
Cardinal Vinko Puljic

Without justice, there is no peace

The Schiller Institute delegation met with Vinko Puljic, the Roman Catholic cardinal of Sarajevo, on April 16.

*Cardinal Puljic is the author of a book, *Suffering With Hope*, which is available in English. It is a compilation of his letters and speeches up through 1993, which he refers to as the hardest time in Sarajevo.*

Cardinal Puljic's remarks excerpted here were translated from Croatian.

Puljic: I want to tell you a few important principles. We have to recognize all three religions, all three cultures, or three nations in Bosnia. We have to educate them about how to honor man.

This war created something which we didn't have in Bosnia. There was not such a great love between people, but there was *some* love between people. We lived together. But this war brought hate between the people, and the media incited it.

Now, we have to do everything to make politics accept the fact that everybody is equal, and then to help us to love this country, everybody who lives in it. Because we love this country, we have to do something to build this country. We must do everything possible so that children in school are taught to love their country, to love each other, to have a special love for those who were injured during the war, and then to make sure that every person feels secure in this country.

Our emphasis is on the schools

I welcome your idea, to help the children here in Bosnia. The Catholic Church has tried not to be thrust into politics, but to do its church work. We are working for man. We put the emphasis on the school; we have to start with the schools. We are just opening schools which are multi-ethnic, multicultural. We have one here in Sarajevo, a private school. Even though we did not have the means to open the school, we opened it.

In this school, the children learn together, they play together, they live together, nobody bothers the other. They are Catholic, Muslim, and Orthodox children. When they have catechism class, the Catholic children learn catechism; the Muslim children have their religious class; but the Orthodox children have no certified priest who can teach them [because



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there are no Serbian Orthodox teachers on this level left in the city—ed.]. We call it the "School for Europe," and we think that at this moment, it is most important.

We would like to open more schools, wherever it is possible. We have problems with the government, because it does not want to give us back our buildings. We had these buildings before the Second World War, and then the communist regime came along and "liberated" these buildings. We do not ask for anything else, just our buildings.

We use all these buildings for social work. The sisters of this community have a special mission for the children in all of Bosnia, Croatia, and the other parts of former Yugoslavia. We have a project especially for abandoned children, for orphans. We have a project for handicapped children, and another for injured people, invalids, an ambulance. And for old people; they really need a lot of help.

Contacts among the religions

We are thinking about contact with the other religious communities. I had a meeting with Rejs Ceric last Monday. We would like to create one commission, which is not going to be declarative, but concrete. We have not yet done it, but we think we have to do it as soon as possible. Last Sunday, I met the Orthodox metropolitan. I went to greet him and present my best wishes for Orthodox Easter, and he will meet me here today. I am open to dialogue, and to building bridges so

that we can work together.

That, in short, is what I wanted to tell you. The big problem is the refugees returning to their homes. There are many spiritual injuries from the war, and it is very hard to heal them. We have to work on this, not let politics manipulate it, so that everybody can go back to their homes. They must be helped to build small businesses. It is very dangerous that we have been living so long from humanitarian help. It damages one's mentality. Man's destiny is to work and to live from his own work.

Dr. Jozef Miklosko: I have discussed in quite a tough way, but politely, with the deputy minister of defense [Hasan Cengic, see p. 41]. He spoke about tendencies for Greater Serbia and also Greater Croatia. He was a little bit pessimistic about the situation, but he spoke about the guilt of Croats against Muslims. He said that many mosques were destroyed by Croats, and that some priests organized such things. I tried to explain to him that after 40 years of communism, there are many who are formal believers, that it is wrong to say that all Croats are Catholics, all Serbs are Orthodox, and all Bosnians are Muslims. But how do you evaluate the guilt of Croats against Muslims?

Puljic: We are very sad that this radicalism happened, as a consequence of the Serbian aggression. We saw the destruction and burning of religious buildings. It is very negative. I reacted every time it happened, but it was very, very hard, during the conflict between Muslims and Croats. Every reaction by me created a hard life for my priests, who were left in their parishes. I had to react, but in a way that my priests would be saved, both when there was the Serbian aggression, and also when the conflict started between the Muslims and the Croats.

We should not forget that the conflict between Croats and Muslims is the consequence of the Serbian aggression. During this conflict, Croats destroyed some mosques and Muslim buildings. When I reacted, it was very dangerous for me, but I couldn't condemn just one side. The Muslims destroyed many churches, and we cannot use them any more. There was a great deal of hate on both sides. I couldn't condemn just one. That would not be right.

What I was trying to do, was not to let any priest join the soldiers, or be a leader of the parties. Here is the difference with the Islamic community: Their priests were in the army and in the party. The Muslim community can organize themselves as they wish, but my responsibility is to watch after how the members of my community are behaving. I could not tell the political leaders and the army leaders how they should behave, but I had a responsibility for my people, and I had the right to tell them what is not right.

There were some mysterious persecutions during these conflicts. The Croatians—not "the Croatians," but the Croatian army—expelled about 50,000 Muslims. But the Muslim army expelled 150,000 Croatians. Everybody has to get back

to their homes, but the situation is not yet ready.

We asked forgiveness and we said, we have to forgive each other.

Umberto Pascali: We heard in discussions that there were efforts on the part of the Croatian leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina to split Bosnia in two parts.

Puljic: Politicians would like to divide it, and some international politicians are working for that. That is not right. That is injustice.

Everybody has to go to their homes, but they must have security in their homes. I would like to go to my birthplace in Banja Luka, and I would like a situation in which each Muslim could go to Mostar, Caplina, to Banja Luka, as well as for the Serbians to be able to go to their birthplaces. Without that, there is no justice. Without justice, there cannot be peace.

Condolences from Croatia to Mrs. Alma Brown

This letter was sent to Mrs. Alma Brown by the women of DESA-Dubrovnik, a Croatian humanitarian organization which is a member of the Committee to Save the Children of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Mrs. Brown is the widow of U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, who died in a plane crash near Dubrovnik on April 3.

Dear Mrs. Brown,

We, the women of a small women's organization here in Dubrovnik, would like to express to you and your family members, and to all the other grieving families in America, our deepest sympathy. The tragic loss of Mr. Brown and his dear friends and crew members has deeply shaken the lives of all the people in this region. Our women went to church to weep for the loss of these good people and to pray for their souls.

Mr. Brown and his friends came to this country in a very noble mission of bringing us help and friendship of the American people. This was really a Mission of Hope.

Cruel destiny has stopped them halfway through. Nevertheless, their sacrifice *shall* be our obligation and our oath to continue the work they have started, the work of building Peace and Friendship among the people on this planet!

God bless you and give you all the strength in these hard moments!

Sincerely,

The women of DESA-Dubrovnik