

Im Rahmen der Reihe

**Warum Krieg? Albert Einstein – Sigmund Freud 1933**

## **“Keiner war dabei”**

Why Do We Need Monsters? War Criminals as Ordinary People

**Slavenka Drakulić** im Dialog mit **Wolfgang Petritsch**

Begrüßung

**Rudolf Scholten**

Donnerstag, 19 Mai 2005, 19.30 h

**Slavenka Drakulić**, geboren 1949 in Rijeka, hat sich als Schriftstellerin und Journalistin international einen Namen gemacht. Sie studierte an der Universität Zagreb Komparatistik und Soziologie und veröffentlicht seit 1976 Artikel, Essays und Bücher, heute arbeitet und lebt sie in den USA, Wien, Istrien und Stockholm. Drakulić schreibt für internationale Zeitungen und Zeitschriften, ihre Romane und Sachbücher wurden in zahlreiche Sprachen übersetzt. Im März dieses Jahres erhielt Slavenka Drakulić für ihr Buch „Keiner war dabei - Kriegsverbrechen auf dem Balkan vor Gericht“ (Paul Zsolnay Verlag Wien) den Leipziger Buchpreis zur Europäischen Verständigung. Veröffentlichungen in deutscher Sprache: Das Prinzip Sehnsucht (Aufbau 1989), Wie wir den Kommunismus überstanden – und trotzdem lachten (Aufbau 1991), Sterben in Kroatien – Vom Krieg mitten in Europa (Aufbau 1992), Café Paradis oder Die Sehnsucht nach Europa (Aufbau 1997), Das Liebesopfer (Aufbau 1997), Marmorhaut (Aufbau 1998), Als gäbe es mich nicht (Aufbau 1999), Keiner war dabei – Kriegsverbrechen auf dem Balkan vor Gericht (Zsolnay 2004).

**Wolfgang Petritsch**, geboren 1947 in Klagenfurt, ist zur Zeit österreichischer Botschafter und Ständiger Vertreter Österreichs bei den Vereinten Nationen, der WTO und der “Conference on Disarmament“ in Genf. Davor war er u.a. Botschafter in Belgrad, sodann in verschiedenen europäischen und internationalen Positionen tätig, etwa als EU-Sondergesandter und Chefverhandler für Kosovo. Von 1999 bis 2002 war er als Hoher Repräsentant der internationale Zivilverwalter in Bosnien und Herzegowina, verantwortlich für die Umsetzung des Friedensvertrages von Dayton. Von 1977 bis 1983 war Petritsch Mitarbeiter von Bundeskanzler Bruno Kreisky. Zahlreiche Publikationen, zuletzt (gemeinsam mit Robert Pichler) „Kosovo-Kosova. Der lange Weg zum Frieden“(2004).

*Im Gedenken an Albert Einstein wird das Bruno Kreisky Forum für internationalen Dialog im Jahr 2005 seinem Programm den historischen Briefwechsel „**Warum Krieg**“ zwischen Albert Einstein und Sigmund Freud aus dem Jahr 1933 zugrunde legen. Die Überlegungen, die diese großen Persönlichkeiten des 20. Jahrhunderts in ihren Briefen zu der Frage des Krieges äußerten, bilden den Ausgangspunkt für eine neue und gegenwärtige Befragung – perspektivisch als Rückblick und zugleich als aktuelle Beobachtung und Blick in die Zukunft konzipiert. Anlässlich des Einstein-Jahres/Jahr der Physik 2005 soll an die Frage, die Einstein Freud 1932 stellte, erinnert werden: „**Gibt es einen Weg, die Menschen von dem Verhängnis des Krieges zu befreien?**“*

Die Veranstaltungsreihe findet in Zusammenarbeit mit der Tageszeitung **Die Presse** statt.

## **Rudolf Scholten**

Meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren, ich möchte Sie sehr herzlich willkommen heißen bei einer Veranstaltung im Rahmen der Reihe WARUM KRIEG. Wir haben diese Reihe am 13. April im Akademietheater begonnen und seither haben weitere zu diesem Thema hier im Haus stattgefunden. Ich bin froh, dass wir heute eine weitere zu diesem Thema hier erleben werden können. Ich möchte Ihnen die ganze Geschichte dieser Serie nicht erzählen, weil Sie sie vielleicht schon gehört haben. Aber im Wesentlichen geht es uns darum, in einer Zeit, in der zumindest in unseren Augen eher leichtfertig mit Jubiläen und Feiern umgegangen wird, einen Punkt zu setzen, der diesen Umgang sicher ernsthafter vornimmt und mehr an die Quellen der Fragen und an die Ursprünge der Fragen als an die Oberfläche der Konsequenzen geht.

Ich möchte sehr herzlich heute hier eine kroatische Autorin begrüßen, die nicht nur literarisch Erfolge zu verzeichnen hat, sondern auch in ihrer politischen Beobachtung. Begrüßen Sie mit mir Slavenka Drakulić. Sie hat ihr jüngstes Buch als einen Bericht über ihre Beobachtungen des Haager Tribunals veröffentlicht, der beklemmend zu lesen ist, weil sie an einem Punkt rührt, der

die erschreckende Nähe zwischen entsetzlichem Unrecht, großer Schuld auf der einen Seite und ebenso entsetzlicher Banalität auf der anderen Seite aufzeigt. Aber sie wird vielleicht zu diesem Buch noch erzählen. Der Titel, wenn Sie mir diesen kurzen Schlenker auf die österreichischen Verhältnisse zulassen, heißt *Keiner war dabei*. Das ist aber eben ein Buch über das Haager Tribunal und nicht über die österreichische Zeitgeschichte.

Wir sind froh, ein Vorstandsmitglied des Kreisky Forums heute hier als Gastgeber begrüßen zu können. Wolfgang Petritsch, guten Abend. Ich möchte jetzt nicht die lange Reihe der Funktionen von Wolfgang Petritsch aufzählen. Ich sage Ihnen nur, ich war einmal mit ihm in Sarajewo auf der Strasse spazieren. Und die Reaktionen, die er bei einem einfachen Spaziergang, der in keiner Weise eine politische Demonstration war, dort auf der Strasse bekommen hat, waren enorm beeindruckend. Das traurige Gegenspiel ist, dass er in dieser Zeit eine Bewachung hatte, die sich auch als beeindruckend beschreiben lässt. Eine meiner Töchter, die mit war, allerdings im Alter von sechs Jahren, hat dann gesagt: „Warum sind so viele Polizisten da? Hat er was angestellt?“  
The floor is yours.

### **Slavenka Drakulić**

Good evening everybody. I am very happy to see you here. I would like to say just a couple of words about this book and how it came about. Of course, it is not only a book, it is the whole issue of the war crimes. Why did I write this book? Before that I wrote two other books about the war. And both of these books were written from the perspectives of victims. One is called *Balkan Express*, and it is about me, a civilian, watching the war coming closer and closer. The other is called *As if I was not there*, and it is about mass rapes in Bosnia. After ten years writing about the war, both novels and also non-fiction and many articles, I started to ask myself the question that, of course, everybody else all this time asked himself or herself. And this is, who are these people who are committing these horrendous crimes, who are ordering them, who are executing the orders? But it is one thing to be a soldier, the other thing is to be a volunteer, or to be drafted, or to be basically a civilian who is committing these crimes. In any case, I wanted to know who are the perpetrators? Because you end up asking this question just out of simple curiosity. I decided that I would like to look into that question for one reason. Not only because of my curiosity, but also because this question I saw was not welcoming. Nobody actually encouraged me to write this book. When I said I am going to take a close look at the perpetrators, I would like to know who they are, people said, why would you do that? First of all it is too early, people don't want to go into these details about the war, the war is finally over, people are tired to hear about the war – so let's forget about everything. And second, perpetrators, obviously, are monsters. Why someone needs to get closer to them, to try to understand them? It looks even perverse when you say that words “to understand a killer, a war criminal”. It doesn't really sound very good. I could understand that people are tired, that they don't want to hear about such things. But in my view it was also a paradox. It was a paradox since their, that is our destiny (I am from there, too) is very much linked to the perpetrators. In what way? Because we are very much conditioned by, what we call, the international community, we are very much conditioned by extraditing the war criminals. So the condition for Croatia, or for Serbia for that matter, to even start to think about becoming a member of the EU - and for many other reasons, for economic reasons also, not only political - is to extradite the war criminals. This is a very big problem, as you might have heard and learned all these years, for all these Balkan countries. It is a very hot political question in the whole Balkans.

The problem in my view is rather simple: the truth about the war. This is the trouble about the war, that many people – these are small countries – in this or that way participated in that war, took part in it either directly, or indirectly just like citizens supporting the government leading that war and their nationalist rhetoric - all that this kind of politicians like Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic stood for. That is to say that people were involved. I would even say that almost

everybody was involved in this and that way. Of course, there is a very big difference between a person who votes for Tadjman, or the one who executes his orders, or the one who really is killing and murdering people. But people being involved don't want to talk about that because something about their behavior during the war might come up, once alleged war criminals are standing trial. In short, the problem is individual responsibility. Most people don't want to face their responsibility for the war and the truth about themselves. This is the classical question. Father, what have you been doing during the war? But according to me there is no justice without truth, and this we will discuss here today. The problem is then, there is no truth about this war except the one coming from the Tribunal in The Hague. If you would leave it to us, to individual states in that region, the truth would be very different from state to state.

My problem dealing with war criminals was that, as I already mentioned, people told me that war criminals are just monsters. But my question was, what if war criminals are not monsters? What if? If they are not born murderers, not born killers, not born in order to kill other people? What if Karadzic and Mladic are ordinary people who under certain circumstances turn into war criminals? What kind of consequences might have such a conclusion, that they are ordinary people, for other ordinary people, for the rest to us? If they are murderers, born murderers, then they are not so interesting, I think. Because we have nothing to learn from them. Because it is either genes, or biology – something inborn, inherited perhaps that made them what they are. And most certainly a small number of such people became war criminals. Indeed, this is a situation where they flourish, where they execute or act out their own kind of perversity. I have in my book one such a case. This guy who is actually a borderline case, Goran Jelisic. He was a killer and torturer in Luka camp, near Brcko. But if they are indeed ordinary people, not extraordinary people, then I think we have something to learn from them, and actually to learn a lot. What can we learn? I think we can learn about ourselves. At the bottom of dealing with war criminals there is an unpleasant question: What would I have done in such a situation? And in my opinion the answer is, well ..., you actually don't know. You do not know until the moment you are in such a situation. But you can become aware what are the possibilities, and what are your options in such a situation. Because as Primo Levi said, there is always a moral choice, there is always a possibility of moral choice.

Tonight Mr. Petritsch will be so nice to read one story about Dražen Erdemović. Erdemović was sentenced as a war criminal, but he was faced with an impossible choice. It was really proven in his case. He was asked to kill muslim men near Srebrenica, to execute them in a mass execution in 1995 – the tenth anniversary will now be commemorated on 11<sup>th</sup> of July. Erdemović told his commander that he doesn't want to do execute them. Then he was faced with the choice: either his life or theirs... Sitting in the court in The Hague 5 months and observing war criminals, I came to the conclusion that, indeed, they are ordinary people.

I think that the perpetrators must be punished. And they are going to be punished only symbolically, of course. Only a small number of the war criminals is going to be sentenced. The Hague is washing our dirty laundry. Because none of the countries involved is either capable or willing to trial their own war criminals or even to investigate war crimes. But I think that the longterm legacy of The Hague is not this symbolical justice only, but the truth. So we are coming back to the truth. The Hague is the only place where the truth in the trials is emerging, like little pieces of a puzzle. A truth emerging from that institution and, so far, this is the only truth that we know. Everything else that you hear is ideology and politics, that is, manipulation. So the longterm legacy of The Hague, in my opinion, is bringing the truth out. But as we know, and we can talk about, this is a very complex political issue because there is a certain inability and unwillingness to deal with the truth. The recent past is preventing us from dealing with the future. Political consequences are visible. For example, Croatia in March was denied negotiations with the EU because we were not capable of extraditing alleged war criminal Ante Godovina. Our political

leaders are not capable of telling people that although Gotovina might act heroically in certain situations, he could be a war criminal and he has to defend his cause in the court. The same thing goes for Serbia, because they have a big problem with Ratko Mladic. The interesting thing is that in both countries these men are considered to be heroes. So there is a whole complex question, how do you deal with truth in the particular country, and why people are so much opposing it. They are opposing extraditing of these men to the Tribunal in The Hague because, in their opinion, they are heroes..

This is what I wanted to say, and we can now perhaps listen to part of a story.

### **Wolfgang Petritsch**

Before I start, and I will do so in German first, I would like to give a warm welcome to my dear colleague and friend, the Jordanian Ambassador to Austria, Mr Shehab Ed-Din A. Madi, with whom I have been working in Geneva, for some time. Fortunately, he now lives in Vienna, and I very much appreciate that you, Ambassador, are attending this event tonight, here at the Bruno Kreisky Forum. I know that you worked before with Crown Prince Bin Talal and that you knew Bruno Kreisky very well, personally.

Ich komme jetzt wie bereits angekündigt zu einer kurzen Lesung. Es ist eine sehr gute Einstimmung gerade auf das, was Slavenka Drakulić jetzt gesagt hat. Es ist das achte Kapitel ihres Buches *Keiner war dabei. Kriegsverbrechen auf dem Balkan vor Gericht* und handelt von einem Tag im Leben des Drazen Erdemovic, der 1971 in Tuzla auf die Welt gekommen ist. Seine Mutter war Kroatin, sein Vater Serbe. Er wurde vom Haager Tribunal für Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit angeklagt, weil er am 16. Juli 1995 an der Exekution von Muslimen in Srebrenica teilgenommen hatte. Im Verlauf der Ermittlungen und des Prozesses zeigte er mehrmals Reue wegen seiner Taten. Er habe schießen müssen, erklärte Erdemović, denn hätte er sich geweigert, wäre er selbst getötet worden. Das ursprüngliche Urteil, 10 Jahre Gefängnis, wurde dann auf 5 Jahre reduziert, weil man seine besondere Situation berücksichtigt hat. Er hat sich dann auch als Zeuge der Anklage zur Verfügung gestellt, gegen General Krstic und auch gegen Karadzic und Mladic. Heute ist er ein freier Mann und hat den Status eines geschützten Zeugen. Ich überspringe einige Seiten, weil die Lesung nicht zu lange dauern soll. Erdemović befindet sich also jetzt dort, wo die Erschießungen stattfinden werden.

„Und während er im Gras lag, fühlte er ein leichtes Beben des Bodens. Als Kind hatte er einmal sein Ohr auf eine Eisenbahnschiene gelegt. Obwohl kein Zug zu sehen war, konnte er das Geräusch der Lokomotive hören lange, bevor sie hinter dem benachbarten Hügel auftauchte. Er stand auf und sah sich um. Die anderen hatten noch nichts gehört, doch das war nur eine Frage der Zeit. Eben traf der erste Autobus ein, ein ziemlich schäbiges Fahrzeug, wie sie zwischen den Dörfern verkehrten und häufig Pannen hatten. Drazen sah die Aufschrift Centrotrans und einige Soldaten auf den vorderen Sitzen. Der Bus hielt vor dem Hauptgebäude in diesem Dorf, wo die Exekutionen dann stattgefunden haben. Der Befehlshaber wechselte ein paar Worte mit dem Fahrer, während zwei Soldaten die hintere Tür öffneten. Ein Mann stieg aus. Drazen vergaß ihn nicht mehr, denn in diesem Moment begriff er, was ihre, die Aufgabe der Truppe war, und zitterte. Der Mann war groß und sehr mager, doch Drazen konnte sein Alter nicht schätzen, weil er eine schmutzige Augenbinde trug. Gekleidet war er in ein blaues, verschwitztes Hemd, blaue Trainingshosen und Turnschuhe. Seine Hände waren auf dem Rücken gefesselt. Ihm folgten noch fünfzig Gefangene. Ein Soldat führte sie zu einem Feld jenseits des Gebäudes. Der Befehlshaber rief sie zusammen (nämlich die Soldaten) und sagte, jetzt kämen Autobusse mit Zivilisten aus Srebrenica. Er meinte die gefangenen Muslime, die sich den Einheiten der Armee der Republika Srpska ergeben hatten. ‚Wir werden sie liquidieren‘, sagte der Kommandeur. Das gefiel Drazen gar nicht. Nie hatten sie so einen Auftrag gehabt, aber keiner sagte ein Wort. Nur einer, Pero, hatte

es sehr eilig. Aber Drazen bemerkte, dass er Schnaps getrunken hatte und wahrscheinlich alkoholisiert war. Drazen sah die Gefangenen an. Sie standen mit dem Rücken zu den Soldaten. Ein Mann wandte sich halb zu ihnen um, als erwarte er etwas. Wollte er etwas von ihnen? Für Drazen war das widerlich, und er hatte Angst, sich übergeben zu müssen. Nein, das konnte er nicht tun. Er konnte Menschen nicht einfach so töten. Als er sich seinem Kommandeur näherte, zitterten ihm die Hände. ‚Ich will das nicht tun‘, sagte er. Brano Gojković wandte sich zu Drazen, als habe er nicht richtig gehört. ‚Was?‘, sagte er. Drazen kannte den Trick. Gojković wollte, dass er seine Worte lauter wiederholte, damit er Zeugen für späteres haben würde. Drazen sah die Soldaten an. ‚Genossen, ich will das nicht tun? Seid ihr noch normal? Wisst ihr, worauf ihr euch einlasst?‘ Er fühlte, wie ihn der Mut verließ, während die anderen seinem Blick auswichen. Pero lachte laut über ihn. Es folgte eine unbehagliche Stille. Drazen bemerkte plötzlich, dass er den ganzen Tag kein Vogelgezwitscher gehört hatte. Gojković, der Kommandeur, sah ihn ernst und starr an. ‚Wenn du das nicht tun willst, Erdemović, geh zu den Gefangenen, und du wirst auch erschossen. Gib mir deine Waffe.‘ Der Kommandeur sah in nicht mehr an, als hätte er das Interesse an seiner Entscheidung verloren. Er ließ die Soldaten hinter den Gefangenen antreten, welche niederknien mussten. Drazen stand am Rand des Erschießungskommandos. Sein Herz schlug noch immer heftig, als er seine Waffe auf einen älteren Mann richtete, dessen Gesicht er zum Glück nicht sah. Fieberhaft wog er seine Möglichkeiten ab. Natürlich hätte er zwischen zwei Gefangenen zielen können, doch die wären nachträglich exekutiert worden. Übrigens war ihr Trupp klein, kaum zehn Mann, und hätte er daneben gezielt, wäre er bald entdeckt worden. Der Kommandeur hätte gewusst, wer da sabotierte und hätte ihn töten lassen. Nein, er musste genau zielen. Da kam der Befehl ‚Feuer‘, und jener ältere Mann entschwand seinen Blicken. Drazen erinnert sich nur, dass er ein graues T-Shirt getragen hatte. Er schloss die Augen und versuchte sich zu beruhigen. Doch es gab keine Ruhe. Schon standen neue Gefangene vor ihnen. Einer schrie ‚ihr Verdammten‘, konnte jedoch seinen Satz nicht beenden, denn schon kam der nächste Feuerbefehl. Nachdem er einmal angefangen hatte, schoss Drazen alle paar Minuten ohne nachzudenken. Er versuchte, nur auf ältere Männer zu zielen. Ihm schien der Schaden wäre dann geringer. Als Drazen auf seine Uhr sah, war er schockiert. Sie hatten nur fünfzehn Minuten gebraucht, um mehr als sechzig Menschen zu töten.

Inzwischen war der nächste Bus schon eingetroffen. Die Gefangenen konnten nicht sehen, was sie erwartete, denn auch sie trugen Augenbinden. Drazen war froh darüber. Er betrachtete es als eine Gnade gegenüber diesen armen Menschen. Aber bald kamen Busse voller Männer, die keine Augenbinden trugen und deren Hände nicht gefesselt waren, als hätte man sie hastig zusammengetrieben, in die Busse gestopft und zur Farm Branjevo transportiert. Warum diese Eile? Drazen begriff es nicht. Die Männer ohne Augenbinden konnten sehen, was sie erwartete. Sie sahen die Leichen und die Soldaten mit ihren Kalschnikoffs. Dennoch stiegen sie aus dem Bus und ließen sich zur Richtstätte führen wie Vieh zum Schlachthof. Der Wald war in der Nähe. Es wäre logisch gewesen, einen Fluchtversuch zu unternehmen. In wenigen Minuten konnten sie in die Sicherheit des dichten Baumbestands eintauchen. Das war eine kleine Chance zu überleben. Doch keiner der Gefangenen brach aus. Drazen hatte so etwas nie zuvor gesehen. Gefangene, die sich in den Tod geleiten ließen. Erwarteten sie, dass jemand sie retten würde? Wären alle auf einmal los gerannt, hätten einige flüchten können. Und selbst, wenn alle getötet wurden, sie wären in dem Wissen gestorben, dass sie es versucht hatten. Sie hatten nichts zu verlieren. Schon als sie aus dem Bus stiegen, musste ihnen klar sein, was auf sie zukam. Drazen hoffte, sie würden weglaufen. Damit hätte er einen Grund zum Schießen gehabt. Es wäre leichter und fairer gewesen. Sie hätten eine Chance zum Entkommen gehabt. Aber nein, die Gefangenen bewegten sich ruhig und gehorsam, wie paralytiert. Vielleicht empfanden diese Männer nichts mehr. Aber dann sah er etwas, das ihn entsetzte. Während er auf den Kopf eines Mannes zielte, zeigte sich auf dessen Hose ein verräterischer nasser Fleck, der sich ausbreitete. Er hörte den Befehl und feuerte. Als der Mann umfiel, sah Drazen, dass er noch lebte und weiterhin vor Angst urinierte. Es war ihm so

unangenehm, als wäre es ihm selbst passiert. ‚Es hätte auch mir passieren können‘, dachte er, schob jedoch den Gedanken beiseite. Er war müde und wütend auf sich, auf Gojković, auf alle. Es war nicht Recht, alle diese Männer umzubringen. Als Soldaten wären sie Kriegsgefangene gewesen. Als Zivilisten verdienten sie diese Behandlung nicht. Er wusste, dass sie etwas falsch machten. Gäbe es Gerechtigkeit, würden diese Männer nicht einfach so umgebracht werden. Ohne Prozess, ohne Beweis für ihre Schuld. Hunderte Männer konnten nicht einfach so verschwinden. Die Angehörigen würden nach ihnen suchen. Und am Ende würde man Dražens Einheit die Schuld an ihrem Tod geben. Wenn Gojković keine Zeugen wollte, was war mit seinen eigenen Soldaten? Waren sie nicht Mitwisser des Verbrechens? Wie konnte er sicher sein, dass keiner reden würde?

In diesem Moment hörte Dražen Geräusche. Unter den Gefangenen auf dem Feld stand ein Mann von etwa sechzig Jahren, grauhaarig und gut gekleidet. ‚Bringt mich nicht um‘, rief er. ‚Ich habe vielen Serben in Srebrenica das Leben gerettet, sie können für mich garantieren, hier sind ihre Namen und Telefonnummern.‘ Er zog ein Papier aus der Tasche. Dražen führte ihn beiseite, gab ihm eine Zigarette und ein Glas Orangensaft. Der Mann setzte sich und zündete die Zigarette an. Seine Hände zitterten, als er Dražen das Papier reichte. ‚Hier sind die Namen und die Telefonnummern. Ihr könnt das alles überprüfen. Ich sage die Wahrheit.‘ Aber Dražen wusste, dass ihn die Soldaten nicht am Leben lassen würden, denn er hätte Zeugnis über die Exekutionen ablegen können, was zu vermeiden war. Warum nahm er ihn dann beiseite? Dražen war beeindruckt, weil dieser Mann nicht so stillschweigend wie die anderen den eigenen Tod akzeptierte. Er wirkte aufrichtig und tapfer, und Dražen wollte sein Leben verlängern, so weit er konnte. Der Mann schien keine Hoffnung zu haben. ‚Wir haben alle zusammengelebt, Muslime, Serben, Kroaten‘, sagte er. ‚Was ist uns einfachen Menschen geschehen? Warum haben wir das zugelassen?‘ ‚Ja wirklich, was ist uns geschehen?‘, sagte Dražen. ‚Wenn mir das nur jemand erklären könnte. Ich weiss nicht mehr als du. Ich bin ein Halbkroate, meine Frau ist Serbin.‘ Dražen begriff, dass er und dieser Mann etwas gemeinsam hatten. Die Toleranz gegenüber anderen Nationalitäten. ‚Aber wie kannst du das hier tun?‘, fragte der Mann, als er seinen letzten Zug inhalierte. Dražen konnte ihm nur sagen, dass er selbst keine Wahl gehabt hatte. Es war dumm, das zu einem Mann zu sagen, der gleich sein Leben verlieren sollte. Es klang verdammt. Aber es war die Wahrheit. Dražen wusste, dass der Mann nur schuldig war, weil er die falsche Nationalität hatte. Eine weitere Konversation war nicht möglich, denn Pero kam mit einem anderen Soldaten heran. Sie führten den Mann einfach ab. Dražen sagte, ‚Nein, tu das nicht.‘ Mehr konnte er nicht tun. ‚Halt’s Maul‘, sagte Ivan. In einer Minute war alles vorbei und der Mann tot.

Es war später Nachmittag, und die Soldaten konnten kaum eine Pause machen. Anfangs hatte sich Dražen jede halbe Stunde unter einen Baum gesetzt und eine Zigarette geraucht. Das war eine Art Flucht gewesen. Doch jetzt mochte er nicht mehr rauchen. Seine Bewegungen wurden mechanisch. Er zielte auf jemandes Kopf und schoss. Und ehe er sich den Schweiß von der Stirn wischen konnte, kniete schon der nächste Gefangene vor ihm. Das war ihm lieber. Denn wurde die Pause zu lang, spürte er den Leichengestank. Im Sommer beginnen sich die Leichen fast sofort zu zersetzen. Der Geruch erinnerte ihn an einen Metzgerladen. Seine Mutter hatte ihn manchmal zum Fleisch kaufen geschickt. Aber das hatte er stets zu vermeiden gesucht. Im Sommer hatte die Metzgerei einen unerträglichen Geruch. Er ekelte sich vor den dicken grünen Fliegen, die sich auf dem Fleisch nieder ließen und ihre Eier ablegten. Der Metzger amüsierte sich damit, die Fliegen zu fangen und in ein Glas mit Wasser zu tun. Dražen floh vor dem Gestank nach Hause. ‚Was hast du für ein feines Näschen‘, hänselte ihn die Mutter. Jetzt wehte dieser Gestank vom Feld herüber, und er sah die selben grünen Fliegen auf den frischen Leichen.

Ivan bemerkte, dass Dražen blass wurde. Er bot ihm Schnaps an, hausgebrannten Slibovits. Nach ein paar Schlucken wurde ihm besser. Der Alkohol wirkte besänftigend, und er schoss eine Zeit lang weiter ohne nachzudenken.

Während er noch einen langen Schluck nahm, beobachtete Dražen aus dem Augenwinkel, wie aus einem der Busse ein kleiner Junge stieg. Er trug keine Augenbinde, und Dražen konnte sein Gesicht sehen, obwohl er sich geschworen hatte, nicht mehr auf die Gesichter der Gefangenen zu achten. Das erschwerte ihm die Arbeit. Der Junge mochte fünfzehn sein, vielleicht auch jünger. Er war nackt bis zur Gürtellinie und seine bleiche Haut der Sonne ausgesetzt. Er musterte die Soldaten und dann die Toten auf dem Feld. Seine Augen wurden immer größer, als könnte er das alles nicht aufnehmen. ‚Er ist doch erst ein Junge‘, murmelte Dražen mehr für sich und war bemüht, nicht hinter ihm zu stehen zu kommen. Als die Gefangenen vor dem Trupp nieder knieten, hörte Dražen noch vor dem Schießbefehl die Stimme des Jungen. Mama, flüsterte er, Mama. An diesem Tag war Dražen Zeuge geworden, wie Männer um ihr Leben flehten, wie Kinder weinten, den Soldaten, Geld, Autos, sogar Häuser versprachen. Viele fluchten, einige schluchzten. Doch dieser Junge rief nach seiner Mutter, wie Kinder es tun, wenn sie aus einem bösen Traum erwachen und Trost suchen. Obwohl der Junge eine Minute tot war, glaubte Dražen noch immer seine Stimme zu hören. ‚Ich halluziniere‘, dachte Dražen. Zum zweiten Mal an diesem Tag wurde ihm so übel, dass er zu den Büschen rennen und sich übergeben musste. Er brachte nur eine gelbliche, nach Alkohol riechende Flüssigkeit heraus. Noch war kein neuer Bus eingetroffen, und er lehnte sich an einen Baum. Er war erschöpft. Seit zehn Uhr morgens war er in der Sonne gestanden und hatte geschossen, bemüht die Gefangenen nicht anzusehen, nicht über sie nachzudenken, nichts zu empfinden. Jetzt war er abgestumpft, sein Körper wie aus Holz. Er kam sich vor wie eine Marionette, die nur den Arm heben und schießen konnte, wieder und wieder. Er saß da und starrte in die Ferne, hörte jemand ächzen, dann knallte ein einzelner Schuss. Dražen wandte sich nicht um, wollte nichts mehr sehen, hatte genug vom Töten. Wie viele Busse würden noch kommen?

Nach drei Uhr nachmittags war alles vorüber. Gojković gab bekannt, dass keine Gefangenen mehr da waren. Und die Soldaten stiegen eilig in ihren eigenen Bus. Die Sonne stand hoch am Himmel, und der Gestank war unerträglich. Dražen konnte es kaum erwarten, diesen Schreckensort zu verlassen. Wieder wünschte er sich, ins Wasser zu springen oder wenigsten zu duschen und den Todesgeruch von sich abzuspülen oder sich wenigstens die Hände zu waschen. Er betrachtete sie aufmerksam. Sie waren nicht blutig, nur am rechten Zeigefinger war eine Schwielen, eine rosige, runde Schwielen. ‚Seltsam‘, dachte er, ‚vom Töten Schwielen zu bekommen‘. Schätzungsweise hatte er etwa siebzig Mal geschossen. Er hatte vielleicht siebzig Menschen getötet und davon eine Schwielen bekommen. Plötzlich kam ihm das so komisch vor, dass er kurz und hysterisch auflachte. Endlich verließen sie das Dorf Branjevo. Das Feld am Gebäude war von Leichen bedeckt. Wer würde sie begraben und wo? Dražen wandte den Kopf ab. Das war nicht mehr seine Angelegenheit. Er hatte das seinige getan, für ihn war es vorbei. Zum ersten Mal an diesem Tag atmete er tief durch. Doch es war nicht vorbei. Noch nicht.

Als sie im benachbarten Bilice ankamen, teilte ihnen der Kommandeur mit, dass fünfhundert Männer im Kulturhaus auf ihre Exekution warteten. Diesmal war es einfacher, nein zu sagen, denn Dražen war nicht der einzige. Sie alle waren müde vom Töten und weigerten sich weiter zu machen. In Bilice gab es ausgeruhte Soldaten, die sich freiwillig für die Aufgabe meldeten, was dem Kommandanten nur Recht sein konnte. Dražen saß in einem Lokal gegenüber dem Kulturhaus und bestellte einen starken schwarzen Kaffee. Bevor seine Einheit angekommen war, hatten einige Gefangene einen Fluchtversuch unternommen, waren aber alle erschossen worden. Einige Soldaten waren noch dabei, die Toten nach Geld oder Schmuck zu durchsuchen. Dražen starrte sie an. Er starrte nur und trank seinen übersüßen Kaffee. Er wusste, dass er diesen Tag nie vergessen würde, dass er sein Fluch war. Der Honigduft am Morgen, der blaue Himmel, das Geräusch des ersten Busses, jener dünne, schnurrbärtige Mann, die Urin getränkte Hose, der Leichengeruch, das tief rote Blut aus den Schusswunden, der Junge, der nach seiner Mutter rief. Er fühlte, dass dieser

Tag sein Leben verändern würde, dass er es bereits veränderte. Ihm kamen die Tränen. ‚Jungs weinen nicht‘, hatte sein Vater stets gesagt, wenn er mit blutigen Knien nach Hause kam. Aber wo war sein Vater jetzt? Wo waren sie alle, seine Eltern, seine Frau, seine Freunde? Dražen war noch nie so einsam gewesen, allein mit den eintausendzweihundert Toten, die ihn verfolgen würden, wohin er auch ging.“

Well, after listening to this text, it is really quite difficult to ask a question. But I must tell you, I was shocked when I read in an Austrian newspaper this morning, that there had been a seminar on the subject of Srebrenica, organised by a student organisation in Belgrad, which has dealt with - what these students called - the “truth” about Srebrenica. This conference basically came to the conclusion that there had never actually been any crimes committed in Srebrenica. So, this is the outcome of something that happened ten years ago. What is your reaction when you hear such statements?

### **Drakulić**

I am not surprised at all. And this is what I meant when I said that if you would leave the truth to each country, to each nation, this is how it would look like. The students concluded there were no crimes committed in Srebrenica. But we know that not only crime, but genocide was committed in Srebrenica. And how do we know that? Because there was a trial of Radislav Krstic, a general who was in charge of the Army of Republika Srpska (Drina Corps) and who led the attack on Srebrenica, together with Mladic. He was first under General Ratko Mladic. In the trial of General Krstic part of the truth about Srebrenica came out. And the prosecution presented mainly circumstantial evidence. Krstic never admitted any wrongdoing. He never said that the muslim men were not executed, but he denied that he was there, that he knew about that, or that he ordered it. He didn't deny execution itself. This trial was also very important because he was the first person ever after the second world war who was actually tried and sentenced for genocide. On the other hand, if you ask Croats about the Serbs in Krajina they will tell you the same thing. There was no intention to ethnically “cleanse” them. Yesterday, the Croatian prime minister was speaking about what he and many Croats feel when the chief prosecutor, Carla da Ponte, demands to extradite particular alleged war criminals. She is too hard on Croatia, says the prime minister, saying that there was a criminal intent in the action “Storm” - that is when Croatia took back the Krajina region where mostly Serbs lived before this war. He said that there was no criminal intent. Croats didn't want to ethnically “cleanse” that part of the country, they only wanted to take it back. But The Hague is saying no, it was criminal intent, we have proofs. If you leave it to the politicians, or if you leave it to the students, or if you leave it even to historians, what will come out will not be the truth. By the way Serbia never really admitted that it was involved in the war in Bosnia.

Therefore, even if we don't like it, even if it feels humiliating, even if we think that it would have been much better – and of course, it would have been much better to have our own investigation about war crimes and our own trials of our own people - it is for many reasons very difficult, almost impossible. In Croatia there were five trials or five attempts of trials for war crimes. And only in one case war criminals were sentenced. But in four other cases they were released because there was not enough proof against them. There was not enough proof because there were no people there to witness. It is a small country. And if you are a witness, an unprotected witness in such a small country, to witness is as good as signing your own death sentence.

### **Petritsch**

There is also a chapter in your book about a Hague-witness who got killed, subsequently.



**Drakulić**

Yes, it was Milan Levar in the so-called “Gosšić case”. It becomes really very clear that it is very difficult to witness, even if you want. I am saying that also because very soon the court in The Hague is going to stop its investigation and conclude the trials. They will give back the rest of the cases to the respective countries, and then expect the countries to try their own war criminals, with some kind of supervision by the Tribunal. I wonder what is going to happen then. Because you will have people like those students who will say one thing, and you will have the others who will say the other thing. I think the biggest problem in all these countries in transition is corruption. It is simply that the juridical system is not independent. It is very much under influence of politics. Therefore there are many reasons for being pessimistic about the future trials.

**Petritsch**

Actually, what annoyed me the most in the context of the Gotovina case, is really not so much that this person who already had been a criminal before, eventually became a general. What really shocked me were the posters that you can see in Croatia. What went wrong in politics? What went wrong with the media? Croatia has quite a diversified field of media. They are not all under government control. Many are owned by Western European publishing houses. One would actually expect that they would enlighten the people, and that at some stage the truth would come out.

**Drakulić**

It is not so easy to answer that, starting from the posters and from the fact that people – as I said before also Mladic and Karadzic - consider Gotovina to be a hero. I won't dispute if Gotovina is a hero or not. I don't know that. Perhaps in some situations he behaved heroically, I don't know. People who fought with him say that he did. That is even not in contradiction with being accused of war crimes. You can be a hero, but you can also be a war criminal. You can become a hero by doing some illegal or not permitted things in the war. But the problem is that the majority of people – an opinion poll was done, of course, after this March 17 when Croatia was denied negotiations with the EU – said that they would never extradite Gotovina. This was quite interesting. And then the majority of that majority also said that they would not do it under the condition that because of that they would live worse instead of living better. Politicians are giving the impression that this is a question of national pride. You cannot deliver a hero to the Tribunal because this is a question of national pride. We cannot let foreigners try our heroes.

But on the other hand you have to know that HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) was ruling for ten years, and the government is in their hands again. In the meantime we had four years of SDP, a socialist government. None of them, however, dared to really talk about the recent war and to discuss the truth. There was not even much of the desire from the people you would expect it, like people one would consider independent intellectuals, or from writers. Of course, there is always a small group around the “Feral Tribune” (which is the weekly from Split), that consequently throughout the war was writing about the war crimes committed by Croatian soldiers. But they are a rather small group. These are the only people who have been fighting for truth. Also a strange thing happened: When the bigger media started to take up these issues it did not mean much. The television is state owned and people believe what the TV news say. And the news are pretty much controlled indirectly by the party in power which is HDZ. The atmosphere recently is anti EU. People think: We have been punished for not extraditing Gotovina, but we belong to Europe, why do they make such big case out of Gotovina? We belong to Europe, we would like to go Europe, don't punish us. And when people think that they are punished, they feel very bitter, very angry. Nationalists raise their heads saying: You see, they don't want you, why would you go and humiliate yourself. And the discussion is again going into the absolutely wrong direction.

The meritum of the thing is, did Croats commit war crimes or not, did they commit “ethnic cleansing” in Krajina or not, is actually not being discussed. There are many reasons for that, one being that people from the government itself, or sitting in parliament, were themselves participating in this war, too. They also dirtied their hands. As I said, it is a pretty messy situation.

### **Petritsch**

Taking a whole people hostage, having perpetrators and onlookers portray themselves as victims, that is something that we as Austrians know quite well from our own past. So these psychological mechanisms are still working in the Balkans, as in many other post-conflict societies. In Bosnia, all three constituent peoples – Bosnians, Croats and Serbs, in Serbia, the Serbs – perceive themselves as “victims”. Now the question really is whether the Tribunal in The Hague has done any good, at all. Did they do a bad job? Did we as the so-called international community, not succeed in conveying the message about justice and what it is all about? It is about justice and truth. These are elements that serve as preconditions for reconciliation and, consequently, social economic progress, as well as integration into the European sphere. Any progress both in these individual states as well as also moving closer to the European Union.

### **Drakulić**

The Tribunal was always experienced as blackmail in Croatia. This is what is wrong. I personally think that we should be grateful to the international community to establish that Tribunal because we are not willing and not capable of doing that. We just don’t want to try our people. We don’t know how to do it, we are not capable of it. But yet, we are very angry if somebody else is doing it. Why? Because if we are talking about truth, and if we believe that The Hague is bringing out truth like in this case of Srebrenica and the trial of Radislav Krstic – but on the other hand, there is not even a desire for truth in the country. There are only ideological interpretations of the recent past. There is no lowest common denominator saying okay, this we should accept, this is what happened, we should accept. All through these years Tudjman was obsessed with taping his conversations with everybody, with his generals, foreign diplomats, guests etc. There are thousands of tapes which were found, of course, after his death. If he would have been alive he most probably would have ended up in The Hague himself. In these tapes he also provided the arguments or the proofs against himself! These tapes or transcripts were published in the newspapers in these last five or six years, so people know the truth, but they don’t accept it.

It is interesting that the Serbs are saying the same thing, the Tribunal is against us, for what reason we don’t really know. From time to time it really sounds like some kind of blackmail. If you don’t do this you will not get that. Therefore my position about the membership in the EU is a little bit different. I think all the problematic Balkan countries should be included rather than excluded. Once they are in, they cannot behave as they are behaving now. You have to know that every nationalist government is striving when it is isolated, because they can do whatever they want. And the bandits, the corrupted people, the criminals who are dealing and wheeling and selling and smuggling will do it even more, they don’t want any kind of control. So it is better for them to be isolated. Now if the Croats are conditioned by extraditing Gotovina and the Serbs by extraditing Karadzic and Mladic, if you take both of these countries in, then there is a different game. But it is impossible, even if the EU would like to take Croatia in, they cannot say, forget Gotovina, come. What would they say to Serbia? It is an impossible situation. I don’t see how long it is going to drag on, because eventually all these countries - which were fighting each other - within ten years will be together in Europe. And they will have to give up part of what they aimed at, and this is their sovereignty. They wanted a national sovereignty. Okay, they wanted to become ethnically clean nation-states, but they also wanted sovereignty. In order to become part of the European Union they will have to give up part of their sovereignty. Isn’t that a paradox? Within ten years

everybody will be in. With Gotovina, without Gotovina. Let's perhaps try to look upon that in a slightly different way.

**Petritsch**

What you are basically saying is that inspite of Gotovina, and inspite of Karadzic, Mladic and the other human rights violators and accused war criminals, Europe should simply say: "Okay, you are included!" and should then deal with the matter within the Union itself.

**Drakulić**

It would be much easier to deal with these problems.

**Petritsch**

That is a practical approach, a very pragmatic approach. Will this not be seen as accepting the situation as it is and not dealing with the root causes of the problem? I believe that we are talking now more about the phenomena of this conflict which is exactly what the tribunal is trying to do. But how will Croatia or the Croats, how will Serbia or the Serbs come to terms with their own recent past? Isn't there the danger that what has happened after 1945 under Tito, could repeat itself, i.e. that one would basically sweep this all under the carpet, now the "big European Union carpet", and say, "let's forget it and move on"?

**Drakulić**

Perhaps we should look at Germany. Of course, Germany is a big example for how to deal with individual guilt, collective responsibility, or facing the past. If the Germans wouldn't have been forced by the international community – by the allies - God knows how long it would have taken them to come to terms with their own past. If we let Serbia, and Croatia, and Bosnia, and Kosovo come to terms with their own past, let them do that alone, leave it to them to extradite these war criminals, to discuss it among themselves to come to the truth - it might easily take fifty, sixty, seventy years, several generations in fact. I am not an expert. But from a very practical, pragmatic point of view, there must be another approach. Because the situation, as it is now, might drag on for quite some time. And I understand what you mean by facing your own guilt and responsibility. People eventually have to do that. But I think that maybe, when you are inside the EU, you are better controlled, you are forced to follow a set of rules. Now we are moving further and further away. In a way people are not reacting as they should: okay, let's solve this, and then we will perhaps get in, let's face our own responsibility, let's investigate the truth about the war. They are saying oh, what is this, they don't want us! Why do they not want us? And it is a vicious circle and for years now.

**Petritsch**

The question then, would simply be that once inside, how will they fare? Isn't there maybe some sort of a "quid-pro-quo"? I sympathise with the idea that one should move much faster into including those countries of ex-Yugoslavia which are still outside, into the European Union. We have to deal with them either outside as you say with all the consequences and challenges, or we act together inside. But without certain standards being fulfilled, the difficulty is simply that there could be a downward spiral, both politically and socially, which would not really serve the whole purpose. The problems would continue to exist (like corruption, organized crime, a certain disregard for the rule of law), and you will not be able to fully concentrate on real issues such as the economy, society, and all the other issues that are so important for the people.

**Drakulić**

But in this way we are already on a downward spiral because of economic problems, because there is no help from the European Union, no real investments. Already there is more poverty. And if

there is poverty there is restlessness. So we are in a way on a downward spiral which also brings the whole region again into a very volatile state. When people are very poor, when there are no jobs, it is always the possibility to continue where we stopped in 1995. It is just speculation, it is just talking about these things. But I see that as it is now it doesn't really work. After ten years Serbs do not even recognise that something has happened in Srebrenica. More than 7.000 men were killed there. It is the biggest massacre after the Second World War. And there is still somebody saying nothing happened in Srebrenica. Look at what we are teaching children in schools today. Is that the history, is that the truth we are teaching them? No. It is very much ideology. Serbs are teaching them there was no Srebrenica. Croats are teaching them there was no exodus, there was no "ethnic cleansing" of Krajna.

I am trying to contribute to the discussion about truth and about the war criminals. My the book was translated into Croatian (I wrote it in English), and published in Croatia, and very much read in Croatia, but there was practically no discussion. The book was published and very well received in Serbia as well. I was very happy because of that. But much more is needed - people who really want to discuss this kind of things. And then perhaps in ten, or twenty, or I don't know how many years, there will be some kind of accepting the general truth. In this way we are further and further from the truth, because if the Prime Minister today in Parliament is saying there was no criminal intention in the operatin "Storm" of the Croatian army for taking back Krajna, contradicting completely the Tribunal in The Hague - then it is a defensive and closing position.

### **Petritsch**

It took us sixty years, and we are still not at the point of dealing with our own past. So time is rather relative. On the other hand, particularly when it comes to the younger generation in e.g. Serbia, but also in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there are children who have never been outside their own country, who have never really travelled, and this is all because of Schengen. We are contributing to this isolation with a very bureaucratic and very excessive application of the Schengen Agreement, thereby causing big problems. So they basically stay in their own country, with their own teachers, in their own political environment, and cannot really see how things are changing on the outside. The longer these young people are left in this situation, the longer it will take to really change something about it. And there is a "lost" generation already now in Serbia, I was told. In Banja Luka there are twenty-year old adolescents who have never seen another person but of their own nationality, i.e. Serbs. And this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, right in the center of Europe. So these are the problems. The longer they linger on, the deeper engrained they are going to be.

But let us take a step further back into history. I briefly touched upon Tito's philosophy of "*bratstvo: jedinstvo*" ..., we are all brothers and we are all united in one country, and we are not fighting each other, since the big enemies have been the fascists, and so on. Isn't there a danger that you get yet another layer of mythology in Croat or Serb history on top of the already existing ones. And with this baggage, you are now on your way to Europe, not having dealt with Jasenovac, not having dealt with Srebrenica. Eventually, you end up in a Europe that has totally different challenges, problems, and issues.

### **Drakulić**

I agree with you. I am very much against silence and forgetting because I have seen the consequences of such attitude in my own life. It happened to me. I was born in 1949. What we learned at school was mainly Tito's offensives, the partisans fighting Germans, and you had to know all the offensives by heart, while you never heard about what they actually did to the other side, the massacres that they committed. In other words, we learned about Jasenovac, but we didn't learn about Bleiburg. So I grew up with the silence of my own father who was fighting with Tito's partisans and who was an army officer. I was very much disturbed by the fact that the silence is

repeated after this war, too. I am strictly against silence or forgetting. But I do not think that by admitting these countries to the European Union this silence would continue. I think it would be much less of a silence and forgetting, and much more of a chance to face yourself. As you said, now in Banja Luka there are young people who have never been out of their own town and who have never heard anything else but what they hear around them, and this is mainly ideology. In order to open up such a situation, in order to do something with these young people and to give them some kind of future you can't keep them surrounded by ideology only. If you close the country, if the borders are not transparent, if they are forced because of economic reasons to stay in their own country only, then it is very difficult to find out anything about the other people, about the world. By politics of isolationism you sentence these countries to nationalism. It will inevitably happen. For example in the last local elections in Croatia we witnessed a pretty big jump of the HSP. This is a very right wing party, a small party, but it is becoming bigger because people are becoming more and more frustrated.

### **Petritsch**

How would you interpret the last local elections, where the government actually lost and Social Democrats got a bit stronger? In Dalmacia, the situation was even more complex. How do you interpret this?

### **Drakulić**

People are sick and tired of these big parties. The only argument that the Prime Minister had - who is from HDZ, but he is undoubtedly oriented towards Europe - was getting Croatia into Europe. Indeed this was his only card to play. Now it seems that his plan collapsed. So people are turning from him. And there is always SDP, there are always Socialists that you can fall back on. But what was interesting in the last local elections is that suddenly many independent parties and individuals appeared, and they won a considerable number of seats. It seems that Croatian citizens want something new, somebody with new rhetoric, somebody with new plans, something different.

### **Petritsch**

Is this a reaction to Gotovina, or is this independent of the discussion about moving closer towards Europe?

### **Drakulić**

No, it very much hangs on the European Union – but the EU is very much conditioned by the extradition Gotovina. But is also a reaction to economic conditions, to some kind of hopelessness and helplessness. It is generally speaking not a very good and not a very optimistic atmosphere.

### **Petritsch**

Let me ask you another question. You mention on various occasions some of the relevant literature on National Socialism. You start out with Hannah Arendt, and you also quote Christopher Browning, Primo Levi, Klemperer. What are the similarities, if there are any, and how do you compare National Socialism and the ways Germans and Austrians reacted to the situation, to what we have seen in the Balkans? Is something like a comparison even possible? Both of us know how sensitive this issue is, i.e. comparing the incomparable. But is there anything that we can learn from these experiences?

### **Drakulić**

So much of literature has been written after the Second World War. And it is always this question why it happened, and how it happened, and are human beings capable of these things and so on. I was, of course, very much relying on the kind of guilt and responsibility that Carl Jaspers wrote about in "Die Schuldfrage", and also Hannah Arendt's writings. I didn't go into very much theory.

For me it was enough just to use them as my orienting points. The war in Yugoslavia happened in a completely different ways, and for completely different reasons. In my opinion the war there actually descended upon people because of the manipulation of the politicians who wanted to stay in power, especially Milosevic, who believed that he could use nationalism. Of course, at the beginning of the war I was always confronted with this kind of ideas that these are some mad people in the Balkans who are killing each other for four hundred years - ancient hatred theory, especially by the American politicians and journalists. It is, of course, nothing of that sort. What you have there is a particular situation of the fall of communism and then some kind of a political vacuum that followed the fall. Yugoslavia was not part of the communist bloc. And in this context it is very important to understand that countries in the bloc had an enormous pressure from Russia, a really totalitarian system, which Yugoslavie was not. When you have your own of communism (or socialism, as it was called) you are brought up with the idea that it is ours and that we don't depend upon anybody. My generation especially grew up as believers in that kind of socialism, with the result that - because we were not exposed to a big pressure - we didn't create any kind of alternative political projects, democratic parties, liberal parties, nothing. So when communism collapsed there was actually a political vacuum. In this vacuum the first to react were nationalists, they were the best organised.

### **Petritsch**

So the relative success of the Tito model actually led to this. There were not too many dissidents. My observation is that because of the Constitution of 1974 which gave the republics a lot of autonomy, all the fundamental changes happened within the national framework of these republics. Consequently, all progress had to be connected to the respective "nation" (Serb, Croat, Slovene...), necessarily.

### **Drakulić**

It was. It actually started in Slovenia. Nationalism started in Slovenia, with the confrontation of Serbian and Slovenian writers about what should be in the textbooks for literature. Slovenians were saying, why should we have Serbian writers in our books for children. This is how it started on that level. In 1983, 1984 Milosevic was still far away. But there was no preparation of any kind for after communism. Did we have some kind of Vaclav Havel? No. Everybody else or every country in the bloc had either Solidarnosc, or Vaclav Havel, or somebody, some kind of preparation, some kind of underground, some kind of organisation, some dissidents. We literally had nobody. This is because we did not think that communism will ever collapse. Nationalists first understood what's up. Especially Croats in diaspora were will organised. So they filled in the vacuum. What Milosevic did at that point is that he himself switched from communist to nationalist. For him it was easy because he was an opportunist. And if he said, now we are switching not to nationalism, now we are switching to existentialism, he would do it tomorrow. He is such a man. But he understood what was important at that moment, too. This is why the cause of this war was completely different from that of the Second World War and fascism. But you should not forget that as all know, Croatia was a fascist country between 1941 and 1945.

### **Petritsch**

Is there a continuity? Do you see, or do you perceive a continuity within the ideology of the new Croatian nationhood and this fascist state?

### **Drakulić**

Unfortunately yes. And the reason is also very simple and understandable. Croatia was forced to put on trial Dinko Sakić who was the commander of the Jasenovac concentration camp during the Second World War. Israel said, if you don't want it we will take him and try him for some 20.000 Jews killed in Jasenovac. So there was a trial. But he was treated like a hero ever since he arrived

in Croatia. In an interview at the beginning of the 1990's Sakić said: I am very happy because there would not have been a democratic Croatia of today if there wouldn't have been an independent Croatia of 1941/45. Nobody said a word. There was nobody who reacted to such a statement. There is also a familiar rhetoric, the change of the language itself, state symbols like money and flag - many things that made the Serbs in Krajina nervous because they indicated the continuity with a fascist state. On the other hand, this was the only time in history, the only time in a thousand years when Croatia was independent. So Croatian nationalist politicians like Tudjman had nothing else, no other history to lean back on. They accepted NDH (Independent State of Croatia) as a fundament of the new Croatian state. They could not distance themselves from it's fascist ideology - which is impossible, of course. So there was a continuation in that sense. It was not nice to see. For example *Mein Kampf* was not only sold in Croatia, but was a bestseller, and you can still see it in the windows of bookshop in Zagreb. Foreigners are asking, what, is this Hitler's *Mein Kampf* there? This is what we have to deal with. Not only we have to deal with the recent past, but the past from 1941 to 1945. This is also a problem.

### **Petritsch**

A heavy baggage for the European Union.

### **Drakulić**

A heavy baggage for the European Union, but also for the Croats.

### **Petritsch**

Before we open up the discussion to the public here, let me ask you one more question. You deal in your book with two women. Mira Markovic, the influential wife of Milosevic, and Biljana Blavsic. Biljana Blavsic, you actually believe to have changed. She was part of the leadership of the Republika Srpska. Maybe you could talk a little bit about women in Balkan politics. What future role do you see for them? What role did they play in the past? How do you assess this?

### **Drakulić**

In these transition countries after the fall of communism women have lost almost all rights given by the communist state. They were guaranteed certain rights, and they were very much into politics as well. But to be a politician in Yugoslavia after the fall of communism meant to be very tough. And this is the case of Biljana Blavsic who is an intelligent, educated woman, speaks English, spent some time on a Fulbright grant in the USA, is Professor of Biology, students liked her a lot. But on the other hand she was an ambitious woman who wanted more power, and who became a politician in Republika Srpska, she climbed very high. She is very famous for a very tough rhetoric. Such rhetoric that even Milosevic thought that she was crazy. Once she said that Muslims are not even to be considered as human beings. She said terrible things. But in terms of rhetoric she was very tough. I don't think that she really believed that, but she had to be more tough than men around her to keep her position. However, she did have the strength to repent alter on, the strength to say I am sorry for what happened. And this was, I would say, the fantastic example that such a thing is possible. I had some doubts why did she change her position. Is it because she had some deal with the Tribunal in The Hague to be a witness in other cases? No, this was not the case. Did she make a deal in order to reduce her sentence? It seems not, or at least the Tribunal said that they did not negotiate about these things. It is really her own understanding that she did something wrong. She repented and said I am sorry. In the Tribunal they believed that this would be an example for the other alleged war criminals - that they would come forward and say confess, like in South Africa. However, she was not taken as a heroic figure in Serbia or the Republika Srpska. They were very, very angry with her. She was very much attacked for that. I thought the change came from her religious believes. This is what I also wrote in the book. At that point I didn't know for sure. But Carl Bilt who knows her well and who has access to her in prison in Sweden (she is

serving her prison term in Sweden in a prison that has sauna, that has horses, lectures of painting, photography, cosmetics, massage, like three star hotel) visits her often and he told me that she really is religious. So she decided to say the truth. She was the one who, for the first time, said in her trial that Republika Srpska got help in ammunition and soldiers from Serbia, which Milosevic always denied. Lately she published a book. I have not read the book, but I heard that it is a very good analytical book.

In the other case, the case of Mira Markovic who was ruling the country together with her husband Slobodan Milosevic. She is in my book because I think she is morally responsible for her immense influence on him – although she will never end up in any court. Nevertheless, she is hiding in Russia because she was accused of being instrumental in the case of murder of Ivan Stambolic. But she was the single person who had the biggest influence on Milosevic because he is very well known not to listen absolutely to anybody. He was ruling like a dictator. He was really ruling singlehandedly, under her influence. Parliament? Prime Minister? What is that? So he was ruling singlehandedly under her strong influence. So if people feared him they also feared her. In my opinion she is morally responsible for what her husband is accused of. She is not actually a war criminal, and she will never be tried for that, except maybe for her role in the case of murder of Stambolic.

### **Petritsch**

I think we should open the floor; who would like to ask a question or give a comment?

### **Question**

You mentioned the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I want to ask if there are similar models of peace building? What is the role of the international community in helping to build a different peace? There are cultural initiatives with a kind of nostalgic look back to Yugoslavia, to her variety. I am curious to know about these activities. What you think about thi?

### **Drakulić**

I guess this is a question for Mr. Petritsch. Perhaps he can say how the international community contributes to peace and reconciliation.

### **Petritsch**

Slavenka, you agree with me that one of the problems in former Yugoslavia is a very weak civil society. You do not have people who would sincerely address the problems, take on the huge challenges, and actually do something about them. This is very obvious when it comes to these truth and reconciliation initiatives. One of the first was actually Kostunica who tried to establish such a truth and reconciliation commission, from the state level. That, of course, did not work and will not work because this has to emerge from the grass roots of society. I give it a greater chance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the head of the Jewish community, Jakob Finci took the initiative. This was a few years ago at a time when The UN-Tribunal in The Hague was still quite opposed to it. I had many meetings with them. They were afraid that the real crimes, the big cases would then be shifted to the truth and reconciliation commission. That, of course, should not be and cannot be. So the truth and reconciliation idea is something which is indeed important. But it cannot be imported from South Africa or any other place in the world. There are few successful examples, and not too many in Africa. They are trying it out for example, in Cambodia . But I think the idea as such is a very important one that needs to grow from the inside, and one needs to clearly distinguish between crimes and opportunistic behavior. And then it really has to take into consideration cultural traditions. Of course, former Yugoslavia - but not exclusively) - has a big macho culture. ... You simply do not admit failure, crime, and misbehavior. On the contrary. If you know you are wrong, you even emphasise it. So there are many obstacles in my opinion why



the truth and reconciliation commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina at present, simply does not work. In Serbia, it was merely expressed as an idea, and it already withered away. In Croatia, as far as I know there hasn't even been an initiative. This is something, I believe, that really needs to come to the fore. But it can only be carried forward by civil society actors. If it is state-imposed, it would most likely produce yet another Tito-type "official history".

### **Drakulić**

I agree pretty much with you, except that I do not believe in the South African model for the Balkans. It is not going to work. But first let us be clear. When we speak about truth and reconciliation are we thinking about Serbia reconciling with Bosnia, Bosnia reconciling with Croatia, or are we talking about people of different nationality reconciling within one state? There is peace. So reconciliation between Serbia and Croatia, there is no need for such a thing. They are communicating, they are travelling, they are trading, they are smuggling, politicians are going back and forth, people are visiting, they are coming to the coast. Last summer there was a lot of tourists from Serbia. There is need for truth, yes. But reconciliation certainly is not needed on the level of the state. Reconciliation and truth is much more needed within the state. Croats should reconcile with Serbs, or the other way around. In Bosnia we have three nationalities that have to reconcile with each other. In Serbia we have a problem not only of Serbia being involved in the Bosnian war, but also Serbia being involved in Kosovo. There is a lot of need for some kind of initiative, or some kind of civil society initiative, I agree completely with that. There is very little of a civil society there. To tell you the truth I cannot imagine in Croatia, for example, somebody coming up and saying yes, I burned that village and I killed all that people, and I ask you now to let me free because I admitted that I did it. The whites who killed and tortured blacks in South Africa - they were excused from any kind of punishment because they confessed their crimes.

I do not think that this is the model. And I do not think that the truth and reconciliation commission is taking off. Because think about only one thing, that a witness cannot come to the trial to say that he witnessed some brutality or a murder because he is afraid for his life. People whose houses were burnt and who were killed, who is going to prevent them to kill this guy who just admitted that he did it. It is a very different atmosphere there. I believe more in creating civil bonds. People have relatives. We were very much mixed in Bosnia. 30% of the kids were from mixed marriages. We understand each other in terms of language. You see what role the language plays if you think about Scheveningen where there is real brotherhood and unity of all prisoners because they are living together and they have no problems with each other. The model for us must be something else, not the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Yet, if we wait for the civil society to grow and start up these questions it will take a lot of time. Again we are stuck with one single problem. And this is time.

### **Question**

I would like to thank you for the book. It is not only a brilliant intellectual analysis, but it is also in terms of the style and the ambition very moving. I would like to ask you, how were you able to get so close to these people? Did you meet them in prison? Did you have many personal encounters with the perpetrators? How could you write such an intense book and describe the actions of these people?

### **Drakulić**

Thank you for the compliment. I am glad that you asked that question because it is an important question. I got an email recently from the United States where a director of documentaries read my book and he would like to make a documentary about Scheveningen prison and about what I described how prisoners are living in that prison. I wrote back and said I am very sorry. First of all, you are never let into the prison unless you are a lawyer or a relative, so there is no communication

with prisoners. My sources are all secondary. The only primary source is seeing the accused while attending their trials. But you can get almost all documentation, except from closed sessions, all protocols are free and public. You can also get all the films of the trials from the court. Basically it is mostly either sitting there and watching trials, or reading protocols and transcripts from the trials, and watching the tapes. I also used clips from the media. Technically it was a very difficult book to write, because you don't have access to the prisoners. For example, the whole story that I have about brotherhood and unity, about the prisoners, how do they live in prison, I have it mostly from the lawyers who have access to them, and go in and out, and befriend them and talk to them, and then they explain to you, and then you have to use a little bit of imagination and reconstruct it. Also the psychological portraits. You have to really work hard with what you have and try to imagine the rest.

### **Petritsch**

But the transcripts and the video tapes are the real archives for the Yugoslav tragedy. So, for historians, they will be the most important sources.

### **Drakulić**

A gold mine for historians. So I used a little bit of that material to be able to describe these people because I thought it very important to give some kind of psychological insight. I was trying to pick up people from different surroundings, people who were really military men, or people who were not military men, or volunteers, just to show different profiles. Also what was very important for me is to show the circumstances, how they came to the situation to behave as they did behave. From my point of view this is the answer. The circumstances are the answer. One psychologist told me, people mostly react to the circumstances. It is not that they plan or think, or that they are mean, or that they have some kind of gene that makes them inclined to murder. They react to circumstances. And if you don't know, if you do not learn what are your options in such a situation, or that you can even come to such a situation of dramatic moral choices - then you are going to go with the majority, most likely. You will go with the herd as most people do. You learn a lot of ugly things about human beings in studying war criminals.

### **Question**

The Hague is an international court, and national courts would be somehow more justified than an international court. But the problem is that we are judging people who have no tradition which is similar to ours. We simply don't understand their system.

### **Petritsch**

I will see, if I understood correctly, there is a different perception of law in the Western world and in the former communist countries simply due to the fact that after 1945, as a consequence of the Second World War and the Holocaust in particular, you had a surge in human rights legislation. That civilians are simply off limits when it comes to war is now at the center of any assessment of whether a war is criminal or not. That definitely has changed. In this interpretation, the wars in the 1990's in ex-Yugoslavia rather resembled wars that predated the First World War. Also, when it comes to the legal framework. So many of the accused in The Hague really believed at the time when they were committing those crimes, that this was a normal thing to do. Ethnic cleansing is, of course, something which up till the 1920's, 1930's was "normal" and internationally accepted. Think of how the Ottoman empire was liquidated in the Balkans, when the so-called "population transfers" took place, when, with the treaty of Lausanne 1923, between Greece and Turkey and all the others, millions of people were removed from one country and forced into the next...whole territories were ethnically cleansed. So this tradition was very strong still up to the 1990's. And this feeling, that something wrong was happening on the part of Milosevic, for example, simply didn't exist, at least not at the beginning.

And it is also the case when we now think about why war broke out in ex-Yugoslavia, and not in the Soviet Union or in Czechoslovakia. There is a simple explanation, in my opinion. This kind of thinking, i.e. in terms of “means that justify the end”, exists to be politically successful. For Milosevic it was very clear. The army was basically Serb-dominated, thus he opted for the “military solution”. Milosevic’s mind was still “ticking” in the sense of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the West had already moved on. This was unheard of, only 50 or 60 years ago. But as a consequence of the Second World War and the evolution of international humanitarian law, the Court in the Hague was established.

### **Drakulić**

Let me tell you one thing. I started by saying that it would have been much better if each respective country would have been able of investigating and trying their own war crimes. But being from there, writing about it for fifteen years now and knowing that it is absolutely impossible, I was very much for the establishing of the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for ex-Yugoslavia) in 1993. I thought it was good because at least somebody is going to wash our dirty laundry. However, there is much talk also in Croatia about these differences, that our cultures are different and so on. Please keep in mind Ruanda. What about Ruanda then? Yes, there are differences. But I don’t think they should be overrated. They are not so big. These cultures, at least in Europe, are not so different. You will admit a difference with Africa. When we are talking about these things, about the difference between the Balkans and the rules in the Balkans, law in the Balkans, culture in the Balkans, and the trials in The Hague Tribunal - I always would like to make a parallel to Ruanda. Because in that case what? We should not have ICT in Ruanda at all?

Let me give you an example. I wrote a story in my book, the title of the story is *Boys just had fun*. It is the case of the three rapists from Forča who were on trial at the Tribunal. They were sentenced to many years of imprisonment. The date of the sentence should be remembered because it is the first time that rape was pronounced a crime against humanity. It is a big date in the history of human rights, 22 of February 2002. In this trial you could observe something which speaks about the culture of differences, particularly about women, as you mentioned the macho culture. These three men were totally in shock that they are tried for rape. In their minds this was not a big crime, these girls survived. They perhaps even believed that they – keeping them in prison - kept them alive. They were kept prisoners in the house and misused sexually. Imagine if they would have been running around, maybe these girls would have been killed. Not only that. But to rape a woman, is that a big crime? Is that the crime that deserves 20 or 12 years of prison? In their eyes most certainly not. And to make matters even worse, it was a black woman judge who was looking at them every single day. To these three men it was a situation from some strange movie. How is that possible? They are tried for rape of women. Number two, they probably saved their lives. Number three, there judge is a female. And number four, it is a black female. This, I think, was perhaps the first time they ever saw a black person in their life. So you can imagine that cultural clash. I can say yes, it was a big cultural clash. But what is the alternative? To leave them to judges in Foča or Sarajevo?. In the normal situation their punishment for rape would be up to five years, and the men would get away with a year maximum for rape. This much for cultural differences. But we should keep in mind, the differences are not that big and a crime is a crime. It was impossible to try them in their country. Yes, it should be mentioned, but it should not be overdone. Because in that case Ruanda is out of the picture at all.

### **Petritsch**

There is, of course, tangible progress, a spillover into the legal systems of these countries. This is the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there has been established a “Special Chamber” for

war crimes in the State Court. And Bosnia itself is going to deal with war crimes, soon .There is now a list of ten thousand war-crimes cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina which are going to be handled by this Special Chamber over the next couple of years. So this is the next step. It brings the whole thing into perspective when we think of our own time frame of, now, more than 60 years. How long is it going to take them in Bosnia, in Croatia, if it eventually starts, and also in Serbia? But I am convinced this needs to become part of a wider project of coming to terms with a rather bloody past, in order to move on to a better future.

**Drakulić**

Thank you very much for being here with us tonight. Thank you.