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Is a New Literature Emerging in Bosnia and Herzegovina? (Notes on Recent Works about our Country: An Excerpt)

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The loss of Bosnia that we have experienced and the way in which we have experienced it is such that the country keeps coming back into our thoughts as it once was. We feel an urge to bring it back the way we experienced it and loved it. It is like the love that wishes to remain forever the same and unchanging. But if we insist on seeing Bosnia only as it once was and not as it really is, that is, if we are blind and deaf to a new kind of Bosnia, a crucial and new element of our being is eluding us, which is that Bosnia has been dispersed throughout the world, that it is where Bosnians are and that it exists in the ways they see and experience it. Bosnia is thus acquiring a multitude of new ways of being, strengthening its existence in such numerous forms that it has today, strangely and under coercion, with so much grief for all her people, become global not only by the meaning and general conditions of its existence but by the very manner of that existence. The force of the misfortune and the coercion we have suffered make stronger in us that reality which is ideal but which is definitively ours and is fully available to us.

We cannot and we should not deny all those people of ours who live in various countries of the world, to which they have been forcibly banished —and they are almost a half of the Bosniak population—we cannot deny them that they are Bosnians, and that their lives, in whatever form and wherever it takes place, that their thoughts, experiences, creative efforts, are not also part of Bosnian life, that they are not part of the life of Bosnia in a new and particular way which is made possible by what we call globalism, the word this time having a literal meaning, i.e., the dispersal and presence of Bosnia in almost the entire world. It is just for that reason, that our people living all around the world give the life of Bosnia a new dimension and an enormous strength, that we have no right to exclude them from the life of Bosnia only because they were the victims of extreme violence that is recognized by us and by our representatives. This is proved by the fact that Bosnia is finding ways to continue to lead a quality existence even in these unthinkable conditions—some of the most important works about us have been created in that seemingly distant yet close world, in America, for instance (Mehmedinović, Hemon, Džamonja et. al.), Germany (Karahasan), Switzerland (Višić), Croatia (Jergović), Slovenia (Osti), Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, and even in Australia. On a daily basis new names are appearing around the world, with Bosnia scattered in it like a string of pearls when the string breaks that keeps them together. Now these pearls of the Bosnian spirit and sensibility is being strung

by people living in many places of the world and creating a new Bosnian literature, ennobling us here and pointing for our sake toward that which is new, something we in our grief fail to see.

All this, directly and in no uncertain way shows that Bosnians are now, truly and literally, the citizens of the world, and that our country Bosnia is, at least intellectually, a gathering place of many energies emerging and radiating toward it from various points of the world. For that very reason, Bosnia is veritably a paradigm of an open and free world, however contradictory this may sound in light of the fact that we in our own country are not very free and that many parts of it are closed to us. This condition we are in—that we are people dispossessed and hurled into the world and that we in an immediate way belong to humankind both in a figurative and in a literal sense, that we have not localized our existence and reduced it to a piece of land and in what results from its real past—that condition fits very well into the well-known maxim of Kant's. Namely, in his Anthropology, Kant claims that no man attests his humanness, his human essence, if he shuts it in its specifically local category and does not affirm his humanness through the entire humankind; it is the entire world and not a local situation that makes possible and ensures freedom and a dignified human existence.

Freedom will come to our country, too, from the world, not from our past. And our country and our people are today present worldwide. I know of no community of our people where Bosnia has not been living in an explicit and profound way, living in a new light and with a different meaning from the one stemming from the awareness of possessing a concrete country. That sentiment is stripped of that egotistical meaning that possession, as a form of relationship with reality, elicits in man. That expansion of dimensions and of the existential space of our nation, that great augmentation of our people's horizons and the fact that our Bosnian people are to a great extent and in a literal sense a people of the whole world (I believe that China is the only country of consequence where we are not present), with the universality of their suffering and the way of their response to the calamity, which they experience as unfolding human events, without hate and desire for revenge—all these are new realities that make us see the intellectual life and general conditions of our people in a new light. At the same time, all this gives our situation universal dimensions, which guarantees us emancipation and freedom in the only way that freedom is possible—by our becoming and our being part of that new humanity that is born amidst the labor pains and convulsions of the present.

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