

APPENDIX TO DUST

AIMS OF THE TA'ARUF CONFERENCE 2003

The World Islamic Call Society which plans and organizes programs for the International Islamic Call Society has decided to arrange an expanded cultural and intellectual symposium under the motto: TA'ARUF - 'that ye may know each other'.

In its fourteenth session, the symposium was based on the understanding that Allah's wisdom has willed that people should be of diverse tribes, nations, races and colours, that Allah has honoured and entrusted man with his vice regency on earth to reform it and not to sow corruption, as well as being aware of the danger of conflicts and wars. These threaten the security and stability of our human community at large. This symposium was also held as a response to those voices speaking about the clash of civilizations and cultures.

The symposium was convened in Tripoli between September 20 - 22, 2003.

The symposium was attended by representatives of 130 Christian and Islamic organizations from different parts of the world, regional and international organizations, top religious delegates from western and eastern Churches, scholars, thinkers, researchers, media people and those concerned with dialogue issues.

The participants have studied a number of papers and interventions, which dealt with the concept of Ta'aruf. This concept produces constructive dialogue that promotes reciprocal respect, rejects oppression, resists tyranny, and establishes a mutual relationship between and among peoples and nations, on the basis of equality. This equality is enshrined in divine laws and international covenants. Furthermore, the delegates have produced: THE TRIPOLI STATEMENT FOR TA'ARUF, which is as follows:

THE TRIPOLI STATEMENT FOR TA'ARUF

We, the participants in this dialogue-based intellectual symposium held and supervised by the World Islamic Call Society and its International Council have examined the current state of international affairs. The world is threatened by people's non-compliance with and deviations from divine laws and from the mission of prophets and reformers, as well as by the decline of values and morals, and the emerging aspects of injustice among nations and individuals.

This examination addresses all the forces of good and justice for the sake of a better future for our generation and a more secure and peaceful world.

Our statement is based on the following principles:

- * Linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity among people and communities is a wondrous gift of Allah and an expression of Divine Will in making people different so that they get to know each other and strive together in building the world.
- * Man's integrity and freedom are basic principles of all faiths.
- * The violation or restricting of such integrity and freedom for any reason contradicts this principle. It clashes with God's will which has honoured man and made him vice-regent on earth.
- * Making distinction and preferences between human beings on the basis of religion, race or colour is racist. It is forbidden by every religion and law. The adoption of any form of racism under any circumstances is a contradiction of all values, morals, laws and beliefs.
- * Indiscriminate judgments and accusations are a grave injustice. They condemn the innocent for the offences of others, broaden the circle of oppression, endanger our communities and open the door for counter-violence.

* Ta'aruf and dialogue between and among people is the only way for solving the problems of our world in a just way. Resorting to force in dealing with such problems repeats the tragic wars witnessed by our world, wars which we must all resist.

* Self-defence is a natural instinct guaranteed by religions, customs and covenants. Confusing self-defense with terrorism and extremism contributes to oppression and hostility. It also distorts facts and creates double-standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To realize such principles on the ground, the participants have made the following resolutions:

- To assert Ta'aruf based on Christian and Islamic spiritual values and on the best humanist principles which affirm the dignity of man whom God has honoured and made His vice regent on earth.
- To work towards highlighting moral values common to Islam and Christianity that reject violence and extremism; to renounce indiscriminate conviction and punishment; to condemn all aspects of exploiting religion in matters of political differences and conflicts; to assert that ignoring other people's fundamental human rights contradicts those religious values which are a fundamental pillar of the faith in both religions, Islam and Christianity.
- To work towards maintaining the website Ta'aruf: http://islamonline.net/english/taarof_conference/index.shtm/ established by the World Islamic Call Society to be a permanent meeting site for its subscribers and other advocates of dialogue to spread the concept of Ta'aruf and transform it from being restricted to intellectual elites, to becoming a common language among all nations.
- To organize meetings between young Muslims and Christians to bring about Ta'aruf on a person-to-person basis in joint projects and activities such as summer camps. These joint activities among young people facilitate Ta'aruf and are a corrective to any negative stereotypical images about others, and consequently enable them to form reciprocal objective positive images.
- To address the new generation who are the victims of misguided and distorted information by conducting cultural and informative campaigns focusing on the high moral principles and values in both Islam and Christianity which forbid aggression against any individual, and any violation of his rights, including, in particular, his right to practice his religion freely.
- To publish a periodical containing a review of all the activities performed by Christian and Islamic societies, organizations and institutions within the framework of propagating Ta'aruf, deepening dialogue which leads to an exchange of information and coordination of activities, so Ta'aruf becomes reality.
- To appeal to everyone, especially writers, media people, and politicians, to avoid the use of prejudicial and hostile expressions and words which include unfair implied accusations against others or which attack their beliefs.
- To abide by the principles of a commitment to dialogue in words and deeds, and to consider dialogue as being the sole means for achieving Ta'aruf between people; also to introduce these components into our social and educational institutions.
- To emphasize the distinction between the extremist positions of some Western governments and their Christian faith, as well as between terrorism and the Islamic faith, as there exist false accusations and prejudices on both sides.

- To support the establishing of a permanent council for inter-religious dialogue within the framework of the United Nations in order to enhance the principles of Ta'aruf between people, and help spread the values of justice and peace in the world.
- To document, collect and translate the agenda, researches, and interventions of this symposium for wider circulation of the culture of dialogue and Ta'aruf.
- To extend their thanks and appreciation to the World Islamic Call Society and its International Council for organizing this meeting, and for all the arrangements leading to its success.

DONALD'S REPORT ON THE TA'ARUF CONFERENCE

Because it is probable that the Soul of Europe will be developing close links with WICS it is necessary to describe the work and standing of this organization.

WICS, a philanthropic and educational aid agency based in Tripoli, Libya, was founded in 1972, two years after Colonel Khadafi came to power. WICS' priority was to restore confidence and dignity to the people of Libya, and subsequently to the rest of the continent of Africa, in the catastrophic aftermath of the often violent and disruptive liberation from European colonialism in the decades following the Second World War. The World Islamic Call Society from its inception promoted a 'moderate' Islam, the main objective being to make it a fundamental unifying factor between the reborn African nations. The religion of Islam and the Arabic language became the core studies in all parts of the continent where WICS established its aid centres. WICS has a wide range of activities, including emergency relief, reconstruction, development and educational projects across Africa, Asia and in those areas of the world where there are Muslim minorities (such as the Philippines and Central America), so that these minorities 'may play their role effectively in societies where they live'.

In the last 4 years WICS has seen a marked development in its cooperation with international organizations, particularly in the West. In Paris the WICS office works closely with UNESCO on literary and cultural projects, in Rome with the Pontifical Institute for Inter-religious Dialogue. WICS both arranges and participates in a variety of symposia, seminars and conferences on culture, globalisation, reconciliation and dialogue etc., all over the world.

WICS is funded by Libya and by donations from other Arab states and individuals. It is one of the most substantial NGOs in that region and probably the most generous in its sympathies anywhere. This vision comes from the inspiration of its secretary general, DR Mohamed Sherif, Harvard educated and cosmopolitan, who founded the organization with Colonel Khadafi. Judging from our many conversations and his open-mindedness, I feel that our vision and objectives have much in common.

Tripoli was therefore a most suitable venue for the theme of the conference: TA'ARUF, a verse from the Koran which roughly translates as: 'getting to know one another', mutual understanding, tolerance of different views and respect with the aim of creating friendships across all faiths and boundaries. For three days Islamic and Christian scholars, experts on inter-religious dialogues, expounded on this text:

'O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other (not that you may despise

each other). Verify the most honoured of you in the sight of God who is the most righteous among you.'

I was not familiar with the particular rhetorical style and metaphysical way of thinking and writing of the majority of speakers. It would require an expert to be aware of to whom specifically the 'message' was aimed, but one thing became clear, that the call, repeated time and again for 'dialogue' in the context of our present unstable world situation was courageous. It is not the sort of theme that would endear the speakers, mostly Arabic, to terrorist networks.

I should add that my one intervention was greeted with much enthusiasm and referred back to many times by subsequent speakers. I told them that, while dialogue was necessary, it tended to remain the sole domain of experts, and that we should consider ways of turning words into action, specifically what to do on Monday morning. I spoke about justice as being the incarnation of the love of God. This struck a chord with all the people attending the conference, and especially those Muslims from minority cultures. I reminded them of the recent tragedy in the Balkans and specifically about the mufti of Belgrade, who happened to be present at the conference, how two years earlier he had informed me that there was no place for Muslims to be buried in Belgrade, and that they still do not have a graveyard. I spoke about the Brussels Presentation, bringing together groups of Muslims and Christians from most European countries who are moving beyond dialogue and of the project to reconstruct the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka as a sign of justice and of a new future, as the flagship project of an emerging network. Consequently I was interviewed by Egyptian, Italian, South African and Canadian broadcasting, all film companies covering the conference.

It would require a much longer piece to convey the spirit of this conference (Peter will be writing a longer chapter about it in his book). Most of the 150 participants were middle-aged and older, only 4 women present. Apart from an examination of the meaning of Ta'aruf, the conference had to deal with constant WICS business, Dr Sherif needing to privately meet representatives from all the countries covered by WICS aid activities, all queuing up to discuss their specific issues with him. Interpreters, translators, IT technicians creating websites and people observing or hanging around, as well as crowds of students based in the WICS college where the conference took place made the place hum with activity. The conference itself consisted only of plenary sessions, no group work. But as with all such gatherings, the best meetings took place outside the conference hall, particularly over lunch, dinner and the lengthy breaks. (WICS imported over a dozen cooks from Morocco to cater for the conference. The food was amazing and the hospitality more than generous.) I exchanged around 50 cards with other conference members and was invited onto the drafting committee of the Ta'aruf Declaration which then emerged in florid English.

THE CONFERENCE

TA'ARUF

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The conference consisted of a series of lectures on this text, delivered by academics and theologians from every part of the Muslim world. The speeches and formal discussions were filmed and recorded, translated and printed on the same day. A small group of representatives chosen by Dr Sherif, the chairman of the World Islamic Call Society, including Donald, drafted a resolution, summing up the findings, aims and future objectives of the conference. Donald and myself tried in vain to make the English translation less flowery and hyperbolic.

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Throughout the conference all delegates were given printed copies of the speeches in Arabic and in English translations. These could all be found on a web site, devoted to the conference and its objectives. It is not necessary therefore to report them in every detail here, but to reflect generally on the work of the conference, the different perspectives, personalities and characters, and also its wider significance regarding the rest of the world, not just the Islamic world, but the western world in particular.

EUROPE IS MUCH MORE THAN A FREE MARKET

Donald Reeves' interview for Danas in June 2002

The project named "The Soul of Europe" which was started two years ago represents an attempt to make a contribution to ethnical reconciliation through the renewal and rebuilding of religious and cultural monuments. The promotion of the project is being experienced in the Republic of Srpska, more precisely in Banja Luka. The spiritual father and director of this organization, The Revd Donald Reeves, with his associates, is now visiting Belgrade where, as he himself says in the interview for "Danas" ("Today"), he came in order to find new allies for the realization of this initiative.

Relatively little is known in this region about the activities of your organization?

- When I left St. James's church, Piccadilly in 1998 and retired, I started a program named "The Soul of Europe". Studying Europe it seemed to me that it is much more than just a free market, the rich become richer and the poor even poorer. There has to be another dimension that has to do with the soul of Europe itself, histories of the peoples and their aspirations. Two years ago I came to Belgrade and spoke against the bombing. That was completely opposite to the attitudes of my Church and Government in London. I was deeply dissatisfied with the bombing because it seemed to me an arrogant and thoughtless policy.

Your first action you named "Banja Luka – Steps towards peace, prosperity and reconciliation" based on the Coventry approach as a symbol of reconciliation after the Second World War. Why Banja Luka and not, shall we say, Sarajevo, Mostar, Croatia or Kosovo for that matter?

- First and foremost I thought about Kosovo, but it has been flooded with international agencies and is still not stable enough for this kind of project. We could not go to Croatia, we could not come to Serbia, but in Bosnia and Herzegovina there were endeavours to accomplish some sort of stability and that is one of the reasons we went to Banja Luka. So, it was not a systematic approach, but what I learnt about Banja Luka made me make a decision that it should be Banja Luka. There we are talking about the worst abuse of human rights during the war in Bosnia – the ethnic cleansing of Croatian and Muslim ethnical communities. Between May to December in 1993 12 Catholic churches were

destroyed and 16 mosques, 6 Catholic priests were killed. On the other hand, Banja Luka has been a frontline city since its founding, three major religions are strongly represented there and that is why it is possible for Banja Luka to be turned into a city of significance to which people from all parts of the world should come in order to learn more about the Islamic, Catholic and Orthodox traditions and the way they coexist.

On the occasion of my first visit I promised the mufti there that I would help him rebuild Ferhadija. I did not talk to any committees, just realized I had to fulfil my promise. That is how it started and that is why we are now committed to help the renewal of Banja Luka on educational, cultural and economic levels, by using the model of partnership as a container from which base we will learn together about civil society and the strengthening of the religious communities there. In that context the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque will represent a symbol of collaboration between Islam and Christianity. And that should happen in Banja Luka and not in Brussels or Bologna because it is in Banja Luka that it is now very difficult for people to live together and that is of major importance.

To tell the truth, it could have been somewhere else, but I think what is more important is the realization that the Coventry approach can be used as a model elsewhere in Bosnia and, later, in other places as well.

Is that the reason for your visit to Belgrade?

- I came to Belgrade, to the new country of Serbia and Montenegro, to see if I can find allies for this and similar projects among the Orthodox and anyone else who cares about a project like this. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there are about 600 Orthodox churches that were destroyed or damaged and about 220 properties in possession of the Serbian Orthodox Church that were also destroyed. It is our intention to help rebuild Orthodox churches, and later possibly Catholic ones as well. We are a small organization but what makes us especially interesting is the fact that we do not have any power.

The ultimate goal of your project is reconciliation among the different ethnic communities.

What is it that makes it any different to the others who also speak about reconciliation?

- Today in the Balkans everybody talks about reconciliation and I myself would want to prohibit the use of that term. My concern is, primarily, in justice. The events in Banja Luka symbolize a question of 'essential justice', which is important for the whole of Europe. I am very interested in the inter-confessional dialogue, provided that it is done in a very concrete way, that justice and human rights are discussed. I reckon that it is completely useless when people talk in an abstract way. To me it is a sort of abuse because the situation remains practically unchanged. Instead, we should deal with

these issues in a very concrete way both from religious and political points of view, whereas the question of justice is irreplaceable. It is, however, important for people to realize that it is not exclusively a religious approach.

The program, which is placed on the web site of “The Soul of Europe”, consists solely of political claims that could be questioned.

- As I have already mentioned, my coming to Banja Luka is connected with questions of justice. My perception of what is in a theological sense described as ‘the universal Kingdom of God’ is that it unavoidably includes both political and economical and social dimensions. The motivation for this work is drawn from my understanding of the Christian faith. It is a tough mixture of religion and politics because a suggestion that one Orthodox church should be rebuilt as well as a mosque is not just a political issue. Both in my country and in yours politics and religion are strongly connected.

The greatest challenge for you in Banja Luke is to understand Serbian nationalism because it is, as you are finding out, an extreme nationalism that lives not in historical but in mythical times.

- We will have to learn much about the way of thinking of the Serbian nationalists. Although their numbers grow fewer and fewer, there are still some who still do not live in the historical time and have a strongly expressed feeling that they are victims. I will give you an example: On May 7th last year the ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone for the Ferhadija Mosque had to be stopped because the extreme nationalistic forces had been mobilized. The reaction of the West was typical. Chris Patten said that all help would be abolished unless Serbs changed their medieval behaviour. Reproaches and threats followed and that is exactly what suits those who live in mythical times because then they can say that nothing else could be expected from a liberal, secularized and atheistic Europe. They do not understand us at all, they say, we are victims. So, they immediately become victims even if they themselves were guilty for something like that. That is why the enormous fear of the nationalists must be understood, fear that they are not understood by others and that their identity is jeopardized. They think Islam will take over the entire Bosnia, the entire Balkans and the entire world. So, we are talking of a mythical imagination and people should not be attacked for that. Facing the facts means nothing to them but they need to be shown the way they think, in fact, does not work in reality. That is what we are trying to do in Bosnia. People can be nationalists within their hearts but it must be clear within their heads that it does not work. There is an ongoing debate within the Serbian Democratic Party between the pragmatists and the old-fashioned politicians who grow fewer and fewer. We must

help the pragmatic nationalists to see that the old mythical apparatus that draws its roots even from the time of Prince Lazar, victims and fear of Islam, in time disappears.

Is that a characteristic only of the Serbian nationalists?

- I always face such a reaction. This does not mean that I am denying the existence of the Croatian or Muslim nationalism. People always say to me: "OK, but what about the others?" I am not interested in generalizations of the type that nationalism is only a characteristic of one particular ethnic group. We can speak about Irish nationalism as well, both of the Catholic and Protestant profiles. But we work in Banja Luka and therefore it is necessary that the essence of Serbian nationalism be understood, especially as we are working in an Orthodox environment. If, shall we say, we should work in Mostar, we would of course have to learn a great deal about Croatian nationalism. In this very moment we are in the Republic of Srpska. That is not some sort of a judgment, rather a path to understand the way of thinking.

That is why I want to learn about nationalism as much as I can, to reveal what hides within the hearts and souls of people like Radovan Karadzic. There is a conviction in the West that all Serbs are nationalists. I think that is entirely wrong. This phenomenon needs to be understood, we must go under its skin and that is why I will not join the international community that will always condemn this type of nationalism. There is no future in such an approach and that is why we want to help people see that that the principle does not work. I think the President of Yugoslavia (Kostunica) is an excellent example for understanding this. I have read his books and listened to his speeches. He can talk about the great and pure Serbia, but is, as well, pragmatic when it comes to the relations with Europe and USA. In a certain way similar things happen in the Republic of Srpska too.

You claim that Serbian nationalism functions according to an inner collective map. The elections in Bosnia in the beginning of the 90's showed that people divided along the ethnical rather than political lines.

- That is indeed some sort of a characteristic of nationalism of all ethnic groups and I agree with you. Of course, my intention was not to write an essay on nationalism in general but I only tried to connect our work with the understanding of the Serbian nationalism because I think that is very important to be understood. You need not agree with it, that is not the point, but the mythical is very interesting, occupies a very big and important place because I have often been told there are more Serbs in Paradise than any other nationality. Heaven must be an enormous place. That is a view held by many people. But there are more and more young people who want to look like David Beckham and are not

interested in being linked with nationalism. They want the same as their peers in other parts of the world, to have a job, a family, a home.

I understand you did not intend to write an essay on nationalism. Do you think it is possible to understand nationalism completely taken out of the context of other nationalisms and events?

- Of course one needs to understand the whole context and have a complete picture. It is very difficult for a foreigner, as well as for a small organization to understand each specific nationalism.

You say that the Serbian Orthodox Church is a champion in defending the Serbian nationalism from the dangers from outside. Recent history in this region shows that the other confessions were not behind when it comes to that?

- I agree entirely with such a claim. That was the case both with the Islamic community and the Croatian nationalism. Your remarks are correct and I intend to incorporate them in the text on the Internet.

You have described the Serbian Orthodox Church as the most isolated. Do you think that other Churches are less Euro-phobic and World-phobic or, maybe, more democratic than the Orthodox?

- That is a very difficult question. Islam is the most fragmented of all the major religions. For example, in Europe you have Algerians, Pakistanis, Turks, people from all the countries in the world who call themselves Muslims and have hardly anything in common except their religion. The idea that there is something called a monolithic Islam does not in fact correspond to the facts. For example, Turks who live and work in Berlin have almost nothing in common with Pakistanis who live and work in the same city. Their language separates them. There is a huge diversity within what we call the Islamic world.

When we talk about the Catholic Church, what disturbs the Orthodox community is the fact that Catholics are a part of the international community, especially the bishops, and, in that sense, the Catholic Church is less isolated. I think that the extreme Croatian nationalists are linked with the Catholic Church, but if we talk about the Catholic Church in Banja Luka, then I can say that it did not identify itself with the Croats at all. For example, Bishop Komarica says that he and his family have lived in Banja Luka for 300 years and are not a part of Croatian nationalism. The Serbian Orthodox Church was historically a very poor church in the 19th century. Many of the monasteries of the Serbian Orthodox Church had very few books, poor premises and suffered a great deal in the Second World War from German occupation, and then under the communists' dictatorship. That was a church under

constant siege and it lacks some sort of social self-confidence that the Greek or Russian churches have. There are practical reasons as well. Many priests and theologians do not speak any foreign languages so their presence at the ecumenical gatherings was not possible. In the Western media the Serbian Orthodox Church is seen as a strange organization led by elderly bishops. On the contrary, I think that it is still a very strong institution, no matter that it was more isolated than others. But, despite all of that, I am a very good friend with many bishops. I was also received by Patriarch Pavle, who blessed my work.

Donald Reeves

OUTCOMES OF SOUL OF EUROPE WORK IN BOSNIA

PAPER TO BE PRESENTED TO THE BRUSSELS COMMISSIONERS 25.10.02

Prepared by Simon Goodenough

October 2001 – October 2002

(Post the Coventry Consultation, 24- 28 September, 2001)

1. THE FERHADIJAH MOSQUE PROJECT

1.a. The Islamic Community in Bosnia, Interfaith bodies in Europe, and the International Islamic Community.

The Soul of Europe, SoE, has now gained the trust of the Islamic Community in Bosnia to undertake the project to reconstruct the Ferhadija Mosque. During the year progress in this project can be measured in the following thirteen ways:

- 1 The license to reconstruct the Ferhadija Mosque was granted – pressure from the SoE was an important part of this decision.
2. Permission to build a new mosque in Banja Luka, in addition to the Ferhadija, was given by the municipal authorities due to direct pressure from SoE.
3. The first meeting of the Advisory Committee on the project to reconstruct the Ferhadija Mosque was held on July 28th. All interested parties from the Islamic

community attended. The meeting was chaired by the Revd Donald Reeves, who, at the invitation of the mufti, then attended prayers at the Begova Mosque in Sarajevo.

4. The Reis, Dr Ceric, has agreed the structure of the organisation for the Ferhadija Mosque project.
5. The Soul of Europe was the guest of honour at the opening of the mosque at Gradiska on July 28th. The Revd Donald Reeves spoke at the opening.
6. The Islamic community has agreed that the SoE's representative in Bosnia, Adnan Jabucar, should be the person responsible for relations with the municipality of Banja Luka and the entity of the Republika Srpska in connection with the Ferhadija project.
7. There have been six meetings with the mufti of Banja Luka, including one social gathering at his house in Sarajevo. The Revd Donald Reeves addressed the Muslim community at the end of Ramadan in Banja Luka.
8. The result of the SoE's journeys and considerable correspondence with interfaith bodies has shown that there is a critical mass of European support for the SoE's involvement with the Ferhadija Mosque project.
 - a. Interfaith bodies in Norway, Austria, France and Italy have given their support to the project, following SoE visits to each country this year.
 - b. Interfaith bodies in Sweden, Finland and Denmark have also given their support, following repeated SoE contacts this year.
 - c. The Pontifical Council for Islamic-Christian understanding at the Vatican has given its support, following SoE's visit this year.
 - d. The Conference of European Churches has given its support.
 - e. The principal Inter-faith organisations in the UK have encouraged the work of the Soul of Europe in Bosnia as has the previous Archbishop of Canterbury.

As well as European support, the Soul of Europe has attracted support from considerable sections of the international Islamic community.

9. The Prince of Wales said at the AGM of the International Business Leaders Forum that he will do everything he can to help the Soul of Europe.

10. Alper Utku, Chairman of Middle East Consultants, has invited the Soul of Europe to Istanbul in November to meet wealthy Turks who have expressed an interest in the Ferhadija Mosque project.

11. The Emir of Qatar has expressed an interest in the Christian-Muslim aspect of the project to reconstruct the Ferhadija Mosque. He has told Dr Badawi, Principal of the Muslim College in London, that he wants to help. The Revd Donald Reeves is in touch with the Emir's private secretary and is awaiting an invitation to Doha.

12. The Soul of Europe had a positive meeting with the Malaysian Ambassador in Sarajevo who supports the project and will assist us in fundraising.

13. The Revd Donald Reeves had a positive meeting with John Battle MP. The Prime Minister has given him a special interfaith portfolio, particularly in relation to the Islamic community in the UK. John Battle has told Donald Reeves that he could arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary when the Soul of Europe is ready.

1.b. The Catholic and Orthodox communities in Banja Luka.

The Soul of Europe has now gained the trust of the two other religious communities in the Republika Srpska. Progress in gaining this trust can be measured in the following eight ways:

The Catholic Diocese of Banja Luka

1. The Revd Donald Reeves spoke at the re-consecration of the Catholic cathedral in November.

2. The Revd Donald Reeves wrote an article for the Tablet, called 'Bosnia's Healing Diocese' (20th July, 2002), in which he described the need for advocacy and friendship for the Diocese of Banja Luka. This diocese is quite different from that of Mostar, which is very nationalistic and an embarrassment to the Vatican. A poor response has initiated a meeting for the Revd Donald Reeves with the Archbishop of Westminster, and arrangements are being made for a visit by Bishop Komarica to undertake a preaching and lecture tour in the UK.
3. At Presnace, a small suburb of Banja Luka, not only was the church destroyed but the priest and a nun were murdered and their bodies burnt. The new priest is establishing a centre for reconciliation, and the church is being rebuilt by Muslims, Serbs and Croats. The SoE has committed itself to help the community to develop a network of support from across Europe, and the community of Presnace has welcomed this work.
4. The Soul of Europe spent three consecutive days with Bishop Komarica, learning about the devastation to his diocese.

The Orthodox Diocese of Banja Luka

5. Bishop Jefrem invited the Revd Donald Reeves to preach on two occasions at the Sunday liturgy at the cathedral in Banja Luka. The highly unusual nature of these invitations, which were of course accepted, cannot be over-stressed.
6. Bishop Jefrem invited the Soul of Europe to spend two days with him visiting his diocese to learn about its problems. Peter Pelz, a director of the project, was able to speak with the bishop in Russian, which delighted the bishop, and helped the relationship to develop between the Soul of Europe and the Orthodox Diocese.
7. At a concert of the choir of Banja Luka in the Cathedral, the Soul of Europe was given front row seats next to the Bishop.

8. Conversations are now taking place between the Soul of Europe and the Bishop about initiatives:
- a. A visit to the Diocese of Exeter by Bishop Jefrem and some of his priests at the invitation of the Bishop of Exeter, to study Anglican patterns of rural ministry.
 - b. An exchange of Serbian Orthodox and Anglican monks and nuns.
 - c. Opportunities for Bishop Jefrem's priests to learn English.
 - d. An exhibition of Bosnian Serb iconography together with examples of contemporary Western Christian art in Banja Luka.
 - e. An invitation to the UK for the Banja Luka choir, which has won a number of international awards.

These initiatives are now being seriously discussed. They are signs of the growing trust that Bishop Jefrem is establishing with the Soul of Europe. He knows well the SoE's determination to see the Ferhadija Mosque completed. The SoE is working closely with the Roger Bryant, head of OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, who is doing everything he can to get the three religious leaders to start to work closely together. OSCE is a useful ally.

It must be strongly emphasised that there is a great need for time in which to develop trust between the religious leaders and the Soul of Europe. Ian Cliff, after a meeting with Bishop Komarica, told the Revd Donald Reeves that the international community should take religious groups seriously, and not just to consider them as multi-ethnic groups. This the Soul of Europe has done successfully and uniquely in Bosnia.

2. THE REGENERATION OF BANJA LUKA

Back to back with the commitment to reconstruct the Ferhadija Mosque and promote reconciliation is the SoE's commitment to the regeneration of Banja Luka. It is a fundamental principle of the SoE's work in Bosnia that there is no point in regenerating Banja Luka without reconstructing its heart – the Ferhadija Mosque –

and that there is no point in reconstructing the mosque without the regeneration of Banja Luka.

In support of this principle, the Alliance for Religion and Conservation has earmarked the Ferhadija Mosque as a religious site and recognised that the project has the potential for regeneration of the environment. This will be announced at a reception attended by the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh on November 12th. The SoE instigated this move and will also be attending.

To further the process of regeneration, the Soul of Europe has, in the last twelve months:

1. Opened an office in Banja Luka, and appointed two staff members. Along with the SoE's representative in Sarajevo, the SoE now has three full time staff members in Bosnia.
2. Completed a Profile Report on Banja Luka by SoE staff. The report was presented at a reception in the City on Friday October 18th, and has been sent to the FCO. Preparations for the profile were assisted by the International Development Consortium.
3. Made presentations to the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska on April 29th, and to the G7 Ambassadors in Sarajevo on March 15th.
4. Become a high profile organisation in Bosnia. The SoE's visits are well covered in national and local papers and television. The SoE is developing a media strategy.
5. Become an organisation with leverage, following the success of the Coventry Consultation. The SoE has had many meetings with the Mayor of Banja Luka and members of his cabinet, and with the new president of the Republika Srpska, Dragan Cavic, prior to his presidency.

6. Initiated an exchange between students and teachers from Banja Luka and three schools in and around Exeter. Eight teachers from the Banja Luka High School visited Devon in June 2002 to learn about the UK's educational system. Teachers and students from Devon will be visiting Banja Luka in March/April 2003. These exchanges will be developed across as many educational organisations as possible in Banja Luka and their counterparts in Europe.
 7. Assisted Svetlana Cenic, economic advisor to President Cacic, to participate in a course on Collaborative Partnership at Cambridge University.
 8. Established a working partnership with the Scottish Civic Forum, which has agreed to assist the Soul of Europe in developing a new culture of citizenship in Banja Luka. This will proceed through a variety of activities and projects now being planned, and will be included in future fundraising proposals.
 9. Responded to the invitation by a group of MEPs to undertake a presentation in Brussels in the New Year of the Soul of Europe's work, and to include participation by the Republika Srpska and Federation politicians.
 10. Completed a grant application to the EIDHR fund in Brussels for projects in Banja Luka. The application is to be delivered on November 4th.
 11. Signed up four local partner NGOs to contribute activities to the SoE's project for the regeneration of Banja Luka. These activities include work with young people with disabilities, work with women's groups, cultural activities with young people, and dialogues between citizens and politicians on democracy and human rights.
 12. Secured the interest of Amicus, the charity established by the AEEU, in developing a pilot project for establishing a small business enterprise in Banja Luka.
- Of these twelve initiatives, the most significant is the link with the Scottish Civic Forum, which offers a positive model for the SoE's proposal of a civic forum in Banja

Luka. The Scottish Civic Forum has agreed to help in setting up the civic forum in Banja Luka and in setting targets for the forum and evaluating its progress.

As a result of these outcomes the Soul of Europe would now like to prepare a proposal for the FCO Conflict Prevention Fund for the next three years. After that time, the SoE, having prepared a careful exit strategy, will withdraw from Bosnia.

Signed Donald Reeves, 25 October 2002

A PROPOSAL

FROM THE SOUL OF EUROPE FOR THE WORLD ISLAMIC CALL SOCIETY.

'My soul thirsts for God ,the God of life; when shall I go to seek the face of God'
Psalm 42.2.

'To God belongs the East and West; whithersoever you turn ,there is the face of God'
Surah - 2.115.

This paper is in 8 parts as follows:

- 1 INTRODUCTION.
2. 7 PROPOSALS FROM THE SOUL OF EUROPE FOR CONSIDERATION BY WICS.
3. THE BRUSSELS CONSULTATION - a brief retrospect
4. THE BRUSSELS NETWORK.
5. NEW INSTRUMENTS FOR DIALOGUE
6. STAFFING AND FINANCE.
7. OUTCOMES.
8. REVIEWING AND REPORTING PROCEDURES.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Soul of Europe has every reason to be grateful to WICS. Not only did WICS support the Brussels Consultation but it also supported the Coventry Consultation in September 2001, which was a break through for the peace process in Bosnia. Without this support for Brussels and Coventry the Soul of Europe would no longer be

functioning.

The Soul of Europe and WICS share 2 concerns. One is to encourage Muslim minority communities so that they can play a full part in the wider community, and the other is a profound commitment to **Ta'aruf** described in the Tripoli Declaration for Mutual Acquaintance.

It is these concerns which lead us to wish to intensify and develop the relationship between the Soul of Europe and WICS.

The Soul of Europe wishes to concentrate on the issue of the integration of Islam, culturally, economically, socially, in matters of religion and politically in Europe.

We are a small organisation, and we wish to continue in that way, although we need to increase our staff if we are to achieve our goals.

We also recognise that it is much less expensive to develop projects in the poorest areas of the world than in the West. That is why we try and keep our costs down.

NB: The Brussels Consultation material lacked the WICS logo. A joint logo of the Soul of Europe and WICS must be designed as soon as possible and appear on all our literature.

2. 7 PROPOSALS.

i. Consultation at St George's, Windsor Castle, March 23-March 26th. We are pleased to arrange, organise, and facilitate this Consultation

ii. Ta'aruf Consultations. The Soul of Europe would be pleased to participate in the preparation and planning of further Ta'aruf Consultations for other regions in the world.

iii Visit to Africa. The Soul of Europe is honoured to accept WICS's invitation to visit Africa with Dr Sherif.

iv The Islamic College. Donald Reeves would be pleased to lecture at the College on the following subjects:

a) The essentials of Christianity.

b) How Christianity came to Africa.

c) Implementing Ta'aruf..

Peter Pelz would be pleased to lecture on An Introduction to Western Culture. Peter is a writer and artist and has considerable teaching experience.

These events could either take the form of public lectures or a series of short courses as part of the curriculum of the College.

v Implementing Ta'aruf. Donald Reeves together with a Muslim who has experience on a similar project of Muslim-Christian cooperation, would like to write a book on the working out of Ta'aruf. The book would include examples of successful collaboration. The book would be commissioned by WICS and published by WICS. The Soul of Europe has already had published one book: *A Tender Bridge - a Journey to Another Europe*. A second book has been written and a third one is in preparation.

The Soul of Europe would be pleased to be part of the Editorial Team for the periodical about Ta'aruf as proposed in the Tripoli Appeal.

vi Arabic/English Translations. Peter Pelz would be pleased to assist with the revising and polishing of translations from Arabic into English.

vii The Soul of Europe proposes that it could assume a linking role for WICS in the UK or mainland Europe - setting up meetings for Dr Sherif with, for example, the Prime Minister.

3 **BRUSSELS - A BRIEF RETROSPECT.**

* Feed Back. The Soul of Europe has invited reactions from the participants. What we have heard so far has been most positive - as one person wrote to me: 'We did a lot of business in a very short time'. People appreciated learning about Bosnia and meeting others from different parts of Europe. We sent everyone a brief report. A more substantial report will follow.

* Bureaucracy. The administrative arrangements were very elaborate. Thus, the Parliament needed at least 6 months notice to have had an Exhibition. Without Jenny-Lee Spencer's painstaking work there could have been a lot of hitches. We managed to get the meeting rooms in the Parliament free of charge.

* Members of the European Parliament. Donald Reeves had 52 meetings with 52 politicians. Some 20 of these are now particularly committed to working on Minority Issues in Europe particularly working with Muslim minorities. 12 came to the Presentation. These numbers are regarded as a good rate of success in this most lobbied of forums

4 **THE BRUSSELS NETWORK**

THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN ISLAM IS LARGELY AN OPEN ISSUE. IT REPRESENTS A REAL INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE FOR MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS ALIKE WHO MUST COME FACE TO FACE WITH ONE ANOTHER AND INTEGRATE THE NEW OTHERNESS. IT ALSO ENTAILS A SOCIAL CHALLENGE BECAUSE THE CAPACITIES OF OUR SOCIETIES TO IMPLEMENT NEW INSTRUMENTS OF DIALOGUE AND COMMUNICATION WILL COME INTO PLAY. BE THAT AS IT MAY, THIS PROCESS OF CO-INCLUSION BETWEEN ISLAM AND THE WEST WILL BE A LONG ONE.

From *Convergences Musulmans* by Felice Danetto and Jorgen Nielsen.

The Future of the Network: The Soul of Europe proposes to strengthen and develop the work of the groups who came to Brussels and some of those who were prevented from coming. We propose to visit these Groups with a focussed agenda as follows:

* **Project development.** We would ask how the projects would look like in 2 or 3 years time. We would encourage them to create links with suitable secular authorities, relevant academic institutions, and to build up a bank of public figures, decision makers and media people in their region who support the vision of Muslim/Non Muslim collaboration. We will prepare a simple questionnaire for the groups to complete. Donald Reeves has had considerable previous experience in the area of project development.

* **The Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka.** We would want to encourage participation in this project.

* **Ta'aruf.** We would ask the groups from each country to set up a high profile public meeting where the concept of Tar'aruf can be presented and promoted.

Following these meetings we would like to have a follow up - not the whole group but a pair from each country. Such a follow up could take place in July. The purpose of the follow up meeting would be to engage in mutual learning through presentations of the activities of the different groups. By then the Soul of Europe will have established a 'virtual community' on the internet with a project coordinator whose responsibility would be to animate this activity. This can be discussed at our meeting next week in Tripoli.

We would wish to undertake visits to Aarhus, Paris, Duisberg, Brussels, Leicester, as well as to those groups who were not able to come to Brussels in Gottenborg, Rotterdam and Vienna.

A note on Spain. We have a special invitation to visit Spain. The Spanish Delegation whom we met in Tripoli and who came to the Brussels Consultation are having difficulties in establishing an inter-religious council and hoped we might help them. Barcelona is also the venue for the

Parliament for the World's Religions, which meets every 10 years in different countries. It will meet from July 7th to July 13th. The Soul of Europe will bring some information about this gathering. This may be an event which WICS and the Soul of Europe should attend together. The Soul of Europe would also like to visit the recently opened mosque in Granada. (Your government bought the land for the mosque 20 years ago)

A note on the UK. Because the Soul of Europe is a UK initiative our work here will be to gain support for the Ferhadija projeject. Leicester is arranging a Fund Raising event in March this year for the Ferhadija

5 NEW INSTRUMENTS FOR DIALOGUE.

Local projects are however not enough. Therefore, using our existing contacts and discovering new ones we will ask this question of each country: 'What would help improve relations between Islam and Christianity in your town,region,or country?'

What are the issues that concern both Muslims and Christians? Are there any forums where Muslims and Christians can meet together?' The Soul of Europe would then undertake a very informal survey to suggest some answers to these questions.

We would particularly wish to listen to Muslim leaders.

If there is a positive response to these questions we would share our findings with senior religious leaders in each country. The UK could provide a very significant resource in this area. Under the guidance of Bishop John Austin, the Chair of the Advisory Council of the Soul of Europe, detailed preparations are well underway for the establishing of a National Council for Muslims and Christians. The Soul of Europe will bring details about this activity to Tripoli. We need to discuss the possibility of an enlarged Advisory Council meeting regularly with scholars on Ta'aruf.

In this type of development work, the Soul of Europe is like a 'broker'. Our proposal is to undertake a brief survey, prepare the ground and sow the seeds.

THESE THEN ARE THE PLANS FOR THE SOUL OF EUROPE FOR THE NEXT 2 YEARS:

- * To work directly with WICS.
- * To strengthen the projects the Soul of Europe has discovered in Europe.
- * To help put in place new instruments of dialogue. This could be a suitable theme for Windsor.

6. STAFFING AND FINANCE.

- * Staffing

The Soul of Europe is a lean organisation. In the UK there is just Donald Reeves and Peter Pelz. We operate from the Coach House, Crediton. We do not rent office space either in London or Devon because it is too expensive, although the Soul of Europe has access to many meeting places in London. Formal meetings, for example, can take place at the Athenaeum where Donald Reeves is a member.

For the Brussels Consultation, the Soul of Europe employed Jennylee Spencer who undertook all the arrangements for the Consultation.

Our representative in Bosnia is Adnan Jabucar. He has worked for the Soul of Europe for 3 years. He made the film shown at Brussels. His advice as an articulate Bosnian Muslim over the years has been absolutely invaluable. His post has been funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for 3 years. This funding has now come to an end.

To deliver the programme the Soul of Europe has outlined, we need to continue to employ **Jennylee Spencer** on a 3 day a week basis. Her task will be to:

- a) Fix meetings for Donald Reeves and Peter Pelz in the UK and mainland Europe and in Libya.
- b) Make travel arrangements for the Soul of Europe - time consuming because we travel as economically as possible.
- c) Convene, as and when, meetings of the Members of the European Parliament who supported the Brussels Consultation and will become the Champions for the Soul of Europe. Their contacts and networking experience are essential.
- d) Ensure the Soul of Europe and WICS know about all the initiatives which emerge from Brussels about Muslim/Non Muslim collaboration
- e) Investigate funding sources for the Soul of Europe.
- f) Convene the Muslim/Christian group present in Brussels.

Jennylee Spencer would continue to be based in Brussels. She is developing a portfolio of work

To undertake this work the Soul of Europe needs a coordinator of this emerging network - through the website. **Adnan Jabucar** could undertake this work. He would animate this activity from Sarajevo. His other task is to undertake all the necessary research so that the meetings, which are arranged for the Soul of Europe in Europe, are well prepared. His task will be to identify all the key organisations and people in each country who have a concern for Ta'aruf. This research will be undertaken through the internet - it is very time consuming.

He will have a major responsibility in creating a database for the Ta'aruf network in Europe, and also if WICS wanted such a network, could include other regions of the world. This database would be invaluable, and a significant 'capital' asset for the Soul of Europe and WICS. He will help to facilitate interest in the Ferhadija project. He will work closely with Jenny Lee Spencer

In the UK the Soul of Europe needs a book-keeper for 1 day a week.

Thus with modest resources in the UK, including the part-time bookkeeper, Jenny Lee Spencer working on a part time basis in Brussels and Adnan Jabucar working full time from Sarajevo, Donald Reeves and Peter Pelz would be free to undertake the work we have described

* Finance.

The attached budget shows the funds we need for 2 years. At the time of writing we are continuing to explore funding opportunities in Northern Europe. For example, the Soul of Europe is preparing to apply to the King Badouin Foundation which has a particular concern for issues around Islam in Europe. The Soul of Europe would like to invite its Director to the Windsor Consultation.

Apart from WICS, the Soul of Europe receives modest contributions from individuals in the UK.

7. **OUTCOMES.**

It is not possible to include outcomes of most of the 7 proposals, which we are offering to WICS until they have been discussed and agreed. So they are not mentioned below. We would appreciate a full briefing on our role for our visit to Africa to which you have kindly invited us. In the light of the 7 proposals the outcomes might have to be adjusted.

YEAR 1.

By February 29th: the website will be activated, the UK staff appointed., and final report of Brussels consultation circulated.

Also: the Windsor consultation organised and planned, and Brussels Champions have met and started work.

By April 30th, the Windsor report circulated, and if agreed, Dr Sherif's visit to PM happened - outcomes followed up..

By June 30th, first round of visits to all projects will have been completed. Visits will have taken place in the previous months. and planning for gathering of the Network will have been finalised. (Visits will have been carefully prepared on the lines of the focussed agenda as in the report)

By July 31st - Report of network gathering circulated, and report of attendance at World Parliament of Religions circulated - if it is agreed that WICS and the Soul of Europe attend preparations for enlarged Advisory Council meeting, say 2 days, with scholars on Ta'aruf present in place for meeting in October.

By October 31st, goals and targets for 2005 will have been agreed. - to include at least one gathering on Ta'aruf - its theory and implementation.

By December 31st, all existing projects and new ones which have joined during the year will have been visited to engage with the issues around 'New Instruments of Dialogue'.

YEAR 2.

We anticipate further strengthening and development of local projects across the European Union, with the addition of new projects, and each project developing beyond just the local - indicated in the report.

We anticipate the emergence of new instruments of dialogue across the European Union, particularly in France and Germany, learning from the UK experience.

We anticipate planning a major event celebrating the civilising contribution of Islam in Europe for 2006.

We anticipate further opportunities in a variety of settings for reflection on Ta'aruf,

thus encouraging the integration of Muslims, culturally, economically, socially, in religious matters, and politically into Europe.

8 REVIEWING AND REPORTING PROCEDURES.

Because a lot this work is pioneering, the Soul of Europe engages in regular theological reflection and would be grateful for the insights, which WICS can share with us, particularly on the development of the concept of Ta'aruf. The Soul of Europe would welcome contact with Muslim scholars who could offer us counsel and advice as our work progresses. We would like to strengthen our Advisory Council considerably, so that we could have an extended meeting once a year reflecting on our progress. Perhaps this could be in Tripoli.

AND FINALLY:

Europe is becoming increasingly an atheist society in which religion is despised and feared by many secular authorities. In his Christmas Day Sermon from Canterbury Cathedral the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, urged Muslims, Christians and Jews to stand up for each other and support one another. This is what the Soul of Europe is doing. And we are pleased to identify ourselves with the Archbishop's words and are honoured to be associated with the World Islamic Call Society. As we quoted at the start of this paper, both Islam and Christianity are fundamentally oriented toward the face of God:

'My soul thirsts for God, the God of life; when shall I go to seek the face of God'
Psalm 42.2.

'To God belong the East and the West; whithersoever you turn, there is the face of God' Surah 2.115.

Peter Pelz. MA.(cantab)
The Revd Donald Reeves. MA(cantab). M.Litt(oxon)
8th January 2004

We added a budget, which needed scrupulous editing.

After scrutiny and criticisms from the various deputies we concluded with the following minutes, that outlined the projects we would continue to work on for the foreseeable future. Mr Rabu had taken over from Mr Hakimi, kindly and unvuncular, who had been with Dr Sherif since the founding of the organization. Mr Elmeri spoke fluent English, and trained his most critical eye on our proposals, insisting on a number of small, but significant changes that actually enhanced our partnership.

THE WORLD ISLAMIC CALL SOCIETY AND THE SOUL OF EUROPE

MINUTES OF MEETING 9TH FEBRUARY

Present:

IBRAHIM RABU
AGELI ELMERI
MUFTAH ABUAISHA
DONALD REEVES
PETER PELZ

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING:

To discuss the Proposals of the Soul of Europe for collaboration with the World Islamic Call Society

Donald Reeves presented a proposal for two years

- to work directly with WICS
- to strengthen the projects the Soul of Europe has discovered in Europe
- to help put in place new instruments of dialogue.

WORKING DIRECTLY WITH WICS

- **TA'ARUF CONSULTATIONS IN AFRICA**
English-speaking African countries. It was agreed that the Soul of Europe would participate in seminars etc., on TA'ARUF. WICS to make arrangements for after June 2004.
- **THE ISLAMIC COLLEGE**
The Soul of Europe will undertake courses of lectures on Christianity, how it came to Africa and to particularly on implementing on TA'ARUF. WICS to make arrangements, again after June 2004.
- **IMPLEMENTING TA'ARUF**
A book will be written on implementing TA'ARUF, by Donald Reeves and a similar Muslim who is both a academic and a practitioner. WICS to propose name of joint author.
- **ARABIC AND ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS**
It was agreed that Peter Pelz would assist in the revising and polishing of translations from Arabic into English. WICS to provide the material (bringing to Windsor)
- **LINKING ROLE**

It was agreed that the Soul of Europe will endeavour to arrange meetings when needed between WICS and other European religious leaders and officials.

ST GEORGE'S WINDSOR

Donald Reeves has already begun to invite eminent and useful Christian and Muslim speakers. He will provide a list as soon as possible, a few names below. It was agreed that WICS will chose 10 Muslim representatives and the Soul of Europe 10 non-Muslim representatives.

5 people will be coming from WICS and the Soul of Europe.

WICS will send the list of guests as soon as possible, including hopefully Prince Hassan of Jordan, the former President of Lebanon and others.

Donald Reeves will organize space for a meeting of the core group after the consultation officially ends.

SPEAKERS

The Soul of Europe has invited speakers to the Windsor Consultation, including Karen Armstrong and Dr Siddiqui and Joergen Nielsen (above). In addition Professor Andrew Samuels, Professor of Politics at Essex University will be a speaker.

(We produced a list of names, which changed in the weeks leading up to the consultation)

The Conference can hold up to 25 residents, but there is further accommodation available at the Castle Hotel just outside Windsor Castle.

It will be important to identify a colleague at WICS who will help administrate this event. Meanwhile the Soul of Europe will make all the arrangements in the UK.

MISCELLANEOUS POINTS ABOUT THE WINDSOR CONSULTATION

- It was agreed to invite Dr Sherif to make a presentation at the start of the conference
- It was agreed that WICS would provide a logo for use on printed material, and booklets about WICS in English for Peter Pelz to take back to the UK.
DONE
- It was agreed that there will be a meeting with WICS and the Soul of Europe after the consultation at St Georges to finalize the budget for the future work of the partnership between the Soul of Europe and WICS. Donald Reeves will organize accommodation for this meeting at St Georges.
- Donald Reeves will facilitate the conference
- Everyone will need opportunity to contribute
- The Soul of Europe will take forward the outcomes of the Windsor Consultation as part of our work with WICS.

THE BRUSSELS NETWORK

It was agreed that the Soul of Europe should continue to strengthen and develop the Network along the lines of the proposal and that a follow up of selected representatives from all the groups will take place in Tripoli October or November 2004. It was also emphasized that a task for each of these groups would be to establish high profile public meetings in their region on the concept of TA'ARUF.

THE PARLIAMENT OF WORLD RELIGIONS
BARCELONA 7TH – 13TH JULY 2004

It was agreed that WICS and the Soul of Europe should offer a combined presentation as a unique example of collaboration between a Muslim and Christian organization. The Soul of Europe and WICS will ask the Spanish representatives at the TA'ARUF conference to administer this presentation. WICS will complete the application form, for both organizations, as soon as possible. WICS needs to identify a staff member who both the Spanish and Soul of Europe representatives can liase with. Muftah Abuaisha suggested a day meeting in Rome with the Soul of Europe and the Spanish representatives to plan this. The Soul of Europe will get in touch with them.

NEW INSTRUMENTS FOR DIALOGUE

Emerging from the first year's work the Soul of Europe will raise with Muslim leaders first and then Christian leaders in each European country the questions: 'What would help improve relations between Islam and Christianity and are there forums where Muslims and Christians can meet?' In this kind of development the Soul of Europe is like a broker.

(NOT DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING BUT IMPORTANT

The Soul of Europe would like an enlarged advisory council meeting together with Muslims concerned with TA'ARUF reflecting on our activities and their progress. Perhaps in Tripoli or elsewhere at the end of the year.)

We included an alternative budget, which they found more acceptable, though there was barely any difference to the first one. The fact that we had tried to cut our costs impressed them.

SEPTEMBER 2002

Dear Bishop

Today is the first anniversary of the Coventry Consultation. I want first of all to thank you for coming and for your courtesy and generous hospitality which you offered the Soul of Europe ever since. I cherish our friendship, strengthened by our faith held in common in Christ our Saviour who is also our hope.

I am writing this letter because you are a bishop in the Church of God and carry considerable burdens of responsibility and expectations from your priests and people.

This is a private letter.

I want to share with you a brief theological meditation which my experience of working in Banja Luka has inspired. I am not a professional theologian but I have

written and had published a number of books and the sort of theology I undertake is done while on the move.

I have called the meditation: 'Seeing in the Dark', for this is what the last eighteen months have been for me.

Our work in Bosnia has been something like a pilgrimage (though the destination is not clear). I have sensed so many times that I am approaching and even crossing a boundary. There is a new landscape hinted at, inviting me to come and begin to inhabit it. But the invitation is also disorientating and frightening. It requires a loss and a risk. The darkness gathers round as I have crossed one threshold after another.

Prejudices disappear. Ideas change. Crossing boundaries produces confusion and momentarily the pilgrim is lost. (The icon has been a reassuring presence in this time – praying with the icons of the Virgin, particularly the Hodegetria: the Mother of God shows us the way).

These experiences are rarely planned. Like a visitation from beyond, they present themselves unexpectedly.

There have been so many, it would take a book to recount them. Here are three.

Last December you invited the Soul of Europe to attend the liturgy in the Orthodox Cathedral of Banja Luka. You invited me to address the congregation. When I am asked to speak to an unknown group, I try to catch the eyes of the people, because the eyes are the windows into our souls. I looked. Some were indifferent, but most were curious. But what struck me most was the unutterable sadness of so many of those people, young and old, themselves exiles in their own land. The sadness was compounded by the traditional rich liturgy, exquisitely sung, immaculate vestments and beauty of the words and music, expressing the longing for God. The darkness lifted.

Then there were visits to the devastated Catholic churches with Bishop Komarica, one after the other. We arrived and the bishop went straight to the sanctuary, lowered his head in prayer. I followed close behind, saying the Lords Prayer, trying to pray for the priest and the people of each community, now devastated and dispersed - this in Europe where all Christian faiths have flourished for centuries. How could we have let this happen? The bishop took us to Presnace. When I learned of what had happened there, I did not want to stay. What could I say or do? Father Zvonko took us to the room where those acts of barbarism took place. Now it is a chapel with a few chairs, prayer and hymn books, a lighted candle, photographs of Father Philip Lukenda and Sister Cecilia Grgie. And there in that small room, in the presbytery of a remote parish, the darkness lifted, for it is a place of healing, grace and love.

In June there was a meeting in Sarajevo to consider the reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque. At the end of the meeting, I was invited to Friday prayers at the Begova Mosque. It was a beautiful and compelling moment. I will never forget the silence, stillness and attention of that large congregation in Sarajevo, and the plaintive chanting of the cantor so far, so very far, from the pictures portrayed in our media of Islam as a religion of terrorism and fanatics.

So everything changes. The darkness gathers; then disperses. Where am I?

To answer that question I will try and describe what it means for me to foster the dispositions of mind and heart by which all of us can grow in relation to each other and the mystery of God. In three ways: that of seeing, trusting and relating, noting the refusal of blindness, despair and egotism.

A WAY OF SEEING

The darkness is not just about my personal confusion. It is the context in which Christian discipleship has to take place. There is no other. We say that God is invisible, but that says something about us, rather than about God. God's invisibility

acknowledges the depth of darkness in which all of us find ourselves in Bosnia, in Europe, in the world, and also within our own hearts.

But if this is the first thing to be said, it is not the least. We are set on a discipline of learning to see in the dark. It is not necessary or right for me to be paralysed or mesmerised by the dark.

The learning for me is to keep my eyes open against one form of blindness – the blindness to the past. Amnesia is a kind of blindness, a form of unbelief. The past can be cursed but never cancelled. The past must not be forgotten, because, even as the present slips into the past, there is nothing else for us to see or understand.

Time and time again, dear Bishop, in countless conversations in Banja Luka, with so many different people, I have had a strong sense of there being more to be said: conversations left hanging in the air.

And even if the past is remembered, the stains of injustice and cruelty from all sides do not disappear. They are with us to the end of time. In the Book of Revelation (Chapter 5 verse 6) there in heaven's glory is the Lamb, 'standing as though it had been slain'. Even in heaven there are scars.

A WAY OF TRUSTING

Ever since the Enlightenment we in the West have placed such high values on our autonomy that to speak of surrender or trust seems sentimental or soft headed.

By autonomy I mean the certainty that everything depends on our words, plans and activities. In the West we have so often become self-made men and women. I sense this in my own ministry, and have forgotten to have the courage to trust the darkness and to stay watchful in it.

That trust is based on the hope that God grants us; and the conviction that it is possible to hope against hope. Thomas Aquinas puts it well in his Summa Theologica:

'the difference between hope and despair is the difference between possibility and impossibility.' Hope simply refuses the absoluteness of impossibility.

In Bosnia I have met many from the international community full of bright optimistic ideas, which they wish to impose. The ideas come to nothing. They become tired, cynical, and leave. That is despair.

But hoping against hope refuses to become tired and cynical. It persists in seeing possibilities when there appear to be none. This sort of hope settles for nothing less than everything. When I addressed the deputies at the National Assembly in June in Banja Luka, I spoke of Banja Luka becoming a frontier city of the spirit where three great religious traditions will flourish again. Many mocked me. Some began to see some new possibilities.

So the question is: how is that hope to be nurtured and sustained?

A WAY OF RELATING

We have been made capable of friendship. When relationships are forged in mutual respect, then we can speak of friendship which sustains the courage to stay watchful and hopeful in the darkness.

That, for me, as a visitor to your country, is what sustains me. Jews, Christians and Muslims have many ways of dramatising, in parable and imagery, such inclusive friendship: hence the images of friendship are those of food, drink, of common meals and hospitality. Not just the golden images of paradise regained: 'gardens of delight' in which God's people feast on fruit; gardens at the heart of which is set: 'the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit', and leaves 'for the healing of nations', but also in the times between, 'traveller's food, eaten in haste, bread broken, bitter herbs and times of fasting.'

The hope of which I have written so crudely, continues to enact, even in the darkness, metaphors, images of friendship's absolute fulfilment, while despair stays paralysed, deadened by guilt, overwhelmed by cynicism.

Thus the threefold disposition of the mind and heart for seeing, trusting and relating, seems to me to be the way in which I at least try to be constant and hopeful.

I send you these words with my prayers to our common Saviour who prayed that we might all be one in the name of the Blessed Mother, who is dear to us all.

I would welcome your response. Best of all would be if you and I meet. I really would welcome your thoughts on what I have written. I have sent my meditation to both of you.

With best wishes, Yours sincerely, Donald Reeves

I would welcome an opportunity to see you when we are in Banja Luka. I hope you received the letter about the civic forum I sent recently. I hope you will be able to attend the reception and presentation of our proposals on Friday October 18th. I will send exact time and place later.

THE FLEA AND THE ELEPHANT

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

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

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

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

On November 10th I submitted our funding proposal for 2003. In the FCO the local embassy presents the proposal on our behalf, to DFID and the Ministry of Defence. I told the Embassy in Bosnia that before they presented it I wanted their comments. Eventually on December 12th when I was in Bosnia I received their comments, positive, but with some useful criticisms. They apologised for the delay, but the

'printer had broken down' and 'everyone was very busy'. During that month I left messages etc., and became quite agitated because people's jobs were on the line. So we revised our bid and there were more delays.

On December 19th I was told that our proposals had been presented. I was told to 'think positive and be hopeful' but there was no guarantee. I had no choice but to give my colleagues in Bosnia notice, saying that the January payment might be the last.

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

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

What I intend to do is:

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

Anything else I should do?

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND FUNDING

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

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

THE APPLICATION

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

THE APPLICATION FORM

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

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

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

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

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APPLICANT AND DONOR

There is none.

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

AD HOC POLICY

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

BASIC INJUSTICE

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

WASTE

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

CONTROL

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

COMMENT

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

The thinking which pervades these documents is highly reductionist. It neither pays attention to difficulties and miseries of people's lives, nor does it affirm the amazing potential of the human spirit. Instead, everyone is reduced to numbers (how many beneficiaries!) or target groups (at which resources will be made available, so these groups can deliver and thus achieve good outcomes. Spare us!) And because donors

have to please those who make the funds available, there is pressure on them and thus on the applicant for a quick fix so they can be seen 'to be making a difference quickly'

WHAT NEXT?

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

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

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

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

Thank you for reading this

Donald Reeves

9.2.03

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