

**Minutes of the Meeting if the Round Table of 13 July 2019 from 11.00 -14.15
held at the Serbian Club, Bishop Nikolaj Community Centre, 89 Lancaster
Road, London W11 1QQ**

1. Present:

Maya Milanković- Atkinson (Chair)
Tijana Delić Kolo Srpski SestaraS and British Serbian Chamber of Commerce
Milica Dunjak, Individual
Marko Gašić Serbian Orthodox Church , London
Misha Gavrilović Individual
Natasha Kocsis Serbian City Club
Siniša Krajčinović British Serbian Chamber of Commerce
Cezar Kulaj Serbian City Club
Maja Jordan Serbian council of Great Britain
Angelina Lazar Individual
Dragan Macura, London Sports Society and Serbian Society
P J Marić Individual
Zvezdana Popović Individual
Olga Stanojlović Serbian Council of Great Britain
Dragana Tomašević Jasenovac and Holocaust Memorial Fund
Zeljko Vraneš Pokret Rod
Lazar Vuković Serbian Council of Great Britain and UK&I Delegate

2. Apologies

Avram Balabanović British Serbian Chamber of Commerce
Jovica Bozić Individual Serbian Orthodox Church
Ilija Čalinja
Jadranka Dervišević Kitarić British Serbian Chamber of Commerce
Mirjana Lazić Individual
Ivan Miletić Serbian City Club
Mirjana Ognjanović Counsellor Serbian Embassy
Vesna Petković Serbian Society
Žika Petrović Serbian Medical Association
Svetislav Savić
Aleks Simić Britić
Miloš Stefanović Serbian City Club
Zaga Townsend Individual

Those at the meeting wished to express their condolences to Aleks Simić and his family whose father had passed away earlier this month.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

Agreed

4. Matters Arising

None

5. **Community Fund for the Diaspora and funding of the Round Table and Round Table Events** Maya Milanković – Atkinson reported that the difficulty in finding funding to cover the costs of the Event to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the NATO War on FRY highlighted the need for funding for RT and community events. Natasha Kocsis said that it had proved impossible to get everyone together for a meeting of the Round Table Working Group on Fundraising to develop a policy for fundraising and obtaining grants from British grant awarding foundations and to set open and transparent procedures and processes for the distribution of any funds raised .to fund initiatives which were agreed at the Round Table. It was **agreed** that this should also cover the funding of the Round Table. There was discussion as to what was the best organisational option to facilitate fundraising and if any existing established organisations could be used e.g. Serbian Society which was an established charity, or Jasenovac & Holocaust Foundation which had a COI arm. It was **agreed** that a paper should be produced by 31 October 2019 which would put forward a policy and options for consideration at the autumn meeting of the Round Table.
6. **Serbian Month** Maya Jordan reported that this had been the most difficult Serbian Month to organise. This was largely due to three events at the Embassy being cancelled at two weeks notice because of a refurbishment programme. The cancellation of rooms at such short notice resulted in the cancellation of the Jasenovac and Holocaust Foundation's event which had been planned a year in advance, damaged the organisation's reputation with VIPs who had been invited and resulted in cancellation fees. It also resulted in a delay and increased costs for the printing of the catalogue. The organisers of Serbian Month felt that the Embassy's actions had shown a lack of understanding for Serbian Month and the Serbian community in Britain and a letter had been sent to the Ambassador outlining the Round Table's concerns and suggesting a meeting to discuss the issues involved. The letter had not been well received and the Embassy was unwilling to proceed with a meeting. The unfortunate circumstances were noted and it was **agreed** no further action should be taken.

Maya went on to discuss the next Serbian Month, for which no funding would be available from Serbia. Maya suggested a fundraising concert by Paprika to raise funds to enable us to print the catalogue. This was **agreed** as was Maya's suggestion that the catalogue should be printed earlier so that costs were lower. This would mean that the programme for Serbian Month should be a supplement which could be slipped into the catalogue or distributed separately. Maya also informed the meeting that Dejan Brkić, SCGB was organising advertisements which would appear in the catalogue and

sponsorship for the catalogue and that if anyone had any suggestions they should forward them to Dejan.

7. Serbian Language

- a. **Serbian GCSE Level Course** 31 pupils from Birmingham , Bristol, Leicester, London and Oxford sat the exams in February 2019 and received the best results to date 19A*s, 9As,1B, 1C and 1D .Pupils received their certificates at an Award Ceremony held on 21st June at the Kensington Aldridge Academy. Roksanda Ilincic, the world famous fashion designer presented the certificates to the pupils in front of an audience of around 100 people including Her Excellency the Serbian Ambassador and His Grace Bishop Dositej. A joyful and moving celebration.
- b. **Azbukum GCSE Foundation and Higher Level Course** As agreed at the last Round Table Meeting the RTWGSL has been working in partnership with the Azbukum Centre in Serbia to deliver the Azbukum recognised qualification at GCSE Foundation and Higher Level. We hope to recruit sufficient pupils for the course to begin teaching it in late September- have advertised course in Britic, at events and through the RT but need to recruit more pupils to make ensure the course is financially viable. Hope to arrange a recruitment meeting at the Embassy in September but would welcome assistance from those organisations and individuals represented on the RT to recruit pupils.
- c. **Britic Survey** commissioned by SCC to try and ascertain if there is a market for Serbian language courses . Natasha to say something?
- d. **Teacher Training** Six teachers are being trained to deliver theAzbukum course. A six week theoretical training course, delivered on-line and by Skype and then observation and evaluation programme of 3 to 10 days at the Azbukum Centre in Serbia. This is building up the cadre of Serbian language teachers in Britain and enhancing their skills and knowledge through continuing professional development. Course is open to linguists and non-linguists.
- e. **Dopunska Skola** Teacher recruited but still trying to obtain a visa for her. School would be based in Corby.

Dragana Tomasević suggested holding classes in Serbian for younger pupils at the breakfast or after school club at Christ the Saviour Church of England Primary School in Ealing. It was **agreed** that this should be investigated since it did not undermine the St Sava Church School.

8. **Event to Commemorate 20th Anniversary of NATO's War on Yugoslavia** Misha Gavrilović reported that the event was not only a commemoration but also a discussion on NATO's War on FRY. It attracted a wide British and Serbian audience of 160, many of whom had responded to personal invitations from Marko Gasić or Misha Gavrilović rather than the on-line PR for the event and this should be

borne in mind when organising similar events. Marko and Misha were responsible for organising speakers for the event, which included British speakers. The audience feedback on the event was positive and the meeting thanked Marko and Misha and the RT Steering Group for organising the event and Zorka Maksimović was congratulated on her moving recitation of the poem and Zvezdana Popović for the exhibition which accompanied the event. A video of the demonstrations in London held at the time of the bombing was not shown at the event and could form the focus of a future meeting.

A personal statement, copy attached, was read out from Miloš Stefanović who was unable to attend the meeting. Milos felt that it was important to remember the events of twenty years ago because they have helped define our common identity but and that now it was time to consider the events of 1999 afresh and have an open dialogue amongst ourselves.

Misha drew the Round Table's attention to the 'Remembering Srebrenica' charity , which receives funding from the government and Saudi's and which has organised over 330 events to coincide with the EU recognised Srebrenica Memorial Day on 11 July.2019. Dragana Tomašević highlighted the need for guidance on how to manage discussions on Srebrenica.

Dragan Macura reported that Westminster Library services had refused to allow the Serbian Library talk by Dr Marcus Papadopolous 'Serbia and the West – friends or foes?', 'to be held on the premises of Fulham Library following a complaint by a Bosnian member of the public. The talk had gone ahead at the church hall and the organisers were writing to Westminster Council to protest about their decision.

It was **agreed** that the Round Table Working Group on Remembrance Days should be convened by Misha to develop a strategy for holding commemorative events to ensure that they have as much impact as possible.

9. **Serbian Cultural Centre** Natasha reported that the government and embassy realised that the premises required a lot more work than was originally anticipated. It is not clear if refurbishment work has started but it is unlikely that the premises will be available for the next Serbian Month. Once the situation is clearer it was **agreed** that we should feed in our views on how the **cultural centre** could best be used .
10. **All Party Parliamentary Group on Serbia** Natasha said there were no further developments since the last report. Members of the APPF had been invited to the commemoration event and the Award Ceremony and had been sent copies of the Serbian Month catalogue. It was felt it might be best to approach the APPG on issues where they could have influence e.g. the re-introduction of a Serbian language GCSE and A Level.

11. Working Together More Effectively Lazar Vuković reported that it was important that the Round table involved and represented the Serbian community outside of London. He had suggested that we should hold Round Table meetings in cities which had large Serbian communities e.g. Leicester, Birmingham, Oxford or Halifax. It was **agreed** that the next meeting should be held outside of London and that the possibilities of using skype to involve a wider audience be investigated.

12. Presentation of the Book Jasenovac – the Auschwitz Zeljko Vraneš reported that Pokret Rod had exclusive rights to promote the book by Gideon Grief. Dragana informed the meeting that the Jasenovac and Holocaust Foundation hoped to have him as a guest speaker to the Holocaust Memorial day event planned for January 2020 however funding for the event was required. It was **agreed** it would be sensible to combine both events and that the event was added to the list of events requiring funding for Serbian Month.

13. Any Other Business

- a. **BSCC** Siniša Krajčinović reported that BSCC had gone through a period of inactivity following the death of Sir Paul Judge, the previous Director. Dr David Landsman had been appointed as the new Director and this would enable the organisation to be more active and effective.
- b. **Memorial Service for Women from Foreign Missions in Serbia in WW1** Zvezdana Popovic reported that the next memorial Service would feature Flora Sandes or another member of the Scottish Women's hospital and likely speakers would be Alan Cumming or Louise Miller.

Appendix 1

Personal statement by Miloš Stefanović

Poštovani predstavnici srpskih organizacija okupljenih oko Okruglog stola,

Dozvolite mi da se u svoje lično ime obratim na temu Komemoracije bombardovanja Jugoslavije održane 10.juna ovde u našoj Crkvi u Londonu. Zbog drugih obaveza nažalost nisam u stanju da ovo viđenje vam lično predočim, pa sam zamolio Natašu Kočiš koja ko-rukovodi Srpskim siti klubom da vam se u moje ime obrati.

Pre svega, želeo bih da se zahvalim Miši Gavriloviću i Marku Gašiću, ali i brojnim drugim učesnicima i domaćinima, na organizaciji Komemoracije. Mislim da svako ko je preživeo tih 78 dana tako što su mu bombe padale na glavu ili je pak nemoćno gledao kroz medije kako te iste bombe padaju na glave članova uže i šire porodice, prijatelja, rodbine, komšija, pa na kraju krajeva, zemljaka i sugrađana, ne može da ostane imun na sve što smo kao zajednica i pojedinci prošli. Zato je dobro da nastavimo da se podsećamo i prisećamo tih dana, jer oni u velikoj meri definišu naš zajednički identitet i dostojanstvo.

Narativ Komemoracije međutim ni posle 20 godina se nije promenio i to je ono što me je ponukalo da podignem svoj glas, a verujem i glas drugih, koji smatraju da je možda došlo vreme da se s malo više odstojanja posmotre dati događaji iz 1999.godine, te da se komemorativni skup iskoristi za otvaranje dijaloga i diskusije između nas samih u ovoj našoj maloj zajednici. Naime, težnja nije da se na bilo koji način revidira istorija, kako bi se sam čin bombardovanja na ovaj ili onaj način opravdao. Ne. Cilj međutim mora biti da svako od nas dobije šansu da iznese svoje mišljenje o tom zlokobnom periodu, za koje verujem da u velikoj meri će biti lično i dostojanstveno, a ne zavedeno od strane bilo koje propagandne mašinerije, bilo BBC ili RT. Predlog je da ovakve skupove ubuduće iskoristimo za slobodnu debatu, a ne zarad ponovnog slušanja monologa. Ne slaže se svako da je Srbija samo branila svoju kuću i svoje stanovnike tokom 78-dnevnog rata. Dok su ginuli heroji na Košarama, neko je hladnjačama prevezio mrtve Albance sve do Batajnice. Zašto? Svi znamo za UN rezoluciju 1244, kojom smo de fakto potpisali kapitulaciju i vrlo moguć de jure gubitak Kosova i Metohije. Ali malo ko više obraća pažnju na UN rezoluciju 1160 iz marta 1998.godine kojom su nam ponovo uvedene sankcije zbog prekomerne vojne i policijske intervencije na Kosovu i Metohiji. Bilo je tu još niz UN rezolucija, čiji su potpisnici bili predstavnici i Rusije i Kine. Znači, svet je bio protiv nas, a ne samo ta prokleta Amerika.

Diskusija 10.juna nije bila samo na temu Komemoracije, nego mnogo šira, što u velikoj meri postavlja pitanje legitimnosti govornika i njihovih gostiju po tim drugim temama. Na primer, svi na bini su odreda denuncirali rad Haškog tribunala, kao anti-srpskog, anti-istorijskog i, na kraju krajeva, anti-istinitog. I svi su u velikoj meri bili u pravu. Međutim, građu i sakupljene dokaze će pravnici i istoričari još decenijama da analiziraju, tako da se ne može reći da je tribunal bio totalno beskoristan. Lično sam vrlo redovno pratio rad Tribunala, te mi je u pamćenju ostao momenat kada se srpski general JNA rasplakao prilikom izricanja presude na višegodišnju robiju zbog uništavanja Dubrovnika, moleći sve majke, hrvatske i srpske, za oproštaj što su im sinovi bespotrebno ostavili kosti na obroncima iznad grada.

Nemojmo da zaboravimo da su alternativa Haškom tribunalu bili domaći sudovi u bilo kojim od država ex-Jugoslavije. Skor rada tih sudova na istragama i osuđivanjem ratnih zločinaca kojih je, svi se bar u tome slažu, bilo na svim stranama sukoba, je skoro pa nikakav. Primer iz Srbije je da, prema dosadašnjim rezultatima, niti jedan Arkanovac nije osuđen od strane države Srbije. Za druge strane da ne govorimo. Kada i u kom trenutku će naša društvena svest dostići taj nivo gde ćemo kao zajednica smoći snage da pre svega pogledamo sebe u ogledalu u velikoj meri zavisi od nas samih. Biti slobodan je biti svestan svojih vrlina, ali i svojih mana. Stalno izigravanje žrtve nije način da se do te slobode dođe.

Hvala još jednom,

Miloš

