

Gratitude to LOJA Centre for Balkan Cooperation and to KURVE Wustrow Centre for Training and Networking in Nonviolent Action



CONTENTS

	Editorial			
	JOHN DEWEY IN THE BALKANS	3		THE ART OF BUILDING BRIDGES By Krzysztof Czyzewski 17
	Dossier			
	MULTICULTURALISM AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL COHESION IN MULTIETHNIC COMMUNITIES By Agron Rustemi	4		Loc-alia INTERVIEW, EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE BRIDGE CULTURE, IDENTITIES, INTEGRATION With Anne-Marie Autissier 19
	MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: FOSTERING STUDENT RESILIENCE AND BUILDING INCLUSIVE SOCIETY By Stefan Rashkovski	6		
	EDUCATION AND CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY By Francesco Bigagli	8		Forum THE FRIENDSHIP OF DIFFERENCES - REMEMBERING IVO BANAC By Obrad Savić 20
	WHEN THE WORD "DIFFERENT" MEANS "WRONG" By Adina Deacu	11		Ars Poetica PUNISHMENT Are you originally correct? Poem by Iulia Enkelana 23
	MULTICULTURALISM IN THE TIMES OF PANDEMIC By Lazo Matovski	12		Visible Soul PAINTINGS By Delia Chausheva 25
	The Gaze of the Other			
	LEARNING THE CULTURE OF THE OTHER By Gudrun Steinacker	15		Our Essay EUROPE IS IN THE AIR By Bujar Luma 27



JOHN DEWEY IN THE BALKANS

This issue of our journal is focused on the International Scientific Conference on Multicultural Education, which took place last December in Tetovo, North Macedonia. It was organized by the Tetovo based NGO LOJA Centre for Balkan Cooperation.

“Loja” means “game” in the Albanian language, and is derived from the corresponding verb, which means “to play”. However, it is not an ethnic Albanian organization. The composition of its staff and of its many volunteers, mostly youngsters, reflects the plurality of the country. Most importantly, as it describes itself, this organization is “dedicated to the improvement of the cultural and social life as well as inter-ethnic relationships in Macedonia and the Balkan region”. It is an outstanding example of intercultural dialogue, of building bridges between the *Others* in an especially sensitive context. It is significant that, besides local youth, volunteers are coming from different countries of the world: the reputation of its interesting experiences has reached beyond the scope of our region. It cooperates with several important organizations and institutions of European countries.

The activity of LOJA Centre is very intensive, and it lies mainly in the fields of education and culture, consisting in arts festivals, exhibitions, dance, stage performance, cinema, film and video production,

or computer courses, capacity building for staff members and partners, etc. Playing is an essential component of its *modus operandi*. John Dewey in the Balkans?

John Dewey, the great American philosopher of the first half of the twentieth century, conceived the revolutionary pedagogic doctrine according to which the combination of working and playing was crucial in the educational process. It was meant especially for schoolchildren. Now, in the case of the activity of LOJA centre, it needs the following two qualifications. In the first place, we are creative in as much as we preserve a certain heritage from childhood, which is creativity. Let us remind of something from a philosophical poet, the playwright Friedrich von Schiller: “the human being plays only when he is fully a human being, and he is fully a human being only when he plays”. Second, John Dewey conceived his theory in a quite different context. It did not address the problems of inter-ethnic relationships; the concept of multiculturalism had not even appeared. LOJA centre, instead, applies playfulness in its endeavor to overcome stereotypes and promote intercultural dialogue.

The International Scientific Conference on Multicultural Education was one of the most relevant events organized last year by LOJA Centre

for Balkan Cooperation. An additional merit is that it was successfully organized in these very difficult times of the pandemics. Scholars from different Balkan countries and from other European regions participated in it, either onsite or online. Being a scientific exchange of ideas, its *modus operandi* was not playfulness in action; however, while analysing problems of education, it was done by a scientific approach to that modality as well. John Dewey was implicitly present. A whole range of diversity of experiences were shared, from primary school education through higher education. In the presentations and in the subsequent debates, fundamental theoretical concepts were discussed: multiculturalism, interculturalism, culture as such, as a common treasure of the humanity, the relation between education and culture, etc. Besides, difficult questions were focused upon, as for example that of the necessity of multilingual education in ethnically plural landscapes such as that of North Macedonia and of other similar countries.

From the many contributions in the conference, we have selected some of them for the special dossier of this issue of our journal, in a shortened version. We are publishing also two of the keynote speeches in the section “The Gaze of the Other”. The full version of all the contributions will be published soon in a book that is being prepared by LOJA centre.

DOSSIER: EDUCATION AND



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His scientific interests include social research, social policy, public policy employment and career development. Key qualifications in social policy and social protection, career development, public policy, and research methodology. We are publishing a part of the paper on which his intervention in the conference was based. The full version will be included in a book that will be published soon by LOJA Centre with the contributions for this conference.

Multiculturalism as a tool for social cohesion in multiethnic communities

By Agron Rustemi

MULTICULTURALISM, THEORETICAL APPROACH

Among the most widely used expressions in today's post-modern society are the notions like multiculturalism, multi-culture, multi-culturality, etc. The issue of multiculturalism, which has its origins in the western social and political anthropology, primarily the Anglo-American one, is a problem of the communication among the members of different cultures, ethnicities and religions. Multiculturalism fosters differences by emphasizing the need for tolerance and uniqueness of the groups that seek identity and protection within the tolerant society. According to Andrew Heywood, this notion is a descriptor and normative for cultural diversity, which is a result of the presence of two or more groups in a society and whose convictions and practices create different collective identities.

Multiculturalism is closely connected to the diversity of communities, which originates from racial, ethnic and linguistic differences, with the affirmation that differences are the pillars of the human unity. That is a philosophy of respecting the individual as a human being or God's creation, as H. Goodings says, in the freedom of the identification of the self, you are either a black or a white man, a man or a

woman, an American or a French, a Muslim or a Christian, etc. One of the definitions of multiculturalism in the anthropological and sociological literature is the following: "Multiculturalism is a policy with which public relations among different cultures of a society are regulated, including the way of utilization of languages and symbols."

The topic on multiculturalism represents

an important part of political programs in countries throughout the world and has an impact in bolstering the revision of public policies with the aim of finding a modus that is the most appropriate in fulfilling the requirements of different communities. From a normative point of view, it means recognition of differences, of the right to respect different cultures and the benefit of the whole society from moral and cultural differences. The well-known thinker, Charles Taylor, says that multiculturalism is a policy of recognition, an antipode of non-recognition or wrong recognition, which

can be very dangerous for the society, can include means of humiliation and lock the person in an unreal, deformed and reduced shape of existence. Having in mind the fact that most people tend to stay close to their culture, the thesis of multicultural countries implies the idea that the special cultural-ethnic communities need to enjoy their rights, whereas the institutionalization of

those rights is the best way to achieve completeness of every society.

Multiculturalism accepts the importance of the religion, ethnicity, values of the lifestyles, and the feeling of being valued by both individuals and groups. Diversity and multi-layering are inseparable parts of every community in every phase of history. Human societies are multicoloured and multicultural says Martinello: "Only cloning people by a particular matrix will enable the formation of mono-cultural and mono-identity societies".¹

1. Ali Pajaziti, *Fjalor i sociologjisë*, Logos-A, Shkup, 2009, pg. 431-432.

MULTICULTURALISM AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL COHESION

It is known that the Balkans is a soil that in the recent history, especially in recent decades is a synonym for turbulent conditions, for intolerance, conflicting, for aggressive nationalism and for cultural differences that cause excommunication of the other, where they still watch over mythological Leviathan. It is no accident that the term *homo balkanicus* denotes the individual that is part of a group that has not succeeded to achieve empathy with the neighbour and is oriented toward extreme politicization and partiality of the society. Former Yugoslavia was a sui generis example of experimentation with diversity and with multiculturalism. From 1945, the system implemented a policy which enabled mixing of cultures, while in 1952 was promoted building of the Yugoslav culture based on the interaction of all Yugoslavian national cultures. Pavkovic called this policy interactive multiculturalism, which after the reaction of the Slovenian intellectuals was abandoned. At the beginning of the 1960's that policy is replaced by strict segregate multiculturalism which does not allow mixing and creation of "Creole" culture but seeks equality and cultural development of each nation and nationality. Later, from the early 90's, it

ND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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follows aggressive nationalism that was a factor of fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia.²

The Republic of North Macedonia presents a historical, political, economic and cultural reality of the Balkans. It is a part of this geographical area known for its ethnic and cultural diversity. Some authors have characterized

(Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Roma, Vlachs...) and religious groups (Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Catholics...) lived in harmony throughout centuries. However, in recent decades the ethnicization of the state created a gap between two dominant cultural elements: Macedonian and Albanian, respectively Orthodox and Muslim,



the Republic of North Macedonia as the epicentre or the heart of the Balkans. The territory of the Republic of North Macedonia in all periods of the history of humanity was a part of great empires and civilizations. Due to favourable geographical position, as a crossroad of civilizations and religions, in history it is known as “Catena Mundi”.³ North Macedonia is a cultural mosaic, with a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional basis, *unitas multiplex*; it is a corridor where East and West, Islam and Christianity, are merged. This illustrates the symbolism of the cultural components of the Islamic and Orthodox provenience, mosques, churches that meet in the four sides of this country.

The cultural identity of North Macedonia is very complex, a multicultural society, where different ethnic

which up to now are in a condition of latent and manifest contradiction and search for modalities for creation of an applicable and sustainable policy of cultural diversity or cultural pluralism. The perception of otherness, i.e. difference, has become one of the most important issues in 21st-century.

There are four instruments that can be used to reinforce the cultural exchange: 1) a greater frequency of inter-human contacts 2) an unconditional defense of human rights, 3) the implementation of basic political frames; 4) the help of round tables open for the audience to discuss inter-ethnic relations.

The Ottoman Empire defines the cultural diversity by defining the cultural and religious rights of the non-Islamic (Christian and Jewish) communities. This system called the “millet” system (religious communities), enabled the regulation of the ethical, religious and language issues, promoting tolerance for everybody.

In the post-Ottoman period, the things started to change. Different nationalisms generated intolerance, because the process of forming a nation (nation building) was based on the premises of exclusivity, ethnocentrism and ethnic nationalism. During the socialistic period, the question of human rights and the attitude towards different cultures was neglected. With the 1974 constitution, Macedonia was defined as a pluralistic state and 1989 and 1991 are years when politics of a national state were designed. This trend was changed after the conflict in 2001, when the Ohrid Framework Agreement actually redefined the country according to a multicultural concept, which meant promoting a civil and

donia to denationalize their state and live in a cultural deconstructivism (N. Frazer) or cultural relativism.

North Macedonia is a part of the “historical part” called the Balkans, where contradictions and complexities persist in the historical sense of the word. Amy Gutmann says that it is difficult to find a democratic society or a society in a process of democratization, which is not a focus of debates in relation with the identity and culture. In North Macedonia, there are tendencies of closing the ethnic and religious communities inside the political walls, the educational, informative, marital, demographic as well as economic ones, a fact that clearly

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non-ethnic society (Engstrom). But during the last couple of years, the new developments are starting to go in negative directions, especially between the two biggest ethnic communities. This phase revealed the fact that our democracy is a limited democracy (I. Aceski) and that the actual politics resembles the concept of F. Zakaria of illiberal democracy.⁴

In North Macedonia, in many cases, two truths are being promoted, which are utterly different, and continue to live; each one in its own social reality, contributing so little in what we call

speaks of ethnic exclusivity. Historically seen, both greater ethnic groups don't have a long history of ethnic animosity; their mutual living is possible and necessary.

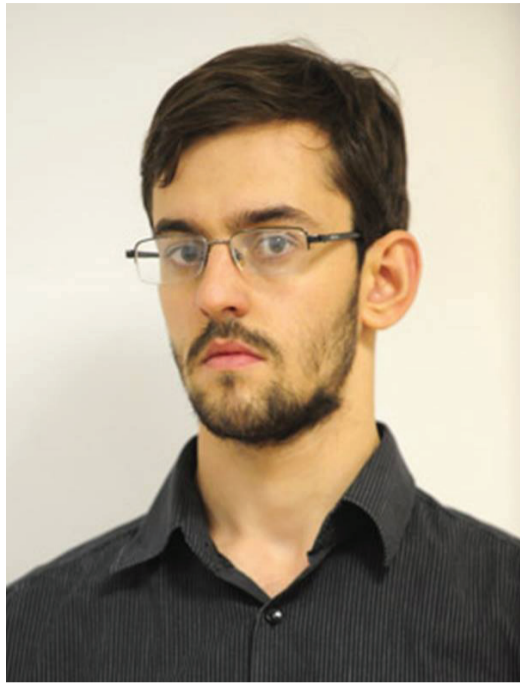
There is a necessity of a bigger exchange of information in all life spheres, comprising here the culture as well. According to some analysts there are four instruments that can be used to reinforce the cultural exchange: 1) a greater frequency of inter-human contacts 2) an unconditional defense of human rights, 3) the implementation of basic political frames; 4) the help of round tables open for the audience to discuss inter-ethnic relations. Universities should be places where the openness, transparency, tolerance and cosmopolitanism are cherished as a discourse, which will further be shown in the other societal categories, from the demos to the elite.

As far as multiethnicity and multiculturalism is concerned, there is a need to find feelings for building bridges in order to live with the neighbour in a mutual respect; there is a need to understand that one-colouredness has sense only in terms of multiple forms and colours. The languages and the difference between them should be sacred symbols and the fight against them is a fight against naturalness.

2. Aleksandar Pavković, “Multikulturalizam kao uvod u rasparčavanje države - slučaj Jugoslavije”, *Sociološki pregled*, 1998, vol. 32, No. 2, pg. 155-170.

3. Ferid Muhić, *Shkupi – kryeqendra e shtatë portave*, Skenpoint, Скопје, 2007, pg. 4.

4. See: Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, New York, 2003; <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/53577/fareed-zakaria/the-rise-of-illiberal-democracy>



Stefan Rashkovski (Skopje, 1990) started his activity as a journalist immediately after his bachelor studies. Then he worked in the field of Education, Labour and Social Policy; and, subsequently in Defence and Foreign Affairs - where he gained experience in international relations and communications. At that time he was finishing the first master degree in Political Science with focus on political marketing. In the same manner, while studying at Corvinus University of Budapest at the department of International Relations, he was engaged in an internship in the Embassy of Republic of Macedonia in Budapest as political analyst. Now he is finishing the second year of PhD studies and his academic activities are chiefly connected with research on the issue of political violence. We are publishing a part of the paper on which his intervention in the conference was based; this paper was prepared in collaboration with the young scholars Deniz Horuz (Szent Istvan University, Godollo, Hungary) and Katarína Sárvári (Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary). The full version will be included in a book that will be published soon by LOJA Centre with the contributions for this conference.



Multicultural education: fostering student resilience and building inclusive society

By Stefan Rashkovski

Challenges are the steps on the stairway toward growth. This is a natural rule. It implies that one has to put effort and employ one's full capacity to overcome an obstacle that leads toward unlocking inner potentials and developing a particular set of skills that in themselves represents the growth of the individual. This is how human beings can develop to their maximum potential, that is, only by facing and overcoming challenges. The environment itself is what generates the challenges for human beings whether it is the jungle or the office. This situation is an everyday reality in all the aspects of life, including the classroom. What distinguishes the latter from all other are the circumstances that it provides. Namely, the classroom can be seen as the most constructive and the safest environment for growth that inevitably has positive impacts first on the individual and, through the individual, it influences the whole society. That is so because students, from the elementary and up to the highest levels of education, are pushed to interact with other individuals, all of which are different: that, by definition, is a challenge in itself. In the very least,

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one is exposed to and faces a complete stranger in a unknown environment where the student needs not just to accept and adapt in order to survive, to put it in evolutionary terms, but also to engage, interact, cooperate in order to thrive. This fosters learning and growth and the process of globalization facilitates it even more. Namely, globalization, which in the words of Marshall McLuhan made the world a global village, created

what we now know as multiculturalism. Consequently, the need for multicultural classrooms arise and, with it, the concept of multicultural education. The process of globalization added quality to education and value to student growth by creating even more challenging environment in the form of the multicultural curricula and classroom. That is so because the multicultural classroom encompasses greater diversity that naturally is followed by greater challenges and therefore a greater potential for learning and growth. This is the main benefit of multicultural education, the overcoming of the cultural, religious, racial, ethnic and political barriers represented as challenges that the students are facing and overcoming in the multicultural classroom. Students develop student's resilience, which is defined as the ability to thrive in the face of challenges. This serves to increase the understanding between peoples of different cultures, which means an improvement of the level of social consciousness that leads to greater levels of social justice and equality that ultimately leads to inclusiveness in the society. Multicultural

al education serves to create resilient students, which results in greater social justice, equality and inclusiveness in the society that ultimately enhances the process of globalization with its end goal to create a peaceful world society.

Besides the knowledge about particular subjects as part of the multicultural curricula, which in itself is rich and consequently of great value, multicultural education provides students with the necessary experience of life from the perspective of learning about humanity as a whole. This is done by mixing students from different ethnic, racial, religious, cultural and political backgrounds into the same classroom. They are exposed to diversity and prompt to interact and cooperate among themselves, which is how the students develop resilience and learn to overcome their own personal and more often than not, limiting worldviews that are conditioned by their background. Inevitably, there is an increase in the level of social consciousness, which implies less prejudice and hostility, and more understanding and equality. In short, "multicultural



education compares and contrasts all people across racial and ethnic lines in an open atmosphere that is uncritical and free from value judgments. It studies diversity across cultures, examines the strengths and contributions of each, and promotes cultural pluralism as the ideal posture for society.”¹ Ultimately, this is how

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multicultural education increases the levels of social justice, equality and inclusiveness in the society. This is its greatest strength and its main role in the society. It is not a coincidence that “multicultural education grew out of the Civil Rights movement, and that it is grounded in the Western democratic ideals of freedom, justice, and equality.”²

The concept of resilience can have several meanings but it can be viewed only from one perspective. It means both elasticity and resistance from the perspective of facing and overcoming challenges. By definition,

1. Foerster, Leona. „Moving from ethnic studies to multicultural education”. USA: Agathon Press, Inc. 1982, pp. 124.

2. Gatimu, Wangeci. „Undermining critical consciousness unconsciously: Restoring hope in the multicultural education idea”. USA: Springer, 2008, pp. 48.

“resilience is the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.”³ Other authors define resilience as “ability to recover rapidly from difficult situations” and “capacity to endure ongoing hardship in every conceivable way. The action or act of rebounding or springing back; the quality or fact of being able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness or as a basic strength underpinning positive characteristics within a person’s emotional and psychological makeup”⁴ The concept of resilience is also applicable to the sphere of education and especially when it comes to the multicultural classroom. By its very nature, that is, by mixing greater amount of diversities, the multicultural classroom inevitably poses greater challenges for the participating students, who will need to develop resilience in order to overcome them and thrive. This is how the concept of “resilience in education” came into being. According to Bamford, resilience in education means the „ability to thrive in the face of adversity”.⁵ The importance of the concept of resilience in education can be seen best in connection with the multicultural classroom. It gener-

3. Johnson, Bruce. „Teacher–student relationships which promote resilience at school: a micro-level analysis of students’ views”. UK: British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 2008, 36:4, pp. 385-398.

4. Ploner, Josef. „Promoting student resilient thinking in diverse higher education learning environments”. UK: Research Gate, 2011, pp. 3.

5. Bamford, Jan. et al. 2005, pp. 140-158.

ates the greatest amount and intensity of challenges for the students, since besides just mingling students from different background, what the multicultural classroom does is expanding the previously culturally, ethnically, religiously and politically conditioned and limited worldviews of the students by breaking those barriers. The purpose is to create something greater on individual and collective level as well. This can be a painful and challenging process, which means that the students must be equipped with inner fortitude and properly guided by their teachers in order to develop resilience: it will serve as a tool for overcoming those barriers and thrive in the face of the challenge both personally and academically. Educational resilience is also defined as “the heightened

The enmity that can arise from difference is always present as long as there is difference without understanding.

likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences.”⁶ The teachers’ approach as well as the family and the community itself play important roles in

6. Morrison, Gale & Megan Redding Allen. „Promoting Student Resilience in School Contexts, Theory Into Practice”, USA: 2009, 46:2, pp. 162-169.

this sense. Essentially, this is how the process of globalization influences the breaking of barriers and building of bridges in a top to bottom perspective. Multicultural education is the tool by which the process of globalization breaks down barriers and builds bridges amongst students of different background, and students’ resilience is the instrument that the multicultural education uses to influence the society as a whole. Ultimately, the gap between different cultures, ethnicities, religious and political groups can be narrowed down and, conse-

Multicultural education is the tool by which the process of globalization breaks down barriers and builds bridges amongst students of different background, and students’ resilience is the instrument that the multicultural education uses to influence the society as a whole.

quently, people are enabled to work for building greater levels of social justice, equality and inclusiveness in the society. Students’ resilience fundamentally comes as a response to the natural tendency of human beings to stick to what they identify themselves with. It’s a natural characteristic that *per se* cannot be considered as something negative. This is also the challenge in the multicultural classroom. Separation or segregation noticed in the students’ behaviour essentially can be considered as the cradle of what we can define as tribalism and its supreme form nationalism, which brings up divisions between people that sometimes can take a problematic trajectory in the society. As long as there are divisions of this kind, humanity is bound to enter into conflict. Nowadays, it is less frequent than in the past, but still the enmity that can arise from difference is always present as long as there is difference without understanding. The process of globalization mitigated the animosity between different peoples largely and multicultural education might be one of its most powerful tools for increasing the levels of social consciousness. It can serve to build a global inclusive society.



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Education and Consociational Democracy

By Francesco Bigagli

After almost two decades from the finalization of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), which ended the 2001 conflict by introducing a consociational democracy through territorial decentralization and extended rights for the Albanian-speaking minority, amid a deteriorating economy and high unemployment, especially amongst youth at 46% (EC, 2018), North Macedonia remains a country deeply polarized along ethno-national lines with implications for the

of access to primary and secondary education in the mother tongue, a provision of the Yugoslav "separate but equal" policies which "fixed and crystallized ethno-cultural nations and were deliberately constructed as belonging to particular ethno-cultural nations" (Brubaker, 1996) but introduced a principle of positive discrimination in the enrolments of minorities in State universities and prescribed publicly funded access to higher education in the Albanian language, considered as key conflict

political rights since the country gained independence from Belgrade in 1991.

While the introduction of a single official language is traditionally used as a nation-building (and nation-maintenance) tool to guarantee national cohesion, reinforce participation in public life and, ultimately, as a precondition to the integration of diverse groups, there is always a risk that language can be employed as a means of domination to preserve the privileges of the majority group in society; resulting into a "nation-destroying process" (Walker, 1972) with the formation of antagonistic and profoundly resilient "minority nation-building" stances (Kymlicka, 2001) that could work counter the exclusive state policies and lead to conflict and/or enduring tensions. This is because language constitutes one of the key "markers" of ethno-national identities and, by extension, not only any perceived threat to a particular language, both within and outside the education system, is construed as a threat to the survival of a group identity, but language symbolizes the "worth and status of the community that speaks it" (Horowitz, 2000). As Horowitz explains, if "the demand for a single official language reflects the desire for a tangible demonstration of preeminence, so linguistic parity is transparent code for equality". And yet, the question is whether improved language access and (educational) decentralization correlate with improved integration and cohesion. This is because a focus on access alone as a quantitative indicator in the measurement of



progress does not necessarily translate into a more cohesive society. Access to education alone, for instance, does not, *per se*, fulfill the right to education. The conditions in which education takes place, the quality of education as well as the capacity of educational institutions to prepare graduates for political, economic and social life are equally important categories. As a result of educational decentralization, UNICEF (2009)

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maintenance of peace.

From 2005, the responsibility for a number of public services, *imprimis* basic education, had been entirely assigned to municipalities in accordance with the OFA which stipulated, *inter alia*, extended linguistic/cultural rights to persons belonging to non-majority communities, with an emphasis on access to education in the mother-tongue given the importance of education for conveying aspects of a group cultural identity. The OFA not only reiterated the right

drivers. The OFA also established Albanian as an official language in addition to Macedonian in areas where ethnic Albanians make up at least 20% of the population. In January 2019, a new law that extends the use of the Albanian language across the country has come into force. Ethnic Albanians see this as the last remaining stipulation of the OFA. As Fontana (2017) argues, the education and language reforms have come to epitomize the new power relationship between ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanian minority, who had been mobilizing for greater collective and

reports a decline by more than 10% of “mixed schools” (under whose roof children are still ethnically split by language or taught in different shifts/buildings) in the 2001-2009 period and an increase in the number of monolingual ones. UNDP (2008) indicates a reluctance to send children to a mixed school amongst 69% of ethnic Macedonians and 42% of Albanians. Higher education has also expanded dramatically in consociational North Macedonia: In 1994-1995, only 1.95% of graduates were ethnic Albanians against 19% in the 2014-2015 period (Muhic & Memeti, 2016). The expansion, however, has occurred only along ethno-cultural and territorial lines with newly founded Universities delivering instruction exclusively in Albanian or Macedonian. Arguably, if increased access to mother tongue-based education can help preserve cultural identities and settle ethnic grievances, it can also contribute to cementing boundaries between groups along ethno-national

appearing to have made derogatory remarks against the other community in their classroom. A review report on the implementation of the OFA (OFA Review on Social Cohesion, 2015) takes stock of the increasing lack of cohesion, spreading of negative stereotypes, intolerance and mistrust between the two dominant nations.

As Fontana (2017) contends, the emergence of a “parallel” education system can result in the development of a sense of belonging of one group against another (and even against the State) and education is often used in deeply divided societies as a “gatekeeping” tool by manipulative ethnic mobilisers to nurture exclusive identities and challenge the legitimacy of other groups’ discourses. Higher education is not free from attacks and manipulations due to its relevant political role. As Milton (2018) claims, higher education is not only often perceived as a hotbed of political radicalism

If increased access to mother tongue-based education can help preserve cultural identities and settle ethnic grievances, it can also contribute to cementing boundaries between groups along ethno-national identities in the absence of inter-communal points of contact and shared values.

the ‘90s by ethnic Albanians. As Czapliński (2008) claims, citing the then OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Max van der Stoep, “He believed that the solution to the problem of Albanian language HE was a prerequisite for achieving progress in other aspects of minority rights and, after it had been addressed, it would be much easier to move on other issues.” While mother tongue-based schooling was guaranteed by the Constitution, higher education was exclusively delivered in Macedonian, with the exception of pedagogical faculties. According to Czapliński, the widespread inability to speak the state language and discriminatory practices on the grounds of ethnicity, resulted in great disparities in access to HE among ethnic Albanians in the ‘90s. This, in turn, hindered access to employment opportunities, representation in decision-making institutions and was perceived as a threat to Albanians’ longing to become a constituent nation.

In recent years, research has mostly focused on the consequences of educational decentralization at school level in North Macedonia. The school system largely reflects the consociational structures and narratives of power along “mutually exclusive communities” reproducing pre-conflict cleavages and tensions (Fontana, 2017). However, a comprehensive study on the unintended effects of higher education in the mother tongue in North Macedonia has yet to appear. Recent research shows that higher education can not only contribute to economic recovery after conflict but could play a role in peace-building and conflict transformation. This is particularly the case for North Macedonia given the prominent role of higher education in conflict causation and the strong focus on equality of access established by

the OFA. However, the question is whether access to higher education in the mother-tongue is *per se* conducive to sustain peace and/or whether a univocal focus on access has perhaps served as a (political) tool to cement divisions and reproduce ethnic nationalism along the Yugoslav “separate but equal” policies.

In line with the OFA, non-majority students have the right to study in their mother tongue at all levels of education with the State language (Macedonian) being introduced at fourth grade. Although a quarter of schools (primary and secondary) are bilingual or trilingual, only 13% of these have students *de facto* studying under the same roof (Bakiu & Dimitrova, 2016). This is because in the so-called ‘mixed schools’ pupils attend classes in detached buildings or different shifts with little to no interaction among different ethnic groups (*ibid.*). This is particularly relevant in the case of ethnic Macedonian and Albanian children who study in an ethnically mixed environment but rarely have contact with each other. According to the OSCE (2010), “one third of children (i.e., 30% Macedonian and 35% Albanian) claim that they have mutual contact outside of the classroom environment and if they do is mostly not out of personal initiative”. However, the degree of ethnic separation is mostly pronounced at higher education level. In the academic year 2017, 2018 and 2019, for instance, the number of ethnic Albanians that graduated from the University of Skopje (UKIM), the largest public tertiary education provider which mostly deliver instruction in the Macedonian-language, represented respectively 7,4%, 6,7% and 6,7% of the total number of graduates

Page 10



identities in the absence of inter-communal points of contact and shared values; ultimately leaving little to no margin for “other ways of being and other forms of politics” (Finlay, in Fontana, 2017) other than identity politics. An OSCE study (2010) indicates a high level of adversity between Albanian and Macedonian students with nearly half of their schoolteachers

(i.e., through student activism, production of critiques against the *status quo*) but can become a “focal point” of ethnic mobilization.

Analysts argue that the problem of access to higher education (HE) in the mother tongue represented one of the main drivers in the process of ethnic mobilization during

However, the question is whether access to higher education in the mother-tongue is per se conducive to sustain peace and/or whether a univocal focus on access has perhaps served as a (political) tool to cement divisions and reproduce ethnic nationalism along the Yugoslav “separate but equal” policies.

compared to 85,19%, 86,77% and 86,40% of ethnic Macedonian students. The figures are similar with regard to other two largest higher education providers in the country delivering instruction predominantly in Macedonian: At Golce Delcev University, only 0,58%, 1,4% and 0,93% of ethnic Albanian students graduated respectively in 2017, 2018 and 2019 compared to 94%, 91,31% and 89,90% comprised by ethnic Macedonians. Similarly, 1,6% (2017), 2,3% (2018) and 3,35% (2019) of ethnic Albanians graduated from Bitola University. While there is no data available yet for the

order thinking and life skills to promote students' critical and communicative abilities.

Although diversity could be experienced through specific curricular content, evidence suggests that without a direct exchange of ideas with the Other, this could even have negative effects on students' development.

Arguably, if the right of access to higher education in the Albanian language contributed to ending the 2001 conflict, the presence of ghettoized campuses and lack of instruments to promote

Recent research shows that higher education can not only contribute to economic recovery after conflict but could play a role in peace-building and conflict transformation.

newly established Mother Theresa University which deliver instruction in Albanian, ethnic Macedonians that completed their studies at the University of Tetovo, the largest Albanian-language higher education provider, represented 4,3% of its total graduates in 2017, 4,3% in 2018 and 4,6% in 2019 (State Statistical Office, 2019).

A commitment to the values of diversity as part of identity formation processes in deeply divided societies is especially relevant at higher education level, in the years between adolescence and adulthood (Gurin et al, 2002). In this sense, universities could be uniquely positioned to support peace-building processes as traditionally heterogeneous spaces of civic socialization and through their intrinsic role in fostering independent thinking. However, higher education can also operate counter conflict transformation by strengthening the social roots of conflict through, for instance, the presence of negative ethnic stereotypes in textbooks or the attitude of faculty members geared towards the exclusion or belittlement of minorities. The employment of teacher-centred pedagogies and rote-learning methodologies that stifle students' initiative and creativity can also undermine peace-building efforts by making students more vulnerable to political manipulation. The lack of opportunities to engage with diversity on campus also affects the quality of the educational experience. In this regard, recent reports by the European University Association address the need to enhance student-centred learning across all Macedonian public monolingual institutions and strengthen higher

rapprochement, undermines the significance of what Robeyns (2006) terms "the personal and collective instrumental social roles of education", and, in turn, the possibility of engineering a social change.

In conclusion, without a strong governmental commitment to deethnicize education by transcending the OFA's exclusive access-oriented policies, the persistence of a situation of "voluntary apartheid" (Baumann, 2009) makes consociational power-sharing permeable to political manipulation which critically hampers social transformation and increases the probability of inter-ethnic tension, ultimately weakening the peace process.

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When the word “different” means “wrong”

By Adina Deacu

Adina Deacu is an Environmental Psychology Researcher studying different learning, working and living environments as context of behavior, as well as the influence that human behavior has in return on the environment as a whole. Through all the projects that she works on, she takes into account both the physical environments (interior/exterior design), as well as the social ones (human interaction design). We are publishing fragments of the paper on which his intervention in the conference was based. The full version will be included in a book that will be published soon by LOJA Centre with the contributions for this conference.



One of the problems with the modern educational system is that it targets the majority. This means that, if students can fit in and follow the teachers' teaching methods, then they are considered good students. However, if they cannot, then the educational system categorizes them as students who don't like to learn or students with “problems”. The problem is that currently, the educational

into consideration the negative psychological effects that they have on learners.

What the “one-size-fits-all” education system does is to label all those who don't fit in or can't follow the teaching methods as students who are not good at learning or students with “special needs” or “problems”. Very little consideration is given to the physical environments in which learning hap-

environments in comparison. The first experience of different being perceived as wrong was during the author's bachelor studies, during a discussion held at the author's home between the author, born and raised in the Dobrogea territory, known for its ethnic diversity, and a university colleague from the Northern part of Romania. The discussion revolved around a traditional dish the author had cooked in the same way as she always did, but perceived to have been cooked in the wrong way by the Northern Romanian colleague. The same attitude was then observed by the author in many other situations and was assumed to be underlying many conflicts, in which people are not aware of how their growing up environment has created this bias of “*What I know is what is right*”.

areas as well. This phenomenon is believed to be rooted in the cognitive dissonance theory. If people are used to behave in a certain way for a very long period, the assumption is that it becomes an involuntary bias to conclude that what they are doing is right. This might lead people to enter a defensive mode to protect the beliefs that follow their behaviors when others might present different opinions or ways of doing things.

Although there is little evidence in the literature to support this statement, the author believes that this is due to the angle from which research has been done previously, not the phenomenon itself. In other words, there are very few known locations in which being different is accepted as different, not wrong, and it is cel-

The problem is that currently, the educational system is not diverse enough in the way the learning material is delivered to respond to different learners' learning needs and styles.

system is not diverse enough in the way the learning material is delivered to respond to different learners' learning needs and styles. Einstein once said: “If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, you will always think it's an idiot”. With the “one-size-fits-all” approach, there are many fish out there forced to climb trees, thus inhibiting their personal development.

Diversity in education is a hot topic, yet it is not truly included into education systems. With increasingly developed technologies available, the only major “innovation” that has happened in education is digitalizing existing teaching methods. This means that the “one-size-fits-all” educational methods have just been spread faster without taking

pens and how these can be improved depending on the learning outcome that educators aim to achieve for learners. Little attention is given also to ways in which teaching methods could be adapted to different learning styles within the same setting. Accepting that different doesn't mean wrong, that there is not only one way of learning and teaching respectively, and reflecting that in the classroom design and activities, is crucial for a truly inclusive, diverse and healthy education system to exist, where learners who learn differently are not labeled to have “special needs”.

The word “different” being perceived as “wrong”: this observation relies on the author's growing up experience, as well as observations made in different

This concept was also discussed by Mike Hulme in the sustainability area in his book “Why we disagree about climate change”. His argument is that due to different understandings of what climate change means within different cultural backgrounds, disagreements are imminent. It is easy to assume that the same principles apply to many other

celebrated rather than being a cause of fight. Dobrogea is among the very few places where many ethnic groups live in harmony and diversity is celebrated through different festivals every year. What's more, it is the only place in the Balkan Peninsula where this happens, compared to conflicts between other Balkan territories.

There are very few known locations in which being different is accepted as different, not wrong, and it is celebrated rather than being a cause of fight.



Lazo Matovski was born in Struga in 1985. He has a multidisciplinary formation: law, journalism, project management, public procurement, European integration, and economics. He is author of many professional publications in these fields. Currently Lazo Matovski is employed at the Language Implementation Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia as a Head of Department. We are publishing a part of the paper on which his intervention in the conference was based. The full version will be included in a book that will be published soon by LOJA Centre with the contributions for this conference.



Multiculturalism in the times of pandemic

By Lazo Matovski

1. Introduction

Today's reality has been rapidly changing. The time has confronted the world with an unprecedented health crisis that has taken so many lives, inflicted so much pain and changed people's normality. SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the global interconnection level, but at the same time forced us to become more alienated, thus limiting the social interactions between people from different backgrounds.

Adverse reactions to the recent developments across the world have become daily music to our ears. This situation has brought many unknowns, raised many questions and generated a lot of uncertainty. The overall insecurity about people's health and well-being raises the question about our ability, as a global community, to efficiently tackle the negative social outcomes of this crisis, including the effects on the concept of multiculturalism as a "moral movement" that is not only concerned with decreasing oppression but seeks to "enhance the dignity, rights, and recognized worth of marginalized groups". Multiculturalism not only deals with the inclusion of citizens with different cultural backgrounds in the society, eliminating the power of domination of one group over the other, but also aims at termination or at least enervation of the exclusion mechanism.

2. Impact of the pandemic crisis on the concept of multiculturalism

Pandemic diseases are part of the human history. The newly discovered COVID-19 coronavirus occupied the world's attention since late 2019. From the earliest reported cases in early December 2019 in Wuhan, China, the battle with the vicious enemy is still ongoing and seems it will not end near soon. Many people have already lost their lives to COVID-19; many people have lost their loved ones, relatives, friends, colleagues.

Scientific community is in race with the time to understand better the real source of the outbreak and to find an effective remedy for solution of this global health crisis, which has generated negative effects in all segments of the society. What was considered as a routine daily life yesterday has become abnormal today. Different segments of the society have been faced with negative implications since the beginning of the crisis, including the health sector,

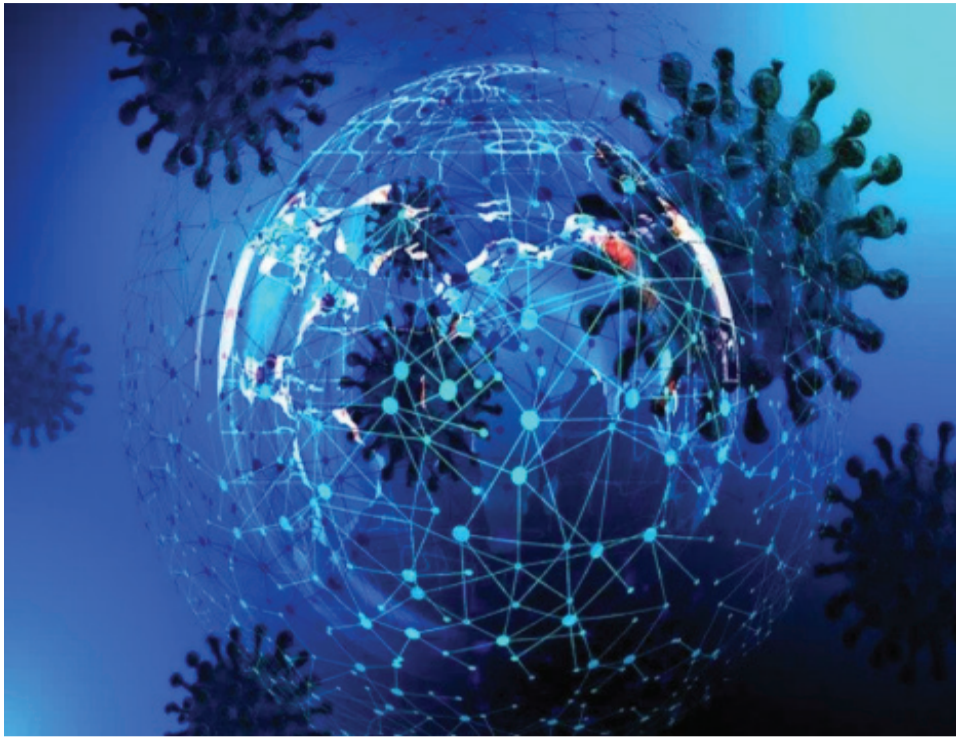
All of a sudden, the question of how to respond to the challenges associated with diversity based on ethnic, cultural and religious differences in times of crisis has appeared in the spotlight. With the rise of the pandemic, many countries have faced rise of equally infectious nationalism and xenophobia as well.

economy, culture, education, among some of them. Recent developments have caused adverse multiplicative effects to the concept of multiculturalism as well. All of a sudden, the question of how to respond to the challenges associated with diversity based on ethnic, cultural and religious differences in times of crisis has appeared in the spotlight. With the rise of the pandemic, many countries have faced rise of equally infectious nationalism and xenophobia as well. Some political leaders could not restrain themselves in such time to sparkle the flame of isolationism, distorting the rules of good, responsible governance by respecting the multiculturalism as a societal trait, representing not only cultural, but also ethnic and religious pluralism within the society as well.

3. Research

This research is a combination of methods such as historical analysis, content and data analysis. The empirical part is based on a survey consisting of 20 questions, conducted in December 2020 with 122 respondents included, divided by different indicators such as age, gender, level of education, ethnic, cultural, religious background etc. The objective of the survey was to investigate and measure the impact of the crisis on the concept of multiculturalism in the local community and countrywide.

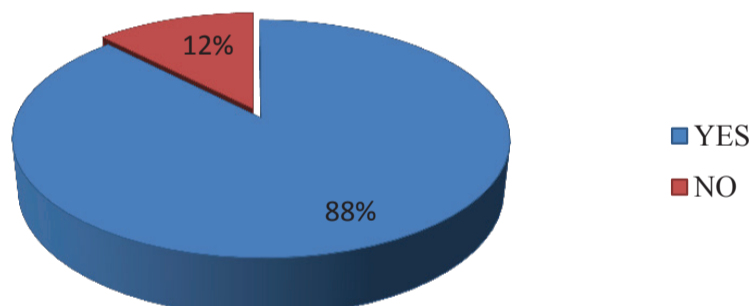
Identical responses were given on separated, but practically related questions regarding the respondent's **assessment of the communication between people from different cultures** in the municipality/area where the respondent lives in and general assessment of the intercultural interaction on a national level. 14.75% of the respondents' assessment was very good; 38.52% good; 25.41% unsatisfactory; 13.93% bad and 7.39% very bad. Respondents' assessment led to a conclusion that majority of them or 53.57% have good or



very good assessment of the intercultural communication in the local community and on a national level, whilst 46.43%, which is a significant percentage, have different perception categorized from “unsatisfactory” to “very bad”.

Majority of the respondents (87.7%) thought that **learning the language/culture of other ethnic community** is an advantage in many segments of life: in verbal communication, language/cultural interaction, labor market competitiveness.... Respondents with higher educational level have developed greater awareness about the importance of learning other languages and cultures, multilingualism, intercultural understanding etc. (see Chart 1).

Chart 1. Do you think that learning the language/culture of other ethnic community is an asset?



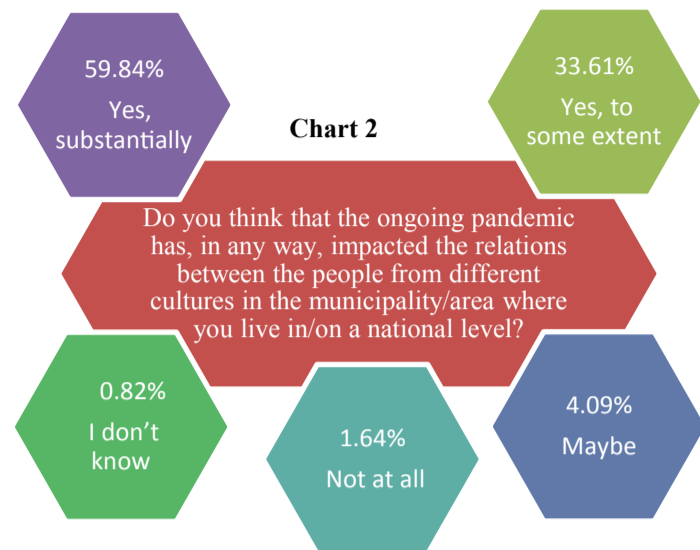
82.78% of the respondents’ preference is a multicultural environment, as opposed to 17.22% of the respondents who prefer monocultural environment instead.

During serious health crisis with a global impact, the care for multiculturalism is overshadowed by the primary care for public health and protection of human lives.

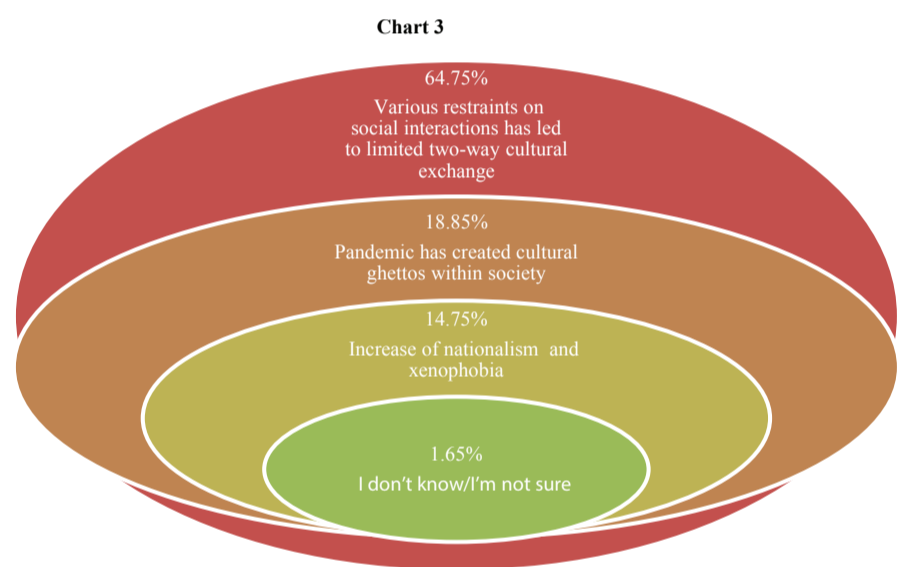
Based on the indicator regarding **the meaning of the term “multiculturalism”**, 22.13% of the respondents chose “*Cultural pluralism*” as an option; 31.97% - *A mixture of people from diverse ethnic and cultural background*; 18.03% - *Different cultures in one place*; 11.48% - *Coexistence of different cultures in harmony*; 10.66% - *Respect and acceptance of other cultures*. 5.73% were not familiar with the term.

Significant data closely related to the paper’s main research focus can be extracted out of the respondents’ answers to the closely related questions on **whether they think that the ongoing pandemic has, in some way, affected the relations between the people from different cultures** in the local community and on a national level. 93.45% of the respondents agree that the pandemic, in some way,

affected the relations between the people from different cultural background, substantially or to some extent, both in the local community and countrywide (see Chart 2).



Nearly 2/3 of the respondents or 64.75% stated that the pandemic negatively affected the multiculturalism countrywide by imposing various limitations on the freedom of movement, preventing or limiting cross-cultural interactions; 18.85% thought that the pandemic has created cultural ghettos within society; 14.75% that the pandemic has led to increase of nationalism and xenophobia; and the remaining 1.65% belong in the category - Don't know/I'm not sure (see Chart 3).



It is very indicating that respondents tend to maintain frequent communication with people from other ethnicity and/or cultural background in their local communities in non-crisis. On the question **whether they communicate, in normal circumstances, with people from different ethnicity/cultural background** in their local communities, 76.23% of the respondents’ answers support this claim. 22.13% have occasional, but are still open and practice cross-cultural communication, and only less than 2% of the respondents do not practice it at all (see Table 1).

Yes I do, frequently	76.23%
Sometimes	22.13%
No, I only communicate with people from my ethnicity/cultural background	1.64%

14.75% of the respondents thought that the multicultural relations have been improved since the beginning of the pandemic; 59% stated that they have not been changed and nearly 20% saw tendency of worsening (see Table 2).

Improved	14.75%
Unchanged	59.02%
Worsened	19.67%
I don't know/I'm not sure	6.56%

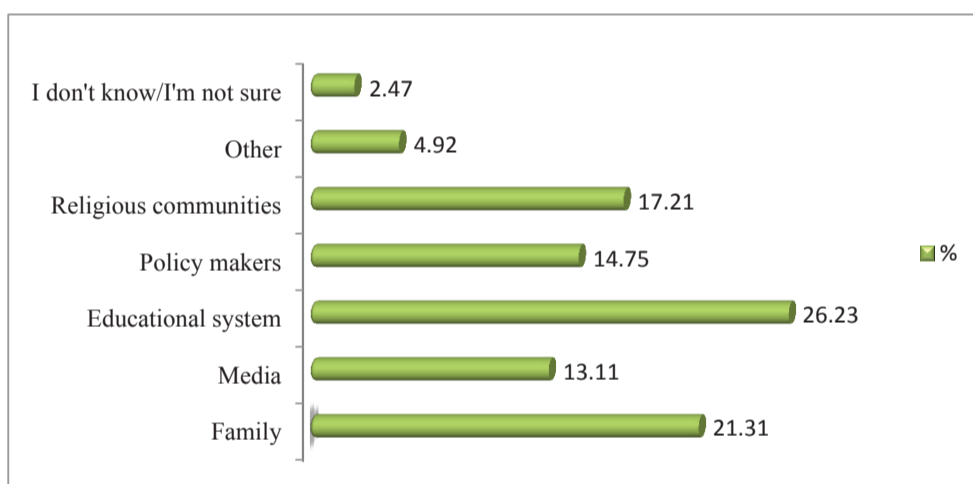
During serious health crisis with a global impact, the care for multiculturalism is overshadowed by the primary care for public health and protection of human lives. This thesis is supported by nearly 83% of the respondents who stated that **nobody cares about multiculturalism during pandemic and nothing has been done by policy makers** toward protection and promotion of the multiculturalism in the country in the time of pandemic (see Table 3).

Yes, they have done a lot despite pandemic	2.46%
Something has been done, but insufficiently	9.02%
Nothing has been done	27.87%
Nobody cares about multiculturalism during pandemic	54.92%
I don't know/I'm not sure	5.73%

Respondents were divided on **who is the most influential subject in promotion of the multiculturalism**. Educational system and family values together combined nearly reach 1/2 or 47.54% out of the listed options as the most influential subjects. Less than 1/2 or 45.07% is a combination of other three factors combined together: religious communities, policy makers and media (see Chart 4).

Chart 4

In your opinion, which of the subject listed below is the most influential regarding the promotion of multiculturalism in the society?



For the purpose of development of the multiculturalism in the society, other factors such as family, media, educational system, policy makers and religious communities are of great importance. The most negative influencers on multiculturalism are politicians (58.2%) and the media (54.1%). On the other hand, the most constructive factor shaping the course and the development of the multiculturalism in the society is the family (64.75%), which shows that respondents believe that family members' authority and their personal traits can positively impact and facilitate shaping one's character by teaching the importance of creating a culture and spirit of tolerance towards others, cross-cultural understanding, respect and coexistence. Educational system (58.2%) and religious communities (28.69%) also positively affect multiculturalism as well (see Table 4).

Positively	Negatively	Doesn't influence	
Family	64.75%	27.87%	7.38%
Media	26.23%	54.10%	19.67%
Educational system	58.20%	36.07%	5.73%
Policy makers (on a national/municipal level)	18.85%	58.20%	22.95%
Religious communities	40.16%	28.69%	31.15%

Will society continue to nurture the multiculturalism as an integration concept where all ethnic groups freely exercise their distinctive identity or are we heading to disintegration by becoming more insular?

4. Conclusions

The concept of multiculturalism associated with cultural diversity, derived from national, ethnic and religious differences, in times of crisis certainly deserves a closer scientific observation from a standpoint of analyzing the trends and challenges in the midst of today's health crisis. Diverse ethnic, cultural and religious composition is what makes Republic of North Macedonia a true multicultural society. Will society continue to nurture the multiculturalism as an integration concept where all ethnic groups freely exercise their distinctive identity or are we heading to disintegration by becoming more insular? What lessons can we learn from this crisis?

Based on this research, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- There is still space for improvement of cross-cultural relations and increased inter-ethnic interaction.
- Nearly 88% of the respondents feel no repulsion when it comes to learning the language or the culture of their fellow citizens from other ethnic community, thus displaying respondents' built-in sense on the advantage of learning something new.
- There is almost unanimity in the perception that the pandemic has affected the cross-cultural relations, to a greater or lesser extent.
- Nearly 2/3 of the respondents believe in the negative impact of the pandemic on the multiculturalism countrywide due to the limitations on the freedom of movement, preventing or limiting cross-cultural interactions.
- Respondents' preference is predominantly a multicultural environment, instead of monocultural.
- Majority of the respondents think that there is neither positive nor a negative change in the country's multicultural relations since the beginning of the pandemic.
- The care for multiculturalism in pandemic is predominantly overshadowed by the primary care for public health and protection of human lives.
- The family and the educational system are perceived as the most positive factors in the development and improvement of the multiculturalism, as opposed to the policy makers and the media.

The ability to recognize and celebrate our differences is something that makes our country and local communities more cohesive even in crisis. This pandemic is an opportunity for ourselves to brainstorm, make certain adjustments and to continue nurturing and promoting the values of diversity, equity and multicultural understanding in a much-changed reality as the only way towards coexistence and prosperous future.



Gudrun Steinacker was born in Düsseldorf, in 1951. She has studied History and Social Sciences in Munich, Münster and Belgrade. From 1978 until her retirement in 2016, she has worked in the German Diplomatic Service, in New York (UN), Zagreb, Strasbourg (Council of Europe), Oslo, Vienna (OSCE), Moscow, Sofia, Consul General in Novosibirsk, Ambassador in Skopje and Podgorica. She is Vicepresident of Südosteuropa Gesellschaft (South East Europa Association), Programme Director for Western Balkans, International Training for Diplomats, Federal Foreign Office Berlin; she is also Member of the Board of Trustees Foundation Euronatur, committed to the conservation of nature in Europe. We are publishing the keynote speech she gave at the International Conference on Multicultural Education organized by LOJA Centre.

Learning the culture of the Other

By Gudrun Steinacker

The German-French Youth Office is an organization in Germany and in France, with enormous practice in German-French exchange and cooperation between young people from the two countries. It started in 1963 and included since the nineties cooperation with third countries and of course also learning the language of the other.

I would like to talk here about my personal experience, when I was posted at the German representation to the council of Europe in Strasbourg. Officially, the relationship between France and Germany in general and particularly in the earlier troubled border region of Alsace was excellent, Thanks to the German-French Youth Office, we had exchange and cooperation between young workers and students

on both sides. Nevertheless due to the history in this complicated border region in Alsace on the French side few people spoke German, although the Alsatian dialect is close to German and on the German side few learned French.

change this. He was responsible for education and took the initiative with the German colleagues on the other side of the border to promote the learning of the language of the other country in pre-school and elementary schools. This was

otherwise is an international city as the seat of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. This was a great success and not least due to education. It was not only about teaching the language, but also about an intercultural approach, learning also about the history, the culture, the traditions etc. on both sides. Now I think people on both sides feel at home on the other side as well.

I would like to add: if you learn a foreign language and in particular the language of your neighbour you are not learning only a language; you are also learning the culture, the history and all aspects of life of a particular ethnic group

It was quite difficult for young French, for young Alsatians, to learn German or French in the school during the first two decades after the Second World War. A regional French politician, Alain Dejean, himself not from Alsace, decided to

called learning the language of the neighbour. Thus, there were German language training courses from pre-school through elementary school on the French side and similar courses on the German side. At that time, late 80's and early 90's, this was still a courageous step. Fortunately, this developed to such a degree that now on both sides learning French in Germany and German in Alsace has considerably improved, although, and you know this in your own countries, the international language that is used in communication and cooperation between young people is often English. Still, when I look back on what was thirty years ago and where this region stands now, the progress is considerable. When you visit Kehl, which is the closest city, on the German side you hear French by not only French people, but also German inhabitants not least because shopping in Kehl is very popular. On the French side, you will hear people speaking German. Germans constitute the largest number of tourists in Stasbourg, which

I also want to mention another example from my own family decades ago. Many of my ancestors from my father's side lived in Slovakia, which was until 1918 a part of Hungary and belonged to the German minority. The official language that was taught at school was Hungarian. Since the second half of the 19th century, there was a developed system of education in the mother tongue of the three people who lived then in Slovakia, Slovaks, Hungarians and Germans. But all had to learn Hungarian as the common official language that was the official common language. Gradually the Hungarian language was more and more enforced by the Hungarian authorities. Nevertheless, this was not really bringing the different ethnic groups together. There was good cooperation on the daily level; people simply live in the same place; but they were living rather besides each other than with each other. And the life in the society, associations, churches, were separated according to the languages. Very few from the German minority and even less from the Hungarian, who were not the majority, but



the dominant population, learned Slovak. This only changed after the First World War when Slovakia became a part of the new state of Czechoslovakia. My grandmother was born in the small town Modra (in German Modern) near Bratislava, which Germans called Pressburg and the Hungarians called Pozsony as it is very typical that most towns and places in Slovakia have three names: a Slovak name, a German name and a Hungarian name. While speaking German at home, she learned Slovak before the First World War. Her father was a Protestant minister in Modra and wanted her to learn not only Hungarian, but also Slovak. My grandmother, according to what I know, was very proud to speak the three languages. However, one of her brothers decided to be a very nationalist Hungarian. He moved to Budapest and insisted on only speaking Hungarian. My grandmother lived with her family until the end of the war in Hungary and then moved to Bratislava. As far as I know her brother refused after the war to be in contact with her because he didn't want to speak German. Thus, the separation of people even within one family because of

methodology like today. Sometimes it was successful because the teacher understood how to address the issue of learning another language. However, learning languages one hundred years ago, or even fifty years ago, was quite different from learning languages nowadays. They did not pay so much attention that you really speak it, but rather that you know the grammar and the vocabulary. But even at that time a part of the population in such a multi-ethnic country like Slovakia understood how important it is to

it otherwise – and the Albanians, which constitute the second largest group in the country. Germany at that time supported programs to promote interethnic cooperation; the Embassy cooperated with LOJA and with the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities in programs that promoted multicultural education. One of the programs was that future young teachers, Albanians as well as ethnic Macedonians or from any other ethnicity, could participate in a training on the job in intercultural education. Then

to address the kids who come to the school and do not know German but do not even have a common language. Therefore, they cannot communicate with each other. Now even official politics admit that Germany is a country of emigration and that is of course still another challenge to integrate such kids in the educational system where the common language by which they will communicate with each other has to be German. This is a learning process for the German educational system.

If you are raised bilingually or trilingually you have a different mind-set.

know the language and also the culture of the others - sometimes it was for pragmatic reasons, but the result was very positive. I read only a couple of months ago a book with contributions from different conferences investigating and describing the situation as it was in this respect in the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire particularly in the field of education. I read about this practice that owners of restaurants, shops and other

they would practice for a couple of months, mostly in NGO's helping children from disadvantage social groups to do their homework, many of them being Roma children. They would work and play with these children after school, to help them to better integrate into the education system, which was quite successful. It brought young future Albanian teachers and Macedonian teachers together. I was positively surprised how much the future young teachers

Coming back to the time, I spent as a diplomat in today North Macedonia. As I mentioned, there were programs, by the High Commission of National Minorities, which were really trying to bridge the separation along the different mother tongues in the country. I was sometimes a little bit disappointed that most Macedonians would not see a reason to learn Albanian. They would send their children to schools where they might learn German, English, French, but not Albanian, and not understanding that this is the language of their own people.

If you are raised bilingually or trilingually as it was the case in my father's family in Slovakia you have



speaking different languages for nationalist reasons is a longstanding phenomenon, unfortunately until today

I would like to add: if you learn a foreign language and in particular the language of your neighbour you are not learning only a language; you are also learning the culture, the history and all aspects of life of a particular ethnic group. I think that in the education system of that time, one hundred years ago, teachers in practice knew how to do it, but there was not a theory, a developed

businesses sent their children to families of the other ethnic group for months so that they would learn the language as good as possible, because it was good for their business. I think that it is interesting to know about it. One could reflect whether this could be something that would be taken up again.

When I came to what is now North Macedonia in 2011 I was aware of the uneasy or difficult relationship between the so-called ethnic Macedonians – I don't like the expression but it's difficult to explain

liked this training and thought that it was very important for their teaching abilities. Many of them became only then aware of the problems of socially disadvantaged children in the existing schooling system, which did not always consider their problems. This is what is still happening, not everywhere, but in many places. In Germany, in classes which are called integration classes, where newly arrived kids of migrants get gradually in one, two years into the German schooling system. It is not always successful, but they are developing constantly new methodologies, how

a different mind-set and you'll have much better precondition to learn even further languages. We have to have a broad view of this very important issue and to convey to the larger population the enormous advantage, the enormous profit one can have by being raised and educated in a multicultural system with different languages and different ways of life



Krzysztof Czyżewski – practitioner of ideas, writer, philosopher, culture animator, theatre director, editor. Co-founder and president of the Borderland Foundation and director of the Centre “Borderland of Arts, Cultures and Nations” in Sejny, Poland. Teacher and lecturer, professor at the University of Bologna. Among his books of poetry and essays are: *The Path of the Borderland* (2001), *Trust & Identity: A Handbook of Dialogue* (2011), *Miłosz – Dialog – Borderland* (2013), *Miłosz. A Connective Tissue* (2014), *A Small Center of the World* (2017), and *Toward Xenopolis* (2019). We are publishing the keynote speech she gave at the International Conference on Multicultural Education organized by LOJA Centre. The photos accompanying the text are related to activities of the Borderland Foundation (photographer: Wiesław Szumiński).

THE ART OF BUILDING BRIDGES

By Krzysztof Czyżewski

We created in our region, for schools, what we called “Glass Bead Game” – which of course refers to Hermann Hesse’s famous novel, but for children.¹ This program is a very special game they can practice in schools. It is

understand for the others from neighboring disciplines. From a very basic level, from primary school, engaging children in the kind competence that I mentioned, the competence of overcoming your own story, of finding con-



based on telling stories about different personalities, architectural objects, religion, and culture from your region, your art, with images helping you to build the story, to tell the story to the others. Now, this is not how you win the game. The way in which you win it, is how you can combine the set of your images with that of someone else, how you connect your story with the other, how you find influences, interdependence, palimpsest, within different stories, narratives, histories. It can develop competence on building connected issues. This is mostly lost in our education system, which is based on specialization of different realms, of different disciplines. That’s what we did within our universities. Look what has happened. We have towers inside of these ivory towers, towers of disciplines with specific languages difficult to

nections, this art of building bridges is very important, I think.

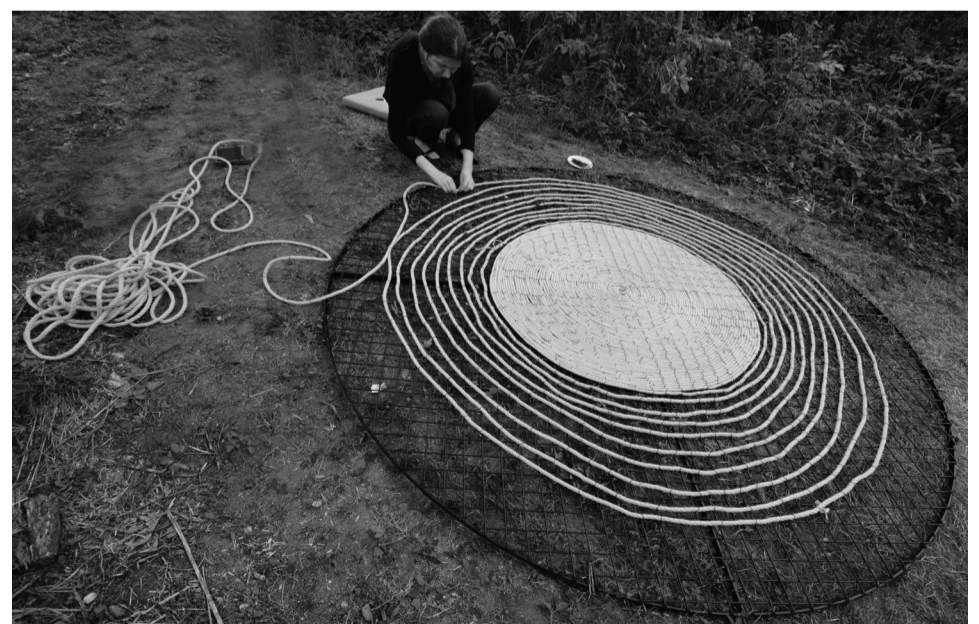
In addition, what we need for a borderland is not only a negative language about our conflicts, culture wars,

Our academic language is based on the borderline criteria. We easily can speak about conflicts; we easily find thousands of books describing these conflicts. The same is with the media. We call it media oriented message. However, if you try to speak about something that is positive, then the problems appears.

clashes on ethnic or religious ground. What we need is very much about a positive language by which we could name and express commonality, something we share together, something we want to do with the others, and the empathy we feel. We have a problem with this language also in academic and school level. This was mainly my work with the students in Bologna University. I taught there political science and European studies. My students were future diplomats and clerks of EU administration. The problem with positive language, telling for example the history of Europe, is to find a credible language, which will be needed for cooperation, for connection, for building something together, sharing something together. Our academic language is based on the borderline criteria. We easily can speak about conflicts; we easily find thousands of books describing these conflicts. The same is with the media. We call it media oriented message. It is very good for the media, it works. However, if you try to speak about something that is positive, some good traditions, some

year paper, to describe for example borderland people who are bridge builders. A credible language to express these experiences is very difficult and new.

What else we need for the borderland is the Agora, the place that we lost in our multicultural societies – you can call it the Balkan *Charshia*, or in Ukrainian, *Maidan* – the common space. In spite of different neighborhoods, of the different *mahallas*, in spite of this richness of cultures and religions that we have, we can still have the *Charshia*, the common responsibility, or in other words, the responsibility for the common, for something that we share together. We take the responsibility not only for our *mahalla*, but also for the whole city, for the whole community. This is the challenge we face today. The Agoras are possessed by confronting ideologies coming from different sides. We have problems with this space. We are talking about how we understand multiculturalism; we are talking about how we understand interculturalism, but let us think also about culture, culture



good memory, something that you created together, then the problems appears. On the academic level, for my student in Bologna, it was quite challenging to write a thesis, to write a final

as such, just culture, which is Agora, which is *Charshia*. It is something that from inside we understand as mine, as ours, in spite of any border and divi-

1. In Hermann Hesse’s homonymous novel, whose plot is situated in the future and in unspecified place, a community of highly knowledgeable scholars plays the “Glass Bead Game”. It consists in the combination of coloured glass beads representing different themes from history of culture, mathematics, music, etc., trying thus to achieve essentially an abstract synthesis of all arts and sciences (Editor’s note).

sion. The way in which we will use the word “ours” is crucial, I think, for our education and culture in the future. We should open it from inside. We closed our cultures, religions, identities, strictly within our borders. As a solution for that, establishing intercultural dialogue is not enough, I think. This is something that Dragan Klaić said: cultures are somehow addressed to be in

What else we need for the borderland is the Agora, the place that we lost in our multicultural societies – you can call it the Balkan Charshia, – the common space

clash with each other. However, there is something at the bottom, which is simple culture, which is something that we have in common. I think it is a very important challenge for our education to think about school, about university, opening from inside: how we understand culture, how we feel and practice our memory, our history, our religion, and so on.

Understanding that we have around us these divisions and that there is something positive in them, there is an example with children coming to our “Borderland” center. They come in from a kindergarten level, and they are becoming more Old Believers², Lithuanians, and Poles, than they were before. They are asked by others: “Tell me your story... teach me your songs... teach me your language”. This is the beginning. They are going back to their families and ask their grandparents: “Tell

2. In Eastern Orthodox Church history, the Old Believers are Orthodox Christians who maintain the liturgical and ritual practices of the Russian Church as they were before the reforms of mid sixteenth century.



me, because I am respected by my difference; the others want to know about my religious traditions more, so I'm becoming more interested about my Old Believer tradition than I was before”. The main thing is that this is not the end of the story. You engage them in that, you respect these divisions. You don't think about erasing borders, but you engage them in something

opposition to them, we created a cosmopolitan response: we are citizens of the world, we are cutting off our traditions, going to big cities, to metropolises, and becoming citizens of the new world. Nevertheless, it has the price of being uprooted, of closing our eyes towards the past, the traditions, the differences. Because of the human nature, I don't think this will work in



common, in creating common stories, in cooperation, in opening their own cultures from inside. Finding in the traditions elements of tolerance inside their own traditions, finding the seeds of opening from inside. There is something I want to refer to the cosmopolitan ideas. There are the nationalist ideologies of modernity, and in

a long term. There is a need of being rooted, there is a need of a connection, there is a need of continuity. The answer is not in escaping. The answer is how to build the continuity, how to develop all these towards an open world, towards modernity, towards the future, rather than to ignore the bridge behind you. That is the prob-

To think of being rooted as a chance for openness, for being critical, self-critical. You cannot be self-critical if you escape from your background.

lem, I think, with the cosmopolitan ideas. After all, we witness nowadays the crisis of these ideas as well. The reaction is very dangerous, because it takes back to nationalism, to racism and so on. If we have too much of this abstract openness to the world, this longing for being rooted is strong. My concept is to find a third way, to think of being rooted as a chance for openness, for being critical, self-critical. You cannot be self-critical if you escape from your background. You can be self-critical only if you are an insider of some kind of traditions, of ideas you want to develop and defend.

I don't know all the answers but we are, I think, on that way now, a third way. To find something after nationalism and after cosmopolitanism, a citizenship which would be more natural for the new circumstances.

We are talking about how we understand multiculturalism; we are talking about how we understand interculturalism, but let us think also about culture, culture as such, just culture, which is Agora, which is Charshia





Agrégée de Lettres Modernes and PhD in Sociology, Anne-Marie Autissier is an emeritus lecturer authorized to supervise research at the Institute of European Studies of the University of Paris. She served as Vice-President for International Relations at Paris 8, from February 2017 to March 2018. She also worked as a consultant for various French and European organizations (European Cultural Foundation, European Commission, various European artistic networks, French Ministry of Culture and Communication, French Institute, etc). She is author of several books, among which Europe and culture, a couple to reinvent? Essay on 50 years of European cultural cooperation. She is conducting a research project between India and the European Union on the articulation between policies and practices of diversity in cultural and artistic matters: multiculturalism versus integration and diversity.

Anne-Marie Autissier: Culture, identities, integration

INTERVIEW, EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE BRIDGE

First of all, thank you so much for having accepted to give this interview for The Bridge. Let's start! What is, according to you, interculturalism in relation to multiculturalism?

Multiculturalism is in the political sphere, as interculturalism - much less used. Multiculturalism consists in accepting the coexistence, on the same territory, of people with different origins, different languages, different religions, and the law adapts to these

multiculturalism – teaching at school in the language of your country of origin, giving the opportunity to migrants for creating cultural associations. But it also failed because everyday problems were not solved.

What is the role of higher education in terms of respect for diversity in our multicultural societies?

Higher education did not bring important changes, neither in the UK, nor in France.

The French model always insisted on the individual – the ways of finding your way, of integrating yourself into a nation. The Anglo-Saxon model is based on communities. However, both failed. One of the reasons is that one cannot have a chance to be a citizen without being offered all the chances of integration: a decent work, a decent housing, equal opportunities for studies.

situations. Interculturalism seeks what there is in common between people, whatever their differences: citizenship, separation of religion and state... As Professor Jean-Pierre Saez observed, interbreeding is the result of an intercultural process, but it is not the abolition of differences: it is rather the affirmation of a diversity reinvented by the secular multiplicity of encounters between cultures¹.

What are the advantages and shortcomings of the French model of integration and of the Anglo-Saxon multicultural model?

The French model always insisted on the individual – the ways of finding your way, of integrating yourself into a nation. The Anglo-Saxon model is based on communities. The French model was pointed out as an 'assimilation' model; the Anglo-Saxon model has been criticized for 'laxity'. However, both failed. One of the reasons is that one cannot have a chance to be a citizen without being offered all the chances of integration: a decent work, a decent housing, equal opportunities for studies. In the seventies, Sweden tried a specific model of

Maybe in the UK it considered more the marginalized communities, by a system of quotas. In France, there were some outstanding experiences, like the one taken over by the Paris Institute of Political Studies: to receive youngsters from marginalized

Europe is a crossroad of identities and it should remain as such. The role of EU is not to build a one European culture, but to build all possible encounters between all European identities

suburbs and to accept them as students, after an examination. It was a sort of Anglo-Saxon quota, even though it was not usually mentioned it as such.

Would you please explain something about your own experience of study in cities that have different cultural tradition? Do you think that the big city is the appropriate space for living in diversity, or is it that the city dwellers accept difference merely because of indifference, because, according to Georg Simmel, in a city we are all strangers?

Yes, I think that cities are more tolerant, especially big cities. This does not mean that bumping on the street inspires into some-



one who is different more kindness. It's a kind of indifference. What I know, out of my own experience, it is that more initiatives are taken and supported in big cities, by public authorities or by private sponsors. And some cities are more prepared: it is the case of Malmö (Sweden) and Saint-Denis (France). They have experienced the arrival of many foreigners for a long time and they had to face this reality. They helped newcomers to create associations, to organize their own festivals, to freely attend

all European identities. European Union is a hub. Let us hope that it is a positive hub. This is European cultural identity. Generally speaking, and on the basis of some investigations, European identity will always be a secondary one: either because nations have perceived themselves as such for centuries, or because they just had the opportunity of recovering their national identity (Central and Eastern Europe).

What is the importance of culture for the European integration?

For most people, culture is not a source for building new identities or belongings. First of all, because what we call "culture" has been inherited by them, since they were very young. Secondly, because this type of approach requires curiosity, a minimum of resources and intellectual predisposal. At this stage, experts and associations can be efficient to attract people, to give them reasons for being proud of themselves and to give migrants' culture a chance to be taken into consideration. However, let us

courses of language and to perform on some occasions. It is the topic of my most recent research.

What is Europe? In what sense can one talk about a European cultural identity?

Only people who are confident with their own cultural background can welcome others. That is why education is so important.

Europe is a crossroad of identities and it should remain as such. The role of EU is not to build a one European culture, but to build all possible encounters between

be careful: only people who are confident with their own cultural background can welcome others. That is why education is so important.

1. Anne-Marie Autissier ed. (2008) *Dialogue(s) interculturel(s) en Europe. Regards croisés sur l'Année européenne du dialogue interculturel.*



After 20 years of teaching *History of Social Theory* at the University of Belgrade, Obrad Savić was first suspended and then, in May 2000, he was fired for political dissident engagement. Obrad Savić has taught at many universities in former Yugoslavia as well as in the United States and Western Europe. After 2005 he has work at University of Leeds, UK, and American University at Prishtina, Kosovo. Meanwhile, he has edited and published several books: *Philosophical Reading of Freud*; *European Discourse of War*; *Politics of Human Rights*; *The Balkans as a Metaphor*, etc.



THE FRIENDSHIP OF DIFFERENCES - REMEMBERING IVO BANAC

By Obrad Savić

Ivo Banac is no longer with us; I wish to speak in his honor with the utmost respect. I first met Professor Banac, whose academic life was worthy of every admiration, twenty years ago, during my stay at the New School for Social Research. From the beginning of our ‘American get-together,’ Ivo Banac advocated for a refined friendship devoid of any inappropriate intimacy. We both worked to build a measured, unobtrusive relationship, which hadn’t arisen from some great distance - but was, on the contrary, the product of our mutual fear of the kind of aggressive, oversized closeness that was always so foreign to both of us. The driving force of our

depoliticized friendship originated from the fact that our relationship from the beginning rose above that pernicious closeness based on familial, ethnic, national, fraternal and androcentric kinship. The spirit and nature of our sovereign friendship arose directly from our irreconcilable differences and dissimilarity.

Over and against any form of secular pride (*amour propre*), the difference in our respective attitudes toward religion - or more precisely, toward the Christian faith and Catholicism - has permanently determined the protective spirit of our friendship. Despite my own impiety and

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atheism, I understood the spirit of refined Catholicism that Ivo Banac persistently fostered, following in the footsteps of Hans Küng and Henri de Lubac. According to Banac, what is universal in the Church (“At the foundation of the Gospel is a constant view of the unity of the human

community”) belongs to the Catholic denomination of Christianity. It is well known that the adjective *catholikos* was used by ancient Greek philosophers to denote the value of universals.

In his book *The Croats and the Church* (2013), published in the midst of secular modernity, Ivo Banac offers a short history of Croatian Catholicism. The intertwined relationship between the Church, the nation, and modernity is magically resolved in the book’s epigraph: “He who has no Church for his mother cannot have God for his father.” If I understand this correctly, the sacrament of



spiritual healing works through a real and mystical union with Christ's church: since the forgiveness and reconciliation of sinners is first and foremost a reconciliation with the church itself, it would seem that the sacraments constitute the essence of the Catholic Church. No Catholic believer doubts the dogma—namely, that God's forgiveness cannot be achieved unless a communion

What is so fascinating about the gifts of solidarity with a good and virtuous friend is the affirmation of one's own uniqueness through the uniqueness of another.

of believers with the Church is established the "sacrament of the unity of the Church" or *sacramentum unitatis ecclesiasticae*. Although I never discussed with Banac the conciliatory power of the Eucharist in the Church of Christ (Christian Theophagy), it seems to me that from time to time throughout my life I have relied on

the protective vigilance that could at least temporarily delay "Christ's blood's nullifying of our political existence" (See Gil Anidjar, *Blood: Critique of Christianity*, 2014).

During one of the gatherings of the Bosnia Forum in Mostar, I introduced Gil Anidjar to Ivo Banac. I remember them starting an interesting discussion in the hotel garden about Christian "voices of blood", and ending the conversation with stimulation comments on Derrida's ominous remark that "blood would make all the difference."

It is especially important to emphasize that friendship with Ivo Banac was marked from the very beginning by the egalitarian practice of *solidarity*, which draws its origins from the Judeo-Christian tradition. In contradistinction to familial fraternity, which had diverged Christianity from fraternity based in a blood relation, to the expanded fraternity of all Christians. Ivo Banac and I persistently built a form of civic solidarity - the very core and foundation of our republican

friendship. My friendship with Ivo Banac was indeed reciprocally reflected in the solidarity that once led Montaigne to claim that his friendship with la Boetie "had no other model [*idee*] than itself" and therefore "can only refer to itself," in other words—it can only be its own measure. What is so fascinating about the gifts of solidarity with a good and virtuous friend is the affirmation of one's own uniqueness through the uniqueness of another. That is why our civic friendship was from the outset spontaneously emancipated from the biased rule of family ties and blood kinship. Indeed, I do not need to invent here some new, sublime way of celebrating Ivo Banac's precious solidarity, who selflessly gave me numerous "gifts" worthy of lasting memory.

Let me describe one of the "gifts" that my friend Ivo Banac respectfully gave me. I will not be mistaken if I state that the certainty of what Aristotle calls *the first* friendship (*e prote philia*) happened during our



early American days, when Ivo Banac introduced and wholeheartedly recommended me to his academic colleague from Yale University, the historian Professor Peter Gay. The truth of friendship consists, I believe, in unconditional trust—however, trust takes time because it has to be tested. But as I said, our friendship was in its early days and hadn't had a chance to be tested yet. (To go back to Aristotle's dictum: "Perhaps it is

not well to seek as many friends as possible but as many as are sufficient for living together," because we have no time to put too many of them to the test of time.) The proof of true friendship was precisely in the fact that Ivo Banac, even though he didn't know me well at that time, introduced me generously to his nearest friend professor Gay. At that time, Peter Gay was Director of the New York Public Library, and Banac's introduction yielded many frequent cordial meetings. At the first meeting, I informed Professor Gay that together with my Belgrade friend, psychologist Ljubko Stojić, I had translated his 1988 book *Freud: A Life for Our Time*. (Unfortunately, Gay's book has not yet been published in Serbian, because the local publishing house Nolit was terminated during the right-wing revolution in Serbia.) I had conducted an interview with Professor Gay about the translation of his work and I hoped to see that translation eventually published, despite the time that had elapsed. This successful episode of my collaboration

with Peter Gay had, in a sense, strengthened and fortified my civic friendship with Ivo Banac - the kind of friendship that relies on academic solidarity which itself implies equality of virtues among friends, equality in what turns them towards each other.

Although, as I have mentioned, my friendship with Ivo Banac was mostly crafted in the mold of civic solidarity,

I cannot deny that the destructive power of pre-political friendship, which we had both inherited, greatly influenced the strength (and weight) of our relationship. In order to think of friendship with an open heart, the early friendship must be somehow transformed for the future: “For to love friendship,” Derrida writes, “it is not enough to know how to bear the other in mourning; one must love the future” (Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 2005).

What had permanently - that is to say, in a testamentary manner - determined our de-politicized friendship for the future was, paradoxically, daily politics: namely, the brave political rebellion of Ivo Banac, and his remarkable defense of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the devastating attacks of Croatia and Serbia. Indeed, it was during the many years of our meetings in Mostar, organized by the prestigious non-governmental organization Forum Bosnia, that I was able to comprehend, from within, Ivo’s

heroic struggle for the integrity and wholeness of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is precisely in this place, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that destructive madness lurks, the political nightmare that arose under the burden of the destructive energy of ethnic hostilities.

Is it possible that the vengeful virus of nature has suddenly turned us into conspirators of aloneness? The madness of solitary silence is already here, like an intrusive guest who arrives before its host - the whirlpool of solitary silence signifies a definitive break with love, even if it is love for a close one (a friend) or love for oneself.

Therefore, what are we doing here - we who are civic friends, we who invite you to join us and share with us, despite everything, joy rather than omnipresent suffering and sorrow. Just before his death, when the whole world withdrew into isolation due

to Coronavirus, Ivo Banac and I exchanged a few self-ironic remarks about how our civic friendship had failed, and that we were now, in fact, innocent *friends of loneliness*, members of a desert community seeking to share what is unshareable - loneliness itself. I wonder in the end, what is the friendship of the lonesome - a friendship without closeness, without presence, and hence without togetherness and solidarity? Is it possible that the vengeful virus of nature has suddenly turned us into conspirators of aloneness? The madness of solitary silence is already here, like an intrusive guest who arrives before its host - the whirlpool of solitary silence signifies a definitive break with love, even if it is love for a close one (a friend) or love for oneself. Finally, for the love of friendship, a loyal friendship for the future, I quote from a moving letter I received in the midst of this pandemic panic from my friend Ivo Banac at 9.13am on Monday, March 23, 2020:

“Dear Buddy,
Thank you very much for your

friendly message. We are all well. Andrea and I are trying to keep safe from this plague in Dubrovnik. Nature certainly defends itself from everything that the human race has imposed on it, but it still embraces and enchants us. Figs are sprouting, wisteria is blooming, medlars are ripening in this Garden of Eden. Does it get any better than that? My warm greetings and love, Ivo”

Who could be more convincing than dear Banac to gently free us from the fear of vengeful loneliness in the presence of death?

Nature certainly defends itself from everything that the human race has imposed on it, but it still embraces and enchants us

The text was solicited by the International Forum Bosnia to be included in the commemorative issue on Ivo Banac. It was kindly sent to “The Bridge” by the author.





IULIA ENKELANA

Punishment

Are you originally correct?

Iulia Enkelana (the pseudonym of Iulia-Maria Kyçyku, born in 1999 in Bucharest, in a Romanian and Albanian family) is the author of a several short films (officially selected in international film festivals), short stories (published in Romanian and Albanian cultural magazines), plays, essays and two online albums: 'eyeland' (drawings) and 'do you remember your first loneliness?' (photographs). She is currently studying theater in Cluj-Napoca.

I am part of a wonderful generation (sometimes a *generrection*).

The *atmosfear* of our times is quite strange.

We live in a new (*chim*)era.

And there are plenty of (*t*)errors.

Some of us live in *Europe*, where there's also a European *Onion*. However, there are still some *nutsis* left.

We have been under *dicktatorship*.

We know some things about *mis(t)ery*.

Some of us have been in *exille*.

We admire *Amerryca*, even if it's not so merry all the time. We sometimes dream of *Hellywood*.

What is the *essense*?

We dream of success, although it can mean *suckcess*, or even *suckstress*.

We are pretty *melalcoholc*. Sometimes *nostallergic*.

We drink *tekill*a and tend to see a sort of key in whiskey.



Iulia Enkelana

We work part time or *fool* time.
We pay *fuctures*.
We read the *prass* every day.
Well, almost every day; from Monday to *Thirstday*.
Does nowhere mean *now, here?*
We tend to fear mor(*t*)ality.
We are surrounded by manifests and *moneyfests*. Or *moneyfeasts*. (Maybe just *money facts*.)
We certainly make the (*in*)difference.
We invent heroes, such as Irony Man or *Betman*, and we love them.
And we love the behind the *sins* videos, too.
In the *meantime* (or in the *kindtime*), we are politically correct.
We use *anti*-social networks.
From where could I buy a new *iReality?* Internet, *Younternet*...?
We can be *selfish*.
We can be *awwwful*.
We love fashion and not *fashioff*.
We rock, but sometimes we *pop* or we *classic*.

Is there any evolution in *revolution?*
There is anger in *stranger*.
We love *occidental* destinations. We travel to *Sweetzerland*, *Lonedon*...
Or we just send them greetings from the (*f*)East.
We sometimes listen to the *vice* of reason. We have *fleshbacks* and one night *standards*.

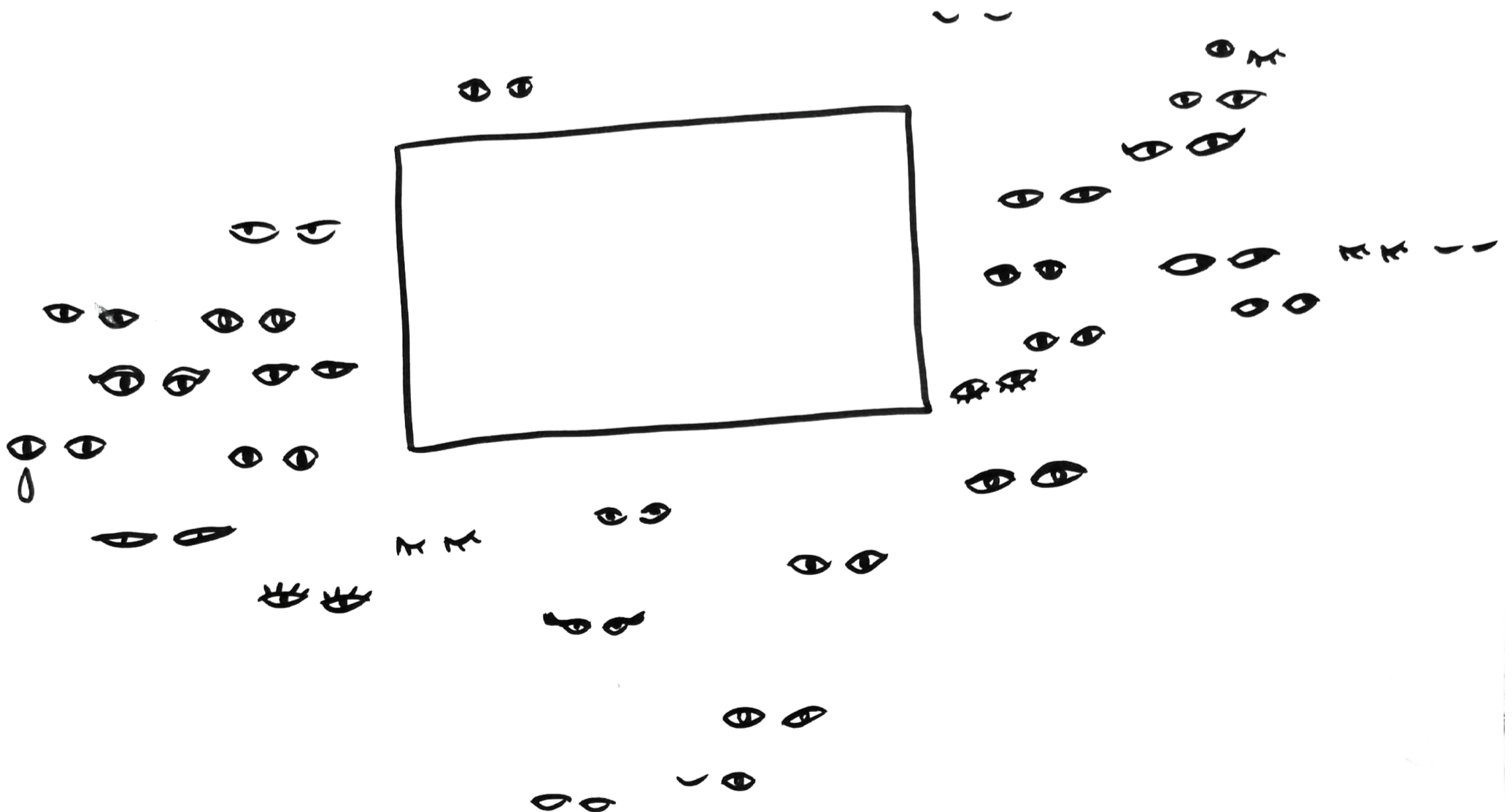
But we're not *ashamed*. (*Ashaimed?*)
After all, it's a strange *decayde*.
We fight *illusions*, often stuck between *Heaven and Help*.

We quite like *metawhores*. We appreciate (*f*)art.
We are sometimes so *infantile*.
We like clichés and silly quotes about *lief*.

Are you *originally correct?*
We sometimes forget that inspiration is not *inspirace*.

But we are *optimystical*.
We experience a certain kind of *soulitude*.
We believe and *beleave*.
We do go back to *realife*: we see the read in '*bread*', the right in '*bright*' and the art in '*smart*' (and in *heart*).
We are *poethical*. We write poetry, although it's often just *poetry*.
We love writing and *righting*. *Think* about it.
From time to time we are *satirIQ*.
We know that justice is not *just ice*.
We like *essays* and not *es-shut-ups*.
It's clear that I have to polish my English (...and to *english* my Polish).

This *scene* may be *seen* as a *sin*... But it was indeed an *experimeant to be*.
And we will always pay our *philosofee* for this.





Delia Chausheva was born in Sofia in 1965. After her studies in Krakow, Poland, for which she was graduated in Painting in 1993, Delia Chausheva has made several solo exhibitions in Bulgaria and abroad, and has participated in many exhibitions in different countries of Europe and of other continents. She has received a number of national and international awards. Her works are property of galleries and private collections in Bulgaria, Poland, Germany, Japan and USA, Serbia, Macedonia, Vienna. Delia Chausheva is member of Academia Balkanica Europeana.

Delia Chausheva has been working in the field of abstract painting for many years, building her own recognizable and sustainable style over time. Her art education is marked by two important names in Polish art. She graduated in Painting under the supervision of Prof. Jerzy Nowosielski at the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, with a second major in Graphics under the supervision of Professors Weimann and Bush. This determined her specific and more cosmopolitan attitude to the problems of abstract painting, as well as their visual realization. Delia Chausheva has many exhibitions in the country and abroad; she has won national and international awards.

“Abstract painting is considered one of the purest forms of expression, since it allows the artist to perform visual communication freely - without being limited by the shapes, which exist in the objective reality. This very freedom of communication, not mediated by the determination of visible images, is exactly what Delia Chausheva offers us. Through her paintings she shares with us her view on the world, or rather her illusion about Life and the Universe – an infinite cycle of revolving dust particles and giants, which is suddenly interrupted. The gravitational thrust, which completely changes the existence of a Comet, is an example of such an interruption. In that exact moment of conflict, coming out of this cliché and monotonous state, a sudden blow that disrupts the daily routine and completely changes life, is what the author is interested in. Chausheva recreates this through her distinctive means of expression. The smooth, monochromic canvas is permeated by spatial structures, resembling shattered glass or broken ice, which is saturated, vivid and arousing various color combinations – red, violet, green, blue. The light, transparent and smoothly applied hues are in conflict with the intense accents or dark shapes accomplished by layering the oil paint. The compositional decisions are unexpected and provocative, they flip the space upside down, and experiment with our senses by making us seek unusual solutions for their perception and reasoning”, says the art critic PhD Stefania Yanakieva about the author.

Delia Chausheva uses the traditional painting material – oil, to create compositions, in which the graphic principle is leading. According to PhD Stefania Yanakieva, what makes Delia Chausheva’s works so influential and memorable is their main characteristic: “...they manage to open the door to our imagination, giving us the freedom to perceive and interpret them according to our own individuality and sensitivity. They succeed to unlock our imagination and arouse our aspirations to seek new and unknown worlds, as well as to look at our familiar world in a new and different way.”



„Condition” - 70x60 oil



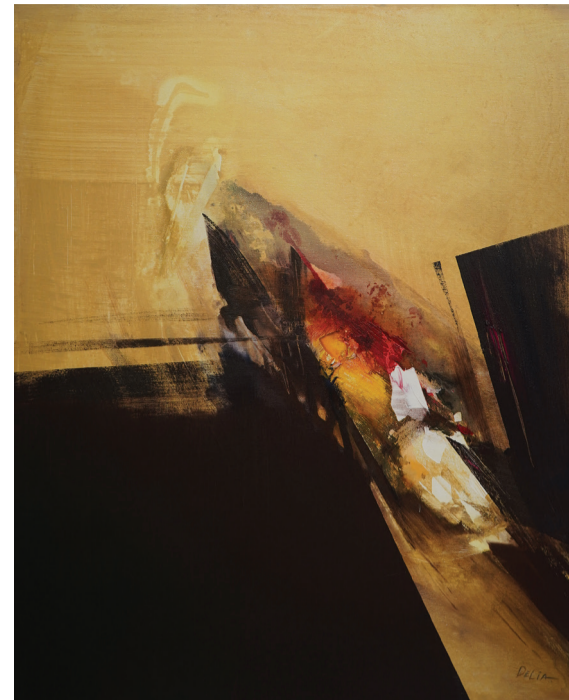
„On the road” - oil 89x100



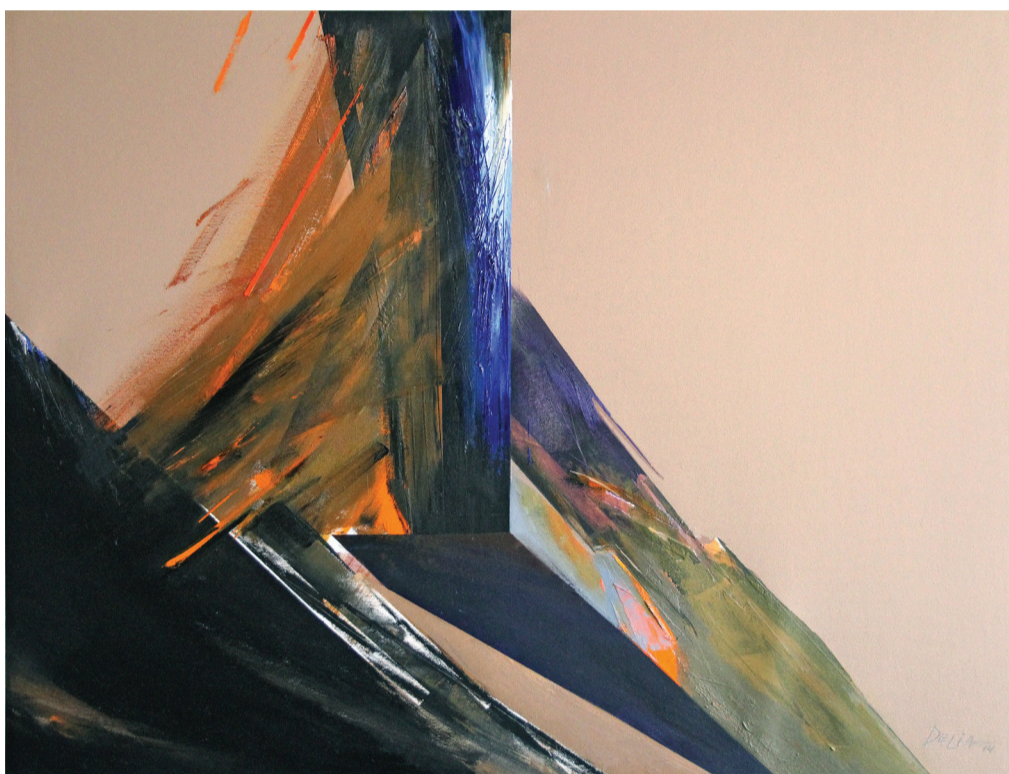
„Intervention”- 200x150 oil



„Where is heaven”- 80x105 oil



„Somewhere in the middle” 81x65-oil



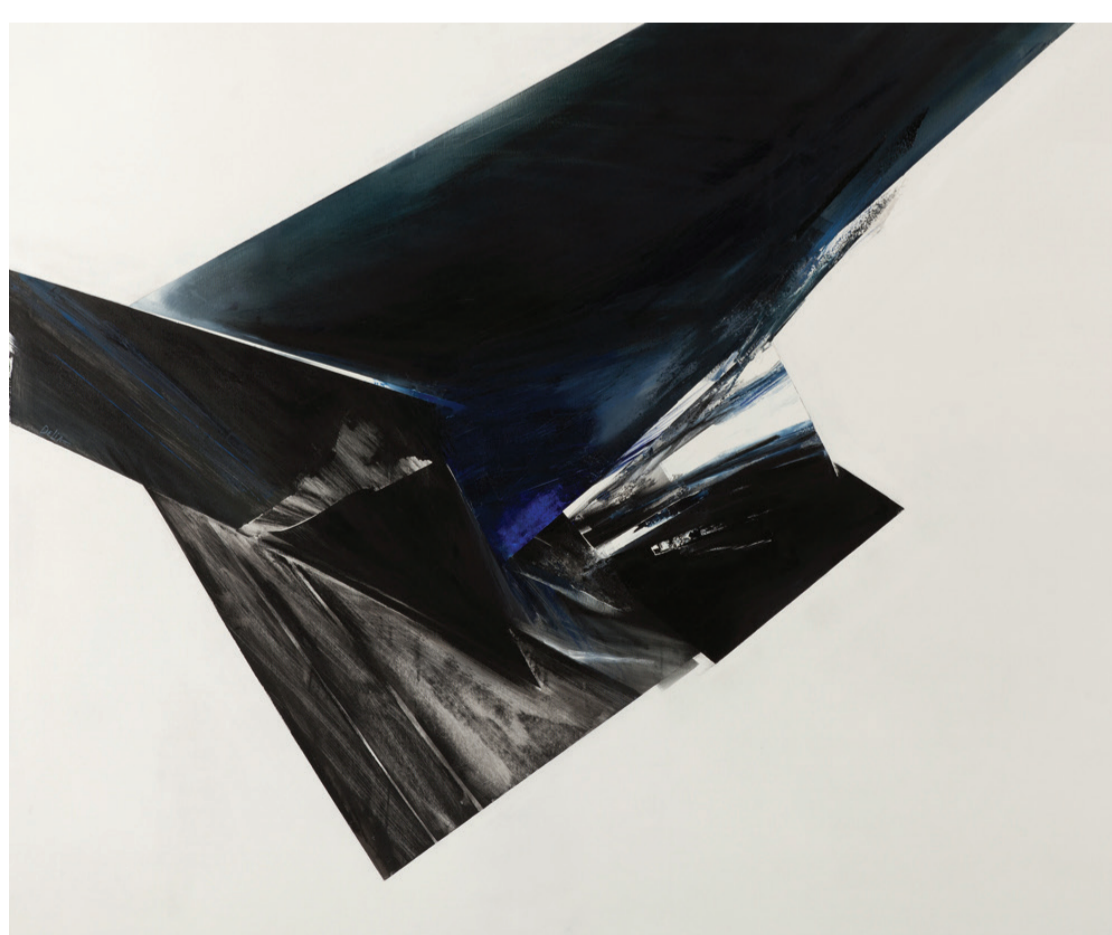
„Touch”- 80x105 oil



„Gravitational thrust” 90x70



„O Rumbles and Visions”- 150x150 oil



„Composition” 144x180 - oil



Bujar Luma, a theatre director by vocation, integrates into his work of civic activism modern techniques from the art and new media to engage effectively an intercultural dialog between communities. He is founder of LOJA - Centre for Balkan Cooperation. Initiatives launched by Bujar Luma and LOJA in ethnically charged environments went on to become models for replication in North Macedonia, Balkan region and beyond. From 2000, he closely cooperated with DFJW-OFAJ, the German - CPS program and MyHeroProject (USA based) to build networks and develop activities in the Balkans. On 2014, he became a member of Joint Coordination Team, core group of facilitators responsible for the process of the establishment of Regional Cooperation Youth Office (RYCO), one of concrete outcomes of the Berlin process. Bujar has been also key speaker at many conferences and has often been involved on "Track II diplomacy" initiatives especially on Western Balkans. Beside its civil society activism, Bujar Luma works as freelancer also in professional theaters. This text was first published by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Skopje Office in December 2020 (www.fes-skopje.org)

Europe Is In the Air

A factual fiction essay on the Berlin Process and the power of Franco-German relations

By Bujar Luma

It is the summer 2024, June 2024.

One more day and the summit would begin which would be the last of the Berlin Process Summits for the Western Balkans.

When finishes, this would be that last stone in the European journey of the Balkan region. With this summit, Germany and France were concluding a very complex process and were clearly leaving their mark on lasting peace in the Balkans. As a result, one or two years from now, the full membership of the Balkans in the EU would begin. Europe would be complete. So, on itself, this was more than just an ordinary summit. When completed successfully, not only would it meet, but it would also exceed the expectations of the very creators of the Berlin Process.

The Berlin Process, from 2014 until now, had helped to overcome some very complex issues in the Balkan region. Not only had it directed many political issues towards a solution in line with the European framework, but also as a mechanism in times of blockage and stagnation of the integration process, the Berlin Process kept alive the idea of Europe



itself in the Balkans!

Here, let us recapitulate: in the South of the western Balkans, North Macedonia had been encouraged not only to find internal cohesion, but also to resolve the name dispute with Greece and overcome the historic dispute with Bulgaria as well, by being provided a multi-perspective approach to the past without blocking the future. The issue of the autocephaly of the Macedonian church from the Serbian Church was still acute, but as it was not obstructing the future, it was dealt

with no hurry.

In Montenegro, the accession dynamic not only managed to secure consensus so that Montenegro could be consistent in its Euro-Atlantic journey and foreign policy, and, besides, to resolve the problem of religion, but it had helped to demarcate the border with Kosovo.

Albania and Greece had already resolved the issue of the maritime border; they abolished the law of war and had agreed that the issue of property of persons deported after

the war should be addressed through international courts.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, although strong internal debates and clashes continued, nevertheless, guarantees were provided in order not to contest the territorial integrity of the country and visible steps toward EU and NATO membership had been taken.

For June 2024, for the last summit of the Berlin Process, they had left one issue, which was probably the most important in the Balkans - the full

normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

Many international factors contributed to all these developments, especially Germany and France within the mechanisms offered by the Berlin Process. Although the history stubbornly spoke that often at crucial moments the help from the overseas was necessary, nevertheless, these two countries were taking on an even greater role.

To achieve this, Germany and France had acting separately from time to time and were finally joining efforts together. Germany, in addition to the official policies, was also visible through organizations, platforms, funds and institutions such as Goethe Institut, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst, Kurve Wustrow and many others. On the other side France, besides the official policy, also helped through its state agency for development, the Institute Français, André Malraux Centre, Service Civic, etc.

Meanwhile, they both had been part of military interventions and peacekeeping missions. But a crucial starting point for the credibility of the efforts and the long-lasting impact of the collaboration of both countries had always been the French German Youth Office (DFJW-OFAJ).

At the same time, Germany and France, taking as an example the vision and values that Charles De Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer promoted with the Élysée Treaty, and working for deploying these same values at the southern borders of the continent, were in a way fulfilling and implementing a vision of theirs for Europe. This idea and model of the Franco-German reconciliation for the Balkans had also been offered by President Jacques Chirac and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. It had been officially offered immediately after the Kosovo war through the DFJW-OFAJ, and now it was being offered through the Berlin Process. For example, based on this narrative, they had also helped to establish the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, officialized in 2016 in Paris.

With all these efforts, compiled together, Germany and France were drawing parallels between the Élysée Treaty and the Berlin Process. Here the German Chancellor and the

French president, not only were building on the legacy of De Gaulle and Adenauer, but they were also further pushing the dream of Alfred Grosser and Robert Schumann.

In its essence, this idea was even deeper and of a much earlier date. It corresponded to the values that emerged from the French Revolution. However, they were only brought to live when France and Germany stretched their hands for reconciliation in Élysée.

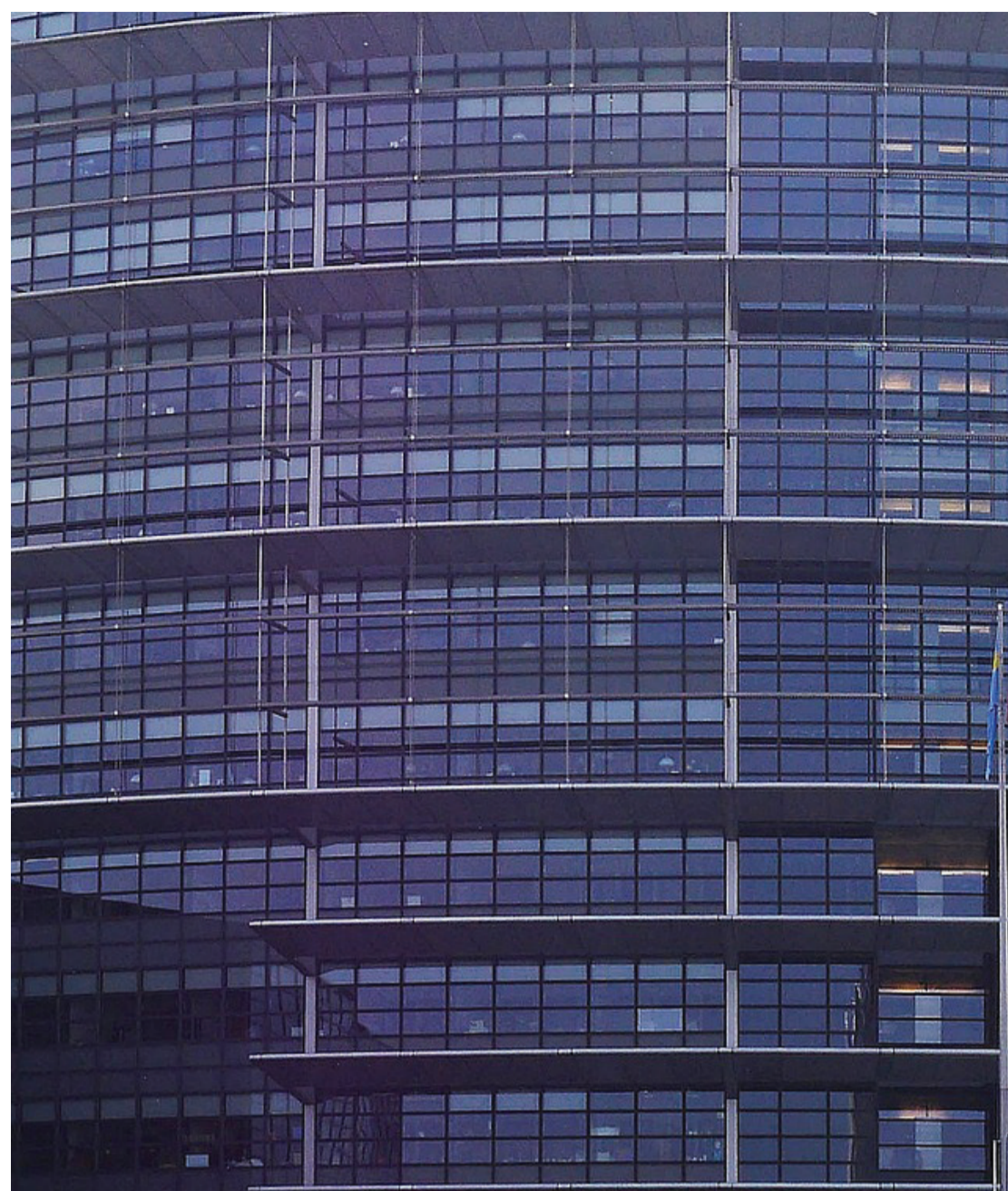
Even in the Balkans, the idea of Europe was quite old and present to all nations. Unfortunately, it often suffered severe blows from the East and eastern extensions (often its inhabitants), and as a result the European idea in the Balkans was oppressed and marginalized. The bearers of this idea not only felt very often forgotten and betrayed by Europe, but also in most cases paid a very high price for their determination. However, to be fair, beside real Europeans, there were constantly groups and individuals, both from the South and the North of the Alps, who saw the idea of Europe through the lenses of purely personal interest. This was a depressing and discouraging fact for all those who pledged and defended European values in this part of Europe.

Nevertheless, surprisingly this idea never faded - when others thought that it had faded away, it reappeared, and it grew repeatedly. As if it was an integral part, a code of the subconscious!

Now it was cultivated by the Berlin Process. It is on this narrative that Germany and France gathered momentum in the context of the summits for the Balkans and, in particular during this last summit of June 2024!

No one knows why, but the Chancellor and the President, when they were checking the last details of the summit, silently remembered something; whenever Europe was at risk from abroad or from its own inhabitants, someone protected it from overseas. They even asked themselves: Why so? Would Europe need to be protected from overseas again?

In the meantime, details were set for this summit and all arrangements were made. This summit had arisen the curiosity of the media like none of the previous ones. Not only the interest of the media from our continent, but also of many



American, Russian, Turkish, Chinese and other media agencies...

The fact that this time the host was neither an EU country, nor would it happen in the format "an EU country + a candidate country", was something new. This time the hosts were Serbia and Kosovo, two countries claiming membership, and beyond centuries of hostility had pledged to reconcile and, in order to prove this, they were organizing the summit.

It was both an opportunity and a risk. Therefore, this summit was directly sponsored and monitored by the French President and the Chancellor of Germany. Eventually the EU itself was aiding, as it was the European spirit itself that also needed this to be a success.

It was something very rare to see such an increased activity and presence not only of the media but also of many other agencies from eastern countries.

The leaders' meeting would start in Belgrade, while the other component of the summit had started in Pristina - the Civil Society Forum and the Business Forum!

As agreed, the Forum would make recommendations to political leaders on European policies in the region. The Forum expected from this

summit that the region would be certified as part of Europe and would behave as such.

For decades and until the present day, this was the expectation of people who fought for the Europeanization of the Balkans.

And it would happen the next day!

Would not this be a confirmation of that call for which Skanderbeg and Pjeter Bogdani had fought? Did not the Frasheri brothers, De Rada, Ndre Mjeda and the Qiriazzi sisters totally pour their souls and knowledge to this cause? Was not this the cry of the students of Prishtina repressed in 1981? Did not the late President of Kosovo Ibrahim Rugova repeat it in each one of his weekend conferences? Didn't Ismail Kadare pour all the imagination of writer for this purpose?

Didn't Milan Obrenovic, Aleksandar Obrenovic, Dimitrije Tucovic, Zoran Djindjic and Ivan Stambolic (the last four killed) aspire and pay a price for it? Do not, Marko Nikezic and Latinka Perovic in a very risky times raise their voices for it? Didn't Borka Pavicevic work with all her friends from all over the Balkans until her last breath?

Was it not the embodiment of the manifesto of the Republic of



Krushevo, did not Pitu Guli and Nikola Karev fought for it? Didn't Arben Xhaferi reminded us of this until the day he closed his eyes in solitude? Did not Zoran Zaev and some MP's almost pay with their life on that dark April? Did not the exaltation of November 2020 prove it, when for the first time the national football team of North Macedonia qualified for the European championship?

Was it not what they wanted in early Duklje? Didn't the Balshajt - Balsci wanted this? Wasn't Slavko Perovic voice a reminder when the Balkan sky was covered with darkness? Isn't Andrej Nikolaidis reminding us about it whenever he can?

Didn't Captain Hussein Gradashевич fight for it? In the darkest days of the siege of Sarajevo, did not the SARTR (Sarajevo War Theater) keep this spirit alive?

And many other people, in South and North of Alps, who day by day, with full devotion and often in silence, embody this cause, who will forgive me for not being able to mention them by name..

Tomorrow, when completed, wouldn't the bones of Milaim, who has lived in the same house for 96 years and changed nationality for 9 times, find peace at the edge of Sharr

Mountain. The states and the borders came and went, and Milaim in that same house, kept Europe in himself and for generations to come, as much as he could!

There was something Hegelian in all this, while everything seemed to be reaching the end where it had begun, in Kosovo. From the Battle of Kosovo in that remote month of June until the Merciful Angel in another June, centuries later, this land had only seen wars. Sometimes it was being defended against the East and sometimes against its own inhabitants. Often those who loved this territory, not necessarily loved the population who was living there.

So, for many reasons, this was the summit for which Germany and France had invested the most. This was more than a moment; it was a momentum. One of those divine hours about which Stefan Zweig had written like no one else! Together they would write the European history for which this region had paid an extremely high price.

It had paid such a price in particular when France and Germany were taking up arms against each other, when they did not have a view and attitude for Europe and consequently neither for the region; it had paid such a price at the Versailles

conference and the Congress of Berlin. When France and Germany were together, things seemed to be clearing up, like in Rambouillet for example! Even more so with the Berlin Process.

Therefore, these two countries had agreed to approach the region with the power of their own example, that of a reconciliation which essentially had entailed confrontation with the past, freedom, justice and equality.

Coincidentally or not, one before the summit, on June 10, 2024, the French President and the German Chancellor had visited together, in France, the memorial village of Oradour-sur-Glane! In the Balkans, someone read this visit as a message before the summit. In fact, with this, France and Germany were commemorating this infamous event in its 80th anniversary and were recalling that peace was so cherished and how important the reconciliation between these two nations had been for Europe

Weren't these the values that emerged from the French Revolution?

Thus, with the power of reconciliation, with the spirit of Élysée Treaty in the framework of the summits of the Berlin Process, the Balkan states and nations had been helped to find their European path.

And the moment was coming, the historic, the divine hour was knocking!

From Skopje, Pristina, Sarajevo, Tirana and Podgorica, the prime ministers' planes were ready to take off for Belgrade. Meanwhile, the President of France and the Chancellor of Germany had left Paris and Berlin respectively.

All the prime ministers of the Balkans were already in the air and watching from above. They were looking down with some difficulty as they were hindered by the pollution-smog that was common to the Balkans. It knew no borders. Even when they could see, they often saw a ruined nature, clearly visible deforested mountains, some dams that obstructed the flow of rivers and quite often an urban chaos. Religious objects were also seen, mostly on the tops and around the streets. As if they had been added!

This was also the impression that the French President and the German Chancellor were having, as they got closer to the Balkans. Somehow, it was blurrier and more difficult to see there below!

The plane in which the Prime Minister of Kosovo was flying was operated by Euro-Wings (as agreed between the two governments in Washington). The Prime Minister was sitting by the window. He was reading the joint letter that the President of France and the Chancellor of Germany had sent to the political leaders of the region this morning, but now and then, he looked out the window. At some point, it was very difficult to see anything because of the smog produced by the Kosova-A lignite power plant. Even the little that he saw was not what he would have liked to see. Urban chaos again, a lot of fertile land left barren, and on those lands, he saw residential neighborhoods probably of new rich, a strange mix, he said to himself. However, he saw too many car cemeteries! He did not notice any significant factory, which frustrated him particularly! Except for Sharr Mountains, only the winding highway that connected Durrës with Prishtina, Merdare and Nis was clearly visible (done because of strong insistence from the overseas). The plane was following that same course. As the Prime Minister looked at the Kosovo plain, he was reminded that the battle of Kosovo had also been a war of all the Balkan nations for a European region. Despite the distortions that daily politics had made to the history of this battle, he, as a good connoisseur, knew this quite well and he assumed that also the professional historians did.

Before leaving the airspace of Kosovo behind, the plane made a turn, he saw the American base Bondsteel, and only a minute later, just before entering the space of Serbia, he clearly distinguished the Russian base in front.

As he looked down, he did not understand why, he remembered that a former head of a regional structure emerging from the Berlin Process had served as a soldier during the war near that base. Perhaps he remembered that according to the agenda he would meet him at the summit now as part of the Serbian government. They were flying over the city of Pozarevac, and he was aware that there was a memorial for Milosevic, as it was also his birthplace.

Suddenly, he felt a kind of trouble. It was something personal: he noticed the prison where he had been kept locked up and abused for two years.

Our essay

◀ Page 29

He was reminded that it had been in June, on June 10, when they threw him into that prison. He said to himself, "Is it possible that one of those who used violence against me will take care of my safety in Belgrade?" However, he had already taken on the obligations and had to go beyond himself. Besides the vision, his reason was being blurred as well.

Was this June 10 a mere coincidence? This month of June seemed to be reserved for the moments when history is written, he kept saying to himself. And, somehow, he broke away by counting the historical dates of June with himself!

At that moment, he remembered that with the similar plane, but with destination The Hague, four years ago, the former President of Kosovo, the former Prime Minister and the former Speaker of Parliament had flown together. He said to himself, "What if this plane goes even further? What if it lands in The Hague?"

He remembered that here in the air he controlled nothing but his own thoughts.

As they approached Belgrade and began their descent, signs of foreign investment were becoming visible below. He saw some signs of well-known German brands and occasionally a French brand. He also saw buildings of Russian, Turkish and Chinese companies.

Suddenly, the phone rang. Someone informed him that the President of Serbia had already changed his mind: he would not accept to place a memorial plaque in honor of the bodies of Kosovo Albanians that were buried in Batajnice. He had refused, as protests had begun in Belgrade. At most, he offered to do something in the form of a somewhat confusing statement in the context of the summit conclusions.

The Prime Minister of Kosovo immediately decided not to land, he said that if there will be no memorial plaque, he would return to Prishtina. Both the German Chancellor and the French President learned about this decision while in the air. At that moment, was everyone being tested, particularly the President of France and the Chancellor of Germany.

In the north of Alps, often one could not understand how you can agree in the process and not respect the conclusions.

Someone from the air had reported about all this overseas, while from the ground there were some communication lines from beyond the Carpathians.

Now not only the credibility of Germany and France was being tested, but above all the centuries-old investment for Europe, Europe itself!

Below, there was also former heads of governments who had worked so hard for Europe and who wanted to



celebrate this last summit as a success. There was also the whole group of civil society that was looking forward to this moment! Everyone was trying to do something on its own. Trying to contact regional structures, individuals, and the whole army of people trained with European funds? Could they do something? They were looking for someone who could help in this situation, someone who could talk to the Prime Minister and the President. Could it be the one who believed that had foreseen this scenario a few years ago and who believed that the idea for this last summit was also inspired by one of his writings?

Would the Chancellor of Germany and the President of France speak unanimously? Was there again the necessity of an intervention from the overseas?

Was that divine knocking right

now? Did the French President and the German Chancellor read it that way? Did the President of Serbia and the Prime Minister of Kosovo read it that way?

The situation required quick and tough decisions. In order to speak unanimously, what would Germany and France use as their strongest argument? Was the example of reconciliation the most powerful weapon?

In front of them the divine hour was knocking even harder! Now they had the opportunity to write an important chapter of history. A rare opportunity for Germany and France to display through their own example their leadership and hold the reins of the old continent.

A fog was starting to appear down in Belgrade, the crowd that was first noticed was now almost covered by fog.

From another plane also came the announcement that it would refuse to land, while a third one was hesitating. Meanwhile the other planes were waiting for signals and instructions.

Belgrade was now losing clarity; the fog down there was getting thicker!

These flying objects up in the air, were neither the black ravens of that remote June nor the iron birds of a much later June. They were the flying machines of June 2024 that did not have much time to make history!

While, after many centuries, these were a little more than 20 years that this region was living in peace and democracy together! Never before had the region experienced anything similar.

The Euro-Wings were spinning in the air, and had fuel only for just over 20 minutes of spin, then either had to start landing or take the return route.





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