ZVONKO TARLE

TUĐMANIA

Poste restante
(Letters from Exile)

Publisher's Note

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PREFACE TO THE 2025 EDITION

The short work you have in your hands, *Tuđmania — Poste restante,* belongs to the future just as much as it does to the past. At a time when pressure was never higher for Croats, including Croat intellectuals, to put their minds and hearts in the service of the resurgence of Croat nationalism — backed by Germany and America, amidst the anti-communist and anti-sovereign fervour sweeping Europe — the writer Zvonko Tarle took a different path. Like many who lived and worked in a common Yugoslavia alongside brothers and sisters of other ethnic groups, this Yugoslavia, this Yugoslav ideal, which was never perfectly implemented but ensured a common future for all its peoples, was something sacred. An identity even emerged from this unity: the Yugoslav identity. Zvonko lived it, dreamt it, and eventually suffered for it. He did not, as they say, turn whichever way the wind blew, such as a flag does.

As a well-known opposition writer and editor against the Tuđman regime, he narrowly escaped a terrible fate by fleeing to the Serbian hospitality of Belgrade — becoming, as he says, a refugee within his own country. This united identity — Yugoslav — did not negate his Croatness, but strengthened it by adding steel-like unity with millions of the Croatian people's greatest allies: other South Slavs, and especially the Serbs. This idea had a flag of its own — an old flag of Slavic unity, blue, white and red,

with the five-pointed red star of anti-fascist struggle at its centre. This flag meant suffering at Jasenovac and Kozara, but also strength and victory. The Victory of our partisans led by our liberators, the Red Army, at Belgrade in October 1944 and at Batina in November of the same year. The Victory of May 9, 1945. A flag may change in the wind in simple terms, in terms of direction, but such a flag as our Yugoslavia's, forged in blood and honour, remains as solid as granite.

When Tuđman and his ilk came to power in the Socialist Republic of Croatia, a constituent republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, it was no surprise that one of the first targets was the flag. In doing so they targeted an identity, an idea — the most noble of ideals, regardless of its implementers. The Yugoslav ideal was civic, not ethnic — its destruction being a great crime. The intimidation campaign to turn Croats against this ideal succeeded. Zvonko rightly wrote that the idea we can now live as "good neighbours" is naive. Where there was no Other, but one united people, to now speak of neighbours and borders is a betrayal. We either live together, or we do not live at all.

Croatian nationalist culture is criticized here — not only in terms of the rulers but the everyday people who turned against their friends for the sake of a false independence that never arrived, and indeed in thirty-five years has still never come. The Catholic Church, intrinsically linked to the Croatian national myth, remains a force for destruction and

misanthropic anti-Serbian hatred. This was long documented by Viktor Novak in *Magnum Crimen.* Nor is the purity of the Croatian language treated any better, with the official forbidding of "Serbian" words from state television broadcasters.

But the worst crime of all in Tuđman's Croatia was to be a Serb. Even a wealthy anti-communist businessman could be targetted if his father happened to be a Serb. Thus, equating dogs and Serbs — or rather, placing Serbs below dogs — became a commonplace attitude.

At the time of these letters, the greatest crime had not yet occurred: *Operacija Oluja,* Operation Storm in English. This criminal, genocidal operation wiped nearly two hundred thousand Serbs living within the Croatian Republic from their native lands. The dream of the Austro-Hungarians in the First World War, and of Pavelić, Hitler, the Ustaše and all Croatian nationalists in the Second, was completed by the self-styled liberal and democratic Croatia under Tuđman, with full backing from the collective West. Thirty years later, the soil still mourns for its original Serbian tiller. The lands of the Krajina never belonged to narrow Croatia but only to our shared Yugoslavia. Just take note of the predominantly-Serbian city of Knin. In the last Yugoslav census of 1991, 85.5 per cent of its population was Serbian and 10.3 per cent Croatian by ethnicity. In the latest 2021 census, it was reported that only 21.4 per cent is Serbian, while 76.8 per cent is Croatian. Today, in this ancestral Serbian

land, settled Croats live, work, raise families, socialize, in the same buildings, parks, workplaces, restaurants, that Serbs did for generations. This was the worst of crimes, a blatant act of genocide which has gone unpunished because it could not fit into the collective West's narrative of the "evil Serbs" in the Balkans.

Yet through all the travesties and devastations, Zvonko's literary style shines. It is one of a highly-learned man, with lines such as "Refugees live like moss, whispering, speaking with shadows, holding onto the right to secrecy, stripped of the right to love" searing the pages. Such descriptions deepen the emotional level of each word read.

This book belongs to the future because the fate it describes was not sealed in 1992, but continues to unfold. The Yugoslav soul has been lost in Croatia. In chasing an illusion of independence, the Croats gave up a homeland, a people, a future.

Look at Croatia today. It is in the European Union, its currency is the Euro, its industry decimated, its economy dependent on tourism and German multi-nationals. Its own language is ignored in public signage in cities like Split, where every menu and map is in English. Croatia is no longer sovereign. Whatever independence and sovereignty existed under Tito is now gone.

Zvonko foresaw all this. He wrote: "Croatia today is death for the homeland — without any awareness of the true purpose of the suffering." Indeed, Croatia has collapsed inward, no longer own-

ing or controlling itself. It is again a land of foreign masters. All out of hate for a brother.

The question through all of this, perhaps the most relevant for our time is: What possibly led Croatians to accept this? What is it in the Croatian soul which continues its chauvinism even to our days, despite having not a single accomplishment to brag about in thirty-five years of so-called "independence"? It is reflected in such passages as "Croats cannot do without a master" and "The dream of an independent Croatia — no matter how ugly it has proven — still intoxicates." Too many people are still willing to cut off their own limb if it means spiting a friend they have been convinced is an enemy.

Such nationalism always has a motive, and it often does not mind to venture into absurdity if it should help in even the slightest way. One of the most absurd examples is the claiming of the now-famous innovator Nikola Tesla, a Serb who lived within the borders of modern-day Croatia. According to the nationalists, he was a Croatian. This is despite the fact that the Ustaša butchers killed nearly every Serb in Tesla's village of Smiljan, and even members of his own family. What does it hurt to call such a great man, a great Yugoslav — a Serb, as he was until his last breath. Only those severely diseased and sick in the head can oppose or contest this. Thus is the mental plague of modern Croatian nationalism. It is precisely these kinds of attitudes which must be opposed by all remaining

true and honest Croats, who cannot be defined by ethnic blood or lineage but only by lofty internationalist convictions.

Drawing one final quote from the text: "I remain like part of the wind that does not care for borders. I remain a part of spring in Croatia, a part of autumn in Serbia." It is only this attitude on the part of the Croatians that can save them from the terrible fate they have embarked upon. It is my sincere, yet perhaps somewhat naive hope, that this can once again be accomplished in the future. But as even a schoolchild knows, a wave begins as a ripple...

N. Ribar

FORBIDDEN TO SERBS AND DOGS

There is a park in the Zagreb neighbourhood of Dubrava, where settlers from Janjevo live, where Tuđman wins one hundred per cent of the vote and where oxen are roasted in his honour.

At the park entrance stand three small signs. One reads "Forbidden to dogs," but an unskilled hand, adding lines to the letters, "modified the sign" so it now reads as if dogs have "become Serbs." Further playing with the signs leads to the final version — on the third sign, someone was less witty and more direct, simply adding "Serbs" alongside dogs.

So now it says: "Forbidden to dogs and Serbs."

On the door of a shelter in Rijeka, someone spray-painted with car paint: "Forbidden to Serbs." This one, clearly, was straightforward. The author of that graffiti, it seems, had nothing against dogs.

Goran Babić writes about the Dubrava park case in his book *What the Dead Think About*. The sign in Dubrava and the graffiti in Rijeka have never been taken down or removed. Does that mean no one is bothered by them?

The hand that wrote this, if justice exists, will one day wither. The real problem lies with those who remain unpunished by man or God — the ones who dictated to the hand, which is ultimately just a machine for labour, one that doesn't think but only executes. For decades, Croatian state-building hysteria has persisted. Krleža, Babić and a few oth-

ers among us Croats have properly understood this hysteria, have delved into its roots. Nothing that is happening in Croatia today is new, unexpected or accidental. All of it has been seen before. In their history, Croats have always transformed the dream of a state into a dream of a ruler and a dream of rebellion. Krleža analyses this brilliantly. Croats cannot do without a master — and once they make a pact with him, they turn against him. And so it goes, for centuries.

Fascism in Croatia is defined precisely by the lost dream of statehood, the illusion of sovereignty, the influence of the Catholic Church and the voids within a mythical past.

Countless authors strive to prove that Croats originated from Iran, that Serbian and Croatian are two distinct languages, that the Drina river marks the border between Western and Eastern civilization. Dictionaries are still being prescribed even today. For instance, Croatian State Television published a "dictionary of Croatian expression" (if that is indeed the exact title) — essentially a little book of permitted words and phrases. No Serbian word is allowed to slip in by accident. Anyone who fails to adhere to this manual forfeits their right to address the public.

Meanwhile, the public itself — the so-called ordinary Croatian person, citizen, commoner — is left bewildered. They watch the only permitted television channel, and understand nothing. They read the newspapers, and still understand nothing. The

official new-speak and the language of the people are two different tongues. The spoken language of Serbs and Croats as peoples holds little to no difference, but the language used by the media truly does exist in two separate forms.

The roots of Croatian national darkness and fascism lie deep in the underground corridors of the Catholic Church and in a historical depression that small nations on the margins of great civilizations are prone to.

Those who write signs and graffiti saying "Forbidden to dogs and Serbs" are carrying out orders issued by far more dangerous strategists of Croatian national identity.

For those who have died, Croatia no longer matters — and Croatia no longer cares about them. A Croatian soldier who lost fingers in this war and can no longer write graffiti receives a monthly compensation equivalent to two kilograms of bread. For the loss of vision, the monthly compensation is forty Genscher marks.

What must that disabled veteran think when he passes by the sign in the Dubrava park? The true authors of those signs — hidden away in offices — are not only responsible for war and destruction, but have also inflicted spiritual wounds on Croatia that may never fully heal, wounds that will take a very long time to mend.

SOMEONE DOES WRITE TO TUĐMAN

Night will never know the face of our suffering. Day is the hem beneath which our face hides.

We are silent and we suffer. We guard our face.

Life is the mystery of a seed that, in a clouded mind, easily equates victim and executioner.

Blades of heavenly grass fall upon our feverish passions. Easter and Christmas rise, Response and Question rise. Suffering is merely the gauze over our fates. A crescent moon.

To be here, to be present, to be oneself! Time will lend strength to poetry, and take reason from us.

I rise from Hölderlin, I rise from the "being of art," I wound myself on Heidegger. People, my face has the colour of the sky. I die for the land. War is our land, our voice, our songs, our words.

Here we are in poetry, here we are in clay, here we are in ourselves like in a scent, in an oil, in aloe.

To be a person, to be air, to be a journalist. The land has no land, the face has no face, sorrow is not sorrow, and grief is an unopened letter.

Between fact and suffering, I have no patience for moss. The compass alone is my companion.

No one will ever sever the rope between me and my homeland.

I have lost my homeland and my fatherland. A tear, nothing more.

I remain like a part of the wind that does not

care for borders. I remain a part of spring in Croatia, a part of autumn in Serbia, like a soul that does not acknowledge borders, gendarmes, customs officers or middlemen between two peoples in trenches, two peoples in wounds, two griefs in a bird's foreboding. Birds of ill omen — black, of course.

I am here, among friends. Others are here too; we came from all over — from Rijeka, from Split, from Zagreb, Osijek, Gospić...

An entire editorial staff fled — fifty, sixty people, journalists, professionals.

We are here for the truth. Truth is our only weapon. Someone does write to Tuđman. His loyalists are panicking, and we thank them for that. We are the traitors. And yet we believe that the true traitors are those who serve Tuđman, the *endehazija,** the supposedly sovereign and lawful Croatian state — non-aligned Croatia.

When will someone in Croatia even try to ask how many have died, who truly caused this war, who sacrificed thousands of Croats for a delusional ambition?

We will write. We rise to defend the honour of the Croatian people, to defend the honour of the profession.

We have lost our homes, our books, our shirts and coats — but not our honour.

When Vrdoljak's loyalists formed the CROA-

* Colloquial term for the nazi puppet Independent State of Croatia (NDH).

TIAN JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION, we remained in the JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CROATIA.

And now we are restoring its work.

We now call on all our colleagues in Croatia to join us, to preserve the dignity of our people together, to build bridges of friendship between warring nations and those afflicted by the "plague of the 20th century."

Many of our colleagues literally saved their lives by fleeing Croatia. Now they are here, in Belgrade, in the great heart of the Serbian people, now facing numerous problems. That is why we have come together — for the idea of Yugoslavia, against fascism, for new pathways of integration in this region. Today we are Strossmayer, Rački, Svetozar Marković, Cankar, Racin... Today we are only an echo, but tomorrow there will be no decisions about the future without our voice.

The JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CROATIA will return and operate in Zagreb, but it will remain within the Union of Journalists of Yugoslavia, it will remain standing in defence of unity. A group of nationalists cannot drive us out of Yugoslavia — nor can they drive Yugoslavia out of us.

And one more thing — something human: our friends, colleagues, comrades from Serbia have offered us all their privileges and all their rights.

This way, all journalists will be able to arrange their employment status and social insurance. People will be able to receive medical care, to gather,

to work. And to write to Mr. Tuđman — to write letters of truth.

We are sending a few swallows back to Croatia.

As letters.

We, Croats, Serbs, Jews — we, people, exiles, journalists — we, the small pins on the rough face of Serbian democracy, want to continue sleeping peacefully and breathing freely.

ANITA'S TEARS, MATE'S COWARDICE

No one's tears can move Mr. Tuđman. He does not possess that small crystal vessel for tears, nor the human little pump some call the soul and others the heart. For Mr. Tuđman — seasoned and tested in evil — only his face contorts, hardens into stone.

And that stony face, those narrow, cynical lips, the skewed mouth, those tiny eyes are not the reflection of a soul capable of weeping.

The writer Jože Horvat — the one who captured Home Guard soldiers during the war and later sailed the seas — has now put on a warrior's uniform, taken up a rifle and gone to the Banija region.

What changes in a man for an old partisan, an anti-fascist, a bearer of the Partisan Commemorative Medal, a peacemaker and seafarer, to return to Banija fifty years later "to retrain himself from fifty years ago" — but now in a fascist uniform, with a Crusader's cross around his neck and hatred in his soul? Why?

How is it that old Jože calmly watches, just like his new (or old — both are communists) commander, while clean-shaven young men, still children, fight around him, and does not send them home — to their mothers, their books, their girlfriends?

And while Jože picks up a rifle, Dr. Tuđman sends children to war. History may forgive Jože some things — it certainly won't forgive Tuđman.

Tuđman would send even the unborn to war if

it meant preserving his Ustaša reign of terror.

Hasn't he locked the entire Croatian people inside a massive armed camp? Even pregnant women, in the end, have become hostages of a deranged policy.

Warnings mean nothing to bloodsuckers.

They've hidden the countless dead from the Croatian public — including young boys, drugged, deranged, charging senselessly and without skill toward artillery targets.

The captured boys begged the "uncles, gentlemen, sirs" not to send them back to Tuđman's companies.

We saw that scene on television — that nightmarish state of mind, the fear in their bodies, the unease in their souls — boys forced to die at Kupres.

What separates these innocent children, many not even of age, from Tuđman and Jože is the ability to cry. The boys do not hide their tears.

I witnessed a small, sincere, boyish drama in my own family.

When I managed to get out of Croatia, my son was still in Rovinj. His sixteenth birthday was approaching, and I was seized by fear that Tuđman would put him in uniform, that he would be sent to the Lika front where young men from Rijeka and Istria were being deployed. I managed to get him out to freedom on the last ship that sailed — to Bar, and later to Belgrade.

His best friend Romano went to Gospić and

survived by some miracle, but their friends from Rovinj — two lanky, wild, honest young Istrians, Damir and Tomica — will never again leap into the sea from the cliffs at Škaraba, nor will they gaze at the bell tower of St. Euphemia, or dance on the Brod, or stroll the promenade...

For Damir and Tomica, the war is over. Rest in peace.

Tomica was an only child. His mother, Mata — divorced — gave up everything to raise her son.

Tomica was only seventeen.

Many mothers — nearly thirty thousand, although the numbers are kept hidden — are weeping for their sons.

All mothers cry the same, but not all sons are the same.

Mothers are the true victims of this senseless war.

News recently reached us of the death of Edi Kovač, the seventeen-year-old son of singer Mišo Mate Kovač.

The newspapers exploded over Mišo's metamorphosis — cheerful, Yugoslav, former communist, this and that, hero and victim. And in the end — openly Ustaša. But no black shirt, pistol or Ustaša symbolism will soothe a father's grief for his son. Grief doesn't scream — it falls silent, it draws a person inward.

And no one asks whether Anita Baturina cries — once a promising beauty, later a devoted mother and homemaker. No one ever heard Anita boast

that her underage son was defending Croatia. His father did the boasting.

And when the son died, again it was the father who shouted. But Anita cries — like all mothers cry.

Maybe Anita will ask her plump husband why he didn't go to defend Croatia himself, but sent underage Edi instead?

Maybe?

Many fathers ought to ask themselves why it's their sons, their children, their future defending Croatia — and not THEM.

At the very least, they could ask that much — since they lack the courage to ask Tuđman: who exactly is attacking Croatia, and from whom must it be defended?

For two days, the mothers of Pula — away from the public eye and the media — begged for their sons to be returned from the National Guard.

The municipal government of Rijeka was the only one in Croatia that demanded the HDZ* and Tuđman not send minors to war.

The president of that government, SLAVKO LINIĆ, is still enduring hardship today — having been labelled a traitor, a collaborator, a commie...

But maybe Slavko saw the tears in those mothers' eyes — maybe he saw what Tuđman's stone face and hard-hearted Croatian "heroes" like Mišo Kovač cannot see.

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* Croatian Democratic Union.

"What is essential is invisible to the eye," says the Little Prince — and those so-called "heroes" have no eyes for that.

Protect those young men, gentlemen. A war can be won or lost — but without them, our future is truly lost.

STRAW AND WHIRLWIND

Everything is collapsing. How can one find Hope again in the void? Every day, I hear bitter people claiming we will never again be able to live together. But the truth is different — if we want to live at all, we must live together.

Nine million people from the former Yugoslavia, of various nationalities, are interconnected — through family, marriage, godparent ties and friendships.

One in five children born after the war in Yugoslavia came from a mixed-nationality marriage.

Only the facts are more stubborn than the foaming nationalists. And statistics — that relentless science that counts us by every measure, across and along, infallible yet somehow lacking in heart, in any inner vision, I'd say. Statistics see nothing but numbers, and miss the human dramas, the suffering.

Those who dug trenches between our peoples, who dug graves for people, will once again escape justice. It might well happen that the same people who destroyed Yugoslavia will now try to assemble a new one. They dismantled the state to seize power — and now they will try to build it again in order to stay in power.

And we are all just straws... poor stalks!

Elie Wiesel would say: "Reason must be found again, beauty must be recreated — from the void."

Elie Wiesel knows what our people have been

rehearsing for centuries in the Balkan whirlwinds — that hatred strikes equally at the one who hates and the one who is hated. Only the origins, only the human anguish, differ.

The story of a troubled young man, Pero Mutić, from Veliko Vukovlje in the municipality of Garešnica, only confirms that those who rise in honour of the emergence of Love and Respect are in the right.

Pero Mutić was a Croat, one of those who lived in Veliko Vukovlje, a village mostly inhabited by Serbs. Serbs and Croats in that village had never had open conflicts, unsolvable problems or reasons for hatred. And so it remained — almost to this day. Now, because of the dangerous games of madmen, the Croats have left the village. Pero Mutić, poor man, stayed with the Serbs. He often said he would never leave the village where he was born and raised, where his late parents brought him up through hard, backbreaking labour, and where his Serbian neighbours helped him — even building him a house. Poor Pero Mutić could not abandon his Serbian friends. He helped them, as much as he could, to survive the Ustaša rampages.

Pero Mutić also had what we call the sorrows of love — he had a woman in a neighbouring Croatian village, a divorcée devoted to raising her son and tending her garden, devoted, too, to respecting Pero Mutić. When the seasoned Ustaša blockheads realized that Pero Mutić was no longer useful to them — that he was written off — they decided

to erase him from this world. And they did so — brutally. They bribed the son of the unfortunate divorcée to kill his mother's lover in his sleep. With an axe, a knife, whatever he could find. An atmosphere worthy of Kafka.

And the boy carried out the order.

Pero Mutić was found murdered in the home of the woman he loved.

The boy confessed to the crime. He named those who had incited him and paid him — yet the "democratic authorities and police" took no action against them. They even released the boy, while his mother, in a state of nervous breakdown, nearly lost the ability to speak, watering her roses in deep mourning.

At the time of his murder, Pero Mutić was twenty-five years old.

The village of Veliko Vukovlje buried him with voluntary contributions from the residents — Serbs.

Not a single Croat was present in the funeral procession.

Pero joined his parents, among the clouds, to bear witness to earthly passions.

The whirlwind has swept away yet another straw.

Everything is collapsing. How can one find Hope again in the void?

THE TAMING OF THE SPINE

In my life, I've seen all sorts of wonders. But I've never seen anyone tame a mosquito — never seen one taught to drink water instead of blood.

I've met horse tamers, snake hunters.

And I met one man who tamed spines. He was the kind of person who would either bend a spine or break it. After his work, what remained were either spineless people or cripples.

Croatia, summer of 1990. For the first time, a government tried to tame my spine. They failed. A year later they would arrest me, try to scare me. Again — they failed.

Back then — and still now — I can't shake the feeling that many of my comrades gave in, bowed their backs before brute force. I can understand them. I can understand all those sorrowful people in Croatia whose fear has stripped them of their right to speak freely. But what do people really think? Surely they haven't also lost their minds. All I know is that today, in Croatia, it is hard to be yourself — there's always someone ready to think and speak on your behalf.

These days, taming spines is in vogue. Nooses of nationalism are thrown over us, and only when we're waist-deep in the muck of hatred, when we're drowning in trenches of lies, does the final reckoning with our spines begin.

Spines break easily — but they do not tame easily. The more fragile ones simply have their marrow

extracted from the spinal bone by special methods, and then columns of people become spineless.

Columns of faceless people march the streets, staring through others, through buildings and cars, staring with white eyes void of pupils — empty. Vacant. Those who are more resistant, more courageous — people unwilling to surrender their pride or their identity — are targeted with special methods. They're offered flattering awards, well-paid jobs, travel abroad. And if they refuse, the vultures descend.

My colleague Goran Zelić, a fighter-journalist from *Novi list*, had to flee Rijeka — not because he's a Chetnik, a Serbo-Bolshevik or a member of military intelligence — but because he resisted having his spine tamed. They wanted to train his spine to inform on his colleagues. Zelić was called in for a police "interview." All he had to do was snitch, and they would forgive him for being half-Serb, half-Croat — in truth, a Yugoslav. Zelić couldn't accept that. And the vultures came. First, his wife lost her job. Then came threats against his family. Zelić ended up homeless in Belgrade. He offended neither his father's nor his mother's people. And how could he? Could he sleep peacefully, believing he would one day return to Rijeka? Sooner or later — he will.

And there will be no one he won't be able to look in the eye — with his spine intact. I know many such cases. We are not enemies of the Croatian people — not at all. We are enemies of Tuđman's regime. Fascism is rolling through the streets of Cro-

atian cities, and we stand against fascism. Anti-Yugoslav sentiment is seeping into every pore of life in Croatia, and we stand for Yugoslavia. If they were alive today, even figures like Strossmayer — though a Catholic bishop — or Ivan Kukuljević, the historian, or Ljudevit Gaj would be fleeing Croatia. From Slovenia, the author of *The Servant Jernej*, and even Prešeren himself, would flee. In that sense, my exile has meaning. I have lost my home, my books, my manuscripts, my belongings, my clothes, my friends, my city and all the comforts that city had to offer, my people and the republic where I was born — but I have remained clean. I sleep peacefully. Those who did not resist, who stayed behind — they lost much more. Their spines were tamed. Their dreams were taken from them. Their souls were taken from them. How will they speak when the "enemy" withdraws, with hatred still in their hearts? Hatred does not retreat with the enemy. What a heavy reckoning awaits — with themselves, with their own souls.

Zelić and I have gained many new friends. Sometimes I think we are growing like the first shoots of some imagined "Park of Friendship."

In this region of South Slavic nations, people must live together. Or not live at all.

Neither the spineless, nor those with broken spines, will be able to sustain life with hatred as the measure of time.

Let us cast aside the rifles, the knives and the hatred — while there is still hope for us, and for our children.

NEVEN

In Tuđman's Croatia, only a dead Serb is a good Serb. Recently, Paraga — the Ustaša leader — compared Serbs to animals in Daruvar, but immediately apologized to the animals for the "inappropriate comparison."

Serbs in Croatia can only exist as — dead, beaten, harassed, silent, ugly, dirty. They are treated as a lower race — forced to hide, change their names, convert to Catholicism.

Recently, Milorad Pupovac stated that in Tuđmania, around nine thousand Orthodox Serbs had already converted to Catholicism.

Gordana Grbić, once a TV news anchor and now employed in the Croatian Parliament, had her child baptised Catholic "so the boy wouldn't have any problems."

Of course, this aligns with the popular joke: boys are playing football in a Zagreb parking lot, in front of an apartment building. Little Jovica is only allowed to join the game once he changes his name to Ivica. Then, when his father calls him from the balcony, the boy says — "See, you can't even be a Croat for five minutes without some Serb giving you a hard time." That kind of oral propaganda is very popular in Croatia today.

In the New Year's issue of *Glas Istre*, one Ivan Đoza from Opatija, when asked what he expects from 1992, answered:

"That there will no longer be any Serbs in my

sovereign Croatia."

Đoza even had his photo taken — the poor soul. As a *Borba* correspondent reporting from Rijeka and Istria, I once covered the consecration of a new Catholic church — the Church of St. Nicholas in Rijeka. The church was designed by Boris Magaš, one of the greatest modern Croatian architects, known for designing the stadium in Split. The church still leaks to this day. Back then, I noted in my reporter's notebook that the cross — or crucifix — was made by the workshop of Neven Ležajić from Zadar.

That's how I met Neven Ležajić. Later, I saw his chandelier — made of stainless steel and monumental in scale — hanging in a tavern on the island of Krk.

In Croatia, Neven Ležajić was everything a Serb is not allowed to be — successful, intelligent, serious, wealthy.

He had also crafted a cross for the monastery at Krka, and I remember him telling Father Nikolaj that he offered a warranty of eight hundred years — sealed by God Himself.

Neven Ležajić owned three yachts, a massive house, a plane and two production halls for nautical equipment... He had an annual turnover of about seven million dollars. He employed more than fifty workers, all paid according to European standards. And they worked accordingly.

But when the plague arrived — the HDZ — when the genie of nationalism and hatred was let

out of the bottle, the threats began. His property was seized, his family endangered.

Like some twenty thousand others, Neven was forced to leave Zadar. Now he's in Belgrade — with us. His house in Zadar was bombed. Only the north wall remains. The local Zadar newspapers reported that Neven Ležajić had planted the explosives himself and demolished his own house. His production halls were looted and wrecked. His plane was confiscated at the airport of Croatia's allies in Vienna. His three yachts are now scattered among the vessels of the Croatian navy. Everything he had — he lost. About twelve million West German marks. All of it — gone for good.

What was Neven Ležajić's crime? Nothing. He chose a Serb for a father. That's his only "sin." He was, and remains, a man uninterested in politics — only in business, order and hard work. He built things both visible and invisible — things that helped people, things that benefited friends. Neven always helped those in need. He took part in humanitarian work — and even now, he helps refugees. In Belgrade, his company "Inox Krajina" has begun operating again. Neven Ležajić will stand on his feet once more — but those who hate him will crawl forever.

The story of Neven, a Serbian businessman from Zadar, is just one of many — stories of people who can lose everything and still remain true to themselves. People you can rob of wealth — but never of honour. People who always remain upright.

VELIMIR FROM OSIJEK

Even Velimir still doesn't fully understand why he had to leave Osijek. We meet in front of the *Moskva*, in the garden. Staring at the sky, saying little, we let out the occasional bitter thought, sending off a quiet, secret grain of love for our past. Today, we are people without a past. Refugees in our own country.

Are we also people without a future?

Velimir will never fully leave Osijek, and Osijek will never fully leave Velimir. They will remain connected by the invisible threads of life, by some secret bond.

He had to leave everything — his birthplace, his cradle, his dreams and loves, his school memories, diaries, secrets, his professional career.

Velimir had been a successful director. He oversaw all retail operations in Osijek. People swore by him. Today's Ustaše once played cards with him, pretending, biding their time, sizing up Velimir's neck for their future vampiric feasts. They asked him to get them things that couldn't be found in stores. Velimir picked up the tabs. Velimir was a welcome friend, a beloved man. And he himself admired them sincerely.

Those were times of trust — belief in people, times of unity, of brotherhood and togetherness, of human warmth.

For Velimir, time stood still. He knew only happiness and success. He trusted people even

when they betrayed him. Those born without suspicion rarely learn the ART of doubt — because how can you distrust friends? How can you not believe those who bring gifts and kind words?

"No one shall come but dear friends," said I.G. Kovačić — and Velimir believed that all who entered his ever-open door were just that: friends.

Today, it's unclear who misses whom more — Velimir, his Osijek — or Osijek, ravaged and looted by Ustaše, its Velimir.

Velimir is in Belgrade now. One high-ranking NDH official, the day before Velimir's arrest, couldn't hold it in — the secret cracked inside him — and he whispered to Velimir to run. That's how Velimir saved his life. And his friends. He refused the Ustaša's conditions — refused loyalty, refused the uniform — and they immediately wrote about him in the papers, just so it would be known: how he was supposedly the manager of a department store in Dalj, how he was fighting in Vukovar, how he was sniping from his "secret nest." Dangerous to life.

Velimir would call his former card-playing buddies, and they'd feel awkward — ashamed. But still, they lied. Shame, for seasoned Croatian nationalists, is just a pair of short trousers. If it hadn't been for lies, this war would never have happened — that's certain. If it hadn't been for lies, many people, many children, would still be alive. If it hadn't been for lies, Triglav would still be the tallest mountain peak in Yugoslavia. If it hadn't been

for lies, some friends would still be in their false friendships with others — but lies brought at least one good thing: people started looking each other in the eye.

I'm not one for looks of hatred or blood. The people are not to blame — they have been consumed from within, collapsed into misery and hatred, into suffering and death, behind masks of a better future that will never come.

Velimir, with his heart fixed on Osijek, knows what a lie is.

Today, Velimir is the director of a major company in Belgrade — "Elektrotehna." Once a commercial giant, today a debtor to everyone. Velimir had the strength, courage — and perhaps the wisdom (time will tell) — to take on the old comrades, shady operations, crooked privatizations and theft.

The management opposed him. The workers stood by him. And he won — but only with great difficulty, and only after leading the workers into the streets, where they declared openly: We want Velimir. And they got him. Then came the sabotage — through the Chamber of Commerce, and from all sides, they attacked Velimir with every dirty weapon.

In vain.

Velimir's life is a powerful lesson for us — refugees and political exiles. Struggle is unavoidable. The front lines are thin everywhere.

Osijek misses Velimir. Velimir misses Osijek.

Only Belgrade gained the persistent and dedicated VELIMIR SMOLIĆ.

SHATTERED HORIZONS

There are nights — writes my fellow exile Emil Cioran — in which the future is cancelled, in which only one moment remains: the one we choose to be our last.

In the heart of an emigrant, it is always the equinox — neither day nor night. Only waiting. War summers pass quickly, like steam rising into the clouds. Sometimes, love happens. Even to us emigrants — especially to us — because love is the spell woven into all our suffering. Love for the Truth. Between love and nostalgia, between the scent of flowers and the memory of home, our life passes — quietly and gloomily — this summer, this moment that will never return. I am in love this summer — swept up by energy, smiles, the building of the National Theatre.

And still, the nights continue — those in which the future disappears.

Fire and memory.

Jure Fajdić is no longer among those who still hope, no longer among the living. Jure had been a youth activist, later a union organizer at *Marko Orešković*. He rose to defend Croatia — to defend some unclear image of the future, an image of shattered horizons. He put on a National Guard uniform. But when the fascists tried to destroy the monument to the victims of fascism from that earlier, Second World War — Jure Fajdić opposed them. That was not a fight for Croatia — but a fight

against Croatia. All his illusions became clear, and in that moment he unknowingly chose his last moment. The Ustaše hanged him from a tree in Perušić.

Every child in Gospić — in that prewar Gospić — knew the music teacher, Ante Kremić. Kremić was a beloved man. When some new government arrived in Gospić, along with a new army in black shirts — an army that kills and burns, that destroys — Ante Kremić resisted. The Ustaše executed him by firing squad.

No one can choose the moment of their death. Those encounters are sudden. But everyone can choose the moment of their rebellion.

Can we, too, admit our mistakes, our illusions? We must. Not without a particular sadness, not without a heavy burden on the conscience, I must remember Dane Uzlec — our man — who was shot in the back because he protested the burning of his godfather's house — a Croat. War is often more brutal than even our most fevered imagination. Patriotism can blind. When we all, after this darkness, finally open our eyes and begin to see clearly, we will face many things that will not please us — things that will shame us before ourselves, before our history, before our epic songs.

In Belgrade, I meet people from Gospić — many for the first time. Some stood before firing squads, some lost their childhood homes, their families, their dearest ones. I listen as they calmly separate reality from dream. Many have lost hope

of returning — lost hope of ever visiting their family graves — lost faith in the authorities, but kept faith in honour.

Everyone carries their own sorrow, their moment in which the future vanishes. Still, it is hardest for those who lost their loved ones in this war. All mothers know the same taste of tears. Even the mothers of criminals have lost — a son, perhaps an only child. The time of shattered illusions is the season of all our years — the moment of the collapsed horizon — the flight into dream-monasteries, into the religion of solitude.

And yet, there are always people who will watch over us from the sky. I remember Želimir Mažurančić, grandson of Ivan, who took his own life at the end of 1941 in Zagreb, because — as he wrote — he could not bear to watch the shame the Ustaše were bringing upon the Croatian people.

There are such people — of faith and steel — people ready to face the nights in which the future is cancelled.

A FINGER IN THE SEA

I went to Bar, to Kotor, to Tivat, and each time I encountered the sea, I dipped my finger in it — sending messages to my former and current friends in Croatia.

Thank goodness the sea exists. Those who love me will receive my message. Once I tame the doves, they too will carry my messages. How hopelessly this war has turned us against one another — torn our ties, shattered our souls.

I met Zorica T. — just a few exchanged words in which we understood that wisdom disguises our wounds, teaches us to bleed in secret. Each of my words is dug from the soul — an exile's soul, a soul that does not tolerate chains. That is why it floats, sends greetings, cleanses the conscience, awakens, drives to action.

Sometimes the pain that life inflicts is stronger than the will to live. Is that not why religion is more beloved than philosophy? Because God is stronger than Nature?

Zorica T., love is like an eagle — it watches us from above, lends us sharp vision to recognize one another. Will it fall dead because of a senseless bullet? Love is that invisible city, that crystal we seek — the labyrinth in which we wander. It's hard to recognize us: if we laugh, laughter kills us; if we cry, we lay waste to those around us, to the souls of others. Sometimes, in moments when Time is our clothing and our hope, in the long nights of exile

and solitude, we feel angels standing on our shoulders — the white one, who weeps, and the black one, who laughs. Our future, our life, depends on their conversation.

No scream, no voice. Refugees live like moss — whispering, speaking with shadows, holding onto the right to secrecy, stripped of the right to love. That is how we live each day, as if our whole life was meant for that one day, that one moment, that one cry. In the morning, we are born. By evening, we die with the Sun. Nothing unusual.

What did old Đuka Cvijić from the village of Rastovac, Slavonia, think in his final moment, as the Ustaše cut off his head? He had lived for sixty years in harmony with nature — and with human nature.

The torment inflicted on Cvjetko Teglić from Rastovac must surely find its place in a *General History of Dishonour*. The Ustaše arrested Cvjetko, bound him, forced him to march through the village, then cut strips of skin from his back with belts, and finally riddled him with bullets. His daughter had to witness all of it. Ljiljana was seventeen at the time. How old is she today — just one year later? Has her entire life lost meaning, or has she found some small piece of hope to restore her voice, a glimmer of light in her eyes?

What passed through the mind of Miloš Juzbašić, a twenty-four-year-old young man, with a noose around his neck? To whom did he want to send his final message? They say that in the moment before death, a person goes numb, that the brain

shuts down.

Josip Kučer, a twenty-two-year-old Croat from Grubišno Polje, stayed behind to defend his home, his neighbours and friends from the fascists. The Ustaše could not forgive him for that — he died in horrific agony.

"Hatred is the beginning of madness," wrote Cicero. And we are already completely surrounded by hatred and madness. Everything around us is burning, frothing. And precisely because of that, remembering the horrific crimes that have been committed, we must speak of love and solitude — of the balance between God and Nature, of the white and black angel perched on our shoulders.

There will be life. There will be seas and people. We must forgive — but we must not forget. Not the victims, and not the perpetrators. Wherever they may be hiding, they must be exposed.

Will my frightened and silent friends in Croatia receive these messages? Was I dipping my finger in the sea in vain?

My Hope is stronger than my body. We have lost everything — and yet we still have everything: Love! Hope! God and memory — in whatever form — a memory of Home. Someone else now wears my shirts, reads my books, cooks in my pots — but they cannot take away my right to love, they cannot understand my whispered conversations with shadows, my hope for return, my arguments with objects, with photographs, with people from memory — they cannot reach the God within me — myself.

CROATIA TODAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1992

"If someone dares to speak words of praise over my open coffin, I'll drag myself out and slap them." These are the words of Vassily Rozanov — all too fitting for the tormented and still-dazed Croatia of today.

The General and his regime have admitted to forty thousand war dead. Reportedly, thirty thousand were civilians and ten thousand soldiers. With the same brazenness with which they lie to their own people — claiming victory in a war that cost them a third of their territory, destroyed infrastructure and devastated the Croatian economy — the boastful General now proclaims that he has created "a Croatian army, Croatian currency and Croatian politics." In reality, all of it looks very different — grim, and anything but encouraging.

Croatia today is a collection of unbearable human tragedies — an armed and mutilated prison camp, politically fragmented not by ideology but by differences in hair colour, clothing and shoe styles among the so-called like-minded.

The dead are beginning to speak louder. Thousands of Croatian soldiers have been decorated with the "Zrinski-Frankopan" medal. All of them supposedly fell in defence of the homeland — though no one ever attacked it, a fact that is becoming increasingly clear even to hardened nationalists.

The dead cannot speak — but surely some of

them would rise, pull themselves from their coffins, and slap those who planted hatred in their hearts and grenades and knives into their hands.

Croatia teeters on the brink of social collapse — impoverished, devastated, with no real vision for the future and spiritually defeated. Nearly half a million are unemployed. Hunger knocks at the door. Social aid is being distributed, and as the journalist Željko Žutelija put it: "Some are left with only memories of the past and a bleak present — others offer interest-free loans on the future." There is nothing. Promises have evaporated. Hopelessness wanders through the increasingly empty streets of Croatian cities, while shortages wave at us from store shelves. The Croatian man — the citizen — is in an ever-worsening situation, ever closer to the wall, to the face of truth.

And yet, people part with illusions only with great difficulty. The dream of an independent state — no matter how ugly it has proven — still intoxicates. A dangerous seed has been planted in the soul of the Croatian people, and it will not be easily uprooted anytime soon. There should be no illusions about that.

The political moment in Croatia is defined, on one side, by the growing awareness of the high price already paid — and still to be paid — though such awareness remains timid, as no party dares admit that just a few years ago life was better, travel was free, people were creating, and that, in its thirst for power, the Croatian leadership deceived its own

people by manipulating their most sensitive emotions.

Croatia is facing growing tensions with its neighbours — Slovenia and Italy. Slovenes can hardly catch a single crate of sardines on the Adriatic without being stopped by the Croatian police. Border disputes remain open — currently, Croatia's border is among the most rigid in Europe. The Italians have identified elements of fascism in independent Croatia, have risen in defence of their minority in Istria, and have raised a number of issues that the two governments will have to address. Citizens of Istria continue to protest sharply over the fact that, now more than ever in history, the region contains three borders and three armies. In Istria — but also in Dalmatia — movements for regional autonomy are gaining momentum. They are demanding their own parliaments, laws, judicial systems, economic planning. They are calling for the removal of borders and greater movement of goods, capital and — of course — people. Croatia is crumbling from within.

Croatia today groans under the unbearable burden of a war it invented — a war in which it attacked itself. There are more and more voices of reason — and more and more voices of the hungry. The voices of reason call for the start of negotiations and policies aimed at undoing the horrors of war, hatred and the ambitions of the Ustaša émigré movement — and for reintegration processes across the South Slavic region. The voices of the hungry

demand solutions to social problems, economic stabilization, and lasting answers for the issues of refugees and the displaced.

Croatia today is the rule of Tuđman and the political swindlers around him.

Croatia today is the dead, the lost, the missing, the displaced sons of Croatia.

Croatia today is still a one-track media campaign — an information prison camp.

Croatia today is ruined villages and towns, destroyed infrastructure, decimated livestock — the spectre of hunger looming beneath a sky ablaze with nationalistic fervour.

Croatia today is death for the homeland — without any awareness of the true purpose behind the suffering. It is simply a return to a dark past, from which ghostly memories of knives and trenches still lurk.

Croatia today is us — the victims of Ustaša paranoia, displaced, driven from our homes.

The time of lies is coming to an end. The time of truth is approaching. And when it comes, what we now call CROATIA TODAY will collapse.

HELICOPTERS AND CELESTIAL BORDERS

It is becoming increasingly clear that the citizens of the former Yugoslavia will have to learn to live with borders.

Our borders — as the history of our relations has shown — will be harsh.

Examples already exist. Slovenes and Croats have entrenched their border in deep trenches of misunderstanding and miscommunication. At the root of the dispute between these two new states lie economic issues, maritime routes and territorial claims. But how do you draw a border between peace and war?

A total of thirty-four border crossings have been established, each staffed with customs officers and guards. What does that look like in practice?

For over fifty years, the residents of Jelšane in Slovenia and the village of Rupe in Croatia shared a church and a cemetery. Now, border barriers divide them. Customs officers inspect every funeral procession, open coffins and check the IDs of mourners. Even reaching the cemetery now requires a passport.

Croatia responds in kind. From the Bay of Piran, vessels cannot sail into international Adriatic waters without prior inspection. Slovenia has, for all practical purposes, been left without a coastline.

Istria has been carved up by the new borders between three countries. The Italians have the

smallest share, and the border between Croatia and Slovenia — drawn using familiar postwar cartographic methods — is entirely unnatural. It leaves Slovenian villages in the Ćićarija region inside Croatia, and parts of Croatia's Dragonja valley in Slovenia.Over time, many of these villages experienced "voluntary ethnic cleansings," so that today, in Savudrija for example, hardly any Croats remain — despite it once being an entirely Croatian village.

What the states formally recognise, their citizens dismantle and defy every day.

This is true of the Istrian borders as well — they unnaturally divide ethnic communities and slow the flow of goods, people and capital. Pregnant women from Buje now go to give birth in Trieste — it's cheaper and safer than in nearby Koper. It wasn't like that when we were one country. Birth in Koper used to be free of charge. The authentic voice of the people's political will in Istria is the Istrian Democratic Assembly, now a parliamentary party with three MPs. The party leaders advocate for "Istria as a region in a Europe of regions," for multicultural regionalism. In its ultimate vision, the party sees an autonomous Istria with formal borders, no army, a unified economic policy, and its own parliament to represent and defend the will of the people. It is unnatural for Istria to have three armies and tourism ambitions — for the Italian minority in Croatia to be separated from its kin in Slovenia or Italy. Near Koper, by Škofije, there's a border stone by the road — a marker of the imagined border with

Italy. A man once built a house there before the borders were drawn, before the Second World War, unaware of what fate awaited him. Today, part of that house lies in Yugoslavia, and the other part in Italy. The kitchen and living room are on our side, the bedroom and bathroom in Italy. When it comes to absurdities — there is never an end.

After the Ćosić-Tuđman agreement, it is becoming increasingly certain that we will soon have borders — with border crossings, customs officers, soldiers and police. Some may say, "if we can't live together, then at least let's be good neighbours." But I admit — I cannot believe in that notion. We've been so deeply interwoven for so many years that we can't even be good neighbours to ourselves. Life with people is not like life with nature — or with spiritual beings. The art of living together, no matter how sorely tested through blood and hatred, cannot be subdued by any border — nor by border patrol dogs. The illness of our age is unlike any other, and yet, it belongs to the same group of afflictions known in past eras. All of this has been seen before — it repeats in certain concentric, inevitable, dialectical circles. Our task should be to bind Fate and Freedom into a single knot — because at this moment, our fate is the limit of our freedom. In the whirlwind, who else but a human is the bearer of the spark — but the matches are in the pockets of state authorities.

This newly-invented "voluntary resettlement" is nothing but ethnic cleansing. It's hard to say wheth-

er such resettlement saves one's soul or just one's property. Instead of relocating people, we should be working to reconnect them. You can't relocate mixed marriages. You can't relocate children from those marriages. A border cannot separate a mother from her son. That is why we must learn to live next to a border in a way that the border — built by authorities for their own interests — is dismantled by citizens, also in their own interest. The one thing that is certainly in no Yugoslav citizen's interest — is the border. Borders will not resolve misunderstandings. And as long as misunderstandings remain unresolved, borders make no sense. They can be watched by helicopters and other celestial aircraft — but no wall will ever be high enough to divide people.

A GENERAL HISTORY OF DISGUST

Today, Croatia is one large armed camp. It's difficult to travel from one street to another — and going to another city or country is a real adventure.

And for this — as for everything else in Croatia today — the Serbs are to blame. Serbs are blamed for the hardship of daily life, for expensive shrimp and unaffordable fruit, for bad football, for a collapsing economy. And yet — a Serb is on the new Croatian banknote. By mistake. From the depths of his intellect, Ruđer Bošković gazes out at innocent people rubbing the note as they pay, overpay and struggle to believe that the two greatest nations — whose finest sons once dreamed of a common state — now find themselves in trenches again. The slaughter has resumed. Darkness is everywhere. And Ruđer never imagined he would be exploited in such a filthy war.

Everyone has been exploited. Used. Those who refused — left their homes, their possessions, their memories, their loves — and departed. With honour.

This war is, so far, an unwritten HISTORY OF DISHONOUR — a history of evil. Darkness and shadow. The world has no idea. It buys into the lie. And our journalist colleagues — the very ones I write this to — have accepted the lie as their uniform. Lies are their profession now. And perhaps they will never again be able to comprehend truth.

I pray to God for those liars, those blind men, those corrupt souls. What will happen to them — if they even have a soul?

I don't know how they sleep. Perhaps soundly — like all the dishonourable, all the servants. Have they ever wondered what Simo Kljajić, a retired journalist from Gospić, dreamt the night before he was slaughtered? Our Simo was found with his throat cut — murdered and burned. That's what they do with truth: cut it down, kill it, burn it. Erase every trace.

How calmly the liars of the world sleep. And how much more the world prefers lies to truth. In these prison camps of the soul, life is suffocating — and the Croatian people have allowed everything to be taken from them — soul, body, everything — for the sake of a state. But what kind of state is that, without a soul? What kind of people are those, without a soul? Will they ever be reunited with their soul again?

Will an entire nation — once full of brilliant minds — truly go all the way into madness? So many questions — and not a single answer. Like those stairs that rise in my memory from old Split — stairs that hang on a wall and lead from nowhere to nowhere.

Želimir Mažuranić, grandson of Ivan Mažuranić — the writer and Croatian ban — took his own life in November 1941 because he could not bear the shame the Ustaše were inflicting on the Croatian people. A suicide to preserve the honour of

one's own nation. I've written about this before — and must keep writing — to remind us constantly of Želimir Mažuranić's honourable act.

Today, there is too little honour and too much fear in Croatia. Boys have been shamelessly handed knives and rifles. The worst scoundrels are armed — wreaking havoc and dispensing their version of justice. People have turned into silence. Then comes the flash, the knife — and the scream.

By then, it is already too late.

The monsters and ideologues of the "young democracy" have devised a horrifying toy for children — a puppy, a bunny and a little bear. The toys are filled with explosives. When innocent hands reach for their toy, when joy lights up their eyes, the toy explodes. Children are left without hands. It is not limited to Serbian children — the effect is heightened for propaganda purposes. Can the human mind even imagine what these monsters look like?

While sixteen-year-old boys are dying on the battlefields in Gospić, newborns are losing limbs to these monstrous toys.

And again — the Serbs are to blame. These grotesque toys were found in Split, where there are no more Serbs. They fled to save their lives. And not one of my journalist colleagues has stopped to ask: Who is really making these deadly toys? Who needs the impact of these explosions? Who sacrifices their own children to obtain a state?

What would Ruđer Bošković say? What would Strossmayer say?

Would they, like our journalist colleagues, turn lies into truth — and then come to believe in them themselves?

It's suffocating — no more room for soul, or tears. Those who wear the mask of death on their faces, whose hearts have been replaced with seedbeds of hatred, will one day have to look into mirrors that do not lie.

By then — sadly — it will be too late.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zvonko Tarle was born in Šibenik in 1951. A professional journalist, he wrote for all the major publications of the former Yugoslavia. He worked as a correspondent for *Borba* from Split and Rijeka. He fled Croatia in September 1991 after multiple break-ins at his apartment, threats and arrests. He edited the first opposition newspaper in Croatia, *Press*, which was published in 1990-91 in both Croatian and Italian in Rijeka. The ruling party ordered the paper banned, and later evicted the editorial staff — forcing *Press* to cease publication.

He was also involved in alternative theatre — leading the *Epicentar* theatre in Split (national and international festivals, numerous awards) and the *Palach* theatre in Rijeka (awarded *Polet*, among others, with festival appearances). He served as artistic director of a theatre in Rijeka and directed performances in Karlovac.

He published several poetry books:

— *Lov*, Zvornik, 1973

— *Kad ponestane vazduha*, Mladost, Belgrade, 1977

— *Biljno mlijeko*, ICR, Rijeka, 1984

— *Živi zid*, Književne novine, Belgrade, 1984

His manuscripts, books, artworks, documents, photographs, letters and more were irretrievably destroyed in Rijeka. His apartment was sealed and vacated.

He now lives in Belgrade as a political exile and

is the founder of the refugee newspaper *Odgovor*.

* * *

Zvonko Tarle passed away in 2010 in Belgrade. We present the continuation of his biography from the website of the Association of Journalists of Serbia.

Zvonko Tarle Has Passed Away

Today (May 27, 2010), in Belgrade, after a long illness, Zvonko Tarle — veteran journalist and writer — passed away. He was born in 1951 in Drniš.

Until 1991, he worked as a *Borba* correspondent from Rijeka, and afterward as a journalist for *Borba* in Belgrade. He was also president of the refugee Society of Journalists of Croatia, which had its temporary headquarters in Belgrade.

He edited the Belgrade weekly *Odgovor*, which focussed on refugee issues, and he founded *Radio 021* in Novi Sad. On the recommendation of UNHCR, in 1996 he moved to Banja Luka, where he founded the multiethnic *Radio Kontakt*, and later carried out a similar initiative in Kosovo, founding *Radio Kontakt Plus* in Kosovska Mitrovica.

Following that, in 2003 he founded the monthly magazine *Danica* in Banja Luka, and in 2005 the Croatian Cultural Centre, where he served as director until his passing.

Proof