

Obnova spomeničke baštine Hrvatske i Alma Mater Alumni Croatiae u SAD

Agresija na Hrvatsku 1991. godine, koja još uvijek traje, rezultirala je, uz ljudske žrtve i materijalne štete, i katastrofalnom destrukcijom hrvatske spomeničke baštine, uništavanjem ambijentalnih cjelina, naselja i gradova. Istodobno je, odmah od početka, pokrenula i mnoge akcije za zaštitu i obnovu baštine. Može se reći da su, također, gotovo svi hrvatski intelektualci u inozemstvu (iznimke su zanemarive) promijenili svoje radne i životne navike, pa i neke principe - kao, na primjer, nemiješanje u "politička" pitanja - i pokrenuli ili se uključili u jedinstveni pokret pomoći Hrvatskoj. Odjednom su se na međunarodnoj javnoj sceni pojavili deseci, pa i stotine priznatih i poznatih intelektualaca - potpuno asimiliranih u novoj sredini - koji su počeli javno ispovijedati svoje hrvatsko porijeklo i pripadnost, zahtijevati priznanje hrvatske državne nezavisnosti i izražavati potporu naporima u ostvarivanju novoga demokratskog sustava, a protiv srpske agresije. Zbog njihova ugleda, nepobitnog humanističkog morala i inteligencije s kojom su nastupali, njihova je djelatnost bila neusporedivo efikasnija od mnogih dotadašnjih akcija u formiranju (i preformiranju) javnog mnijenja u zemljama Zapada, koje nije baš uvijek bilo naklonjeno Hrvatima. Naročito se to odnosi na priznato najvišu klasu intelektualaca, na znanstvenike i profesore na sveučilištima, istraživače u institutima i ostalim znanstvenim ustanovama.

U to sam se uvjerio za svoga jednomjesečnog boravka u SAD i Kanadi, u tijeku siječnja i veljače 1992. godine, kada je upravo taj proces previranja, nastupa nove generacije i profila boraca za hrvatska prava bio u punom jeku: o toj su pozitivnoj promjeni najsuggestivnije svjedočili sami Amerikanci, naši kolege.

Ali, hrvatski sveučilišni intelektualci pomagali su jednako tako u širenju objektivnih informacija o Hrvatskoj kao i materijalno, u organiziranju, prikupljanju i slanju pomoći u robi i novcu. Radni sati koje su uložili u tu djelatnost i sume što su ih pojedinci i grupe odvajali i slali u domovinu, u proporciji s njihovim primanjima, nadilaze sve što sam ikada čuo da bi se za bilo koju svrhu i u bilo kojoj situaciji skupljalo u Hrvatskoj. Nakon povratka ustanovio sam da ni u objektivnom informiranju, a kamoli u priznanju i zahvalnosti, nismo bili na razini onoga što su naši prekomorski kolege učinili za nas.

U Ameriku me je pozvala poznata zaklada za zaštitu i obnovu kulturnog nasljeđa, koja djeluje u čitavom svijetu, World Monuments Fund, sa sjedištem u New Yorku, da u toku tjedan dana održim dva predavanja, konferenciju za novinare i nekoliko radnih sastanaka s ekspertima fondacije WMF radi razmatranja mogućnosti njihova sudjelovanja u zaštiti ugroženog i obnovi uništenoga spomeničkog blaga. Pozvala me kao predavača i na konzultativni razgovor o mogućnostima pružanja pomoći i glasovita fondacija The Getty Conservation Institute, Marina del Rey, Kalifornija.

Medutim, smatram najvažnijim da izvijestim o onom dijelu svoga putovanja koje nije bilo organizirano ni financirano od američkih fondacija ni od našeg Ministarstva kulture (koje je snosilo putne troškove do New Yorka i natrag), nego je obuhvaćalo mjesec dana putovanja od jednog sveučilišta do drugog na istočnoj i zapadnoj obali SAD i Kanadi (New York University; Pierson College, Yale, New Haven; Connecticut Coll. New London; Wesleyan Univ., Middletown; Cambridge

The Restoration of Croatia's historical Heritage and Alma Mater Alumni Croatiae in the U.S.A.

The aggression launched against Croatia in 1991 - which is still in progress - resulted, apart from the human victims and material damage, in the catastrophic destruction of the Croatian cultural heritage, the annihilation of entire urban complexes, villages and towns. At the same time, however, from the very outset, numerous campaigns were mounted to protect and restore that heritage. It may also be said that almost all Croatian graduates (with a negligible number of exceptions) changed their mode of life and work, as well as certain of their principles - as, for instance, their reluctance to be involved in "political" issues - launching and joining in a common effort to help Croatia. All at once there appeared on the international scene scores, indeed hundred, of distinguished and well-known academics - totally assimilated into their new setting - who began to declare in public their Croatian origins, calling for recognition of the independence of the Croatian state and expressing their support for attempts to create a new democratic system, as well as their opposition to Serbian aggression. In view of their standing in the community, their undeniably humanitarian outlook and their intelligent approach, their activity was incomparably more efficacious than previous campaigns in shaping (and re-shaping) public opinion in Western countries, which had not always been favourable to the Croats. This applied in particular to the acknowledged highest class of graduates and academics - scientists and professors at the universities, research workers in institutes and other scientific establishments.

I was able to convince myself that this was the case during a month's stay in the United States and Canada in the course of January and February 1992, when this process of fermentation, the emergence of a new generation and type of campaigner for Croatian rights was in full swing: it was the Americans themselves, our colleagues, who most convincingly testified to this change for the better.

Croatian graduates at the universities helped in disseminating objective information about Croatia as well as in the organisation of material aid, the collection and despatch of cash and goods. The hours of hard work which they devoted to this activity, and the sums which individuals and groups subscribed and sent to their native land, in relation to their income, far exceeded anything I had ever heard of as being collected in Croatia for any purpose and in any situation whatsoever. On my return I discovered that we had by no means matched in terms of publicity - much less in acknowledgement and gratitude - what our overseas colleagues had done for us.

In America I was invited by the famous foundation for the preservation and restoration of the cultural heritage, The World Monuments Fund, in New York to give two lectures and to hold a press conference in the course of a single week, and also to join a number of working sessions with experts from the WMF foundation with a view to exploring the possibility of their participation in protecting our threatened cultural treasures, and in restoring what has been damaged or destroyed. I was invited by the famous Getty Conservation Institute, Marina del Rey, California, to lecture and to join in consultations on the possibility that the Institute might assist us.

However, I consider that my most important duty is to report on that part of my itinerary that was not organised or financed by American foundations or by our own Ministry of Culture (which met the cost of travel to New York and back), but which comprised

- Harvard, Boston; State historical society Wisconsin, Madison; McGill Univ., Montreal; Univ. of Toronto; Univ. of Washington, Seattle; UCLA Los Angeles, i još neka). Sve su to organizirali bivši studenti Zagrebačkog sveučilišta u Americi i Kanadi (Almae Matris Croaticae Alumni) u različitim organizacijama i podružnicama, te podružnica Atlasa u New Yorku (N. Komarica), a koordinator je bila S. Mežnarić sa sveučilišta u Madisonu, Wisconsin.

U svojim predavanjima nastojao sam iskoristiti probudeni interes slušatelja za sudbinu Hrvatske usmjerujući ga prije svega upoznavanju bogatstva, vrijednosti i značenja hrvatske umjetničke baštine, a tek potom o dimenziji destrukcije i problemima obnove kulturnog nasljeđa ("nije važno samo koliko smo izgubili, nego i što smo mi i čitava kulturna zajednica time izgubili"). U diskusijama i razgovorima nakon predavanja u svim su sredinama postavljali pitanja kako bi nam i čime mogli pomoći. Nakon brojnih razočaranja, o kojima su mi pričali naši iseljenici, koji često nisu dobivali ni potvrdu da je njihova pomoć primljena, a kamoli zahvalu ili, što je najvažnije, obavijest kako je raspoređena i u što je upotrijebljena - smatrao sam da je jedino moralno od naših kolega s američkih sveučilišta zamoliti pomoć u nečemu što je dugoročna investicija namijenjena zaštiti i obnovi hrvatske baštine, što će služiti u znanstveno-istraživačke svrhe i za usavršavanje mladih kadrova. A to znači, pomoć u kompletiranju opreme suvremenom kompjutorskom i video tehnikom središnjega hrvatskog Instituta za povijest umjetnosti u Zagrebu, koji je i do sada imao najbogatiju i najcjelovitiju dokumentaciju o gradovima i spomenicima arhitekture u Hrvatskoj, što je bilo od neprocjenjive koristi i za procjenu štete i kao podloga za izradu projekata obnove. Nadajući se da bi nam od potrebne opreme za prošireno područje istraživanja s obzirom na ratna razaranja i potrebno intenziviranje rada u vezi s obnovom mogli pomoći djelomičnim doprinosom, bio sam ugodno iznenađen kada je gospođa Marija "Manana" Banac, predsjednica "Društva prijatelja i bivših studenata Sveučilišta u Zagrebu", odlučila da će organizirati prikupljanje sredstava za cjelokupnu planiranu opremu u visini od 40.000 US dolara. (Riječ je o Ogranku za Novu Englesku, New Haven, Connecticut, ali to je zapravo ono što svi mi poznamo pod kratkim imenom Yale University). Izvanrednom organizacijskom sposobnošću i požrtvovnim radom gospođa Banac i ostali članovi odbora, uz priloge ostalih podružnica AMAC-a, uspjeli su prikupiti veći dio potrebnih sredstava, i u najskorije vrijeme Institut za povijest umjetnosti u Zagrebu može očekivati svoju novu opremu. Zahvaljujući im i ovom prilikom na pomoći bilježim ovo kao jedan od mnogih primjera međusobne suradnje bivših studenata Zagrebačkog sveučilišta u Americi - jer se osjećaju kao jedna velika obitelj i razvijaju svoje veze sve intenzivnije i korisnije za razvoj znanosti u nas i ugled Hrvatske u svijetu.

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a month's tour from university to university on the eastern and western seaboard of the United States and Canada (New York University; Pierson College, Yale, New Haven; Connecticut College, New London; Wesleyan University, Middletown; Cambridge - Harvard, Boston; State Historical Society Wisconsin, Madison; McGill University, Montreal; University of Toronto; University of Washington, Seattle; UCLA, Los Angeles, and a number of others). The tour was arranged by former students of the University of Zagreb now living in the United States and Canada (Almae Matris Croaticae Alumni) through their various organisations and branches, as well as by the Atlas branch office in New York (N. Komarica), with S. Mežnarić of the University in Madison, Wisconsin, acting as co-ordinator.

In my talks I tried to take advantage of my listeners' recently aroused interest in the fate of Croatia, drawing their attention especially to the abundance, the merit and the importance of Croatia's artistic heritage, and only then describing the scale of the destruction and the problems involved in restoring our cultural heritage ("what matters is not just how much we have lost, but what that loss means to us and to the entire cultural community") In discussions and conversations following my lectures in all the centres I visited, questions were asked as to how and by what channels help might be given. After the many disappointments reported by our compatriots abroad, who had often not even had an acknowledgement that their aid had been received, much less any thanks, or - what is more important - any indication of how it had been distributed and used, I came to the conclusion that we had a moral obligation to ask our colleagues at American universities for assistance in an area which would be a long-term investment in the protection and restoration of the Croatian national heritage - something that would serve the purposes of scientific research and the training of young qualified personnel. This would involve in fact the augmentation of our available equipment by the provision of computer and video techniques in the central Croatian Institute of Art History in Zagreb, which has hitherto held the most abundant and complete records of towns and historical monuments in Croatia. These records have proved to be of inestimable value in assessing war damage and as a basis for restoration projects. Hoping merely that our friends in America might contribute in part to the cost of equipment needed for more thorough research into problems connected with war damage and more effective restoration work, I was agreeably surprised when Mrs Marija "Manana" Banac, the chairwoman of the "Association of Friends and Former Students of Zagreb University" decided to organise the collection of funds to meet the entire cost of the equipment we had planned to acquire, amounting to 40,000 US dollars. The organisation involved was the branch located in New England, New Haven, Connecticut, but that is in fact the whole area we know by the name of Yale University. Thanks to the superb organisational skills and the devoted labours of Mrs. Banac, together with other members of the committee, and donations from other branches of Alma Mater Alumni Croatiae, the major part of the money was raised in the shortest possible time, and the Institute of Art History in Zagreb may expect to get its new equipment. In thanking those responsible for helping us on this occasion, I would like to record this as one example among many of the joint co-operation of former students of Zagreb University in America - who feel themselves to be members of one large family and who are keen to develop even closer and more effective links with the aim of promoting scientific endeavour in our country and improving the standing of Croatia in the world at large.

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