

ideologues. As a result, policy makers and civil activists have frequently been misled to ignore the restoring potential of religious belief in divided societies. Mahmutćehajić's weight of evidence demonstrates that this is wrongheaded. Other parts of this magisterial work expose the modern ideological obstacles to the path of a good life – ethical life in the community of the just – all of which are variants of fanatical enthusiasm (nationalism, communism, fascism, fundamentalism). He demonstrates that Bosnia, like the world, can function in justice only if it nurtures unity in plurality.


Unity in plurality is the motto of Prof. Mahmutćehajić's civic activism that takes many forms. Disappointed in the effects of ethnic and party politics in his native country, he sought to find relief in a broadly conceived International Forum Bosnia (IFB), an organization that he founded in 1977. The IFB is an NGO dedicated to a different vision of Bosnia, based on dialogue, confidence, respect of the rule of law and human rights. Not only has this assembly of individuals and groups from all the ethnic and religious communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina contributed to interfaith harmony at home, but Prof. Mahmutćehajić has spread its fundamental message to the neighboring countries (he lectures widely in virtually all the Balkan countries) and indeed throughout the world.

A very important part of the IFB's enterprise has been (in 2011-2012) the Sixth and Seventh International Summer Schools (Youth and Heritage), that both years were held in July and August at Stolac, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and provided opportunities for young people from various countries and religious communities to acquaint themselves with traditional knowledge, crafts, architecture, etc. in a series of encounters that include seminars, fieldwork, and recreation. In addition, also in 2011-2012, Prof. Mahmutćehajić has organized the parallel Sixth and Seventh International Conferences "Unity and Diversity in Europe," which brought together an impressive array of scholars and civic leaders from Europe and the world in discussions that above all involve issues of interfaith and intercommunal harmony. Intellectual commitment, organization, and funding that is expended in this effort could be the envy of far more powerful enterprises.

In conclusion, it is impossible to think of a more active intellectual and organizational force on behalf of interfaith harmony, certainly in the troubled Balkan region and throughout Europe, than Prof. Mahmutćehajić. He has repeatedly demonstrated his commitment to this cause, in no way diminishing thereby his rootedness in the Qur'anic revelation. As somebody who has greatly benefitted from his wisdom, generosity, and vision I am pleased to recommend him for your prestigious prize.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ivo Banac". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "I" and a long, horizontal tail.

Ivo Banac
Bradford Durfee Emeritus Professor of
History