



# CIVIL COURAGE PRIZE

## Introduction by Sir Michael Howard

Natasa Kandic

2000

As you all know, Arundel House is the Headquarters of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and we are more familiar here with that more orthodox form of courage - conspicuous gallantry displayed in combat. In the Second World War such awards were extended, by the George Medal and the George Cross, to civilians committing similar courageous acts. But without underrating the importance of these awards, or the gallantry of those who received them, these were normally won under conditions of armed combat in which courage - both physical and moral - was necessary not only for military victory, but sometimes for simple survival. In war dangers may be great and immediate, but there are also group pressures to be brave. Often people have to be brave if they are not seen, very publicly, to be cowards, and the awards they receive are simply for doing their jobs.

It is very different in times of peace. Then, however great the challenge of injustice and oppression, there is no group pressure to be brave. People are not thanked for standing up for cherished principles and human rights. Those who do so risk not only persecution and punishment by their government, but something often even harder to bear - the disapproval of their neighbors. Most people only want a quiet life, and are prepared to tolerate a huge amount of injustice in order to get it - especially if they do not directly suffer from it themselves. Those who do fight against injustice, tyranny, lies and corruption are often regarded as troublemakers, and their activity is often resented as much at home as it is admired abroad.

We all know these troublemakers. They are maddening people, always rocking the boat, stirring it up, making it impossible for us to get on with our own lives. We wish that they would shut up and go away, and if the government does shut them up and send them away the general opinion in the pubs and the clubs will often be: a very good thing too. They were asking for it. How very different this is from the fate of the soldier, fighting gallantly for his country, surrounded by admiring comrades, honored by his sovereign, and glorified by the popular press!

Yet these are the people on whom the values of our civilization ultimately depend: lonely, unpopular and isolated; under test, and in constant danger, not for a brief, heroic moment, but for a lifetime; 'bearing witness', in the Biblical phrase, in season and out of season. At the beginning of the Second World War the poet W.H.

Auden, looking out on a bleak world from his vantage point of a dive on 52nd Street, consoled himself with the vision that in the surrounding darkness

...dotted everywhere  
...points of light  
Flash out wherever the Just  
Exchange their messages:..

To Auden and to us, these flashes sustain hope that reason will not be destroyed by the darkness of ignorance; that civilization will prevail over barbarism: and that the world-wide struggle for peace and justice will not be totally in vain.

Natasa Kandic, the person whom we honor tonight, is a point of light flashing out of the surrounding darkness. For her acts taken deliberately over time, staunchly resisting evil at great personal risk, she justly merits The Civil Courage Prize.

Awarded today for the first time, The Prize is worth \$50,000, which the recipient says she plans to spend helping the many prisoners of war she has been speaking out for since founding her Humanitarian Law Center in Belgrade in 1991. The Center has earned a reputation for accurate and unflinching reporting of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia. As its director, Ms. Kandic has pursued the facts surrounding both civil and criminal complaints about human rights abuses against oppressed minorities throughout the war zone. Her life has been repeatedly threatened by the Milosovic regime. With remarkable courage she visited both Serb and Kosovar Albanian colleagues persecuted in Kosovo in 1999.

At no small risk to her life during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, Ms. Kandic, a sociologist by training, traveled to Kosovo to express concern for the Albanian population and report on human rights abuses there. After the conflict, she stayed in Kosovo to help protect the Serb, Roma and Muslim minorities against violent attacks by Albanian extremists. Now, at a time of increased repression of the youth resistance movement in Serbia, Otpor, she is leading the campaign to uphold the rights of political dissenters.

In 1995 Ms. Kandic investigated the crimes committed by Croatian army and police against the Krajina Serbs. She helped protect Serbs from prosecution by the Croatian government, but also documented crimes committed by the Yugoslav Army, Croatian forces, and Serbian paramilitaries. In Bosnia, she helped protect the rights of Muslims persecuted by Serbian and Croatian forces.

Throughout this period she has been the subject of continued threats, harassment and physical assault. Yet she persists in seeking to establish the truth about abuses regardless of who committed them, and so has earned respect from all sides of the conflict.

This award is the brainchild of John Train, but before he presents it I will tell you something about him. He is of course an old friend of the Institute, and has sponsored our series of Strategic debates here, but he has a long history of humanitarian concern.

He led the Afghanistan Relief Committee during the Soviet genocide in that country, and was twice made a *Commendatore* in recognition of help given during Italian disasters. He is director of the International Rescue Committee, which supports millions of refugees in dozens of countries. He has received appointments from the last three American presidents. His Civil Courage Prize is a magnificent conception with which I am proud to be associated.

*Sir Michael Howard, M.C. Retired Regius Professor of Modern History, Oxford University; Robert A. Lovett Professor of Military and Naval History, Yale University. Founder and President of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London.*