

# Peace Spirituality Encounter

*Drawing from History  
Transforming the Present  
Creating a Future for Peace*



Pax Christi International  
Poland, 15 – 20 May 2013

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Present – Creating a Future for Peace**

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# 1.

## Introduction: Peace Spirituality Encounter in Poland

*Marie Dennis (United States), Former Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns; Co-President of Pax Christi International*

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On the 16th and 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2013, Pax Christi International held a peace spirituality encounter in Warsaw, Poland, that was followed by a pilgrimage/retreat in Oswiecim (Auschwitz/Birkenau), 18 – 20 May 2013. About thirty-five people from different Member Organisations including Pax Christi International attended.

Pax Christi International Member Organisations and colleagues from Poland, the Russian Federation, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the U.S.A. and South Africa met first in Warsaw to explore the lasting impacts and the possibilities for regional reconciliation and peace after World War II and the Nazi occupation; the era of Soviet communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union; and the 1990s wars in former Yugoslavia. Of particular concern to participants was the role of the churches in promoting or failing to promote reconciliation, including among faith communities themselves. Pax Christi International Co-President Bishop Kevin Dowling spoke from his experience in South Africa and his work for Pax Christi in Croatia on the spirituality of transitional justice and democracy in post-conflict situations. The exchange of insights from peacemakers' experiences over the past seventy years in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine to Croatia and Sarajevo was remarkable. When that happens, we are working for peace.

In Auschwitz, Pax Christi International's delegates, including members from Poland, the Russian Federation, Kenya, New Zealand, El Salvador, the U.S.A, Croatia, South Africa, Germany and the Netherlands, walked on ground made holy by horrific human suffering. Listening to the experience of an Auschwitz survivor and seeing the artefacts of such unthinkable, calculated abuse were horrifying. They evoked in each of us a renewed, deep commitment to ensure that such atrocities never again happen.

But we were acutely aware that brutality in a myriad of forms continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century – in Southeast Asia, Central America, Africa, and the Middle East –

and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. Pax Christi's shared commitment to nonviolence was both tested and reaffirmed in Auschwitz. Our reflections there will nourish Pax Christi's spirituality, which is articulated by the many contexts around the world where people were able to sustain their belief in the power of nonviolence, even in the face of horrific violence and war.

With a rich and deep spiritual foundation, Pax Christi works for peace. As we approach our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we see with even more clarity the urgent need for just and sustainable peace on earth. We are committed to that task in Central and Eastern Europe, but our network is active as well in Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, North America, Africa, the Middle East and the rest of Europe-- wherever in the world violence threatens human dignity, perpetuates poverty and exacerbates ecological destruction.

This publication collects some of the presentations given by participants in Warsaw and Auschwitz.



*Entrance gate at Auschwitz*

*\*All photos taken during Pax Christi International Peace Spirituality Retreat visits to Auschwitz and Warsaw*

# 2.

## Welcome Speech from Renovabis

*Dr. Thomas Müller-Boehr (Germany), Manager of Partnerships,  
Dialogue and Voluntary Service at Renovabis*

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Dear members of the International Board of Pax Christi,  
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

First of all, I would like to say thank you very much for the opportunity to take part at this Pax Christi International Conference on “Peace Spirituality and Transformative Democracy” in cooperation with Renovabis. This conference has been initiated, on the one hand to discuss the various aspects of this subject and, on the other hand, to focus on the first steps of concrete realisations in the different fields of conflicts and injustice in our home countries. Herewith, the Pax Christi association wants to apply its own mission of peace and reconciliation to nowadays challenges in this field. With Poland and Warsaw, the responsible, indeed, have chosen a place that represents points of contact for our common issue. Let me just mention a date we must not forget at this place today: On May 16<sup>th</sup> in 1943 – exactly seventy years ago to the day – the uprising in the Ghetto of Warsaw has been beaten down. One of the most prominent and bravest fights of Jews against the Nazi-Terrorism ended in the cruellest way. Last week the Polish Government honoured the last survivors of this uprising. With the pilgrimage to the former extermination camp of Auschwitz subsequent to our conference in Warsaw, we will have a personal, as well as a common engagement with this dark chapter of European, particularly Jewish, Polish and German history.

Renovabis - the solidarity initiative of the German Catholics with the people in Central and Eastern Europe - has been initiated just twenty years ago – only a few years after the iron curtain had fallen. The promotion of reconciliation and peace between the people in Germany and our nearer and farer neighbours in the Eastern part of Europe belongs to the core tasks of our campaign. This aspect in our statute does mean a strong link between our both organisations. At this point, I can mention some challenging situations in the Eastern/South-Eastern part of Europe in rough headwords:

- The lasting consequences of the conflict in former Yugoslavia
- The conflicts of independence in the southern regions of Russia
- The various conflicts and differences concerning ethnic, religious and national minorities, especially the problematic situation of the Roma in Europe on the whole

Pax Christi International, respectively, various national sections of Pax Christi have been or are still engaged in this field in some of these countries - in single cases in cooperation with Renovabis.

The motto of our assembly here is:

Drawing from history – Transforming the present – Creating a future in peace.

**Drawing from history:** This means to consider the historic and often complex backgrounds and causes of conflicts which make impacts on the living together until now. We may not abstain from these backgrounds when we speak about peace promotion today. Narratives of violence and injustice – as described in the preparatory documents of this conference - can provide insight to our subject. Therefore, we are to face up to the consequences of forty to seventy years of Communist regimes for the challenges of civil societies in the eastern part of Europe today.

**Transforming the present:** This part of the concept of the three steps needs also a realistic view of the situations we want to discuss – not only discuss but to get involved with the steps of peace together with the people affected by violence, injustice and marginalisation. One of the crucial obstacles to find sustainable solutions is: not to accept their inner violations, their distrust against any change, especially initiated from players coming from outside. We know these barriers well enough from our experiences with conflicts in our own contexts.

**Creating the future:** Not to forget what has happened in our *history*, not to abstract from real living conditions *today* and nevertheless making concrete steps to a more peaceful and conciliated *future* means to resist the enormous forces of persistence: This is the tension when we realise our responsibility, or may I say –our mission. And, “Creating a future” may implicate a misunderstanding: Of course, it is not us who can “make” a peaceful and just future by our own power. Therefore it says “*creating a future*” in trust to the peace coming from God himself and his Holy Spirit as we believe as Christians.

Facing these challenges Renovabis and Pax Christi are pulling at one rope. Therefore we are grateful to hold this conference in cooperation. The promotion of

the dialogue between East and West in Europe - in close conjunction with the support to our partners in twenty-nine countries – is a central mandate for us. So, we are glad that representatives of ten of our partner countries can take part at this congress.

I will close with my wishes for fruitful discussions and encouraging encounters these days.

Thank you very much for listening!



*View of the electric fences at Auschwitz*

# 3.

## The Spirituality of Transformative Justice and Democracy

*Bishop Kevin Dowling (South Africa), Bishop of Rustenburg; Co-President of Pax Christi International*

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In January 2002, I sat at a simple shrine under a tree on a hot day. The shrine marked the scene of a shocking atrocity. This was in the compound of Holy Cross Parish, Kauda, in the Nuba Mountains, one of the most remote and underdeveloped areas in Africa.

In its single-minded commitment to terrorise and subjugate the people in the Southern areas of Sudan, the Bashir regime in Khartoum embarked on an infamous bombing campaign. Antonov transport planes flew low over villages and crude barrels of explosive and shrapnel were rolled down the ramp at the back of the plane onto the villages and people below.

One morning, an Antonov flew low over the Holy Cross Parish compound. The Catholic school teachers and children were having classes under the trees to shelter from the hot sun. Three bombs were dropped. One hit the ground next to a tree where a teacher was conducting her class – fourteen children and the teacher were killed.

The coalition of Christian Churches under the Sudan Ecumenical Forum and peace activists began a campaign. We meticulously documented such atrocities, double-checked, and then engaged in advocacy with the important governments involved in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement process which had not yet been concluded at Naivasha in Kenya. This advocacy and pressure led to the cessation of the bombing campaign.

Sadly, after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed, and after South Sudan obtained its independence, the Bashir regime has during the past year again begun its appalling bombing campaign against the same targets in the Nuba Mountains and with even greater ferocity – reckoning, probably, that the Western Governments with so much else to attend to will not return to pressurising the Bashir regime as they did in the past. This has led to dreadful suffering, internal

displacement and thousands of people hiding in caves in the mountains. Security for them is non-existent, and “security” takes on another meaning in that starvation and disease become the marks of a total lack of food security for these people.

The situation is indeed desperate. A few months ago, on November 30, 2012 there was a report which quoted Bishop Macram Max Gassis of El Obeid Diocese, in whose territory falls the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan State of Sudan.

“The bombings are carried out on a daily basis. The first victims of this war are civilians, especially women, children and the elderly,” said the Bishop. “Recently the church of Heban was bombed, which thankfully reported limited damage. In the month of November, Khartoum launched 330 bombs, which caused 36 deaths, mostly women and children, and 22 injuries. Thirty homes and crops were destroyed.”

“No humanitarian organisation is present in the Nuba Mountains and the Church is the only presence of hope for these people, with our sisters and four doctors and surgeons (2 Americans, a German and an English doctor). The only medical facility in the area is the hospital which I founded, with a capacity of 80 patients and now has over 500.”

“Many priests walk the paths that lead from the Nuba Mountains to our structure in South Sudan in Yida in Unity State, to get supplies and medicines. The journey takes 16 hours and under the threat of Sudanese bombers. I was abroad and asked the international community to implore the regime in Khartoum to stop the bombing on civilians, and to allow food and medicine to be brought to the exhausted people,” concluded Bishop Gassis (CISA).

That story highlights just how very difficult it is for the Church in partnership with affected communities to mount and sustain successful international advocacy campaigns for peace, justice and transformation - with and on behalf of the victims of wars, violence, atrocities, and human rights abuses in all their forms – including rape as a weapon of war.

The history and context here in Eastern Europe has its own particular circumstances and challenges which participants from this region know very personally. Someone like me depends completely on people like you to try to understand a little of your history and how the aftermath of atrocities, wars and all forms of violence in this area need to be addressed. All I can do is share my own story and journey with you in the hope that it can support us in our calling and mission for peace through justice.

But all of us engaged in working for sustainable peace, justice and transformation can take our inspiration from a spirituality and an analysis of the meaning of justice which can be relevant and helpful no matter what our context and challenges might be. It means that we respond to our situation empowered by the Spirit of God, and a spirituality and relationship with the Lord of justice and peace, which then enables us to discern the principles and values which can and should guide our decisions and responses.

The title of the talk I was given is "The Spirituality of Transformative Justice and Democracy". I will try to reflect a little on the issue of justice in post-conflict situations like wars, or in situations where all kinds of atrocities and appalling human rights abuses are occurring. What kind of justice do such situations demand, what kind of justice do the victims cry out for.

For example, on my visits to Croatia and meeting the activists engaged with *Recom* in the quest for a Truth Commission to respond to the Balkan conflict, what struck me so forcefully was my meetings with the mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters of the disappeared; people who had "disappeared" during the wars and violence, whose bodies had never been found, the existence of mass graves which had never been uncovered. I remember the *Pax Christi* meeting in Vukovar where we visited the site of the dreadful atrocity where people were taken from the hospital in Vukovar, put into a warehouse, and then taken to a field where they were shot. There were around 160 people. But when the mass grave was uncovered, only around 100 bodies were there. Where are the other bodies?

The relatives of the disappeared want to know; they want to find out the truth of what happened to their loved ones – as happened in my own country South Africa where people sought the truth of what had happened to family members during apartheid atrocities; these relatives are still suffering the trauma of loss years after the end of the wars. Recovering the truth was/is the very first step towards achieving justice for these victims, but how long will this still take is the question?

In post-conflict situations after the end of a war, and in all efforts to work for peace in situations of violence, what has become central to discussions over the past years has been a reflection on all the issues which make up what is termed "transitional justice".

Transitional Justice places the emphasis or focus on the centrality of *justice* as the cornerstone of both the process and the outcomes of a time of transition from conflict and violence. One objective is to create and nurture an environment where the past evils and atrocities can never be repeated, and the ways to

achieve this. But, Transitional Justice also speaks to the possibilities of justice for the victims, accountability for the perpetrators and the past beneficiaries of injustices, and a process leading to reconciliation, if possible, and a minimally decent society.

Catholic Social Teaching principles can bring a distinctive value to the broader conversation around Transitional Justice. For example, the principle of “the preferential option for the poor” challenges nations and the communities in a society to understand and implement the process of justice primarily from the point of view of the *experience of the victims*. It calls for a reading of the history, the story of what happened from the bottom up, from the reality *as the victims experienced it*. It also calls for an empowerment of the victims to have their own stories recorded, in this way affirming their human dignity and worth. What is even more important, the preferential option for the poor calls for the victims to be enabled to explore their own energy and wisdom, so that they become the agents of transformation, i.e. how *they* can be involved in the processes which seek justice, healing, reconciliation if possible, the restoration of their dignity, and a better future for all citizens.

And then, what about the perpetrators of the atrocities? What justice do the victims want for them? Do they want punishment? The international community, in response to such terrible atrocities, genocides and so forth, and in an effort to put an end to a culture of impunity and to establish the rule of law throughout the world, established the International Tribunals to try war criminals and those responsible for genocides and gross human rights violations. If found guilty the perpetrators are punished with lengthy spells in prison. So, for example, the trial of Ratko Mladic, the Serbian army commander in The Hague.

However, there is some controversy around the International Tribunals. Some of the African governments, for example, have stated that there is an imbalance in the prosecutions of Africans when this is compared to people from the West, especially when countries like the USA will not permit any of its citizens to be brought before the ICC.

The process at these International Tribunals is based on the notion of “retributive justice”. Retributive justice has a primary focus: retribution against the perpetrators, punishing the perpetrators for the crimes committed, and that this will hopefully stop others from doing similar things. But the question is: is retributive justice the best means of transforming the situation after terrible suffering? Does punishing the perpetrators necessarily restore a society and its wounds? Is punishment the only or best way to lay the foundations for reconciling the groups involved in a conflict or

war and creating conditions for sustainable peace? It seems to me that it needs something more and different.

So, increasingly the discussion around justice is focussed on *restorative justice* as distinct from retributive justice. Restorative justice holds together a three-fold commitment: firstly, to affirm and restore the dignity of those whose human rights have been violated; secondly, to hold perpetrators accountable, emphasising the harm they have done to other individual human beings and communities, and the need for restitution; and, thirdly, to create conditions in which human rights will be respected in the future. Commenting on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Archbishop Desmond Tutu reflected that restorative justice 'is concerned not so much with punishment as with correcting imbalances, restoring broken relationships with healing, harmony and reconciliation.'<sup>1</sup> This is close to the Biblical understanding of justice.

Reconciliation? This is a very complex question indeed because violence and atrocities, and gross human rights violations severely hurt people. Relationships between people and between communities will have been damaged or even destroyed – firstly between individuals, then at the village or community level, and at the national level or between states. Unless great efforts are made to bring about holistic healing, many underlying factors could result in serious problems in the future as broken societies and people whose dignity has not been restored may develop different forms of dysfunctional behaviour – and violence could break out again. And all processes of healing and reconciliation must incorporate rich cultural dimensions present in affected communities around the world. Indeed, these cultural dimensions are a very important dimension of restorative justice.

After war and conflict, it is so important that NGOs, civic organisations and the Churches be involved in a continuous process of healing and ongoing conflict resolution in affected communities, and with individual victims. The victims cannot just be forgotten and expected to get on with life. And, just as important, there cannot be real reconciliation unless this incorporates comprehensive social reform and economic development for the victims, the poor and marginalised – to offer restitution and reparations for the victims.

This puts the focus on another aspect of justice. Catholic Social Teaching would add to the Biblical understanding of justice the notion of *distributive justice*, the sharing of the goods of creation. *Gaudium et Spes* talks about 'paying attention to the universal destination of earthly goods. The right of having a share of earthly

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<sup>1</sup> TRC Final Report.1 Chapter 1 #36

goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The fathers and doctors of the church held this opinion, teaching that everyone is obliged to come to the relief of the poor, and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods.<sup>2</sup>

It is very important to ensure that the justice process does not merely discover truth, nor only give affirmation and healing to the victims – vitally important as these are. In line with the “option for the poor”, justice must ensure that the poor/victims benefit directly from the resources of the earth or nation, especially those who were deprived of such rights and benefits by war, conflict or authoritarian rule – so that they can live a life of dignity and a minimum level of decency. The question of economic development after war and conflict is crucial, therefore.

All these aspects of “justice” which I have briefly reflected on – all these aspects of “justice” form part of our understanding of “transformative justice” which is in the title of my talk. Transformative justice requires the recovery of truth, reflection on retributive justice versus restorative justice, healing as the first step in the journey towards reconciliation, distributive justice which will focus on the needs of the victims through restitution and reparation, and economic development which transforms their living standards so that they can live with at least minimal decency.

And another goal, part of the title of my talk, is to promote and sustain “democracy” – democracy as part of transformative justice. Obviously, there is no single all-embracing definition or understanding of democracy, and cultures around the world influence this understanding. But, a basic dimension which is central to any understanding of democracy is participation of citizens in all aspects of governance in the country, election of their own representatives, and the right and ability of holding their representatives accountable for meeting the fundamental human rights and needs of citizens and communities.

### **The Spirituality of Transformative Justice and Democracy**

If all of us coming from Eastern Europe, Russia etc., and all of us as members of the Pax Christi family, if we as peace and justice activists, are to engage with our affected communities and victims of war, atrocities, and gross human rights violations – so that transformative justice does not remain a distant dream, but becomes even gradually a reality which flows into a participative democracy which ensure the rights and well-being of all citizens. If we as peace activists are to engage in this great venture, and even more if we are to keep our spirits alive and hope-filled in the face of so many challenges and obstacles. Then, quite clearly, we

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<sup>2</sup>Guadium et Spes #69.

will need to act out of a *spirituality* which empowers us, sustains us, and enables us to keep moving forward.

I would like to share with you a personal reflection which has helped me in my own journey. I suggest that our spirituality is quite simply the spirituality of the prophets – from the Old Testament to John the Baptist who prepared the way for the greatest prophet Jesus. You may move or respond to your situation from another starting point in your own spirituality and journey. I am simply trying to share my starting point in my spirituality.

So, let us look at the call of the prophet Jeremiah. “A word of Yahweh came to me, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I set you apart, and appointed you as prophet to the nations!’

I said, ‘Ah, Lord Yahweh! I do not know how to speak; I am a child!’

But Yahweh replied, ‘Do not say: ‘I am a child. Go now to all those to whom I send you; and say what I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to protect you – it is Yahweh who speaks!’

Then Yahweh stretched out his hands and touched my mouth and said to me, ‘Now I have put my words into your mouth. See! Today I give you authority over nations and kingdoms to uproot and pull down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.’” (Jeremiah 1:4-10)

All the prophets were called by God – none of them wanted this, or chose this. Jeremiah, for example, tried to get away from the call of God by trying to convince God that he was just a child, not able to speak therefore, which is the role of a prophet. But God did not accept this. Jeremiah and the other prophets, they were lifted out of their ordinary existence by God to take on a new mission which they knew all too well would bring them challenges, suffering, and perhaps even death. To be called by God as a prophet has nothing to do with foretelling the future; it is a call to announce the Reign of God in the present context of the people and their communities, and what the Reign of God means of even demands for people, communities, and the whole of creation.

The prophet always and at all times lives in the actual conditions of his people; he/she is one with his people, and experiences every day the reality of their life. The prophet, living in the midst of his people, is called by God to interpret the actual situation of his people in the light of God’s Word and vision for all people. So the prophet is called to listen for the voice of God in the actual situation of the people,

especially in the context of suffering and injustice, what we call today “reading the signs of the times”. The prophet then applies the Word of God to the actual context of the people with all its demands and challenges.

So, for us, we can look at the prophet, among other examples, as one model of our calling in the search for peace through justice – like the prophets, we always remain one with the people to whom we are sent by God; we grow in the culture, the wisdom and spirituality of our people, we have shared their dreams and hopes, the struggles and sufferings of our people, and we have shared in the human weaknesses of our people and communities. This means that, just like the prophet, we are the ones who can/must hold our people before God in intercession and prayer, and then we can try to bring our God and God's word to the people and their situation in the quest for peace through justice and non-violence.

If this is to happen, then the prophet – like us – needs to live in a strong personal relationship with God. Prophetic figures like Jeremiah, Moses, Hosea, Mary, and even Jesus experienced a call to a particular mission in some kind of a “religious” experience of encounter with the God who called. From then onwards, the prophet needed to live in this personal relationship with God, who kept on forming them spiritually for their mission of bringing God into an encounter with the people and their historical context.

Through this personal relationship with God, the prophet is able to discern God's will in the developing situation, and to enable God's will to be done. This is beautifully captured in the classic text from Luke 4:16-21, where Jesus recognises that the words of Isaiah the prophet exactly encapsulate his own understanding of his mission in the midst of the people in their situation of oppression and injustice. So our task is to be a witness to God present in the real world of people's lives; we witness to God's presence through our word and the different ways we engage with our communities in their actual struggles and in working with them so that their hopes and dreams are gradually realised.

One important dimension of our spirituality in action is that we consciously promote and develop participation – we invite our people to participate in reflecting on their situation and on discerning together what is the way forward, which are aspects of working for democracy in society. So we consciously invite our people, our partners, to take responsibility for their responses to the actual situation – we do not prescribe to them what they should or should not do.

But, what is the objective, the goal of our spirituality, our relationship with Jesus, and the actions and responses we make in our actual situation? This, it seems to me, is to

reveal our God to our people in their situation as a God of compassion *and* justice, a God of justice *and* compassion, that God's desire for our people is that they should experience justice in their situation and become people of compassion and non-violence. We can return to the call and mission of Jeremiah. God reveals to him what his mission is among his people and in the society: "See! Today I give you authority over nations and kingdom...To uproot and pull down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

Jeremiah is called to uproot and pull down to destroy and overthrow. Strong words, but essentially this means that *all* injustice, oppression, abuses among the people and society must be "destroyed and overthrown" – we work to *overcome* all this evil. And in the place of injustice and oppression, the task is "to build and to plant" - to "build" the Reign of God which will be experienced in justice, peace, non-violence, respect for the dignity of every person - to build, yes, and to plant - to "plant" the seed in the heart of every person and every community which will bring hope where there is despair, courage and strength to work together for a better future in situations where there seems to be so little to inspire and give courage and hope.

But, as with all the prophets, the justice that God desires is to be proclaimed with great courage, but is to be worked for through compassion – in other words, no vendettas or revenge, rather a conscious commitment to non-violence. We have the wonderful example of all this in the story of the woman taken in adultery in John 8. Here we see Jesus as the perfect example of non-violence. He is eminently qualified to condemn her, but he very simply refuses to do so. So, in doing so, he absolutely questions all power and domination, all efforts to condemn people and to punish them, all retribution as the way to solve our human problems. For Jesus – and therefore for us his disciples – there can be no decision to use coercion, domination, and power to achieve objectives – rather compassion, sensitivity, and opening doors for vulnerable people to begin again, and to walk towards what is truly life-giving. That is our role, and that requires that we live and express the same spirituality as Jesus.

Our spirituality in view of promoting transformative justice and democracy is directed towards helping our people to recognise that we are called to promote justice which is, in fact, God's passion, and that justice is all about working to develop *right and just relationships* between people, and between people and all of creation. And right and just relationships require that we recognise and accept that we are all sinners, but that God is a God of infinite compassion whose vision of justice excludes everything which is contrary to compassion – that is, violence, domination, oppression, cruelty, vengeance, and all the rest. Instead, we are

called in our spirituality and relationship with Jesus to recognise and promote his vision of justice, viz. the peaceful resolution and reconciliation of divisions and differences, non-violence in every situation which provokes and hurts, forgiveness even when it is so hard to offer, inclusiveness of everyone, especially the marginalised and excluded in Church and society, promoting the fundamental equality of every human being, and especially those who are regarded as not worthy of equal treatment, and ensuring the integrity of creation and our planet.

When Jesus spoke about the kingdom, and what it means, he completely destroyed any concept of a kingdom of violence, power and oppression. His kingdom, what we might prefer to call the “Reign of God”, is all about love, compassion and justice in relationships with each other and with all creation, a kingdom where God is all in all.

This is the spirituality and vision to which we are called today and every day in our lives and ministries in the cause of peace in our world. And our spirituality also needs to be based on this awareness: all the prophets, and Jesus himself, did not succeed in their mission, in the way that we humans define success. They failed in the face of evil, injustice, force and power; and they suffered the consequences. But that was not the end of the story – Jesus is the risen Lord, and has handed on to us the power of the Spirit, and the call to trust in Him and in his presence and action through us to transform this world into the dream of God – a dream of sharing, of peace, of making the love of God take life in love of the neighbour.

I conclude with the words of Mahatma Ghandi and Archbishop Oscar Romero: Mahatma Gandhi said:

“Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much for you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and weakest person whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him/her. Will this person gain anything by it? Will it restore them to control over their own life and destiny? In other words will it lead to *swaraj* [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away.”

And Romero: “God's reign is already present on our earth in mystery. When the Lord comes, it will be brought to perfection. That is the hope that inspires Christians. We know that every effort to better society, especially when injustice and sin are so ingrained, is an effort that God blesses, that God wants, that God demands of us.” (March 24, 1980).

To that I say: Amen!

# 4.

## The Relevance of Perspectives in a Theology after Auschwitz

*Fr. Manfred Deselaers (Germany), Centre for Dialogue and Prayer in Oświęcim (Auschwitz)*

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### Theology after Auschwitz

"Where was God in Auschwitz?" "How can God be good and almighty if He allows Auschwitz to happen?" Is there anyone who does not know these and similar other questions? Also the questions "Where was man?" "Where were the Christians, where was the Church?" challenge our testimony of faith, and they purify it.

In order to be able to reply to these queries in a meaningful way, we have to take the reference point of the question seriously: What is it that we talk about when we say "Auschwitz"? What precisely happened in the former concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz with its sub-camps, Birkenau in particular, and why? And what is meant when Auschwitz is used as a symbolic word for a larger context?

### "Auschwitz"

#### The Facts

"Auschwitz" is the German name for a Polish town, Oświęcim, which was incorporated into the German Reich after Poland was invaded in 1939 and abolished as a state. To eliminate the Polish resistance and the Polish ruling elite, a concentration camp, which expanded quickly, was established in this town in 1940. In 1941, after the German attack on the Soviet Union, Russian prisoners of war were taken to the camp. From 1942 onwards, mass transports of Jews were brought there. In 1943, so-called "gypsies" - Sinti and Romanies were brought -and also many others, including political opponents, criminals, so-called anti-social elements, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals - from Czechoslovakia, Belarus, France, Russia, Yugoslavia, Ukraine and other countries, Germany included. Nine villages in the surrounding area were demolished and their inhabitants evicted, arrested or murdered in order to create the "area of interest Auschwitz", 40 km<sup>2</sup> wide.

Approximately forty sub-camps developed, about half of them near industrial plants, or farms, many outside the area of interest.

Those who were taken to the camp as prisoners were no longer treated as human beings but as numbered labour force. The average survival time of the prisoners was ten months. The degree of dehumanisation, the terror, the threatening nearness of death is inconceivable to us today. Even former prisoners often cannot describe it. It is equally unthinkable how human beings can do this to others. But it did really happen.

About 150,000 Polish prisoners were taken to the camp, and half of them were murdered. About 15,000 Russian prisoners-of-war were taken to the camp, and almost all were murdered. About one million Jews were taken to Auschwitz; most of them were not put in the camp as prisoners but were immediately murdered in gas chambers. About another 200,000 were taken to the camp, and half this number also perished there. About 23,000 Sinti and Romanies were taken to the camp, and almost all were murdered. These are the major groups of victims. There are no graves; the ashes of the incinerated bodies were scattered. It is impossible to picture the abyss in which more than a million human beings vanished without a trace.

Our understanding will always only be an approximation, always only a surmising. And yet, this approximation, our attempt at getting to know the whole truth is necessary for the sheer respect that we owe the victims. Without this attempt, we cannot authentically speak of a "Theology after Auschwitz". Theology after Auschwitz begins with silence and with listening to the voices of the victims, to the voice of this land of Auschwitz.

### **The Symbol**

Auschwitz was the largest concentration and extermination camp of the Third Reich, but not the only one. In its significance it stands, therefore, symbolically also for greater contexts. For example:

In Auschwitz, we do not only think of the Jews who were murdered here but also of the whole tragedy of the Jews in Europe during Hitler's regime. It has become the symbol of the Holocaust of the Jews, the Shoah.

Auschwitz is a symbol of the fate of *occupied Poland* during the Second World War.

Auschwitz is a symbol of the fate of the *Sinti and Romanies* during the Second World War and of a continuing history of their discrimination.

The *Soviet Army* liberated the last prisoners in 1945; in the states of the former Soviet Union, the liberation of Auschwitz is an important symbol of the memory of the "Great Patriotic War", the liberation of Europe from Fascism.

Auschwitz possesses a great symbolic meaning for the fight of *political prisoners* from many countries, Socialists, Communists, and other resistance groups.

For *Jehovah's Witnesses*, the memory of non-violence, persecution and death as a testimony of faith in Auschwitz is important.

For *homosexuals*, who were another category of prisoners, even if there were only a few prisoners registered as such, Auschwitz has acquired a symbolic meaning for the Gay Movement.

For *Germany*, Auschwitz is an admonishing memory of the greatest failure and a call for conversion to good relationships with the various groups of former victims.

In the following paragraphs, I will briefly outline three theological perspectives of Auschwitz: those of Polish Catholics, religious Jews, and Christian Germans. It should above all become clear how strong the respective personal backgrounds are and therefore also the differences, which unconsciously become part of the dialogue about Auschwitz.

## **The Polish Perspective**

### **Nazism and Communism**

The Poles recall a twofold aspect of the Second World War which began on September 1, 1945, with the invasion by Nazi Germany and on September 17th of that very same year with the invasion by the Soviet Union. Both systems were anti-Christian: neo-pagan National Socialism and atheistic-materialist Communism. Both systems aimed at the destruction of Polish independence and Polish identity. Both systems liquidated the military opposition and the elite of the nation.

These experiences follow a long history of struggling for an independent existence within the boundaries of Europe. At the end of the First World War, after 123 years of not existing on Europe's maps and numerous uprisings, Poland finally in 1918 won the struggle for an existence as an independent state. It was to last only twenty-one years.

## **Christian Roots**

From the beginning, Poland has possessed a connection with Christianity and the Catholic Church, which – as it were – is the backbone of Poland's national identity. The baptism of Poland in 966 was at the same time the beginning of its national existence, as well as its Christianisation.

In 1656, after an assault by the Swedes and their retreat from Poland, King Jan Kazimierz elevated Our Lady as Queen of the Polish Crown and subsequently made solemn promises of dedication. Mary, the Mother of God, has been worshipped as Patroness and Queen of Poland ever since that time.

In 1791, the parliament (Sejm Wielki) proclaimed the constitution of May 3, the first paragraph of which specifically stipulates that "the ruling national religion is and will be the holy Roman Catholic faith." At the same time, parliament guaranteed respect for other denominations as well as freedom of religion. Shortly afterwards, Poland disappeared from the map of Europe. In the Russian, Prussian and Austrian partitioning territories, Polish was still spoken in the churches. It was like this for more than 120 years, and only in the churches could one still feel Polish.

The Polish spirit developed especially among the Parisian émigrés, where the vision of freedom coalesced with a messianic vision. The certainty that God is on the side of the Polish people and Mary, Mother of God, the protectress of the home country, was deeply rooted in the people's conviction. This was linked to the tradition which saw a deep meaning in martyrdom: it is worthwhile remaining faithful to God, the fatherland (the mother) and its values, in spite of suffering, in spite of death. The blood of the martyrs bears fruit. After death, resurrection follows as a gift from God.

In 1918 Poland regained its nationhood after 123 years of non-existence on the map of Europe.

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 again destroyed the Polish state. So was there no resurrection after all? However, the faith did not die under the influence of the occupation, even though it was greatly tested.

## **Auschwitz**

There are a great number of testimonials to the Christian faith during the wartime, including those by victims of Auschwitz.

In a secret message to his wife, Wacław Stacherski writes from his prison cell in Block 11, before his execution on September 9, 1944, "Oh Iris! God exists, even if it is so difficult to believe in Him here. Yesterday, Sunday, through the cell window, I heard

a Mass being said that was celebrated secretly on the ground floor. That brings to mind the Early Christian time of the catacombs. God alone knows where there were more saints and martyrs - in Rome or in Auschwitz."<sup>3</sup>

In Poland, Father Maximilian Kolbe, who in the camp sacrificed his life for a fellow prisoner, became the symbol of the victory of love resulting from the power of faith in a world of hatred. In the post-war period, Auschwitz played an important role in official Communist education, since it was seen as a symbol of the Soviet Union that had liberated both the camp and Europe from Fascism. One deliberately did not want a religious dimension to be connected with the camp. Against this background, the veneration of Maximilian Kolbe, which grew after his beatification in 1971, represented a different, a religious perspective of the memory of Auschwitz.

The largest Catholic youth movement in Poland, "Oasis", was founded after the war by the priest Franciszek Blachniki, a former Auschwitz prisoner. He had experienced his conversion while awaiting the execution of his death sentence. Surprisingly, his death sentence was not carried out. From that moment on, he was convinced that true freedom is spiritual and that human beings who are deeply rooted in prayer and put their trust in Christ need not fear those who wield power. That is the source of a Polish liberation theology. Later, members of the Oasis-Movement played a vital role in the peaceful revolution of the Solidarność movement.

### **John Paul II**

Karol Wojtyła, who was born in Wadowice, not far from Oświęcim, and grew up there together with Jewish friends, decided during the War to become a priest. As Bishop of the diocese of Krakow, to which Oświęcim then belonged,<sup>4</sup> and as Pope John Paul II (from 1978), he looked upon his mission as an answer to his experiences during the war. In 1979, he said on the grounds of the former Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau: *"Can anybody in the world be surprised that the Pope who was born and educated here in this land, that the Pope who was called to the Chair of Peter from Krakow, from the archdiocese in which the Auschwitz Camp is located, that this Pope began the first encyclical of his pontificate with the words 'Redemptor Hominis' – and that he dedicated this encyclical in its entirety to the theme of humanity, the dignity of man, the threats confronting man and the rights of the person?"*

The great roles that the Pope from Poland, the Church and the faith played on the road of the non-violent revolution, which brought the Dictatorship of Communism in

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3 Quoted and translated from: Irena Pająk, *Mieszkańcy Śląska, Podbeskidzia, Zagłębia Dąbrowskiego Auschwitz. Księga Pamięci*, vol. 1, Katowice 1998, p. 3

4 Since 1992 Oświęcim has been part of the newly founded diocese of Bielsko/Biała

Europe to an end, have added to the conviction that Christianity has emerged victorious from these experiences, essentially verified after Auschwitz and Katyn. This perspective, which sees Christianity deeply connected with the dignity of person and the freedom of nations, clearly distinguishes Poland from other European countries.

## **The Jewish Perspective**

### **Shock**

Before 1939, Jews had made their home mostly in Europe and above all in Polish territories. This Jewish world does not exist any longer - not by Polish, but by German guilt. Jews were not only cast out and murdered; before that, they were declared non-humans by the Germans, vermin, disease carriers which had to be destroyed. Under German occupation Europe was organized accordingly: Jews were systematically hunted, marked, separated, gathered and burnt in crematoria.

### **The Covenant**

The most important religious point of reference for the Jewish perspective is the memory of the exodus from Egypt and the making of the Covenant at Mount Sinai: *"God said to the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession'"* (Exodus 19:3-6)

In the course of history, many catastrophes have challenged God's love and commitment. But the religious leaders have always been eager to show that it was the faithlessness and guilt of the people – not of God – that led to the catastrophe. That is especially true for the two-time destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (586 B.C. and 70 A.D.), the subsequent banishment into exile and the ending of the state of Israel.

But it is not possible to accept Auschwitz as a punishment from God. The attempted eradication of the whole people, six million murdered human beings, among them almost the entire orthodox Jewish world of Eastern Europe and an infinite number of children, is not conceivable as an adequate response to any corresponding sin they might have committed. What has happened to the Covenant? Was the Shoah not worse than Egypt? Where was God?

The old categories do not fit any longer. But if Israel loses its relation to the Bible and to its promise, it loses its identity. That would be Hitler's final victory, the ultimate

annihilation of Israel. Never to allow this to happen is the new 614th commandment for Jews after Auschwitz, according to Emil Fackenheim. Elie Wiesel wrestles with God. He does not let go of the relationship, but before God can ask him "Where are you?" he, Wiesel, asks God "Where were you when my sister, my mother, my people were murdered?" The loyalty to the memory of the murdered ones becomes the starting point for all that follows.

### **Kiddush Hashem**

Perhaps the issue is not to understand God but to stay faithful to Him in spite of everything. *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.* (Isaiah 55:8) Jews were murdered for being Jews, willing or unwilling. Did they not in this way bear witness to God, even if against their will? Hallow the name of God: Kiddush Hashem?

### **The State of Israel**

The Shoah does not only mean a shock for their relationship to God but also a shock regarding their neighbours. Can one really trust them? During the War, many Jews did not even find a place where they could escape.

The formation of the State of Israel, therefore, is for many Jews the most important answer to Auschwitz. At last they have a home which will always be willing to take them in. Maybe it is also a sign that God has not forsaken His people after all. And perhaps rather than Kiddush Hashem, martyrdom, the issue is Kiddush Hachaim, life. "Am Yisrael chai" - the People of Israel live. It hurts all the more to recognize that in Israel the dream of Shalom is so hard to carry out and that a recurrence of Auschwitz does not appear to be impossible.

However, the issue is not only Israel and its particular people. The issue is human dignity throughout the world. For God is the Creator of the world and the Father of all human beings.

### **The German Perspective**

#### **Guilt**

We who are living today are not to blame, but there is this German guilt and somehow we must deal with it. That is the German wound "after Auschwitz". Auschwitz admonishes us that something went horribly wrong. Today, this reminder is part of the German identity as a permanent pang of conscience. In the city centre of Berlin stands the Brandenburg Gate. On one side of it is the Parliament Building and on the other side the Holocaust Memorial.

## **Critical Approach**

All this also characterizes German theology after Auschwitz. Even if Christians sacrificed their lives in the resistance, this is only true for a small minority.

In its essence, therefore, German theology after Auschwitz is critical. It looks for the mistakes made in theology which led to that failure, and it attempts to search for new approaches that make a repetition of the mistakes impossible.

One approach is the accentuation of Jewish dimensions in Christian theology. Jesus was a Jew. God's Covenant with the Jewish people was not superseded by the "New Testament", but it continues to exist and as the Covenant of the living people of Israel it is of vital importance also for Christians.

It is more difficult to integrate into theology the memory of the tragedy of the victims. This is what Johann Baptist Metz attempts to do, stressing that after Auschwitz theology is no longer possible without the memory of the victims of Auschwitz who often lost their faith in the goodness of God. What is needed is a theology as "Memoria Passionis," which does not only recall Jesus' suffering on the Cross but also the suffering of the Jews in Auschwitz. Such a theology would not so much emphasize the relation to God and prayer, but the actual help given to the victims, thus becoming Political Theology.

Unlike Israel and Poland, Germany has no theological reference to its own people today. The state of Germany, which united territories with different religious backgrounds, has only existed since 1871. National Socialism attempted to establish a national identity on "Nordic Germanic" pre-Christian foundations. Large parts of the Protestant Church tried to give themselves a new identity as "German Christians". These attempts have been completely discredited today. Any tendencies of national-religious character are looked upon with great distrust, wherever they may surface.

## **Forgiveness?**

The subject of forgiveness is rarely dealt with in German Theology after Auschwitz, since its mere mentioning would lead to the suspicion of it serving as exculpation. The perpetrators cannot demand forgiveness; they may only receive it gratefully as an act of mercy. But who can forgive whom and in whose name? And what is to be said about the continuing effects of guilt on succeeding generations?

## **Dialogue**

The above shall suffice as a brief outline of the different perspectives. Yet, if they are so different and therefore the theological terminologies also are different, is dialogue possible at all?

## **Wounds**

Whoever takes Auschwitz seriously touches a wound which has not yet healed. When a wound is touched, the reaction can be very emotional and "not objective". Often it is better not to touch the wound directly but to invigorate the new life around it. Sometimes it may be better to remain silent rather than to speak. But it is wrong to turn away.

This wound has to do with our own identity. Who, how, where would I have been then? Who am I and how should I be today?

Dialogue after Auschwitz is an encounter between wounded people. This wound is not only in us; it also plays a fundamental part in our relationships. Auschwitz did not begin with the murder of human beings. Auschwitz began with the annihilation of relationships between human beings. Poles were regarded as work animals, Jews as vermin. One could therefore have a clear conscience killing them. Healing after Auschwitz is the story of relations.

Dialogue after Auschwitz starts with actions of confidence-building. Dialogue begins with silence and listening, listening to one another. This requires that I accept the other person and respect him or her as they are, in their otherness, with their wounds. The most important task of dialogue is the preparation of such an atmosphere of trust, of the ante-room as it were, so that the trust to enter may be established, and then to discuss in the living-room, convinced of mutual trustfulness.

In doing so our faith helps us. The dignity of all human beings is a gift from God. The revelation of the Bible speaks of this in its very first words: So God created man in His own image. (Genesis 1:27). By respecting this dignity, we respect God. To listen to one another with respect at the threshold of Auschwitz, even if the differences remain, is the most important response to Auschwitz and the most powerful testimony to our belief that God is Love.

*Translated by Annegret Fuehr*



Display of suitcases, baskets and other belongings brought by the prisoners of Auschwitz



*Bishop Kevin Dowling and Marie Dennis, Co-Presidents of Pax Christi International, taking a moment of silence after placing a wreath at the firing squad wall of Auschwitz*

# 5.

## European Union as a Peace Building Entity

*Fr. Paul Lansu (Belgium), Senior Policy Advisor of Pax Christi International*

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**“If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.”<sup>5</sup>**

One of the dilemmas for the European Union is always the question: geographical enlargement of the Union or deepening the policies of further integration and collaboration. Some might argue that you have to make a choice. Others believe that these two scenarios can be developed simultaneously. Croatia is the latest new EU member. What about Ukraine and other countries in the Eastern European region? Who is interested in joining the EU, politicians or civilians? Clearly, membership should be the result of democracy and democratic elections within the given countries. The EU can serve as a mediator, such as in Northern Ireland, and as for the latest agreement between Serbia and Kosovo, although under pressure.<sup>6</sup>

The question I focus on is: can the EU function as a peace building entity?

1. World War II was inevitable, when taking into consideration how World War I ended with the Treaty of Versailles in 1919,<sup>7</sup> which was composed primarily by Allied powers. In this treaty, Germany was treated as the sole perpetrator of the war and they lost a significant amount of land, including Alsace-Lorraine which went to France; Eupen and Malmedy went to Belgium; land taken from Germany and given to Poland; the German African colonies such as Burundi and Rwanda were given to Belgium.
2. The Treaty of Versailles was incredibly unjust. Reconciliation among parties who are considered unequal is impossible. The treaty subsequently left the German people feeling defeated and hopeless. Adolf Hitler noticed this

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<sup>5</sup> Quote from Nelson Mandela: <http://www.cicd-volunteerinafrica.org/quotations/78-important-subjects/quotations/520-nelson-mandela-quotations>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dw.de/serbia-and-kosovo-sign-historic-agreement/a-16758946>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/treaty\\_of\\_versailles.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/treaty_of_versailles.htm)

vulnerability, and promised a return to the greatness that once was Germany. Many Germans were susceptible to Hitler's rhetoric and tactics, allowing him to gain an immense amount of power, thus leading into the Second World War, after which Germany was treated as an equal in order to encourage lasting reconciliation.

### **Founding Fathers**

3. The founders of the European Union were united by the belief in reconciliation after witnessing the destructiveness of both World War I and World War II. They proclaimed that "never again shall there be war between us." Years of violence within the European continent made it obvious that a union of some kind was essential in order to rebuild economically, as well as to ensure peace across Europe. There were several values inspiring the founders which continue to inspire members of the European Union today. The ultimate goal was for a peaceful, united, and prosperous Europe, with the utmost respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities.
4. Several key founders played significant roles in the process of developing a union. The cornerstone of Konrad Adenauer's foreign policy was reconciliation with France, which was significant seeing as he was the first chancellor of Germany after World War II. In 1962, in collaboration with President Charles de Gaulle, Germany and France were able to sign a treaty of friendship,<sup>8</sup> which was a major milestone towards European integration. Prime Minister Winston Churchill was the first to call for a "United States of Europe" and made it his aim to eliminate European ills of nationalism and war mongering. The Italian Alcide de Gasperi worked on both the Marshall Plan,<sup>9</sup> as well as other initiatives that were aimed at the fusion of Western Europe. He developed close economic ties with other European countries, notably France.
5. Jean Monnet<sup>10</sup> was the unifying force behind the birth of the European Union, and was the inspiration behind the Schuman plan<sup>11</sup> ultimately developed by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, the architect of the European Integration project. The Plan was to have joint control of coal and steel

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<sup>8</sup><http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-elysee-treaty-has-been-a-cornerstone-of-european-stability-a-879002.html>

<sup>9</sup><http://www.enotes.com/economic-cooperation-act-1948-marshall-plan-reference/economic-cooperation-act-1948-marshall-plan>

<sup>10</sup>[http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean\\_Monnet](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Monnet)

<sup>11</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schuman\\_Declaration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schuman_Declaration)

production, with the idea that a state that did not have full control over coal and steel production would be unable to fight a war. Finally, Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak helped to formulate the Treaty of Rome<sup>12</sup> by acting as the president of the working committee for the preparation of the Treaty.

6. One of the earliest, most momentous steps towards creating a united Europe was on April 18, 1951 when the six founding countries of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands signed a treaty based on the Schuman Plan to run coal and steel under common management. This allowed no one country to fully develop weapons for a war. It is worthy to note that the common war materials of coal and steel were the first items to be converted into instruments of peace. On March 25, 1957, the Treaties of Rome created both the European Economic Community (EEC),<sup>13</sup> or the common market, and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM).<sup>14</sup> The EEC allowed for the free movement of people, goods, and services across borders. On January 4, 1960, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)<sup>15</sup> is signed and enters into force on May 3, 1960. January 14, 1962 saw the adoption of regulations on the Common Agricultural Policy that created the groundwork for the establishment of a single market for agricultural products and for financial solidarity. Then, on July 15, 1964, it was ruled that community law is to override national laws. Sicco Mansholt from the Netherlands was the first European Commissioner to be responsible for agriculture, and he laid the basis for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).<sup>16</sup> He firmly believed that Europe needed to become self-sufficient and that everyone should be entitled to a stable supply of affordable food.
  
7. The next significant achievement was in April 1972, when European member states decided to allow their currencies to fluctuate against each other within narrow limits, known as the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM),<sup>17</sup> which ultimately developed into the Euro that we know today.
  
8. In March 1985, the Schengen Agreement<sup>18</sup> takes effect in seven countries, allowing citizens to no longer require passports to travel between these states. On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall collapsed, opening borders between East and West Germany for the first time in over twenty-five years. In February

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<sup>12</sup>[http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/treaty\\_of\\_rome.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/treaty_of_rome.htm)

<sup>13</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_Economic\\_Community](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Economic_Community)

<sup>14</sup><http://www.euratom.org/>

<sup>15</sup><http://www.efta.int/about-efta/the-european-free-trade-association.aspx>

<sup>16</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common\\_Agricultural\\_Policy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Agricultural_Policy)

<sup>17</sup><http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/exchange-rate-mechanism-ERM.html>

<sup>18</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schengen\\_Agreement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schengen_Agreement)

1992, the Treaty on the European Union<sup>19</sup> is signed in Maastricht, which set clear rules for the future of the single currency, as well as foreign and security policy. At this point, the European Community becomes known as the European Union. The following year, in January, the single market and four freedoms are established: the free movement of goods, services, people, and money.

9. Throughout the 1990s, civil war had erupted in the Balkan states, in which the EU took on peace-keeping operations in March of 2003. EU led forces replaced those of NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic Macedonia. Finally, the Treaty of Lisbon<sup>20</sup> was signed in December 2007, with the goal of making the EU more democratic, efficient, and transparent and encouraging the tackling of challenges like climate change, security, and sustainable development.
  
10. The Christian Democratic Party played a noteworthy role in the creation of the European Union as well. Robert Schuman, “the Father of Europe,” was a Christian Democrat, the first to put forth a plan for French and German coal and steel production to be placed under one High Authority. In 1953, the publication of the founding declaration of the Christian-Democratic Group was officially recognised. The first meeting of the Common Assembly of the three European Communities (European Parliament) was held in March 1958, with the Christian-Democrats holding the clear majority. The first step towards developing the European People’s Party<sup>21</sup> occurred in November 1969 when Hans-August Lucker was elected Chairman of the group. He expanded institutional and organisational links with the national Christian-Democrat parties. The European People’s Party was founded in April 1976 and was composed of parties from seven Community countries.

### **Goals and Aims Today**

11. The goals and aims of the European Union today are similar to those goals established during the founding: to provide peace, prosperity, and stability for its citizens; to overcome divisions on the continent; to ensure that its people can live in safety; to promote balanced economic and social development; to meet the challenges of globalisation and preserve the diversity of the peoples of Europe; and to uphold the values that Europeans share, such as

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<sup>19</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maastricht\\_Treaty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maastricht_Treaty)

<sup>20</sup>[http://europa.eu/lisbon\\_treaty/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/index_en.htm)

<sup>21</sup><http://www.epp.eu/index.asp>

sustainable development and a sound environment, respect for human rights, and the social market economy.

12. The objectives of the European Union differ somewhat from the ultimate goals, and include: providing an area of freedom, security, and justice without internal frontiers; providing an internal market with free and undistorted competition; working towards sustainable development based on economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection in quality of the environment. The EU also promotes scientific and technological advances; combating social exclusion and discrimination; social justice and protection; equality between men and women; solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child; economic, social, and territorial cohesion; solidarity among member states; and respect of cultural and linguistic diversity.

### **Enlargement**

13. Enlargement of the European Union has played a major role in encouraging the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Union. Through the invitation for ten additional countries to join the EU in 2004, the EU was putting an end to the split between the free world and the Communist bloc. Poland and seven other CEE countries became member of the EU in May 2004. Many have viewed enlargement as an opportunity to promote political stability and economic prosperity within Europe. Enlargement, however, is not a simple process. In order to become a Member State, a country needs unanimous support from all twenty-seven Members – a conflict or poor relations with just one country could terminate their chances at becoming a Member State. This can be seen through EU-Turkey tensions over Cyprus and through Greece-Macedonia tensions over Macedonia's name. There are also fears by some EU Member States of over-enlargement to countries further east, such as Georgia and Ukraine, due to unwanted migrant labour and the fear that a sovereign debt crisis could slow enlargement.
14. There are currently eight countries that are waiting to join the European Union: Turkey, Iceland, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia. Croatia is set to become a Member State in July 2013, while the other nations are having some difficulties with meeting the requirements of EU membership. Bosnia-Herzegovina continues to suffer from ethnic quarrels, corruption, organised crime, ethnic divisions, and an unstable political climate. Serbia continues to have issues with Kosovo and needs to

further cooperate with the police and justice mission in Kosovo. Montenegro needs to consolidate rule of law, fight organised crime and corruption, and better protect freedom of expression. Albania also needs to strengthen rule of law and fight organised crime and corruption. Macedonia has made progress in police reform, in fighting corruption, and in human rights, yet their dispute with Greece over the country's name hampers their ability to join both the EU and NATO.

15. Iceland is suffering from a dispute over mackerel fishing since they object to Norway and the EU taking more than ninety-per cent of the total allowable catch recommended by scientists. Financial reform has also been difficult in the country. They do, however, already apply two-thirds of EU laws, and they are in the Schengen Zone and follow single market rules. Their primary concern is the impact that EU laws will have on fishing and whaling, while the EU would gain a more significant role in the Arctic which is rich in untapped energy and mineral resources.

### **Turkey**

16. Turkey has, by far, had the most difficult time progressing towards EU membership. In 1963, the six member states of the then European Economic Community (EEC) signed an agreement with Turkey, confirming and extending the existing ties between the EEC and Turkey. This "Ankara Agreement" was at that time considered, within both the EEC and Turkey, as a first step towards discussions on a possible membership. However, it is remarkable that this agreement is to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013 and that the special relationship still exists, whereas Turkey is still not a member of the European Union. This indicates a complex relationship between Ankara and the EU. Turkey sees itself as a bridge between West and East, between Europe and Asia. Turkey believes that it belongs to the West. They are part of NATO since 1952. Turkey feels not accepted by the West. But thanks to the European Union there are no taboos anymore in discussing issues such as the Kurdish and the Armenian issues. There is no unanimity among the EU member states about a possible membership (is Turkey ready for membership?) and both the successive governments and the public opinion in Turkey have been changing their mind on the matter. Turkey still has to normalise its relations with Cyprus, and there are serious concerns about the respect for freedom of speech and democracy, the treatment of religious minorities, women's and children's rights, and the civilian control of the military. It is vital that they strengthen democracy and human rights through judicial reform before they have a chance of becoming a Member State. Others worry that Turkey, as a mainly Muslim country, would change the dynamics of the EU; however, they

would provide a younger labour force that could help an aging Europe. The first concern of Turkey goes to the civil war in Syria and its impact for the whole region of the Middle East.

### **Role of Regions**

17. There are several regions within EU Member States that are vying to be independent members of the EU. The primary political party in the Flanders region of Belgium believes that they are dealing with both globalisation and localisation – the EU should handle issues such as defence of the environment, while democracy needs to be closer to the people. They desire to be an independent state within the EU through the dissolution of Belgium and the development of a Flemish state that will be sovereign over the Dutch-speaking territory, and to include Brussels which may have a separate linguistic status. Flanders believes in cooperation with the EU, yet remains restrained and critical, firmly believing that EU territory should not exist beyond European boundaries. A similar such region is the Basque in Spain who want to join the EU on separate but equal footing with Spain.
  
18. Also, in Spain is the semi-autonomous region of Catalonia. They hope to hold a referendum after elections, which could be followed in the Basque country. Currently, Spain has no constitutional mechanism to allow for the independence of one of its regions, and the EU has no system for the breakup of a Member State. It is also important to remember that EU membership can be blocked by just one member country, meaning Spain could block Catalonia's entrance. Catalonia aims to follow Scotland's example and negotiate a referendum with the central government; however, the Spanish Prime Minister is threatening to block the referendum from occurring. Support for independence in Catalonia has recently risen to over fifty percent.
  
19. The final territory that craves independence is Scotland, UK. Scotland, however, would likely become a separate province, rather than a truly independent state. They wish to keep their currency, the pound sterling, but they will still have interest rates set by a foreign bank, the Bank of England. They would primarily depend on Brussels for policy decisions, and in EU majority voting, Scotland's votes would make little difference. They are having a referendum in the fall of 2014 after negotiating with Prime Minister David Cameron. What remains unknown is whether they would automatically qualify for EU membership, or would they need to apply like any other state wishing to become a member.

## Disadvantages

20. There are various points to be made about the European Union that could be considered disadvantages to being a member. Some claim that major policies have failed, and the EU is thus in a demographic, economic, and technological decline. Others claim that there is not enough money spent on defence, seeing as Britain and France have had armed forces cut, and in Libya, for instance, they were dependent on logistics and supplies of the US. Furthermore, people who live within the EU do not identify with it, nor do they have faith in it. People are more closely associated with their national identities, be it French, Polish, Belgian, Spanish, or any other. The EU is essentially undemocratic, seeing as most members are unelected, therefore are unaccountable, and are far removed from citizens. Voter turnout in parliamentary elections is extremely low, and still dropping, since people do not feel that they are being adequately represented.

## Advantages

21. More importantly, however, there are numerous advantages to being a Member State of the European Union, the first of which is the free movement of goods, services, people, and money. This has improved trade within the region, as well as migration for education and jobs. There is also the hope that wealth and stability will eventually return to the region. Additionally, the EU has its own foreign service, and it is in the process of trying to create its own intelligence and federal police services. The Erasmus education program<sup>22</sup> allows thousands of EU scholars to study abroad, to share their knowledge and gain from the knowledge of others.

22. Finally, and most importantly, peace within the European Union is essentially guaranteed through interdependence. There have been no wars within the EU since World War II, justifying that the primary goal of fostering peaceful relationships between members has been quite successful. There is much negativity towards the EU since the Euro Crisis began, but the Union ultimately just needs more time to evolve. It is a relatively new institution, and it is constantly changing. In comparison, the United States took approximately ninety years to fully come together, so the EU simply needs to be given a chance to continue to progress.

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<sup>22</sup><http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/>

### **Remaining Conflicts within the EU**

23. Despite the fact that a war has been avoided within the EU since the end of World War II, there have still been conflicts within the region that the EU has had to address appropriately; the most notable of which may be the conflict in Northern Ireland. There is a long history of discrimination against Catholics by Protestants in Northern Ireland, and the EU developed a peace programme that contained two strands: (1) economic and social development, and (2) addressing the legacy of the conflict as part of the peace process. Under these strands, there were five economic and social priorities: (1) economic renewal through the harnessing of economic opportunities generated by the peace process; (2) social integration, inclusion, and reconciliation with priority being given to vulnerable groups in the worst-affected areas; (3) employing locally based regeneration and development strategies; (4) promoting an outward and forward looking region by encouraging dialogue with other EU regions on economic, social, and environmental issues; and (5) stimulating cross-border economic, social, and cultural cooperation. In the Northern Ireland conflict, the EU effectively promoted the peace process by realising the importance of communication and reconciliation in the process of reuniting Northern Ireland. The DDR (demobilisation, demilitarisation and re-integration) of former armed people from both sides in Northern Ireland is still not yet finished. Peace does not come without pain. A “win-win” is the best solution. It is all about “identity” and an inclusive dialogue.
24. Another significant conflict within the European Union was the issue of the division of Cyprus between Turkish-Cyprus and Greek-Cyprus. In this situation, EU accession was perceived to be an act aimed towards finding a resolution to the division of the island and was to act as a pressure to reach a solution. It has been determined that the most progress in resolving the conflict was done within the last three years before accession, with accession effectively acting as a major catalyst in discussions of reuniting. Although the country is reunited and a member of the EU today, the use of EU accession as a catalyst did not have a completely positive outcome on the situation between Turkey and Cyprus. At the Luxembourg summit of 1997, Cyprus was accepted as a candidate country despite the fact that it was still divided at the time. Meanwhile, at the same summit, Turkey was told that it had to work on finding a solution to the Turkey-Cyprus conflict before it would become a candidate country. This had utterly disastrous effects on EU-Turkey relations.

25. Since the breakup of the former Yugoslav Republic, there has been much conflict in the Western Balkans. The Union's policy towards the region is stabilisation through integration. In 2000, the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP)<sup>23</sup> was launched, which offered Balkan countries the idea of eventual EU membership. It was later determined at the EU-Western Balkans summit in 2003 that the Balkans will have a future within the EU. In the Balkans, however, soft power has not been enough to encourage the same transformations as were seen in Central and Eastern Europe, thus the region was the site of the first EU security missions under the European Defence and Security Policy. Perhaps the EU should take on more of a peace building role in the Balkans, similarly to the actions taken in Northern Ireland, to encourage reconciliation and dialogue between fighting factions, rather than a stronger military role.

### **Conflicts between Peoples**

26. The European Union also has a long history of issues and conflicts between peoples and populations. First and foremost, Germans and Poles have disliked each other for decades, due primarily to atrocities committed during World War II. Over time, however, they have grown into normalised neighbours. Many Poles feel badly about the process of resettlement of Germans following the Second World War, but they felt that it had to be done. Poland has grown to increasingly support Germany within the European Union; they would prefer to have a stronger Germany within the EU than risk Germany leaving the Eurozone, which would likely lead to the disintegration of the entire EU.

27. Further conflict can be seen through the observation of Serbians, Croatians, and the Serbian minority in Kosovo. When Kosovo banned Serbian goods from entering the country, Croatia offered to fill the void through trading with Kosovo. This greatly upset Serbia and their negative reaction demonstrated how positive Serbian-Croatian relations are necessary for regional stability. Following the entrance of Croatia into the EU in July 2013, their relations will prove even more vital. Furthermore, in 2011, Serbia indicted Croatian nationals on counts of war crimes, which angered Croatian officials because they want to deal with the criminals themselves. Additionally, Kosovo has plans to reintegrate Northern Kosovo, which is primarily Serbian and would prefer to be united with Serbia rather than Kosovo. The issues in the North are hindering Kosovo from beginning negotiations to enter the EU, who says that

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<sup>23</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/sap\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/sap_en.htm)

Kosovo is nearly ready to begin negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)<sup>24</sup> but needs to continue to work on the issues in the North and to protect minorities.

### **Economic and Financial Crisis**

28. Although the EU works towards economic unity and interdependence, the recent and on-going crisis in Greece has proven that even further restrictions and monitoring are required in order to ensure that the entire Eurozone does not fall apart. The economic crisis destroyed Greece's economy, brought down its government, caused social unrest, and threatened the Euro's future. The country is suffering from a recession due to the austerity measures that have been demanded by France and Germany in return for massive bailouts. Although fellow EU Member States have agreed to the bailouts and a Greek debt restructuring, it has not been easy. Greece continues to have major deficits and the emergency funds that the country received have not been paying for public services, but are rather being used to pay some of the interest on the debt. It is important in the case of Greece, as well as with Cyprus, Spain, Italy, and Portugal, that the EU remembers that they are working together to save a landmark Union of vastly different countries; they must remember that the citizens of the EU come first. If Greece is unable to improve societal structures, then their debt will never truly be cleared.

### **Peace Building Efforts**

29. The European Union acts as a peace-building entity through three primary areas of policy, the first of which is development and cooperation. While the EU continues to be the world's largest aid donor, it also uses trade in order to drive development by opening markets to exports in developing countries. The Union's primary objective in this policy area is to eradicate poverty using a sustainable approach; it wants to give people control over their own development by: (1) attacking sources of vulnerability, such as poor access to food or clean water, education, health, employment, land, social services, infrastructure, and healthy environment; (2) eradicating disease and providing access to cheap medicines for epidemics like HIV/AIDS; (3) reducing the debt burden which diverts resources from public investments; and (4) promoting self-help and poverty eradication strategies that allow developing countries to consolidate the democratic process, expand social programmes, strengthen their institutional framework, increase private and public sector capacity, and reinforce respect for human rights.

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<sup>24</sup>[http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/press\\_corner/all\\_news/news/2012/10102012\\_01\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/press_corner/all_news/news/2012/10102012_01_en.htm)

30. The second policy area is humanitarian aid and civil protection, which includes crisis relief, and runs relief operations in areas with long-running crises and post-conflict instability. The EU was present in Libya, Afghanistan, and Palestine, among other nations. The EU's European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO)<sup>25</sup> has the duty to save lives, reduce suffering, and protect the integrity and dignity of those affected through emergency assistance including the delivery of tents, blankets, food, medicines, medical equipment, water purification systems, and fuel. ECHO also funds medical teams, mine-clearance experts, and provides transport/logistical support.
31. The final policy area which promotes the EU as a peace-builder is in human rights. The EU supports efforts to combat racism, xenophobia, and other types of discrimination, specifically in the areas of asylum and migration. Furthermore, the EU's humanitarian assistance is not subject to restrictions based on human rights breaches; aid is provided with the aim of relieving human suffering regardless of the cause. In order to promote respect for human rights and democracy, the EU has chosen to focus on four areas: (1) strengthening democracy, good governance, and rule of law; (2) abolishing the death penalty; (3) combating torture through preventative action, such as police training, and punitive measures, such as employing the use of the International Criminal Court; and (4) fighting racism and discrimination by ensuring respect for political and civil rights. Despite the efforts of the EU, discrimination remains prevalent within the Union, especially in regards to the migration of the Roma, which most EU Member States view to be an ethnic disadvantage in society.
32. The European Union has long been involved in African affairs, and there are two specific instances in which the EU aimed to work as a peace-builder in the region; however, in reality they acted more as a non-strategic state-builder. Peace-builders focus primarily on supporting human rights, civil society, and local institutions, whereas state-builders focus on security and the maintenance of shared sovereignty through an emphasis on good governance programs. Non-strategic state-building differs from strategic state-building in that it seeks to regulate but does not result in a neo-colonial imposition of rule, rather in external rule that promotes self-help and self-improvement thus leading to shared sovereignty. The EU's three policy areas aimed towards peace-building as mentioned earlier seem to fit this description precisely.

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<sup>25</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm)

## Democratic Republic of the Congo

33. We begin by observing the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. When colonial rule ended, there was a relationship of structural economic dependency between the state of Zaire and the West. President Mobutu was brought into power and maintained control due to support from the US, Belgium, France, and other Western nations. When Western powers and international organisations put pressure on Mobutu to democratise, the economic crisis worsened and further undermined state institutions. When the Rwanda Patriotic Front seized power in Kigali, around two million refugees flooded into eastern Congo and congregated in large refugee camps near the border in North and South Kivu, which deepened already existent divisions between native Kivu and Rwandans. Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, and Burundi formed an anti-Mobutu alliance which controlled Congolese rebel groups. Rwanda and Uganda then formed the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo-Zaire, led by Laurent Kabila. When Laurent was assassinated, his son Joseph took over and was prepared to negotiate with all rebels, work more closely with the international community, and to allow the UN to militarily intervene. Agreements were signed and Joseph Kabila became the transitional president, with four vice-presidents from various rebel groups. Violence continued throughout the transition, especially in North and South Kivu, Ituri, and eastern Katanga.
34. The process of integrating the armed forces of the warring groups essentially failed, further causing violence to ensue. In November 2004, Kabila recruited local armed groups to defeat Nkunda, a former General in the transitional army who rebelled against the Kabila government. Nkunda fought in North Kivu between November 2006 and the end of 2009, alleging to protect the Tutsi. He defeated Kabila's forces in 2008, and by winter of 2008, MONUC<sup>26</sup> had intervened calling for a cease-fire, and the US, South Africa, and European partners of Rwanda were mobilised to put pressure on Nkunda to see it through. The DR Congo and Rwanda decided to work together to put an end to Nkunda, and he was captured in 2009. Their joint mission, however, resulted in the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and there were another 160,000 refugees in North Kivu in a two month period.
35. During the first period of the conflict, between 1996 and 2002, the European Union as a whole had little involvement in the Congo. The UK and the US were

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<sup>26</sup><http://www.un.org/fr/peacekeeping/missions/past/monuc/index.shtml>

the predominant positions on the UN Security Council, and the EU accepted this. Belgium, France, and the US, however, were the main countries that shaped Western policy towards the DR Congo. Between 1996 and 1997, the EU General Assembly did not condemn the actions of the RPF against the refugees in eastern Congo because the British and US governments' views that the events in the DR Congo were strictly an internal matter were predominant. The French government, the EC Commissioner for Humanitarian Action, and the Belgian Foreign Minister wanted an EU or UN intervention force to protect the refugees.

36. Between 2003 and 2007, the EU began assuming a non-strategic state-building role in the DR Congo. The EU participated in the International Committee in Support for Transition, which shaped political decisions for the DR Congo. The EU contributed to drafting the Constitution, defining the formation of the government, and prepared for the election. Also, the EU began to encourage the use of security tools, emphasise state-institutions and good governance programmes, and support elections in a highly-militarised environment. The EU's increased involvement did have some positive outcomes, including: (a) persuading leaders to renounce armed struggle; (b) providing humanitarian aid and peace-building activities; and (c) contributing to the introduction of laws to stop discrimination; however, because decentralisation was included as a key element in the Constitution, EU strategy contributed to legitimising gains made by conflicting parties.
37. In contradiction to the fact that the EU aims to be a peace-builder is the use of military forces in conflict zones. In 2003, the EU undertook its first military operation in Sub-Saharan Africa, which led to an increase in EU security missions towards the DR Congo. These operations were driven by various concerns. The initial use of military was launched to deal with a humanitarian emergency, but it was more to test the emerging European Security and Defence Policy. The other two EU missions aimed to reform the security sector and to facilitate the integration of the armed groups into a new army, which ultimately contributed to an increase in armed violence due to the lack of desire to integrate into a power-sharing unit by rebel forces.
38. In early 2002, the European Commission and the Congolese government signed a national indicative programme in which the EU supported the facilitation of the Inter-Congolese dialogue and wished to act as a stimulant for international aid. The aim was to build a stronger, improved relationship between the DR Congo and the EU. EC development programmes had a number of significant state-building features, such as: (a) development aid

was used to finance security sector missions; (b) increased development aid was targeted at good governance programmes, like the reform of public sectors, local governance, and the privatisation of local businesses; (c) aid was used to provide support to state budgets; and (d) aid was closely intertwined with using military means to support elections. Additionally, the Congolese government agreed to delegate powers to a National Authorising Officer within the EC to implement major donor project, including projects in infrastructural work, health and urban development, and major humanitarian aid programmes. Thus, the Commission functioned as the government in these areas. The EU continues to maintain a large say in the DR Congo through direct budget-support.

39. Despite the fact that the EU certainly provided humanitarian assistance and aid in the DR Congo, they primarily acted as a state-building entity rather than a peace-builder, as seen through their extensive involvement in the security sector, diplomatic engagements during the transitional period, the deployment of several military operations, and the emphasis on good governance programmes. The EU acted as a *non-strategic state builder*, rather than a strategic one, for a number of reasons. First, there was no EU consensus about the strategy to be employed. Second, the varying perspectives displayed that there was not a full understanding of local and regional interactions. Third, EU tended to emphasise building institutions from above rather than resolving local issues and emphasising the needs of the people. Fourth, the EU failed to devise a plan in which warring factions would give up their military strategies to achieve political power, despite security sector involvement. Finally, EU officials did not adequately use their financial and human resources to address the interaction between local causes of conflict. Acting in this sense shows us that the EU may have initially entered the DR Congo with the intentions of acting strictly as a peace-builder, but with no defined plan they ended up working more as a state-builder along with other nations.

40. It is rather clear that today, the European Union aims to act as a non-strategic state builder, especially in regard to Africa. The EU's policy towards Africa states that their aims are to "strengthen and promote peace, security, democratic governance and human rights, fundamental freedoms, gender equality, sustainable economic development including industrialisation, and regional and continental integration in Africa." Additionally, due to their uniquely shared history, the two regions have laid the foundation for cooperation based on the need to promote universal approaches to security including conflict prevention and peace-building, conflict resolution and

post-conflict reconstruction, linked to governance and sustainable development. It is important to realise that if the EU was strictly working to better conflict-afflicted areas, then they would likely not focus on governance and reforming government security institutions and participating in military interventions than they would on addressing conflict resolution from the ground up, working primarily with grassroots organisations and local communities to resolve issues, followed by working up the ladder to government and security reforms.

### **Israel & Palestine**

41. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is currently a hot topic globally, and especially in the European Union, with a central aim being a lasting peace in the Middle East. It has been easy to see through time that Israel has the upper-hand in its conflict with Palestine: they have the support of the United States and other powerful members of the international community and they are stronger militarily; however, in order to reach a peace agreement, the power balance needs to be more equal. Israel should be treated just like any other country – their occupation of Palestinian territory and abuses of human rights are illegal according to international law. Palestine receives sympathy from many states in the Muslim world, and the EU would make great improvements in its Middle East cooperation if they were to break away from the shadow of the US and show more support for Palestine. Additionally, the EU may receive more political goodwill if they were seen to be working towards a solution to the conflict.
  
42. The EU is Israel's biggest trading partner, which gives significant leverage to the European Union. Theoretically, the EU could suspend trade with Israel since “The European Union-Israel Association Agreement,”<sup>27</sup> which regulates trade between the two entities, is based upon a respect for human rights, which Israel has violated. Furthermore, when Hamas won the democratic election, the EU demanded that Hamas denounce violence, acknowledge previous agreements Israel had made with the Palestinian Authority, and to accept Israel's right to exist, none of which were asked of Israel, thus clearly demonstrating the bias. If the EU had not put as much pressure on Hamas, their strategy could have been more successful.
  
43. In order to encourage a peaceful solution to the excessively violent conflict, the European Union must fully employ its role as a peace-builder. They must

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<sup>27</sup>[http://eeas.europa.eu/israel/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/israel/index_en.htm)

be independent of the influence of the United States in their treatment of Hamas and Israel. It is possible to be impartial, and this is vital in order to foster a true power balance that may one day result in a peace accord. The EU has the ability to play a major role in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, but only if they are willing to break away from the US, put more pressure on Israel, and take a bit more of a relaxed position towards Hamas. Reconciliation will not be realistic until Palestine and Israel are regarded as equals – the European Union has the opportunity to be the leader on the path towards this.

### **Soul of Europe**

44. Former President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, believes that Europe needed to have a soul; that there needed to be a spiritual and ethical dimension to the European Union – legal and economic expertise were not enough for the EU to succeed. Thus, *A Soul for Europe*<sup>28</sup> was developed in 1994. It was an incredibly forward-thinking initiative whose goal was to involve religious communities in dialogue with the European institutions. Religious communities were encouraged to present projects with the potential to receive grants. We at Pax Christi International believe that Jacques' belief in providing the EU with spirituality and meaning is quite significant today. The EU is suffering from a lack of connection; EU citizens do not feel like EU citizens. A uniting force is missing, and should be more seriously pursued by the European Union bodies. Encouraging and stimulating a sense of spirituality among such a multitude of religions and individuals would further motivate work towards peace.

### **Nobel Prize 2012: The EU**

45. The Nobel Peace Prize of 2012 was awarded to the European Union for contributing “to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe” for over six decades.<sup>29</sup> Although the EU undoubtedly aims to work for peace within the Union and around the world, as can be witnessed through their peace building efforts in the DR Congo and Israel-Palestine, as well as peace-oriented policies, the EU still has a long way to go to truly earn the title of a peace building entity. Upon receipt of the Nobel Prize, there was much criticism voiced in the media, especially since the European Union is a bloc that is strongly based on military power. Past winners including Desmond Tutu, Mairead Maguire and Adolfo Perez

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<sup>28</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/policy\\_advisers/archives/activities/dialogue\\_religions\\_humanisms/sfe\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/policy_advisers/archives/activities/dialogue_religions_humanisms/sfe_en.htm)

<sup>29</sup>[http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/press.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/press.html)

Esquivel shared their opposition to the EU receiving the award seeing as it is strongly based on military force to ensure security. Alfred Nobel intended for the prize to be given to those who work towards disarmament, but the EU remains one of the biggest weapons producers in the world.<sup>30</sup>

### **Pax Christi International**

45. Similarly to the European Union, Pax Christi International was created based on reconciliation and was originally formed as a Crusade of Prayer for Germany. By the end of World War II, people were longing for peace. The first powerful symbol of the rebuilding Europe was a peace pilgrimage in France. Bishops in both France and Germany gave their support to the growth of Pax Christi, and soon the organisation expanded into a Crusade of Prayer for all Nations. From then, Pax Christi grew quickly, and in 1952 began to be identified by Pope Pius XII as the International Catholic Peace Movement.
  
46. Pax Christi International believes that the root causes of conflict must be addressed in order to promote long-term solutions. The movement believes that the EU recognises this, yet often has taken on more of a state-building role, rather than a peace-building one. The European Union has discouraged war within the Union for over sixty years, and needs to be given the continued opportunity to grow and manage its internal problems. Meanwhile, the EU Member States must work towards developing a consensus on how to deal with external conflicts, since historically, actions in regions such as Africa and the Middle East have been highly contended.

#### Further Reading:

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3. [http://www.academia.edu/370580/The\\_European\\_Unions\\_Role\\_in\\_the\\_Palestinian\\_Territory\\_after\\_the\\_Oslo\\_Accords\\_Stillborn\\_State-building](http://www.academia.edu/370580/The_European_Unions_Role_in_the_Palestinian_Territory_after_the_Oslo_Accords_Stillborn_State-building)
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<sup>30</sup><http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/10/us-nobel-eu-idUSBRE8B906M20121210>

10. <http://www.ethnopolitics.org/isa/Tocci.pdf>
11. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU\\_4.5.9.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_4.5.9.pdf)
12. <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/the-western-balkans-and-the-eu-the-hour-of-europe/>
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Visiting the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery

# 6.

## Ethical and Religious Reflections on Violent Conflicts, Wars and Genocides Worldwide 1

*Dr. Mustafa Ali (Kenya), Secretary General of the Global Network of Religions for Children and Director of Arigatou International; Member of the Board of Pax Christi International*

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Good evening. After yesterday's experience at the gas chambers that killed millions of Jews and non-Jews, I decided to write another presentation to represent my reflections from this experience. And so my earlier prepared presentation is shelved, and now I want to share with you this. WHERE ARE YOU?

Opening Remarks:

A community that has been subjected to atrocities like what we saw yesterday at the concentration camps and gas chambers never fully recovers. They need to be assisted by others to recover to some extent.

Genocides, wars, violent conflicts can be prevented and stopped from happening.

The scale of death and suffering that took place in Auschwitz in the 1940s is regrettably, taking place today. The difference is that in Auschwitz, it was targeted against specific communities, committed by one group led by one man. In today's 'genocide', it is dispersed over huge geographical space, over time and committed by many leaders in respectable positions, some are 'silent'.

If we don't learn from history, the same mistakes will be repeated by us. The majority of the world's population seems to have learnt little from this tragedy. Some learned nothing.

It is within us, within our means, to answer to the desperate cries of the many, who, today, find themselves in tragic circumstances. Yesterday, Fr. Dr. Manfred, while sharing with us in the evening, said people coming to Auschwitz could easily lose or strengthen their faith in God. Many of course wondered, and indeed asked, "Where was God when all the torture, the suffering and the killings happened?" He went

ahead and wondered, "Shouldn't the right question be for us to ask is where were you when it happened?"

And so this brings me to a question, "where is God?" Are we not told in our scriptures that God is closer to you than yourself? If God is closer to you more than you, why should we blame God? Should we not have been the one to prevent these tragedies? In my religious tradition, we believe that God does not change a bad situation until you change what is inside you, to change the bad situation. I read on one of the doors at the blocks where many were killed, and recall gesturing Fr. Lansu to look at it. 'Those who do not learn from history will repeat the same mistakes.' Is this not what we are seeing today? Are there similar or almost similar atrocities committed here at the Auschwitz being committed in the Middle East? Africa? Many places?

We are lucky that this memorial is standing here today and visited by millions from around the world. Humanity is so rich that we have kept the memory of the tragedy in museums - at the heart of the tragedy, to holocaust museums in Washington, in Cape Town, everywhere, to remind us of the tragedy where millions were gassed to death. But who will remember that anything between seven million and fourteen million Congolese (statistics not available) were, in the Congo Basin, killed at the behest of King Leopold the Second - murder on an industrial scale that happened less than a hundred years ago? Who even kept figures of the slaves who were killed or who died over a period of five hundred years? Who will build memorials of the six million children dying every year? Who will even talk on their behalf? Who is caring for today, there are so many - from the killing and raping fields of DR Congo to the murder of children, men and women in Syria?

The fact that chemical weapons have over the last few days been used to kill human beings in Syria, the fact that so-called civilized nations still stock these chemical weapons, let alone nuclear weapons, is abhorrent. It is evil. The fact that we still say and believe in the lie that 'if you want peace, prepare for war' - a lie that has so often led so many groups and nations to go to war instead of preventing it - a lie that is fed to us in schools when we are kids; a lie that all religions need to repudiate, but are not doing anything or little is being done to stop it.

It was shocking for many of us yesterday to see the photo of the SS staff and soldiers celebrating in the mountains after a 'hard-days' work at Auschwitz. But should we be surprised by this? Not at all. Today, similar scenes have been seen/witnessed, repeatedly. I learnt from the tour guide yesterday that the SS tried to cover-up their actions. Some leaders today go in front of television cameras to justify wars, killings, for reasons and euphemisms such as the 'international community'; desecrating

well-meaning phrases such as 'responsibility to protect'; killing in the name national interest, national security, national this and that. And we follow them.

Today, policies and decisions that impoverish others leading to deaths of children are adopted in parliaments, congresses and floors of many countries and multilateral institutions, always with applause at the end. We say that humanity is today at its most literate, most compassionate? Most. Is it? How can we claim that we are, when we see rising cases of intolerance? How can we, and how can it be that we lose 20,000 children daily - six million every year - silent 'genocide' of sorts, and somehow we don't care to prevent this when we all know that God has blessed the world with resources to prevent this? How can it be that we say in the Holy Quran that God created us to belong to many tribes and nations so that we may know and talk to each other....but alas, what we see as a constant is that nations are now using religion to justify domination. And even within our religions, we see camps fighting each other. We see Sunnis scheming to dominate over Shias and vice versa. We see the fanatics - Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and others, taking over religion, and misusing it in the same way for political domination.

*And how can we ask where God is when we are witnesses to six million children dying every year? Is it not always true that we find our true selves by going beyond ourselves in caring for one another? Is it not true that part of dialogue with God is when we dialogue with each other? And in this way we can stop asking where God was when Hitler killed six million, and instead ask where you were? Is it not time then, that we find it in our hearts the importance of the other, the relevance on the other, our inter-relatedness? Isn't my wellbeing yours and yours mine?*

Dr. Manfred yesterday talked about the wound. It signifies our vulnerability. Is it not time that we see the other through the lenses of vulnerability. That I cannot be assured of my security as long as you are vulnerable. That your vulnerability is my insecurity. Isn't this what we have as the most important teaching - Loving your neighbour -in our religions -- Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, indigenous teachings? So the question to reflect is why is the rain still beating us so hard? Is it not time to restore the light that shone the stars when Jesus, Abraham, Muhammad and other prophets walked the earth. Is it not time to restore them in their original form, devoid of misusing them? Politicizing them? Mystifying them? Romanticising them?

And when you go to the depths of these teachings, in their original context, you will find that the teaching of the love for the other was so fundamental without which the world could not have found love then, and survive as humans, without which

what we saw yesterday at the gas chambers continue to, today, unfold in different ways, before our own eyes, daily. But we chose not to see them. Without which there are so many cries of despair in the world today, but we chose not hear these cries. Without which injustices have been made to look like the right thing to do. And yet fewer and fewer of us are talking about these injustices. But with the efforts of the very few people and networks around the world, like yours, the light that shone dark skies thousands of years ago, that talked and walked the just path, is kept alight. Just alight, from being extinguished by the forces of darkness, with the hope that this light will increase and shine brighter as more and more come to keep this light shining.

Let us go back to our faiths and religious traditions to find the reasons, resources and ways to keep the light shining even brighter. Let us all, instead of asking where is God when injustices and killings are done, look each other in the eye, and ask each other, where are you? Where are you when on daily basis violent conflicts claim more, with little or feeble attempts to stop or resolve them? Where are you when life has been rendered to be about power and domination, about profits and not people? Where are you when we are losing 20,000 children every day - six million every year? Where will you be tomorrow when the same happens? And the day after? WHERE ARE YOU? Thank You.



*Train tracks leading to Birkenau extermination camp*

# 7.

## Ethical and Religious Reflections on Violent Conflicts, Wars and Genocides Worldwide 2

*Dr. Fr. Maciej Hulas (Poland), Sociology Institute of the Catholic University of Lublin*

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It occurred many times that Europe had been turned into a battlefield: Crusades, seventeenth century religion wars, revolutions in Britain, France and Russia; genocides in Ukraine and the former Yugoslavia – all this makes Europe a continent in which unimaginable beauty and subtlety produced by Mozart, Hugo, Gaudi, Goethe intertwined with equally incomprehensible hatred in which groups of people were able to invest economic and intellectual resources to develop an unimaginable killing potential of mass destruction. What happened in Auschwitz makes this place unique in its own right. It is a strange kind of uniqueness, in which human tragedy finds no counterparts in any part of Western world. Auschwitz became an icon of hostility that was meticulously planned and institutionalised and carried out. A perfectly organised microcosm of contempt for human being, with no rules, where people life ended in the moment one had crossed the threshold of this place. When we look at the open space of the Birkenau we can feel, what is like to die without having anyone to call our name or hold our hand. *Auschwitz* is a product of Europe, a continent whose history had taught is how to create itself in a most genius way and destroy at the same time.

### **Conflicts across Europe**

Europe had always been a continent of conflicts with the variety of ethnic and political ambitions striving for independence and domination. Two World Wars, genocides in Ukraine and slaughters in former Yugoslavia, all of these make it clear that European subtlety is intertwined with something that goes beyond human imagination. Even if at the moment peoples of Europe may relatively enjoy tranquillity, conflicts are coming up across ethnic groups divided by political borderlines. There are nations dissected by political borders. To mention are Poles in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, Albanians in Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia, Irish in the UK and in Republic of Spain with its Castilian, Catalan and Basque population, Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Syria and many others. They are group of people nationally

mobilised by some nationalist leaders that strive to self-government, but are stopped by the fact of being divided by political borders of a state.

Resentments that result from the national or ethnic ambitions to create one political unit better than other had often generated a distorted patriotism that missing the very point of what patriotism is all about often caused havoc in political order and human life. One of the few things responsible for conflict and rancour nowadays in Europe seems to be the wrong concept of patria as well as *patriotic* allegiance.

According to Schmitt, the state represents political status of people living within the confines of a given territory, and the policies thereof consist in an incessant fighting the enemy. Politics, Schmitt argues, is an arena of an exponentiated antagonism where the nation mobilizing facet is a simple antithesis: enemy – friend. According to that kind of theory, both the state and its politics become incomprehensible in the absence of an enemy. Schmitt argues that conflicts influence common perception and stimulate collective actions. Conflicts create specific political behaviours. The state is a particular entity, and state politics are policies of a small group of political decision-makers. Schmitt rejected the worldwide politics one for everyone since it is impossible to single out an enemy from the humanity as a whole. He reduced patria to a battlefield, which resulted in patriotism based in conflict become the darkest days of the human history.

Both in Romanov Russia and in the USSR patriotism relied on the notion of power. Cliché such as “socialism as a fatherland” or “socialist fatherland” were popular in the propaganda nomenclature. Patriotic narratives in the thirties were dominated by eclectic rhetoric of the proletariat Internationale, elements of national culture, revolutionary pathos, bourgeoisie values, mythology, the imperial past, and myths from revolution and the civil war. In the fifties, Chruszczov underlined particularly one element, namely “the Stalinist friendship of the peoples of the USSR” considered as “the key to prosperity and invincibility of [...] Homeland. In the entity of the Soviet Union, a multi-national socialist state, the peoples of all Soviet republics” were to see “[...] a reliable basis for their independence and prosperity”.

In modern-day China, patriotism is officially referred to the love and support for China represented by the state. It is defined as love of the socialist system and the road chosen by all nationalities living in China under the guidance of the Communist Party. In the Chinese concept of patriotism, the state is identical with the will of the peoples, and this is the basis for it to claim the right for an unconditional subjugation of all citizens to the institutions of the party. Chinese patriots are supposed to comply with rules set by social education oriented at the realisation of an anti-natalist policy. China is the first country, in which family planning is being

defined by a constitutional regulation. The family planning control is treated as a moral obligation of families to the rest of society, and the constitutional regulation calls it *explicit* patriotic duty fulfilled for the sake of economic development of the nation. Reduction of population growth in China was due to compulsory public education in the spirit of socialist theory of civilisation, and through the promotion of anti-natalist culture. Chinese patriotism is extreme owing to the fact that the constitutional regulation brings in to conflict the law in force with fundamental human rights.

### **Crimes Committed for the Greater Good as an Allegiance to Patria**

Many crimes in Europe have been committed out of loyalty to one's own patria. In a sense, patriotism resembles religion. They are catalysts for motivation. Both appeal to one of the most sensitive areas of the human psyche, namely, one's emotional relationship with existence. Religion liberates from the fear of death, while patriotism helps maintain the bonds with patria. As Benedict Anderson genuinely puts it, that dying for one's own country implies moral greatness. A common feature to both, religion and patriotism is their historical and ideological misuse. The mobilising potential of religion was utilised in the seventeenth century religious civil wars. Nationhood was still too tenuous to organise the warring parties. It was religious affiliation which fulfilled this function (Bockenforde). With the dawn of "a secular age" however, the political importance of religion diminished (Taylor 2007), whereas patriotism is still doing well.

There are situations where religion and patriotism should be approached with caution. If religion destroys rather than unifies, then it ceases being true religion. Religious icons and rituals are intended to support and inspire worship and if being used for other purposes than worship they may easily turn into instruments of provocation. Patriotism is and will always be an -ism, which means, it has been fully defined and interpreted for its purpose. It is the idealistic patria which forms the basis of patriotism. Ideas in their own right have positive connotations. They are viewed as lofty, since they refer to ideal forms and patterns, and express the longings for an ideal order. Problems arise when these ideals are put into practice.

An example of the misuse of patriotic motivation appears in the Horacean sentence: "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" (it is sweet and right to die for your country). In modern times this statement was proclaimed and reproduced in a variety of contexts by national pathos, education, culture and art. However, there is no correlation between the ancient understanding of bravery manifested by actions of individual courage in the face of the enemy, and the contemporary ways of waging war, which are based on avoiding hand to hand combat or seeing the enemy. The breakthrough in the history of political conflicts was the Great War

which used the latest killing machines to extraordinary effect. Tanks, submarines, airplanes, machine guns, flamethrowers, sniper rifles, and biological weapon effectiveness was not so much dependent on an individual's valour but on a highly specialized application of military training. To survive meant evasive action and shelter more than courage under fire. It also resulted in new syndromes such as shell shock. A new era of technological warfare was ushered in where political and economic strength was driving a war machine creating more effective ways of annihilation (Winkler: 181n).

"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" ignores the value of human life. Romantic connotations appeal foremost to the consciousness of young people, whose natural idealism and lack of experience overpower reality. Pro patria mori, - dying for one's country, has always been an imagined idealism not necessarily real and without question. A striking example is the self-sacrifice of many Australian and New Zealand volunteers at Gallipoli. The slogan fighting for the "homeland" was part of a pro war campaign which attracted thousands of young men away from their farms, towns and suburbs. Patria in this case was not based on their homeland but on a glorified sense of supporting the British Empire. An empire which as a colonial power distorted the truth about Australia's history in order to create a sense of belonging to mother England. Did so many deaths result from the conscious dedication of one's life for patria and the values it stood for, or an irreversible youthful exuberance used and manipulated by the political powers of the day? There is no easy answer to these questions. Gallipolis war graves serve as a stark reminder of the futility of youth and a political system which encouraged sacrifice.

Patria was reflected in national uprisings in the nineteenth century. The Warsaw Uprising being the most recent. It was aided, supported and inflamed by the Polish intelligentsia. The uprisings were initiated by national liberation propaganda programs calling for the defence of patria, understood as national sovereignty. In the vast majority of cases the uprisings failed resulting in the loss of large numbers of people. The Warsaw Uprising alone led to two hundred thousand casualties and the destruction of the original antebellum architecture.

Is it justifiable to take actions that are so risky, and with such tragic consequences in the name of political independence? Are these hecatombs justified in support of a romantic notion captured by a Horacean sentence? A question arises, whether patriotism with no hesitation to annihilate thousands to the accompaniment of Horacean poetry is not turning into idolatry, in which patria like "all idols require willing and devoted sacrifices". Critical evaluations of the past will not discredit or diminish the sacrifice of those who had succumbed to their youthful enthusiasm which fell prey to the ill-fated patriotic rhetoric about dying for one's country.

Criticism rather pays homage to human life, as the most precious asset. Putting one's life on the line to defend patria is ideologically flawed. To die to save a life is the greatest and most honourable of sacrifices.



*View of the electric fences at Auschwitz*

# 8.

## Overcoming Violence: Responding to Contemporary and Past Violence

*Katarina Kruhonja (Croatia), Former director of the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek; Co-Recipient of the 1998 Right Livelihood Award*

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### Introductory Remarks

I was asked to prepare a contribution for these consultations on the topic *The spirituality of Inter-Faith Dialogue and Contacts (experience from Croatia and other post-Yugoslav countries)*. This task is too challenging for me because I am not involved and informed sufficiently about interreligious dialogues on the levels of high church leadership<sup>31</sup> and, also I do not know sufficiently about the scope, extent and impact of the grassroots interreligious efforts by faith-based and like-minded initiatives. Such are the *Regional Network of Believers for Peace* and interreligious cooperation among youth in Sarajevo.

But, at the same time – it is significant, and for me painful, that in our, by war wounded, societies there are no prophetic voices coming from our churches on how to overcome consequences of past violence and how to work on rebuilding trustful and reconciled relationships. Particularly, if one has in mind that religious communities have become among the key social actors in our post-socialist societies.

I can compare it with my experience from the work on recovery of the multi-ethnic, war-devastated communities, in eastern Croatia. Division and distrust between people were so strong that it was necessary to go very gradually: first measures for the prevention of violence, then opening communication between Croats and Serbs aimed at re-building trust and, finally, encouraging them for cooperation on matters of common interest of the village. This process lasted for years– almost ten years, and is still under way. But, our peace and development teams have not

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<sup>31</sup> Particularly, one should carefully explore the work of the Interreligious Council (IRC) established in Sarajevo 1996 by Dr Mustafa Cerić and three other top leaders who have their seats in Sarajevo (Orthodox metropolitan Nikolaj Mrdja, Catholic archbishop Vinko Puljić and President of Jewish community in BH Jakob Finci).

helped the people from these local communities to open dialogue about past violence. It seemed to us to early. These questions remained under the carpet. But, now we can see that without opening up these questions – trust cannot be rebuilt.

So, I rely my opinion on lessons learned from this experience: I think that an interreligious dialogue that brings us together about recognition of what we have in common, what connects us is not sufficient. I think that we need an interreligious dialogue about reconciliation - *what are painful issues which are dividing us* and are an obstacle for rebuilding trust. I do believe that our faith can lead us to act in the *spirit of aspiration for the truth and life without mutual violence*. The fact that a political solution has still not been reached (in B-H) is not a reason to postpone such reconciliation efforts – I believe that, on the contrary, such efforts could provide an atmosphere in favour of finding a political solution which will take in account needs of all involved. I am looking forward to such religious leaderships.

What I am going to share with you are lessons learned from my peace work which is, at the same time, my spiritual journey.

Namely, in this very period of my life, after twenty years of peace activism and the time of Croatia's accession to the EU, I have a need to slow down, to reflect aiming to once again reach the level of clarity that is necessary for me to realize my place, opportunities and purpose of my personal engagement on peace building in Croatia and in the region<sup>32</sup>.

Namely, during the last twenty years many activities have been undertaken and a lot has been done at all levels (state, inter-state and civil) in order to end violence, conduct pacification and measures of transitional justice and give impetus to post-war peace building and democratisation in countries and societies which were established following the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. However, at the time of Croatia's accession to the EU and ICTY's accession into the final stage of its work, controversies still remain while social polarisation regarding the interpretation of the

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<sup>32</sup>I am a co-founder of the *Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights* in Osijek; for approximately ten years, I coordinated cooperation between civilian initiatives in preparation for and implementation of peaceful integration of Croatian Danube Region, including the network of *peace and development teams* that worked on post-war recovery of multi-ethnic local communities in Eastern Croatia and Northern B-H (Posavina area) devastated by war. For the last ten years, I have participated in creating, strengthening and linking civil initiatives at the regional level on the processes of dealing with the past, particularly on the establishment, development and work of *Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past* from Zagreb, national monitoring team that monitors war crime trials and the Coalition for RECOM (*Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia in the Period from 1991-2001*). I also participate in educational programmes in the field of nonviolent communication, nonviolent actions and peace service.

past and use of some transitional justice measures are seemingly getting stronger. It is almost as if the war has not finished yet but deepens within Croatian society; economic dysfunction creates an even bigger discrepancy between the rich and the poor on the account of seizure of general goods<sup>33</sup>; the manner in which we treat and use political freedoms creates confusion and mistrust towards political elites and parliamentary democracy. The disappointment and anxiety because of economic deprivation and insecurity are combined with the feeling of helplessness to change the situation. At the same time, a socially harmonized vision of a desirable future does not actually exist. Neither in Croatia, nor in Serbia, let alone in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In short: as a society we still have to deal with the consequences of past violence and there is need for a transformation of the present situation – a more just society is needed. At the same time, there is a gap between the political (nominal) and social democratisation - scarce democratic experience, inefficient civil participation, weak civil society, lack of capacities for nonviolent activism, lack of culture of dialogue or room for public dialogue.

The question is: where are we, what to do and how to do it? What are the achievements at the political and cultural (social) level that represent a solid foundation for sustainable peace?

Today, I will not talk much about achievements. I will bring you my remarks concerning gaps, pitfalls and cultural or political paradigms which, I find have to be addressed because they are obstacles for deepening the processes of dealing with the past and for building sustainable peace.

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<sup>33</sup>In Croatia, one-third of citizens are poor. Currently, the only members of the European Union with a higher poverty rate are Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania and Latvia. The rate of relative poverty amounts to 20.6%, while the rate of material deprivation amounts to 32.2%. This rate better explains the share of population which has been excluded from society. Those are all the people who cannot afford at least three of nine items of material privation – to eat meat, chicken and fish, to keep the apartment warm, to replace old furniture, to buy new clothes, to pay for one week of holidays, invite friends over for dinner, once a month buy friends a drink in a coffee bar. That increase of the poverty rate in the last two years is the result of *new poor people*. These are no longer long-term unemployed persons with lower degree of education, but to a large extent up-to-now employed men and women with secondary and university education, from urban areas, and the youth. Croatia is at the top among EU countries regarding unemployment of youth.

## I. Overcoming violence:

### Transformative Democracy as the Fundament for Sustainable Peace

Our post-totalitarian societies used to be called *transitional* ones. But, it is not about transition from a bad political and social setting into a better one – a just and democratic one. The regimes we hate are not only something imposed on us from outside. We internalised it at different degrees. Therefore, it is a transformation (not just transition) which is needed at the individual, social and political levels.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, if we are looking towards societies which are working to overcome violence, it is transformation which is needed, in so called democratic societies.

Overcoming violence - that is what I see building sustainable peace is all about – it is both the starting point and the destination.

*Responsibility for peace* I see as the responsibility to bring an *end to the spiral of violence* on the following three “entry points”:

- It is necessary to work on the consequences of a violent past so that they *will not* become fuel for repeated armed conflicts in the future (transformative justice and reconciliation).
- It is necessary to suspend war and armed conflicts as a manner of establishing “peace”, “justice” and “democracy” and, at the same time, to develop alternative measures to prevent armed conflicts.
- It is necessary to establish and practice alternative, nonviolent answers to contemporary and structural violence - diminishing injustices and resolving conflicts - advancing the community towards a *just society that nurtures, maintains and improves peace through nonviolent methods*.

So, it is important to seriously take into account that the need to deal with the consequences of a *violent past* and the need to search for an *alternative response to contemporary violence* (and injustice) are two interconnected points of reference that determine our present and our future.

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<sup>34</sup>Srdan Dvornik, "Suočavanje s prošlošću – prevladavanje onoga što jesmo" ("Dealing with the past – overcoming what we are") in: Dino Abazović, Branko Todorović (urednici), Yearbook of the Balkan Human Rights Network, 2005: Confronting the Past – Consequences for the Future, Balkan Human Rights Network, Sarajevo 2005.

However, what kind of peace are we talking about? I refer to such peace where individuals and groups, nations and states, find room for development on the basis of their own capacities and not on behalf of others. Dominant and competitive relations are transformed into solidary relations based on mutual respect and cooperation. Gandhi used to say that such peace is possible because we have resources for all/everybody's needs but not for all/everybody's greed. This is peace that is nurtured through permanent improvement of relations<sup>35</sup> so that they cause more good than evil, whether we talk about emotional, psychological, economic or political sphere.

This is how I understand *transformative democracy*.

## II. Response to Contemporary Violence – How to Find Other Ways?

### War time

*Don't talk about peace; it is the war going on.* That sentence was one which I have been confronted with as peace activist so many times. But, it was not frustrating for me since I also experienced being trapped with the - omnipresent - logic of total war (logic: there is no other possibility except *either them or us*). At the beginning of the war, my feelings and mind were so clouded with ongoing violence that I was not able to see any other response except the violence. I was freed from this logic of violence when I made two decisions: I refused to accept the conclusion that there is no other way except violence; I decided that I would like to love my enemies (those who attacked our town from three sides<sup>36</sup>) as Jesus would love them.

When I made these decisions I had no clue what in practice it could mean. It was just my willingness. But I gained a lot: firstly, I learned the most valuable lesson that there is always a *possibility of choice* (even, in most cases, clouded by our previous experiences, by pressure exerted by the circumstances (violence) and by our own environment and culture); secondly, I felt liberated from the logic of violence; thirdly, I gradually started to discover different, *alternative responses to contemporary violence*.

I learned that even *during the war (or during serious conflicts)*, one can make conscious steps towards peace *by preserving the essence of peace: human dignity*. In war time, it is almost treason even to think, but specifically, these meant:

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<sup>35</sup> Definition of peace as peaceful relations as designed and often used by Adam Curle.

<sup>36</sup> In that time in my town there were already thousands of traumatized people. As a doctor, I saw numerous killed, detained and tortured people in ad hoc detention camps or people displaced from their homes; one village not far away from my town was the first one completely burned down.

a) *to stop violence* does not only mean to stop those who perform violence against you and members of your community, but it necessarily has to contain a decision that you and members of groups which you can influence - family, colleagues from work, party, political leaders, military formation, government etc. - *would not respond in the same manner nor would you approve or justify revenge;*

b) we should strive for peace that would restore disrupted relations, i.e. to leave a possibility for a solution by which new, *more just relations, but still relations*, would be established with our current enemy.

In war (or serious conflicts), although it may seem a paradox, *paying respect to the dignity of each human being, including the enemy*, may not be postponed. Actually, an ordinary person knows that it is not permissible, not even during the war, to abuse and kill children, women, civilians, detained persons and persons who are ill. Such atrocities, however, are usually *justified by the arguments of endangered national security and the nation's secure future*. This is why it is difficult and dangerous to publicly announce in one's own community: "Not in my name!" But by preserving the attitude and practice that the principles of freedom and justice must be applied equally, even under circumstances of war, in respect of all humans, including the enemy, one can contribute to preventing the continuation of violence through an endless 'victim–perpetrator–victim' cycle. On the contrary, grounds are prepared for a community built on human dignity, mutual recognition and interconnectedness.

From such a standpoint it is possible to opt for peace and strive towards peace even when war is still going by using the following approaches:

- By pleading persistently for peaceful conflict resolution and by constant, unremitting efforts in favour of peaceful resolution of the war;
- By supporting the needy ones we can contribute to: prevention of further victimisation (to stop suffering); preservation of human dignity of war victims through strengthening interconnectedness and solidarity between people and approaching victims as a part of the solution – that they can contribute to a peaceful future – that they can become a part of a peaceful, healed future;
- By taking a stand against violations of humanitarian law and human rights made by members our own community;

- By strengthening our own capacities for peace building through education, networking and cooperation (locally, nationally, across the front line, internationally).

A lot of such efforts were taking place during the war in Croatia.

### **III. Post-war period - Transitional Justice Measures / Dealing with the Past**

On numerous occasions people asked me why I deem that it is necessary to deal with the past. Isn't it better for the individuals, nations and societies, instead of painful, useless, even harmful dealings with the past violence and crimes, to leave the past behind and turn completely towards the (better) future? I reply that, actually, I am dealing with the present, with *contemporary problems that are the consequences of a violent past* which represent an obstacle for overcoming traumas and consolidating a new peaceful, harmonious and democratic society. For many people living in my homeland of Croatia and other ex-Yugoslav countries, the past is not past at all: the basic point of reference of their present and, for some, even their future, is personal or community trauma and deprivation (economic, political, social) caused by violence suffered directly or indirectly in wars. There are many people among survivors and their families who cannot, no matter how hard they try, completely turn their heads away from the consequences of the war and live a "normal life"<sup>37</sup>. Many of them, including policy-makers, have significantly reduced possibilities for personal, cultural and social development due to suffered violence, war experience and exposure to prolonged conflict. That is why, in my opinion, the term *transitional (transformative) justice* better points at the interconnectedness between the consequences of past violence and the present that needs to be transformed.

However, when the international actors initiated measures of transitional justice, they included in its mission only direct consequences of the recent war from the 90's. The same was done (and is still being done) by the Government of the RC and by civil society organisations. But, as I will explain later in my presentation, it has become clear to me to which extent controversies regarding interpretation of Croatian history spill on to the transitional justice process regarding recent Homeland war in the 1990's. I think that it must be acknowledged and, necessarily, it should be taken into account.

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<sup>37</sup>The Centre for Interdisciplinary Post-graduate Studies from Sarajevo stated that according to this year's research, 80% of citizens of B-H live in the past, i.e. "they go to sleep and wake up with war memories."

Nevertheless, the measures of transitional justice that I am talking about deal with consequences of wars and armed conflicts in former Yugoslavia during the 90's: more than 150,000 people were killed in the last war on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, more than 13,000 missing persons are still being sought, approximately one million people fled before war atrocities and there is a significantly large number of those who still feel different consequences of the war. Almost 2,000 Croatian defenders committed suicide.

Croatia has become a member of the EU and in order to do so, it did a lot in the area of democratisation, establishment of the rule of law and implementation of measures of establishment of post-war justice.

Actually, strengthening and implementing of transitional justice measures have become the most important instruments for and indicators of democratisation in a new, independent state – Republic of Croatia (strengthening the rule of law).

Namely, measures that we use in the processes of dealing with the past (transitional justice) are designed to stop violence, repair damage and injustice inflicted upon victims, as well as to provide guarantees that the same will not happen again.<sup>38</sup>

In practice, it means that these measures are directed at establishing *restorative justice for victims*, but with the expected final outcome pertaining to the *entire society – just social order which reflects the rule of law and reconciled relationships*. The step in between is establishing social consensus concerning *justice for all victims and condemnation of all crimes*.

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<sup>38</sup>According to the new understanding, it is beyond doubt that history (as events) was also created by precisely those “ordinary people”, small people, humiliated and insulted. After the Second World War (in which many civilians had been killed) the historians started paying more attention to civilian victims of wars and other people whose basic human rights (were) jeopardized and the people who (were) exposed to violence and crimes. As well as to the development of international conventions and legislation which protect human rights and introduce sanctions for violations of rules of war and crimes against civilians and humanity. In the last twenty years, the UN published several documents that are important for understanding, inciting and pressuring member states in relation to measures of post-war peace building and transitional justice. These are:

- Boutros Boutros – Ghalli: *An Agenda for Peace*, Second edition, 1995;
- The United Nations' General Assembly Resolution adopted on 16 December 2005 entitled *Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law* which pertains to compensation, restitution, rehabilitation, resolving the whereabouts of missing persons, symbolical reparation and guarantee of not repeating the crimes. A/RES/60/147, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/remedy.htm>;
- The Human Rights Council appointed a *Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence*;
- Pablo de Greiff: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence*, Human Rights Council, Twenty-first session, Agenda item 3, 9 August 2012.

Four measures of transitional justice - *truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence* include different specific activities, measures and mechanisms.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, the processes of inter-state normalisation between Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and cooperation in economic, touristic and cultural (including sports) areas are taking place in parallel with specific transitional justice measures and support processes of transitional justice.<sup>40</sup>

In Croatia (and the region of ex-Yugoslavia), the transitional justice approach was introduced very early, while the conflict was still ongoing, as measures of pacification and building a basis for peace agreements.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the process was very well-resourced by the international actors. Likewise, from the very beginning there were three key stakeholders in the implementation of these measures – the state, the international actors and civil society, which created opportunities for synergy based on bottom-up and top-down approaches.

The Dayton Peace Agreement, various UN resolutions, and the establishment of the ICTY created a basis for this process. Accession to the EU supported motivation and dynamic on the political level by insisting that the state guarantees the return of all refugees; by insisting on the establishment of a law-based state, particularly, an independent and impartial judiciary and provision of a guarantee for the respect of minority rights.

The Republic of Croatia implemented the following measures: it adopted and implemented the Pardon Act (which pertains to the rebel Serb population in the RC) whereby it rendered possible the integration of the Serb population in the RC; war crimes trials (cooperation with the ICTY, trials before national courts and

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<sup>39</sup>These mechanisms are:

- establishing the fate of missing and detained people;
- determining human losses and facts about war crimes;
- establishing retributive justice (war crime trials, lustration);
- establishing restorative justice (exercising the right to return of refugees, compensations to victims of war crimes, truth telling mechanisms, apologies, erecting monuments);
- providing professional assistance to victims suffering from physical and post-trauma difficulties and creating opportunities for their re-socialization.

<sup>40</sup>I recall what breakthrough we made when visa regimes were revoked.

<sup>41</sup>For instance: 1992, the Republic of Croatia adopted and implemented the Pardon Act; the Dayton Agreement contained the right to the return of refugees, the Erdut Peace Agreement defined certain sensitive rights of the Serb minority in Croatia (two-year moratorium on serving the military and the right to adapted school programmes in the Serbian language), the ICTY activated its mandate in Kosovo while armed conflict was still ongoing there; the peace movement warned about human rights violations and war crimes, it cooperated across the war line of separation in search of missing persons and invested efforts into trust building measures at grassroots level.

regional cooperation with judicial authorities of Serbia, Montenegro and B-H); searching for missing persons; some reparation to victims; rendering possible the return of refugees, repossession of their property and exercise of acquired rights, establishment of legal framework for the protection of political and cultural rights of minorities (important for the Serb minority in Croatia).

The key role of civil society was that, even during an armed conflict, it warned of human rights violations and war crimes; it insisted on the prosecution of all war crimes (including those committed by members of Croatian formations) and cooperation with the ICTY; it conducted systematic monitoring and informed the public about all war crime trials; it provided support for witnesses and victims; it collected facts concerning human losses and war crimes; it supported return of all displaced persons; it participated in searches for missing persons; it conducted programmes dealing with trauma and restoration of trust in multi-ethnic communities. Apart from that, civil society organisations from the region established a regional coalition which advocated the setting up of an independent inter-state (regional) commission that will establish facts regarding human losses and victims of war crimes and other serious human rights violations.

### **Achievements**

I will mention here only *milestones* that have been achieved so far. They seemed to me, ten years ago, to be far-fetched, wishful thinking. As for example:

- That the facts about the most serious war crimes and genocide have been investigated and established<sup>42</sup>;
- That the states would extradite its citizens charged with war crimes to the ICTY, and those are high-ranking soldiers and politicians (responsible persons, 161, from high commanding levels were indicted regardless of their ethnic affiliation, i.e. whether the crime was committed in an aggressive, liberating or defensive war or armed conflict);
- That the national courts conduct trials for war crimes in cases of crimes committed by members of one's own military formation (in Croatia, Serbia and B-H) and that national jurisdictions from the former war sides would cooperate with one another in that regard;
- That a possibility is being discussed at the level of presidents of states, successors of ex-Yugoslavia and at the EU level to establish an *additional regional mechanism* (along with the war crimes trials) of dealing with the past

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<sup>42</sup>In case the ICTY had not been established, I cannot even imagine when investigations would have been initiated and when evidence on destinies of numerous war crimes victims – even the mass ones such as the genocide in Srebrenica and crime on Ovčara – would have been collected.

that should focus on the facts about victims -*Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia in the Period from 1991-2001*. This initiative comes from the bottom-up, it was initiated by civil society organisations from the region<sup>43</sup>;

- And finally, the fact that the highest-ranking political leaders, state presidents, started to publicly express regret for the suffering caused to victims (people) from the “other side”.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>**Coalition for RECOM** (*Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia in the Period from 1991-2001*): Civil society organisations from the region have initiated a wide-ranging consultation process in the countries established after the fall of Yugoslavia. Consultations were made concerning the need to establish an *additional mechanism* of dealing with the past that should focus on the victims. Besides the continuation of judicial processes before national courts, our efforts go towards the establishment of a regional commission which shall be tasked with determining the facts on sufferings, war crimes and mass violations of human rights. More than 7,000 people have been involved in the consultation process. It has included persons of different walks of life (victims, veterans, civil society organisations, youth networks and organisations, journalists, artists, scientists, independent intellectuals, religious communities). The general public was informed about it through the media and by the broadcast of debates on TV shows. As the result of this four-year-long consultation process, a coalition comprising more than 1,700 organisations and individuals was established and a consensus on two issues was reached: a) that the transitional justice processes need to be approached regionally because of the regional character of war conflicts; b) that states should assume responsibility to take a lead in such regional transitional justice processes. Therefore, the coalition will seek participation from their own governments in establishing an independent regional commission. The mission of the commission would be to compile facts and to publish a report that would comprise a list of human losses in the region, including data on how they died and a list of missing persons (there are still more than 13,000 reported missing persons in the region), the facts about the most serious war crimes and violations of human rights on a mass scale. In addition, this commission would organise public hearings for crime victims (truth telling mechanism). The states should commit themselves to cooperate with the Commission in the course of the investigative stage and in implementing its recommendations. On 6 September 2013, President Josipović hosted a working group of experts established by presidents of all states that emerged from ex-Yugoslavia, including Kosovo. The working group will seek the opportunities for the establishment of such an inter-state commission and harmonisation of its mandate in relation to specific national legislations. For more details on the Coalition for RECOM, see: [www.zarecom.org](http://www.zarecom.org).

<sup>44</sup>Most impressive are: in 2010, the President of the RC Josipović and the then President of Serbia Tadić together visited the site of suffering of war crimes victims in Vukovar (where Croats had been killed on a mass scale) and in Paulin Dvor (where 18 Serb civilians had been killed); On 16 April 2010, Ivo Josipovic in his speech before the B-H Parliament apologized for the role of Zagreb in fuelling bitter ethnic divisions during the 1992-1995 war (summary in English is available on: [www.dw.de/dw/article/0%5467958,00html](http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0%5467958,00html)). The day after he visited the memorial places Ahmići and Križančevo Brdo escorted by Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić and Catholic Archbishop Vinko Puljić; On 31 March 2010, the Parliament of Serbia adopted its Declaration on Srebrenica condemning the crimes in Srebrenica <http://srebrenica-genocide.blogspot.com/2010/04/text-of-declaration-on-srebrenica.html> (11 August 2012). For the time being, although still exceptionally, civil initiatives participate at memorials and visit the sites of suffering of victims from the “other side”: Women in Black (from Belgrade), Fund for Humanitarian Law (from Belgrade), Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past (from Zagreb), IDC Centre Sarajevo, Veterans for Peace – Regional Peace Initiative are organisations that have been contributing to such integrative culture of memory for several years. Srebrenica is a memorial that represents the most visible meeting point with multi-ethnic structure of visitors.

These are the main *advances* regarding *reparations, non-recurrence and trust*:

- With the assistance of the international actors, the states have almost completed the reconstruction of homes devastated by war.
- Under the pressure of international actors all states had to pass measures for ensuring the return of refugees and displaced persons and guaranteeing their private property.
- Under the pressure of international actors practice and laws have been improved – rule of law was strengthened to better protect and ensure human, cultural and political rights of minorities. Thus, for instance, the following was done in Croatia: a discriminatory act in relation to property belonging to Serb refugees was abolished; court practice of filing group indictments for war crimes against a large number of persons of Serb ethnicity without solid evidence has been suspended (in practice this was an obstacle for return because people were afraid that they would be arrested and convicted); while a legal framework provides good political organisation and participation of the Serb minority in parliamentary democracy.
- War crime trials' standards have been introduced into national judiciaries and national judiciaries' capacities for war crime trials have been developed.
- The credibility of institutions has been gradually improving in Croatia with synergistic effects of work on the part of all three stakeholders – international actors, the state and civil society organisations.<sup>45</sup>

### **Shortcomings, gaps and controversies**

Despite of previously mentioned achievements it should be acknowledged that *seeking the truth and justice for all victims* is an incredibly demanding process. The process of establishing *social consensus* concerning justice for *all* victims and condemnation of *all* crimes has not been completed yet, but it is on the table and underway.

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<sup>45</sup>Synergistic effect means that we are making progress towards the desired objectives, but this is not a harmonized cooperation. On the contrary, this is like wrestling. Civil society organisations that advocate for post-war justice, including justice for victims on the “other side” and accepting responsibility for crimes committed on “our” side, most often have to constantly “push” the state, “swim” against the mainstream in society and perform those jobs that the state does not perform although it would have to. For instance: the UNHCR and civil society organisations in Croatia have been struggling for more than fifteen years to exercise citizens' rights, the right to return, repossession of property and the acquired rights of Serbs in Croatia. More than 150,000 persons received legal aid. The main problem was obstruction caused by the silence of administration.

I learned two, on the first glance contradictory, lessons:

- That the most powerful source for motivation on this path is solidarity with all victims (it is deeply rooted in human beings),
- But, at the same time, acknowledging the suffering of victims on the enemy side challenges “our” truth to such extent that the first instinct (and very often the long-lasting one, as well) is to refuse to look at this side of war and perceive those who remind us of it as internal enemy.

Today, policy makers and the majority of ordinary people as well, *feel an obligation* in their public appearances to advocate the standpoint that each crime must be condemned, while each victim's suffering must be recognised. And that everyone is entitled to return to their home.

At the same time the public and politicians react by denying the crimes and not accepting the ICTY's and/or national court' judgments if they pertain to own soldiers and generals. Still, the return of refugees is not welcomed, but rather marked with suspicion and opposition; returnees feel insecure, their trust towards institutions is very weak; there is strong resistance from both ethnic groups towards commemorations for all victims. A request that civilian war victims and war crimes victims should receive decent compensation has not been realized yet (in B-H the act is being prepared, while in Croatia it is not on the agenda yet, while social support is weak).

The most visible aspect in Croatian public is *polarisation* between those who work and advocate for measures of transitional justice and the opinion expressed by a part of the public and political parties that they (measures and those who advocate them), actually undermine the “dignity” of the Homeland War; furthermore, that they work against the truth, their own people and the state and their future. A request to ensure interpretation of the conflict from the 90's that would guarantee preservation of the dignity of the Homeland War and “the truth” about the Homeland War is always put on the table as a precondition. One's interpretation of national well-being is always ahead of the welfare of the victims. Furthermore, all political parties (and all governments up to now), Catholic Church and veterans organisations are supporting the process of creating a myth of the Homeland War which is becoming a part of Croatian identity. It seems to be too close to the myth of Croatia as a victim, but simultaneously, as a winner in the defence war which, for that reason, could not possibly be held responsible for war crimes.

There I see, also, that controversies regarding the interpretation of history from the Second World War spill over into the controversies over interpretation of the Homeland war in 1990's and over certain transitional justice measures (requirement to prosecute war crimes committed by members of Croatia forces during Homeland war<sup>46</sup>). Namely, Croatian society is still divided on the ground of inter-generational transfer of belonging to anti-fascist/communist/Ustasha-pro-fascist movement. There are memories of sufferings on different sides in almost every family. This dispute still has different and widespread social implications – the society in general is just as polarised about the issue whether the current Republic of Croatia is the final outcome of the Ustasha movement or the successor of anti-fascist Croatia.

On the other hand, a significant number of policy makers deem that measures of normalisation and, at a later stage, cooperation, are sufficient and that they will, as such, represent instrumental means to reconciliation (that it should be left to historians to write history; we need to look to the future). So far there has been no political wisdom by the government to handle these processes by creating a *social consensus on the strategy and dynamics* – the prevailing perception is of a political objective that is forced from the outside or from a small group of people (in Croatia there is a perception that those are left-wingers, Yugo-nostalgists - human-righters and the "so-called peace activists").

Further, as measures of transitional justice are not recognized by politicians and the society as one of the key pillars for establishing sustainable peace, investing resources, particularly funds, is perceived as a necessary evil that competes for insufficient resources.

In Croatia, when it comes to official policy there is better preparedness and willingness to regulate relations at the international level between two states, Serbia

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<sup>46</sup>Here I can see a connection with the need to forever dispose of the thesis on the "genocide nature of the Croatian people" because of the connection between the Ustasha movement and fascism and the need to recognize and accept that the Ustasha movement was primarily a movement for liberation from Serb-old Yugoslav dictatorship – that fascism was not the heart and soul of the Ustasha movement, although it was practise; that it should be taken away from historical interpretation that the Stash movement had a criminal, fascist character. On the contrary, that the Ustasha movement has to be justified as an authentic Croatian patriotic movement for the liberation from the old-Yugoslav (Serbian) dictatorship. At the same time, there is interpretation that the war and post-war crimes committed by Tito's anti-fascist /communist movement were, actually, committed with the intention directed against Croatian independence (i.e. against Croats, their rights and well-being).

and Croatia, than to support the recovery and healing of the disrupted internal Croatian-Serbian relations.

Thinking about why the achievements reached so far have little effect on trust building - interethnic Croatian-Serbian relations - I can recognise the paradigm which it concerns. It opposes and undermines the approach in favour of a peaceful settlement at the deepest level – at the level of need for security. I am talking about the concept of peace and security that is based on *eradication* or, if this is not possible, *on domination or assimilation* of the "enemy" (in broader sense others, different people – strange to us). It can be recognized in the widely spread and firmly rooted standpoint that *there is no peace for us (Croats) as long as they (Serbs) are among us*.

Such a concept of peace and security is justified by the fear that previous painful experiences of injustice, oppression and violence would continue or will be repeated. That is why such a concept has found fertile ground.

However, the pernicious effect of such logic lies in the fact that it leads us into a *spiral of violence* - whether during an armed conflict or in such a manner that during "peace" time it perpetuates a dominant concept that is heavily leaning on maintaining "peace" through discriminatory and repressive behaviour and measures (structural violence).

Such logic is the foundation for passing over in silence, covering up (even stimulating) war crimes and for a wide-spread social solidarisation with members of one's own units when they are charged committing of war crimes ("if *our boys* did this job, they did it because it had to be done, they did it instead of us and for the safety of our children – they are heroes and not criminals"). The concept of security, which is based on fear of others, supports the freezing of ethnic dimension of the conflict, as well as in processes of building inter-ethnic trust in Croatia<sup>47</sup>.

Apart from that, I am of the opinion that this logic has an *auto-destructive effect on Christians*. When I think that there is no other option, that peace and security may be achieved only through eradicating the enemy from my own environment (or their conversion into what we are), in that case I think and act contrary to *what I am* (i.e. what I believe that I am as a Christian). Therefore, its effect is not at the

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<sup>47</sup>In 2013, a request for introduction of bilingual signs with Cyrillic letter in Vukovar (which is a constitutional right of Serb minority in Croatia) caused waves of protest where introduction of bilingual signs was labelled "repeated aggression against Croatia". Or: one elderly woman told me: "I know that something needs to be done to improve Croat-Serb relations in Croatia, but I am afraid that if we "give them some slack", Serbs will once again assume domination over us."

moral or ideological<sup>48</sup>, but at the ontological level. I am not talking only about non-Christian behaviour; I am talking about the erosion of one's own identity. This is why I think that at this level we, religious believers, need to question what kind of concept of security we rely on, i.e. how we perceive others, different, in relation to our own security and prosperity (our own, of our own religious community, nation or state).

### **Go on: but how?**

The findings and recommendations from the research conducted in Croatia, B-H and Serbia in the period from March 2010 until April 2012 were published this year.<sup>49</sup> The researchers determined that representatives of associations of victims and other stakeholders who work on the processes of dealing with the past (international, representatives of judicial institutions, representatives of parliamentary political parties and civil society organisations) agree that it is necessary to continue with complementary measures for restorative justice: (1) impartial war crimes trials (with further improving witness protection and continued monitoring) – this was the priority and key measure for all; (2) fact-finding about all victims, missing persons and the circumstances of their calamities – even that it should/could have a regional approach; (3) that it is necessary to demonstrate, as soon as possible, active solidarity with victims through reparation (which is, for the time being, totally underdeveloped); (4) to improve and expand trust building measures in local communities (particularly in B-H); to strengthen the culture of integrative memories - prayers, commemorations and monuments for all victims in places where they were detained, tortured or killed. One of the key recommendations was to intensify cooperation at civil-society, political and scientific level.<sup>50</sup>

In short, there is a quite high level of agreement on the recommendation *to go on!*

The majority of researches and opinions I had the opportunity to read and hear and my personal thinking moves in the same direction, to the conclusion that, *in spite of*

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<sup>48</sup> The sign *Jesus left, church right* which was carried by protesters at a rally titled *Love Thy Neighbour* aimed at ideological level (the protest was organised in front of Zagreb cathedral on 15 January 2013 by the LGBT community because of hate speech, as they interpreted statements by some religious leaders in Croatia).

<sup>49</sup> Martina Fischer and Ljubinka Petrović-Ziemer (eds.): *“Dealing with the Past in the Western Balkans: Initiatives for Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia”* Berghof Foundation Report No. 18, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> It is interesting and indicative that the aforementioned research did not include religious communities as stakeholders in the processes of transitional justice nor did the answers of interviewed persons contain comments on the role of religious communities. I did not talk about this dimension either although it is important and present (a comment on Martina Fischer and Ljubinka Petrović-Ziemer (eds.): *“Dealing with the Past in the Western Balkans: Initiatives for Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia”*, Berghof Foundation Report No. 18, 2013).

*still existing controversies*, the process of transitional justice moves forward and needs to be continued.

But we should rethink about how to implement those measures so that they do not provoke the aforementioned controversial perceptions and reactions<sup>51</sup> and to attenuate the existing controversies so that they would not represent an obstacle to the processes of transitional justice. The question is what to do and how to do it so that the processes of *dealing with controversies* would be initiated.

There are some suggestions that, in my opinion, may maintain achievements accomplished up to now, as well as enhance and *deepen the processes of dealing with the past in Croatia at the social level*.

- To introduce the third approach in the process, which might tentatively be called *historically transformational*, aimed to use critical research and analysis to define the paradigms of politics and culture which contributed to violent conflicts of the past decade<sup>52</sup>.
- The Government should stimulate an open and enhanced broad social dialogue regarding the *strategy for comprehensive approach* to dealing with the past which would take into consideration *also the heritage of the Second World War and socialist period*.
- To introduce the term *reconciliation* into the public sphere and to deepen a dialogue about this issue.

Researchers and practitioners who deal with transitional justice mostly agree that reconciliation (no matter how this concept is understood) should be a final (long-term) objective of transitional justice – transformation into reconciled relations (based on truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence).<sup>53</sup> In my work, I often encounter opinions (mostly from the population of victims, i.e. from the position of victims) that reconciliation should not be on agenda until the facts have been determined, war crimes condemned and until victims' dignity has been restored.

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<sup>51</sup>One of the controversial reactions which was recently released and which is being often chanted is a slogan by Serb football fans: "knife, wire, Srebrenica" (which rhymes in Serbian); Croatian football fans still chant "kill, kill, kill Serb".

<sup>52</sup>Proposal by Milorad Pupovac in: Martina Fischer and Ljubinka Petrović-Ziemer (eds.): "*Dealing with the Past in the Western Balkans: Initiatives for Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia*" Berghof Foundation Report No. 18, 2013.

<sup>53</sup>Pablo de Greiff: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence*, Human Rights Council, Twenty-first session, Agenda item 3, 9 August 2012.

It is my understanding that these are mutually connected, interactive processes. Reconciliation should not be forced indeed, nor is it actually possible. However, it seems to me that the time has come to introduce the term reconciliation in the public sphere: to put on the agenda the restoration of disrupted relationships and establishment of new social links, based on mutual trust!

Namely, we have to decide where exactly do we want to go. For the starting point, let us agree that we want to make a step forward towards *future without killing each other – never again*.

Such a standpoint (*willingness*) is necessary so that, with measures of transitional justice achieved so far (particularly in the area of determining criminal responsibility for crimes), or some similar measure that would deal with the heritage of the Second World War we could act in the *spirit of aspiration for the truth and life without mutual violence*.

Can citizens of Croatia agree to reach an agreement on Croatian-Serbian friendship as an agreement on a *joint desired future* which would begin to materialise as of the day of signing it? And the processes of restoration of trust, reconciliation, learning from joint violent past will go on for who knows how long of a period. They will be neither simple nor painless. But having such a standpoint (*willingness for friendship/reconciliation*), we would more easily find ways to create a culture of memory which supports transformation of relations from enemy towards trust.<sup>54</sup> What happened cannot be changed – it is a part of our individual and national biographies. What we can do, is to create an atmosphere for a culture of memory of war, suffering which will be healing, liberating and peacemaking.

The culture of memory which supports transformation of relations from enemy towards trust is based on an *aspiration for the truth* (to speak the truth<sup>55</sup> - a commandment for Christians not to provide false testimonies) and *compassion* (to carefully treat your own and other people's wounds). I believe that courage and wisdom, as well as compassion towards suffering are natural inclinations possessed

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<sup>54</sup>"If memory on the violent experience is important, even saving (warning about danger; forming our identity) and at the same time dangerous (because it supports PTSD or could lead to a new cycle of violence), then it is essential to explore ways of disambiguating memory. What does it take to remember well, to remember in redeeming rather than destructive ways? How can we help memory become a bridge between enemies instead of a deep and dark ravine that separates them? How can former enemies remember together so as to be able to reconcile, and how can they reconcile so as to be able to remember together?" From: Memory, Salvation and Perdition, Miroslav Volf, Culture of Peace, 2007, Article in extension [www.centar-za-mir.hr](http://www.centar-za-mir.hr); and <http://www.yale.edu/divinity/Fac.MVolf.htm>.

<sup>55</sup>I recommend: Miroslav Volf: "The End of Memory, Remembering Rightly in a Violent World", William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan/ Cambridge UK, 2006.

by each human being (for Christians, the image of Divine character given to humans). Those inclinations need to be released and worked out in ourselves and in our communities.

I am driven to further explore and deepen this topic in the religious community to which I belong (Catholic Church in Croatia) and to support the needed interreligious dialogue regarding overcoming the past and contemporary violence.



*Map of the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery*

Peace Spirituality Encounter

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