
PETER HANDKE AND THE POWER OF DENIAL

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by Emir Suljagic

[...] Today, I have returned to Stockholm again in an attempt to preserve the memory of Srebrenica.

I am here to protest against the decision of the Swedish Royal Academy to award the Nobel Prize for literature to Peter Handke - an Austrian writer who spent a good part of his career belittling and openly denying everything that my family and I, among millions of others, survived in the 1990s.

Denial of crimes is closely linked to power. Individuals, groups, organisations and even entire societies engage in denial for one simple reason: because they can. By doing so, they exclude their victims from their moral universe which defines crime and punishment. According to this logic, no crime is perpetrated if the victims deserved it and hence, there should be no punishment.

With the decision to award Handke its prize for literature, the Nobel Committee excluded Bosniaks from the European moral universe once again; and this decision was no accident. It is indicative of a shift in the European attitude towards Bosnia and, I daresay, towards Muslims in general.

[...]

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