

## CHILDHOOD IN THE TIME TUNNEL<sup>1</sup>

“War on children is a twentieth century invention. Children and their families are not getting caught in the crossfire-many are being targeted. Children are considered the enemies of tomorrow”.

Graca Machel

Mozambique leader, fighter for children rights.

### UNICEF data

Today more than fifty countries are in war. The modern wars are not between states but within them.

There is enormous escalation of war effects on civilian population.

I World War-14% of the victims was a civilian.

II World War- almost 70% of the victims was a civilian.

By 1990-close to 90% affected by wars and their sequels were children.

In the last decade: Two million children were killed, twelve million were left homeless, five million were disabled by bombing and torture, one million orphaned or separated from parents, about ten million children are psychologically traumatized.

From fifty-three million people uprooted by wars 80% are women and children.

### Twice there was a country

Yugoslavia was established in 1919 under the terms of Treaty of Versailles. It was a monarchy of Croats, Slovenians and Serbs the other ethnic groups were denied their ethnic identity. It was born as a child of Iliric movement that originated in Croatia an ideal of uniting the South Slaves. It consisted of people of Slovenia, Croatia, and Vojvodina (today north province of Serbia, that were previously under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), Serbia (independent from Ottoman Empire from mid nineteenth century), Bosnia (that was first under the Ottoman rule and then part of the KK Empire), Montenegro (which partly stayed independent from Ottoman Empire and which was for a period of its history part of Venetian Republic) and Macedonia (under Ottoman Empire till Balkan Wars in 1912, 1913).

With the outbreak of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War first Yugoslavia was disintegrated. It was a country of ethnic discontent. The pact with Nazi Germany was signed, demonstrations in Belgrade followed, “better grave than slave”. Bombing and occupation ensued.

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In summer 1941 partisans' resistance began, spreading over the country. In Serbia Cetnik loyal to the King broke into the fractions of which some collaborated with Nazis. The Cetnik movement is controversial and differently evaluated by different historians. In post war Yugoslavia there were considered the traitors. In Croatia a Nazi puppet state was formed led by Ustasas. In Jasenovac, concentration camp (Croatia) Jews, Serbs and Gypsies were killed, estimated number of victims ranging from 50 000 to 70 000 to 700 000. In Bosnia, with the help of Great Muphty of Jerusalem, an SS Hanjar division was formed.

Second Yugoslavia was founded in 1945. It consisted of six republics and two autonomous regions, five nations, three major religions and three languages. It was a socialistic republic. The capital was in Belgrade, the president until his death in 1980 was Josip Broz Tito. He ruled through the communist party. About 20 000 000 people lived in that Yugoslavia. On mixed territories every fourth marriage was an intermarriage, on unmixed ones it was every third. Religion was not forbidden (Greek Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim were the major ones), but suppressed. Those belonging to one of the religions were convinced that the other one was in better position. Belgrade was the first 'Juden rein' city in Europe during 2<sup>nd</sup> WW. However, after the War former Yugoslavia was the only so called East European country in which Jewish life prospered.

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW the ethnic atrocities among the people of previous Yugoslavia were more or less ignored and not to be mentioned. Considering its own history there was a pact of silence. From childhood onwards you learned to love your neighbor - your sister and brother. At home you were warned to be wary of your neighbors - the enemies, the traitors, the murderers from the previous war. If you were to be a successful pupil you were not to ask questions but to memorize and not doubt. If you were to have a career it would be wise to be a member of the Party and, of course, to keep your mouths shut. You were to love your country, admire and adhere the cult of the rather hedonistic leader Tito.

If you felt that you were not a Yugoslav but for instance a Serb, Croat or Slovenian you better not show it. Until one day you were told that you are not permitted to be a Yugoslav any more. Many protested, so again it became an option.

What I have written now in many ways is present in various ways in the few papers that appeared on the topic dealing with the issues of former Yugoslavia. The pact of silence, the transmission of traumas of loss and separation from the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW, the double value systems - in and outside the home, the narcissism of small differences.

Yet...

For Eastern Europe Yugoslavia was west. Easterners had difficulties to get visas, when they managed they were free and often fled to the West from Yugoslavia. When they planned to return to their home country they shopped in developed western-like stores, liked and envied the Yugoslav life. Years since the blood bath of its disintegration began many are baffled and ask why and what happened.

For the West Yugoslavia was Eastern Europe. Very few knew that it was never a member neither of the Warsaw pact nor behind the Iron Curtain. There was some

diffuse knowledge of Tito's "historic NO" to Stalin, a vague sense that it was a different sort of Communism. It was a favorite tourist spot for west Europeans. Before 1990 it was expected that former Yugoslavia would join in the near future the European Common market.

As for Yugoslavs, they could not own a chain of restaurants, hotels, and banks.

But they could own a restaurant or a motel or a villa at the sea shore. An average Yugoslav citizen at the beginning of the eighties could afford to have his summer holidays in Spain or Greece, to dress in Italy traveling freely to most of the countries of the west world without a visa. The Yugoslavs grumbled against the regime, objected that there is no freedom of press, learned not to tell jokes about Tito as not to wind up in jail. When Tito died in 1980 the country was in a shock. As it often happens with idealization, what is left of it today is contempt, more or less. Yugoslavs lived in a state that very much resembled an intrusive symbiotic mother that does not permit independence but does offer security of free educational and health services, respected older age. The schooling system was against individuality and creativity yet many could afford to better their know-how in the West and did so.

Sarajevo was the heart of Yugoslavia, loved by many. Slovenia had most beautiful skiing resorts, far more attractive than in Switzerland. Dubrovnik was the favorite summer resort for the Belgradian; there was no seacoast as beautiful as Dalmatian, despite the fact that it was in Croatia. Serbs did not trust the Croats, Croats did not trust the Serbs, Slovenians were annoyed by both, but all often fell in love and married. Several years before the war the hit song was to Yugoslavia - "From Vardar (Macedonia) to Triglav (Slovenia)... grow stronger daily, proudly in the middle of the Balkans..." many sang. The impression was that majority of Yugoslavs love the country. Ten years later there is no more Yugoslavia, nor Yugoslavs left. At least it seems so.

## Before the War

It is no wonder that after ten dismal years of war that for all the problems with the children the war is to blame. Nevertheless, the trouble started much earlier. The children that were born in the years after the war had an upbringing from family through school and beyond through the wider community which can be stated in several short sentences: Do not ask, do not think too much, keep your thoughts to yourself, do not expose yourself, be ingratiating to an authority, be compliant. These children are the parents of the generation of today's youth. Yugoslavia even though not typical Eastern European behind the Iron Curtain country nevertheless was a country under a totalitarian regime with a shallow almost non existing democratic tradition in its past. I do consider it dangerous and highly debatable to generalize an existence of an Eastern European mentality. Concepts <sup>2</sup>like the narcissistically disturbed personality organizations, be it the thin or tough skinned narcissus (Rosenfeld) no doubt very well describe some but not all aftermaths of growing up

and developing under a totalitarian regime during the cold war in what was once called Eastern Europe. How much cultural values proclaimed by society are internalized is very much not only a general but an individual developmental story. Similar manifest forms of behavior often carried different intrapsychic meanings. If one would generalize one perhaps can say that inhibiting of showing aggressive feelings deepened the hostility and nourished the dependence; that many behaved as compliant obedient adults much more interdependent on others than with individualized selves in the sense of individuation and separation. A lot were authority smitten, with open compliance and inner hatred. It was a must to have a leader, a strong almighty God like omniscient and omnipotent being which one does neither necessarily trust nor like. The responsibility for one's life and lives of one's children were often too gladly delegated to a non-trusty authority.

Identification figures at least in former Yugoslavia were myth like heroes, from the past and all except Tito (conveniently) dead. There were a lot of secrets, private and public levels of functioning and behaving. It was utterly Ego- syntonic to pretend, to be wise and lie. The Super Ego was expected to be corrupt. Those who were different were for their peer group angels and devils, respected and disdained. On the social level they were misfits, often labeled as dissidents in the wider sense of the meaning of the word, not only political. In their own lives they were most often in deep trouble.

In the seventies the atmosphere has changed quite a lot. Hippie values were imported together with jeans, Coke and rock music.

Mental help professionals raised their voices and questioned how much the idealized slogan of the cherished and loved children in the Yugoslav society was true in practice. Alarm bells were often not even heard much less listened to. In the eighties a serial in newspapers characterized the educational system as a psychiatric risk factor. One I remembered well was entitled: "The Darwin play at schools". At the annual meeting of psychologists of Serbia a panel discussion entitled: "School tailored to fit the child" soon turned into: "Child tailored to fit the school". Children called the school a rat race. To be a 'very good' pupil meant to fail. The children hated the classes without whispering and in which ones classmate was the worst rival. There were less and less friendships, children seldom talked and played together. There was an alarming increase in drug addictions; the youngest I have seen was eight and a half years old. The children at first ran away from schools, then from families, and then from life. The rate of tentamen suicidi before the end of each school year increased annually. By mid eighties 90% of children in high schools saw their future abroad instead of waiting on employment lists. The world of adults was unempathic and denied. On a very popular TV show it was acknowledged that it is true that thousands of children for years are lost generations, but what to expect when they are "the young, apolitical, aggressive ignorant ones. To appeals "Why are the parents silent?" the parents remained silent probably protecting themselves and their children. It was evident that the development of the youth had problems much beyond difficulties of separation, formation of sexual identity and professional identity.

In the years, which should be, years of first loves there were evident problems of attachment and agoraphobic-claustrophobic dilemmas. It was in to be 'cool'. It meant to feel as little as possible, or at least definitely not to show or express feelings. Auto-aggression turned more and more in to aggressive acting-out. The young did not run from the classes, instead they started to burn some of them. Skinheads appeared and then young ones in misused national uniforms with nationalistic slogans.

## The years of War

In 1987 Slobodan Milosevic became the leader of the Serbian communist party. In 1990 he became the president of Serbia. In June 1991 a short war with Slovenia started followed by the war with Croatia. In 1992 the bloodbath of Bosnia started. In 1987 most of the Serbs were in love with Milosevic, a God like idealized heroic leader who will free them from communism, correct all the wrongs done to the victimized nation including, the battle of Kosovo six hundred years ago. The propaganda machine, the control of mass media, the demonization followed by dehumanization of the enemy who was the brother or a sister of yesterday was successful. The whole world hated the Serbs because they were the largest nation of former Yugoslavia. The Germans were helping the Croats as they did in 2<sup>nd</sup> WW and as for atrocities - the world was simply lying. In 1992 the love affair, at least between Milosevic and Belgrade, has gone very sour. It will take five more years for rest of Serbia to follow and another three for the elections in September 2000 to happen. But in spring 1991, Belgrade was on the streets. Milosevic had no choice but to bring out the tanks and the police. The first victim in Belgrade was sixteen-year-old Branislav Milinkovic that was shot dead by the police. Two years later his older sister burst in to tears at a high school exam and told the psychologist that three months before Branislav's death their father had died, that the

Mother goes out of the home just to visit the graves and has become a plant. The girl was terrified as in line waiting for his turn for the exam surrounded by the bodyguards stood Marko Milosevic, Slobodan Milosevic son.

When the war broke out, the first reaction among the children was one of shock and disbelief. Then the majority trusted the just cause. In the beginning some volunteered and joined the Army. As years went by 400 000 educated ones fled the country, refusing to be killed or to kill.

The families first stuck together. With the sanctions in 1992 the standard of living dropped enormously. The parents were in the survival struggle, often affectively unavailable for their children. The sanctions brought a generalized feeling of shame, rage and victimization. The percent of divorces increased. In the last few years sudden deaths, usually of the father, became a wide spread phenomena.

The children of mixed marriages on the so-called mixed territories were estimated in numbers as about 70% of the entire youth population. During wars they kept quiet. Than, later they confided in friends – mother's family is in Bosnia, it is true that Dubrovnik is in siege, the grandparents live there.

In 1992 the first refugees from Croatia and Bosnia arrived. Most of them were children, alone with parents staying behind. Children welcomed them as friends in need. Soon compassion turned in to distance and revolt. The refugees were the ones getting aid, jobs and flats. The children were most often placed in to families of distant relatives. They felt very lonely. A 14 year old asked the psychologist at school whether she could sit in an adult's lap and burst into tears. A family from Croatia in which both parents were teachers was housed in the cellar. The older child formerly a student in Rijeka, Croatia became a construction worker and soon fell very ill. The younger 12-year-old daughter first ran away from school then from home. Some months later the frantic parents learned that the child has managed, on foot, to reach her older sister married to a Croat and living in Rijeka. The child could not stand Belgrade.

The parents managed to get their sixteen-year-old daughter from Sarajevo to Belgrade. The child sent all the help she got from Caritas to her mother, who she was convinced was lying. The mother would never burn books for heating and nothing is 'all right', as she says.

The best received were the refugees from Kosovo. The regime was by then a very hated one, and proclaimed that there are no refugees from Kosovo. The children did not exist and could not enroll to schools. The children from Kosovo came with the worst horror stories. Graphite appeared: "If this were world of children and not adults Kosovo could not have happened", "My best friend is Albanian".

In 1997 the children joined the student demonstrations in the streets. Most of them were convinced that the adults made a pact with Milosevic the CIA agent that he has become (and not only for children) after he was portrayed in Western media following the Dayton peace accord as the "constructive factor" or the "the factor of peace in the Balkans". The world could impose sanctions but not help the students in the streets. But after months of demonstrating still Milosevic stayed in power. Once again adults from the opposition have betrayed the youth, made a deal with the hated regime. The world did not seem to care. There was no hope.

From volunteering to defend the wronged Mother Serbia, all the children wanted were to "graduate and emigrate". Even though the regime managed to control the media, it tried but did not succeed in obtaining total control over the Internet. After the NATO bombing (March-June, 1999) many young ones from Europe and States wrote to their peers in Belgrade: "Sorry for the bombing". In autumn 1999 just several months after the bombing for the first time graduates from high schools demanded to have their excursions in West Europe. It was high treason; they were labeled NATO traitors, as often the adults in contact with the West were. At schools it was forbidden to talk about politics except the official one. Gradually, some of the truths of the past years reached the children. They did not believe any more that everybody hated them. They demanded to know the truth. The slogan "Serbia never at war", Milosevic propaganda statement became a kind of a black humor joke. There were too many that have not come back. There were too many that hid in the attics. There were too many that walked the streets as invalids. For years the bad guys, the villains were portrayed as

heroes, offered as identification figures. The marriage of the war criminal Arkan the butcher of Bosnia and Kosovo was a wonderful event, a fairy tale: "The general marrying the princess". Money was only safety. To learn was to be stupid. To play Serbian runlet speeding through red lights in cars was being smart. Heavy golden chains around the neck were symbols of "respected" gang life and success. In one of the safest cities in Europe first there was an increase in thefts, then rape, then murders. The offenders often were adolescents, even young ones. Around primary schools Bermuda triangles of restaurants with cheap liquor were opened. Entertainment for the young of Belgrade begun at 11p.m and finished at 4a.m. There was numbing of the youth, they sucked the poison, "better to drink than to think".

After the bombing the youth movement "Otpor" (Resistance) got new recruits from children when a director of a high school unleashed the police to beat up the kids at the meeting held at his school. The slogan of Otpor was "He is finished".

In September 2000 there was fear and hope. On the night of the October the 5<sup>th</sup> most children were on the streets. After years they again reunited with the world of adults. So perhaps now they will dare to grow up. They have enormous expectations of becoming Europeans. Some of the expectations will take a long time to be fulfilled. During years except in situations of forced mobilizations the dictatorial regime democratically kept the borders wide open wishing the troublemakers, especially young ones to leave. On purpose I have not written of tragic examples of those that have died or have killed themselves or are crippled for life. There were no official numbers of the dead or the invalids. It is still so. I have also not told the stories of those that suffered separation and loss of their siblings and are sitting somewhere with kids from Bosnia and Croatia around tables of Yugo-nostalgia unable to mourn. The emotional content of the last decade for a young one growing up in Serbia (and in many other parts of ex-Yugoslavia) I think is very well expressed by a six and a half old girl who went mute after witnessing the murder of her father and rape of her mother. To a question in play therapy after remaining silent for two years, "What are you afraid most of? ", the girl whispered- " people".

As for the young ones in Serbia today instead of "graduate and emigrate" they say, "We stay". They wait hoping and almost convinced that most of their friends will come back.

## The time tunnel

In psychoanalytical literature as there are many theories there is quite a number of different explanations for wars. For instance, in accordance with Freud's view proposed in 1931 in his correspondence with Einstein, "Why War" wars are caused due to the existence of an aggressive drive that is inherent. The death instinct directed outwards results in the destruction of the object.

Fornari on the other hand speaks of the need to deal with depressive feelings, with the unrecognized guilt. He uses the example of the Gulf War as a consequence of shame, guilt and depression of the Vietnamese one. Lost wars breed new wars.

Quite a number of authors stress the maternal function of national states: there is a generalization from mother earth Gea to mother Russia, Statue of liberty and so on (Anzieu, Chasseguet-Smirgel, Kernberg). I think one should bear in mind that there are fatherlands as well as various phallic symbol skyscrapers that are national pride (Eiffel Tower, Empire State Building, Ostankino TV Tower).

Some authors make analogies with the behavior of adolescents and those of large groups in crisis.

For the purpose of this paper concept of identity, that of the individual one and that of the large group as well as the knowledge of dynamics of large groups in crisis stemming from group analysis will be used.

Identity is a controversial issue, defined by Erickson (1956) as "A sustained feeling of inner sameness within oneself...persisting sharing of some kind of essential character with others". When in accordance with Freud there are four signs of danger -loss of a loved one (mother), her love, a body part or self-esteem- what is endangered is the person's core identity. It can raise feelings of psychic annihilation.

Large group identity as defined by Volkan (1999) is "a subjective experience of thousands or millions of people who are linked by persistent sense of sameness while also sharing numerous characteristics with others in foreign groups".

Identities of large group have various aspects: ethnical, national, religious. They develop during childhood via progressive identifications (differentiations and integrations) with parents, teachers, peer group members on to the community, its leaders, religious authorities and so on. It is more or less definitely formed during the adolescent passage (Bloss). What aspect of the large group identity will be the most relevant one-the ethnic, religious or the national one, likewise depends on the world of adults.

The large group offers a sense of belonging, or as Volkan puts it a sense of "we-ness". There are sharing of same food preferences, hygienic customs, folk tales, and language. The threat to the identity of the large group, to the sense of we-ness, is experienced as a personal threat. It may and often does provoke anxieties, feelings of imminent psychological death similar to those when the core identity is threatened.

Akhtar describes the bridge between an individual and large group identity, as "well internalized inner morality and solidarity with one's large group are the ethnic groups ideals". When threatened by a crisis, for instance an economic crisis, as was the case in former Yugoslavia, the large group regresses. In the foreground are the psychotic mechanisms that enable running away from ambivalence. Predominant is the use of primitive mental mechanisms (splitting, projection, denial). Regression to the paranoid-schizoid position brings in to play strong manic and paranoid defenses. Features that are not tolerated in the individual are tolerated and often welcomed by the group. The individuals' capacities to think, to symbolize, to have a coherent mental activity are displaced and split on to the group for instance the government.

The large group chooses its leader. When in crisis, in regression, the group chooses a "transforming" (Volkan, 1999) leader. Or as Bion put it, the group in crisis chooses the maddest among them as the leader. Often it is a charismatic figure. The concept

of the charismatic leader is often understood as a representation of the combined parental figure, the total parent. This sort of a leader simultaneously raises feelings of love and awe. His occasional brutality carries often a thrill for the masses. There is a fit between the leader, his personality organization on one side and that of the members of the large group in crisis on the other. It is easy to wonder to which extent did Milosevic's personal biography (suicide of favorite uncle, father and mother) influence the homicidal and suicidal behavior among some Serbs.

In order to maintain its sense of we-ness the large group in crisis needs an opposing group, the enemy. It is easiest to project parts of one's own personality in to someone alike, similar. What really goes on is much in accord with the narcissism of minor differences about which Freud wrote in 1921. The chosen enemy often shares the same or very similar language, the same or similar cultural value system. By use or better-put abuse and misuse of mass propaganda, mass media, the chosen enemy is first demonized then dehumanized. In contemporary wars the enemy to be is usually the neighbor, often the friend of yesterday, a family member belonging to the "others".

When the war with Croatia begun one of the first things was to cut off the communications, telephone lines and TV programs between the two republics. During the war in former Yugoslavia the warring parties accused each other for character traits that were almost identical. In the common language the differences in dialect were stressed. The Serbs were supposed to write only in Cyrillic letters even Latin medical diagnoses. The common history was denied and of course both Serbs and Croats were the chosen oldest people in the world. In the play "Chauvinistic Farce", very popular both in Zagreb and Belgrade several years before the outbreak of the war a Serbian professor of history tells his Croatian colleague that "First on earth there were Serbs, then amoebas, then Jews, years later the Croats appeared". Croats according to their propaganda, were not Slavs but of noble Aryan origin.

During all these years a parallel trend existed- that of Yugo nostalgia. In midst of Milosevic Belgrade, in various cafés and restaurants songs of happier times from all parts of the former country: folk from Macedonia pop from Croatia and rock from Bosnia were heard. They were not popular only among the middle-aged generation but well known and loved by the young that were small children when the war started. Today they know little about former Yugoslavia. When the marriage of the parents is intermarriage, parents being of different ethnic, religious or/and national background the identifications of the child during its development may or may not be contradictory. These (childhood) identifications are questioned unconsciously only when provoked by severe regressions. The children in a conflict choose those that belong only to one of the parents and disown those of the other. The solution may or may not be a permanent one. Many children of former Yugoslavia were and are children of mixed marriages. "My mother is a Serb my father a Croat I was a Yugoslav and now I am nothing".

The children of these spaces were for decades ordered to love each other. Evidently, from what has happened they did not. The last decade or so the children were ordered to hate the children of their neighbors. It is believed to be so but I wonder.

Little, almost nothing is given for reasons that make contemporary wars those within states, civil wars. Perhaps the crisis of the small group that of the family in postmodern society has been displaced and projected onto the larger family. Civil wars may in a way present acting out and attempts at resolution of conflicts within families.

The crisis that begins with threats to the identity of the large group often leads to wars. The end results are that of traumatization. The concept of trauma with various terms across the literature (stress, shock, strain, cumulative, retrospective and so on) is a very fashionable one nowadays. It is a highly tricky one as well. The concept of trauma should relate to the intrapsychic repercussions but often it encompasses the external event as well. It is well known by now that those events that are man made disasters, as wars, have a more malignant effect than those caused by nature. The first may have not happened, the second are in a way a destiny. For children the disasters come from the world of adults and often discontinue their development. Children react in different ways so it would be useful to differentiate between traumata and an overwhelming trauma. Groen-Prakken (1996) makes a distinction between trauma and developmental interference. Trauma "is an amount of disturbance that temporarily deadens the synthetic function of the Ego, developmental interference can be defined as whatever disturbed the typical unfolding of the development".

A special form of trauma is one of transgenerational trauma, the central issue being the mode of its transmission, from one generation to the other. The children do not live in their own worlds but in the worlds of their parents. In their own lives they act out the fantasized borrowed trauma trying to undo it. Various theories, those of Levine, Fryeburg Jacovy, and Kestenberg are in use. According to Kestenberg the child seems as if to be living in a double world of yesterday and today. Through the "time tunnel" they transpose themselves looking for remedies of the parents' trauma in the present. When yesterday becomes today, there is no tomorrow. When the future is stolen from childhood the childhood is lost.

Whether the child was perceived as traumatized or not depended in some extent whether the therapist belonged to the so called traumatophilic group, where the therapist searches for the contained trauma or a traumatophobic one, when therapists rationalize their feelings of disgust, revulsion by ignoring the trauma.

During the NATO bombing not all the children were traumatized but all did suffer. Some children like eight-year-old Marko reacted to the bombing as to traumata, a developmental interference. The well-behaved and liked boy started throwing all sorts of objects at home, at play and in class. Often he caused minor injuries to children and himself. The repetitive play in sessions after some months transformed the various flying objects in to flying paper airplanes with NATO insignia. For some the bombing was an overwhelming trauma. Vera was 14 when it started. She left

Belgrade with her mother and younger brother. The father could not cross the border and was drafted. Vera started to diet and then stopped eating almost altogether. She became aggressive to her mother and brother. The great loss of weight was life threatening and she was hospitalized. Today she still eats very little, only the food prepared by her father. She ignores her brother and is rude with the mother.

Ivan's maternal great-grand father committed suicide after the 1<sup>st</sup> WW, the maternal grandfather after the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW. Mother had several suicidal attempts. Aged four Ivan swallowed an overdose of mother's pills. For the next two suicides the trigger was failure in history at school. The parents were convinced that the boy knew nothing about the family secret (pact of silence). The boy was convinced that as long as he is not well his mother would have to stay alive. He dreamt of nature and talked of nature. "How to tame it, will it destroy itself or be destroyed?" Ivan's fears about his own nature and the unpredictable nature of his family environment colored by transgenerational trauma were evident.

I found Volkan's concept of chosen traumas that he uses together with that of chosen glories in explaining transgenerational trauma as useful for our topic. Chosen traumas powerful large group markers as they give a group a persistent feeling of sameness and give tasks (of revenge) to the coming generations. They denote an event that brought "drastic losses, feelings of helplessness, victimization by an another group". There is "an inability to mourn the trauma, reverse the narcissistic injury and humiliation" (Volkan, 1997). To Volkan the Battle of Kosovo is the chosen trauma for the Serbs. There is no doubt that Milosevic fueled Serbian nationalism by manipulating the Kosovo saga especially in 1987 and few years after. But, my impression from the last years was not that the Serbs were so much preoccupied by the Kosovo battle, nor with the fate of Murat and Lazar, the Turk and Serb leaders. The songs of Kosovo were rarely present. The sentence often heard was "Five hundred years under the Turks". The Muslims of Bosnia, in many cases Slavs in origin, during the bloody war have become the Ottoman Turks. One of the sentences often reported by the raped Muslim women were "You will give birth to a Serb". As if there was a time collapse, as if there was vengeance for the tribute in blood, when the Turks demanded from the Serbs to give over the son, which they chose. The child was to become a Turk and serve in the Army as Janissary.

But the major time collapse, the message of the parents to the children to take revenge for their victimization, losses and humiliation to my mind concerned the events of the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW. The Serb spoke of Ustasas. The Germans were helping Croatia, again. Some wore Cetnik uniforms; some resolutely declared that only a dead Ustasas is a good Ustasas. All Croats were Ustasas. The coat of arms, the flag and the currency in Tudjman's Croatia elicited associations of the Nazi puppet state. Of course, only a dead Cetnik is a good Cetnik. Of course, all Serbs were Cetnik. For century old aspirations Bosnia paid the heaviest price.

One description of Balkans I've heard is "Balkans are a geographical term, the rest is pure psychopathology".

The lives of the children in the last ten years are best told in their own words:

“My mother was a Serb, my father was a Croat, I was a Yugoslav and now I am nothing; Graduate and emigrate; what do you fear most? -People; We stay.”

In preparation there is a law of amnesty for those young ones that have fled refusing to join the army. The estimated number for the year 1999 is over 30 000. As I have already mentioned 400 000 highly educated have left the country over the past years, most of them opposing the regime and being of Yugoslav identity. It is estimated that at the moment around 70% is planning to return in the forthcoming year. This sounds as a highly optimistic percentage to me. Some will return and it will have an impact. The children today know little about former Yugoslavia. Some parents have been telling their children. Winnicott speaks of a total unit, the whole person within whom in severe pathological states there is a split between benign and persecutory elements. In order to heal there needs to be reparation, acceptance of guilt and remorse. At present there are few signs of remorse. Little is known about Omarska, Srebrenica, the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. It is partly the result of mass media manipulation, but people did not want to know, as well. The bombing and sanctions, pronounced the feelings of victimization.

When there will be a capacity for ambivalence for love and hate together, there will be a chance that the children get out of the time tunnel.

I doubt that the last ten years have reared only hate, as the last decades did not indoctrinate only love.

In the years to come for some that are growing up now the chosen trauma possibly will be the lost Yugoslavia.

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