

Way of unificationist in Croatia after war

I was born in a beautiful city on the banks of the Danube in 1969.

I remember a wonderful childhood and many good friends during school.

Unfortunately, during the Croatian Homeland War in 1991, there was a division between Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs, on national and religious grounds.

Many Serbs in Croatia actively supported or participated in the military attack on Croatia.

During the war, Vukovar, a town on the border with Serbia with 45,000 inhabitants before the war, was fiercely attacked and bombed for 3 months, and about 2,000 people were killed (including a hundred children) and several thousand were wounded.

In 1991, Vukovar was occupied and under the occupation of Serbian forces until 1998 and its peaceful reintegration under the control of the UN.

Almost all Croatian residents of Vukovar were forced to leave the city in 1991, under threat of force.

In 1998, the Croatian residents of the city returned, and many Serbian residents of the city left the city forever because they did not want to live under Croatian rule.

After that, Vukovar, like Belfast in Northern Ireland, became a deeply divided city, on national and religious grounds.

Serbs and Croats go to separate kindergartens, separate schools, cafes... mutual distrust and resentment, and hatred, are great.

I have often wondered what I can do personally to change such a situation, how to take at least one positive step towards the unification of Croats into Serbs and overcoming the hatred and resentment from the recent past.

The answer came last year during a visit to my relatives in America.

Through FB I contacted one of my schoolmates from elementary school in Vukovar, Alex, a Serb who now lives and works in Florida, America.

He was so excited when he heard I was coming that he booked a plane flight from Florida to meet me far north, near the Canadian border, at Niagara Falls (photos 1).

We had a very emotional meeting after 38 years, and then I made the decision that I would do everything I could to gather all my old schoolmates from elementary school, both Croats and Serbs, back to Vukovar after all those years.

I understood that it would be a very difficult, almost impossible mission, and that almost no one had succeeded, but I was determined to succeed and take one concrete step towards the reconciliation and unification of Croats and Serbs in my hometown.

I started looking for my schoolmates from elementary school one by one and soon realized that they live all over the world, in Australia, Canada, USA, Spain, Ireland, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Montenegro, Serbia and Croatia.

I soon realized that I would have to organize 2 meetings, one in London for all those who live very far from Croatia and cannot come to Vukovar, and the second, a "home" meeting for all those who live closer.

After a lot of preparation, I managed to organize a meeting in London on 4/28 where 5 former students of my class in elementary school met.

It was a very emotional and deep gathering that none of us will ever forget, and Croats and Serbs who now live in the USA, Ireland, Spain, Austria and Croatia also participated. (photos 2 and 3).

After that I was ready to organize a much bigger gathering in my hometown of Vukovar.

There was a lot of resistance and doubts, mistrust towards that gathering, but I invested a lot of effort, time, energy, talked a lot with everyone, prayed and finally I managed to overcome all the obstacles and arrange a historic gathering of the "lost" generation in Vukovar after almost 40 years, the first mutual meeting of Croatian and Serbian students in a city deeply divided nationally.

The historic meeting finally took place on August 31 with the participation of 14 former schoolmates in person and another 5 via zoom, which are almost all former students of my class that we managed to find.

Our former class teacher also came to the gathering.

Although there were a lot of doubts and mistrust before the gathering about how everything would go and whether there would be any problems or mutual conflicts, everything went perfectly and without any problem.

I prepared a special program for the gathering and everyone was delighted.

The gathering was very emotional and beautiful, and both Croatians and Serbs enjoyed gathering together and reminiscing about shared and beautiful moments from our childhood.

The media also recognized the symbolic importance of this gathering for the divided city of Vukovar, and the local TV crew came to make a report on the event (including an interview with me), which they later showed on the news. [Vinkovacka TV Okupljanje 8 c mp4 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vinkovacka_TV_Okupljanje_8_c_mp4) (A recording of a TV program)

After almost 40 years, I managed to unite the Croats and Serbs from my class and bring them together, and unite them around the vision of a common meeting.

This was a small step for us, but perhaps a significant step forward for the unification of the two divided communities in Vukovar, Croats and Serbs.

True Parents teach us that we must be unificationists, people who overcome divisions and unite people of different faiths and nationalities, but only now do I understand the full meaning of those words of True Parents.



With Alex in USA



Meeting in London



Meeting in London



Our photo from primary school



Meeting in Vukovar



Meeting in Vukovar



Meeting in Vukovar



Meeting in Vukovar



Meeting in Vukovar



Our class teacher with our special gift



My interview for the TV crew



Our teacher with all our gifts