

We ended up standing on the curb awaiting Tito during an anatomy lecture; Dr. Davidović had insisted that we stand and wave to the president, who passed by motionless, so it was not clear to me that he was not a wax figure. In the slanted ice-rain, lightly clad, we all shivered and cursed for two fucking hours. And I got bronchitis.

Anyway, four years later, I found my Index, the student booklet, and my A slanted in blue ink next to *Anatomy*, signed Dr. Radomir Davidović. Out of 140 students, 3 got As.

I googled him, and only one picture of him showed up, probably taken ten years after I had seen him last. All sorts of IDs from Republika Srpska, where Davidović worked as a senator until his death in 2006, came up. He served as ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Australia from 2001 to 2002. He officially resigned because of anti-Serb policies in Bosnia. I don't know why he actually resigned and how he got that plum job to begin with.

He died. I had thought I eventually would see him and he'd have fascinating things to say. He looked like God by Michelangelo sans beard.

So how could this admirable man be part of a regime that committed atrocities? His brother published a letter on the internet by Dr. Davidović which has since disappeared, claiming that he, Radomir, had followed the Hippocratic oath and in fact treated more Muslims than Orthodox. He had founded a hospital in a marginal zone, in Milici near the Drina River. He had thought he would be treating Serbian soldiers. Instead, he mostly treated Muslim victims of Serbian soldiers.

Dr. Davidović published another letter in which he questioned whether the Srebrenica massacre of eight thousand men and boys had happened on the scale the Western media claimed. He had read reports in foreign newspapers that Serbs had killed five hundred thousand Albanians in Kosovo, a statistically provable falsehood. What's to guarantee, he said, that there were mass executions in Bosnia on the scale the foreign press claims? He denied the existence of Serb concentration camps. He claimed a lot of it was misrepresentation and fake news.

He died of leukemia, which he attributed to the depleted uranium bombing by NATO. How can one be certain of such causes? I just saw a movie, which Croatian director Mimi Kezele made in Germany, about Kosovo Albanians

and Serbs in conflict in which a child dies of leukemia from depleted uranium radiation. How many deaths could be attributed to that radiation? Well, causes of leukemia are multiple, so the real number will never be known. Dr. Davidović died at seventy-two. I can also add as a sidebar, but it should be a big story, that my niece in Zagreb got leukemia from being exposed to radiology department rays without a lead wall to protect her department. Five out of seven of the doctors working on her ward got chronic leukemia. Dr. Davidović addressed the right issue. A powerful man like that was actually a victim of freaky radiation.

I suspect that even if I had had a chance to talk to him before his death, I would remain puzzled. I could write a piece of fiction to imagine the thinking and the experience that made this rather complex individual. I think it's an interesting quandary that he has faced me with—which is worse, to talk good and do nothing, or to talk bad and to save hundreds of lives? To use Marxist principles, Communism failed in practice: beautiful talk didn't result in good economy and freedom for the people. It can be also the reverse: incorrect ideology and ugly talk could be refuted by good deeds.

Dr. Davidović talked badly and saved hundreds of Muslims. What have we done in the meanwhile?

**Josip Novakovich** emigrated from Croatia to the United States at the age of twenty. He has published a dozen books, including a novel (*April Fool's Day*, in ten languages), four story collections (*Infidelities*, *Yolk*, *Salvation and Other Disasters*, and *Heritage of Smoke*), and three collections of narrative essays as well as two books of practical criticism. His work was anthologized in *The Best American Poetry*, *The Pushcart Prize: Best, of the Small Presses*, and *The O. Henry Prize Stories*. He has received a Whiting Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Ingram Merrill Foundation Award, and an American Book Award, and in 2013 he was a Man Booker International Prize finalist. He teaches creative writing at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada.

## FRANK GALUSZKA

*Beirut (III)*, 2016  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 20 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST