

Yugoslavia, and it is now destroyed. What does the World Bank want to take? Does it want to take the breath from the people, to pay back the loan? How can the people pay back anything? It's impossible! Bosnia needs rebuilding—it needs food, it needs clothing, it needs industry to start up again. Only twenty percent are working, just light work, and without pay.

Fidelio: In her Call, Mrs. LaRouche proposed a new Marshall Plan for Bosnia.

Dr. Njemsevic: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Dzinovic: They *do* need what you call a Marshall Plan, what was used for Germany after the war. We should do the same thing, and call it the Bosnia Plan. It should be the same thing: we should use a million soldiers to do the rebuilding. This country spends billions and billions every year. Let's do it, and create a new beginning. Let's build it. The entire infrastructure in Bosnia is wrecked, and should be put in order. It would be a new page of history: To look at soldiers, not as thinking of destroying people, but instead, to be the ones used for reconstruction.

Dr. Njemsevic: Yes, the military should help in rebuilding. They should start from the beginning, from zero—because, actually, the level is under zero right now. This could be done very quickly. Starting with rebuilding the roads, because all the roads were destroyed. And if you don't have roads, you cannot do anything.

Mr. Dzinovic: That's how you build up an economy.

Fidelio: And if this does not happen?

Mr. Dzinovic: If it does not happen, then the country will go back five hundred years. We will go back to the Dark Ages, right in the center of Europe. It would be an absolute shame for the whole world, for all Europe, to let that happen.

Think of it like a Rwanda in Europe. In Rwanda, in three months, they killed a million people. So you have a state, but no people. It seems to be the same ideology being done to our people, the same idea. But, thank God, they did not completely succeed in wiping out everyone.

Monsignor Franjo Komarica Bishop of Banja Luka, Bosnia

'We are people, entitled to fundamental human rights!'

Banja Luka was the stronghold of the Greater Serbians in Bosnia. Taken over by their gangs in 1991, it was to be the example for "ethnic cleansing," in which all non-Serbs were to be terrorized into leaving. Churches, convents, mosques, and cemeteries were destroyed, sometimes bombed and uprooted from their foundations. Out of 110,000 Catholics in the dioceses, 80,000 were forced to leave. For the Muslim population, it was even worse.

Monsignor Komarica was interviewed on March 15 by Umberto Pascali, and the interview was translated from Croatian by Margaret Casman-Vuko. The following is abridged.

Fidelio: Monsignor Komarica, your name has become famous throughout the world because you and your Croatian Catholic clergy have steadfastly remained in the Banja Luka region of Bosnia, usurped by the Republika Srpska, despite an official policy to eliminate all non-Serbs and create a homogeneous Serbian entity. Could you describe the period when you were in Banja Luka, from the beginning of the conflict, and your main experiences there?

Bishop Komarica: Dear friends, I thank you most sincerely for your humanity, and the love you express to those of us in danger, many thousands of miles away. All of us are people, God's creation, God's children, part of a great family. I rejoice. Although you are far away, on another continent, you are very close to us. Much more binds us to our fellow man than divides us. This fundamental truth, corroborated by your interest in us, has been my life's creed during the past years. I have always tried to conduct myself accordingly among people, especially among my neighbors of whatever religious or ethnic national affiliation. We

I regularly asked, 'Why are you doing this to us?' They would say, 'You aren't guilty of anything. However, you have to leave here.' I could not accept this.

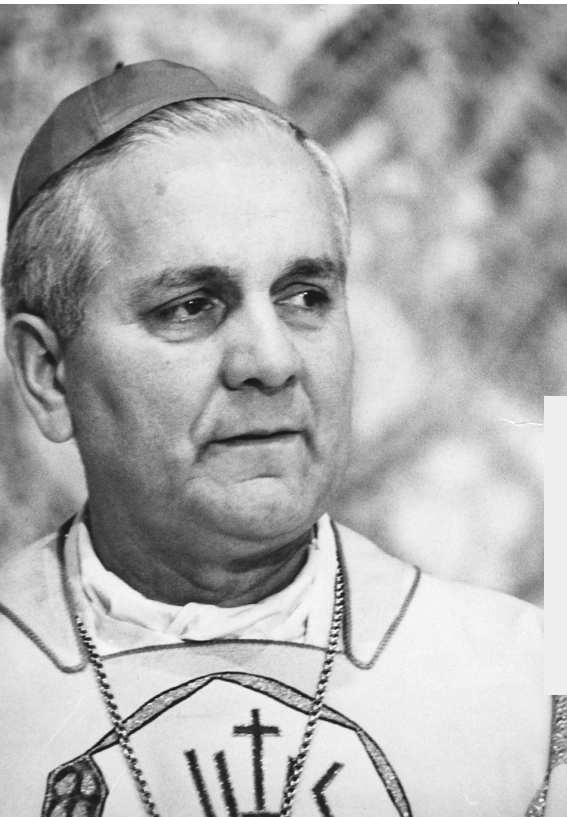
have far more similarities, kinships, and mutual bonds, than whatever divides us.

I cannot accept that the most precious human values, mutual respect and love, are no longer valid. This makes no sense. These precious values, common to every person, should not be displaced by enmity, hatred, war, destruction, egoism, and exclusivity.

In response to your question, I am a witness to a volcano, to an avalanche of exclusivity. I cannot explain, even to myself, where such evil in people's hearts comes from. It seemed to rise to the surface overnight, in people's words, in crimes. I can only explain this according to the Gospels, in the words of Jesus Christ: ". . . for from the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks" (Lk 6:45).

As you know, during the past decades, this land, my homeland, as well as much of Europe, has been engulfed by a wave of atheism. This means that religion has been practically absent. The individual has lost connection with the transcendental world, with God.

Thus, what happens, happens. Truth is no longer truth. Honor is no longer honor. A brother is no longer a brother. Confusion prevails. The scale of values is totally distorted. A person feels very lost. He enters a dark tunnel of hopelessness, destruction, and horrible fear. I have also noticed many examples, many, many examples, of people, especially



Josia Stilinovic

people without religion, immersed in terrible evil. I have seen how they arm themselves with lethal weapons against people they know pose no danger whatsoever. This is characteristic of war madness. It is not limited to my milieu in Banja Luka.

From the very beginning, our message as a diocese community to priests and believers has been as follows: “We will not take any weapons into our hands whatsoever, because weapons are always aimed at a person.” When we preach Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves, we must help the people to implement it by telling them: “Do not use anything that endangers your neighbor, neither the tongue, nor weapons, nor any other means of doing harm.” We have indeed tried, despite our very grave situation, not for one day or one month but for four years. We have tried, always relying on God’s strength, to forgive, forgive, and forgive anew. As Jesus teaches us, we must return good for evil.

I thank God that, by the power of His Holy Spirit, manifested in many, many instances among our Christian faithful,

and certainly in a special way among our priests, that the majority in our diocesan community share the attitude we consider our duty. We would rather endure injustice than inflict it upon our neighbors, other people.

Fidelio: You were under house arrest for a long time in Banja Luka. You have witnessed great violence, including that inflicted

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upon priests and nuns. Could you describe what you went through?

Bishop Komarica: I was filled with profound admiration for the conduct of the faithful, the conduct of my wonderful priests, monks, and nuns who did not have to remain here, who could have found much greater safety and comfort somewhere else. All who remained did so voluntarily, to share good and evil with the faithful. They remained, completely unarmed, without any weapons or protection whatsoever, despite the destructive terror threatening them with liquidation, death.

Over five hundred civilians were killed in the greater Banja Luka region. This occurred although there was no armed resistance here. We did not want conflict. The only reason these people were killed was because they were peace-loving. They were here and they wanted to remain where they belonged, in their homes, in their ancestral villages. They wanted to live with their neighbors as they had lived previously, in peace and honor.

Six priests were killed in the Banja Luka region. They were killed because they were pacifists, because they steadfastly urged the people to peace, forgiveness, good works, and charity. They preached that people should be humane, human

brothers, not wolves at each others’ throats. That is why they remained here.

Unfortunately, the disgraceful, racist and neofascist destruction of non-Serbs was part of a plan, implemented by the most heinous means. Owing to the peace-loving conduct of our priests, monks, nuns, and faithful, this plan was not realized in the manner that its creators, local and international, had intended. Therefore, as you are aware, a ferocious attack was launched upon the

Church as an institution. Our church buildings were deliberately destroyed, one after another. Our monasteries, convents, and parish centers were also destroyed. I regularly asked local [Serbian—Ed.] politicians, “Why

are you doing this to us? What have we done to you?” They would say, “We don’t have problems with you. You aren’t guilty of anything. You are a peace-loving nation. However, you have to understand. You have to leave here.”

I could not accept this. One of the fundamental human rights is the right to the homeland, the right to one’s own home. I publicly insisted that not only Catholics have this right, but non-Catholics as well, Orthodox or whatever, other people. Whoever they are, this is a universal right.

One of my priests said the following to me, a couple of days before he was killed, “I am remaining in my post where the faithful have no one except me, even if I have to sacrifice my life for the glory of God and to help my neighbors. I urge my faithful not to harm anyone. I urge them toward goodness, forgiveness, to love those who have inflicted great evil upon us.”

These sacrifices shall not be in vain for the future of the Church, this territory, the entire homeland of the Croatian nation, and for other nations around us. One year ago, the Holy Father told me during an audience that he was aware of the striving by the Catholics in the Banja Luka Diocese in forgiveness and peace-making. He said we are

doing something very precious for the entire Church, even during the period of this wretched war that was not caused by our conflict with our neighbors, but by conflict among the egoistical interests of others. Although much evil and injustice was being inflicted upon us, during the war we had already started the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. I learned later that other bishops also know about this in Europe and the world. They support our position. They say to us, "We could not have endured such an avalanche of destructive force and evil without becoming infected by it."

Fidelio: One of the most dramatic moments was last December, when, after you had opposed with so much sacrifice the "ethnic cleansing" by the Greater

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Serbs, certain factions inside Croatia itself began calling for a sort of reverse "ethnic cleansing." For example, Mr. Milas asked the Croats to evacuate the Banja Luka area to the Serbs. At the time, you courageously protested against this type of thinking. Can you describe that event?

Bishop Komarica: Yes. I would reemphasize that in my direct experience, evil does not establish boundaries between one person and another, between one nation and another. Evil threatens every person, regardless of national or religious affiliation. Therefore, I would never draw a line between good and evil, good people and evil people, one nation and another nation. There are people who have succumbed to the influence of the Evil Spirit in every nation. It is also true that there are good people, worthy people, in every nation. This is absolutely true. I especially want to emphasize this. Perhaps it was not sufficiently clear.

In this specific situation, when an official political representative of the Croatian nation and the Republic of

Croatia rashly or thoughtlessly stated that Croats, i.e., Catholics, have to leave the territory that the Serbs presently govern (or actually that the Bosnian Serbs have taken by force), I considered this statement to be a commensurate crime. Such people are attempting to usurp one of these people's fundamental rights, the right to their own home.

I personally rejoice that this is not the official policy of the Republic of Croatia, as I have been informed by meritorious official representatives. I do not wish to doubt their assertion. However, I also expect them, as representatives of the Croatian nation, to respect the human rights, civil rights, and freedoms of all people, not only Croats in the territory of Croatia, but Serbs, Muslims, Bosnians, and all others. In any case, all people are guaranteed these rights by the

Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, if someone is not guilty of violating any of the laws of the Constitution—a constitution politicians have called impeccable, i.e., a very humane constitution, one of the most democratic in Europe according to representatives of the European Parliament—he must not be punished. He certainly must not be persecuted on the basis of national or religious affiliation.

Fidelio: Just another short question. There have been several reports that forces extraneous to the former Yugoslavia have intervened in some surreptitious way to provoke a war. Even in 1993, there were reports on the intervention of some special forces, in this case special British forces. Such intervention was intended to stimulate conflict between Muslims and Catholics, to provoke a war among the victims in Central Bosnia. Did you see anything like this?

Bishop Komarica: I cannot tell you anything concrete at this time. I would like

to have some time to think about it. A lot happened and it is possible that I have forgotten a lot.

I want to say that I remember very well when I was told, actually in 1993, before the conflict between the Croats and Muslims in Central Bosnia, that the situation would not develop properly unless a quarrel would be set up between Croats and Muslims. We have to realize this. This was said to me on several occasions. I remember very well when we heard about the first conflicts. And we said, "Here, that hellish plan is being realized." Divide and conquer. I know that I also spoke with representatives of the Croatian government and said, "How could you let the secret services draw you into this conflict with Muslims? That's what they told me. If I knew about it as a lay person, you had to have known about it."

This tactic was not merely of local character, but international. Therefore, I confirm that I am familiar with what was asked in the question. I cannot tell you it was so-and-so, but I remember very well that it was planned. It reached my ears that there were intentions, i.e., it was necessary to set up a quarrel between Croats and Muslims in Bosnia. The situation became complicated and caused a grave tragedy throughout Bosnia. Obviously, for me, there is no doubt that our war is not merely of a local character, but of international dimensions, not in some explicit form that armed forces fought each other here, but behind the scenes. The activity of various interests among the great powers was highly recognizable, especially European but also outside of Europe.

The greatest disappointment is that we must now question our confidence, our belief in the humanity, in the civilized image that these great European forces and nations profess to represent. Instead, they have manifested an egoistical determination to realize their own goals, without regard for the victims. They have been indifferent to the suffering of those who have the misfortune to be little people, who cannot play the game with them because they are not big enough, but want, in their conviction that they are people, to cry out: "But we are people! We are entitled to fundamental human rights!"