

In His Own Words:

Ivo Markovic on How Fear Has Been Used as a Form of Political Manipulation

For me, the opposite of faith is not lack of faith, but it is fear. Nothing degrades a human being like fear. Fear is Infidel.

I meet people all the time, for example in my choir, who say "I'm not a believer." And I accept them as non-believers and I respect them. Those are, for me, people of good will. They just haven't had a chance to see the face of God and they haven't met God personally. As long as they don't live in an atmosphere of fear, for me, they are believers.

This is the element that I learned in the war: how fear is destructive and how our world needs to develop mechanisms to overcome the manipulation through fear. When society or a social group is in the atmosphere of fear — it is poor and hungry... threatened in any way — then it gives birth to psychologically sick leaders and it becomes sick itself. Then hate starts spreading.

Whatever Hitler was talking about — that the Germans are threatened by all the different sides — the same analogy was used by Slobodon Milosevic in Yugoslavia. I went to Germany and I compared newspapers from Hitler's time and those of Milosevic and they are basically the same. Same headlines. Serbs are threatened from all directions the same way that Germans were threatened. He puts Serbs in the element of fear and that fear reduces man into an animal. Then the same model was used by Croatians and by Muslims. And then in that element of fear, people are behaving like animals.

The biggest mistake that was made was that soldiers were left to become politicians. They are losing because they know, as soon as the peaceful times come, they will lose. That's why they create hate, distrust. Everything is done in some systematic order.

Now those warriors don't have weapons. Those weapons are prohibited. Now they are waging war through media and political manipulation. Existing television and media manipulates people and degrades them against all human rights. And that's what the West doesn't understand.

During elections, our people are not normal citizens who are voting because they were poisoned and manipulated so much with fear through television that they are not free beings any longer. In such an atmosphere, it is so difficult to work. There are many people who see that, but it is so difficult to reject it.

And when they are not using television to put people in this atmosphere of fear, then they place bombs. They do all of that. Together. They help each other. They are cooperating. As the HDZ [Croatian nationalists], as the SDS [Serbian nationalists], and SDA [Bosniak nationalists], they cooperate. They are enemies, but when they need each other, they cooperate.

For us, in such an atmosphere, it's very difficult to help people to become aware. To come to the level of normal human functioning and that is basic human rights, and for them to be masters of their own fate. A child in the atmosphere of fear in school is a very dangerous substance. Whoever puts anybody in the atmosphere of fear degrades a human being like nothing else. If a teacher in school or anybody who works with people puts people in this atmosphere of fear, that's the most abnormal living condition for a human being.

There is no change in this region until all these nationalists are taken out. They are fascists. As [western] Europe did away with fascism, we just realized that we shouldn't have negotiations with Milosevic but rather should have stopped it 10 years ago. And, as Milosevic should have been taken out, that's how Tudjman should have been taken out and how Izetbegovic should have been taken out. We cannot allow them to go for elections at all because they are just putting people in an atmosphere of fear. The world needs to help us to destroy this fascism. All of those parties are for ethnic cleansing, for people not to live together.

We have to start building mechanisms of culture and attitude towards fear. On any level, whoever manipulates with fear — whether it's a priest or somebody at work or somebody in strictness or politician or any social worker or journalist — that we essentially have a general culture and sensitivity to create these mechanisms. I believe there is a lot of fear. Yes. And that's when it's easy to stop resolving a conflict and instead of life, it becomes death and destruction.

We need to learn that wherever we meet fear, we have to show trust. To give us solidarity to activate trust and understanding so that people would come back from that kind of atmosphere. When we stop the creation of negative awareness through media, then the Church can use its own positive influences. And not only the Church, but the culture. Serbia is full of positive people. And Bosnia is full of positive people. And Croatia. For them to get a chance. Now it's difficult to get a chance.