



YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
NISMA E TE RINJVE PER TE DREJTAT E NJERIUT  
INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LjudSKA PRAVA

Montenegro

# TESTIMONIES TO THE FUTURE

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVES ON THE PAST



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## PREFACE

This publication emerged as a result of stories written by participants of the School of Transitional Justice, implemented by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in December 2023 within the project "Fostering Public Dialogue on Transitional Justice," supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The School gathered young people from all parts of Montenegro to inform them about the war crimes committed on the territory of Montenegro during the 1990s and to explore and address the concept of transitional justice through dialogue and raising awareness among young people about the importance of confronting the past.

Participants, visiting sites of suffering and listening to testimonies of those who witnessed the crimes, learned about the dark chapters of Montenegrin history.

These texts are authentic stories of our participants, reflecting their experiences and new knowledge on these topics. May they serve as the beginning of a journey towards a better future, justice, and respect for human rights.

*Youth Initiative for Human Rights*

Podgorica, February 2024

## CARRYING MEMORY INTO THE FUTURE

*Tereza Vujosević*

It is in human nature to fight. Since the dawn of time, there has hardly been any peace, and if there is a political one, internal fights are still going on. In the eternal search for something, the humane side of people sometimes remains hidden, we forget about it. We forget that we are human and give ourselves the right to decide on other people's lives. If we are no longer humans, then what are we? Non-humans?

Thus, in the 1990s, some "non-humans" chasing "others" who were "not ours" wanted to "cleanse" what they considered "theirs". They gave themselves rights that do not belong to them and they took away everything from others.

However, we are not familiar with the past, and there are chances that we do not want to be. The educational program speaks in favor of this. In the regular curricula, this part of history is hardly given any attention, and it all comes down to a teacher's will to either discuss or skip this topic, based on personal assessment. We skip the parts of history that we do not like. Thus, there is no way forward.

Prosecution of individuals responsible for war crimes was and continues to be slow, which is partly due to the long-term process of harmonization of domestic legislation with international law, but also due to a lack of will. War heroes on one side, war criminals on the other.

Systematic violation of human rights through the use of various forms of violence, primarily against the civilian population, led to the creation of societies whose complete recovery will require much more time and tolerance than we can imagine. It seems that the seeds of intolerance and revenge have been planted in a place, or places, where they are constantly nurtured and watered by unconsolidated histories of nations, re-injury of wounds that have not healed even after more than thirty years, and shots to the center of human souls. As if it is easier not to look at the reflection in the mirror and face the past.

By hiding from the crimes committed at the end of the last century, we are missing the future, standing still at the crime scene. The only way to satisfy justice is to confront the public with historical facts and learn from the past what we must never repeat.

## SCHOOL OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

*Nikola Pejović*

I applied for the School of Transitional Justice, organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), for several reasons. One of them was the lack of a clear understanding of the concept of transitional justice, while at the same time I wanted to expand my knowledge about war events during the 1990s in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Of course, as with all other seminars, one of the motives for applying was to make new acquaintances and broaden horizons. What made this School special was the opportunity to listen to the personal experiences of people who felt the hardships of war on their skin in different ways.

On the one hand, we heard the story of Alen Bajrović, a young man from Bijela near Herceg Novi. Without any explanation or search warrant, his father was taken to the premises of the Ministry of the Interior unit in Herceg Novi in front of the entire family. Despite the family's persistent attempts to obtain any information, their father disappeared without a trace. To this day, more than 30 years later, his family seeks justice before Montenegrin and European judicial bodies, but unfortunately, without success. While other families whose members had been abducted and deported that year accepted the monetary compensation offered, Alen's family continues to persevere in their fight for justice and refuses to leave everything behind.

On the other hand, there is Miloš Čekerevac's story – a man from Ivanjica in Serbia, who lived "on the other side of the wire" in Mlini near Dubrovnik during the war. He refused evacuation with other families during the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) attack on Croatia, unaware that "his" army would bring him misfortune. While he was hiding with several families in an underground

garage, similar to Alen's father, he was taken without explanation and ended up in a camp in Morinj with mostly Croats and Bosniaks, along with JNA deserters. Miloš was one of the few Serbs imprisoned there. It was quite emotional when Mr. Čekerevac talked about how his little daughter asked the Serbian soldier why he had kidnapped her dad, to which he replied that he did not take him but that he would be the one to free him. The soldier followed through on his word, bringing her dad home. A large number of participants shed a tear at that moment, together with Miloš.

There is also the story of Luka Brailo, a journalist from Slobodna Dalmacija, who reported from the scene during the siege of Dubrovnik while his family fled to Italy. After seeing them off to the ferry, he did not know if he would ever see them again, which was one of the hardest moments of his life. This was also an emotional moment and left an impression on both the speaker and us - participants. Fortunately, he survived the siege without consequences, just like his family, and stayed in Dubrovnik where he now enjoys retirement, remembering the events of 1991. After the war, he visited Montenegro several times, trying to find out, together with his acquaintances from the Liberal Alliance of Montenegro and the Monitor newspaper, why had our fellow citizens participated in the attack on Dubrovnik.

These three stories touched me deeply because it was the first time I had the opportunity to hear in person about the experiences of people who had been through the traumatic events of the 90s. They certainly marked the entire seminar, although I must give credit to other lecturers from whom we also learned a lot.

Džemal Perović, Montenegrin politician and activist, shared his thoughts about the concept of the culture of memory and his view on the war years. Ervina Dabižinović, psychologist and activist, gave us a picture of what life was like before and after the war. Sanja Grbović, lawyer and professor, presented, amongst other things, the facts about the crime in Štrpci, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Vjekoslav Vierda, lawyer from Dubrovnik, shared with us his experience about the process of trying to restore his hometown to its original state. Marko Vukčević and Kristina Janković prepared us for writing the stories about our experience at the School, while Sead Sadiković, a public service journalist, enriched the whole experience with his specific narrative.

This seminar provided me with a deeper understanding of transitional justice and war events in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Experiences of the people whose stories we heard moved me deeply and prompted me to think about the importance of facing the past in order to build a future based on peace and justice.



During the School, we realized that transitional justice is not only a legal issue, but also a deeply emotional experience for those who are directly affected. Different perspectives contributed to the richness of the discussion and encouraged us to think about the complexity of the process of reconciliation and reconstruction of societies after the destruction of war.

The excitement and seriousness of the seminar was reflected in the dynamic dialog among the participants, as we searched for answers to the questions arising from the stories heard. Those discussions encouraged us to introspect and ask questions about our own role in building a better future, where the dignity of every individual is respected, regardless of the past.

In conclusion, the School of Transitional Justice left a deep and lasting impression on me. Empowered by knowledge and experience gained, I feel responsible to share the acquired knowledge with others, and to actively promote the values of transitional justice and reconciliation. This experience confirmed the importance of open dialogue and exchange of ideas with the aim of building a society able to face the past and the foundation for a sustainable future.



## SCHOOL OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

*Andrea Eraković*

I will undoubtedly remember the School of Transitional Justice forever. So much emotion could be felt, each lecturer spoke with eyes full of tears and thus gave us the opportunity to see and feel what people had really gone through during the war. They introduced us to the culture of memory firsthand, and I really cannot wait to share my knowledge and impressions with my neighbors because I think this is one of the most important topics that should not be neglected because it is part of the past.

I am very glad that I was a part of this project. I believe that I could not have learned so much about war crimes and the real truth from anyone else as much as I have learned from people who went through the horrors of war crimes in our region. It is a very strange feeling when one considers the fact that these crimes did not happen several hundred years ago, but only thirty years ago. It is sad that young people have to live with the consequences left behind by war crimes. When I heard that people who had committed murder and violence against others during the war were not punished but lived their lives carefree, I simply could not believe it. I will mention a case that is relevant these days - a man, who beat his pregnant wife to death, was sentenced to only 12 years in prison. The man who ended a young life, left three children without a mother, got only 12 years in prison. For me, this was shocking news; I cannot believe that the court made such a decision but I hope that this case will not end like this. Women were also abused during the war, and even today such cases are present in our society. In my opinion, such problems are solved by protests - the people should show disagreement with the decisions they think are incorrect. I am only now aware of the kind of country I live in, and it saddens me that I can understand the decisions made by young people to leave Montenegro, in search of a better life. Young people should make an effort together and encourage other people to

discuss the problems that need to be solved, so that the consequences we have today do not occur.

I was taken aback when Mr. Alen talked about the court settlements that were offered to the victims' families. I cannot believe that anyone could think that human life can be paid for. I was really surprised to hear that he was still suing the government; I am very glad that he has the patience and courage to fight the government on his own to get justice.

The School really met my expectations in all segments; it was very educational and left an indelible mark. I must also mention the museum with very realistic photos from the war, where every emotion can be felt.

The last day was also very interesting - we talked about today's problems that are being neglected, but should really be discussed. I believe that the ideal solution is for young people to talk to each other and exchange opinions as much as possible, because it is very important to talk about the existing problem, as the conversation is the first step towards a solution.

I hope that one day many young people will occupy important government positions, and that from those positions they would be able to change the country for the better, because we really deserve it. We have had enough people who are destroying Montenegro by implementing their destructive policies; it is time to stop the "brain drain" from Montenegro by enabling young people to live carefree in their country.



## SARA<sup>1</sup> AND THE BRIDGES OF TRUTH

*Danijela Darmanović*

In a town located in the north of Montenegro, inhabited by diverse communities, both Muslim and Serbian, a girl named Sara was born. Her town had witnessed one of the most tragic war crimes. Bukovica!

Sara grew up in a family that nurtured tolerance and understanding. Thanks to her upbringing, she saw people as individuals, dividing them into good and bad, and not by ethnic or religious background. She has always appreciated the multiculturalism woven into her hometown, as well as into her country.

One day, Sara became aware of the importance of politics in shaping society. She realized that a misguided policy, driven by emotion and intolerance, had left permanent scars on her community. She began to think about how the government should take responsibility for its actions and take steps towards reconciliation.

On this journey of learning and pondering, the School of Transitional Justice was very important to her, where she learned a lot about war crimes committed on the territory of her country. However, the School was not limited to the acquisition of knowledge, but was also a journey of empathy and empowerment that broadened Sara's understanding of human suffering and the need for justice. In the stories of persons who were victims of war, she felt the weight of their experiences. Their emotional stories were shocking, but at the same time inspiring. Listening to them, she felt pain, sadness, but also the strength that comes from the courage of those who had survived injustice. These stories were not just dry accounts of events, but human destinies, told with a deep emotional charge. She felt the pain of fathers, mothers and children, the despair of victims of torture, but at the same time the exceptional courage of those who decided to share their stories so that the world would understand the price of war. Emotions poured out

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<sup>1</sup> **Sara** is a female name meaning goddess, princess, high-ranking woman. Sarah, a biblical figure, was Abraham's wife and is mentioned **in both the Bible and the Koran**.

of their words and touched every part of her being. This School left an indelible mark on Sara's heart and mind, which will make her dedicated to the fight for truth and justice on her further life path.

This emotional connection with the war victims moved her deeply and gave her a new perspective on the importance of transitional justice. She realized that the truth has the power to heal, and that facing the past is key to building a future based on justice and respect for human rights. She thought about how important it would be to learn what she heard and learned about past historical events from school textbooks, so that young people would create awareness of the importance of peace and tolerance. She believed that it was important that the coming generations be not burdened with guilt for the actions of their predecessors, and she realized that it was of great importance to pass on the truth to the younger generations.

This experience will further motivate Sara to persevere in her future work and spread the true narrative about the 1990s. She will try to transfer her new knowledge and empathy to other young people, so that they can work together to create a society that values peace, tolerance and diversity. Through this learning journey, she realized the importance of conveying the truth to the younger generations. Only through a proper understanding of the past can we create bridges to a better future. Multiculturalism is not just a word, but also a way of life that requires a commitment to understanding, loving and respecting diversity.

## LIBERALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

*Jova Radović*

Liberalism and transitional justice represent two key concepts, the meeting of which is often considered complex and challenging in contemporary society. While liberalism tends to protect individual freedoms and rights, transitional justice focuses on dealing with the past, especially in the context of the transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic systems. In what way can liberal principles fit or conflict with the requirements of transitional justice, analyzing the dilemmas and challenges that this interaction can pose to societies in the process of transition, remains a question for extensive study and analysis, so I will try to present only the key segments.

Liberalism in countries behind the Iron Curtain played a significant role as a stimulus for lustration processes, especially during the period of transition to democracy after the fall of communist regimes. Here are a few key points that illuminate that dynamic:

### 1. The demand for transparency and accountability:

Liberal values, including transparency, accountability and the rule of law, have become fundamental guidelines during the transition to democracy. Countries behind the Iron Curtain faced the need to overcome authoritarian practices and establish new standards that encourage the accountability of political elites.

### 2. Lustration as a means of dealing with the past:

Processes of lustration, i.e. exposing and confronting crimes and injustices from previous regimes have become a key element in the transformation of societies. A liberal commitment to justice and the rule of law supported these efforts, as it emphasized accountability and the protection of human rights.

### 3. Lessons from the East and the West:

Countries behind the Iron Curtain, when adopting liberal principles, often relied on the experiences of other countries that had already gone through similar transitions. Western democracies represented a model that emphasized the importance of lustration in building an open and responsible society.

### 4. Civil Society and Activism:

Liberal principles supported the development of civil society and activism as key agents pushing for lustration. Citizens' groups, human rights organizations and the media played a key role in uncovering past crimes and demanding justice.

### 5. Challenges and Controversies:

While liberal values encouraged lustration, they also faced challenges and controversies. Issues related to legality, political tensions and divisions in society often accompanied these processes.

In the final sense, liberalism was the catalyst for confronting the past and achieving justice in the countries behind the Iron Curtain. Its commitment to the rule of law, transparency and accountability helped shape transition processes and supported efforts to build democratic societies

Analyzing the historical role of liberal factions in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and their role in the transition requires a review of the region's complex political past. It is important to take into account the diversity of liberal groups and political actors within the wider context of the former Yugoslavia. Here are some key aspects to consider:

**1. Multiparty system and diversity of liberal groups:**

After the multiparty elections that followed in Yugoslavia, including Serbia and Montenegro, a diverse political scene was created. Liberal parties were part of this pluralism, but it is important to note that other political factions were also present, including those originating from former communist structures (SDP).

**2. The complex context of wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia:**

The 1990s were marked by the breakup of Yugoslavia and a series of conflicts. The participants in the wars were diverse, including different political groups and factions. Liberal parties were no exception, and some faced internal divisions and challenges during the wars.

**3. All liberal factions, similar to the previous liberal currents within the SKJ itself (the great academic Latinka Perović in Serbia in particular), tried to advocate peaceful and diplomatic approaches.**

**4. The bearer of the transition:**

The question of who should be the bearer of the transition after the wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia is complex. The liberal factions were not necessarily the only ones because of the generally low support. Examples are the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina and the Liberal Democratic Party of Čedomir Jovanović.

**5. The need to analyze individual actions and policies:**

Analyzing the need for liberal factions as the only bearers of transition requires an analysis of individual actions and policies of each party. It is important to properly assess their contribution to the transition process, including their efforts in building democratic institutions, supporting human rights, and engaging in the reconstruction of society.



In conclusion, the question of the bearer of the transition after the wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia is complex and cannot be simply reduced to one political faction. The analysis should take into account different contexts and specifics of the activities of each liberal group, as well as the broader picture of the political scene of that period. Montenegro, as part of the former Yugoslavia and later the FRY, had its own specific path during the process of the dissolution of the federation. The Liberal Alliance of Montenegro (LSCG) played the most significant role in the political landscape of Montenegro. Here are some key points of the analysis:

### 1. The role of the LSCG in multi-party system:

LSCG was one of the political parties that emerged during the multi-party system in Montenegro. It was founded in 1990 as a liberal option, it stood for democratic values, pacifism, the confederal structure of the FPRY, and later for the independence of Montenegro when it was clear that the flames had already swallowed too much and that there was no turning back, and the principle of the free market is implied.

### 2. Activities during the war and post-war period:

During the wars of the nineties, LSCG distanced itself from armed conflicts and took a peaceful and diplomatic approach. In the post-war period, the party sought to advocate liberal values, including the protection of human rights and democratic reforms.

### 3. Conflicts with other political actors:

LSCG faced political conflicts with other parties in Montenegro, including the long-time leader and instigator of the wars of the 1990s, Milo Đukanović and his Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS). These conflicts were often related to different visions of the political future of Montenegro, and later due to criminal activities and war crimes inspired by the actions of Đukanović before his departure from Milošević.

### 4. Liberal principles and challenges:

LSCG promoted liberal principles, including economic reforms and respect for civil liberties. However, it faced challenges in terms of wider acceptance of those principles in Montenegrin society, where traditional

political divisions often dominated. Later, conflicts arose within the party itself.

## 5. Participation in the democratic process:

LSCG participated in democratic elections in Montenegro, including the period after independence in 2006. During those years, the party faced changes in the political environment, including increased polarization and controversy. Most of the members of the party went through terrible torture primarily by the state, planned beatings, obstructions in all fields from the extremist Serbian political options in Montenegro.

During the wartime demonstrations in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, rock 'n' roll and punk music were often strongly present, and their connection with liberalism has several key aspects:

### 1. Expressing discontent:

Rock 'n' roll and punk music were often a means of expressing discontent and resistance to political authority. At the beginning of 1992, members of rock bands EKV, Partibrejkers and Električni orgazam formed the "Rimtutituki" project, whose activity was focused on anti-war action. Rimtutituki was founded to oppose the mobilization for war in Bosnia. Milan (EKV), Gile, Švaba, Čavke and Jovec (Električni orgazam) formed Rimtutituki at the signing of the petition against mobilization. Their most famous single "Slušaj 'vamo!" (Listen here!), with the key chorus "Peace, brother, peace", was released by B92 (then a dissident radio-television station), and was promoted with a concert on a truck that toured the streets of Belgrade. In the context of Yugoslavia, where wars and political conflicts took place, these musical forms became a platform for young people who wanted to express their disagreement with the authorities.

### 2. Song lyrics with a political dimension:

The songs of rock 'n' roll and punk bands often contained politically charged lyrics that expressed disagreement with the existing system, criticized authoritarianism, and called for freedom and human rights. All this

testifies to how much the hippie movement, liberalism and the general music scene and events from democratic countries influenced the anti-war music movement in the 90s.

### 3. Mass gatherings and civic solidarity:

Concerts by rock 'n' roll and punk bands often attracted large crowds. These events became an opportunity for the masses to gather, and a sense of community and solidarity often supported liberal values

### 4. Support for peaceful protests:

Music artists from the rock 'n' roll and punk scene often supported peaceful protests and demonstrations against war conflicts and authoritarian regimes.

### 5. Cultural activism:

Rock 'n' roll and punk music in Yugoslavia during this period were often associated with cultural activism. These bands not only provided entertainment, but also played a role in shaping social discourse and encouraging reflection on political issues.



It is important to note that during this time, some musicians faced censorship and repression for expressing political views that opposed official propaganda. This dynamic points to the importance of art and culture in expressing freedom and promoting liberal values during the challenging times of the wars in Yugoslavia.

When dealing with the historical review of the transition in the context of the liberal model, we can cite many positive examples. In previous years, the Liberal Party of Canada, under the leadership of Justin Trudeau, took several measures that could affect issues of transitional justice and related topics. Some of the key aspects include:

1. Solving the indigenous peoples issue:

The Liberal Party emphasized the relationship with indigenous peoples, acknowledging historical injustices and seeking new paths to cooperation and reconciliation. This includes acknowledging residential schools as abuse and expressing regret.

2. Reconciliation with the past:

Canada has conducted research and investigations into violence against indigenous children in residential schools. These steps aim to ensure accountability for historical injustices and contribute to reconciliation processes.

3. International rights support:

Canada has continued to support international human rights norms, including participation in international institutions and support for global justice and reconciliation efforts.

Other historical examples of transitional justice provide insight into different approaches and challenges. For example:

1. The South African Republic:

After the fall of apartheid, South Africa created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This model included amnesty in exchange for the truth about past crimes. This approach was partly in line with liberal values, but caused controversy due to the lack of prosecution.

2. The Hague Trials:

The breakup of Yugoslavia led to a series of conflicts during the 1990s. The International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague was established to prosecute those responsible for war crimes. It could not be said that

its role satisfied the principles of liberal justice (many war criminals were not prosecuted; some cases were dropped in the appeals procedure even though they were absolutely clean, e.g. Markač, Gotovina), but its contribution was certainly of key importance in insuring that war crimes do not go under the radar and that today we have an inexhaustible database of war events, and war crimes do not become obsolete.

### 3. Germany after World War II:

The process of denazification and war crimes trials were carried out in Germany after World War II. This model combined individual responsibility with broader societal efforts of restoration and reconciliation. Germany's biggest failure is that, under the influence of the patriarchy, it prosecuted a very small number of female criminals, while those it did prosecute were sentenced to minor prison sentences.



These examples illustrate the diversity of approaches to transitional justice, each of which carries its own challenges and implications in the context of specific social and political circumstances.

The question of absolute justice is a philosophical question that is considered through different theoretical perspectives. Absolute justice usually refers to the idea of universal and immutable principles of justice that should apply regardless of social, cultural, or individual variation. However, philosophers often disagree about the existence of absolute justice, and different ethical theories offer different perspectives.

There is a deep gap between the concepts of law and justice:

**1. Law:**

This usually refers to the system of laws, regulations and legal norms that govern behavior in society. The legal system focuses on establishing rules that determine what is allowed or prohibited, and enforcing those rules through the judicial system.

**2. Justice:**

This concept has a broader meaning and refers to the moral dimension of social relations. Given that there is no objective moral and that good and evil are a matter of convention, people often reduce justice to law. Justice is often associated with fairness, balance and equal treatment of all individuals. It can be a philosophical, political or social value developed from ethical and moral principles normed through the majority civilizational discourse.

We can therefore say that absolute justice remains in the field of metaphysics, and when it comes to law, the most we can do is apply liberal principles in law.

## RECORD IN A WHIRLWIND - THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SIEGE OF DUBROVNIK

*Jovana Vučeračević*

In the crevices of the chastisement of defiance and pride, on the side of history where love resides, I would like to see the testimony of cries and prayers for peace, instead of war, as they disguised this crime as patriotism. A record in a whirlwind, because it deserves to be written down - that cry that, radiating from Lovćen, hit the edges of Rumija and Orijen and could not find an ear to hear it, an interlocutor to talk, nor overcame the echo of self-proclaimed heroism and actors of fatal ideological convictions. Let it be interpreted as a plea to Dubrovnik for forgiveness and a thank you to the walls for their hospitality during the visit as part of the School of Transitional Justice.

Despite the harsh truth of my people, during the most severe attacks by the JNA army, there was still strong resistance in Montenegro. However, conversant was spelled oddly – separatist, traitor, Ustasha...

End of the 20th century, location - Balkans, house by the road. The media is adding the last drop of the gunpowder. The blast is ready, a minute of silence, the detonator is activated, it is time to die... Humiliation, unexplored terrain in the Montenegrin history creeps into its lines on that fateful October 1, 1991. Same again at dawn and cold storage at dusk... For days, youth from Prevlaka and Konavle died in the east of the front and the city of Dubrovnik, to the coast in the west, in attempts to liberate Dubrovnik from... citizens of Dubrovnik, for the sake of petty interests of the big-state projects of Slobodan Milošević and his mercenaries. The intellectual twilight, directed by the public service: *"thousands of armed Ustashes supported by foreign mercenaries are waiting on the border of Montenegro"*, and similar empty, warmongering headlines forced the most rural, non-urban and less educated population to leave their homes and for the first time lead Montenegro into a shameful conquest and plundering war. The puppet show has begun: the mighty Belgrade puppeteer sets his marionettes in motion, embodied in the political and republican leadership of those years, and sends Montenegro on a suicide mission. During the 8-month siege, every night someone would lose their only son and someone would count the money earned by selling weapons to both gangs, so that later they would become businessmen, founders of monasteries, owners of hotels, restaurants, discotheques... For some it was war, for others - brother.

However, a handful of educated, intelligent and wise people saw through the intentions of the then official Belgrade to try to realize their idea using Montenegro as their cover. It was later exposed that this had been just one in a series of such attempts, and as a result, we would spread our umbrellas in Podgorica as soon as it got cloudy in Belgrade. Back then, in the time of bureaucracy, censorship and the generally turbulent state during the 1990s, it was not easy to see where the famous "war for peace" was leading. It is in that place that the ratio of knowledge of a simple man, who knows nothing but love, creates a counterbalance and gives birth to the truth. In those currents within the system, the only definitions of courage and heroism close to me work from humility. They are discussed a lot among my people, but obviously little is known about them. We do not learn in schools about Marko Popović from Cetinje, a poet, who in the middle of the siege created the verse "Forgive us, Dubrovnik, the fairy cries from Mount Lovćen", quite modestly, without suspecting the historical significance it will gain in the following decades. These verses, already a symbol of resistance, could be heard at the mass rallies of the Liberal Alliance in opposition to the tendencies of the "ruling class" of that time. However, the ear that was supposed to be the addressee of the peace messages sent by the people asking for forgiveness and representing then the only, de facto, general interest, was deaf. The memory of Admiral Vladimir Barović, *who took his own life in protest against the order of the JNA high command to shell coastal settlements in Croatia from the island of Vis*, is not preserved. I hope that Stradun is familiar with the words of Admiral Krsto Đurović from Cetinje: "As long as I am the commander, not a single shell will fall on Dubrovnik", whose wife was Croatian and whose children lived in Croatia. I will quote a portion of a newspaper article to point out the absurdity: *"On October 4, 1991, by decree of the Presidency of the SFRY, the criminal Ratko Mladić was promoted from the rank of infantry colonel to the rank of major general. By the same decree, by a strange fate, another man was promoted. Namely, the Presidency of the SFRY promoted the captain of the battleship Krsto Đurović to the rank of rear admiral. On one side of history, on the side of the forces of evil, stands Ratko Mladić, and on the other, the name of Krsto Đurović from Cetinje shines bright. On that day, at least in a formal sense, these two men began their commanding careers. It is just that Mladić's is well-known - criminal, and Đurović's is almost unknown, even though it is heroic and lasted only one day."* The next day, under a big veil of secrecy in contradictory circumstances, he dies in a military helicopter crash, without even knowing about his promotion. Refusing calls to the march of military installations on Čemovsko polje and Sutorman and many other stories, which live in the realm of folk tales and tavern anecdotes, about the mass desertion by those who had mistakenly gone to defend the unattacked, deserve to be heard. Those who perished on the right side of history, together with the victims, deserve to be known by name.



Although the media completely boycotted and avoided presenting the facts, figures and data about the number of people who had actively (participating in anti-war forums and protests) or passively (avoiding military conscription and calls for mobilization) expressed their position, the general impression was that those who refused to participate in the shameful conquest and plundering operations were much more numerous. And while the "brave" (with some honorable exceptions) knights demonstrated their military power over civilians and carried their decorations through Trebinje and Nikšić in the form of fur coats, furniture, home appliances, even large livestock and small poultry, resistance to this idea in Montenegro grew stronger, as well as to its bearers who in the end, sooner or later, found themselves on the "Hague benches" and answered for their crimes. And no, this is not transferring the burden of guilt or juggling responsibility, but witnessing the unequal standards abused by the powerful. This is a settlement for the true victors of this siege, those who refused to take up arms. A humble surrender, because I give up on the fate of a country whose foundations would rest on the myth that we are sinless. Let our words serve as medicine, the bitterness of wormwood, because facing the weight of the truth is the only path to reconciliation.

I will end with the words of the late Mićo Orlandić – back then in the town of Bar, before a full audience, as witnessed by my grandfather, he said: "Maybe a Willy Brandt will be born in Montenegro, kneel down and ask for forgiveness". And so it happened.



## NOT EVERY NEW MORNING IS GOOD

*Marija Joksimović*

Not every new morning is good. It happens that on that very morning you find out that there has been a war and that the army will arrive at any moment. So what should you do? Run or stay? On October 1, 1991, Miloš Čekerevac wondered the same in the village of Mlini. "I am a Serb, our army (JNA) is attacking, they will not touch me so no need to run; I will wait for them." Thus, relying on the fact that his own will not touch him, he stays.

"With the neighbors, 14 of us were living in the basement; no electricity, we see each other by the flames of the stove, and we feed ourselves from the freezer, we take water from the pool. We have been there for over three weeks, we do not know what is going on. There is war. The first people we make contact with are Croatian soldiers and they immediately ask if we needed medicine, they see that we have small children. At that time, the neighbor's little one was 6 months old. The soldiers leave, we stay, we certainly could not escape by car, JNA is 300m away, and they shoot at everything that moves. We have to wait and see what happens. Should we surrender? But how? You cannot go out with a white flag or hands up. I see a reflection in the fogged glass, someone is approaching, I shout "Don't shoot, there are civilians." He enters the garage and throws me to the floor. I shout, "The ID card is in the left pocket." The man looks at it, it says that I am from Ivanjica. My neighbor wanted to take his ID out of his inside jacket pocket, but they jumped on him thinking he was taking out a gun. At that moment, I hear someone say "Throw the bomb". "No, no", I jump, "Don't do it, there are children inside"... Fortunately, their commander-in-chief appeared and prevented that from happening. Later, when it was all over, a man found me and apologized for what they did then. I ask him what would have happened if the bomb had been activated, and he says they would just take a photo and say that the Ustashes did it.

They are taking me and my neighbor away. They did not say why, but we knew we had to go. They did not say where either. We end up in the Morinj camp. I completely lose contact with my wife, who is left without anything. They did not beat us in Morinj, but it was very crowded, so we were lying on the floor. You

were not allowed to come close to the door when it opens, hands against the wall when the guard enters... That period was perhaps the most difficult because I did not know what had happened to my family. I managed to find out from a policeman I knew that they were safe. My wife found out where I was only a week later and came looking for me. The first time they did not tell her anything about me, and the next time she told our child to say to the policeman, "You locked my dad up, sir," to which he replied, "I locked him up, I will let him go," and really let me go. Eighteen days later I left the camp.

In October 1991, Miloš, aka Čeki, was imprisoned by his own people as an Ustasha. He was later accused by the Ustasha of being a Chetnik. He was never given release papers from prison, so it is as if he was never in it, and he cannot prove it. He never returned to Mlini, and why would he? He saved ten houses in Mlini from being burned down by the JNA.

We learn history from those who write it, and so many stories are never told - the stories of ordinary people, not soldiers, diplomats, commanders, but an ordinary man who is not guilty of anything but must survive all the misfortunes that befall him. As long as there is a record or even a memory, no one will be forgotten.



## WAR AND THE MEDIA

*Ivan Vučković*

In this paper, I will describe the role of the media during the war events in the former Yugoslavia, but also in the "whirlwind of war" that blew in the past. The emphasis was placed on the importance of the media for society, as well as on the essential question: "Who caused more damage in combat – journalists as warmongers or armed groups on the battlefield?" Are journalists ready to act ethically and admit their mistakes, i.e. apologize for them, or will they continue their sensationalist reporting only in a different "guise", abusing their freedom and power once again and playing with the trust of citizens, perhaps creating new hidden conflicts.

The famous writer Jacques Ellul once said "...in order to win, we cannot act differently. It is obvious! But can evil really be defeated by evil?" We have witnessed that through the development of human civilization, people's consciousness has changed, as well as the weight of social situations, and it was not easy to cope with those events, but according to folk wisdom, "each era brings its own burden". The role of the media during its development had its ups and downs, like every social area. The structure of the media is very similar to other institutions, whose goal is to produce intellectual and business elite to support the interests of the powerful. Sometimes even difficult situations are good if they are seen from the right angle, because based on them the heroes of the era are revealed and often the villains are exposed. Here we can apply the folk wisdom "snow is falling not to cover the mountain, but so that every animal shows its track". Unfortunately, we are witnesses that - especially before and during World War II, the Cold War and the wars on the territory of our former country - media propaganda can become a powerful weapon in the hands of people who, guided by the maxim that "the end justifies the means", resort to unethical treatment.

Philosopher Branko Klun describes war in the media with the following sentence: "Reporting in war is done as a show, a specific reality show in which virtual world and reality intertwine." Every experience is expensive, so our former country and its people paid a high price. Of course, it is not possible to transfer all the blame to the media, but some contributed with their reporting to "heating up" the already heated atmosphere, and we were just waiting for "the

ghost from the lamp to be released". Today, when there are no open conflicts in our region, we still have relics of the past where certain journalists report unethically on many social issues, and, what is particularly worrying, assume the role of a judge by evaluating evidence or putting facts in a different context, so a free-thinking person wonders who the journalists are doing this for. "Since the beginning of the conflict, the information published by the media in the former Yugoslavia essentially included nationalist discourse and ubiquitous attacks and insults directed against other nations." Certainly, one should not associate honorable and honest journalists who remained consistent even in difficult times, when it was hard to remain first and foremost a human and stick to the basic principles on which a civilized society rests, with those who did not act that way.

The media is the seventh force and they should certainly be aware of the power and freedom they possess, but responsibility without freedom and freedom without responsibility cannot go together. George Washington once pointed out that fictional stories could have a greater impact than true ones. It is problematic when this power is used for other purposes, such as creating social awareness for the needs of certain groups, inciting war by spreading a false media image during war events that "several thousand soldiers are moving towards a certain country or that children are being thrown into a zoo to feed the animals", labelling certain nation as criminals as well as placing the blame without valid evidence on certain persons. We had the opportunity to hear all these narratives from certain journalists during the war events in the former Yugoslavia; in such a way, journalists use their power for completely different purposes. Every person has a need to possess some kind of power, to be accepted and respected in society, which is desirable, because through one's profession, a person can help others and make the world a better place. Carlos Castaneda specifically wrote about this in his "Stories about power", but it is unacceptable when this power is used to achieve another goal, when a journalist becomes a means to achieve the goal of a group and his journalistic pen becomes a weapon to achieve dark goals. Unfortunately, we have had the opportunity since World War II until today to see that there are "warrior journalists" who, for the sake of their own comfort, commit heinous acts through their writing and thereby become part of the war machine. Using the guise of democracy, freedom of speech and freedom of public speech, a false image is created and people are misled. Thus, the honorable motives of the people of one country can be abused. Every man is obliged to defend his country in line with international law, but when a false image is created that an attack on one's country is being prepared, that the opposing army has committed war crimes, it can cause great public anger, especially among soldiers and volunteers, causing the desire for revenge against the opposing side. A completely different effect can occur then.

Propaganda is a powerful weapon that was well defined by geopolitician Harold D. Lasvel, according to whom "propaganda is the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representations. These representations may take spoken, written, pictorial or musical form." It is not clear why unscrupulous journalists, who are ready to produce articles creating a false image during war events, do not use their media power and knowledge to write about peace and reconciliation or to at least deliver verified and accurate data. Thus, society becomes a puppet of journalistic/political-intelligence games, and innocent people become victims. I once heard an instructive story about a murderer and a writer. The writer was a quiet and withdrawn man, known for his books and the ideas he fought for; he wrote about his ideas all his life and inspired other people with his literary works to achieve various goals. He spent his time in a modest apartment full of books with a wonderful view of the city park full of happy children running and celebrating life with their games and smiles. On the other hand, the second person killed somebody who had wronged them. When the writer and the murderer passed away, they faced God's judgment. The angel asked God: "Will the murderer go to hell and the writer to heaven"? God told the angel to take the murderer to heaven and the writer to hell, because the writer encouraged people through his texts to kill people of opposing views and beliefs in the name of his ideas and goals, all for the sake of achieving a "higher goal". As a result, he committed great crimes, not personally but through his books, i.e. his pen. Our nation still has a saying that "a harsh word is sometimes stronger than a sword", and that a kind word opens iron doors. Unfortunately, we have seen that "the truth becomes the first victim of war", and it is the truth that frees us from all lies, prejudices and leads to the realization of facts. The best testimony to this is the reporting by heroic journalists and war correspondents, who, despite the numerous threats and difficulties encountered during the war, managed to preserve the journalistic profession as well as their reputation and dignity. At the same time, certain "... media in the former Yugoslavia were a nuclear reactor for the production of hatred, prejudice and especially fear", according to the director of SENSE agency, Marko Klarin.

When mentioning the wars of the 1990s, it is impossible not to remember the iconic and at the same time genius movie "Pretty Village, Pretty Flame". In this movie actor Milorad Mandić - Manda plays the role of a Serbian Chetnik who goes to war for patriotic reasons, but also to protect his friend Laza who went to war because he watched the torture and killing of Serbs in the news, who dies in the end. Viljuška, "Fork", played by Mandić, utters one sentence while holding the journalist in captivity: "...she will still say that we had tortured her". In my humble opinion, this scene best illustrates how both the international and domestic media, for the sake of realizing the interests of the great powers and certain groups in our region, created false images and thereby demonized a certain

side. The question arises as to who killed more people in the war: war criminals with their weapons and orders, or unethical journalists, writers, warmongers advocating through their texts revenge and crimes against other people? How do the families of those killed or those who suffered damage due to the sensationalist reporting by immoral journalists feel? Do the media ask themselves how many lives, untold stories are left behind because someone "targeted" a nation or a person, who are not to blame for anything, except that they belong to the opposite side? Many will say that maybe the journalists were forced for various reasons, whether justified or unjustified, to produce certain articles or to report sensation-ally and even biasedly. It is not our place to judge anyone, that is the job of national courts and the court of history, but even if such things happen, that person should wonder how they would feel in such a situation. Even if they apologize for the mistake made, because it is human to err, it is bad to remain in a constant state of making mistakes without the desire to change. German President Frank Walter Steinmeier asked the Polish people for forgiveness for the crimes committed by the Third Reich during World War II. In war, not only people die, but also the cultural heritage of a nation, which is its being, identity, existence that actually gives life to a nation. The destruction of cultural heritage is a crime that directly affects the identity of a nation. Our Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić often highlighted the motif of the bridge in his works, which certainly reminded him in a deep symbolic sense of joining, reconciliation, healing wounds from the past and bringing people together, because if journalists "were the first to destroy, they must be among the first who will restore" the bridges of reconciliation.

I was especially motivated to write this text after participating in the program of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights related to transitional justice and facing the past. During the program I had the opportunity to meet the famous journalist from Dubrovnik, Luka Brailo, who reported on the war events of the nineties, the wonderful Vjekoslav Vjerda, who was appointed by the Croatian Government for the restoration of Dubrovnik, as well as to hear a moving testimony by Mr. Čekerevac, who had to leave his home with his family and leave a whole life behind. The struggle and search for the truth, as well as the attainment of reconciliation, is not only the responsibility of judicial authorities, but our responsibility as well, especially the younger generations, because this is the only way to achieve true reconciliation and face the past. Otherwise, we will become hostages of lies and the generations to come will be haunted by the "evil spirit of the past", which contributed to the start of wars and riots on the territory of our former state.

## WAR FOR PEACE

*Sara Danaj*

I went up the stairs to the roof, but a shell fell, razing me to the ground.

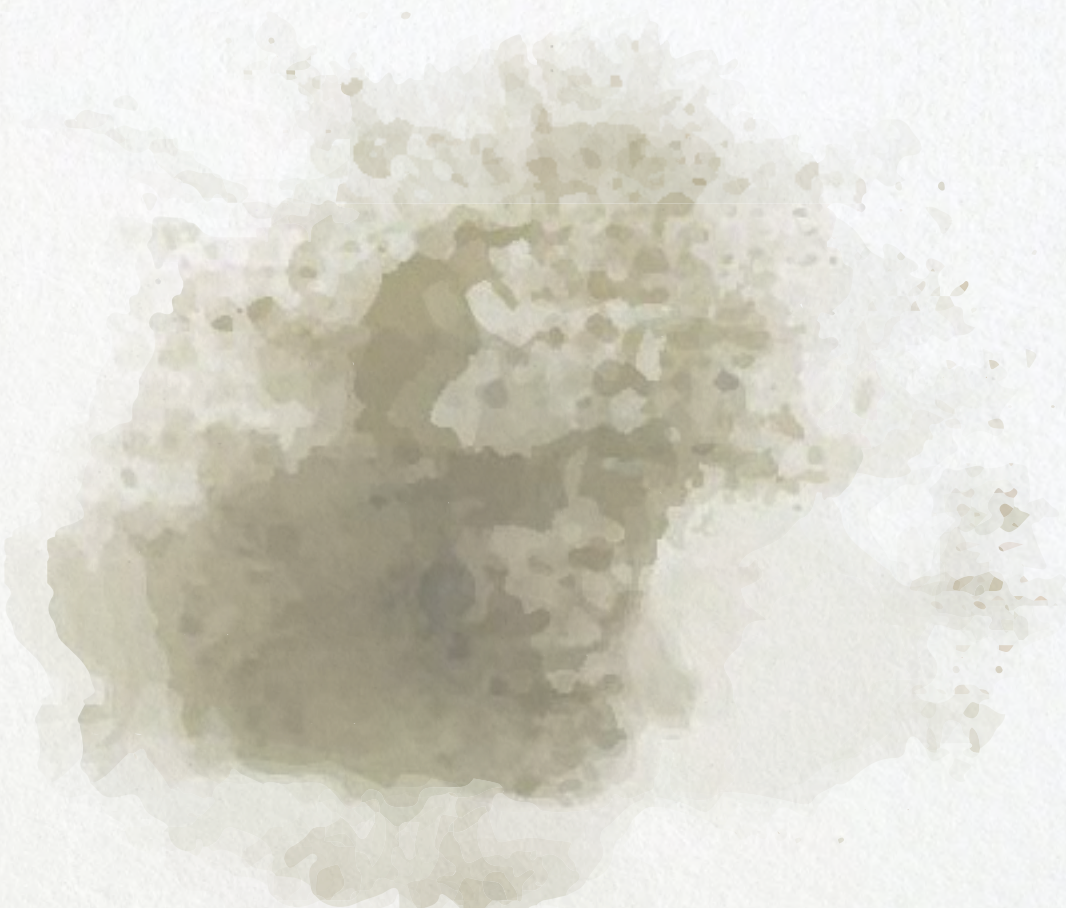
The dust rose, the air became thick, silence began, and noise was everywhere.

I slowly got up to see the world around me - it became black, maybe even brown.

Kitchen spices replaced by soot, where is all my hope now?

The city is devastated, and so is my dream. A war for peace is not my position!

I am left to wander and poison myself with smoke as I search for my pavilion  
in the fog.





## CURIOSITY AND SKEPTICISM AS A MECHANISM FOR DEALING WITH THE PAST AND TRANSGENERATIONAL TRAUMAS

*Jovana Šobić*

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights gave me the opportunity, through the first and second modules of the School of Transitional Justice, to learn the basic facts and information about the war events of the 1990s, which marked the Balkans and left certain consequences. I decided to apply for the School of Transitional Justice mostly because I am studying political science, majoring in international relations, and I believe that it requires some knowledge of history. As I did not acquire enough knowledge about history, which is necessary for a better understanding of the material I am studying, I recognized this School as a good opportunity to learn more about the events in the former Yugoslavia.

Attending the first module of the School got me thinking. From the simple need to learn more about historical facts, in order to implement them later in the course of my studies, I noticed that several things sparked curiosity in me. Since I knew that there would be another module of the School of Transitional Justice, I was sure that I would be one of the participants.

As a person who was born after the war events of the 1990s, I have not experienced nor could I have known what it meant to live in a community gripped by fear for one's life and the lives of others, what it meant to be hungry and thirsty, tired and exhausted from hiding in basements and shelters. I have never experienced sleepless nights spent in agony and waiting for everything to pass, to stop, in order to walk freely around my hometown again and spend time with friends.

However, as a person who was born in 2004, I recognize and feel the intolerance among my peers, I feel divisions based on religion and nationality. Suddenly I am more aware of everything, so I stop and think: where does this kind of division, bigotry and rebelliousness among us young people come from? Is it all innate, or does it have something to do with what is continuously propagated by the elderly: "Love your own, respect others"?

If it is innate, how? If it is propaganda, why?

It was then that I encountered the term "transgenerational trauma" for the first time and noticed that it makes absolute sense when it comes to the aforementioned situations. Ms. Ervina Dabižinović beautifully described life in Yugoslavia back then. Peace, freedom and harmony were especially important for that period, and with Tito's death in 1981, all of that disappeared very quickly. Everyone had to adapt to a new way of life, and soon with the secession of Slovenia, the rest of the members of the then Yugoslavia formed their own borders and political regimes. There was no more harmony and peace, and with the distribution of various misinformation through the media, then with the outbreak of war, the concept of freedom was forgotten. This will later "clarify" the appearance of aversion based on nationality, which brought about a large number of victims and enormous material damage, burned and abandoned houses, devastated cities and destroyed religious buildings and monuments, presented through the School of Transitional Justice in war crimes: Štrpci, Kaluđerski Laz, Bukovica, siege of Dubrovnik, deportation of Bosnian refugees, Morinj camp.

Hearing about all this, be it from exceptional lecturers and experts or the very victims of war events, I began to collect my thoughts.

Now I could conclude why there was hatred and a gap between us young people even though the concept of multiculturalism should make us a harmonious, united and tolerant community. Now I can explain the emergence of a large number of non-governmental organizations, civil societies and various movements that advocate for the education of the youth through various seminars, projects and workshops. For the first time, it is clear to me why I feel shame when the topic of war crimes, which I did not commit, is mentioned in the media. Now I can say with certainty that I want to face the past. I want to face the traumas of my loved ones and then the rest of the community, I want to face the consequences of the war and I want to accept everything ugly that had happened. Finally, I want to do my best as a young activist so that a similar situation never happens again.

I am becoming aware of the history and the burden of a time in which happiness and peace disappeared so quickly, and which are very difficult to reintegrate into the lives of people who have gone through war. I am also becoming aware that the youth feel the consequences of the war, precisely because we have not collectively faced the past and the transgenerational traumas that it carries.

Mr. Luko Brailo had my undivided attention during the second module of the School, and I will conclude my train of thought with his statement: "Children and grandchildren should never be blamed for what had happened."

## “FORGIVE US, DUBROVNIK, THE FAIRY CRIES FROM MOUNT LOVČEN”

*Nevena Kastratorić*

The war in Dubrovnik in 1991 left deep scars not only on the city walls, but also in the hearts of the people. Through the fog of time, we remember that gloomy period, when the city was filled with the sound of grenades and the smell of ruins.

Dubrovnik, the pearl of the Adriatic coast, has become a place of fear and despair. Every stone on Stradun carried the burden of sadness, and every window told a story of loss and suffering.

The light of resistance burned in people's hearts, but also the dark shadow of losses. Feelings of anger, sadness and courage were woven into the fabric of their destinies. Seeing homes destroyed and loved ones lost, it was an emotional whirlwind.

In that chaos, fellowship among people was a beacon of hope. Each tear was a drop that watered the root of communion, from which renewal and rebirth would spring.

Dubrovnik may have recovered physically, but the war scars remained engraved in the soul of the city. Those who survived carry the memories as a burden, but also as a reminder of the strength of the human spirit.

## WAKE UP

*Dejan Marsenić*

Wake up and look around you; nothing goes as planned in this perhaps cruel world. The longer you live in this world, the more you will realize that there is a lot of pain and suffering, but also freedom and hope in people to fight for a better tomorrow. Darkness does not exist; it is nothing more than the absence of light, just as the hatred and evil of this world are nothing more than the absence of love and kindness. Wherever you turn in this world, you will see that where there is light, there are shadows that follow, that there are many who build peace by starting wars or create hatred to protect love. Wake up. We do not have time to hide because of what has already happened, because of something that is happening now or would happen; the new generations must stand as a bulwark of light that will not allow the shadows to make us live in a world of gray, darkness and hatred. Be the presence of consciousness, the wind of change, the warmth of love. Then and only then will cruelty, war and hatred disappear.



## SCHOOL OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

*Loreana Brajović*

With everyone having their own side of the story, it is hard to uncover the single truth. Bearing this in mind, the chances of us fully discovering the scenario from the nineties are almost non-existent. The only thing we are sure of is how many people had suffered, as well as how many people are still suffering because of the wars in Yugoslavia.

One nation, but it did not stick together. Families separated, lives lost. For what?

A war for peace. Two terms that do not go hand in hand. There is no peace with war, and there was no peace later either. The streets of Dubrovnik are still mourning, fear can still be felt through the city streets. As if shells were falling to turn everything into dust again. All traces of the tragedies that befell it are covered in the culture of Dubrovnik. Not all wounds have been healed yet. There are memories of the bombing in the 1990s in a few places. There are also wounds in the hearts of many who had lost their loved ones. Destroyed monuments remind citizens and visitors of the war every day.

Yugoslavia was no stranger to the killing of innocent people because of their nationality and religion. The war crime Štrpci is a planned war crime. A train going from Belgrade to Bar was stopped, a train carrying civilians. For the first time, passengers' names were written on the tickets. Names, because of which twenty of them, the youngest of whom was 16 years old, were later killed. They were tortured, mistreated, and later shot in the back of the head. All this just because of their names.

In addition to so many victims, as well as those guilty but not convicted, these topics are still a taboo. They are waiting for their turn somewhere on a bottom shelf in the government office. Their turn has still not come. These topics should be heard and remembered. We should cherish the memory of the victims, so that their names are not forgotten, for a future where nothing similar happens again.

