

Carles Torner

# The ten commandments for deserting Bosnia

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Moscow, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010

DEAR SIMONA,

**In the Spring of 1933, J.V. Foix wrote a postcard from Dubrovnik which ran: Dear Riba, Our proposal has just been approved: the 35<sup>th</sup> PEN Club Congress will be held in Barcelona. Foix had attended the International PEN Club Congress to extend the invitation on behalf of Catalan writers. The Congress, presided over by H.G. Wells and Pompeu Fabra, was held in Barcelona and brought together writers the world over. The high-profile international event was an excellent sounding board for Catalan literature.**

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**TODAY, SIMONA, I AM WRITING A LETTER TO YOU**

in response to your request that we “reflect on what the Bosnia of 1992 has left in our consciences. Has it left us completely indifferent or, on the contrary, has it helped foster public awareness and a more critical approach? Has it been used for other purposes, for example, revealing a lurking peril?”. You asked me to give form to the traumatic memories of our youth. Here, I agree with Francesc-Marc Àlvaro that

the defining moment for our generation was not Barcelona’s Olympic Games but rather the war in Bosnia and the way it undermined the idea of Europe. I would say that Catalan solidarity with Bosnia gave rise to a plethora of initiatives, each providing a different insight on and way of getting to grips with the war. This contrasted with the general spinelessness of politicians at the time. The memory of those years is buried deep and unearthing it is no easy task.

I shall draw on various episodes to this end. That is why I began my letter with Foix's postcard to Riba, writing to you directly now that you are on the Board of the Catalan PEN Club. I will look at the legacy of J.V. Foix, Carles Riba, Marià Manent, Pompeu Fabra and what we have done with it since the Bosnian War of 1992. Have we lived up to this legacy? To find out Simona, let me tell you a short story that gets to the nub and cuts out the nuances. It reveals how we could defend Bosnia on the international stage and still have a voice. To do so we had to both find the right words and ensure Catalonia's voice was heard in the world (a problem that Catalans have to face day in, day out). Failure to do either would have left us muzzled and powerless.

You will know the problem because you have translated J.V. Foix into Slovenian. At Dubrovnik, Foix voted to expel the German PEN Club (which had been infiltrated by the Nazis) from the International PEN Club. The expulsion was a watershed in PEN International's history. It went beyond the club's repeated calls for peace and freedom of expression and its opposition to the Nazis following their seizure of power in 1933. Foix voted to expel the German PEN Club, acting on Catalan writers' behalf in doing so.

Seventy years after Foix's initiative, Dubrovnik was again centre stage. It was the eve of St. George's Day [Catalonia's Patron Saint]. I spoke at the Congress in the following terms: "This is not a war between equals whatever the European media may say to the contrary. It is naked aggression by Milošević. As writers, we cannot sit on the sidelines: we have to distinguish between butcher and victim. We have to take sides. And if one of the National PEN Clubs is presided over by those who defend such aggression, we must live up to the memory of 1933 and expel it".

The Serbian PEN Club at the time was presided over by the novelist Dobrica Ćosić, who was also to become President of the Yugoslav mini-federation of Serbia and Montenegro. At the time, Milošević was looking for a political discourse to replace Communism, which was on the way out and giving way to democracy in many former Eastern Bloc countries. Milošević was keen to hang on to power and enlisted the aid of Ćosić and his Serbian ultra-nationalist circle to help

him do so. In 1977, the Press dubbed Ćosić "The Serbian Tolstoy" and lauded his admission to Serbia's Academy of Arts and Sciences. According to Ćosić, the Serbs had always won wars only to lose out in the peace that followed. After Tito's death, this "folk memory" was given a new lease on life when many writers chose Kosovo and the trials and tribulations of the Serbs as a narrative theme. Ćosić gave Serbian leaders a policy blueprint. In September 1986, the Belgrade Academy of Arts and Sciences began leaking the contents of the infamous memorandum setting out the theoretical justification for military aggression. Yet even before that, Ćosić had settled on Milošević as the political instrument for building "Greater Serbia". We now have the documents charting the course taken by Ćosić's circle of Serbian intellectuals in enlisting Milošević's support. Through him, the Serbian Republic and the Yugoslav Army, their ideas inevitably led to the dismantling of the Yugoslav Federation, war on Serbia's neighbours and a deliberate policy of genocide. In 1993, the war had already been raging for a year and a half, sowing death and destruction in its path. In April 1993, we lacked the documentary evidence that we have now. Even so, the murderous intent of Milošević's troops was as plain as day. The second Mazowiecki Report for the UN Commission on Human Rights (published in full by *Esprit* magazine) revealed the full horror of what lay behind the term "Ethnic Cleansing". We knew then that the theoretical foundations for the genocide were laid by writers and that these were then leading lights in Serbia's PEN Club. Clearly, there was no alternate but to kick the Serbians out while keeping Slovene, Croat and Bosnian delegates. It was the Catalan delegate who opened fire.

Yet, shame of shames, there was no expulsion! The delegates were sold the idea that Bosnia was a many-faceted conflict and the fruit of centuries-long hatred. It was argued that referendums for independence had opened Pandora's Box and that this weighed more heavily than singling out aggressor and victim. The International PEN Club fell for the "Neutrality" stance then prevalent in Europe. The International PEN Club's Congress in Dubrovnik was to prove a travesty of democracy. This was thanks to the

Club's President and Secretary, whose wheeler-dealing marshalled enough "neutrals" to stop any resolutions on "internal"<sup>1</sup> organisational matters. Our role was thus reduced to that of witnesses to the whole sorry business. Yet we cannot escape the fact that it was two writers who laid the groundwork for genocide: Ćosić himself and his disciple Radovan Karadžić – a poet.

The Congress ended with two declarations. The first was drawn up by Gyorgy Konrad, the Hungarian writer who then presided over PEN International. He passed it all on his own, without deigning to submit the text to delegates for their approval. Twenty of us signed a very different declaration. Its signatories (Isidor Cònsul, myself from the Catalan PEN Club, Alain Finkelkraut, Annie Lebrun and others). It read thus:

*We, the undersigned, members of PEN International, in the name of human dignity, freedom and rights, hereby state our unreserved support for the peoples of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Albanians of Kosovo, the Muslims of Sandzak, the peoples of Macedonia, the oppressed minorities of Voivodina and the deserters, pacifists and dissident intellectuals of Serbia. (...) The horror is spreading like the plague. We denounce Serbia's nationalist Communism and those members of the country's PEN Club – such as Dobrica Ćosić – who espouse it. We demand that all intellectuals, writers and artists do their utmost to stop this war. Freedom of thought is at stake.*

The gap between the two declarations was abysmal and PEN International had shown the most wretched cowardice. When Finkelkraut bid me farewell, he said "You have shown the guts to come here in the midst of a war. Why don't you just leave PEN for betraying us?" I replied, "You are French and have any number of international organisations you can draw upon. Catalan writers lack options and so cannot afford the luxury of ditching PEN International. We need to refound an organisation that has shirked its moral duties". Foix and other writers threw the Nazis out of our club in 1933. Contrast that with 1993, when PEN

delegates bickered over details, leaving us in a minority at every turn. What could we do under such circumstances? It must be hard for today's readers to grasp how things stood. To digress, Simona, there was a need back then to articulate the analysis, which was at odds with daily media coverage. It is hard to imagine our position was so hard to defend, especially now we see a former Head of State – Slobodan Milošević – arraigned by the International Court for crimes against humanity (charged on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2001 for war crimes in Croatia, and on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2001 for war crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina). The trial made history. Yet back in 1992-1995, what more could we have done? With the help of *Esprit* magazine's Vukovar-Sarajevo Committee, the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia, the publisher Oriol Izquierdo (and, it must be said, the indifference of many others), I published a collection of essays with other authors. Contributors included, among others: Dževad Karahasan, a well-known Serb dissident; Bogdan Bogdanović (former Mayor of Belgrade); Krizo Katic (a Croat psychiatrist, who helped victims of violence from the outset); Annie Lebrun; Véronique Nahom-Grappe; Pascal Bruckner. The title for the collection was a searing one: *La victòria pòstuma de Hitler* [Hitler's Posthumous Victory]. It was inspired by a remark by Marek Edelman, a Jewish survivor of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. He said, "The war in Bosnia is Hitler's posthumous victory," alluding to the genocidal nature of the conflict and the way Europe looked on without raising a finger to stop it. Finkelkraut took up the comment in a discourse made on the site of the Buchenwald concentration camp, with Edelman sitting in the front row – hence the title. Finkelkraut was amazed and said, "We could never have given a book a title like that in France. Everyone would have come down on us like a ton of bricks." In Catalonia it was well received and the first edition soon sold out.

We learnt from the exercise. What discourse do we face? I shall endeavour to sum it up under the following ten points:

■ <sup>1</sup> Translator's note: One recalls James Thurber's fable *The Rabbits Who Caused All the Trouble*. The wolves, having eaten their rabbit "foes", told the world that "the affair was a purely internal matter".

## **The ten commandments for deserting Bosnia**

### **The first commandment**

#### **THOU SHALT BE NEUTRAL**

Call the warring parties “combatants” even if it means lumping together aggressors and their victims. So remember both the peasants fleeing across the fields and the para-military group that searches and rapes them before cutting their throats are all “combatants”. The warring parties cover both civilians being shelled in the streets and the regular army that slaughters them. You should refer to the war waged by Serbians in Bosnian and Croatian territory as “civil war”, a “religious war” or as “a Balkan conflict”, never as part of a master plan to build a Greater Serbia. You will say you want to disarm everyone to attain peace. Back the arms embargo and you will strengthen the strong and weaken the weak.

### **The second commandment**

#### **THOU SHALT BESMIRCH THE VICTIMS**

Label the Bosnians “Muslims”, making the peril posed by radical Islam clear to anyone willing to listen. Tar all today’s Croat groups with the brush of the Nazi collaborators of half a century ago. Repeat endlessly that the Balkans is a mish-mash of cultures whose barbaric tribes are just itching to settle old scores. Splutter “They’re all the same –just a bunch of savages” into your beer. You will ask everyone to put down their weapons, including those who are defending home and family. Remember to say the victims are just as bad as those who slaughter them.

### **The third commandment**

#### **THOU SHALT NOT USE THE WORD “GENOCIDE”**

Never mention the building of Europe’s first racially-based state since the Third Reich. You should ascribe each daily crime to “the complexity” of the situation. How many reports have you heard of by Tadeusz Mazowiecki for the UN Commission on Human Rights, by Human Rights Associations and even witnesses of the Shoah [the Holocaust] (Marek Edelman, Simon Wiesenthal) –all documenting the genocide in Croatia and Bosnia? Never mind, just let it go in through one ear and out the other. You know better because these “experts” do not read the newspapers and watch the TVchannels you do. A politician in your

country will never use the word “genocide”. Wipe it from your memory and it will cease to exist.

### **The fourth commandment**

#### **THOU SHALT WIPE EUROPE’S SLATE CLEAN**

Forget that the one thousandth day of the siege of Sarajevo happened to be the fortieth anniversary of the day the allies reached Auschwitz. There are those who will draw parallels between the Munich Agreement and the West’s unwillingness to stop aggression. You will say that such thoughts are masochistic and praise a Europe that vowed the crimes of the Holocaust would never happen again. Argue that the plan for a “Greater Serbia” and “Ethnic Cleansing” are very different beasts from Nazi dreams of Lebensraum and “The Final Solution”.

### **The fifth commandment**

#### **THOU SHALT LAUD HUMANITARIAN AID AT ANY PRICE**

Hold firm, even when the victims rise up against you and clamour not for more blankets and food parcels but for the means with which to defend themselves. Do not relent, yea though humanitarian aid may spread the conflict and your main concern become the safety of your own soldiers rather than defenceless civilians. Verily, your soldiery shall take the name of humanitarian aid in vain and the aggressor shall vanquish them, turning them into his hostages, allies and victims at will.

### **The sixth commandment**

#### **THOU SHALT REVEL IN THY POWERLESS**

You will keep UN “peacekeeping” forces in a state of utter unreadiness and weakness. You will let the Serbian commander ignore so-called “safe zones” as he pleases. You will let your “blue helmets” suffer humiliation when the Serbians stop your aid convoys getting through. Last but not least, you will allow the aggressor to break ceasefires, breach agreements, and lie to his heart’s content.

### **The seventh commandment**

#### **THOU SHALT PREACH TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK TO MASS-MURDERERS**

You shall go to Sarajevo if necessary but you will reduce the war to a tussle between multiculturalism and homogeneity. You will not defend internationally-recognised borders





and will pour scorn on referendums on self-determination. You will cause confusion and seek reconciliation at any price, sitting at the same table as those who wield the knife.

### The eighth commandment

#### THOU SHALT TWIST HISTORY

As you contemplate ravaged Bosnia, you will hark back to the “Good Old Days” of Yugoslavia. You will neither look ahead nor wonder what can be done to stop dirty deeds of Kosovo’s “Ethnic Cleansers”. You will justify your powerlessness by resorting to weird and wonderful theories: The Spirit of Yugoslavia Betrayed; History’s Comeback; the expansion of Nationalism; a new German Imperialism; an American anti-European strategy; the Vatican’s wheeler-dealing.

### The ninth commandment

#### THOU SHALT DREAM UP A MAKE-BELIEVE WORLD BASED ON IMPOSSIBLE PEACE ACCORDS

Even though you know the Serbians, Bosnians and Croats are waging a long war and that the decision to sign peace accords is dictated by purely military considerations, pretend that you are about to pull off a lasting peace with each new map that crosses your desk. You know that the aggressor has the most peaceful intentions, that he has his country’s interests at heart and that it is up to him whether he wants to collaborate or hold out. Leave no stone unturned in seeking a “political solution” that puts the seal on Serbia’s victory. Moreover, you will pretend to believe the breakdown of negotiations between Belgrade and Pale and that Milošević has given up the idea of a “Greater Serbia”. You should advocate a “Bosnian-Serbian” parliament and if anyone blames you for political blindness and cowardice, you will accuse him of wanting war but of having no idea how to win it.

### The tenth commandment

#### THOU SHALT HOLD THY PEACE

Bury your head in the sand. Lounge on the sofa, watching atrocities on the TV. Mutter “Peace” to yourself as the war spreads like wildfire, consuming all in its path.



In 1995, two events in Catalonia revealed just how hard it was to place the host of Catalan initiatives for helping Bosnia within a tough public political discourse. Public mobilisation in Catalonia was impressive and one could write reams on describing the sentiment and symbolism behind silent, candle-lit vigils in over two hundred village and town squares up and down the country. What emerged from that deathly silence?

The two events were the Mediterranean Cities Conference and the demonstration in *Plaça Sant Jaume* after the massacre in Srebrenica. I have chosen these two because they highlight the two biggest difficulties encountered during the Catalan political discourse on the war in Bosnia. One was the ingenuousness of achieving peace through dialogue without putting pressure on Serbia. The other was the way Spanish laws muzzle Catalan politicians, making it impossible for them to speak freely on Europe.

You are probably asking yourself what the link was between the Conference –which marked the beginning of a European policy for the Mediterranean-rim lands– and a besieged, divided Bosnia. By sheer accident, I happened to hear that major cities on both sides of the Mediterranean would attend the Conference and that Nebojša Čović, the Mayor of Belgrade, was one of the guests. When I heard that, I could not believe my ears. How come Barcelona had symbolically added Sarajevo as its eleventh district yet was extending an invitation to Čović? Without further ado, I wrote to Pascual Maragall –then Barcelona’s Mayor– demanding that he withdraw the invitation to Čović. The lines I penned were: “Barcelona also has a responsibility to make Belgrade negotiate with Sarajevo. Remember, 70% of Bosnia is now occupied by the Serbs and is on the brink of disappearing altogether.” I reminded him of Belgrade’s former Mayor, the dissident Bogdan Bogdanović: “It is dissident Serbs whom we should invite.” Until the day that an international court judges those perpetrating war crimes in Bosnia, how can we possibly invite one of Milošević’s vassals? Can

you imagine the history books fifty years hence showing you shaking hands with the Mayor of Belgrade?" The letter proved effective. A group of Bosnian refugees –of which hundreds were then living in Catalonia– held a demonstration in Barcelona's *Plaça Sant Jaume*. The Mayor of Belgrade made an excuse for not coming and the nightmare photo was avoided.

What there is a photo of is the demonstration in *Sant Jaume* Square on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1995, a little after the fall of Srebrenica. During the rally, the Mayor of Barcelona, the President of the Catalan Parliament and the President of the Catalan Government gave political weight to José Maria Mendiluce's address. It was the first time anything of this political importance had been said in Europe since the slaughter in Vukovar in the autumn of 1991: "We cannot be neutral. We do not want to be neutral and we reject the neutrality of European governments. This is not war, it is genocide."

What stance did Catalonia take during the genocide in Bosnia? What did the siege of Sarajevo and the massive support for the victims mean to us back then and now? Let us rewind the film. Raül Romeva gave voice to the host of associations subscribing to the "Europe for Bosnia" movement in Catalonia's Capital. President Pujol, President Xicoy and Mayor Maragall stood erect and silent as they surveyed the packed square. They lent political weight to the words uttered by the representative of the UN Refugee Agency [UNHCR]: "We cannot be neutral. We do not want to be neutral and we reject the neutrality of European governments. This is not war, it is genocide." From that moment forth, I have not stopped exploring how it was that our leaders silently sided with the people's protest.

I cannot deny, Simona, that I too had a dream. Can I tell you it? Dreams have no rhyme or reason but anyway, in my dream, after Mendiluce had made his speech, President Pujol unexpectedly broke with protocol, snatched the microphone and took up the message: "We are not neutral. We cannot be neutral. It is genocide." President Xicoy and Maragall then uttered the same words.

In the dream, it seemed to be the very next day that the aforesaid politicians were forced to call a Press Conference. There, they said: "Despite what many people think, we measure our words

carefully and know what it means not to be neutral. We know what it means to ask other European governments to abandon neutrality and to intervene. Our country is willing to do whatever it takes. We also know that many people think that it is not our place to say such things. However, we can only repeat what we said yesterday in *Plaça Sant Jaume*, 'This is not a war but genocide and that is why we cannot be neutral.'" They then realise that they have overstepped the powers conferred on them within the Spanish State, where Central Government has sole right to decide foreign policy. Then all three –Pujol, Xicoy and Maragall– resign to a man.

I know it sounds like a silly dream. Even so, what would have happened if, say, Pujol or Maragall had spoken instead of Mendiluce and had explicitly questioned European neutrality? What would have happened if they had denounced the confusion of aggressors with victims and lambasted Spain's diplomats for hanging on to Mitterand's coat tails? What, for that matter, would have occurred if the Catalan Parliament had voted to lift the embargo on arms exports to Bosnia instead of staying silent and pretending that Catalonia was neutral? Under such circumstances, I am in no doubt that they would have been forced to resign. Catalonia's position during the war in Bosnia is graven in my memory. It forms part of who we are. Nobody can explain Catalonia's position in Europe without also speaking of its exceptional role in relation to Bosnia. Each of the International Court's resolutions, first in relation to the Milošević's trial and now to Karadžić's only confirms Catalonia's high moral principles. These trials should be shown on prime-time TV.

Shall we return to Foix for a moment, Simona? Foix was vulnerable. One hardly need say that he had no telephone or Internet in 1933 Dubrovnik. He would not have been able to talk to Riba, Fabra or Manent before leaving Barcelona. Who could have foreseen that in the middle of the Congress, the organisers would give the floor to Ernst Toller, a German Jew and a fugitive, who would accuse the German delegation of being infiltrated by the Nazis? By the same token, who could have imagined that the Congress would agree to a vote to expel one of its national PEN clubs? There were moments when tempers ran



high. Indeed, H.G. Wells, who presided over the Congress, asked for the voting to be repeated and in the open, with each representative rising to his feet and saying yea or nay to the motion. Foix knew what he would vote for but he was nervous nonetheless. When his turn came to vote, he rose and addressing the President and said in French "*La Catalogne et sa femme toujours d'accord*" [Catalonia and his wife are still in agreement (sic)]. "In agreement" here voting to expel the Nazis. Foix had travelled to Dubrovnik with his wife and his nervousness when it came to cast his vote explains this curious slip of the tongue.

However, Simona, what interests you and me here is that Foix, ignoring the slip of the tongue, used "*La Catalogne*" [Catalonia] when expelling the Nazis and in an international setting. He represented the country and used "Catalonia" to supplant "Spain". Catalan writers were (and are) keenly aware they their country lacks both European and wider international recognition. It is a great handicap we are forced to bear. Cruel Fate, it would seem, has decreed that it cannot be otherwise. While our country lacks international recognition, each time we take a position in a debate, we are forced to seek the right to speak.

We refounded the PEN Club. As representative of the Catalan PEN Club, I worked on a committee that spent two long years on drafting the new Statutes. We cut the President's powers down to size and set up an International Executive Committee for holding PEN congresses. The new Statutes were passed in Helsinki in 1998 and I was elected member of the first PEN Executive Committee at the Warsaw Congress in 1999. After the madcap "ethnic cleansing" programme by Milošević's armies, NATO bombed Belgrade and Serbia was forced to surrender. The American's determination threw the Europeans weak-willed shilly-shallying into sharp relief. The PEN Congress drew up two resolutions: one of a more "literary" nature that made a general call for peace and a ceasefire; the other of a more "judicial" nature, recognising that it could not take a neutral stance in defending the victims in Kosovo and accepting the need for intervention while remaining critical of the form it took. It was decided that the two resolutions were complementary rather than contradictory and that they could be voted upon separately.

I was involved in something of an anti-climax. It was at the end of the Congress and we had got to the last few items on the agenda. The votes were counted and the representative of the Catalan PEN Club got the most and headed the new Executive Committee in accordance with the Statutes that had just been passed. The next point on the Agenda was voting on the two resolutions. When it was proposed to move to a vote, the Catalan delegate asked for the floor to read out his resolution, which he had penned in the wee hours of the night before:

"In 1991, Vukovar was wiped off the map and Dubrovnik came under attack...

"In 1992, 'ethnic cleansing' spread throughout Bosnia and the siege of Sarajevo began...

"In 1993, the International PEN Club should have lived up to its history at the Congress held in Dubrovnik sixty years later.

"Yet despite these events, PEN International failed to take sides between aggressor and victim and, like the international community, opted for 'neutrality'.

"Since then, we have failed to expel Dobrica Ćosić and the writers who laid the theoretical foundations for 'ethnic cleansing', which was put into practice by Milošević's army. We have therefore betrayed PEN International's founding principles.

"Many years have gone by since the genocide carried out in Kosovo and the virtual apartheid applied to the Albanian population in the years that preceded it. It was also many years before the international community dared put an end to Milošević's evil plans by sending NATO in. In the context, our 'neutrality' leaves us speechless. Let us recognise that we too were defeated in this war.

"Here in Warsaw, we are close to the city that was wiped off the map by Nazi bombing and to the Jewish ghetto. Can be a better place as this to recognise that in Dubrovnik, we betrayed PEN International's founding principles?"

Let me return to your question, Simona. Has indifference now overtaken the passionate relationship between Catalonia and Bosnia, Barcelona and Sarajevo? Has an old love grown stale in the twenty years since the annihilation of Vukovar? I cannot answer this in general terms but there is still you, a Slovene who translates



Pahoa, Jancar, DeeJay into Catalan and Foix, Calder, Caber and Marcel into Slovene. You are also the author of the Catalan work *L'atzar de la lluita* and a member of the Catalan PEN Club's Board, representing Catalonia both as a writer and a nation. It was also you who asked for this article from the Board of *L'Espill* journal. Surely these are all grounds for thinking that we have followed faithfully in Foix's footsteps?

A new challenge arose in relation to the 2000 Congress, which was to be held in Moscow. It had been four years in the planning and the idea was that it should symbolise the healing of Europe's old East-West divisions. In 1999, Putin began to rise to power with Russia's brutal attack on Chechnya. The Executive Committee immediately met in London. The Danish author Niel Barfoed and I proposed a three-point plan, which met with the Committee's approval. These three points were: (1) we could not desert Russian writers at a time when journalists were being murdered in the country; (2) we had to go to Moscow and use every means at our disposal to denounce the war in Chechnya. The Russian PEN Club motions should table the motions criticising the government's attacks on writers and journalists. This was to make it harder for the regime to level fanatical anti-Western accusations; (3) we would not invite Putin, the Russian Minister of Culture, Moscow's Mayor or any other Russian authorities to the event. This meant renouncing all Russian government and Moscow municipal subsidies and seeking other funding from European and American foundations. It also meant drawing up a communication plan to ensure the inaugural speech hit the international headlines and so overcome media restrictions in Russia. So it came to pass –Günter Grass read his famous *Never silenced* speech. He denounced the crimes in Chechnya and the persecution of journalists.

Above all, Simona, we won the respect of a new wave of Russian dissidents. As a result, Anna Politkovskaya addressed the 2001 Congress, which was held in London. She denounced both the Russian army's mass killings in Chechnya and the political persecution she had been subject to (Anna had been arrested and gone through a mock

execution). We organised a campaign supporting Anna: she received invitations to speak from around the world. The idea was to spread her fame abroad and make the regime think twice about persecuting journalists. Anna Politkovskaya came to Barcelona on three occasions.

You ask me whether the memory of 1992 has been used for other purposes. Above all, Simona, I believe it helped forge our friendship with Anna and facilitated her presence among us until she was murdered on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2006. Her death came as yet another terrible blow. Both the campaign for Sarajevo and that for Anna Politkovskaya were bloody failures yet in both cases stayed true to our principles.

Nietzsche wrote:

*One must learn to love. This is what happens to us in music: first one has to learn to hear a figure and melody at all, to detect and distinguish it, to isolate it and delimit it as something with a life of its own; that requires some exertion and goodwill to tolerate it in spite of its strangeness, to be patient with its appearance and expression, and kindly towards its oddity. Finally, there comes a moment when we are used to it, when we yearn for it, when we sense that we should miss it if it were not there (...) Love, too, has to be learnt.<sup>2</sup>*

This is something you too subscribe to. I have cited it in recalling besieged Sarajevo. The path I have followed is just one of the many that could be taken to the past. You made the conceptual leap in *L'atzar de la lluita*: it is not just a question of learning to love people but also countries and cultures so that once we have got to know them, we would miss them were they to disappear. Over these years, we have learnt to love Bosnia and Slovenia, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and even Serbia (the one of dissidents such as Bogdanović). Events there have left their mark on all of us who sought to help the victims of war and to give voice to conscience and –in the process– shaped Catalonia. The trace is there to be found. We only need a little spadework to reveal its meaning. So let us set to work with a will, spurred on by both joy and grief II

■ <sup>2</sup> Translator's note: The original German can be found in *Abschnitt 334*, in the fourth volume of *Fröhlichen Wissenschaft* under the title "Man muss lieben lernen".