

30
YEARS

Open Society
& Its Friends

/1991-2021/

... and you are one of them!

!ment fo eno era uoy bna...

30 YEARS

#thirtyyears



A regional cooperation marking three decades of Open Society Foundations in the Balkans

The 30 Years Initiative has provided perspective on three decades, 1991–2021, of the presence and work of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) in the Balkans. It has examined how the unique philanthropic efforts of George Soros, his open society ideas and philosophy persevered during the stormy recent history of the region and how that work is still a moving force, alive and active.

The 30 Years Initiative consists of two complementary components: a virtual tour of seven presentations/discussions on the region, each of which offered a particular perspective on the 30 years – Virtual Momentum – and the book *30 Years: Open Society and Its Friends*. Taken together, the two parts of the initiative offer an excellent and significant opportunity to look at the region and its many challenges, accomplishments, difficulties, failures, political and social circumstances—its past, present and future.



The 30 Years Initiative presented its tour de table – Virtual Momentum – traveling throughout the Balkans in 2021:

April 22 – Pristina, Kosovo, hosted by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society

May 6 – Ljubljana, Slovenia, hosted by The Peace Institute

May 18 – Skopje, North Macedonia, hosted by the Foundation Open Society – Macedonia

June 10 – Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, hosted by the Open Society Fund – Bosnia and Herzegovina

June 14 – Zagreb, Croatia, hosted by the Human Rights House Zagreb

June 17 – Belgrade, Serbia, hosted by the Open Society Foundation Serbia

June 17 – Final discussion on the future of open society in the Balkans



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THIRTY YEARS OPEN SOCIETY and ITS FRIENDS



Sarajevo / 2021

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Links to recordings of the Virtual Momentum events are available through the digital version of the book.



Excerpts from [Building Open Society in the Western Balkans, 1991–2011](#).

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#thirtyyears

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In Lieu of a Preface

Boro Kontić

A Conjunction of Planets

As we reminisce about the beginnings of the work of the Open Society Foundations in this part of the world, the logic of personal memory inevitably sends me back to the siege of Sarajevo. Under these conditions, the Foundation was one of the essential, invaluable facts that eased for the people of Sarajevo the feeling that they were cut off from the world and abandoned. Such feelings were widespread. Sarajevo poet Abdulah Sidran, in his poem titled "Planet Sarajevo," captured this in his appeal to the ears of the world:

*Listen
to the breathing
of Planet Sarajevo.*

Prevented from living a normal life in Sarajevo, we did not lose our sense of dignity, thanks to the presence of the Foundation, among others, and all the noble people who were in precious contact with us.

On the pages that follow, we speak about everything the Foundation accomplished here over the last thirty years. In this brief preface, in keeping with my vocation as a journalist, I will mention only the digital archive of newspapers.

Each time I reach for this precious tool, so necessary in the fight against oblivion and ignorance, I remind myself that it came about at the prompting of the Soros Foundation. Thanks to it, in its easily accessible memory, I read today that George Soros signed an agreement with the government of Yugoslavia establishing the Soros Yugoslavia Foundation on 17 June 1991. Events then accelerated dramatically and utterly transformed the history and geography of the country.

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Children in War, Sarajevo,
Bosnia and Herzegovina,
1992



That same day all the newspapers reported that the European Community would be announcing its position on Yugoslavia that was to be “precise, clear and extremely comprehensible.” A few days later came the declaration of independence of Slovenia, one of the six Yugoslav republics. The declaration was followed by a ten-day war with Yugoslav People’s Army units, and this clash augured what has been euphemistically dubbed the “bloody ‘90s.” And the collapse of Yugoslavia.

That same June day, the media reported on an escalating situation with Albanian refugees who were trying to land in Brindisi at the very tip of the Italian boot. The Italian government decided that the boats carrying the 680 newcomers would have to leave the territorial waters of Italy and return to Albania.

At such a time the people of what was still a shared state drew together. The cohesion of the country may have been in question, but their common goals were not: an open society, advancement of civil institutions, respect for human rights, respect for diversity, the rule of law, the professional media, and participation of citizens in public life. Everything listed here was clearly under threat. These goals were often maliciously dismissed in the bloody ‘90s as “peacetime luxuries.”

But also a part of the mosaic of events from the time, from that very day, is the news that a phenomenon appeared in the heavens on 17 June 1991 that is seen only rarely. Three large planets in the solar system—Venus, Mars, and Jupiter—were only three degrees apart for several days. The next time, astronomers tell us, that these planets converge over Earth will be in 2152.

We hope that the world will be in better shape in 2152, fairer and more sensible than when conditions called for the Soros Foundation to be established. And we hope that no other city on this planet of ours endures years that are as tragic as those endured by Sarajevo and the region.

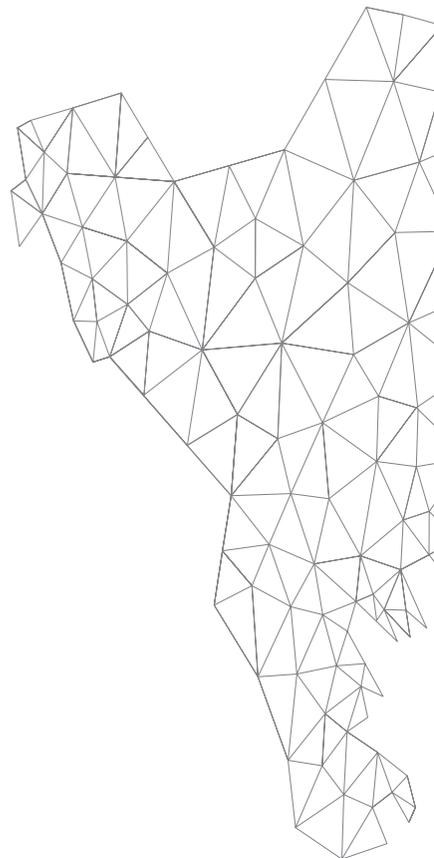
What has been accomplished over the first thirty years under the auspices of the Foundation will be set out on the pages before you. And lest we forget: The people I met while working at the Foundation fill my address book and its contents are always changing. Names disappear after one-time projects end, but the friendships formed through work at the Foundation are constant.

These friendships gainsay the notion that one only makes true friends in childhood. Friendships are made when people can recognize sincere dedication to shared values. Especially at a time when these values are under attack.

Translated from Bosnian
by Ellen Elias-Bursać

And such was the moment, despite the astrological exclusivity, when the Open Society was born.

In keeping with the essence and name of the Foundation, this anniversary publication is not intended to bring an end to the narrative about the Foundation. New subjects, fresh perspectives, new testimonies are always welcome.



The Promise of Open Society

George Soros and Alexander Soros

George Soros

George Soros is founder and chair of Soros Fund Management and the Open Society Foundations. Soros has been active as a philanthropist since 1979, when he began providing funds to help black students attend Cape Town University in apartheid South Africa. He has since given away more than \$32 billion. The Open Society Foundations today support individuals and organizations in more than 120 countries, working to build vibrant and inclusive democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens.

Alexander Soros

Alex Soros is the deputy chair of the Open Society Foundations. Soros received his PhD in 2018 from the University of California, Berkeley and was a post-doctoral fellow at the Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and the Humanities at Bard College, an honorary fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study at Central European University in Budapest, and a visiting fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna.

Looking back, we are convinced that starting the foundations three decades ago in what was once Yugoslavia was one of our great achievements. The new foundation in 1991 embraced a diversity of thought and approaches at a time when the countervailing forces of dissolution and nationalism were already underway in the former Yugoslavia.

At its core the foundation aspired to strengthen the very notion of open society by fostering the development of an autonomous civil society, independent media, and a range of educational and cultural institutions, which often were the only critical voices.

These early efforts included providing scholarships, investing in early childhood education, supporting independent media, funding democratically minded groups, and giving humanitarian aid. Sarajevo in particular was a symbol of open society that became threatened with destruction by the doctrine of the ethnic state. It was here where any supposed march to freedom was over, and it was a sign of what was still possible on the European continent.

During the siege, the foundation worked to maintain some vestige of normality for people living there—repairing and extending the gas lines, supplying coal, firewood, and charcoal, establishing access to clean water, restoring the bakery, providing seeds for planting and of course, newsprint because access to information assumed an urgency almost as fundamental as food or water. Until the foundation installed a satellite phone system, there was no way the civilian population could have contact with the outside world.

There is so much that came out of the Western Balkan foundations, perhaps what we are most proud of is that they all shared the goal of Roma inclusion and empowering Roma in their struggle for cultural, social and political identity. There was so much ground gained on this front even up to today.

There is Life after the West Remember the Alamo

Boris Buden

I

People may be more or less aware of this, but the time has come to say it out loud: the entire grand narrative of the democratic revolutions of 1989–90 and the final liberation of the people of Eastern Europe from Communist totalitarianism, including what we refer to as the “transition to democracy”—the project of bringing the postcommunist societies into conformity with the norms and ideals of the “West”—has lost all meaning, at least for the regions of ex-Yugoslavia. What’s more, it has shown itself to be what it always has, in fact, been—an ideological trap for redistributing power and establishing new relations of dominance and exploitation. The time is behind us now when we had a sense of a total historical certainty, when we knew exactly where we were coming from and where we were going. Now the unknown lies before us, obscure and perilous, as the future always is, open to any number of outcomes. Once abandoned, the well-trodden path of history we embarked upon in 1989–90 is now a meander, as is increasingly clear. Straying from the path is easy, yet there is no way back. The likelihood that the process of transformation begun with the epochal fall of Communism would end fatally now seems altogether plausible. And this is not merely a case of a genuine threat of imminent biological extinction of the kind faced by most of the nations whose independence came about after Yugoslavia fell to pieces; this extinction includes or rather assumes an economic backward slide, disintegration of the social fabric, a total loss of political and every other kind of sovereignty, cultural decadence, geopolitical marginalization and an overall provincialization of the lifeworld.

But the final breakdown of the postcommunist grand narrative brought along with it something else. Something which finally resembles authentic historical experience. And historical experience is authentic inasmuch as it is the experience of contradiction, irreducible to the simple, linear flow of historical time and hierarchical relations, which such a linear temporality assumes and produces. In the ideological construct of such “transitions toward democracy,” the postcommunist societies have been trapped in a paradigm of “historical

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Socialism series,
2015



lag” behind the democratic, capitalist societies of the “West”; from this follows the necessity of an (accelerated) push for them to catch up with the “West.” This has, then, created a whole teleology of transformation, based on the real existing ideal of the “West,” reduced to a hierarchical ascent to “higher,” “western” values. The trajectory was well-planned and the idea was to follow it to the goal. In essence, this entire process could be reduced to the dubious notion of “westernization.” And in the process, every doubt in the ideal or, heaven forbid, consideration of possible alternatives, was shoved aside. The same paradigm, after all, was used to understand the identity wars of the 1990s which tore Yugoslavia to pieces. Their cause, meaning the cause of the social and political processes that brought them about, was seen to be the “civilizational shortcomings” of the Balkan people, in other words, their cultural backwardness—lagging behind “the West,” of course. In picturesque terms, the Balkan peoples chose to battle each other so they could vent their atavistic passions instead of enjoying the boons of western democracy and the prosperity of a free capitalist market. Needless to say, the notion of the “West” as an ideal is thereby utterly de-historicized. As a transitological ideologem, this implies a sublimated norm, and not a historically contingent and culturally particular form of real life which is, as such, inseparable from the internal contradictions, regressive processes, crises, unplanned about-faces, a life that can always elude control and take off in an unpredictable direction.

And then this is precisely what happened. People from the Balkans, and with them a large part of the world, watched with incredulity as the crisis of the political order, the populist mobilization of the masses, the uncontrolled dissolution of supranational institutions, nationalism, racism, political violence, home-grown terrorism and even the threat of a new wave of fascism engulfed the previously untouchable “West.” The shock caused by Trump’s rise in the United States, Brexit and the real possibility of a collapse of the European Union, the rise of the right-wing populist parties and movements in western Europe and ideologically kindred regimes in the European East, prompted many from the region of ex-Yugoslavia to ask: Haven’t we already seen this? Isn’t the inability of the European Union to anticipate and absorb the separatist tendency of Great Britain reminiscent of the helplessness of the political elites of the Yugoslav federation to prevent the collapse of the multiethnic state? Doesn’t Donald Trump’s populism sound a lot like the rhetoric of our nationalistic leaders who took us to war back then? We can still remember how the “West” identified the cause of the war as ethnic hatred, supposedly native to the culturally backward “Balkans.” But what we don’t recall is the hatreds ever escalating—no matter how present they may have been in ex-Yugoslavia—to a level of violence

comparable to Anders Breivik’s massacre or the murders of foreigners in Germany before the outbreak of the recent war. The riot of the mob at the American Capitol was reminiscent of our “happenings of the people,” and the “anti-bureaucratic” and “yogurt” revolutions, but at that point there was no loss of life yet. Whether justified or not, this *déjà vu* effect raises yet another question: “Who is catching up to whom here, who is in transition, from where and toward what? Isn’t it the “West” that is following in the footsteps of the postcommunist East and isn’t what the western societies are now going through the very thing we went through some thirty years ago? Haven’t we from the East, especially those of us from the region of ex-Yugoslavia, been the avant-garde of history, while the liberally democratic “West” is our straggling adherent?”

This question, no matter how understandable it may be, rests on erroneous assumptions—those same assumptions on which rests the grand narrative of what are referred to as the democratic revolutions of 1989–90 and the ideology of postcommunist “transition to democracy.” The view of the “West” as the ideological end of history, finished in the real existing order of liberal democracy, which—in a state of post-historical quiescence, “waiting” for everyone else to catch up with it—is every bit as illusory as the fantasy of a postcommunist East being the avant-garde of the historical regression and dystopian havoc of that same order of liberal democracy. In genuine historical practice, nobody catches up with anybody, nor does anybody wait, nor can we know in advance how a newly initiated historical process will end. Nevertheless, the illusion about the “West,” which in its ideological self-dismantling follows the dark ideal of the postcommunist “East,” does contain a kernel of truth: the heroic story of how liberal democracy—and capitalism, of course—beat communist totalitarianism and brought about the end of history has run its course; the teleology of the “transition to democracy,” which mobilized the transformational energy of the postcommunist states, promising a brand new light at the end of the tunnel, has lost the force of its attraction; finally the “West,” after losing the cachet of the norm and aura of the ideal, has shown itself in its real historical truth—as an ideological construct whose historical viability is over. The first thing that can breathe meaning into life after the “West” is an alternative genealogy of actual reality—not yet another grand narrative, but a story in which we can recognize not only what we are like today, but

BORIS BUDEN

Boris Buden, author, cultural critic and translator. He earned his doctorate in cultural studies at Humboldt University in Berlin. During the 1990s he wrote for and edited the Zagreb magazine *Arkzin*. His essays and articles cover topics from philosophy, politics, cultural and art criticism. Among his more recent books are *Zone des Übergangs*, (Frankfurt/Main, 2009), *Findet Europa*, (Vienna, 2015), *Transition to Nowhere* (Berlin, 2020). Buden is a permanent fellow of the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies in Vienna. He teaches at Bauhaus University in Weimar and at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. Buden lives in Berlin.



how we became this way. No matter how local and singular, the story must be globally translatable. It must also be freed of transitional teleology, its linear temporality. And perhaps most important, it must be told from the other side of “East” and “West.”

II

In what follows I will offer a brief analysis of a case supported by the main thesis: in Croatia—and this country will serve as my illustration here—the very first step taken toward democracy in 1989 went in the wrong direction. Why and how? If we are to understand this we need to start somewhere else, in a different time. For instance, in Vienna in 2012.

In the spring of this year, a new activist initiative cropped up on the political scene in Austria, using the obscure name of W.I.R.—*Wiens Identitäre Richtung* (The Identity Orientation of Vienna). This group of young neo-rightists and racists, led by Alexander Markovitz, a student of history, held their first activist performance in September of that year. Wearing monkey and pig masks they harassed the members of an African-Haitian dance workshop organized by Caritas. By late 2012, W.I.R. joined forces with like-minded people holding similar political ambitions and founded IBÖ—*Identitäre Bewegung Österreichs* (Austrian Identity Movement), and in so doing joined the new pan-European right wing that had been coalescing around the notion of identity, or more precisely, around the common goal of preserving and protecting something this movement, in an overtly racist sense, experiences as a European identity, which, in their opinion, faces an imminent and vital threat from migrations and left liberal politics.

Back to the acronym of W.I.R. At first glance, beyond serving as the name of a movement, it suggests association with something else, the pronoun “we,” in German, *wir*. But only at first glance. A second glance reveals that W.I.R. evokes a far deeper historical meaning, linking it to the Balkans and the present time. During the age of European revolutions, 1848–49, known as the Peoples’ Spring under the Habsburg monarchy of the day—brought to the verge of collapse by democratic uprisings—W.I.R. stood not only for the royal ‘we’ used by the still very youthful emperor in his proclamations addressing the people—“We, Franz Joseph the First, with God’s grace Emperor of Austria, Apostolic King of Hungary and the King of the Czech lands...”—but also for the initials of the three “glorious” generals of the counter-revolution: Windisch-Grätz, Jelačić, Radetzky. The imperial and royal officers who

2012

1848

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2015

smothered the democratic revolution in blood carved “W. I. R.,” their generals’ initials, into the blades of their swords.

We Croats entered the fray at this point as the “faithful-unto-the-Emperor” (*kaisertreu*) vassals who, under the banner of Ban Josip Jelačić, joined the European counter-revolution in the decisive and merciless struggle, squashing everything implicit in so-called European democratic, i.e., “western,” values. And, as is well known, we prevailed. The democratic, republican spring glimpsed briefly by the people of Europe in 1848 was immediately transformed into a monarchist autumn and absolutist winter thanks to our modest contribution. In late October 1848, with the cannonade of Windisch-Grätz’s guns from the terrace of the Schwarzenberg palace, our predecessors—Croats and Serbs in harmony and unity under Jelačić’s command—stormed the barricades of the uprising in the center of Vienna. This was after they had rebuffed Kossuth’s troops at Schwechat, who shortly before had rushed to the aid of the Viennese revolutionaries. Along the way, our predecessors shot, slaughtered and, with the gusto of war, marauded, until finally they not only saved the emperor and the monarchy from republican wrath, but preserved the vassal yoke around their own necks. Today the belief is widely held that doing so was in our national interest. We may ask, however: are these identity neo-rightwingers who have stepped into the twenty-first century following in the footsteps of Windisch-Grätz, Jelačić and Radetzki also acting in the interests of Europe and the European identity to which Croats—as we’re still taught today by Croatian national ideology—have always belonged? In Jelačić’s style, for instance, when, entirely in keeping with Hus’s observation, “*O sancta simplicitas,*” they toss their little bundle of wood onto the bonfire on which burns the idea of democratic republicanism.

1989–1990 :
1947

Exactly a month before the Berlin wall came down, in early October 1989, the Croatian Social Liberal Alliance, the first organized initiative coming from the reawakened multiparty system in Croatia, convened on Zagreb’s Republic Square (still so-named then) for a public signing of a petition for return of the Ban Jelačić monument to the square. Twenty years later, one of the participants of the happening would describe the year of 1989 as the “second People’s Spring.”¹ He seemed to feel there was no contradiction in the fact that he had taken part in retrieving the monument from the junk heap of history and was thereby celebrating the butcher of that first People’s Spring in 1848—just as there was no problem for this newly minted political party of Croatian liberals to bring their historical and ideological nemesis out of the shadows onto the political stage of the freshly established democracy. But just before this party was erased altogether from the Croatian political scene by precisely the same nationalism they’d tried unsuccessfully to woo when bringing the monument

Translated from Croatian
by Ellen Elias-Bursać

back to the square, they succeeded in doing something else—they kept their silence even when Republic Square was, inevitably, renamed Ban Jelačić Square. The liberal citizenry respects the national tradition, even when they ought to be ashamed of it. Contrast this with the communists who took the monument to Ban Jelačić down in 1947 and renamed his square Republic Square, thereby acknowledging as their own not only the tradition of European revolutionary republicanism, but also the democratic political legacy of the bourgeois class. Believe it or not, only in the revolutionary communist movement did the bourgeois elites of the Yugoslav nations come into their own as a political subject of contemporary—we might even say contemporary “western”—history.

In the 1960 American movie, *The Alamo*, which evokes the 1836 battle of Texas republicans against the troops of the Mexican president, General Santa Anna, John Wayne both directs the film and plays Davy Crockett. In one scene he has a long monologue about the idea of the republic: “Republic. I like the sound of the word. It means people can live free, talk free, go or come, buy or sell, be drunk or sober, however they choose. Some words give you a feeling. ‘Republic’ is one of those words that makes me tight in the throat—the same tightness a man gets when his baby takes his first step or his first baby shaves and makes his first sound as a man. Some words can give you a feeling that makes your heart warm. ‘Republic’ is one of those words.

“The word “Republic” leaves the heart of the Croatian middle class cold. Unlike the heart of the Croatian and Yugoslav communists, which beat for the political ideals of historical citizenry and the “West.” And when this heart stopped beating, not only did the citizenry, as an historical subject, vanish from the scene, but the progressive charge, which created the “West” along the teleological horizon of contemporary history, vanished too. In this, however, there is nothing tragic. The heart of our current consumerist middle class, which owes its material existence to communist modernization, is not warmed by ideals, and especially not ideals of a better future. Its historical pulse, after all, can no longer be felt. And as far as the “West” is concerned, there is life after that illusion as well.

?

1836 : 1960

2021

[1] Ljubomir Antić, “Povratak Bana” [The Ban Returns], *Vijenac* 407.

History—Servant or Mistress?

Dubravka Stojanović

How long does an historical event last? What about a war? Does it actually begin with the first shot fired and end with the signing of the peace treaty? Is its duration “dictated” by historians who “assign” it the dates we find in encyclopedias and history textbooks to mark the beginning and the end of hostilities? Or is the duration of an event calculated and measured differently? Perhaps a war should be seen as beginning when the ideological buildup to hostilities starts, and as ending only when the memories of the war cease to stir powerful emotions and shape the present. All of these are key theoretical questions about the relationship between the present and the past, about historical periodization and chronology, but primarily about how a society approaches history. If Erik Hobsbaum could say that the 20th century was a brief one, that it didn’t last for the usual 100 years but only 78—from the first outbreak of worldwide conflict in 1914 to the unification of the continent in 1992—then we, too, can ask how long the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s have really lasted.

This year, 2021, is exactly 30 years since the “formal” outbreak of the Yugoslav wars. But did they really begin in 1991, or was the whole previous decade, from Tito’s death in 1980, an indivisible part of the buildup? As far as the end of the war is concerned, it “formally” ended in Croatia with the Oluja (Storm) military campaign in 1995. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended with the Dayton Peace Accords later that same year, while the Kosovo conflict ended with the NATO Pact intervention of 1999. More than 20 years have passed since then, indeed a quarter century! But all of us who live in this part of the world know that these wars are still ongoing in one form or another even today, and they continue to determine our lives—in fact they are increasingly present in our everyday lives. You might ask how such powerful negative emotions can be sustained for such a long time? How does one see to it that the fires that fuel the conflict burn on for decades?

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Belgrade, Yugoslavia,
May 31, 1992



The incendiary tinder, the surest way to keep the conflict blazing, is abuse of history. History has been the battlefield on which all of this began, on which the swords of the Yugoslav peoples first crossed—because Yugoslavia couldn't be dismantled without first bringing into question its historical foundations. The ideology of "brotherhood and unity" first had to be usurped. It was on the foundations laid by this ideology that Yugoslavia was rebuilt during World War II. The country had to be portrayed as a dungeon of the peoples, an artificial creation imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. There had to be created and then intensified a feeling of threat coming from the other parts of the country. To underscore this, each of the communities had to see itself as having fared the worst within Yugoslavia: territorial concessions.

There was a need to create and then exacerbate the feeling that the other Yugoslav peoples were a threat. For this purpose, World War II and the monstrous crimes that the various Yugoslav peoples committed against each other under the cloak of the wartime occupation served as the handiest "memory jog." Hence mass graves from World War II were exhumed in the 1980s with the goal of shocking, provoking distrust, inflaming passions, and especially stoking fear that the crimes perpetrated against them could happen again. Fingers were pointed at neighboring republics, not so they'd face up to the crimes committed in the spirit of preventing such crimes from happening again, but the very opposite—so that crimes like these would again become psychologically possible.

And for the crimes to become psychologically possible, each of these peoples had to envision themselves as both the finest of heroes and the most wretched of victims. A contradiction? Not at all. Everything is fair game in myth. Pushing a heroic narrative boosts self-awareness with the story of how "we have won every war," and this augurs future victories; the statement "we have never waged wars of conquest" reinforces the idea that future wars will also be morally defensible. However not even this was enough. Heroes are beyond our reach. While they are models and ideals, they exist on another plane and ordinary people find identification with them difficult. This is why the role of victim is far more productive for propaganda. Victimhood attracts empathy, it homogenizes a community, enhances cohesion, engenders a feeling of superiority. Victims cannot be murderers. They are a priori forgiven. Victimhood cannot be questioned, it is both dogma and untouchable myth—the foundation of every authoritarian order. This is why victimhood manipulation serves as the conceptual basis for political manipulation.

The history boom that paved the way for war in Yugoslavia began at the very beginning of the 1980s. Many agents of memory joined the effort. The revision of history in Serbia was first begun by the Church. Then literature contributed with the novels of Dobrica Ćosić (*Vreme smrti* 1972/*This Land, This Time* 1978) and Vuk Drašković (*Nož* 1982/*Knife* 2000), authors who were the first to inaugurate a revisionist rethinking of the two world wars. Then came theater. The play *Kolubarska bitka* (The Battle of Kolubara, 1983), based on a novel by Dobrica Ćosić, goes straight to the crux of the matter—it posits World War I as the pivotal event of the new culture of memory, the ideal amalgam of a heroic and self-victimizing narrative. *Golubnjača*, a play published in 1982, broaches the question of genocide against Serbs in the wartime Independent State of Croatia—also fast becoming a foundational subject of revanchist politics. This wave reached its peak with the publication, in 1985, of the novel *Knjiga o Milutinu* (The Book of Milutin), which was published in an astonishing 17 printings in a single year. The novel tells the story of the suffering of Serbs in the 20th century, particularly at the hands of neighboring communities. In the mid-1980s, historiography joined the fray with "new insights," first redefining the relationship between the Chetniks and Partisans, and then introducing, in a growing number of articles about the Independent State of Croatia, the premise that there could be genocide again, so a preventive war was necessary in order to keep this from happening. All these were, of course, legitimate topics for consideration, but the goal of these scholars was not to publicize scholarly truth, but to dismantle Yugoslavia.

The war could now begin. Ethnic cleansing, massive crimes, camps, bombing, snipers, sieges all happened again. Genocide. They recurred not because these are uniquely Balkan specialties, nor because these peoples are inherently violent, and even less because history is destiny that returns in cycles. All these are justifications used to avoid responsibility. This happened again because the predetermined goal of war necessarily led to these sorts of conflicts, and also because the instrumentalization of the past provided amnesty for the most cruel of crimes. And then the wars ended. But the elites weren't ready to relinquish the wars' emotive and political potential. The mental prolongation of a war is a lucrative affair. The constant restoking of the war narrative has allowed the war-waging elites, after only brief setbacks, to stay in power until today in all the countries that emerged from the dismantling of Yugoslavia. For 30 years. You may well ask: how could this be possible? It has been possible because the elites did not just take our societies and countries hostage, but our pasts as well. They skillfully kept their steely grip on the interpretation of history even after the war. From the battlefields, the wars moved

into the realm of history, using new narratives with which they continued to mesmerize the masses. Fresher, more traumatic and recent examples have been added from the wars of the 1990s in addition to the tales—well-used yet never used-up—of the sorry fate of one’s own people during the world wars or under Yugoslav oppression. For the newly created states, these new stories have been incorporated in the founding myth. The Ten-Day War in Slovenia has become the source of a heroic narrative. The Homeland War in Croatia and the status of war veterans are untouchable and protected by the constitution and parliamentary declarations that ban any attempt at reassessment. Bosnia and Herzegovina has deepened its ethnic divisions—ensconced by the Dayton Peace Accords—with three concurrent and utterly contradictory interpretations of the wars of the 1990s, and these successfully prevent the state from functioning. Montenegro has issued apologies, but it has also covered up many bloody wartime episodes. Until recently, Serbia pretended it played no part whatsoever in the wars, just as the Milošević regime claimed. Vučić has, however, discovered that the traumatic events of the 1990s wars could provide new impetus for mobilization and, of course, an additional boost to his power. Serbia has hastily cobbled together a new narrative, focused entirely on two events: Operation *Oluja* and the NATO Pact bombing, as if nothing had happened before them. The ways in which the state now commemorates these dates clearly indicate the formation of a new martyr identity, according to which the Serbs are the greatest victims of the Yugoslav wars. Not only have there been promises of governmental financial support for movies and television series to inculcate among the masses a desirable interpretation of these events, but a speedy campaign is presently underway to introduce one single, rubber-stamped textbook for history and geography, so school students are given the “real truth,” or so they claim. Each year the key dates become triggers for new negative emotions, the promotion of conflicts with the neighboring countries and a prolongation of war by other means.

History is also used in quite specific instances. For instance, Montenegro and Serbia recently reached a nadir in their diplomatic relations; their ambassadors were declared *personae non gratae* after a divergence in their interpretations of decisions taken at the Montenegrin assembly of 1918! At almost the same moment, Bulgaria obstructed the European integration of Northern Macedonia, demanding that the country issue statements on certain historical events and personalities and “concede” that one of their great national heroes, Goce Delčev, is, in fact, Bulgarian. These are the most current examples of how history has become a handy tool for daily politics, for achieving immediate political goals.

Translated from Serbian
by Ellen Elias-Bursać

But why stoke conflicts at all? The naïve might think that war is something nobody wants, that it is in nobody’s interest, that everyone does everything they can to keep a war from starting and all they can to bring it to an end as soon as possible. The Yugoslav experience has shown how erroneous this thinking is. War is in the interest of many. When a country is in disarray, absolute power can be imposed and increased, democratic processes can be halted, development blocked. This promises a permanent condition of insecurity in which a “strong hand” offers quick solutions. The anticipation of war, the war itself, and its mental prolongation provide excuses for blocking the introduction of essential political changes, and this is in the most profound interest of various elites because only then can they, unhindered, grab all power.

The political conflicts of the past have shown themselves to be trusty allies in this effort. Control over past conflicts has been shown to be the best way to maintain control over society. It is easier to work with the past and manipulate it than to offer a program for the future. Hence the past is offered up as a surrogate for the present and future, as a solution when there is nothing else to offer. It simulates a dynamic; it imitates life—because we can no longer extricate ourselves from the past, and perhaps we’d rather not. This is why the question must be raised of whether life mired in the past has permanently kept us from seeing the problems of the present and finding ways to address them. Is history only a servant aiding the authorities and keeping the present as is, or will it ultimately become our mistress?

DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ

Dubravka Stojanović is a professor of history at the University of Belgrade. Vice-president of the History Education Committee, she also organized the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in South Eastern Europe and served as an expert for the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights on issues of history, memory and misuses of history in education. Stojanović has received a number of distinguished awards in Serbia, including the Peace Prize in 2011 from the Belgrade Center for Peace and Democracy for her engagement in the reconciliation process through the teaching of history in South East Europe, and she received the French decoration *Chevalier de l'Ordre national du mérite*.

From “Fantasy” to Reality

Aryeh Neier

In the fall of 1993, a few weeks after taking up my duties as the newly appointed President of the Open Society Institute, I visited Sarajevo. It was my third visit to the besieged city that year. The war in Bosnia had been underway since spring the previous year. Conditions were bleak. There were shortages of food and drinking water. Many trees had been cut down for firewood. The electric power supply was intermittent. Residents of the city’s tall apartment buildings frequently had to climb many flights of stairs, often carrying plastic bottles with water they had obtained from the city’s old wells, to reach their homes. Worst of all was the constant shelling and sniping from the surrounding hills that by then had maimed and killed thousands of the city’s residents.

Zdravko Grebo, Professor of Law at Sarajevo’s University and Chair of the Open Society Foundation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, had arranged for me to speak at the Law School. I was to discuss the recent decision of the United Nations Security Council to establish an International Criminal Tribunal to prosecute and punish those from all sides who were committing war crimes in Bosnia and elsewhere in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. It was the first such tribunal under international sponsorship since those at Nuremberg and Tokyo immediately following World War II. In my previous position as Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, I had issued a public call to establish such a tribunal and helped to obtain its adoption by the Security Council.

Though the Security Council resolution included a detailed plan for the operation of the tribunal, and had been adopted unanimously in May 1993, not much had happened in the roughly five months that had elapsed before my talk in Sarajevo. Most important, a chief prosecutor for the tribunal had not been chosen. Due largely to obstruction by Russia, no one would be chosen to fill this crucial post for another nine months. Moreover, the new tribunal would have no enforcement mechanism to enable it to get custody of those

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monument,
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Bosnia and Herzegovina,
July 11, 2020



who would be indicted for committing war crimes. Some governments supported establishment of the tribunal as a way to pretend they were doing something about war crimes in Bosnia and Croatia that aroused international outrage.

It was a substitute for sending in troops to put an end to the conflict. In my talk at Sarajevo University, I discussed the crimes that would be subject to the Tribunal's jurisdiction, the procedures it would follow and the punishments that would be handed down. While the members of my audience were polite, I could see that they thought I was fantasizing. The Bosnian Serb forces besieging Sarajevo under the leadership of Radovan Karadžić and General Ratko Mladić, cutting off its food supply, water and utilities, and wounding and killing many of its citizens, were winning the war. Those who knew the history of Nuremberg and Tokyo were well aware that those tribunals succeeded because the Germans and Japanese had surrendered. The Allied forces that defeated them in World War II had custody of the principal war criminals. The situation in the former Yugoslavia was entirely different. Many of those who listened to my talk probably thought that the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia was a bad joke. It was not only the residents of Sarajevo who were skeptical of the new tribunal. The great majority of those in other countries who followed developments in the former Yugoslavia also doubted that it would amount to anything.

As the war in Bosnia continued, with ongoing reports in the international media of atrocities, nothing seemed to be happening at the tribunal. For a substantial period, the only person over whom the tribunal obtained custody was a low level former guard at one of the camps that the Bosnian Serbs operated where many detainees were tortured and often killed. To evade being drafted into the Bosnian Serb army, Duško Tadić had fled the territory and had gone to Munich. There, he was recognized on the streets by former detainees of the Omarska Camp where he had been employed, and where he had participated in the conduct of abuses. The German authorities arrested him and turned him over to the tribunal where he was eventually tried, convicted and sentenced to a long prison term. I recall talking about the Tadić case with a prominent American diplomat who scoffed that the only thing that the tribunal had to show for itself was that it had put a "Corporal" on trial. In July 1994, fourteen months after the Security Council established the Tribunal, it finally got a chief prosecutor. The appointee was a South African Judge, Richard Goldstone, with a stellar international reputation. He had found ways during the apartheid years to challenge the country's repressive system by rulings that upheld principles of equal justice. When violence erupted during

the transition from apartheid to a democratic system, he had headed an investigative commission that demonstrated that the South African police were covertly fomenting violence between different groups of the country's black inhabitants in order to discredit the emergence of a multiracial democracy. I had gotten to know Goldstone during this period and had formed a very high regard for him. When the transition finally took place in May 1994 with the election of Nelson Mandela as South Africa's President, Mandela had appointed Richard Goldstone to the country's Supreme Court.

Goldstone's association with Mandela was what made it possible for the Security Council to appoint him to serve as the Tribunal's chief prosecutor. The old Soviet Union had been eager to portray itself as the friend of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Accordingly, Russia did not want to antagonize Mandela, who gave Goldstone a leave from his appointment to the South African Supreme Court to take up his post at the Yugoslav tribunal. While Russia had blocked others who had been considered for the post as chief prosecutor. It did not obstruct the appointment of Goldstone.

Goldstone's appointment as Chief Prosecutor revived hopes for the Tribunal. It was not only his reputation. He had a capacity to project determination and bulldog tenacity that made some who were skeptical of the Tribunal begin to take it seriously. Another factor was that he altered the strategy of the Office of the Prosecutor. Before Goldstone's arrival in The Hague, the prosecutors recruited to staff the Tribunal had proceeded as if they were conducting trials of criminal gangs or racketeers. They had focused on securing indictments of low level members of those gangs on the theory that if they obtained custody of those indictees they would get them to provide evidence against their superiors in exchange for reduced charges or more lenient sentences. Charges against more senior figures would be bolstered by evidence provided by defendants engaged in a form of plea bargaining.

Such a strategy may be appropriate in many ordinary criminal cases. Yet it was counterproductive so far as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was concerned. It reinforced the view based on the ICTY's custody of Duško Tadić that, at most, it would deal with some of the small fry of the wars in the former Yugoslavia. A serious concern was whether the United Nations would maintain the funding for the ICTY. Also, some diplomats feared that the indictments issued by the ICTY might complicate the process of negotiating a peace settlement to end the conflict in Bosnia. Killing the Tribunal to save money and make it easier to end the war was an option that had significant support.



Richard Goldstone turned the attention of the Office of the Prosecutor to top-ranking leaders of the parties to the conflict, including Karadžić and General Mladić. It took him some time to gather the evidence needed to bring an indictment. When they were indicted in July 1995, it caused a sensation. Though the Office of the Prosecutor did not know it at the time, the issuance of the indictment coincided with the greatest crime of the war, the massacre of about 8,000 Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica. Within a few weeks, however, that crime had been exposed. Goldstone's response included the separate indictment of Karadžić and Mladić for the genocidal slaughter at Srebrenica. The indictments of Karadžić and Mladić had an important unanticipated consequence. Shortly after the second set of indictments, the parties to the conflict in Bosnia gathered at Dayton, Ohio for peace negotiations. Radovan Karadžić had been expected to go to Dayton to represent the Bosnian Serbs. But the indictments made it dangerous for him to attend. He could have been arrested and turned over to the Tribunal. Accordingly, he did not attend. Instead, Slobodan Milošević, who had not yet been indicted, represented the Bosnian Serbs as well as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Some observers believe that this facilitated the achievement of a peace accord, as Milošević proved somewhat more tractable in the negotiations than Karadžić.

As the war in Bosnia ended following the Dayton Peace Agreement in December 1995, the Tribunal still had not made progress in obtaining custody of defendants it had indicted. Richard Goldstone had left The Hague and was succeeded by a Canadian Judge, Louise Arbour. NATO troops occupied Bosnia to enforce the Peace Agreement. They distributed flyers with photos of indicted war criminals, but arrests were not made. There were reports the NATO troops deliberately avoided making arrests because they were concerned about reprisals. One arrest was made in Eastern Slavonia because the UN Administrator of the region, General Jacques Klein (a French born American military man), was intent on cooperating with the Tribunal.

The situation changed when Tony Blair became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 1997. Blair appointed Robin Cook as his Foreign Secretary. Cook was a strong proponent of human rights and under his influence, the practice of British troops serving with NATO in Bosnia underwent a radical shift. Instead of letting those indicted by the Tribunal go unmolested, British troops began seeking those who the prosecutors for the ICTY had designated as war criminals and turning them over to the Tribunal. Though there had been predictions that sympathizers with those who had been indicted would engage in reprisals against those carrying out arrests, reprisals did not materialize.

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The success of the British in carrying out arrests had an impact on other NATO forces in Bosnia. American troops also conducted arrests. Though there had been suspicions that French troops were ignoring opportunities because of a secret deal with the Milošević government, they also made a couple of arrests. With a significant number of those indicted in custody, many who had not previously taken the ICTY seriously began to see it in a different light.

In February 1998, war broke out in another part of the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo. It was quickly marked by war crimes. Elements of a guerrilla force, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), conducted ambushes of Yugoslav troops. The Yugoslav Army responded by carrying out small-scale massacres in a number of villages that were suspected of harboring the guerrillas. Over the next 13 months, more than 100 villages were destroyed. Those killed often included civilians who had not themselves participated in the ambushes. I attempted to persuade the Prosecutor, Judge Louise Arbour, to bring indictments against those responsible for the killings of civilians. She declined to do so because she said that she could not identify the leadership of the KLA and, therefore, could not hold them responsible for war crimes they had committed. I tried to persuade her that both sides in the conflict had an independent responsibility to comply with the laws of war. She should not ignore war crimes that could be prosecuted because she could not proceed with other prosecutions. To no avail.

In March 1999, NATO intervened in the war in Kosovo against the forces of the Yugoslav government. By then, Judge Arbour had said that she had acquired the information to go forward with prosecutions of both sides. In May 1999, she indicted Slobodan Milošević, citing the largest of the village massacres as one of the crimes for which he was responsible. The timing of the indictment of Milošević was unfortunate. NATO was bombing Serbia and killing civilians in Serbia as part of its campaign against the Yugoslav military's actions in Kosovo. The indictment of Milošević at that moment conveyed the impression to many in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that the ICTY was acting as an arm of NATO.

Throughout the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the work of nongovernmental organizations played a crucial role in documenting the war crimes on which indictments were based. Although several organizations did outstanding work, none was more important than the Belgrade-based Humanitarian Law Center, founded and directed by Nataša Kandić. She took substantial risks in going to conflict areas to gather information and in publicizing her findings. If the story of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia has a hero, it is Nataša Kandić.

Eventually, The ICTY obtained custody of Milošević who died before his trial was completed. Indeed, over time, the ICTY was able to apprehend all those it indicted from all sides in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia who did not die before they were apprehended. Though the prosecutors for the ICTY, and the judges, made some mistakes along the way that sullied its reputation, on the whole the Tribunal must be considered a success. In indicting those from all parties to the conflicts in the region for the crimes they had committed, it demonstrated its impartiality. Its achievement in securing custody of its indictees ultimately reflected not only the cooperation of external forces such as NATO but the recognition by the governments in the region that it was in their interest to cooperate with the Tribunal. The trials it conducted were fair. The jurisprudence of the Tribunal included some significant advances in international criminal law. And the work of the Tribunal inspired the creation of a number of other bodies, including the International Criminal Court, that have advanced accountability for war crimes worldwide.

The most disappointing feature of the ICTY is that its work has not created a more widespread sense of responsibility in the region for the crimes that were committed during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. Many Serbs continue to perceive themselves as the victims in the conflict and even tend to dismiss reports of large scale killing in Srebrenica as a fabrication. To an extent, errors of judgment by personnel of the Tribunal, such as the indictment of Slobodan Milošević at a moment when it appeared the Tribunal was collaborating with NATO, are to blame. Yet it may be that in the long term, the work of the Tribunal will play a different role in thinking in the region.

In the years following World War II and the Nuremberg trials, most Germans seem not to have felt a great sense of responsibility for the crimes that were proven at Nuremberg. It was not until twenty or thirty years after World War II that large numbers of Germans began to acquire such a sense of responsibility. Today, more than three quarters of a century after the end of World War II, a sense of responsibility for Nazi crimes is pervasive in Germany and has a large impact on both domestic and international public policy. Nuremberg played an important part because the trials there provided irrefutable evidence of war crimes. The same may ultimately be a consequence of the trials conducted by the ICTY.

ARYEH NEIER

Aryeh Neier is president emeritus of the Open Society Foundations. Neier served as Open Society's first president from 1993 to 2012. Prior to this, he was the cofounder and executive director of Human Rights Watch. Neier also worked for American Civil Liberties Union and was national executive director from 1970 to 1978. He has taught at New York University School of Law, Georgetown University Law School, the University of Siena, and Science Po's Paris School of International Affairs.

Neier has published articles in the *New York Review of Books*, the *New Republic*, the *New York Times Magazine*, the *New York Times Book Review*, *Dissent*, and *Foreign Policy*. He was a columnist for the *Nation*, has written op-eds for newspapers across the world, chapters for over 20 books, and has authored seven. A revised edition of his book, *The International Human Rights Movement: A History*, was published in 2020.



A Slow Journey

Sonja Licht

Ivan Krastev ends the foreword to his disquisition on trust, *In Mistrust We Trust: Can Democracy Survive When We Don't Trust Our Leaders?*, with the words of Samuel Johnson, saying that we're "happier to be sometimes cheated than not to trust."¹

The question of a lack of trust in state institutions and politicians has come up so often during the COVID-19 epidemic—possibly more often than ever before. We have been living with the problem of mistrust of the political elite for many years, of course. This is one of the central problems raised when analyzing the crisis of liberal democracy. Is this loss of trust a cause or an effect of the crisis? Is the world changing too fast? Has the neoliberal economic paradigm based on globalization and the accelerated pace of technological development made people feel more and more alienated and helpless? Has the fact that we are more connected and smothered in information than ever before, along with the explosion of fake news and conspiracy theories, led to our inability to distinguish between truth and lies? Can trust be built and sustained if many people, perhaps most people, have lost hope: hope in justice, a more secure future, life without fear for oneself and future generations?

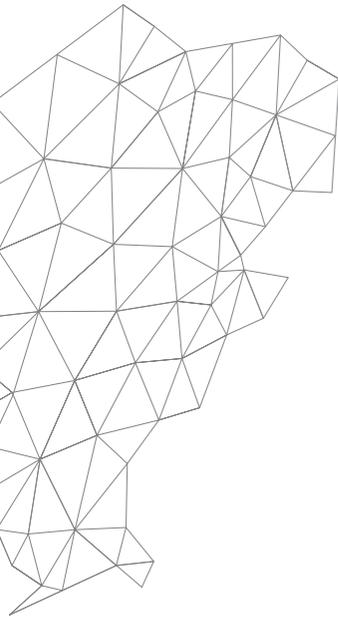
All of us who care about maintaining a viable democratic order must seek answers to these questions and work to prepare the world and our own societies for the challenges posed by the need for rapid and decisive action when handling climate change, the pivotal crisis of our times. For our region this is perhaps less dramatic than elsewhere on the planet, but climate change has already resulted in long-term detriment to the health of the population and the quality of life, and it is undermining basic human rights as well as the entirety of social development. As far as the future of liberal democracy is concerned, almost all the countries of the world have had to face their own lack of preparedness and vulnerability during the current pandemic; as well,

© Goranka Matić,
Jelena Šantić at the
inauguration of Slobodan
Milošević as President of
Federal Republic of
Yugoslavia, July 23, 1997

they are seeing that the fundamental legacies of democracy—power-sharing, the rule of law, social justice, freedom of speech—are not merely under threat but have already suffered serious setbacks. A sense of solidarity within the primary and immediate community is always, more or less, there, but at the state, international and global levels, this feeling is being fundamentally eroded by the selfish populist policies of the elite and by intrusive, often dangerously adversarial, geopolitical interests.

Many have rushed to conclude that democracy is less successful than autocracy at handling crises like this one. Autocracies must find it easier to adopt and implement radical measures such as lockdowns and total isolation of large urban centers and even of countries, but this brings us back to the question of trust. Clearly trust cannot be coerced. If radical measures are easier to impose where fear governs instead of responsibility, where the state rules by decree rather than by agreement, where the rule of muscle power overrides the rule of justice, one wonders how, in the future, we'll be able to deal with more serious challenges such as the worsening pollution of air, water, land, the destruction of forests, the rise in average temperatures, the preservation of an already seriously threatened biodiversity? How will we preserve the planet if not through our awareness of the necessity for collaboration and solidarity, but also through moving away from a consumer society? How will we persuade all people, or at least the vast majority, to engage in mastering the test here and now, without delay, on which the future of humankind relies, but also on which their future and the future of their families depends?

The questions multiply, yet answers are few—especially in regards to the challenges. The feeling of the helplessness of the individual when faced with such overwhelming tasks demanding their attention is one of the reasons people are giving up on taking part in public life. “I won't get involved in something I can't influence,” is becoming the mantra of many. They start complaining only when someone moves to control for profit the streams on which their local ecosystems depend, piping water to mini hydroelectric power plants, or when nuclear or chemical waste is dumped in their neighborhood, or when unregulated landfills begin taking over farmland. Apparently we have to start from the existential dangers threatening the everyday lives of people, with the hope that awareness of the direct link between the local and the global will push our own problems to spill over into the larger struggle for the general good. The question remains of whether we have enough time for such small steps. Do the existing political elites have the readiness and courage to serve as leaders in this struggle? They let public opinion guide them instead of daring to lead. And when they do lead, they often manipulate public opinion.

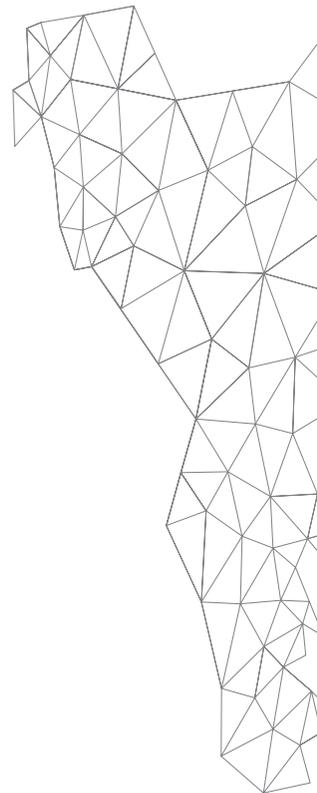


I believe the time has come for a responsible, courageous elite, those who care far more about addressing the genuine social problems than about election results. Only a political elite with vision, prudence and a focus on the general good—to whom the electorate, with their active involvement in public life, can cede part of their sovereignty in the elections (for a precisely defined term in office)—will be able to justify public trust and spearhead what is probably the most serious battle for the future of humanity and our civilization: our struggle to survive. I can already imagine the reactions of many: this is a naive utopia, it is impossible in this day and age. This means that in advance we're acquiescing to an egotistical, selfish approach to life and a world in which the stronger, wealthier and more powerful have the right to take for themselves everything or nearly everything. And at the same time we're accepting the fact of people being reduced to mere peons in the hands of the “all-powerful leaders,” who enslave not only institutions and countries, but society as a whole. If this is, indeed, the case, then the next pandemic will find us unprepared, and the average temperature by the end of this century will have risen by 4 °C or more. Most of our planet will have become uninhabitable by then, meaning that we are effectively consenting to dystopia.

In his analysis of the lessons from the year of COVID, Yuval Noah Harari says that humanity has shown how it is far from helpless; scientists have proven that fighting the uncontrolled forces of nature is possible, and many of the deaths and much of the suffering have been caused by bad political decisions. Unlike politicians, scientists have created an international alliance for the fight against the virus. “If Covid-19 nevertheless continues to spread in 2021 and kill millions, or if an even more deadly pandemic hits humankind in 2030, this will be neither a natural calamity nor a punishment from God. It will be a human failure and—more precisely—a political failure.” (“Lessons from a Year of Covid,” *Financial Times*, cited from ft.com, 26 February 2021.)

This text is not about offering an apocalyptic vision for the 21st century but serves as a reminder of our own potential for taking greater responsibility and grappling with changing our behavior. This is a reminder of moments from my own experience, which demonstrate that when we want to we can change history. The only prerequisite is for us to believe in ourselves and our power to come together and stand up to what seem to be unstoppable forces, while not behaving like individuals who are primarily focused on themselves.

First example: 9 March 1991, the first major opposition demonstrations were organized by the Serbian Renewal Movement, with Vuk Drašković at its head,



after the introduction of the multiparty political system. The central demand was the resignation of the director of Belgrade Radio and Television because of its systematic dissemination of lies and libel. The massive size of the demonstration far outstripped what the organizers themselves had been expecting and it grew into a protest against the regime that was associated with Slobodan Milošević. Drašković addressed the demonstrators from the terrace of the National Theater, as did quite a number of representatives of the Democratic Party and prominent public intellectuals. After a brutal police intervention, the deaths of a student and a member of the police force, and the arrest of Vuk Drašković, there were calls for the minister of the police to resign. That same evening Milošević brought tanks out onto the streets of Belgrade. This was the first hint of the wars to come in Yugoslavia; the formal, bloody collapse began 98 days later. Ignoring the threats, students gathered the next day on Terazije, the square at the very center of the capital city, and only one day later, Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia organized a counter-meeting barely a kilometer as the crow flies from the students' "velvet revolution." So we witnessed games being played with a clash evocative of civil war. Luckily, most of those attending the counter-meeting were not prepared to lock horns with the "hooligans" on Terazije. The students dispersed on March 14th, after Vuk Drašković was released from prison, resignations were tendered by the director of Radio and Television and the minister in charge of the police, and B92, the independent radio station, and Studio B of Belgrade Television were allowed back on the air. The March 9th demonstrations and the student demonstrations proved that there was a spirited defiance against autocratic rule and the repression of the free media, and this was adequate for the winning of partial victories, but inadequate to stop the people and processes leading to the war and to the thirtieth anniversary of the protest, journalist Momčilo Turudić reminds us that we never learned what Franjo Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević agreed to during their meeting on 25 March 1991 at Karađorđevo, "but from what transpired, we can easily guess. It would appear that they decided that they couldn't let the government be threatened by huge demonstrations like the one on March 9th, so it would be better to distract people with other concerns." (*Vreme*, 4 March 2021.)

Second example: On 19 November 1996, local elections were stolen in Serbia. After ten years of the Milošević regime, after wars, hyperinflation, pyramid schemes, after threats to basic civil rights, to the right to elect one's representative, the people came out onto the streets, first in the city of Niš, and then in most of the cities in Serbia. The protests grew into a movement under the leadership of *Zajedno* (Together), the opposition coalition, and were

joined by students who had joined the uprising. This movement lasted 117 days and "took over" the whole country. I remember when I was on my way by car one chilly winter evening from Belgrade to Valjevo. In the middle of nowhere, lit only by the headlights of the occasional passing car, a group of some thirty people were marching along the Ibar highway. They were on their way from one village to the next, feeling they were part of a larger movement that aspired to a different, more open Serbia. All over Serbia people marched. At moments the protest had a carnivalesque air, while at others it felt more like the beginning of a civil war. Especially on December 24th, when Slobodan Milošević and his party organized a counter-meeting of their followers, just as they had in March 1991, this time on Terazije, in the very heart of protest territory and the capital city. With very few police on the streets, there were frequent verbal and also physical confrontations that day. One of the counter-protesters shot a protester in the head. And there were vicious police attacks on the protesters over the next days and months. Four people lost their lives during the protests, and over 500 were injured. The key slogan of the uprising was "Belgrade is the world." "Between the cosmopolitan ambitions and bleak reality of Belgrade and Serbia at the time yawned a rift so vast and painful that it soon became the first great crack within the Slobodan Milošević regime." (Filip Ejodus, "Belgrade is the World," *Politika*, 11 September 2011.)

In early February 1997, Milošević ordered the Serbian government to pass a *lex specialis* by urgent procedure, which would recognize the results of local elections at the recommendation of an OSCE team led by Felipe Gonzales, Spain's long-standing prime minister. In over 30 cities, including Belgrade, the opposition then came into power. Zoran Đinđić became mayor of Belgrade. Only a few months later, the *Zajedno* coalition fell apart: on 21 September 1997, Vuk Drašković's Serbian Renewal Movement encouraged voters to vote in the election, while Zoran Đinđić's Democratic Party and Vesna Pešić's Civic Alliance (these being the trio who had led the civil protests), with another 14 opposition parties, boycotted it because of grave irregularities in the election process. In coalition with Vojislav Šešelj's Serbian Radical Party, Slobodan Milošević once again won his place in the government. And the political elite once again utterly betrayed the expectations and trust of their constituents.

Third example: Slobodan Milošević's defeat in the election for President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (only Serbia and Montenegro at the time) on September 24th and then after the "democratic revolution" on 5 October 2000.

Two laws adopted in 1998, which effectively abolished all autonomy at the universities and introduced open repression of the media, were the crowning achievements of Slobodan Milošević's autocratic rule. His wife Mirjana Marković was by then openly sharing power with him. She was head of the Yugoslav United Left party. In late March of that same year there was an outbreak of open hostilities in Kosovo that culminated with the bombing by NATO forces from March to June 1999. The opposition tried several times to unite; in 1998 the Alliance for Change was formed, and then it merged with the Democratic Opposition of Serbia in 2000. This was also when the Serbian Renewal Movement, initially the strongest party within the opposition, lost stature by aggravating the already serious difficulties faced by the opposition parties when they tried to take a joint stand. In April 1999, journalist Slavko Ćuruvija, one of the most vocal critics of Slobodan Milošević, was murdered and anti-regime demonstrations started in August, continuing with hardly any interruption. Tensions were on the rise throughout Serbia. Ivan Stambolić was murdered just a month before the elections of September 2000. He had been Slobodan Milošević's political "father," and may have been murdered out of fear that he might, at the last moment, step into the leading role in the opposition and pull it together behind him. The forces of the fractious opposition were, however, united by the *Otpor* (Resistance) student movement, which grew in mid-2000 to become a nation-wide resistance movement. The clenched fist of the movement and the slogan "He's finished" were seen all over the country. The *Otpor* activists made the opposition parties swear that they'd line up against Milošević; with the civil society organizations and the independent media, they created a climate which, on the eve of October 5th, made possible a country-wide general strike. The miners from Kolubara, who supplied the city of Belgrade and a large part of Serbia with electrical power, went on strike on September 29th. "All of what happened on October 5th revolved around Kolubara," said Miodrag Ranković, president of the Surface Miners' Union, on BBC News Serbian. When asked why he joined the strike, Ranković said, "Because Milošević destroyed our entire generation." (Slobodan Maričić, "October 5th, 20 Years Later: The Days When Serbia Stopped," BBC News Serbian, 29 September 2020). By October 5th, almost everyone, even several state institutions, had joined the general strike, and hundreds of thousands of people poured into Belgrade. A day later, Milošević was forced to concede to Vojislav Koštunica, the candidate for the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, who became the new President of Yugoslavia. After the December 2000 elections in Serbia, Zoran Đinđić became Serbia's Prime Minister.

Twenty years after October 5th there are still debates and disagreements over what that day meant and why an "October 6th" never dawned, meaning why there wasn't an appetite for Serbia to embrace democratic transition and membership in the European Union. To return, once more, to Miodrag Ranković, the workers had paid the greatest price for the "questionable privatizations" (as the European Commission has referred to them in their annual reports), the sale of social and state property for a pittance, destruction of the industrial plants that had made it intact through the 1990s. Ranković says that he quickly saw things were not proceeding as they should, that "Đinđić and Koštunica did not share the same political vision... One was pulling westward while the other pulled to the east... We all expected that our life would be better and saw that this was happening slowly, very slowly; but had October 5th never happened that would be a terrible shame." Although everybody is disappointed with October 5th, Ranković tells the BBC journalist, it did bring with it something sorely needed—a peaceful transition of power.

Why was the path to a democratic transformation and European perspective for Serbia and most of the Balkan countries—the ones called the Western Balkans—so slow? After the fall of the Berlin Wall, while the post-socialist countries were going through rapid changes, Yugoslavia was falling to pieces. Even the path taken by the other countries was not without nationalistic, anti-Semitic and anti-Gypsyist attacks, such as Vladimir Mečiar in Slovakia, István Csurka in Hungary, Vadim Tudor in Romania. The tragedy of Yugoslavia, toiling and suffocating in wartime destruction, meant that only with the beginning of the new millennium could it breathe more freely, when a democratic, European perspective too hold for the first time all across the Western Balkans. This was confirmed in the autumn of 2003 by the summit of the European Union in Thessaloniki, when the highest representatives of the member countries announced that the future of the countries of the Western Balkans was with them. This is when enthusiasm for joining the EU was at its highest in all the countries of the region, when it appeared to be merely a question of time before the entire Balkans would be an integral part of the democratic European community. There was also a growing conviction that having found a common denominator and shared goal, these societies would overcome their difficult past legacy and muster the strength necessary to collaborate in building a political culture and institutions to secure the sustainable democratic development of each country individually and of the region as a whole.

But the particular interests of the political elites fueled their readiness to stir up nationalistic hatreds and a sense of the threat coming from "others" in

order to hide their own incompetence or greed for power behind their aspirations for higher goals. The process of privatization was rash and non-transparent (predatory). This resulted in surging corruption and a lack of broad and open dialogue within the societies; privatization was initiated before the necessary institutions had been formed and the rule of law enforced. All this eroded people's trust—both in politicians and in the success of the democratic transition. This condition was then aggravated by the major financial crisis of 2008–2009, imported from the center of neoliberal capitalism, which further weakened the social cohesion necessary for the survival of hope and faith in change. Loss of faith in the certainty of a European outcome was heightened by the lack of readiness among the European partners to support the courageous and decisive moves of individual politicians at pivotal moments, as was the case when Đinđić hoped to accelerate the resolution of the Serbia-Kosovo conflict, or when approval was given to begin North Macedonia's EU accession negotiations in October 2019 after an agreement had been reached with Greece following the decades-long deadlock over the country's name.

All these processes and events motivated people to leave the region. While there was talk, 10 years ago, of a brain drain, the intensity of emigration in the pre-pandemic years became such that it was deemed more and more often a "tsunami," particularly in terms of the leaving of medical professionals, but also of all those others for whom there was demand in the European Union and elsewhere. This is why Remzi Lani, well-versed in the situation in his native Albania but also in the Western Balkans, says: "In the Balkans the transition is over.... We transitioned from repressive to depressive regimes." (Ivan Krastev, "Putin's Next Playground or the EU's Last Moral Playground," *The New York Times*, 28 January 2019.)

What can we expect once the pandemic ends? Will the crisis inspire people to act in the hilly Balkans, to battle against frustration and depression and for their future and that of their children? Or will the accelerated emptying of the region continue, which may pose a serious political problem but also a security threat for the European Union?

In closing I have a personal story: Professor Mary Kaldor asked me to speak in Belgrade to a group of her students who had been traveling with her through the region. They wanted me to talk with them about the political situation. I told them, among other things, that apathy was rampant and no changes could be expected any time soon. The conversation took place in the early afternoon of 17 November 1996. What I had said was proven wrong a few hours

Translated from Serbian
by Ellen Elias-Bursać

later, after the polling places closed, as Terazije filled with people who were marching in a spontaneous protest against the stealing of local elections. I promised myself then that never again would I pass judgment on what might happen in politics and when it might happen. But I never lost my faith in people, that they'll find the strength in themselves, despite stumbles and deadlocks, to fight for the essential values on which the future of our civilization depends. This is why I am ending with a quote from an interview with Ivan Vejvoda: "Threatened democracy and the struggle against those who threaten it depends on the activities of the citizens. In the darkest times in Europe, during Fascism and Nazism, there were those who fought for freedom, even when the situation seemed desperate and hopeless. A sense of a way forward, the use of the right to vote in elections, won sometimes through bloody, historic, battles on the streets, is key for the functioning of democracy." ("The Temptation of Democracy and the Pandemic: The People's Mistrust Will Bring Down the Apostles of Populism," *Novi magazin*, 29 November 2020).

[1] I am proud to say that the BFPE (The Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence) marked its tenth anniversary by publishing this book in a Serbian translation, in a collaboration with CLIIO publishers. This was the first edition to appear in print: *S verom u nepoverenje – Može li demokratija da opstane kada ne verujemo svojim liderima*, translated by Jelena Kosovac, Clio, Belgrade: 2013.

SONJA LICHT

Sonja Licht is president of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE) with its focus on the democratic transformation and European integration of Serbia and the greater Balkans, and on organizing the Belgrade Security Forum. Part of the Yugoslav dissident movement from the late 1960s, Licht served from 1991 to 1995 as co-chair of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly and from 1991 to 2003 as CEO of the Open Society Fund in Yugoslavia (later Serbia). She has been honored with a number of awards, including the Pro Merit Medal of the Council of Europe, the Star of Italian Solidarity, the French Legion of Honor and the Order of Merit of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany.

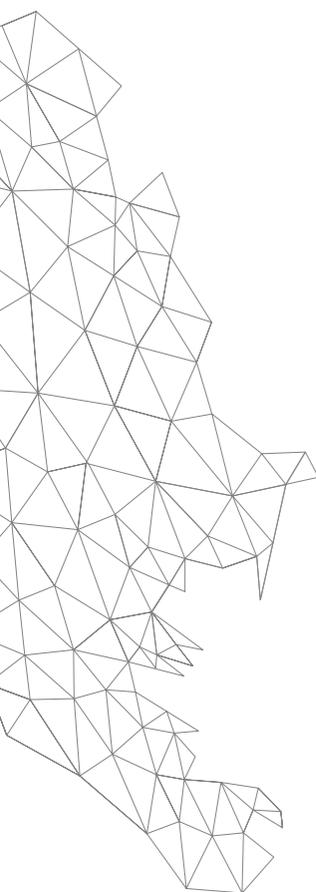
Waiting for Democracy

Vesna Pusić

At some point in the 1960s, we discovered our Bulgarian relatives. This was nothing out of the ordinary for our family, typical of the emerging middle class in Central and Eastern Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The first trained doctors, professors, engineers, officers who earned degrees from universities and vocational schools traversed the Monarchy and surrounding areas in pursuit of employment, military service, love, or simply adventure and new experiences. The collapse of the Monarchy in 1918 found them scattered everywhere from Austria to Bulgaria. Some were brought down by malaria in the Macedonian lands at the close of World War I, several others vanished in Galicia, but most of them ended up living somewhere within their first "European Union"—the Austrian monarchy. This is why no one was surprised when relatives with unusual names suddenly appeared, wearing, for instance, a brooch that was nearly identical to one my grandmother wore, or having physical features resembling those of our immediate family. Older family members knew all about them, of course, though they may not have met in person. But for us, children, these encounters were always a mixture of the exotic and the intimate and a chance for us to hear stories about how our grandmother's grandfather had come from Poland with a family of twelve children, and how somehow through them we kept a finger dipped in the ocean that was our part of Europe. Those were different times and the Bulgarian relatives couldn't even send letters to us in Yugoslavia for many years after World War II, let alone travel to visit us in Zagreb. But in the late 1960s or early 1970s, Penčo and Marie appeared with their three children, all close to me in age. They spoke Bulgarian, Russian and a little French, while my brother and I spoke not a word of any of these. But the relative similarity among the Slavic languages made it possible for us to communicate in Croatian-Bulgarian-Russian; with gestures, pantomime, and drawing we tried to tell each other about ourselves and our lives. I didn't know much

© Pavo Urban, Shelling of Dubrovnik, Dubrovnik, Croatia, November 1991





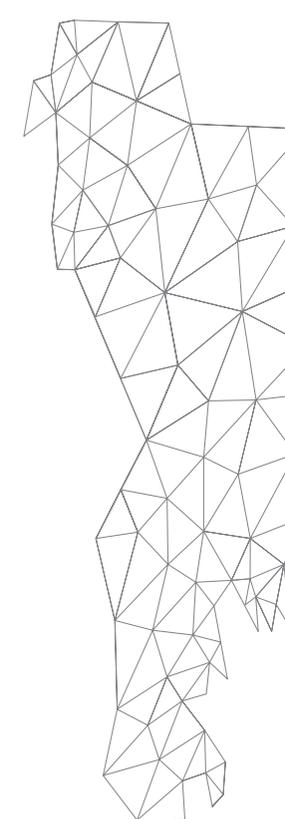
about Bulgaria, except that the regime was quite Stalinist and obtaining exit visas for travel, even to Yugoslavia, was very difficult, while travel to Western Europe or the United States was nearly impossible. We found some things difficult to grasp due to the language barriers, but due even more to the vast differences in degrees of personal freedom and the way the government operated. My cousin, Mizi, for instance, was already anxious at age 16 about whether she'd be able to enroll in a university, though she was an excellent high-school student and a true nerd. But her father was a doctor and he was not a member of the Party, and both of these at the time in Bulgaria were potential complications for her access to the university. This seemed very strange to me, but I understood that the main difference between us was in the degree of freedom, the possibility of deciding about your life, and, especially, freedom of movement. This inspired me and my friends to tell her and her brothers that we could go to Graz or Trieste whenever we felt like it; sometimes we went farther into Europe with our parents, and even to other continents. Each of us had a passport and we could travel wherever and whenever we wanted. The ultimate moment of our boast was when we claimed that we could hop into our car right then, drive to the Italian border at Sežana, circle back and forth across the border between Italy and Yugoslavia, and nobody would care. This was a slight exaggeration; the guards on both sides of the border would probably have sent us packing summarily, but we made our point about our right to freedom. We didn't tell our cousins this to gloat, but to express how proud we were of our freedom. Since Yugoslavia was not Sweden or the Netherlands—where every teenager our age took such things for granted—we knew, either from our own experience or from hearing stories, that things could be different, and this made us treasure our freedom all the more. I doubt we could have articulated it at the time, but at some level we felt that this was crucial for our self-esteem. Even if limited, our personal autonomy, regarding government, served as a germ for our self-esteem, our attitude, and our future civic self-awareness.

Twenty years later, as individuals and as a society, we would be faced with an entirely new situation, in which this question of civic self-awareness and the space of personal autonomy would again become central and perhaps decisive in our survival and evolution as a society.

In the 1980s we managed as if we had no state apparatus. In his book *Jugoslavija, država koja je odumrla* (*Yugoslavia: A State that Withered Away*), Dejan Jović says that one of the main reasons for the collapse of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s was the continuous decentralization of the function of the government—which was how the ideologue, Edvard Kardelj, strove to solve all

problems. Decentralization, in my opinion, could have been as much a foundation for democratization as it was for collapse. But the two main forces for integrating the Yugoslav state—Josip Broz Tito and the Yugoslav Army—vanished in the 1980s. Tito died in 1980, and Slobodan Milošević, a Serbian politician and new leader, used the second half of the 1980s to turn the already crumbling Yugoslav Army into his own fighting force.

Meanwhile, Yugoslavia lost a whole generation of political leaders. During the political thaw of the 1960s, a new generation of politicians had risen to power within the party organizations in each republic. Although they formally all belonged to one and the same political organization, the gap between them and the politicians of the older generation was often deeper and more significant than the gap between members of different political parties would have been. Unlike the older generation, the newcomers were too young to have rooted their political legitimacy in having played a prominent role in the struggle for national liberation during World War II. Even if they weren't candidates in a multiparty election, they still had to work their way through to the leading positions within their own party, and to do this they needed fresh political platforms—a new source, in other words, of legitimacy. They found this in harkening to the “voice of the people” in their move to formulate policies that would offer answers to the real-life problems and interests of their constituencies. This was not yet an open call for democracy, but it had that ring. However, after much vacillation among the older generation, especially from Tito, these new politicians did not survive politically. They were all replaced and ejected from political life in the early 1970s. That is why we, in ex-Yugoslavia, came into the 1980s with no political leaders: most of the party and government functionaries had been negatively selected—they were intensely focusing on themselves, rotating in collective presidencies, and generally had no idea what to do with the country. This was not a political elite capable of spearheading the democratic transition sweeping through Eastern Europe, nor could they contemplate future membership in the European Community, as the EU was then called. Those who were more honest and committed to preserving institutions did not have the capacity to lead the country in new directions. The others squabbled among themselves over power and tended to endorse nationalist revisionism. This de facto absence of government from everyday life freed up a broad space within society. The *Novi val* (New Wave) in pop and rock music and the *Novi kvadrat* (New Square) in comic strips and illustration were media that were no longer closely monitored by the government; the theater, film, feminist groups, counter culture, and underground culture—in other words what we, in the late 1980s, had begun to call civil so-

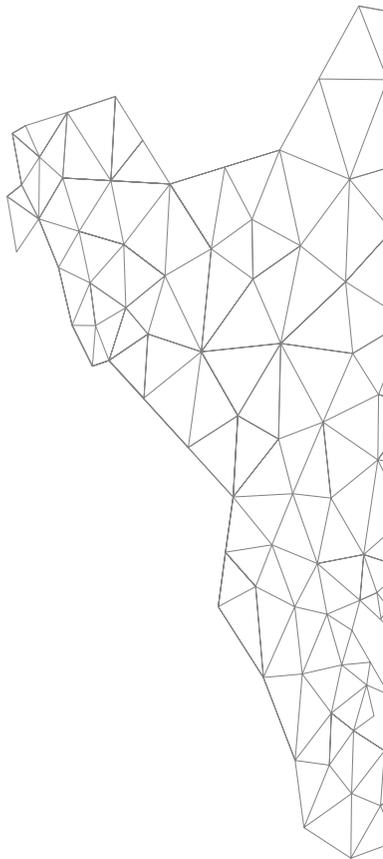
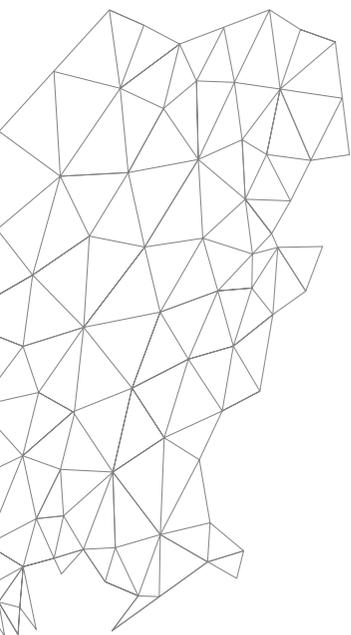


ciety—enjoyed a rich and intense life. While the government was increasingly weak and marginalized, society was growing in strength and self-confidence. At the time we were convinced that all our problems and difficulties would be resolved by democracy. The growing role of society, which expanded the space of freedom, emboldened us further. There were those who were already cautiously warning that democracy with no democratic civil culture, no democratic institutions, and no democratic traditions would not easily take hold. They said that a multiparty system could devolve into nationalistic clashes, the free market into a mobster economy, and independent media into cheap tabloids. And even worse, they warned that within civil society itself, movements might appear that would espouse discrimination, hatred, and limits to the rights of individual groups, hence: totalitarianism from below. But these voices were feeble in comparison to the enthusiasm and delight with which most of us thought about a future democracy.

Reality showed itself, of course, to be something quite different and far more cruel. Immediately after the first multiparty elections in Croatia and Slovenia in 1990, the war, or rather wars, of ex-Yugoslavia broke out and lasted for the next ten years, moving from northwest to southeast. The first multiparty elections already indicated that building a democracy would not be simple. The new party that came into power in the multiparty elections in Croatia—the Croatian Democratic Union—behaved, as did the new governments in the many other countries that had not had democratic traditions, as if by winning the elections they had been granted the right to do as they pleased. Since the electorate had no experience with democracy either, most of them were easily persuaded that multiparty elections guaranteed democracy. And that's that. Elections were all there was to democracy. What with the ongoing war, conditions for the development of a true democracy were nonexistent. The members of the new ruling parties, relatives and friends of the members, or ordinary sycophants ingratiating themselves with the new government promptly stripped bare most of the national economies, grabbing control of the dominant media and the central academic and cultural institutions. The lively and diverse civil society of the 1980s, on whose wings democracy was supposed to come, slowly dissolved under the new government's financial boycott and the patriotic and nationalistic fervor fanned by the authorities, while the war-related circumstances inflamed and justified them. Long before Viktor Orban imposed his illiberal democracy, we, in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia, had found ourselves in "dictatorships with democratic legitimacy" and had begun to write about them. At the time, we assumed this to be the end of this phase in our political development. As later events in Eastern

Europe demonstrated, it was more a sign of things to come than it was an end.

Under these circumstances the aspirations, the dominant themes, and the very survival of civil society changed drastically. The focus shifted to human rights, preventing and denouncing war crimes, saving refugees, resisting the rehabilitation of fascism (the Ustashas, Chetniks, and so forth), and critically reexamining government. The goal was to hold on to and preserve small pockets of freedom and critical thinking, not as an alternative to government under the circumstances (no one held such illusions), but to be held in safekeeping for a future time. These oases of civil self-awareness allowed for the survival of civil society and ensured the foundation from which a genuine political alternative would arise when the time for democracy came. With a small group of friends and colleagues in the early 1990s, I started the independent Erasmus Guild think-tank. Among other activities we published *Erasmus*, a magazine for the culture of democracy; with time we gathered around us 300 collaborators. *Erasmus* no. 16, published in April 1996, was dedicated in large part to Mostar, a city in Bosnia and Herzegovina that had just emerged from merciless devastation during the war between Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks. To be more precise, in the first half of the 1990s, military units of a political formation of Bosnian Croats known as Herceg-Bosna, which no longer exists, ruthlessly ravaged and terrorized Mostar. Among other things, they shelled the Stari Most (Old Bridge), an exquisitely elegant structure built in 1566, included on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites. In 1993, after being shelled repeatedly, the Stari Most fell into the Neretva River before the television cameras and the eyes of the world. Frozen, I watched the images on television. When I came to Mostar in the spring of 1996, I headed straight to the bridge and saw the hanging steel construction where the old bridge once stood. This was the only time during the war that my otherwise firm position on individual guilt and responsibility for war crimes and atrocities was seriously shaken. This position is not difficult to defend when it has to do with crimes committed in someone's name, but the bridge over the Neretva was brought down in my name, too. The devastators were Croats and they justified their action by saying that in doing this they were defending Croats and Croathood. I ended my text about Mostar, written at the time, as follows: "I am certain that among the people who experienced the war firsthand, there are many who long to disavow the crimes and atrocities committed in their name. They must be the first to do so. We must distance ourselves from the criminals in our ranks and from their crimes, which they intend to mask by using the name of Croatia." That day, standing on the hanging steel structure



over the Neretva, I resolved to enter politics—to prevent anyone ever again from committing such crimes in my name.

My Mostar vignette, which played such a pivotal role in my life, is comparable to the hundreds of thousands of experiences of injustice, crime, lies, and deception that have motivated people to get involved in public life to prevent or turn around the destruction of their societies in the 1990s during the war and postwar years. Most of us were then living under authoritarian regimes, led by political parties that had won elections. The other political parties were weak, mostly without sufficient funding and tainted by their own real or imposed historical ties to the previous regime. Most competed with the ruling parties in nationalist positions and attacked them “from the right”—yet another poorly researched phenomenon of political psychology in the opposition movements in the post-Yugoslav states during the authoritarian period. In any case, the most articulate fighters for democracy in the 1990s came from the civil sphere; they were, in part, heirs of the rebellious society of the 1980s. Also, among them, were newly emerged activists motivated by the troubles of the 1990s. Society in its finest sense—the struggle against discrimination, for political responsibility, against impunity for crimes committed, for the rule of law—was still there. But as was the case with the previous authorities, the new regime did not have any intention of supporting it. Everything seemed to have changed except political culture. The authorities went right on behaving as if the government were theirs, as if the budget, financed by all taxpayers, were theirs, and as if support in that budget for NGOs, publications, or media that criticized the government would be absurd! As if democracy is not administration according to rules that have been set out clearly in advance and defined by the parliament, espousing a wide range of views, interests, and preferences, but is simply victory at the polls by any means. Illiberal democracy at work as the ideal of all autocrats!

This was the context within which the Open Society Foundation first appeared. It financed many civil society projects which would have floundered without their support or never would have even begun. There were other foundations as well, but as a rule they were either government-led or party-led and as such were more easily tractable by the domestic authorities. Why did one exceptionally wealthy man spend vast amounts of his money to fund associations and newspapers promoting democracy in Eastern Europe? And, in doing so, invoke Karl Popper?

Fine, this second question didn't trouble them much, because for the most part they had no idea who Popper was and why he mattered. But the first

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by Ellen Elias-Bursać

question puzzled the authorities at the outset, and from there went on to become extremely irritating. The presence of the Open Society made possible the existence of the vital space of freedom and autonomy essential for the development of democratic culture and civil self-awareness, with which every society defends itself from autocracy. For the many people who had gathered around the independent publications and activist groups in the civil sphere, this allowed, at least for a time, independence from the authorities. Many of them later entered politics in the narrower sense, won elections, moved into important positions at all levels, and left their mark on politics. This reminds me of the pride we felt as children, when we explained to our Bulgarian cousins how we could freely cross the border. That wasn't freedom yet, but it was the groundwork for freedom. By that same token, this wasn't democracy yet, but it was the groundwork for democracy. The authoritarian powers in Eastern Europe have not to this day forgiven the Open Society Foundation for this respite that ensured civil initiatives when they were most important. And it did help society in its finest aspects to survive. And it did ensure, at the end of this long and agonizing transition, a chance, perhaps, for liberal democracy.

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VESNA PUSIĆ

Vesna Pusić was born and raised in Zagreb, Croatia, where she studied sociology and philosophy at the University of Zagreb, obtaining her PhD in the field of sociology. Throughout her career as an academic and politician, Pusić taught at the University of Zagreb and also served for twenty years as a member of the Croatian Parliament. From 2011 – 2016 Pusić was the Croatian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs. Pusić has been a human rights activist and has published a number of books and articles.

Many Tunnels, Few Lights

Vladimir Milčín

“So why does Soros give us money?” asked the person at the wicket in the Commercial Bank branch. He didn’t give me a chance to answer and immediately “enlightened” me by asserting that George Soros intended to buy Macedonia. I asked him why Soros would buy an unrecognized country closed in by two embargoes, and he responded, “That Jew Soros wants to resettle the Jews from Israel to Macedonia!” “But, why?” I shouted. “Because here they’d be secure, while in Israel they’re threatened by a sea of Arabs!” he shot back.

This was my first real-life encounter with a conspiracy theory. The malicious charge that Macedonia was destroyed by Soros’s millions can be read on social networks even today. As Umberto Eco says: “The most unusual aspect of the proven fabrication of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is not their existence, but their acceptance.” The more fraudulent something is, the more tenacious it is. And tough as weeds.

“Yes, we had a difficult opponent, though I’m not referring to [rival political party] SDSM, it was only a screen, an instrument, a poker... If George Soros hadn’t been behind it—with all the millions that he poured into Macedonia through the entire network of nongovernmental organizations, media, the politicians, inside and outside, whom he pays, the influence of the most powerful states in the world—a decisive influence when we talk about smaller countries like ours—it wouldn’t have been so difficult, and the economy would have been stronger, we would have had more job openings,” stated the former premiere Nikola Gruevski on 3 January 2017. His party, VMRO-DPMNE, announced an offensive against the *Sorosites*, the first phase in the operation *De-Sorosisation of Macedonia*. By order of the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Financial Police and the Financial Intelligence Unit combed through the work of 22 civil society organizations from 2012 to 2017. The case was assembled towards the end of December

© Beka Vučo, Monument of Alexander the Great, Skopje, North Macedonia, 2019



2016, immediately after the parliamentary elections in which Gruevski failed to win sufficient votes to form a government.

Late in the night on 8 November 2018, Gruevski fled from justice. On 11 November he arrived in Budapest, having traveled from Albania through Montenegro and Serbia in a Hungarian diplomatic vehicle with only his identity card. He sought, and received, political asylum from his mentor, Orban. “The former Macedonian premier, Nikola Gruevski, who governed the country from 2006 through 2016 with an authoritarian-mafioso style and who was sentenced to two years in jail, managed, despite not having a passport, to flee to Hungary and seek asylum there,” *Deutsche Welle* announced on 14 November, underscoring that Hungary, a member of the EU, had become his accomplice.

What connects Gruevski and Orban? Their hatred of Soros. Orban, a former recipient of a Soros fellowship, has been a vocal critic of Soros for years. The Open Society is a hindrance to the Orban ideologic goal—an illiberal state. “Europe can’t kneel before the Soros network!” Orban shouts. The European court of justice has delayed its ruling against the expulsion of the Central European University from Budapest. The criminal Gruevski became a citizen of the EU after several days, but the country he destroyed for 30 years can’t get even a date for the start of accession negotiations with the EU.

A calendar of temporariness or *nomen est omen*

The first multiparty parliament adopted Macedonia’s Declaration of Independence on 25 January 1991. President Gligorov wasted several months trying to convince VMRO-DPMNE that the referendum question should be: “Are you for an independent Macedonia with the right to enter into a union with the sovereign states of Yugoslavia?” His political experience and his acquaintance with Balkan and European policies about the *Macedonian knot* warned him that it would be easier to proclaim than sustain an independent Macedonia. The referendum on 8 September succeeded and Gligorov called Macedonia an *Oasis of Peace*, but what followed was more like an *Unfinished Peace*.

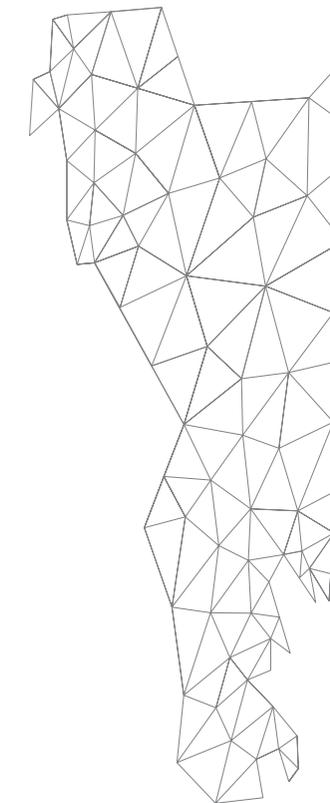
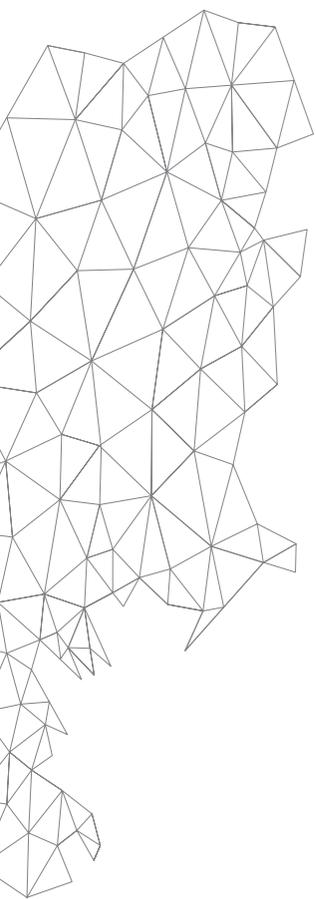
The European community formed an Arbitration Commission of the Conference on Yugoslavia led by Robert Badinter, President of the Constitutional Council of France. On 15 January 1992, the Commission announced that only the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Macedonia had fulfilled all conditions for international recognition and that the name Republic of Macedonia did not represent any territorial threat. That was the first, but also the last, de-

cision which did not put conditions on the recognition or the membership of the *Oasis of Peace* in the European community.

The light was quickly extinguished. On 27 June, the European community adopted a declaration concerning the former Yugoslavia requesting that the Republic of Macedonia change its name, that is, the name should not contain the word *Macedonia*. The delayed admission into the UN under the provisional name FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) on 8 April 1993 hurt a bit less. On 3 October 1995, President Gligorov was seriously wounded in an assassination attempt carried out through the activation of a car bomb in the centre of Skopje. Only a day earlier, Gligorov had refused Milošević’s offer for a customs union. The investigation failed to uncover either the perpetrators of the attack or those who commanded it. The question as to whether the attempted assassination was motivated by independence or the provisional name—which had been promised to be temporary and in force for only several months—has not been resolved to this day.

Like a train without a schedule, the provisional Macedonia puffed along the tracks from tunnel to tunnel with no end in sight for nearly 30 years. Greece’s opposition to member states of the EU recognizing Macedonia under its constitutional name delayed the establishment of diplomatic relations until December 1995. Macedonia submitted its first application for membership in the EU in 2004, but the answer was: The path to Brussels leads through Ohrid. The Republic of Macedonia carried out the Ohrid Framework Agreement which brought an end to the multiethnic conflict of 2001. At the summit in Bucharest on 3 April 2008, Greece also blocked Macedonia’s entry into NATO. In 2018 the EU’s answer was: The path to Brussels runs through Prespa. The Prespa Agreement was signed on 17 June 2018, and on 30 September a consultative referendum was held which asked: “Are you in favour of membership in the EU and NATO by accepting the agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Greece?” The yes side received 609,813 votes, and the no side 37,700. The State Election Commission declared the referendum unsuccessful because only 36.91 percent of registered voters on the electoral roll voted, but the majority of the parliament voted yes. On 19 February 2019, the Republic of North Macedonia became a member of NATO but the path to the EU remained closed. In 2020 the message was: The path to Brussels leads through Sofia.

In his essay “North Macedonia and Bulgarian Historical Imperialism,” historian Ulf Brunnbauer, director of the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies at the University of Regensburg, used the formulation “a



19th century battle with arguments from the 19th century.” Prime ministers Borisov and Zaev signed a Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighbourliness and Cooperation between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia on 1 August 2017. However, on 9 October 2019, the Borisov government adopted a declaration putting forward an ultimatum for a revisionist history of the past, a re-shaping of history, i.e., a cover-up of the Kingdom of Bulgaria’s participation in the two world wars. Sofia submitted a request that Skopje replace the term “Bulgarian fascist occupier” with the phrase “German fascist occupier of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the interim Bulgarian administration composed mainly of Macedonians.” This was the sole recognition by contemporary Bulgaria of the fact that Macedonians existed prior to 1944. After equating Stalin and Tito, the former president of Bulgaria, Plevneliev, announced on 7 March 2020: “Macedonianism is an ideology that is not only anti-Bulgarian, it is an antidemocratic manipulation of history which creates tensions between future generations.”

Privatisation, oligarchs, sanctions

The UN sanctions against Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, that is, Serbia, introduced on 30 May 1992, were in force until 2 October 1996. Macedonia was not a member of the UN, but it was given an ultimatum to honour the embargo which was also a threat to its fragile economy. The traffic corridor Salonica–Skopje–Belgrade was closed. There was no railroad connection with Sofia and Tirana, nor is there today. The roads along the corridor Tirana–Skopje–Sofia were in terrible condition. They are not much better today. On 16 February 1994, Greece introduced a trade embargo against Macedonia which was in force until 15 October 1995. The country and the citizens grew poorer, but those who became rich during the transition, the oligarchs, grew enormously richer. Several “morally-politically suitable” socialist directors and trade representatives of Yugoslavia in the Warsaw Pact countries got rich first through the criminal privatisation under the “leveraged buyout model” and then through the violations of sanctions.

The fear of being caught in criminal activity drove the oligarchs to take over the state so they could corrupt the government and the media. Ljubisav Ivanov “Dzingo”—a long-serving member of the parliament of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and later in the Macedonian parliament as well—is the most illustrative example. After 40 years directing a mining and quarrying company, he became its head. He appropriated the former Socialist Union of the Working People of Macedonia and re-registered it as the So-

cialist Party of Macedonia. He also had his own bank and his own television station, which ran the dirtiest campaigns against Soros, the foundation, and civil society organizations. He was close to Milošević, and this enabled him to smuggle oil across the Macedonian-Serbian border through a private illegal crossing. Not all oligarchs have their own crossings, but with the blessing of functionaries in the government, all their firms used false documents. They designated their firms as end importers of goods which ended up in Serbia or as exporters of goods which were not produced in Macedonia, but in Serbia. The profits were enormous, but the harm the country suffered was equally enormous. In August 1992, Greece blocked the transport of oil from the port in Salonica with the justification that Macedonia had broken the sanctions against Serbia, although it was a public secret that Greece had also broken them.

Light in the tunnel

The Open Society foundation – Skopje of George Soros was registered on 15 September 1992. During his first visit to Macedonia, Soros felt the importance of the name and promised that he would agree to renaming the foundation the Open Society foundation in Macedonia, which took place on 2 November 1992. Even today, after the change of the name of the country, the foundation is called *Foundation Open Society – Macedonia*. Soros considered the survival of Macedonia as a multiethnic and open society to be of vital interest to Europe and the whole world. He stated this in his address to the Macedonian parliament on 6 January 1993. The frozen runway at the Skopje airport made it impossible for him to address the representatives in person and to inform them that he was giving the Macedonian government a bridge loan of US \$25 million to purchase oil and cover other needs during the period leading up to Macedonia’s recognition by the UN, the USA and the EU and while Macedonia was unable to receive funds from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. “I am doing this so that I can turn the attention of the world towards the powerlessness of governments to act. Most of all, I am thinking of the governments of the EU and the government of the USA. The EU is blocked by Greece. I hope that the Greek community in the US will be sufficiently wise and will not lobby against recognition of Macedonia; the EU made a grave error in allowing this to be blocked by Greece.” The speech enraged Greece and the Greek diaspora, but it also angered the Macedonian diaspora and the VMRO-DPMNE party. Because George Soros continued: “As I said, the Greek government does not have a legitimate basis to object to the name Macedonia, but it has the right to respond to provocation. The maps of Greater Macedonia represent such a provocation although the government

of Macedonia is not responsible for these maps. I sincerely must tell you that the flag of Macedonia is also such a provocation because the sun of Alexander the Great is found in Greece and not in Macedonia. Allow me to ask you: Is this flag obligatory?"

In order to overcome the lack of medicines and medical material in Macedonia, Soros also agreed to a grant of \$2 million. And he did not stop there. He also approved a grant of \$100,000 to secure newsprint for print media. On 16 February 1994, Greece also formally announced an embargo and closed the Salonica port and all rail and road border crossings. "In order to bring Skopje to its senses," said George Papandreou, deputy minister of external affairs. But it was clear to Soros that the embargo was devastating the Macedonian economy and it was feeding Macedonian nationalism. In order to lessen the damage of the embargo, he approved another bridge loan of \$25 million loan to the government so it could obtain animal fodder; in addition, the foundation covered 50 percent of the air transport of early ripening crops to markets in Slovenia and Austria. The biggest problem was the slow transport of oil to the Skopje refinery from the Black Sea port of Burgas, 600 kilometres away. Tankers waited for days at the Bulgarian-Macedonian border. Soros sent Fred Cuny, a crisis management expert, to Macedonia to find a way to speed up the transport. The Albanian port of Durrës is located 289 kilometres from Skopje and Cuny came up with the idea of using the narrow-gauge railroad line, Skopje–Kičevo–Ohrid, built in 1919. A branch ended at the Albanian city of Elbasan; however, in 1948 following the Tito–Stalin split, the border was closed. In 1966, a new line, Skopje–Kičevo, was built, and in front of the railroad station in Kičevo one can see a locomotive and two cars from the narrow-gauge railroad, a reminder that Albania and Macedonia had at one time been connected by rail. Fred Cuny's project was not realised because it required a great deal of time and money, but the embargo was broken. On 5 October 1995, following the Interim Accord between Greece and Macedonia, the flag Soros had discussed was replaced by a flag which displayed a stylized sun with eight rays, but the flag with sixteen rays remained the flag of the Macedonian diaspora. In Macedonia and the Macedonian diaspora there are still those who believe that the last name Soros is Greek and that Soros and the *Sorosites* destroyed Macedonia.

Oxymoron—attraction and repulsion

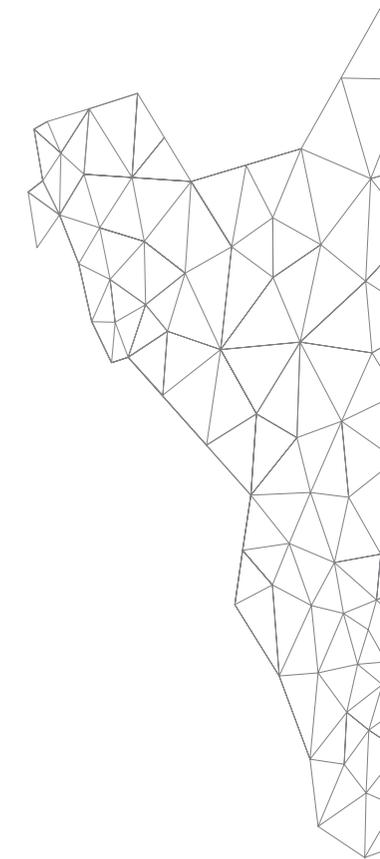
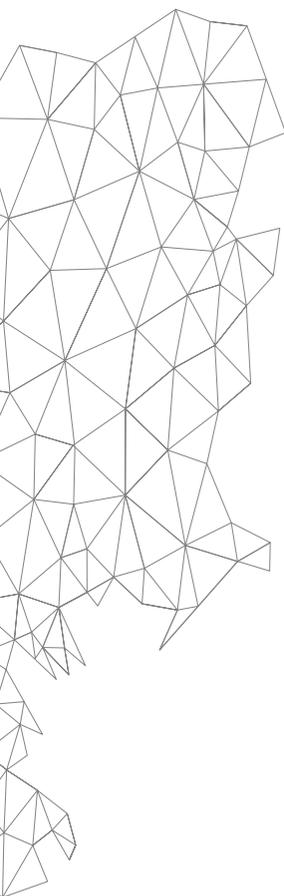
The enormous support for the EU by the Macedonian public and in the media over the past three decades gave Brussels maneuvering room for post-

poning decisions and justification for unfulfilled promises. Still worse is the fact that the political elites in Macedonia neglected their responsibility to the citizens. They diligently competed to please Brussels even after its credibility was damaged. A public opinion poll conducted in February 2021 demonstrated that the majority of Macedonian citizens no longer have faith in the EU or in NATO. In response to the question of whether the Republic of North Macedonia would ever become a member of the EU, 55.9 percent of those interviewed answered negatively, while 58.7 declared themselves in favour of a return of the name *Republic of Macedonia* despite the loss of the possibility for EU membership. Of those polled, 58.1 percent were in favour of a return of the name even at the cost of losing membership in NATO.

Bulgaria's blocking of the start of accession talks gave a new argument to the Eurosceptics, the most vocal of whom are those who want Macedonia to be in the East and not the West. They supported Trump and they supported the violence in the US Capitol on 6 January 2021, just as earlier, on 27 April 2017, they had supported the violence in the Macedonian parliament to prevent parliament from convening.

Brussels has not demonstrated any great concern about the loss of interest in the EU in Macedonia, but on 5 March 2021, the ministers for external affairs of nine countries, among them Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland, requested that the Western Balkans be returned to the EU agenda: "Many things have changed since our last discussion in August 2019. In the countries in the region there have been dynamic internal political events. On top of this, the pandemic has worsened trends already present, including geopolitical implications as well. Other actors are ready to interfere in regional affairs, often at our expense. They were more effective in the presentation of their support and they have undermined faith in us, our credibility, and the perception of our solidarity."

Who are the other actors? The Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs recently announced that Russia and China must build a model of strategic mutual trust, in order to support the protection of their key interests, to join forces against the colourful revolutions and to fight against various disinformation campaigns because the western countries want to destroy the legitimate regimes in the two countries with the mobilisation of opposition forces and street protests.



Requiem for the citizen resistance

“Today it is not the sun of freedom that is being born over Macedonia. Today our sun is setting. It is becoming dark and darkness surrounds us. A heavy fog of propaganda covers our land. Our sleeping intelligence produces thousands of political monsters. They use our indifference to suck the blood of our hard-won state. They use our fear and our timidity to trample our rights and freedoms. Respected citizens, you who want to live in a European, and not in some Neolithic, biblical, or ancient, Macedonia, support us in the battle against the occupiers of our consciousness and our conscience!” So read the declaration of *Citizens for a European Macedonia*, an initiative of six intellectuals and activists who, in February 2009, began their tour of the country. As early as 19 February, members of the ruling party violently prevented debate in the Cultural Centre in Struga.

An increase in violence followed. On 28 March, several hundred Orthodox believers and members and supporters of VMRO-DPMNE brutally attacked, right before the eyes of the police, a hundred students from the Faculty of Architecture in Skopje who, organised in the informal initiative *Prva arhi brigada* [First Archi Brigade], protested the construction of a church on the city square.

On 6 June 2011, the night of the victory of VMRO-DPMNE in early parliamentary elections, VMRO-DPMNE supporters were celebrating on the square. A member of the special police unit brutally beat Martin Neškovski, a young man who was there to congratulate the incumbent prime minister, Gruevski, on his victory. The government tried to hide the murder, but wasn't able to. The citizens protested for days, but the government-controlled media labeled the organizers and some of the participants in the “Stop Police Brutality” protests as “members of the opposition SDSM party and the Soros Foundation.” On the night of 12 September 2013, several hundred police burned the camp of the citizen's initiative *Parkobrani* [Park-defenders] in the centre of Skopje and they arrested eleven activists. Members of *Parkobrani* were protecting the green spaces where the government planned to build pseudobaroque and pseudoclassical objects for the project “Skopje 2014.”

On 20 December 2014, on the street opposite the parliament building, the *Platform for Civic Policy AJDE!* [Let's go!] was performed. On the street there were 123 citizens, and in the parliament building 123 members of parliament: “They cannot silence all of us! They cannot put us all in chains!”

In March 2016, *AJDE!* began protesting in front of the Constitutional Court, and the protests grew bigger by the day. The actions of *AJDE!* were regu-

larly reported to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. For days citizens chanted “No justice, no peace!” and they asked the judges not to allow President Ivanov to give amnesty to people convicted of election fraud. The session at which the Constitutional Court was to vote was scheduled for the morning of 16 March. *AJDE!* called on citizens to join in an all-night vigil from 15 to 16 March, starting with a protest march to the Constitutional Court. However, the huge column of citizens was prevented from reaching the Constitutional Court because supporters of the GROM party, which was in coalition with VMRO-DPMNE, had illegally set up camp blocking the approach to the court building. In order to avoid likely confrontation, *AJDE!* led the column across a different bridge, but here the citizens encountered the police with armoured cars and water cannons directed at them, while music was heard coming from the GROM camp. Access to the Constitutional Court was blocked. The Minister for Internal Affairs in the technical government was the general secretary of SDSM. Revolted and discouraged, the citizens dispersed, but the first cracks had appeared in *AJDE!* and in the citizen resistance.

On 5 May 2015, directly after telephone conversations had been published which brought to light the attempts of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the government to conceal the murder of Martin Neškovski and the identity of the person who killed him, outraged citizens engaged in a massive spontaneous protest in front of the parliament building and “bombarded” it with eggs. In the evening hours incidents took place which eyewitnesses confirm had been provoked to justify police intervention with excessive use of force. That night, the police chased down demonstrators through the streets of Skopje and arrested them. The police, armed to the teeth, stormed into the reading room of the City Library and arrested students there. Daily protests culminated with a confrontation in front of government headquarters on 17 May at which more than 60,000 citizens protested, joined in an informal coalition with *Citizens for Macedonia* (comprising more than 80 citizen groups), unaffiliated individuals, SDSM and almost every smaller opposition party. Following the meeting, tents were set up—the *Camp of Freedom*—in front of the parliament building. The building was closed in the middle of July after the signing of the Pržino Agreement with which, under the tutelage of the EU and USA, the political crisis was to be solved and conditions secured for fair and democratic elections.

Soon after, following its return to parliament, SDSM announced that it was leaving the *Citizens for Macedonia* coalition. That was not controversial, but what was controversial was the fact that partners from the civil society organizations had not been invited to the press conference at which the leader,

Zaev, announced the unilateral severance from his recent partnership. This undermined trust in nongovernmental organizations, which suffered further after well-known civic activists appeared on SDSM's candidate lists for parliamentary and local elections. After the elections, some became governmental officials, and even ministers in Zaev's government. Today his government faces growing dissatisfaction among the citizens due to its unfulfilled promises and poor management of the COVID-19 virus epidemic, but also the epidemic of populism, criminality, corruption, and nepotism. There is no justice, but there is still peace. The last phase of the resistance, the *Colourful Revolution*, announced the fall of the regime.

Troubles with the census

The last census in Macedonia was conducted in 2002; the attempt to conduct a census in 2011 was cut off with the irrevocable resignation of the State Census Commission. In May 2014, the Foundation Open Society – Macedonia emphasised: *The census is democracy, and not just an ethnic number*. “The demographic situation in North Macedonia is clearly dramatic but until there is a census no one will know how bad it is. And it will remain hard to plan properly for the country with no proper statistics,” wrote Tim Judah in a research report for the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, *Wildly Wrong: North Macedonia's Population Mystery* (published 14 May 2020). Both the former government and the current one were oblivious to the alarms. Finally, on 21 January 2021, the Parliament passed a law by which the long-delayed census was to be conducted—in the midst of a raging epidemic that shows no signs of abating, in part due to the government's poor management of it.

“What really should frighten us is the number of people who have left the country. Young people of all ethnic groups are leaving. It is true that the census will make us confront our greatest fears—not fears of ‘the other,’ but of how few of us currently remain in the country,” announced President Pendarovski, and he warned of the dangers of politicization, including calls for a boycott, a priori jockeying for proportional representation of ethnic groups and threats to reject the results if they do not project someone's desired number. The president's concern was justified. The ambassador to the EU in Skopje had to raise a yellow card in response to the request by one of the Albanian parties that a person's ethnic identity should be included in personal identity cards: “The European regulation strictly prohibits the entering of race, ethnic, political, and religious identity in personal identity papers.” It is certain that the state suffers great harm from this emigration, but the

Translated from Macedonian
by Christina E. Kramer

greatest harm is the emigration of highly educated citizens. They do not see a future for themselves in Macedonia, no matter which party is in power. These people leave not only on account of higher earnings, but also on account of better opportunities for advancement, better education and health, and also to live in more politically stable environments. The exact number of Macedonian citizens who hold two passports, most often Macedonian and Bulgarian, is not known. On 4 March 2021, the Bulgarian news agency BGNES announced that there were 45,752 citizens registered at the address 6 Lege Street in Sofia, mainly with Macedonian first and last names, who had received Bulgarian citizenship on the basis of “proven Bulgarian descent,” but the office of the president of Bulgaria announced that in 2020 there had been 9,098 Macedonian citizens also requesting Bulgarian citizenship. These people reside and work abroad, most often in EU member countries.

Bulgarian politicians persist in asserting that there are more than 100,000 Bulgarians living in the Republic of North Macedonia. But available data contradict this. In the census of 2002, a total of 0.073 percent of the population in Macedonia declared themselves to be Bulgarian. One can see on the website of Bulgaria's Central Election Commission that only 328 citizens of Macedonia announced that they would vote electronically in the parliamentary elections in Bulgaria slated for 4 April 2021.

To be continued?

The longest tunnel on the territory of the former Yugoslavia is 7,062 metres. It was built in 1966 on the route Skopje–Kičevo. In the first years of the transition, after the closing of the Rudnici Skopje mining complex, the so-called Socialist Giant, there were no freight trains. During the period of the refugee crisis, the tunnel was a haven for thousands of refugees on the road to Europe. Today only two half-empty passenger trains pass through the tunnel daily.

Macedonia entered the 21st century without rail links to Albania to the west or Bulgaria to the east. The construction of a rail line to the Bulgarian border, a length of 89 kilometres, drags on, a promise made by both VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM in every preelection campaign since 1994, but all that can be seen of the rail plan are columns for several unfinished viaducts...

VLADIMIR MILČIN

Vladimir Milčin was executive director of the Open Society foundation–Macedonia from 1992 to 2015. Trained as a theater director, he has directed 95 plays in the Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Croatian, Hungarian and Slovak languages. From 1982 to 2012 he taught drama at the St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. He is a founding member of UJDI (the Association for the Democratic Initiative of Yugoslavia)—the first organized democratic opposition in the former Yugoslavia—and the Helsinki Citizen Assembly of Macedonia, as well as of informal civic initiatives such as Citizens for European Macedonia and Ajde! (Let's Go!).



The Yellow Brick Road

Dubravka Ugrešić

1. I spent the academic year of 1975–76 in Moscow on an exchange program run by the education ministries of Yugoslavia and the USSR. I applied because I was planning to research material for my master's thesis about Boris Pilnyak, a Russian avant-garde writer. I began my study of Russian avant-garde culture at a time when it was still in the deep-freeze as a field, despite the cold-war “thaw” and official rehabilitation of the avant-garde artists who'd been targeted in Stalin's purges. Furthermore, the political systems and the relations between Tito and Stalin, that is, between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, were of no interest whatsoever for me, even though “politics” had profoundly shaped the destinies of my parents and therefore my own. My mother was from Bulgaria and had come to live in Yugoslavia after the war, but because of the Cominform rift between Tito and Stalin (1948–1955) that isolated Yugoslavia from the countries of the Eastern Bloc, she, too, was isolated from her parents and couldn't visit them for the next ten years, until diplomatic relations were finally reinstated between the two countries.
2. Although inseparable from it, this other dimension of the story, the “political” piece, only caught my attention once I was in Moscow. There was no method to my mastery of the political dimension. It proceeded chaotically, randomly, as one detail or another jumped out at me. I soaked the environment up through my skin, with a disregard for data, testimony and the experience of others. Yes, I was arrogant, but I was in no hurry to face the reason for my arrogance. Although I was from Yugoslavia, I enjoyed some of the privilege of the Western-European students because, like them, I was protected by a fragile, trivial, yet oh so powerful little item. My passport.

© Getty Images/Damir Šagolj, Prayer, Medjugorje, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2009

3. Out for a stroll one day, I happened to wander onto Red Square. The day was the First of May and the famous May Day Parade was underway. Soldiers marched through the square, their legs rising high with each step, and tanks, one after another, crawled by at a turtle-like pace. Many members of the political and military elite stood dutifully on the bandstands. On the chests of the elite gleamed their medals like clouds of gnats. The multitudes rubbed shoulders on the square. The massive militaristic scenography was both fearsome and surreal, even childish, as if the soldiers were little toy soldiers made of lead, in stark contrast to the festive colors of the day. And from the hatches on the tops of the tanks, from which peered the heads of soldiers, there were flowers “growing.” Next to each soldierly neck loomed a huge flower on a long, wire stem. The viewers greeting the parade brandished identical flowers planted on long wire stems, and these made them look even smaller than they were. I recognized those flowers. The sight took me back to the “promenade of flowers,” as we’d called our childhood parades. When I was in elementary school we marched through our little town, four abreast, like orderly flower beds. One year we, the little girls in the first and second grades, wore red dresses and little red hats. We were poppies. All of our dresses were made of the same flowing crêpe paper.

4. As if it were a powerful magnet, the scene dredged up a memory of something else. Apparently from an altogether different planet. The book I was remembering was called *The Wizard of the Emerald City*, or, in the language of its author, A. Volkov: *Volshebnik izumrudnogo goroda*. Recollections of this childhood book had been buried by my memory of its cousin, with its slightly different title: *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, penned by a different author, Frank L. Baum. And ultimately recall of both books was submerged by the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, filmed in 1939—based on Baum’s book.

At that moment, in Moscow, on the First of May of the year 1976, I began to feel as if I could no longer say my name, or give the time, or say where I was, in what country, at what juncture of experience and culture, and, damn it, on which planet this was all happening. I was hemmed in by a crowd of affable, colorful little Munchkins, and soon I’d be setting out with my trusty retinue along the yellow brick road, on our way to Oz, where a famous wizard would send me back home, to Kansas...

5. I mused why the scene on Red Square brought me back memories of the yellow brick road to Oz. Could it be that only I, among the hundreds of thousands of people on Red Square that day, was reading the mighty political spectacle as if it were a child’s fairy tale? Or was it that I was reading the child’s fairy tale as if it were a mighty political spectacle, in which the valiant crew—Dorothy Gale, the little girl, with her dog Toto and her trusty companions, Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, Cowardly Lion—was setting out in search of a heart, a brain, courage and a way home? Brain, heart, courage, home...

The transformation of this text, meant for children, into a mega-text meant for everyone, began in 1900, as soon as Baum’s book was first published. But only when the first version of the movie came out in 1939 did the story catapult into the world canon of texts. There aren’t many texts that rise to this textual orbit. For Christian civilization one such mega-text is the Bible. But it wasn’t the many cinematic and other versions of *The Wizard of Oz* that boosted the status of the text, nor was it the vast industry that grew up around it after the movie was a hit, nor was it the official canonization from above, from the United States Library of Congress, which declared the *Wizard* “America’s greatest and best loved homegrown fairy tale,” and the “most watched movie ever.” No, it wasn’t the similarity of the name of the land of Oz to the name of the biblical land of Uz, the purported namesake of this mythical place; indeed millions of people the world over have embraced the text, many of whom have never in their lives read a single line of the Bible.

6. The vast majority of people the world over experienced Donald Trump as if he were Baum’s Wizard: a cheat, a liar, a charlatan and a dilettante, a more or less dangerous shyster, even without first consulting *The Wizard of Oz*. So why didn’t the multitudes rush to draw back the curtain and expose the impostor?! Toto, the little dog, did. That little de-mystifier. Was the pup smarter than the people? Toto followed his instinct and curiosity, while we follow faith. The little dog knows nothing of utopia, he’s not dreaming of a land of luscious bones. We, however, long for a true utopia. We, humanity, are strung out on utopia, we’re utopia addicts. And we bang our heads against the wall every time, unfailingly choosing the worst option. We set out, brimming with the belief that we’ll find Oz and courage, heart, brain, and home. Instead we bump into a wizard-charlatan, a dilettante. And what’s worse, we slavishly embrace the falsified academic diploma from the



charlatan certifying that the straw in our heads is a brain, that our plastic heart proves we have a heart. We proudly accept the bogus gold medal, declaring to everyone that we have courage.

Could this have ended differently? Maybe not. Who knows, maybe our behavior is following a long-set pattern, a mythical blueprint. Maybe we're open only to mythical thinking, and know nothing else nor are able to recognize anything else. Maybe the wizard-charlatan can also do no differently, because he has been preordained to deceive according to an ancient blueprint. Were Stalin and Hitler not wizards of Oz? Is God, the one who slapped the world together in a mere seven days "in his image, in his likeness," not the charlatan of Oz? Is Jesus Christ—he who walks on water and feeds millions with a single fish, rising from the dead when so inclined—not one of the finest of wizard-charlatans? And isn't his mother, the Virgin Mary, who has been shedding phony tears while we stubbornly insist on believing they're real, she who reigns with the ruse of the immaculate conception while abandoning us to wallow in our sin—is she not a great wizard, who has passed her powerful genes on to her son? And furthermore, who created whom: did we create our fairy tales or are we their creation? Are memes, our cultural genes, to be credited with civilization and its collapse, because we are what we are, set in our ways and unchanging? Is Kim Kardashian—who entertains us by plumping up her bottom and cinching in her waist, and by batting her lashes, which she manipulates like fans—is Kim Kardashian not actually a latter-day Virgin Mary? We sit before our screens, as before a church altar, transfixed, poised to follow her, ready to plump up our bottoms and cinch in our waists, bat our lashes like fans, and adore her.

7. So where is this Oz, anyway? And where is home? What is our true address? Where did we start from and where are we going? Where are the maps? Why do we stubbornly insist on following the yellow brick road? Isn't there another road we could follow? Who told us to take this one? The Munchkins?! If, for instance, instead of going to the movies on a Sunday we were to take our children to an astronomical observatory, we might cast an eye there upon a map, something we far too seldom do. We live on a puny little ball. This is our home. We are floating here among other similar balls. Some are smaller, some larger. Some, or at least so they appear on the map, are at the center, others at the periphery. We are on the outskirts, living on a run-down (black-and-white) farm in the middle of nowhere, somewhere in Kansas...

© Mario Ilić/Selma Selman,
Mercedes Matrix
Performance 2h 30 min,
Krass Festival, Hamburg,
Germany, 2019

Our maps are mythical. Perhaps this is the source of our stubborn insistence to seek shelter under the roofs of large religious, political, social and cultural systems. Seeking Oz, we follow the good old, well-trodden, yellow brick road. And in so doing, we run from our own reflection the way the devil runs from the smoke of holy incense.

8. We're waiting for an answer which is not forthcoming, perhaps because we aren't asking the right questions. Do we Europeans want, for instance, to find ourselves living in microstates, as foretold by the low-budget Netflix series, *Tribes of Europa*, which, by the way, opens with a scene filmed in my neck of the woods. Serving as a symbol of destruction is Vojin Bakić's devastated monument on Petrova Gora, known as the *Monument to the Uprising of the People of Banija and Kordun*, one of the last exemplars of Yugoslav modernism. Populism, currently ascendant, is meanwhile spewing out sculptures of its tribal leaders. The people of Banija and Kordun, whose numbers were already thinned by wars (World War II and the hostilities we're calling the *recent war* of 1991–1995) and by migrations, involuntary or otherwise, are being thinned yet again by earthquakes, pandemic, poverty. Even the "natural" (hence, free) post-apocalyptic scenography of Bakić's monument is right there in Banija and Kordun. Perhaps the new European political and social constellation will be marked as Europe's return to a (better?) tribal past?

9. So where is this Oz, anyway? Has the digital revolution reset our DNA, our "mythic" cultural meme, and opened new horizons, more reliable models, or has the opposite happened? Doesn't an attractive Oz exist somewhere in the realm of post-truth? Post-truth is the essential code of every wizard. Hasn't the internet—with its cheap technological wiles, games and guiles so readily accessible to all—opened the door to new political constellations, to a "society of spectacle" (as Guy Debord termed it some fifty years ago), or a "civilization of spectacle" (Mario Vargas Llosa, more recently)? Is "spectacle" the new social and political constellation, which Dorothy, consoling Toto, describes poignantly as "someplace where there isn't any trouble," "over the rainbow," "behind the moon," "beyond the rain"?

And then, haven't we, being mythic-thinking barbarians, created a sophisticated technological civilization which our infantile mind can no longer control? Will we revert to a tribal social constellation, or will we set off again in search of Oz? Will we adapt and reinvent ourselves

Translated from Croatian
by Ellen Elias-Bursać

to become a new people, compatible with the incoming technology? If this proves impossible, will we seek the assistance of cheaters, liars, charlatans—who are our new *transhuman* wizards?

10. A religious activist, walking down the yellow brick road, stopped before a Sarajevo friend of mine (who was there by the roadside) and asked: "What is the purpose of your life?" My friend said: "But I have no life..."

At this moment more than 80 million unhappy Earthlings are roaming yellow brick roads in search of Oz. Their numbers are growing with each passing second.

DUBRAVKA UGREŠIĆ

Over the past three decades, Dubravka Ugrešić has established herself as one of Europe's most distinctive novelists and essayists. In 1991, when war broke out in the former Yugoslavia, Ugrešić took a firm antiwar stance, critically dissecting retrograde Croatian and Serbian nationalism. Subjected to prolonged public ostracism and persistent media harassment, she left Croatia in 1993. She positions herself as a "transnational" or rather a "post-national" writer and champions the right of authors not to recognize or respect ethnic and national borders, especially in cases where these are being imposed by force, as they are in her case. Ugrešić's books have been translated into thirty languages. She has taught at a number of American and European universities. She is the winner of several major literary prizes, among them the 2016 Neustadt International Prize for Literature.

New Countries, Same Patterns

Veton Surroi



1. A story I heard about an office in Moldova reminded me of the history of the Japanese soldiers who emerged from the jungle on the islands of the Pacific in the 1960s and surrendered to the Philippine authorities, realising only then that World War II was over. In Moldova, the unit that monitored foreign radio stations and reported items of interest to the Politburo and the communist leadership continued to function. The service's punctilious chief, asked by a visitor why he persisted in this work, simply explained that nobody had told him to stop doing what he had done all his life.

Something similar to the case of the Japanese soldiers in the Philippines and the radio monitors in Moldova is happening in parts of the former Yugoslavia, where a large part of the public hasn't been told that Yugoslavia has disintegrated, and that the wars for its dismemberment are over. If you wake up in the morning in 2021 in Bosnia and Herzegovina [BiH], Serbia, or Kosovo, you will probably still hear a story that dates back to the end of the 1980s.

One morning in 2021, on a channel typical of public discourse in Serbia, the producer and the programme moderator were talking about the concentration camps in Prijedor in the present-day Republika Srpska in BiH. They both agreed that the scenes from this camp were part of a Western propaganda campaign to invent 'neo-Nazis'. The iconic photograph of a starving young man, whose protruding ribs immediately prompted memories of World War II, was a picture of a tubercular patient, the producer said. The programme moderator said that the camp had in fact been an assembly point, where people gathered in order not to be killed. The man with protruding ribs, the moderator said, 'was taken away and exhibited in the circuses of Europe.' On that

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morning in 2021, it seemed that nobody had told either the producer or the moderator that the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia based in The Hague had long ago established that in 1992 Serbian forces had captured Prijedor and then imprisoned thousands of Muslim and Croatian civilians of BiH in the camps of Omarska, Keraterm, and Trnopolje. In a large part of the Serbian public arena, people talk daily about how Serbia will regain Kosovo, even though efforts of this kind led several members of Serbia's military and political elite to be convicted of 'a joint criminal enterprise.'

A large part of the public media in Kosovo claims that the Kosovo Liberation Army [KLA] liberated Kosovo from Serbia, and the arrest of any leader of this organisation for alleged war crimes is an act of revenge against the liberators. This section of the media cannot explain why, if the KLA liberated Kosovo, the country is still under the protection of NATO and was administered by the United Nations until 2008. If the KLA liberated Kosovo was it then occupied by NATO?

2. The Japanese soldiers in the jungle of the Philippines should have been told about the end of the war by their commanding officers, but this did not happen and their iron discipline held out until eventually, their trust betrayed, they surrendered. It seems that the radio monitors' superiors in the Agitprop department in Moldova forgot to inform them that the Politburo no longer needed their daily report, and indeed the country no longer needed either a politburo or a communist party. But what about the citizens of Serbia, BiH, and Kosovo? Why haven't they been told the wars are over?

The question implies that someone, a superior force to which these states and peoples are subordinate, should declare an end to the war. In fact, something like this happened. The great powers announced at Dayton in 1995 that the war was now over and the signatory presidents of the successor countries of the former Yugoslavia agreed to this. In 1999, NATO and the 'Federal Republic of Yugoslavia' signed the Kumanovo Agreement ending the war in Kosovo. These facts were widely reported by the media. At first every day, then regularly for months, and finally on anniversaries, the populace was reminded that the war was over and they were now living in peace. Why then do people not realise this, and why does the official account of the great powers that the war is over coexist in the same space with the discourse of war, still striving to achieve military goals in a time of

peace? One essential reason is that in contrast to the conclusion of earlier European wars—and the example usually cited is the reconciliation of France and Germany after World War II—there was no clear military victor in the former Yugoslavia. In BiH, as Richard Holbrooke describes in his book, the United States relied on the bombardments and the Dayton negotiations until a half-and-half territorial division was reached between the forces of the Bosnian-Croatian Federation and those of Republika Srpska. In the case of Kosovo, negotiations took place between the United States, Russia, and the European Union to secure Belgrade's withdrawal of its military forces from Kosovo in exchange for the UN Security Council resolution that recognised Serbian sovereignty over the territory.

Thus the great powers brought an end to the war by creating a situation without a military victor. They announced that the armed conflict had ended and everybody could call themselves winners, and call the opposing side losers. The man with the protruding ribs at Prijedor gained the internationally recognised state of BiH, and those who detained him in the camp gained Republika Srpska within it, with the right to frustrate the functioning of the internationally recognised state. The Albanians of Kosovo achieved the expulsion of Serbian forces, and Serbia won the right to obstruct the functioning of the state of Kosovo and the international legitimacy of this independent state.

Peace was constructed as an extension of an unfinished war. Peace was constructed as a continuation of war by other means. In BiH, the war perpetuated itself in efforts to frustrate and paralyse the functioning of this state. It continued in Serbia with efforts to frustrate and dominate the life of independent Kosovo. It continued in Kosovo with the efforts of the KLA to gain in peace something it had not won in the war: the historical role of liberator. Anyone who obstructs any of these endeavours will be called a traitor to the cause (Serbian, Albanian, etc.), as in wartime.

3. And so, to pursue the earlier analogy, it is as if the Japanese soldiers were told that the war was over, but that the imperial cause would still be pursued without weapons. Or if the radio monitors of Chişinău had been told that, sure, communism had collapsed, but the Politburo still needed the monitoring of foreign radio stations.

Something like that, but with an essential difference.

In both cases, Japan and Eastern Europe, we are dealing with a historical turning point: the end of the war, and the end of a one-party dictatorship. In the clear aftermath to these wars, the historical rupture also meant a collapse of legitimacy. The terrible defeat of Japan in the war, with the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, led to the delegitimisation of the social consensus about the war in Japan, of the ideals that inspired it and the goals it was supposed to achieve. Similarly, in the former communist countries the collapse of communism should have led to the delegitimisation of the closed society and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The ambiguous epilogue, and the absence of a historic rupture in the case of the trio of Kosovo, BiH, and Serbia, has allowed competing legitimacies to coexist and confront each other. Thus, the lack of a historical rupture in BiH made it possible at the same time and in the same place to legitimately respect, value, and collectively accept the cause of the victim of Prijedor with the protruding ribs and the cause of those who put him in the camp. The same legitimacy at the same time and in the same place is granted to the ideology and goals of the military operations that created Republika Srpska, including the Srebrenica genocide, and the political ideals or activities of the civilians of Srebrenica and other places in BiH who were the victims of this ideology and these military operations.

In Kosovo, the end of the war led to the confrontation of two legitimacies: put simply, the first view that Kosovo must be an independent country and the second that it must be part of Serbia.

In our analogies, it is as if Japan's imperial aspirations for the military and colonial domination of Asia and the Pacific were to have the same value in Japanese public discourse as Japan's aspirations for peaceful coexistence with other peoples of Asia and the Pacific. Or, in the case of the former communist countries, as if it were possible for a politburo to continue to rule at the same time as a multiparty parliament.

The end of the wars in BiH and Kosovo did not bring about the end of the ideologies that led to them. The end of the wars gave these ideologies civil recognition in peacetime, and even enabled them to take shape as projects legitimised by the great powers.

4. BiH, Kosovo, and Serbia live on in unfinished conflicts. A statement that they live in peace may be largely true or largely false, depending on what one means by peace. If peace is the absence of armed con-

flict, then yes, these countries live in peace. But if peace is closer to the Kantian concept of the elimination of the causes leading to armed conflict, then this trio does not live in peace.

So, as I wrote above, these countries and peoples experience peace as a continuation of war by other means. In theory, this peace that is war by other means should have led to a 'final' agreement that would establish peace of the Kantian kind.

The internal contradiction of seeking peace while exploiting peace for the purposes of 'war by other means' can best be seen in the recent years of negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia. In these negotiations, the presidents of the two countries strove to find a formula for peace by minimising the 'misplaced' or 'impure' populations in both countries. Thus, Kosovo was to have surrendered the northern part of its territory, inhabited by a Serbian majority, and Serbia was to have given up some Albanian inhabited villages in the south of Serbia. If peace is to be achieved by a population exchange on ethnic lines, then the presence of 'impure' populations in the respective states is a reason for hostility and war. Conflict minimised in this way gives no grounds for optimism regarding peace, because the other 'impure' side will always be present, even if only on the other side of the border. What percentage of the 'impure' is permissible? And when all those who today are 'impure' are removed, will there be other categories of the impure, groups who do not meet majority criteria because of their religious, cultural, or sexual identities?

Let us not go into how this principle would look if implemented in BiH. It would be an invitation for the return of the practices of the war, this time legitimised as the final exclusion of the 'impure.' This state has not succeeded in establishing its own constitutional legitimacy, which could be achieved by a peace agreement reached by its citizens. Instead of a peace agreement, BiH lives according to a ceasefire agreement (Dayton) which permits it to continue the conflict over its own identity, as in wartime. In this situation, the political parties representing the Serbs try to create decision-making sovereignty for the Serbs of Republika Srpska, denying any relevance to the existence of BiH.

5. The public discourse of unfinished conflict goes hand in hand with the fact that BiH, Kosovo, and Serbia are states whose construction is not complete, each with its own peculiarities. BiH is an internationally



recognized state and a member of the United Nations but is paralyzed as a state by its lack of constitutional legitimacy and the obstructive dispositions of the 'ceasefire agreement' (Dayton) and its now legitimized rejection by a product of the war called Republika Srpska. Serbia is an independent state and a member of the United Nations but is unable to define itself in terms of its own territory and population. More than one hundred states do not recognize its claim that Kosovo is part of Serbia. These one hundred include Kosovo itself, a declared independent state recognized by more than one hundred other states but contested by Serbia and the states that refuse to allow it to join the European Union or the United Nations.

Thus it is entirely natural that unfinished conflicts should create situations in which peace is considered to be a way of continuing war by other means, and that these means should be integral to efforts to complete the project of the state. The construction of a state generates a (new) narrative of war. And so we wake up to find ourselves back in the 1990s, or in Kosovo's case back in the 1980s. The discourse of that period, as created by and for the sake of the regime of Slobodan Milošević, can easily be discerned today: the public sphere in Serbia is perpetually dominated by the importance of the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church since the Battle of the Field of Kosovo, of the Serbian mediaeval state, of Stefan Nemanja and the reach of the Serbian state, as far as Greece. The former mayor of Belgrade and one-time member of the movement that toppled Milošević explained that the Albanians are in fact recent arrivals to the Balkans, that they originated in the Baltic region, and are usurpers of Serbian land—a formula usually exploited to justify collective expulsion. Twenty-five years after the end of the war in BiH and twenty-two years after the end of the war in Kosovo, a culture of war still dominates this part of the Western Balkans. The same discourse that constructed the arguments of the opposing sides in the war in BiH is the discourse of the public arena in this country today. The same narratives that see Kosovo as either Albanian or Serbian are the narratives of the public arena in Kosovo today. In these narratives, all the casualties of my nation were victims and all the casualties of the other nation were legitimate military targets, even when the dead of both nations, as in three-quarters of all cases, were civilians: children, women, and men.

6. What makes these peoples go back to where they were a quarter of a century ago? Are they indeed cursed to centuries of mutual hatred, as

© Alban Bujari/KOHA Ditore archive, Kosovo for Drenica, Pristina, Kosovo, March 9, 1998

can be said so easily? If they are Europeans, why can't they take an example from the peoples of Western Europe, who fought for hundreds of years but have now lived in peace for more than half a century? Is there something not right in the DNA of the Balkans, which makes people enter the 21st century with the conflicts of the 20th?

There is nothing special about these peoples, still less any collective genetic disorder. The error lies in the notion of transplanting a historical solution into a different historical context. The error lies in thinking that the peoples of the Western Balkans would behave in the same way as the peoples of Western Europe did when they were offered help towards a new integrative process, in the shape of the Marshall Plan. The error lies in thinking that every people, when told that it is better to cooperate than to fight, decides to cooperate, regardless of the different historical context. For the last quarter century, projects have been selected and ritually offered to the Western Balkans by organisations and initiatives that share the common idea that states and peoples that were until recently at war must now establish regional cooperation, and through this overcome any remaining effects of the conflict. But they all presuppose that the conflicts, politically and militarily, are clearly over, when in fact the situation is quite different. To make a grotesque analogy between Western Europe and the Western Balkans, the situation is as if in 1946 General Marshall were to suggest to the peoples of Western Europe that they might embark on a process of integration, while France was seizing a part of Germany's industrial regions in reparations for war damage and political parties in Germany were announcing that Hitler's essential fault lay in failing to establish the Third Reich. The German public arena would be dominated by the idea, a quarter of a century later, that World War II was generally known to have begun when Czechoslovak and Polish chauvinists, under the direction of Jewish Freemasons, started the systematic persecution of the indigenous German population.

In 2021 we hear the story about the wretched man with the protruding ribs, interned in the camp for his own protection during the war, and subsequently sent round the circuses of Europe to show more emancipated peoples an example of centuries-old backwardness. The basic lack of human empathy for suffering and those who suffer illustrates a vicious circle of an unfinished conflict, that is, a war continued by other means, and a process of state formation that justifies a miserable fate for those with the 'wrong' identity.

Translated from Albanian
by John Hodgson

Three important lessons are to be drawn from this situation.

First, an irrecoverable period of time has been lost. The blithe belief that 'time heals all wounds' turned out not to bring necessary reconciliation to the region. No, time alone does not heal.

Second, a new generation has grown up in a culture of war. Children born at the end of the last century hear about wars fought with weapons and wars that continue by other means, and live in the midst of this culture, which is shockingly amplified by social media. The amount of hatred generated and broadcast by the internet goes far beyond that of the totalitarian systems of the 20th century. This generation has never lived in a culture of peace, because peace is not merely the absence of armed conflict.

Third, peace is not a static situation. Peace cannot be established as a project of the great powers and left there. Peace is a conscious activity, and a daily form of communication, that requires a deepening awareness of the dignity of the 'other,' a deepening of mutual acquaintance, and the transformation of the present through a vision of the future. Peace is a daily effort to reconcile opposites. Peace is an organised movement, just like war, but in the totally opposite direction.

VETON SURROI

Veton Surroi is a journalist, writer, politician and civil society activist and, during the 1990s, a leading figure in Kosovo civil society and politics. He founded the KOHA Group that brought together the independent newspaper and television in Kosovo, took part as a senior member on the Kosovo Negotiations Unity Team at the Vienna Negotiations (2005-2007) on the status of Kosovo, and has served as a Member of the Kosovo Parliament. He was a senior negotiator at the Rambouillet peace talks in 1999 and is one of the four cosignatories of the Rambouillet accords for Kosovo. In 2001 he served as a mediator for a common Albanian position during the negotiations for the Ohrid agreement that stopped the war in Northern Macedonia. He has published ten books, three of which are novels, one is a play, and the rest are collections of essays.

Historical Revisionism

Rastko Močnik

Given the vast literature on the subject, it is difficult to say anything new about historical revisionism. We can, however, ask why, despite all these scholarly discussions, revisionism keeps being preserved and reaffirmed. It will, perhaps, help us reach an answer if we first define what historical revisionism actually is. So where does it begin?

Degrees of revisionism

Does revisionism begin when we are told that socialism was not democratic, in contrast to the present day, when we are supposedly practicing democracy? Judgments of this sort mystify the present-day rule of party bureaucracy and indirectly revise the socialism they are proclaiming as, indeed, the rule of party bureaucracy. The deficiency of socialism, it is said, was that there were not enough parties, that everything was crammed into just one party. I am simplifying things in order to show how it becomes impossible for us to analyze the specificity of political processes, practices and forms of domination in the historical socialisms if we take as our standard the official self-image of the present state of affairs and if a value judgment modulates our historical analysis. "In countries where a single, governmental totalitarian party exists," Gramsci writes, referring to Italian Fascism, "political questions are re-clothed in cultural forms and as such become unresolvable." The culturalization of politics is characteristic of our contemporary reality, in which we have many political parties but only one politics, namely neoliberalism. In the Yugoslav socialist past, the culturalization of politics was, at least until the 1980s, only a marginal phenomenon. In Yugoslavia, political questions were clothed in cultural forms only for a short period, perhaps in the early 1950s, around the time when, as legend tells it, Krleža proclaimed freedom in culture and art.^[1]

© Denis Luka Sarkić,
Protest 'Erased' in front of
Slovenian parliament,
Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2003



Later, political questions emerged and were processed in political forms: from the large-scale miners' strike in Trbovlje, Hrastnik, and Zagorje in 1958, the student movement from 1963 to 1973, struggles with nationalism in 1970 and 1971, progressive sociology, particularly during the period when the journal *Praxis* was published (1964–1974), the Yugoslavia-wide protest against the expulsion of a group of professors at the University of Belgrade in 1975, to the conflicts around education reform in the early 1980s and the Yugoslav mobilization in connection with the Belgrade trial of the organizers of the Free University in 1984–1985. The 1980s saw the collision of two contradictory practices: the politicization of culture on the left and the culturalization of politics on the right. The self-organized masses of young people created a politicized popular culture “from below,” while the national bureaucracies of the ideological apparatuses (the “cultural workers”) culturalized—i.e. fascistized—politics and began to demolish the socialist federation. Assertions that Yugoslav socialism was undemocratic manipulate specific parliamentary notions of democracy and are in their own way revisionist.^[2]

Even so, they are not viewed as revisionism and are repeated by the establishment from political institutions, the mass media and educational apparatuses to professional bodies and academic institutions. We must, then, set a narrower standard for revisionism. Does revisionism perhaps begin when positive views of socialism and fond memories about it are declared to be “Yugo nostalgia”? This purported “concept” shows us how thoroughly the minds of researchers here have been subjugated by the colonizing campaign of the global ruling ideological apparatuses, since they have imported it from journalism and transition studies. It derives from the Orientalist bias that views socialism as something so horrific that no normal person could remember it favorably, let alone cultivate any positive opinion about it.^[3] In this redaction, pleasant memories and positive inclinations can only be a kind of collective madness, the incapacity of Easterners to live in freedom, the shock of democracy—in other words, regressive nostalgia. The truth, however, is that official academia suffers from memory problems: it forgets that it was these very nostalgics who brought down the socialist bureaucracy. But the nostalgia thesis is produced by the academic industry, and reproduced by journalistic wisdom and book learning. The institutions that are authorized in epistemological diagnostics do not see it as revisionist. Does revisionism begin with the kind of teleological constructions that, as in Slovenia, for example, draw a linear continuity from the “battle for the northern border,” through the People’s Liberation Struggle during the Second World War, to independence, while erasing the socialist revolution? To cite one example

among many: “We have a rich freedom-loving tradition from the time of General Maister and the battle for the northern border. As early as the 1920s, Primorska Slovenians stood up against fascism. Through the Slovenian fighters in the People’s Liberation Struggle we became part of the victorious coalition of Allied nations during the Second World War. At the end of the twentieth century we were able to act together and achieve the independent state of Slovenia.”^[4]

Does revisionism begin with assertions that equate fascism, Nazism and “communism,” because they are all “totalitarianisms”? Many people, from professional historians to Partisan associations, have accused these “theories” of falsifying history. Meanwhile, such eminent political bodies as the Council of Europe and the European Parliament are constantly trying to persuade us that we must put “communism” in the same category as fascism and Nazism; they recommend this way of teaching it in schools and call on governments to remove, if not outright ban, the display of all communist symbols. The Council of Europe and the European Parliament manufacture the “European memory” and strive to erase from the “European consciousness” thoughts about an alternative to the neoliberalism of the European Union or even about leaving capitalism.^[5]

Even the president of Slovenia reminds us that we used to languish under totalitarianism but now enjoy freedom: “In little more than a quarter-century, we grew from a people into a nation, from totalitarianism into democracy, from a land into an independent and sovereign state.”^[6] The equation of fascism and socialism under the rubric of totalitarianism is, more likely than not, truly revisionism, and whoever this serves can, under the protection of the European institutions and with our president’s approval, manipulate it without constraint to their own ends. Our last hope of finding an irrefutable example of revisionism must then be the equation of the People’s Liberation Struggle (the Yugoslav antifascist Partisan movement) and the collaboration with the Nazi-Fascist occupying powers. Quite the contrary! The thesis about some “tactical collaboration”—the old quisling argument—is spreading like the plague; this thesis says that communism is the greater evil and therefore the battle against communisms takes priority over the battle against the occupier. It is difficult to call such revisionism revisionism now that the rule-of-law states in the region have nullified the verdicts against the main collaborators. In 2007, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia overturned the trial and judgment in the case of Bishop Gregorij Rožman of Ljubljana, who in 1946 was convicted in absentia for collaborating with the occupying powers and sentenced to eighteen years’ imprisonment and forced labor, the

loss of his civil rights for a period of ten years after serving his sentence, and the confiscation of his entire property; on appeal, he was further stripped of his citizenship. In 2015, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Serbia overturned the judgment against Draža Mihajlović, who in 1946 was sentenced to death and the forfeit of his civil rights for his collaboration with the occupying powers (the sentence was carried out). In 2016, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Croatia annulled the judgment in the case of Alojzij Stepinac, who in 1946 was convicted of collaborating with the occupying powers and sentenced to sixteen years in prison with forced labor and the loss of civil rights for five years. In 2020, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia annulled the judgment against Leon Rupnik, who in 1946 was convicted of treason and collaborating with the occupying powers and sentenced to death; the sentence was carried out. (In the Rupnik case, the annulment is not yet final.)

The revisionist ideology of “national reconciliation”

The equation of anti-fascist resistance and collaboration also provides the basis for the ideology of “national reconciliation.” In Slovenia, “reconciliation” is not just an official state project; it is also an official academic discipline. In 2008, the government created the Study Center for National Reconciliation, which describes its task as “to research recent Slovenian history with an emphasis on all three totalitarianisms that were present in the Slovenian territory: fascism, Nazism and communism.”^[7] The center is based on an ideological project (“reconciliation”), not on any academic program; its object of study is ideological (“all three totalitarianisms”), and its time-space specification of this object of study is short-term/national (“recent Slovenian history”), and yet it has the status of a scholarly institution.

In this ideological genre, the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts came up with an epoch-making solution: “reconciliation in guilt.”^[8] Both sides are guilty: the collaborationists because in their (justified, according to the Academy) struggle against “revolutionary terror” they collaborated with the occupier. The fighters for liberation are guilty because they allowed themselves to be “taken over” by the Communist Party with its “revolutionary terror.” This dialectic of “guilt on both sides” is a mechanism of ideological interpellation: it forces you into a dilemma and no matter how you try to wriggle out of it, you will always end up facing a ideological hook. Anyone who takes one side or the other must also accept the guilt or of this side and is, through guilt, already in reconciliation; meanwhile, anyone who remains indifferent is par-

ticularly guilty, since they have no concern for “the fundamental matters of our national existence,” as the Academy warns.

If we have not been able to find the boundary where revisionism begins, this is because the producers of revisionism are spread throughout society—anywhere and to the degree that society is controlled by the state. The examples I have cited show that revisionism is practiced in the judicial system, in political institutions, and in ideological apparatuses, from the mass media to the educational system and official academia.

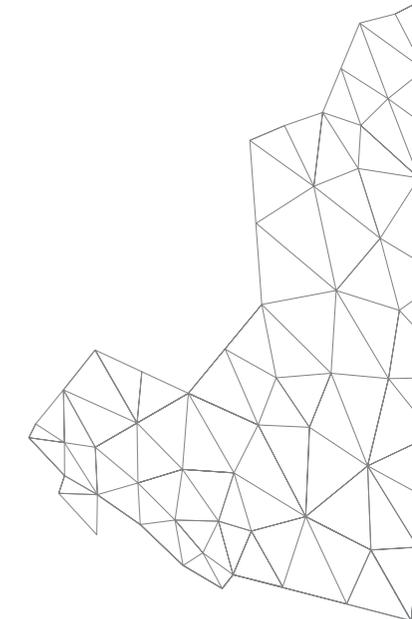
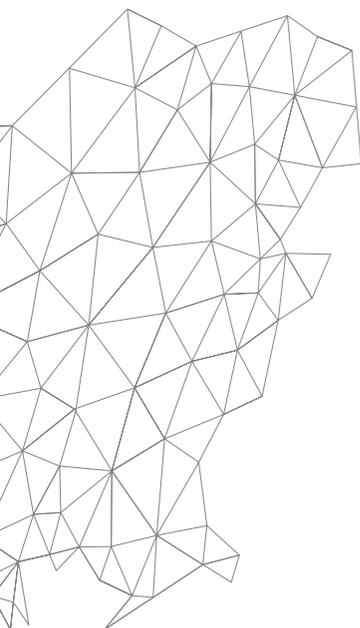
A preliminary theory of revisionism

It is impossible, therefore, for anything that is connected with the state to define the standard for revisionism, and it appears that science, too—at least, institutionalized science—is merely state science, and thus ideology.^[9] We ourselves, then, must define the standard for revisionism; that is to say, *theory* must define the *mechanisms* that result in historical revisionism.

Let us try to clarify this using the most radical revisionism, namely, the kind that strives to rehabilitate the collaboration with Nazi-Fascism through the ideology of “reconciliation.” Upon first inspection, its “radical core” lies in the ideological poverty of the illiberal political right.^[10] Its formula is “anti-communism and patriotism”—which is to say, the formula of the collaborationists. It would be illusory to expect that the collaborationist formula would attract mass support. Consequently, it is not a mere demagogic manipulation intended to bring in votes. Through the reconciliation ideology, there must be objective coercive processes at work about which the ideologues of reconciliation are themselves unaware.

We will perhaps arrive at these objective processes if we examine a further paradox of the reconciliation ideology: it has also been accepted by the nominally “anti-fascist” liberal right^[11]—with various cosmetic reservations, certainly, but with enough conviction to ensure that “reconciliation” has become a state project. We might consider the psychological mechanism here: the illiberal right hates socialism, while the liberal right is ashamed of it. This would be mere psychologizing; it would have some support in the biographies of the liberals, who were greater or lesser dignitaries in the “socialist” past—but the biographies in the illiberal right are not essentially different.

The unusual behavior of what, in principle, is otherwise the anti-fascist liberal right points to objective processes that are operating as an “external



coercive imperative” beyond the rhetorical wiles of official liberal ideology. A general solution to the problem would be that in the contemporary peripheral and dependent capitalism in the Balkans (as, on the whole, in Southern Europe and in the territories of the former “historical socialisms,” or more precisely, *post-capitalisms*) class conflicts are intensifying, which means that the ruling groups are therefore using more authoritarian means to hold on to power, the illiberal faction is therefore being the most suitable enforcer of political power, and so on. In a time of heightened class conflict, the ruling group must close its ranks—so the liberal faction is now squeezing in with the illiberals. This explanation, while correct, is nonetheless still too general. At present, the liberal faction has collapsed institutionally, in parliament (two liberal parties joined the illiberal right to form the ruling coalition), while at the same time, by contrast, the liberal ideology (human rights, media autonomy, transparency, professionalism, etc.) has become dominant in the public sphere and even, to some extent, in the mass protests.

How are we to understand this Protean ruling group, which with no particular difficulty oscillates between liberalism and illiberalism, possesses no “organic” ideology, and in all its varieties puts into effect a sometimes softer, sometimes stricter, neoliberalism? These “subjective” practical features of the politics and ideology of today’s ruling groups in the post-socialist lands may be explained by their “objective” position.

What the various factions in these national political establishments ^[12] have in common is the objective nature of the comprador bureaucracy, which is the ruling group in the dependent capitalisms of the post-socialist world.

The comprador bureaucracy, while it does, indeed, dominate the legal-political (state) sphere, lacks economic power and is not a class. It is merely local social administrator for the ruling classes, who are outside of the postsocialist social formations. It ensures the social conditions needed by transnational capital (such as a weak labor movement, loose ecological regulations, low taxes on capital earnings and so on) and seeks political patronage among the global superpowers. If it wants to remain in power, it must achieve at least minimal unity as a group. The post-Yugoslav comprador bureaucracy united around joining the European Union and NATO, and later around the adoption of the euro. When the political bureaucracy thus installed itself in a comprador position, it had already split into warring factions. Unlike a comprador bourgeoisie, which, for instance, organizes local economic processes and, through them, shapes political programs and practices, here the comprador bureaucracy does not have its own politics, as it operates by the rules of

the EU bureaucracy and under the pressure of transnational capital, which it seeks to attract to the country. Its basic work consists of maintaining the social peace and engaging in factional battles, which are presented as party pluralism.

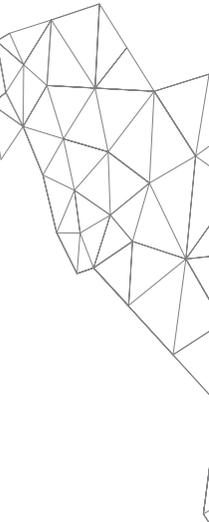
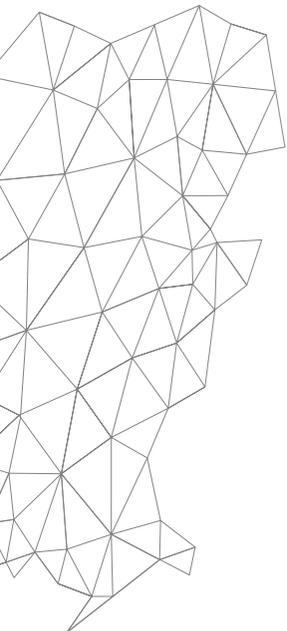
The illiberal bureaucratic factions are using the ideology of reconciliation, which echoes authentic collaborationist motifs, as well as anticommunist stereotypes that portray socialism as “communist totalitarianism” and “revolutionary terror,” in an attempt to discredit the liberal right, which is connected not only personally but also organizationally to the former political bureaucracy of postcapitalism. The liberal factions have responded to this pressure (which, despite its lack of mass support, is clearly strong within the legal-political sphere) with a two-pronged politics of passive adaptation and active amnesia. Passively, they are adapting to the ideology of reconciliation, since they clearly believe that this is their ticket to the political establishment, which would allow them to participate in the siphoning of political dividends. And actively, they are spreading “amnesia about socialism.”

The impotence of the social sciences

Why have the social sciences, and historiography in particular, not put an end to revisionism and organized amnesia? There are two reasons behind their inability to do this: the public news media have excluded science from the public sphere, and our scientific and educational institutions have excluded theory.

The public news media are dependent on commercial success; the present order is pushing even media that are truly “public” (that is, not privately owned) into the commercial sphere. Their material, to the degree that they use material, they acquire from official scientific and educational institutions, and their reporters and correspondents also come from these educational institutions. But in the humanities and social sciences, these institutions merely recycle, in a more esoteric language, varieties of the political ideologies we have already presented. There are several reasons why institutionally supported science has descended into ideology.

The basic reason is that the local ideological bureaucracies (just like the political and economic bureaucracies) have yoked themselves to the general campaign of the “Western” empires, which are trying to compensate for their economic decline with military domination, political manipulations, and ideological supremacy. To this campaign belong the destruction of public



education, the debasement of higher education into the supplier of a cheap work force with “commercially competitive profiles,” the introduction of corporate management at universities, ideological control over research in the social sciences and humanities, the expulsion of theory from higher education and research institutions, and, last but not least, the Bologna reforms.

Institutions whose official aim is, supposedly, to facilitate the production of science are now attacking theory. Without theory, science degenerates into ideology. We might say that the local scientific and educational institutions have yielded to neocolonialist pressure, but in fact they have joined it: they have turned themselves into its local mouthpieces. Institutions of science and education have become comprador apparatuses governed by the comprador ideological bureaucracy. They have transformed bylaws and regulations, from the top down, under state and institutional coercion. The academic community has not opposed this; on the contrary, this community has collapsed—its remnants now devote themselves to office intrigue and have no connection with the ordinary people who pay their salaries. Even if the public media were not boycotting theory, official academia would be unable to supply it.

The social sciences and humanities are now importing cognitive objects from the the dominant ideologies (“identities,” “marginalization,” “vulnerable groups,” “inclusive society,” etc.); they clothe ideological practices in learned jargon and thus equip ideology with “scholarly” authority.

The impotence of historiography

Even initiatives to re-establish scientific practices and oppose revisionism allow us to see just how badly the expulsion of theory and the importation of ideology have undermined the possibility of theory-based scientific work.^[13] This is how well-intentioned historians define the epistemological foundations of history as a science: “establishing precise and verifiable facts, their analysis and synthesis”; learning “how to verify information”; “historical facts”, which may be “interpreted” in various ways depending on the “point of view”; “relevant data”; “opposing opinions”; “a multi-perspective approach to past events”; etc.^[14] Antirevisionist historians advocate the position of “a history of events,” which Fernand Braudel, one of the pioneers of modern historiography, warned about: “Social science has almost what amounts to a horror of the event. And not without some justification, for the short time span is the most capricious and the most delusive of all.” Even if we truly “reliably and precisely ascertain facts and events,” we must, as the histo-

Translated from Slovenian
by Rawley Grau

rians justifiably point out, analyze and synthesize them—and if we have no theory, then ideology will supply our cohesive element. If we have no theory to provide a framework in which we could even begin to determine what counts as a “fact” (“events” are, in any case, ideological constructs), then we are ascertaining these “facts” intuitively, i.e. ideologically. Immanuel Wallerstein noted that the event-based method of the short time-span encompasses only the national space and, for this reason, is oblivious of the structural relations and long-term processes that determine the phenomena of the short time-span in the national space. Without theory, calls for a “transnational” discipline that is “free from any political, ideological, religious or economic pressure” are nothing more than pretty wishes.^[15]

Conclusion

Historical revisionism is an ideology that serves to preserve and reaffirm the rule of political and ideological bureaucracies in countries that are losing their former central position in the global capitalist system, given that the center has been shifting to East Asia. Social conflicts are intensifying, and the ruling groups seek to preserve their rule through measures that are ever more coercive and ideological practices that are ever more institutionally regulated. Historical revisionism is one such ideological practice: by manipulating the social memory, it oppresses the social imagination and deprives the rebellious masses of their intellectual weapons and political tools.

The Balkan countries (like, more generally, Southern and Eastern Europe) are becoming the periphery of the “Atlantic” semiperiphery.^[16] the replication of institutional structures and legal, political, and ideological practices are here partly imposed by the European Union, but this copying of the neocolonial master is also, partly, a strategy by which the comprador bureaucracies hold on to power. In the periphery of the semiperiphery, the institutional processes and ideological practices that produce historical revisionism are, therefore, all the more intensive, and all the more violent. A critique of revisionism is beneficial to the degree that it dismantles the ideological mechanisms that reproduce the present domination on the local and international levels. But we will not be free of revisionism until we eliminate these relations of oppression and exploitation.

RASTKO MOČNIK

Rastko Močnik has retired from teaching at the University of Ljubljana and is currently a guest professor at the Faculty of Media and Communications, Singidunum University, Belgrade. He has been an activist and participant in alternative movements since the 1960s. In the 1990s, he chaired the Open Society Foundation–Slovenia. He is a translator of works by Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Claude Lévy-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Donald Davidson, Jacques Lacan and others, and is also the author of several books on the theory of ideology and the epistemology of the humanities and social sciences, most recently: *Spisi o suvremenom kapitalizmu* (Writings on Contemporary Capitalism), Zagreb, 2016 and *Teorija sa ideologijom* (Theory with Ideology), Belgrade, 2019.

- [1] Actually the autonomy of culture and art, their independence from day-to-day politics, had been established, at least on the declarative level, a few years before Miroslav Krleža delivered his speech "On Freedom of Culture" at the 3rd Congress of the Writers' Union of Yugoslavia, in October 1952 in Ljubljana. In December 1949, the plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia condemned the imposition of an official doctrine in the arts and proclaimed the conceptual autonomy of cultural creation.
- [2] A specific form of Yugoslav socialist democracy was, for example, the social management of public services (health care, education, culture, the pension system, social services), which made impossible both the bureaucratic etatization and the market commercialization of these activities; it did, however, allow for decisions to be made by those who had expertise in these fields and those whom the decisions affected, i.e., the implementers and the users.
- [3] On the positive appraisal of socialism and the negative appraisal of capitalism in Slovenian public opinion, see Maca Jogan and Živa Broder, "Slovenija: dva družbena sistema v spremenljivi kolektivni zavesti," *Družboslovne razprave* 31, no. 80 (2015); and Maca Jogan and Živa Broder, "Samostojna Slovenija in kolektivni zgodovinski spomin," *Teorija in praksa: revija za družbena vprašanja* 53, special issue (2016).
- [4] From the address by Slovenian President Danilo Türk at the main celebration of Slovenian Statehood Day, June 22, 2012, <http://www2.gov.si/up-rs/2007-2012/turk-slo-arhiv.nsf/dokumentiwweb/E71-23D4D6BB04A56C1257A25007937CC> (accessed May 15, 2021).
- [5] The most recent product of this ideological industry is the European Parliament's "Resolution on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe," dated September 19, 2019, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021_EN.html (accessed April 8, 2021). The preamble cites numerous other resolutions, declarations, statements, etc., that equate "communism" with Nazi-Fascism.
- [6] From the address by Slovenian President Borut Pahor for Slovenian Statehood Day, June 24, 2018, <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs.nsf/objave/3F6A1106D6DE490CC12582B60-05C8150> (accessed May 15, 2021).
- [7] "Mission and goals," <https://www.scnr.si/en/about-the-centre.html>.
- [8] "Izjava SAZU o slovenski spravi" ("Slovenian Reconciliation: Statement on Reconciliation on the 30th Anniversary of the Sovereign State of Slovenia") on the Academy's website, <https://www.sazu.si/events/604f373d12416e9924e4eac7> (accessed April 6, 2021).
- [9] Translator's note: The Slovenian word *znanost*—"science"—covers a much broader range of concepts than the modern English word, which when used without a modifier normally refers only to the physical and natural sciences (the

"hard sciences"), while fields such as history, economics, and sociology are described as the "social sciences. Rastko Močnik's word *znanost*, however, covers all learned disciplines, so in several cases I have translated it, and its derivative *znanstven*, as *academia* and *academic*. But as his argument begins to home in on the nature of the knowledge being produced in academia, the word *science* (and *scientific*), with its connotation of reliance on verified data and logical thought ("theory"), in contrast to *ideology*, seems the necessary choice.

- [10] In Slovenia, illiberal politics is being implemented by the coalition currently in power, which consists of the Slovenian Democratic Party, the Christian Democrats, and two liberal parties.
- [11] Various liberal parties and nominal social democrats.
- [12] In Slovenia, we can consider all the political parties, as well as the state administration organically connected to them, to be part of the political establishment. The exception is the Left party, whose program is democratic socialism.
- [13] An example is the project "Who Started All This? Historians Against Revisionism"; see "Announcement of the 'Defend History' Declaration," <http://www.krokodil.rs/eng/who-started-all-this-historians-against-revisionism-final-conference/> (accessed June 25, 2021).
- [14] The declaration "Defend History" is available here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-DQ8edN-TS3W5_hhJTWYSkhrP515F_Xh (accessed May 25, 2021).
- [15] The quotations are from the "Defend History" declaration (see n. 14).
- [16] This was the position of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia immediately before the Second World War, when it was on the periphery of the European semiperiphery of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.



DUŠAN PETRIČIĆ

Over the past several decades, Dušan Petričić's cartoons have appeared regularly in major Yugoslav and Serbian magazines (*Politika*, *NIN*), and since 1993 also in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Toronto Star*, *Scientific American*, *The Scientist*, and many others.

He is the co-author and/or illustrator of more than 60 books for children published in Yugoslavia and North America. Dušan Petričić is a recipient of many prestigious international awards for his cartoons and book illustrations from Tokyo, Amsterdam, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Leipzig, Moscow, Budapest, Ankara, New York, Philadelphia, Toronto, Montreal and Skopje. He was a professor of illustration and animation at the University of Belgrade, as well at the Sheridan College, Oakville, Canada, and OCADU, Toronto. He divides his time between Toronto, Canada, and Belgrade, Serbia.

Contemporary Art and Soros Art

Lev Kreft



Among the many ideas that have been handed down to us from Walter Benjamin and become generally accepted, two claims from point seven of his diagnosis of modernity stand out. This diagnosis was written shortly before Benjamin fled Paris and made for the Spanish border, where he died by suicide (after having previously contemplated and announced suicide a number of times). The treatise, later given the title "On the Concept of History," came into the hands of Theodor Adorno, who published it. The first generally accepted claim from this treatise is that the cultural tradition is in reality a "triumphal procession" of victors who have appropriated and carried off historical "cultural treasures" as spoils.^[1] The second is that the historical materialist "regards it as his task to brush history against the grain," so that the previously refined cultural tradition is called into question. When the institution of art (as Peter Bürger calls the formed and fashioned apparatus of bourgeois art) or the artistic field (as a realm separated from others through its autonomy, each of which has specific rules for gaining power, as Pierre Bourdieu writes) operates in such a way that its hegemonic principle controls its population (artists and works of art) and distributes it into persistent institutions, the appropriation of spoils takes place as a matter of course, without any particular difficulties. But this is rarely the case in modernity, since modernity is by definition a state of instability. Karel Teige, writing about romanticism, notes that it prevailed in some key European countries in the first half of the nineteenth century, but unlike the courtly art of the classicism that preceded it, romanticism was less unified in style. Its disunity had a political and, to some extent, a class basis. Conservative romanticism nurtured a romantic dreaminess about escaping into wild, untamed nature as a sign of opposing landscapes transformed by bourgeois industrialism, and it glorified the wild, primal man, whom civilization had not yet managed to corrupt. The literature and theatre of liberal romanticism declared itself

© Šejla Kamezić, public installation EU / OTHERS, The Triple Bridge, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2000

in favor of democratic national republicanism—Victor Hugo’s performances provoked political demonstrations in the audience, as did opera—and Giuseppe Verdi’s surname became a catchword for adherents of the monarchy-based unification movement: *Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re d’Italia!* (long live Victor Emmanuel, king of Italy). Romantic bohemians, gathering on the Left Bank in Paris, saw themselves as affiliates of the proletariat and the *Lumpenproletariat*, and this affiliation continued with the *poètes maudits* of the second half of the nineteenth century, after the Paris Commune. All three versions of romanticism have long since become “spoils,” regardless of whether, like the later avant-garde, they stood on the edge in triumph and left the artistic field through their descent into life, or whether they were constantly striving to become recognized on the next descriptive label in a museum arranged according to historical periods.

One thing, however, is certain: From modernity onward, from the end of the French Revolution onward, there has always been at least one stream in contemporary art that has successfully resisted admission to the academy and the museum. When artists are canonized years after their death, they are already so outdated that they would be lost to memory if the institution of art had not accepted them under its wing. Walter Benjamin is right, but he is also not right: contemporary art is not a matter of spoils taken by a triumphal procession of victors; rather, it is a living investment in a process that may someday be transformed into spoils, but not now and not immediately. A good deal of contemporary art jostles its way forth, offering itself to become the spoils carried along in the procession. However, much modern art, at least since romanticism, has resisted this metamorphosis, not only because of artists’ conviction but primarily because their works have for some time resisted classification; such works break with the established line of historical progress and do not belong to the historical story of each new modernity, at least not without a thorough reworking and profound forgetting of everything that is unsettling or disturbing. Among the most disturbing obstacles for the institution of art in the process of digesting the history of art is the “politics” of art. The Soviet avant-garde was allowed to become interesting as spoils only after it could be declared a victim of the revolution; only then was it preserved in a canonized and institutionalized model by being transformed from an aesthetic to an artistic avant-garde after the end of the Soviet empire. Such thinking is in line with the differentiation established by Aleš Erjavec, namely, between the artistic avant-garde, which causes trouble in art, and the aesthetic avant-garde, which enters the world of politics, economics and everyday life, leaving the world of art behind. The path that leads to the institution of art

from the Left Bank is a path of professional conversion and pretense, especially through interventions that depoliticize the art’s own political aspects.

Every period of modernity has had its contemporary art, but the way each period establishes its version of contemporary art has changed radically from the twentieth to the twenty-first century. According to a nineteenth century model that continued to remain valid through the first half of the twentieth, a new wave rises in response to yesterday’s artistic newness that radically rejects everything that came before it and establishes itself as an aesthetic hegemon. Often the new rejects and overturns the history of art and history as a whole. To use the language of Arthur Danto, works appear which, according to the previous definition of the field, are beyond the limits of art, thereby redefining the entire field. This is what the avant-garde entails: a subversion in the artistic field and a stretching of the boundaries of art. But after a while this subversive aspect ends with the inclusion of the new in the institutional canon, while a new wave of the avant-garde leaps over this institutional appropriation and redefines the history of art and the artistic field.

Postmodernism argued that the end of modernism also entailed the end of this characteristically subversive model of the history of art, in which, as Bertolt Brecht so neatly put it, bad new things are preferable to good old ones. With postmodernism, the Western world of art responded to the tiresome repetition of the always-and-ever new, declaring, “Anything Goes!”—there is no need to divide the old and the new, the acceptable and the unacceptable, the primitive and the progressive, in the framework of the permissible and the tolerable. Even some ideological, engaged and political art remains possible, albeit on the condition that it does not put forward the thesis that it is the *only* real art. In contrast to Western postmodernism, the communist East—from the Soviet Union to China, from Vietnam to Cuba—saw a different exit from a different modernist model. In the communist East, the successor to modernism was fostered by the historical avant-garde that had been included in the original revolutionary process, by socialist realism as a prescribed artistic context of socialism in any one country, by moderate modernism as a sign of the decay of totalitarian rule in culture, and finally by the neo-avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s that chose both moderate modernism and its socialist-realist predecessor as the object of modernist rejection. In the Western Balkans, postmodernism did not mean that within art one can do what one wants without ideological restrictions. Rather, it only had to establish a public space for art and unlock the field where state-party cultural bureaucrats and moderate modernism’s bearers of national academic creativity had scissors and canvass in their hands. In Slovenia, this type of contemporary art

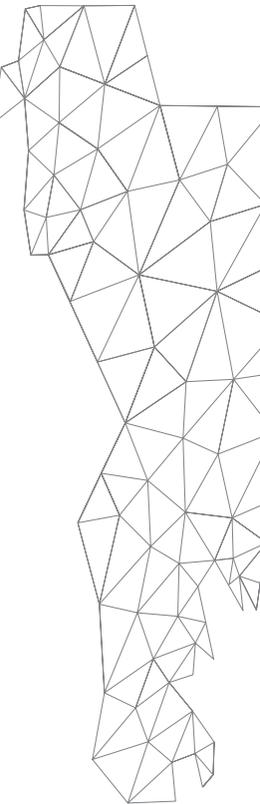
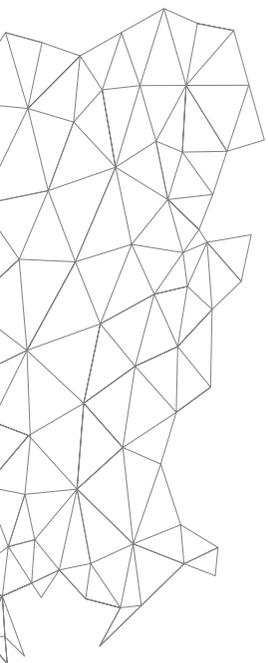
that was so typical of the 1980s earned itself the title “alternative art.” Alternative art participated in the processes of conquering and expanding the public space, asserting human rights and civic politics, narrowing the space of rule of hegemonic national culture and socialist cultural policy, and offering expressive means to new generations. Doing so (and this brings us back to Benjamin’s thesis about spoils) made it clear that contemporary art is art that has not yet succeeded in being turned into spoils (as is the case with every contemporary art), and alternative art is at the same time also the type of contemporary art that, against the hegemonic desires of socialist institutions and national cultural hegemonies, developed into a complete strategy with detailed tactics, while rejecting in advance all forms of cultural consumerism and the popular culture industry.

Alternative art was one of the components that brought down socialism—the other two were nationalist culture and neoliberal economic ideology. Alternative culture also participated in the demolition, but with its perspective of postsocialism, it still portrayed itself as an alternative, this time as an alternative to party democracy and to neoliberal capitalism. Nationalism perceived Slovenia exclusively as a sovereign ethnic community that was a bulwark against everything foreign; the neoliberalism of socialist management imagined Slovenia to be its private property. Alternative culture, on the other hand, imagined its place in the new state as a continuation of alternatives—and for this it expected understanding and support, though it never received that understanding and support. Had it not received support from the West, especially in the form of the activities of the Open Society Institute (OSI), this art would have been recorded as disappearing and would have been inventoried among the artefacts of the museum collection of Slovenian culture. Although OSI in Slovenia abandoned its institutional activities fairly early on, these were in part continued by the Ljubljana-based Peace Institute, though the Peace Institute lacked the grant-giving practice typical for OSI’s involvement with the civil society. Alternative culture was left to its own devices, to operate the way it knew how—and it knew how not least because it had maintained the interconnectedness and mutual recognition that began in OSI and became solidified in OSI’s spin-offs. The very name “SCCA, Center for Contemporary Arts—Ljubljana” indicates that it does not conceal or deny its origin as a Soros Center for Contemporary Art. The label “alternative art,” meanwhile, has faded into the more general “contemporary art” or, in the narrower sense, “activist art” or “artivism.” As the foregoing suggests, alternative art in the Balkans did not see as sharp a differentiation between East and West as was the case elsewhere (although this is perhaps

why especially in the Balkans this difference was conceptualized early on), and neither did it see a hostile distinction between domestic subversive tradition and the purveyed liberal Western art models for the postcommunist era. Miško Šuvaković argues that the disintegration of the socialist bloc also stimulated the emergence of Western institutions, the function of which was to support and guide transition processes in communist countries. The wars in former Yugoslavia, which were waged for exclusive national control over territories and populations, certainly had an impact on Balkan diversity, as they could not be ended without Western intervention and without support for the introduction of a liberal democratic constitutional model. That said, nowhere did this model become the only game in town. In art, notably in the aforementioned Centers for Contemporary Art, this situation gave rise to the label “Soros Art” or “Soros realism,” as Šuvaković calls it.^[2] These centers help create a special type of new art, and the realism of this art refers not so much to the aesthetic aspect or the philosophical meaning of realism, but to connecting the East, including the Balkans, to Western reality. Šuvaković lists the non-artistic expectations of the institutions that supported of new art in terms of the East in transition meeting the West in globalization, resulting in art reconfigured according to the following non-artistic requirements:

- initiating transition in culture and placing it at a global level;
- emancipation from the elite models of modernism and postmodernism;
- the metamorphosis of “alternative” urban art as marginal art of national cultures between popular and high culture into art that tests the annulation of the hierarchy between the margins and the centers;
- urging the “politicalness” of civil society.^[3]

In and of itself, this is nothing new. A similar process was brought into being after the Second World War, when Nazi art and Japanese traditional art were abolished and replaced, with the model of abstract expressionism being held up as a model of emancipatory and emancipated art. It is no coincidence that after several years of propagating abstract expressionism, two remarkably similar variants of “capitalist realism” appeared in Germany (in West Germany, of course, albeit with significant creative contributions from German artists who fled the East), rejecting the proposed model, but also a model of returning to domestic patterns. These variants opted for anticapitalism, especially in terms of critiquing consumer life for turning people into objects—a critique which entailed rejecting the art world as brought about by the American market and by a profit-oriented model of cultural policy. Already in this process, it is evident that there is not just one axis (East–West), but an addi-





tional and no less important axis of opposition between the cosmo-political and domestic-national or even purely ethnic orientation. Cosmo-political. Not cosmopolitan, because it is a political orientation and not just a cosmopolitan personal approach. The third axis, however, was formed by the transition from socialism to capitalism, which changed the sign of the correct and expected affiliation of culture to political hegemony. It was along this third axis that ruling coalition after ruling coalition—on an ongoing basis—decided which actors, depending on where they fell along the first two axes, had access to the government and the ministry of culture and their support.

Thus, in Slovenia, the first or Demos period proclaimed a Catholic culture of prayer and work (*ora et labora*), which provoked keen resistance from the ranks of alternative arts. During the reign of liberal democracy, these ranks found an open door of support. This support sprang from a former youth organization that already in the 1980s had become a political representative of subversive artistic currents. However, this open door meant exactly what Miroslav Krleža called antechambering, and what the ancient Romans called clientelism: For something or someone to be accepted, artists had to come to the antechamber and express, through their work and attitude, political affiliation and cultural availability. In the period of its transition to contemporary art, alternative culture rejected *antechambering*—despite the fact that individuals and some groups tried to make this transition as well. It is only after reviewing this outline of the context and basic axes of the cultural and artistic conditions that we can define “Soros realism” as a style of art with the following characteristics:

- (a) it has a function;
- (b) it has a relation of presentation and representation in regard to a concrete societal and cultural reality;
- (c) it has an “optimal projection,” which means a positive social change project (emancipation, education) is “represented” through the work of art.^[4]

The four strands of non-artistic requirements and the three thrusts of “Soros realism” in art are best served by the aforementioned Centers for Contemporary Art. The activities of these centers create a similar type of new art, but this new art’s realism resides not in its aesthetic aspect, not in the philosophical sense of realism, but in its connecting the East—again, including the Balkans—to the Western reality characterized by postmodernism:

“*Soros realism* is not realism in the sense of a return to the realism of the paranoid nationalistic type that emerged in most postsocialist societies in the

© Šejla Kamešič, public installation EU / OTHERS, The Triple Bridge, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2000

1980s and 1990s. Neither is it a brutal variation of the socialist realism that established the canons of expression in the 1930s, '40s, '50s and '60s in the East. On the contrary, it is a *soft* and *subtle* uniformisation and standardisation of postmodernist pluralism and multiculturalism as a criterion of enlightened political liberalism, and it must be realised by European societies at the turn of the century."^[5]

In short, this realism is not a stylistic aesthetic move but a political orientation for an alternative culture in transition, whose culture is to be modernized beyond the Western model of a market-oriented, popular and creative-industrial culture. It should be immediately emphasized that liberalism does not refer to the neoliberalism that the managerial and political classes brought into the transition in the 1990s, when neoliberalism gained ground in the Balkans as a justification for the total privatization and dismantling of all that was social and communal. Rather, liberalism was neoliberalism's opponent—the liberal Enlightenment that placed alternative/contemporary art in the context of civic emancipation, human rights and the right to engagement and resistance. Liberalism's role as a subversive alternative did not end with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the emergence of Western-style liberal democracies, and oftentimes completely new countries. Instead, through its own searching and the support of the Open Society Foundations, alternative art sought an engaged place in these new constellations. The following should not be forgotten: The Soros institutions explicitly adhered to a non-paternalistic relationship between the West and the East, including their support for art that expressed a critical attitude toward the self-satisfied West after the fall of socialism. They did not set up links in the Balkans as international and transnational cooperation but as a primary joint artistic activity; and from the very beginning, they focused their activist criticism and doubt not only on the socialist starting point but also on the (neo)liberal goal of transition, from the standpoint of civil society.

The artistic currents that developed a specific way of undermining party hegemony and conquering public space in the 1980s were supported by a network of contemporary art centers that provided an alternative to nationalist euphoria, various lusts for power, and the Yugoslav wars of succession. This also meant a stronger and more enduring shaping of the artistic field. For all its diversity, this field preserved the experience of the 1980s and developed a new artistic activism for the new century within new, increasingly authoritarian or at least neoliberal circumstances, and it did so while maintaining many contacts and creating new networks in the cultural space of the former Yugoslavia. And if the circumstances have changed today, thirty years later,

Translated from Slovenian
by Jason Blake

the central point of contemporary activist art or activism is the struggle for open public space and respect for the public good into which it reaches in connecting and merging with other subversive social movements, to enable democratic politics and various public goods in the face of authoritarian and increasingly obvious and overt fascist hegemony. The "soft and subtle" work done by and still being done by the Centers for Contemporary Art in the former Yugoslavia, as well as by Ljubljana's Center for Contemporary Arts, represents an important tradition and tangible support for these artistic engagements, although now more in the sense of theoretical, ethical and institutional support, rather than in how financial resources are distributed.

Today, this support is once again crucial, as we are experiencing a personnel tsunami in cultural institutions founded by the state, which staffs key positions with people who are willing to use extreme means to erase and obliterate the rebellious tradition of previous decades.

[1] The Benjamin quotations are from "On the Concept of History," available at <http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html>.

[2] Miško Šuvaković, *Umetnost i politika: Savremena estetika, filozofija, teorija i umetnost u vremenu globalne tranzicije* [Art and politics: Contemporary aesthetics, philosophy, theory and art in the time of global transition] (Belgrade: *Službeni glasnik*, 2012), 160–161.

[3] *Ibid.*, 161. (The English translations here and those below are borrowed or adapted from <http://www.ljudmila.org/scca/platforma3/suvakoviceng.htm>.)

[4] *Ibid.*, 162.

[5] *Ibid.*

LEV KREFT

Lev Kreft has retired from the teaching of aesthetics at the University of Ljubljana. During the 1980s he was both a researcher and director at the Marxist Center of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia. During the transition period (1990-1996) he served in the Slovenian Parliament and as deputy Speaker. He has been affiliated since 2001 with the Peace Institute, where he served as director (2004-2012), and is a founding member of the European Association for the Philosophy of Sport. He has published books and articles on aesthetics, the philosophy of art, and the philosophy of sport, and serves on editorial boards at Routledge for the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport and Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*.

End of a Country; End of an Empire: Yugoslavia in the light of Brexit

Misha Glenny

From the mid-1980s onwards my job as a foreign correspondent would take me on a regular basis to Belgrade and Zagreb. I had friends in both cities and it felt no different than traveling between London and Edinburgh. But from the spring of 1990 until the outbreak of war in June 1991, something shifted. What struck me most was how rapidly political, social and even cultural conversations in the two capitals had begun to diverge. Friends in Zagreb would ask me eagerly for news from Belgrade when I arrived and the same was true vice versa. In earlier times, of course, they would have easily gleaned such news themselves primarily through the media although also of course through friends.

But something fundamental was happening, especially after the Croatian elections of April 1990 which resulted in a thumping victory for Franjo Tudjman's HDZ. The flags were changing, the street names were changing, even the statues were new. The new government had concerns which were very different from Milošević's regime in Serbia—essentially they were preparing for independence but they were also enacting a series of measures designed to strengthen Croatian national identity in light of the forthcoming break-up of Yugoslavia. This was an intense experience in which the politics of Zagreb and Croatia's regions, once merely of provincial interest, was suddenly much more important to people living in Croatia than the politics of Belgrade.

At the same time, it became increasingly difficult to find copies of *Politika* in Zagreb or copies of *Vjesnik* in Belgrade. The number of kiosks which carried the papers from Serbia in Croatia or Croatian papers in Serbia became ever

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smaller. I know that because I had to start my day by reading both and the Internet didn't yet exist—you had to get hold of the physical copies and this became more difficult by the day.

I was reminded of this when I travelled to the Edinburgh Festival in the summer following the Brexit Referendum in 2016. Conversation around the dinner tables of Edinburgh and in the newspapers was all about what the decision to leave the European Union meant for the renewed prospects of Scottish independence. The Scots had voted with a significant majority not to leave the EU. The people in Northern Ireland had also made plain their desire to remain. It was a majority of the English (and the Welsh) who voted to leave.

That summer I had my first conversations with Scots who had never previously entertained the idea of independence, explaining patiently why the Brexit vote had changed their position. My friend Matt, an actor, had been a supporter of the Union since I had first met him at university in Bristol. He had always voted Labour and always avoided the Scottish National Party. But that summer, he had changed his tune. 'I've had it with London and the Labour Party is a waste of time,' he told me, 'I now want us to be free of Westminster.' Until this moment, the commitment to the Union with England had certainly faced important challenges but it never seemed seriously threatened. Now it was. It remains so to this day.

Scotland had always boasted its own lively independent press. Yet for the first time, I met people who had stopped reading anything published by the big London houses, like Murdoch's News International or Rothermere's Mail group, because they regarded these as Brexit-supporting attack dogs of Westminster. Some were even turning off the BBC as being the mouthpiece of a London elite which either ignored Scotland or regarded the country with contempt.

The Brexit referendum took place nineteen years after Tony Blair's devolution legislation had enabled the establishment of a Scottish parliament. Henceforth the new building at Holyrood would be responsible for most domestic legislation north of the border although Westminster reserved most revenue-raising legislation for itself, along with defence, immigration and foreign policy. By the time of Brexit, two very distinct parliamentary cultures had emerged in Scotland and England. Whereas the Scots were aware of this, the English had no idea—they didn't care what happened beyond their borders even within the Union. This English indifference is to have serious consequences.

In 2001 during the nearly-civil war in the then Republic of Macedonia, I opened my remarks at a conference in Skopje by saying how I wished to talk about a country that had started to fragment about a decade earlier and could conceivably begin falling apart in the next couple of decades or so. The other attendees assumed I was talking about Macedonia or some other still contested territory in the former Yugoslavia. They all laughed when I rounded off my introduction with the words, 'I am, of course, talking about the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.' Devolution had just gone through and I was talking in jest.

Today the laughter seems hollow. At the time, I realised that there were political contradictions within the British Union, but I hadn't anticipated they would reach the point they did 20 years later. To be clear, the break-up of Britain is now a real possibility.

As the government of Boris Johnson started to push for as hard a Brexit as possible from 2019 onwards, the wheels began to fall off the bus in Northern Ireland and Scotland. While it seemed impossible that this process would not descend into the type of war that characterised Yugoslavia's break-up, there was and is a real risk of a return of violence in Northern Ireland and, as I will argue below, the move towards independence in Scotland could also include some nasty surprises.

We witnessed a taste of this in Northern Ireland in April 2021 when young Loyalists (protestants who are militant supporters of the Union with the UK), unhappy with the way Brexit has turned out for the province, rioted for several nights in Belfast. This is because in order to secure the hard Brexit which his party and advisers demanded, Boris Johnson had to agree with what is effectively a customs border between England, Scotland and Wales on the one hand and Northern Ireland on the other. For the loyalist community this looks worryingly like the first step on the road to a United Ireland and a complete break in the ties with Britain.

As I write many people in Northern Ireland are bracing themselves for the next so-called marching season. This takes place every July when Loyalists, supporters of the union with Britain who make up the great majority of the protestant community, take to the streets to commemorate a series of battles that took place in the late 17th century and in the process taunt the local Catholic community with sectarian songs and slogans. It never passes off without incident. In the coming years, the marching season is guaranteed to be unusually tense.

There are, of course, huge differences between the history of the territories which made up the former Yugoslavia and the United Kingdom. After all, Yugoslavia only came into existence in 1918 after the collapse of three proximate empires, the Austro-Hungarian, the Ottoman and the Russian, that had dominated either territorially or ideologically for several centuries. For much of the next century, Yugoslavia was the object of both peaceful and violent competition for influence by the great powers in the wake of the Versailles treaties. Domestic cultural, confessional and national differences ricocheted within royal Yugoslavia, the interregnum of blood between 1941-1945, and communist Yugoslavia. Equally the great powers were able to exploit local actors in attempts to further their interests in a region which was as strategically important in the interwar years as it had been in the run-up to the Great War.

Britain assumed its present form three years after the formation of the first Yugoslavia. In 1921, Ireland was partitioned, Northern Ireland or Ulster, comprising six of Ireland's 32 counties, becoming a new distinct entity in the UK. In the south, the Irish Free State, effectively an independent Ireland, was formed.

But the origins of the British Union go back much further. England subdued Wales in the late 13th century; the Union between Scotland and England has lasted since 1707 and the kingdom of Ireland was officially incorporated in 1800 even though it had been under English domination since the 16th century.

Henry VIII reasserted English claims to Ireland in 1536 but the key moment in English-Irish relations was the first decade of the 17th century when the crown established 'plantations' (protestant settlements) the greatest number concentrated in one of Ireland's five historic provinces, Ulster. The men and women who populated these plantations were primarily migrants from the West of Scotland and northern England. They are the ancestors of today's loyalist protestant community in Northern Ireland (amongst them was a belted knight from Ayrshire, Sir David Glenny, from whom I am directly descended). Many historians consider that this plantation represented England's first colony, the model of a system that would spread around the world and ensure Britain's primacy as the decisive global power in the first half of the 19th century.

Until the 1970s, Britain had maintained one of the most centralised political systems in the Western world, ably assisted by the absence of a written

constitution, an anachronistic anomaly that successive prime ministers have been able to exploit to their advantage. Under the 1707 Act of Union, Scotland retained its rights to a separate legal, religious, educational and fiscal system.

But all political power was vested in Westminster as were almost all revenue-raising powers.

There is no question that Scotland, the north of Ireland and south Wales benefited hugely from the Union with England through much of the 18th and 19th centuries. The impact of the Scottish Enlightenment in the late 18th century through figures like Adam Smith, David Hume and James Watt travelled far beyond the borders of Great Britain, while individual Scots not only colonised many of the professions of London, they emerged as the backbone of the colonial and military administrations across the British Empire. The elegant houses of Edinburgh and the great industrial landscapes of Glasgow and its surrounds were built on money coming in from the colonies (frequently from slavery, although Scots are sometimes less than forthcoming about that).

The one community who patently did not benefit from this arrangement were the Catholics of Ireland. They were treated distinctly as second-class citizens. Their horrific famine of the 1840s encapsulated their fate most brutally. Ireland's population was some eight and a half million at the beginning of this decade. Over the next seven years, one million died due to famine and two million emigrated (mainly to the United States where, as Catholics, they were greeted with similar discrimination by the protestant populations of New York and Boston). Right up until partition in 1921, the Catholics who made up between 80 and 90 percent of the population of Ireland, owned just 5 percent of the land.

And that was the deal. England controlled the politics; the Scots, the Welsh and the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland could access all the economic benefits of Empire. And it worked (except, as we have seen, for Ireland's Catholics) until the 1970s when Britain's post-colonial malaise mingled poisonously with post-industrial uncertainties. The Thatcherite revolution a decade later further damaged the unspoken economic agreement between Scotland and England by shifting Britain away from its manufacturing past and towards a neoliberal present in which the City of London would have the decisive say and the neglect of Scottish interests began in earnest.

In 2014 Scotland held a 'once-in-a-generation' referendum on independence in which the proposition was rejected, 54 percent to 44 percent. And that

would have been everything settled for at least another 20 years. Except that vote on Scottish independence took place before David Cameron, the then Conservative Prime Minister, decided to hold a vote on whether the UK wanted to leave the European Union.

Brexit has accelerated the possibility of the break-up of Britain like no other event. In the 2016 referendum both Northern Ireland and Scotland voted convincingly to remain in the EU. But Brexit was essentially a project driven by a nostalgic English nationalism that took no account of the sensibilities and pro-European sentiment of the Celtic periphery.

At this point, the reader may well ask – what has all this got to do with Yugoslavia? I have already outlined that the historical specifics of Britain and Yugoslavia are extremely different. Yet as we have observed in the wake of the financial crash and especially since 2016, we have seen various political and social phenomena repeated across countless countries albeit tailored to their own cultural cloth. Perhaps, without us realising it at the time, Yugoslavia was not the end of an era but the first event of the new epoch.

The wars of the 1990s resulted in part from the economic opportunities which the collapse of communism offered the country's predatory regional elites, particularly in Serbia and Croatia. These leaders, above all Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman, were able to exploit the complex history of the region to disguise the seizure of state assets after the planned economy began to give way to capitalism. The politics of fear refracted through the memories of violent nationalism created easy paths for Milošević and Tuđman to consolidate their political monopolies. For Milošević this was even easier than for his Croatian counterpart. The creation of the Socialist Party of Serbia enabled him and his allies to maintain control over many of the political, social and economic instruments that had previously been at the disposal of the League of Communists of Serbia and, to a lesser extent, the federal communist structures.

As is well documented, this involved the premeditated and managed 'anti-bureaucratic' revolutions to bring Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro under Belgrade's control. Once Milošević had achieved this, he had a powerful constitutional tool at his disposal and it was no surprise when Slovenia and Croatia began co-ordinating their moves towards independence (a very temporary alliance which lasted until days after the war broke out in June 1991 when Ljubljana predictably struck a deal with Belgrade so that it could leave the federation without any further bother from the JNA).

By the time multiparty elections were held in Slovenia and Croatia in 1990, it was clear that the outcome would result in a majority for parties seeking independence. By this time, so many of Yugoslavia's federal institutions were either no longer functioning or they were being undermined by one of the six republican governments.

As Žarko Puhovski has argued the Sabor's decision – on Tuđman's prompting – to hold a referendum in spring 1991 was primarily designed for international consumption. The idea certainly fell on fertile ground in Germany, where both Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher made the argument that having just realised the opportunity to absorb the DDR into the BRD, Germany would not want to stand in the way of Croatia seeking its own path (from Tuđman's perspective, vindicating his assiduous lobbying of Bonn, Munich and Vienna in the late 1980s).

The problem with the introduction of plebiscitary democracy at this moment was that there were a range of unsolved (and yet not necessarily insoluble) issues which really should have been addressed before referenda were introduced into the mix. The Serbs of the Krajina were the first to play this game in August 1990 in response to a range of political changes that Tuđman began to introduce soon after his election victory. In a vote that was explicitly rejected by Zagreb, but accepted implicitly by Belgrade and explicitly by the Bosnian Serbs, the Krajina Serbs proclaimed their independence.

What was immediately obvious was that majoritarian victories in all the referenda that were held in the Yugoslav republics would lead to conflict in the absence of agreement between the national groups. The only partial exception to this was Macedonia.

The referenda positively encouraged polarisation. It was as though throughout Yugoslavia, everybody had to choose according to Lenin's dictum 'If you're not for us, you're against us.' Of course, it is no surprise that the British establishment paid no heed to this recent history lesson. Five years after the Brexit Referendum, Britain remains bitterly divided. Across the country, there are family members who still won't speak to each other because they voted differently. For people like myself who voted to remain in the EU, leaving feels like a bereavement, a sadness and sense of loss that I cannot shake off. Meanwhile the Brexiteers continue to taunt the Remainers with sinister, triumphalist flag waving.

I was powerfully reminded of my scepticism of the referenda in Yugoslavia as a driver of constitutional change in 2015. In the run-up to that year's general

election, David Cameron announced in the Conservative Party manifesto that Britain would have a referendum on leaving the European Union if his party were elected. There are two things to note about this. Firstly, Cameron did not believe his Conservative Party would be reelected without the continuing support of the Liberal-Democrat Party, which would have blocked any referendum on Europe. Cameron never thought he would have to keep his manifesto commitment.

Secondly, Cameron was promising a referendum not because he harboured a deep conviction that this is what the British people wanted. There was no political pressure from the electorate to question Britain's membership of the EU. Instead, it came from two sources – disaffected right-wing Tories, some of whom had joined the UK Independence Party, supposedly a single-issue organisation. The other main supporters of leaving the EU were the three proprietors of Britain's most influential newspapers: Rupert Murdoch, Lord Rothermere and the Barclay Brothers. All three live as tax exiles from the UK. All three exert immense influence on government.

When polled in the run-up to the election about the most important issue facing the country, the Europe question came in at number eleven or twelve. Or to put it layman's terms, the electorate didn't give a fuck. Cameron's motivation was actually to destroy the UK Independence Party who in the previous five years had become an irritant to the Tories by attracting a small percentage of Conservative votes. At risk were perhaps one or at most two seats which UKIP may have won although this would not have significantly dented the Tory Party's standing. Cameron placed Britain's membership of the EU on the green baize of the poker table for a possible pot of a couple of quid and a pack of cigarettes.

The consequences of Cameron's insouciant naivety have devastated English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland society. It has accelerated a dangerous culture war in all parts of the country with damaging implications everywhere. The shift towards support for Scottish independence will probably mean another referendum there within the next five years. In the era of social media, we know from both the 2014 independence referendum and the 2016 Brexit poll that this event will be vicious. There is an added threat inasmuch that Northern Ireland is once more teetering on the brink of active sectarian divisions and there are indications that this will impact on Glasgow where there is a split between Catholic (independence) and Protestant (unionist) communities which is reflected most visibly between the city's two major football teams, Celtic (Catholic) and Rangers (Protestant).

Ironically, Brexit is also rapidly burying what remains of Britishness, the identity that is supposed to unite the regions whereby the total is greater than the sum of its parts. Indeed, the more fanatically Johnson and his cabinet ministers demand that the British Union Flag be waved from every building at every opportunity, the faster Britain seems to disintegrate.

Reflecting on the two breakups, I am wondering whether to reconsider my approach to Yugoslavia. During the 1990s Western leaders regarded Yugoslavia as an anomaly, the exception that proved the rule of smooth transitions from communism to capitalism (neither the violence associated with gangster capitalism nor less geographically immediate conflicts as between Armenia and Azerbaijan were taken into account in such analyses). The Balkan wars would represent the final throes of a discredited system although this was in truth combined with much essentialist nonsense about Balkan peoples being inherently violent. The more I experience the damage wrought by a self-seeking elite network behind Brexit, the more I wonder if Yugoslavia was in fact a harbinger, a warning of how populism might work in the post-Cold War era far beyond its borders.

MISHA GLENNY

Misha Glenny is an award-winning journalist and historian. He first travelled to Yugoslavia in the early 1980s. Prior to that, he worked as Central Europe Correspondent for *The Guardian* covering Eastern Europe and the Balkans from Vienna, and then for the BBC. He covered the revolutions in Eastern Europe and the wars in the former Yugoslavia. He is the author of several books, including *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-2010*, and, more recently, *McMafia: Seriously Organised Crime*, which was made into a successful television drama by the BBC. Misha speaks several languages including Bosnian /Croatian/ Serbian. He has worked as a visiting professor at the London School of Economics, Columbia University and University College London. He lives and works in London.

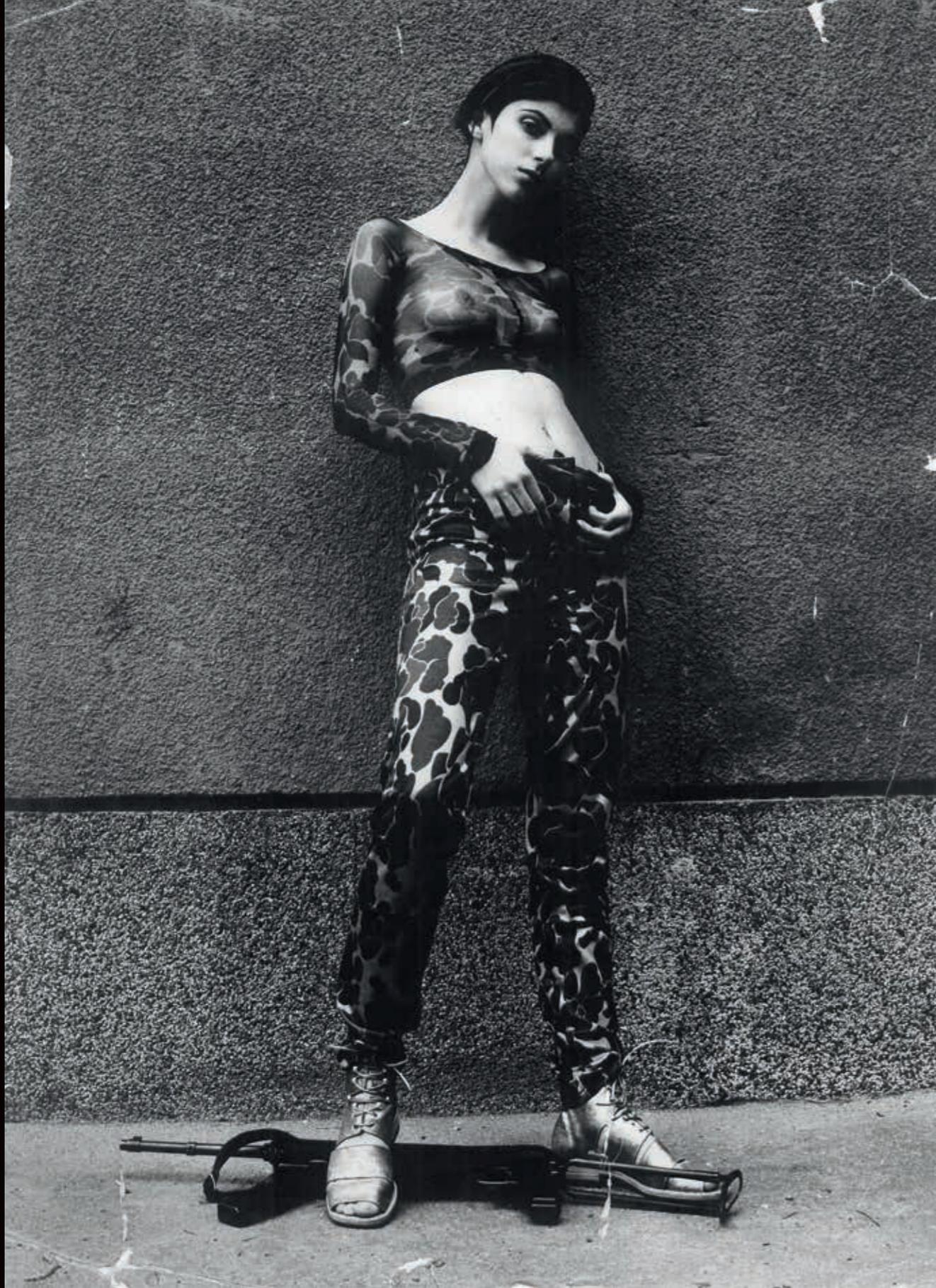
Gender Equality and Other Stories

Rumena Bužarovska

I remember my aunt, smiling, gentle, small, telling me a story about something that happened when she was a little girl. She was on her way home from the ice-skating rink. It was getting dark. As she headed to her building with her skates in her hand, she heard steps behind her. She quickened her pace, but noticed that the steps behind her had also quickened. She turned and saw a man following her. She dashed forward but the man raced after her. Near her apartment building—in an urban, densely-populated Skopje neighbourhood—the man caught up and grabbed her. “And then,” my aunt says, “gathering all the strength I could muster, I shouted with the faintest, quietest voice you can imagine, ‘heeeeelp!’ and the man let me go and ran off.” The young girl that is my aunt suddenly felt powerful because the man had fled because of her voice, so she chased after him, menacingly waving her skates. At one point, it dawned on her: what if he started to chase her again? “I was such an idiot,” I remember her saying. Still, I remember my admiration for her.

I also recall how I admired her for another story. She and a friend (was it Žane?) were walking through the city. In my recollection, or, more precisely, in the image her words created for me, the two of them are on the highest point of the Stone Bridge in the centre of Skopje (I’m sure I’m getting this a bit wrong). They are approached by a pervert, an exhibitionist. My aunt, one of the rare people in the family who would tell me stories connected with womanhood and sexuality, had explained to me that an exhibitionist is a person who feels compelled to show his sex organ to women. She had portrayed him to me (most likely) as a man in a coat who, without seeking permission, reveals himself. The man was a known exhibitionist in the city, my aunt told me, and people usually ran away when he flashed them. But she and Žane were both nearsighted and wore thick glasses, so when he exposed himself,

© Šejla Kamberić, Behind the Scenes, 2019 (photograph was taken in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1994 by Hannes M. Schlick for the Italian fashion magazine MODA)



they just drew closer to him so they could get a better look and then burst out laughing. That scared the wits out of him and he ran away. I don't know if I'm retelling these stories exactly right because my aunt told them to me more than thirty years ago, and my memory surely deceives me, but my mind has anchored the story in pictures from which it can't escape, no matter how differently the story was told. But I'm certain of the basic facts: a man grabs a young girl, she yelps "help," he runs away, but she chases him with her skates; two women with thick glasses encounter an exhibitionist and try to get a better look at his sex organ, laugh at him, then he runs away. From today's perspective, I'm certain that my aunt was trying to teach me how to deal with everything that would happen to me throughout my life as a girl and as a woman. I would be followed, my movement would be restrained, I would be attacked, public space would be inaccessible to me, and I would not be able to complain, since no one would believe me, since I would be accused of enjoying presenting myself as a victim. Instead, I would have to learn to silence the stories in which someone wanted to harm or kill me, or to turn them around and laugh in the face of my timidity, turning it into strength. I was also taught from other women in my life that the way I should deal with these things is in a "feminine" way: keep silent, but somehow through "cunning" find a way to get my own way. But to get my own way, I understood later, would mean: to survive, to not be physically assaulted, to have moments of peace in which, for example, I could watch a true crime show on my own, nibble chips under the blankets, and feel safe.

When I was twelve, I saw for the first time that my body meant something I wasn't aware of, something that provoked in me a feeling of shame and responsibility from which I still feel the consequences. And 27 years later, I'm still battling the idea instilled in me that I'm guilty for the violence that was inflicted on me. I was walking along the tree-lined road behind my building in the middle of the summer dressed in shorts. Suddenly I heard music and in the middle of the intersection a car stopped with two men inside. They opened their doors and started cat-calling, but then, to my relief, they drove off. I felt dirty and imagined that my shorts were the problem. For a long time it didn't occur to me, and not just to me, but to our whole society, that perhaps it wasn't the shorts, but that it is simply not normal to catcall a 12-year old girl, nor is it normal to do that to a woman at any age.

Little by little I got used to this feeling of shame, fear, and discomfort. The biggest problem for me was the restriction of my freedom of movement. It seemed that all of society, including my own family, told me that I had to stay home to survive, to not be attacked (the end result of this is the ironic fact

that—according to a United Nations report—it is precisely the home that is the most unsafe place for women). And so, movement into public spaces, especially alone, was a tremendous challenge. Most of the assaults I've experienced in my life—someone grabbing my behind, or my breasts, or my crotch (forcibly, while running past, or from a bike; always, always, always, without exception, men)—were on a street, most often near my home. On the street in front of my apartment building. In the area between the bus stop and my apartment building. At the bus stop itself. I don't know how many times my behind—whether I hid it under a coat or under a jacket—was "a reason" for someone to slap me and nonchalantly move on. We all know what happens when we protest: it's not like in my aunt's story, where the attacker flees. If you shout at the attacker, confront him, or run after him, they will very simply either accuse you of lying, or if you persist, beat you up. I then started experiencing harassment on public transport. My mother and I were once in a crowded bus. Behind me, a man with an erect penis pushed and rubbed himself against me. I shoved him back. My mother noticed something had happened, but I didn't tell her what because—after all—I shouldn't disturb the people around me, and I also knew that my mother, as woman, couldn't protect me, so why should I rattle her even more? More striking, once while I was sitting on a bus, looking out the window, I turned my head to see a man right beside me holding and rubbing his penis directly in my face. Just a few years ago, I was spending a month in Berlin and every day, literally every day, I had incidents in the metro. Once a man persisted in speaking to me and demanded that I give him my attention, but when I asked him to leave me alone, he menacingly stood up, called me a whore, and stormed off into the next car. In case you are wondering what I was wearing: a long black coat. I had, in the interim, grasped that clothing is not the provocation. The provocation is the female body in whatever form. It is treated like a moving piece of property, something to be used and then left behind. Like loot, or some exotic prey that happens to be riding on the bus.

For a long time I had difficulty telling these stories, especially when not in written form, because my experience—and the experience of all women—is so normalized and accepted, that it seemed like I was complaining simply because I exist. of the ugliest accusations were that I was complaining because, in fact, someone had paid attention to me, and that I didn't know how to accept a compliment, that I was killing the flirtation, and that, ultimately, I hated men. And so, the telling of these stories and others about the impossibility for women to move in public spaces and all the protective mechanisms we use in order to get from point A to point B without being killed (like Sarah Everard,

kidnapped and killed in the middle of London on the evening of March 3, 2021, by a policeman) was considered until recently to be an infantile and affected much-ado-about-nothing. Thankfully, this collective gaslighting that governs all patriarchal societies (are there other kinds?) is declining. I live in an era in which I will experience, and do experience, drastic change and a tremendous gain of freedom, an era in which the female story can be told and heard. As a writer I have always engaged in reading and writing. Growing up, I had difficulty in identifying with, and developing empathy towards, a wide range of characters who, in real life, do not deserve such compassion. This was due to the fact that the canon was male—hence the narrators of the stories were male and nearly all the experiences were of white men. Through literature I learned how it was to live as a white male and how to love and be loved by one. I came to identify with a male character—which is key in literature, to be able to walk in someone else’s shoes and to experience a life that can never be yours, thus developing an understanding of difference—but for the most part it was expected and deemed natural that I would identify with the passive, muse-like, female characters who fainted, fell in love and, if they were bad girls, killed themselves. Hence, I became accustomed to enduring and understanding all sorts of male provocation because I was seeking the cause for their weakness, which was often just simply privileged and unjust aggression.

It took me some time to understand that our tolerance for violence and aggression also comes from not having the opportunity to tell the story. It is simply this: whoever tells the story has the power. The narrator decides what kind of world will be represented, what kind of world will be archived in the history of human experience. Therefore, I feel I am witnessing something immense when I see the stories that have surfaced since the movement #metoo took off, a movement which has also spread here under the hashtag #segakažuvam (#now I speak up) which also addresses experiences of sexual violence and harassment. There is, in addition, #segakažuvam #kadeneodam (#now I speak up #where I don’t go), which addresses the experiences of women in public spaces. Very shortly thereafter, the movement #ženeujavnoprstoru (#women in public space) spontaneously appeared in Croatia, in which women told similar experiences about the harassment and violence they experience outside, on the street, on public transport, in the park; and recently, following the Serbian movement “Pravda za Mariju Lukić” (“Truth for Marija Lukić”), the most massive and most shocking movement under the hashtag #nisamtražila (#I wasn’t looking for it) appeared, inspired by the actress Milena Radulović’s personal and brave testimony of having been raped. This most powerful movement for sexual equality is radically changing—has

Translated from Macedonian
by Christina Kramer

already changed—the world. It is not coincidental that these changes happened precisely through the telling of stories. Stories have always been a means of reality, but also a way to pass on experiences, and thereby also creating history. Another way women are taking over the narrative is by being increasing present as female authors on a global scale. This shouldn’t surprise us when we have in mind, first of all, that most often, on average, the majority of readers are women, and it is therefore entirely unsurprising for them to want to identify with stories different from the standard white male narratives. This surge in female authors is also seen in our region where mutual support among female authors has developed in the absence of support by state associations, awards, and institutions still dominated by privileged men. An author friend recently told me how the editor of a journal tried to impose a question on the female journalist who was to conduct an interview with her. The question was along these lines: “Do you believe there is an incestuous hub of young female writers advertising each other on Instagram?” How can one answer such a question riddled with the anxiety over losing the undeserved and state-awarded privilege that has silenced women’s voices for centuries? One can’t. Such a question doesn’t deserve an answer. And the creators of the state policies that have existed until now will become extinct, like dinosaurs. We will watch and we will not mourn. I sincerely feel privileged to live at a time when I can witness how the narrative is being taken over by those who, until now, have been silenced and taught to be unseen, unnoticed, to occupy the smallest possible space so as not to be punished with psychological or physical violence. I want to believe that a time is coming in which my aunt’s story about the pedophile who attacked her in front of her building, or the one about the exhibitionist who felt that he was strong and terrifying just because he owned a penis, will have a different ring. In this new version, women won’t have to fight off these bullies on their own, using everything they have at their disposal, including their humour. Such a new story, I would like to believe, will not have the opportunity to occur. And if it did, I would like the perpetrator to be thrown in jail where he belongs, and for the story to be told without the female narrator being judged as unreliable regardless of her age, appearance, or sexuality. And I believe those times are coming. Perhaps it will take a few more decades, but the process is underway, and it is irreversible and inevitable. I am proud to be able to experience it, and that now, here, everywhere, I have the opportunity to tell my story.

RUMENA BUŽAROVSKA

Rumena Bužarovska is a fiction writer and literary translator from Skopje, North Macedonia. An author of four volumes of short stories translated into several languages, her collection *My Husband* has been published in the USA, Germany, Italy, Hungary and the former Yugoslav republics, and has been adapted into three stage productions in Ljubljana, Belgrade and Skopje. A 2018 resident of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, she is a professor of American literature and translation at the State University in Skopje. She is the co-author and co-organizer of the Macedonian women’s storytelling initiative PeachPreach.



On Books, Fire and the Written Word

Jeton Neziraj

(A personal account of the 1990s, about burned books, newspapers used for cleaning and the ghosts of war still wandering in search of blood.)

- *
- "May your words blow in the wind"
- "May your books burn"
- "May the flames swallow your written words"
- "May you run out of newspapers to clean your windows"
- *

Books, but also newspapers, when burned, remain in a carbonized form for a few moments, and if you have a sharp eye, you might still make out a word or half a sentence in them! But then, very quickly, what was once paper becomes soot entirely, and if there's a breeze, the soot, in small particles, rises to the sky and disappears in infinite space. And the words, once written on paper, now lose their meaning entirely, become one with the wind... become *words blown in the wind!*

Pre-war and war in six episodes with books

First episode. It must have been 1990 or 1991. One afternoon, in our house, the fire that had been lit to roast *flija*^[1] burned brighter when a pile of discarded books were added to it. "We do not need them," the adults told us children. Later, we realized that they were books by Marx, Engels, Tito, Kardelj and their contemporaries. Of that series of *red books*, only Rosa Luxemburg's book was not burned. Probably because the author was a woman, burning her book might have seemed bizarre to the men in our family. Who knows.

© Beka Vučo, Books for Sale, Pristina, Kosovo, October 2021

But that day was the first time I was eating *flia* roasted over a fire of books. As I tore off thin layers from it, I tried to make out the letters I believed had been left there after the burning of the books...

Second episode. A few years later, in Pristina, in the space between the University Library and the Department of Philosophy, one day a pile of books showed up, like a big pile of garbage. From the stack, the books were being loaded onto a tractor by two men assisted by an armed guard. We then realized that they were Albanian books and that they were being taken out of the department's facilities, to be burned or thrown in a landfill.

Third episode. During the war, from a hill, we saw villages burning in fires set by Milošević's police and paramilitaries. When one of the houses produced more flames than the others, we joked, "the owner is an intellectual," as we assumed that the big flames were due to the books that were now burning—they burned beautifully, to express it in the humorous spirit of those days. It is strange, but suffering and cruelty brought us joy. We talked about why it was worth writing "a thick book"; among other reasons, because when it burns, it emits more flame, it's a true fire, while thin books burn fast and their fire is depressing, good only for kindling, a wisp of a fire, a fireless fire...

Fourth episode. One day when it became clear to me that our house could burn down like the other houses in the surrounding villages were burning, I decided to hide the books. There was no hiding place on the face of the earth. So I decided to dig a hole in the ground and put them there. Of course, I could not save all the books, a selection had to be made. And here, the dilemmas arose: which books were worth burying to be resurrected after the war, and which could be left to the mercy of fate—while still worrying they could be burned. I do not remember what criteria I chose. But I believe priority was given to the books of literary theory and drama, that is, the ones that were the rarest and that I believed would serve me... if I survived. I wrapped the selected books tightly in newspapers, put them in plastic bags, then in a wooden box, and then buried them in a hole in the yard. Those days I had a strange dream: as if the war were over and I started digging a hole where I had buried the books. But I could not find them. While searching for the books, the backyard and then everything around was filled with open holes. To me, the holes looked like graves...

I often think about that dream, even now, more than 20 years later.

I pulled the books out of the hole when the war ended. It was a good feeling that among the many losses, something had survived. I did not believe then

that there was such a thing as a bad and harmful book. But many years later, when I read a book written in the language of hate whose contents poisoned, I wrote an article titled "Books that Must Be Burned." Now I think that was a bad title. But what can you do, the fires of war have the capacity to leave us with bad habits!

Fifth episode. In Pristina, after the end of the war, the homes of Serbs who had fled to Serbia were now occupied by Albanians, most of whom were ordinary profiteers, but some were obviously desolate people whose houses in the villages had been burned and now found themselves in need of shelter. In those days, trash bins were full of, among other things, books written in Serbian. The *new* apartment owners dismissed them with disgust. The only place you could find books from that period was in trash bins. Of course, this *exclusivity* applied only to those Albanians who could read in Serbian.

Sixth episode. Many years after the end of the war in Kosovo, I was in the offices of a publishing house in Frankfurt. The staff there told me that if I found something I liked I could get the book for free. I took an armful of books. The staff looked at me in amazement, then asked, "Do you read German?" "No," I replied. "Ah, maybe someone in your family reads?" they asked me again. "No," I replied again. And now they were completely confused, but somehow, I too was confused by their confusion. "Then why do you need them, if you cannot read them?" they finally asked me. "Because they are books," I told them. This answer of course did not explain much, and they did not ask further questions, but I'm sure it seemed very strange to them. I, too, didn't know how to tell them about our obsession with books, the trauma and stories I carried with me about burned, buried books, about the images of books thrown in trash bins and disappeared from the face of the earth...! When Ernesto Sabato is asked what he meant by one of his books, he replies that he could not summarize in a hundred words what he had said in the book with three hundred thousand. Because, according to him, then there would be two hundred ninety thousand nine hundred redundant words in that book. That day in Frankfurt, I, too, could not explain to those people in two minutes the trauma that took more than ten years for the flames and trash bins to sculpt in me: that one day we might be left without books.

Displacing the other and their books

In my mind, these fragmented episodes focusing on books, which took place over a period of about 20 years, are the most dramatic landscape of a space contaminated by violence, intolerance of the other, hatred and desire to dis-

place the other, to burn and vanish even their books. Even their books, because only then would the extinction be fully completed. Ethnic cleansing in Kosovo could not be successful if Albanians still had access to books. Therefore these books had to be loaded on a tractor and burned or thrown in the trash. When Albanians occupied Serb homes after the war, they were removing books from them—and perhaps a cross that someone might have left behind. Not the furniture, not the beds, not the plates, spoons and other things... they were not Serbian enough. But the books in Serbian, yes, they carried hidden traces of the *enemy* who had left, so they had to be removed. Only this way could the traces of their existence be erased from those houses and flats.

Undoubtedly, similar stories about books that were burned and destroyed during the 1990s and beyond are found throughout the former Yugoslavia. The most famous public image is that of the bombing and burning of the National Library in Sarajevo. But there are so many other libraries burned all over the region, tens of thousands of private libraries burned, numerous institutions emptied of document archives, and so many trash bins filled with *other-enemy* books. Immediately after the war ended, when the Serbian administration relinquished what was at that time, the People's Theater of Kosovo, they took with them to Serbia a large part of the archive, *to preserve it*. They carried away what could be taken in that sudden and dramatic period, before the Albanians came, the new "owners" of that building. But a few years later, a crazy Albanian director of the current National Theater of Kosovo collected books and documents in Serbian, as many as could be collected in one night, and sent them to be burned or thrown away as garbage. So I have heard.

A few years ago, in several cities in Kosovo, a group of angry former soldiers, in an organized ritual, burned the book of Kosovar writer and publicist Veton Suroi, in which he denounced war crimes and corruption and the postwar political mafia. There are also episodes full of the burning and other disappearances of books throughout the region, about which the public does not know, or of which is not spoken publicly... The past in these parts has swallowed and forgotten everything else, but also many flames with which books and archives have been burned.

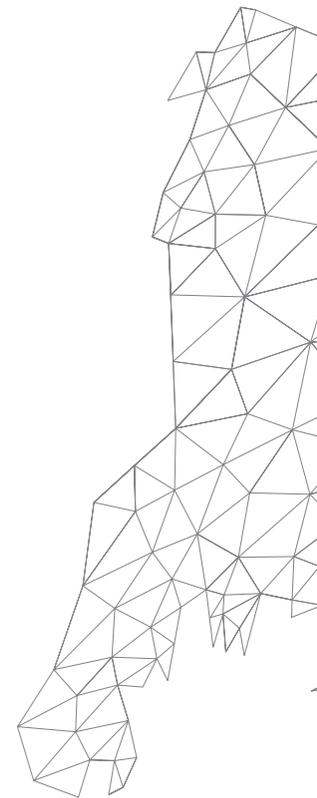
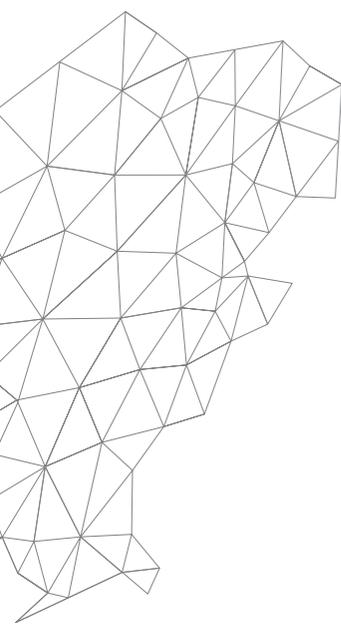
The written word and the prophets of the apocalypse

During the 90s, people in Kosovo attributed an almost mythical power to books, newspapers and, generally, anything in writing. *Alternativa*, a political

magazine, began to be published in Ljubljana, because due to its critical tone towards official politics, its publication in Kosovo was impossible. But it arrived in Kosovo illegally, as did many other products at the time, which, due to international sanctions against Yugoslavia (the little that was still left), were no longer on the market. If you were caught with *Alternativa*, you could suffer more or less the same punishment as if you were caught with a firearm. However, *Alternativa* was easy to find, read and circulate from hand to hand. People bought newspapers and magazines and, after reading them carefully, preserved and archived them. There were two widely read daily newspapers, *Bujku* and *Koha Ditore*, the latter being the first independent newspaper to appear in Kosovo.

The publishing activity of newspapers and books, during the 90s, had shrunk and reduced drastically, and this shrinkage had increased people's hunger for the written word. People became obsessed with preserving daily newspapers and this must undoubtedly be the largest private archiving initiative in the history of mankind. The rafters of houses, basements, and wherever there was little space were filled with newspapers. It was a biblical attempt *to preserve the history* that was happening before people's eyes. The word carried no weight if it was not written. And it was the written word that had to oppose the information darkness that had gripped the country. It also had to oppose the stories and urban myths that began to circulate about the arrival of some elders or prophets, appearing on wooden bridges, deserted roads, or early mornings, giving ominous predictions about *the war that would be a carnage...* These *legendary* elders appeared quite suddenly, at different intervals of time, and the stories and prophecies that they carried to us the living had in themselves frightening words: *blood, war, carnage, fire, land, displacement, apocalypse, crying mothers, orphaned children, collapsed mosques and churches, fields with burned graves and mountains...*

The horror of the war was being lived and experienced before it had even started. Past legends were exercising their full power over the living afraid of what was to come. Therefore the written word was much needed. Who better than it could defy fear? Who better than the written word could witness the drama that was happening and the greatest drama that was expected to happen? Because it was tangible and contained more accurate evidence of what was happening, the written word was like the antipode of those urban legends coming from the *fog*. When Kosovo Albanians seldom want to blame themselves for any omissions or shortcomings, they often stop at the lack of books and documents written from the past. They proudly mention their rich oral epic, but also as a weak point. They say, "We did not want to write



down our stories and deeds, we told them orally, but words blow away.” And according to them, Serbs have written down everything, left documents, of course written in the manner that suited them. Albanians use this *argument* of their distancing from the written word to defy history and to prove the Albanian ownership of Kosovo, in relation to the Serbian written evidence. This is why, during the 90s, when they witnessed *history in the making*, they wanted to cling to the written word. The words coming from the books and newspapers carried almost the same ominous messages and advice as those that came from the imaginary prophets, because the reality was such and the war was on the horizon. However, people preferred the written word, the written story, because by now they were already fed up with words and sayings arriving out of the mists of time, addressed to no one...

But as people in Kosovo began to believe that good things can come from books, they also believed that bad things can come from books. Therefore, that day in the backyard, when my family members were burning *the red books* of communism, they seemed to want to be freed through this act from a curse that had gripped them for so many years. In reality, they had lived well in the time of socialism, almost all of them had been employed and had made a good living, enjoying all the privileges that that system offered. However, that period was bad, this was agreed upon at the time by most people in Kosovo, it was the same public consensus that had to be accepted as such. And therefore the legacy of that system had to be discarded, so history had judged. And what better symbol than that of books could represent the legacy of that system? And what better act than that of burning those books could undo the legacy of that time? The act of burning them was not public, because they did not need any excuse, even though some had been members of the communist party. The act of burning was rather a theatrical act of individual cleansing from that bad inheritance!

The nationalists' trumpets can still be heard

Amin Maalouf, a Lebanese-French writer, says, “it is no longer enough to know others in an approximate, superficial, crude way. We need to know them subtly, up close; I would go as far as to say intimately.” And according to him, this can be done only through their culture, literature first and foremost. He rightly says that the intimacy of a people is its literature.

Ten years after the war in Kosovo, when several small cultural initiatives of Kosovo-Serbia cooperation began, the joint translation and publication of books was at its center. In Serbia, in over twenty years, almost no book by an

Albanian author had been published. It was more or less the same in Kosovo, where the publication and translation of books from the Serbian language had become taboo. In 2011, in Kosovo, *Qendra Multimedia*^[2] published an anthology of new Serbian short stories titled *From Belgrade, with Love*. It was met with nationalist hysteria, a constant presence for the past twenty-plus years, always on guard. The public rejection (even by some writers) of what should have been the most civilized act was startling, unpredictable and depressing. At the same time this anthology was published in Kosovo, Sasha Ilić and the literary group Beton in Serbia published an anthology of new Kosovo literature titled *From Pristina, with Love*. The reactions of the public there were more optimistic, perhaps because the curiosity was greater—about a literature of which they had no knowledge at all, how it was written and what subjects it was concerned with. Since then, dozens of other books have been translated and published in both countries. But some important theatrical projects, exhibitions and music concerts have also taken place. Among the important performances, created as a result of this cultural dialogue initiated by civil society and artists, are *Patriotic Hypermarket*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Encyclopedia of the Living*. But there are of course many other initiatives, larger and smaller—all with their own weight and satisfactory impact in both countries. The trumpets of blind nationalists have constantly echoed in opposition to these initiatives. In Belgrade, in some cases, the opposition has even been violent. And while the cultural circulation between Kosovo and Serbia, due to pressure from nationalists and politicians, has often come to naught, it seems to be more on track and flowing a little more normally between other countries of the former Yugoslavia. In any case, the challenges are still there and they should not be underestimated.

First of all, most politicians are not interested in any cooperation that could bring normalcy and long-term peace. This is because the *national emergency* alarm, set off by any sort of internal or external attacks, works to keep the public away from the real problems the countries of the region face: poverty, corruption, the miserable state of institutions, organized crime, etc. But it is not only the politicians, there are also those full of rusty minds among the so-called intellectual elites, who hover over fragile peace like ogres, trying to scare and undo it. When a few years ago, in Canada, I met a university professor who said that he was *Yugoslavia* and that he came from *Yugoslav* (even though in reality Yugoslavia no longer existed), he started to blame Kosovo Albanians for all the bad things that had happened to the planet including the destruction of Yugoslavia. He said to me: “We gave you the university in 1974, we taught you to read and write, and you turned on us, showing your

true colors.” By “we” he meant the Yugoslav communists. In his projection of the *historical mistakes* of socialist Yugoslavia, this was one of the biggest mistakes: the Albanians in Kosovo should never have been given a university, because, just like Prometheus who took fire from Zeus and gave it to the people, they took it (the university) and then the flame of knowledge, of writing, of the written word, spread and would not stop until the *destruction* of Yugoslavia which he continued to cherish. I believe we have all met or known distorted, anachronistic minds imbued with fascist ideas, like that of the *Yugoslav* professor in Canada. These are the most unique products that hegemonic politics, nationalist passion and a passion for destruction could produce. And they are still among us, with swords raised ready to march.

But beyond the politicians, beyond the remaining fascist fossils, what is evident is that more people in Kosovo, Serbia and the region are beginning to realize that their enemy is not the Serbs, or the Albanians, or the Croats. Their common enemy consists of the corrupt political castes, the nationalists and former warlords who, in order to preserve the privileges of war and postwar, insist on keeping people intimidated and subjugated.

Lullabies that should heal our traumas

Many people in Kosovo clean their windows with newspapers. During the 90s, some poorer families who could not afford to buy newspapers came to our house and asked for some. We gave them what we did not archive. And when one of these families appeared at the door and asked, “do you have a newspaper,” it was implied that they were looking for newspapers to read, but then also to clean the windows with. It did not matter how old the newspaper might be. They first read it thoroughly and then cleaned the windows with it. As I understand it, the glass is once washed with water and then, with the crumpled newspaper, it is given one final cleaning that makes it shine. Maybe people do this in other countries, too, I do not know. And I also do not know if it is the power of the substance with which the newspaper is produced that has a cleansing effect, or the printed words! Or maybe neither, and I would not be surprised that Balkan people know how to do things that produce an effect only in their own minds. But it does not matter. I want to believe in the power that words have to cleanse. Written words can cleanse our dark minds and souls obscured by hatred, envy, and the desire to destroy the other.

After all these books that have been burned and destroyed, we seem to have become indebted to the written words! And that debt must now be repaid, by writing new words, endless words. But not words that poison, not words that

Translated from Albanian
by Ani Gjika

cast a mist over the past, that deepen hatred, that still seek blood in the present and the future. We need words that testify to our common pain, words that sing lullabies to our traumas and sufferings, words that heal and try to fix the region, to make it a better place. We need words that evoke the horror that people in these parts have experienced, but we also need words to point the finger at the culprits, those of the past and those of the future that may come. Because as Ernest Gellner puts it in his book *The Condition of Freedom*, “when social ills and beliefs are destroyed, there are usually some loyal followers who fight to the last.” The ghosts of war on these sides are still in the isthmus, waiting for some rivers of blood to flow again... This is also where the arsonists of burning books reside, fewer in numbers than they once were, but there are still some—enough to ignite new flames if circumstances and opportunities arise...

Hence the written word.

JETON NEZIRAJ

Jeton Neziraj is director of Qendra Multimedia, after having served as the artistic director of the National Theatre of Kosovo. He has written over 25 plays that have been staged, translated and published in over 15 languages, and he has worked as a playwright with theatres and companies including La MaMa in New York and Volksbühne in Berlin. The German theatre magazine *Theater der Zeit* and the German Radio *Deutschlandfunk Kultur* have described him as the “Kafka of the Balkans,” while the *Los Angeles Times* called him “a world-class playwright who challenges our complacency at every twist and turn.”

[1] A traditional Albanian dish consisting of multiple crêpe-like layer brushed with cream and served with sour cream. The name also translates to “sacrifice/offering to God.”

[2] Multimedia Center

**OVO JE
ZADNJA
STRANICA
FERALA**

The Velvet Retardation

Viktor Ivančić

A journalist? Did such a thing ever actually exist?

Ernest sounded sincerely amazed. I cannot recall exactly what year it was when I struck up the conversation with this amiable young man from the probable future, a staffer at a center for information media that wielded power as a “content producer” in the context of the Balkans; he was almost a colleague and our conversation took us back deeper into the past, to the first decade of the century. All I remember is that I was dead at the time but this didn’t seem to bother Ernest.

Oh yes, I said, believe it or not there really were journalists. Of course back in the day, in the early ’20s, only a handful, more the exception than the rule, more on the margins than in the major media companies. By then it was already clear as day that the “final solution” was only a matter of time, and professional journalists would be completely pushed out of the job of informing the public.

Why clear as day? Ernest’s curiosity was piqued. I mean, why shove journalists aside?

For the survival of media companies, naturally. I know this sounds oddly paradoxical—that those who by the logic of their profession were called upon to inform the public became ballast in the process of informing the public—yet this is exactly what happened. But not overnight. The idea that the profession could be sacrificed for the salvation of an industry that grew out of that very profession took time to mature and was implemented systematically, although this was never stated as such publicly. Professional journalism—understood in traditional terms, the only way it can be understood—became too expensive, imposed itself as an irritant on the balance sheet of expenses, and besides, with journalists came too much suspicion, a critical eye and a yen for asking questions in an era when somewhat different qualities were valued.

Such as?

Such as what they expect of you, Ernest: loyalty, a constructive attitude, an inclination to avoid making waves... In any case, the priorities of the media industry and of the profession of journalism have found themselves not only

on opposing sides, but in open conflict, and those who hold the money had the upper hand. So in the time frame we're talking about, the early 2020s, conditions sank to an even lower level than where they'd been in the 1990s—years that were marked, as you well know, in this part of the world, by war, violence, the self-will of authoritarian regimes and a pervasive nationalistic mobilization.

How is this possible? Weren't the 1990s known as the "leaden years," especially in terms of the freedom of the press?

This assessment is, without a doubt, on point. Most of the media were harnessed then to the propaganda machine for the war. The original accumulation of criminals was underway during those years, so big money was still flailing about hysterically amid the ruins of socialism. What I meant to say is that they still hadn't been set up as a contained system. Amid the disorder, small but very serious professional operations started up as focal points of resistance, in opposition to dominant nationalistic journalism, such as B92 and *Vreme* in Serbia, *Arkzin* and *Feral Tribune* in Croatia, *Dani* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Monitor* in Montenegro... They were all focused, one way or another, on reporting about the least desirable topics, including the war crimes committed by "their own" side or the predatory privatization going on under the aegis of the government. These news organizations became a kind of free territory for the media. And thanks to support from several foreign foundations with an interest in liberal values, freedom of the press and the protection of human rights, such as the Open Society, these news organizations managed to survive direct blows, never gentle, in their home regimes. And that was how things went until, uh...

Until?

Until the situation became so damned "normalized." Did you notice, Ernest, that I put that word in quotes?

Yes, I did. But why?

Because a new paradox arose at this point. The age of "normalization" didn't usher in normal conditions for life and the flourishing of professional journalism, though at first glance it seemed to. There was no more wailing of sirens, no more bloodshed, genocide, columns of refugees, no daily deliveries of state violence, at least not visible violence, but the invisible violence became increasingly efficient and soon was routine, presenting itself as inevitable.

Where did the invisible violence come from?

Those involved actively in the original accumulation of criminals consolidated their ranks, happily melding with the system, boosting their monopolies and fundamentally making a mess of the media territory, leaving

no room for those who didn't fit in quite so easily. So the circumstances "improved" (note the quotation marks again!) in such a way that the journalism profession found itself in a structurally worsening situation. This meant that the time had mostly passed for the free media mentioned above, twenty years after they'd begun. Some of them shut down, others were sold to corporations and turned into the exact opposite of what they'd been, and yet others languished in stark poverty, maintaining their name and remnants of their prestige on what was essentially a voluntary basis. What even the most resourceful of the repressive apparatuses had failed to smother was finished off by the standard capitalist dynamic, but this occurred gradually, without smoke and mirrors, and became inevitable. The process could charitably be called the velvet retardation.

What about the foundations who used to support the independent media?

They were drawn off to other spheres of interest. Which, if you think about it, is fair enough; they couldn't assume the job long-term which, under other circumstances, is supposed to be the responsibility of a proper country, and their decision to do so is even more justifiable if they had also wrongly concluded that the country whose work they'd been funding *had*, indeed, begun to be a proper country. On the other hand, I cannot avoid the impression that behind the decision to cut off financial support to independent professional journalism there was, in some cases, the typical misconception of the liberal capitalist mindset.

What misconception is that?

The misconception of the so-called free market. When it is finally fully established, it is supposedly going to resolve all problems and arrange life in an optimal fashion. This delusion sometimes goes so far that it even equates the free market with democracy itself. And since, according to the lore, professional journalism—understood in traditional terms, the only way it can be understood—serves democracy, this led to the unlikely conclusion that what we call the free market, itself an extract of democracy, is the best possible environment for the flourishing of journalism.

But isn't it?

Of course not, Ernest. First, actually, there is no such thing as a free market. We can rely on the noun "market," but the adjective "free" is highly problematic; experience tells us that this is the merging of state and economic power into a single oligarchic structure. And professional journalism and the free market, contrary to what sermons may tell you, are as compatible as oil and water or, if this works better for you, as sheep and wolves. To truly abandon professional journalism to the free market is tantamount to

handing it over to political tyranny, but the impact is more gradual and, as far as the methods of its destruction are concerned, less transparent. If one had to choose between Joseph Stalin and Rupert Murdoch, it is fair to say that no such choice exists, except in the theatrical context of stage sets and costumes. Especially because we are talking about a profession which, thanks to the rather obscene history of the trajectory of the information media, does not live off of the fruits of its labor.

So what does it live off of then?

As you know, the information media earned their livelihood from marketing, since the choice had fallen to Murdoch and his crew. Although such a combination has, since ancient times, been thought to be self-evident, it is anything but natural, even using the most basic market criteria. A cobbler, for example, earns his bread and butter from the sale of the shoes he makes. The journalist who writes a newspaper article, on the other hand, is paid from advertising revenue, for which his article merely serves as an access point, or vehicle. Let's not beat about the bush: media companies essentially function by pimping their readers out to advertisers. The game here is sales that rely on consumers as slaves. The media market is, therefore, multi-layered, and journalists were asked—when there still were any—to pander to a much broader range of loyalties than the norms of their profession. If they jeopardized the ad, i.e., the corporate power standing behind the media, the journalist was jeopardizing their very existence, and the media owner promptly let them know. Not to mention the schizophrenia and chaos of the medium itself.

What does chaos have to do with the medium?

An ordinary newspaper ad and an ordinary newspaper article—if we stay with the classic media—belong not only to different genres, but are by their very nature adversarial in how they interact. In the case of the ad, someone is paying you to shower them with uncritical praise, while in the case of the article you are obliged to examine this same someone critically, meaning that you are being asked to unmask the propaganda by drawing on the truth and the facts. In their rapacious desire to survive and earn a little something along the way, the information media ventured onto the worst possible terrain, where these two genres merge, reconciling the unreconcilable, first through hybrid inventions such as *native advertising* and the like, and later through hybrids without apparent labels. Whoever wasn't prepared to do this was eliminated from the competition, spat out by the "free market." And so, step by step, inch by inch, journalists evolved into "content producers," the offspring of the velvet retardation—in other words, you, Ernest.

There's no reason to be hurtful! Ernest frowned.

It is not my intention to hurt anyone's feelings. I tried to soothe him. After all, journalists were largely to blame for this outcome. Even in better times it was often tricky to see the difference between a journalist and a masochist. I am merely trying to lay out for you the reasoning that led to the conclusion that the professional journalist had become an untenable impediment to the further growth of the information industry. First journalists were expensive and mercilessly squandered funding for research and fact-checking and engaged in similar excesses, and then they were in favor of unnerving the sponsors in business and politics with their criticism, suspicions and probing questions. It is best that they're gone. Did you know, Ernest, that in the second decade of this century, the number of journalists was cut, globally, by a quarter?

No.

Well, now you know. And having said that, I should say that the curve later dropped even more. In the Balkans at that point the results were nothing short of spectacular. Here, every crisis is used to accelerate trends.

What crises do you mean?

In early 2020, for instance, amid the infamous pandemic, many of the local media companies, such as the Styria Media Group, and Hanza Media in Croatia, or Oslobodenje in Bosnia and Herzegovina, immediately laid off a vast number of journalists, with the explanation that they had to in order to "cope with the difficulties they were faced with." The only issue is that we were only a month into the pandemic at the time. The economic impact of the crisis still hadn't even hit. So obviously this "crisis" merely served as an excuse for them to follow a path they'd laid out in advance, accelerating what they'd been planning to do anyway.

So what were they planning to do anyway?

To dump journalists in order to make the media industry more prosperous, as I said, Ernest. To dispatch an entire profession into hard-earned retirement. And pass their job on to less demanding workers, stenographer-type service providers, who could be brought on through outsourcing. Did you know that a research study from 2015 demonstrated that more than half of all news presented in the media is based on press releases that are not fact-checked before they're published?

Today they make up between 96 percent and 99 percent of the news, announced Ernest.

That, pal, is what I'm talking about. The results of the strategic belief that the communication channels between PR services and the public shouldn't be clogged by professional journalists if a more productive, obedient and cheaper work force can ensure the flow of information. In the coun-



tries of the southeastern Balkans, this went more easily than it did in what we call the West, where even today one can still find vestiges of the hypocrisy and sick thinking that democratic life is unimaginable without competent, critical journalism. Here, as you know, there never have been any true democratic traditions. To be fair, exploring in depth the differences between western surgery and the Balkan ax is pointless, considering that both result in the butchered flesh of journalists. Perhaps one of the factors to recognize is size...

Size?

When you have a country the size of a bedroom, then what you call the media market for such a country can be disciplined as a whole with two or three well-placed blows. There are no margins, no sidelines, no alternatives. You're in the mainstream or you're out. This is a game of all or nothing. That may be why the Balkan media are now owned by figures with such wide-ranging profiles, from lawyers, beer-brewers and hotel owners to real estate agents and horse thieves, and almost none of them care a whit for nonsense such as the honest reporting of the news; instead their media support their other business dealings. After the initial accumulation, problems such as journalists' expenditures are seen from a rational angle: why should I be paying someone who, I assume, won't do their job?

Fine, but informing the public hasn't stopped, has it? asked Ernest.

Not at all, I agreed, in fact it has only surged in intensity. We are seeing the hyperproduction of information trivia, because trivia, among other things, exerts a beneficial influence by encouraging the passivity of the public. The principle of "more information, less journalism" has triumphed. Not only because there was no routine in place for evaluating the importance or unimportance of news items using journalist skills, but because those items that truly are important most often never see the light of day and are replaced by information trash. Had, for instance, someone decided in 2021 to publish a daily paper that would zero in exclusively on those topics of vital interest that had been neglected by everyone else on the media scene, the newspaper would probably have ended up the thickness of a Bible or phone book. Ernest looked perplexed. I continued. But somehow I feel sure that the "free market," especially in the marketing realm, wouldn't have been pleased with this experiment. The "free market," if not caught up in political fandom, prefers commercial, entertaining and nonthreatening contents.

So what about public services, financed from state budgets, which didn't have to kowtow to the laws of the market?

The Balkan rule is that these have always been seen as the property of the ruling political parties. Anyone, for instance, in that same long-ago 2021, who'd had the patience to watch the evening news in Croatia broadcast by

© Goran Basarić,
Inside B92 Studio,
Belgrade, Yugoslavia,
1993

Croatian Radio and Television would have seen that of the eight opening segments, six covered the activities of the prime minister. In Serbia the results were even better: of the eight opening segments on Radio Television Serbia news, Aleksandar Vučić, may he rest in peace, pranced through ten.

Who is this Aleksandar Vučić?

Ignore that, Ernest, forget I mentioned him.

Fine, but what business model would have allowed journalism to survive on the market? he asked, not without a tinge of malice.

None, I said. As far as the so-called free market is concerned, it's fair to say, in my opinion, that there is no market-based business model that can ensure journalism its democratic role in a democratic society.

So, what does that mean, then? Was what happened inevitable? There's no alternative?

Not at all, Ernest. No way. Not only could the profession have been saved, but it could have experienced an incredible boom had the awareness prevailed at a certain moment, better late than never, that professional journalism should be seen and treated as a public good. In the same way, for example, that proper countries treat their system of education or health care. I know this might sound a little pompous, but just as everyone ought to have the right to free public schools and medical treatment, they should have the right to honest professional information. The uninformed (or prejudicially over-informed) citizen—a citizen who knows very little about society and has no way of seeing through to the secretive maneuvers of the people in power—can only serve as an object for manipulation, an appealing sort of social invalid instead of an active and aware participant in the life of the society.

What do you mean by “free” health care and education?

“Free” is, of course, a loaded word here, since these are public moneys supplied by the country's taxpayers. In other words, news should be freed of any commercial or political obligations; journalism should be freed of the pressure of money—more precisely: freed from the pressure of private and corporate money, and protected through public financing—because otherwise the media inevitably end up serving the rich and powerful. For such a change to be possible, it would be necessary, first, to commit clearly to journalism as a public good, and then have an at least minimally proper state that is prepared to protect this public good. In order for this to happen, of course, we'd need to treat the state as an administrative apparatus designed to serve the public, instead of as a glorified mythical fabrication.

So what would a minimally proper state look like?

If we keep both feet planted on more or less solid ground, we'd have to say that this would be the polar opposite of Croatia and Serbia which have,

Translated from Croatian
by Ellen Elias-Bursać

since day one, paid the Croatian and Serbian radio and television broadcasters straight from their state budgets for raw propaganda about the present regimes. A minimally proper state would see to the unconditional provision of public moneys to the independent media, including those who criticize the authorities, and perhaps especially to them. Such a state—and feel free to laugh at me for teetering on the brink of utopia here—would serve democratic society without being beholden to political intimidation or big money, or political intimidation *and* big money, as we see more often nowadays, or, most often, the two of these as one. The “free market” cannot assume this role, because, with the support of liberal repertoires of ideas, it fails to acknowledge the unbearable tension between capitalism and democracy. And if there's anything we've learned in this century, it's that the connector *or* should stand between these two concepts instead of the more slippery *and*. Reducing this to the central question of our profession, I suggest: a journalist, a journalist who is critically inclined, needs democracy, while capitalism needs “content producers.”

But then shouldn't there be someone who decides which media would be supported by the public funds? Wouldn't this turn into an opportunity for even more manipulation and pressure?

The citizens themselves are the ones who should decide this, my dear colleague, each one personally, in the most democratic fashion possible. I should warn you that early in our century a relatively detailed model for how to do this very thing was proposed, according to which, citizens—after the funds had been set aside for the public good, as a guarantee that they would be honestly and professionally informed—could decide for themselves through vouchers which of the media would receive their funds.

Who designed this proposal?

A few socialists, a nasty crew.

What are socialists?

Let's not get over our heads here, Ernest. If we're to talk about extinct species, let's stick with journalists. I just wanted to let you know that history can go in another direction, and looking at the current day through the optics of necessity is not the wisest thing. If this had really played out, you wouldn't be talking with a cadaver.

Why?

Because, Ernest, then you'd be the one who was dead.

VIKTOR IVANČIĆ

Viktor Ivančić was born in Sarajevo and lives in Split today. A professional journalist since the early 1980s, he was a founder and editor at *The Feral Tribune*, the satirical and political weekly known for its provocative, antiwar position and defiance of the nationalist regime. Ivančić's work has been recognized with, among others, the International Press Freedom Award, 1997, from the Committee to Protect Journalists, New York, the Olof Palme Prize, 1998, from the Olof Palme Memorial Fund, Stockholm, and the Golden Dove for Peace Prize from Archivio Disarmo, Rome. He has published fifteen books of essays and prose, and his satirical column *Notebook of Robi K.* has been coming out for forty years and enjoys cult status.

Anti-Conspiracy Reflections in Pandemic Times

Remzi Lani



1. I first came across the term conspiracy in my early teens, when among the books in my house a voluminous one with a green cover stood out, titled *The Great Conspiracy against Russia*. From very early on, I read this book by Michael Sayers and Albert E. Kahn, published in Albania in 1951, five years after its original publication. The book was quite popular in Albania at the time, but was hard to find. Its authors presented and unmasked what they considered to be a major internal and external imperialist conspiracy against Soviet Russia. Through the pages of the book, one after another, parade conspirators from Trotsky to Bukharin, a long list of the “fifth column” of international reactionaries who demanded the liquidation of the Soviet country. One can easily find this book in Albanian today, in digital form, free of charge.

Just looking at the nearly 700,000 bunkers the communist regime built in Albania would be enough for a foreign visitor to understand that the country lived in a permanent state of conspiracy. Enver Hoxha’s roughly 100 books are filled with plots and conspiracies hatched by external and internal enemies who were scheming against our Stalinist country. Endless bunkers built on the coast, plains, hills and mountains would protect us Albanians from a joint attack by NATO and the Warsaw Pact forces, a coalition of enemies, who despite disputes and contradictions they had among them, would still unite (of course) against communist Albania. Washington, DC, and Moscow, without excluding London and Bonn, in cooperation with Belgrade and Athens, were participants in what could be called the Great Conspiracy against Albania. In the late 1980s, Beijing joined this club of enemies.

© Anri Sala, *Untitled*, Tirana, Albania, 2003
 Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

When the Berlin Wall fell and, like other former communist countries in Europe, Albania began the long journey of a postcommunist transition, the bunkers became a hot topic for Western newspapers writing about this small Balkan country, at a time when Albanians themselves had either forgotten them, ignored them, or were using bunkers according to various needs and tourism. Meanwhile, former conspiracies had become the butt of jokes in conversations. But, only for a short while. Newspaper pages soon began filling up with new conspiracy theories.

If someone runs a Google search for the word *Katowice*, they will find a lot of information related to this industrial city in Southern Poland. But, if someone searches the word *Katovica* (the way the name of the Polish city is spelled in Albanian) then hundreds of entries of information will be displayed in Albanian (and only in this language) about an alleged meeting of the leaders of the former communist countries led by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987 in the town of Katowice, where they strategized about how to hold onto power under the new conditions after the fall of communism, by turning the former communist class into a new capitalist class. According to proponents of this theory, everything important that happened in Albania after 1990 is linked directly to the last communist leader, Ramiz Alia, adopting Gorbachev's course of action. The Katowice conspiracy is a constant topic of discussion in the Albanian media. Everything that has happened in post-communist Albania, particularly the zigzags of Albania's transition, is, according to this theory, a nearly point-by-point realization of the plan drawn up in that distant Polish city, where, in fact, isolated Albania could not even have been present.

When, during a brief conversation while standing for a coffee break between panels at an international conference in Bern, Switzerland, where the keynote speaker was Mikhail Gorbachev, I managed to ask him in my broken Russian about the Katowice meeting, the former Soviet leader looked at me surprised and replied: *Shto eto? Ja nikagda nje slushall.* (What is this? I have never heard of it.)

Of course, Albania is no exception. The short distance from the Belgrade airport to a hotel in the center of the Serbian capital is enough for the taxi driver to explain that an independent Croatia was a conspiracy of the Vatican and Germany, while an independent Kosovo (to which he adds that this, in fact, is not his main concern) is a major

conspiracy between the Americans and Albanians. And this picture would be incomplete without mentioning that in Tirana or Belgrade, Skopje or Bucharest, one day you will inevitably encounter the conspiracy of George Soros, even the online lists railing against the "Soros army," which attracts invisible threads of power and plans to flood the peninsula with more immigrants from Syria.

2. One of the most brilliant novels within Danilo Kiš's *The Encyclopedia of the Dead* is undoubtedly *The Book of Kings and Fools*. The main character of this novel is not a human, but a book, entitled "The Conspiracy, or The Roots of the Disintegration of the European Society." Gracefully mixing fiction and nonfiction, the great Balkan writer has created an anti-story of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and warns that the history of conspiracies is not over. The title in particular sounds like a warning for us today.

It is the year 2021, and Balkan countries, like the rest of the world, face the pandemic of COVID-19, practice vaccine diplomacy as much as they can, become part of the "vaccine war" against their will, and do not miss any opportunity to cultivate vaccine nationalism. And like all other countries, in fact more than others, the Balkans are infected by what is now widely regarded as an infodemic.

Conspiracy theories, compounded by misinformation, have gone viral (the frequent use of the term viral itself means that we are actually dealing with two viruses at the same time). They begin with the origin of the virus: according to some, the coronavirus came from a laboratory in Wuhan engineered by China; according to some others, the coronavirus was created by the United States as a biological weapon; and according to others still, it was actually created by Big Pharma to make extraordinary profits from vaccines and medicines. Afterwards, conspiracies and misinformation continue linking 5G technology to the coronavirus and the great conspiracy of Bill Gates, according to which, through global vaccination, he aims to place microchips in human bodies and thus establish total control over the human race.

And if the above theories are in fact global, and crashed on our shores as everywhere else in the world, as is always the case, it did not take long for homegrown theories to spring up. A so-called Albanian conspiracy theorist stated on a TV show that COVID-19 is a biological weapon spread by the "White Brotherhood," the result of a battle between



the Illuminati and Donald Trump. A Montenegrin politician claims that behind coronavirus stands “a global Satanist pedophile deep state.”

Everywhere else in the world—and in the Balkans, too—there is a debate about the origin of conspiracy theories. Various reports point to China, which, in an attempt to divert attention from itself, launched a propaganda offensive, using the mask of diplomacy on one hand and on the other, disinformation campaigns, especially across Europe. Others blame Russia, which, through *Russia Today and Sputnik*, has undertaken systematic disinformation operations and has been able to advance anti-Western narratives, especially in the Balkans. To these must be added conspiracy theories that originated and spread in the West itself from radical far-right groups, anti-vax campaigners and charlatans of all kinds. These, too, have reached the Balkans.

Indeed, what has been said above about the Balkans applies to a large extent to any other country, at least on our continent. Yet, there is something else which makes the situation in our region much more serious and complex.

A Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BIEPAG) survey on the spread of coronavirus conspiracy theories in the Balkans, published in early 2021, underlines that approximately 80 percent of people in the Balkans believe in one or more conspiracy theories. The report states that the country with the highest number of supporters of conspiracy theories in the Western Balkans is Albania. According to the study, Balkan countries take a geopolitical approach when it comes to the origin of the virus: Albanians believe that the virus came from China (65 percent), while far fewer Serbs believe this (35 percent). When it comes to vaccination, in all countries of the region except Montenegro, the majority of the population (averaging 53.4 percent) would not take a vaccine, compared to only 39.2 percent who would like to be vaccinated.

According to another survey, by the Institute for Development, Research and Alternatives (IDRA) in Tirana, “one-third of the respondents believed that the 5G internet coverage network is one of the factors for the rapid spread of the virus, while 29 percent of the respondents believed that the vaccine would implant microchips in humans to track them.” Various data show that this is more or less the situation in other countries in the region.

© Anri Sala
 Untitled (ball+lion), 2000
 Courtesy: Esther Schipper,
 Berlin; Galerie Rüdiger
 Schöttle, Munich

To what extent does this situation reflect what has long been said and written about the Balkans as a land of conspiracies? And what does it have to do with the recent phenomenon of what Ivan Krastev calls the rise of the paranoid citizen, not only in the Balkans, but worldwide? How does this relate to old historical factors, to the fact that the Great Powers dictated the fate of the region (and its maps); and how does it relate to today's social and political factors that determine the life of each individual in Balkan societies in transition? And, perhaps most importantly, what role does the new media and communication ecosystem play in the birth and spread of conspiracies and misinformation?

3. The answer to these questions is complex.

The life of an individual today appears simply as an attempt to survive and adapt between Big Tech and Big Pharma. Especially in these pandemic times. The life of an individual in the Balkans is no exception.

In this context, it is not difficult to notice that our societies are firstly characterized by low trust and secondly, polarized to the extreme. Both of these factors, as has been rightly said, create fertile ground for conspiracies of all kinds.

In societies with low trust in local institutions and leaders, individuals tend to seek out other authorities they can trust—authorities that can be easily found in the many conspiracy theories in circulation. The vague vacuum of distrust is easily filled with the simplistic answers offered by these theories.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic, with the uncertainties that accompany an event of its magnitude, with the understandable lack of scientific explanations as to its origin, treatment, vaccine, has brought with it a strong dose of public distrust in both science and scientists, as well as in governments and governors. Simply put, they say one thing today and another tomorrow. And when the scientific and state authorities do not have an answer (which is in fact understandable to a large extent), conspiracies have the answer. It's either one or the other.

Furthermore, our societies are presented as extremely polarized.

Political pluralism in the Balkans is conceived more as a political conflict than as a political dialogue. In a polarized context, the easiest

(but certainly necessary) thing is to demonize the political opponent, who is associated with hostile foreign powers, speaks ill of his country in Brussels or Berlin, and—why not?—is connected even with the international mafia. If this opponent is connected to Moscow, all the better. If there is a plan to fill the country with more Africans or Syrians, at a time when Albanians, Serbs or others are fleeing to the West, even better.

Extreme polarization has led to situations where truth and facts do not matter, as your fans will believe what you say, in any case. A kind of Balkan Trumpism. Citizens lose connections to the truth, as has already occurred. Nearly all Balkan countries held elections during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what became clear was that the theory of two truths (not Galileo's maxim) was already the rule, not the exception. War-like elections were built on extreme antagonism, the delegitimization of the opponent and the logic of exclusion. Troll farms operate at full capacity. It is not difficult to see that accusations of treason have recently been added to the Balkan political and media discourse. There is an increase in the number of conspirators in the region. We thought that we had left all this behind. People are more interested in discovering the conspirators than in discovering the truth. Especially on the internet. Such a conspiratorial mindset, according to Rosenblum and Muirhead, "unsettles the ground on which we argue, negotiate, and even disagree.... It makes democracy unworkable—and ultimately, it makes democracy seem unworthy." Mistrust and polarization fuel conspiracies. On the other hand, conspiracies reinforce as much mistrust as polarization. Democracy erodes, but certainly not for this reason alone. We see this in the Balkans every day.

4.

Eric Schmidt, former chairman of Alphabet, Google's parent company, is quoted as saying: "The internet is the first thing that humanity has built that humanity doesn't understand...." It seems that the cyber-utopia of the beginning of the last decade, when we naively celebrated Facebook Revolutions while China cynically perfected the Internet Dictatorship, is gradually being replaced by cyber-realism. And indeed it's realistic to accept that the internet is something we do not understand. However, the 2.5 billion citizens of the Republic—or rather, Kingdom—of Facebook, on the one hand, have experienced a strong dose of freedom previously unknown, and on the other hand, something of a gambling addiction, or an illusion of freedom. Balkan people are active citizens of this space, using their real names

or anonymously, it does not matter. (I have to disclose here that I am not a citizen of Mark Zuckerberg's state, but I spend quite a few hours online every day.)

What interests me in these reflections is how conspiracies and misinformation (without forgetting fake news) have spread massively on the web, and in the case of the Balkans, have invaded it. If you browse Albanian, Serbian, Croatian, and Macedonian web pages, you have the impression that the Balkan conflicts of the first quarter of this century have ceased on the ground, but continue on the internet. Media wars that began in the 1990s have resumed. But now, more and more, what's replacing the once known *hate speech* is what I call *fake speech*. Fake speech, in my opinion, is a dangerous cocktail of fake news, disinformation–misinformation–malinformation, and conspiracy theories. This booming avalanche is the core, but it is also often the emergence of what is widely regarded as Information Disorder.

Mark Deuze writes, “we do not live *with*, but *in* media.” Long gone is the time we lived *with* media and in front of us stood a vertical media system whose operating keyword was *transmission*. Now, we live in media, in fact, we are part of a horizontal media system, the operating keyword being *share*. And perhaps what is most important here is not the lack of hierarchy, but actually the lack of rules. Paolo Mancini, the well-known researcher of media systems, brilliantly defines the situation when he says that what we see today is the de-institutionalization of the media and communication system.

5. In this situation, the mediatization of conspiracy theories is in fact natural, and there is nothing conspiratorial here. The fact that the media creates them is also not new. The media have always done this, in Albania or Serbia, in Italy or in America. What is new and has led scholars to claim that we are living in a “golden age of conspiracies” is their viral spread and their unusual impact on public debate.

This phenomenon is a symptom of a serious problem of the modern ecosystem of communication, which, while flooding individuals with information (excess of information, infobesity), finds them unprepared to navigate and orient in this informative ocean. The newly published Media Literacy Index 2021 emphasizes once again that the citizens of the Balkan countries continue to be the most vulnerable citizens in Europe to fake news and disinformation, ranking

in the bottom 10 of all the countries of the continent. Fake news—a term misused by many, including Donald Trump—is analogous to those fast e-bikes that transport, aside from the short-term lies of the day that will be forgotten tomorrow, long-term conspiracies of the decade that are here to stay. Fake news has the ability to spread and amplify conspiracies. It looks like a marriage of convenience. Especially in times of crisis. And especially in the Balkans.

Invited to talk about Information Disorder at a regional conference some time ago, I found myself in the position of being able to talk about the situation, identify the problem, compare situations, but being unable to offer solutions. In fact, I'm not alone in this. What lies ahead is a complex situation, a difficult challenge. Is this an educational challenge first and foremost? Is this a serious media challenge? Is this also a civil society challenge?

Of course, this is a serious confrontation of many dimensions, many unknowns. Open Society is threatened by exactly what seems like the Great Opening. An aggressive and often unseen threat. However, at least we have already realized that although for the pandemic virus there seem to be several vaccines, for the disinfodemic virus there can be none. We will have to look for immunity in the development of critical thinking, building trust and, above all, in defending what John Stewart Mill calls “freedom of thought.”

REMZI LANI

Remzi Lani is executive director of the Albanian Media Institute. He has had a long career in journalism, working for publications such as *Zeri i Rinise* (Tirana), *El Mundo* (Madrid), and *Zeri* (Pristina). He is also the author of articles on Balkan affairs for local and foreign papers and magazines, a member of the European Council for Foreign Relations and a member of the Steering Committee of the Global Forum for Media Development. In 1990 he became a founding member of the first human rights group in Albania, the Forum for Human Rights. He is a well-respected voice on issues of democracy and free speech in his country and across the region.



Corruption of the Text

Balša Brković

In today's world, joyously embraced by media civilization—in this day and age of speedy images and huge falsifications—the image you put out there of yourself outweighs all else in importance. It becomes hard fact.

What image does today's Montenegro present to the world? Some ten years ago, an NBA basketball player from Montenegro was announced in American sports halls by strains of the beautiful theme song from *The Godfather*. We have seen recent research confirming that all across the world, the word most frequently associated with Montenegro is: "corruption," only barely edging out "criminal." Of course this sort of impression of any country does not arise from its fine accomplishments. Why then is the word "corruption" the logical association with Montenegro instead of, for instance, names such as "Djilas" or "Savićević," "Dado," "Džon Plamenac," or our women's handball team...? I am not aspiring to "correct" the image of my homeland with a single essay. That wouldn't be possible. I fear such an undertaking would require volumes. But, the corruption—this vast ocean of the same sort of thing that sank the former East and South of Europe—is more complex as a phenomenon than people usually think it to be, while the matter remains within the zone of political literalism. The way I see it, all things start with the Text. This also applies to corruption.

Tradition

Growing up in Montenegro, even in the age of socialism, meant being in an ongoing dialogue with tradition...The self-definition of any society is no simple process. The story of tradition is one of the mechanisms by which certain norms are imposed which, in principle, exist to protect the position and interests of an elite. Or—and this bears repeating—tradition exists in no other way than as the story of the tradition. Also—this story is not one laid down over

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The Wick is Short, Podgorica,
Montenegro, 2012



always the story (and vision) of the current generation. Montenegrin society is torn today among mythologies favoring totalitarian ambitions. The current myths, and the forms of action implicit in them, from lithium to honking patriotic car parades... A church encroaching on the political scene more explicitly than ever? But this time much "smarter," in other words—more dangerously.

So what is this about? In the name of which tradition is this version of the self-degradation of a society unfolding? Judging by the politicians who invoke it, tradition is the measure of all things, whatever they are and are not (to tweak Protagoras's maxim). However, we are interested here in a slightly shifted viewpoint—fascination with tradition is a form of the corruption of the Text. What is the extent of this corruption? What are its consequences? How can people act freely, or even think that acting freely is possible, if they wear the constant shackle of tradition around their necks? For tradition is the ecstasy of the norm, mainly outdated and entirely unnecessary. This susceptibility to the corruption of the Text always creates contexts in which corrupting narratives flourish. The Text is, therefore, a battleground before the battle moves over into so-called reality.

Our tradition is shining, glorious, our hospitality legendary, and our children are the smartest and most charming... Almost every devotee of "traditional values" believes this, and not only in Montenegro. Hence we come to the following: the image of an ideal reality masks a reality that is quite different... Tradition therefore becomes the way we—falsify.

A friend of mine who is a painter drew my attention to an engaging account. A certain mid-nineteenth-century French travel writer describes his journey through Montenegro. His travels take him to a remote spot one or two days on horseback from Cetinje, the capital. His host greets him as befits a host and affirms yet another instance of the hospitality of mountain folk—one of those moments that those enamored of tradition love to brandish now and then. Hospitality is, as they are fond of saying, an affirmation of our purity and our willingness to communicate. The Frenchman experiences all of this: the Montenegrin mountain folk truly are genteel. He has even more reason to think so when, after he has sat with his esteemed host until the wee hours in conversation with half the village, his host insists on riding alongside the Frenchman on horseback to the capital city. The Frenchman is sincerely moved: ah these noble mountain folk, he surely thinks.

The conversation during the ride with his genteel host affords him a true picture. When the Frenchman asks the host why he feels he should ride

© Goranka Matić, Balkan Women For Peace: Women Activists Crossing the Borders, Debeli brijeg, Montenegro-Croatia, June 2002

along on what will be a very long trip, the host tells him: “Well, you have splendid boots. At least two of the men I saw last night at my home were contemplating waylaying you en route, killing you and taking your boots... As I’m with you, they won’t dare.”

So all the gentility in this story comes from an individual who has defied tradition. Because the true devotees of tradition, had the host not been there, would have been strutting around the village wearing—brand new French boots.

After the ethical reversions the traditional narrative generally carries a person’s wallet from their pocket. When society embarks on such a parody, corruption becomes the only measure of all things: the guardian angel of what is cynically known here as a “winner in the transition.” Even the break with tradition had something radically traditional about it here in Montenegro. This occurred along with the corruption of the highest authority.

Another brief tale from relatively recent history about using a higher authority as “cover.” In my childhood I heard a story from a relative, an older man who’d fought with the Partisans in WWII. Communist Party youths were assigned the task of giving their fathers a fright on the eve of pre-war elections. Their obstinate fathers preferred other parties and political convictions.

Two brothers were told to pounce on their father behind the house in the pitch-black darkness and rough him up a bit—with blows more to humiliate than to injure. One of them vacillated, despite his commitment to the cause. He wasn’t sure whether what they were planning to do was such a good idea. The other uttered a sentence that made my relative and his friends roar with laughter: “Go ahead, punch him, Mikonja, go for it, this is for the Party so it doesn’t count...” Just don’t lecture me about tradition. There probably isn’t a more corrupt narrative than this... After these and like corruptions, you are fully prepared for the remainder of the semantic range of the word. Despite this unhappy context, one should keep in mind that never would the world, anywhere, have taken a step forward had there been, fortuitously, one fine and truly important tradition—that of the denial of tradition...

Faking a system of values

All this is part of the answer to the question of how, in Montenegro, it was possible for a higher system of values (pro-western, liberal) to succumb to the onslaught of the church. Actually a subtle deception occurred here. One

Translated from Montenegrin
by Ellen Elias-Bursać

of the fundamental troubles facing today’s Montenegrin society is as follows: the proponents of what would have been a viable system of values (i.e., liberal democracy) espoused it in words only. Their pretense of belonging to an indisputable system of values was not naïve. The political defeat of an elite like this usually implies a disavowal of the system of values endorsed by those who have been cast down. But the political elite had given no more than lip service to the values, indeed they did all they could possibly do to slow the processes, to dilute and parody them... So in Montenegro a system of values is in dispute that never even had a chance. For, despite their declarative support, reality represented the very true political elite that brandished the most attractive flags, but... This was an orgy of corruption, greed, nepotism and diletantism that continued for decades.

A postcard from Malta

The murder of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia shook all of contemporary Europe.

When information was published implicating today’s Montenegro in this story (along with Malta, Azerbaijan and China, and the economic and political elites of those countries), I conducted mini-survey among people I knew. Their response: the Montenegrin role in this scandal seemed neither improbable nor impossible.

Because corruption, in whatever form it takes, is the most credible living tradition in Montenegro.

BALŠA BRKOVIĆ

Balša Brković lives in Podgorica, Montenegro; he has published six volumes of poetry, a book of stories *Berlinski krug* (Berlin Circle), and several novels. A story of his was included in the *Best European Fiction 2015* anthology and his work has been recognized by the *Miroslavljevo jevanđelje* prize 2001-2003 and the *Ratković* prize in 2017 (with Tanja Kragujević). He reviews literature and theater and writes on the history and ideas of anarchism. For many years he was culture editor for the Montenegrin daily *Vijesti* (News) and initiated *Art*, a regular Saturday culture supplement.



Who's That Crying Behind the Wall

Ferida Duraković

*Sarajevo, from both sides of the wall
from both sides of the river, 1993*

Who's that crying behind the wall?

If they're ours
Let's mourn them

If they're theirs
Let's dump them
Let them cry
Let them croak
Let them starve
Let them be lonesome

But
What if it's an old woman crying behind the wall?
What if it's a lonely child crying behind the wall?
A little girl, raped?

The helpless have no kin
or army or party
Or words of solace
So what about the helpless?

Forget them
Fuck them
They're not ours
And they're not theirs either
See how they dumped them on us

© Beka Vučo/Open Society
Foundations, View from
the Old Jewish Cemetery,
Sarajevo, Bosnia and
Herzegovina, 1995



Let them cry
Let them croak
Let them starve
Let them be lonesome

But what if they aren't theirs or ours
Whose are they then?
I think they're ours
They should be ours
We're helpless they're helpless
They're ours

Ours they're not
Forget them
Fuck them

They aren't ours
They're no-one's
Who's to blame anyway
Just look at you—
They're yours
You should be over there behind the wall just like them!

Postscript:

The war I suffered through from 1992 to 1995 is still going on in my thoughts today. This poem is my way to speak—bypassing ideologies, politics and the newly formed “states”—about how there is no such thing as a just war, that civilians, in every war, have nothing but lines of verse with which to cover themselves if somebody humiliates them, beats them, tortures them, locks them up, wounds or murders them. Civilians. The collateral damage of every war and all conflicts of all armies and all ideologies in this part of the world, especially nationalistic ones.

My grandmother, who died in besieged Sarajevo in 1995, was born in 1911 and over the course of her lifetime she made her way through three wars: the First World War, the Second World War, and this one, one of many in the Balkans. I made it through only this one, one of the many in the Balkans.

If we follow this trajectory and its symbolism, my daughter, born in 1996, will not experience the fate of the women in her family. And she'll live a healthy, happy, long life... Just preserve her from the hearing of evil.

© Denis Imamović,
View from the Old Jewish
Cemetery, Sarajevo,
Bosnia and Herzegovina,
2021

Who's That Crying Behind the Wall, 2

Ferida Duraković

*Sarajevo, from both sides of the wall
from both sides of the river, 2020*

Neighbor, did you hear that last night?
The kid wailing in the apartment next door?
All night long
I never slept a wink

Well, must be those migrants
Devil take them
Why choose our building to come to
Neighbor B. says they're from Iraq

They're hardly able to choose
Lucky for them they have somewhere to sleep
That's surely the crying of a sickly child

Spare me your sentiment
Whatever moved them to travel with a child?
Who sent them out into the wide world
and to us, of all places, in this hole in the wall
Please, spare me!

But, the kid's just a child
who can hardly be blamed for being born
Maybe they have nothing to eat
And the kid's sick
Maybe they have no medicine
I doubt the kid's crying for joy

Translated from Bosnian
by Ellen Elias-Bursać

You, my dear, are such a bleeding heart
Obviously you're a poet
This is all according to plan
They move into our buildings
Change our genes
Nothing random here

Spare me, like they've chosen Bosnia
To settle here—out of all the countries in the world
Were you a refugee during the war?

I was, yes, in Sweden
But I had no cell phone like they have
Thank God I'm white so I fit in
But these here are out to taint our seed
All this is a conspiracy
against European civilization!
It's just that you don't understand
You're such a gullible fool
Like all poets

And besides
If you love them so much
Be my guest
Take them home with you!

Postscript:

The Slovenian police found thirteen migrants from Iraq, two of them children (six and eleven) who had hidden in a freight truck and suffered from dehydration and a shortage of oxygen. Some of them required medical care after they were found on Tuesday during a routine check on the border with Croatia. The migrants had traveled several hours from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) through Croatia, packed into compartments with scant oxygen, in a truck with BiH license plates. The police arrested the truck driver from BiH and another person who was with him in the vehicle.

Will freedom know how to sing
The way captives have sung of it?^[1]

[1] Branko Miljković

FERIDA DURAKOVIĆ

Ferida Duraković (Sarajevo), poet, short-story writer, columnist, children's author. She founded of the P.E.N. Center and the Writers' Association in Bosnia-Herzegovina and has published 17 volumes of poetry, prose, children's books and translations from the English.

Her work was recognized by the Hellman-Hammet Fund for Free Expression Award in 1992 and by the Vasyl Stus Freedom-to-Write Award from PEN New England for *Heart of Darkness*. Her books of poetry have been published in the United States, Italy, Bulgaria, and Poland, and select poems have been translated into 30 languages. She ran the PEN Center Sarajevo from its founding in 1992 to 2013, and lives in Sarajevo with husband, daughter, and four cats.

The Open Society Lightning Rods

Miljenko Jergović



Karmen Bašić was the Executive Director of the Open Society Institute Croatia from its founding in late 1992 until her death in March 1999. Zdravko Grebo, the initial member of the Soros Yugoslavia Foundation from 1991, established the Open Society Fund – Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war years in Sarajevo and was its first Executive Director, and soon after, the President of the foundation Board. Zdravko Grebo died in January 2019.

This photograph of the two of them was taken on January 4, 1993, at the Hotel Esplanade in Zagreb during the dinner hosted for George Soros and the five-member committee of individuals connected with Open Society Foundations, who oversaw the distribution of the \$50 million that Soros committed for humanitarian assistance to victims of the war then underway in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Our generation was faced with the challenge of never properly experiencing the fall of the Berlin wall or the transition from a single-party system run by the Communist Party to a parliamentary, multiparty democracy. We went straight from communism to war. The war began as the first parties were being founded, because their plan was not to move their community to a new, democratic footing, but instead to pull out of the community altogether. And the community was Yugoslavia: largely a confederal state of independent republics during the 1980s, which, over the last decade of its existence after Tito's death, neither tightened its hold with a firm ideological grip, nor flexed its muscles to remain fully in charge. Yugoslavia was a single-party state and the Communist Party—which was, after all, called the *Savez komunista* or Alliance of Communists—was composed of nine often fractious communist parties, or communist alliances, six at the republic level, two at the province level, and a separate unit based in the Army. This did not amount to a multiparty system, because all these parties were uniformly communist.

But each of them also contained another element: a more or less pronounced bond with the territorial community, people or ethnic group they represented. Simply put, what they practiced was no longer communist internationalism but a nationalist version of communism. And so they remained, in essence, to the end. Into war we strode without a single intermediate step, untouched by the historical sea change underway in Europe. The war was going to be fought over the ethnic and territorial legacy of what was left behind by the Alliance of Communists of Yugoslavia and their nine dwarves. And all the arguments about the war revolved around history. The outcome was a manifestation of historical determinism, variously understood, as well as the new countries organizing around the historical rights of the individual ethnic groups conceptualized as nations before Yugoslavia was founded in 1918.

© Beka Vučo/Open Society Foundations, Karmen Bašić and Zdravko Grebo, Zagreb, Croatia, January 1993

Popper has said that by no means are we utterly determined by history, and that our destinies are not set in stone through the predictable dramaturgy of the historical process. But these thoughts never reached us. The war broke out immediately and we had no time to grasp what a liberal democracy is supposed to be, and what a society would be like where people could truly decide about themselves and their social trajectory, instead of being only part of a collective, making collective decisions. What Karl Popper wrote in 1945—believing himself to be waging the decisive battle of World War II—published as the two-volume *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, was light-years ahead of what we were experiencing in the early 1990s.

The Open Society Institute began its work in Belgrade on 17 June 1991, exactly nine days before the war broke out in Yugoslavia. But it began in Sarajevo and Zagreb, and partially in the other Yugoslav capital cities as well, in a dramatically different way than it did in other parts of Eastern Europe. Elsewhere, the Open Society Institute arrived as the living face of parliamentary democracy and political liberalism in the broadest sense of the word. Freedom is, among other things, expensive; Popper's notion of the open society is, financially and in every other aspect, demanding and costly, much more expensive than any form of totalitarianism. In Sarajevo and Zagreb, however, the Open Society Institute commenced its work only after the war had begun. In Sarajevo this was one of the most—if not *the* most—powerful platforms for what we called the “international community,” though we were never quite sure what this ought to entail, while in Zagreb there was a national or nationalistic revolution underway in parallel with the war, and the Open Society Institute was perceived, not altogether wrongly, as being its vehement adversary.

Popper's ideal, as well as the way Soros put it into practice through his Open Society initiatives, was founded on two only nominally opposed principles: individualism and social solidarity. Not merely to glorify the first of these, but for certain deeper and more important reasons, the story of the Open Society in these two countries can be told through two remarkable biographies and two examples of unwavering commitment, which compensated, at times, for the lack of genuine social movements. Where else can Popper's ideas be seen as having such an impact on individuals and their power and ability to change their world as they did in Zagreb and Sarajevo?

The two people were Karmen Bašić and Zdravko Grebo. And it's interesting, and perhaps instructive, how very different they were. Yet both were singular products of their times.

Karmen Bašić was one of those savvy European young women, a child of counter-culture movements and passions, who discovered India in the late 1960s and early 70s. Ironically, the East, with its philosophies, literature and spirit, was discovered, in Yugoslavia, via the West. First she studied Indology and then she worked for a few years during the 80s as a Croatian language instructor at a New Delhi university; in Zagreb she ran the Section for Oriental Studies within the Croatian Philological Society. She was among the first latter-day Croatian and Yugoslav feminists, committed, grappling with the reality and life of the community, but, essentially, apolitical. She ran the Open Society of Croatia from its founding to the end of the 1990s. This was a war, with assaults by renegade Yugoslav Peoples Army units, followed by the uprising of a portion of Croatia's citizens of Serbian ethnicity, and there was also the establishment, in parallel, of the authoritarian nationalistic autocracy of General Tuđman, who, using revolutionary methods, transformed the community into something most reminiscent of the social order of Falangist Spain during the days of Francisco Franco. This was a time of fear, of existential collapse and of identity crises. The government, the regime media, the church and much of society perceived the Open Society Institute as a vast cash register, financing the most varied assortment of enemies of Croatia. For every evil that befell Croatia in those years, the sole culprit or co-culprit was Soros.

At the worst possible time for the Institute and for Popper's idea, Karmen Bašić was the visible, ever-present face, the poster child. She was the lightning rod who drew lightning to herself and under whose auspices so many people learned about freedom. It is difficult to explain to someone today how such projects could completely hinge on this one dynamo—a friendly, smiling woman. If it hadn't been her life, her story would have made a great movie, or a novel about a brightly colored emergence from the grayness of socialism, performed by Karmen Bašić with the full force of her imagination, courage and devotion to the causes she espoused. Asthma is a form of over-sensitivity to the world. She died of an asthma attack, in the East, in Almaty, the city of apples, where she happened to be traveling for work. This was in 1999, at the very end of the Tuđman era. Afterwards, things were easier.

Zdravko Grebo was four years her junior, but they were of the same generation. India was not his thing; instead he was swept up by the student protests in 1968, when a whole generation choked on the “gulp of freedom,” to use Bulat Okudzhava's poetic image. Later, as a professor at the Sarajevo Law Faculty,

he worked on the theory of state and law. Long-haired, bearded, always in an olive drab jacket he'd picked up at an army-navy surplus store, which we called, of all things, a Vietnamer. In the 1980s, Grebo's manner set him apart; it was so different from the demeanor of a typical university professor or communist politician. Yet he, too, was a politician: a communist who believed in reform of the Party, but also in the reform of ideas. He was a member of the Central Committee, a delegate at the final Congress of the Alliance of Communists of Yugoslavia, when the Party ultimately fell to pieces, signaling the beginning of the war. Grebo then made his last, almost desperate, gesture, proposing that the Party split in two. One part would be the Social Democrats, the other—the Communists. War, of course, had more zing.

He took part in the first ecological, human-rights, alternative and cultural campaigns underway in Sarajevo in the 1980s. He was already a lightning rod then and, in a way, he watched over our whole generation. We could do whatever we liked, lambaste the ideological commissions of the Central Committee and the still vigorous Security Service, who pursued everyone who diverged from the Party line, because we knew that no matter what we did, Professor Zdravko Grebo would defend and protect us. He defended us when he thought we were crazy and when he was convinced we were up to childish ideological mischief, because he was committed to defending freedom as a matter of principle. And nothing could upend that principle.

How could it happen that in no time flat, in no more than a few years, Zdravko Grebo moved from serving as a delegate at the final congress of the one and only Party to establishing the Open Society Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and from there to becoming the genuine incarnation of Popper's concept of the open society, and this under the worst conditions imaginable, in a city under siege, with hostilities raging against Bosnia and Herzegovina, amid a civil war, with the collapse of the traditional, multiethnic and multi-confessional community? And wasn't Grebo a Marxist? And didn't Popper, in his discourse on open society and its enemies, start out with a reckoning with Marxism, not only with Stalin's version but with the one he himself had earlier espoused? Yes, this is how it appears in theory. In practice, things are slightly different, especially the practice Professor Grebo demonstrated and championed with his life. During the siege, he started a radio station, because this was the medium most accessible to the largest number of people in the city. He brought to the station young people who'd had no previous experience whatsoever. Later they'd be the protagonists of a liberated generation of people, intellectuals and independent journalists. He published literary editions and a periodical. Amid the besieged city he published key

Translated from Croatian
by Ellen Elias-Bursać

subversive books. Studying open-mindedness himself, he taught it to others. His individualism, eluding comparison to anyone or anything, was irreducible to a single idea and ideology. He was not messianic. Grebo did not foster or disseminate particular ideas: he created the conditions under which people could think and speak freely. In this he was incredible. He did this for himself, driving people around in his yellow VW Golf, or gathering them at a student café or at a neighborhood tavern. He went on to do the same, though on a much broader, more extravagant and steadier scale, at the Open Society. He expected of others only that they'd have a feel for freedom. He'd take care of the rest.

Karmen Bašić and Zdravko Grebo were brave. This sort of personal courage is the third facet of the Open Society project, wherever it has been tried. The first facet is Karl Popper's idea, the second is George Soros's one-two punch of good will and funding, and the third has been the courage of individuals. While the first two facets are, for the most part, reliable and permanently set, the third side is fickle. We know nothing about people until we give them the chance to disappoint us bitterly. In the 1990s, in Sarajevo and in Zagreb, the circumstances were such that suffering two disappointments would mean the obliteration of hope. The problem of post-communist Eastern Europe today lies in the widespread feeling of disappointment in freedom, which for these countries and their societies has led to a resurgence of totalitarian thinking. If Karmen Bašić and Zdravko Grebo had been different people, if they hadn't had it in them to serve as lightning rods for a sensitive, very young world caught up with re-inventing itself, the disappointment in freedom in Bosnia and Croatia would have been inestimable in its consequences. For we in our generation, as I said earlier, had not a moment of respite to familiarize ourselves with freedom; we jumped straight from communism into war. These two courageous individuals could not, at such a time and in such places, create an open society as a stepping stone to a liberal parliamentary democracy, but they did give the opportunity to gifted individuals to imagine it freely and build their world and follow their vision, unfettered by the collective will. Now that's big.

MILJENKO JERGOVIĆ

Born in Sarajevo in 1966, he is one of the most significant Balkan writers of his generation. In 2012, he received the Angelus Central European Literature Award for his book *Srda Sings, at Dusk, on Pentecost* and in 2018 he won the Georg Dehio Book Prize. His stories and novels have been translated into more than 20 languages. He has received numerous literary awards, both domestic and foreign. Jergović currently lives and works in Zagreb, Croatia.

International Experience

Aleksandar Hemon

In January 1992, I left Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina for a trip around the United States under the auspices of the now-defunct United States Information Agency. The official part of the trip lasted for a month, in the course of which the Agency arranged for me, a young journalist and writer, meetings with film directors, writers, editors and such. After the official part of the trip, I stayed on for a few more weeks to visit friends. My last stop was Chicago, from where I was to fly back home on May 1, 1992. I had not planned or intended to stay in America, but the war in Bosnia spread like a wildfire, so, after a difficult and painful period of deliberation I decided not to return. On May 2, the day I would've landed, Sarajevo came under a siege that would not end for nearly four years.

Unprepared as I was for staying, I had no money at all, so that the first step had to be finding a job. Before I received a work permit, I worked illegally, sometimes for less than minimum wage. Even after I got my papers, I was applying for low wage jobs, because I had no skills or qualifications other than being a writer and journalist from a country and in a language few Americans knew existed. I'd scroll through ads in the back of newspapers for jobs like kitchen help, bartender, bouncer. At interviews, I often made up my past employment history, claiming that I used to be a bartender in Bosnia, or was trained in martial arts. But the potential employers, already put off by my foreign accent, could see right through me and my false past. One day, I came across an ad for a sales job, seeking bilingual candidates with international experience. I thought that my previous life in Bosnia automatically constituted international experience, and since I could speak Bosnian and English, I seemed to be a perfect candidate. When I called the number, the very cheerful person told me they liked my accent, and invited me for an interview.

The interview was in a Chicago neighborhood called Six Corners, which was very far from where I was staying, requiring a long commute and changing

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subways and busses more than once. I bought the *Chicago Tribune* to read on my long journey, and on its front page was a map of Bosnia, illustrating an article about the war. I now recall that there were little fires on the map, indicating intense fighting, but it could well be that those fires were a projection of my fervid mind. At that time, I hardly had contact with my family and friends, and news and stories of atrocities were, as far as I was concerned, everywhere I looked. I remember watching, over and over again, the story about the Sarajevo breadline massacre, trying to recognize the people in it, crawling in their own blood, asking the camera to help them. The job interview took place in an office that was clearly rented for the occasion, as it contained only second-hand furniture. The waiting room was packed with people, all presumably bilingual and internationally experienced. For some reason, it was only in the waiting room that I found out that the company was selling healthy cookware and that my job would consist of arranging presentations, in my language, and that I would get a commission if—if—I sold some cookware. Moreover, we were expected to recruit other salespeople from our respective ‘cultures’ and thus build and lead our teams, from which we would harvest some more commissions. I doubted that I could ever sell anything to anyone, let alone from a sales team, but I felt that I had no choice except to continue—there is such a thing as the audacity of despair. Six of us at a time were then bundled into an office to sit across from a man in a white shirt who was grinning ardently to project relentless positivity. He asked each of us to tell him about ourselves, and tell him what we could offer to the company. It seemed to me at the time that the purpose of the question was to assess the willingness of each of us to debase ourselves in order to get the job.

I was the last one in my group of six to speak about my eagerness to help make the company even more successful. I hadn’t had many job interviews, and none of them were successful, so I had to figure out quickly what to say. All the people before me spoke confidently and cheerfully, eager to debase themselves, make a lot of money, help the company fulfill its enormous potential, etc. The guy in the white shirt was clearly appreciating their performances. I did manage to generate some self-debasing bullshit by way of rehashing the bullshit generated by the people before me, but doing it cheerfully and confidently was far beyond me. Still, at the end of the interview, the guy congratulated us all—including, to my surprise, me—on getting the job.

But what that meant in reality was that we would be immediately heading to the company offices in a distant suburb to undergo training, for which we had to pay out of pocket. I didn’t quit right after the interview, tempted as I was, because I had invested so much time and energy into reaching that point. Off

to the suburbs I went with my fellow bilingual salespeople, the *Chicago Tribune* still under my arm. The training was in a huge room with a stage on which there was a chalkboard and a table with the cookware. Whoever spoke to us did so at the same pitch of perky positivity and unfettered enthusiasm. The star of the show, the allegedly genius salesman, was a guy wearing a green suit, a hideously colorful tie, an enormous gold ring on his pinky, and an impressive mullet. He brandished the same kind of relentlessly positive grin as the interview guy. The first thing the green-suit guy did upon getting up on the stage was ask the audience of trainees: “Who wants to make money?” It seemed that everyone in the audience raised their hands; even I did it, mainly so as not to be conspicuous in my lack of ambition. The green-suit guy drew a sad face with a downturned mouth on the chalkboard and instantly crossed it off with a dramatic gesture. Then he drew a smiley face, and turned to the audience to glare triumphantly at us, as if he had just revealed the greatest, simplest secret of life and success.

At which point it was clear to me that, if smiley positivity was a requirement, I stood no chance of ever selling any healthy cookware to anybody. Which is to say that I quit the job before I even started it. But I had no way to leave, as the people who gave me a ride to the remote suburb were enthusiastically invested in the spectacle on the stage, smiling like there was no tomorrow. I would have to sit through the end of training to catch a ride with them. Resigned, I turned to the *Chicago Tribune* on the desk before me and started reading it. The green-suit guy spotted me and said, before a room full of smiling people: “Whaddya need that for? Never read the papers. The news just makes you depressed.”

The entire summer of 1992, I was indeed depressed by the news from home, featuring the brutal siege of my hometown and atrocities all over Bosnia. My friends and family were often impossible to reach, and some had died. Shortly after my hapless attempt at becoming a salesman, I did manage to get a legal job (door-to-door canvassing for Greenpeace) and spent my days working and despairing, or reading and despairing, or just plain despairing. The despair reached its peak toward the end of the summer, when the news about the Serb concentration camps hit all the front pages in sight. I was affected greatly by the famous *Time* magazine cover picture of an emaciated Trnopolje camp inmate. I remember where exactly in Chicago I stood (at the intersection of Broadway and Deon) with that picture in my

ALEKSANDAR HEMON

Aleksandar Hemon is the author of the novels *Nowhere Man*, *The Lazarus Project*, *The Making of Zombie Wars*, and short story collections: *The Question of Bruno* and *Love and Obstacles*. His other works include two books of nonfiction, *My Parents: An Introduction/This Does Not Belong to You* and *The Book of My Lives*. He has collaborated on screenplays for the Netflix original show *Sense8* and the upcoming *The Matrix 4*. Born in Sarajevo, Hemon visited Chicago in 1992, intending to stay for a matter of months. While he was there, Sarajevo came under siege, and he was unable to return home. Hemon wrote his first story in English in 1995. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2003 and a “genius grant” from the MacArthur Foundation in 2004. Hemon is a Professor of Creative Writing at Princeton University.



mind, when I had an intense physical sensation of being crushed by the horror of what was happening in my country, followed by a wave of profound hopelessness, terrible loneliness and sorrow. It occurred to me at that moment that I might not be able to survive the war, even if I was thousands of miles away and safe, and that I should perhaps find a way to talk to someone who could help me—maybe a therapist. But then, in the next moment, I thought: “What could a therapist say to me? Think positive?” I decided not to seek any help at that time, convinced that no one in America could begin to understand.

Steadily, my accumulated despair and loneliness morphed into fury which far outlasted the war. A couple of years after the war ended, I charged across the gym in the middle of a soccer game to kick one Clemente in the head. Clemente was a nice guy, if a bad goalie, and I was instantly sorry and ashamed that I assaulted him. Kicking people was not acceptable, so I sought help from a therapist who specialized in anger management. In our first session, he sat across from me with the same fucking positivity grin as all of those from my early job-seeking days. Thankfully, he didn’t ask me to think positive, but he gave me instead breathing exercises to help me manage my anxiety and anger. I was supposed to control and slow down my breathing while visualizing a place from my previous life where I had once felt peaceful and safe. The therapist’s idea was that I would train myself so that when I started getting upset I would invoke my vision of the safe and peaceful place and my body would reflexively react by slowing down my breathing and calming me. Needless to say, it didn’t work even for a moment, not least because the place I had envisioned—my family’s mountain cabin in Bosnia—was irreversibly lost to us. I would pan across the cabin with my mind’s eye, paying attention to every little thing and tchotchke, and all I could think of was that I would never see any of that again. What my body and mind reacted to, and not at all by becoming calmer, was all the irretrievable losses my family, and just about everyone I knew and loved, had experienced. I realized then that a safe and peaceful place might be beyond my reach, just as I realized that my sense of displacement in America—that place of pathologically relentless positivity—was never going to wane. And it never has. I prefer to communicate and share my thoughts and feelings with Bosnians or former Yugoslavs who’ve had similar experiences of displacement, and thus understand how rapidly a society can come apart. But there are also those who recognize that a successful society must strive to be a safe and peaceful space, that it should be relentlessly built and maintained as such for all citizens. The work of justice and care is endless, its results uncertain, but the only other choice is despair concealed behind a relentless grin.

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April 6, 2012

A Smashed Vase

Goran Marković

The blow was not a total surprise. Many years before the edifice known as Yugoslavia crumbled—which had seemingly stood on solid ground—there were signs that unsettling things were underway. For instance, the epidemic of Variola vera, otherwise known as smallpox, in 1972. The outbreak of this tropical disease which had been all but wiped out proved that the foundations of the bastion had been seriously shaken. Before this, the student unrest in 1968, which at first glance seemed to be ultra-leftist, had, in fact, zeroed in on the weak points of the state. Tito nearly lost his position of unquestionable authority and had to fall back on one of his magic tricks to deceive and placate the rebellious youth.

But these were only hints of weakness; they didn't augur anything as drastic as the collapse of the entire country and years of a bloody war. The scenes that followed were apocalyptic and reminded me of a continuous slow-motion smash of a beautiful, precious vase, with pieces floating slowly off in many directions, moving away from one another forever. As the shot is very slow, it is still possible to see that on individual shards of the harmonious, beautiful whole there are traces of what was an image, a complicated pattern with many different scenes, allegories and symbols. Motifs and hidden signs can be spotted here and there, but these are only fragments that will never be reunited.

At that moment I was, as they say, in the best years of my life and at the peak of my creative potential. Surrounded by a small group of the children of actors, I made my first autobiographical movie, *Tito and Me*, while over our heads flew airplanes on their way to Vukovar. We were lulled by the assumption that this wouldn't last long, maybe it would be no more than a fatal blunder, soon to be resolved one way or another. But the war dragged on and on, and slowly what this was all about became clearer: the demise of an illusion.

© Mladen Pikulić,
Tennis Player, Sarajevo,
Bosnia and Herzegovina,
2009



The movie came out in 1993 while the war was raging, and off I went that year to an international festival in San Francisco and then on to the premiere of the film in New York. There I was greeted by Donald Krim, distributor and promoter of East European cinematography, as well as my friend and colleague, Srdjan Karanović, who had already left the country and was teaching at a college in Middletown, Connecticut. I spent 24 hours there and made the acquaintance that day of a woman who was the head of the University of Chicago film department. She proposed that I unpack my suitcases, so to speak, and teach film direction in her department. I had one hour to make this life-changing decision: to remain on another continent, probably forever, or go back to hell.

I thanked her for her offer and explained that I couldn't make such a big decision quickly, then I boarded a plane for Amsterdam, another for Budapest from there, and finally, took my seat in a van (the Belgrade airport was closed due to the war) and set off for what was left of Yugoslavia. Along the way I asked the driver to allow us a stop for a bathroom break, but he refused to do so before we reached the border. When I dashed to the men's room in my homeland, it was flooded, the electricity was out, and my piss-stop cost 20 billion dinars!!! Inflation was running at more than 100 percent per day.

Why did I stay in that country, or rather in that remnant of it now known as Serbia? I must admit that I don't know. Somebody might think this was because I was an impassioned patriot, a Serbian nationalist perhaps, or something like that. But, no! Nothing of that was me. Indeed, I was involved with all the groups and movements opposing the regime of Slobodan Milošević, I was disgusted by nationalism and chauvinism, I was mainly linked to people through philosophical and aesthetic bonds. Throughout the war I kept up contact with people who thought as I did "on the other side," mocked limelight patriots and exposed war profiteers, various moral monsters and deranged clan leaders, and by so doing I knowingly laid my head on the chopping block.

I traveled with a group of independent intellectuals to Paris. At the time we were probably hoping to show the French that all Serbs are not like those whose crimes filled the front pages of newspapers. There I met with Lang, the Minister of Culture, and Glinskman the philosopher, and once again I took my place in the van that brought us back from the Budapest airport in the dark. My mother told me: don't come back. On television they'd declared us to be traitors slinging mud at our country, but, once again, I couldn't bear to become a fugitive, a refugee. After a few days, thieves broke into my apartment and rummaged through everything, leaving money untouched in a box

on the desk. This was a message. A friend—an actor who had played the lead in five of my movies and had meanwhile joined Milošević's party—was elected to Parliament and called for an inquiry into my traitorous activities. The sentence for treason at the time was the death penalty, so for the first time I began seriously contemplating leaving the country. But the inquiry, luckily, was not given the go-ahead so I could breathe a sigh of relief. There was no longer any way for me to do my job, since I'd been ostracized and tagged as an enemy. And furthermore, to make a movie you had to work closely with state television, which had meanwhile become the most vociferous warmonger, and if I had stepped over the threshold of that institution this would have meant trampling on everything I'd fought for, a denial of my guiding principles. I sat down in a darkened room and began writing: nobody could stop me from doing that.

I often went to theaters, not to see plays but to theater salons packed with half-drunk actors. The theater was another kind of home for me, since my parents were famous actors and I was practically born in the theater. I felt as if the theater protected me, it was a kind of family that loved and understood me, just as I loved all those people in the smoky rooms who in everything found occasion for humor, irony and self-irony. This turned out well for me in those bad times because it was when I wrote one of my finest plays: *Turneja* (Tour).

The play was a hit and I took home an award for best text at the biggest local theater festival. Suddenly I had an alternative, an exit. I'd come back to my lost home and it had offered me a chance to start over. I thought about how great it was that I'd stayed, that I probably would have sunk into nostalgia elsewhere, written poorly in another language that I'd never fully master and lived in relationships with people I'd never fully understand. As it was, life around me may have been horrible, but I could create in a language and world I completely understood.

I didn't limit myself to the theater. I was nearly fifty and for the first time in my life I tried my hand at prose. In a way I felt that a person who decides to start doing something as serious as literature late in life is being pretentious, even immature. Yet another part of me felt that all of these—film, theater, fiction—are the same. I persuaded myself that they are merely different ways of articulating the same poetic. These two voices were constantly at war inside me, threw me to the ground, with the referee counting to eight until up I scrambled and took my stance again. Earlier, while I was working only on movies, I fought against words. I was put off by dialogue that sounded overly literary.

I believed that what an actor says has no more importance than background music, or street noise, and that what was behind the words, what was actually happening to the person, was what mattered: the subtext meant more than the text. Now, however, I did turn to words, first on the stage and then on paper.

But there was no going back. I continued on all three tracks. My plays came out one after another, I found ways to start making movies again, I wrote books that were at first more diary-like—confessional prose of a sort—but ultimately I ventured into something that could be deemed a novel. I wasn't sure whether all this was truly worth much or was a symptom of a neurosis, an unchecked appetite for writing, my defense against the horrifying circumstances in which I was living. But all this, by some miracle, succeeded. People were uncertain about what I was up to, and so was I. Yet it succeeded.

The war ended and people gradually began to adjust to the new reality. A rift appeared among us: those who felt defeated and the others, the people who believed in the possibility of a better, more humane world. Milošević was overthrown and we, from the latter group, felt that justice had finally come. But our hopes were dashed. The new government, the one we'd believed in and fought for, proved to have flaws much like the previous regime's: greed and arrogance. I thought: anyone can desire to be a leader, but a nation is defined by their choice of candidate. If you choose a fool or a crook, you get what you deserve.

So it was that a dark force began gathering strength and preparing for its grand return. Imperceptibly, those who had previously fomented bloodshed, the nationalist leaders and the war profiteers, reclaimed their positions close to power. This was also fueled by a worldwide shift to the right. And in neighboring countries similar grifters began pretending to be ordinary people, and made little effort to hide their true faces. In my country this was clearest of all: the political party of Šešelj, the war criminal, changed its name and overnight his people came into power. They were, in fact, elected. Apparently they were what the voters wanted.

Yet again I clung to hopes: This would have to pass soon, people would quickly see that these were the very same people who had thrust us into the hopelessness of war, so this government would not prevail. What an error of judgment that was! The politicians turned out to be very clever and so craved power that they were capable of destroying everything standing in their way, including their own people. They soon took control of all state institutions

Translated from Serbian
by Ellen Elias-Bursać

and began to reduce them to shadows of their former selves. Not a single democratic body was left that functioned independently, from the courts to the media; one by one, they were gradually taken over by or flattened under the thumb of the government.

After Milošević's fall I walked into the state television building for the first time. Thousands of people there who were merely doing their jobs felt that at last they were free of Milošević's henchmen who had held everything in their grasp. Again the television staff could breathe; they could do what they knew best. But soon it all began again. Pressure, control, the divergence between those who were obedient and all the rest. The Bastille, as we called the building of the state television during the Milošević years, became the Bastille once again in the Vučić era. Bastille Plus, I called it. I went on living what seemed like a normal life. In fact, I felt like a fakir stepping gingerly over the shards of a smashed vase. Always cautious, anticipating a jab, my face in a grimace. But I came across more and more people who were jealously guarding their shards, and not only here in the Balkans, but the world over. There were even those who had never been Yugoslavs, yet spoke about the nonexistent country with a shade of melancholy. I thought about how Yugoslavia might become the new Atlantis with no proof that it had ever existed. All this grew out of my choice to return to what was left of the country where I was born instead of trying to root myself in a pleasanter, happier world. Around me the shards of the shattered vase are still afloat, and I have run into people, from time to time, who collect them in the vain hope of reassembling them. Like those actors in ads for super glue who magnificently restore broken things to their past coherence. We all know this is futile, but there are moments when the shards, at least briefly, possess the power that the beautiful vase known as Yugoslavia once had.

I must admit that this tragedy has made me into a different person than I would have been otherwise. If my homeland hadn't fallen apart, I might have made movies that would have lost their freshness of spirit in time. I wouldn't have gone so often to the theater and found it to be my home. The idea of writing probably never would have occurred to me. This has taught me that even the most tragic things possess the potential for change into something beautiful. As the old anarchist, Bakunin, once said: "The passion for destruction is a creative passion."

GORAN MARKOVIĆ

Goran Marković is professor emeritus at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts at the University of Belgrade. He studied film direction in Prague, Czechoslovakia, from 1965 to 1970 and made documentary films for television from 1970 to 1976. Since 1976 he has made the feature films: *Special Education*, *National Class*, *Variola vera*, *Taiwan Canasta*, *Reflections*, *The Meeting Point*, *Tito and Me*, *Cordon*, *The Tour*, *Falsifier*, *A Stowaway on the Ship of Fools*, *Delirium Tremens*. He has also made medium-length documentary films, directed theater productions, and written several plays.



© Goranka Matić, From the Balcony of the National Theatre, Belgrade, Serbia, March 9, 1991

30
YEARS

Background

As communism collapses throughout Eastern Europe in 1989, Ante Marković, Yugoslav prime minister, forms a government in a last, failed attempt to reform Yugoslavia and hold it together. New leadership in Montenegro acquiesces to Slobodan Milošević, Serbia's president. The Serbian constitution is amended to curtail the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Franjo Tuđman rises to power in Croatia. On June 28, one million Serbs flock to Kosovo Polje to commemorate the 600th anniversary of a legendary battle, which Milošević uses to rally the crowd in support of struggles to come.

In January 1990, at the final Congress of the Yugoslav Communist Party, the Slovenes walk out and the Croats support them. Albanian demonstrations in Kosovo are crushed, a state of emergency is imposed. In the spring, the Yugoslav republics hold the first free multiparty elections. Slovenia ousts the communists. Croatia sweeps Tuđman's (HDZ) party to victory. Alija Izetbegović founds the Muslim Nationalist Party (SDA) in Bosnia and Herzegovina followed by the establishment of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) headed by Radovan Karadžić. In the fall, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the three nationalist parties—the Muslim SDA, the Serb SDS, and the Croat HDZ—win 85 percent of the vote. Milošević's Socialist Party (formerly communist) wins in Serbia.

The following pages highlight the most important historical events 1991-2021.

1991 **January/** Kiro Gligorov elected Macedonia's first president.
March/ Anti-Milošević demonstrations in Belgrade are broke up by force, with tanks entering the ciity center. Milošević meets Tadjman to discuss carving up Yugoslavia.
May/ A first military conflict leaves 15 dead in Borovo Selo, Croatia; rotating Yugoslav presidency breaks down.
June/ James Baker, U.S. secretary of state, visits Belgrade to try to save Yugoslavia, but is ignored. Croatia and Slovenia declare independence. Yugoslav Army moves to stop Slovenia's independence.
July/ European Community–brokered Brioni accords end fighting in Slovenia; war spreads through Croatia.
August/ Bombardment of Croatian city of Vukovar. Major Serb offensive in Western Slavonia.
September/ Voters in Macedonia in a referendum endorse independence.
October/ Bombardment of Croatian city of Dubrovnik.
November/ Vukovar falls after siege; more than 200 non-Serbs are removed from a hospital and killed. In a referendum, Bosnian Serbs vote to remain part of Yugoslavia.

1992 **January/** Most European Community countries recognize independence of Croatia and Slovenia.
March/ Bosnian President Izetbegović declares Bosnia and Herzegovina independent when the majority of Bosnia and Herzegovina's inhabitants vote to break away in a referendum boycotted by most Serbs. In Albania, early elections take place after the Stability Government established in 1991 collapses. The Democratic Party wins 62 percent of the votes and 92 of 140 seats in the Parliament and Sali Berisha becomes the first elected president.
April/ War in Bosnia and Herzegovina breaks out, the siege of Sarajevo starts, and ethnic cleansing begins. Janez Drnovšek elected prime minister of Slovenia. The United States recognizes the independence of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
May/ Multiparty elections are held in Kosovo; Ibrahim Rugova is elected president. Ratko Mladić named commander of Bosnian Serb Army. United Nations imposes sanctions on what is left of Yugoslavia—Serbia and Montenegro.
June/ Serbian police obstruct the establishment of the Kosovo Assembly. Milošević declares Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Montenegrins vote to join. UNPROFOR takes over control of Sarajevo airport, airlift of food begins. Serb controlled camps spread throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

July/ Food and water cut off in Sarajevo. Croat community of Herceg-Bosnia proclaimed.
August/ Franjo Tadjman elected president of Croatia.
December/ Milan Kučan elected president of Slovenia and Milošević and Milošević's party win Serbian presidential and parliamentary elections.

January/ The proposed Vance-Owen peace plan divides Bosnia and Herzegovina into 10 cantons.
April/ Bosnian Croats launch offensive against their one-time Muslim allies. UN admits Macedonia under the temporary name "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)."
May/ UN Security Council resolution 808 establishes the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, but the chief prosecutor Richard Goldstone is not named until July 1994. UN gives "safe area" status to Goražde, Žepa, Tuzla, Bihać, Sarajevo, and Srebrenica.
June/ Tadjman and Milošević unveil a plan for a three-party division of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but Izetbegović rejects it.
July/ The Muslim-Croat war rages; Croat controlled camps operate mainly in the Herzegovina area.
November/ Croat mortars destroy Mostar's Old Bridge. Serbia suffers hyperinflation; Milošević reelected president.

February/ Serbian mortar attack kills 68 civilians at the Markale marketplace in Sarajevo. The city remains under siege. Greece closes its borders to Macedonia and introduces a trade embargo.
March/ Washington Agreement signed between Croatia, representing the Bosnian Croats, and the Bosnian Muslim leadership, ending the military conflict between the two sides; Muslim-Croat Federation is formed. The "Contact Group" consisting of diplomats from Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States is established to try to settle the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina; their plan is accepted by the Muslim-Croat Federation but rejected by the Bosnian Serbs.
July/ Pressure mounts again on Sarajevo after on-and-off agreements on a cease-fire.
December/ Jimmy Carter visits Sarajevo and Pale, announcing a four-month cease-fire but fighting continues in the Bihac area.

May/ Bosnian Serbs take UN soldiers hostage.
July/ Srebrenica falls, Bosnian Serbs massacre over 7,000 Muslim men.
August/ Croatian forces overrun Serb-held Krajina. Over 150,000 Serbs flee eastward toward Serbia. Second mortar attack on the Markale marketplace

1993

1994

1995

in Sarajevo kills 37 civilians. President Clinton appoints Richard Holbrooke to start the negotiations to end the war.

September/ Siege of Sarajevo ends. At the Geneva meeting, the foreign ministers of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina recognize Republika Srpska as an entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

October / Macedonian President Gligorov survives an assassination attempt. Greece lifts its embargo on the country.

November/ The United States brokers the Dayton Peace Agreement, signed in Paris on December 14 by presidents Slobodan Milošević, Franjo Tudjman, and Alija Izetbegović, ending the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. UN suspends sanctions against Yugoslavia, and lifts them a year later.

1996 February/ Serbian authorities close down the Soros Yugoslavia Foundation in Belgrade. After a strong domestic and international campaign it was opened in June under the name Fund for an Open Society.

September/ The first postwar elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina bring victory for the same national parties that won in 1990.

October/ The citizens of Zagreb, in the biggest demonstration in recent Croatian history, protest against the government's efforts to close and take over Radio 101, a popular and vocal critic of the Tudjman regime.

November/ The Democratic Party of Socialists wins parliamentary elections in Montenegro, and Milo Djukanović remains prime minister. Election fraud in Yugoslav local elections and the resulting coalition triggers four months of mass street demonstrations led by students and opposition parties. Milošević acknowledges the fraud, and is forced to accept *lex specialis* giving over thirty municipalities to the opposition, including Belgrade. He continues to hold power, clamping down on civil liberties.

December/ Liberal Democrats capture parliamentary elections in Slovenia, Janez Drnovšek remains prime minister. Tudjman returns to Croatia after receiving medical treatment in the United States and, in a speech, openly attacks the work of the local Open Society foundation.

1997 January/ In Albania, protests by angry people that lost their savings in a pyramid schemes break out in Tirana and several cities in the south. The protests grow into an armed rebellion against the Democratic Party government, leading to a complete breakdown of governing institutions. Order is restored only when a multinational military force intervenes.

June/ Franjo Tudjman elected for a second five-year term as president of Croatia.

September/October/ Pristina University students protest against the Serbian regime; police brutally put down the protest.

October/ Milo Djukanović, after distancing himself from Milošević's politics, narrowly wins the presidency of Montenegro.

January/ Eastern Slavonia is peacefully reintegrated into Croatia. Slovenia becomes a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council.

February/ Serbian military and paramilitary forces attack villages in the Drenica region, marking the beginning of the Kosovo war.

March/ Ibrahim Rugova wins presidential election in Kosovo. Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) commander Adem Jashari and 54 members of his family are killed after a three-day siege by Serb forces.

May/ U.S. Envoy Richard Holbrooke begins arranging negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade. The fighting and destruction escalate, and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) grows from 100 armed troops to over 20,000 recruited soldiers. NATO gives Milošević an ultimatum to stop the destruction of Kosovo.

June/September/ Fighting and destruction continue to escalate in Kosovo; OSCE mission deployed.

October/ Coalition "For Change" (VMRO-DPMNE and the Democratic Alternative) wins the third parliamentary elections in Macedonia.

March/ On the 23rd, the Kosovo delegation signs the Rambouillet Conference agreement, but the Serbian delegation reject it. The same day, NATO starts bombing Serbian military and strategic targets in Serbia and Kosovo. Serb military and paramilitary troops force 1 million Kosovar Albanians to Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro, creating a large-scale humanitarian disaster for these countries.

May/ Civil society groups in Croatia organize a campaign for free and fair elections, Glas 99.

June/ After 78 days of NATO bombing, Milošević agrees to withdraw forces from Kosovo. The UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1244, establishing Kosovo as a UN-administered territory, de jure remaining under the sovereignty of Serbia. International troops from the NATO-led Kosovo Force are deployed in five zones corresponding to their country of origin (France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States) under a joint command. The KLA, having agreed to disarm, is demobilized and replaced by the Kosovo Protection Corps. Tens of thousands of Serbs are forced to leave Kosovo.

November/ Six Croatian opposition parties form a preelection coalition. The German mark is introduced as an official currency in Montenegro, strengthening economic independence.

1998

1999

2000

December/ Croatian President Franjo Tudjman dies. Boris Trajkovski is elected president of Macedonia.

January/ In Croatia, the opposition coalition parties win the election and Ivica Račan (SDP) is elected prime minister. Joint Interim Administration Structures are set up in Kosovo, focusing mostly on reconstruction; Ibrahim Rugova's party, LDK, wins by a landslide in local elections.

February/ Stjepan Mesić is elected president of Croatia and sworn in for his first term.

June/ Constitutional changes establish Croatia as a parliamentary country.

July/ The Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina issues a landmark human rights decision guaranteeing Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs equal rights as citizens throughout the country.

October/ Milošević is accused of rigging the presidential elections to defeat the candidate of the democratic opposition coalition, led by Zoran Djindjić. Mass street demonstrations culminate in the storming of the federal parliament. Milošević quits and Vojislav Koštunica of the opposition Democratic Party of Serbia is sworn in as president.

November/ Macedonia signs its Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union.

December/ Liberal Democrats win parliamentary elections in Slovenia, Janez Drnovšek remains prime minister.

2001

January/ Zoran Djindjić, head of the Democratic Party, leads the opposition coalition to victory in December 2000 elections and becomes prime minister of Serbia. Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is readmitted to international organizations and institutions.

March/ Under Djindjić, the authorities arrest Slobodan Milošević and subsequently transfer him to The Hague on June 28 to stand trial before the ICTY.

July/ The ICTY indicts Ante Gotovina, a Croatian general, for ethnic cleansing and war crimes. Milošević appears in court at the ICTY and refuses to recognize its jurisdiction.

August/ The Ohrid Framework Agreement, as a peace deal between the government of Macedonia and the representatives of the Albanian minority in the country, is signed. The parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopts a new election law.

October/ Croatia signs its SAA with the European Union, marking the first formal step in Croatia's accession to the EU.

March/ The Belgrade Agreement redefines Montenegro's relationship with Serbia within a joint state. The government of Kosovo is created; Ibrahim Rugova is elected president and Bajram Rexhepi is appointed prime minister.

April/ Ivo Sanader defeats an extremist candidate to become president of the Democratic Union (HDZ) in Croatia. Bosnia and Herzegovina accedes to the Council of Europe as a member state.

October/ First elections in compliance with Bosnia and Herzegovina's new election law are fully executed by local authorities.

December/ Janez Drnovšek wins Slovenian presidency.

January/ Albania opens negotiations with the European Union on its SAA.

February/ Parliament of Yugoslavia ratifies charter for new state union with the name Serbia and Montenegro. Montenegro granted the right to hold a referendum on independence within three years.

March/ Reformist Prime Minister Djindjić is assassinated in Belgrade by a web of organized crime figures closely linked with the old regime. Referendum in Slovenia favors EU and NATO membership. The European Union, following a new "two track approach," starts negotiations separately with Serbia and Montenegro.

April/ Serbia becomes a member of the Council of Europe. Filip Vujanović becomes the president of Montenegro.

November/ In parliamentary elections in Croatia, Sanader's HDZ wins the most seats and forges a coalition government, with Sanader as prime minister.

February/ President Trajkovski of Macedonia dies in a plane crash.

March/ Vojislav Koštunica becomes prime minister of Serbia.

April/ Branko Crvenkovski elected president of Macedonia. Legislation to solve the status of Slovenia's "erased" citizens fails to pass a referendum.

April/May/ Slovenia becomes a member state of NATO and the EU.

June/ Croatia gains EU candidate status. Democratic Party leader Boris Tadić elected president of Serbia.

August/ The new UN special rapporteur on Kosovo favors the start of negotiations on the country's status.

October/ Parliamentary elections are held in Kosovo. President Rugova creates a coalition with Ramush Haradinaj's party, appointing him prime minister.

November/ The United States recognizes the Republic of Macedonia under its constitutional name. Parliamentary elections in Slovenia are won by the right-wing Democratic Party, Janez Janša becomes prime minister.

2002

2003

2004

- 2005** **January/** Stjepan Mesić elected president of Croatia.
March/ Haradinaj resigns as prime minister of Kosovo after the ICTY indicts him for war crimes.
October/ Negotiations between the European Union and Croatia are officially opened. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Commission opens negotiations on an SAA. In Albania, Edi Rama, the mayor of Tirana, is elected chairperson of the Socialist Party, replacing Fatos Nano, who resigned following the party's defeat in general elections.
November/ UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appoints Martti Ahtisaari as chief negotiator on Kosovo's status.
December/ Macedonia obtains EU candidate country status. Former Croatian army lieutenant general and ICTY indictee Ante Gotovina is apprehended in the Canary Islands and transferred directly to The Hague to stand trial.
- 2006** **January/** Ibrahim Rugova, president of Kosovo, dies from lung cancer.
June/ Montenegro declares independence after a majority of voters approve a May referendum.
July/August/ New coalition government is formed in Macedonia with Nikola Gruevski (VMRO-DPMNE) as prime minister.
September/ Talks on the future status of Kosovo are opened under UN auspices.
October/ Milo Djukanović resigns as prime minister of Montenegro. He is replaced by Željko Šturanović. Serbia's new constitution refers to Kosovo as an inseparable part of Serbia. The second general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina bring small changes in power, but no progress in the country's political life.
December/ Macedonia announces plans to name Skopje airport after Alexander the Great, a move perceived as a provocation by the Greeks, who still block the recognition of the country as the Republic of Macedonia.
- 2007** **January/** Slovenia adopts the euro as its currency.
February/ Martti Ahtisaari announces his plan for supervised independence for Kosovo.
April/June/ Ivica Račan, president of the SDP in Croatia since the late 1980s, dies and is replaced by Zoran Milanović.
May/ Negotiations between the European Union and Serbia on its SAA are completed.
June/ Russia blocks endorsement of the Ahtisaari plan for Kosovo at the UN Security Council.

November/ Kosovo's elections, which the majority of Serbs boycott, result in a coalition government with Fatmir Sejdiu as president and Hashim Thaçi as prime minister. In Croatia, Sanader leads HDZ to another narrow victory.
December/ Slovenia joins the Schengen Area countries for mutual cooperation.

January/ Slovenia becomes the first of the new member states to hold the EU presidency.

February/ Kosovo declares its independence. Željko Šturanović resigns as prime minister of Montenegro. Milo Djukanović becomes prime minister again. Boris Tadić wins elections on a pro-European platform for Serbia.

March/ An ex-military ammunition depot in the village of Gërdec near Tirana, where stockpiles of obsolete ammunition were being dismantled, explodes, killing 26 people (including children), injuring 302, and destroying 5,500 properties. The government calls it an accident and the opposition calls the accident a result of government corruption.

April/ At the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Croatia is invited to join, but Greece vetoes membership for Macedonia. Filip Vujanović becomes president of Montenegro.

June/ Bosnia and Herzegovina signs its SAA with the European Union. Early parliamentary elections in Macedonia are accompanied by incidents but the government of VMRO-DPMNE and the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) wins an absolute majority in the parliament.

July/ Former Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadžić is arrested in Belgrade, transferred to the ICTY and indicted for genocide and other war crimes.

October/ Montenegro recognizes Kosovo. The UN adopts Serbia's request to review the legitimacy of Kosovo's declaration of independence and refers the case to the International Court of Justice.

November/ Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić left the Serbian Radical Party and founded Serbian Progressive Party. Parliamentary elections are won by social democrats in Slovenia and Borut Pahor becomes the head of government. In Macedonia local and presidential elections confirm the power of VMRO-DPMNE and Gjorge Ivanov is elected president.

December/ EULEX is created to monitor and advise police, judiciary, and customs in Kosovo.

February/ After extraordinary parliamentary elections, Djukanović stays in power in Montenegro.

April/ Albania joins NATO as the organization's 28th member.

2008

2009

2010

July/ Ivo Sanader, amid rumors of corruption, suddenly resigns as prime minister of Croatia. His handpicked successor, Jadranka Kosor, becomes the new prime minister.

November/ Prime Minister Kosor of Croatia and Prime Minister Pahor of Slovenia sign an arbitration agreement to resolve a maritime border dispute that was blocking Croatia's progress toward EU membership.

December/ Serbia applies for membership in the European Union. Montenegro is accepted into NATO's Membership Action Plan for possible admission into NATO. The European Union grants Serbian citizens the right to travel without a visa to Schengen countries.

January/ Ivo Josipović is elected president of Croatia.

February/ Macedonia's government increases ethnic tensions by launching the project Skopje 2014, with its plans for new antique buildings and monuments in Skopje.

March/ Serbia's parliament adopts a resolution apologizing for the massacre of Muslim Slavs at Srebrenica in 1995 and declares that Serbia should have done more to prevent the tragedy. In Slovenia, legislation regulating the status of the "erased" is adopted. Slovenia hosts the first Balkan summit to discuss the European perspective; all leaders attend except Serbia's president because Kosovo's prime minister was also invited.

April/ Croatian President Josipović visits Central Bosnia and apologizes to Bosnian Muslims for the crimes committed in the name of Croatia in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

June/ EU and Western Balkan leaders in Sarajevo reaffirm commitment to European future for the region.

July/ The International Court of Justice upholds Kosovo's right to independence.

September/ The European Union grants the citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina the right to travel without a visa to Schengen countries.

October/ General elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina produce mixed results, disappointing some reformers. In response to Albania's application for membership, the European Commission publishes its Opinion on the country's preparedness for opening accession negotiations. The Opinion requests Albania to give priority to 12 issues that must be resolved to meet the political criteria for membership and the opening of negotiations.

November/ Serbian President Tadić visits Vukovar and apologizes for the crimes committed by Serb forces. He is accompanied by President Josipović of Croatia.

December/ Milo Djukanović, after 20 years in power, resigns as prime minister of Montenegro. Igor Lukšić becomes prime minister. Montenegro receives EU candidate country status. Sanader, the former prime minister of Croatia, is arrested on corruption charges in Austria. Kosovo holds parliamentary elections.

January/ Hashim Thaçi is elected prime minister of Kosovo despite allegations of involvement in organized crime activities. In Albania, four citizens are killed during protests against high level corruption.

March/ Serbia and Kosovo begin talks in Brussels to normalize relations, the first since Kosovo declared independence.

April/ Atifete Jahjaga, deputy general director of the police of Kosovo, is elected president of Kosovo, the first woman to hold the highest office of state.

May/ Former Bosnian Serb army chief Ratko Mladić is arrested in Serbia after 17 years on the run and is extradited to The Hague to stand trial for war crimes. After leading Tirana for three consecutive terms, Edi Rama, of the Socialist Party, loses reelection and Lulzim Basha, of the Democratic Party, becomes mayor of Tirana.

June/ Macedonia holds parliamentary elections and the VMRO-DPMNE, led by the incumbent prime minister, Nikola Gruevski, wins.

July/ Ivo Sanader is transferred from Austria to a jail in Zagreb. The last remaining war crimes fugitive, Goran Hadžić, is captured in Serbia and transferred to The Hague.

September/ EU-mediated talks between Serbia and Kosovo are called off after 16 ethnic Serbs and 4 NATO peacekeepers are hurt in clashes in a dispute over Kosovo border crossings.

December/ The International Court of Justice in The Hague rules that Greece was wrong to block Macedonia's bid to join NATO in 2008 in opposition to the state's name.

January/ The Macedonian government holds an extravagant ceremony to unveil the concrete pseudoclassical Arch of Macedonia in Skopje.

March/ In a referendum on the Family Code, Slovenian voters reject giving same-sex couples the same rights as heterosexual couples. The European Union grants Serbia candidate member status. In Macedonia, the European Commission launches the first round of High Level Accession Dialogue intended to intensify country's reforms that would lead towards the future EU accession negotiations.

May/ Tomislav Nikolić of the Serbian Progressive Party is elected president of Serbia.

2011

2012

June/ Bosnia and Herzegovina submits the Roadmap for membership application to the European Union. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issues a landmark decision on the status of Slovenia's "erased" citizens in the case of Kurić and Others v. Slovenia, holding Slovenia responsible for violating several articles of the European Convention on Human Rights. The European Commission issues visa liberalization roadmap to Kosovo, the last Balkan country whose citizens need visas to travel to the EU Schengen Zone. Montenegro starts accession negotiations with the European Union.

July/ The International Steering Group, composed of 23 European countries, Turkey, and the United States, ends supervised independence of Kosovo and grants it full sovereignty. Ivica Dačić, of the Socialist Party, becomes prime minister of Serbia.

October/ The European Commission issues its landmark finding that there are no legal obstacles for the European Union to enter into an SAA with Kosovo, opening doors for Kosovo to benefit from the EU enlargement process.

November/ Slovenes take to the streets demanding the resignation of Janez Janša and his government due to corruption charges. Kosovo is admitted to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

December/ SDSM, the biggest opposition party in Macedonia, boycotts parliamentary sessions after heated debate over the 2013 state budget, and its MPs are forcefully evicted from the chamber. In Montenegro, Milo Djukanović becomes prime minister for a sixth term. Miroslav Mišković, one of Serbia's richest businessmen, is arrested in Serbia for tax evasion having to do with the privatization of road construction companies.

2013

February/ Following a vote of no confidence, the parliament ousts the government of Janez Janša and names Alenka Bratušek of Positive Slovenia as prime minister, the first woman to hold the office; she is tasked with establishing the new government.

April/ Kosovo's Hashim Thaçi and Serbia's Ivica Dačić reach the first agreement in a dialogue facilitated by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton. Short of mutual recognition of sovereignty, each prime minister signs a separate document that is cosigned by Ashton.

June/ Edi Rama of the Socialist Party beats incumbent Sali Berisha of the Democratic Party in parliamentary elections in Albania and becomes prime minister.

July/ Croatia joins the European Union as its 28th member.

September/ The SAA between the European Union and Serbia enters into force.

October/ Bosnia and Herzegovina conducts its first official postwar census, the first since it declared independence in 1992 and was recognized internationally.

November/ In Kosovo local elections, Shpend Ahmeti, of the fierce opposition party Vetëvendosje, beats Isa Mustafa of the Democratic League of Kosova for the first time and becomes mayor of the capital, Pristina. Following a referendum, Albania refuses to serve as the host site for destroying chemical weapons from Syria.

February/ Slovenia manages to avoid further austerity measures by the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Central Bank.

April/ In Macedonia, early parliamentary elections are held jointly with presidential elections. Prime Minister Gruevski forms a new government with previous coalition partner, the Albanian DUI. President Gjorge Ivanov wins a second term.

May/ In European parliamentary elections, right-wing parties secure a majority. The new European parliament "abandons" enlargement policies, which threatens to slow down the pro-European transformation of the Western Balkans countries. The worst flood in a century hits Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, killing 62 and forcing hundreds of thousands of people from their homes.

May/ The Serbian Progressive Party, led by Aleksandar Vučić, wins early general elections and a majority of seats in Serbia's parliament.

June/ The European Union grants Albania candidate status. Following inconclusive elections, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo rules that the post-election VLAN coalition, made up of non-majority-winning parties, is unconstitutional. Following inconclusive election, the LDK party joins PDK, the party with the majority of votes, to form the government. In Slovenia, Janez Janša goes to prison after being convicted of corruption.

July/ The European Union and Kosovo initial its SAA, signaling the conclusion of negotiations.

August/ In Slovenia, a new centrist government under Prime Minister Miro Cerar, with his new Miro Cerar Party, takes power.

October/ Russia's President Vladimir Putin visits Belgrade as a guest of honor at a military parade marking the 70th anniversary of Belgrade's liberation from Nazi German occupation.

November/ Johannes Hahn, the European Commissioner for Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, reminds Serbia of its commitment to align its positions with those of the European Union, including on difficult

2014

issues such as sanctions on Russia. In light of the region's European integration, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama pays a historic visit to Serbia and meets Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, the first high-level meeting in seven decades. The meeting reaffirms the open issues between the two countries. In Macedonia, over 3,000 students take to the streets of Skopje in protest against higher-education reforms and external testing.

December/ Slovenia's Constitutional Court releases Janez Janša from prison.

2015

February/ Macedonian opposition leader Zoran Zaev releases wiretaps of telephone conversations between high government officials arranging corrupt deals. The wiretaps suggest that the state intelligence services have been illegally wiretapping more than 20,000 citizens. Massive protests and a political crisis ensue.

June/ The SAA between the European Union and Bosnia and Herzegovina enters into force. In Macedonia, the Pržino Accord is signed by leaders of the four biggest parliamentary parties in an attempt to end the protracted political crisis.

August/ The Macedonian government declares a state of emergency as thousands of Syrian refugees enter the country daily from Greece en route to western Europe.

September/ Following a year of extensive consultations, all three levels of government of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopt a Reform Agenda outlining economic, social, administrative, and rule-of-law measures to guide pro-European transformation. In less than two months, most approximately, one million refugees and migrants cross through Macedonia and Serbia. After Hungary closes its border with Serbia, the Balkan migration route turns toward Croatia and Slovenia. Nearly half a million refugees cross Slovenia in the following months.

October/ Kosovo signs its SAA with the European Union. Civil society organizations from the "Balkan Route" countries meet in Belgrade and adopt principles of joint actions in response to the refugee crisis. The Slovenian government allows soldiers to assist police in patrolling the border, to detain people and hand them over to police, and to issue orders to civilians within the border area.

November/ UNESCO rejects Kosovo's application for membership as result of Serbia's intensive lobbying of its member states, and states, and holds Kosovo aspiration to join the UN agency as a full-fledged member.

December/ The European Union opens negotiations with Serbia, starting with Chapter 32 of the EU Acquis Communautaire on financial control and Chapter 35 on other issues, which focuses on normalization of relations between

Serbia and Kosovo. In Slovenia, a second referendum on the Family Code denies equal rights to same-sex couples. In Serbia, the prime minister names three nongovernmental organizations—all of them engaged in anticorruption watch-dog activities—particularly hostile and accuses their donors.

January/ Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski steps down as part of the deal brokered by the European Union to end months of political crisis (the Pržino Accord).

February/ Bosnia and Herzegovina submits its application for EU membership. ICTY finds Radovan Karadžić guilty of genocide in Srebrenica and sentences him to 40 years in prison. In Slovenia, thousands protest against accommodation of asylum seekers.

March/ Macedonia, Croatia, and Slovenia close borders to primarily Syrian refugees heading to western Europe from Greece.

April/ Prime Minister Vučić and his Serbian Progressive Party win elections in Serbia. In Skopje, Macedonia, protesters ransack President Ivanov's "People's Office" (part of his citizen engagement initiative) after he blocks legal proceedings against the top politicians involved in the country's wiretapping scandal.

July/ Albania's parliament approves a constitutional reform package aimed at fighting organized crime and corruption, meeting EU conditions for starting membership negotiations.

October/ In Podgorica, Montenegro, 20 citizens of Serbia—including a former head of the Serbian special police unit, the Gendarmery—are arrested for an alleged coup d'état attempt on the eve of parliamentary elections. Montenegrin authorities also raise the issue of Russian interference.

December/ Following an election loss, Nikola Gruevski announces the "de-Sorosization" of civil society and authorizes state institutions to conduct financial checks of 13 nongovernment organizations, seen widely as undue pressure on civil society.

January/ Slovenian parliament amends the Aliens Act, enabling Slovenian authorities to reject asylum seekers at the border if they deem the numbers suddenly increase and "threaten public order and internal security," without specifying "numbers."

April/ Aleksandar Vučić wins presidential elections in Serbia. When massive peaceful protests ensue under the slogan "Against Dictatorship," claiming the presidential election was rigged and demanding more freedom of speech, pro-government media (Press Online and Informer) viciously accuse George Soros of "instigating chaos in Serbia again." Ana Brnabić becomes the first woman and openly gay person to be elected prime minister of Serbia; she

2016

2017

reaffirms Serbia's accession to the European Union as a strategic goal. In Macedonia, just minutes after the majority of MPs (67 of 120) elect Talat Xhaferi, a member of the ethnic Albanian DUI party, as speaker of parliament, a crowd of about 200 VMRO-DMPNE supporters rampage violently in the Macedonian Parliament. Zaev is beaten, and 104 people are injured, including 10 MPs and many journalists. In Albania, Ilir Meta is elected president.

June/ Macedonia elects a new government, led by SDSM's president Zoran Zaev. Montenegro becomes the 29th member of NATO. In Albania, Edi Rama and the Socialist Party win elections.

September/ After three months of political deadlock following parliamentary elections, Ramush Haradinaj becomes prime minister of Kosovo and commits to "no alternative to dialogue with Serbia."

October/ The first LGBTQ plus pride parade is held in Pristina, Kosovo, without any reported incidents.

November/ Borut Pahor is elected for a second term as President of Slovenia.

2018

January/ Amendments to Serbia's constitution focusing on the judiciary domain are published and opened up to public debate prior to seeking the opinion of the Venice Commission.

April/ The European Commission unconditionally recommends opening accession negotiations with Albania. In Montenegro, Milo Djukanović wins presidential elections in the first round.

June/ Macedonia and Greece end their 27-year name dispute. Macedonia adopts the new name, Republic of North Macedonia, favored by 94 percent of voters in the consultative referendum held in September. Greece commits to lifting its blockade of North Macedonia's integration in NATO and the European Union.

June/ Slovenes stage massive demonstrations against the "politics of hate" in Ljubljana as anti-migrant rhetoric dominates preelection campaigns.

August/ A new center-left government led by Marjan Šarec as prime minister takes power in Slovenia.

October/ Bosnia and Herzegovina holds general elections after an aggressive preelection campaign lasting almost six months. The process and outcomes are characterized by multiple flaws, relatively low voter turnout (54 percent), and the reelection of nationalists among all three ethnic groups. The parliament of North Macedonia initiates constitutional amendments. In Kosovo, a survivor of sexual violence during the Kosovo war shares her story for the first time in public.

November/ Nikola Gruevski flees North Macedonia and applies for political asylum in Hungary to escape a two-year prison sentence on corruption

charges; he announces his actions via a Facebook status post. In Serbia a 15-month series of primarily peaceful protests begin against the authoritarian regime of President Aleksandar Vučić, using #1of5 million as the social media hashtag.

December/ Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj raises tariffs on goods imported from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia from 10 percent to 100 percent.

January/ Two-thirds of MPs vote in favor of constitutional amendments and formalize the Republic of North Macedonia as the country's new name.

February/ Opposition parties boycott the parliament of Albania by relinquishing their 40 seats, which the Central Election Commission fills with largely unknown candidates from 2017 election lists. In Podgorica, Montenegro, citizens begin protesting against corruption; in the coming months, these become the largest civic protests against the government of Milo Djukanović and his party and coalition partners.

May/ Stevo Pendarovski, a candidate of the ruling SDSM-DUI coalition, wins presidential elections in North Macedonia.

June/ Kosovo celebrates its 20th anniversary of liberation with former U.S. President Bill Clinton and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright attending the celebrations. President Hashim Thaçi honors President Clinton with the Order of Freedom in recognition of his role helping end the war.

August/ U.S. President Trump appoints Mathew Palmer as his special envoy for the Western Balkans, with dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia topping his agenda.

September/ The first LGBTQ plus pride parade takes place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with about 2,000 people joining in the streets of Sarajevo. The German Bundestag conditions the opening of Albania's EU accession negotiations on ensuring a functional Constitutional Court and Supreme Court with vetted judges and prosecutors and completion of electoral reform. Slovenia's Constitutional Court declares amendments to the Aliens Act unconstitutional.

October/ Denmark, France and the Netherlands block the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia; French President Emmanuel Macron calls for reform inside the European Union before engaging in further enlargement during the EU Summit. In Kosovo, the Vetëvendosje party wins parliamentary elections for the first time; all previous government parties suffer a great loss of support. U.S. President Trump names U.S. Ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell his special envoy for Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. In Novi Sad, Prime Minister Edi Rama, President Aleksandar Vučić,

2019

and Prime Minister Zoran Zaev announce the establishment of a mini-Schengen initiative to advance regional cooperation through a free economic zone.

November/ A 6.4-magnitude earthquake shakes Albania, killing at least 51 people, injuring more than 1,000, and leaving thousands of citizens homeless. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and Serbia sign an agreement on border management cooperation and joint operations.

December/ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the experts' report to the European Commission on rule of law highlights a dysfunctional justice system that is subject to political influence while the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) report reveals that every second 15-year old student is functionally illiterate. By end of 2019, Serbia has opened negotiations on 18 chapters of the EU Acquis and provisionally closed two. To meet key EU priorities and implement judicial reform, Albania establishes the Special Anti-Corruption Structure, an independent judicial body, to investigate high-level organized crime and corruption in government since 1990.

2020

January/ Croatia assumes presidency of the European Union for the first time since joining the union.

February/ In Slovenia, Marjan Šarec resigns and a new government is formed under Janez Janša, who starts to impose restrictive measures and spread hostile rhetoric against civil society organizations. The media, the judiciary, and independent state bodies also come under attack.

March/ The World Health Organization declares the spread of a new coronavirus, COVID-19, a global pandemic. EU foreign ministers agree to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, though no date is mentioned. North Macedonia becomes the 30th member of NATO. Due to COVID-19, governments across the Western Balkans announce general lockdowns. In Kosovo, a vote of no confidence ousts the government of Albin Kurti. EU Council appoints Miroslav Lajčak as EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues.

May/ In light of the EU–Western Balkans Zagreb Summit, more than 90 leading civil society organizations from the Western Balkans, many of them former or current Open Society Foundations grantees, sign a declaration that urges the heads of states and governments of the EU member states and Western Balkan countries to intensify and accelerate negotiations and implementation of reforms in the process of aligning with the EU Acquis, especially in the fields of fundamental rights and freedoms, the judiciary, rule of law, and democratic institutions. EU leaders reaffirm unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans and announce an immediate package of 3.3 billion euros to tackle COVID-19 and post-pandemic recovery.

June/ Early parliamentary elections take place in Serbia amidst COVID-19. Most of the opposition parties boycott the elections.

July/ Early parliamentary elections take place in Croatia and North Macedonia amidst COVID-19. The European Commission presents Albania and North Macedonia with draft negotiating frameworks. Bosnia and Herzegovina commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre.

August/ Opposition parties in Montenegro win elections for the first time since the introduction of a multiparty system. Three coalitions—“For the Future of Montenegro,” “Peace is Our Nation,” and “Black and White”—agree to form an expert government.

October/ Albania passes electoral reform. Ana Brnabić wins a second term as Serbia's prime minister.

November/ Hashim Thaçi resigns as president of Kosovo after Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague confirm his indictment on war crimes. The 25th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement is observed.

December/ Zdravko Krivokapić becomes prime minister of Montenegro.

30
YEARS

Foundations Activities 1991-2021

1991-1995

The Open Society Foundations (OSF) established the Open Society Foundation in Albania (OSFA) in 1992 to help the former communist country transition toward an open and democratic society. Emerging from half a century of an oppressive regime and extreme international isolation, Albania's transition required rebuilding its very foundations—rebuilding its human capital, enabling free access to and flow of information, supporting legal reform, and cultivating civic dialogue. In short, “opening Albania to the world.” To deliver on all four pillars, the foundation prioritized building a critical mass of educated and open-minded Albanians who could lead a successful transition to an open society on all fronts. Therefore, during the first years, OSFA granted scholarships that enabled over 700 Albanians to graduate from the American University in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, and the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, and another 520 to graduate from other European and US colleges and universities. Thousands of others, supported by travel grants, participated in a myriad of educational programs across the world—reconnecting and exchanging experiences with their peers throughout the region, Europe, North America, and beyond. To elevate preschool, elementary, and secondary education to contemporary standards, OSFA spent over \$100 million to initially rebuild 275 schools and kindergartens across the country and reinforce them against earthquakes. Defended by communities during the 1997 riots, the school buildings later survived a 6.4 magnitude earthquake in 2019, which shattered the northwestern region of Albania. In addition, OSFA supported curriculum development, teacher training, and the creation of reading rooms, previously unheard of in Albania. To support tertiary education, the foundation supplied tens of thousands of books to the University of Tirana, which soon housed 4,000 titles of literature, philosophy, geography, dictionaries and encyclopedias, and more than 500 journals. In parallel, the foundation funded the translation of more than 150 books into Albanian—from the political philosophy of Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* to the theoretical cosmology of Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*.

ALBANIA

To open access to information through improved journalism and the availability of reading materials, OSFA advanced professional and independent journalism through training, seminars, infrastructure capacity-building, equipment, conferences, and international study visits. In parallel, it supplied 140 tons of paper to independent newspapers and provided free access to international news services.

In 1992, OSFA supported the country's first nongovernmental organization (NGO), the Forum for the Protection of Basic Human Rights and Liberties, and later expanded its support to include technical assistance, grants, and learning opportunities to civic groups all over the country, helping develop organizations that worked on good governance, democratization, legal reform, urban and rural development, human rights, women's rights, youth, Roma, disabilities, environmental protection, business environment, economic reform, anticorruption, conflict resolution, education, health care, and social protection.

In 1993, the foundation extended its support to the growing community of Albanian artists, who were for the first time experiencing the freedom to create and express, and were rebelling against "social realism", a genre imposed on artists by the previous regime. In its early years, the program supported artists, NGOs, publications, exhibitions, and a number of cultural events, such as the Tirana Fall music festival, which grew into a regular annual festival for several years.

In 1994, OSFA solidified its support of Albania's transition by launching four independent centers: the Media Center, the Women's Center, the Albanian Law Center, and the Student Advising Center. Further, it launched a major initiative, the Albania Education Development Project, and established its first local office in Shkodra.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In response to the siege of Sarajevo, George Soros and the Open Society foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina spent tens of millions of dollars to fund a purification system to pump clean water to the city's residents; plastic pipes through which 60 percent of Sarajevo's homes received natural gas for heating and cooking; an electricity line through a tunnel under the city's airport that ensured uninterrupted power for hospitals, the central bakery, television and radio stations, the presidency building, and other facilities; vegetable seeds that enabled residents to grow food on terraces and in gardens; and clothing for elderly people, refugees, internally displaced persons, students, and teachers.

In 1994 and 1995, the Open Society foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina played a key role in helping public discourse survive, shipping and distributing over 180 tons of paper to newspapers, magazines, and book publishers in besieged Sarajevo. The foundation supported publication of 52 primary and secondary school textbooks, awarded scholarships to nearly 500 university students, funded the Sarajevo film and jazz festivals, and provided training for journalists.

The Open Society foundation in Croatia provided equipment and research support for Zagreb's University Hospital for Cancer, the Institute of Immunology, the Institute for Protection of Children and Mothers, medical schools in Zagreb and Rijeka, and several more hospitals. The foundation helped the refugees flowing in from Bosnia and Herzegovina. It funded several restoration projects, including the effort to repair shell damage to Dubrovnik's sixteenth-century customhouse, the Sponza Palace. The foundation established a school debate program; Step by Step preschool programs; a network of educational information and counseling centers; the Center for Education Research and Development; and an e-school with courses in biology, chemistry, physics, geography, and astronomy. It provided funding for the Inter-University Center and a high school with instruction in classical languages. The foundation also provided computers, equipment, and copy machines to elementary schools, high schools, universities, and public and university libraries.

CROATIA

The country was hit hard by the severing of economic ties with the rest of Yugoslavia and an economic embargo imposed by Greece. The Open Society foundation in Macedonia provided a \$1 million grant for medical supplies to Macedonia's hospitals and clinics; helped set up an internet connection for universities and civil society organizations; supplied educational, health, art, and cultural institutions with computers, photocopiers, and fax machines; and awarded scholarships to graduates from Macedonia's universities.

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With Macedonia's economic woes unabated, tensions grew between Slavic Macedonians and members of the country's large Albanian minority. The foundation worked to help establish Macedonia as a democratic state for all citizens, regardless of their ethnic origins and religious background, through efforts such as a network of private radio and television stations that broadcast in the Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Serbian, and Vlah languages.

The Open Society foundation in Slovenia provided more than \$1 million for educational, psychological, social, and legal assistance to refugees in the country. More than 1,000 refugee children received financial support for their education, and 140 refugee university students from Bosnia and Herzegovina received stipends to study in Slovenia. The foundation provided support for the Step by Step preschool program; for more than 100 young people from Slovenia to participate in international exchanges with schools and colleges in Great Britain and the United States; for more than 500 student groups, youth newspapers, and youth organizations; and for debate groups in 26 elementary and secondary schools and at both of Slovenia's universities. About

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50 students from Slovenia received stipends to UK and U.S. universities, and 66 students attended the Central European University, which, in keeping with its policy of helping students from transition countries, exempted them from paying tuition for postgraduate studies in the humanities and social sciences.

YUGOSLAVIA In Serbia, the local Open Society foundation supported a number of media outlets independent of the Milošević regime, including B92 of Belgrade, a symbol of resistance to nationalist policies; Radio Boom 93 of Požarevac (home town of the Milošević family); and radio Bajina Bašta, whose signal, though weak, reached Srebrenica and other safe-haven, cut-off areas of eastern Bosnia. The foundation also provided assistance to a small group that traveled from Serbia to Sarajevo to show solidarity with the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When Serbs fled or were expelled from Croatia, Soros gave the foundation an extra \$15 million for assistance to refugees. The foundation also helped establish associations of independent publications, electronic media, and journalists. The Association of Independent Journalists of Serbia demanded freedom of information and exposed suppression of the media and violations of the rights of journalists, including threats to their lives and freedom.

In the province of Kosovo, where the Milošević regime had forced all Albanians out of their jobs in local hospitals, schools, and other public institutions, the foundation funded a teacher-training program and provided lesson materials to help a parallel school system set up by Albanians in homes, garages, and other private premises. The branch office supported conferences that brought together Kosovo, Albanian, and Serbian intellectuals; underwrote publications about the Kosovo conflict; and assisted a daily newspaper and weekly magazine. In the province of Vojvodina, the foundation focused on work with the province's multiethnic communities.

In Montenegro, the foundation helped establish and develop nongovernmental organizations, independent media organizations, independent cultural institutions, alternative arts groups, and university and alternative education centers. It assisted refugees, supported the civil society sector, women's organizations, and judicial training, and established a library for vision-impaired people.

1996-2000

The Open Society Foundation in Albania (OSFA) installed the country's first internet antenna, pioneered the Open Internet Center in Albania, and became the first to provide free email services and internet access to civil society organizations (CSOs) and academic institutions. In the following years, it opened many other internet centers in public libraries across the country and supported computerization in other sectors, critical for advancement of the free flow of information. The foundation donated 50 computers to the University of Tirana, computerized the National Library in Tirana, installed internet in the University Hospital Center, and supported the computerization and digitization of independent news organizations and the Ministry of Justice. OSFA also built a data exchange network to facilitate communications between 12 municipalities hosting Kosovar refugees during 1999. In 2000, OSFA merged its Internet Program and Libraries Program into the Information Program, to take a more systematic approach to advancing access to information countrywide.

OSFA's investment in Albania's human capital expanded in 1996 to improve public health and helped launch the first institution to provide up-to-date services to poor and disabled children (the Children's Development Center). Over the years, the foundation supported public health reforms and piloted programs for mental health, palliative care, elderly citizens, children exposed to abuse, and people with disabilities. OSFA pioneered work that introduced sex education to school curricula and published the first textbooks on previously taboo issues, such as drug prevention, sexual health, and nutrition. The foundation's Women's Program empowered the first civil society organizations advancing women's equality in society through training, conferences, and counseling.

The foundation expanded support to youth debate clubs from high school to university students and introduced debating in Albanian to the practice of English language only, as had been the norm. Hundreds of Albanian youths and teachers participated in debates nationwide, in both languages, and continue to build the culture of civic dialogue across opposing views through critical and logical thinking, tolerance, and growing respect and acceptance of open society values. In later years it was clear that the youth clubs seeded reform-minded leaders. Several alumni went on to establish the *Mjaft Movement* (Enough), one of the most active civic movements in Albania of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

ALBANIA

In a fragile state still recovering from heavily centralized governance, public administration institutions remained weak. OSFA introduced institutional capacity-building of central and local administration through training, associations, improved communication with citizens, and the participation of citizens in local processes. As graduates began returning to Albania with knowledge acquired in European and North American educational institutions, the foundation launched the Fellowship Program to prevent Albania's brain-drain, attract talent from the Albanian diaspora, and build administrative capacities of the young and fragile country in transition. A fund of \$600,000 donated by Mr. Soros enabled OSFA to provide supplementary stipends to 428 Albanians taking roles in central and local government institutions across the country.

In addition, the foundation fostered highly needed legal reform through legal knowledge, capacity-building, and access to justice. By translating and publishing legal material in the Albanian language, including the first English-Albanian legal dictionary, OSFA introduced best international legal practices to the wider community of legal practitioners and drafters. Facilitating participation in international study visits and conferences enabled hundreds of Albanian lawyers to learn about contemporary international human rights-related legal practices directly from their international colleagues. And starting in 1999, a network of legal clinics enabled citizens access to free legal assistance, a previously unheard-of support service.

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The Open Society foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina helped initiate, develop, and press for adoption of the country's first state law on associations and foundations designed to protect basic rights, including freedom of speech and freedom of association and assembly, which NGOs require to function. The foundation established the Soros Center for Contemporary Art, which gave exposure to contemporary artists, and the Center for Educational Initiatives, which introduced modern education theories and trained teachers to develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

The Soros Law Center established a postgraduate course in European studies, the first in Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide instruction on contemporary politics, economics, and society in the European Union. At the beginning of 2000, the foundation took on new priorities, including helping the country's Roma to organize and press for equal rights and equal opportunities.

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The Open Society foundation in Croatia supported the establishment of the Croatian Law Center and ZAMIR, Croatia's first independent internet service provider; a project examining privatization in Croatia; and independent cul-

tural organizations. It also assisted nongovernmental organizations dedicated to defending human rights, protecting the rights of marginalized groups, including the physically and developmentally disabled, and promoting sound environmental policies. The foundation helped establish the Electronic News Library and the International Center for Education of Journalists.

In 1999, the foundation provided funding for a voter-turnout campaign (Glas 99) for the parliamentary and first post-Tudjman presidential elections; efforts to decentralize the country's public administration; a Roma preschool education project; development of curricula and capacity building for a public health school's initiative for improving management of TB; and a number of programs promoting entrepreneurship.

In Macedonia, the Open Society foundation expanded the Step by Step preschool program to 60 schools and sponsored seminars to improve school curricula, teaching methods, and management. The foundation launched an ambitious project, including preschool programs, English language courses, and computer training, to stimulate the integration of Roma children from Skopje's poorest area, Šuto Orizari, into Macedonia's broader society.

In 1999, relations between Slavic Macedonians and Albanians deteriorated with the influx of refugees, whose numbers amounted to about 15 percent of Macedonia's population. The foundation established strategic partnerships to improve interethnic relations in Macedonia. Albanian and Roma media organizations received grants to publish and broadcast programs for refugees. Daily newspapers were distributed free of charge in refugee camps. Medical assistance and psychological counseling were made available to children and mothers in the camps. The foundation supported free legal assistance for refugees, and the donation of computer equipment to register refugees and manage the distribution of humanitarian aid.

The foundation readjusted its priorities in 2000 toward long-term support for the efforts of the government and civil society to meet the requirements for accession to the European Union. It began implementing a project to develop NGO support centers for institutional development in four ethnically diverse towns suffering difficult economic conditions. The foundation provided legal assistance to journalists and media organizations in response to fraud-ridden local elections during which people were shot inside polling stations and journalists were pressured and threatened.

The Slovenian Open Society foundation supported the publication of around 200 books in the social sciences and the humanities and purchased approx-

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imately 20,000 books for 60 public libraries. Support went to a number of student media organizations as well as cultural magazines. Approximately 100 journalists received grants to visit media organizations abroad, to carry out projects abroad, or to participate in conferences and seminars. The foundation also funded more than 500 civil society projects concerned with ecology, human rights, volunteer work, ethnic minorities, women's rights, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights, student issues, psychiatry, child abuse, violence, and drugs. In 1999, it contributed to the development of palliative care in Slovenia with grants to the Slovenian Hospice Society and the Palliative Care Development Institute.

The foundation ceased operations in 2000 and transferred its media, civil society, and East East projects to the Peace Institute, an independent research NGO for social and political studies, which the Open Society Foundations continue to support.

YUGOSLAVIA Five months after a court ruling annulled the Yugoslavia Open Society foundation's registration, international and domestic pressure prevailed and the foundation was reinstated. The foundation supported some 200 nongovernmental organizations throughout Serbia as well as the student movement in Belgrade, which played a leadership role in the 1996 citizens' protest against Milošević's refusal to recognize the defeat of his party in local elections. Support also went to the Center for Free Democratic Elections, which organized about 7,500 volunteers to gather evidence proving that the results of some local elections were fraudulent.

In 1999, the foundation worked to mitigate the social, economic, and political effects of the armed conflict in Kosovo, the NATO bombing campaign, and the hundreds of thousands of refugees who fled the conflict. It supported the establishment of Opennet, the second internet provider in Serbia, which operated as a part of B92, and dozens of internet clubs providing free training for thousands of people. The foundation's Third Millennium Project promoted the use of information technology for education, equipping schools with computer labs and training teachers. The foundation provided support for the Center for Free Democratic Elections, which marshaled about 50,000 volunteers to monitor the 2000 presidential elections.

In the province of Kosovo, the Open Society foundation in Serbia provided a \$2 million grant to support the parallel education system in Kosovo, including basic computer courses, equipment for labs and schools, curricula reforms, teacher training, and the introduction of the Step by Step preschool

program. The foundation established the Dodona Culture and Gallery Center and supported 30 exhibitions and other activities.

After the withdrawal of the Serbian police and administrators from most of Kosovo, Soros transformed the Pristina branch office into an independent foundation. During the Kosovo conflict and its aftermath, the foundations in Kosovo and Macedonia provided support for more than 500,000 Kosovo Albanians forced into Macedonia. These efforts included facilitating the enrollment of Kosovo elementary and high school students in Macedonian schools, the establishment of internet centers for refugees to communicate with family members and others, continuation of higher education for students and professors of the University of Pristina by organizing summer school programs in Macedonia, and establishment of preschool centers for refugee children in several cultural centers in Macedonia.

The foundation in 2000 helped establish information centers in Kosovo's national and university library as well as libraries in other areas of the country, providing furniture, information technology equipment, books, and access to global web-based libraries. The foundation also established the Kosovo Education Center to advance education at all levels through policy reforms and implemented Step by Step programs and literacy and critical-thinking projects.

The Open Society foundation in Montenegro continued to support programs in arts and culture, media, civil society, and education; to promote diversity, conflict resolution, human rights protection, and efforts to fight discrimination; and to assist minority groups in building networks and advocating for the protection of their rights. The foundation helped journalists, activists, students, scholars, and independent intellectuals reestablish contacts with their counterparts in other areas of the former Yugoslavia. The foundation supported projects to ease the plight of Roma refugees from Kosovo, helping to develop Montenegro's first Roma nongovernmental organizations. It provided support for the development of nongovernmental organizations working to prevent violence against women. The foundation became an independent entity in November 1999. The Open Society foundation in Serbia continued to work in Vojvodina through its branch office in Novi Sad.

2001-2005

ALBANIA Building on the success of the brain-drain prevention efforts and recognizing an increasing need for adequately trained administrators, OSFA partnered with the University of Tirana and the University of Nebraska (USA) in 2001 to establish a graduate program in public administration to train future public administrators and managers. In the following years, the foundation expanded support to strengthen the Training Institute for Public Servants, train local government officials, drive community participation in local decision-making and budgeting in an effort to open up governance to citizens, support decentralization of public services from national to local government structures, and advance urban planning and management. In 2005, the foundation established the Network for Good Governance to infuse the best global practices of urban governance into the practices of local government administration in Albania. Simultaneously, the foundation continued to provide strategic support to the educational system. New curriculum development enriched primary and secondary education with up-to-date learning content. Summer internships, introduced for the first time, exposed students to a wider variety of employment opportunities. Short-term research enabled students to tell the world about Albania in equal measure to the new knowledge they acquired abroad to bring home. The introduction of the European academic credit transfer system enabled Albanian students to transfer to and integrate into the European educational system more easily.

Economic reform in Albania grew in importance in this period. OSFA supported the first online resource center for business development in Albania, modernized the library of the Faculty of Economy, supported the launch of the first graduate program in business administration, helped establish one-stop-shops for business registration, supported the development of local development strategies, and strengthened the dialogue between the business community and local administrations through studies on mutually beneficial policies on taxes, remittances, public-private partnerships, tourism, and related topics.

In 2005, OSFA launched the Network of Open Society for Albania (NOSA) to test the viability of an open society network instead of a national foundation. In development since 2003, the Network brought together seven nonprofit and think tank organizations to advance open society values in three priority areas: good governance and rule of law, civil society, and European integration and regional cooperation. OSFA itself maintained grant-making operations to continue supporting CSOs.

OSFA also continued supporting CSOs to improve the integration of marginalized groups and create better social cohesion in the country. To this end, OSFA supported studies to assess the social and economic status of several marginalized groups, supported the operations of social service providers such as day-care centers for people with intellectual disabilities, terminal illnesses, and substance use disorders, and trained social workers working with people affected by domestic violence, blood feuds, child abuse, and human trafficking.

The foundation supported the first edition of the international Tirana Biennale for visual arts, which in years to follow grew into a highly competitive and one of the most respected arts events in southeastern Europe. OSFA also supported the first editions of the Butrinti 2000 International Festival of Theater, which has grown into one of the largest festivals of contemporary performing arts.

The Open Society foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina supported work on the *Lessons (Not) Learned in Bosnia-Herzegovina* report, an attempt to evaluate the performance of international organizations working in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war; the report called for a reorientation and rethinking of policies. The foundation also funded a project to restructure educational services, launched a legal clinic program to train students and offer legal aid to the indigent, and helped establish the Youth Information Agency to increase the participation of young people in society. In 2002, the foundation supported an international conference with 300 participants to discuss the establishment of Bosnia and Herzegovina's state war crimes court. The foundation also printed the first issue of *Sarajevo Notebooks*, a literary magazine that explores political issues facing Bosnia and Herzegovina's deeply divided society.

A foundation-supported analysis of deficiencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitution concluded that it must be harmonized with the European Convention on Human Rights. The foundation embarked on a campaign to improve juvenile justice, which resulted in a strategy and action plan unanimously adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2005. The foundation launched a three-year program to encourage policymaking based upon information and evidence, awarding eight fellowships for research and advocacy. It also piloted its good governance programs in five municipalities in an effort to transform local governance structures into modern, transparent systems that provide efficient public services. A foundation-supported assessment of democracy in the country encouraged citizens to vote in upcoming general elections using "issue-based" instead of "ethnic-based" criteria.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

CROATIA The Open Society foundation in Croatia pressed for policy reforms by supporting a think tank that published a report on the low levels of entrepreneurial activity in Croatia and designed a training program for small- and medium-sized enterprises with high growth potential. The foundation also addressed reforms in local government elections, social services, and the regulation of government employees.

The foundation launched the Open Society Forum, which conducted research and evaluated progress in areas such as education, rule of law, ethnic minorities, and economic development—and how they affected Croatia's democratization and European integration efforts. The Open Society Index, developed by the foundation, measured the level of openness of Croatian society through criteria in education, media, entrepreneurship and economic freedom, transparency of political processes, rule of law, and marginalized groups and minorities.

In May 2006, the foundation closed after 14 years of work, while the Open Society Foundations continued to provide funding to local NGOs working on issues such as human rights, mental health, and general and higher education.

KOSOVO The Open Society foundation in Kosovo provided assistance for the establishment of the Kosovo Law Center, which helped people reacquire personal legal documents confiscated from them when they were expelled by Serbian police in 1999. Support for Roma projects facilitated the return of Roma from Macedonian camps and the enrollment of their children in local schools. The foundation also supported an educational reform project, media organizations, and women's shelters. The foundation helped to establish the departments of psychology and political science at the University of Pristina, develop a project to increase the quality and transparency of administrative services in 20 Kosovo municipalities, train governmental and nongovernmental organizations active in arts and culture, and create a wide network of debate clubs within schools and youth communities.

The foundation launched its operational project, Forum 2015, which at first was a joint effort with two think tanks, addressing the crucial problems affecting consolidation of democracy and integration into the European Union. The foundation set up eight community centers to provide multiethnic and multicultural communities with educational, cultural, and sports activities, access to information technology, and help establishing small businesses. The foundation organized experts to support the transition of the justice sector from UN administration to administration by Kosovo's local authorities.

In 2004, Forum 2015, now an integral part of the foundation, undertook projects evaluating Kosovo five years after the introduction of the UN administration and analyzing Kosovo's experience with privatization and problems with the electoral system, ethnic intolerance, decentralization of ethnic minorities, and higher education for the Serb minority.

The foundation and the United Nations Development Program joined efforts for major capacity building in the country and established an institute to train 70,000 local civil servants. The foundation helped protect minority-group nongovernmental organizations, initiate think tanks for the Bosniak, Roma, Serb, and Turkish communities, and establish a school to educate students about the European Union.

In response to violence between Albanian insurgents and Macedonia's military and security service, the Open Society foundation in Macedonia mobilized more than 100 nongovernmental organizations in a countrywide peace campaign, "Enough is Enough", and advocated for free and fair democratic elections and efforts to fight corruption and organized crime. These activities made the foundation the target of attacks from government institutions and government-controlled media organizations, which derided the foundation as a "Fifth Column," "sorosoids," and "agents of an international conspiracy." The foundation joined efforts to establish support centers for nongovernmental organizations, a creative teaching and learning project, and education and public administration reforms. In 2002, a foundation-backed, voter-turnout drive for parliamentary elections recruited over 120 nongovernmental organizations and helped produce a turnout of 73 percent. The foundation continued its comprehensive work in education reform, including enhancement of educational opportunities for Macedonia's Roma.

The foundation helped gather 110 representatives from almost every student and youth organization in Macedonia to evaluate the country's institutions of higher education, and undertook a needs assessment to prepare for a capacity-building program for student organizations. Macedonia's government agreed to cooperate with the foundation on the National Program for Development of Education. The foundation also carried out research on corruption in higher education, revealing its presence in admissions, examinations, student services, administration, and many other aspects of higher education.

The foundation supported efforts to reform Macedonia's judiciary, to advocate for a law on free access to public information, and to promote anticorruption efforts. The foundation coordinated donor community activities to promote

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and monitor Macedonia's commitments to the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and helped with projects to improve the school achievement of Roma children and young adults. In addition to pressing for progress on Macedonia's accession to the European Union, the foundation undertook projects to improve Macedonia's economic stability and business climate, and initiated public and institutional debates on decentralization, freedom of information, the status of Roma, and the status of nongovernmental organizations.

MONTENEGRO The Open Society foundation in Montenegro encouraged the public to become involved in government reform by participating in campaigns and advocating for legislation on issues such as corruption, organized crime, and trafficking in human beings. It pursued numerous activities to strengthen freedom of expression, develop media self-regulation, elaborate journalistic codes of behavior, and change libel from a criminal law to a civil law matter. With other Open Society Foundations entities, the foundation initiated education reform, including policymaking, development of legislation, curriculum development, teacher training, and textbook publishing. The foundation helped establish the Judicial Training Center, legal clinics, and a strategy for reform of Montenegro's judiciary. Following the official policy to decentralize government, the foundation supported the drafting of legislation relevant to local self-governance.

The introduction of a new primary education system in 20 pilot schools across Montenegro culminated years of foundation work on education reform. The foundation undertook the training of teachers of civic education, a new compulsory subject in primary schools, and supported an evaluation of the first year of implementation of educational reforms. In the area of legal reform, the foundation organized debates on draft laws dealing with witness protection, court fees, judicial education, and rules of procedure. The foundation supported the monitoring of a law on the financing of political parties. Support also went to expert commissions responsible for revising Montenegro's criminal code and code of criminal procedure. The foundation helped create education policies that do not discriminate on the basis of gender.

SERBIA After operating in dangerous and difficult conditions for almost a decade, the Open Society foundation in Serbia, in 2001, worked with the new democratic government and international donors to advance the country's transition to democracy. The foundation supported the preparation of new laws on the judiciary, local government, freedom of information, and the police. It joined the Council for the Reform of the Judiciary to bring the judicial system up to international standards and helped Serbia's law enforcement and judicial

institutions to cope with organized crime and war crimes. The foundation supported education reform, including curricula changes, a national education strategy for Roma children, and public education debates involving over 30,000 teachers, parents, and community members.

During the state of emergency after Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić's assassination, the authorities restricted key human and civil rights, including freedom of expression and information; limited the independence of the judiciary; and restricted defendants' rights in criminal procedures, thereby violating the principle of a fair trial. The foundation initiated efforts to reestablish these rights. It worked to strengthen the professional capabilities of the judiciary, particularly judges and prosecutors dealing with organized crime in recently established special courts. The foundation also supported training for members of nongovernmental organizations to monitor court trials.

The foundation in 2004 began campaigning against the new, antireform policies of the Koštunica government. It helped organize an international conference that contributed to work on a new legislative framework for education reforms. The foundation worked with the Serbian government to draft elements of the National Strategy for Joining the European Union; Serbia's progress toward joining the European Union remained thwarted by its refusal to cooperate fully with the UN war crimes tribunal. The foundation promoted numerous activities to further cooperation between Serbia and the tribunal, and worked to increase the capacities of the domestic judiciary to deal with cases involving serious violations of humanitarian law.

In 2005, the foundation advocated for building a pro-European Union social consensus in Serbia, and monitored the effectiveness, efficiency, and democratic nature of the government's work on EU accession. The foundation contributed to the development and implementation of an educational program for civil servants negotiating Serbia's Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union.

2006-2010

In 2005–2008, the foundation led NOSA, an experimental partnership of seven leading Albanian nonprofit and think tank organizations pursuing open society values through good governance, civil society, and European integration. Employing primarily operational projects, OSFA and NOSA partners conducted public discourse on the most important reform issues of the day.

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They monitored the implementation of the state budget across 10 priority areas, led dialogue between the central and local governments toward effective decentralization in 6 sectors, supported active citizen engagement in local urban planning and development, and built up the capacity of municipal governments to leverage EU funds for local development.

To empower civic activism, OSFA and partners supported the creation of an enabling legal and financial environment for CSOs, built the capacities of civic organizations to influence policy, cultivated the culture of debate and public consultation, monitored implementation and advocated for the development of national and municipal policies that would respond to citizens' needs, and provided legal aid and assistance to vulnerable and marginalized groups. OSFA and partners led nationwide consultations to inform strategic reforms. Consultations with civic organizations identified 13 amendments to the law on nonprofits, which led to a partial amendment and extensive advocacy to exempt grants to nonprofits from value-added tax. During this time, OSFA funded the launch of the first online platform, *unevotoj.com* ("I vote"), which monitored the performance of elected members of Parliament and highlighted their unfulfilled preelectoral promises.

As Albania started preparations for membership in the European Union, OSFA and partners embarked on informing the public, building capacities, and monitoring Albania's fulfillment of its commitments. A supplement to the *Daily Shqip*, the monthly magazine, *Europa*, and the booklet *Passport of Stabilization and Association* informed the public about the Europeanization process across sectors. NOSA partners trained journalists and nonprofit organizations to monitor and report on the government's progress in implementing the Stabilization and Association Agreement and at the same time conducted their own monitoring and tracked the government's progress directly, publishing findings in periodic reports. The reports continuously highlighted the government's slow progress in executing reforms in the justice sector, decentralization, administrative capacities, election process, and visa liberalization as well as the overall lack of Parliamentary oversight of the Council of Ministers and Government. To communicate the urgency of pro-Europeanization reforms and advocate for them, OSFA launched *Citizenry and Governance*, a series of high-level monthly forums with leading thinkers in Albania's civil, government, and international policy sectors.

In March 2008, an explosion in a former ammunition depot in the village of Gërdec killed 26 people, including children, injured more than 300, and damaged over 5,500 properties. In response, OSFA commissioned extensive re-

search through testimonials of victims and witnesses and funded the *Res Publica Center*, a public interest law group, to provide free legal aid to victims and their families. *Res Publica* filed over 200 civil and criminal lawsuits in the Tirana court, the High Court, the Constitutional Court, and the European Court of Human Rights.

Surveys conducted by the Open Society foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina revealed that the country's schools continue to use separate Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian curricula and that some rural schools are also physically separating children of different ethnic groups. Surveys also revealed, however, that the students themselves are ready for change, saying that their schools are not fostering critical thinking and ethnic pluralism. The foundation supported civil society efforts to encourage reforms to curricula that would promote tolerance and multiculturalism.

Citizens Committees for Democracy monitored the performance of the newly elected government, evaluating the extent to which preelection promises were kept. The Youth Get Out to Vote project helped young people to understand the role of voting in a democracy. The foundation monitored education reforms that would promote human rights and equal opportunity in school programs. A curriculum and textbook review and a public opinion survey found that schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina discriminated on the basis of ethnic, religious, and political affiliation as well as economic status.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Open Society Foundations, which are committed to ending violence against women, supported an organization providing psychosocial and medical treatment and legal counseling to women victims of wartime sexual violence and domestic violence.

The foundation's Campaign for Justice in Education alerted the public to discrimination against children in the educational system on the basis of their ethnic, religious, and political affiliation, as well as their health and economic status. The campaign advocated for equal access to education, higher quality of educational services, safety in schools, learning about diversity, and harmonized financing of education.

Widespread discrimination against various groups is one of the most serious generators of human rights violations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The foundation established an antidiscrimination team to bring strategic litigation cases before the country's courts. In July 2010, the first antidiscrimination ruling found that the government violated the right to education of a minor with special needs by not providing assistance in a regular class to enable

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the child's inclusion. The foundation helped establish the Public Interest Advocacy Center to mount public pressure on the government to provide information on its fiscal decision making and to encourage citizens to participate and hold public officials accountable.

CROATIA In 2007, a year after the closing of the foundation in Croatia, the Open Society Foundations formed a three-member advisory board to help with the work the Foundations continued to support in the country. It quickly became clear, however, that a local presence was needed. Despite its steady progress toward European integration, Croatia continued to suffer from political corruption and economic mismanagement. In 2010, civil society representatives and experts supported a strengthening of the Open Society Foundations engagement in Croatia. In September, an Open Society Foundations advisor for Croatia was hired to serve as the liaison for Foundations programs in the country.

KOSOVO Forum 2015's Status vs. Status Quo initiative mobilized civil society to support negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia. The foundation agreed with the government of Kosovo to draft the Kosovo Strategy for Integration of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, which was completed after two years of public debate and adopted by the parliament in 2008. Soros pledged 500,000 euros to the integration effort, and the European Union gave 1 million euros. The foundation was mandated to oversee the strategy's implementation.

The Open Society foundation in Kosovo supported multiethnic centers in communities with large Serb, Bosniak, Roma, and Turkish populations. Forum 2015 published a study of government plans to construct a power plant that would cause numerous ecological, social, and economic problems, undertook projects examining the country's European identity and policies toward migration, and launched a study on the international presence in Kosovo. The foundation established six community centers in areas where Roma comprise a majority population to advance education, culture, and health, and engage youth.

The foundation in 2009 initiated a two-year project, Communicating with Europe, which sought to broaden and strengthen communication channels between civil society organizations and the intellectual elite in Kosovo with their counterparts in countries that have not recognized Kosovo's independence (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Spain). Forum 2015 initiated a project to enhance communication between Serbia and Kosovo. The foundation provided support to the Ministry of European Integration to advance Kosovo's progress in developing closer

cooperation with relevant EU institutions in Brussels and Pristina and also supported media efforts to inform the public about the European Union's policies on energy, visas, agriculture, and other areas.

The foundation supported television documentaries on fighting corruption and on reforming the electoral system. George Soros's emergency fund helped 25 Kosovo organizations to withstand the impact of the global financial recession. The foundation funded efforts to prepare Kosovo's minority communities to support the crucial countrywide census in 2011.

The Open Society foundation in Macedonia worked to strengthen the country's internal integration to meet the prerequisites for European Union integration. These efforts included projects to study and analyze Macedonia's state institutions and improve governance; to integrate the Roma through reforming the education system, improving health care, strengthening Roma nongovernmental organizations, and expanding economic opportunities; and to decentralize public administration and develop local democracy. The foundation advocated for bringing national education policies into harmony with the goals of the European Union's overarching education policy framework.

The foundation mobilized public support, exerted pressure upon government and political leaders, and organized discussions with EU officials to accelerate Macedonia's accession to the European Union. It monitored spending by the central government and the process of decentralization in order to enhance public debate on government transparency and accountability.

The Open Society Foundations in 2008 provided support to the first organization in the country offering community-based housing services as an alternative to institutionalization for people with intellectual disabilities. The effort in Macedonia was part of an Open Society Foundations campaign throughout the region to improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.

In addition to supporting education and legal reforms, strengthening civil society organizations, and promoting the integration of Roma, the foundation joined the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe in its project to end ethnocentric teaching of history by avoiding stereotypes, identifying attitudes that encourage conflict, and promoting the idea of multiple interpretations of events. The foundation undertook a project aimed at introducing the rehabilitation and resocialization of former drug users, including visits of social workers and civil servants to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland, and the Czech Republic to study similar centers and a conference on best practices.

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The foundation in 2010 continued to press for change to advance Macedonia's progress toward membership in the European Union. Some of the foundation's activities were seen as threatening by various political interests in Macedonia, and the country's ruling party attacked the foundation, several of its spin-off organizations, the initiators of Citizens for European Macedonia, and other nongovernmental organizations as national traitors and conspirators against the state.

In Macedonia, the Open Society Foundations also operated the Roma Mentor Project, which brings successful Roma into public school classrooms and after-school learning programs to inspire and help Roma students achieve in school and life.

MONTENEGRO In the weeks before the referendum on independence, the Open Society foundation in Montenegro focused on explaining the vote's importance to the public. Of the persons casting ballots, 55.5 percent voted for independence, surpassing by half a percentage point the amount needed to clear a EU-established threshold for validation. Subsequently, parliament declared Montenegro to be an independent state; Serbia, Russia, the European Union's member states, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other countries recognized Montenegro's independence. The foundation supported efforts to prepare Montenegro for accession to the European Union and to improve Montenegrin attitudes toward European integration.

The foundation collaborated with mass media organizations on training seminars, courses, workshops, and study trips; funded an analysis of human and minority rights and public debate on the issue of Montenegro's accession to NATO; and promoted compliance with pledges to improve the situation of the country's Roma. The foundation supported programs to strengthen both public administration and local government institutions, including providing staff members with skills to implement reforms crucial to the European integration process. The foundation also undertook development of Montenegro's first shadow report on implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Projects run by parent groups, teacher associations, and organizations of young people with disabilities received funding to further implementation of teaching methods and to assess student achievement upon completion of primary school. The foundation worked on improving civil monitoring of human and minority rights, the financing of political parties, the promotion of free access to information, and efforts to fight corruption.

With Montenegro officially a candidate for entry into the European Union, the foundation in 2010 supported efforts to update the European Reporter portal with relevant information about the European Union and Montenegro's progress toward integration. The foundation continued its efforts to promote the rule of law and build the capacity of organizations working with women, the Roma, and other groups who face discrimination.

The Open Society foundation in Serbia's report on the country's law on access to information called for the constitution to guarantee access to information as a human right and a constitutional commissioner to oversee its implementation. The report also called for the adoption of a new law on protection of personal data. Another foundation study, on the right to information in Serbia's minority languages, stimulated extensive public debate and provided a resource for policymakers and stakeholders. The foundation continued to advocate for the development of pro-European public policies, rule of law, good governance and accountability, and respect for individual human rights and the rights of the Roma and other minority groups.

SERBIA

In the wake of Kosovo's recognition as an independent state by most EU countries and the ensuing backlash in Serbia, the foundation sought to combat resurgent nationalism and renewed calls for isolationism. The foundation led a coalition of civil society groups that worked to inform the public on the benefits of EU integration, helping keep nationalists from regaining control of the government. The foundation also worked to increase budget transparency and improve mechanisms to monitor the spending of aid money from abroad. Foundation-supported professional associations of judges and prosecutors questioned the general reelection of judges and prosecutors and played a large role in preventing an effort to bring the judiciary under the control of the government and political parties.

In 2009, a collaborative campaign by foundation-backed civil society organizations in Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania helped lead to a liberalization of the European Union's visa requirements for citizens of these countries, an important step in their EU accession process. Serbia applied for membership in the European Union in December. The foundation continued to work in a coalition of civil society groups to educate the public on the vast benefits of entering the European Union. The foundation also led efforts to fight corruption, increase budget transparency, and improve the country's mechanisms for spending foreign aid funds, as well as to improve access to quality education for the country's Roma.

2011-2015

ALBANIA As Albania embarked on implementing the 12 policy priorities requested by the European Commission, the Open Society Foundation in Albania (OSFA) established a working group to review the government's action plan and recommend priority actions. Initially, the recommendations went unheeded, but consistent advocacy resulted in political parliamentary groups reaching a consensus on several recommendations, including the appointment of a People's Advocate and electoral reform. In addition, the Ministry of Integration invited civil society organizations (CSOs) to join the interagency working group to revise the action plan. OSFA continued monitoring the government's progress in implementation, analyzed the role of the Assembly in budgeting the EU priorities, and studied the costs and benefits of European integration, finding that legal approximation, alignment with the Albanian context, and human capital development would be among the most costly of the process.

Envisioned as a noble experiment, the Network of Open Society for Albania (NOSA) was dissolved in 2013, with a core lesson for the Open Society Foundations (OSF) that engaging local groups in shared outcomes can be seriously challenged by competition—for funding (especially when there is a significant shortage of other donors), for results, and for credit.

In 2014, OSF funded a \$2 million partnership between Harvard University and the Government of Albania that provided capacity-building and technical assistance toward the goal of macroeconomic stability and fiscal strength. The support enabled Albania to successfully negotiate with the IMF and the World Bank, ward off their orthodox solutions on electricity theft, and bring \$600 million into the state budget.

To continuously support and improve the rule of law, OSFA monitored implementation of the Cross-Sector Justice Strategy and trained judges and prosecutors on European Conventions to support implementation of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decisions. In 2014, the foundation established the Fund for Public Interest Litigation and built a network of 20 human rights defense lawyers, who in two years filed 24 cases of human rights abuses. In the meantime, the foundation continued supporting the Res Publica Center to provide free legal aid and ensure that victims of state abuses had access to justice. As a result, 330 victims of the Gërdec explosion filed their reparation cases, and 4 Roma families were saved from being evicted from their homes. In the latter case, Res Publica filed a complaint with the UN Human Rights

Committee in Geneva against the Government of Albania, who tried to evict Roma families from their homes to construct a football stadium—without securing alternative housing for them in advance.

In 2014, Parliament enacted laws on the Right of Information and Notice and Comment—a landmark success for OSFA, civil society, and the media, who had for years been advocating for the government to open up and provide access to public documents. The laws, which were drafted by OSFA, obligated public administration institutions to make public data available to citizens and any other interested party.

Following years of advocacy and public consultations conducted by OSFA and its partners aimed at creating a supportive environment for the sustainable development of nonprofit organizations, a 2014 decision of the Council of Ministers and a new law adopted in 2015 exempted grants made to nonprofit organizations from value-added tax.

With OSFA as its sole donor, the Alliance Against Waste Imports collected 50,000 citizen signatures, led the fight all the way to the Constitutional Court, and demanded that the Government of Albania organize a referendum, which ultimately banned the importation of waste to Albania. OSFA supported the Coalition of Domestic Observers, which accredited 1,639 domestic observers to monitor elections in 700 polling stations and monitor ballot counting in 89. In 2014, recognizing the need to consolidate civic election monitoring, the foundation brought together seven nonprofit organizations and established the Election Situation Room, which enabled better coordination of civic monitoring during the 2015 elections.

In its ongoing support for media democratization and content diversification, the foundation launched "Circles," an annual open competition of short investigative documentary films to highlight Albania's striking social issues. For four years in a row, competing films were broadcast by a national broadcaster and a special jury awarded the top five documentaries.

The Open Society Foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSF BH) launched *Školegijum*, a journal for critical education, in 2012 as a platform for critical analysis of educational policies and practices, under the broader campaign for fundamental education system reform. The journal's primary purpose was to advocate for open society values in education: interculturalism, respect for human rights and fundamental liberties, integrated teaching and learning, and critical thinking. It gathered professionals, activists, and journalists from across the country to challenge mainstream educational policies and pro-

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

mote social justice and equal education opportunities. A year later, within the Good School Practices program, the foundation supported and encouraged schools that were able to introduce an innovative and progressive approach to education despite the unfavorable economic and political environment.

In 2012, the foundation provided support to the country's first organization advocating for the full respect of human rights and social inclusion of LGBTI people, the Sarajevo Open Centre. The initial support turned into a long-term partnership. The same applied to the support of Sumero—the first organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina focused on improving the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.

The Municipal Intensive Labor Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which ran throughout 2012, was part of the OSF effort to mitigate the consequences of the global financial recession. The project provided opportunities to create temporary income and temporary employment for over 1,000 unemployed persons while improving the necessary infrastructure and quality of life in local communities. In 2014, after the devastating floods, the foundation created the Flood Recovery Project. The project improved the living and environmental conditions in communities severely damaged by flooding by rebuilding roads, repairing the water supply system, remediating landslides and river beds, and providing temporary income to the poorest residents.

The foundations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo joined efforts in 2014–15 to denounce travel barriers between the two countries caused by harsh visa regimes. The highlight of this initiative was *Someone Else's Heart: A Theatrical Treatise on Borders* and a documentary film composed of testimonials of humiliation and isolation caused by the suspension of movement between the two countries.

CROATIA Through the Emergency Fund, the OSF supported several initiatives in Croatia that sought to address consequences of the economic crisis and improve social cohesion. The funding went to nonprofit grantees that provided free legal assistance to citizen groups at risk that enabled them to exercise their housing rights; to grantees who trained unemployed women, asylum seekers, and persons with disabilities to improve their employability in local markets; and to grantees who provided early-development educational programs to preschool children of families suffering from social and economic hardship.

KOSOVO The Kosovo Foundation for an Open Society (KFOS) advocated nationally, regionally, and in European capitals for contractual relations between Kosovo and the European Union as a prerequisite to accelerating the country's

pro-European reform. To this end, the international conference Kosovo Calling, and a study of the same name, explored the non-recognizing positions of Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain as an obstacle to Kosovo's progress on the path to European integration. Another study, presented in Brussels and authored by Jordi Vaquer and Christi Ghinea, highlighted the lack of knowledge among five European non-recognizing members as an obstacle to the European Union's engagement in the region.

KFOS co-founded the Civikos Platform of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which led the collaboration between CSOs and the Government of Kosovo to draft the Strategy and Action Plan for Mutual Cooperation. Supported by the Reserve Fund of OSF, the foundation launched Vote and Watch, the first ever crowdsourced election monitoring platform, to which more than 16,000 citizens submitted SMS messages reporting election irregularities. The foundation's Open 333 advocacy platform, composed of three-minute video testimonials of three thought leaders, distributed on Facebook, was an unforeseen success—each of the published videos has been viewed 30,000–50,000 times.

The foundation supported the launch of the Mirëdita, Dobar Dan festival that has brought artists from Kosovo and Serbia together in Belgrade to build new understanding and improve social, political, and cultural relationships between the two societies. KFOS and OSF BH initiated a joint project to advocate for free movement of people, goods, and services between Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, impeded by lack of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Recognizing the foundation's leadership in integrating Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian (RAE) communities, the Government of Germany, the European Commission, and the Karl Kubel Foundation provided KFOS with multiyear funds to support the development and implementation of the second RAE integration strategy, focusing on education and RAE self-advocacy.

As part of a new initiative, Reconnecting Mitrovica, KFOS inaugurated the Civic Energy Center in northern Mitrovica to foster civic engagement in the north, which had been nonexistent since 1999. The center enabled the foundation to empower civic actors among the Serb community by cultivating public discussion and informal debates, publishing analytical reports, conducting qualitative and quantitative research, building knowledge about the European Union, and hosting a biweekly studio program, *TV Debates Spora ZOOM* (a play on the word sporazum, which means agreement), with Kosovar

analysts discussing issues pertaining to the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue. Further, the foundation partnered with the Open Society Foundation Serbia to gauge the opinions of the Serb community in northern Kosovo about normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, expectations from the Dialogue, and the future of the Serb community in Kosovo, all with the goal of informing and fostering further cooperation between CSOs in the north and those in other parts of Kosovo.

KFOS premiered *Rejected in Berlin, Germany*, a documentary film that demystified the myth of Kosovars intent on migrating illegally to European countries, outlining the negative impact of isolation and the strict visa regime that continues to limit Kosovars' travel to Europe's Schengen territory for business, study, and visit purposes.

MACEDONIA The Foundation for an Open Society Macedonia (FOSM) supported Macedonia's EU accession process through monitoring, advocacy, and capacity-building activities. It monitored the country's progress on pro-European reform and published its findings in quarterly *Accession Watch* reports, which became a credible source of accession information for elected officials, civil society, media, and the general public. To ensure an active role for CSOs, the foundation established a shadow negotiation team that analyzed policies and prepared contributions to Macedonia's negotiations on the judiciary, fundamental rights, social policy and employment, and competition chapters of the European Union law, known as *Acquis Communautaire*. The foundation's civic partners helped hundreds of municipal officials, civil society representatives, journalists, lawyers, and students build their knowledge of European law.

To cultivate accountability in state institutions, FOSM monitored the decentralization of 12 municipalities, public procurement in hundreds of cases at national and local institutions, and budget implementation in government-funded programs. To accelerate development at the local level, the foundation initiated the Model-Citizen-Centric Municipalities concept, through which it trained municipal officers, council members, civil society activists, and civic representatives on strategic and participatory planning, local governance, education for social justice, and EU funding opportunities, and established community centers that have provided direct services to thousands of citizens. In 2013, a number of the foundation's recommendations were included in the amendment of the Law on Public Procurement.

During this period, the foundation provided significant support to Roma and civic participation and engagement initiatives. It supported the Citizens for

a European Macedonia (CEM), whose CEM Club has hosted over 600 public discussions on issues related to human rights, youth, marginalized groups, gender equality, identity and history, reform of institutions, civic activism, EU accession, etc. Its partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) enabled the awarding of over 240 grants to CSOs in support of civic activism, monitoring, advocacy, cooperation, and capacity-building for civic engagement. FOSM's support enabled the provision of free paralegal assistance and legal aid to marginalized groups, such as Roma, migrants, sex workers, drug users, and even media outlets and journalists in civil and criminal lawsuits related to charges brought against them because of their coverage and reporting. Through free legal aid, hundreds of Roma have secured property titles, and the Roma Housing Legalization Fund has provided 1,500 interest-free loans to cover related legal and administrative costs. An FOSM grantee successfully prevented out-of-wedlock and civil partnership from being defined as a union between a man and a woman in a constitutional amendment. A ten-year USAID partnership (2004–2014) in the Roma Education Project provided direct education support, tutoring, scholarships, mentoring, and additional academic assistance to more than 3,000 Roma students and youth from preschool to university education. The project doubled the number of Roma secondary and university students and graduates, contributing to increased educational attainment of Roma in the country.

By extending financial support to alternative media outlets, FOSM played a critical role in ensuring that alternative and independent information, largely ignored by mainstream media, reached the country's citizens. This proved particularly critical during the political crisis of 2015, when data showed that millions of Macedonians had turned to four digital news outlets supported by the foundation for information. Following the political crisis, the foundation supported the We Deserve Better campaign of 75 CSOs that familiarized and mobilized citizens around crisis-related problems that had been the focus of several national and international reports.

Responding to the emergent migrant crisis in 2015, FOSM supported the distribution of 100,000 humanitarian packets to refugees and funded the monitoring of human rights violations, which resulted in 24 charges against police officers.

The Open Society Foundation Serbia (OSFS) focused on three priorities: improving public policy formulation and implementation through increased participation of informed citizens in public affairs, increasing accountability

SERBIA

of those in power through rigorous monitoring and advocacy, and strengthening minorities' social inclusion through confidence building and the promotion of tolerance and understanding.

The foundation funded the establishment of the National Convent for the EU, a national cross-sector collaborative mechanism that enabled participation of CSOs in negotiations between the European Union and Serbia. The National Convent for the EU brought together about 600 representatives of civil society, negotiation teams, government, Parliament, state institutions, local authorities, trade unions, and professional and business associations in 21 working groups to interact and generate recommendations for Serbia's European integration process. In parallel, OSFS supported educational initiatives that enabled the informed participation of CSOs in European integration processes and their monitoring of critical reforms in the sectors of public procurement, competition, anticorruption, security, and foreign policy.

The foundation established an informal network of civil society actors that reaffirmed each citizen's right to objective information and the true purpose of free media through robust monitoring of adherence to media regulations, public service program schemes, and the flow of public media privatization funds. The foundation also supported several media outlets in producing high quality journalism that investigated corruption, abuse of public authority, education, antidiscrimination, etc. Five independent state bodies with whom the foundation cooperated in designing indicators of institutional effectiveness agreed to apply them in their reporting to the National Parliament. In addition, the indicators were included in the National Action Plan for Chapter 23 negotiations with the European Union.

The foundation supported the efforts of national minorities to elect their national councils. Election of the Bosniac National Council through fair elections and a preelectoral campaign was a particular success, because it ended an eight-year political struggle. To improve Roma inclusion, the foundation supported the establishment of the Standing Conference of Roma Citizens' Associations – Roma League and proposed a new law on the legalization of informal Roma settlements as one of its first activities. After the municipality of Brus legalized Novo Selište, an informal settlement with 130 Roma residents, the foundation lobbied local institutions in 20 other municipalities to define local housing policies for their Roma communities and produced a feasibility study for a Roma Inclusion Strategy. The foundation's support of the LGBT community enabled improved understanding of LGBT identities, the development of an LGBT Platform, and advocacy for the adoption of new

police protocols to prevent violence against members of the LGBT community. Further, to foster development of inclusive social policies, the foundation supported initiatives that strengthened the role of parents' associations and teachers unions in developing inclusive educational policies.

OSFS partnered with KFOS in surveying the perceptions of members of the Serb community in northern Kosovo about normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina with the goal of informing and fostering further cooperation between CSOs in the north and those in other parts of Kosovo. To keep the topic of responsibility for the wars of the 1990s high on the social agenda, the foundation supported an art installation that reconstructed the crimes of Serb paramilitary over the Bogujevci family during the Kosovo war, the creation of an interactive website about the impunity of suspected war criminals, media coverage of the Hague Tribunal proceedings, the production of the feature film *A Good Wife* (included in the official selection of the Sundance Film Festival), and the production of the documentary film *The Fall of Ratko Mladić*. A particular success was the foundation's support of a unique collaboration between actors from Kosovo and Serbia who produced the play *Romeo and Juliet* and performed it in both the Albanian and Serbian languages. The play has been performed in Serbia, in Kosovo, and beyond and has received very positive reviews and viewership across borders.

The OSF supported the Peace Institute's extensive advocacy seeking the regulation of legal status for 18,000 people erased from the Slovenian registry of citizens in 1992. The institute provided legal counselling and representation and also filed written comments before the ECHR. In 2012, the ECHR ruled that Slovenia had violated several provisions of the European Convention for Human Rights and ordered the government to adopt ad-hoc compensation for all erased people, not only the applicants in the suit. Following the ECHR judgment, the Peace Institute monitored its implementation in Slovenia, supported the claims of more than 1,000 people for compensation, and represented hundreds in status regularization procedures.

Supported by OSF, the Peace Institute participated in regional and international advocacy initiatives seeking to support media integrity and citizens' rights to information in post-authoritarian countries. Through participation in the South East European Media Observatory's research and advocacy, the Peace Institute addressed obstacles to "democratic systems in the countries of South East Europe by mapping patterns of corrupt relations and practices in media policy development, media ownership and financing, public service broadcasting, and journalism as a profession".

SLOVENIA

In 2012, to commemorate the work of Živko Pregl, the co-founder and vice president of Slovene Philanthropy, an NGO promoting volunteerism, and a former president of the board of directors of the Open Society Institute – Slovenia, the Peace Institute established the Živko Pregl Award to recognize and promote civic activism in Slovenia. The first Živko Pregl Award recognized Irfan Beširević, an activist who worked with the Social Centre Rog, the Invisible Workers of the World, and the Civil Initiative of Erased Activists.

2016-2021

ALBANIA In 2016–2021, the Open Society Foundations in Albania (OSFA) partnered with Albania’s National Council on European Integration and, in an effort to enhance Albania’s outcomes in negotiations with the European Commission, provided high-level intensive training on European enlargement to the most promising civil servants, nonprofit leaders, and journalists.

Recognizing OSFA’s leadership in evidence-based public debate on constitutional reform—initiated in 2009 and a strategic priority since 2014—Parliament formally invited the foundation to be a partner in designing and supporting justice reforms and in promoting a transparent, inclusive, and open process for developing domestic expertise and educating the public. To this end, OSFA and the Reserve Fund of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) provided a grant of \$684,000 for technical support and the engagement of dozens of local legal experts and the organization of a wide-ranging consultation process with judges, prosecutors, academia, civil society organizations (CSOs), and media throughout the country, one of the most inclusive legislative processes in the country. After the reforms were approved, OSFA continued to advocate for their implementation, for informing citizens, and for keeping the new institutions accountable to the public. To this end, OSFA provided high-level monitoring and critical analyses, which provided reliable expertise and information for international partners, the media, and state institutions. OSFA continued supporting efforts by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) in Albania to build its own capacities, produce qualitative investigative journalism, and simultaneously strengthen relations with CSOs, activists, and experts working on public procurement, organized crime, local government, and asset declaration matters. These efforts led to the publication of 63 investigative stories in just one year. In cooperation with the Information and Data Privacy Commissioner, OSFA supported the

creation and launch of a national electronic registry of requests for access to public information and trained over 230 freedom of information coordinators. In 2018, the registry grew into a national online platform, pyetshtetin.al (“ask the state”), with 27 other state institutions signing up to streamline access to public information through a single platform.

Combining activist lawyering, community mobilization, and media, OSFA’s Fund for Public Interest Litigation and its lawyers successfully represented 61 Roma families in negotiations with state institutions and secured housing bonuses and the construction of 61 alternative housing units. OSFA leveraged its extensive experience with free legal aid systems to support the Ministry of Justice’s drafting of a legal framework for the Free Legal Aid Law, which established the institutional infrastructure, the Directorate for Free Legal Aid. The OSFA also launched four legal clinics, which in only one year provided free legal assistance in over 2,200 cases and successfully resolved several major advocacy and litigation cases. OSFA Legal Clinics successfully lobbied for the rehabilitation of the landfill in Porto Romano in Durrës, helped 10 Roma and Egyptian families in Pogradec obtain ownership titles for their apartments, prevented construction of a power plant in Zall Gjocaj (a protected area in the Mat region), and ensured that patients with hemophilia, breast cancer, and in need of cochlear implants received adequate healthcare, previously denied. Also, an OSFA-supported advocacy campaign, combined with legal expertise, resulted in a decision by the Financial Supervisory Authority to require insurance companies to compensate citizens with \$12 million of unpaid claims, solving cases pending since 2011.

The foundation supported the Roma and Egyptian community in developing and strengthening leadership capacities and advocating effectively for improvement of their livelihoods. The support combined proactive community engagement with the creation of new Roma and Egyptian advocacy organizations. In 2019, the Roma and Egyptian community successfully advocated the need for better infrastructure to support community entrepreneurs, and as a result the Municipality of Tirana constructed a second-hand goods market in the Shkoza Area.

For years, OSFA and its partners conducted public consultations and advocated for a constitutional amendment that would enable 20,000 citizens to propose a legislative initiative in the public interest. This resulted in Parliament approving the law on Voter Legislative Initiatives, which expands popular democracy and creates new opportunities for CSOs and citizens to drive amendments and reforms on issues of public interest.

OSFA's consistent support and advocacy for improved palliative care resulted in all regional hospitals in the country establishing Palliative Care Units. OSFA supported women's empowerment through entrepreneurship training and microloans and prioritized women in rural and remote areas, who had been completely underserved by other donors. OSFA supported CSOs working toward strengthening parents' formal representation at the school level and their engagement in addressing school problems.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In 2016, in line with its long-term focus on government accountability, the Open Society Foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSF BH) brought together several CSOs to advocate for the country's accession to the multi-lateral initiative Open Government Partnership (OGP). The coalition promoted OGP principles and benefits, participated in the official OGP membership application, prepared the first draft of the National OGP Action Plan, and worked on a common cooperation mechanism between the authorities and civil society in the implementation of OGP obligations.

In 2017, OSF BH initiated and, in cooperation with partner CSOs, started implementing the multiyear initiative "Let Public Procurement Become Public." This complex initiative documented in real time various forms of violations of the Law on Public Procurement and created an evidence-based foundation to advocate for full transparency of the public procurement process.

In 2018, the foundation helped launch the first Roma web portal in the country. A sufficient number of highly educated young Roma was a vital precondition for launching the new media outlet—all reporters were foundation scholarship recipients. The portal increases the Roma community's presence and visibility in the media and strengthens the promotional capacity of Roma nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and activists. It plays a unique role in presenting the views of Roma communities and raising awareness about the issues they face.

Fanzine Revizor, supported in 2018–19, is a critical, subversive, and nomadic newspaper whose goal is to network like-minded people in several cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and neighboring countries. *Fanzine* strives to strengthen the network of proactive individuals, affirm the idea of public criticism, and create a culture of dialogue that implies pluralism and ideological diversity, intending to emphasize the social and cultural phenomena circumscribed by the processes of post-socialist, post-industrial, and post-conflict environment.

In 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina participated for the first time in the Program for International Student Assessment, PISA. The foundation used this unique

opportunity to launch a public campaign advocating for comprehensive education reform that would provide quality education to all children. Along with the Education Support Program, the foundation supported the publication of a national report, which was launched concurrently with the international report on PISA published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in December 2019.

2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide. The foundation concluded its 20-year contribution to transitional justice by supporting the *Što te nema* memorial in Srebrenica. For fifteen years, artist Aida Šehović's *Što te nema* memorial traveled across the world as a participatory public monument to the 1995 Srebrenica Genocide. As part of the final iteration in its nomadic form, the memorial set out 8,372 *fidžani* (demitasses) filled with freshly brewed coffee, each representing one of the known victims.

Spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which put the country's capacities to a stern test, OSF BH provided emergency assistance to vulnerable and marginalized social groups most affected by the crisis.

The Kosovo Foundation for an Open Society (KFOS) continued advocating for improved transparency practices nationally through Kosovo's membership in international and regional initiatives. KFOS mobilized civil society organizations to partner with the government and draft the first National Action Plan (NAP) in order to apply for membership in the OGP. Following the rejection of Kosovo's application for membership in the OGP (due to Indonesia's non-recognition of Kosovo's statehood), KFOS continued to lead national efforts to implement the NAP commitments and support civil society monitoring. In 2018, the foundation joined Balkan Tender Watch, a regional coalition that aims to improve procurement systems in the Balkans. In parallel, the foundation helped create an enabling environment for opening up of public data, advanced the approval of the Open Data Charter, and led training of government officials and civil society on the importance of data disclosure through the Pro Open Coalition—a coalition of 11 member organizations established in 2018.

KFOS brought together nine leading education CSOs to form the Coalition for Integrity and Transparency in the University (KITU). KITU's mission is to advocate for improved academic integration, transparency, and accountability in Kosovo's public institutions of tertiary education, namely, the University of Pristina, and to investigate abuses at the university. Several investigations found alarming levels of fraudulent and politicized management practices

KOSOVO

across various boards. KITU's recommendations were later included in the draft law on higher education.

Supported by the Reserve Fund of the OSF, the foundation launched the only civil society platform that brings together Kosovar political leaders of government as well as opposition parties in a series of closed roundtable discussions with the goal of strengthening Kosovo's negotiating position in its dialogue with Serbia. The foundation supplied the platform with policy documents and research and supported the participants' advocacy visits to leading European capitals—Paris, Berlin, Brussels, and London—and later expanded the visits to Athens and Madrid, capitals of two non-recognizing EU member states.

To continue cultivating better communication with non-recognizing European countries and informing their citizens about Kosovo's reality and progress, the foundation supported 24 young European researchers to analyze European policies toward Kosovo. It engaged James Ker Lindsay of the London School of Economics to lead 10 experts in assessing the diplomatic positions of 9 EU member states toward Kosovo. The latter analyses were published under the title *Lack of Engagement? Surveying the Spectrum of EU Member State Policies Towards Kosovo* and were presented at public discussions in several European capitals.

The Civic Energy Center, founded and supported by KFOS, has become a hive of constructive and evidence-based debates concerning the Serb community in Kosovo. The biweekly television talk show *SporaZOOM* brought hundreds of Kosovar Albanian, Serb, and international thought leaders to almost 100 televised discussions on hot topics of the Serb community's integration into the wider civic, political, and economic life of Kosovo. The School for European Integration implemented in North Mitrovica has graduated over 200 alumni. Through regional seminars, the school brought discussions and experts from the region to North Mitrovica, including Mimoza Ahmetaj, the Minister of European Integration in the Government of Kosovo, becoming the first high government official to address participants in the north.

KFOS continued to support civic monitoring of the government's progress toward pro-European transformation. In the wake of the European elections in 2019, the foundation expanded its focus to cover the impact of the European Union's new legislature on Kosovo's destiny and its path to European membership. As the foundation's civic partners developed into national thought leaders, it supported seven of them in building their knowledge of the Euro-

pean Union even further through reports and workshops with CSOs, public institutions, and media representatives.

Reacting swiftly to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the foundation provided emergency grants to civil society and media organizations, and gave direct relief funds to vulnerable groups such as Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, prisoners and their families, and informal workers. Notably, with additional OSF funds, the foundation provided the Kosovo government with 100,000 COVID-19 test kits worth \$1.5 million.

In efforts to inform and motivate citizen turnout at the early parliamentary elections in 2016, the Foundation for an Open Society Macedonia (FOSM) supported the civic action "We Decide" to monitor election campaign financing, promoted ballot secrecy protection, distributed written, audio, and video content through social networks, and encouraged youth to vote. Following a loss in the early parliamentary elections, VMRO-DPMNE's leader, Nikola Gruevski, speaking at an event outside the State Election Commission, read a proclamation in which he used the term *de-Sorosization* for the first time: "We will fight for the de-Sorosization of Macedonia and for strengthening an independent civil sector that will not be controlled by anybody." This proclamation served as a prelude to orchestrated institutional violence and political pressure on FOSM and 21 other CSOs (all partners and grantees of the foundation), given that orders from the prosecuting authorities had already been prepared and sent to the addresses of these associations and foundations. Such harassment by institutions of the captured state, which lasted until the formation of a new government led by SDSM in May 2017, was unprecedented in the history of Macedonia.

In response, the foundation supported a joint initiative of 127 CSOs, communities, groups, and trade unions to defend and protect civil society and expose orchestrated harassment by institutions and government-controlled media. CSOs demanded that the authorities stop the daily harassment, confirm the validity of their inspections, investigate the abuse of authority for purposes of political pressure and discrimination, revoke fines imposed, and strike the minutes of initiated procedures. In addition, with the help of the Reserve Fund of the Open Society Initiative for Europe (OSIFE), the foundation awarded 20 grants for legal aid and representation, financial and communication consultancy, and community activities. With funds from the OSF Communications Office in New York, FOSM supported the NGO Info-Center's project of analyzing the contents of continuous media attacks on CSOs, activists, FOSM, and George Soros as well as the dynamics of their publication.

MACEDONIA NORTH MACEDONIA

In 2018, FOSM celebrated 25 years of existence and operations in North Macedonia with a month-long anniversary that started with the promotion of a documentary feature about the foundation and a multimedia exhibit that showcased its work and achievements in the past period, continuing with several conferences at which participants from North Macedonia and abroad discussed important topics such as: North Macedonia's accession to the European Union, legal empowerment, Roma health, freedom and the internet, youth and the open society, educational reforms, and the power of art and culture for social change as well as the future and perspectives of the open society in North Macedonia. Jubilee celebrations also included an exhibition of creative activism.

The foundation participated in the development of North Macedonia's fourth National Action Plan (NAP) for the OGP, becoming the first Western Balkan country to introduce Access to Justice as a new priority area in the country's OGP NAP. In 2019, FOSM started activities to establish the Civil Society Network for OGP and the National OGP Council as a collaborative project for OGP priorities and initiatives. Building on its legacy of supporting the provision of free legal aid, the foundation and partner associations found critical shortcomings in the Draft Law on Free Legal Aid, prompting the Ministry of Justice to order the development of new legal language in coordination with civil society. In 2018, as part of the foundation's continued support of CSOs that provide paralegal assistance and legal aid to thousands of marginalized groups (Roma, sex workers, people who use drugs, and textile industry workers), it decided to collect data on the costs of accessing justice. It found that transportation costs, costs of initiating court proceedings, and administrative costs are the most frequent obstacles faced by vulnerable groups in accessing justice.

FOSM was instrumental in sensitizing society to and generating public support for the most marginalized and excluded groups in society—Roma, people who use drugs, sex workers, and sexual minorities. Over the years, the foundation has had a major role in the development of the Health and Rights field, and this is reflected in overall improvements, specifically, the building of effective and sustainable civil society leadership and organizations—from anchor organizations professionalized in health and rights to strong grass root organizations—that are able to advocate powerfully and demonstrate remarkable resilience, courage, and initiative in promoting and defending the health and related rights of the most marginalized, often in hostile and politically adverse circumstances.

After North Macedonia and Greece signed the Prespa Agreement (resolving the name dispute), the European Union's conditional recommendation to open accession negotiations in June 2019, and NATO's invitation to join the alliance, FOSM partnered with 10 civic organizations and launched an integrated nationwide campaign to inform citizens about the benefits of North Macedonia's integration into the European Union and NATO and to inspire greater turnout for and informed decision-making in the referendum scheduled for September 2018.

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the foundation mobilized and provided extensive in-kind, awareness raising, and emergency grant support, the total value exceeding \$500,000. Food and hygiene packages were given to more than 15,000 citizens, and tablet devices and internet cards were provided to 350 socially vulnerable children. Teacher training, technical equipment, teaching materials, and other digital multilingual resources valued at \$140,000 were provided to 10 rural schools to improve online teaching and learning in minority languages of instruction. A fund of \$255,000 enabled 15 nonprofits to provide free emergency legal aid to workers in the formal and informal economy. In addition, the foundation supported an analysis of the impact of the crisis on the textile, agricultural, and informal industries, a series of awareness-raising campaigns, and the translation of excerpts of instructional curricula into languages of smaller ethnic communities.

The Open Society Foundation Serbia (OSFS) remained committed to strengthening citizen participation in public affairs, ensuring plurality in the media sphere, fostering accountability of public authorities, and enhancing social cohesion. Building the capacities of institutional and semi-institutional mechanisms for civic participation in democratic processes, such as the National Convent for the EU, continued to be one of its top priorities. As a growing wave of populism and xenophobia challenged the credibility of civic engagement and democratic processes, the foundation supported initiatives that aimed to strengthen citizen resilience. By supporting "pluralism hubs," such as Center for Cultural Decontamination and REX, a center for contemporary art and engaged cultural practice, as well as grassroots activism, the foundation was able to reduce the impact of these growing threats and reinvigorate grassroots democracy.

The foundation supported a robust election monitoring mechanism during the 2016 parliamentary and 2017 presidential elections. A network of 27 CSOs monitored the editorial policies of national and local media, their adherence to standards of professional reporting, the financing of the electoral cam-

SERBIA

paigns, and freedom of assembly and expression during the electoral campaigns. The foundation supported the Center for Research Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) in engaging 2,000–2,500 volunteers to monitor polling stations and ballot counting. Building on its deep election expertise, in 2019 the foundation recognized that the country was increasingly being polarized across party lines and launched a comprehensive dialogue between civil society and political parties to address polarization and discuss improvements of conditions for the 2020 elections.

The foundation continued to support the Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina on normalization of relations by encouraging an open, transparent, and democratic exchange of ideas. To this end, OSFS funded the publication of *A Guide to Internal Dialogue on Kosovo, a series of op-eds in the weekly Vreme*, and monitoring reports on public information. Further, it supported the National Convent on the EU and its Working Group 35 to support the Dialogue itself, commissioned a national poll on normalization of relations, and organized eight public debates in Niš, Kraljevo, Belgrade and Novi Sad. In addition, the foundation funded the publication of *Serbs and Albanians through the Centuries*, a major three-volume book written by Petrit Imami, a Kosovar historian and playwright. OSFS donated 250 copies of the book to public libraries nationwide and funded public debates under the title *Dialogues among Dialogues* in six cities in Serbia.

To strengthen a regulatory framework and infrastructure that would ensure freedom of expression, the foundation established Citizens for Media—a coalition of media professionals and CSOs—to advocate for an improved media ecosystem, transparent and unbiased state financing of national and local media, and effective functioning of independent state regulatory bodies. Funded by OSFS, a comprehensive study of the Center for the Development of Syndicalism exposed for the first time the precarious living and working conditions of journalists and the detrimental effect these conditions have on freedom of expression and the tabloidization of the media sphere. The foundation also supported efforts to curb the rise of post-truth and hate speech in digital media by exposing the use of astroturfing and bots on social media for political purposes. In 2019, the foundation engaged with the Coalition for Free Access to Information and successfully lobbied against the passing of a new Draft Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, which would have corroded the right to access information.

To improve social cohesion and prevent the deterioration of multiethnic relations, the foundation supported efforts by CSOs and the government to open

cross-sector exchanges and build consensus on the proposed core principles of integrative minority policies. The foundation also supported the establishment of a Creative Recycling Center, a pioneering effort that applies social entrepreneurship as a model for economic empowerment of Roma.

OSFS supported the production of cultural campaigns that challenged nationalism, far-right ideas and illiberal trends in the physical and digital space. Funded by OSFS, the Touring Public Archive and its Museum of Violence mounted exhibitions across Serbia of X-rays of violent injuries sustained in public and private spaces resulting from social phenomena—discrimination, nationalism, chauvinism, fascism, family violence, gender-based violence, homophobia, racism, and xenophobia.

OSFS supported the local policy community in localizing the Sustainable Development Agenda and aligning its objectives with the European Integration process. In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, OSFS dedicated almost \$900,000 to support national public health institutions with medical supplies and equipment and to support CSO efforts to serve vulnerable groups.

Thousands of refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and several African countries arrived in Slovenia in late 2015 and 2016 en route to western European countries. Many ended up in refugee camps in the country. OSF support enabled the Peace Institute to monitor the situation in the field, identify problems the refugees were facing, generate recommendations, write numerous reports and letters to the authorities, raise the awareness of the general public, and sensitize the media. Recognizing the need for systemic change, the Peace Institute embarked on advocacy efforts to improve Slovenia's migration policies and make them more inclusive and welcoming for refugees. Aside from recommending amendments to the law and regular monitoring, the Peace Institute hosted weekly language and other courses and various social events for refugees and provided legal counselling for refugees seeking asylum.

In 2016, OSF awarded the Peace Institute with a three-year "exit grant" to support its project activities, part of its policy to conclude funding to national foundations operating in countries that had joined the European Union. In coordination with OSF, the Peace Institute reallocated the grant so it could be used to support its institutional operations for the period. In a country in which funding for CSOs was rapidly declining, the grant proved critical to the continued operations of the institute.

SLOVENIA

In 2019, OSIFE supported the Peace Institute in its advocacy for inclusive migration, asylum, and integration policies and in projects to provide support and assistance toward improved inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in Slovenia's labor market. To this end, the Peace Institute employed a refugee as cultural mediator and organized numerous workshops and training, all while continuing to monitor and advocate for necessary policy interventions. Most importantly, the institute organized a national symposium that aimed to break down stereotypes, prejudices, and fears related to migrant employment and foster their integration into Slovenia's labor market—this was done by presenting refugee and asylum seeker perspectives on job searches, work, and employment in Slovenia and by sharing best practices.



© Goranka Matic, Days of Sorrow and Pride, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, May 1980

30
YEARS

Open Society Foundations
Programs in the Balkans

Introduction

From 1991 to 2021, the work of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) in the Balkans has been organized through the national foundations as well as through OSF Programs that identified and partnered with individuals and organizations best situated to advance OSF's mission of building open societies.

Throughout the three decades of work in the Balkans, OSF Programs, focused and headed by professionals in the selected fields, have played a significant role side by side with the national foundations. The following pages are a testimony to what they have done and accomplished and what kind of legacy they are leaving behind.



© Maja Medić, from the production of *Romeo and Juliet*, 2015

ARTS AND CULTURE PROGRAMS AND THE SOROS CENTERS FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS

Since the beginning of his philanthropy, George Soros recognized that efforts to support human rights and social justice needed to happen in tandem with support for the arts and culture. In the Balkans, the tragedies of the 1990s ushered in a new era of artistic and cultural expression: artists, artistic collectives, and cultural groups took to the streets, squares, and markets, drawing the public eye toward projects engaged around art for social change. This was the starting point for the birth of a multitude of cultural hubs, including a network of 20 Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts (SCCAs) across Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. SCCAs operated as open art centers, providing information on international grants, scholarships, and competitions, organizing annual local contemporary art exhibitions, and supporting visual artists' participation in exhibitions, conferences, and learning opportunities abroad. After Open Society stopped funding the centers in 2003, several successor organizations emerged and joined existing networks of independent cultural hubs to continue supporting contemporary visual art across the region. These hubs acted as producers of cultural events that raised issues linked to transitional justice, democracy, and protection of human rights. In 1999, the Arts and Culture Program was founded as part of the response to the challenges posed by entrenched or re-emergent authoritarianism in the post-Soviet space. With a focus on capacity-building and advocacy, the program enhanced regional cultural collaboration and knowledge transfer, connecting researchers, artists, activists, and media professionals. As it was intended specifically for countries emerging from Communist rule, the program was wound down in 2013.

Arts Exchange

Launched in 2015, the Arts Exchange sought to facilitate and support arts programming for social change and the sharing of good practice on arts engagement across the OSF Network. In the Western Balkans, the Arts Exchange collaborated with the Open Society Initiative for Europe (OSIFE) and OSF national foundations to support local, national, and regional artists, arts organizations, festivals, and documentaries. These collaborations ranged broadly from regional support for an orchestra that transcends national borders, to increased support for longtime partners in the region (Center for

Cultural Decontamination in Serbia), to advancing democracy at the local level in Macedonia through creative activism capacity development. Ongoing is a cross-regional initiative in partnership with the OSF in the Western Balkans and Open Society Initiative for West Africa that creates a platform for artists, activists, and journalists to receive training, build regional networks, and experiment with creative activism tactics to provoke interest and broad public action against corruption.

Present Day, Culture and Art, and Looking Ahead

The 2019 merger of the Arts Exchange and the Documentary Photography Project into Culture and Art formalized OSF's global commitment to funding for the field. With an aim to uplift diverse artistic practices, strengthen locally led cultural spaces, and create opportunities for peer support and learning, Culture and Art prioritizes socially engaged artists and cultural producers from around the world whose work has been historically excluded, silenced, stigmatized, and underfunded due to racism, discrimination, willful ignorance, and censorship. In its inaugural year, the new program engaged in a wide range of collaborative grant making in the region, from multiyear support to an important creative activism and contemporary art space, the Contemporary Art Center Skopje (formerly a Soros Center for Contemporary Art) in Macedonia, to supporting a participatory public monument for the 1995 Srebrenica Genocide. In the coming years, artists and cultural producers will continue to play a critical role in the region: summoning peace and reconciliation processes, challenging oppressive power structures and discriminatory narratives, and creating momentum for transformation.

Milena Dragičević Šešić, Professor Emerita, University of Arts Belgrade, former Chair and member of the OSF Arts and Culture Program Board
 Rashida Bumbray, Director, Culture and Art
 Lauren Agosta, Senior Culture and Collaborations Lead, Culture and Art
 Summer Peet, Project Head, Culture and Art

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM: EDUCATING CHILDREN FOR DEMOCRACY, STEP BY STEP

“What these teachers are doing, many said was impossible!”

Coordinator, Center for Educational Initiatives,
Bosnia and Herzegovina

When OSF launched its flagship early childhood program, Step by Step, in 1994, the foundations across ex-Yugoslavia were amongst the first to sign up. Inspired by research linking early development to the nurturing of open societies, George Soros committed up to \$100 million to test that theory across Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Over the ensuing 20 years, the initiative helped shift the prevailing paradigm of early education and care for children from birth through primary school, embracing values of democracy, social inclusion, and parent and community engagement with a special focus on excluded children. In a bold move, beginning in 1998, Open Society “spun off” the Step by Step Program to create a network of national early childhood nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including, in the Balkans: the Center for Interactive Pedagogy (Serbia); Open Academy Step by Step (Croatia); Center for Educational Initiatives Step by Step (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Pedagogical Center Montenegro; Step by Step Center Albania; Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives Step by Step (North Macedonia); and independent programs based in the Kosovo Education Center and the Step by Step Center for Quality in Education at the Pedagogic Institute (Slovenia).

In the earliest years of the program, as Europe was consolidating and Yugoslavia was falling apart, with wars and nationalism raging, the teams implementing Step by Step across the Balkans formed tight bonds, professional collaborations and lifelong friendships. The work was intense. National Foundations hired experts to run the program, negotiated with ministries and local authorities, refurbished pilot kindergartens and primary schools, adapted curricula, and delivered training and ongoing technical support. The impact on communities was immediate and powerful. The program expanded rapidly, in some cases (North Macedonia, Montenegro) reaching all of the kindergartens in the country as well as in-service teacher training institutes. For professionals, Step by Step was a neutral and safe space. As one Step by Step director noted, by focusing on pedagogy and staying out of politics, the program brought people together. Pedagogues from Republika Srpska started to attend trainings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, uniting educators from the

© Blerina B. Lila,
Kindergarten, Pristina,
Kosovo, 2020-2021

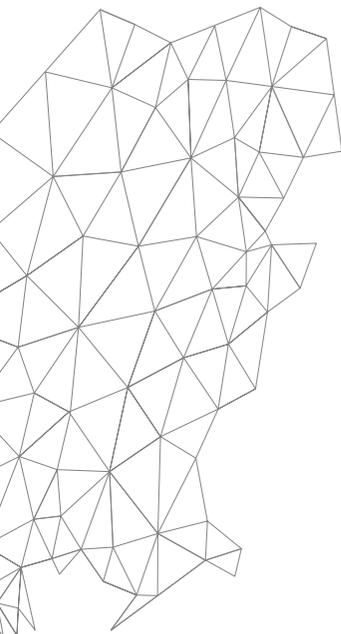


three parts of the country, and eventually Step by Step in Bosnia and Herzegovina achieved a monumental milestone: forging agreement on a common preschool policy across all cantons and Sarajevo.

In addition to general reform of the early education system, Step by Step inspired creativity and innovative programming. The team in North Macedonia launched a children's museum in a defunct cultural center in Skopje. The Croatian NGO established a national professional journal. The Serbian team built preschools in Roma settlements and helped officially launch the position of Roma Pedagogical Assistant. In Albania the program integrated Step by Step into the OSF-funded Albanian Education Development Project (AEDP), a mega-education initiative aimed at restoring the infrastructure and quality of education across the country. In Kosovo, new national standards were created based on Step by Step principles.

Today, though the Early Childhood Program wrapped up at the end of 2020, all of the NGOs and programs have survived politically challenging contexts and the winding down of OSF investments and most have thrived with support from governments and other donors. All are active in the International Step by Step Association, the go-to regional network for professionals reaching across East and West Europe and Eurasia. But there still exists a special space for early educators from the Balkans. Each summer, they eagerly await the annual conference organized by the Center for Innovative Education (Bosnia and Herzegovina). It is where creativity flourishes and seeds for a better future are planted.

Sarah Klaus, Senior Program Advisor, formerly Early Childhood Program Director

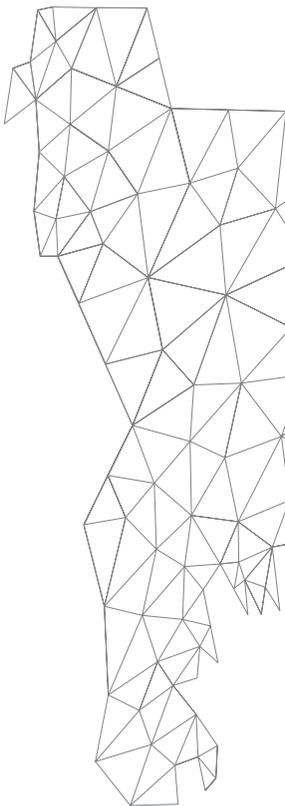


EAST EAST: PARTNERSHIP BEYOND BORDERS PROGRAM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Throughout its existence, the OSF East-East: Partnership Beyond Borders program was a unique international programmatic framework and mechanism fostering and providing space for regional and international links and collaboration, beyond national contexts. Initially designed to enable people in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to define the post-communist transition and social development and to overcome isolation by building a culture of transnational communication, collaboration, and partnership, over time the program evolved to begin dynamically addressing the changing social and political issues and challenges. One of the key features of its support was that conceptually, in contrast to the shrinking public space, it provided the necessary independent space for contact and dialogue “beyond borders” among progressive actors from societies in transition. Its gradual geographic expansion over time opened up further opportunities for cross-cultural contacts, learning, and exchange between the civil societies of the “traditional OSF network” and peers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Through supported initiatives, civil society actors as social change agents in South East Europe (SEE) societies in transition recognized and made the most of the opportunities to enrich and scale up their practices and achievements by establishing, maintaining, and revitalizing contacts; by exchanging ideas and experiences; by testing ideas and assumptions in order to monitor, analyze, and initiate social change in their communities. In the early 1990s, The Flying Classroom/Workshop was an outstanding initiative that in the years immediately following the break-up of former Yugoslavia enabled progressive intellectuals, activists, and opinion makers from the newly established states to overcome some of the negative effects of broken contacts and communications in the region, fight isolation, and continue exchanging views and opinions on the challenges of democracy of that period. In the postwar context, the program was thus instrumental in providing space for (re)building bridges, (re)building trust, and building new civic alliances. The regional work of the Coalition for RECOM is another notable example, being one of the most important regional civil society efforts aimed at implementing the principles of transitional justice in the region.

To address the political, economic, and social challenges in the Balkans, in 1999 the subprogram for SEE was introduced (including Greece and Turkey), working for stability, security, and democracy across the region. It created



opportunities for intensifying the social dialogue in the region, but also for civic actors from the Western Balkan states to communicate, join forces, and continuously work on building expertise relevant for the EU rapprochement process: notable was the contribution of such sustained civic effort to the EU visa liberalization process. Namely, the intensive regional collaboration and the building and sharing of expertise that was facilitated by the program made it possible for a network of Western Balkans civic actors to have a say in the inadequate official national policies, eventually leading to securing the visa liberalization status for all Western Balkans countries. Deemed extremely useful, the program framework furthermore allowed these successful practices and civic expertise to be transferred from the Balkans to interested civil society actors from the former Soviet Union successor states within the European Neighborhood Policy.

Along similar lines, it was the support of this program that enabled the establishment, capacity-building, and joint work of a network of regional anti-corruption actors, evolving in 2008 into the Regional Anti-Corruption Platform of the Western Balkans. Active to this day, this pioneering civic coalition remains the leading force and source of expertise in the work on transparency, accountability, and public integrity in the Western Balkans.

Almost a decade ago, the civil society organization (CSO) Eco-Consciousness from Skopje, Macedonia, had an opportunity to master the methodology for monitoring the use of natural resources through cooperation with a Czech organization. This resulted not only in a mass protest against the construction of small hydropower plants in Mavrovo National Park, but also in the disruption of the financial plans for small hydroplant development, and it secured the protection of an endangered area of the national park.

Similar examples of bilateral, trilateral, regional, and global civil society contacts made initially through this program's framework—which have secured regional and international relevance—are numerous. For people from different corners of civil society across the OSF network, but also for those of us who worked on its implementation, the hybrid nature of this OSF program provided an exceptional opportunity for continuous learning, use of existing and discovering new opportunities, collaborating and connecting people and ideas, and an uninterrupted source of innovation for actors of social change. True to the core of the OSF mission, the East-East Program facilitated and exercised a global open society in action.

Slavica Indjevska, Program Director, Foundation Open Society – Macedonia
Radmila Maslovarić, Program Manager, Open Society Foundation Serbia

REBUILDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP CULTURE ONE STEP AT A TIME

In the early years, economic development was not a programmatic priority for the Soros Foundation. Business activities and financing small businesses were very different from all other programs of the foundation. Mr. Soros himself, whose reputation came from the financial markets, was hesitant to engage in economic development for fear of potentially failing in an area where he should excel, fearing that if he did not, he would be harshly judged.

Birth of the Economic Program

The program was initiated in the mid-1990s by the Board of the Open Society Foundation – Croatia, the first foundation to embrace it. The Board's reasoning was simple and convincing: there can be no open society without the ability to start and engage in economic activities. In addition, we were convinced that it would be much easier to rebuild relations between the divided former Yugoslav countries through business relations and entrepreneurship than through other methods. And most importantly, there was a need to educate and nurture a new generation of entrepreneurs of all types—business, social, political—who could bring a different vision and energy to rebuild the country after the devastating war.

A Humble Start with a Big Vision

The program started small but with a big vision: to create conditions for entrepreneurship to flourish and to support a new generation of young people who think and act differently. Although the obvious and immediate objective was to support new enterprise creation and to grow promising companies, a more important one was to harness the potential of a new generation after the war. Over time the humble beginnings caught up with the vision and led to the launch of several keystone projects and institutions that together filled the vision with actions.

The Cradle: Center for Entrepreneurship

First came the Center for Entrepreneurship (www.czposijek.hr), a joint project between the Soros Foundation in Zagreb and the local government in Osijek, which donated a small rent-free space for the Center, already a novel partnership approach in Croatia. The Center started with training entrepre-

neurs in the then UN-controlled area and evolved into a leading entrepreneurship support organization in Croatia. In 2021 the Center is celebrating its 25th anniversary and is now operating in close collaboration with the BIOS incubator in Osijek, also an OSI project. The Center served as a blueprint for other centers in the country, notably in Dubrovnik and Pula which were later transformed into development agencies.

NOA: Money for the Entrepreneurs

Created jointly in 1996 by Opportunity International and a group of citizens from the war-devastated eastern part of Croatia, the credit union NOA (<https://www.noa.hr/>), was the source of microfunding for entrepreneurs and small businesses when there was no money available for small businesses. Its open and transparent lending policies, which provided financing to both Croats and Serbs, created a fair amount of controversy at the beginning, but in the long run it proved its viability. OSI contributed additional capital to expand lending activities beyond eastern Croatia.

Academia: University-based Educational Programs in Entrepreneurship

Learning from experience that money is not enough to solve the issues of building an entrepreneurial culture, and going beyond the training of adults, it was decided to introduce entrepreneurial education to young people as part of their formal education. George Soros was at the first commencement of graduate students in Osijek on 14 October 2002. Starting academic education in entrepreneurship at the graduate (master's) level had several advantages: it offered opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs to develop their businesses while educating the cadre of instructors needed to teach the program in a novel and enterprising way. It also allowed the later expansion of the program to include undergraduate and doctoral levels (www.ices.hr). The program partnered with other leading universities in Europe and the United States and has graduated hundreds of students in its 20-year history; for this reason it was selected as one of the 20 good practices in the European Union in 2015.

BIOS: Business Incubator

For many years the City of Osijek tried to start a business incubator without success, but it was not until OSI took over the project that it finally took off. The partnership between the city and OSI, the BIOS incubator (<https://inkubator.hr/>), offers space, coworking facilities, and other support services

to early-stage entrepreneurs. Starting with one small building and parking space, the BIOS facility expanded substantially and continues to grow.

CEPOR: SME Policy Center

The Small and Medium Enterprises and Entrepreneurship Policy Center (CEPOR) (<https://www.cepor.hr/>) is the latest addition to the original vision of creating an entrepreneurship infrastructure in Croatia. There was a clear need to shape and support policies for entrepreneurship and small businesses through independent policy research and advocacy on behalf of the sector. Starting with a Global Entrepreneurship Monitor survey of entrepreneurship in Croatia, CEPOR continues to fulfill its role as a policy institute forging new ground in a country where policy research and advocacy is still underdeveloped.

Summary

The entrepreneurship project in Croatia is an example of how a small group of people sharing a vision, combined with appropriate support and flexible no-strings-attached funding provided by the Economic Program of OSI New York, can lead to lasting and sustainable results. All of the projects that were started many years ago still exist, and they continue to evolve and adjust to emerging needs and challenges.

What started as a small initiative in war-torn Osijek became a permanent component of the entrepreneurship infrastructure in Croatia. In addition to Croatia and using the Croatian experience, the Soros Foundation and the Soros Economic Development Fund (SEDF) worked in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Montenegro. These programs involved investments in local banks and microfinance institutions to support lending to micro and small businesses. The Macedonian foundation has also supported various entrepreneurship activities for youth, women, and ethnic minorities.

Slavica Singer, Professor Emerita, UNESCO Chair in Entrepreneurship Education, J.J. Strossmayer University in Osijek, Croatia, and former member and Chair of the OSI Croatia Board

Piotr Korynski, Consultant, International Development, former Director, Economic Development Program, and Vice President, Soros Economic Development Fund

EDUCATION AND THE IDEA OF COMMON LIFE

In the shattering and remaking of the Western Balkans mosaic over the past 30 years, the Guernica-like anguish of its larger political, social, and economic formations demand most of the attention. The education pieces may not be that easy to distinguish at first, yet on closer inspection, their colors sparkle and give shape and character to the mosaic's every form. Over 30 years, education proves to be foundational and formative for every individual, family, and society. It was always central in the open society vision for a new Western Balkans mosaic: from the time of the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991, its descent into a terrible war, and in its patchy reassembly, along with Albania, around the European Union 30 years later.

The ravages of nationalisms and communal war were a catastrophe for education across the region in the 1990s. Early peace allowed a relative revival of schooling systems in Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia. Elsewhere, day-to-day life, learning, and teaching were devastated over several years as many thousands of students and teachers were fearful and at risk in classrooms or forced to become refugees. The war damaged or destroyed up to 60 percent of Bosnia and Herzegovina's school buildings. OSF's efforts at the time provided support for local partners and emerging national foundation education programs to focus on immediate and practical needs "from stationery to winter boots to wall and roof repairs." These included a project to reach teachers through local radio during the long three-year Sarajevo siege with simple schemes to keep students motivated to learn. When the Serbian government closed the education system for ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, OSF funded the Kosova Educational Enrichment Program from 1995 through 1998 to support the diverse needs of an underground schooling system. In its largest intervention in the region, OSF gave almost \$60 million through AEDP to build and refurbish 275 schools, train teachers, engage local communities, and develop policy and governance in Albania's national education system.

The education interventions in the Western Balkans in the 1990s were funded directly by OSF New York and OSF Budapest and, increasingly, through the eight national foundations that were established in the newly emerging post-conflict countries in the region. An OSF network-wide education support program was set up around 1997 in Budapest to strengthen emerging foundation-led initiatives and to build a regional network of education initiatives and expertise to buttress education reforms in the region that would advance

open society. The idea was to link international and local expertise in a collaborative network to sharpen strategy and promote shared learning. It was clear at the time that even while major system-wide development initiatives such as AEDP were so necessary, implementing large-scale projects was not a viable role for a private foundation. However, it is also apparent now, with over two decades of hindsight, that AEDP left a lasting legacy that lends legitimacy still to the work of the national foundation in present-day Albania.

National foundations in the region also funded and implemented a range of centrally developed OSF programs on early childhood education, debate, and critical thinking across the region. These initiatives grew into a network of NGOs and a generation of teachers and trainers that are still committed to open society values and are active in the region today. A focus on ending segregation in schooling and advocating for the equality and inclusion of Roma emerged as a key post-conflict priority for OSF's strategy advocacy across the region. The Open Society Education Support Program (ESP) established a Roma Education Initiative to fight discrimination and promote equality and education inclusion for Roma children in the region from 2002. This work was absorbed into the Roma Education Fund, a substantial initiative that has supported Roma-led initiatives since 2005 to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma students. Education inclusion for Roma has remained a constant emphasis in the region ever since. I joined ESP in Budapest just before the Kosovo crisis of 1999, which involved a series of tragic events that precipitated an urgent recalibration of power in the region and pulled me personally and professionally to its people and politics. After the NATO bombing and Serbia's withdrawal, renewed efforts were made to fund and animate the Stability Pact for South East Europe, which would channel significant international resources into reconstructing the region, which included countries of the former Yugoslavia along with Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Romania. ESP actively engaged, in collaboration with the OSCE and the Austrian government, to advocate successfully for including education in the pact.

In 2001–2005, OSF set up a dedicated office in Ljubljana, a sister program to ESP called Open Society Education Program for South East Europe (OSEP-SEE) to strengthen the regional network that included a range of local NGOs active in training teachers, producing education materials, promoting public dialogue, and monitoring education reform implementation. The dedicated regional office for education helped to consolidate the education network across the region, making inroads for advocacy and affirming good practices for inclusion and quality in education.

The key test of transformation in education systems—not only the transformations that lead to better equity and education quality but those that contribute to strengthening democratic participation and open society—is their ability to respond both to society’s needs and an individual’s aspirations. The past 30 years of course confirm that such transformations are impossible in education without broader transformations in society, politics, and the economy. Nevertheless, this is the ambition we reached for in the Western Balkans and, while it remains largely unfulfilled, it continues to provide inspiration for innovation and collaboration across the region and beyond. The Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC) was founded in 2006. It emerged from education programs and policy initiatives that were spun off from national foundations, driven substantially by the energy and expertise that grew out of the education initiatives in SEE from the previous 15 years. NEPC retains its close strategic partnership with ESP and regional foundations and has a head office in Zagreb. The network promotes collaboration in research and policy-advocacy activities between members in 21 countries, including all Balkan countries, and countries in the Baltics, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, demonstrating a shared resolute commitment to furthering open societies through education, long after institutional affiliations with OSF have ended. In 2008–2011, the ESP funded the International Teacher Leadership Initiative, a collaboration between a school-teacher-led M.Ed. program accredited by the University of Hertfordshire in the United Kingdom and partners in nine Balkan countries. The aim of the project was to lay the foundations for a movement in which teachers lead change in their schools and become activists who provide ongoing support for other teachers. In 2011–2013, ESP funded the development of a national qualification framework (ATEPIE) for teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, which aimed to find ways to support teacher leadership in their subjects and schools more systemically.

OSF’s critical thinking program led to the creation of the International Consortium for Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking, a network that was active in the region and led from Zagreb in 2012 and 2013. While the network itself is less active, critical thinking is a notion that many in the region regard as inseparable from teacher professionalism. The Foundation Step by Step spin-off in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Center for Educational Initiatives Step by Step (CEI), has offered annual teachers awards that have popularized critical thinking and open society values in education for all levels of school and reaches an enthusiastic network of over 8,000 teachers. ESP had no role in starting this successful initiative, it grew out of the collaboration across

the region and was uniquely inspired by the brilliant and much-loved Rada Jusović, who died in February 2021.

Real momentum for change, of course, always comes from the ground up. The 2011 teachers’ strike in Serbia drew its energy from the demand for an increase in meagre salaries but strike actions in the Balkans have notably focused on issues beyond wages, such as improving the quality of education in schools. The 2013 teachers’ strike in Albania demanded an increase in the share of the GDP invested in education and better quality public education.

The 2015 Macedonian teachers strike was against a punitive system of teacher evaluation. The 2016–17 protests and strike to support coherent curricular reform in Croatia insisted that education should include critical thinking and practical experience. Student protests across the region have been for: free public education in Croatia (in 2009); against ethnic segregation in Bosnian schools (from 2017); and against corruption and leaked exams in Serbia (in 2019). The protests against fees by Albanian students in 2019 constituted the largest student action since the four days of student action that saw the end of Albania’s decrepit regime in December 1990. Student action always tends to whet the appetite for more democracy.

Education reform efforts are meaningless without the engagement of education’s key constituents—teachers and students. But the ESP-funded regional studies, a Cross Country Survey of Parent Participation in the Life of the School (2008–2010) and the Advancing Participation of Ethnic Minority Parents in the Life of School regional study (2009–2011) also emphasized the importance of parents and communities in holding education reform processes accountable.

The core commitment in the work of ESP, national foundations, and civil society partners in the region has always been to strengthen democratic practice in educational institutions through an approach that combines policy-level work, constituency building, and grassroots community engagement. Given the scale of the challenges facing the region and its education systems over the past 30 years, OSF’s contribution is relatively modest. Nevertheless, the local presence of the foundations, the persistence and dedication of foundation education staff, and the international collaboration and supportive efforts of ESP and the OSF education network have been catalytic for change in the region as well as a source of inspiration for change beyond the region. Perhaps, after 30 years, we have learned what all good teachers are able to teach: what matters is that we try, always with hope and purpose, and always with and for others.

Looking back at 30 years of education engagement in the Western Balkans prompts us also to look forward 30 years. The past 30 years have three lessons to offer. First, the education work in the regions draws its strength from collaboration and cooperation: between the professionals of countries that are formally at war, between an OSF thematic program and national foundations, between the region and the world. The power of this collaboration lies in the professional intimacy of the relationships it forges and its mutual determination to persevere; it is the triumph of the trans-local and bottom up rather than the diktat of policy or strategy from the top down. Second, education is significantly about women: teachers in the region are mostly women, women predominantly lead OSF's education work in the region, student activism is significantly the story of young women emerging as leaders. Attacks on education are thus attacks on women; neglect of education is neglect of women. It is because education shapes the thinking of new generations and is able to break or make ideas like patriarchy and democracy that its control is always contested. Third, education both reflects and spurs wider social change but cannot achieve social change or open society in isolation. Social change builds on what history teaches and what society learns; it requires dedication and commitment over the longer term. OSF's work in education in the region has been integral to the story of social change for the last 30 years and has prepared the ground for the next 30 educational years and the challenges to come.

Hugh McLean, Senior Advisor, Open Society Foundations Education Program

HARM REDUCTION AND DRUG POLICY REFORMS IN THE BALKANS

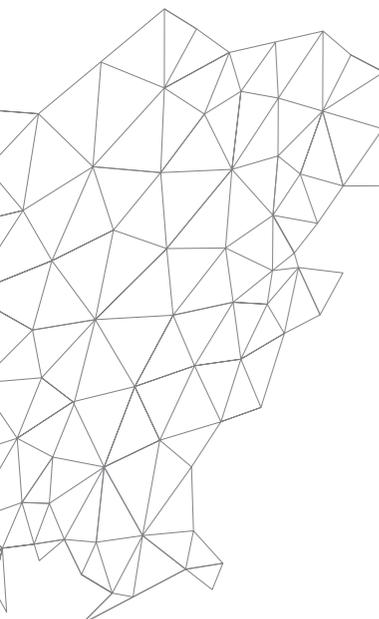
The history of OSF's work in the Balkans and on approaches to drugs—a signature issue for the Soros network—have been intertwined from the start. OSF has worked for more than 20 years on reducing, to the greatest extent possible consistent with public health and safety, the involvement of the criminal justice system in the response to illegal drugs. Countries in the Balkans have been innovative and committed partners in this effort, making sure that civil society, pragmatism, evidence, and compassion take precedence over an ideology of punishment and ineffective enforcement.

The region has achieved multiple milestones of note—not just in SEE, but in the world. Macedonia was among the first countries to reach out to OSF to

urge the foundation to broaden what had been a US-focused effort on drugs, asking for assistance with the provision of methadone, a medicine that reduces drug injection and craving and helps return people to social function. This first helped catalyze the creation of a new program at OSF, International Harm Reduction Development (IHRD), which in turn led to the creation of training programs and support for services and policy analysis in countries across the world to reduce both the harms of drugs and of drug policies that emphasize punishment at the expense of health. Slovenia also created new treatment programs with methadone and later (in 2004) with buprenorphine, another medicine to treat heroin dependence. Croatia rolled out a policy of methadone administered by general practitioners, integrating the process squarely in the healthcare system—a novelty in the world. Albania worked with OSF to become one of the first countries to pilot methadone provision through a community-based organization, also establishing a new model. Multiple countries used OSF support and technical advice to begin programs to provide sterile needles and syringes to reduce—and in the case of some countries in the region, to completely contain—HIV infections among those who injected drugs. Romanian and Bulgarian groups worked with OSF to create some of the first unions of people who used drugs, emphasizing how programs are strengthened when those directly affected are given a voice, and sounding what would become a call heard around the world: Nothing About Us Without Us.

The world visited the region when the International Harm Reduction conference was organized in the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana on 3–7 March 2002 with the theme “Social Changes: Lines of Inclusion and Diversity.” OSF founder George Soros and OSF's first president, Aryeh Neier, both made speeches about the significance of developing harm reduction programs in the region.

From 2006 to 2009, the IHRD program continued to support advocacy for the health and human rights of people who use drugs, including in Bulgaria, Romania, North Macedonia, and Montenegro. OSF's newly formed Global Drug Policy Program, founded in 2008, became actively involved in drug policy reform discussions in SEE in 2010. This period was of crucial importance for the region because the governments were under pressure to meet the requirements of EU regulations, and because the Balkans had become a transshipment area for heroin originating in Afghanistan and bound for Western Europe. OSF supported the establishment and operation of a network of 22 drug-policy-oriented organizations from 10 countries in the region to develop and strengthen regional collaborations, establish relations with national and regional policymakers, and produce and disseminate research and policy analysis. The network engaged actively in Informal Drug Policy Dialogues where



policymakers, experts, and practitioners discuss approaches to drug policy reform in a closed setting conducive to frank exchanges. Informal dialogues have been taking place for nearly a decade and have become a well-recognized and respected forum for discussing experiences and strategies for advancing drug policy reform on the national and international level. The dialogues have elevated the voice of SEE policymakers and civil society groups, including at the Commission of Narcotic Drugs and in EU discussions where the voices of drug reformers from the region had often gone unheard. Work has also included consultation with individual governments, including Albania, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and others, on issues ranging from medical cannabis to approaches to new psychoactive substances, to reform of overly punitive laws and prison reform. Pioneering work—and big challenges—remain. When the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria—whose budget greatly exceeds that of OSF—began to fund harm reduction in the region, we at OSF felt confident that the services would be sustained. Years later, as the Global Fund deemed countries too rich to receive funds or as countries in the region joined the EU and became ineligible for support, harm reduction service providers have had to press national governments for support. Montenegrin groups led a coalition to work with the government—and the Global Fund—to create mechanisms for new “social contracting”—establishing a model many other countries now look to for inspiration. North Macedonia committed to supporting a coalition after the Global Fund withdrew. But sustainability and government commitment to drugs services and drugs reform remains a challenge, and programs have shrunk or closed in many countries. Balkan countries have adopted drug policy strategies more or less consistent with the European strategy, but there are often large gaps between policies on paper and actual practice. A recent conference held in North Macedonia on the promise and challenge of drug decriminalization is timely, and it takes the discussion where it needs to go—beyond infectious disease control to reform of the thinking that treats people involved with drugs like drugs themselves—as something only to be controlled and contained.

The history of SEE is one of rising to the challenges with courage and creativity. In the arena of drugs services and policy, it has been a privilege to work with—and a hugely productive partnership between—national foundations, international programs at OSF, and the civil society groups who have again and again proved that “nothing about us without us” is a strong policy principle and a corrective to drug war ideology.

Daniel Wolfe, International Harm Reduction Development
Kasia Malinowska Sempruch, Global Drug Policy Program

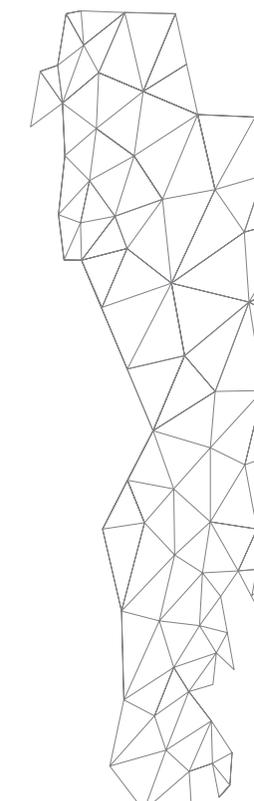
SUPPORTING HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE BALKANS

The mission of the Higher Education Support Program (HESP), initiated by Dr. William Newton-Smith, was a specific part of OSF general objectives: to assist in the political, economic, and cultural transition, encourage multi-party democracy and inclusiveness, boost civil society, and strengthen the rule of law and justice. HESP’s distinctive task was to assist the reform of universities in former socialist countries by introducing advanced academic standards in social sciences and the humanities. New states were founded, a new society was emerging, and our conviction was that the new expert generation in these areas would strongly contribute to realizing the ambitious aims of democratization, pluralism, and the economic reforms of former socialist regimes. HESP operated through several specialized programs and at the local, regional, and international level. The programs all aimed to introduce and spread the culture of free, critical, and open thinking as a new basis for intersubjective communication and relationships, democratic decision-making, scientific cooperation, and building a set of values. There were programs offered to faculty, to researchers, to students, and to university administrators.

Faculty and researchers had opportunities to use research grants through the Research Support Scheme, and also grants to visit foreign universities. The Civic Education Project funded junior scholars from the United States and Western Europe to teach as visiting lecturers in the region (former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Balkans), and it also helped bring young academics who graduated or obtained their PhDs abroad back home. HESP also supported intensive seminars for improving higher education administration and management. Southeast European Student Initiatives supported students fighting against corruption in higher education, and cross-border student cooperation in SEE.

Very popular were visits to the Curriculum Resource Centre, situated at the Central European University (CEU), with a collection of curricula from respected universities. Faculty were awarded stipends to spend one week in Budapest to consult foreign curricula, to participate at specialized seminars, and to buy books for their university libraries.

The Summer University, situated at the CEU but initiated and funded by HESP, and locally organized summer schools in the region generated a lot of interest. These two-week intensive courses of lectures and discussions,



delivered by highly qualified professors, updated the faculty about recent debates in their research and teaching fields.

Specific grants for active participation at international conferences and for purchasing foreign books and scientific journals were precious during the 1990's, the years of the war in former Yugoslavia. In the time of political isolation and economic crisis, these opportunities enabled faculty to be in touch with current events in their disciplines. These international academic activities not only allowed participants to stay up to date in content and teaching methods but also established the necessary groundwork for fertile international cooperation.

HESP financed a number of higher education institutions with multiyear grants: the Inter-University Centre in Croatia; the South East European University, Romaveritas, in North Macedonia; the Belgrade Open School, Alternative Academic Educational Network, and Petnica Science Center in Serbia; and the Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis, Bled School of Management in Slovenia, to name but a few.

The Balkan region is very unbalanced in the political, economic, cultural, and geostrategic sense—each of the countries had specific needs in the realm of higher education and research—and HESP acted in the best way to satisfy them. Each OSF national foundation in these countries had its own HESP portfolio, with local priorities, advisory boards, and budgets. Together, international, regional, and national programs had a sustainable impact on higher education reform and development in the humanities and social sciences in the Balkans.

Gvozden Flego, former member of the International HESP Board, University of Zagreb

HESP IN THE BALKANS: IT ALL BEGAN IN DUBROVNIK

Professor Ivan Supek, as Rector of the University of Zagreb, created the Inter-University Centre (IUC) in Dubrovnik in 1972. He envisaged the IUC as the centre of a network of universities that would send postgraduate students to Dubrovnik for a year of study. There would be an itinerant faculty drawn from the universities in the network. The funds were not there to support such an ambitious endeavour. But short courses of one week or two weeks would

be financially feasible. In 1974, I became involved in teaching for Supek's philosophy of science course, which I would eventually take over. I found the mixture of students and faculty to be stimulating, exciting, and fun.

I conveyed my excitement about the IUC to George Soros who promptly gave me a grant so I could increase the number of students and faculty coming from the East to my course. And shortly thereafter he gave general scholarship funds to the IUC. In 1987 George asked me to take the initiative in organising courses for young people from the East to prepare them for the political changes he foresaw. In April 1989, we had six such courses running simultaneously. George himself came for a weekend to see how they were going. When I met him at the airport, I told him how much excitement these courses were generating. He replied: "They all think Uncle George has come to town to give them a University. Well, I'm not going to do it. It's much better to reform existing institutions."

Over the weekend I arranged for all the participants of the Soros courses to meet with George. At that meeting the question of whether or not to create a new independent University was definitely not on the agenda. What was up for discussion was: What kind of University? Where will it be located? The atmosphere in the meeting was electric. George made no commitment to take the idea forward, but I could see that the discussion was having an impact on him. He reiterated his view that is better to work with existing institutions rather than start anew. But perhaps from the point of view of this volume, the meeting he and I had with a group of academics from the then Yugoslavia is more significant. These were not participants in the Soros courses but scholars who had come to Dubrovnik to request that George start a Yugoslavian foundation. He politely declined that request but said that he envisaged strengthening the IUC. He did offer funds to support intellectuals and artists if his expenditure would be matched on a two-for-one basis by the republics of Yugoslavia. I could see that he was moved by their arguments but not moved enough at the time to create a foundation. That meeting was to have a real impact, as George says in his introduction to *Building Open Society in the Western Balkans 1991 to 2011*: "These intellectuals changed my mind." In June of 1991 he signed an agreement with the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Ante Marković, to create the Soros Foundation Yugoslavia. But a week later, Yugoslavia began to disintegrate and George ended up creating seven foundations, one for each of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. These Dubrovnik meetings did lead George to create a new institution, the Central European University (CEU), and to create seven foundations for the Western Balkans. Indirectly it led also to the creation of HESP. As we were developing

the CEU, criticism mounted that George would deplete the universities in the region, particularly by hiring their best academics. George's response was to promise to spend as much on other universities in the region as he was spending on the CEU. I served as the acting Rector and President until January 1993 whereupon I was asked to take charge of HESP. That was an exciting venture which meant I got to know and to appreciate the work of the Open Society Foundations of the Western Balkans.

William Newton-Smith, former Chair of the Board of the Higher Education Support Program

30 YEARS IN THE BALKANS: HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE

The Human Rights Initiative (HRI) began its work in the region in the mid-1990s, initially supporting a number of key human rights organizations. This strategy was subsequently furthered to include working to ensure a strong human rights movement, particularly mainstream national human rights watchdogs, equality groups, and organizations pursuing accountability and rule of law. The program also funded work in the area of transparency and accountability.

Accountability for Grave Crimes

HRI's grant-making on accountability for grave crimes in the Western Balkans centered on abuses committed during the war in the region, through supporting the Humanitarian Law Centers (HLC) in Serbia and Kosovo, Dokumenta in Croatia, and the SENSE Agency reporting on the proceedings of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague.

High quality documentation and analysis of grave crimes is one of the key contributions to the field from Open Society's long-term support to these groups, resulting in valuable databases and archives that enhance and support national and regional truth-seeking efforts, memorialization initiatives, and national prosecutions. Key examples of work include HLC Serbia's archive of national war crimes prosecutions, including primary material from trials held in Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia; impact on the national and international media coverage of the war; and original evidence material presented in ICTY trials. HLC Kosovo remained the only civil society

group continuously monitoring the Kosovo trials, while the SENSE agency developed what may be the most comprehensive archive of materials related to the ICTY trials, which it made publicly accessible through exhibits and documentation centers in the region. Two key long-term and publicly available documentation efforts include the Kosovo Memory Book project, which accounted for each person who died or disappeared during the 1997–2000 war in Kosovo, and the Human Losses Project—a regional name-by-name accounting of all the human losses from the wars that took place in 1991–2001 in Kosovo, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia, and in Serbia and Montenegro during the NATO bombardment. Collected evidence was key in bringing justice to many victims of these abuses.

Equality

HRI's work in the area of equality mainly impacted women's rights and LGBTI and Roma rights movements. In the field of women's rights, OSF has supported key women's rights groups in the implementation of laws and policies on tackling gender-based violence. Groups like Babe in Croatia, the Shelter Center in Skopje, and the Women's Center in Trebinje were offering services to victims of gender-based violence, and were also engaging in monitoring the implementation of laws and policies and in advocacy that led to improvements in the way states responded to gender-based violence. More recently, funding was provided for feminist groups representing marginalized women, typically those experiencing multiple forms of discrimination. By funding feminist groups led by Roma women and initiatives led by lesbian and bisexual activists, HRI's goal has been to strengthen their voices in both the women's movement as well as in the Roma rights and LGBTI rights movements. This work has been most developed in Serbia with support for key Roma women's organizations as well as with funding for the LGBTI rights groups Labris and Geten. HRI has contributed to strong feminist voices influencing the human rights discourse and to the overall diversity of the movement. In the area of LGBTI rights, our approach was to support mostly national-level organizations, which were made up of, run by, and dedicated to the LGBTI community. Our goal was to support these actors on the ground to change social attitudes, make legal and policy changes to ensure the human rights of the community, and to elevate the most marginalized in the community (including transgender and intersex people). Our investment, in collaboration with national foundations and regional programs, made OSF one of the largest donors to LGBTI issues in the region and was a significant success. For example, our grantee Zagreb Pride in Croatia had been campaigning for legislation that would recognize same-sex couples, leading to the passage of



a bill on registered partnerships, the first of its kind in the Balkans. A similar effort is in progress in Montenegro, and our long term grantee, Queer Montenegro, hopes to have a similar bill passed in the near future. Another positive outcome of our investment has been increased visibility. Sarajevo Open Centre worked for years to rebuild the strength and courage of its community after a couple of public LGBTI events were brutally attacked in 2008 and 2014. It managed to stage the country's first Pride parade in 2019 and show the world that the LGBTI community in the country was there to be full members of society rather than second-class citizens.

HRI's support of Roma rights centered on building a strong and resilient Roma rights field, supporting Roma-led organizations that use rights-based strategies to counter systemic racism and discrimination against Roma in Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia. In Albania, HRI focused on building a grassroots housing rights movement to stop forced and mass evictions of Roma and Egyptians and advocate for effective public housing policies for all socially marginalized groups. In 2019, the initiative succeeded in boosting the voices of several local communities at the national level, winning several court cases acknowledging discriminatory practices in housing policies, and creating two new initiatives on legal advocacy and women's rights. In North Macedonia, our funding has been providing legal assistance and advocacy support for Roma victims of systemic abuse through the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, the Roma Lawyers Association, and the National Roma Centrum. Work over the years included empowerment campaigns on effective policing, migration policies, employment, and housing rights. As a result of our investment, several dozen poor Roma families won their cases against the government and a younger generation of Roma lawyers is emerging ready to support the movement. In Serbia, we funded grassroots organizing, campaigning, and advocacy efforts by Roma women and girls in the Vojvodina and Belgrade regions. Roma Center Daje and the Novi Bečej Association have been working to strengthen Roma women's organizing and bolster their voices at the local, regional, and national level. Advocacy is focused on securing public funding for emergency services on gender-based violence, building locally coordinated efforts to prevent violence, and recognizing gender-based violence as a core issue for the movement.

Transparency and Accountability

The initial investment of HRI in the area of transparency and accountability prioritized public campaigns for the adoption of right to information laws

© Martina Šalov, Sarajevo Pride, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2019

across the region. Subsequently, as the number of countries with access to information laws grew, the need to learn from their implementation experiences emerged as well. We have supported efforts that advance the right to information as an instrument to fight corruption and promote transparency. We have supported journalists, activists, CSOs, and networks to access relevant public information on budgets, public procurements, development projects, and other public interest issues to promote accountability and civic participation. We have supported organizations such as GONG in Croatia; MANS in Montenegro; BIRN, Levizja Fol, and COHU in Kosovo; and networks such as the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP, a consortium of investigative centers). International efforts such as the Open Government Partnership (supported by OSF) have also provided opportunities to create more effective collaborations between civil society and government and strengthen governments' commitments to transparency.

Justice

In the Western Balkans, negotiations for accession to the European Union represented a great opportunity for civil society to influence the justice sector reforms under way in Albania, Serbia, and Montenegro to comply with EU accession requirements. In these three countries, plus Kosovo, all candidates to EU accession, HRI's justice work supported national organizations' efforts to engage with lawmakers and practitioners to influence the design and implementation of criminal justice reforms. We also supported groups that advocated for laws and policies to uphold due process and fair trial rights and promote alternatives to incarceration.

In partnership with the national foundations in Serbia and Albania, HRI supported nine grantees in the region. In Serbia, we supported the Network of Committees for Human Rights, the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, and Human Rights Committee Valjevo. In Albania, we worked with the Albanian Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma, Torture Victims, the Albanian Helsinki Committee, and Qendra Res Publica. In Montenegro, we provided funding for Juventas and Human Rights Action. Finally, in Kosovo, we supported the Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture. Most of our partners advocated successfully for the inclusion of noncustodial sanctions in their country's criminal procedure codes and legislation, and actively took part in government task forces to shape prison reform, calling for more fair and proportionate sentencing and highlighting the lack of application of existing noncustodial measures. As an example, we highlight the work of the

Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, which in light of the migration crisis in Europe, has recently been documenting and providing legal support for migrants and refugees who were beaten up and tortured by state agents as they tried to cross the border from Serbia into the European Union. By consciously hiring and developing young professionals in their team, and holding a human rights summer school for young Serbians every year, this organization has ensured a continuous flow of new blood into the broader human rights and social change movement in Serbia and the broader region.

The OSF Human Rights Initiative Team

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM INITIATIVE IN THE BALKANS

In the years following the collapse of one-party rule in Eastern Europe, all states took up the challenge of administrative restructuring to embrace (to varying degrees) the democratic winds sweeping across the region.

Decentralization was a cornerstone of that debate. How was political power to be devolved? How would new centers of power—democratically elected local and regional governments—be structured, funded, held accountable for transgression, and enabled to drive inclusive change?

These were big questions to wrestle with, compounded in some geographies—notably the Western Balkans—by periods of intense conflict which delayed progress and hardened antidemocratic forces.

For these reasons, from the late 1990s until 2011, OSF featured a program—the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI)—dedicated to fostering equitable and accountable decentralization and good governance at the local level.

During its tenure, and in partnership with the region's national foundations, LGI mounted a significant slate of work in the Western Balkans. Through policy fellowships, trainings for elected and appointed officials, advisory assistance at the central and local levels, cross-regional networking, and research dissemination, LGI was one of the central actors shaping the region's discourse and experimentation with different approaches to decentralization.

As a means to advance alliance-building and learning, LGI supported the emergence and strengthening of associations of local governments in many Balkan countries. It also helped seed the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe, which remains active today. In addition to creating more balanced political and financial power structures in each country, these associations spearheaded concrete advances for open society, from the introduction of new municipal codes of conduct (Serbia) to new approaches to managing diversity (North Macedonia).

In Kosovo, LGI and the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society jointly established Forum 2015, which remains a preeminent debate platform in the country. To help inform the Vienna negotiations on future statehood, LGI produced the *Kosovo Decentralization Briefing Book*, portions of which were used by political negotiators and, subsequently, by bureaucrats implementing the reforms.

Aside from periodic elections, citizen participation to influence local priorities had long been minimal across the Balkans. The Yugoslav-era notion of “forced volunteerism” had left many jaded. LGI ran a significant, multiyear program in Albania, Kosovo and, more modestly, Serbia to encourage participatory social and economic development planning. This experience yielded a number of tangible outputs, such as increased funding for municipal projects prioritized by citizens. More importantly, it seeded a new way of working within local governments—one that was more inclusive and more responsive to citizen engagement.

LGI’s Managing Multiethnic Communities portfolio had its genesis in the Balkans and, over time, local leaders and activists from the region began harnessing their experiences to mentor their peers in the Caucuses and Central Asia. Among other things, the portfolio brought together municipal leaders, functionaries, and civic activists to jointly reflect on the challenges of managing diverse populations. It became an incubator for exploring and pioneering innovative tactics to navigate those challenges more effectively—from budgeting and financing, to language policy, to public service delivery.

Scott Abrams, Director of Special Initiatives, Economic Justice Program, and former Deputy Director, LGI

MEDIA IN THE BALKANS: BETWEEN FOUNDATION AND TRANSITION

Media development in the Balkans during the three decades of transition would be unthinkable without the contribution and role of OSF. And perhaps I am not wrong when I say that OSF support to media in the Balkans has perhaps been more intensive than in any other region of the world.

The Balkan case was complex since the very first days. Apart from the post-communist agenda, the conflict and post-conflict agendas presented other simultaneous challenges.

The term “media war” became part of the vocabulary after originating in the Balkans. During the bloody conflicts of the 1990s in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo, the media played a controversial role: some of them turned into mercenaries and loudspeakers of the Milošević and Tudjman regimes, while the others turned into a resistance front against nationalism and war-mongering projects. The media was as much a victim of war as it was its instigator. George Soros and his foundations supported without any hesitation precisely this antiwar and antinationalist resistance front of independent media in the Balkans.

On the other hand, the shift from “Soviet media model” to “social responsibility model” seems to have been more difficult than was predicted. We were not dealing with a mere transition; it was rather a process of the foundation of a new media system. In this process of media reform in the Balkans, OSF and its foundations have constituted an irreplaceable factor.

Media Freedom as a nonnegotiable value in the democratic process has been and remains at the top of the OSF agenda in the Balkans. Media development, namely the establishment of a sustainable and functional media system, also has been and remains an integral part of this agenda.

It is impossible to mention in these few lines everything that OSF has done in 30 years in our region, but I would like to emphasize that from the start, OSF combined realistic short-term goals with a long-term strategic approach. OSF was there to provide emergency support when needed, but without forgetting at any point what we refer to as systemic change. And most importantly, our philosophy was to partner with local actors and not to patronize them.

Being a lead actor in the region for three decades, OSF has been an initiator and pioneer in many processes related to attempts to formulate coherent



media policies, increase media transparency, develop investigative journalism, advance the digitization process, etc. Media integrity, a concept approved today even beyond the Balkans, was formulated precisely in this framework. The general sociopolitical context on the one hand and the speedy development of social media on the other have led to a new situation whereby illiberal, antiliberal media have moved from the margins to center stage. Fake news, disinformation, and conspiracy theories are blooming, especially online. Media freedom in the Balkans today oscillates between stagnation and decline. The challenge is still open.

New Balkan democracies are a variant of “contested democracies,” with a high degree of political polarization. Unfortunately, the phenomenon of polarization also appears as media (re)politicization. Gradually, independent media has been replaced by clientelistic media; repression by pressure; censorship by self-censorship; and open control by hidden influences. It is normal to ask in this context: “What went wrong?” The answer is difficult to formulate. I believe we cannot escape what Ivan Krastev refers to as the “imitation syndrome,” namely the imitation of European models in an environment not yet ready to accept these models. We were also affected by what can be considered, in one form or another, as an implementation deficit—it is a well-known fact that laws in the Balkans are drafted according to European standards and implemented following Balkan standards. And finally, in some cases and in some countries, OSF’s exit was premature. Hence, one thing is clear: our work in the Balkans is far from a “mission accomplished.” So, the mission continues.

Remzi Lani, Director, Albanian Media Institute, Tirana, Co-Chair of Western Balkans Advisory Committee, Former Chair of the Board of the Open Society Foundation for Albania

FROM CONFINEMENT TO COMMUNITY

The Open Society Mental Health Initiative (MHI) worked in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia between 1995 and 2019. During those years, the Balkans proved to be fertile ground for supporting wide-ranging reforms in the recognition of the human rights of people with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities and their treatment. When we began the work, their situation was characterized by institutionalization, usually for life, locked away from society.

© Robin Hammond, Witness Change, Osijek, Croatia, November 10, 2019

MHI began its work at a time when the Balkans were rebuilding following the war in the former Yugoslavia. We believed that the development of community-based services and advocacy for people with intellectual and/or psycho-social disabilities needed to occur at the same time that other aspects of society were being rebuilt. If we did not attend to these individuals at this time, they would be forgotten in institutions and would never be a priority. MHI believed that it was possible to develop community-based services as alternatives to the institutions. We wanted to create programs that highlighted how confining people for decades deprives them of their fundamental human rights. The idea was to establish cost-efficient models in local communities where people could lead dignified lives and to have governments assume financing of these new services over time.

MHI focused much of its time and resources on Croatia, where we found strong local partners and a government with the political will for change. Over the years, we deinstitutionalized hundreds of people from various institutions across the country and completely closed two, replacing them entirely with community-based housing. We also developed supported employment and self-advocacy programs, creating new local NGOs to lead those if there were none already existing.

One highlight of this work was the Balkan Express project that enabled the exchange of information, technical assistance, and know-how between Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia. We developed a network of like-minded NGOs across these countries who helped one another adapt and replicate the community-based models we had established in Croatia in their countries.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia, MHI worked closely with the national foundations on cofinancing and implementing the work. MHI succeeded in negotiating Memoranda of Understanding with the governments of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia, but the work in Croatia was most successful. In the other countries, deinstitutionalization began, but it did not go far enough. In each case, this was because of a change in government and the subsequent loss of political will to reform the system.

Looking back in 2021 on all of the seeds of change that we planted, most grew into tall trees and continue to be sustainable through government financing. Given the political climate in much of the Balkans today, there is a real threat that reform will not continue, or worse, will be rolled back, unless

civil society continues to play its role as the government's conscience and holds it accountable to its commitments.

Judith Klein, Founding Executive Director, Include–The Mental Health Initiative, Inc., former Program Director, Open Society Mental Health Initiative

ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL INEQUITIES IN PUBLIC HEALTH IN THE BALKANS

Addressing health disparities and poor health of Roma in Western Balkans

For nearly two decades, the Public Health Program (PHP), in partnership with the Open Society Foundation Serbia (OSFS) and the Foundation Open Society-Macedonia (FOSM), have challenged systematic discrimination against Roma communities in health care services across the Western Balkans.

Coercive treatment and violations of patients' rights to consensual treatment and confidentiality remain a challenge for health care systems in the Western Balkans. These practices are especially acute for Roma communities who face unequal access and discrimination in health care systems.

Traditionally, medical professionals have tended to focus on infectious diseases of Roma populations, framing their interventions as combatting a potential public health "threat" for the rest of the population. The dominant paradigm has focused on Roma's individual responsibility, linking Roma communities' poor health to "poor choices." Structural social and environmental determinants—combined with discrimination and anti-Gypsyism—have often been overlooked. To address some of these inequities, the Public Health Program has supported the Roma Health Scholarship Program, supporting Roma students in pursuing medical studies, since 2008. In 2010, our civil society partners began challenging discrimination and improving access to quality health care services for Roma by employing legal empowerment and social, citizen-based, accountability approaches aimed at making health care delivery and policymaking more responsive and inclusive. In 2018, this initiative was integrated into the Open Society's Legal Empowerment Shared Framework, created to respond to the unmet legal needs of marginalized groups globally.



In North Macedonia and Serbia, our partners successfully challenged coercive and discriminatory treatment by individual medical professionals and violations of patients' rights. They supported and monitored an equitable rollout of preventive and immunization programs in Roma communities, and they challenged the practice of bribes paid for health services. These partners were also able to identify key barriers within the communities whose access to benefits and services provided through national programs was previously inhibited, and served as a bridge between the communities and health care systems.

Roma health mediators and paralegals improved information-sharing about medical conditions by doctors, nurses, and pharmacists, which resulted in more Roma patients with chronic diseases attending regular checkups. In some instances, they have pursued strategic litigation. The evidence collected through social accountability has fed into different policy monitoring and evaluation reports, including EU policies. This unique initiative was collected and interpreted by marginalized Roma communities themselves.

In North Macedonia, the National Programs for Active Care of Mothers and Children and Prevention of Cervical Cancer now include specific Roma-related objectives and budget allocations. In the village of Crnik and in the Shuto Orizari municipality of Skopje, our partners opened a new general practice and O and reduced the typical practice of informal payments. They also successfully challenged the state practice of disqualifying Roma from health insurance through coercive administrative hurdles and high payments. Work must continue to tackle the structural rather than individual determinants of Roma health.

Sexual and reproductive health in marginalized communities

Over the past fifteen years, PHP, in collaboration with FOSM and OSFS, has addressed structural health disparities and access to care in sex worker and LGBT communities in North Macedonia and Serbia. We have supported community-led movements that have advocated for accessible and well-financed health services, often coupled with legal and social services for a more holistic approach to health. Our partners have also advocated for a wide variety of measures to address structural determinants of health, such as discrimination, criminalization, and stigma. In North Macedonia, PHP and FOSM supported the establishment of two key organizations in this field. STAR, established in 2009, is the first sex worker collective in the Balkans. The organization has effectively challenged stigma and negative public perceptions of

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Skopje, Macedonia,
December 17, 2015

sex workers that drive violence and poor health outcomes. Through creative activism, the organization has provoked public debate and created an environment where key policymakers are now questioning the criminalization of sex work. STAR has consistently ensured that its advocacy is supported by community-based, participatory research. Most recently, the organization released a report on the impact of COVID-19 on sex workers in the country.

The second organization is the Coalition MARGINS, which was established in 2007 to promote and protect the human rights of marginalized communities in North Macedonia. The Coalition has pushed policymakers and health practitioners at both the local and national levels to address discrimination and establish more responsive services. It has also engaged in strategic litigation to challenge policies and practices that contravene European law.

In 2019 the Coalition won an important case at the European Court of Human Rights in favor of a trans man who sought to officially change his gender. The ability to change gender is key to the well-being of trans people. The case has provoked a review of the law in North Macedonia, although the process appears to have stalled in the context of COVID-19. The Coalition has also worked with practitioners to build out gender-affirming care for trans people in North Macedonia. Until recently, there was no capacity to perform gender-affirming surgeries in the country and, to address this major shortcoming, the Coalition established an exchange program for surgeons to spend time in Belgrade and learn new skills from practitioners there.

Sustaining funding for health and human rights programming

Since 2014, when changes in donor funding policies led to drastic funding cuts for middle-income and upper-middle-income countries, PHP has supported national, regional, and global efforts to mobilize funding for health and human rights programming for the most at-risk groups in the Balkans. As countries in this region became ineligible for funding from the Global Fund—the largest donor for HIV prevention and treatment programming—many community-led programs that delivered life-saving services to sex workers, LGBT communities, and people who use drugs were forced to shut down, eventually leading to a spike in new HIV cases in countries like Romania. PHP has played an active advocacy role, elevating the issue of donor withdrawal and its impact on health and human rights programming in the Balkans to the top of donor agendas. We supported the efforts of civil society groups from the region to engage with the Global Fund in the development of transition policies that address the realities of their countries.

At the national level, we supported civil society capacity-building and advocacy work for increased domestic commitments. In North Macedonia, for example, our support of a civil society advocacy platform led by the NGOs HERA and Stronger Together resulted in the allocation of \$1.6 million for HIV prevention—a fourfold increase from the previous government commitment. At the same time, our long-standing collaboration with FOSM on advocacy for the health and rights of the most marginalized, and in particular our joint support to the Healthy Options Project Skopje (HOPS)—a pioneer in the provision of services for sex workers and people who use drugs—helped shape the landscape, vision, and capacity for the delivery of people-centered, rights-based, and inclusive services.

Across the Balkans, through our operational partnership with the Global Fund and in collaboration with other donors and regional networks, we supported advocacy for and development of financing mechanisms (also known as social contracting) allowing governments to allocate funding to, contract with, and finance CSOs for the delivery of prevention and social support services for the most vulnerable groups. We have coupled this advocacy with direct support to groups on the ground to enable them to receive such funding, ranging from the licensing and accreditation of harm reduction and other prevention and support services for sex workers, LGBT communities, and people who use drugs in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the capacity-building of outreach service providers in Serbia.

Ekaterina Lukicheva, Senior Program Officer, Public Health Program
 Maja Saitović, Senior Program Officer, Public Health Program
 Marek Szilvasi, Team Manager, Public Health Program
 Sebastian Köhn, Project Director, Public Health Program
 Erin Greenberg, Communications Officer
 Jonathan Cohen, former Program Director, Public Health Program

OSF PUBLISHING PROGRAM: A LEGACY OF IDEAS

Although the OSF Publishing Program was closed down in 2000, more than two decades ago, there are many in the Balkans who consider it one of the most successful of Open Society programs, indeed one that has left behind a very important and durable legacy. From the very beginning, most OSF offices in the region supported publishing projects within the framework of

their educational, cultural, and civil society programs. Initially these dealt with proposals coming from outside the foundation, many of them from universities, which were treated the same way as any other grant request. But shortly afterwards, a number of OSF offices in the region came up with the proposal that this was an area where foundations should play a more proactive role, initiating a much more ambitious project called Books for an Open Society – Translation Program in the Humanities. The long term goal of this project was to translate into the local languages some of the most important Western authors in areas such as economics, political sciences, sociology, philosophy, history, history of art, etc.—areas where as a result of the severe ideological restrictions imposed by the Communist regime, there was a dramatic vacuum. Priority of course, was given to titles which would mostly help promote critical thinking and the principles and values of an open society, but also to those which otherwise would have no chance of being translated without OSF support. Thus, in the space of a few years, in cooperation with the CEU Translation Project, a library was established in many of the countries of the region that would go on to play an important role not just in bringing about a cultural opening up of these countries, but what is more important still, a reform of the education system, where many of these books are still today used as reference books or even as textbooks.

In the case of Albania, a country that for decades had experienced an extreme form of isolation from the rest of the world, the contribution of OSF continued even after the year 2000, with the establishment of the House of Books and Communication, a spin-off of the Open Society Foundation for Albania (OSFA) Publishing Program, which soon transformed into one the most respected and prestigious organizations in the service of an open society and the promotion of critical thinking.

Piro Misha, Director of Albanian National Library, former Program Director of Open Society Foundation for Albania, and former member of the OSFA Board

NAVIGATING ROMA EQUALITY THROUGH WESTERN BALKAN NATIONALISMS

I will always remember December 1998 in Sarajevo. I arrived with a group of Roma late in the evening, after a long bus journey from Belgrade. The smell of fresh coffee and ćevap sizzling on the grill blended with the festive clamor of people, the colorful bazaar streets and the heartwarming kindness of Baščaršija, shaking me to the core. As we passed by the mosque, a loud and sudden sound that I had never heard before made me shiver—my first live encounter with Islam. Our guide told me I was lucky to be making my first visit to Sarajevo during Ramadan. The next day, our group gathered in the Media Center to start a journalism course. Its director, Boro Kontić, offered warm words of welcome, spoke of the program being financed by the Open Society Institute (OSI), and introduced people from OSI. I suddenly realized: this was the “Soros foundation” and the “Soros people.” I shivered again.

My experiences of that December gave me such different feelings about Sarajevo, Islam, and Soros than those I’d had before from watching Serbian television. Gratitude and curiosity started to take the place of fear, suspicion, and prejudice. Civil wars and their identity politics—what we called “nationalism” then—were a formative experience for me and many other Roma activists. Nationalist propaganda about the “other” or the “enemy” still runs deep in our collective unconscious—not only animosity among majorities, but also among the Roma toward “Catholic Roma” or “Serbian Roma” or “Muslim Roma” or “Shiptar Roma.” Yet the very identity politics that shaped the nationalism of majorities in war have since shaped the Roma’s struggle for rights and equality. That struggle has gradually brought us together despite the internalized fear of the “other.”

The Western Balkans is perhaps the best place for a thought experiment: where we would be if it weren’t for OSF support? OSF has also made critical contributions to the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe. But in the Western Balkans, the bloodshed and the hard—and still incomplete—democratic transition could have been an excuse for OSF to do much less, or nothing at all. Just remember how after World War II, when the United States and other powers paid attention to the settling of scores among the majorities in nation-states, the Roma victims and survivors were pushed away into invisibility.

In the difficult context of the former Yugoslavia—which later became known as the Western Balkans—OSF supported the foundations of Roma move-



ments within the newly created and unstable states. It has helped the voices of Roma grow from few and feeble to stronger and more numerous. OSF's support for the voices of Roma journalists, media, linguists, artists, and cultural producers has been crucial for ethnic consciousness as well as for the respect and recognition of Roma as a minority. Scholarships and training for Roma have nurtured the increasingly vocal civic advocates, including Roma women and youth.

This has led to important advances. For example, the term "Roma," instead of the "gypsy" slur in its local variants, has been adopted at the policy level, if not yet fully in the social domain. Minority status recognition has been achieved for Roma as it has for other minorities. With it, we can navigate our own struggle for equality using the small yet important opportunities provided by minority rights for Serbs, Bosniaks, Albanians, Hungarians, Macedonians, and others. For example, the Ohrid Agreement in North Macedonia, primarily made to ensure ethnic Albanians' participation in public administration, has helped us as well—nominally, at least, because the gap between the numbers of positions we should have and the number we do have is still too large. In addition, the freedom of ethnic self-identification for the Roma increased in the last censuses.

OSF helped build a political consensus around the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, which brought the issues of Roma poverty, unemployment and, most prominently, education into the policymaking arena. After the decade ended, the Western Balkan countries remained in the follow-up initiative, Roma Integration 2020, which is currently under review for prolongation. In the Western Balkans, largely due to Roma advocacy supported by OSF, governments have demonstrated a comparatively higher—yet still insufficient—political commitment to Roma equality than the EU countries have, especially the newer EU members. This is perhaps the only policy area where the EU could learn from the countries of this region, rather than the other way around.

In the last few years, the legacy of earlier generations of Roma activists and OSF's investments in a better political context have coalesced into a new force that is now showing its face. The new Avaja movement in North Macedonia, Opre Roma in Serbia, and a network of youth in Albania are just examples of OSF's deep and long-standing positive impact on our movement. This impact has not only been on Roma movements in the region but also at the European level. Roma from the Western Balkans, more than from any other region, articulate a sense of Roma identity and self-determination strongly within the transnational Roma movement, regardless of whether we are still

in the region or in Western Europe. We thereby shape the ideas and positions of Roma advocates across the whole of Europe.

There are certainly many other important achievements, but one issue I wish we could have done more about—and, perhaps more importantly, could still do more about—would be the situation of the Kosovo Roma. This is a regional issue that, according to informal estimates, affects more than 100,000 Roma who left Kosovo. These people, their truth and their voices, are largely ignored by the major powers and stakeholders.

Roma from Kosovo have suffered from propaganda from all sides since the 1990s. They are the “other” for both Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo as well as for Roma in Serbia and North Macedonia as “Shiptar Roma.” If I had not been in Sarajevo when I was 19, taking the first steps in my Roma activism, I would not have been able to question the nationalist propaganda. If I were not part of OSF, I would not be in the position today to fight back against it together with many other Roma and supportive friends.

Željko Jovanović, Director, Roma Initiative Office, OSF

THIRTY YEARS IN THE BALKANS: OSF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

“I was an ordinary kid doing the stuff every other kid did, which was simply living my childhood. But politics somehow got in the way, and I was not a child anymore. I became a Croatian kid. Suddenly I was not buying my favourite comics in Serbo-Croatian, but in Croatian. It was not appropriate that my favourite football players were Serbian, nor was it OK to be friends with kids who were Serbian... And then the war happened. Again, nobody asked me about it, I was just swept away into the grown-up world. Suddenly not only did I have to abandon all that was Serbian, but I also had to hate it as well.” (Valerio Bacak, Undergraduate Exchange Program, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2003.)

“I believe the scholarship program in general created a generation who are critical towards their governments and more tolerant towards diversity. ...Today I manage a national scholarship program for young Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children in both Serbian and Kosovo educational systems in Kosovo. Among many, the program is being indirectly funded through OSF and I hope that through these small grants for marginalized communities and knowing

how important education is, I can at least remain committed to and honor the philanthropy of George Soros and his contribution towards my education.” (Saranda Stublla, Undergraduate Exchange Program grantee, Bard College, 2008.)

The quotes above spotlight the formidable challenges and remarkable achievements driving thousands of OSF Scholarship beneficiaries in the Western Balkans throughout the past 30 years. From the Soros Supplementary Grants Program for the Former Yugoslavia, one of the most comprehensive, inclusive, and effective lifelines to threatened students and scholars in the history of scholar rescue (roughly 4,000 awards given over five years of war), to the present-day Civil Society Scholars Awards, offering safe space for intellectual explorations, Scholarships have sought to sustain the life of the mind in this fraught and fascinating landscape.

Scholarships entered the region with a mandate to provide study opportunities in alternative academic and cultural environments, focusing on fostering critical thinking within a long-term vision of strengthening open society. With essential support from OSF-funded Education Advising Centers and national foundations, awards for undergraduate exchanges, MA, MPhil, and PhD degrees, and pure research helped motivated thinkers pursue questions and visions generated by the profound social upheavals of their histories, cultures, and politics.

Scholarships from OSF included pre-academic summer schools as well as student gatherings during the academic year, opening up space to freely and safely engage in debates, friendships, and shared learning regardless of politicized origins or identities. Alumni frequently reference the “transformative” personal experiences afforded by their scholarship support, experiences that fundamentally changed their perceptions and awareness. These same alumni are now active in the ongoing transformation of the region. “The scholarships, grants, and projects that the Open Society Foundations have made possible for these people have provided the means for them to exercise critical thinking, to go beyond the prejudices and know how to appreciate and respect diversity, to recognize the importance of each individual in the framework of a democratic and open society and eventually to strive to make that society a desirable norm for everyone.” (Alba Çela, Albania, American University of Bulgaria, Central European University, Global Supplementary Grants Program.)

Martha Loerke, Director, Scholarship Programs
Audrone Uzieliene, Senior Program Advisor, Scholarship Programs

SUPPORTING THINK-TANKS IN THE BALKANS

Three decades ago, the dissolution of Yugoslavia ushered in a new era for the states that emerged in these territories. Their transition from authoritarian rule required a level of expertise and internal policy capacity that nascent national governments had not yet built. In response to this challenge, local think tanks gradually stepped in and became centers of knowledge production and policy advice.

From 2007 until 2017, the Open Society's Think Tank Fund (TTF) provided institutional and organizational development grants in the Western Balkans. Three reasons guided our decision to engage. First, the Balkan region was a priority for OSF engagement since its founding. Second, the relatively uncrowded policy space in these countries allowed a well-targeted intervention to have more policy resonance than a similar undertaking in a Western context. Finally, funding from other donors forced think tanks to concentrate on externally guided short-term projects. TTF core grants combined the best of two worlds. On the one hand, our funding was not rigidly tied to a specific thematic issue. On the other hand, these grants were not unrestricted. Instead of imposing its priorities on the grantees, TTF provided a funding framework to reflect their need for sustainability and deploy OSF investments accordingly.

For example, some of the think tanks we supported have become essential partners in pushing through difficult reforms of domestic security. As members of our regional cohort, they networked extensively to learn from each other on policy and internal development issues. In each country, we sought to build an ecosystem of organizations that would provide proper analysis and debate on the most important issues of the day. For instance, in Albania, at one point we were supporting three organizations, each advocating a different path toward EU accession. Though it was ultimately up to the government to choose the best policy recommendation, their interventions made this decision evidence-based and better informed.

After giving critical institutional support to major independent policy research actors in the Balkans, TTF—which by 2015 had merged with OSIFE—shifted gears to address another clear gap on the ground. While European integration has always been a mantra in the Western Balkans, policy actors failed to put the right emphasis on a wider process of Europeanization that would go beyond specific EU association criteria. The fixation of national gov-

ernments, donors, and an increasing segment of domestic civil societies on technocratic benchmarks not only downplayed dubious political practices of national governments, but also diluted the public commitment to reform. Often forgotten in these discussions was the complex reality of Europeanization as a two-way street, whereby EU-wide challenges and discourses in member states have an impact on Europeanization processes in the neighborhood. OSIFE redressed these shortcomings by building the capacity of local actors to broaden the scope of their engagement with the EU as a whole and its member states beyond the traditional European integration paradigm and by promoting practices that would include these countries in European discourses. We provided grants to local organizations and national and regional policy networks and supported the outreach of our Balkan partners in Germany, through the Aspen Institute Germany as the Berlin hub, and through the Clingendael Institute as the hub in the Netherlands.

In 2019, OSIFE decided to begin phasing out our support to independent policy research actors in the Balkans as a result of changes in the program's internal priorities. Most grants are expected to run their course by the end of 2021. As we leave the region, there is a lot to reflect upon and much to be proud of. We have built a strong field of independent policy research actors that use rigorous methods to gather evidence and develop public policies in a region where evidence-based decisions are still an exception. Our staying power as a donor has nurtured groups that are agile and responsive to external context, as can be seen by their ability to scale up EU advocacy and, more recently, to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. Yet the glass is decidedly half-full as these policy research actors have to fight for their financial survival, battle low recognition from self-referential national policy establishments, and figure out how to persuade their societies at large that evidence and facts matter in an age of rampant populism, "fake news," and democracy under siege worldwide.

Goran Buldioski, Director, Open Society Initiative for Europe (OSIFE), and former Director of the TTF Program
 Masha Djordjević, former TTF Program Manager
 Vladyslav Galushko, Team Manager, Open Society Initiative for Europe (OSIFE)



THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM IN THE BALKANS: EMPOWERING DIVERSE WOMEN FOR GENDER JUSTICE

In 1997, Anastasia Posadskaya was invited to start a women's program for the Soros Foundations network. Working with Debra Schultz in New York and Eva Foldvari in Budapest, the program welcomed all interested national foundation representatives to a 1998 founding meeting hosted by Vladimir Milčin and Slavica Indjevska of FOSM. Sonja Licht, head of the Open Society Fund Yugoslavia, served as the founding board chair of the Network Women's Program (NWP), and Valdet Sala of OSI Albania as a founding board member. NWP invested in engaging and empowering its 28 women's program coordinators, creating a strong network that embraced women's leadership and human rights as integral to building open societies.

An ethic of collaboration, mutual support, and knowledge sharing animated the program. The participatory planning process identified major program areas: Women's Human Rights; Violence Against Women; Women and Education; Women's Health and Reproductive Rights; Information, Documentation, and Mass Media; and Roma Women's Leadership. Replicating the same inclusive convening methods locally, women's programs served as catalysts for the development of national women's movements and independent women's NGOs. The Balkan women's programs were pioneers in supporting women from diverse ethnic, religious, and racial groups.

Building on the strong legacy of women's activism and feminist intellectual production in the Balkans, NWP and the Belgrade Center for Women's Studies organized the Inaugural Network Conference on Gender/Women's Studies in 1998. In 1999, NWP worked with the Macedonian foundation and Kosovar and Albanian women activists to respond to the Kosovo crisis. Outstanding cross-ethnic organizations like Women in Black inspired later NWP global work on gender justice in post-conflict zones.

Uniquely based in an intersectional feminist approach tackling gender, racial, ethnic, and economic discrimination simultaneously, the ground-breaking Romani Women's Initiative (1998 to 2006) was the first to solicit and foreground Romani women's leadership across the region, to build partnerships between young Romani women and men to address sensitive cultural issues like the virginity cult, to hold a Roma gender studies summer school and Roma women's policy workshops, to sponsor a European-level Romani Women's Policy Forum addressed by World Bank President James Wolfen-

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Skopje, Macedonia,
May 29, 2013

sohn, and to introduce Romani women's issues at the UN and global women's organizations.

Perhaps NWP's most lasting achievement was to bring the region to the attention of the United Nations women's agencies (UNIFEM and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW), and the global women's advocacy and funding movements. In 2005, when George Soros requested that foundations spin off programs to become independent, five Balkan women's programs did so in innovative ways. Remaining connected to NWP's network, they became the Gender Alliance for Development Center (Albania); Woman and Society Research, Policy and Advocacy Center (Bosnia and Herzegovina); the Kosovar Center for Gender Studies, Women's Action NGO (Macedonia), and the Reconstruction Women's Fund (Serbia). Always seeking to integrate gender issues into the Soros network, NWP in its first incarnation was known for its esprit de corps!

Debra L. Schultz, Professor of History, City University of New York, former Director of Programs, OSF Network Women's Program

I first came face to face with the impressive work of the NWP when I was leading the Global Fund for Women, a public foundation supporting women's rights groups across the globe. The women from the Balkans were always an inspiration and a source of hope for us. From Women in Black to the Croatian Center for Women War Victims to Žene ženema (Women for Women) in

Bosnia and Herzegovina, women from the region reminded us that the brutality of war, civil strife, and gender injustice could not keep women from speaking up in their own voices for their power and freedom. In more recent years, in my capacity as the head of the Women's Rights Program (WRP) at OSF, WRP worked with the Western Balkans program to organize a convening that brought together 35 participants, 23 of whom were representatives of the women's rights groups from eight countries from across the Balkans. Other participants included staff from Balkan country offices of OSF, representatives of the WRP, several funders, and a facilitator. The convening took place in the moment of strategizing, with OSF taking a pause, to review the past work and strategize toward the future. We firmly believe that doing so in consultation with and listening to the voices of activists and organizers who are doing the work can inform OSF strategy and ensure it is connected directly to the struggles and solutions proposed and worked on by the communities themselves. Although it occurred almost 20 years after I first visited the Balkans, I found the energy, power, and vision of Balkan feminists was

not dimmed. Whether Roma activists or Lesbian rights advocates, the women of the Balkans are clear that nothing less than gender justice will ensure open societies for all.

Kavita Nandini Ramdas, President and CEO Nathaniel Cummings Foundation, former Director, OSF Women's Rights Program

DEBATE AND YOUTH ACTIVISM FOR OPEN SOCIETY IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Debating, starting with but not limited to the Karl Popper debate format, has been present in North Macedonia though a debate community since the late 1990s, thanks to the efforts of the Open Society. Debate and civil society were novel terms at this time in the post-Yugoslav transitional system, where civic participation and pluralism were still finding their place. The debate program fortunately found roots, and deep ones too, when the debating community established the Youth Educational Forum (YEF) as a spin-off organization, one that continues to practice debate and youth engagement across the country to this day, 22 years later. To remain a youth organization in the course of roughly two decades is not an easy feat, as age creeps up with the passing years. That is why this organization adopted another characteristic—to be membership based and membership led, where new generations would take over from older generations, and set up a system of authenticity and democratic practices that remains ingrained in its core. It is from this perspective that we approach this short reflection of years past—as people who have had the chance to be debaters, to be members, to be elected to run this organization, and who have passed these roles on to new leaders to run and work for the YEF community in ways true to them.

Looking back on achievements in an ever evolving social context is not a simple task, but we'll try to do it justice with a few (heavily digested) reflections.

Reflection I: A culture of dialogue and debate supports ideas and people.

To say debate was practiced for competition would not be a lie, as YEF takes pride in its national championships, in being the host of one of the World Debate Championships of the International Debate Education Association (IDEA), and in bringing home trophies from international championships (the World Universities Debating Championship 2016 holds a particularly

fond place). But soon enough, we found out that debate can also serve other causes—to reconcile, to engage, or to foster political dialogue. Debate was the practice that brought together young people from different ethnicities studying in ethnically divided schools. Debate was the machinery that inspired youth activism and discussion about youth issues in schools and local centers. And debate was the form that created space for argument-based dialogue among polarized political leaders in the country—the annual debate event Argument: Organized Expression is a testament to its impact.

Reflection II: Critically thinking young people do more than talk. YEF did not remain only a debate organization.

Its members were joined by other programs (Street Law) but also developed new ones, driven by their own problems and need to improve young people's lives. The organization gave rise to student activism focusing on quality of education and representation of students. These young people were among the first to openly start discussing how corruption was degrading education. They were the first to oppose partisan and monopolized student organizing and did so in many ways—petitions, boycotts, and debates are just some. The student organizing battle took a particularly long time to win. It is only in the most recent years that student organizing was reformed, thanks to a new law, grassroots student activism and movements, and years of advocacy. But the students in YEF do not consider this a case closed, and in the last several election cycles, they have been monitoring student elections. Activism became a core mode of acting in YEF, growing in importance as space for freedom of expression and activism grew more constricted and oppressed in the country. Whether it resulted in nationwide campaigns or in supporting local youth groups and students, it is an integral part of YEF. One of the ways this is nurtured is through the ENGAGE Social Activism Conference, bringing together activists of all ages in a space of free expression and networking each year.

Reflection III: Policymaking cannot happen without young people.

Young people who are informed about policies, know their rights, and are aware of how to practice advocacy can influence politics, even when decision-makers would rather they not. One noteworthy example is the attempt of the Government to adopt its first ever Law on Youth in 2011, but without the input of young people. Only a few youth stakeholders participated in this process, and many more opposed it. YEF was among the key organizations to raise a red flag about this law that ostensibly wanted to support youth but

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Youth Education Forum,
Struga, Macedonia,
August 28, 2011



indicated it would have the effect of controlling youth. A broad-based coalition of youth civil society succeeded in getting Parliament to hold a public discussion (a rare occurrence, both at the time and to this day) and it retracted the law based on civil society input. This initiative paved the way for the establishment of a national umbrella organization of youth, the National Youth Council, now a member organization of the European Youth Forum. In 2020, almost a decade later, a Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies was adopted, with all the lessons taken in consideration; drafted by MPs, institutions, youth wings, and civil society all together, it passed unanimously.

We could go on and on about past achievements, battles won, and fond memories, but we would like to use some of these pages to also reflect on lessons learned and ideas for the future. This is a modest attempt—to provoke a thought or two about youth civil society, youth workers, and the development community.

Takeaway I: When supporting youth to be active citizens, we have to be there for more than one generation.

Working with young people is a constant affair. You may work for one, two, or three generations, but once you stop, no matter the sustainability effort, there is little guarantee that new generations will benefit from the work that was done. Sometimes the work that YEF and other youth organizations do might seem repetitive and never-ending, but the point is to give the new generations the same opportunities that the ones already out the door enjoyed. Education, engagement, and support should sometimes remain accessible to coming generations, particularly in these times of rising populism and autocracy.

Takeaway II: The young people that need the programs the most will likely not be the first to join them.

Youth programs will not have an issue attracting the active student from the capital in a decent socioeconomic position. But programs and their implementers should make an extra effort to reach out to the young people that do not have these opportunities. Whether these are youth from less robust socioeconomic conditions, young Roma, young persons with disabilities, youth from rural environments, or even just youth from outside the capital, disenfranchised and marginalized young people must have an equal chance to participate, because they are more often the ones facing more issues and having less support to do something about it.

Takeaway III: Advocacy takes time, and often more than one cycle.

Many of YEF's achievements, and achievements of civil society in North Macedonia, took time. They took more than one advocacy cycle and more than one approach to achieve, depending on the social and political context, on the players, and on complex perspectives. But one thing that characterizes many civil society success stories is that they took more than one try. So a message to youth and adults, activists and supporters alike, is to keep persisting. And have an open mind, particularly to the lessons we can learn from younger generations.

Marjan Zabrchanec, National coordinator for strategic communications at the Government of North Macedonia; former President and Executive Director of the Youth Educational Forum

ROMA EDUCATION FUND AND THE BALKANS

In 2004, the first regional public gatherings and discussions began in preparation for the launch of the international Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 initiative in the South East Europe region. I was a law student and didn't know what exactly that meant but I believed that it would be something big and important for the Roma community because Mr. George Soros and the World Bank were mentioned as the initiators. I first heard of Mr. George Soros in 2002 when I was awarded a scholarship in the higher education program at the FOSM.

The following year, in 2005, the Roma Education Fund (REF) was registered in Switzerland, with its headquarters located in Budapest, Hungary. REF as international foundation was initially formed to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. With an active and growing network of representative offices across Central, Eastern, South Eastern Europe and Turkey, REF provides grants and scholarships to entities and individuals who share its belief in quality, inclusive education and desegregated schools and classrooms. I would say it is an ambitious mission that should benefit both sides. First, the Roma community, and second, the educational systems of the region (which were already part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion) in inclusion and retention of Roma students and enabling them to complete the highest possible level of education.

The initial results of REF's work were visible from the very beginning, in the first two to three years. Several Balkan countries with direct financial sup-

port from REF (and later from their own budgets through the relevant ministries) began to implement early childhood development projects. In primary education, many projects—in partnership with schools, municipalities and ministries of education—were implemented to support Roma families and their children in the education process. Current scholarships in secondary and higher education serve as financial support, while mentoring and tutoring provide additional academic support in the process of achieving positive results and successful transition from the secondary to tertiary level of education. With each new academic year, the number of Roma students in the region, especially in the Balkans, increased, which I would say renewed hope and expectations that they will become proactive individuals and professionals shortly after graduation who will be the main bearers of the processes and changes in the Roma community.

The involvement and contribution of several Balkan countries and their relevant ministries and government bodies became visible by including the Roma issue in their strategic documents, and even through the creation of special action and operational plans to improve the educational structure of the Roma population in general at all levels of education. Some of them started to allocate their own budget funds, which together with the funds allocated by REF offered a new approach and perspective in the treatment of the Roma issue. This was the first attempt to create special public policies aimed directly at the Roma community, which was not the case before.

The Roma civil society sector was also financially supported by REF through the implementation of projects that have significantly and visibly strengthened its capacity at the operational and strategic level, especially in terms of monitoring the activities of relevant ministries and advocating important issues and goals for the education of the Roma community.

Today, 15 years after the establishment of REF, the following changes are visible in the countries of the region (mostly in the Balkans) at both national and local levels:

- The number of Roma students in primary, secondary and tertiary level of education has increased dramatically;
- The first masters and doctors of science appeared recently who have graduated not only in their home countries but also at prestigious universities in Europe and worldwide;
- Some of the former REF beneficiaries are today holders of public offices and part of the state system thus being able to contribute to the develop-

ment of the societies in which they live along with the development of the Roma community;

- Others hold important positions in the civil sector at national, regional and international level, managing the organizations (ERIAC, REDI, REF and others) which are part of the transnational movement led by the Roma Initiatives Office at the OSF office in Berlin;
- At the political level, in some of the countries of the Western Balkans and a significant number of projects initiated by REF have become public policies whose sustainability has been achieved through legal changes and the provision of a state budget for their further implementation (scholarships in today's Northern Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo).

REF's success would not be possible without the OSF, which played a key role in establishing and funding it, especially in advancing the educational level of the Roma community at the regional level and beyond. Together we achieved significant results that were simultaneously focused on both quality and quantity, primarily on the development and advancement of the Roma community in the field of education.

It is now the right time to accelerate the dynamics of our joint work, to position ourselves as generators in the countries where we work and focus on the implementation of new tailor-made innovative projects for the present and future. We should also continue to promote the development of education systems by contributing to the creation of proactive individuals and groups in Roma communities together and in partnership with the Roma community itself and the state institutions.

For the very end, I will return to 2004/05 when I believed that something big and important would happen for the Roma community. It has happened, and REF has proven to be a truly great contribution and important organization in Europe, which today, after 15 years of work, is facing new challenges posed by the global pandemic and changes in the Roma community itself. This especially applies to changes in the Balkans, where more results are expected, considering previous investments in human resources, results achieved and the newly established REF in Serbia, which taken together inspire new hope in the Roma community.

Despite all the positive results, there is still a lot of work to be done and numerous challenges to be addressed, to which REF will have to respond appropriately and wisely in the future.

Redjepali Chupi, Interim Director, Roma Education Fund

30
YEARS

Spin-Off Organizations in the Balkans

Introduction

The 30 Years initiative represents an excellent opportunity to take an in-depth look at all the spin-off organizations in the region that have been formed with the help of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) Network over the past three decades. These spin-offs represent an important legacy of the OSF.

To better understand and define what a spin-off is and why various programs were “spun off” from the national foundations or network programs, we present three possible situations:

- The majority of the spin-offs are independently registered organizations that evolved from an existing OSF national foundation or OSF Programs.
- Spin-offs can also have a bit more complex form, for instance, when a particular program merges with an already existing independent nongovernmental organization (NGO) or governmental body. Here, the spin-off may exist as the sole program of that organization (the organization may even change its focus because of the spin-off) or become a component of another program within that organization.
- In the third case, a spin-off can be considered an entity that has merged with an institution created by the OSF Network for the same or similar purpose as that particular spin-off.

This presentation of spin-offs in the Balkans is envisioned more as a mapping of the spin-offs in the region than as a comprehensive analysis of the process or an evaluation of spin-off activities. We have here a comprehensive view of all the spin-offs in the region by country, with summaries of their activities and updated data on each of the organizations that are still active at the end of 2020.

ALBANIA

Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status
Albanian Media Institute (AMI)	Media	2001	Active
Albanian National Debate Association	Debate	2001	Closed
Albanian Youth Council	Youth	2001	AYC operates but the sport program (initially supported by OSFA) has been discontinued
Book & Communication House	Publishing	2001	Active
Step by Step Center	Step by Step	2002	Active
Gender Alliance for Development Center	Women	2005	Active

Albanian Media Institute
8 Gjin Bue Shpata St., 1000 Tirana
www.institutemedia.org
Contact: Remzi Lani, Executive Director

The Albanian Media Institute (AMI) was founded in 1995 and assumed its present form after merging with the Soros Media Training Center in 2001. The Institute's major program areas are media and information literacy, disinformation and propaganda, and building the capacities of Albanian journalists. Over the last three years, AMI moved from mainly providing training to working as a think-tank that focuses more on advocacy and researching misinformation and disinformation. Given that the Institute does not receive any institutional support, its funding is based on project activities. Significant support for activities comes from OSF, but also from EU funds, UNESCO, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the US Embassy in Albania, the British Embassy, the Norwegian Embassy, and others. Furthermore, revenues are generated through publishing and consultancy activities. The Institute maintains an excellent relationship with the local foundation, the Open Society Foundation in Albania (OSFA), and acknowledges their shared vision and values. Furthermore, the Institute's executive director was the chair of OSFA at one point, and now he is a member of the Western Balkans Advisory Committee and a member of the board of the Open Society Institute for Europe (OSIFE). The Institute and OSFA work together on many advocacy initiatives. AMI is a member of several international organizations and networks: GFMD, WAN-IFRA, Media Diversity Network, IFEX, SEENPM, SEEMO, EJTA, Ethical Journalism Network, etc.

Book and Communication House
8 Gjin Bue Shpata St., 1000 Tirana
http://www.idk-al.org/
Contact: Piro Misha, Director

In 2001, the Publishing Program of OSFA was transformed into the Book and Communication House, which was in turn registered as a nonprofit organization. In 2005, it transformed into the Institute of Dialogue and Communication (IDC). The goal of IDC is to serve as a catalyst for promoting public debate and critical thinking. The Institute has no further institutional support from OSFA; however, it continues to receive support for its program activities. The Institute also receives funds from other donors and functions successfully.

Step by Step Center
3/2/1 Elbasan St., 1000 Tirana
https://www.facebook.com/Qendra-Hap-pas-Hapi-206724079675686/
www.hph.al
Contact: Gerda Sula, Executive Director

The Step by Step Center is an NGO that grew out of a transformed Step by Step Program. It was registered in 2001. The Center's mission is to model and disseminate the democratic principles in Albanian early childhood education while paying special attention to social and minority ethnic group settings. The Center does not receive institutional support from OSFA. It continues to operate successfully with support from other donors.

Gender Alliance for Development Center
10/1 Abdyl Frasheri St., 1000 Tirana
http://www.gadc.org.al/
Contact: Mirela Arqimandriti, Executive Director

The Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization established in 1994 as the Women's Center. The organization was founded by a group of women with the aim of fighting socioeconomic inequalities in a patriarchal society—the country of Albania, which had just emerged from a dictatorship. In 2004, the Women's Center changed its name to the Gender Alliance for Development. In 2005, GADC merged with the Women's Program of OSFA.

GADC is a voice for Albanian women and a force for change. The organization works to empower women and to create an equal and just future for low-in-

come girls and women to get out of poverty and exclusion all over Albania. GADC's main thematic areas of expertise are as follows:

- Ensuring women's economic empowerment, Women's Entrepreneurship;
- Empowering citizens to monitor the local gender agenda;
- Expanding women's participation in politics and decision-making;
- Building peace and ending gender-based violence;
- Advancing women's rights in rural areas.

The organization does not receive any institutional support. Its funding is based on project activities and intensive project fundraising. This means that GADC needs to adapt to donor priorities. In order to stand up for women's rights and to empower them, GADC raises funds in Albania as well as internationally.

At this point, the most stable donors are: Olof Plame International Centre, UN Women, the European Commission, the Austrian Development Agency, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Tirana, and the National Endowment for Democracy. The Center applies for EU funds frequently, but has received only two grants in the seven-year period. Last time GADC received program support from OSFA was in 2014.

GADC acknowledges the role OSFA had in the development of the organization in the past. However, they feel that women's rights are no longer a priority for the local foundation and that the lack of institutional support for the last 12 years has impeded the Center's further growth. Nevertheless, GADC managed to widen the scope and number of programs and activities. From its start as an organization working with domestic violence and gender issues (capacity-building, training), they have initiated programs dedicated to women's employment, women in rural areas, sexual violence and intimate partner violence per the Istanbul Convention, women internship, gender-responsive budgeting, and some additional topics waiting for funding.

The Center is member of several regional networks (Network to Further Labour Rights against Discrimination, Gender Budgeting Watchdog Network, Networks against Gender-Based Violence) and international associations (Women against Violence Europe-WAVE, WIDE+, Clean Clothes Campaign).

Today GADC is one of the most established and well-known women's rights organizations in Albania.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status
Soros School of Foreign Languages	The School SELP	1999	Operates as a commercial entity
Center for Educational Initiatives Step by Step (CEI)	Step by Step	2000	Active
Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies (CIPS)	Law Center	2000	Active
Media Center (MC)	Media	2000	Active
Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA)	SCCA	2000	Active
TEAM Consulting (TEAM)	Internet	2000	Operates as a commercial entity
Youth Information Agency (OIA)	Youth	2002	Active
Student Resource Center (SRCE)	Scholarships	2003	Closed
Women and Society (WAS)	Woman	2003	Closed
Center for Culture of Dialogue (CCD)	Debate	2005	Active

Center for Educational Initiatives Step by Step
1 Kralja Tvrtka St., 71000 Sarajevo
<https://www.coi-stepbystep.ba/>
Contact: Nedim Krajišnik, Deputy Director

The Center for Educational Initiatives (CEI) Step by Step was founded in 1996 with the help of the Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSF BH). The Center's main program areas are quality improvement and building communities and coalitions for change in the field of education, the influence of poverty on educational opportunities, and improving and promoting the teaching profession. Over the last three years, CEI developed from an organization that mainly provided resources, training, and other activities to educators to a center for excellence. It has created a platform for greater participation of teachers in advocacy and professional development by establishing the Community of Innovative Teachers and empowering them to initiate and lead change from within; it has involved other stakeholders and the wider community in a dialogue about education; and it has created online platforms and resources based on research and needs analysis. The organization is constantly evolving and creating new programs based on current trends and research in education as well as the needs of teachers. Some of the new programs include critical thinking and value-based education, new programs for school management, publishing, and annual awards.

The Center does not receive any institutional support, so its funding is based on project activities. A significant percentage of the funds comes from OSF, and different activities have been supported by USAID and Porticus. The organization applies for European funds, but they require significant cofunding. The Center generates revenue through training programs, conferences, publishing, and consultation services.

CEI maintains a good relationship with the local foundation and acknowledges their shared vision and values.

The Center is a member of several international organizations and networks: International Step by Step Association (ISSA), the Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC), Council of Europe, British Council, and ERI SEE.

Center for Interdisciplinary Studies
8 Zmaja od Bosne St., 71000 Sarajevo
<http://cis.unsa.ba/>
Contact: Nihad Fejzić

The Center for Postgraduate Interdisciplinary Studies (CIPS) grew from the Law Center, founded in 1995 by OSF BH. The Center was integrated with the University of Sarajevo in June 2013, and after the adoption of the Statute of the University of Sarajevo, the name was changed to the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies (CIS).

The Center focuses on the interdisciplinary education of new generations of local experts as well as those from the region of South East Europe (SEE). CIS developed a wide international partner network which includes universities from Austria, Italy, Russia, Greece, and other countries, and regional institutions and NGOs.

At this moment, CIS organizes different master's and specialist programs, as well as two doctoral programs—Global Studies and Gender Studies. The thematic scope of the master's programs has changed slightly, and now the Center offers master's and specialized programs in nutrition, disaster management, public health, and European Studies, and a European Regional Master's Program in Democracy and Human Rights in SEE. The Center, being part of the University of Sarajevo, is funded by the Cantonal Ministry of Education.

Media Center
26 Koševo St., 71000 Sarajevo
<https://media.ba/>
Contact: Borislav Kontić, Director; Maida Muminović, Executive Director

The Media Center was founded by OSF BH in 1995. It is registered as a for-profit company. However, in 2007, the Media Center founded the Media and Civil Society Development Foundation which became fully operational only in 2011. The Media Center and the Development Foundation share the same programmatic orientation and their activities are intertwined. Both the Center and the Foundation are committed to media freedom, freedom of expression, and the fight against discrimination. The only difference is that the Center is oriented toward income-generating activities and clients, while the Foundation does fundraising and applies to competitions held by local and international donors.

The Media Center and the Development Foundation have very good relationships with OSF BH and share the same values. Since 2012, OSF BiH has supported different activities of the Development Foundation. The Media Center has also worked with Albany Associates, IOM, EUSR, and UN Women.

The Media Center is a member of the Southeast European Network for Professionalization of the Media (SEENPM) and recently joined IFEX, a global network of organizations connected by a shared commitment to defend and promote freedom of expression as a fundamental human right.

Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art
3 Tabašnica St., 71000 Sarajevo
<http://scca.ba/>
<http://pro.ba/>
Contact: Amra Bakšić-Čamo, Executive Director

The Soros Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA) was founded by OSF BH at the end of 1996. In 2000, SCCA changed its name to the Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art and since then has operated as an independent, nonprofit professional organization. In 1998 SCCA established its pro.ba* multimedia—video, film, and TV—production department.

The majority of the Center's activities now go through its film and TV production department, pro.ba. The activities pertaining to contemporary art are few and far between, and are mainly related to the production of video works. The Center does not have any institutional support, and almost all its funding

is obtained through projects. Commercial services generate some additional revenue. Main contributors to the organization's programmatic budget are the Federal Foundation for Cinematography, the Cantonal Ministry of Culture and Sports, and EUROIMAGES. OSF BH does not have funds to support contemporary art or film production and this is the main reason SCCA does not apply to the local foundation. However, that does not affect the good relationship between SCCA and OSF BH. As of this writing, the executive director of SCCA is a member of the board of OSF BH.

The Center has developed a wide international network, especially in the field of film production, and has managed to survive in a very volatile environment of BH independent culture for the last 20 years. It will continue to be a meeting point, an active promoter of new cultural models, new developments in film and contemporary art, and an active participant in the cultural scene (production center).

Youth Information Agency
15 Skenderija St., 71000 Sarajevo
www.munja.ba
Contact: Jan Zlatan Kulenović, Director

The Youth Information Agency (YIA) was founded in 2000 as part of the Youth Program. In spring 2016 its name was changed to Social Innovations Incubator "Munja" (lightning) to better suit the vision and activities of the organization. Munja is registered as an NGO, and its mission and activities did not change much from those under the agency. It works to improve the position of young people, increase their active role in society, and improve employability. It shifted from a donor-driven NGO to a social enterprise with mixed funding and transformed its projects into social products. The focus has narrowed to youth empowerment, mainly in the field of the labor market and in the design of social innovations and tools, especially in the digital field.

The organization does not receive any institutional support, and secures funds through projects and services. In 2019 it received support from OSF BH for a pilot project dealing with intergenerational cooperation. Munja organizes training, internships, events, and exchanges between young people. The staff readily acknowledges the role of OSF BH in the establishment and development of the organization and maintains a good relationship with the local foundation. The organization is a member of the Foundation of Environmental Education–Eco-Schools Global Network, Young Reporters for the Environment, and the SEE Youth Network.

Center for the Culture of Dialogue
1 Fra Andela Zvizdovića St., 71000 Sarajevo
https://www.ckdbih.com/
Contact: Nadina Balagić, Acting Director

The Debate Program was founded in 1997 and was implemented within the OSF BH. In January 2005, the Debate Program evolved into the Center for the of Culture of Dialogue (CCD), an NGO, thus expanding its mission and goals. The mission of the Center is "to foster critical thinking and democratic principles of decision making, creating by the means of debate a new democratic model of civil society, having in mind that there is more to abolishing a totalitarian political establishment than setting up new political institutions, namely enabling the new modes of thinking to permeate all spheres of private and public life."

The Center organizes research, competitions, and public debates. CCD is a member of the World Debate Organization for the World Schools debate format (WSDC), the World Intercultural Facility for Innovation (WIFI), and the International Debate Education Association (IDEA). The Center has received support from UNDP, USAID, the US Embassy in BH, the European Commission, and different public funds in BH.

Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status
Center for Drama Art (CDA)	Arts and Culture	1998	Active
Croatian Debate Society (CDS)	Debate	1998	Active
Institute for Contemporary Art	SCCA	1998	Active
Institute for Development of Education (IDE)	Higher Education	1998	Active
Step by Step Open Academy (SBS-OA)	Step by Step	1998	Active
Step by Step Parents' Association (SBS-PA)	Step by Step	1998	Active
Student Information Center-Osijek (SIC)	Higher Education	1998	Closed
Multimedia Institute (MAMA)	Information	1999	Active
Forum for Freedom in Education (FFE)	Education	2000	Active

CROATIA

...

...	Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status
	CEPOR – SME Policy Center	Economic Reform	2001	Active
	Electronic News Library (ENL)	Media	2001	Integrated in the Library of the Zagreb Law Faculty

Center for Drama Arts
1d Petrovaradinska St., 10000 Zagreb
<https://cdu.home.blog/>
Contact: Matija Prica, President

The Center for Drama Arts (CDA) was established in 1995 with the support of the Open Society and in collaboration with the Academy of Dramatic Art at the University of Zagreb. It initiated an academic publication *Teatar & Teorija*, a documentary film production project Factum and the Imaginary Academy in Grožnjan, Istria. *Frakcija*, a journal of performing arts, was launched the same year. In late 2019, the *Frakcija* archive was published and made public at <https://frakcija.cdu.hr/>. At present, the Center's major programmatic areas of work are: working rights in the field of culture; questions of public space and its accessibility and importance for cultural production; and the role of the audience and local community in cultural production and governing of cultural activities, institutions, and organizations. Some of the new members are also interested in developing innovative presentational and educational practices, which mostly focus on multimedia practices.

CDA participated actively in an array of collaborative platforms and networks, including Zagreb–European Capital of Culture 3000, Clubture, and Alliance Operation City. The Center receives institutional and programmatic support from the Kultura Nova Foundation. Their activities are also supported by the Ministry of Culture.

Most of the projects initiated at the beginning of the Center's work have been completed for some time, and the people who founded the organization and were active members during the initial years are no longer active in the Center. However, the CDA maintains the same stance toward art and its function in society; they have just devised different means to realize it. The CDA does not maintain contact with the OSF Network because the types of activities the Center currently engages in are no longer the focus of the Network.

Croatian Debate Society
16 Petra Berislavića St., 10000 Zagreb
<http://hdd.hr/>
Contact: Bojan Marjanović, Chairman of the Managing Board

The Croatian Debate Society (CDS) promotes active citizen participation through a variety of projects and programs. The most important CDS activity is the coordination of children and youth, as well as their educators, in debate clubs in Croatia. Apart from the debate program, CDS uses debate as a method of informal learning in the development of citizenship competencies in youth and implementation of antisocial behavior prevention programs. CDS receives institutional support from the National Foundation for Civil Society Development. Since 2012, the Society has received program support from various EU funds, such as the European Instrument For Democracy And Human Rights (EIDHR), YiA, Erasmus+, EfC, EYF; various public funds; the US Embassy in Croatia; and others. The CDS is a member of IDEA and the World Schools Debating Championship.

Institute for Contemporary Art
20 Kralja Tomislava Square, 10000 Zagreb
www.institute.hr
Contact: Janka Vukmir, President

The Institute for Contemporary Art, the successor of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art–Zagreb was founded in 1993 and registered as an independent nonprofit organization, a citizens' association, in 1998. The Soros Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA) changed its name to the Institute for Contemporary Art in 2012. The Institute's major program area is contemporary art promotion and raising the level of professionalism. For that purpose, the Institute established a small gallery, an exhibition program, and a library and archive, which is slowly being digitized. Furthermore, the Institute publishes books and other contemporary art publications, conducts research in the field of contemporary art, and collaborates on different art, advocacy, and activism-related projects with other organizations. The Institute has also been organizing a national award for artists up to age 40 since 2001. The Institute does not usually receive any institutional support; however, in 2020, the Institute received some support due to the COVID-19 crisis. The organization's funding is almost completely project based. Major contributors to the Institute's budget are the Ministry of Culture; City Office for Culture, Zagreb; Rijeka 2020, European Capital of Culture and City of Rijeka; and the Trust for Mutual Understanding, New York.

Although the Institute has not had contact with any OSF entities since 2001, the staff continues to regard the Institute as part of the OSF legacy. The Institute is now registered in the State Archives of Croatia as an archive creator and owner, and this is partly due to the OSF history and the SCCA program. The Institute is a member of several international associations and networks: YVAA–Young Visual Arts Awards, Trieste Contemporanea, Continental Breakfast–Europe and informal contemporary art networks.

Institute for the Development of Education
9/I Nikole Zrinskog Square, 10000 Zagreb

<https://iro.hr/>

Contact: Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt, Executive Director

The Institute for the Development of Education was founded in 1999 as the Student Information Center (SIC). In September 2005, the Assembly of SIC decided to change its name to the Institute for the Development of Education (IDE) to reflect a change of its vision, mission, and strategic goals. The Institute advocates for a system of higher education that ensures equal educational opportunities, adheres to the principle of quality assurance, promotes international cooperation, supports lifelong learning, and meets the needs of both individual and society.

IDE receives institutional support from the National Foundation for Civil Society Development. The Institute implements a wide range of projects, mainly funded by different EU funds. Furthermore, IDE serves as a host for the EducationUSA advising center in Croatia. The work of IDE has also been supported by different public funds as well as the Institute of International Education, Fulbright Center Netherlands, and others.

The Institute has developed a strong network of institutional partners, both local and international.

IDE is a representative of Central European University.

Step by Step Open Academy

73 Illica St., 10000 Zagreb

www.korakpokorak.hr

Contact: Sanja Brajković, Director

Step by Step Open Academy (SBS-OA) was founded in 1998. Its goal is to improve the quality of the educational process. To this end, the Academy's

major program focus is the professional development of educators with special attention to vulnerable groups. The stress is put on an intersectoral approach, and activities emphasize the values of equity and diversity. The Academy is a main coordinator of the Romani Early Years Network (REYN) in Croatia. SBS-OA does not receive any institutional support. The majority of funding is project based. Most of the Academy's activities are EU funded. In addition, the Academy generates revenue through publishing activities and professional development. Recently, SBS-OA received support from the OSF Network for improving the education and care of Roma children.

Even when there is a change of staff in the office and the Academy employs new professionals, an effort is made to preserve the institutional memory. The management of the Academy thinks it is important that all professionals know the history of the organization, the context in which organization arose, and the history and original goals of the programs that were developed with the support of OSF.

SBS-OA is a member of ISSA.

Step by Step – Parents' Association

73 Illica St., 10000 Zagreb

www.udrugaroditeljakpk.hr

Contact: Silvija Stanić, Executive Director

Step by Step–Parents' Association (SBS-PA) was founded in 1998. The Association's main objective is to promote the value of a community focused on children. Its activities include the promotion of children's rights as well as the rights of their families to a dignified life; cooperation with preschool, school, and other institutions that take care of children and families; advocacy; and training.

SBS-PA receives institutional support from the National Foundation for Civil Society Development. The Association's main contributors to program budget are various EU funds; it implements projects with the support of different EU funds and the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy.

The Association is a member of the European Parents' Association and CO-FACE Families Europe.

Multimedia Institute
18 Preradiceva St., 10000 Zagreb
<https://mi2.hr/>

Contact: Tomislav Medak, President of the Association

The Multimedia Institute (MI2) grew from the Information Program in 1999. Since its inception, the Institute has been focused on (1) critically inflected digital arts, film, music, and literature; (2) digital commons: free software, free culture, and open access; (3) philosophy and theory; (4) cultural networking, advocacy, and grassroots organizing; (5) protection of the public domain and struggle for spatial justice. It is best known for the social and cultural center MaMa in Zagreb, founded in 2000.

MI2 receives institutional support from the National Foundation for Civil Society Development. Multimedia Institute activities are supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, City Office for Education, Culture and Sports of the City of Zagreb, Kultura Nova Foundation, the European Commission Culture Programme 2007–2013, and the European Cultural Foundation.

The Institute is a member of various local and international networks, including the collaborative platform Zagreb–European Capital of Culture 3000, Alliance Operation City, Clubture Network, Right to the City, and Kooperativa. Although the OSF legacy is not mentioned in so many words on the organization's web site, MI2 has maintained the same goals and viewpoints as when it was launched and supported by the Open Society Institute (OSI) Croatia.

Forum for Freedom of Education
8 Đurđićeva St., 10000 Zagreb
<http://www.fso.hr/>

Contact: Mario Bajkuša, Development and Programs Director

The Forum for Freedom of Education (FFE) was founded in 1992. In 2000, OSI–Croatia transferred part of its Education Program activities to FFE. FFE develops, promotes, and implements educational programs and projects, and advocates for public policies to improve education in Croatia. This is accomplished within several programmatic areas: teaching advancement, school democratization, and development of personal and social competencies. It is one of the rare spin-off organizations that has added staff since 2012 and now it has 10 full-time employees.

FFE receives institutional support from the National Foundation for Civil Society Development. FFE receives support for different projects from the

European Union, the EU Parliament, the Swiss-Croatian Partnership Fund, OSF, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Croatia, the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, and the Ministry of Demography, Youth and Social Policy. The Forum is a member of the Network of Education Policy Centers and the SIRIUS Network; it has developed a strong network of institutional partners in Croatia and Europe. FFE acknowledges the importance of OSF's legacy—several programs that were originally launched by OSI–Croatia are still being implemented. Furthermore, these programs served as a basis from which several current programs were developed. FFE is in contact with OSF regarding the situation in Croatia in relation to education and civil society in general.

Small and Medium Enterprises and Entrepreneurship Policy Center
7 J.F. Kennedy Square, 10000 Zagreb
www.cepor.hr

Contact: Slavica Singer, Chairwoman; Mirela Alpeza, Director

The Small and Medium Enterprises and Entrepreneurship Policy Center (CEPOR) is the first think-tank in Croatia to deal with the problems of the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector. CEPOR is a nonprofit organization founded in 2001 based on the Agreement between the Republic of Croatia and OSI–Croatia. Currently, CEPOR's main program areas are entrepreneurship and the SME sector (constraints to its development in the field of government policies, financing, education, supporting infrastructure, collaboration with research institutions, inclusiveness), and research, advocacy, and influence of the policy development processes.

The Center's funding is project based. It does not receive any institutional support. The main contributors to CEPOR's programmatic budget, in addition to local government and sponsor funds, are the European Fund for Southeast Europe Development Facility (EFSE), the US Embassy in Zagreb, and the European Union.

After OSI–Croatia closed in 2005, the Center frequently collaborated with OSF New York in organizing some events in Croatia but not any more. CEPOR mentions OSI–Croatia and OSI–New York as donors on its website. Furthermore, at all events, meetings, and other occasions where CEPOR's activities have been presented, CEPOR has been regarded as a part of the OSF legacy. Over the years, CEPOR has developed a strong network of institutional partners in Croatia (J.J. Strossmayer University in Osijek, Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Croatian Employers' Association, Croatian

Association of Banks, City of Zagreb, Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts). The Center is a member of the European Network for Social Research (ENSR) and the European Association for SME Transfer (TRANSEO)

KOSOVO

Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status
Center for Humanistic Studies "Gani Bobi"	Education	1999	Closed
Art Resource and Training Center (ARTC)	Arts & Culture	2000	Integrated with Faculty of Art
Kosovo Education Center (KEC)	Step by Step	2000	Active
Kosovo Center for Gender Studies (KCGS)	Woman	2004	Active
CiviKos Platform	Civil Society Program	2007	Active

Kosovo Education Center

Third Millennium School Compound, 49 Qëndresa St., 10000 Pristina

<http://kec-ks.org/>

Contact: Dukagjin Pupovci, Executive Director

The Kosovo Education Center (KEC) was founded in 2000. It has four programmatic areas: improving the quality of education for teachers and school managers; projects related to human rights, more precisely children's rights; networking and participation in policy making; and education research, usually of an applied nature.

The Center does not receive any institutional support; its funding is based on project activities. The Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS) regularly supports the Center's projects, and some other network programs provide occasional support to projects overlapping with their focus. Since 2012, the Center has received project support from the European Union, the Council of Europe, the German Cooperation Agency, UNICEF, USAID, World Bank, Austria Development Cooperation, and various public funds. KEC's relationship with the local foundation remains close. Luan Shllaku, executive director of KFOS, continues to serve on the board of KEC.

Kosovar Gender Studies Center

18/1 Mother Teresa St., 10000 Pristina

<http://kgscenter.net/>

Contact: Luljeta Demolli, Executive Director

The Kosovar Gender Studies Center (KGSC) was founded in 2002 by the KFOS Women's Program and was the first organization of its kind in Kosovo. Two years later, based on a feasibility study, the KFOS board decided to spin off the Women's Program from KFOS and it became an integral part of the KGSC. The Center's major program areas are advocacy for gender equality, including research and publishing, and awareness-raising activities. The Center has grown programmatically since 2011. It has been quite active in the field of capacity-building and preventing and addressing gender-based violence and shadow monitoring on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Furthermore, the Center expanded its scope of activities to fighting sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. The Center does not have any institutional support and it is funded through project activities. Its main donors are the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, UN Women, EIDHR, MATRA, and USAID. KGSC does not receive any support from KFOS because the priority areas it covers are not aligned with the programs and priority areas of KGSC. Nevertheless, the Center maintains a good relationship with the local foundation. Lack of institutional support has resulted in a decrease in staff over the last three years. The Center is considering offering consultancy services as a revenue-generating activity in the future. KGSC has developed a good cooperation with different state agencies and ministries, such as the Agency for Gender, the Ministry of European Integration, the Ministry of Finance, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, etc. KGSC is a member of AtGender and WAVE.

CiviKos Platform

7/A Bedri Pejani St., 10000 Pristina

<http://www.civikos.net/>

Contact: Donika Emini, Executive Director

The CiviKos Platform is a voluntary union of civil society organizations committed to the development of a favorable environment for cooperation between civil society and public authorities. In spring 2007, several civil society organizations and the Prime Minister's office initiated a process of institutionalizing cooperation between the two sectors, thus creating the CiviKos Platform. The organization currently has a membership of 207 organizations

and it keeps growing. The Platform does not receive institutional support from KFOS, nor has it received support for project activities since 2014. Nevertheless, the CiviKos Platform maintains good relations with the local foundation. The work of the CiviKos Platform is funded through project activities. The most recent donors are the European Union, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, MATRA, USAID, and ECNL.

MONTENEGRO

Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status
Pedagogical Center Montenegro (PCM)	Step by Step	2002	Active

Pedagogical Center Montenegro

25 Svetog Petra Cetinjskog Blvd., 5th Floor, 81000 Podgorica

Contact: Biljana Maslovarić, Executive Director

The Pedagogical Center Montenegro was founded in 2000. From its very beginning, the Center's main programmatic focus has been on early development programs and Roma integration. It is in a very precarious position now due to lack of stable funding. As a result, the Center does not have full-time employees. It does not have institutional support, and its only sources of funds are projects. The staff are volunteers and they use their own money to keep the organization functioning. The Center's main contributor for its programmatic budget is UNICEF.

Although there is no longer a local foundation in Montenegro, the staff still regards the Center as a part of the OSF legacy because it was founded through the Step by Step program and because OSF owns the Center's office space.

The Center wants to develop in the direction of greater use of distance learning and the integration of green – and ecopedagogy.

The Pedagogical Center Montenegro is a member of ISSA.

Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status
SOS Clinical Center (SOS Center)	Medical and Health	1998	Closed
Center for Clinical Legal Education (CCLE)	Law	1999	Fully integrated in regular teaching process
Civil Society Resource Center	Civil Society	1999	Closed
Education Resource Center (ERC)	Higher Education	1999	Operates as a commercial entity under the new name Educational Advising Center
HOPS – Healthy Options Project Skopje	Public Health	1999	Active
Institute for Social and Humanities Research Euro-Balkan	Civil Society, Women, Higher Education	1999	Closed
Judicial Training Center (JTC)	Law	1998	Transformed into Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, an independent legal entity financed by the state budget
Youth Educational Forum (MOF)	Debate	1999	Active
Big Brother, Big Sister (BBBS)	Big and small	2000	Closed
Children's Theater Center (CTC)	Arts & Culture	2000	Active
Contemporary Art Center (SCCA)	SCCA	2000	Active
Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives	Step by Step (SBS)	2000	Active
Performing Arts Center MULTIMEDIA	Arts & Culture	2000	Closed
Safe Childhood (SC)	Medical and Health	2000	Closed

NORTH MACEDONIA

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...	Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status
	SONET	Internet	2000	Operates as a commercial entity
	Economic Education for the Youth – Junior Achievement (JA)	Economic	2001	Closed
	Hospital Volunteers (HV)	Medical and Health	2001	Closed
	Soros International House (SIH)	SELP	2001	SIH merged with another language school and operates as a commercial entity
	Eurothink – Center for European Strategies (former Macedonian Center for European Training)	EU Integration	2003	Active
	Research Center for Gender Studies (RCGS)	Women	2003	Closed. In the meantime, head of the RCGS founded the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities
	Akcija Zdruzenska (AZ)	Women	2004	Active
	Center for Research and Policy Making	Sustainable Development, Macedonian Politics, Human Development, EU and International Affairs, Good Governance and Budget Monitoring, Migration	2004	Active
	Association of Citizens for Inter-ethnic Relations Support and Community Development “Common Values”	Civil Society	2005	The organization closed its programmatic activities in April 2011 and is now consistent of the page: www.facebook.com/ngo.common.values/

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...	Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status
	Metamorphosis – Foundation for Internet and Society	Information	2005	Active
	Reactor – Research in Action	Gender Equality, Youth and Urban Development	2005	Active
	Association for Development and Activism Aqua, Struga	Civil Society	2007	Active
	Center for Sustainable Community Development, Debar	Civil Society	2007	Active
	Centre for Sustainable Development Porta, Strumica	Civil Society	2007	Closed
	Community Development Center, Kichevo	Civil Society	2007	Closed
	Community Support Center, Resen	Civil Society	2007	Closed
	Foundation for Local Development and Democracy Focus, Veles	Civil Society	2007	Active
	Local Community Development Foundation, Shtip	Civil Society	2007	Active
	Local Development Center “Antigonea,” Negotino	Civil Society	2007	Closed
	Regional Advocacy Center, Delchevo	Civil Society	2007	Closed
	Regional Center For Sustainable Development, Gevgelija	Civil Society	2007	Closed
	Regional Center for Sustainable Development, Kratovo	Civil Society	2007	Closed
	Support and Development Foundation, Prilep	Civil Society	2007	Not formally closed, but inactive for years
	Youth Entrepreneurial Service Foundation (YES)	Economic Reform	2007	Active
	Association for Local Democracy – Community Center in Municipality of Center, Skopje	Model of Citizen-Centric Municipality	2016	Closed
	Association for Local Democracy – Community Center in Municipality of Struga	Model of Citizen-Centric Municipality	2016	Active
	Association for Local Democracy – Community Center in Municipality of Strumica	Model of Citizen-Centric Municipality	2016	Active

HOPS–Healthy Options Project Skopje
48/1-6 Hristo Smirnenski St., 1000 Skopje
<https://hops.org.mk/>

Contact: Hajdi Shterjova Simonovikj (Executive Director)

HOPS–Healthy Options Project Skopje is a civil society organization that has actively implemented its programs and activities in Skopje and other cities in the Republic of Macedonia since 1997. Major program areas of HOPS are: HIV prevention, promotion and protection of human rights of people who use drugs and sex workers; advocacy, rehabilitation, resocialization, and reintegration of people who use drugs and sex workers and their families; psychosocial support, resocialization, and integration for children at risk; and resocialization and re-integration for inmates who use drugs within the probation system.

The main institutional partners of HOPS are the Foundation Open Society Macedonia (FOSM) and the Public Health Program at OSF, not only in terms of institutional financial support but also in terms of strategic partnership. FOSM has helped HOPS develop or get involved in many national and international networks that are helpful for the further exchange of experiences. HOPS's activities are financially supported by FOSM. Furthermore, HOPS received some institutional support for salaries, rent, and overhead costs from the Ministry of Health and the City of Skopje. The Global Fund and Civica Mobilitas have also supported HOPS's activities. The organization managed to receive some support through EU funds, but the organization needs to build some capacities so it can apply to EU funds more successfully.

HOPS is a member of IDPC, ICRSE, SWAN, DPNSEE, NSWP, the Correlation network (EHRA), and NAMATI.

Youth Educational Forum
34 A Drenak St., 1000 Skopje
<https://mof.mk/>

Contact: Dimitar Nizamovski, Executive Director

The Youth Educational Forum (YEF) was established in 1999. Previously, the Debate Program was an integral part of the youth programs of the FOSM. The Forum's name reflects the need to encompass a number of activities and programs. At the beginning of 2011, the organization launched Radio YEF as an independent internet space that is open to youth and the cultural and creative community in Macedonia. YEF has four program focuses: debate, "We

learn law," youth (policy, research, youth organizing), and activism. The Forum received institutional support from FOSM until 2017. Furthermore, the local foundation regularly supports the Forum's activities. YEF has received support for their projects from various EU funds, USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy, the German Cooperation Agency, and others. YEF is a member of IDEA and a number of national networks.

Children's Theater Center
1 Evlija Celebija St., 1000 Skopje
<https://www.facebook.com/Qendrateatroreperfemije>
Contact: Razije Jonuzi, Director

The Children's Theater Center (CTC) was founded in 1999. It presents its own productions, but also hosts productions from community theaters. The Center hosts concerts occasionally. It is mainly supported by local community funds.

Contemporary Art Center Skopje
DTC Mavrovka G. Delchev, Lamela A 1/10, 1000 Skopje
<http://www.cac.org.mk/>
Contact: Anita Ivkovik, Director

The Contemporary Art Center Skopje (CAC) was founded in 1994 as the Soros Center for Contemporary Arts – Skopje as a program of FOSM and part of the SCCA Network of 19 centers in Central and East Europe.

CAC serves as a ground-breaking organization in two fields: Urban Art Actions, i.e. community-organizing practices through arts and culture, and Creative Communication Activism.

CAC's main programs include: visual arts and mobile gallery; independent culture and capacity-building; cultural and social development of rural areas and small communities; creative communications, artistic activism, and urban art.

The Center's main institutional partner is FOSM. The Center collaborates with the foundation on different projects regularly. The foundation provides institutional support to CAC, as well as grants for their projects. Other main contributors to CAC's program are the Ministry of Culture, and Municipality Center, City of Skopje. CAC is a member of Kooperativa–Regional Platform for Culture.

Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives “Step by Step” Macedonia
72a Partizanski odredi Blvd., 1000 Skopje
<https://www.stepbystep.org.mk/>
Contact: Suzana Kirandžiska, Executive Director

The Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives “Step by Step” Macedonia was established to continue the educational program “Step by Step” that began in 1994 as regional program of OSI–New York and Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

The Foundation supports the development of an open society through activities in the field of education, art, culture, and publishing as well as human (children’s) rights and civil society. The Foundation guides, coordinates, participates in, and directly implements activities that promote innovation, progress, and development of the work of preschool institutions and primary schools in the Republic of Macedonia.

The Foundation received its last grant for institutional support from FOSM in 2015. However, the organization still receives program support from the local foundation. In addition, the Foundation receives support from various EU funds, USAID, and the OSF Network.

The Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives “Step by Step” Macedonia is part of ISSA and through its actions fully supports and acts upon ISSA principles for quality pedagogical practice.

Eurothink–Center for European Strategies
16 Petar Pop-Arsov St., 1000 Skopje
<http://eurothink.mk/>
Contact: Ivan Stefanovski, Executive Director

Eurothink–Center for European Strategies is a think-tank founded in September 2002, originally under the name Macedonian Center for European Training.

The Center supports Macedonia’s accession to the European Union and the Europeanization of society through professional training and counseling, the development of evidence-based public policy, regional cooperation, and advocacy for change. Since 2007, Eurothink has shifted its focus from a training institute to a think-tank in hopes of reducing the country’s apparent lack of expertise in creating evidence-based public policies. The Center monitors the accession process and works on four programs: EU accession, regional

integration, Europe for citizens, and justice, freedom, and security. The Center has not received institutional support from FOSM since 2016. However, the local foundation continues to support the Center’s activities through project grants. The European Union has recently become a very important donor to the Center.

Akcija Zdruzenska
2 Nikola Trimpare St., 1000 Skopje
<https://zdruzenska.org.mk/>
Contact: Marija Savovska, Executive Director

Akcija Zdruzenska is a nonprofit organization established in 2004 by FOSM. The work of the organization is based on extensive experience in developing and implementing programs for the promotion of gender equality and women’s rights. Its main program pillars are women’s civic participation, gender equality and women’s human rights policy advocacy, good governance, and accountability.

Akcija Zdruzenska does not receive institutional support from any donor. FOSM last supported their projects in 2015. However, Zdruzenska is in contact with the local foundation for the purpose of exchanging information and consultation. In recent years, the most significant contributors to the organization’s program budget have been the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation and UN Women.

Akcija Zdruzenska is a member of the International Gender Policy Network.

Center for Research and Policy Making
6 Cico Popovic St., 1000 Skopje
<http://www.crpm.org.mk/>
Contact: Marija Risteska, Executive Director

The Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) was founded in 2004. It engages in policy analysis, seeking to open the policy-making process to citizens, improve laws, assess institutional capacities for their implementation, and monitor and evaluate the extent to which these policies are creating public value and are directed toward the Europeanization of Macedonia.

The Center focuses on the prevention of violent extremism and the analysis of Macedonian politics, good governance, education, the labor market, gender, and a sustainable environment.

CRPM is funded through project activities. Its most significant donors in recent years have been the Council of Europe, various EU funds, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, USAID, and others.

Metamorphosis–Foundation for Internet and Society

40 Apostol Guslarot St., 1000 Skopje

<https://metamorphosis.org.mk/>

Contact: Bardhyl Jashari, Director

Metamorphosis started its work in 1999 as part of the e-publishing program of the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, and became an independent foundation in 2004. The Metamorphosis Foundation works on strengthening the awareness and capacity of citizens and civil society to realize their fullest possible potential as activists for democracy, while supporting government to fulfill its democratic role in serving society. The Foundation's programs focus on institutional openness and accountability, capacity development for active citizenship, upholding human rights online, and media development. FOSM provided institutional support for Metamorphosis until 2017. The local foundation supports projects implemented by Metamorphosis. The organization's activities are supported by various EU funds and USAID as well as other funders. In addition, the Foundation offers services of IT solution development, web content development, and training.

Metamorphosis has developed a wide network of partner organizations, both locally and regionally.

Reactor–Research in Action

18/I Partizanski odredi Blvd., 1000 Skopje

<https://reactor.org.mk/>

Contact: Marija Mashevska, President

Reactor's beginnings date back to 2004 when the organization's founders were part of a training and capacity development project for think-tanks organized by the European Stability Initiative (ESI) and FOSM. Reactor's primary focus and core activity is conducting research in the field gender equality, youth, urban development, and civil society development.

Reactor does not receive any institutional support now. Its activities are funded through projects. FOSM and the OSF Network provided institutional and programmatic support until 2016. In the meantime, Reactor diversified its donor base and expanded its sources of funding. Today, Reactor's activities

are supported by the European Union, Civica Mobilitas, UNICEF, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, and others.

Aqua–Association for Development and Activism

8 Klimetica St., 6330 Struga

<http://akvastruga.mk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/zdruzenie.akva>

Contact: Dimitri Golabovski

The Aqua Association in Struga aims to contribute to local development, local democracy, and civic activism in the region of Struga, Ohrid, and Vevchani. Their work is focused on achieving three goals: increasing the role of civil society in local development and areas of good governance and decision-making, supporting and strengthening youth activism in the local community, and reducing and controlling human impact on the environment. FOSM supported the Association's activities until 2016. The Association is a member of the National Youth Council of Macedonia.

Center for Sustainable Community Development

13 Velko Vlahoviq St., 1025 Debar

<http://cscd.org.mk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/cscddiber/>

Contact: Goce Ljubinovski

The mission of the Center for Sustainable Community Development (CSCD) is mobilizing, connecting, strengthening, and encouraging citizens, including young people and communities, to become active citizens and to participate in decision-making for good governance, better quality of life, sustainable development, and a healthy environment striving toward European values. Its strategic goals are: strengthening the capacity of the civil sector; strengthening cross-border and regional cooperation; and promotion of sustainable use of human, natural, and cultural resources. The main program activities of CSCD are: research, good governance, protection of the environment, promotion of cultural heritage, youth activism, and lobbying. FOSM supported the Center's activities until 2018. Furthermore, the Center participates in different projects aimed at development of local communities. In 2019, the Center's activities were supported by Civica Mobilitas. The Center is a member of ALDA–European Association for Local Democracy.

Focus–Foundation for Local Development and Democracy**2 Solunska, 1400 Veles****<https://focus.org.mk/>****Contact: Ubavka Janevska, Executive Director**

The Focus Foundation for Local Development and Democracy promotes democracy and civil society and contributes to the development of special and economic processes. It develops and supports initiatives based on good governance and responsible citizens. The Foundation realizes the set goals through three program areas: good governance, special and economic process development, and youth.

FOSM supported the activities of Focus until 2017. Furthermore, the organization participates in different projects aimed at development of local communities. In 2019, the Foundation participated in different projects funded by Transparency Macedonia and through various EU funds. The Foundation is a member of ALDA–European Association for Local Democracy and numerous local and national networks.

Local Community Development Foundation, Shtip**66/1 Strasho Pindzur St., 2000 Shtip****<https://frlz.org.mk/>****Contact: Boris Sharkovski, Program Director**

The Local Community Development Foundation Shtip is a nonprofit NGO founded in 2006. Its major program areas are good governance, decentralization, citizens' involvement in public policies, youth, and philanthropy. The Foundation does not receive any institutional support. Its funding is based on project activities. The main contributors to the organization's program budget are USAID, FOSM, and the Global Fund for Community Foundations.

Regional Advocacy Center**Maršal Tito St., TC "Pela", 2320 Delchevo****<http://rcz.delcevo.org.mk/>****<https://www.facebook.com/RegionalenCentarZaZastapuvanjeDelcevorcz/>****Contact: Toni Stoimenovski**

The mission of the Regional Advocacy Center (RAC) is advocacy for and support of the NGO sector in participating in the process of creating policies for effective development of the region, which includes the municipalities of Delchevo, Pehchevo, Berovo, Makedonska Kamenica, Vinica, and Kocani. The mission

of the RAC arises from the need for an organization in the region to support cooperation and networking of the three sectors in the region for ideas and projects, to represent the policies and interests of entities in the region before donors and institutions, to coordinate and inform about cross-border cooperation, and to educate and inform about the European Union. The Center has implemented projects funded by the European Union and the Municipality of Delchevo as recently as 2020.

Regional Center for Sustainable Development, Gevgelija**60 Maršal Tito St., 1480 Gevgelija****Contact: Katica Hadži Nikolova**

The Center's mission is development of civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights through information, education, and support of all actors in civil society. The Center is a member of the National Youth Council of Macedonia.

Regional Center for Sustainable Development, Kratovo**3ta MUB St., 1360 Kratovo****<https://regionalcentar.org.mk/>****www.facebook.com/rcorkratovo/****Contact: Jasmina Davitkovska**

The Regional Center for Sustainable Development (RCSD Kratovo) is a nonprofit NGO based in Kratovo. Its activities cover, besides Kratovo, the following municipalities: Kriva Palanka, Rankovce, Staro Nagorichane, Probishtip, Kumanovo, Kochani and Delchevo. In some of its programs, that cooperation is deepened both at the regional and national level through various networks, platforms, and coalition collaborations with other organizations. FOSM supported the Center's activities until 2017. In 2019, the Center received support from the Ministry of Culture, and in 2020, the Center's activities were supported by Civica Mobilitas.

Youth Entrepreneurial Service Foundation**13b 16ta Makedonska brigade St., 1000 Skopje****<http://www.yes.org.mk/>****Contact: Gabriela Kostovska Bogoeska, Executive Director**

The Youth Entrepreneurial Service Foundation (YES) was established in 2005 as an independent, nonpartisan and nonprofit organization at the initiative of

its two founders: FOSM and the Foundation for Management and Industrial Research. The basic goals set before the organization were to encourage the development of entrepreneurship and the SME sector, create jobs, promote innovation and new technologies, and develop skills of young people and companies.

Today, its major program areas are: developing entrepreneurship and the SME sector; education and employment; stimulating innovation and competitiveness; supporting reform and EU integration processes in Chapter 20: Enterprise and Industrial Policy; and cooperation, growth, and development. The Foundation does not receive any institutional support. YES is funded through project activities. These days, most of the Foundation's activities are supported by the European Commission, the US Embassy, and NORDIC. Additional funds are raised through a business incubator and organizing training. Although YES does not receive financial support from FOSM, it still maintains contact with the local foundation and with other organizations from the OSF Network in an advisory capacity. YES is part of JEUNE–European Network of Young Entrepreneurs, Balkan Network of Incubators, InfoDev, and others.

Association for Local Democracy – Community Center of the Municipality of Struga
Vlado Mileski St., 6330 Struga
<https://ccstruga.mk/>
Contact: Gjoko Mileski

The Community Center of the Municipality of Struga was established by the Municipality of Struga and FOSM to contribute to the active involvement of citizens in the preparation and adoption of local policies and providing quality municipal services. The Center provides legal and administrative assistance to citizens, informal education for young people and adults, and support for youth, civic, and cultural initiatives. FOSM provided institutional support in 2016 and 2017, and continues to support the activities of the Center.

Association for Local Democracy – Community Center of the Municipality of Strumica
37 Blagoj Mučeto St., 2400 Strumica
<http://www.ccstrumica.mk/>
Contact: Mimi Nikolikj

The Association for Local Democracy – Community Center of the Municipality of Strumica was established in 2016. The purpose of the Association is to contribute to the active involvement of the citizens in the preparation and adoption of local policies and in the provision of quality municipal services. The Center provides legal and administrative assistance to citizens, informal education for young people and adults, and support for youth, civic, and cultural initiatives. FOSM provided institutional support in 2016 and 2017, and supported the activities of the Center. The Center is also supported by the Municipality of Strumica.

Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status
Center for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP)	Step by Step	1998	Active
Association for Creative Communication and Debate (ACCD)	Debate	1999	Not formally closed, but inactive for years
Center for Contemporary Arts	SCCA	2000	Inactive
Educational Advising Center	Scholarships	2002	Fully integrated in Belgrade Open School (BOS)
Reconstruction Women's Fund	Women	2004	Active
Center for Applied European Studies (CAES)	European Integration	2007	Active
Center for Education Policy (CEP)	Education	2007	Active

SERBIA

Center for Interactive Pedagogy
30 Drinčićeva St., 11000 Belgrade
<https://www.cipcentar.org/en/>
<https://www.facebook.com/CIPCentar/>
Contact: Milena Mihajlović, Executive Director

The Center for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP) was founded in 1998. It contributes to the development of universally accessible quality education. It promotes

equal rights for everybody; respect of needs, opinions, and choices; respect of individual capabilities; respect of ethnic, national, and cultural heritage and traditions; up-to-date pedagogic practices based on interactive teaching methods; improvement of accessibility of education for children and youth from marginalized groups (especially children and youth with disabilities and Roma children and youth). For the past five years, the Center has been implementing a comprehensive initiative related to early childhood development of Roma children and other vulnerable groups; this has been implemented in a large number of kindergartens in more than 20 cities in Serbia.

The Open Society Foundation Serbia (OSFS) does not provide institutional support to the Center. However, the local foundation and the OSF Early Childhood Program support different projects of the Center. CIP also received support for projects from EU funds.

CIP has very good relationship with the local foundation. They collaborate on different projects and are in regular contact. CIP is a member of ISSA.

**Educational Advising Center
Belgrade Open School (BOS)
117 Bulevar oslobođenja, 11000 Belgrade
<http://www.bos.rs/>
Contact: Milorad Bjeletić, Executive Director**

The Belgrade Open School (BOS) administered different OSI scholarships through the Educational Advising Center (EAC) from 2002 until 2016. The Educational Advising Center was fully integrated into BOS in 2016; however, several OSI scholarship programs are still administered by BOS. BOS does not receive any institutional support from OSFS for activities previously conducted by EAC, and the last programmatic support for these activities was given in 2013. BOS is in contact with OSF Network programs and continues to collaborate with the local foundation on different projects and activities. Aside from the scholarships, BOS has developed a wide range of projects, and they are funded by numerous donors, such as the German Cooperation Agency, SDC, WWF, various public funds, and others.

BOS is a member of numerous national, regional, and international networks, such as WeBER, NISPAcee, etc., and has developed numerous partnerships in the region.

**Reconstruction Women's Fund
6 Braće Baruh St., 11000 Belgrade
www.rwfund.org
Contact: Ana Imširović Djordjević, Operations Manager**

The Reconstruction Women's Fund (RWF) was established in April 2004 as the only local women's foundation. The founders of RWF were the Fund for an Open Society Serbia, Women's Studies and Research (Novi Sad), and Women in Black (Belgrade). At this point, RWF has three program lines and a stipend program: General Support (institutional and activity support for groups the Fund works with regularly); Special Focus (for engaged feminist activism oriented to learning and sharing knowledge on critical issues, communication, and massive campaigns including strong support for diverse marginalized groups—aimed at addressing militarism, nationalism, and racism, their diverse manifestations, causes, and consequences); Rapid Response Grants (for short-term interventions in cases of unforeseen and severe violations of women's human rights); and the Žarana Papić Stipends (support to women activists and academics to improve their access to knowledge and global exchange in the fields related to gender and women's issues).

The Fund receives support from Trag/Oak, the Sigrid Rausing Trust, Prospera-International Network of Women's Funds, Global Fund for Women, and Global Fund for Community Foundations. Usually, the Fund does not apply to open calls or tenders on a project basis. In order to secure sustainability, RWF works on capacity strengthening regarding financial resilience and further development of its local philanthropy program. OSFS has not provided any institutional or program support since 2012. Furthermore, the Fund has an entirely new team that is not personally familiar with the local foundation. However, staff members are aware of previous collaborations and the importance of OSFS for the Fund. In that sense, RWF's staff continues to regard the organization as part of the OSF legacy and appreciates the network of regional partners developed through OSF.

RWF is a member of Prospera-International Network of Women's Funds, and the Foundations for Peace network.

Center for Applied European Studies
31v Njegoševa St., 11000 Belgrade
<https://cpes.org.rs/>
Contact: Jasna Filipović, Director

The Center for Applied European Studies (CPES) focuses on the development and policies of the European Union in its activities, which are research, monitoring in the areas relevant to Serbia's EU accession process, developing policy proposals and implementing advocacy initiatives, and organizing different forms of gatherings of stakeholders in the Europeanization process. In the past five years CEPS did not receive any institutional support from OSFS. Its programmatic activities were regularly supported by the local foundation. Based on information available at the organization's web site, several projects in the period of 2018–2020 were supported by EU–IPA funds and by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Belgrade.

Centre for Education Policy
21/20 Carigradska St., 11000 Belgrade
<http://www.cep.edu.rs/>
Contact: Jasminka Čekić Marković, Director

The Center for Education Policy (CEP) was founded in 2005. It has always responded to the needs of the educational system's stakeholders. Therefore, following a new national strategic goal set by the government (such as EU integration, establishment of a national model of dual education, improving democratic culture in schools, etc.), CEP has expanded its programs accordingly. The Center is active in the following program areas: educational and social inclusion at all levels of education; improvement of interculturalism and democratic cultures in schools; teacher's capacity-building; improvement of the vocational education and training system; higher education; and the national qualification framework and recognition of qualifications. CEP has not had any institutional support since 2014. It is financed through implementation of different projects, which in the last three years have mainly been funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the European Commission, UNICEF, Council of Europe, and Pestalozzi Children's Foundation. OSF provides regular support to the Center's projects. Furthermore, CEP generates revenue through various expert services in the field of education. CEP has a very good relationship with the local foundation. A representative of OSFS was a member of CEP governing board until 2019. The Center acknowledges the importance of the local foundation in becoming a recognized, independent research organization in Serbia.

CEP is a member of the Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC), an international organization that gathers civil society organizations from 19 countries.

Name	Program	Spin-off Year	Status	SLOVENIA
Legal Information Center (PIC)	Law	1997	Active	
Association for Culture and Education KIBLA	Arts and Culture	1998	Active	
Association for Culture and Education PiNA	Open House	1998	Active	
Center for Contemporary Arts (SCCA)	SCCA	1999	Active	
Ljudmila Art and Science Laboratory	Information	1999	Active	
MIRK	Youth	1999	Closed, but its activities integrated in iEARN and Slovenian Olympic Committee	
Myra Locatelli Cultural Association	Arts & Culture	1999	Active	
Palliative Care Development Institute (PCDI)	Public Health	1999	Closed	
Step by Step Centre for Quality in Education	Step by Step	1999	Part of the Educational Research Institute	
Student Resource Center (SRCe)	Education	1999	Active	
Za in Proti (ZIP)	Debate	1999	Closed	

Legal Information Center (PIC)
6 Metelkova St., 1000 Ljubljana
<https://pic.si>
Contact: Katarina Bervar-Sternad, Director

The Legal Information Center (PIC) was initiated by OSI and established by seven NGOs in 1997. It is a legal center for the protection of human rights and the environment. It provides legal support to individuals, vulnerable groups, and NGOs in exercising and protecting their rights and strengthening their position in society. Activities are legal assistance, advocacy, informing,

training, encouraging civil dialogue national and international projects, and involvement in policy-making and decision-making processes. PIC is participating in decision-making processes, working bodies, committees, networks, and forums to advance the position of NGOs in Slovenia and increase their influence on decision-making. PIC encourages socially responsible and active citizenship. The Center is mainly funded from different Slovenian public funds, but also from EU funds, and the EEA and Norway Grants Fund.

PIC is a member of the following networks: Justice and Environment, CNVOS, SLOGA–Slovenian Global Action, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, EUROCHILD, International Detention Coalition.

Association for Culture and Education KIBLA

9 Kneza Koclja St., 2000 Maribor

<http://www.kibla.org/>

Contact: Aleksandra Kostič, President

Multimedia Centre CyberSRCeLab – MMC KIBLA was founded in 1996 as a project of Narodni dom Maribor and OSI–Slovenia with the aim of training computer users from the Maribor area, with free Internet access and information and advisory services. In 1998, MMC KIBLA became the Association for Culture and Education (ACE KIBLA). ACE KIBLA presents, organizes, produces, coproduces, documents, and archives cultural-artistic projects as well as electronic and printed publications. The Association is supported by the Ministry of the Republic of Slovenia for Culture, the Municipality of Maribor, the Employment Service of Slovenia, and EU programs. Over the years, ACE KIBLA has developed a wide network of partners, both local and international.

Association for Culture and Education PiNA

15 Gortanov Square, 6000 Koper

<https://www.pina.si/>

Contact: Vid Tratnik, President

The Association for Culture and Education PiNA was established by OSI–Slovenia in 1998 as the first internet café in Slovenia. To this day, PiNA has served as a meeting point, providing information, exchange, connection, and collaboration in the field of societal challenges. PiNA facilitates dialogue between close and distant realities, while constantly questioning its system of values and its field of action to enable individual and collective growth toward a sustainable, fulfilling, and curious coexistence.

Funding for the organization's activities is project based, with the majority of financing coming from different EU funds, but also the EEA and Norway Grants Fund as well as public funds. Furthermore, PiNA offers expert services to other NGOs.

PiNA is a member of the Network of Multimedia Centers of Slovenia.

SCCA–Ljubljana Center for Contemporary Arts

6 Metelkova St., 1000 Ljubljana

<http://www.scca-ljubljana.si/>

Contact: Dušan Dovč, Director

The SCCA–Ljubljana Center for Contemporary Arts is a successor to the Soros Center for Contemporary Arts – Ljubljana, a program of OSI–Slovenia, established in 1993. It is a flexible and internationally active organization for layering and comprehensively connecting programs and activities in the field of contemporary visual and new media arts. Their activities address artists, curators, theorists, experts, critics, and the general public in the fields of visual and new media arts.

The Center's programs were recently supported by the Municipality of Ljubljana–Department of Culture, the Ministry of Culture, the EU program Creative Europe, the Ministry of Public Administration, Kultura Nova Foundation, and others. SCCA–Ljubljana is a member of numerous networks: IKT, GAMA, network of the Anna Lindh Foundation, On-AiR, InSEEcP, On-the-Move, Asociacija, Kooperativa, Cultural Quarter Tabor. The Center is the promoter of CEC ArtsLink, an international program supporting residences and collaborative projects in cooperation with US organizations and artists.

Ljudmila Art and Science Laboratory

10 Rožmanova St., 1000 Ljubljana

www.ljudmila.org

Contact: Anže Zorman, Head of Office

The Ljudmila Art and Science Laboratory was established in 2010 as a successor to the Ljudmila Ljubljana Digital Media Lab, a program founded by OSI–Slovenia in 1994. The organization, however, lost all contact with the OSF Network after the local foundation office closed in 2000.

Ljudmila's main program areas are new media art production, new media art education and workshops, managing cultural information portals, partaking

in initiatives related to better inclusion in the digital society, and open-source software development. Ljudmila has also been serving as the public lead of Creative Commons Slovenia since 2011.

Ljudmila's work is supported by the Municipality of Ljubljana, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Public Administration, and the EU fund Creative Europe. Ljudmila is a member of the EMAP/EMARE platform, Creative Commons, EASTN-DC, and NVO-VID.

Myra Locatelli Cultural Association

123 Volče, 5220 Tolmin

https://www.facebook.com/myra.locatelli/?ref=page_internal

Contact: Zdravko Duša, President

The Myra Locatelli Cultural Association's starting point in 2000 was the Show Your Tongue International School of Scriptwriting which was founded by OSI in 1997. Later on, its program developed some new initiatives that aim to connect different artistic and literary forms, and above all to develop them into interesting projects. It is located in the Lukatelova House in Volče. It organizes book promotions and round tables, publishes books, and is dedicated to updating village traditions. The Association has different programs; one of them is the Lukatelce Festival of ethno music. The Festival's maxim is "more like a fiesta than a festival." Some of the projects are funded by the Volče Local Community and the Tolmin Municipality. The Association has a strong international network of partners.

Step by Step Center for Quality in Education

62 Gerbičeva St., 1000 Ljubljana

<http://www.korakzakorakom.si/>

Contact: Jerneja Jager, Head of Center

Step by Step Center for Quality in Education (formerly known as the Developmental Research Center for Pedagogical Initiatives Step by Step) has been operating under the auspices of the Educational Research Institute since 1997. The Step by Step program was initiated by OSI-Slovenia in 1994.

The Center aims at high-quality education and the initiation of changes in the educational system through professional development of early childhood education and care (ECEC) practitioners and primary school teachers. Its activities are based on equal opportunities, principles of democratic civil society, children's and parents' rights, contemporary knowledge of the child's devel-

opment and learning, and different influences on them. Special attention is dedicated to vulnerable groups. Activities of the Center are funded by Erasmus+ Program of EU as well as OSF, the Jacobs Foundation, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and others. The Step by Step Center for Quality in Education is a member of ISSA.

Student Resource Center

4 Kerstnikova St., 1000 Ljubljana

<https://www.svetovalnica.com/>

The Student Resource Center (SRCE) is part of the University of Ljubljana Student Organization, the SOU. The Center provides legal and social services and counseling for studying abroad, living in the SRCE Student House and the m2 student-housing-rental agency and online bulletin board. It offers young people comprehensive support on their educational journey.

Za in Proti

24 Svetosavska St., 1000 Ljubljana

<http://www.zainproti.si>

<https://www.facebook.com/zainproti/>

Contact: Miha Andric

The Institute for the Culture of Dialogue "Za in proti" (ZIP) was founded in 1998. It grew out of the Debate Program launched in 1996 by OSI. ZIP ("za in proti" means pro et contra, for and against) wants to contribute to a higher level of the culture of dialogue in Slovenia and to increase the active participation of young people. The Institute receives support from different EU funds, most recently from Erasmus KA2.



Open Society Foundations Spending in the Balkans 1991-2021

The financial information of OSF spending in the Balkans has been prepared by OSF's International Finance and Budget Office teams in close collaboration with the financial directors from the National foundations.

It is important to note that it was not easy to collect financial information for the past three decades. Since a 30-year reporting period greatly exceeds statutory data retention requirements, most of the original records were already archived and are only available in summarized form. In addition, during the three decades many different financial systems were used locally and throughout the whole OSF Network while the definition of data categories (region, country, program, foundation) have changed significantly.

There are four different group of years with different data sets:

These were the hardest years to report on. The information for these years remains in various documents and correspondence, much of that stored in the national foundation and OSF archives. A number of large expenditures in the region during this period included humanitarian aid efforts, projects during the siege of Sarajevo, help in medicine and medical equipment, scholarships (supplementary grants to the students from the former Yugoslavia), higher education program initiatives, independent media outreach, arts and culture programs, major human rights activities, etc., as explained in the section on Foundations' Activities.

1991-1996

These years were presented with the help of high level (summary) spending data on National Foundations' activity collected from annual reports that were published by OSF.

1994-1996

In this period two sets of data exist: (1) high level (summary) spending data and (2) data collected from annual reports that were published by OSF. The hub office spending represents summary information that was migrated from the previous accounting system. The figures were tied back to previous financial reports or publications on a high level, therefore these reports show a relatively accurate picture of the activity in the region.

1997-2011

The detailed spending data on National Foundations and hub offices exists from the current accounting system.

2012-2020

In spite of these gaps in the accounting system of the past, the financial information here presents a fairly accurate picture of the total OSF spending in the region.

Geography	Albania	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Kosovo	North Macedonia	Serbia	Croatia	Montenegro	Slovenia
Foundaton	Open Society Foundation for Albania	Open Society Fund Bosnia & Herzegovina	Kosovo Foundation for an Open Society	Foundation Open Society-Macedonia	Open Society Foundation Serbia	Open Society Institute Croatia	Open Society Institute Montenegro	Open Society Institute Slovenia
	annual expenditure ¹ in million US dollars	-II-	-II-	-II-	-II-	-II-	-II-	-II-
1991	-	-	-	-	0.36	-	-	-
1992	-	-	-	-	3.52	-	-	-
1993	-	3.01	-	3.65	11.53	4.90	-	2.98
1994	2.83	4.72	-	6.94	10.54	4.66	-	2.92
1995	2.81	6.78	-	5.30	11.18	5.84	-	3.70
1996	2.09	8.87	-	4.51	16.16	8.07	-	3.76
1997	12.85	7.89	-	4.57	14.81	8.86	-	4.57
1998	5.33	7.54	-	5.43	8.92	6.97	0.26	4.30
1999	5.36	6.03	0.85	6.20	6.48	5.22	1.89	2.55
2000	5.31	2.46	2.60	4.68	6.56	3.81	2.08	-
2001	5.15	4.06	2.66	4.54	5.27	4.62	1.21	-
2002	5.64	4.97	2.54	5.53	4.97	1.03	1.65	-
2003	4.99	4.57	2.86	4.75	3.99	1.09	1.65	-
2004	3.83	3.40	2.49	4.85	3.77	1.50	1.35	-
2005	2.81	2.89	2.27	3.76	3.87	0.40	1.29	-
2006	1.72	2.69	2.10	3.10	4.21	-	1.66	-
2007	1.79	3.11	2.44	3.40	5.18	-	1.68	-
2008	3.24	3.47	2.18	4.04	5.14	-	1.70	-
2009	1.67	3.28	3.10	4.01	7.28	-	1.07	-
2010	3.13	3.80	4.05	4.64	5.75	-	0.44	-
2011	3.00	4.79	3.09	5.41	4.55	-	0.07	-
2012	2.73	4.19	1.96	5.75	4.44	-	0.22	-
2013	2.51	3.21	1.87	4.40	3.35	-	-	-
2014	1.89	3.49	1.79	3.83	4.22	-	-	-
2015	2.27	2.45	1.90	3.55	3.58	-	-	-
2016	2.20	2.80	2.18	4.03	3.82	-	-	-
2017	2.28	2.61	1.90	3.51	3.48	-	-	-
2018	2.47	2.66	2.12	3.97	3.93	-	-	-
2019	3.86	2.76	2.38	4.26	3.91	-	-	-
2020	2.58	2.84	3.66	3.59	175	57	18	25
total:	96	115	53	126				
total for the period, in million US dollars		665.6						

notes:

- 1 source of data: year 1991-1993: Foundation local records; years 1994-2010: annual reports of the Foundation; years 2011-2020: management reports submitted to OSF. 2020 data was updated on 11 February 2021. Data includes spending against Foundation's own budget and thematic programs spending through the local Foundation.
- 2 OSF Albania's 1995-1999 figures also include spending incurred for Albania Education Development Project (AEDP). Year 2020 includes data for the period January – September.

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2001

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Sotiraq Guga
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Iris Luarasi



2003

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2019

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Gent Ibrahim
Arta Ibrahim Alibašić
Anila Iliazi
Xhuljeta Imami
Agim Isaku
Prenda Ismaili
Llazar Jorganxhi
Geron Kamberi
Ilda Kekezi
Alketa Klosi
Edlira Kovaçi

Enkeleda Kuka
Mimoza Laku
Blerta Lala (Skëndaj)
Silva Lalo
Çerçiz Loloçi
Keti Luarasi
Gentian Lula
Valbona Mane (Çarçani)
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Merita Marku
Artur Metani
Hilda Mezini
Brunilda Milkani
Albert Milo
Bardhyl Minxhozi
Pirro Misha
Vjollca Muça
Bihane Mustafaj
Avni Mustafaj
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Fron Nazi
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Juliana Olldashi
Besa Ombashi
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Olsi Rama
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Srebren Dizdar



2003

Jakob Finci
Milivoj Gagro
Gavriilo Grahovac
Mehmed Halilović
Mario Hibert

Dženana Husremović
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Mladen Ivanić
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Zlatiborka Popov-Momčinović
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1996

Sevima Sali-Terzić
Avdo Sofradžija
Selma Spahić
Franjo Topić
Perica Vidić



2012

Ugo Vlasisavljević
 Senad Zaimović
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 Edin Zubčević
 Miodrag Živanović

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 Vjeran Zuppa

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1995

Dražen Čolak
 Siniša Dvornik
 Srdjan Dvornik
 Danica Eterović
 Nikola Gamilec
 Simona Goldstein
 Milijan Ivezić
 Tomislav Jakić
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 Zlatko Klanac
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Pandora Pijović
 Nikolina Punek
 Tin Radovani
 Biljana Radulović Tatomir
 Dražen Rajković
 Tomislav Reškovac
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1996

Vladimir Šobat
 Darija Stantić
 Darko Tot
 Drago Vručinić
 Branko Vuković

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 Vjosa Dobruna
 Donika Emini
 Argjentina Grazhdani
 Venera Hajrullahu Gjyljeta Mushkolaj



2000

Amir Haxhikadrija
 Enver Hoxhaj
 Valdete Idrizi
 Snežana Karadžić
 Goran Lazić
 Mimika Loshi
 Artan Loxha
 Nita Luci
 Shkëlzen Maliqi
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2000



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1996



1998



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1996



1997



2011

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1995



1997



2018

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 Gordana Krstić
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 Ivan Levi
 Mary Frances Lindstrom
 Isadora Opačić
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 Richard Simon
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1991



1992



1993

Balkan Regional Perspective

Over the thirty years of work in the Balkans, the national foundations and their Board and staff members worked together among themselves on many programs and projects and used various opportunities to meet, exchange experiences, learn from each other and start and jointly implement various regional initiatives. The regional perspective and collaboration have always been an important part of the national foundations' strategies. The Balkan Regional Office at the OSF New York helped coordinate those efforts. Together, they addressed the most challenging and difficult issues related to European integration, which as a political process also involves different layers of civil society in the Balkans. Those efforts included processes that support civil society and reform initiatives that might achieve the potential of European accession through the respect for rule of law, freedom of expression, human rights, the promotion of arts and culture, etc.

The regional aspect of that work provided a holistic view and grasp of the European continent, with a focus on countries that are still on the periphery of the European Union but are very much an integral part of Europe and its



1998



1998



2019

future. Through the regional focus within various initiatives, over the years, the national foundations managed to support accountability to Europe's multilevel democracy, through coordination and assistance on advocacy for the national foundations in European capitals as well as Brussels, Washington, D.C., and other multilateral and diplomatic missions based in the Balkans.

In order to strengthen connections between the national foundations, especially among the Board and staff members, throughout the years, various regional meetings were held, either as a part of larger OSF gatherings (jamborees in Budapest, London, Istanbul, etc.) or specially focused fora for the Board and/or staff of the national foundations that took place in many parts of the region – from Ljubljana, Dubrovnik, Budapest, Istanbul, Tirana, Belgrade, Skopje, Pristina, to Berlin, Novi Sad, etc. These meetings, carefully planned and implemented with the other parts of the OSF Network and including the most senior OSF leadership, as well as guests from outside the network, were a crucial part of the national foundations' strategic thinking and an essential laboratory of ideas for further actions.

Photographs of the national foundations' Board and staff members in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia are from the private Beka Vučo archive.

Over the three decades of work in the Western Balkans, we have lost many of our dear colleagues, members of the governing boards of our national foundations as well as staff members. At this time, when we are marking this important anniversary of OSF's work, we dedicate this page in the book to those who are not with us anymore. We value their work, their unconditional contribution, their commitment and desire to the cause of building a more democratic and just society. We remember their courage, their wisdom and efforts, their friendship, love and collegiality.

They will always remain one salient part of the Open Society Foundations' work in the region.

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IN MEMORIAM

30
YEARS

Donor Organizations in the Balkans

Donor Organizations in the Balkans

Open Society Foundations have cooperated with many private, governmental and local donors in advancing their mission in the Balkans. During the past three decades, the donor community active in the Balkans changed – some donors were active only during certain periods, while some others joined at a later stage. The OSF's Western Balkans Office undertook two mapping exercises that produced studies on donors active in the Balkans that were promoted at Donors Forums convened in 2016 and 2019. The First Donors Forum 2016 was organized in cooperation between OSF and the European Fund for the Balkans in Belgrade, Serbia. The second Donors Forum was held in September 2019 in Skopje, North Macedonia and brought together representatives of over 70 donor organizations active in the Balkans. The following is the list of donors active in the Balkans with whom OSF works and/or cooperated in the past.

Private Foundations and Networks

Institution / Organisation

- Ariadne Network
- Balkan Trust for Democracy
- BHF Bank Stiftung
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- Civil Rights Defenders
- DAFNE Network
- ERSTE Foundation
- European Climate Foundation
- European Cultural Foundation
- European Foundation Centre
- European Fund for the Balkans
- FRIDA Young Feminist Fund
- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
- Friedrich Naumann Stiftung
- Heinrich Böll Stiftung
- International Republican Institute
- KfW Stiftung
- King Baudouin Foundation
- Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
- Körber Stiftung
- Kvinna till Kvinna
- Mama Cash
- National Democratic Institute
- National Endowment for Democracy
- Oak Foundation
- Olof Palme International Center
- Pestalozzi Children's Foundation
- Porticus
- Robert Bosch Stiftung
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- Roma Education Fund
- Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung
- Schüler Helfen Leben
- Sigrid Rausing Trust

- Trust for Mutual Understanding
- Vehbi Koc Foundation
- Westminster Foundation for Democracy
- Zeit-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius

Bilateral / Governmental / Foreign State funding

Institution / Organisation

- Austrian Development Agency
- British Council
- Embassies of Austria in each of the Balkan countries
- Embassies of United Kingdom in each of the Balkan countries
- Canadian International Development Agency
- Embassies of Canada in each of the Balkan countries
- Embassies of Denmark in each of the Balkan countries
- Embassies of Finland in each of the Balkan countries
- Embassies of France in each of the Balkan countries
- German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)
- Embassies of Germany in each of the Balkan countries
- Netherlands' Fund for Regional Partnership – MATRA
- Embassies of the Netherlands in each of the Balkan countries
- Royal Norwegian Embassies in each of the Balkan countries
- Swedish International Development

- Royal Norwegian Embassies in each of the Balkan countries
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- Embassies of Sweden in each of the Balkan countries
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- Embassies of Switzerland in each of the Balkan countries
- United States Agency for International Development
- Embassies of the United States of America in each of the Balkan countries

Multilateral Funders / Regional Organizations

Institution / Organisation

- Council of Europe
- EU Delegations in each of the Balkan countries
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
- European Commission
- European Endowment for Democracy
- Global Environmental Fund
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
- Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)
- Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- UN WOMEN
- World Bank
- World Health Organization (WHO)

Local Philanthropy

Institution / Organisation

- Catalyst Balkans
- Forum for Civic Initiatives
- Foundation Ana and Vlade Divac
- Foundation Hemofarm
- Foundation Jelena Šantić
- Foundation Novak Djoković
- Foundation Slavko Ćuruvija
- Fund B92
- Fund for Active Citizenship (fAKT)
- Group 484
- Hastor Foundation
- Heartefact Foundation
- HORUS Foundation
- Kosovar Civil Society Foundation
- Mozaik Foundation
- National Coalition for Decentralization
- Partners Albania for Change and Development
- Smart kolektiv
- Trag Foundation
- Tuzla Community Foundation
- Zajecar Initiative

30
YEARS

Photo-Bibliography

Photo-Bibliography

Photography plays an important role in this book. Due to its very nature, photography has impacted the way we remember things from the past—from global events to domestic and familiar occurrences. The photographs chosen convey objective information through the visual capture of things as they were. These images by well-known photographers or shots of important installations by exceptional artists throughout the Balkans have shaped the way we see and understand things in the region.

This section gives background and context for all the photographs in the book.



DAMIR ŠAGOLJ

A Bosnian refugee child wipes the blackboard in a joint first-through fourth-grade class located in an one-room school in a camp built between a coal mine and its waste heap near the town of Banovići. As Bosnia and Herzegovina negotiates its way to the EU, a group of refugees from the Serb part of the country still live in primitive shelters waiting to return to their pre-war homes.



MILOMIR KOVAČEVIĆ STRAŠNI

This 1992 photograph of children on the shrapnel-damaged truck-cab parked in front of the Youth Theatre in Sarajevo is part of the series Children in War, and was exhibited at the Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo in 2016. The photograph, warm and charming, gives an inside view of the city during the difficult and tumultuous times of war. In spite of all the dangers the children faced and experienced during the siege of Sarajevo, they remained children – thirsting for games, friends and escape from the cellars and bunkers where they were safe but secluded. The children's clothes are shabby, they look malnourished, they are surrounded by the war's brutality – but they smile broadly with happy faces – glad to be photographed... perhaps hoping the photo will reach some foreign newspaper or TV showing the other side of the war..

VESNA PAVLOVIĆ

Fabrics of Socialism (2012-2018) is a photographic project based on an archive of images of the Museum of Yugoslav History in Belgrade, Serbia. The archive is the visual record of Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito's career and his travels around former Yugoslavia and the world. It represents a psychological portrait of an era, pointing to the role of spectacle in state ideology through the lens of photographic representation. Personal and individual experience is juxtaposed with the collective memory. The work frames and questions the monumentality of the socialist vision in a country that witnessed a decade of wars soon after the president died.



GORANKA MATIĆ

At a 1992 Belgrade antiwar event organized by the Civil Resistance Movement and many other nongovernmental organizations, the participants protested against the aggression towards Bosnia and Herzegovina and the devastation of Sarajevo and other towns and villages in the country. About 100,000 citizens carried a black ribbon, 1,300 meters long, from the Palace Albania to Slavija Square as a symbol of compassion and mourning for the victims of war. They sent a message to the citizens of Sarajevo: "We are with you." They also warned that in Sarajevo, people were dying not only from bombing and snipers, but also from hunger, and that children, the sick, and the elderly were the most vulnerable. The demonstrators demanded the evacuation of those endangered as well as the delivery of food and medicine.





AIDA ŠEHOVIĆ

Što te Nema – Why Are You Not Here? – is a participatory public art project by Aida Šehović dedicated to collective memory of the Srebrenica Genocide. The project began as a one-time performance in 2006 with 923 collected porcelain coffee cups (*fildžans*), one for each victim, and evolved into an annual nomadic monument that traveled the world for 15 years before returning home to Srebrenica with more than 8,372 cups in 2020. During each annual iteration every July 11th, visitors and passers-by are invited to fill the collected cups with Bosnian coffee prepared on site in memory of the victims.

GORANKA MATIĆ

Serbian strongman Slobodan Milošević was sworn in on Wednesday, July 23, 1997, as President of Federal Republic Yugoslavia, thus fulfilling his ambition to remain paramount ruler of the troubled Balkan state. More than 3,000 opponents protested outside the Federal Parliament. Barred from standing again as Serbia's president, having already served the maximum two terms allowed under the constitution, Milošević needed the Yugoslav presidency to maintain his grip on power.

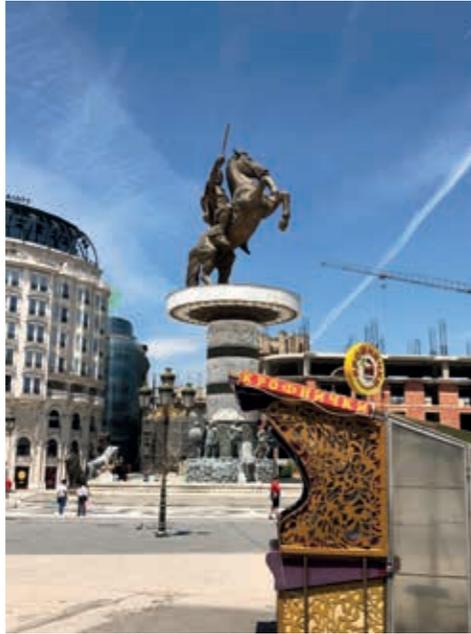
Jelena Šantić, by vocation a ballerina, was also one of the most prominent peace activists in Serbia and the Balkans. From 1991 Jelena organized many peace demonstrations, initiated numerous NGO-cooperation networks in the region and was a leader in refugee relief and reconciliation projects among opposing parties. After her death in 2000, her daughter founded the Jelena Šantić Foundation, continuing her legacy.

PAVO URBAN

The siege of Dubrovnik was a military engagement fought between the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and Croatian forces defending the city of Dubrovnik and its surroundings during the Croatian War of Independence. The JNA started its advance on 1 October 1991, and by late October, it had captured virtually all the land between the Pelješac and Prevlaka peninsulas on the coast of the Adriatic Sea. The actual bombardment of Dubrovnik, including that of the Old Town—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—culminated on 6 December 1991. Pavo Urban, a photographer from Dubrovnik, had been photographing attacks on Dubrovnik since October 1991. On December 6, he was in the area of the Old Town, taking photographs on the main street Stradun, when he died from one of the shells. He was 23 years old.

The rights to publish his photographs in this book were given to Beka Vučo by Pavo's mother, Mirjana Urban.





BEKA VUČO

Skopje 2014 was a project financed by the Macedonian government, led by the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE party, with the official purpose of giving the capital Skopje a more classical appeal, a massive revamp of the city. The project, officially announced in 2010, consisted mainly of the construction of colleges, museums and government buildings, as well as the erection of monuments depicting historical figures from history. The project was seen as politically controversial in its nature and as a nation-building endeavor, a 'fabrication of heritage and history' as it tried to further impose the narrative of Macedonian history, promoting a Macedonian identity with unbroken continuity from antiquity through the Middle Ages to modern times. Skopje 2014 has also generated controversy for its cost: estimates range from 80 to 500 million euros.



DAMIR ŠAGOLJ

A Catholic man prays at the site where the Virgin Mary reportedly appeared in an apparition in Medjugorje, 120 km south of Sarajevo. Millions of pilgrims from all over the world have visited the small Bosnian town after six Bosnian youngsters claimed that the Holy Mary appeared to them there over thirty years ago.

SELMA SELMAN

Together with my family I performed "Mercedes Matrix" where I use art as a tool for transforming the value of an act of labor and art. In this work, art becomes a tool to question the labor of my family and my labor as an artist. The same acts of labor which are performed are simultaneously executed for my own survival as well as being executed by and for the survival of my family. The mechanism of these artworks transforms the living reality of my parents and the possible function of art, while fusing the work and reward of laborers and artists. When this labor is recycled back into the domain of art, it gains value as an artwork, and shows art's potential to transmute value just as my family transmuted the value of scrap metal as a method of commerce, proving the equal potential for transformative actions in any body.





ALBAN BUJARI

The photo was taken at The Long Bazaar in the town of Peja a couple of days after the war ended and the Italian contingent of KFOR disembarked in the region. The town was heavily damaged by the operations of the Serbian security forces. The Long Bazaar, built during Ottoman rule, was almost completely destroyed. It was later reconstructed, largely with international assistance.



Following the massacre of civilians in the village of Prekazi i ulet (Donji Prekaz), 200,000 people took to the streets of Kosovo's capital, Pristina, to protest against the Serbian state security forces. Their motto was "Kosovo for Drenica," and their banners proclaimed for the world to hear: "NATO, where are you?"; "Stop the Serbian terror!"; "Kosovo has no terrorists"; "Please stop the Serbian crime." This was the largest protest organized in Kosovo ever, with simultaneous protests taking place in other Kosovo towns, totaling over half a million people. At Prekazi i ulet, 54 members of the Jashari family were killed, including KLA commander Adem Jashari.

DENIS LUKA SARKIĆ

The 'erased' is the name used for a group of people in Slovenia that remained without legal status after the country declared independence in 1991. Erasure affected all citizens of other former Yugoslav republics who had not obtained Slovenian citizenship, mostly people of non-Slovene or mixed ethnicity. Many of them had been born in Slovenia or had lived there for many years and were not aware they needed to apply for citizenship of the new state. The status of the 'erased' has been a major human rights concern for many years. The erasure from the register of permanent residents was an arbitrary act by administrative bodies and did not have any basis in Slovene law. The issue was brought before the European Commission, which stated that it does not have jurisdiction over such matters. Some of the affected made a collective appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg, claiming that "the cancellation is a European problem, because it violates fundamental human rights provided by the EU Convention." In 2012 the Grand Chamber of the ECHR decided the case in favor of some applicants. Less than half of the claimants were able to regain permanent residence status, and only they were entitled to compensation under the ad hoc scheme set up through the 2012 ECHR judgment. This means that more than a half of all erased people never received any kind of redress from the state. There are still erased people living in Slovenia who do not have any kind of legal status. The authorities have still not officially apologised for the erasure.





ŠEJLA KAMERIĆ

With the public installation EU/OTHERS in downtown Ljubljana, on the Triple Bridge (Tromostovlje), where hundreds of pedestrians pass by daily, Šejla Kamberić thematises one of the most momentous pairs of opposites in current sociopolitical geography. Signs above the walkway replicated the actual border control division of travelers into either EU Citizens or Others.

If one were to look back, however, they would realize the signs were double-sided, and any chosen path was absurdly opposite in the other direction.

“Europeans. Lost identities. Who are those ‘OTHERS’? Is the border the place where we should find out who we are?” The artwork EU/OTHERS was produced for Manifesta 3 – the European Biennial of Contemporary Art, 2000. Today the installation is in the permanent collection of the Tate Modern in London.

MAJA BAJEVIĆ

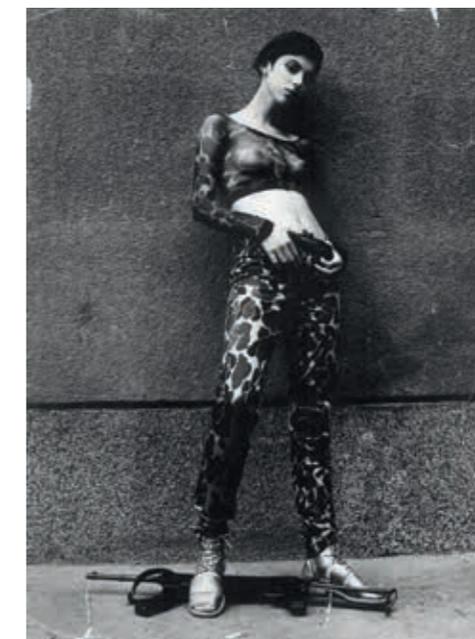
The Sites of Memory series extends the author’s personal reflection on important sites of post-WWII Yugoslavia. Personal history is set against the backdrop of collective memory. Archival images in the series are subjected to a sequence of interventions such as digital scanning and hand stitching of images printed on fabric. Passage of time is obscured both by the strategies of representation and the material itself. Archives accumulate as do memories. Critically engaging them through transformations offers a second look at the past.

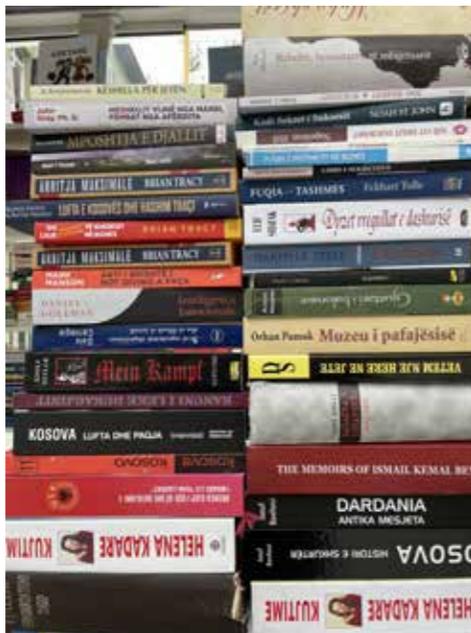


ŠEJLA KAMERIĆ

The black and white photograph Behind The Scenes (2019) is a self-portrait. The artist is a teenage model, wearing camouflage-printed designer clothing and posing with a machine gun.

“This photo was taken during the hardest and most brutal part of my life. But the image shows something else. We try to imply deception in which our mind constantly functions. The culture we live in gives us the guidelines – points of understanding or total misunderstanding. I wonder what exactly do we see and what do we want to see from the vastness of images that are being imposed on us on an everyday basis. How can we understand the complexity of our own reality? Truth creates fiction. Fiction shows the truth.”





BEKA VUČO

Along the main walking street Mother Teresa Boulevard, in Pristina, an abundance of small, easily put together stalls with books for sale can be found. Those book stalls, some home made and improvised, carry a variety of books of all sorts of topics, in mostly Albanian and also English language editions can be found – as well as many textbooks and books for children. Some books are second hand, some brand new. The written word and the book itself (to be held in hand) is still rather popular – although the internet (E-books and E-papers) has moved fast into daily life, especially with the Kosovar youth. The booksellers compete for customers by piling the books high (with absolutely no thematic order) or by arranging them on tables, chairs, boxes... easy for a buyer to choose among the many titles.

THE FERAL TRIBUNE AND MEDIA CENTER

The Feral Tribune was a satirical weekly newspaper from Split, Croatia, published from 1993 to 2008. "During the entire time The *Feral Tribune* existed, it preserved spirit, wit, lucidity while saving democracy, and it inspired that marvelous feeling of defiance to the vulgar world and all forms of tyranny and subjugation. *Feral* freed us from fear yet also alarmed us about what was coming and what did, indeed, come." A quote from 'Turned Off Lights in the Balkan Pub,' the introductory text to the digitalized edition of the Feral Tribune by Mirko Kovač.

GORAN BASARIĆ

RTV B92, or simply B92, is a Serbian news station and television and radio broadcaster with national coverage headquartered in Belgrade, Serbia. It was founded in May 1989 as a predominantly youth-oriented station on 92.5 MHz FM. It was a rare outlet for Western news and information in Yugoslavia under Slobodan Milošević, and was a force behind many demonstrations that took place in Belgrade during the turbulent 1990s. Over time it became a national station with a wide audience. On 6 October 2000, the day following the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević, RTV B92 started a Serbian commercial TV station called TV B92. B92 TV won the MTV Free Your Mind award in 1998 as well as many other awards for journalism and human rights advocacy.





ANRI SALA

Edi Rama was the mayor of Tirana, Albania, in 2000-2011. An artist by vocation, he initiated a program of urban transformation that involved painting the city's buildings in vivid colors. The bleak, gray, post-Communist city became a colorful European capital with vibrant hues of hope for the future. In 2003, Anri Sala, a well-known Albanian-born artist, produced the film *Dammi i Colori*, which consists of scenes of the city with Rama reflecting on his regeneration project in voice-over.

"The question here is that color has an impact first of all on the breathing of the city, the intensification of the rhythm of its breathing, the breaking of a dust screen, the creation of a new time and the setting of a new time pace for the city. It is much more than the color one would want his building; therefore, I think that quite unconsciously those who do not like the coloring of the city, but who want the process to continue, affirm precisely this, that this is not a question of taste, but a question of choice in relation not to the color as a picturesque element, but in relation to the need to give the city new breathing space."



ANRI SALA

Untitled (ball+lion), 2000
Colour photograph mounted on aluminium
dimensions: 79 x 109,5 cm
edition of 5+2 AP
Courtesy: Esther Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich

GORAN BORIČIĆ

In recent years, Montenegro has increased its efforts to implement preventive and legislative measures needed to curb corruption. However, corruption remains a serious problem in the country. The European Commission finds in its annual Progress Report that efficiency in the fight against corruption is constrained by frequent legislative changes and the lax attitude among law enforcement authorities to investigate corruption allegations, especially those involving high-level officials. Citizens and NGO activists are the ones who are expressing lack of tolerance for the daily pressure of corruption on their lives with many organized protests and various actions. This photo is from the protest organized in Podgorica in 2012 against the former regime featuring the banner: "The wick is short."



GORANKA MATIĆ

Organized by the French non-governmental organization Transeuropean, during the months of May and June of 2002, a group of women activists from the Balkans crossed all the borders of former Yugoslavia and Albania. Goranka Matić was among them and remembers those days:

'These crossings happened several years after our wars. A bus was full of women of all generations from all our new countries. Each border crossing was a new experience, with or without visas and with relatively friendly border officers. This crossing from Montenegro into Croatia on Debeli brijeg was one of the merrier. I was growing up in this space without borders'.





BEKA VUČO

The Old Jewish Cemetery in Sarajevo is located on the slopes of Trebević mountain, in the Kovačići-Debelo Brdo area, in the southwestern part of the city. From the entrance to the cemetery one can see the panorama of downtown Sarajevo during the war years.



DENIS IMAMOVIĆ

A current view of downtown Sarajevo from the Old Jewish Cemetery.



BEKA VUČO

Karmen Bašić, the Executive Director of the Open Society Institute Croatia, and Zdravko Grebo, Founder and President of the Board of the Fund for Open Society Bosnia and Herzegovina. The photograph was taken at a dinner in the Hotel Esplanade in Zagreb on the occasion of a visit by George Soros to Croatia on January 4, 1993.

MIDHAT MUJKIĆ

Sarajevo Red Line was a memorial event for 11,541 women, men and children killed during the 1992–1996 Siege of Sarajevo. The installation consisted of 11,541 red chairs placed along a one-kilometer stretch of Sarajevo's main street, running through the center of Sarajevo like a river of blood. It is estimated that more than 100,000 people visited the installation during a day long exhibition on 6 April 2012, the 20th anniversary of the beginning of the siege. Installation and concept by Haris Pašović and East West Center, Sarajevo.





MLADEN PIKULIĆ

A boy playing tennis on the grounds of the former Yugoslav Army 'Marshal Tito' barracks in downtown Sarajevo. He and his peers were not even born in 1992, when to drive by these barracks at full speed was like playing Russian roulette. Happily, the war games have been replaced by sports games.

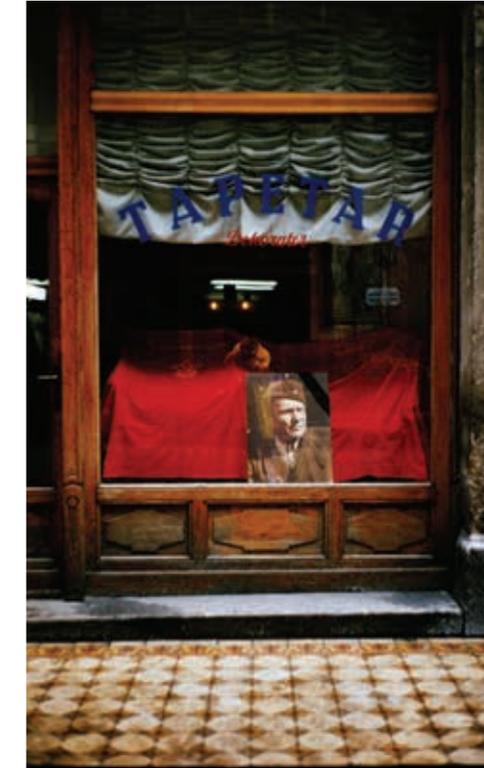


GORANKA MATIĆ

A scene from the first protest, on March 9, 1991, against the rule of Slobodan Milošević, particularly the misuse of Radio Television Belgrade. The protest was organized by Vuk Drašković's Serbian Renewal Movement, an opposition party. Two people died in the ensuing violence, and the government then ordered the army onto city streets with tanks. The next day, protests drew large and diverse crowds, including supporters of other opposition parties. The protests ended on March 14th and the government replaced the director of state-run TV as well as the minister of internal affairs.

GORANKA MATIĆ

"On the afternoon of May 4th [1980], I planned to go to the movie-house Zvezda on Terazije Street. I saw a strange scene on the streets of Belgrade, where private cars were being stopped by soldiers, who then entered the cars... In front of the movie-house the guy was changing the poster announcing the film I wanted to see. What is happening, I asked. Tito died, he said. The following day I saw that shop windows throughout the city were displaying Tito's photo with a black ribbon. I could not resist and started photographing."



MAJA MEDIĆ

The bilingual production—in both Albanian and Serbian—of *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's famous story of warring families, was produced in 2015. This production was a collaboration between two local NGOs: Quendra Multimedia (Multimedia Center) from Pristina, Kosovo (led by artistic director Jeton Neziraj), and Radionica Integracije (Integration Workshop) from Belgrade, Serbia. The production, directed by the well-known actor/director Miki Manojlović, who also leads the Belgrade NGO, and performed by a tight-knit group of outstanding actors from both Kosovo and Serbia, represents a unique and powerful collaboration—a chance for Serbs and Albanians to come together to create a piece of art that shows how love and understanding can triumph over centuries of hate, division, and war.





BLERINA B. LILA

Children playing in the kindergarten 'Babies and Toddlers' in Pristina, Kosovo. Open Society's Step by Step early education reform program was launched in 1994, and developed as an independent initiative in Kosovo from 1999. Since then, the program has reached more than 6,000 teachers of preschool and primary schools by introducing to them learning through play and community engagement. Most preschool institutions in Kosovo have been included in the network of institutions that apply the 'Step by Step' methodology. Funding for the delivery of the 'Step by Step' training was raised from various sources, including the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), municipalities and OSI and its partners' sources. In recent years, the 'Step by Step' program has been focused on raising educators' competencies and the quality of preschool services based on ISSA principles (Competences) which have been recognized in an official document by the Ministry of Education.



MARTINA ŠALOV

The first Sarajevo Pride was held on September 8, 2019, despite conservative and right-wing pressure. Sarajevo has rarely seen so many smiling faces as nearly 2,000 people joined the LGBTIQ community while some citizens waved and greeted the parade from their windows. Sarajevo had a history of violence targeting LGBTIQ events in 2008 and 2014, but this time there was not a single incident. The main organizer, Sarajevo Open Center, and the Pride Committee did their best to enable a smooth and joyful festival of freedom.



ROBIN HAMMOND

36 year old Luka at the 'Center for Community Services' (the Center) with Director Ladislav Lamza in Osijek, Croatia. Luka suffered brain damage from a high fever when he was three. He was placed in state care at seven. He was sent to the Center and never adjusted to life there. He ran through glass windows or doors chasing staff with bricks or being chased himself, many times. When the Director was not present, staff would tie him to his bed. As part of a program led by the Center to move people into the community, he and others moved to a house with 24-hour support in 2014. Since living there he's much calmer. Too many people with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities are still institutionalized in Croatia, often for life. There is an urgent need to continue developing services in communities so that everyone can take their rightful place in society.





VANČO DŽAMBASKI

Each year on December 17th the Association for Support of Marginalized Workers – STAR – organizes marches to celebrate the International Day to STOP Violence against Sex Workers and to call attention to hate crimes committed against sex workers all over the globe.



OPRE ROMA SERBIA

On August 8, 2018, in Belgrade an organized protest took place as a reaction to the oppression and violence against the Roma in Ukraine and Italy. The protest began in front of the two embassies and took the activists along the main streets of the city. The protest was organized by the young Roma movement that was established with the support of Open Society Foundations' Roma Program, including many students who were supported by the Roma Educational Program.



VANČO DŽAMBASKI

Protests against Macedonia's Draft Law on Abortion that contained the most intrusive provisions in terms of human rights. The ruling majority in the Parliament adopted the Law in fast-track procedure, unrelentingly ignoring protests.

DONA KOSTURANOVA

Participants in the Youth Summer Academy organized by the Youth Educational Forum (YEF) stage a flash mob dedicated to freedom of expression. The flash mob was the start of the Glasno (LOUD) Festival for Freedom of Expression in Struga, organised by YEF. The Youth Summer Academy is an annual event bringing together young people, members of youth clubs from across the country in workshops, debates and cooperation dedicated to activism, fundamental rights, critical thinking and youth participation.



BEKA VUČO

A small private house on a rather busy Agim Ramadani street in Pristina was a perfect place with its cracked wall for graffiti expressing the feelings of various unknown authors. The house was taken down some years ago, but the photo document stays.



30 Years Initiative

1991 2001 2011 2021

Acknowledgments

Beka Vučo

Creating and organizing the entire 30 Years Initiative and the book *30 Years: Open Society and Its Friends* has been a true regional effort and even more than that. Without the experience and support from many of my peers, colleagues, friends, and collaborators within and outside the Open Society Foundations network, this book would not exist. I thank them all wholeheartedly.

It is hard to even begin naming the many contributors and, no doubt, some will be unintentionally omitted. For that, in advance, my apologies.

The first spark of an idea to think about a book came up in one of the many conversations that Aryeh Neier and I had in 2019. We had worked together on the book published for the 20th anniversary of the foundations in the Balkans *Building Open Society in the Western Balkans 1991-2011*, when Aryeh was still the President of OSF – and I felt that raising the idea with him was a natural, first step. Aryeh immediately embraced the concept and throughout the months to come, including the pandemic period, we shared ideas, topics, names and suggestions. His support, help and guidance were priceless. I thank him for all that, including for being on the Editorial Board of the book and writing the essay on war crimes in the Balkans.

When Goran Buldioski approved the project in January 2020 and gave me the official OSF green light and budget to start the project, no one knew that the next months of working from home and various lockdowns would make this project a very different one from the first sparks of the idea. The concept changed a few times, making it a real Zoom virtual experience. I thank Goran for trusting my experience and knowledge and for giving me the full freedom to conceptualize the 30 Years Initiative in all its complexities and challenges.

I also thank him for letting Zorana Gajić continue to stay on my team for this project and actually, as a program analyst, serve as my right and left arm, the sounding board for small and big ideas and issues, details and all that

came along. Zorana's professionalism, dedication, focus on details and her knowledge of the Balkans were crucial in bringing us from points A to B and all the way to points X and Z. She made this process easy, uncomplicated and straightforward. I especially thank her for being a master of making various lists – which were, during our work on the 30 Years Initiative crucial, so that no one and nothing would be forgotten!

In Belgrade, early on, while sipping coffee at 'Madera' restaurant, Sonja Licht and I put our heads together and began an over a year-long continuous conversation of remembering the past three decades. Her deep knowledge and analytical experience of times past were crucial for conceptualizing many parts of the virtual panels and the book. Names and details just poured in, ensuring that many circles would not be forgotten.

The Editorial Board of the book – Sonja Licht, Veran Matić, Vladimir Milčín, Aldo Milohnić, Piro Misha, Aryeh Neier, Slavica Singer, Veton Surroi and Daliborka Uljarević – put us on the right track when thinking about the topics for the book and helping in pulling together the names of the essay authors. I am very grateful for that – but it was Boro Kontić, as the Editor-in-Chief, who made it all happen. He was the one to give the 'titles' to the prominent authors and pair them with the topics that represented the challenges over the three decades – and today, as well. It was a joy to work with him again and be in touch often.

We are grateful to all the authors – who enthusiastically agreed to be part of the 30 Years Initiative – for their creativity, insights and their deep empathy for the people and places they wrote about. Their work will surely stand the test of time. They are: George and Alexander Soros, Boris Buden, Dubravka Stojanović, Aryeh Neier, Sonja Licht, Vesna Pusić, Dubravka Ugrešić, Vladimir Milčín, Veton Surroi, Rastko Močnik, Dušan Petričić, Lev Kreft, Misha Glenny, Rumena Bužarovska, Jeton Neziraj, Viktor Ivančić, Remzi Lani, Balša Brković, Ferida Duraković, Miljenko Jergović, Aleksandar Hemon and Goran Marković.

Sincere thanks for the visualization and the design of the book, her splendid ideas and elegant simplicity, go to Dragana Lacmanović and her sublime talent and especially for the patience since the parts of the book were coming in piece by piece.

Translation can always be a tricky thing but Ellen Elias Bursać and her marvelous team of translators – Jason Blake, Ani Gjika, Rawley Grau, John Hodgson and Christina E. Kramer – gave the English voice to every author's thought in the book in its full majesty.

Paula Gordon, as the copyeditor, was a superior guardian of the English language itself and ensured consistency, readability and accessibility. Among my native English-speaking friends, it was Janet Garvey who tried to polish my sometimes long and funny sentences in the first drafts of the texts.

From day one, I saw the 30 Years Initiative as an important regional undertaking in the Balkans, not only for the five national foundations but also for key partners in the three countries where OSF no longer has offices. They all deserve special thanks for their dedication to the project:

In Open Society Foundation for Albania – Andi Dobrushki, Klodi Seferaj, Aleksandra Sula and the rest of the wonderful and dedicated colleagues.

In Open Society Fund – Bosnia and Herzegovina – Dobriša Govedarica, Dženana Trbić, Nermina Karović, Denis Imamović and the rest of the superb and terrific staff.

At the Human Rights House Zagreb – Vesna Teršelič and Ivan Novosel for their first-class help and understanding what real partnership and being a host means.

In Kosovo Foundation for Open Society – Luan Shllaku and Lura Limani, Dukajin Hyseini, Vera Pula, Sihana Xhaferi and the rest of the talented and committed colleagues.

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In Foundation Open Society – Macedonia – Fani Karanfilova-Panovska, Slavica Indjevska, Suzana Velkovska, Vančo Džambaski, Ljiljana Ristevska, and all of the superb and devoted staff.

In Montenegro at the Center for Civic Education – Daliborka Uljarević helped with her knowledge of the region and Vesna Lakus provided the institutional memory of the foundation.

In Open Society Foundation Serbia – Miodrag Milosavljević, Radmila Maslovarić, Dijana Janevski, Vladimir Vasić, and the rest of the magnificent and dedicated colleagues.

At the Peace Institute in Ljubljana, Slovenia – Iztok Šori, Brankica Petković, Jasna Babič, Katarina Vučko and the rest of the great and devoted colleagues. Special thanks go to Slavica Singer who helped all along on many issues and Tin Gazivoda for being part of the Production Team and to both of them especially for helping out in organizing the virtual panel in Croatia.

The two researchers, Aida Čengić and Iliriana Kačaniku, former employees of the national foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, respectively, contributed enormously to the documentary part of the book and with great enthusiasm and superb capabilities for the section on the Spin-Offs

(Aida), and Historical Overview and Foundations' Activities (Ilirijana). I thank them for their dedication and patience, and for endlessly checking important details.

This book would not be what it is without the many parts of the Open Society Foundations' network. We also reached out to former OSF colleagues, as well as others throughout the region, who were affiliated over the three decades in their respective countries and worked closely with the national foundations. The help that we all received was immediate, accurate and without any hesitation.

From the OSF Global Board we thank the Board members Maria Cattai and Ivan Krastev as well as Katy Mainelly who provided extremely important contacts and information.

From the OSF Executive Office we thank Mark Malloch Brown, Laura Silber, Evelyn Chung and Jonas Rolett for their openness and willingness to help. From the Western Balkans Advisory Committee, we thank Ivan Vejvoda for sharing his knowledge, ideas and contacts and for always being there as an important sounding board.

From the OSF Communication Department thanks go to Lucy Carrigan, William Kramer, Mai Lynn Miller, Ken Davidson, JK Keller, Laura Wickens and Maggie Soladay for giving us useful information and advice.

From the Financial Offices in New York and Berlin, Peter Sziranyi, David Knuth and Nailya Bashirova gathered three decades of financial information with the help of the financial departments of the national foundations, while Suzanne Wettenschwiler and Maria Ribar searched for and provided access to financial information from the 1990s.

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As we are closing this book – *Open Society and Its Friends* – I am also closing my three decades of work at the Open Society Foundations. It was a unique and once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The rest is history.

November 2021
New York



NITI!
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Looking back, we are convinced that starting the foundations three decades ago in what was once Yugoslavia was one of our great achievements. The new foundation in 1991 embraced a diversity of thought and approaches at a time when the countervailing forces of dissolution and nationalism were already underway in the former Yugoslavia.

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Though the circumstances often were incredibly difficult, the bold and brave efforts of the foundation in Yugoslavia continue to inspire the work of the Open Society Foundations around the world today.

#thirtyyears



30 YEARS/ OPEN SOCIETY AND ITS FRIENDS