
Father Avakum Rosic

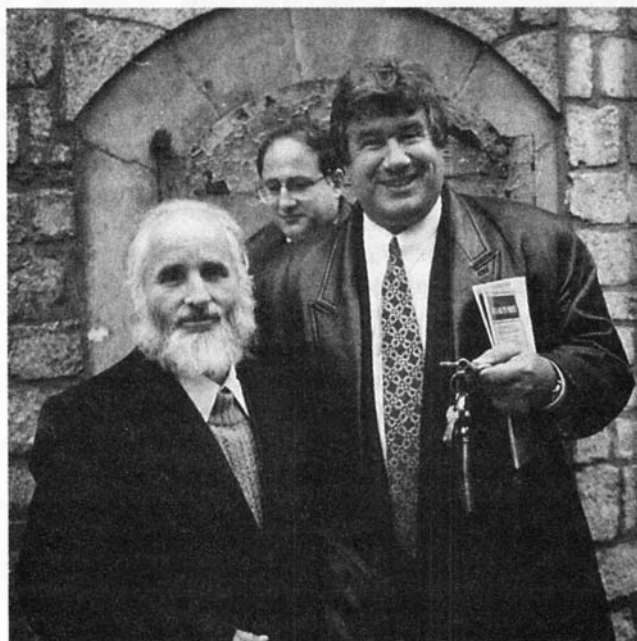
Hatred and revenge will do nothing

Father Rosic is the only Orthodox representative remaining in Sarajevo, since Metropolitan Nikolai left for the territory controlled by Radovan Karadzic. The text of this discussion has been abridged.

Dr. Jozef Miklosko: We hoped to meet Metropolitan Nikolai, too, but he is away. Maybe you could tell us how you see the situation in Bosnia, what should be changed for the better, and what would help the ecumenical cooperation of the three Churches in Sarajevo?

Rosic: We have a very difficult situation here. It won't be easy to solve this quickly; it should be done gradually, to bring people together, and I hope it will be solved. Every war brings difficulties. There are many casualties, victims, invalids. And all of us have suffered so much, together; so, it's very difficult and it can't be solved quickly.

For those who have lost members of their families, who have suffered damages, it is very difficult to return to normal life. And we are going to feel the results of this war for the next ten years, as it was in 1941 in this country—but now, it's



Father Avakum Rosic (left) with Schiller Institute delegation members (left to right) Umberto Pascali and Nihad Dzinovic.

even worse, in this war. We have to do a lot for the unity of the people, and to forget these bad things that have happened. As St. Paul said, you can do anything by means of Love. And the best value is love. With hatred, we can do nothing. With love, friendship, and good will, we can do a lot.

Our church was shelled twice, and was very badly damaged, especially the roof. The rain would run into the church, and so we tried to cover the roof with plastic sheets. Fortunately, there was not too much damage inside, but the walls would get wet.

I would like to thank you for your good will and good aims. A few days ago, we were at a reception with the American ambassador to Sarajevo. There was an envoy of the cardinal, there was the Rejs Ulema [Dr. Mustafa Ceric], and a Jewish professor, and two gentlemen from the United States with the ambassador, who really care about unity and community here, so they would like to start an initiative to meet all the religious leaders, so that we could find some kind of common language.

We congratulate one another and send our best wishes to one another when we have our religious holidays, and we attend one another's receptions. We have organized common prayers together, and have prayed together in four of our religious buildings: churches, a synagogue, and a mosque. A cardinal from Rome and the papal nuncio were present at these common prayers, which meant a lot to people here in Sarajevo.

Miklosko: We would also like to thank you, for the fact that, with so many problems, you are staying here. It's very important that there be always some representative of the Orthodox Church here.

Rosic: I was sent here for just ten days, to replace one of my colleagues, but he got sick and didn't come back. I couldn't leave the church and the people here, so, I prayed to God for this evil to end, and peace to return. Thank God, the war is over now.

All the sides feel hurt, feel that they have been harmed, so it is very difficult for them to accept reconciliation. Some of them would like to take revenge; but this would lead to even greater evil and destruction, and the war would never end. Jesus Christ said that you cannot cast out evil with evil, because evil then becomes greater. So, the war and this evil would never stop.

Ben Swan: I would like to know a little bit more about the situation within the Orthodox community. We have heard that there were districts that were abandoned, destroyed, and burned, and that a lot of people wanted to stay, and did not go.

Rosic: These are very difficult issues and it's very difficult for the people to decide what to do. I was watching the situation in Iraq, when the people had to leave their homes, and I said, "Oh, it's nice here with us; we will never have such problems." Ethnic cleansing is, of course, very difficult for people; nobody would leave his own house, if he didn't have to do it. Not all of them, but most of them, left, because the

war was going on there, and some of them didn't dare to stay. They were afraid of pressure and revenge. It's that way with every, every nation; everybody goes where they have a majority—also Muslims and Croats.

Umberto Pascali: I want to ask you, how you see the future? I know that there were meetings between Metropolitan Nikolai, Cardinal Puljic, and Rejs Ulema Ceric. How do you see the future of this dialogue?

Rosic: I've talked to the Rejs personally, and I know that he felt very bad about the killing of people; because, everybody suffered, every nation had its victims, but the Muslims had the greatest number of victims. The war between Serbs and Muslims was bad enough, but it was even worse, when the Muslims and Croats started fighting. As for the Muslims, we say that in Bosnia, they were "between two fires."

Swan: I thank God that you were not hurt in this war, and that you survived, and that you have continued to help. I am here, basically, to find out how we in America, can be of some help to Bosnia, *now*, in order to maintain peace. While I'm not here in an official capacity, I think that there's a great deal of work that can be done by the citizens of America.

So, I really came to find out from people such as yourself, what your viewpoint is, and what role you see being played by people in other parts of the world. Also, to extend an invitation to people from Bosnia to come to America to help to tell the story that *needs* to be told.

There are some methods that President Clinton had wanted to use. He doesn't have universal support in America on this point, and we want to mobilize greater support. This should come from the public at large, rather than through the political establishment.

U.S. must carry on legacy of Ron Brown

While in Bosnia the delegation issued this statement on the tragic air crash.

... From the moment we arrived, many in leadership position and many common people have been asking about Ron Brown. The U.S. Commerce Secretary and the high-level business delegation flying on his plane had died on April 3, while trying to land at the airport of Dubrovnik. We landed in Dubrovnik ten days later, our eyes pointed on the nearby St. John Hill, where the plane crashed, and our minds absorbed Brown's legacy: What could we do to prevent the genocide against Bosnia from continuing "through financial means"? How could we make sure that real reconstruction took place?

... The question most asked of us was: Will the U.S., will this administration continue the approach carried out by Ron Brown, or will his death be the end of those efforts? ... Indeed the approach of Brown to the reconstruction of Bosnia was the opposite of the philosophy and practice of the World Bank and the IMF. ... Brown did not have in mind a little help that would barely guarantee the economic survival of the war-destroyed country, in exchange for its giving up its national sovereignty and becoming enslaved to the debt mechanisms. No! Ron Brown came to Bosnia accompanied by the most powerful delegation of business leaders he could manage to gather.

It was a powerful combination: the American principle of the right to economic development, and the means to implement it. It was the way to unleash the positive power



The late U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown

of the American economy, as opposed to the destructiveness of financial speculation and usury. ...

We had many meetings with Bosnian leaders, we saw how their faces lit up when we called for a Marshall Plan for Bosnia. This is what Bosnia needs, they said. Real, huge investment, construction of infrastructure, reestablishment of a modern economy that will give our people the dignity of being productive individuals. For them this was the image of Ron Brown ... as opposed to the diktat of the Lord Owens and Lord Carringtons.

... We will spare no effort so that the legacy of Ron Brown will uplift the American people, especially the youth. So that the sacrifice of those perished in the tragic flight, will help to bring back the U.S. to its real tradition and its real interest: a power for the good, a nation that develops itself by helping developing the world. ...