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Roads to Reconciliation: Peacebuilding in the Former Yugoslavia

Peace activists from each of the major ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia—Serbian, Croatian and Muslim, plus a leader of the Jewish community of Sarajevo—will visit the Five-College area October 29-30 as Scholars-in-Residence. They will meet with members of the local Bosnian and Yugoslav communities, visit classes at the University of Massachusetts and other colleges, and give a public presentation about their experiences reaching out across ethnic boundaries to prevent war and heal from its aftermath. Defying the hatred and enmity encouraged by many political leaders in the Balkans, these courageous activists have taken extraordinary risks to oppose war, speak out against ethnic intolerance, and build community with other visionaries across "enemy" lines.

"Roads to Reconciliation: Peacebuilding in the Former Yugoslavia"

Thursday, October 29, 1998 at 7:45 p.m.
UMass Amherst , Campus Center Room 163-C

"Compassion in Action: The Jews of Sarajevo" - Presentation by Dr. Jakob Finci

Friday, October 30, 1998 at 8:00 p.m.
Jewish Community of Amherst, 742 Main Street, Amherst

DRAGAN POPADIC is a professor of psychology at the University of Belgrade and a founding member of the Center for Antiwar Action in Belgrade, Serbia.

MIRHA KRATINA is a field facilitator and psychologist for Save the Children, Zenica, Bosnia Herzegovina.

JAKOB FINCI is president of La Benevolencia, a Jewish educational, cultural, and humanitarian society in Sarajevo, and director of Soros Foundation for Bosnia Herzegovina.

LIDIJA OBAD is coordinator for the Center for Peace, Nonviolence, and Human Rights in Osijek, Croatia.

(Detailed biographies on the following page.)

Sponsored by the UMass Amherst Office of Jewish Affairs, Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, and Friends of Bosnia. For more information contact the UMass Office of Jewish Affairs, 413-545-9642 or goldbaum@admin.umass.edu

Biographies of speakers from the former Yugoslavia:

JAKOB FINCI trained as a lawyer in Sarajevo and worked in commercial law until the Bosnian war. During the war, he accepted his current position as president of La Benevolencia, a Jewish educational, cultural, and humanitarian society. La Benevolencia provides aid to all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regardless of religion. Mr. Finci has recently started the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose goal is to achieve peace and coexistence through reconciliation between the three ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, Mr. Finci is the Executive Director of the Soros Foundation for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and vice-president of FONDEKO, a foundation for improvement of the quality of life and sustainable development in Sarajevo.

MIRHA KRATINA is a psychologist who received her training at the University of Sarajevo and the University of Belgrade. Since 1995, she has been the field facilitator and psychologist for Save the Children in Zenica. Save the Children is a community-based program designed to improve the social and psychological well-being of preschool children affected by the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ms. Kratina's role has been multi-faceted; she has provided technical assistance to local communities in setting up preschool/playroom services and training for teachers and playroom leaders in areas including psychosocial care and child trauma. In addition, she has trained educators in Zenica-Doboj Canton in the mental health of children, psychological problems induced by war, and professional burnout.

LIDIJA OBAD is a Croatian woman whose life was changed by the war between Croatia and Serbia. Ms. Obad has taught English at the University of Osijek for the past 18 years. Since 1992, she has worked as a coordinator for the Center for Peace, Nonviolence, and Human Rights in Osijek. The Center works to protect human rights, provide peace education and psychosocial support to populations affected by war, and to rebuild confidence between Croats and Serbs. Ms. Obad's work has focused on ecumenical projects in Croatia-projects which help people overcome the feelings of mistrust, hatred, and frustration brought about by war. Ms. Obad deals with topics which include reconciliation, forgiveness, justice, and victimhood.

DRAGAN POPADIC is a professor of social psychology at the University of Belgrade and a founding member of the Center for Antiwar Action, which organizes civic actions and protests in the former Yugoslavia. In 1993, Mr. Popadic was part of a group of psychologists who founded MOST ("the bridge"), a group that promotes cooperation and mediation in conflicts; and he has been its director for the past year. As part of this work, he leads workshops for teachers, pupils, psychologists, and activists on improving communication and cooperation. In addition, Mr. Popadic is a co-author of the UNICEF program "The Goodwill Classroom," which consists of a series of workshops for school children to help them develop tolerance and nonviolent means of communication.