




A STORY OF LOVE

The time we live in is so unpleasant that you wish you had not even been born, or rather that you had been born at some other time, on another occasion, simply because right now there is not enough love to go around. What is the use of big houses, expensive cars, winter holidays in Vysoké Tatry, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, expensive perfumes and briefings? These are just shadows of real life. We give ourselves up to the narcotics of delusion, the illusory, secret paths of life, and when it is already too late, with our eyes closed to our own failings, we reach maturity; we suddenly realize that it is too late to start again. The end is here, it is perhaps already peering around the next corner.

There is no way we can steal back the years, steal happiness – if there is no love. There may seem to be sun and joy, you may imagine that your success is complete as you earn a medal, in the shadow of great men, but I have seen many who, pockets empty walk with heads held high around this town. Their joy in having nothing is much greater. Because they have this town. They have friends. They have a soul. They didn't have money for Zagreb, Vienna or Prague. Their money was left in the glasses they emptied with friends with whom they later waited for the sunrise over the Croatian barricades. For some that waiting took too long and they were lost. But we know full well where they are. If life allows us to let our love control us, as their love carried them, at the end of the road, perhaps we can expect that we too will die happy.

Siniša Glavašević

*A story by the journalist from Croatian Radio Vukovar, Siniša Glavašević, who was captured and killed at Ovčara after the occupation of Vukovar, written during the siege and destruction of Vukovar.



*Vukovar's symbol of freedom
One of the most frequent targets of the Yugoslav People's Army, the Water Tower endured the attacks and became the symbol of Vukovar's resistance and struggle for freedom. (photograph Marko Perić)*



Nikola Tesla Street, the centre of Vukovar, the 18th of November 1991.

STORY OF A TOWN

I abandon all search for justice and truth. I give up all attempts at submitting ideals to my life. I give up everything that I considered until yesterday essential to a good beginning or a good ending. I would probably abandon myself, but I can't. Because, who would be left if we all abandoned ourselves and fled in fear? Who would the town be left with? Who will take care of the town while I'm not there, while I try to find myself in the rubbish-heaps of human souls, while I am alone and stagger, wounded and tired, in the heat, while my eyes begin to face my personal defeat?

Who will guard my town? My friends? Who will extract Vukovar from darkness? There are shoulders broader than mine and yours. So, if it's not too difficult for you, if there's still a zest of youthfulness in you, join in. Someone messed with my parks, the benches on which your names are still carved and the shade where you both gave and received your first kiss. Someone simply stole everything, how else could I explain that there is not even shade anymore. There are no shop windows that filled you with joy, no cinema where you watched the saddest film. You must build from scratch, first your past, looking for your roots, and then your present. And if there is still strength left in you, invest it in the future. And don't be alone in the future. As for the town, don't worry. All that time it was in you, hidden so that the oppressor wouldn't find it. The town – that's you!

Siniša Glavašević

*Story of the Journalist of Croatian radio Vukovar, Siniša Glavašević who, after the occupation of Vukovar, was abducted in the hospital and killed at Ovčara; written during the siege and the destruction of Vukovar.



(photograph Dionizije Šebetovsky)



Vukovar, the 8th of June 1997: the “Freedom and Return Train” symbolically brought Croatia back to Vukovar (photograph Božo Biškupić).

The victor who doesn't know how to forgive, plants the seed of discord and future ills. And the Croatian people don't want this. They didn't chose to suffer here in Vukovar and throughout Croatia. Everything we are doing now is not focused on parochial local interests but on the overall interests of Croatia and Europe, in the interest of peace, of the future of this region and of Europe. Long live the coexistence between the Croatian and Serbian people and other ethnic communities in this region! Long live our only and eternal Croatia! (From the address of the President of the Republic of Croatia dr. Franjo Tuđman in Vukovar, the 8th of June 1997).



Borovo naselje, 15th of January 1998. (photograph Marko Perić).



The support for peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube Region: Senior Officials of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Croatia together in Vukovar (photograph Marko Perić).

THE PEACEFUL REINTEGRATION OF THE CROATIAN DANUBE RIVER REGION

The “*Basic Agreement on Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srijem*” was signed in Erdut and Zagreb on the 12th of October 1995. The agreement was a precondition for the establishment of permanent peace in this area that was destroyed by the war, human suffering, forced migration and the general social and economic impact.

The UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 1037 on the 15th of January 1996. which established the United Nations Transitional Authority in Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES), led by U.S. Gen. JP Klein. The objectives of the mission UNTAES were: to disarm the area and return it to the sovereign control of the Croatian government, to keep the multiethnic and multicultural character of the area, to promote an atmosphere of trust; allow refugees and displaced persons freely to return to their homes, to promote adherence to the highest standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms, to promote redevelopment and rehabilitation of areas, to organize free and fair local elections

The local elections which where held on the 13th of April 1997., were particularly important for the success of the mission and for providing conditions for the return of Croatian refugees. The conducted elections established the political system equivalent to the one in other parts of Croatia. By participating in the elections, members of the Serbian minority from Vukovar and the Croatian Danube Region were given the opportunity to choose their legitimate representatives in local government bodies and government.

With the attention to accelerate the process of peaceful reintegration Croatian President dr. Franjo Tuđman established in October 1997., *The National Committee for the Implementation of Programs to Establish Trust and to Accelerate the Return of the Normalization of Life in the War-affected Areas of the Republic of Croatia.*

The President of the Committee was Mrs Vesna Škare Ožbolt from the Office of the Croatian President while the Vice President was Mr Ivica Vrkić from Osijek (Eastern Slavonia) and Vojislav Stanimirović as Serbian representative from then occupied Croatian Danube Region. Board of Vukovar was established on the 3rd of November 1997.

The Resolution of the UN Security Council in 1045, from 19th of December 1997., gave full support to the completion of the mandate of the peacekeeping mission UNTAES, which formally ended the process of peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube Region and Vukovar, and the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia. The closing ceremony was held on the 15th of January 1998., in Borovo (neighbourhood of Vukovar). Based on the different experiences for the process of reintegration, UNTAES mission was considered one of the most successful UN peacekeeping missions in the world.



An aggression on Vukovar's European identity. The Eltz Manor, a 18th century baroque castle own by the Prince-Archbishop of Mainz and the House of Eltz. The communist regime expelled the Eltz family from Vukovar in 1945 and the Yugoslav People's Army bombed their castle in 1991.



A European renaissance at the Croatian Danube. A restored Eltz Manor was reopened in 2011. The project was financed by the Croatian Government and the Council of Europe Development Bank.



A city of culture. The cultural centre "Hrvatski dom", founded in 1922, was a pivotal institution for Vukovar's society and cultural life. The cultural centre "Hrvatski dom" in ruins after the aggression on Vukovar.



A new culture of hope. The new "Hrvatski dom", restored and reopened in 2007, as a symbol of a new culture of hope.



The church and Franciscan monastery of Saints Philip and Jacob was a frequent target of the Yugoslav People's Army artillery. Since the church was still standing, Serbian paramilitary forces intended to bomb it again in 1996, but were stopped by the Alsace native and US General Jacques Paul Klein, Head of the UN Transitional Authority.



Renewed faith. The church of Saints Philip and Jacob stands today as a living testimony of the solidarity and generosity of people all around Croatia and Europe who contributed to its restoration.



Upon a decision of the Croatian Parliament, the Royal Gymnasium of Vukovar was founded in 1891. Latin and French were taught since 1895. The Royal Gymnasium was a centre of excellence for the entire Sirmium County. The Gymnasium, Vukovar's High School, completely destroyed by the Yugoslav People's Army in 1991.



A new and bright look to the future. The restored Gymnasium is now educating new generations of Vukovar students in a modern Croatia, reintegrated into Europe. It stands also as a reminder of the importance of education in overcoming the challenges of today, honouring the city's heroic history and building a future of peace and prosperity for all the citizens of Vukovar.

THEY ARE OUR TRUTH

Memorial cemetery for the victims of the Homeland War, Vukovar; 938 white crosses, one cross for each victim exhumed from the massive grave in that area.

