazing up at people, so the characters can be observed as it were from a position of humility, non-judgementally, not looked down on. Breughel depicts from above, the eye of God looking. Nature, the earth, and the universe become a frame for the activities of the human species. We inhabit whatever congenial space we can find, determined to

make a home in what can appear to be an inhospitable environment, occasionally despoiling it, but transient. We exist and then die; the skies and landscapes continue.

A wealth of detail draws the viewer into a patient reading of each Breughel painting, in which subversive truths slowly reveal themselves. In *The Road to Calvary*, it takes time to locate Christ, a tiny frail figure falling under the weight of his cross, at the very centre of a carnival, where un-noticing peasants seem to be hurrying to a picnic: ‘bread and circuses’. Breughel satirizes traditional crucifixion paintings, which put rich donors in the foreground as mourners, by depicting aristocrats weeping with exaggerated gestures into velvet sleeves. Visual arts can balance ambiguous meanings and different interpretations in a single image. Having to avoid the lethal attentions of the Spanish Inquisition, Breughel allows the viewer freedom to interpret. However, he feared for his family’s safety, and ordered his wife to destroy a number of the paintings after he died.

Breughel drew on traditional folk myths and allegories to comment on the grim realities of his time. *The Triumph of Death* depicts a contemporary Armageddon. The earth is scorched to barren flatness, over which skeleton armies swarm victoriously. Even the sky is blocked out by smoke and fire, the battle become a claustrophobic prison from which no one can escape, not even royalty. The gambler in the foreground may stake everything on survival, but everybody and everything will perish, if not from firearm, sword and spear or on the many gibbets taking the place of trees in the burnt-out landscape, then from starvation and apocalyptic despair. On the one hand, the painting shows death having the last word, but implies, by its painstaking portrayal of the consequences of war, that these are catastrophes that humanity creates and brings on itself. Not only does everyone die, but the earth is destroyed as well. Goya, a Spanish painter who worked a

couple of centuries after Breughel, took this bleak vision of humanity further in his *Disasters of War*. He etched atrocities, witnessed during the fighting between France and Spain, in which men inflicted tortures on each other. Goya did not flinch from emotions of extreme terror and brutality. A couple of centuries after Goya, Jake and Dino Chapman embellished Goya's etchings with angrily cynical graffiti: Mickey Mouse heads and smileys, updating the shocking originals to our present age, when what had once been exceptional horrors, have become commonplace, even material for entertainment. Their own meticulously detailed installation, *Hell*, is a virtual re-creation of Breughel's *Triumph of Death*, set in the aftermath of the Second World War, placing the cause of the world's destruction not on a medieval concept of death, the familiar scythe-bearing skeleton, but on man himself become death. Look closer: the torturers and killers have skulls for heads.

Breughel explores our capacity for apocalyptic violence and destruction in another painting: *Dulle Griet*. A Netherland version of Mad Meg rampages across the earth, and, loaded with loot, dares to approach the gates of heaven while brandishing a sword, having vanquished the devils of hell. Her defiance expresses a woman's fury at the machismo depredations of war. Her sword is raised in challenge to God. She is no longer mad, but a mouth piece for a humanity which has had enough of oppression and futile struggle. She appears among the archetypal heroines in Caryl Churchill's play *Top Girls*.

The narrow road to Banja Luka crosses a land where soldiers burnt houses, villages and towns, raped nuns, killed, looted, and blew up bridges, churches and mosques, leaving charred and gutted remains. Farmers, like those portrayed in Breughel's paintings, continue to plough the fields, driving horses and carts which now hold up traffic. Their

wives stretch aching backs, hands on hips, sighing, and gazing exhausted up to the sky in a prayer for good harvests and an end to wars. Children play games, chasing each other with sticks and whatever they can find lying around the shells of homes and gardens: kitchen utensils and rags scattered among the weeds.

In *The Return of the Hunters*, Breughel paints a winter landscape in shades of grey and white to chill the skin. He depicts the lives of people intent on domestic tasks, gathering fuel and preparing food. Accompanied by exhausted lean hounds, and, carrying a meagre haul of game, several men in the foreground, wrapped in thick clothing, trudge past us through deep snow, on their way home down the hill. On a distant frozen lake people are skating. At a time of war and political oppression, Breughel observes and records the ways in which men and women toil to survive, and find fleeting pleasure.

Snow paintings can be pretty: the charm of fresh white covering trees, fields, towns and mountains. But snow brings fear too; the threat of a new Ice Age. Liszt, in the last of his *Transcendental Studies* for piano, conjures up a landscape where snow is steadily falling. Constant menacing tremolandos, and a relentless tread of octave chords, lead to shuddering chromatic scales: arctic winds that build in intensity, until, by the final bars, the music takes on a post-apocalyptic grandeur. Our world disappears under the all-consuming blizzard: everything buried, all life come to an end, everyone perished, as after a nuclear holocaust or ecological catastrophe.

LOOKING BACK: A PROGRESS CHECK

Two years earlier, we set out on our first journey, to explore the possibilities for future projects, and to determine where we could be of use. We received the blessing of the Serb

Orthodox Patriarch, the Chief Rabbi, the Catholic Archbishop and the Mufti of Belgrade. Sky News recorded this joint meeting. We were told to focus on Bosnia, and establish projects there. We arrived at Banja Luka, from where some of the worst ethnic cleansing during the Bosnia War had taken place, and we persuaded its three religious leaders to join a selection of political leaders, the mayor and his cabinet, teachers and businessmen to attend a consultation in Coventry, where they could freely discuss the future of their city away from home, without distraction and interruption. When we first arrived at Banja Luka no one knew who we were. Over the next year we became friends with each of the participants, met many times and began to build trust. All of them understood our ultimate objective: to see the destroyed Ferhadija Mosque rebuilt. Had we stood on the streets of Banja Luka and announced this objective before the consultation, we ran the risk of being shot. The war's purpose had been to destroy the Islamic community, and wipe out all trace of its culture and presence for ever. All sixteen mosques were dynamited, and the rubble and foundations removed so not even a memory would remain. Outside the city, in a village a few miles up the River Vrbas, a small mosque lay in ruins, the minaret on the ground. The scene said: 'Don't come back. We don't want you.'

Since the consultation, permission had been granted to rebuild the Ferhadija Mosque. The mufti celebrated Bajram in the Islamic Centre, and the authorities did not stop him preaching to the city over loudhailers about the need for justice and for the rights of his people. No one protested. Orthodox and Catholics accepted the mufti's invitation to attend a reception after the worship. Some Serb politicians and members of the mayor's cabinet came. There were important absentees, including the Orthodox bishop, but it was a start.

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In mediation all sides have to feel equally valued, whatever their crimes or sufferings. This rule requires constant attention, however difficult the issues. I might feel deep disapproval, but it cannot cloud my sympathy and judgement. This is not so difficult: people, whatever they have done, remain human. The back stories, the reasons, the manipulations that led them to commit atrocities, need always to be taken into account, including the weight of obligations laid on the shoulders of each generation by their parents.

I mentioned earlier the young Israeli from the kibbutz Netzer Sereni, who agreed to talk to me in 1964, weeks before the first of two wars won by Israel that gave the country more land and hopefully more security. He belonged to the second generation born in Israel, raised with high expectations by parents who were labouring to make the desert fruitful. We sat on the floor of his little bungalow, a warm perfumed breeze blowing through the room from the orange orchards, and discussed what it meant to be born in this new country, surrounded by enemies, a state established on the negation of the rights and needs of Palestinians who were either driven out or made to accept the new order. I had seen the refugee camps from a distance, a few miles beyond the border with Lebanon: a mass of black tents, and a miasma of dust cloaking people wanted neither by the country that was no longer their home, nor by those to whom they fled for help. For a year I observed the demography of a divided country. The second class citizens, Jews from North Africa and the East, held a position a few rungs above the third class citizens, Palestinians, who were a source of cheap labour. The Israeli was aware of the injustices and political realities, but he belonged to a generation which felt it had no choice or skill

in negotiating them. He would need to find super-human resources of courage and strength of mind to challenge the obligations which branded him, and his generation, as surely as the numbers tattooed on the arms of concentration camp inmates.

It is the same with Bosnians and Serbs, whenever they look at me. It is a gaze, on the one hand defiant and proud, saying: 'We don't need anyone's sympathy, we did what we thought was right, and do not accept any criticism'. On the other hand the gaze demands help to untangle an unwanted inheritance of knotted history, guilt, shame, suffering and responsibilities.

Our work continued after the consultation in Coventry. Joint declarations had not changed the situation. Banja Luka remained demoralized and neglected. We were now seen as champions of Muslims, so we needed to establish stronger links with the Orthodox Serbs and win their confidence.

Surveying the swathes of destroyed villages, heaps of rubble in a landscape of flower-filled meadows, made us despair of re-building a social order that the Serbs denied had ever existed. In fact, for centuries in this relatively ignored region of Europe, a cohesive social fabric of many colours had flourished. Far from being a series of tragic misfortunes and mistakes, the history of Bosnia could be an inspiration to the rest of the world's communities which are trying to co-exist, sharing the planet in equality and justice.

HUNTING PARTIES

Once again, police and security officers were trying to arrest Karadjic in a village near the southern border with Montenegro, a region beyond the control of governments, where

neither Roy Wilson nor Adnan cared to visit. Once again Karadjic managed to escape. Shortly after this, he disappeared under the radar and only turned up several years later, in the guise of a white-bearded New Age guru in Belgrade, much to the astonishment, not only of the international community, but also the Serbs.

It turned out the French were tipping him off during his years of dodging arrest in Bosnia. Though the French made no secret of their support for Karadjic and Bosnian Serb nationalists, it could not be publically acknowledged as policy but only as a sign of solidarity with the Bosnian Serb leader on the run. The eighty strong bodyguards, who protected Karadjic, presented a challenge to the security forces, though, ironically, the international community indirectly provided money for his protection. Funds, given to the government of the Republika Srpska for building democracy, were siphoned off to pay the bodyguards. As with the search for Bin Laden, it seemed that a lack of will prevented the capture of these war leaders. This prevarication hampered the work of the Hague Tribunal which needed the presence of Karadjic to complete the case against Milosevic. These two former allies fell out when the war ended, and each would implicate the other in crimes for which they were both indicted. They had become pawns in a wider political game: to do with Serbia's entry into the European Union. Given enough incentive, the Serbian government might surrender them to the Hague Tribunal.

The lurking presence of Karadjic in Bosnia prevented progress on all fronts. Just the thought of his survival nourished nationalism, and infuriated victims who sought justice and closure. The ability to move freely, as an outlaw in the mountains, with a small army of dedicated followers, enhanced his status. His evasion of the substantial security forces made him a mythic figure for nationalists. The delay in arresting him turned a political

gamble into a costly mistake: his freedom highlighted the weakness of the international community, vacillating and unable to agree on tactics. From the people's perspective, never a priority for politicians, his arrest and trial would have meant Bosnians, including the Serbs in the Republika Srpska, could finally be able to accept the fact that the nationalists had lost, and enable them to acknowledge the extent of the crimes committed in their name, put the past behind them and start to work for a future, in which all communities lived together without war.

'When I go to Sarajevo, I always stay in the Srpska part of the city,' declared the French ambassador's representative to Banja Luka, in a restaurant for all Bosnian Serbs to hear. 'Bravo!' shouted the diners. Roy Wilson, sitting at a neighbouring table was outraged. 'What are the French up to?' he exclaimed to us later, confused by this now publically acknowledged support for Karadjic. Adnan smiled wryly: there were no decent hotels in the Serb portion of the city. French loyalty to the nationalists had a small bonus: Roy's counterpart now enjoyed free taxi transport around Banja Luka, cab drivers eager to show their gratitude. Such sympathies prolonged the nationalist dream and encouraged the Serbs to believe that their policy of ethnic cleansing was respected and tolerated elsewhere in Europe.

Perhaps the French imagined a future Republika Srpska with a rehabilitated Karadjic as president. His crimes could be forgiven as being political, the slate wiped clean. He would reward their support with influence and trade agreements. But French dismissal of how Bosnian Muslims might react baffled us. The whole Muslim world would rise up against such a betrayal, and embark on an even bloodier war.

The French expressed solidarity with Serbians fighting for what they claimed to be a 'noble' cause, and considered the evidence of mass graves, rape and torture, even the ethnic cleansing, as exaggerated Muslim propaganda. Gallic sensibilities are rarely upset by atrocities, which are considered part of the thrill and glory of war.

The French, in their literature and cinema, have explored the sado-masochistic politics of torture and oppression, even eroticising them. Jean Paul Sartre observed this phenomenon during the Nazi conquest of Paris: columns of hard, fit, masterful and good-looking invaders, goose-stepping through the streets of the capital, and being welcomed by many: the start of Nazi fetish, Nazi porn.

European fascination with the atrocities of war goes back to the *Iliad*, the first European epic, which is also the first record of the ever-recurring conflict between West and East. The fault line between continents, then and now, runs through the Balkans. Middle-Eastern epics, including the *Old Testament*, also tell of wars and atrocities, but written from either an existential point of view, as in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, or, as in the Bible, an eschatological perspective, that presumes a divine purpose.

The Epic of Gilgamesh, one of the earliest writings in world literature, focuses on the meaning of life and death, an awareness of our mortality and the importance of relationships. In the *Iliad*, war is the whole story, proclaimed in its celebrated opening lines. This epic becomes a record of one violent act after another, a celebration of blood and suffering, of grief for fallen soldiers, while glorifying their excesses. Combat in Europe has become as instinctive as feline behaviour. Kittens, within days of birth, know how to prowl, attack and catch prey without being taught. This explains why no

government even questions the rationale or expense of war, unlike with other essential parts of the social fabric. In health, education and the arts, governments are prepared to argue sums. The two World Wars raised the question about whether the world could actually survive modern warfare. Whereas Europe decided, for its own preservation, not to engage in conflict within the continent, weapons continue to be developed and produced for use in other continents, wherever it is decided to fight.

In Lucas Moodyson's film *Together* two boys in a '70s Swedish commune act out a game, in which one pretends to be a torturer applying electric shocks, to force a confession. They then change places and the other gets the chance to be a torturer. In my childhood it was cowboys and Indians, cops and robbers. Is this a game or preparation for real life? It goes back to the *Iliad*: history as a mythology of combat. One hero is killed, the other has the glory. Either could win – Achilles or Hector. But Achilles had the Gods' protection. Because fate decides, the manner of the conflict counts for more: honour, nobility and passion. This is European heritage, and it starts with the *Iliad*, and defined for the next three thousand years what it means to be a man: his worth tested and proved in battle. This is not a universal heritage. For instance, Aborigines, a far older culture, have different priorities and focus on their relationship with nature, reading the landscape for survival, not engaging in organized mutual combat.

The European tradition is so deeply ingrained that it has defined our relations with the rest of the world through centuries of aggressive colonization and being 'top dog'. Leaders from Alexander the Great to Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and George W Bush, have considered being commanders-in-chief as the highest honour. Alexander led from the front, putting his life on the line alongside his soldiers. Now war leaders make

decisions, and direct operations, from a comfortable position of safety. They are proud not to even have nightmares about the suffering of their own troops, let alone that of the enemy. Present day leaders do not have regrets, not even about ‘collateral damage’, a deliberately diminishing way of describing civilian deaths..

For all the glory and honour won by Alexander the Great, the Spartans at Thermopylae and the Athenians resisting the Persians at Marathon, these warriors had no illusion about war being anything but a brutish business. Even the mythologizing *Iliad* depicts battles as angry, pitiless and messy affairs. There is a sense of tragedy and waste which tempers the glory. Thucydides’ account of the Peloponnesian wars, between the rival Greek city states Athens and Sparta, is the first factual description of war. Both sides are given their due. The historian respects two different cultures, each determined to get the upper hand. Few historians are as even-handed as Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian Wars* is a sober account of tactics, which inspired generations of generals and leaders who were prepared to fight from the front. When everyone involved has to wield the sword, only the truth of war can be spoken. Once the leaders remove themselves from the front line, fantasy and sentimentality take over.

The brutishness of war is constantly visible in our media. In the case of the Vietnam War, the shock of daily reports of carnage and terror brought an outraged American public on to the streets, to protest, and force their leaders to end the conflict. At the same time, we have grown immune to war’s messy reality: it has become live entertainment. The ‘shock and awe’ that began the invasion of Iraq became an impressive firework display. We did not see the mangled bodies of victims. The American government put an embargo on filming the return of dead soldiers, for fear of rousing protest, as happened

during the Vietnam War. The deaths of soldiers in Afghanistan cause no similar outrage, despite the regular procession of grief and respect accompanying the coffins. What makes the lack of outrage more surprising is that no one understands the justification for their deaths. 'They did a job they loved,' their families say. The soldiers believe they are helping the people of Afghanistan, and preventing terrorism on our streets; but, despite the constant repetition of these mantras by our leaders, no one understands how, and politicians cannot explain.

A sense of perpetually reliving the past, a *déjà vu*, hangs over these doleful processions, respectfully marking the death of fit young men. Meanwhile there is confusion about why they were fighting and being killed. The families find some comfort in recalling how their sons claimed to enjoy shooting at enemies and defusing bombs, all in a far off land none of the parents would ever want to visit. Soldiers certainly appreciate the camaraderie: the intensity of male bonding in danger. That has always been the nature and attraction of war, from the *Iliad* to the present day: the nobility of combat and being in uncontrolled violence together. The enemy is dangerous; our men are heroes.

Soldiers are mythologized, even when there is evidence of mistreatment of prisoners, and our heroes are accused of inflicting torture, atrocities and murder. There has always been rape and pillage: 'stuff happens' in the aftermath of battle. Now it is hooding, terrorizing with shouting and dogs, sexual humiliation, beating, sometimes to death. This is what it means to be a soldier at war: the testosterone fuelled punishments and humiliation. During ancient battles, victors sodomized the losers, in a gesture of contempt, before killing them. War removes inhibition and operates outside the law. This has always been part of its allure.

Some cultures ritualize, and so blunt, the extremity of violence. In a famous picture of two naked Nubian men, one riding the shoulders of another, the humiliation of defeat is contained in a gesture where the loser has to carry the man who vanquished him; but the image is also one of intimacy and respect. Next time round, the victor might be the one doing the carrying. The present world powers have no mechanisms for such containment of violence, except in the field of sport. War is a theatre where anything is allowed to happen. There is no limit to what men at war will do to each other. When prisoners of war complained that barbarous treatment, at the hands of their Japanese captors, contravened the rules of the Geneva Convention they were told: 'Get real. This is war.' War might once have been considered a gentleman's game, played by the rules. Now it is accepted that rules do not apply, regardless of the Geneva Convention.

Atrocities contribute to the glamour of war. Concentration camps, torture, rape and killing are more exciting to learn about than people sitting round tables, and painstakingly working out ways of living at peace with each other.

French vocal admiration for the Serbs, including those involved in the ethnic cleansing, perplexed some internationals because it sent a message to Bosnian Muslims that they should not expect sympathy. These ambivalent attitudes to atrocities are part of a culture fascinated by the extremities of human nature, both sublime and barbarous. From the verses of the vagabond poet Francois Villon ('where are the snows of yesteryear?'), through the obsessively detailed descriptions of sexual torture by the Marquis de Sade, to the novels of the convicted thief Jean Genet, French literature regularly shocks readers by upending accepted moral values, and turning murderers and thieves into idols, describing acts of extreme abuse and violence as moments of sacred beauty. The atrocities of the

Bosnian War would not have upset Gallic sensibilities. The French could correctly point to equally appalling atrocities committed by all European nations at some stage in their history, including the carnage of the French Revolution, the Civil War in England and the Thirty Years War that laid waste most of Central Europe in the years after the Reformation. French artists and philosophers are drawn to examining the extremes of human nature. Simplistic moral judgements apart, killing and torture are considered as individual or communal, but not political, acts. People must take responsibility for them. However, idealism remains separate from its consequences. For this reason, Serbs appreciate the French for supporting their politics and side-stepping war atrocities.

At the same time, moral indignation is central to the Gallic way of thinking. Even at their most existential, the French express outrage at the extent of human cruelty and injustice, especially after a cool appraisal of all the facts, however appalling. This explains why the most eloquent examinations of the Holocaust have come from France. Claude Lanzmann's epic documentary *Shoah* found that the best way to deal with the subject of Auschwitz was through the perspective of survivors: perpetrators as well as victims, talking about their experiences. The film deliberately avoids using archive footage; it compels us to look at faces and listen. Marcel Ophul's *The Sorrow and the Pity*, made in 1969, began the process of examining France's wartime collaboration with the Nazis. Fifteen years earlier, and just ten years after the event, Alain Resnais, another French film director, made *Night and Fog*, the first film to examine the facts about concentration camps.

Other countries took their time. In the immediate post-Second World War years, the English film industry celebrated victorious battles and plucky fighters, personified by

dependable John Mills, alongside other square-jawed and stiff-upper-lipped types. The films emphasise courage and resilience, rather than the messy brutality of war, and, with a few exceptions, its damaging effect on the minds and emotions of those fighting it. America did the same. Granite-like John Wayne faces down the worst situations with contempt, while winning the war in the Pacific. Meanwhile, Hollywood gave the green light to a generation of artists and directors, refugees from Europe, Jews as well as others who refused to work for their fascist home countries. They made a significant contribution to what became known as Film Noir. This genre explored moral dilemmas, in which trust between people, and traditional certainties like family life, and relationships within the community, had broken down. These films spoke for a generation of soldiers returning to civilian life and being forced to confront a new phenomenon: empowered women, who had not only learned to live independently, forge careers and make decisions while the men were fighting, but enjoyed this freedom, and did not intend surrendering it. These films hinted at the men's traumatic experiences of war, and its atrocities. The issues could only be dealt with indirectly, focussing on psychological and emotional damage, strained relations with families, and adjustment to civilian life, rather than the facts which led to it. The war became an unspoken trauma even for the victors.

Shame of defeat meant that, for years, German films avoided reference to the war. They reverted to sentimental escapism until a generation of artists and directors born after the war ended, angry and disillusioned at the failure of their country to consider its recent past, opened up a Pandora's Box of guilt and recrimination. Their films prepared the ground for the epic *Heimat*, by focussing on the moral malaise, social and political, in Germany during the post-war decades. *Heimat* examines in depth the creeping influence

of fascism and, without making judgements, comments on a war that was a tragedy for Germany, as well as the world.

Stalin made sure that Russian films remained communist propaganda. After his death, a thaw in cultural attitudes meant that a few directors, like Tarkovsky and Klimov, could recall the horrors of the Great Patriotic War without censorship: in *Ivan's Childhood*, *Mirror*, and *Come and See*. They offered apocalyptic reflections on a war which killed millions, and allowed audiences freedom to acknowledge the extent of past grief and trauma, that had been repressed but never forgotten. Tarkovsky told me about the sacks of mail he received from grateful men and women, after they had watched *Mirror*, his autobiographical film, explaining how they had never been allowed to think about their sufferings and sacrifices, and could now look back, and mourn.

French cinema may have been the first to examine the horror of the Holocaust, but it took a generation before France could begin to deal with the divisive issues of collaboration with the Nazis. Resistance heroes caused ambivalent reactions, on the one hand France had to acknowledge their bravery; on the other they reminded the rest of the country of its accommodation with fascism. In the mid 1970's I witnessed a procession of Resistance fighters entering Chartres Cathedral. They were gathering in memory of Jean Moulin, their leader who had been caught, tortured and killed by the German occupiers towards the end of the war. He never lived to witness victory. Few paid attention to this small group of middle-aged men and women, severe, lean and fit, wearing uniforms, and unfurling flags in the almost empty cathedral. People, passing by, even turned away, feeling guilty, and resentful at being reminded. These grim marchers were ghosts from the past. The perils they endured day and night throughout the occupation, the violence

and stress, were etched in the sharpness of their features and eyes. A close-knit family group, they seemed contemptuous of everyone else, and accustomed to being feared and hated. Marcel Ophul's 1969 documentary film about them, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, caused controversy, but the facts could not be denied. Louis Malle's 1974 film *Lucien Lacombe* caused an even greater furore. The French general public resented this respected director's raking over the past in his take on the same subject. The French might shrug off a documentary as some old men reminiscing, but Malle's story of a young man's seduction into fascism, and the anti-Semitic municipal authorities' enthusiastic adoption of the occupiers' ideology were hard to ignore and deny. In one scene, the mayor's wife is shown watching, with indecent delight, the torture of a captured resistance fighter. Malle tells the story from every perspective, including that of the proud Jewish tailor, a refugee from Paris, who opportunistically encourages the young fascist's love for his attractive daughter, knowing it could save her life.

After the war, Resistance fighters and the collaborators they once fought, who had tortured them and killed their colleagues, were expected to continue living together, side by side, as though what had happened could be put in the past and forgotten. The persecuted Resistance fighters are now regarded as heroes, and those who had collaborated keep silent about what they did. The film star Arletty found a way of excusing fraternization with Germans by declaring that, although her body might belong to everyone, her soul was impregnable and her heart belonged to France. In *Les Enfants de Paradis* she is Garance, who is kept by a rich man. This can be interpreted as an allegory of France's relationship with Germany during the occupation: she lives in a gilded cage, wears expensive jewellery, and yearns for her true love.

The reality of the Resistance was messier, and the truth less convenient than this allegory would have us believe. The issues of justice and retribution were less easy to resolve. Those women who collaborated, mostly for reasons of survival, were publically humiliated, and had their heads shaved. Arletty, being a national treasure, did not have to suffer that indignity. In a chilling moment towards the end of Marcel Ophul's documentary, a statement by a farmer, a former Resistance fighter, resonates down the decades, and we got used to hearing it during our time in Bosnia. The farmer stands on a hillside and talks to the camera, behind which the director asks questions about people who might have betrayed him during the war. 'O yes,' he says. 'We know who they are. We know where they live.'

Alain Resnais' 1955 documentary *Night and Fog* focuses on the question of responsibility, ending with the question: 'who is guilty?' This widens the issue beyond the depraved crimes of guards, the reality of heaps of corpses and crowds of grotesquely gaunt survivors, to the bureaucrats and policy makers who gave the orders from behind desks, far from the action. The film's conclusion, 'who is to blame?' suggests historical, political and social perspectives that implicate all of us. When Germany got to see this disturbing film, over twenty years after the war, it traumatised a generation which had been kept in the dark about what their parents had been party to in the war.

When is the right time to reveal the truth?

The Bosnia War ended in political, social and moral confusion, because neither Serbs, Bosniaks or Croats could claim victory. After the Second World War, the Germans and the Japanese had been forced to accept they had lost, faced punishment and were then

helped to make a fresh start. The Dayton Accord stopped the killing in Bosnia, but war continued in the hearts and minds of the survivors. Since no one admitted defeat, issues of justice and punishment could not be addressed adequately. Whatever our feelings about the people we met, and what crimes they may have committed, our work meant we communicated equally with everybody, including nationalist leaders who, because they had not been punished for war crimes, considered themselves unfairly victimized, and even justified in their ethnic cleansing. They considered the Hague Tribunal to be an invasion of their rights as a nation.

This was a situation without precedent. Our sympathies might be with those who had suffered most, but we had to be friends with everyone. Divisions between good and bad no longer signified. This situation provided a unique opportunity to explore new ways of reconciling, which took into account crimes, guilt and history, the causes of mistrust as well as understanding politicians and the ways they cause mischief. The focus had to be on future stability of all communities living together. The alternative meant revenge politics repeating past patterns in a perpetual cycle of escalating violence.

Before he died of a broken heart, after the destruction of his beloved Ferhadija, the former mufti of Banja Luka mourned the fate of Muslims and the Catholics but pitied the Orthodox Serbs most, because, as he said: ‘they are living in a concentration camp of the mind’. The authorities refused permission for him to be buried on the site, even though all muftis are traditionally laid to rest next to their mosques. This had to do with superstition as much as meanness of spirit: Serbs feared the spirit of the dead mufti. It might haunt them. We came across several vandalized Muslim cemeteries where the solitary gravestone of a past imam stood untouched.

AS THE BISHOP SAID TO THE ACTRESS

It is a rule, as basic as the laws of gravity, that when a new market opens up, and restrictions are lifted, sex sells first. Witness the instantaneous spread of porn on the internet. Immediately the Berlin Wall came down, and people could move freely between Eastern and Western Europe, scantily-dressed prostitutes in every size, shape and hairstyle, from peroxide blonde helmets to long black tresses, gesticulated at drivers, and competed for custom in all weathers along the roads leading to the border.

In Bosnia they congregated in hotel lobbies. The Hotel Bosna, a relic from communist times, had not been refurbished. The walls were painted uniform brown. Rusty pipes and cracked plaster in the bathrooms proved a health hazard when, after a shower, the water, mixed with the last toilet flushing, seeped up through a grating in the floor. The breakfast buffet stifled whatever appetite might remain after the nauseating smell. Disinterested waiters disdainfully poured an unpleasantly flavoured coffee substitute along with ersatz orange juice, the colour of a traffic light, and served limp cold eggs, grey spam, and bread like dry blotting paper. The hotel then charged European rates, as though it were four star: more than double the rate for locals. Take it or leave it was their attitude.

Only the bar area had been given a fresh coat of deep purple paint. Everyone congregated there because of the dimmed lighting, and well-upholstered armchairs. Two prostitutes accosted me the moment they saw me on my own. These beautiful, elegantly-dressed and carefully made-up young women sat at the next table, discussing business for the day with their burly, beetle-browed pimp, who hid his scowl behind Raybans. The

Bosna attracted politicians and businessmen from across the Republika Srpska. They expected sex, and the prostitutes were not shy of being visible and available.

After breakfast, and running the gauntlet of more perfumed girls, we visited Bishop Jefrem. He looked especially delighted, having rescheduled an appointment just to see us. He seemed neither defensive nor nervous: confident of not receiving a scolding. The house looked more cheerful too. A large stiletto letter opener stuck prominently out of a pencil jar on his desk.

Over coffee and brandy, which washed away the rancid taste of Hotel Bosna spam, we once again discussed the proposal for bringing Orthodox students to the UK, to widen their experience after studies. The bishop would make the choice, in other words: ones who were in no danger of losing or being diverted from their faith. Donald invited the bishop to give a lecture on Serbian Orthodox Church history in London. Suddenly feigning modesty, the bishop suggested that others would give a better presentation. 'I'm a simple provincial,' he explained. His fellow bishops later informed us that Bishop Jefrem played this humility card frequently, to get out of unwanted commitments. Donald teased the bishop, saying the bishop liked to be in control. Bishop Jefrem laughed good-naturedly at this impudent suggestion, but his startled look indicated it had hit the mark.

We then discussed the main purpose of our meeting: Bishop Jefrem's invitation to show us round his monasteries, later in the spring. These were situated mostly in remote regions of the diocese, where special jeeps were required to negotiate the rough roads up and down narrow valleys. This journey would teach us more about Serbian Orthodoxy, and bring us closer to understanding the bishop, so strengthening our relationship.

We talked about the celebrated friendship in the first part of the 20th century between the Orthodox Bishop Nikolaj Velimovic and the Anglican Bishop Bell of Chichester. Bishop Jefrem reminded us that Velimovic had been sent to the Dachau concentration camp by the Germans, during the Second World War. After the liberation, the communists refused to let him return home and he died in exile in Chicago. Patriarch Gavrilov had died in the Belsen concentration camp, and his successor Patriarch Vicencia had been poisoned in Belgrade by the communists. The Serbian Orthodox Church and its congregations had suffered not only during the Second World War, but under communism afterwards, one trauma following the other. This history explained Serb attitudes and lay behind the familiar Serb complaint: ‘No one understands us!’ When Bishop Jefrem referred to the war, he did not mean the recent one, but the one before. The crimes committed against Serbs at the Jasenovac concentration camp, were as present to the bishop and his Church as the Battle of Kosovo. This might had been waged hundreds of years ago, but in the minds of nationalist Serbs, the defeat and betrayal happened yesterday.

Talking about Patriarch Pavle, and how this saintly man bore no grudges, but ignoring the fact of his support for the ethnic cleansing during the Bosnia War, the bishop exclaimed: ‘He is a gift from God! He is a miracle. He does the liturgy every morning!’

STARTING FROM SCRATCH, EVERY TIME

We entered the government offices with minimum security check. Perhaps that day no one was bothered, and we could have entered, undeterred.

Svetlana Cenic wanted to focus on a business partnership course at Cambridge University. We were helping her, paying part of the fee. Ros Tennyson had set up this

academic qualification, and Svetlana, wanting to add it to her CV, seized the opportunity of asking Donald numerous questions. Perhaps she was only interested in what the course might do for her career, but we hoped some benefit of Ros's new thinking about cross-sector partnership might rub off on Balkan politics. We were planting a seed, in hope.

Vice-President Dragan Cavic, being unaccustomed to not being the centre of attention, shuffled his feet, and scowled during her protracted conversation with Donald, but, when the meeting started, could not have been more helpful and friendly.

'The mayor hasn't found you an office yet?!' he exclaimed, surprised and turned to Svetlana: 'Remind me to phone him!' *The Godfather* came to mind: Cavic making Davidovic an offer 'he couldn't refuse.' Phone calls from the vice-president still put the wind up people in Banja Luka.

The vice-president then listened to our plans not only for the civic forum, but also for links between priests, Orthodox and Catholic, and parishes in Europe. He held his breath at the mention of the Prince of Wales and Crown Prince Alexander. We would get to know the Crown Prince on several visits to Belgrade where he now lived in the palace residence recently inhabited by President Tito and then President Milosevic. Both princes had pledged support for the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque, as well as an unspecified Orthodox church.

We then elaborated on a vision for Banja Luka that would turn this reviled city into one of the most important and extraordinary places in Europe, an example to the rest of the world, a place where the three once equally strong faiths and communities would flourish

in friendship. Problems could be turned into possibilities: a five year plan which would eventually attract visitors for business and tourism.

Cavic and Svetlana were not used to this kind of talk. International representatives, like the head of the United Nations or the High Representative, would fly in by helicopter, and lecture, threaten, scold and bully them: the kind of behaviour guaranteed to alienate and achieve nothing.

Now they were being offered an alternative: positive ways of thinking about their city and country that built on past traditions and did not exclude people.

Touched, Cavic began to tell us about a radical shift of thinking in nationalist politics. Serbia in the last ten years had aimed to keep all the provinces of Yugoslavia united under Serb rule, but since the outcome of the war, Slovenia, Macedonia and Croatia's independence, the division of Bosnia, the downfall of Milosevic and pressure from the European Union, Serbs now accepted that their sphere of influence had to be restricted to their region, with Belgrade as its capital, and Montenegro its access to the sea. Cavic dismissed any possibility that Montenegro might have other ideas. All ethnically distinct regions of the former Yugoslavia had been determined to have their independence; Montenegro and Kosovo still aimed for theirs. But for the time being, according to Cavic, Serbia and Montenegro were strengthening their political union.

'The name of Yugoslavia will disappear,' Cavic said with a melancholy tone of resignation that nonetheless contained a bitter note, as he acknowledged the final defeat for those Serbs like himself, who had fought for their dominance in a Yugoslavia they planned to turn into a Greater Serbia. 'It is a symbolic end of nine centuries of history,' Cavic went on. 'After six centuries, the state of Yugoslavia was created as a result of the

Second World War: born in war and now disappeared in war. The kingdom became a communist country, then a democratic country and now is no more. But if this contributes to stability in the region, then it is good.’

Cavic spoke slowly, as though regret made him shy of the truth. But this Bosnian Serb nationalist was a pragmatist. He had been entrusted with forming the new policy of his party, which had only recently jettisoned its leader Karadjic; no doubt under pressure from the international community, which refused to negotiate with a party led by someone indicted for war crimes. New-blood Cavic believed the party had to become part of the wider world, and leave its mythic past behind. The consequences of this new order demoralized him. For us, the change of name from Yugoslavia to Serbia seemed superficial. For Cavic it meant that Serbs had relinquished their claim to dominate the region. The war’s objective had been to control the whole of Yugoslavia, which used to cover an area stretching from the Alps to Greece, from the Adriatic to the borders with Romania and Bulgaria. Now Yugoslavia had dwindled to Serbia and Montenegro. Serbs had lost control of Zagreb, Sarajevo and Ljubljana, the Alps to the north, Lake Ohrid to the south, and the affluent tourist region of the Dalmatian Coast to the west. Belgrade had previously been the capital city of a large and varied country; now it felt provincial and less important.

Cavic looked at us mournfully: ‘The day of your coming here is a critical moment in our history.’

After wishing us luck with our visit to the Patriarch in Belgrade, and promising to put pressure on the mayor of Banja Luka to provide us with an office, he embarked on a now familiar speech about how, every day, relations between the ethnic groups were

improving. 'It is encouraging,' he said. 'Everywhere is like this. War was a big historical tragedy. But war has ended. We have had years of peace, and past good relations are being restored. However we must end the poor economy of the region, raise standards of living, no matter what religion you are. Economy, employment, social security... all these are important...'

Donald interrupted this party political broadcast, seizing on the economy to discuss the partnership forum, and the fact that, as 'the first of its kind', it could become the channel for inward investment. 'There has to be progress by the end of the year,' he urged, and outlined what he intended to say to the international ambassadors, he had been invited by Wolfgang Petritsch to address in Sarajevo later that week: a speech to encourage interest and garner support for our project. 'They must support the partnership forum quickly, and make a difference to the region.'

'The problem is Serb nationalism,' Donald went on, touching on a crucial issue: one that needed airing before our visit to Serbia. 'The international community is always too ready to condemn,' Donald told Cavic, reassuringly. 'But my task is to understand the issue.' He quoted Serbia's then president, Kostunica, who, despite ousting Milosevic, shared his predecessor's fiercely nationalist attitudes. 'If I can understand the reasons for Serb nationalism better,' Donald continued, 'the Soul of Europe's work will be enriched in Banja Luka. I'm on a big learning curve.'

Without blinking an eyelid Cavic responded as though he had been waiting for this opportunity to enter a discussion on an issue close to his heart. 'The phenomenon of Serb nationalism is not much different from other nationalisms. It can be positive and negative. When negative it becomes chauvinism. Events in the war have worried the

international community. Then, Yugoslavia was one country, but only Serbia, of all parts of the region, remained a truly multi-ethnic society.’

We kept diplomatic silence, and did not challenge this view by saying that Bosnia, the country he had worked so hard to divide, had actually been the most multi-ethnic society in the whole of Europe; and that his assertion about Serbia contradicted our own experience in a country where we had difficulty meeting any Serb Muslims at all.

Cavic went on to state that Belgrade remained a glowing example of a multi-ethnic city. We thought about the small group of Muslim worshippers we had recently met there, gathering fearfully in the damaged city mosque. ‘Nationalism is attached in its worst forms to Serbs, because of what happened in Croatia and Bosnia,’ Cavic conceded. ‘As a result of Serb expansionism, over eight hundred thousand Serbs now live as refugees; and this fact feeds the chauvinism which caused it. There are Serbs from Croatia, Kosovo and Bosnia living as refugees in Serbia.’ We remembered the crowds of these refugees outside the Patriarchate on our first visit to Belgrade, and the camps outside the city, but we made no comment about the way these Serbs now saw themselves as victims, who rejected any notion that they might ever have been aggressors who had the tables turned on them.

Cavic continued: ‘Months ago, the Serb parliament made a decision about the protection of minorities, even though there had been good policies before. For instance, in Serbia, Laic, the president of the SDA, Serb Democratic Alliance, characterized the law as being of the highest standards only when it protected minorities. There was open discussion about the identity of a divided Yugoslavia: whether Yugoslavia had been a Serb construct, an identity which creates the impression of a Greater Serbia. But Serbia

already had a constituency before the creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In my opinion the project that was Yugoslavia has collapsed. I am sorry that happened. The former Yugoslavia could have been rearranged in a different way, when it comes to the issue of the relations between republics. In future, the new construct will re-integrate. It will no longer be Yugoslavia, but something different. It will be a matter of time. The idea has always been there.'

Did this constitute a threat about the future, a warning that Serbs would make another violent attempt to reunite the former Republics of Yugoslavia, each of which now insisted on their total independence as sovereign nations? Or did Cavic recognize reality, and simply hope for some kind of federation? The answer depended on what he meant by the word 'idea'.

'I need to understand the psychological map of nationalism,' said Donald. Realizing he would not get a clearer response from Cavic for the present, he added: 'But that's another time, another subject.'

Cavic smiled and responded: 'Americans call it patriotism.'

Samuel Johnson's dictum came to mind: 'Patriotism is the last resort of the scoundrel.'

We then discussed the invitation to Donald to make a presentation to the National Assembly about our work. We were supposed to meet Dr Kalinic, Speaker of the Assembly and arrange a date, but he had been called away to Sarajevo for a meeting with the High Representative; the subject: reaching a compromise on constitutional rights in the Republika Srpska.

Cavic apologized for the Speaker of the National Assembly's absence. They had discussed Donald's speech. 'He asked what I thought, and I said yes!' Cavic told us with

special emphasis on the affirmative. ‘But we decided, and please don’t take me wrong, that since the next session on constitutional issues will be a tough one, it will be better for you to speak at the session after. The nature of those constitutional changes will in fact help the Soul of Europe.’

The issue of constitutional changes, ever since our meeting with Cavic, turned out to be so thorny, that a date for a meeting of the next National Assembly had yet to be announced.

Years later the situation in Bosnia worsened: each side, including the international community, digging in its heels, and waiting for the time when pressure would cease, and the Serbs could be free to do what they wanted. The issue, then as now, centred on autonomy for the Serb nationalists in the Republika Srpska.

They had fought a war to take control of the whole of Bosnia, but been forced to accept what amounted to only half the country, and were determined to consolidate autonomy there. The ultimate aim was secession, independence or unity with Serbia.

Now the international community put constant pressure on Bosnian Serbs to accept the rights of other parties and minorities.

Donald’s speech needed to address these issues, and help the nationalists see that a change of attitude was in their interest, politically. Never underestimate the determination of Bosnian Serbs to hang on to their dream. Having neither won nor lost the war, these Serbs considered their policy of ethnic cleansing to be vindicated, and had no intention of giving up the Republika Srpska, where they would now remain in the majority, even if other ethnic groups could not be persuaded to leave.

ARON'S MAP

Not only Serbs dreamed of a united Yugoslavia. With the exception of a minority of ardent nationalists in each former province, most young people we encountered from Croatia and Bosnia, including Adnan, felt nostalgia for the days when they belonged to a united homogeneous country, with a variety of cultures, landscapes and peoples. They had then enjoyed freedom to travel and settle anywhere in a land that ranged from the high Alps in Slovenia, along the Dalmatian Coast to the sun-baked beaches of Montenegro, and the lakes of Macedonia: a region of deep rivers, mountain ranges, plains, coasts and cities, each with its own character and unique history.

The spiritual trauma of Yugoslavia's destruction preoccupied Aron, a student journalist in Croatia. His Serb Jewish mother had separated from his Croat Jewish father, who lived in Zagreb, and moved to Novi Sad in Serbia. Aron described himself as the eternal Wandering Jew, neither Serb nor Croat, nor any specific ethnicity. He held out little hope for the region ever recovering its former tolerance and blended spirit.

On our third meeting, with tears in his eyes, he presented me with a tattered old map, held together with strips of tape, and blotched with coffee stains. It had been published for tourists attending the Sarajevo Winter Olympics in 1984. Aron wept for a country, where he once could have roamed freely everywhere, from the Austrian Alps across Hungarian plains, by mighty rivers like the Danube, along the borders with Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Greece, visiting Ottoman mosques and jewel-like monasteries. On the way he could swim in the Adriatic, meet different ethnicities, learn new dialects, and taste all kinds of cuisines.

The aftermath of war left mutual recrimination, hatred, mistrust, and travel restrictions between the former provinces. The Slovenian embassy refused Adnan a visa, because he was Bosnian. Serbs and Croats still considered themselves to be enemies and were not welcome in each other's countries. Muslims felt threatened in the Republika Srpska and Serbs claimed to be in peril in the Bosnian Federation. Aron and Adnan took every opportunity to travel across the new borders, intent on reclaiming their homeland, and felt sorrow, fury and bitterness at what the previous generation had destroyed. A country with a wider variety of peoples, cultures and landscapes than any other in Europe had been allowed to implode, and what used to be home to a lively internationally famous intellectual and artistic community, ended up a patchwork of impoverished regions, each shell-shocked and weak, clinging to its own separate and parochial interests. These regions searched in vain for inspiration, because the brightest minds and creative talents had either been snuffed out, or fled to other countries in the world.

The road signs in Wales, written in Welsh and English, reminded Lazar, our first interpreter and a Montenegrin from Belgrade, of similar dual language signs in the Republika Srpska. We reminded him of our bloody past, over several centuries ago, and the subsequent long, hard and bloody path to unity and co-existence. Relations could often be strained, but at least former enemies were able to live as neighbours.

Lazar, the spiritual searcher, wondered why Serbia could not learn from the United Kingdom. Adnan the business man and fixer admired Tito for holding the fractious federation of different regions, each with its own history and character, together in a united country. Aron the writer just wanted to be able to go everywhere, unimpeded by border checks and visa restrictions, to see and experience everything.

Zeljka Jovic, a young international artist, pitched tent in any country that invited her to exhibit, be it Germany, Canada, the States, England or Scandinavia. As I wrote earlier, she came originally from Banja Luka. Petite and focused entirely on being an artist, she had showed me her installation at a London exhibition, and talked about her homeland as though it were a distant place, where she never thought to settle again, although she might return to visit friends. It was a land she barely thought about, apart from a few rapidly receding memories, which inspired her work: complex installations, involving sculptures, music and film. She stood in front of her latest creation: a water-wheel made of wood and strips of paper, a structure both sturdy and fragile. As the wheel revolved, images were projected on to the strips of paper, showing a woman doing gymnastics in a perpetual loop.

My parents had also once been young refugees, forced to settle in a foreign land. Apart from a brief period after the Second World War ended, when they thought about returning to Germany, with the naïve ideal of helping with the ‘spiritual regeneration’ of their former ‘Heimat’, they never subsequently considered going back to live there. They stopped speaking German and assimilated into English culture, learning to write fluently in their adopted language.

Zeljka Jovic’s water wheel was a uniquely ubiquitous artefact in Bosnia, a country of rivers and streams rushing down mountainsides, where the water has, for centuries, been used to help mill flour, rotate spits and provide energy. This specifically foreign element in her international career may have been inspired by a memory of her homeland, but the installation did not depend on this knowledge to make an impression. It transcended the local. As the wheel revolved, I became mesmerised by the structure’s beauty and the

constantly gyrating young woman. As with all successful works of conceptual art, the installation inspired trains of thought, and, only then, did awareness of the significance of Bosnian water wheels add depth to her creation: notions of repetition, perpetual cycles of life, of history, and of survival. The fragility of the rustling paper became a reminder of how easy it is to tear and destroy.

Other refugees I met, though settling permanently in their adopted countries, developed an intense relationship with the culture of the land they were forced to leave. Refugees from Nazi Europe created havens of a traditional Jewish culture, especially in cuisine. My parents resisted such nostalgia and preferred to adapt. In Lancashire they gamely tried black puddings and even tripe. But when visiting other refugee friends, with a more sentimental attachment to their past, we were served chicken soup and dumplings, Kugelhupf, a German ring cake, and Kipferl, Austrian crescent-shaped walnut biscuits. English was spoken with heavy German accents.

Mirza looked forward to taking me back to the Banja Luka he once knew, to secret places where, as a small boy, he spent hours bathing and fishing in the River Vrbas. Though living in London, and attracted to pretty English girls, he chose to marry a Bosnian beauty queen, and became a practitioner of Sevdah. This uniquely Bosnian tradition of melancholy love songs blended Eastern European and Middle Eastern musical styles: Turkish melodies floating above Slav rhythms. Mirza formed a choir with other Bosnian refugees. Dressed in a baggy sleeved white shirt, embroidered waistcoat and fez he conducted and accompanied them on accordion, or a plucked guitar-like instrument. In Bosnia it is now rare to come across Sevdah. Turbo-folk, a mix of popular song and electronic beat, dominates the air waves and concerts, as performed by pouting

women, posturing in tight dresses, wiggling hips, undulating and snaking their arms. Old style gypsy and folk music exists as a form of cultural heritage, performed on feast days in town squares or restaurants, where small groups, made up of violin, accordion, bass and guitar, play for parties and weddings. The musicians move up and down the tables and gather around women guests, who listen, blushing, and sometimes join in the singing. The men meanwhile drink and shout loudly at each other above the music. With the destruction of communities and removal of ethnic groups, the classical folk traditions like Sevdah are disappearing. From his flat in Stockwell Park, Mirza preserves Bosnian heritage.

Adnan had little time for folk music. The traditional circle dance, the 'kolo', with its intricate steps, had for centuries been part of community celebrations attended by all ethnic groups. During the war, these dances became associated with Serb nationalism, and are now performed solely in honour of an ethnically cleansed Greater Serbia. In Israel, similar dances I witnessed at evening Kibbutz gatherings seemed innocent pleasures; but the constant repetition of words extolling 'eretz Israel', 'land of Israel', while everyone moved in enclosed circles, tainted similar celebrations with sentiments of exclusivity and patriotic defiance. Palestinians were not invited to join these dances.

Music in itself does not divide or separate. Eurovision Song Contests attract regular criticism of countries, including those that made up the former Yugoslavia, giving each other all their votes. Despite the war and continuing political and ethnic animosities, music still crosses boundaries. During one of our later projects, we brought local people together, to talk about the murder of Muslims and Catholics at the iron-ore mine in Omarska, and prepare a memorial. Serbs needed to acknowledge what happened at

Omarska. When we achieved a few successful steps towards this acknowledgement, the leader of the surviving Muslim community invited the Serb Orthodox mayor, who had been in charge of ethnic cleansing, to a birthday party at a local Muslim restaurant. They used to be school friends. During the war, the mayor authorized the incarceration of the Muslim leader at Omarska, where Serbs would kill him. A documentary about our project filmed that evening's party: Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats joined in singing old songs, joking, laughing loudly, and drinking together. However, music and brandy does not guarantee peace. Similar gatherings had taken place before the war, when Bosnian Serbs and Muslims attended each other's parties: also drinking, smiling and singing together. At one such filmed celebration, the Serbs can be seen clapping their Muslim neighbours on the back, and announcing, with toothy grins: 'We are friends today; tomorrow we have to kill you!' After the music stopped, dawn broke next day to a massacre. Some members of the Muslim family managed to escape, others, including old women and children, who could not flee, were cornered and shot dead. Then the Bosnian Serb neighbours, wearing army fatigues, and brandishing rifles, set fire to the house. Why did the Bosnian Muslims not heed the warnings? Did they simply not believe that their friends could turn on them with murderous violence? Did they not have anywhere else to go? Or were they like rabbits caught in the headlights, frozen with terror, and therefore sitting targets? Perhaps, like my grandparents in Berlin, they could not bring themselves to leave, uprooted from a country they considered home, and hating the idea of settling in a foreign land. Despite the protestations of friends, some of whom even begged to hide them, at risk to their own lives, they preferred to wait for the knock on the door and be taken away by the Gestapo, put on trains along with hundreds of others, then emptied on

to a platform, where more uniformed armed men, surrounded by barking dogs, ordered them to strip, before squeezing them, humiliated, cold and naked, into gas chambers.

Aron's map is a treasure. It stretches out, the corners damaged, the creases torn, and crackles like the flimsy paper on Zeljka Jovic's water wheel. From the jewel-like lake at Bled, in the shadow of the Alps, to Ohrid in southern Macedonia; from the islands and ancient towns of Rijeka, Split and Dubrovnik, on the Adriatic Sea, through multi-minareted Mostar, with its famous Ottoman bridge across the River Neretva, to the mosques and churches of Przren, and the exquisitely painted monasteries of Pec and Decani in Kosovo, to the mountains along the borders with Bulgaria and Romania, from the city of Zagreb, with its monumental Gothic Catholic Cathedral, through Sarajevo and its fountains and great mosques, to Belgrade with its Baroque Orthodox cathedral, and parks overlooking the confluence of the Rivers Danube and Sava, guests to the Winter Olympics would have faced a difficult choice of so many beautiful places to visit. It was a land of national parks with waterfalls, forests, flower-covered meadows, and mountains filled with wild animals: boar, wolves and bears. The Romans called the region Illyria, a name which conjures up an idyllic region, which it always has been. The sculptors of Ancient Greece modelled their Gods on young men and women from the lands to their north, then, as now, famed for their beauty.

Recreating the region, recognizing its different entities, and integrating them into the European Union, were the political priorities after the Bosnia war. This meant repairing infrastructure, and establishing workable democracies in communities still reeling from both the collapse of communism and a savage internecine war. Issues of justice and reconciliation were deferred, preferably to another generation, because the consequences

of dealing with the truth of what happened might destabilise the region again. No wonder the international community tried to keep a lid on still simmering tensions.

Aron's tattered map is a reminder of a deeper trauma hardly talked about, so painful that it has to be consigned to forgotten history. The merciless destruction of a country, its dismemberment, and the effect this had on all who survived, caused an immeasurable grief, felt by those old enough to remember the days before the war, and those still young enough to sense that their future had been snatched from them. This had been Lazar's judgment, cursing Milosevic: 'He destroyed my life.'

Beyond this expression of fury, no one could talk further about this catastrophe that had broken people, places and a culture. The words choked in his throat.

The lengthy meeting with Vice-President Cavic finally dealt with the appointment of a broker. The Coventry Group should be part of the appointing process. A short list of candidates would be invited and the group recommend the best. We would take responsibility for the final choice on their advice. Cavic suggested a lecture on democracy at the High School. We were not clear whether he meant himself. The teachers had told us about the bad behaviour of his children, so we assumed Donald would give the lecture.

We discussed 'enlightened self-interest', on how to persuade people to come on side, the touchstone of our work in Banja Luka. Then came an unexpected broadside from Svetlana, about Mufti Camdzic being disruptive. He had declared boycotting future meetings of the Coventry Group, and would only meet the other religious leaders if we told him to, because he saw no point in such gatherings, when he saw no change in the

situation for Muslims in Banja Luka. After our latest dismal meeting with the frail members of the Islamic community, we sympathised with his reluctance to co-operate, but it seemed no one else had any patience with him. Given the hard-line attitudes of the Bosnian Serb nationalists in charge of the country, a friendlier less-confrontational attitude would achieve nothing for him, and could even earn contempt from those who had tried to destroy his community. Whatever his behaviour, they would never have respect for him. Compromise was not part of the mufti's character; he had been appointed there to be a leader, who would robustly defend the fragile community, and stand up to an administration which preferred a meeker champion, someone it could sideline.

Svetlana shrugged her shoulders impatiently and complained: 'Why do we always have to start right from the beginning every time?'

These words summed up our work: one step forward, two steps back. Pablo Casals, the celebrated cellist used to acknowledge congratulations after his concerts, then to say, with a humble gesture, that he must now prepare for the next performance. 'Is that necessary?' an admirer asked in astonishment, assuming the virtuoso musician did not need to practise. 'We start again, every time, right from the beginning!' responded Pablo Casals. He was describing the act of creation, which is not a matter of perpetual progress, like scientific research, moving from one success to the other up a never ending ladder, but a process of rediscovery, that returns to the basics, and analyses each step as though for the first time. For artists creation has always been about re-inventing the wheel – building the wheel unique to each individual person, making it function so the work expresses something personal to that one person alone, and consequently, with luck, universally.

So it is with the art of peace-building. In Bosnia and with the eventual rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque, each visit and every meeting became an act of recreation.

A HAVEN

We kept being told of other groups doing ‘exactly’ our kind of work in Bosnia, so we chased them up in order to exchange notes, learn from them, and find ways for collaborating. Often the work turned out to be aid-orientated, humanitarian, and, in most cases, the organizations were about to pack up, and relocate to new areas of more recent conflict.

Norway funded the Nansen Dialogue Centre, one of the more established and permanent NGOs. Local staff were trained specifically for creating a forum where painful matters could be discussed freely and openly. The offices were situated in a pleasant house, with garden and garage, not far from Banja Luka centre. In similar cases, we wondered who had owned the house before. Often, formerly Muslim homes, occupied by Serbs after the war, were being sold, or let, to unsuspecting foreign agencies.

Another world from outside the mess of the Balkans had landed, and found a home here: a tidy office, clean, smelling of fresh air blowing through all the rooms, shelves well stacked with books and brochures, walls covered in cheerful posters, carefully tended plants, bright lights and comfortable chairs, sofas around coffee tables, and equipped with state of the art projectors and loudspeakers for film shows and playing music. The staff members were also welcoming, smiling and smart. Dragana Sarengaca, the Bosnian woman from Banja Luka who spoke to us, had travelled to Norway, studied at the

Nansen headquarters, and together with a couple of other young colleagues, had succeeded in persuading the Norwegians to fund and establish the centre in Banja Luka.

The Nansen Dialogue Centres avoid direct confrontation. Dragana expressed guarded interest in cooperating with us on joint seminars. We could use the space. As a rule, the centre organized well-advertised public discussions on cultural identity with mostly young participants on subjects such as ‘Does Bosnia and Herzegovina exist?’ Of all the international NGOs we met, the Nansen Dialogue Centres had the most far-reaching influence, best organization and funding. In future years we attended events they encouraged: funding professionals to help young people create, and perform plays, dealing with matters that concerned them. These inevitably touched on painful topics: ethnicity, corruption, lack of justice and, above all, unemployment, and the woeful lack of opportunities for their generation.

Dragana smiled ironically and kept silent when we asked about the quality of cooperation between other NGOs in Banja Luka. Desperate search for funding created rivalries. Some NGOs existed only for the purpose of extracting money from donors. Such NGOs set themselves up with anodyne names, like Peace in the World, and achieved little. These NGOs occupied rooms with minimum literature, as though waiting for ideas that might attract funding. Some NGOs, also with vague titles, provided a means for former nationalist fighters to exist on income siphoned to them from government and military sources. At the Nansen Dialogue Centre in Banja Luka, pictures and notices covered the walls and a group of bright and energetic young people had established a welcoming centre.

IBRAHIM

The barking of dogs echoed over the hills around Sarajevo, high, low, squeaky and gruff, squealing and booming all through the night, like in Walt Disney's *101 Dalmatians*. Just before sunrise, the pealing of bells mingled with the calls of the muezzin from minarets near and far. The raucous sounds penetrated damp dawn mists.

No sleep yet cools my eyes,

The day is arriving

At my bedroom window.

My disturbed senses seethe

With doubts, heaving to and fro

And creating night spectres.

- Don't fear, don't torment

Yourself further, O my soul!

Be glad! Already here and there

Morning bells have woken.

Early Morning: Eduard Mörike

The sense of a community listening to the same sounds, waking from its sleep, to prepare for the new day's work, imbues bells and sacred chants with a universal comfort. Whatever we may feel about each other, we are together on this earth, and it is our shared home. For atheists, agnostics and pious people alike, the image and sound of a church, temple or mosque, whether in a remote village or a towns and city, signify home, belonging, the visual and aural focus of a community, whether it be a minaret poking

above a hillside along the River Una near Bihac, or a steeple rising over a nest of houses in a Devon valley.

Sarajevo, with sounds of different faiths, and tiers of houses stretching along the hillsides that overlook high-rise flats, office blocks, markets, fountains and quiet courtyards, is a city of graveyards with thousands of white stones, fresh and gleaming. The recent history of this place inspires both hope and doubt. Is it possible to achieve any form of reconciliation in a place where traditions of tolerance and mutual respect could not prevent a siege: months of perpetual bombardment, sniper fire, death, maiming and destruction?

And what can we achieve? Perhaps our efforts make no difference. However utter the devastation, people rebuild and carry on.

My friend Ibrahim, a weather forecaster for radio and television, used to take me on walks around his city. One hot summer's afternoon, climbing up one of the steeply sloping hillside graveyards, he nudged me, and asked with a wink, as I gasped for breath on a particularly steep hill climb: 'Too much for you?' We looked down the busy urban valley over the top of the celebrated library where ten years earlier the ashes of books, burnt by shelling from Serb positions, higher above us, fell on the city like snow. He told me about his childhood growing up in Zenica during the war, and the sickening perpetual fear of attack, of not knowing whether he and his family would be alive the next day. Declaring that Serbs could never be trusted again, he planned to sell the family house in Doboij, close to Croatia, because the town belonged to Serbs now. His large brown eyes gazed over the urban vista, a man growing old before his time. Only a few years earlier,

when we first met, he had not yet finished college, and looked trim, did cartwheels and kick-boxed.

As a matter of pride Ibrahim invited me for coffee and cevapcici, rather than expect me to pay. I was his guest in his country. When he spoke of family and work, how he felt about the country, I heard the voice of the people, telling me, not what he thought I wanted to hear, or what suited him to tell me, but just things as they were. This informed me that however broken the country, Bosnia would survive despite its history and foreign interference. However, lack of justice, and other issues around unresolved conflicts, would fester indefinitely. Each side had to be in readiness for the next war, and prevent itself being crushed. Ibrahim did not complain at being poor, or not being able to emigrate. He intended to stay in Bosnia and make the best of his life.

Some years later, we met in Banja Luka, where he had been invited to attend a conference of weather forecasters. We witnessed a Bosnian Serb nationalist demonstration. Young men ran through the streets after a football match. Serbia had beaten Bosnia. They brandished Serb flags, shouting: 'Death to Turks!' Ibrahim felt no fear; only curiosity and pity for people, who could not accept that Bosnia was their country, not Serbia. The crowd surged towards the site of the Ferhadija Mosque, but the police prevented any entering and desecration of the exposed foundations. This marked a change from our first visits, when the police would have allowed vandalism against Muslims, and even encouraged it. Back then, Ibrahim would not have felt at ease in Banja Luka. Perhaps our work had made a difference. Maybe we were just one of many small activities working towards more tolerance. However, as Ibrahim told me on that hillside graveyard in Sarajevo, some things would never be forgotten. How could people trust

each other again, after a war of such unmitigated terror and barbarism? Foreigners now dictated how the country should be run. Economic necessities compelled former enemies to make grudging gestures of co-operation. But the old nationalisms remained, especially in the upper echelons; former war leaders biding their time till the foreigners eventually left, and the old bloody vendettas could be resumed. So, those unresolved issues of justice continued to fester. Former war criminals evaded arrest, and held positions of authority and influence, protected by their communities. An even worse conflict threatened to disrupt a future generation.

Talking about these issues, Ibrahim's soft eyes looked hard and unforgiving, sorrow giving way to anger; the implication being that when the next war came, the graveyards would be on different hillsides in other towns.

ALLEGIANCES AND AGENDAS: TALKING TO AMBASSADORS

As a token of his respect for what we achieved at Coventry, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, had invited Donald to make a presentation to the ambassadors of those countries that made up the Peace Implementation Council to which the High Representative was accountable in Sarajevo, a rare privilege for a non-politician. On this particular day, 25th March, the ambassadors were intending to discuss changes in the Bosnia constitution: legislation concerning the rights of a multi-ethnic society throughout the country, in the Federation as well as the Republika Srpska. Petritsch knew the ambassadors did not share allegiances. The French and the Russians favoured Serbs. Germans favoured the Croats. Only Saudi Arabia and Malaya favoured the Bosnian Muslims, who, at the outbreak of war, made the shocking discovery that they could only

depend on support from the Islamic community outside Europe: and only grudgingly from their traditional ally, Turkey. With such discord from the international community, Bosnians from every ethnic group stood a better chance of reaching mutual agreement on their own. A quiet diplomat, rather than an autocrat issuing orders, Wolfgang Petritsch wanted to give alternative approaches a chance. He had witnessed the Soul of Europe in action, and this explained why we would shortly be sitting opposite a row of ambassadors, most of whom resented our presence that threatened to upset their agendas, and which interrupted busy schedules.

We waited with Anwar Azimov in an ante-room outside the High Representative's office. Anwar noticed us looking at our watches as the minutes passed, and assured us we had not been forgotten. He filled the time by asking for advice on how to balance the demands of the three faith communities in Bosnia.

These were constantly creating obstacles. In Bihac, for instance, the Muslim-controlled authorities were raising questions about the use of land around a ruined Catholic church, and demanded it be turned over to the Islamic community. We remembered this church from our first visit, and could not forget the despair of the priest, Fra Anto. He had no time for our peace-building talk, because of more urgent requirements: aid for his suffering parish, and homes, jobs and materials. The priest showed us the vandalism. Statues of saints had been knocked off their pedestals, crudely hacked.

Anwar's meetings with the Catholic Bishop Peric of Mostar and the Orthodox Bishop Basil of Bjelajina had, unsurprisingly, come to nothing, both being notorious hard-line nationalists. Even Mike Engelking of the World Conference of Religion and Peace resisted Anwar's proposals. The bishops insisted on building churches on the ruins of

mosques, declaring the sites to have been Christian before the Ottoman invasion, even though the bishops lacked written or material proof. For political reasons, and out of superstitious respect, the Muslim invaders rarely desecrated Christian sites, preferring to build on un-consecrated ground. Where a church had been converted into a mosque, such as the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, and also one in Bihac, religious symbols of Christianity and Islam can still be seen, side by side. The Ottomans, in those early years of conquest, on the whole, tried not to antagonize their new subjects. They were clever enough to appreciate the value of converting the conquered peoples into allies, to help protect the outer limits of a now sprawling empire.

Serbs claimed that even the Ferhadija Mosque had been built on a Christian site. This opened up another can of worms: a number of Orthodox churches and monasteries had originally been Catholic. This partly explained why Bishop Jefrem was building as many new Orthodox churches as he could all over the Republika Srpska, taking advantage of present Serbian Orthodox hegemony.

The World Conference of Religion and Peace tried not to alienate bishops from any side, so Mike Engelking followed a brief that distanced him from controversy: an impossible position to take in the Balkans.

Meanwhile, Anwar tried to enforce the law on the reconstruction of ruined religious buildings, mosques and churches, urging the different communities to apply for urban, reconstruction and municipal permits, directly through the OHR commission, to prevent further desecration of sites. He had given a thirty day ultimatum. Mike Engelking now upset him, by refusing to divulge the agreements reached in the Inter-Religious Council, made up of Dr Cerić, Metropolitan Nikolaj, Cardinal Puljić and Jakob Finić. Finić,

representing the Jewish community, had already shared his despair with us about the other three refusing to co-operate. The secrecy surrounding these meetings did not imply sinister developments. It meant absence of any agreement at all. This frustrated Anwar, who informed Mike Engelking that, if the World Council of Religion and Peace did not co-operate with him, then the organization should not expect support and the confidence of the Office of the High Representative. Mike Engelking shrugged his shoulders. Meanwhile, oppressed minority communities survived as best they could; putting up with harassment and stress, while their leaders met in secret and made, or did not make, decisions.

Anwar Azimov was born to an Uzbek family in a remote province of the Soviet Union where, before the revolution, few would have had any expectations. He had benefited from a comprehensive education and, by hard work, gained rewards and opportunities. Russia insisted on being part of the Peace Implementation Council and the High Representative appointed Anwar Azimov. Now raised to a position of authority in what had been the former Soviet Union, and sent to this post-communist corner of South West Europe as a representative of his Russian employers, he collided with the stone wall of games and grudges that made up Bosnian politics. Coming from a similar post-communist society, he understood the intractable character of nationalist politics being played by former Soviet-style power-mongers, turned crooks and war-lords. This cultivated and warm-hearted man devoted more concern and sympathy to tasks, with vain hopes of completion, than most other diplomats we came across in the Balkans. He sighed philosophically in the manner of a Russian intellectual who knew his Dostoevsky and Chehov, each of whom had analysed and portrayed the vagaries of social discourse.

These clear-eyed chroniclers of the human condition acknowledged the invariably tragic consequences of the failure to communicate. Perhaps Anwar Azimov had digested the lessons of the devastating fall-out from political fanaticism in *The Possessed*, or the perpetual crossing of wires in any number of Chehov plays and short stories. He was however determined to make a difference, and not ineffectually, like the idealist in *My Life*, who disappoints his successful and corrupt father by becoming a common labourer, in an attempt to erase class divisions, and change attitudes. It is on the one hand futile; but the sincerity of the young man at least offers a hopeful alternative to the moral stagnation of prejudiced class-bound provincialism and snobbery. Though it costs him family and wife, the man is not a tragic figure. We sympathise with his sincerity, and are touched by his failures, and also his persistence. Chehov makes no judgment; he lays the life out before us like a map. But we can see how even the smallest gesture can have resonance for anyone who wants to make the world a fairer place. The traditions and beliefs that regulate society need not be cast in iron; people can change and be changed. The new world order that Russian writers of the nineteenth century were intimating, and hoping for, happened explosively in the second decade of the next century. Chehov's short story *Ward No 6* inspired Lenin on his journey to the Finland Station. But for all the hopes of a radical reordering of society, which would eventually produce Anwar Azimov, the old fanaticisms, injustices, cruelties and corruption re-emerged. The idealistic socialism that inspired a worker's revolution sickened under the stress of political paranoia and turned, in the space of a few years, into oppressive totalitarianism. In the Balkans, war exacerbated the problems of a post-communist society, trying to come to grips with a free-market economy. Criminal entrepreneurs, many of them in positions of

authority, took further advantage of the chaos, not only seizing once publicly-owned assets, but also taking control of the country.

A worldly-wise diplomat like Anwar had witnessed these changes first hand after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He therefore recognized the situation in the Balkans, and knew the impossibility of sorting out the mess. He told us about the unhelpful behaviour of the faith leaders.

The latest unpleasantness involved Metropolitan Nikolaj, who had recently declared that he no longer wished to live in Sarajevo. The rebuilding of his residence had been generously funded by the Greek and the Bosnian Federation governments. The Greeks had paid for the reconstruction of the grand façade. Jaques Klein of the United Nations had raised money in America for the repair of icons and renovation in the Orthodox Cathedral. But despite all this generosity, the Metropolitan said he preferred to live in Sokolac near Foca in the Republika Srpska, a centre of Serb nationalism, from which Karadjic had organized the siege and attacks on Sarajevo during the war. Maybe the Metropolitan felt that living in Sarajevo meant surrendering to the enemy, the hated Muslims. Years later, Bishop Artemije of Kosovo made the same complaints about living in a place that used to be Serbia, but now had declared itself a separate country. He resented being dependent on Kosovo Albanian authorities for amenities and any kind of help. He feared that local non-Orthodox workers, repairing his churches, would be deliberately making the buildings unsafe. 'They are making sure the roof falls in when we are at worship,' he declared. So, fear and mutual mistrust poisoned relations between the religious communities for years to come.

We were used to staggering up several grand flights of stairs to his quarters at the top of the Metropolitan's reconstructed residence, and suggested there might be a more practical reason for his wish to move: the elderly bishop could not cope with the exhausting ascent several times a day. 'Let him put in a lift!' exclaimed Anwar with a laugh.

Anwar had a soft spot for Bishop Jefrem of Banja Luka, despite the bishop's openly hard line nationalism. Russian Anwar appreciated Bishop Jefrem's close relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, so did not question the bishop's politics too closely.

Anwar urged us to make contact with the Chief Mufti of Russia and also the Orthodox Bishop of Albania, known to be friendly and liberal in his attitudes.

At this point we were ushered into the room where Wolfgang Petritsch and the assembled ambassadors waited for us. The ambassadors looked exhausted. This group of middle-aged and elderly men, greying at the temples, and all with the disgruntled expression of naughty schoolboys being summoned by the headmaster, did not make us welcome, and their surly demeanour did not encourage us.

The High Representative introduced us almost apologetically, quoting the Soul of Europe's aims. He endorsed these wholeheartedly, but the muted tone of his voice hardly inspired confidence. He did not lift the spirits of these men who at that moment would have preferred to get up, stretch their legs and go home for lunch. Throughout Donald's short speech some of them kept leaving and returning, and the rest sat with glum faces, resenting this intrusion into their day's work. Only the UK ambassador, Ian Cliff, nodded and encouraged us.

The others listened with the corners of their mouths turned down, and ruffled papers with a mixture of boredom and exasperation. Donald further baffled them by explaining

we were not humanitarian aid. He described our methods based on the model of ‘the powerless leader, and added that our work demanded intensive long preparation. What did this have to do with them and their briefs? Apart from the lack of business opportunities or anything that might be of benefit to their home countries, our project sounded vague, with possibly no concrete outcomes. Donald explained the purpose of a partnership forum and its relationship to the Ferhadija Mosque. It should be an international pan-European project, not just a British initiative. The ambassadors were not used to thinking and working collaboratively, each coming from competing countries, whose interests they were paid to protect and further, within the limited time span of their time in Bosnia. The Ferhadija Mosque meant little to them, particularly as these secular politicians had lost patience with religion. The ambassadors reckoned that the politicking religious leaders did not deserve support for the reconstruction of churches and mosques, which had now become gestures of provocation rather than reconciliation. The ambassadors blamed religion for fuelling the bitterness and barbarism of the war. Religious leaders encouraged divisive nationalism, and could scarcely be considered part of the solution or any process of peace.

It felt as though everyone’s time had been wasted; but the American and Canadian ambassadors responded enthusiastically and offered support. Cliff Barnett from the United States advised us to create a package involving Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim projects, to demonstrate our fairness. However we were rapidly learning that the asymmetry of crimes committed by all sides made such even-handedness almost impossible to achieve. Sam Hanson, the Canadian ambassador, wanted us to include the Jewish community, which was being a helpful, moderating influence in Mostar, particularly regarding the

reconstruction of the famous bridge. He commented sarcastically about the Catholic Bishop Peric of Mostar, advising us to get him to soften his hard-line nationalism, and officially recognize this ‘miracle’ of inter-faith collaboration. So far, the Inter-Religious Council had done nothing to heal the divisions between the religious groups, and went out of its way to be unhelpful. For instance the Orthodox Metropolitan Nikolaj refused to take part in a joint Easter message of peace and cooperation with Catholics and Muslims, saying it would be hypocritical. Politicians were more prepared to be reconciliatory, even in the Republika Srpska; but not the religious leaders, who were keeping suspicions, hostility and hatred between the different communities vigorously alive.

The other ambassadors took no interest in us. Ambassador Ahmet from Turkey, the one who had met us on a previous visit and informed us of Dr Cerić’s relations with the Saudis, reminded us that the Reis had rejected Annex 8 of the Dayton Accord, which stipulated that all destroyed mosques and churches be re-built. The Reis wanted only Saudi mosques and discouraged the reconstruction of Ottoman style mosques, because he had taken sides against Turkey. Ambassador Ahmet looked impatient with us: ‘The religious leaders are exploiting you,’ he said with a cynical curl of the lip. ‘You should be aware of that.’ He then shrugged his shoulders as though washing his hands of us; and only grudgingly offered to meet us again, if we needed his advice.

We were then ushered out of the meeting.

Before leaving for Belgrade we met up with Ian Cliff again.

Looking back, ten years later, this time turned out to be the heyday of our relations with British ambassadors. Bureaucracy, thrift and monitoring from the Foreign Office began

to limit their independence, and restricted involvement in projects. Ambassadors used to be allowed more freedom to encourage local initiatives, which enhanced Britain's profile globally, over and above supporting British business interests. So Graham Hand, before Ian Cliff, could make his own judgments relying on a sharp intellect, quick wit, understanding of the political situation and lively relations with fellow ambassadors. These qualities nourished an instinct for what might work, which meant that he took a calculated risk in supporting our, at the time, seemingly hopeless plan for a conference in Coventry: a gamble that paid off for the Foreign Office.

Ian Cliff inherited us, and turned out to be the last ambassador in Bosnia who trusted our projects. We were not a burden to him; in fact he reckoned that, because we worked at ground level, we might be able to give him and his bosses at the Foreign Office a useful perspective on matters that affected the international community in Bosnia. The manner of the Foreign Office's funding of our work, to create a civic forum gave us so many problems that the project crumbled. This book is partly a cautionary tale to other independent organizations, not to be dependent on governments.

That part of the story has yet to come, but for the time being, having an encouraging ambassador, as well as a friend in Banja Luka, Roy Wilson, encouraged us enough to build solid foundations for both the civic forum and the Ferhadija Mosque. Then lumbering bureaucracy, indifference, ignorance and lack of vision placed a dead hand on everything we did.

Our priority issue at the time gives an example of the changes that were soon to take place. These showed a sharp decline in the quality of thinking and action by representatives of the international community in Bosnia. Our work consisted of a

juggling act: winning and keeping the trust of all three faith communities. Apart from different foreign powers, not so covertly, siding with one or other, Western government representatives officially followed the cue given by the United Nations, that all sides had been equally culpable, in what was declared to be a civil war, and therefore had to be treated even-handedly. The asymmetry of suffering gave the lie to this policy: it encouraged the main perpetrators of war crimes to consider themselves as victims on a par with those they had been killing; and it made those who suffered the most feel sidelined. How could justice be done in this unfair situation? For a while we were able to share these insights with ambassadors and other representatives, who welcomed them. Then the shutters came down; they showed less interest in our discoveries and opinions; put more emphasis on justifying the expenditure of tax-payers' money, and made demands for rapid concrete results. All the while, they doubted our methods and made promised funds difficult to access.

Meanwhile the juggling continued.

Catholic Bishop Komarica had become our staunchest ally. We were establishing a friendship with Orthodox Bishop Jefrem. However, Mufti Camdzic and the Reis Dr Ceric were friendly but suspicious. This might have been because they were not used to support from a non-Muslim organization. They realized the importance of our work, but kept a distance. 'Great work you are doing!' declared Dr Ceric on our last visit, adding: 'What have we done to deserve you?!' all the while holding us at bay with raised palms.

On the one hand he saw it as a matter of justice that Christians rebuild a mosque they had destroyed, and yet the Reis could not absent himself completely from the project. It was his mosque after all. We understood the political reasons for his decision to share

responsibility for the reconstruction with the Soul of Europe. We had agreed to this partnership. However, distancing himself from the project implied lack of support for Muslims, in a part of the country where they were weakest.

‘Some people say the Reis is a poisonous influence,’ Ian Cliff told us, ‘But he is clever and has friends in high places. He is strengthening his hand politically, travels all over the world and is respected as the reasonable voice of Islam on the international stage. He is also allied to Islamic nationalism and supports hardliners. Up until the war broke out the party of Izetbegovic and Ceric was considered normal, not extreme. During the war they initiated enterprises with the excuse of protecting themselves from the “evil” Serbs. This party is now in possession of most of Sarajevo. This has given them an excess of material power, wealth they are not likely to give up without a fight.’

We proposed that the ambassador invite Dr Ceric to supper. The Reis could then suggest names for patrons of the Ferhadija Mosque project and so strengthen our relations with the Islamic community. ‘He has political influence,’ said Ian Cliff. ‘It is in his interest to support the Soul of Europe.’

The success of Coventry gave us confidence in our proposal for another conference, this time in Bosnia. Political and religious leaders would discuss the future of the Ferhadija Mosque, emphasising the international significance of its reconstruction. We suggested that SFOR might lend us helicopters, to ferry participants between Banja Luka and Sarajevo, something so surprising, it would make the project headline news. The road journey, crossing the high mountains of central Bosnia, took hours, so the guests would need to overnight in Banja Luka, at considerable expense. Ian Cliff kindly refrained from pouring scorn on this proposal, and just listened to us politely.

He pointed out that the conference was being planned to take place during Ramadan, so excluding Muslim participants. The event needed more time and care. A wide variety of people were expressing an interest, several from England and Scotland, and we had not begun to approach interested communities in other parts of Europe.

We agreed to postpone this conference to the next year, 2003, and offered to keep open-house in Sarajevo throughout October. Small groups of interested people could visit and learn about the situation. Representatives for the conference would hopefully emerge out of these groups to take responsibility for decisions about the rebuilding of the mosque, and all related issues, and then move them to resolution. The project now needed a director, as soon as possible, so the conference itself could rubber-stamp decisions already made. Once the coordinators were in place in Banja Luka, and the broker and director appointed, our project looked likely to proceed faster and with more substance.

In high spirits, we left Ian Cliff and Sarajevo. Our positive feelings allowed us, momentarily, a delusion: the mosque had already been rebuilt, and Europe was smiling.

RETURN TO BELGRADE

Cherry blossom sprinkled over meadows and hillsides on the road from Tuzla towards the border with Croatia. White star showers sparkled in the still leafless woods, pale amber under a cerulean sky. A month earlier, winter fires had flickered over dry fields shorn of hay and corn, and sent dark clouds billowing over the landscape. Now families were digging in gardens, preparing the ground for vegetable sowing. Elderly women squatted on their broad haunches, clearing stones, crumbling the earth, and mopping their perspiring brows.

In Croatia, the motorway cut through an unpopulated flat land of dark woods and untended fields. It still felt like a war-zone. During the tedious hours driving along the gloomy road, hemmed in by mile on mile of thick forest, Adnan told us that mines lay thickly on either side. Serbs and Croats had fought viciously in this region during the war. To the north lay Vukovar, from which the Serbs retreated early in the war leaving the town in ruins.

During 1991 and 1992 I prepared a series of paintings for exhibition in London. They were inspired by Schubert's song cycle *Winterreise, a Winters Journey*. I worked on them in a quiet Cotswold village, surrounded by hills and valleys, through which flow the rivers Evenlode and Windrush. At the same time, ethnic cleansing raged on the other side of Europe, a region I never imagined to visit, let alone work in. Media images invaded my paintings: broken bridges, burning houses and soldiers: armed young men fleeing, ducking or standing in ravaged landscapes. Violence and destruction tore into my interpretation of Schubert's songs. I was turning the existential crisis of a young man, finding himself alienated from society, into a narrative of many threads, linked by personal memories, desires and dreams. Armed soldiers shoot and burn their way through my towns and landscapes. The road, along which the young man travels, naked and alone, curves and disappears into the distance, trying to connect the various threads, which war constantly breaks. Flowers cascade over each picture, their colours intended to attract the eye and then lead into disturbing narratives, while simultaneously putting balm on areas of pain. The paintings, aspiring to accommodate different perspectives within the framework of Schubert's songs, are meant to be 'read', explaining themselves if the

music and words are followed closely. The mixture of nakedness, violence, blossoms, and complicated structures, baffled and disturbed most people who came to the exhibition. My aunt came to the opening, and wasted no time in telling me how much she hated them. Perhaps the paintings could not bear the weight of substance I placed on them. However, in Germany they received more enthusiastic responses from viewers who sympathised with what I was trying to do. They understood that each painting contained a world, and that complexity and disruption are part of the truth. Some were sold, others disappeared, scattered across the world. They are unlikely ever to be seen as a set again, so my own journey along Schubert's path has also been disrupted.

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As we approached the border with Serbia, the motorway deteriorated, with long stretches of the road in need of repair, seeming to approach the end of the world.

We had hoped to use the scenic route from Sarajevo to Belgrade through Zvornik, but Adnan considered the road too poor for our new car. Besides which, he hesitated driving through fiercely Serb nationalist territory: 'In Zvornik, they don't know the war is over.'

After avoiding some deep pot holes, the border appeared near the village of Lipovac. A small scrawled sign pointed towards Belgrade, its first mention on the motorway.

Customs turned out to be a make-shift cluster of huts, a place belonging to a distant past. The typewriter, being used by one of the guards preparing our entry visa, was a museum piece dating from the First World War. The guard painstakingly clacked away on it, his expression grimly suspicious. We were the only people there, the main crossing point between two major European countries, and it felt as though no one came here, no one expected.

The road, now in better repair, continued through mostly deserted countryside to Belgrade.

The city looked as mouldering as on our first visit, but the European Union had provided bins for the piles of rubbish, which had then lain uncollected in large mounds scattered by the roadside and over patches of waste ground, but was now cleared away. Lazar, our first interpreter and driver, had snorted contemptuously at our concern for the litter: his country faced more serious problems. Gone were also the traffic jams of old cars claiming every inch of parking space. The city looked like a massive rusty shell, no longer the capital of one of the largest countries in Europe. For all its grand buildings and monuments, Belgrade could not disguise the fact it had turned into a provincial town with only a few people roaming deserted streets. The centre seemed to have closed down.

We strolled down the Skadarlia, a cobbled street famous for its restaurants, and appeared to be the only visitors. The time before, numerous smart cars had parked illegally on the cobbles, the gateman being bribed with bottles of vodka, or thick batches of dinar notes. The restaurants were then bursting with crowds of youngsters, business people, and bulky mafia men with their tall slim girlfriends: the din almost drowning out the sound of violins, clarinets, accordions and guitars emanating from every entrance.

This being Saturday night, the place livened up slightly as the evening progressed. We entered one of the famous restaurants and were ushered into an empty dining room. The city might seem neglected and in need of refurbishment, but the eateries of Belgrade were smartly furnished, the tables elegantly laid, with freshly laundered linen, shining glass and polished cutlery, the food meticulously prepared, and served by polite, spruce, and fastidiously groomed waiters.

A band struck up for a small birthday party in a neighbouring room and later serenaded a girl with a folksong: 'Elena, your eyes are dark and my soul is burning!'

Igor Solunac, who had been our translator at Coventry, agreed to help us again. Philip Warner Warner, the Anglican Chaplain in Belgrade, whom Igor befriended at the Anglican community, told us how Igor got up at five every morning to start the long journey into the city centre. He worked and earned for the rest of his family, including a depressed brother who had tried to commit suicide several times, and also for a friend similarly inclined. This explained why Igor would occasionally look distant and melancholy. His situation reminded us of the trauma suffered by Serbia as well as Bosnia during the war. A vociferous bullying minority of nationalists had turned the people into aggressors, but the majority did not want violence, and all of them suffered the consequences, as well as opprobrium from much of the world. Pain weighed heavily on this young man's shoulders. But Igor lacked neither direction nor ambition, and did not allow himself to feel guilt for what his country had done. Nine years later, he would head a team of translators in Southampton, earning a salary far greater than anything he could hope for in Serbia. Igor played the piano and spent hours composing melancholy folk-like melodies, fingers wandering slowly over the keyboard, decorating simple harmonies, while he sang in a high plaintive voice. 'These songs are portraits of my friends,' he explained.

As chaplain in charge of the small community of Anglicans in Belgrade, Philip Warner observed all details of worship with scrupulous care. Robed immaculately, he looked severe; but in his free time, dressed in jeans and leather, he became approachable. A close crop gave his features a child-like innocence, rather than the menace of a skinhead.

Graham Hand, the former ambassador in Sarajevo, had told us that the most important quality required for working in the Balkans was a sense of humour, something he and Philip Warner possessed in abundance. No meeting or event passed without a witty ironic comment. Anglican chaplains in Europe felt isolated and neglected by those who sent them to missions in remote corners of the world. Trying to make themselves at home they depended on the support of congregations, which consisted of a mixture of nationalities, foreign workers, refugees, and lonely souls. Such isolation could take a toll. Philip Warner's English sang-froid, and sharp wit, protected him from the problems seething around him. But even detachment can cause stress. He kept open house, which became a refuge for young people. He would counsel them, and they in turn would look after him, such as repairing his computer. His task was to look after the Anglican community in Belgrade made up of internationals on diplomatic and business postings, such as the wife of the English Ambassador, and young people disillusioned with the Serbian Orthodox Church, which they saw as being corrupt, and implicated in the carnage of war. Some, like Igor, genuinely preferred the more liberal attitudes of the Anglican Church. He had not only converted, but planned to become an Anglican priest at some stage in his life and was eventually ordained in the United States, where a liberal Protestant church had adopted him.

Each day in Belgrade became unpredictable, as we had come to expect. So, for instance, at our first supper in the Skandarlia on the evening of our arrival, it turned out that an Orthodox priest, Father Andrew, who worked on international relations at the Patriarchate, lived above the restaurant. Philip went to fetch him, and was told off for not having given prior notice of our arrival. Father Andrew definitely wanted to meet us.

After a rushed shower he came down, beaming with delight, arms outstretched in welcome. His long black hair fell in dripping strands over a threadbare black cassock under which his body was still warm and damp. Father Andrew followed radical trends. He represented the younger generation of Serbian Orthodoxy, aiming to bring the Church into the 21st century. He knew Bishop Porphyry, whom we had met at the monastery of Kovilje on our first visit to Serbia, two years previously. Father Andrew told us the monastery thrived, and that he would be visiting there for the next few days. A perpetual stream of young people wanted to join the community, and many had to be turned away.

We hesitated to broach the subject of recent history, and the causes of rifts between the different faith communities. But how could we hope to improve relations without all of them facing up to the truth of what happened in the war?

The Nasty Girl, a satirical German film, made in the year people power toppled the Berlin Wall, examines the issue of ‘what we did in the war’: the unpleasant process of forcing a community to acknowledge its role in the worst events of a past, in which many of the people still living took a direct part. *The Nasty Girl* does not have a neat or hopeful ending. Based on the life of a real woman, the main character is a fearless and stubborn researcher who never gives up. After winning a small victory, in outing a Nazi still in position of authority, she realizes that the praise suddenly lavished on her by the other town dignitaries, who had previously tried to silence and even kill her, is a ruse to prevent her unearthing more secrets. Disgusted with her home-town, and feeling pity for the one person who has become a scapegoat for others, those denying their part in the war, she flees with her two children. Her husband and family reject her, and the film

ends with her hiding in a tree, and waiting for the wrath of a guilty community to come and destroy her. The film uses Brechtian distancing techniques, and humour, to expose the truth, in the manner of the most unsparing cartoonists from James Gillray to Steve Bell. Laughter becomes a tool to help us face shocking and even traumatic reality. Satire speaks the truth in the manner of traditional court jesters in the days when autocrats and tyrants, surrounded by frightened sycophants, needed to hear it. It puts those who control society and make decisions on trial. Today, the powerful take advantage of their position, and learn the skill of spin, to avoid blame for their mistakes, and misjudgements, and so be raised above criticism. Satire pricks their ambition, but, without laughter, it fails. When I once congratulated Steve Bell on his striking ability to skewer the powerful and nail issues with a telling image, however grim the subject matter, his question to me was: ‘Did I make you laugh?’

The Nasty Girl touches on issues too painful for humour, and the protagonist’s courage is beyond what most people could ever muster. It took over thirty years after the war for the film to be made, and , in the Balkans, everything painful had happened less than a decade ago.

Individual and community guilt are intertwined, and even years after the event, those that took no part in the crimes still feel defensive.

‘Why didn’t you tell me you were coming?’ exclaimed Father Andrew with a kindly laugh. Well we had not heard of his existence, but agreed to make an appointment on our next visit. At which point he went to prepare for his departure to Kovelje. Later, as we

left the restaurant, a group of eager students, entered to enquire about his whereabouts. 'They'll keep him busy!' commented Philip Warner.

Belgrade disappointed Adnan, surprised by deserted streets and a bleak city centre. After feeling some queasiness at the border, he had looked forward to seeing the capital city, from which his beloved Tito had governed Yugoslavia, when it used to be a single country. Curiosity about the land of his enemy overcame any fear, in contrast to Ibrahim, my weatherman friend in Sarajevo, who told me: 'I will never go to Belgrade. I cannot. They tried to kill us all.' When Adnan, together with two other Muslim friends, also called Adnan, decided to drive to Banja Luka the moment the war ended, this journey across former enemy lines meant reclamation. Working for the Red Cross gave the three Adnans access to transport and a reason for travelling. They were saying: this country is Bosnia, our homeland, it belongs to us as much as to you. His parents were frightened for him, but the boys encountered no danger or hostility. In those post-war days, young people like Adnan felt positive about the future, despite the aftermath of ethnic cleansing. Five years later, going to Banja Luka was still considered dangerous in Sarajevo, and his mother would phone him regularly to check on his safety. Adnan might feel uncomfortable in the presence of so many Serb nationalists, but he would always shake hands firmly, announce his name, and add the Muslim greeting, salaam aleichum. He did not mean to be provocative, but to show these people he was not afraid of them, and also to counteract the continuing insidious influence of nationalism. They respected him for that, even Bishop Basil of Bjelajina, the most fiercely nationalist person we met. The bishop even shook Adnan's hand, and admitted in a low voice that he feared returning to

Sarajevo, city of his birth. 'Come stay me,' Adnan told him. 'Nothing will happen to you there.'

Any optimism he might have felt dissipated twelve years later. Adnan now feels betrayed and disappointed, describing the political situation in Bosnia as a 'transitional Nazi-Communist-Capitalist-Frankenstein' system.

But in 2002 Adnan remained hopeful, had faith in what we were trying to do, especially so soon after the unexpected success of the Coventry Consultation

The moment we deposited our bags in the Belgrade hotel, Adnan dragged me off for a walk. Normally preferring to use the car rather than exercise, on this occasion he wanted to roam around the city on foot. His eyes took in everything: the prices in shop windows, the empty streets, and beggars in the pedestrian precinct. 'What's wrong with this place?' he demanded. 'Where is everyone? This is Saturday; the streets should be crowded, like in Sarajevo.' There did seem to be fewer people, even than on our previous visit. The deserted streets illustrated the political changes in Belgrade since the war. The city had lost the major part of its constituency, and Serbia had to come to terms with being an ever more isolated country, with diminishing influence at the edge of Europe. But that could only be part of the explanation. Bosnia was also an isolated country, Sarajevo a relatively small constituency, yet day and night the city bustled with people, mostly the younger generation.

With each succeeding day in Belgrade, Adnan felt less and less at ease. The conversations with people, still in denial, depressed him to the point where he could scarcely contain himself. We passed a large book shop on one of the high streets, and noticed a display of nationalist literature in the window: framed photographs of Karadjic

and Mladic hanging, like icons, above the books and magazines. In exasperation, Adnan finally begged for an early return early to Sarajevo, leaving us in the capable hands of Igor. The remaining time Adnan wanted to spend sightseeing, enjoying long conversations with me, and attended just the first day's meetings.

Donald spent the nights at the British Embassy residence, where the ambassador had room to accommodate only one of us.

The first evening in Belgrade, having dropped Donald off at the ambassador's, Adnan marched me along the night-streets of Belgrade, passing the Moskva Hotel, where gay men cruised furtively in the shadows. Eventually we found a café, and sat at a table next to one where three tall, pretty and elegantly dressed women were drinking sparkling wine. They appeared to be celebrating a successful day's work, clinking glasses and sharing three large ice cream sundaes. Adnan being the only desirable proposition, they momentarily forgot their business and then turned their inviting looks on me, as the older and therefore potentially wealthier client.

JESUS WEPT

Adnan attended his first Anglican service, despite being bored by religious ceremonies, long prayers, and constant genuflections: weekly traditions that had come to seem empty of significance, half-heartedly celebrated. He would have preferred to be going for a walk, listening to music, or talking in a café, and as a rule avoided coming to lengthy Orthodox services with us, because the notion of standing for several hours, listening to seemingly endless chanting, appalled him. A secular Muslim, he professed only to attend

mosque at Bajram, the equivalent of a Christian Christmas: a necessary, if tiresome, part of the celebration.

Philip Warner celebrated an old-fashioned Anglican liturgy. With a firm hand, and chanting in a well-schooled baritone, he guided the congregation through the various sections of the service, culminating in the Eucharist. No part of the ceremony dragged, so Adnan did not leave his seat for a quick fag, and, as a consequence, heard one of Donald's robust sermons about the purpose of our work. Inspired by his words Adnan vowed in the future to tape Donald every time he preached.

Unusually, young men made up the majority of the congregation, along with families of representatives from various embassies, mostly African. The British Ambassador himself rarely appeared. He had little time for religion, and disapproved of the traditional high-church manner of its celebration: large candles burning, incense wafting, pious gestures, and genuflections.

A spectrally thin gloomy young man accompanied the service from an electric keyboard. Glowering at the sheet music, he cast a shadow even over the cheerful hymns. However a bright-eyed young woman lifted spirits by singing Bach's *Bist Du Bei Mir* with confidence and pure tone, so the beautiful melody floated free from the insipid electronic piping. The woman turned out to be fiercely evangelical, her face shining with the certainty of being saved and chosen by God. The congregation included several Serb nationalists, older men and women, who were keen to remind us afterwards that Izetbegovic, the former president of Bosnia, had wanted to turn the former Yugoslavia into an Islamic state: an alternative reading of history that contradicted stated Serb ambitions to create a Greater Serbia. These people could not be argued with, so

thoroughly had they convinced themselves of their victim status. The numerous young men were more sympathetic to our work of reconciliation. They gathered round us protectively, once the nationalists had left. The Anglican community provided them with a haven where they could share fears and hopes, and take a break from the chaos and insanity of their daily lives.

Donald did not need to raise his voice several tones and shout, as happened in Finland at a similar Anglican gathering, where the worshipers smiled patronisingly, but took no interest. The congregation in Belgrade listened raptly.

Donald took inspiration from two biblical readings: *Ezekiel* in the *Old Testament*, about the valley of dry bones, and the other from the *New Testament*, in which Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. The readings could not have been more relevant, and reminded me of the impossibility but significance of our task. Donald focused on two words in the Lazarus reading: *Jesus wept*. We were constantly hitting the wall of Balkan machismo, the inability of men to acknowledge the pain, death and cruelty they inflicted on each other. Jesus wept. He mourned the death of a friend and his tears became the prelude to the raising from the dead. Tears come before the act. The saviour of mankind was expressing human emotions. The sermon explained that, without the tears, there can be no resurrection.

When Donald had finished, macho Adnan turned to me, and, for the first time, I saw tears in his eyes.

Donald continued to wear his cassock on the street and the embassy driver, who had also attended the service, asked for his blessing.

THE COMPASS

Adnan took me on another long walk round Belgrade, this time exploring the park around Kalemagdan Fortress, the ruins of ancient barracks that overlook the confluence of the Rivers Danube and Sava. The Serbs first built the fortress in the Middle Ages, but then the Ottomans conquered the region, and fortified what the Serbs had started. The name and ruins recall the Turkish presence in Belgrade. The watch tower, rearing up from the banks of the River Sava, alerted the city to invasion from the North. The enemy would have been seen hours before arriving. Belgrade became the site of fierce battles between the Austro-Hungarians and the Ottomans, with the Serbs caught in between, fighting for one side or the other. Meanwhile, the city expanded on and around the low hills to the south of the two mighty rivers, one flowing from the North West, the other from the North. The other side of the Danube, and the land between it and the Sava remained mainly uninhabited, a wilderness of forest and fields with no buildings. The view from Kalemagdan gives the impression that Belgrade perpetually expected to be invaded, and did not dare populate the vulnerable flat lands beyond the Danube where attacking armies could easily over-run and lay waste.

Near to the fortress watchtower stood a tall column topped by a statue of a voluptuous naked man leaning on his sword. The figure had been raised high so as not to offend female sensibilities, and represented the creation of the country once known as Yugoslavia. The naked man with massively muscular thighs and buttocks, his sword placed with crude symbolism directly below the crotch, now represented Serbia and Montenegro, a rump of what remained of the Greater Serbia.

A hawker in the park was selling trophies from the time of Tito. Locals seemed to consider communism a shameful past, because once-valued medallions and insignia could be picked up for a few pennies. Adnan looked back nostalgically to a time when his family felt protected, and had flourished. Among the trophies on the hawker's stall, he found a coin that Tito had minted, to celebrate an anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade from the Nazis. The chief misfortunes to strike Adnan's family happened after the collapse of communism. He hoped people would one day remember Tito with less ambivalence, and appreciate his positive influence on a multi-ethnic country, despite the many negatives of the communist past.

While we strolled down a main street we came across the book shop devoted to Serb nationalist literature: hagiographies of Milosevic, Karadjic and Mladic prominently displayed, draped with nationalist flags and slogans. Chetnik warriors of the past also had their biographies on show, with photos of bearded resistance fighters: nationalism inevitably confused with the war against fascism. These warlords could be seen as liberating the country, but they were also fighting for the subjugation of other ethnic groups. Adnan sneered at the display. It had the same depressing effect as coming across a bookshop in Germany devoted to Nazi literature, windows packed with photos of Hitler, Goering and Himmler, swathed in swastikas and iron crosses. Street stalls in Banja Luka also sold similar nationalist paraphernalia: the stallholders, former soldiers, looking defiant, but the cheap sleaze of those displays gave an impression of defeat, more an acknowledgement of failure than of hope for the creation of a Greater Orthodox Serbia, cleansed of Catholics and every trace of Islam. But it must have been hard for these warriors to come to terms with its outcome. In post-war Germany a generation of both

young and old continued to celebrate the Nazi's glory years for years after. The comfort of community, a narrow family of like bodies and souls huddling in opposition to the rest of the world, remains seductive.

Among the books, flags and photos displayed in the window of this Belgrade bookshop lay weapons, maps, medals and other mementoes of war. These included a compass, which reminded me of a significant event in my childhood.

My parents used to holiday in the Austrian Alps, travelling there every summer in the post-war years, to climb mountains. One year they met and befriended the Pedersens, a German family with two grown up sons, Jens and Ernst. We gathered for conversation and music-making in the evenings. The father told us of his life as an officer in the war. During the battle with Russians on the Eastern Front, when the Germans were being driven back to Berlin, he witnessed his men on a bridge crossing the Elbe being mown down by Soviet machine guns on the other side. Corpses fell into the river and he could do nothing to stop the massacre. He also remembered shooting people from a distance, human beings reduced to targets. The memory of his helplessness, and also of what he had done as a dutiful soldier, traumatised him, so, for years, he could feel no emotion. Now, for the first time in almost fifteen years, he wept, as my parents listened. They belonged to the same generation. As teenagers my parents had been forced to flee. Meanwhile, he joined the Nazi party, in a mood of romantic longing for nature and a purer way of life: *Tomorrow Belongs to Me*. He was then too young to understand the movement's genocidal ambitions. For him it was about comradely togetherness: the outdoors, a positive outlook on life, and Germany's noble status in the world

He and my parents took long hikes up every mountain in the valley: Jews and Germans together again. After supper and conversation, the sons Jens and Ernst performed duets by Telemann on recorder and violin; then we joined in folk songs. Warm waves of nostalgia swept over everyone, including my parents.

The Pedersen father encouraged twenty-five year old Jens, to take me on a walking tour of the Harz Mountains the following summer, when I turned fifteen. Goethe set the Witch's Sabbath in *Faust* on the Brocken, the highest mountain there, and Heine wrote a diary of his own tour across the region, as much of an inspiration to Romantic poets and artists, as the Lake District in Cumbria was to English writers.

A teenager prone to crushes, I adored handsome Jens and would have followed him across the Sahara Desert or to the North Pole; but when we met at the start of our tour, I was too shy to speak. We sat on the ground opposite each other to, as he said, get to know one another. He then performed some athletics, like an Olympic gymnast, which made me feel even more inadequate. Jens took responsibility for me and had meticulously prepared a detailed itinerary. He laid out a map on the grass and pencilled in the route; then showed me his compass which would help us take the right direction. The next days he guided me through forests and across hills. We stared in dismay across the no-man's land of the border between East and West, the countryside suddenly scarred by a wide tree-less gash, stretching for miles, and encased in barbed wire.

The youth hostels in Germany were famous for their quality of accommodation. Along with the first motorway, these dormitories for the young were considered to be among Hitler's fine achievements. At one hostel, the warden woke us each morning with folksongs. Accompanying himself on a guitar, he sang so well that no one complained

and everyone applauded. A few adventurous American girls doing a tour of Europe arrived, and attracted avid attention.

After supper everyone joined in more singing and games. I found myself being intently stared at by a dark-eyed, thin man in black leather, like Jack Palance in *Shane*. He joined in the Nazi marching songs about blood-red skies and fatherland, with particular enthusiasm. Jens noticed that the man was paying too close attention to me, and became protective. The evening being so balmy and scented, with nightingales singing outside, the students decided to play a game of hide and seek with the American girls. They rapidly paired off and disappeared into the darkness of the woods. The leather man hoped I might go with him, but Jens intervened. The two men, one fair the other dark, looked steadily at each other, until the dark one realizing he would not get his way, turned and walked disappointed into the night. Jens put his arm round me and led me back to the hostel. The next night, the dark man sang even louder, his eyes burning with frustration and fury. Without Jens' intervention, I might have gone with the Nazi, despite knowing the danger. That is the nature of seduction.

The Harz Mountains remain in my memory as a region of rolling hills, thick forests, evening singsongs and another sinister place: that bleak stretch of no-man's land, a gash in the countryside, made uglier by the miles of barbed wire and alarming notices with skulls warning of landmines. I came of age on my Harz Reise, Harz Journey, as a teenager, not just personally, but also in my awareness of a world in constant conflict, inflicting traumas that continue relentlessly and with inevitability.

When Jens put me on the train and said goodbye, he presented me with a touchingly symbolic gift: his compass. Several times we had got lost and found ourselves walking in

the opposite direction to the one we should take. We occasionally argued heatedly, as we attempted to read the map, Jens irritating me with his slavish devotion to the compass, endlessly tapping it, and taking pains to establish the correct route. But the compass represented more than a direction finder in the woods. It became a constant reminder of the importance of establishing a balanced perspective in a confusing world, where ideologies easily divert, seduce and mislead people from their common interest and humanity.

Jens finished his studies, became a social worker and married a woman from Africa. In those days that created a scandal. I idolize him to this day, but we never met again.

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The photos of Milosevic, Mladic and Karadjic, arrayed like religious icons in the book shop window, made my heart ache. Exasperated Adnan shrugged the display off as just a typical example of Serb nationalist idiocy. ‘When will these people learn?’ he exclaimed.

I noticed the compass, which then triggered my early memories of Germany, a nation which at that time, like Serbia, was still reeling from its recent history and had also lost its bearings.

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THE WHITE PALACE

Donald had met Crown Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia a few weeks earlier at a presentation for Prince Charles. The Prince publically supported our work: ‘What we have heard about from Father Donald Reeves – what I think is his marvellous work in Bosnia – it’s enormously encouraging. I happen to be one of those people who minds deeply about the unholy destruction that goes on in these terrifying conflicts that

suddenly erupt within communities who have lived together for centuries, and got on perfectly well. The cultural and religious vandalism is even more terrifying, and we have a duty and responsibility to help find ways of restoring order. I salute what Donald Reeves is trying to achieve there, and obviously if I can try and find a way to help, I will, perhaps with the rebuilding of a mosque or two, let alone the churches.'

'Come and see me when you are next in Belgrade,' Crown Prince Alexander told Donald.

The palace stood surrounded by a park on a hill overlooking Belgrade. Tito used to relax here and Milosevic governed the country from offices in this, the most isolated and best protected building in the city, before hiding from public view, in the months leading up to his arrest.

The first of our two visits to the palace came as an invitation to a reception being given for the Jewish community in Serbia, to mark the rebuilding of a synagogue in a town near the Hungarian border. We walked through the main gates, after being frisked briefly by the guards, and a land rover came to pick us up and drive half a mile to the front door of the palace. A group of smartly dressed staff welcomed us, and another group were arranging themselves in the entrance hall. 'Who are they?' I asked Igor. 'That's the Crown Prince!' exclaimed Igor, shocked at my ignorance. The Crown Prince and his wife straightened themselves as we approached. 'So pleased to see you again!' smiled the Crown Prince politely, just in case we had met before. His wife curtsied, smiling, although her eyes looked sad and anxious. We were the first guests to arrive, and June Jacobs, the leader of the Jewish community in England, which had raised money for the synagogue, was summoned to talk to us. Servants wandered around with trays of canapés

and after everybody had spent the first half hour politely refusing them, someone must have broken the ice because within minutes the cornucopia of miniature vol-au-vents stuffed with prawns, smoked salmon and paté, disappeared off the trays.

Everyone seemed tongue-tied at finding themselves in a palace. Adnan went exploring. A pianist was playing songs from the shows in an empty room, and I stopped there to provide him with at least one member of an audience. Suddenly Adnan peered round the door and beckoned me excitedly.

‘You have to take a photograph of me,’ he commanded urgently, pointing at my digital camera.

He was standing at the door of a room he recognized from countless newsreels throughout his life: Tito’s library and study, with its familiar desk and phone. From behind this desk, Milosevic had delivered speeches to the nation. Adnan immediately sat himself in Tito’s chair, smiled at the camera and leaned forward. The moment reminded me of the time I stood on the balcony of the Eagle’s Nest, Hitler’s mountain retreat in Bavaria, savouring the irony of the moment. Now I stood there, not Hitler. How much more symbolic for Adnan, a Bosnian Muslim, to be sitting in the very chair, from which Milosevic had authorized his death.

Adnan savoured the moment.

Igor also came to sit in the chair, looking embarrassed, as though he were desecrating a shrine.

Then a beaming Crown Prince brought in a crowd of guests, taking them on a tour of the famous rooms in the palace.

CRIME AND UNPUNISHMENT

The British Ambassador in Belgrade Charles Crawford had invited several Serb politicians, along with members of his diplomatic staff, to a supper given that evening, partly in honour of our work, but also for us to benefit from their knowledge, experience and advice.

The embassy residence reflected the cool modern taste of the ambassador. Striking examples of conceptual art were fixed to the clean white walls: large twisting angular sculptures, and canvases with colour splashes, hung with plenty of space around each piece. Rock music played in the background, instead of the usual classical baroque wallpaper. A signed photo of Gazza, the footballer, hung in the men's toilet. The ambassador enthused about an espresso machine being installed in the kitchen, where the important business of the house took place in rapid conversations over breakfast. Charles Crawford read the morning papers before family and guests came down.

When we arrived, people working and staying at the embassy residence seemed tired and bored. Various embassy officials gave advice on how we should do our work, suggesting that the Soul of Europe go to Kosovo, and start rebuilding churches there.

The most intriguing guest turned out to be Aleksandar Pavic, a Serb, previous political advisor, and personal assistant to Biljana Plavsic, the former President of the Republika Srpska. She had once been observed stepping over the corpse of a slaughtered Muslim, to kiss the Serb warlord, Arkan, announcing to camera: 'I only kiss heroes!' Biljana Plavsic had since given herself up to The Hague Tribunal, and now waited trial, while continuing to live in Belgrade.

Why had this man chosen to work for an extreme nationalist politician, and what did he feel about his past decisions and his responsibility for war crimes? What had he hoped to achieve personally, and how did he feel now these ambitions were thwarted? His smiling passivity and unwillingness to be drawn on any issue, indicated that he was biding his time, like many Serbs, who considered the Dayton Accord to be a hiatus, a pause before they could resume the task of creating a Greater Serbia.

Aleksandar Pavic's face remained an expressionless mask all evening; a man in cold storage. Adnan did however manage to draw him into a fierce argument about the political situation in Bosnia. Aleksandar Pavic announced that the Muslims were planning to take over the whole region and hand it over to the rule of the Mujaheddin. He wanted to remind everyone that Izetbegovic had intended turning Bosnia into a fundamentalist Muslim state, and the West were making a grave error not recognizing this fact. 'You speak rubbish!' declared Adnan, and spent the next half an hour loudly explaining why. The former political advisor, and personal assistant to Radovan Karadjic's closest colleague, evidently considered his own role to be a Christian saviour: a knight sent to protect Serb maidens from Muslim atrocities. 'We have different opinions,' he told me with a shrug as we went into dinner, and cast a contemptuous glance at Adnan, who turned away, not considering his adversary worth fighting.

The guests sat at different tables. Conversation sagged round mine, with the ambassador's wife trying to enliven the atmosphere by discussing the primitive travel conditions in Serbia, the price of meat, and the varying quality of rakija.

Aleksandar Pavic, seated opposite me, kept his head down, and seemed content to just eat and drink. Why had he been invited? Did the ambassador think this man had a

political future? It disturbed me that someone indirectly, but closely, involved in war atrocities, should be given such hospitality. Being invited could only confirm his sense of being in the right, cancelling any acknowledgment of having committed any crimes. He resisted any communication with me, studiously avoiding my questions, though I wanted to learn about his past, his childhood, where he lived, what he enjoyed doing: to understand him. He sat, dead-eyed, while an embassy official on my right lectured me about the work of the Soul of Europe, and what he thought we should be doing, the now familiar line about rebuilding equal numbers of churches and mosques.

A surly professor on my left entered the conversation only at the mention of rakija, explaining to me the reasons for why this potent Balkan brandy could not be marketed abroad. It seemed that because such brandy was mostly distilled domestically it could never meet the stringent EU quality control requirements.

After everyone at the table had acknowledged rakija's notorious alcoholic potency, horror stories were exchanged about travelling around Serbia by train. Aleksandar Pavic withdrew further into his suit.

Perhaps he shared the feeling, general among Serbs in Belgrade, that their cousins in the Republika Sprska were becoming an embarrassment. The message went: 'You failed. Don't bother us anymore.' This may have explained the tight-lipped attitude of Biljana Plavsic's former political advisor to our work in Bosnia.

Donald also experienced an empty conversation with the man sharing his table, a minister of the Serb government, and someone reckoned to be President Kostunica's right-hand man, but who resisted being drawn into any significant conversation, and smiling mysteriously, stood on his dignity. He left the reception with an attractive, much

younger woman, who might have been his wife or his secretary. At the entrance, waiting for his car, he glanced at his watch and exchanged a meaningful glance with his companion, as much as to say: ‘Well, we got through that without committing ourselves or telling anyone anything.’

A GOOD USE FOR GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

Earlier in the evening, a current news story had entertained the guests. It involved the arrest of an American diplomat from the American Embassy in Belgrade, accused of spying for the CIA, and caught allegedly in the act with a minister, both concluding business at a city restaurant. They were arrested and taken out of the restaurant with paper bags over their heads. When President Kostunica’s right-hand man entered the ambassador’s residence with his attractive companion, Charles Crawford greeted him with a wicked smile and both guns blazing: ‘So are you going to arrest me then? Do you need some paper bags?’ The right hand man looked shocked, not appreciating dry English humour. ‘I don’t think that will be necessary,’ he mumbled.

Embassy staff at the reception exchanged banter about the changes in the former Yugoslavia, now reduced to the Federation of Serbia and Montenegro. The framework of the government’s administration needed to reflect this shrinkage.

We observed the consequences of these changes the next day, when we went to meet the Ministries of Faith and Culture, and trekked around acres of government buildings, set well back from the main road in acres of bleak parkland. The place was too large for the administration, now required to govern a fraction of the former country. The empty-looking concrete shells recalled those atmospheric Edward Hopper paintings that depict

large structures looming bleakly in deserted surroundings, and in which a lone person stands, still and pensive, at a door or window.

We were turned away from several entrances by bored guards and eventually arrived at the offices of the Ministers of Faith and Culture. We sat round another large polished table: many leather chairs to chose from. The elegant room had been decorated with a profusion of baroque plaster mouldings and chandeliers.

The minister, a friendly man with white hair groomed in a quiff, immediately informed us that he would be out of a job within the week, so our meeting could have no consequence. The ministry no longer functioned, and we could learn nothing new from him. Relations between the faiths in Serbia were anyway excellent, apparently. Goals were being met and everyone worked in harmony together.

‘Foreigners are surprised to hear this,’ the minister told us.

The chief problems happened in former communist times, when religion had been outlawed. Now churches needed just to be rebuilt and restored, which required money and expertise. Some churches were being restored in the wrong way, without consulting the appropriate authorities, and therefore not able to resist earthquakes, for instance. The world Jewish community had given money for the rebuilding of the synagogue in Subotica, which explained the reception at the White Palace the night before.

Young people travelled from all over Europe to take part in many rebuilding projects: enthusiastic gatherings, socialising between the faiths and ethnic groups, all achieving ends successfully.

It seemed as though we had nothing to do in the Balkans: the work of the Soul of Europe having already been successfully accomplished. Then the minister realized he

might have painted too rosy a picture, and quickly added that much more work needed to be done.

Throughout our stay in Belgrade, we met criticism of our focus on the Ferhadija Mosque. We had always taken for granted the need for fairness and equal attention to all communities. However the intensity of the Serb argument grated on Adnan's nerves; it became the chief reason for his leaving Belgrade sooner than intended.

We interpreted this argument as a form of denial. Distributing responsibility and suffering equally between all sides, prevents soul-searching by one particular group. But how much stronger would be the position of one side to admit responsibility, regardless of the crimes committed by others; and supporting the rebuilding of what had been destroyed, as a matter of justice? Such an act of acknowledgement would inspire everyone and open up dialogue. It gives people the chance to behave with nobility and generosity. Nowhere in the world is such a lesson ever heeded. So the familiar responses continue: recrimination, mean-mindedness and denial nourishing perpetual conflict.

The minister then stained his argument about fairness and equality by announcing that the Serb government had found funds for the rebuilding of the Serbian Orthodox Zitomislice Monastery in Eastern Bosnia.

We would attend the opening some years later, and witness the full panoply of the Serbian Orthodox Church: processions of bishops and crowds of worshippers, the whole event being overseen by the Muslim Bosnian police.

For now, politics remained divisive: money could be found for one's own places of worship. Such attitudes explained Dr Cerić putting his faith in Saudi support, whatever the price an extreme form of Islam might demand. At least funds from this hard-line

source helped rebuild mosques, however alien the architecture and spirit to the culture of Bosnia; otherwise there would be no mosques there at all.

The minister of culture now joined the minister of religion; and he too faced retirement within the week. He explained that atheists were responsible for the war in Bosnia. It had not been about religion. Blame for the causes of conflict continued to be re-distributed. When we talked about the necessity of good relations between Christianity and Islam, both ministers responded by describing these relations as 'idyllic' in Serbia.

We had now entered the dreamlike atmosphere of the world created by Edward Hopper, one that the outside of the buildings had brought to mind. In these paintings, everyday things: rooms, houses, streets, take on a sinister otherworldliness, an alien environment, where people seem strangers even to themselves. On the one hand, the ministers were describing a situation of perfect harmony, and on the other, they knew the truth, and we sensed an unspoken, but urgent, request for help to make this happen.

The ministers turned down our invitation to a conference in Sarajevo, explaining this could have negative consequences: 'because of our political affiliations'. It would look as though Serbia was interfering in the affairs of Bosnia.

We left the place feeling our visit to Belgrade had been a waste of time. This acreage of mostly empty offices waited for demolition. A new government building would be erected somewhere else, more suited to the new reality of Serbia and Montenegro.

Before leaving for the long walk to the road and a taxi, I took advantage of using the toilet. In stead of toilet paper, sheaves of government documents had been guillotined into neat packages, and placed beside each bowl.

WE ARE ALL ONE BODY

Although it had been two years since our last meeting, and many people must have visited in the meanwhile, Patriarch Pavle remembered Donald, and already stood waiting at the door to his reception room. His enthusiastic smile implied this was one visit he really looked forward to. Igor often interpreted for the Patriarch, but had never seen him smile, let alone be friendly. Burly Donald had to bend low to embrace the tiny frail figure of Patriarch Pavle, who then also offered me his whiskery face to kiss.

‘Wanting peace is fifty percent of the work for us Christians,’ said the Patriarch in his high piping voice immediately after this warm greeting, and we had sat down under a large painting of King Lazar being blessed by another patriarch. ‘Every war of conquest is to be condemned. Only in defence is war justified. *There is no greater love than giving ones life for ones friends.* The Battle of Kosovo in 1389 was not about peace, but about principle. Lazar did not conquer, but wanted to defend. *Do to others what you want others to do to you.* But sadly Christians do not obey these principles, let alone non-Christians.’

Then suddenly switching to the more recent war, as though the six centuries in between had been the flick of an eyelid, and the two wars were one and the same, with the smallest hiatus, he went on sadly: ‘Both Albanians and Serbs were killed, so many monasteries, churches and mosques destroyed, also the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka.’ Mention of the Ferhadija meant the Patriarch had been briefed on our progress.

Before presenting us with a book, *Crucified Kosovo*, the Patriarch looked slowly at it, turning the pages like a grandfather perusing the family album, and pointed out a picture of the ruins of the Holy Trinity Monastery, saying: ‘There you can see a church from

1380, one built before the Ottoman invasion. Mosques too were destroyed. Every war is a calamity, but civil war is a calamity of calamities. May the Lord help us to have peace.

We need it as much as our enemies do... peace, justice and love... a minimum of tolerance and democracy. May the Lord help us. We must do what we can.'

He then looked up at Donald with a kindly glance, and said: 'You work for peace. You are welcome!'

'I wanted to remind you of our first visit two years ago,' Donald began and the Patriarch smiled again, eyes shining, like a father looking indulgently at a favoured son.

Donald spoke about the Coventry Consultation, in particular about Bishop Jefrem becoming a friend and how we were looking for practical ways to help him, also about Bishop Komarica, 'a man of God', who 'cares for everybody'.

Describing the Ferhadija Mosque project, Donald explained: 'We want to show the world it is possible to respect one another. Our small group is working tirelessly to strengthen the three communities. That is the advantage of being Anglican. Two years ago I was a retired Anglican priest without a community. Powerless. The powerlessness brought the people together.'

'The goal of reconciliation is now before us,' said the Patriarch. 'That includes admittance of things done which need forgiveness. I wrote a letter of condolence to Belgrade's Mufti Jusufspahic, over the Ferhadija Mosque, when they destroyed it. Whatever terrible things happened, they happened to us as well. *We are all one body – if one suffers then all suffer. If one is glorified then all are glorified.*'

At this point the Patriarch became particularly animated: 'St Paul advised all visitors to listen to all sides of the story. Because of my position, clearly the priority was the

suffering of the Serb people. But that doesn't mean that the sorrows and calamities of others are not my concern. May God bless us so we can restore all religious objects for the common good.'

'We live by faith,' responded Donald, moved by the Patriarch's quote from St Paul, lines about the one-ness of the world and the interdependence of all its various communities, and referred to another quote: '*My work continues, even when I am no longer here. Hope gives us strength. Love proves that we are not alone in our work.*'

Donald presented the Patriarch with the Soul of Europe candle. One of Adnan's inspirations, it used our logo as the base for a circle of small wicks to light the stars of the European flag around the single candle flame of our work. The Patriarch looked at the candle, delighted, though we guessed it would end up on the side table in the reception room, covered with other gifts, mostly unopened.

Donald then asked for a blessing. Two years ago, almost to the day, the Patriarch had blessed him as we set off on our journey to Bosnia.

'Come and take photographs,' the Patriarch suggested, leading us to the mural of Lazar receiving sainthood. A priest took the picture ensuring that a photograph of an ancient icon from a destroyed Serbian Orthodox church in Kosovo, that hung high on the wall behind our heads, dominated the composition.

The Patriarch stands in the middle beaming. Donald on his right looks moved. Igor stands to attention, aware of the solemnity of the moment. Philip Warner smiles politely. Adnan however is ill at ease. This place represents the spiritual home of the ideology that had tried to wipe him out.

THE PRIEST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Also in the picture stands the Patriarch's clerical assistant, a priest who then took us to his office. Seated in the room, where the furniture had not changed in decades, we encountered knobbly reality after the high-flown talk about eternal and universal matters with the Patriarch. The leather armchairs had been used so often that the spring in the upholstery had worn out completely and they sank, with a sickening unexpected lurch to the floor, the moment we sat in them, our knees suddenly higher than our chests. The typewriter on the priest's desk dated from before the Second World War: an antique.

The meeting had a purpose: to indentify projects that could benefit the Orthodox Church. The priest, with a shock of white hair and startlingly busy black eyebrows, gave us a summary of the situation in Serbia and Bosnia, but first introduced himself in the manner of a character in a Chehov short story:

'For five years from 1953 – 1958 I was a seminarian in Prizren from Kosovo,' he began. 'I never thought I would be a priest. But a blessing came from the Patriarchate. I arrived at this faculty as a peasant. My father kept plum orchards. I was about to return to help my father in the orchards, when they asked if I wanted to learn languages. In English I only knew one word: gentleman. The lecturer only had a few students and there was place for me. I was twenty one years old. At twenty seven I became an interpreter. I have been here ever since.'

In these few sentences he gave us a poignant self-portrait: half a century of service, years that had passed relatively uneventfully for him as an individual, but which witnessed violent upheavals in his country.

Donald wanted to know how we could help the Orthodox Church in Bosnia and asked about the state of monasteries in the Banja Luka diocese.

‘Bishop Jefrem is learning English,’ he told the priest. ‘He already speaks Russian,’ the priest said with a shrug.

Then he showed us a book on mined churches, now in its third edition, each time bigger. Returning to the subject of Bishop Jefrem, he commented that the bishop was a difficult man to know. Even when attending the May conference of bishops, he kept himself hidden, hardly being seen even in the corridors. Nor did much news come from the diocese, except the occasional snippet about rebuilding dozens of ruined Orthodox churches.

He told us that Bishop Jefrem had been in Banja Luka since 1980. During the war the bishop stopped priests travelling, insisting they stay in their villages and parishes. Since our visit to the Patriarchate we discovered further that, throughout the war, and after the destruction of the mosques in Banja Luka, Bishop Jefrem refused to celebrate the liturgy, delegating the conducting of the worship to a priest. The bishop withdrew into his home and no one saw him. This information went a little way to explain a comment about politicians that Bishop Jefrem made to us on one of our first visits: ‘No one listens to me!’ We had interpreted this cryptic remark as meaning that he was either trying to pacify the warmongers, ethnic cleansers and destroyers of mosques, or that he was disappointed they had not carried out the ethnic cleansing with more zeal. Now it seemed he had made a kind of protest, by removing his bishop’s presence from the Orthodox worship; the war traumatized him also.

The nationalist leaders cunningly flattered the Orthodox Church into throwing its considerable influence behind their policies. The consequences of violence and destruction were acceptable to many bishops, who saw the fighting and destruction as necessary; but some like Bishop Jefrem were squeamish, and, though they supported the leaders, found it hard to stomach the atrocities. After the war they could not allow themselves to be seen as inconsistent, so remained loyal to nationalist politics and spoke mealy-mouthed about the crimes and tragedies that ensued.

The priest informed us that shortly after the Second World War, Patriarch Demetrios had given communion to Anglicans, so Bishop Jefrem's proposal to us in Banja Luka was not without precedent in the Orthodox Church. Nevertheless the priest conceded that, given Bishop Jefrem's aloofness and extreme conservatism, his invitation to Donald to preach to the congregation and be present at the consecration was a rare honour.

The priest talked about Kosovo, how Bishop Artemije held together his band of priests despite their persecution by Albanians. Soldiers guarded those buildings not destroyed by Muslims. Incidents such as bombings or attacks happened daily. Communities were disrupted. Kosovo was not ready for the Soul of Europe. The priest then gave us an unusual slant on recent politics: apparently Milosevic hoped for a more complete ethnic cleansing of Serbs by Albanians in Kosovo. It would have strengthened his hand with nationalists in Belgrade, and given them a reason to seethe with resentment and vow revenge. Like Bishop Komarica in Banja Luka, a place where the Catholic Church had been decimated, Bishop Artemije was refusing to abandon his beleaguered Orthodox diocese, even though both had been offered every incentive to leave.

Despite grudgingly acknowledging Serb crimes in the war, the recent attempts by SFOR to arrest Karadjic, apparently hiding in a monastery in Southern Bosnia, raised the priest's hackles. He protested at the armed entry by troops into the church, breaking in and causing damage. 'So it's an occupation!' exclaimed the priest, who still considered Karadjic a war hero. 'Only Turks ever entered churches armed!' he added, eyes blazing, forgetting what Serbs had done to mosques, entering armed, and blowing them up. Donald mentioned the thousand and more mosques destroyed in Bosnia, and the priest then hurried to find a copy of *Kosovo Crucified*, listing destroyed Orthodox churches.

We discussed the possibilities of rebuilding a monastery in Bosnia, probably in areas controlled by Catholic Croats around Mostar. Zitomislice Monastery had been destroyed not during the Bosnia War, but a generation earlier, by the Croat pro-Nazi Ustasha in the Second World War. Money could be made available for the reconstruction, as a way of re-establishing a vital Serbian Orthodox presence in a mostly Catholic region of Bosnia. Bishop Grigorije of Trebinje was appointing priests to Mostar, where attempts had been made to wipe out the Orthodox community during both wars. The priest described the Orthodox cathedral after being bombarded: books and artefacts untouched, left as they were before the war, birds flying through broken windows, feathers and droppings everywhere. Which of the two wars?

The discussion moved on to issues of restitution, some groups receiving more than others, and questions of property that belonged to Catholic and Orthodox communities, confiscated by communists and now being reclaimed: the emphasis being on the suffering of the Serbs.

Adnan bit his lip. He had already decided to leave Belgrade at the earliest opportunity. He winced as Philip Warner commented to the priest how much he had enjoyed his recent visit to Foca. Noticing Adnan's discomfort, Philip quickly mentioned a pleasant trip to Travnik for the Muslim New Year. While we visited the Patriarchate shop to find another copy of *Kosovo Crucified*, Adnan hurried out of the building.

The Patriarch's blessing cheered us. The priest brought us back to earth with a painful thud; but it seemed as though his Church had become separate from the real world, a place for him now shattered beyond recognition.

The next meeting however turned out to be the most difficult and disappointing of all during our visit to Belgrade.

A DISHARMONIOUS WORLD

Dean Bigovic, an Orthodox academic who took a brave stand against Milosevic and Serb atrocities during the Bosnia War, had warmly welcomed us in Banja Luka two years earlier. A lecture hall packed with students listened attentively to him talking about the need to acknowledge crimes committed in their name, and to work towards reconciliation with those communities who had suffered as a result of the war, both Catholics and Muslims.

Dean Bigovic then invited Donald to visit Belgrade and lecture Orthodox students on Anglicanism. As usual in the Balkans, dates were impossible to pin down, and plans faltered. Our first translator and fixer, Lazar, suggested we come to Belgrade on the off-chance that a lecture be arranged at the last moment, a risk we could not afford. So our visit had been delayed till now, and this time Adnan, a Muslim, was our interpreter and

fixer. We arrived at the Theological Faculty looking forward to meeting Dean Bigovic, now promoted to Head of the Faculty.

At first, the Dean, looking in good spirits, his thick black hair contrasting with a bushy white beard, greeted us in a friendly manner and told us he was aware of the progress of our work in Bosnia. Lazar, with whom we had lost contact over a year earlier, was keeping the Dean informed. We quickly realized Lazar must have been telling everyone in Belgrade that the Soul of Europe intended to rebuild only mosques. This explained Dean Bigovic's growing coldness towards us as the meeting progressed. The smiles and warm handshakes gave way to a souring atmosphere.

A mysterious older man, a white haired colleague of the Dean, sat in on the meetings, silently and grimly attending to what we said. It could be that the normally outspoken dean, now having to be mindful of his eminent position, needed to choose his words with care. We sat around a large table in a room full of chairs. Portraits of former deans, all severe-looking male academics, covered the walls.

Donald plunged in as usual: 'We have a serious and difficult issue,' and spoke about the Coventry Consultation, our plans for Banja Luka, establishing a business and educational forum, strengthening the Catholic and Orthodox communities, while rebuilding the Ferhadija Mosque.

Dean Bigovic looked away from us, and into the middle distance, with his large black eyes expressing immense gravity, saying: 'It is a great joy to welcome you. I have not been to Banja Luka since we met two years ago. Your project has a chance to succeed but it won't be easy. All matters that are important are difficult. However we can contribute

nothing, just human and moral support. It is not an issue that, of course, all sacred buildings need to be restored. But we live in a disharmonious world...'

Suddenly there was silence. The Dean spread his arms in a gesture of hopelessness, and waited for what Donald might suggest. Why were we there?

Donald would not be deflected; we needed support and encouragement for the Orthodox as well as Muslim communities in Banja Luka. The conversation continued remorselessly into a minotaur's cave.

'Relations are difficult between Bosnia and Serbia. Goodwill helps,' said the Dean, starting in a hopeful vein, from a point of view we had no problem sharing. His words seemed agreeable but his tone hardened, as though meaning the opposite. 'There are differences between the states. Informal discussions become more important than formal ones. Prejudices disappear. Dialogue between Islam and the Orthodox is a crucial issue. The fate of the world depends on this. We have to lose prejudices. They are peculiar to this region of Europe; there is no need to describe them, but they must be dealt with. They are complementary worlds. Afterwards, we can talk about reconciliation. The Church never acknowledged the great contribution by Islam to European civilization. Islam transmitted this culture from the ancient world. We have to learn from our mistakes. This is a global issue, not just of Bosnia. We need to heal traumas and wounds. Life is one thing, but in theory it is different.' The words sounded promising but the cryptic tone of the final sentence implied something else.

'We need to find a centre for dialogue between Islam and Orthodoxy,' Donald persisted, trying to take the discussion forward to a more practical conclusion than simply an analysis of a grim situation. 'We need to find a centre that is more local. For research

and education, a centre that can be related to the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque; a centre that also works with the local Orthodox community.’

Mentioning the Ferhadija Mosque had the same effect as Desdemona going on about a handkerchief, unwittingly making Othello even angrier.

‘There will always be minorities and majorities,’ said the Dean through pursed lips, resisting attempts to ground solutions in concrete form.

‘How about small informal meetings between Muslims and Christians to, as it were, throw the ball around?’ asked Donald.

‘The faculty has such possibilities,’ the Dean replied evasively. ‘There is a need. We have experts primarily with Islam. Relations are good. Belgrade has excellent relations between Serbs and Muslims.’

At this point we realized the Dean was being obstructive. Having met the Islamic community in Belgrade, we knew that relations between Muslims and Orthodox Serbs were far from satisfactory, despite expressions of friendship between Mufti Jusufspahic and Patriarch Pavle. Muslims were an oppressed minority in Serbia.

The Dean now made it clear he would not take part in our work, saying: ‘Belgrade can not help with Bosnia. It is a political issue.’ He meant that Serbs should now avoid getting entangled with the Republika Srpska. In other words, the Serbs, who had once been eager to attack Bosnia, and put their considerable military might behind Bosnian Serbs, now considered the war lost, and were washing their hands of former protégés. They could now justify this attitude by saying they had no jurisdiction in another country. The man with white hair kept a steady gaze on Dean Bigovic throughout this part of the conversation, and it became clear the Dean had to watch his words.

Donald persisted. 'Islam in Europe presents us with a problem: the diversity of its communities. Because of its congregational aspect, it is hard to identify representatives. We will prepare a paper on establishing a European centre, not related just to Bosnia, but to all of Europe.'

This did not impress Dean Bigovic. 'There is a need for this, but Europe has secularised. A diplomat asked recently that we should ignore religious matters when talking about the European Union. It is OK to talk about economics though. Attitudes to religion vary from country to country. It is a difficult question. But if we don't answer it, we won't reach a conclusion. Friends and enemies – or a necessary evil.'

We had now hit a brick wall. Without Orthodox support, our projects had no hope of success. Dean Bigovic muttered something about the problems of having representatives on an official basis. We talked about our anxieties concerning Bishop Jefrem, a man not familiar with the process of dialogue.

The Dean became ever more resistant. 'Bishop Jefrem is a cultured man. He is not open, but he is a man of goodwill. It is a political issue. Get politicians to agree first, then religions can be involved.'

Again we were being brushed off.

Donald mentioned the invitation to address the National Assembly in the Republika Srpska: 'I will get the politicians on board. The theologians will continue.'

'But they are not listening,' said the Dean impatiently. 'It is a chicken and egg situation.'

Now Donald became impatient: 'Someone has to start. We have to break the vicious circle.'

‘It is a huge problem,’ the Dean said defensively. ‘We are talking in a different language from the Dayton Accord. Talk to the General Synod. Get an invitation from Bishop Jefrem to the Synod in Italy. Tell him you need a representative.’

Adnan, who had been listening with growing irritation, burst in with the comment: ‘People must want to come, not be ordered to represent a particular organization.’

Donald backed him up by explaining the methodology of the Soul of Europe, based on personal relationships: ‘This way the spirit is moved,’ and went on to describe the role of the ‘powerless’ leader.

‘I agree,’ said the Dean, ‘but there are other problems. It is the issue of Europe. There are practically two Europes: the rich EU and the rest. The question is: can you end violence by using force? It is a moral problem. How can we have dialogue with people you bomb?’ referring pointedly to NATO bombing of Belgrade two years earlier.

‘People are either equal or not. It is a problem for our conscience. But people are silent. People are dying and other people do nothing.’ Which people? Where?

We could not respond to this, not understanding his meaning, the words hinting cryptically rather than stating. Donald did not want to waste the meeting entirely, having travelled so far, and needing to salvage something useful. He tried to explain the disunity among Muslims in Bosnia and Dr Ceric’s ambivalence towards the Ferhadija Mosque being rebuilt. But Dean Bigovic was impatient to end the meeting. He stood up to shake our hands and told us to find a good Orthodox project, to match the rebuilding of the mosque, implying that the Serbs could not be held accountable for the mosque’s destruction, because they too had suffered.

His attitude shocked us, having heard him speak in quite different tones in Banja Luka two years earlier. The one meeting we had hoped to be constructive had turned out the exact opposite.

The Dean still wanted Donald to lecture on the Anglican Church, but after this meeting every attempt to contact the Dean to confirm this invitation was met with the information: ‘The Dean is away.’

THE HAGGADAH - THE SOUL OF SARAJEVO

Adnan returned to Sarajevo the next morning. He could no longer cope with the degree of denial among even supposedly sympathetic Serbs. A late-night discussion, over several whiskies, with Roy Wilson on the issues of corruption and political incompetence in Bosnia turned into an ill-humoured argument. The quietly spoken diplomat suggested Adnan might be displaying typically Balkan machismo attitudes. ‘Now you are being personally offensive,’ said Adnan. I brought the conversation to an end and we returned to the hotel, Adnan insisting he had won the argument.

Belgrade had rubbed salt into his wounds. We bonded on this journey, walking everywhere together, looking for presents to take back to Sarajevo. A grandfather clock for his father tempted him, but he eventually settled on a pack of cigars. The realization that Belgrade and Serbia were no longer part of his homeland hit Adnan hard.

We scoured the shops for a book about Banja Luka, as it was before the war, and in one guide found photographs showing the town with dozens of glistening white minarets.

Then we sat in a café for a final drink before he left, and compared spiritless Belgrade with defiantly vibrant Sarajevo. Adnan told the history of the Haggadah, the celebrated

medieval illuminated Jewish manuscript. It had been brought to Sarajevo during the Spanish persecution of the Jews during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, who, at the same time, were also cleansing Spain of Muslim Moors. These Sephardic Jews were welcomed in the Balkans.

Their most treasure artefact, the Haggadah, a vividly illustrated medieval manuscript, took pride of place in the Sarajevo library where it miraculously survived wars and persecutions. At the start of each attack on Sarajevo the book mysteriously disappeared. Only at the return of peace did the book appear once again in the library. During the Siege of Sarajevo, in the Bosnia War, the Serbs deliberately shelled the library in order to destroy it utterly. Again the Haggadah survived. It disappeared, protected, and handed from one safe house to the other. It became the symbol of the city – its soul, its survival against all odds.

The Haggadah is a codex associated with the Passover, one of the most important events in Jewish history, the liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery, led by Moses who also laid down the law, the ten commandments, which have dominated western culture for over two thousand years. The book is a celebration of ritual, feast and community. It is also a collection of stories and illustrations, beginning not with words but a series of paintings depicting, first, the creation of the world: God is not shown but suggested by rays of gold coming down from the sky. The separation of light and darkness, land from sea, sun, moon, trees, animals, and finally man himself, is overseen not by God but a solitary monk in his cell, or maybe a nun. The images are painted in a

simple style, with the confident brush strokes of a sophisticated artist. The inclusion of the artist in the paintings makes the point that this is the work of his or her imagination.

Following the creation story and before the text of the codex starts, page after page of vignettes depict familiar Bible stories from Genesis onwards, in imitation of Christian illuminated manuscripts. Jews were so well integrated in European society, before the pogroms of the later Middle Ages began, that they learned from, and were influenced by, contemporary artists. Eve is born from Adam's rib; a massive serpent tempts her; a fiery angel expels the guilty couple, hiding their genitals with bunches of leaves; Adam starts to dig; Cain kills Abel; Noah builds an ark; Lot's wife is transformed into a pillar of salt while Sodom and Gomorrah topple; and Joseph deals with his brothers. Just as Abraham is about to slice his son with a knife, the father's head turns in time, as a hand from heaven tells him to stop, and a terrified Isaac stares with relief at the lamb being sent to be sacrificed in his place. Jacob dreams of his ladder; Joseph dreams of years of plenty before the years of nothing; Moses is found in the bulrushes, and grows up to be a shepherd: his flock of contented sheep graze next to the burning bush. There are many pictures of people lying in bed dreaming; and of people in procession, coming to meet prophets or kings. Animals and monsters populate the pictures. Most of the figures seem to be smiling, including the creatures. The images that preface the codex itself illustrate a life that everyone could recognize, but with an added dimension, in which the imagination flourishes. The images describe our place in the natural and cosmic order.

Angels appear, but since any image of God is forbidden, his absence in the pictures reinforces a sense of people having to take responsibility for their lives, and to find ways of negotiating the problems of surviving in the world together. A hand from the sky,

surrounded by rays of light is the only indication of a mysterious divine presence: we have been expelled from paradise and must rely on our own resources.

FRIENDS AND ALLIES

Because of his hasty departure, Adnan missed meetings which he would have found congenial. They did not make a difference to our work, but sometimes it is encouraging to speak with people who wanted to be friends and allies

Dr Erdeljan a lecturer at the Philosophy Faculty spoke to us about ‘spiritual genocide’: the words of a relative who was a theologian and art historian. Dr Erdeljan herself had written a thesis on Jerusalem, the notion of the Balkans in the Middle Ages being a symbol of Jerusalem where the three Abrahamic faiths were equally celebrated.

We sat in a courtyard drinking cappuccino and discussed the possibility of Donald giving lectures in Belgrade on the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque. Loud rock music made it hard to hear each other speak. Crowds of students extended cups of coffee over several hours, killing time. They were glad to be out of cramped lodgings, and away from parents and siblings.

Dr Erdeljan had been seven months pregnant when NATO began bombing Belgrade, and two days after the bombing stopped, she gave birth to a daughter. Dr Erdeljan hated Milosevic, and reckoned the scars and traumas would take generations to heal.

Adnan would have liked Dr Erdeljan, and even more so Borka Pavicevic, the director of the Centre for Cultural Decontamination, whom we were surprised and pleased to meet at the ambassador’s residence, later that evening. She attended a reception in honour of

Helena Kennedy, recently appointed director of the British Council, and who had arrived in Belgrade to open a new office in the city centre.

We had met Borka two years earlier. She described to us then the diverse programs of theatre, music and exhibitions, as well as lectures, readings and community events taking place at the Centre. We were impressed by her total dedication, despite threats and lack of funding. Like a priestess, guiding acolytes into the inner sanctum, she had solemnly led us into the auditorium and pointed at the dark empty stage which represented a sacred space, where the imagination, dissent, and open dialogue could freely flourish. I described this meeting in my first book, *A Tender Bridge*. We immediately recognized Borka's motherly bustling presence, grey hair elegantly swept back in a bun.

Overstretched as usual, intensely involved in matters of high seriousness and urgency, she nevertheless promised to come to Banja Luka, and help organize joint events between Bosnia and Serbia, bringing her contacts and expertise. We only managed a brief meeting with her in the ambassador's residence's hallway, where we escaped the noise of the party. She expressed despair at the dangerous situation in this part of Europe, where sixty per cent of the people were unemployed, a recipe for demagoguery and fascism. She informed us of the trends of anti-Semitism and homophobia erupting openly on the streets of Belgrade, and said we must all co-operate more closely, and alert the rest of Europe to these dangers and their consequences. She had expressed similar fears at our first meeting, two years earlier. Borka spent her time warning everyone against apathy. This was part of her nature. We met her later, again unexpectedly, when we found ourselves sharing the same plane to Zurich. She gave us more dire warnings, gripping our arms in the manner of the Ancient Mariner, and fixing us with an intense stare. We

had introduced her to Roy Wilson at the reception. He impressed her with his cynicism about Bosnia: a ‘rogue’ state in the hands of criminals, who creamed off the profits from illegal trade in drugs, cigarettes and prostitution. ‘Anything goes!’

The day following the reception at the Embassy, we visited the women of the Most (Bridge) Project. We last met them two years earlier. Now moved to the top of a noisy tenement flat on a main road, they showed some interest in our work, but expressed doubts about the Ferhadija Mosque ever being rebuilt. Then we listened to familiar arguments about the ‘balance’ of guilt and restitution.

Philip Warner invited us to his flat for a brandy. We listened to recordings of Richard Tauber singing opera arias, and talked about the transient beauty of Serbian men and women: exceptionally attractive, outgoing, arrogantly self-possessed when young, then, within a few years, so many fading into thick-set and disgruntled middle-age. The honeyed tones of an old-fashioned tenor, tapering pianissimos on high notes and caressing every line, evoked youth and its power to kindle and satisfy desire, with a poignancy that also expressed the inevitability of youth’s transience. The reminder that so many of these wonderful looking young men had recently died, killed senselessly, choked me, and I thought back to my pictures of sleeping soldiers, lying vulnerable to attack, among ruins, under showers of flowers.

JOURNALISTS AND SOME TOUGH QUESTIONS

Always there are the questions: what are two Englishmen doing in the Balkans? Why are we there? Are we making the situation any better? Who do we think we are?

Several interviews with the press dominated our final days in Belgrade.

The Chevenings Magazine gave us a pleasant ride, as we sat in the basement office of an elegant town house. International representatives, embassies, businesses, hotels and cultural centres received copies of this publication, in English and Serbian. It was read by federal ministers, presidents and companies as well as tourists.

Michailo Rabrenovic, the editor in chief, took us around a renovated hall, where concerts took place. Then we sat on old leather armchairs in a windowless room. Corner cupboards made the place look like an English country house. A painting of a girl dancer dominated one wall; and a large television screen another.

The editor wanted to help our work by writing an article, which would be an ‘instrument of our strategy’. ‘You are holding a hot potato,’ he commented, when we told him of our plan to get the Serbian Orthodox Church to help rebuild the Ferhadija Mosque. ‘Good marketing will help,’ he concluded after serving us rakija and coffee.

The journalist from Danas, one of the main newspapers in Serbia, gave us a rougher ride.

‘Ask me searching questions,’ Donald said challengingly immediately on arrival.

‘Don’t worry, that is my job,’ replied the veteran reporter of the war and its aftermath, and then plunged straight in:

‘Why do you put special emphasis on Serb Nationalism, and not on any other form of extremism?’ We feared the interview would be an attack on our work in Bosnia. ‘What are you doing here? Why Banja Luka? Have you found partners? Why is there more politics on your web site than religion?’

‘My approach has to do with justice,’ replied Donald. ‘In the kingdom of God, everybody flourishes, economically, socially as well as in religious matters. My motivation comes from my understanding of Christianity.’

The journalist smiled mysteriously at Donald between each question, as though encouraging Donald to challenge the bigotry of his newspaper’s readership.

The article turned out surprisingly positive, and both Muslim Adnan and Orthodox Igor approved.

THE MUFTI OF BELGRADE

‘Karadjic – hero of Serbia’ and ‘Perisic, betrayer of the army’ proclaimed the graffiti-covered walls on the way to Belgrade’s only mosque. Momcilo Perisic was Chief of the Yugoslav Army, considered to be responsible for failing to win the Bosnia War.

Mufti Jusufspahic looked old and exhausted, hair whiter than on our previous visit, but eyes still twinkling.

The conversation deplored the weakness and vulnerability of the Islamic community in Serbia.

‘If we didn’t have evil,’ the mufti exclaimed, smiling ironically, ‘We wouldn’t know what is good!’

He then told us how a grenade had been thrown recently into a Muslim school in Velika Graduska. Churches were also being built on the sites of destroyed mosques. So much for reassurances, from others we were meeting, that the relationship between Serbs and Muslims were good in this part of the Balkans.

Donald told the mufti about being appointed Vice-President of the Ferhadija Mosque project. ‘Thank God Ceric did something smart!’ exclaimed the mufti. Later the mufti’s

son, an imam, explained the reason for his father's sour remark about the Reis ul Ulema. Dr Ceric had been making provocatively extremist public statements, urging Muslims not to cooperate with Serbs, so putting at risk the lives of Muslims in weak communities, such as Belgrade.

Banja Luka had been a most beautiful town, the mufti told us, with Orthodox, Catholics, Jews and Muslims living together peacefully. The mufti could not forgive the present Serb authorities for not allowing Mufti Halilovic, the previous mufti of Banja Luka, who died of a broken heart during the last war, to be buried in the grounds of his beloved mosque. 'Religion is at fault,' Mufti Jusufspahic commented, 'but the politicians are terrible. I am afraid the people who destroyed the mosque are still in power there.'

On the subject of 9:11 the mufti spoke darkly of the Muslims' need to defend their community if there were to be a new crusade. 'It will be a war with a billion and a half people! No good! The criminals are to be condemned, not Islam. God welcomes us into peace. We tell people to be patient and not react. But if Bush orders a crusade, I will have to go on Jihad, though I advise against any kind of war. Let's not make war!' and he smiled.

He described the particular style and beauty of Ottoman mosques as being the 'soul of Bosnia.' We then discussed the possibility of strengthening links between the Banja Luka and Belgrade Muslim communities. We needed to restore confidence between people.

'God is good!' Donald exclaimed cheerfully at the end of the meetings, and the mufti smiled ironically once more, describing how Bosnia and Herzegovina used to be a society of equality, imams and priests all together, organizing joint trips and events, people

coming and going, travelling to Cairo and all over Europe. ‘All religious groups here speak the same language,’ he said.

He waved us off, robe and white fez strikingly defiant against the surrounding graffiti-covered walls of flats, occupied by Serbs.

TEA WITH THE CROWN PRINCE

The jeep driven by the British ambassador arrived at the palace gates. We had been invited for tea with the Crown Prince and his wife, but were kept waiting for twenty minutes, while various staff members, agitated secretaries, and alarmed-looking guards tried to explain that the Crown Prince had been suddenly called away on another engagement: ‘family matters’. So we returned the next day and were welcomed with effusive apologies.

We had the palace to ourselves, and after another discussion about balance in our projects, and being generous to Serbs, we were given another guided tour of the palace treasures.

‘What is your big wish?’ asked the Princess. ‘If you could do anything, what would you like?’ We needed as many good contacts as possible from among the Orthodox community. The princess rang a friend in New York, and handed the phone to Donald, who then listened to lengthy advice from an Orthodox expert who suggested we rebuild a destroyed Orthodox church in Croatia, one where the Patriarch had been christened. She then pointed out that this phone had been previously used by Tito and Milosevic.

The Princess preached a sermon about the need for religion to be in our hearts, that it has all to do with the relationship between God and us. She dreamed of a religious park

in New York, to be created on the site of ground zero. It would be a centre of inter-faith dialogue. She was particularly excited by the prospect of doing something involving Patriarch Pavle, who, she informed us, had studiously avoided being seen together with the dictator throughout the Milosevic years.

She described her charitable work, hosting benefits and getting people to dig deep in their pockets to buy ambulances, and import respirators and bicycles.

The Crown Prince responded diplomatically to our request that he become a patron of our work with the caveats that we find an Orthodox project of equal magnitude to the Ferhadija Mosque, and we should also secure the patronage of Prince Charles. Both seemed unlikely for the time being.

He then took us into the old palace chapel, dark and in need of restoration. A bright shaft of daylight shone through a hole in the palace chapel walls: pierced by a communist sharpshooter, almost a century before.

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The scandal involving the former general of the Yugoslav Army, Momcilo Perisic, now vice-president, being arrested with the first secretary of the American embassy in a restaurant on spying charges, and led out with paper bags over their heads, turned out to be a sting orchestrated by the Kustunica administration. It became a national joke and an international embarrassment. The vice-president resigned. Momcilo Perisic, when general of the Yugoslav army, had stood up to Milosevic. Grudges ran deep in the administration, and Kostunica, though Milosevic's rival, was an even more hard-line nationalist. He had not forgotten the general's stand against the ethnic cleansing during the Bosnia War. At last, President Kustunica had found a way to humiliate this enemy of

Serbia. That an American representative of hated NATO should have been caught at the same time was an even bigger coup!

INTERMISSION: A FAST-FORWARD

LUNCH WITH DODIK

The name of Milorad Dodik dominated our six years in Bosnia, mentioned constantly, and following in significance closely behind Radovan Karadjic and General Mladic.

The latter two represented Bosnian nationalism at its most extreme. Milorad Dodik became prime minister of the Republika Srpska from 1998 - 2001. The international community felt it could do business with him, despite suspicions of corrupt dealings and rumours that he diverted international aid funds towards modernising his home town of Laktashi, near Banja Luka, rewarding business associates with contracts. Radovan Karadjic's party, the SDS, ousted him at the following elections. The SDS bribed voters with free bags of sugar. Milorad Dodik remained in opposition, building up his power-base. He would win the next election and remain in power to the present day, acting like a dictator. As President of the Republika Srpska he is now the most powerful man in the Balkan region. His stated aim is to make the Republika Srpska independent of Bosnia.

In 2005 the differences between the Serb nationalist parties were minuscule, and had more to do with personal and political rivalries. Most of the leaders had been involved in the Bosnia War, some known to be engaged, to a lesser or greater degree, in corrupt business dealings and gangster activities, mainly drugs, weapons and people trafficking. The SDS could not shake off its association with Radovan Karadjic. So, it was only a matter of time before Milorad Dodik returned to power.

The international community claimed Milorad Dodik to be cooperative and no extreme nationalist. Nevertheless he announced, during a football match between Serbia and Bosnia, that he supported Serbia. This public statement gained him popular support and inspired large gangs of youths, gathering after Serbia's victory, to roam the streets of Banja Luka, waving nationalist flags and shouting: 'Serbia! Serbia! Kill the Turks!' The police managed to stop the crowds from desecrating the site of the destroyed Ferhadija Mosque. But the message from the Republika Srpska in 2005 was clear: 'We want nothing to do with Bosnia, although you tell us we are part of the same country. We are Serbs and want to be part of Serbia.'

We drove through Laktashi, the main road flanked by freshly chromed and glass fronted clubs and cafes, and passed miles of ripening cornfields to Milorad Dodik's residence.

Graham Day had managed to secure a lunch invitation for us with this influential politician, so we could discuss our project to build a memorial for Muslims and Catholics murdered at the Omarska iron ore mine. The mine had been used as a killing camp during the Bosnia War. Mittal Steel, who had bought majority shares in the mine, was paying us to run the project because Muslim survivors in the area were threatening to disrupt the mine's activities. We saw this as an opportunity to improve relations between the ethnic groups in Bosnia. Roeland Baan, Mittal Steel's CEO from its Rotterdam Office, was to be the guest of honour. A misunderstanding between the Prijedor mine headquarters and the Office of the High Representative in Banja Luka meant that no car arrived to pick him up at the airport. The mine headquarters claimed to have nothing to do with this visit. Murari Mukherjee, the mine director, disapproved of our project, because a memorial would be a reminder of the mine having been a killing camp. He left on a mission to

another iron-ore mine in Liberia, and insisted responsibility lay with the Office of the High Representative. Even though Roeland Baan was his boss, the OHR should arrange transport. ‘We are not a taxi service,’ retorted Graham Day.

Approaching Milorad Dodik’s residence reminded me of similar drives in James Bond movies. We passed the lake of a fish farm, owned by Dodik’s brother. Guards, concealed by the fields of tall corn, phoned ahead to warn of our arrival. We crossed a footbridge over a stream with a miniature water mill, and saw a large swimming pool. The sight of two boys, Milorad Dodik’s son and his friend, plunging in and, more importantly, clambering out again, came as a relief: no sharks then!

Marko Pavic, the mayor of Prijedor, had also been invited. We were met by two pairs of blue eyes; Milorad Dodik’s being even bluer than Marko Pavic’s. He was also taller and fitter than the mayor. Misha Stojnic, our driver, told us how the three of them used to play in a basketball team together. In those days, tall, athletic Milorad Dodik was the main goal scorer, while he and Marko Pavic left smaller Misha Stojnic to direct game plans. Marko and Milorad now ran the country as a personal fiefdom and enjoyed wealth and power. Meanwhile, Misha spent long periods unemployed and was grateful for any temporary job, like driving foreign visitors.

Milorad Dodik and Marko Pavic had clearly been discussing us before we arrived. Roeland Baan’s absence suited them, as they could attack the project and later blame its failure on us. It became clear they had put pressure on the mine director to find a way of preventing Roeland Baan’s presence at the meeting. Milorad Dodik, handsome and macho, welcomed us graciously, and agreed to support us. Meanwhile, Marko Pavic made it clear in a long speech, that he would not permit a memorial to dead Muslims He

did approve of memorials to dead Serbs. One such had recently been erected just outside Trnopolje, another killing camp. It stood as a calculatedly provocative insult to survivors.

Several other guests joined the lunch. These included the head of the main TV network in the Republika Srpska, and a journalist who had lost both legs in a car bomb planted by the SDS, because he had written articles about war crimes at a time when Serbs were denying them. These two vigorously supported our project to build a memorial to murdered Muslims, offering to give positive coverage when we decided to go public. However, when the time came, several months later, the network and the journalist did mention the project, but in such a way as to make it seem insignificant. Words and promises are cheap, particularly in the Balkans. The media and politicians know how to please the international community with promises and agreeable gestures of cooperation without committing to any of them. Whatever these two people from the media might promise us, the politicians put pressure on them, in the manner of Don Vito Corleone from *The Godfather*: offers that cannot be refused.

The lunch gave us a chance to observe these politicians operating.

The presence of the journalist injured for telling the truth, along with a celebrated elderly Jewish partisan, Ariel Livno, among the guests was a gesture to indicate Milorad Dodik's tolerant liberal attitudes. We were supposed to see him defending a free press, and honouring patriots regardless of ethnicity. However both Milorad Dodik and Marko Pavic paid no attention to these guests. Milorad Dodik's eyes looked nervously everywhere, sideways, backwards, checking and alert. Occasionally they fixed on us an intense and inscrutable gaze. He sat close to Marko Pavic. They muttered together frequently, but no one translated.

Timid waiters served lunch from the barbecue. We watched them timidly aim large canisters shooting yard-long flames at the meat, which was then served char-broiled to leather. Both Milorad Dodik and Mayor Pavic stuck their forks into these slice-resistant slabs and devoured them. The boys helped themselves from the barbecue and tried, in vain, to chew some sustenance before leaping back into the pool.

Once again, we endured tediously familiar and hypocritical speeches about the war being a civil conflict, and how Bosnia needed to be ethnically inclusive. We then explained the project and its process.

Marko Pavic attacked these proposals. Afterwards he shook our hands with a friendly smile, while Milorad Dodik put his arm around our shoulders, promising us support.

The only history mentioned was the Second World War. Ariel Livno, the Jewish partisan, spoke about the impossibility of Bosnia ever being a country where different groups could live together. He did not mean it as a defence of Serb nationalism, but as a grim fact. ‘You will get no-where with your project,’ he told us bluntly, but smiled encouragingly nonetheless. We touched history in shaking hands with this Balkan icon. We were speaking with a survivor of Europe’s worst conflict in centuries: a man who had fought alongside Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks against fascism, in one of the bloodiest campaigns of the Second World War. Milorad Dodik and Marko Pavic were born years after that cataclysm, but the mythology distilled in the survival of this Jewish fighter, fed their beliefs and shaped the events that lead directly to the Bosnia War.

Graham Day was pleased with the meeting: we had not made an enemy of Dodik.

The encounter introduced us to a major player in Bosnian politics.

This meeting took place during our attempts to bring survivors of the killing camp at Omarska together with those who had persecuted them and to initiate acknowledgement of the crimes committed as a prelude to co-existence and mutual acceptance if not reconciliation. Against expectations we did achieve fruitful meetings between the different sides and acknowledgment of what had happened. A mixed group of Bosnian Serbs and Muslims began working on plans for a memorial to those who were killed, and whose corpses had been found in the mass grave near Prijedor. What happened and how we managed this is told in *the white house: From Fear to a Handshake*. We always considered this story to be part of our overall aim, to bring former enemies together and establish co-operation. Rebuilding the Ferhadija Mosque remained our main goal, an act of reparation not just for Bosnia, but for Europe and beyond, a symbol of better relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Milorad Dodik did eventually support the reconstruction. During his subsequent presidency the mosque would be completed and in April 2015 he publicly laid flowers at the Srebrenica memorial, so acknowledging the crimes committed there in the name of Serb nationalism.

However the path to achieving our goal continued to be strewn with obstacles. The following parts of *Dust* describe this journey: the further travels and adventures across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. It is a story of persistence, many failures but also a few and significant successes. The book is intended to be a portrait of Europe and a few of its immediate neighbours in the first decade of the new millennium.

END OF PART ONE OF DUST BOOK TWO: MAPS, COMPASSES AND
MINEFIELDS