

# Spirit of Bosnia / Duh Bosne

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## Why are there less and less jokes about Huso and Haso?

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At the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019, we encounter the cruel ban of satire in public discourse. In neighboring Croatia, NewsBar is on trial due to its satirical texts. In Serbia, the show 'Veče s Ivanom Ivanovićem' (the evening program with Ivan Ivanović) was canceled due to the open criticism of authorities. Of course, in both cases, the prevention of hate speech or the change in the program concept were the reasons given to justify the cancellations.

We were not overly surprised by this news, as if we were already accustomed to quickly accept and consider as normal everything that is truly far from it and we simply say that it does not concern us. Everything that is distorted slowly gets under our skin, and we accept it almost without resistance as an integral part of our everyday life.

The presence of political jokes in society is inversely proportional to the level of democracy in that society.

### ***Bosnians and humor***

One wonders, Do we need to be happy that we are less and less retelling the jokes in which Haso and Huso, along with the world and domestic politicians? I fear that we should not be overly happy, because the absence of a political joke does not mean that we have advanced in the democratic order of our country, but that we may have become just a little less witty.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has always been famous for its humor, especially for good political humor. In the 1980s and early 1990s, and even during the war, in Bosnia and Herzegovina a program called '***Top lista nadrealista***' was being broadcast, which included sketches of a group of comedians, and at one point it had a format of false news. This program criticized the political and social situation of that time, and many sketches, as it later turned out to be, predicted what happened in the former Yugoslavia. The popularity of this program was enormous, as evidenced by the terms that came out of the program into the language and are used in everyday speech today.

It is sufficiently interesting that such a program was deprived of censorship, at least judging by the content, broadcast at a public service at the time of a different social

order, and that in a post-war democratic society, various types of political satire such as the **Polikita magazine** and the cult **Feral Tribune** in neighboring Croatia were extinguished under the influence of politics.

**Top lista nadrealista** in the postwar years was followed by similar humorous programs such as **Nadreality show**, broadcast at the public service, and **Cazinski nadrealisti**, broadcast on a local television station, who mocked the social situation in postwar period, but, unfortunately, they did not last long.

### ***Humor is changing***

We can say with certainty that humor has changed. It has not necessarily advanced. Jokes have been largely replaced by Internet memes. In the modern digital age, political Internet memes have become a new way of expressing political thinking, but also actively involving individuals in political life. Due to their rhetorical potential, they have opened up a new space for political discourse, as well as the possibility that citizens interested in issues of common importance use that space to influence, from the bottom up, a change of political reality.

**Damir Nikšić**, a conceptual artist from Sarajevo, who in his performances looks at social opportunities, draws great attention in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the series **“To niđe na svijetu nema”**, he publicly talks about things from our everyday lives that we are mostly aware of, but we do not dare speak of publicly. The engaging art of Damir Nikšić is very important in the political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina because in this way individuals become involved in the discussion of political issues and gradually begin as well to act politically.

Does such a type of political humor at the individual level have a subversive potential, that is, whether it has the power to change something, is the question which is hard to answer.

It takes imagination and knowledge of political processes to have good political humor, and young people are less and less interested in politics.

Unfortunately, most of them are interested in how to live and laugh at jokes in some other foreign language.

Is the grass greener on the other side, in the promised land? I'm not sure. What is for sure is that there is a certainty that if you work hard for it. As people in Bosnia say, no bread without a hoe, but surely you will also have it if you work hard in the promised land. Those same young people simply do not want to wait for months to get a wage they earned and live in fear and insecurity from day to day. Security is what we are striving for and for which we are now ready to leave everything that has been close and familiar to us so far.

What is also certain is that no one will punish you for the sake of satire, far from our Balkan countries, that is the true freedom of the civilized countries that we are striving for, but we are ready to accept only those aspects that suit us.

The mocking of the structures in power is still expensive in the Balkans; it remains

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only to see who will laugh last.

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