Like some mystical command, the slogan 'spiritual renewal' rings out louder and louder although no one has yet managed to explain what it means. If all it means is the return to some values we already had in Croatia, then the failure is double: for neither were spiritual and social values that would satisfy the demands of the present ever completely attained in Croatia, nor can renewal be fruitful if all it does is restore the old without giving birth to anything new. The Renaissance renewed the spirit of classical times, but it also gave birth to new self-confidence and the spirit of freedom. The romantics renewed ancient folk myths, but they were in fact building the foundations of the modern nation.

In my opinion Croatia's spiritual renewal should begin by discarding the ballast of the past. Spiritual life in Croatia was never free in the full sense of that word: first it was for a long time oppressed by foreign domination, and then for half a century by two totalitarian systems and induced totalitarian consciousness. Communist totalitarianism was ingloriously buried in Europe, with no broadside from the battleship *Aurora*. In some places it adapted and transformed itself in time, in others it is still hiding helpless and diffident, calling itself something different. If it does not come back to life in Russia, its physical death will coincide with its spiritual death, which seems final. 'Class consciousness', 'socialist morale', 'liberation of labour' and 'alienation of the personality' seem to have disappeared without trace; it is as if we had never had 'associated labour', 'self-management socialist democracy' and the 'plurality of self-management interests'. Communist symbols have been obliterated without a word of protest and the 'giants of socialist thought' are losing their promenades, streets and squares, centres, schools and singing societies — from Karl Marx and August Bebel to Vladimir Bakarić and Moša Pijade. The ideology of communism capitulated suddenly, without resistance, and no one here is fighting to inherit its mantle.

Fascism was physically buried much earlier, more dramatically and more bloodily, but in Croatia its will and testament has unfortunately not yet been probated. The basic document (the preamble to the Constitution) of the new Croatian state explicitly distanced itself from the *ustasha* Independent State of Croatia, but various public political speeches, and even some of the actions of republican and local governmental bodies, are often infiltrated with the revival of certain *ustasha* ideas and symbols and the rehabilitation of certain personalities and even that state itself. It is difficult to discern the motives for this unnecessary and self-destructive burdening of the present with the past: if we discard thoughts that make our blood run cold with horror, i.e. that someone is deliberately sabotaging in the interest of Slobodan Milošević and trying to compromise
today’s Croatian state, for comfort we are left with the conclusion that it is only
the blindness and stupidity of a relatively small number of ustasha nostalgics who
are aggressively imposing their anachronistic sentiments on the new state and thus
renewing old and introducing new dissent among the people. From its beginnings
in 1933 the ustasha movement in its Ustasha Principles openly promoted, and
later as a government implemented, everything that today’s modern civilized
world rejects with fear and revulsion as the great tragedy of the twentieth
century: national intolerance, dictatorship as a system, the cult of the sacrosanct
leader, antiliberalism and antidemocracy; it stifled all civil liberties and
proclaimed and implemented terrorism as a means of political policy and state
government. Today’s generations, especially those that have invested their lives
in Croatia, do not deserve to be burdened by any part of that dark consciousness
that once brought distress to Croatia fifty years ago, and is threatening to do so
again.

Whatever we perceive as spiritual renewal, it will not stand a chance if it
is inspired by neo-ustasha concepts or any other offshoot of the totalitarian
consciousness, but only by liberation from them. Totalitarian consciousness is
tenacious and obstinately resistant, obviously capable of surviving the totalitarian
systems it created. It cunningly penetrates the mind and social and individual
behaviour. It behaves arrogantly and aggressively but in fact paranoidly fears
freedom. Possessive when it wields the power of coercion, totalitarian conscious-
ness takes possession of school and profession, art, language and science, the
press and public life, institutions and private life. It pays no attention to the
widespread human resistance of people yearning for freedom, against which it
acts in a wide spectrum ranging from repression and censorship - as the most
primitive forms - to self-censorship and other inhibitions that have the severest
and most long-lasting repercussions.

Those with a totalitarian consciousness do not understand their fellow men.
They only hear their own voices, self-sufficient and final, coldly insensitive to the
suffering they cause, blind to the intermeshing of life and human reaction, short-
sighted as to long-term consequences. When they do not wield the power of
coercion, they cling to ideas and ideologies with a chameleon-like capacity for
superficial adaptation. In Croatia the totalitarian consciousness no longer operates
in the name of class, social justice and international solidarity, but in the name
of the state and nation. Its effects can be equally destructive.

After 1945 people resisting the totalitarian consciousness in Croatia were
rarely courageous enough to act publicly in an organized manner, but were
persistent in the quiet defence of the private and professional sphere. Going to
church and practising religion were a form of resistance that preserved respect
for some important moral norms among the general public. The individual efforts
of many people who tried to preserve professional ethics in schools, courts,
among attorneys, in scholarship, as far as possible in the economy and in other
professions, diluted the totalitarian consciousness and even the system itself.
Already in 1952 (Krieža’s paper at the Congress of Writers in Ljubljana, the

Helsinki Monitor 1994 Special Issue