

such regimes and who find themselves acting cruelly and violently out of fear for their own lives. But I don't want my leaders to be humanistic if that implies pacifism in the face of evil. The Hitlers, Saddams and Slobodans don't want to mediate. Why should they? They have to be beaten on their own terms. We have to use force to counter force. We also have to be clear about our determination to do so, as soon as we see a dictator removing the human rights of his citizens. That is where the West makes mistakes: by holding back and vacillating.

As Maxine said in her piece, 'the collective and personal mirror one another.' As a young mother, and latterly as an old grandmother, I kept on learning the importance of being firm, clear and consistent about what was allowed and what was not allowed, right from the very beginning. That way, we all felt safe. That way, one severe reprimand or punishment did for a long time. The other way, we were all over the place — often upset, never quite knowing what could be got away with, sometimes being frighteningly angry,

which made us all feel bad. I think that this family pattern can be usefully transposed to international relations. I believe the lack of will to punish evil dictators properly at the beginning leads to the position where we have to use evil ourselves in a long drawn out and messy way.

It is also useful to transpose some ideas about individual therapy to therapy for the human race in general. Do you remember Alice Miller's books? She pointed out that one of the mitigating circumstances in cases of child abuse was when an adult had witnessed the event and had expressed the view that this was *not* all right. I believe that this is something that we, as humanistic practitioners, can do. We can speak our minds. We can bear witness. And not when it is too late, but at the first sign of evil in the world. To do this we need a forum.

My omission was not to be the observing witness in 1991. Now in 1999 I have found a forum for my confession. Perhaps there could be a space set aside in the pages of *Self & Society* for bringing to wider attention anything we see in the world around us that is antithetical to life.

Feeling like a Refugee

Dani Dale

In some ways I feel like a refugee, for I am not sure where I belong or where I should call home. England, or the former Yugoslavia. I have only ever lived in England; in fact, you may call me a 'good old

Yorkshire lass'. You may wonder what I am talking about; I wonder myself sometimes.

This is about identity and about who I am or believe to be. There is nothing

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Anglo-Saxon about me. I was born of two displaced persons following the last world war, Serbians who have lived in England for more than fifty years. Even from an early age I began to feel different. I am different. My parents spoke to me in Serbo-Croat and everybody else spoke to me in English. I learned two languages at the same time. When I was young I hated it. As I became older I became proud of my bilinguality. I could speak to all my aunts, uncles and cousins in Yugoslavia. I even had a boyfriend there.

I have only been to Yugoslavia seven times. The last time was twelve years ago, to my cousin's wedding. I always felt very connected to these people. Their culture was different to the one I was living in and yet I always felt as though I had come home and that I was only visiting England.

As I grew older I did not hide my identity. I became proud of the fact that I was different, something which had embarrassed me previously. I am Serbian. I could not live there because life is so hard and equality for women is but a dream. The life is much harder than it is here.

In recent years during my training I began to know myself better, and I realised that although I was born in England there was not much that was English about me. The blood running through my veins is Serbian, as is my skin, my hair and my emotions. I felt very comfortable, and I was happy to know who I was. I was proud to be Serbian.

I am no longer proud and stay quiet as I have already learnt that in times of conflict it is not easy to explain to others who you are. I am not proud of what some Serbs are doing.

Sixty days ago bombs began to fall on

my parents' home country. I cried as I watched, dumbfounded, in front of the television. I rang my parents, my mother was crying. What was this about? Serbians were being bombed. What had we done? We were here and it felt as if we also were being bombed. What had we done? Suddenly I no longer knew who I was. Thrown into confusion, I listened to the propaganda from the two countries that I regarded as mine. I spoke to my relatives on the telephone, everything seeming unreal. What had they ever done to NATO countries?

I heard about massacre and ethnic Albanians. I understood that this must be stopped, but all I saw was NATO doing Milosevic's job of removing the unwanted from the land that Serbia calls its own. I asked why nothing was done to help the Kurds and all the other ethnic groups that were being massacred around the world?

America! It seems to me that America likes wars. It gets involved in lots of wars that are not on the American continent. What is all this about? Have we learnt nothing in fifty years?

I worry about my notion of 'bully boy tactics' and the prospect of a ground war. I ask myself, 'do I believe the writing of Nostradamus?' Probably. I wonder if one of my relatives will be killed and I wonder how I will deal with this? My people are killing my people? Within me I find the English, the Serbian and the Universalist. Everybody is wrong. Everybody is right. Is there no solution? This is not about the politics of the situation, it is about me. The therapist living beside the Leeds/Liverpool Canal minding her own business.

A couple of weeks after the war began I went to Cyprus on holiday. When I told the

Greeks that I was a Serb, they kissed me. They like the Serbs. Students were collecting on the streets of Limasol, their T shirts read 'Help for Serbia'. I shared a taxi with a UN soldier. He was so young, I asked him to keep the peace and for God to bless him. The night I was leaving Cyprus I met six Serbian children from Belgrade. They had come to escape the NATO bombs. Their father was left behind; no male above the age of eighteen was allowed to leave Serbia. How must it feel to think that you may never see your father again? Two of the children were nearly eighteen, they said that on coming of age they would go back to fight. The look in their eyes was frightening. I spoke to them in English, only later telling them about myself. The eldest boy asked me how I felt about it all. I told him I did not know who I was any more. I did not know which side was mine.

I thought, these children are no different to the Kosovo children, in so much as they had to flee their homes. What was the difference? I gave them some money. I had to leave them something. I told them never to forget that not all the English were bad. I felt rather foolish. The eldest boy looked into my soul and said 'please tell the English that the Serbs are not all bad either'. I felt as though my heart had been ripped from my body as the tears rose to my eyes.

As times passed during this period, emotions began to overwhelm me. They began to feel like the emotions of a collective unconscious. Can anyone else understand my emotions, the turmoil within, the uncertainty of everyday turning into yesterdays? As I tried to make sense of it all I felt that I was slowly becoming unbalanced. I began considering whether I needed therapy before it all got

worse. I chose to do some psychosynthesis with my colleague. After an afternoon of imagework, it was sorted. What became clear to me was that it doesn't matter who I am at this time, neither English nor Serbian. I just am.

I wonder if I will ever be able to see Serbia again. To my relatives I am their English cousin. To certain English people I am a foreigner. To my close friends, who can fully see my dominant Eastern European traits within my personality, my passion and my expressiveness, I am the Serbian terrorist. We laugh. Somehow it puts things into perspective. I am able to see that I am powerless and maybe that was what it was all about. Not being able to do anything. Not knowing what to do but pray.

So what is the answer? Is there one? The Serbs have waited hundreds of years for this. If NATO wins, will they wait hundreds of years to get back the land they call their own? It never ends. It was the wrong nation to go up against. I don't know who I am. I weep for Serbia being destroyed by NATO bombs. I weep for refugees being massacred by Serbian militia. I weep for the KLA who are fighting for what they believe in. I weep for the Serbian army fighting for what they also believe in.

What do I think? I think I may not vote in the next election. I think that I would not buy a car from NATO. I think that the only thing that I can do is look to the sky and pray 'our Father'. So, that is who I am then, God's child. That must be enough for me. As I bounce between grief, frustration, bewilderment and laughter at the idiocy of it all, my lesson is how to be me. My identity, autonomous, unconnected to any other groups of labels. Would you want to be me?