

Peace in Europe and the world

The topic of peace in Europe and the world, which we announced for this conference, has become more important and urgent than we might have thought. We thought of the war in Ukraine, and now it is almost overshadowed by the war in Israel and Palestine. Conflicts in the Pacific smoulder under the surface. Military exercises are held along other countries' borders in the West and East. The fear of terrorism is growing.

War is a state in which people commit, according to the laws of their country, by order of their superiors, and out of duty, all those crimes against other people for which they would be sentenced to the greatest punishment in peace, and this happens to an extent that immeasurably exceeds the number of crimes during a long time in peace. This is roughly how Tolstoy morally characterizes the start of war at the beginning of the third part of his *War and Peace*.

Of course, not everyone in conflicts is equally guilty of war and not everyone commits equally great crimes. It can often be clear who is the aggressor and who is the victim, who is the predator and who is threatened. However, in such cases often before many other victims, the truth is murdered. And then one should do one's best to discover and speak the truth.

Great crimes are committed in war, but it is also true that great virtues are shown: courage, self-sacrifice, struggle and concern for others. When it is clear who is the aggressor and who is the victim, much more virtues are shown in those who are victims because much greater virtues are needed to help them.

Those who recently experienced war, especially victims, such as citizens of Croatia or Bosnia and Herzegovina, often say (like Prof. Topić) that ten years of negotiations are better than one day of war. But someone who has not experienced war for a long time, or thinks that it will happen to others and not to him, is easily ready to provoke it if he is convinced that he will prevail and secure a profit for himself. On the other hand, even the one who has nothing left to lose will often be ready for violence if he is not offered another way out of misery.

The world is changing fast. While expert economists and political scientists in the West, including the US, predict that it will have to be multipolar, there are powerful politicians and businessmen who want it to be unipolar. If the World Trade Organization protected market competition while it suited the richest and most powerful, today the richest do not feel so secure and want to ensure a monopoly without market competition. When economic crises occur, the question is what happens behind them: many fail, but in such times some get rich in the fastest way. A pandemic happens, we don't know from where or why, but it can be established that some of the strongest pharmaceutical companies get rich in such a way that they threaten the primacy of oil producers or the military industry. After that, competitions and conflicts arise over the sources and production of energy. And then the military industry must regain its economic position. Above all this, financial capital holds the primacy so far. In these crises, the citizens sometimes experience some general surveillance measures that accustom democratic societies to totalitarian security measures because security becomes more important than freedom.

When tensions between the strongest grow, smaller or weaker countries and peoples often become the first intermediary victims, so wars of stronger ones are waged through them, by proxy.

Large-scale population migrations are also underway today. The reasons are war, political, economic and climatic. Managing or not managing them becomes a new element of power balance. The social and cultural consequences will be noticeable.

Recently, war hotspots are multiplying again and war activities are intensifying. The more tensions rise, the less room is left for balanced judgments or benevolent moves. Unreserved taking sides is required. Whoever aligns himself becomes a target of the opponent, but whoever does not align himself unconditionally, can become a target of all parties who want to gather and consolidate their ranks. It becomes difficult to advocate the position which is in peace understandable that the goal does not justify all the means. If this position comes into question, it is a sign of moral defeat even before the start of the war.

Probably the most destructive war is the war of humankind against nature, which gives birth, among other things, to climate change. Perhaps more people die from natural disasters, largely caused by humans or human carelessness, than from inter-human wars: they die of hunger due to lack of food, from diseases ranging from endemic to pandemics, from floods, storms, fires, rising temperatures, loss of drinking water, or sea level rise, and, of course, earthquakes are also part of nature's arsenal. But even small inter-human conflicts and wars cloud the view of that great war that should be stopped as far as possible if we want to save life on Earth. But since the war against nature brings greater profits than wars between people, the truth about it is even more difficult to find out. Even human wars are usually wars for natural resources: land, energy sources such as oil, for mineral treasures, water sources...

In the 20th century, two world wars and many regional and local wars and conflicts broke out. A series of bloody revolutions took place, of which the most famous, with the largest number of victims, were the Russian and Chinese revolutions, but there were violent revolutions also in Mexico, Latin America, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia and elsewhere. And the communist takeover of power in the former Yugoslavia was, comparatively, no less bloody, which is why the disintegration of that state was also bloody. Nevertheless, two major peace processes took place in the 20th century: the creation of the Indian Union, today the Republic of India, and the creation of the European Union.

In order to understand the process of creating the independent India, it is necessary to know that in addition to revolutionary, so-called workers' ideologies such as Marxism, where violence is a permissible means, there was also a peasant ideology which was non-violent. It started from the fact that, as Stjepan Radić wrote in *Božićnica* in 1928, in the world (as it was then) there are 1 billion and 700 million people, of which 1 billion and 500 million are peasants, about 150 million are workers, 50 million are "various gentlemen", and about 10 million are educated gentlemen (as he wrote). Therefore, the peasants were about 88% of humanity, and whoever wanted good for the people, could not fail to take care of the peasantry. Therefore, for Radić, "the main hope and salvation of all humanity" lay "especially in that 1 billion and 500 million peasantry". Mahātmā Gāndhī spoke similarly at the opening of the Hindu University in Benares in 1916, stunning the present mahārājas and guests by inviting them: "Take off those jewels and keep them in storage for your people in India!.. Only the peasants can bring our salvation. Neither lawyers, nor doctors, nor rich landowners will achieve it!" Both of them, Gāndhī and

Radić, were inspired by Tolstoy's doctrine of non-violence, his peaceful peasant ideology, and fought for human rights with non-violent methods. Such a peace-making peasant movement in Croatia led, after Radić's sacrifice, to the creation of Banovina Hrvatska, the Autonomous Croatia, which was swept away by the whirlwind of the Second World War, but without which there would not be the present-day state of Croatia. The non-violent movement in India – and not the Indian revolutionaries of which there were also some – led to India's independence, in which Gāndhī mobilized hundreds of millions of Indians and helped avoid a bloody revolution and the creation of a violent totalitarian order. Bloodshed only occurred during the partition of India, but even that chaotic event brought relatively and absolutely far fewer victims, approximately 60 to 80 times less dead, than the bloody revolutions in Russia or China. The independence and unification of India is an example of a peace-making and emancipatory process that, in a bloody world, tried to avoid violence as much as possible.

It is no wonder that the example of Gāndhī inspired many people and many movements in the West and in the East, although we know much less about it than about bloody wars and revolutions, as if we are less interested.

The second major peace process in the 20th century was the creation of the European Union, starting with the ideas of Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergio from 1922-1923. about the creation of Pan-Europe in order to prevent the next world war, and enabling the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 and its development up to today's European Union of 27 (until recently 28) members, which continues to deepen and expand. It is no wonder that for one of the fathers of Europe, Robert Schuman, the procedure of beatification is on the way, and most of the other fathers and mothers of Europe were members of the Pan-European movement and were inspired by Christian peace-making ideas. And that is why the European Union received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. We must not forget that.

Today, we are faced with Russian aggression against Ukraine and the brave resistance of Ukrainians who are fighting for their homeland and their long-disputed independence. But this conflict is also global and has many consequences. Some of them concern the change of energy sources on a European and global scale. Some concern world trade in grains and food. That war largely united the countries of the European Union, but under the leadership of the United States of America, which provides the largest military aid to Ukraine and which the European Union still needs for its own defense and protection, because it does not have its own adequate military forces. It brought Russia closer to China, and even to North Korea. And thus it affects the world relations of power. And it also leads Russia to nuclear tests. I cannot predict where the limits of danger are, but politicians bear great responsibility for their decisions.

In the reorganization of the relations among world powers, India has become much more important to the United States of America than it was before, so its Prime Minister Narendra Modi experienced a long standing ovations at the session of both houses of the American Congress when he spoke about bilateral relations before the summer. Modi was also the chief guest of France at the July 14 celebration. Is this something that only France in Europe has become aware of, or the entire European Union? I do not know.

Recently, we were caught by surprise by the terrorist action of Hamas in Israel that caused a new focus of active conflict in the Middle East, which partly overshadowed the war in Ukraine. Obviously, this is a conflict with global significance. The United States of America and the European Union have clearly taken the position that Israel has the right to defend itself, but

both Joe Biden and Charles Michel have stated that they see the realization of a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel as a solution. Arab countries, as well as other Muslim countries, are more inclined to support the Palestinians and there are large pro-Palestinian demonstrations, often with harsh anti-Israel attitudes. The division of the world is also reflected in our area. Croatia unequivocally sided with Israel, but strong pro-Palestinian demonstrations were held in Sarajevo. Many Israeli civilians were killed in the attack by Hamas, but Palestinians are also hostages of Hamas who serve as human shield and are killed by both sides in the conflict. I won't dwell long on it, but we are probably all aware of the weight of the political and moral dilemmas in that conflict. Perhaps it is easier to take a political position than a moral one, which indicates the gravity of the problem.

For us, Christians, Jews and Muslims alike, the land of that long-term conflict is the Holy Land. Do the conflicts in it have to be permanent? Declared Christians, according to recent statistics, make up 33% of humanity, Muslims 21%, together they make up the majority of humanity today. Neither Hindus nor Buddhists can be ignored in terms of numbers if you look at the whole world. Jews are relatively small in number (0.22%), but they are an extremely significant, prominent and influential religious community, and both of the most numerous religious communities in the world originated from the Hebrew tradition, and their religion cannot be understood without it (without the Bible, the Torah). The Catholic Church opened up to other religions for dialogue since the Second Vatican Council, especially with the declaration *Nostra Aetate*. Opening a dialogue with Jews and Muslims was not easy, especially with Muslims, but it recently brought extremely valuable fruit: the Document on Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Coexistence, which was signed together in 2019 by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar Ahmad al- Tayyib. From the many deeply expressed thoughts in that document, I would single out a few:

While we acknowledge the positive steps that our modern civilization has achieved in the fields of science, technology, medicine, industry and well-being, especially in developed countries, we emphasize that at the same time as this great and appreciated historical progress comes there occurs the deterioration of ethics (Italian: "deterioramento dell'etica" ; eng. "moral deterioration") which affects international activity and the weakening of spiritual values and sense of responsibility.

History confirms that religious and national extremism and intolerance produced in the world, both in the West and in the East, what could be called the signs of a "Third World War in pieces", signs that began to show in different parts of the world and in different tragic conditions its cruel face: situations in which it is not known exactly how many victims, widows and orphans there are. In addition, there are other areas that are preparing to become the scene of new conflicts where tensions are born and where weapons and ammunition accumulate, all in a global context shadowed by uncertainty, disillusionment and fear of the future and controlled by short-sighted economic interests.

We also firmly declare that religions must never incite war, attitudes of hatred, enmity and extremism, nor call for violence or bloodshed. These tragic realities are the result of deviation from religious teachings. They are the result of political manipulation of religions and the interpretations of religious groups that throughout history have abused the influence of religious feelings in people's hearts in order to make them do something that has nothing to do

with the truth about religion, all in order to achieve political and economic worldly and short-sighted goals.

Dialogue, understanding, and the promotion of a culture of tolerance, acceptance of others and peaceful coexistence would significantly contribute to the reduction of many economic, social, political and environmental problems that burden a large part of humanity.

Such a step on the part of the representatives of other religions than Christianity could be waited for a long time, but recently it appeared. Religious leaders and political leaders are invited to consider, in these difficult times of new conflicts and wars, whether the principles of their actions are in accordance with the peace-making principles of the great religions and modern humanism. Can bearing testimony to these principles and values help in today's world? If not, what can help?

Mislav Ježić