

Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference

Session 1: Experiences of Nonviolence - Reflection Katarina Kruhonja

Pat Gaffney: ... reflections, I'm sure they're going to deepen. Thank you.

Katarina Kruhonja: Thank you. So, good morning. I'm very grateful to be here. And also I'm very grateful to bring, take on, going on with the discussion with you brought here at beginning.

Voice: [inaudible]

Katarina Kruhonja: Is that OK. So, I was not sure what to share with you, and now after this I would really like to share with you my experience how I tried, tried, or how I'm trying to become a person of nonviolence. But at the very beginning I would say that because it is very confusing to be concrete in [a] concrete situation, nonviolent. And I brought with myself this picture. It was my conference mark of a young person, he was [a] war veteran from Croatia, doing, being in the just war, the fancy war. And he committed suicide, after a while. So I brought him in my heart, in our prayer because a just war is also war, with all these consequences. And how it is confusing, in a concrete situation, to find another way. It was for me as now.

And so the war actually changed my mind. For us ordinary people the war in Croatia, this violent disintegration of Yugoslavia came so suddenly, unexpectedly. So we were in a way confused and the war, and this logical war, was spreading as a wild fire. So, propagation of nationalism, strengthening of the [inaudible] image of the enemy, and actual armed assaults were overwhelming to me as well. So I find myself in the town, surrounded by the Serbian forces bombing us. And I find out that I start to think up like all others, that there are no[t] another way. Just it is or them or us. What we can do? And while we were praying in a small prayer group, we were thinking and talking about what might be the love for our enemy in this very concrete situation? And some of us said, maybe the love for enemy in this situation is to kill him or them, to prevent him or them to do more atrocities. But it came on the table, such kind of logic, that alerted me so hard, I started to think from day to day, what would be to love my enemy in the middle of the war? And I couldn't find an answer. And then I just make a choice from my will. I said, killing my enemy for sure is not the way how Jesus would love his enemy. So I chose to love my enemy as Jesus would. And I didn't know what that means. But this choice really was my passover. So from the logic of the violence. And I would be able to live again.

And my next actually step was thinking, what would, so first I realized it is not love, plainly, to kill. But what that means for instance if I were to be in the situation to defend my life? So, the next answer would be, I would defend life but not by killing. And then, but what would be if I should defend life of my children. So I said again, I would defend life but not by killing another life. So it is kind of a very radical pacifistic point and fortunately I was not, never in this situation. I don't know what I would do, actually, in such a situation. But this passover from the

logic of the violence really very soon opened up my mind and my heart to seek what I can do for the peace in the middle of the war. And very soon I met a person, he was an ethicist and conscientious objector, and we started to think together, what would we do for the peace in the middle of the war. And it was the beginning of the peace movement or peace activism from the middle of the war. So, today, how we worked, I, one minute, yeah.

Today in Croatia and I would say that we find out very much, very concrete things what we can do from the middle of the war for the peace. In our part of Croatia, in the Eastern part, actually we succeeded in the peaceful ending of the war. Contributing from the peace movement as well. And why I'm sharing that with you today is also is that today when we are 20 years after the war, 25 in Croatia, and the situation is not so dramatic with the violence of war, we have the same old challenge. I have the same old challenge, how to be the person of nonviolence in situation of polarization of our society. Of, you know, on ideological basis, on the basis of how to interpret our past. So, it is the same question, how I can practically be the person of nonviolence and how we can work as, to love our enemy and not to take part with the exclusion of the others with and with kind of [inaudible] that we know what is the right, what is the wrong.

Thank you.