

Multiculturalism in Belgrade and Serbia

Serbian transcript:

Ана: Мислим да се доста ради на том односу... Мислим, ја лично не знам, мислим да однос између људи није проблематичан, али да постоје нека нерешена питања око статуса избеглица, њихове имовине, њихових права у државама где су сада, тако да постоји велики број нерешених питања.

Александар: Мислиш да је у неком, на неком приватном плану, личном плану, да постоји неки, да кажем, ружан однос још увек између људи, или не?

Ана: Па вероватно постоји, али барем у Београду се не осећа, овај, толико. Сад у мањим срединама нисам сигурна, али у Београду, с обзиром да је Београд некакав склоп људи који су дошли стварно са свих страна, у Београду се може чути и екавски и ијекавски говор, има доста и Црногораца, и Босанаца, и са свих, овај, крајева бивше Југославије, тако да не постоји тај однос. Јако пуно је мешаних бракова, деце која су... И у Београду је јако мало оних који су заиста пореклом из Београда, да су њихови дедови из Београда, углавном су то... И након Другог светског рата, углавном су људи који су имали неки статус пре Другог светског рата разбежали по иностранству, с обзиром да им је имовина одузета и извршена та национализација, тако да је сада стварно велики број разних култура у Београду.

English translation:

Ana: I think that a lot is being done in terms of relationships [between former Yugoslav states]... I mean, I personally don't know... I think that the relationship between people is not problematic, but that there are some unresolved questions on the status of refugees, their property, their rights in the countries in which they live now¹, so there is a large number of unresolved issues.

¹ Serbia hosts the largest number of refugees from the Yugoslav Wars (approximately 71,850), as well as approximately 210,000 internally displaced persons, mostly ethnic Serbs from Kosovo. There are various issues that the Serbian government needs to address which the speaker is implying here, most important of which being permanent placement of refugees and internally displaced persons and employment and integration, since more than 70% live below the poverty line in Serbia. In addition to that, most of the refugees still haven't resolved issues regarding their property in countries of origin (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo), or claimed other rights, such as pensions, pre-war savings in government-owned banks, etc. which makes their position even more precarious.

Aleksandar: Do you think that in terms of individual relationships, the tension between people is still felt or not?

Ana: Well, it definitely is, but you cannot sense it in Belgrade that much. Now, in terms of smaller places I'm not sure, but in Belgrade – since Belgrade is mixed with people who came literally from all sides and you can hear both ekavian and ijekavian [dialects], and there are many Montenegrins, Bosnians, [and people] from all parts of former Yugoslavia – this type of tension doesn't exist. There are many mixed marriages² and children who are [from mixed marriages]... And there are a small number of people in Belgrade who are originally from Belgrade, whose grandparents are from Belgrade; they are mostly... After World War II, most of the people who had a high social status before World War II went into exile abroad, because their property was seized and nationalization³ took place, so as a consequence we have a large number of different cultures present in Belgrade.

About CultureTalk: CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use every day. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

© 2013 Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and Five Colleges, Incorporated

² The term “mixed marriage” refers to a marriage between two people belonging to different national or ethnic groups (i.e. a Serb and a Croat, or a Muslim and a Catholic). Although Belgrade always had a large number of mixed marriages, the biggest percentage of mixed marriages actually took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with pre-Bosnian War Sarajevo, where more than one third of all marriages were considered to be mixed.

³ The speaker here refers to the first wave of nationalization, a process which took place in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the immediate aftermath of World War II (1945-1948), during which certain property - most commonly farm land and real estate owned by religious institutions as well as all private companies of interest to the government - became property of the state. During this period, most private property owners managed to evade having their personal property seized by emigrating outside of Yugoslavia. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, almost all new states started the process of restitution or denationalization, returning the nationalized property to its previous owners.