

**Conference Session 3.1: Conflict Resolution – Pre-conflict  
Peacebuilding And Inter-Religious Dialogue**

*Learning by Doing in Bosnia and Kosovo*

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The Soul of Europe

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*Wall decoration in Ferhadija Mosque  
destroyed on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1993*

## **Introduction**

This paper describes the work of the Soul of Europe in Bosnia and Kosovo over a twelve year period 2000 to 2012. It is written not as a formal report but as a personal story of exploration and discovery, resulting in significant projects and activities recognised by the UK government, the European Union and communities in Bosnia and Kosovo.

## **Bringing An Idea To Birth**

In 1998 I completed eighteen years as the parish priest of St James Church, a church in Central London. I wanted to see for myself if it is possible to 'love your enemies' as the Bible commands. Or as Nelson Mandela put it to Northern Ireland politicians: 'If you want to make peace do not speak with your friends, speak to your enemies so they become your partners'. For many years I had spoken about these matters - now I wanted to 'walk the talk'.

I began with a blank sheet. I knew nothing of inter-faith dialogue. I knew even less about conflict resolution and peace-building. But I had one treasure which I cherish. And this is the imagination. Albert Einstein said: 'Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere'.

The Soul of Europe arose out of a Sermon I preached in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1999. I had been invited to California to work with a group of pastors from San Juan Capistrano to help them examine the way they work by suggesting in pictures, images and metaphors what their world could be like. Mobilising the imagination becomes the engine for transformation and without fail it encourages, refreshes and inspires. Then I was invited to visit US Borax, a mine owned by Rio Tinto, a global mining company where I had been working as a consultant. The mine is in the Mohave Desert. My visit provided an opportunity to search for new possibilities for business in communities. That is a task for the imagination.

Imagination is a divine gift. It is a sign of God's grace. It is given so that we can see the world differently, as it might be. The imagination invites the dismantling or at

least the relinquishing of the familiar and suggests an alternative world. Imagination is a crucial agent for change.

Imagination is not day-dreaming or wishful thinking. It is a way of knowing. In the West much of our knowing is in thrall to business speak The language of delivery, impact, stakeholders, targets, bench-marking, ring-fencing, and key performance indicators presents a version of reality which can be controlled and measured. In the West, our imagination has been confiscated, as if striving for forgiveness, justice and peace is a spare time activity. It has also drained the European churches of the ability to work as their calling demands.

In that sermon, I proposed that Europe needs to discover its soul. Europe is more than a collection of states held together by the claims of The Market. By 'soul' I mean that capacity for all of us to live fully and gloriously as God intends. We are more than just a puff of air, here for a moment and then gone; we are, each of us, immeasurably interesting and significant.

The imagination has a moral and ethical dimension. It is the Moral Imagination. It looks always to the other, and particularly in Europe to the poor, the underclass of European society and to those minorities which have been scapegoats for all Europe's ills - first the Jews, and now Muslims. It is said that Muslims have become the new Jews of Europe.

On my return to London, I decided to make a journey to mainland Europe to see how this organisation which I had just founded could establish itself, and what its work should be. I decided to go to Belgrade, then to Bosnia. In 2000 the region, the former Yugoslavia, was regarded as 'a black hole' in Europe.

I have dwelt on the imagination because it is the engine which drives our work.

And given that what I have written so far may seem fanciful, even irrelevant, before I describe our activities I want to lay out seven essential principles for dialogue and peace-building which I have discovered. These principles developed as a result of reflecting on our experience. The Soul of Europe learns by what it does. Books put our work into a broader context. We learn from different points of view and mentors: those experienced in the art of peace-building and dialogue. While being nourished by the sacred texts of our traditions, experience on the ground has always been the basis of our work.

## **Principles Of Peace-Building And Dialogue**

The following are essential and immutable principles. When honoured they point in the direction of justice and peace which is the way God intends the world to be:

- 1 The willingness of all the parties to work together even if they disagree profoundly.
- 2 The readiness of all the parties to acknowledge the truth of the events that created a conflict.
- 3 The determination to work together for a new interdependent future.
- 4 The understanding that religion should play a significant role because Judaism, Christianity and Islam - the Abrahamic religions - recognise hope and compassion as God given gifts.
- 5 The appreciation that peace building is a process over time, and not just the work of a high profile mediator
- 6 The necessity of taking as much time as is needed, so that trust can grow between the parties and also with invited peace-builders.
- 7 The necessity of international organisations like the UN or EU to encourage the working out of these principles, and to provide the necessary resources.

## **The Reconstruction Of The Ferhadija Mosque, Banja Luka**

For six years our primary project in Banja Luka, a town I came to know better than where I live in the UK, was the reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque specifically as a symbol of reconciliation between Christians and Muslims.

First we visited Belgrade to meet the religious leaders, including Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church. After a night-drive from Budapest we arrived dishevelled at the Patriarchate for a meeting scheduled in the early morning and in our haste I forgot the letter of commendation from the Archbishop of Canterbury. I had prepared a careful presentation describing how we wanted to be useful and to help bring about peace. I spoke directly. The patriarch listened gravely and as I told him of my plan to invite young people of all faiths and none from across Europe to rebuild a mosque, a Catholic church and an Orthodox monastery, a smile broke across his features. 'Go to Bosnia,' he said, and gave me his blessing.



*Patriarch Pavle greets Donald Reeves at the Patriarchate February 29<sup>th</sup> 2000, along with Mufti Jusufspahic, Catholic Archbishop Perko and Rabbi Isak Asiel*

So we went to Banja Luka. 'Have you got a flak jacket?' asked a border official as we left Heathrow.

During our first visit to Bosnia it became clear that rebuilding a mosque, a monastery and a church did not constitute a priority for the Bosnian people whose focus was solely on finding work and security in the aftermath of war.

Nevertheless we had to meet the religious leaders. This may seem to be a strange way to begin our work, the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia being attributed to economic and political factors, religion not perceived as relevant to the conflict. But religion was a factor. Victims of ethnic cleansing were selected on the basis of their formal religious affiliation: Catholic Croat, Orthodox Serb or Muslim Bosniak. In Bosnia there is little to distinguish one group from another in language or clothing because the majority of people come from the same Balkan stock. It is names that reveal religious identity. During the war violence was motivated and justified by religious institutions, symbols and rituals. So the destruction of the Ottoman inheritance, mosques and properties, as well as to a lesser extent Catholic and Orthodox churches and homes, was justified as a necessary part of 'ethnic cleansing', and carried out in the name of God. Destroying places of worship and their foundations was a way of saying 'you do not belong here'. When the Catholic bishop of Banja Luka met a Serb general, he asked him why the Serbs were

destroying Catholic churches. The general replied: 'Your churches are the heart of your community; if we destroy your religious buildings then we destroy you.' Banja Luka, the administrative capital of the Republika Srpska, seemed not to have been as ravaged by war as other parts of Bosnia, including Sarajevo, the city heavily bombarded during the Serb siege. Appearances are deceptive; there is nothing like an air of normality to induce amnesia. A castle with a restaurant perches on a rock above the beautiful River Vrbas and the main streets of the city are thronged with friendly young people.

Then we met Mufti Camdic, the mufti of Banja Luka. Pointing at my clerical collar and cassock, he said 'it's alright for you. If I go out like this I will be spat at and stoned'. He was wearing the traditional Bosnian mufti fez and knee-length grey coat. In deep sorrow and indignation he told us how on May 7th 1993 the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ferhadija Mosque had been blown up. The foundations were removed, the stones of the mosque dumped in a field outside the city. Now when Muslim leaders were asking for permission for these and fifteen other destroyed mosques to be rebuilt in Banja Luka they were told by Serb officials that this would upset Orthodox Serbs who, due to ethnic cleansing, had now replaced Muslims as the largest majority in the city. The Ferhadija Mosque had been one of the jewels of the Ottoman Empire, a UNESCO listed building loved not only by Muslims but also by Serbs and Catholics. Alexander Ravic, a Serb, described the reaction of the people to its destruction:

'When the curfew was over we gathered round the destroyed place of worship. We were not able to believe that the authorities could find the courage to commit such a crime. We were stunned. Tears were shed not just by disinherited non Serbs, but also by numerous Serbs - all genuine citizens of Banja Luka.'



*The Ferhadija Mosque, Banja Luka  
Before its destruction on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1993*

Not being a war zone, destruction in Banja Luka was confined to religious buildings. Most of the Catholic churches and their properties were either vandalised or destroyed. The modern cathedral was spared because of its proximity to the Orthodox Cathedral. Where there were once sixteen mosques now there were empty spaces. None of the new maps of the municipality and town plans indicated mosques on the places where they had once stood. Banja Luka was wiping out every sign of its past. Many Bosnia towns experienced ethnic cleansing, but Banja Luka operated the most sophisticated program. Before the war its population of 195,000 consisted of 40% Muslims, the rest were divided between Serbs and Croats.

The truth about what happened in Banja Luka during the war began to emerge during our first visit in 2000. We learnt about the murder of elderly people in their homes, young men hiding through the winter in the woods and hills outside the town to avoid being captured, tortured and killed, mothers and their children evicted from their homes, university professors made to sweep the streets. Catholic nuns and priests

'disappeared'. Many people had been fired from their jobs, denied medical care, perpetually harassed and intimidated into leaving. Meanwhile an efficient bureaucracy was set up to help people leave, telling them to visit the offices of the telephone company, electricity board and the bank to certify that they no longer owned their property, forcing them to pay and sign their rights away.

Banja Luka is a European town - a two hour drive from Zagreb. It was as terrifying to be a Muslim or Croat there in 1992 as being a Jew in Berlin in 1942.

Immediately I understood what our work in Bosnia should be. I told Mufti Camdic without hesitation: 'We will help you rebuild the Ferhadija Mosque.'

Few people in Bosnia knew who we were. Apart from the discreet but consistent support of the British Embassy we were on our own. No one had invited us. After the war's ending many foreign aid agencies arrived but five years later most had left. Bosnians were suspicious of foreigners who come with their 'bright ideas'. We were suspect. Were we working for the CIA? Were we spiritual tourists? We spent much of our time and energy in those early visits gaining the trust of politicians and religious leaders.

After my appointment as the Vice Chairman of the Committee for the Reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque questions were understandably asked as to why a Christian priest, and a Christian based organisation, was involved in the rebuilding of a mosque. Dr Mustafa Cerić, then the Reis ul Ulema of Bosnia, always understood the project to be European and sending out a powerful message to the different Muslim communities throughout Europe that they are 'here to stay' accepted as European citizens. As well as being reparation for the crimes that had been committed against Bosnian Muslims, rebuilding the Ferhadija Mosque was a heritage project along with the Mostar Bridge and the National Library in Sarajevo.

The project to reconstruct the Ferhadija Mosque is one of imagination. Here was an opportunity for the people of Banja Luka to show Europe what a tolerant, civilised and open society this city could be. Invited to speak to the National Assembly - the government of the Republika Srpska - I spoke about the Ferhadija Mosque to a mostly Serb audience. Apart from the resentment expressed by a handful of hard-line nationalists the overall reaction was positive. It had not occurred to them to see Banja Luka in such a positive way. Later the municipality gave two sizable donations towards the cost of the reconstruction. The mosque is nearly finished and will be opened this year. Dr Cerić always acknowledged the significance of our contribution to the project.

However, rebuilding the Ferhadija Mosque had to go hand in hand with the economic, social and political regeneration of Banja Luka. This had always been an essential part of the project. I certainly never believed that someone who had been a priest in London for thirty years would find himself trying to find ways to create the conditions for this rebirth of such a troubled European city. I did everything I could to interest the European Union in these ideas, focusing on the wider significance of the project. But there was no interest.

So we decided to hold a Consultation at the International Centre for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral. Coventry was well known for its relationship with Dresden. During the second world war, the City of Coventry was bombed, and the British RAF bombed Dresden. After the war these two cities worked together on many programmes of reconciliation. We invited the politicians, religious leaders, business people and the mayor of Banja Luka with his cabinet to come to Coventry in September 2001, two weeks as it turned out after the bombing of the twin towers in New York.

Our preparation for the consultation involved five extensive visits to Banja Luka. We made it clear that we were not an aid agency. We described ourselves as 'honest brokers', and I presented myself as a 'powerless leader'. It is difficult to convey the bewilderment which greeted our early visits. No one had heard of the Soul of Europe. No one knew who we were or about the Church of England. We also said that if we were not welcome we would leave.

Our credibility, at least among the politicians, was helped by the British ambassador who advised on which politicians should participate. The mayor of Banja Luka and his cabinet were invited alongside businessmen and teachers. The Catholic Bishop Komarica was invited, with Mufti Camdic and Mufti Makic, a survivor of the killing camp of Omarska and now mufti of Bihac. The Orthodox Bishop, Bishop Jefrem was also invited. They all came.

On the last day the entire political leadership of Bosnia led by the High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch, who had supported our project from the beginning. They listened to the proposals of the group who had worked together for three days in buzz-groups - sometimes in pairs, sometimes in larger groups. It was difficult for everyone because of mutual fear and mistrust, even among the Serbs. But the consultation took place. Bishop Jefrem read out a carefully crafted statement composed by all three religious leaders which pledged the rebuilding of religious buildings of all faiths, including of course the Ferhadija Mosque. Considering how traumatised and exhausted the people were by war and Bosnia's problems, our expectations for a follow up were low.

The consultation elicited positive reaction and we were invited to return to Bosnia and help the people take it further. Many initiatives were started as a result of Coventry, well beyond the scope of this paper, including establishing a civic forum whose mission statement was the slogan: 'real change happens when those who do not usually speak are heard by those who do not usually listen'. Exchanges between schools in Exeter (UK) and Banja Luka were set up.

However encouraging the religious leaders to begin to trust each other and work together became an enduring difficulty. Coventry would have achieved nothing had they not all come. The process of encouraging their participation had meant spending a lot of time with each of them. The Catholic diocese had been decimated by the attempted ethnic cleansing of the Catholic community. Most of its churches and properties were destroyed during the war while Bishop Komarica was placed under house arrest 'for his own safety' but in fact to prevent him drawing attention to the plight of Catholics. He took us to ruined churches and each time walked up to where the altar should be. We prayed together for those who had been killed or driven out. Komarica has been tireless in his campaign to get the international community to create conditions whereby people could return to their homes. Few did. We met many brave priests and nuns and were inspired by their courage. But what emerged was a community frozen in despair, grief and anger.

The tears of the Catholics were matched by those of the Muslim community in Banja Luka or what was left of them. One day I spoke at Friday prayers in the mufti's office because there was no mosque to pray in. I apologised about the slow progress finding funding for the rebuilding of the Ferhadija Mosque. The men followed by the women began to cry, sway and wail. We needed to do more to help the project. Everywhere we had gone in Europe Muslim communities told us: 'the Bosnians should build their own mosques'. We had found little interest from the many inter-faith organisations to support the idea of the mosque as a centre for reconciliation. Visits to Germany, France, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Italy as well as Libya, Turkey and Tunisia had produced only vague promises of support and interest, but nothing came

of them. So when we saw those tears in Banja Luka, we also felt defeated. But the Soul of Europe could not and does not walk away. We redoubled our efforts. I introduced Dr Cerić to the Prince of Wales. Following two visits to Istanbul we learnt that modest funds had been promised for the mirhab in the rebuilt Ferhadija. The Turkish Government paid for the stones of the Ferhadija Mosque to be dug up in the field where they had been dumped and be returned to the site of the mosque. Later with the help of the British Embassy we secured a promise of a donation from the Republika Srpska to prepare the foundations. Dr Cerić declared for the first of many times at a meeting in Sarajevo in 2005 that without the Soul of Europe there would be no Ferhadija. We did what we could for Bishop Komarica by inviting him to London, raising funds for his diocese, and arranging press opportunities. Later we helped persuade Pope John Paul II to make a visit to Banja Luka, the last he made before his death, where he apologized for the past and extended a hand for reconciliation. The Serbian Orthodox Church had other concerns. It is often forgotten under communism how much the Serbian Orthodox Church had been persecuted. By the time Tito died, the Church was considerably weakened, the clergy badly trained, few books in the monasteries and seminaries, and ecumenical contacts limited. The Church needed to recover confidence.

Much of Bishop Jefrem's diocese is in the most isolated parts of Bosnia. He took us by jeep along pitted tracks to visit remote monasteries and churches and also to the sites of churches to be built. The consultation in Coventry had changed Bishop Jefrem. He conceded that the Ferhadija Mosque should be rebuilt; however his priority was to strengthen his own Church and support his congregations. Nevertheless he joined the other leaders and attended meetings chaired by the Soul of Europe. They jointly signed a public statement condemning the war in Iraq. He invited me to preach at the Orthodox liturgy on several occasions. Together with speaking at Friday prayers and many opportunities with the Catholic Church, the Soul of Europe had been accepted by all faiths within two years of our arrival in Bosnia. Our experience with the Ferhadija Project, which remains to be completed (see the expected outcomes at the end of this paper), taught us three lessons. The first is to discover the truth of what is happening on the ground. So we learnt very quickly that the rhetoric of symbolic buildings and reconciliation did not interest the majority of Bosnians. They just wanted to live a normal life. Many of the younger generation were trying to leave Bosnia. So when informing people about the Ferhadija Project we spoke about creating jobs, encouraging tourism, and investment, helping to build up a city with a reputation for tolerance. Reconciliation matters but we learnt not to give so much prominence to that word in our public statements about the Ferhadija Mosque. The second lesson is to understand that the future cannot be 'delivered'. Uncertainty is built into this way of working. So easily events overtake efforts at peace-building and reconciliation. Then the whole process has to begin again. The third lesson is that such work needs time and money, because peace-building and inter-religious dialogue constitutes a process, a commitment to the long haul and is not a quick fix. We learnt to have the patience of the weaver determined to continue weaving durable cloth even when some threads start to unravel.



*The Coventry Consultation September 2001*

### **The memorial at Omarska**

In 2005 the global company Mittal Steel (now Arcelor Mittal) acquired the iron ore mine at Omarska, near Prijedor in North West Bosnia. The mine had been used as a killing camp during the Bosnian war, most of the victims being Muslims. Over a thousand men and boys were murdered and many more tortured in the mine and nearby. Survivors and relatives of the victims demanded a memorial, The Serb administrators refused. There was a threat of violence and damage to property, disrupting the mining operation to the detriment of profits. Mittal, knowing of our work in Bosnia, commissioned the Soul of Europe to mediate between Muslims and Serbs, so that a memorial would be agreed by all. Imagine the guards at Auschwitz concentration camp working with Jewish survivors to create a memorial together and you have an idea of the difficulty and sensitivity of this project. Our book: *the white house- From Fear to a Handshake* tells the story of the process, talking to victims and perpetrators and achieving the first steps towards acknowledgment of the crimes committed and securing agreement to cooperate on a memorial. The book begins describing the stand off between Serbs and Muslims. We began a search for members from all communities who would be ready to cooperate. Then we brought them together to begin to speak about the trauma of what happened.

The problems come from extremists on both sides. Serbs threatened those Serbs who supported the idea of a memorial while a number of Muslims disapproved of any conversations between perpetrators and survivors. Our process tried to strengthen the middle ground and give courage to those prepared to cooperate with former enemies. It is worth noting that local religious leaders declined to take part in this process; for them it was too dangerous and difficult. Our book describes the unique nature of this work. It is intended as a guide for others involved in mediation, to learn from our mistakes as well as take inspiration from the process we used. We began to bring people together to cooperate on the idea of a memorial. Finally the book describes the meetings where Serbs and Muslims made a joint presentation of their plans for a memorial to the media, local politicians, the mine management and members of the international community.



*The white house, Omarska, the interrogation centre  
where hundreds were tortured and killed 1991- 1992*

There is still no memorial but the project continues in the hands of Muslims and Serbs.

### **The Serbian Orthodox Monasteries In Kosovo**

This project illustrates the Soul of Europe process of mediation as practised to develop healthy community relations between the Orthodox monasteries of Pec and Decani and the Muslim municipalities in which they stand.

When the new Patriarch Irenej of the Serbian Orthodox Church was elected on January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2010 in Belgrade, following the death of Patriarch Pavle who supported our work in Bosnia, he declared at his first press conference: 'Our first duty is to safeguard our Kosovo, a holy and martyred land to help our state to defend it from those who wish to seize it. Kosovo is our Holy Land, our Jerusalem.'

He was referring to the great monastic foundations of Decani and Pec. Together these and other monasteries, in a region that is now independent Kosovo, represent the heart and soul of Serbia, both in culture and religion. They are designated world heritage monasteries, and with Mecca, Jerusalem, Mount Athos and the Vatican have been officially declared the five most sacred sites in the Mediterranean region. These are working monasteries, not museums. Decani and Pec exist in municipalities where Serbs are a minority. They are islands in a Kosovo Albanian and Muslim setting. The monasteries are guarded by NATO. On our first visit soldiers body searched me and asked if I was carrying any weapons.

The International Crisis Group, a global think tank, noting our track record in Bosnia, suggested we should try and secure invitations from the Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians to find willingness between them to talk and co-operate. We managed to do this.

Before we visited Kosovo I researched the project thoroughly. I wanted to know if any international organisations or NGOs had attempted mediation yet. Even though the seventy eight day war had ended in 1999 not one organisation at any time had attempted to set up a process of mediation. Representatives of international organizations holding influence in Kosovo explained that NATO guarded the monasteries and that was sufficient. They conceded that sometime in the distant future maybe local police could take over guard duties. Meanwhile the nuns in Pec told us: 'We are prisoners; come and help us.' We met the Mayor of Pec four times. He agreed to cooperate.

Pec is the official seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Here in October 2010, the Patriarch was enthroned in the presence of around two thousand Orthodox from all over the Balkans. There was also an impressive gathering of bishops from the Balkans and European church leaders. A priest in the Belgrade Patriarchate told me I was invited because: 'you are a very dear friend of the Serbian Orthodox Church'.

As soon as I received the invitation I visited the European Office in Pristina, Belgrade and Brussels. This was an opportunity too important to miss. I asked the EU to commission the Soul of Europe to ensure that the Kosovo Serbs invited the local mayors and government ministers from Kosovo. No one in the European Office showed any interest, despite knowing what we had achieved in Bosnia. The enthronement was entirely Serb, the Patriarchate heavily guarded to keep the Kosovo Albanians out: a missed opportunity.

There are four words which describe the process leading to positive outcome. They are: Shoes, Walls, Land and Tables.

**Shoes.** Dialogue of any sort depends on active listening and a readiness to stand in the shoes of the other. It is the basis of all negotiation, and it is of course exceptionally difficult in a post conflict situation for victims to appreciate the others point of view, but it is essential for the mediation process and it takes much time and persistence. So in Pec we managed to bring together the mayor and the Serbian Orthodox bishop to encourage them to cooperate, the mayor realizing the tourist potential of the monastery and the bishop wanting his now elderly nuns to feel safe.

**Walls.** In Kosovo, as in many conflicted regions, there are walls of prejudice that lead to demonising. So Kosovo Albanians portray Kosovo Serbs as murderers while Serbs regard the Kosovo Albanians as terrorists. Those who use these words have usually never met anyone from the other side. So there is always the task of dismantling these walls.

**Land.** Nearly every region in the world where there has been a conflict has an issue of land and property, of who owns the land and what can take place on it. In the Balkans many people immediately revert to the courts, despite knowing that whatever verdict is given will be ignored. So attempts have to be made to bring the sides together to discuss and resolve these intractable issues.

**Tables.** Gathering round the tables, eating and drinking together, is a celebration of progress achieved. So many people said to us: 'In the past it was really always like this but we had forgotten.'

In November 2012, after careful preparation during which proposals had been already discussed and agreed, we organized a meeting attended by Mayor Berisha and Bishop Jovan in the presence of local NGOs, both Kosovo Serb and Albanian, representatives of the Government of Kosovo and international officials. These agreed proposals were presented to establish a Community Council where issues affecting both the monastery and municipality could be discussed. The success of this meeting depended on the preparation where active listening, dismantling of prejudices, and dealing with matters of law and justice reasonably became a meeting for celebration: Tables. As the meeting broke up, a Serb said to me: 'This room is full of light.'



*The room full of light: the public meeting  
between Mayor Berisha and Bishop Jovan  
in Pec, Kosovo, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012*

Of course the process is not as straightforward as that. Everything depends on painstaking preparation and the outcome may not always be as positive as that meeting was on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012.

The Soul of Europe has made a short film about the process used in Kosovo. It can be accessed on our website:- [www.soulofeurope.org](http://www.soulofeurope.org). Click on 'films' and access 'Kosovo, Peace-building and the Soul of Europe'.

## **The 12 Cities Project**

In November 2010 I received the International Tchelebei Peace Award from the German Islamic Archive Institute in Germany, the country's oldest Islamic organisation. There is no money attached to this prize, but it is an honour bestowed on people considered to have made a positive contribution to improving relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe.

The Award began a new phase in the work of the Soul of Europe.

The visit to the Ruhrgebiet became a wake up call concerning the growing influence of the Far Right in Europe. The Far Right is tapping into anxiety about Europe's economic crisis and targets Muslims as scapegoats. Nationalism is being mobilised in the face of a loss of confidence about Europe struggling with its economic crisis and its declining global influence. Many of Europe's leaders play into the fear of Islam, with frequent references to the 'Islamification of Europe' and exaggeratedly apocalyptic demographic forecasts about an ageing white population with a falling birth rate and on the other hand a burgeoning Muslim population. Muslim violence against non-Muslims in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, targeting Christians in particular, exacerbate this fear.

For Europe the question is how to find ways of integrating a 'ghettoised' confident and assertive Muslim minority which is perceived by nationalists to be encroaching on Europe's values and identity. For Muslims the question concerns the extent Muslim communities are assimilated; issues around loss of identity or segregation which encourages scapegoating.

The Soul of Europe together with the Soest Forum for Religion and Culture in Germany proposes to address these issues and to establish the 12 Cities Project -a grassroots network across Europe which aims to undermine, interrupt and combat Islamophobia. The project is the start of a movement which it is in the interest of non-Muslims to participate.

## **Objectives**

Following meetings in London, Dortmund and Berlin in 2012 and 2013, the 12 Cities Project will run a campaign to bring together existing projects from across Europe, all addressing Islamophobia. In September 2013 the 12 Cities Project network will hold a gathering in Dortmund Germany bringing together existing projects from across Europe along with prominent individuals also working to combat Islamophobia. The Dortmund event will provide an opportunity for reflection in a safe space where campaigners are able to come together for dialogue.

It will celebrate and show-case the good work that these cities are doing to help integrate Muslim communities so that Muslims are regarded and welcomed as citizens of Europe.

It will support the development of participants through sharing positive stories showing Islamophobia being marginalised.

Following the Dortmund gathering the 12 Cities Project will look towards future development of the campaign.

### **The Soul Of Europe Is Grateful For The Support Of Digid For The 12 Cities Project**

The twelve cities are: are London, Birmingham, Paris, Tbilisi, Sarajevo, Vienna, Oslo, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Berlin, Cologne, and Marl in the Ruhrgebiet.

Each city will be visited to find the most significant projects and invite them to participate in the Dortmund gathering.



Planning the 12 Cities Project, Dortmund, March 2012

### **In Conclusion**

The journey which I and my colleagues have been undertaking for the last fourteen years requires more than just good strategies or techniques - important as these are. It requires willingness to risk and vulnerability. We have learnt that we cannot expect others to work for peace unless we who are peace-builders are prepared to understand the risks and the calling which peace-building requires

### **What Other People Have Said About The Soul Of Europe**

Senad Pecanin, Sarajevo journalist, editor of Dana, September 2000 at Coventry Consultation: 'You guys are different. You keep turning up.'

Bishop Komarica, referring to the Soul of Europe's logo: 'There is much darkness here in Bosnia. The smallest candle gives us hope.'

Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury on awarding Donald Reeves an MLitt degree: 'In recognition of his dynamic and distinguished ministry over many years, and for his work in founding the Soul of Europe.' May 2003

Jon Calame, founder of Minerva Partners – Traditional Buildings Help Community Building (working on reconstructing the Mostar Bridge in Bosnia) commenting on our work for the Ferhadija Mosque: 'You are doing what the World Bank and UNESCO never do. You have invested personally and emotionally without getting buried by politics. Bosnians are good at sizing up foreign interventions and locating

their Achilles heel, and your honesty and competence have kept the more cynical snipers in abeyance... amazing.'

Gerard Galluci, former UN Representative in Kosovo, referring to the process of mediation I describe in the Kosovo Project, in 2010: 'A truly excellent piece. This is peace-making at the retail level where the real work must be done. I will share with students of a graduate course on peace-making and peace-keeping that I am teaching.'

Father Vladimir Vranic, assistant at the Patriarchate in Belgrade, answering my query as to why I had been invited to the enthronement of the Patriarch at Pec in 2010: 'You are a very dear friend of the Orthodox Church.'

Mufti Ibrahim Sabani of Skopje 2006: 'Mr Reeves is very important for us Muslims.'

Jeremy Seabrook, critic, journalist, author and dramatist reviewing *the white house – From Fear to a Handshake* by Peter Pelz and Donald Reeves, 2008: 'Stunning, an extraordinary account of engagement with intractable and murderous hostilities, of the energy generated by hope, a thrilling narrative of those who learn to overcome the injuries done to them and those embittered beyond grief.'

Tim Cartwright, the Council of Europe, commenting on the successful process bringing Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs together in Peja/Pec October 2012: 'Very uplifting. We don't have many meetings like this in Kosovo.'



If this submission is successful, and the prize is awarded to the Soul of Europe, then the prize will be spent in three ways:

- 1 Developing the European aspect of the Ferhadija Mosque
- 2 Ensuring that the model of mediation used in Pec is repeated elsewhere in Kosovo, and beyond
- 3 Developing and strengthening the network established by the 12 Cities Project which is now the main focus of the Soul of Europe's activities