

***In His Own Words:***  
**Ivo Markovic on the War**

The entrance into a war was an enormous shock for me. We theologians and pastors are naïve people. In every association with another human being we search for goodness. We forget that a human being can be an evil being as well.

At the beginning, I was sure that there would be no war. I believed that people of good faith would be able to overcome all the conflicts. One side decided to push into a conflict with violence and everything just followed.

I had my first encounter with killers in Sarajevo when we were detained by Chetniks [Bosnian Serb soldiers]. Two of them entered my room in search of watches and gold and money. I gave them all I had. They were searching on their own and found a small Croatian flag. I don't usually carry any nationalistic symbols but this was given to me by a Serbian friend -- he was a Serb who said to me, "What kind of Croat are you when you don't have a flag?"

The flag was under papers that fell when they searched. And I could have lost my life because of that flag. The man that found the flag took his rifle and said that he would kill me right there and then. I didn't get scared because I thought, "How can you kill a man?" Then a second soldier jumped on him -- I wasn't scared at all -- and threw him down on the floor. I saw that it was very serious. The first one got up and hurried up to get his rifle and then hit me in the stomach with the butt of the rifle. And the second one said, "Don't kill him now." The soldier that had the rifle told me he would kill me. Then I realized that I could have been God's. I could have been killed. I was thinking, "How is it that man could kill?"

The second soldier told me that the first soldier kills all Muslims — newborn children, handicapped people, women — not even one Muslim stays alive for him. He kills. "That's how much he hates Muslims." I was watching the eyes of that first soldier. I will never forget that man. I would love to see him now, see his history, whether he can live. I never had come across such emptiness. Something really diabolic and lost. As I said, I would love to meet that man again just out of curiosity. Just to see whether reconciliation could really exist.

I saw many people like that after that. But the question is, what really brings people to that point? And the answer is fear. The biggest sin of mankind is fear. Whoever puts somebody else in an element of fear degrades him like nothing else.

The basic problem of Bosnia — and not only Bosnia, but also Croatia and the whole Balkans — is because the warriors who decided to go into war and who accepted the war are still in power. They live off negative energies, nationalism, degradation of human beings, destruction. For them, only degraded people vote during elections. And people who are in fear.

Here was a horrifying war. There was mobilization of the most negative energies which so skillfully awakened those deepest urges that were throughout history packed into people in some small space of consciousness. Experts of psychological warfare provoked them cleverly. It was a terrible war. Distrust rules here.

But when you experience difficulties and troubles, man always comes out stronger as a result. And always a human being feels contented and thanks God that he survived that. Even war. Men go through torment and experience stress, but that's just life. And all the handicaps in a certain way could also be a chance — a chance for one to discover a certain area of human knowledge and the quality of human life.

For example, I had an actual case with forgiveness when my father was killed. He was an unbelievably good person, a peacemaker. And for that man to be killed — a person who defended against this atmosphere of revenge. I didn't have a problem with overcoming that. If a man has at least a little bit of soul and wisdom, he would see that my father was killed as a victim of peace — on that road. This is the

path of Jesus. Maybe I will meet the same fate. On that path, any kind of devastation — and even death!  
— in a certain sense, this is a victory over evil.