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Serbian American National
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P.O. Box 9264
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TO: President George Bush
Secretary of State James Baker
Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger
General Brent Scowcroft, National Security Adviser
FROM: Serbian-American Leaders throughout the United States
DATE: April 16, 1992
RE: Bosnia-Hercegovina, Krajina, "Yugoslavia"

We requested an audience today with President Bush's key cabinet officers who are dealing with the Yugoslavian crisis because we are most concerned over the sudden turn-about in U.S. relations in the Balkan area, which, in turn, has sparked off fighting and violence throughout the fragile Bosnian border areas and Krajina.

As you know, we requested this audience after the sudden recognition of the three breakaway republics and before the current shooting began in Bosnia-Hercegovina.

As Americans of Serbian Heritage, we feel that the State Department's assertion that the Yugoslav Army is the cause of escalating violence in Bosnia is another transparent (although familiar) attempt to find a scapegoat for U.S. and European policy failures.

The premature and hasty recognition of the three breakaway republics was strongly opposed by both Cyrus Vance and Lord Carrington, who understood as clearly as night follows day, recognition of Croatia and Slovenia would prompt a declaration of independence in fragile, potentially explosive Bosnia. To recognize Bosnia-Hercegovina before agreement had been reached among leaders of the three competing population groups, and without a clear transitional role for the Yugoslav Army was reckless in the view of all who understood the political forces at work.

Once again, Ambassador Zimmerman echoed the Kohl-Genscher policy of warning the Yugoslav Army (whatever its faults, the only stabilizing force in Bosnia) to stay in the barracks, or in the case of Caplina, Western Hercegovina, to abandon them and surrender when faced by aggression by Croatian forces (HOS and Zenga) recently. The Yugoslav Army stood by when Croatian forces attacked Bosanski Brod, committing massacres against Serbian civilians there two weeks ago. The YNA stood by when Moslem Handzar extremists attacked Bijeljina last week. The German led EC continues to dangle the possibility of lifting the boycott against Serbia. This is a vain hope for reasons we shall discuss later, but it helped prompt a low profile on the part of the Serbian Government and the Yugoslav Army.

In this vacuum, of course, we have witnessed the predictable rise of armed extremists. Along with Croatian HOS and Zenga troops (from Croatia, not Bosnia) that attacked Mostar, Caplina, in the south and committed well-publicized massacres in Kupres and Bosanski Brod, there has been a revival of the notorious Moslem Handzar which attacked Bijeljina last week and brought about an armed response from the Serbian Volunteer Corps, which recaptured the town.

The Handzar served as the elite Moslem SS troops which helped to carry out the Holocaust against Serbs, Jews, and gypsies in World War II and also fought with the Axis forces in Stalingrad. Their revival as a fighting force is feared not only by Serbs, but by moderate Moslems, who fled to Serbian villages in Semberia when Bijeljina was attacked and escaped to Novica in Serbia when Zvornik was attacked. The small Jewish community in Sarajevo has also been fleeing to Serbia, as Serbian Jewish leader Klara Mandich announced at a press conference earlier this week. While President Izetbegovic represents a more moderate brand of Moslem, his call for a general Moslem mobilization is quickly setting in motion forces beyond his control.

Amidst the increasing carnage, General Kukanjac, the Bosnian commander of the Yugoslav Army boasted as recently as a week ago that the YNA had not fired a shot. Inevitably, however, this week they were drawn into the fray after a Moslem terrorist carried out his threat to open up a dam on a hydroelectric plant in Visegrad, releasing a torrent of water (36 million cubic feet per hour) that could have drowned thousands of Serbs and Moslems on both sides of the Drina River. The army took control of the town at this point and the Moslem terrorist fled. For this, however, the YNA has been condemned by the State Department.

For his part, General Kukanjac stated on Wednesday that the army will act in accordance with whatever agreement is reached by the three parties.

Unfortunately, the relatively low profile of the Yugoslav Army will probably not satisfy U.S. demands, nor roll back the forces set in motion by the premature recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbia is being blamed for the actions of local irregular forces that they do not control and are being prevented from using Yugoslav Army forces that might have played a role in stabilizing Bosnia during the transition period.

Complaints about the inactivity of the Yugoslav Army were being heard from both Bosnia's Serbian leader Radovan Karadzic and from Moslem leader Alija Izetbegovic.

Engaging the YNA, however, serves the purposes of the Croatian forces, which view Bosnia as a second front in an ongoing war with Serbia. On Tuesday, the German Ambassador visited Kosovo, which is surely part of the coordinated effort to open up a Moslem front.

Current military estimates according to General Zivota Panic of the Yugoslav Army place Moslem forces at 50,000 armed men, 35,000 Croatian HDZ forces, which are local, and another 15,000 (HOS, Zenga, and Black Legion mercenaries) that came from Croatia. Croatian forces within Croatia are estimated at 200,000.

Meanwhile, we ask the following questions:

1. Why did the U.S. -- after it had been so reluctant to recognize the breakaway republics (in the process being critical of Germany for early recognition of Slovenia and Croatia) and having stated that it would wait until it could recognize all of them -- so quickly move to recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina, even faster than Germany?
2. Why did the U.S. fail to heed the warning of Cyrus Vance against recognition of the three Yugoslav Republics before a comprehensive settlement was achieved, after repeatedly promising that it would not do so?
3. U.S. officials were warned the crisis would erupt if early recognition was granted. Now what is the U.S. going to do?
4. Why has the State Department failed to condemn the buildup of Croatian troops in Bosnia which came from Croatia in January?
5. Why is Serbia constantly singled out for criticism and sanctions when serious abuses on the part of Croatian forces and Moslem extremists which have helped to destabilize Bosnia receive no condemnation from the State Department or Ambassador Zimmerman?
6. Why has Ambassador Zimmerman or the State Department failed to condemn the massacres of Serbian civilians in Bosanski Brod, Kupres, and Zvornik?
7. By every objective measure, Serbia has treated its minorities far better than Croatia. (Compare, for instance, the situation of Serbs in Croatia with that of Croats in Serbia). If human rights are, by definition, universal, why does Ambassador Zimmerman apply vastly different criterion for Serbia than he does for Croatia or other republics?
8. Why is there such a marked contrast between the way Germany has supported its former ally and the way the U.S. is treating its long-time ally Serbia which paid (and is still paying) such a high price to be on the side of democracy in two world wars?
9. The U.S. issued its recognition with conditions. What are the conditions? What can we expect now?
10. Are U.S. officials aware that in Kosovo, the Albanians have their television, their newspapers, their schools? There are no political prisoners! (Milan Panic has been told by Serbian officials that if he can find any political prisoners in Kosovo, he is welcome to free them).

11. Why does the U.S. Embassy and the State Department seem to focus only on Kosovo and seemingly ignore the thousands who have been killed in the Krajina and the hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Croats, and Moslems in both Krajina and Bosnia who are homeless and whose human rights are being compromised at present?

12. Are U.S. officials aware that there are at least 150 Bosnian families from the moderate Moslem sector who are being housed by Orthodox Serbs in Serbia?

13. Are U.S. officials aware that the Croatian forces razed all the remaining Serbian homes and those of Croats friendly to Serbs in the Krajina area so that there would be no trace of Serbian property when the U.N. troops arrived?

14. What can we do to help the United States Government out of its present dilemma?

REPUBLIC OF SERBIAN KRAYINA - YUGOSLAVIA
Република Српска Крајина Југославија
Washington Office

10:00 PM, January 30, 1992

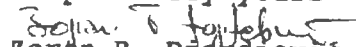
URGENT HITNO URGENT HITNO URGENT

The Honorable Helen Delich Bentley
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mrs. Bentley,

for your information, we are enclosing a copy of the today's
letter of the Government of Serbian Krayina to His Excellency
Boutros Boutros Ghali.

Respectfully yours


Zoran B. Djordjevic

THIS FAX CONTAINS (7) PAGES, INCLUDING THIS PAGE

Croatia.

Though the current Concept makes explicit statements to the contrary, it does prejudice the political solution of the Yugoslav crisis and does that in favor of the aggressors and secessionists.

Thirdly, the Concept proposes disarmament of only one side of the conflict, the Defense Forces of Serbian Krayina. That would not only create a unique precedent in the history of the U.N. peace efforts, but would also be an act of encouragement of aggression and secessionism.

Fourthly, the Concept implies that the Defense Forces of Serbian Krayina are the ones threatening peace and violating cease-fires. Any objective observer can convince himself that provocations and aggression are always coming from the Croatian side of the front-line and that Defense Forces of Serbian Krayina are only protecting their villages and towns.

Croatian provocations on the front-line are occurring daily. A major attack of Croatian forces on the village of Mikusici in the Baranja region was repelled on January 22th. On January 28th, Croats launched a surprise attack in the region of Popovo Polje, north of Dubrovnik. From January 1st, until today, Defense Forces of Serbian Krayina lost seven men from sniper and mortar fire and had several tens of wounded.

The peace will be achieved, stated Dr. Babic, only when the other, Croatian, side is disarmed. Should Croatia demilitarize, or withdraw its troops from the borders of Krayina, Krayina will gladly disarm her Defense Forces.

In the course of discussion, Dr. Babic pointed out to Mr. Goulding that, from the time of the previous U.N. sponsored talks and adoption of the Concept by certain Yugoslav parties, many changes have occurred affecting the fundamental relationships in the region. For instance:

- Croatia ceased to exist as a Republic of Yugoslav Federation and Croatia and Krayina are not bound by the respect for a common state and constitution, anymore.

- People of Serbian Krayina were forced, by the unilateral actions of the Croatian Government and actions of certain European powers, to establish their own Republic, which remains loyal to the Yugoslav Federation.

Our right to remain in Yugoslavia is consistent with the U.N. Charter which recognizes people as the subjects of self-determination and not the arbitrarily established administrative regions.

- Croatian officials, who controlled practically all vital offices of the Yugoslav Federation, left their posts in a non-constitutional effort to block functioning of the Yugoslav state. That includes Prime Minister Markovic and Defense Minister Kadijevic. The later accepted the Concept, posing as the ostensibly authorized representative of Serbian Krayina.

If for no other reasons, than because of all those changes, the peace concept has to be modified, pointed Dr. Babic.

Dr. Milan Babic expressed his conviction that the United Nations will demonstrate full evenhandedness, which was lacking in some other parties interested in Yugoslav affairs.

After this most encouraging mission of Mr. Goulding, Serbian Krayina expects the United Nations to adopt a more flexible approach to the crisis. A new version of the Concept should be adopted which indeed will not prejudice the political outcome of the conflict.

Dr. Babic, also stated that the Government of Serbian Krayina sees no reason for maintaining the two-track approach in which the U.N. is responsible for the military and EC for the political part of the peace settlement.

In the future, Serbian Krayina will accept only a unified approach in which both aspects of the conflict are arrived at through the good services of the United Nations.

Dr. Babic presented Mr. Goulding with a request that the number of U.N. peace monitors be increased, so that the EC monitors could be relieved and completely withdrawn from the theater.

During closing discussion, Representatives of Serbian Krayina informed Mr. Goulding about the methods used by the previous "independent" State of Croatia in the annihilation of Serbian people. The tragedy began when the Serbian people were disarmed, stated Babic. That and the present crimes of the ruling Neo-Nazi-Communist Coalition of Croatia makes us so sensitive to the issue of disarmament.

At the end, Dr. Babic thanked Mr. Goulding for his efforts and expressed his hopes that further talks, in the same spirit, will take place soon.

END OF STATEMENT

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MAR 28 1994

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March 22, 1994

The Honorable Helen Delich Bentley
Member of Congress
US House of Representatives
1610 Longworth Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mrs. Bentley:

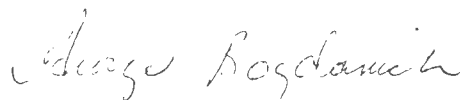
We have enclosed several articles that we hope may be helpful in grappling with the difficult issues that need to be resolved in order to bring peace to the Balkans. We certainly welcome the reduction of hostilities in Sarajevo and Mostar, although the latter comes too late for the 24,000 member Serbian community that was destroyed by Croat and Muslim forces in June of 1992.

Future success, we believe, requires an understanding of past mistakes. One-sided policies have in the past weakened the authority of international efforts to resolve the crisis. Those who wish to broker a settlement are better served by evenhanded policies and single standards whether it come to enforcement of the no-fly zone or the use of sanctions. Regarding the latter, we note Susan Woodward's recent article "Yugoslavia: Divide and Fail" observes: "To the extent that purposes were defined, the sanctions failed. If anything they have made the situation worse, increasing the likelihood that the war will continue and spread rather than cease."

This confirms the observation of UN Mediator Thornwald Stoltenberg who told the *New York Times* recently that Bosnian Muslim negotiators have opposed a settlement, even on favorable terms, because it would have lifted the sanctions against Yugoslavia. A durable settlement cannot be achieved by uneven pressures. Members of the international community who were ready to risk a widening of the conflict to open up Tuzla airport for humanitarian aid, should remember that Belgrade remains closed, even to desperately needed food and medicine. Those of us who are appalled by the deaths of innocents in this war are no less dismayed by the deaths of many infants and elderly innocents in Serbia and Montenegro as a result of the particularly harsh applications of the sanctions.

We wish you success in efforts to achieve a just and lasting settlement.

Sincerely,



George Bogdanich
Media Coordinator

The West's Mismanagement of the Yugoslav Crisis

By ALEX N. DRAGNICH

The efforts of the European Community (EC) and the United States to manage the crisis in Yugoslavia as that country began to drift toward civil war presents us with an interesting case of collective action that has been anything but successful.

Following the declarations of sovereignty in mid-1990 by the republics of Slovenia and Croatia, with strong suggestions that they intended to secede from Yugoslavia, the EC offered its good offices in the ostensible hope of an orderly and peaceful resolution of the crisis. The crisis had been building for several months, as the handiwork of Communist dictator Tito had begun to unravel. Thus, the EC and the United States were not caught unaware of Yugoslav developments.

From the beginning, however, EC policymakers' decisions demonstrated that they knew little or no Yugoslav history. Many of the EC leaders seemed to assume that Yugoslavia began with Tito's Communist party regime. They knew of the Yugoslav republics but apparently did not know how they came about or if the boundaries between them had been satisfactory to all ethnic groups.

Strange as it may seem, they were also ignorant of the fact that the first Yugoslavia (pre-Tito) had not been divided into republics or other ethnic units. The Yugoslavia of the interwar years was a unitary state. Initially, there were thirty-three administrative districts, but in 1929 these were reduced to nine (a tenth embraced the capital, Belgrade). The nine were known as *banovine* (after a Croatian term meaning governor); they were named after waterways and were designed to cut across ethnic and regional differences. A provisional modification was made in 1939, dictated mainly by international developments.

After the assassination of King Alexander

in 1934 as a result of a carefully laid plot by Croatian extremists, the country was ruled under a Royal Regency because the heir to the throne was not of age. In 1939, with war clouds on the horizon and with the Croat leader threatening to use Fascist Italian and Nazi German help to break away from Yugoslavia, Prince Regent Paul made a hasty agreement with the Croats that combined two of the *banovinas* where most of the Croats lived, but also contained over one million Serbs. This provisional agreement gave considerable powers to the *Banovina of Croatia*, but it never received the legal sanction of ratification by the national legislature, as required by the agreement. The coming of the Second World War put an end to further domestic political changes, and in April 1941 the Axis Powers destroyed the first Yugoslavia.

The only so-called independent entity on Yugoslav soil during World War II was the Axis puppet Croatian state, whose minions massacred some 700,000 Serbs, 60,000 Jews, and 20,000 Gypsies. After the war, no Yugoslav Communist leader apologized for the acts of the Axis puppet regime, no retribution was visited on Croatia, and no payments were made to aggrieved parties or their relatives. This was in sharp contrast with the postwar German government, which condemned the Nazi regime and apologized for its acts.

With the creation of the second Yugoslavia (Tito's), the country was divided into six republics (plus two autonomous provinces in the republic of Serbia). This arrangement was supposed to solve the nationality problems that had been a divisive force in Yugoslavia's brief history.

In the pre-Communist years, Yugoslavia was said to consist primarily of three ethnic groups—Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Because Tito and his Communist comrades blamed the Serbs for all the failures of the

Alex N. Dragnich is professor emeritus of political science at Vanderbilt University.

first Yugoslavia, and because Communist guerrillas had little success in Serbia (Colonel Draza Mihailovic was the leader of the non-Communist guerrilla movement in Serbia), they were determined to punish this largest ethnic group and the strongest supporter of the common state. They weakened Serbia by creating a second Serbian republic—Montenegro—an independent state prior to the First World War. The fact that many of Tito's generals and political supporters came from Montenegro played a significant role in its establishment as a separate republic.

Second, as a way of further weakening Serbia, Tito created the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the Serbs were the largest ethnic group (the Croats were half as numerous as the Serbs). In 1971, he used the presence of a large Muslim population, descendants of Serbs and Croats (mainly the former) who had been converted to Islam during the centuries of Ottoman rule, to create a new ethnic identity (Muslim), ironically based on religion. That move made the Muslims the largest group in the republic.

Tito also created a separate republic of Macedonia (once known as South Serbia), partly to punish the Serbs, partly to foreclose Bulgarian claims to parts of that area, and partly to lay claim to Greek Macedonia. As already mentioned, he created two autonomous provinces inside Serbia, Kosovo (cradle of the Serbian nation and at the time of the Ottoman conquest in the fourteenth century ethnically solid Serbian, but by 1946 equally divided), and Vojvodina (with a large Hungarian minority).

During his rule, Tito managed to sweep nationality questions under the rug, insisting that the problems were solved, and thereby foreclosing further dialogue on this issue. After Tito's death in 1980, however, differences among the republics grew, increasingly taking on nationalist overtones.

While threats to Yugoslavia's survival were in evidence in the bickering between the republics in the late 1980s, the first concrete sign came in January 1990, when the extraordinary congress of the national party broke up in disarray. This was followed by Serbia's assuming basic political powers in her two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, limiting or revoking their autonomy. Soon thereafter, in elections in Slovenia and Croatia recycled Communists, posing as nationalists, were victorious. These were followed,

as indicated above, by Slovene and Croat declarations of sovereignty and hints of intentions to secede.

At the same time, General Tudjman's regime in Croatia reduced the Serbs to a minority status, whereas in the Tito period they had been considered constituent peoples and hence on the same level as the Croats. Moreover, under Tudjman the Serbs were subjected to discriminatory acts in employment and in civil rights. Crude examples of the latter were nocturnal shootings, hate slogans painted on their houses, and threatening telephone calls in the middle of the night. Eventually, over one hundred thousand Serbs abandoned their homes and sought refuge in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

A short time earlier, Slovenia and Croatia had proposed a reorganization of Yugoslavia as a confederation. Under their proposal, the central government would have basically consultative powers, even weaker than the U.S. federal government under the Articles of Confederation, which had proved utterly unworkable. Because the national government would have no power to protect the large number of Serbs who would be left outside Serbia—between 600,000 to 800,000 in Croatia and 1.5 million in Bosnia-Herzegovina—the Slovene-Croat proposal was not acceptable to Serbia.

In June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia issued independence pronouncements. Slovenia took control of border posts on the Austrian and Italian frontiers, taking the first steps in violation of the Helsinki Accords' proviso that international boundaries could not be changed except by peaceful means. The European Community sponsored a meeting of the presidents of the Yugoslav republics on the island of Brioni (Tito's favorite retreat) and called for a ninety-day suspension of the independence declarations and a withdrawal to barracks of all federal troops. At the same time, EC foreign ministers obtained Slovenia's promise to remove its border signs and flags during that period and to share border authority with the federal government. While the Slovenes made a half-hearted attempt to share the border post authority, they did not remove Slovenian flags or signs.

At the end of the three-month delay period, Slovenia and Croatia declared formal secessions, and the EC did nothing. The Yugoslav government declared the Slovene and Croat acts unconstitutional (later confirmed by the

decision of the Yugoslav Constitutional Court), and ordered Yugoslav army troops in Slovenia to reclaim the border posts. The Slovenian militia, joined by irregulars, resisted fiercely, firing the first shots in what was to evolve into a civil war. They even seized foreign freight trucks in international transit to block highways. The result was a setback to the Yugoslav army and its withdrawal from Slovenia.

Unlike Slovenia, Croatia had a large Serbian minority, which did not cherish being in an independent Croatian state, particularly in view of their memories of what happened to their compatriots the last time that Croatia was independent. These Serbs took up armed resistance, which was aided by the Yugoslav army units that were in the territory. At the same time, Croatian armed units struck at Yugoslav army garrisons in Croatia.

The reaction in the West favored the continued existence of the Yugoslav state, but as the situation deteriorated in 1991, the reaction changed to one of respecting the wishes of the peoples of Yugoslavia. The European Community offered its good offices, which was accepted, and soon a mission was on its way to Yugoslavia, headed by Lord Carrington. Considerable differences in approach soon emerged, however, between the United States and the European Community, and within the EC itself. The attitude of the United States, as expressed by Secretary of State James Baker, was that if Yugoslavia was to break up, the United States would wait until the different groups had resolved their differences through political settlements, and only then would the question of recognition be considered. At the same time, he personally warned the Slovene and Croat presidents that if they seceded unilaterally there would be civil war. Similarly, Lawrence Eagleburger revealed in August 1992 that he had also warned that in case of unilateral acts of independence, there would be "civil war of massive proportions."

The EC, prodded by Germany and Austria, showed no such restraint. For a time, the majority of EC countries had reservations about acting in haste and some suspicion of German motives was expressed unofficially. The Germans, even before the Carrington mission had sufficient time to test its efforts in negotiation, were pushing for recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. It is interesting to note, however, that the German and Austrian am-

bassadors in Belgrade recommended against the actions that their governments insisted on taking.

At the EC meeting in Maastricht in mid-December 1991, the initial vote on recognizing Slovenia and Croatia as independent countries was eight to four against. But German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher declared that they would not leave the table before they got unanimous support for recognition. It was then 10 P.M. By 4 A.M. the next morning, he had his way. Having given in on some monetary issues, Genscher reportedly said, "now you owe me one," whereupon he had his way. In addition, it was reported that a German foreign office person had told newsmen: "We will move ahead whether any, all, of none of the European states join us." Cyrus Vance, secretary of state under President Carter who had been sent by the United Nations to seek a ceasefire between the fighting parties in Croatia, as well as UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, told Genscher that premature recognition of Slovenia and Croatia could "intensify and widen the war."

In December 1991, in response to Germany's declaration that Bonn was determined to recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina as well, Vance once more cautioned against hasty recognition. Germany's refusal greatly undercut his efforts. Interestingly, Bosnia's and Macedonia's leaders had earlier pleaded with Western capitals to withhold recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, fearing that such actions would provoke the Serbs.

Before Vance's appointment, EC representative Lord Carrington made an error at the outset of his mission by presenting the Yugoslav parties a document that declared the existing Yugoslav state at an end and proposed that negotiations begin on the creation of a new one. His action was viewed unfavorably by the Serbs, who did not want a breakup of the country, but played into the hands of the Slovenes and Croats, who did.

Soon thereafter it became evident that the EC countries were not interested in evenhandedness. The EC countries, as well as the United States, had said that they would respect the wishes of the Yugoslav peoples. It soon was evident that they meant that they would respect the wishes of the republics that wanted to secede but not those of the republics that wanted to remain a part of Yugoslavia. They did this by asserting that the

boundaries between the republics could not be changed except by peaceful means. Ironically, they had already aided and abetted Slovenia and Croatia in their violation of the Helsinki Accords through the use of force to change Yugoslavia's borders. At the same time, they knew, or should have known, that the republic that suffered the greatest injustice when Tito carved up the country into republics and autonomous provinces was Serbia.

The action of the West encouraged the se-

Astute observers predicted that diplomatic recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be followed by more bloodshed than had been experienced in Croatia. And they were proved right.

cessionist republics to believe that they could hold onto every inch of territory bequeathed to them by Tito and had no need to compromise. Moreover, this EC action enabled Serbia's president, recycled Communist Slobodan Milosevic, to pose as the only defender of Serbian interests, and declared that his answer to the EC would be to recognize as separate nations the Serb-inhabited areas of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

It is important to note that at its meeting in Lisbon in February 1992, the EC proposed a cantonal solution for Bosnia-Herzegovina, i.e., dividing it into Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim units. About mid-March, all three Bosnian parties agreed to this solution in principle. Soon after returning to Sarajevo, however, the Muslim president, Izetbegovic, reneged. The available evidence indicates that it was the United States that advised him to go back on his commitment, while the Europeans had reservations. The United States urged the EC to recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina, promising that the United States would follow suit and would also recognize Slovenia and Croatia, which is what happened. Hence a promising solution, before the fighting began, went by the boards.

Not having learned any lesson from the fact that the hasty recognition of Slovenia and, especially, Croatia had undesirable consequences, the EC and the United States extended recognition to Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992. Western policymakers seemingly

again did not weigh the possible consequences of their acts or did not care. They had ample warning when the Serbs of Bosnia-Herzegovina, numbering about a third of the population but occupying more than sixty percent of the area,¹ boycotted the independence referendum and openly declared that if the republic proclaimed its independence, they would form their own republic.

Nevertheless, the Bosnian Muslim leaders seemingly had no worries. In a trip to Washington, the president and his secretary for foreign affairs personally assured Secretary Baker that "no one can divide us." They insisted that they were building a democratic state. Perhaps the Americans were influenced by the success of earlier Croatian propaganda in portraying the conflict in Yugoslavia as one of democracy and communism, which of course was not the case. The regimes in all of the republics continued to be run by Communists or former Communists. Ironically, there was much more freedom for the opposition in Serbia than in the other republics.

Astute observers predicted that diplomatic recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be followed by more bloodshed than had been experienced in Croatia. And they were proved right. Some spokesmen for the EC had justified recognition on the grounds that this would prevent serious strife. Actually, it did the exact opposite. It was a formula for disaster. As an American scholar with no ethnic roots in Yugoslavia said at an academic gathering in November 1992, "The West came to Yugoslavia as fire fighters and ended up being pyromaniacs."

While U.S. State Department diplomats at the working level did not show outward displeasure with policy decisions; they knew that these came down from the highest levels—Bush-Baker. The best proof is to be found in the fact that just before the denial of landing rights to the Yugoslav airline, Yugoslav experts in the State Department were privately assuring one and all that the United States would not take such an action.

While it cannot be confirmed, there are strong reasons to believe that the president and his secretary of state, determined to achieve peace in the Middle East, were being pressured by Saudi Arabia to recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Saudis, so the story goes, stressed to the United States that the Muslim leaders in Sarajevo were moderates, the type of Muslims that America was relying

upon in the Middle East. It is also important to note, as Secretary Baker did for some of us who went to see him in July 1992, that he had been under great pressure from members of Congress who had Croatian, Slovenian, and Muslim constituents.

In any case, we need to stress that as bloodshed in Bosnia increased, the Western powers, instead of reflecting on their failed policies, have since that time concentrated on dealing with the consequences of those policies. The event that triggered Secretary Baker's going to the United Nations to ask for sanctions against Yugoslavia (i.e., Serbia and Montenegro) was the killing of a number of Sarajevo residents who were lined up in front of a bakery to buy bread, for which Serb gunners were blamed. Subsequently, it was determined that the victims were killed by anti-personnel mines laid by anti-Serb elements. Some observers had introduced doubts at the time because of the fact that TV cameras were on hand to record the tragic event and because none of the victims had wounds above the waist. In addition, subsequent terrorist acts initially blamed on Serbs were discovered to have been done by others.

Moreover, an hour after the sanctions were voted, the previous day's report by the UN secretary general surfaced, pointing out that Croatia had a sizable military presence in Bosnia, but there was no explanation why the report was not available to the Security Council when it voted. Some members were quoted as saying that their votes would have been different if the report had been available at the time. In any case, it should be noted that not only was Croatia's military presence significant but also that the Croats were using the Croatian flag and Croatian currency and not those of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The underlying assumption, unspoken but clearly conveyed, was that the Serbs and Serbia had no business being concerned with Bosnia or Croatia. Yet, aside from the fact that the Serbs have lived in those areas for centuries, Serbia's right to those territories was recognized in at least two international agreements, to which reference will be made below.

Moreover, no one seems to have remembered that in the Balkan wars of 1912-13 and in the First World War, the Serbs of Serbia and Montenegro fought to liberate Serbian lands, including those in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, as well as liberating Slovenian,

Croatian, and other South Slav lands. Nor was there any recollection that at the end of World War I, the Slovenes and Croats implored Serbia to accept them as parts of a common Yugoslav state.

And when the common state was dissolving in 1990-1991, the West proceeded on the assumption that Serbia and Montenegro should forget their enormous sacrifices in those wars and be satisfied to have nearly three million of their compatriots remain under the rule of others. We can imagine how this would be seen by Serbs, who, having lived in one state since 1918 after their ancestors had fought to get out from under foreign rule, especially from under the Muslim Turks, now should be asked to have a large number of them go back to Muslim masters.

Tragically, the print and electronic media in Europe and in the United States have dealt with day-to-day developments, and showed no desire to inquire into the basic issues that resulted in the conflict, nor did they engage in critical examination of the policies of the Western powers that not only failed to deal with those issues but also engaged in a violation of the Helsinki Accords, to which they were signatories. One Op-Ed column suggested that what was needed, if the divorce involving six parties was to be resolved amicably, was a peace conference steered by the major powers. That conference would tackle such issues as internal boundaries, allocation of responsibilities for the repayment of Yugoslavia's foreign debt of some 22 billion dollars, division of common properties, and other matters.

In August 1992, pursuant to a British call, a conference was held in London that the various Yugoslav parties attended. While it called upon the participants in the civil war to cease military action, most of the blame was heaped upon Serbia. All of the parties promised to be cooperative, but the attitude of the Western powers that Bosnia-Herzegovina could not be organized along the example of the Swiss cantons was not promising. Interestingly, the cantonal principle, apparently first suggested by Lord Carrington, had earlier been accepted by the three Bosnian groups but was soon thereafter rejected by the Muslims.

An important document guiding the Muslims was the "Islamic Declaration," authored by their leader, Alija Izetbegovic, in 1970 and circulated secretly, but published openly in 1990. It is revealing in that its basic goal is

stated to be "the renewal of Islamic religious thought and the creation of a united Islamic community from Morocco to Indonesia." Moreover, it says that the Islamic movement should take power once it is "morally and numerically strong enough," and that "there can be neither peace nor coexistence between the Islamic religion and non-Islamic social and political institutions."

The declaration did not provide comfort to the Serbs and Croats of Bosnia, particularly when it openly stated that the "upbringing of the people, and particularly means of mass influence—the press, radio, television and film—should be in the hands of people whose Islamic moral and intellectual authority is indisputable. The media should not be allowed—as so often happens—to fall into the hands of perverted and degenerate people who then transmit the aimlessness and emptiness of their own lives to others."

This document explains the reluctance of the Muslims to accept the Vance-Owen Plan or any other plan that would postpone indefinitely their dream of an Islamic Bosnian state. The Croats, on the other hand, were glad to accept the Vance-Owen Plan because it gave them more territory than they could have hoped for, including a narrow strip of land that would prevent the Serbs of Croatia from having a geographic link with Serbia, while their part of Bosnia is adjacent to Croatia, to which they want to be annexed.

The Serbs, who would like to join Serbia, were also unhappy with the plan, not only because under it they would have less territory than they had before any fighting began (about 43 percent instead of over 60 percent), but also for two other important reasons: (1) the plan scattered them among several units and denied them a geographic connection between Serbia and the Serbian enclaves (Krajina) in Croatia, and (2) it gave to the Muslims the factories and coal mines and to the Croats the hydroelectric facilities and the munitions industry. A Serb negotiator reportedly said, "we get rocks and rattlesnakes."

Viewed from afar, the plan had a serious drawback in that it assumed that a multiethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina was possible, whereas a multiethnic Yugoslavia was not. In addition, it dispersed the Serbs within Bosnia-Herzegovina just as Tito's scheme did in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, it did recognize that in a multiethnic society basic decisions should be reached by consensus instead of by

majority vote. Hence, it gave most of the governmental powers to the several units and made the central government weak, so that it could not impose its will on those units.

In mid-March 1993, Vance and Owen were desperate to get the Muslims and Serbs to accept their plan. In order to get the signature of the Muslim president, they made changes in the plan that were vehemently opposed by the Bosnia Serb representative. And yet they hoped that in this way they could force the Serbs to sign. At a special meeting in Athens, Greece, the Bosnian Serb president signed, mainly because the plan was endorsed by Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, but said that his signature would be valid only if his parliament agreed. The latter called for a referendum in which the plan was overwhelmingly rejected by the Bosnian Serb voters.

At the same time, Britain, France, and the United States prepared a new list of sanctions against Yugoslavia (i.e., Serbia and Montenegro), as well as enforcement of a "no fly zone" over Bosnia. Ironically, these actions came at a time when new information confirmed that the existing sanctions had proved counterproductive—that they had actually solidified domestic support for Serbia's president. Even his political opponents conceded that the United Nations sanctions, and the idea of tightening them, evoked universal criticism in Belgrade, even among those who detested Milosevic.

Not long after the rejection of the Vance-Owen Plan by the Bosnian Serbs, the presidents of Croatia and Serbia put forth a plan to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina into three units along ethnic lines. The Muslims' immediate reaction was negative. Ironically, they could have had much more under an EC plan proposed in early 1992, before the fighting began, a plan initially accepted by all three sides, but soon thereafter rejected by the Muslims.

In July 1993, all three parties agreed to a three-way division with a weak central government whose competence would be mainly in foreign affairs and trade. Almost immediately, however, the Muslim president walked out because, in the interim, the Serbs had captured two mountain peaks overlooking Sarajevo. He was encouraged in his walk-out by the U.S. threat of military air strikes unless the Serbs withdrew. When they withdrew in August, the talks resumed and the three-way division agreement was reinstated. The par-

ties also agreed that for a period of up to two years Sarajevo would be demilitarized and put under UN jurisdiction. Still to be worked out was the problem of where the borders of the three units would be drawn on maps.

In the meanwhile, while it may be futile to speculate as to the future, it is difficult to avoid the question: Why did not Serbia's allies in two world wars (Britain, France, and the United States) go to the Serbs, the largest ethnic group and the strongest supporter of the Yugoslav state (which the West favored), to seek their cooperation in a solution when that state began to disintegrate? Or, at least, to assure the Serbs that, while recognition of Slovenia and Croatia seemed justified, in any final settlement Serbian grievances would also be addressed?

If the West had done that instead of condemning the Serbs for wanting precisely what the secessionist forces wanted—self-determination—would it have found a need to talk about ethnic cleansing and about seeking to frame rules of war for an ongoing civil war? Where was the statesmanship?

After all, the West had some examples from the past that might have guided its actions. The U.S. Civil War comes to mind, when a part of Virginia did not want to secede from the Union and formed its own independent state of West Virginia. This is almost exactly the situation with the Serbian-Krajina region of Croatia. And the British have Northern Ireland.

Some aspects of the West's intervention in Yugoslavia's civil war would be amusing if the situation was not so tragic. It should be recalled that one of Lincoln's great worries was Britain's contemplated recognition of the Confederacy. If that had come, he was prepared for war with the British. In the case of the Yugoslav conflict, Western nations have openly taken sides against the side that was winning—the Serbs. Moreover, in their efforts to get aid to the losing side, the West has expected the Serbs to cooperate!

There would seem to be a moral issue of the highest order on encouraging the losing side to continue resistance and thereby perpetuate the carnage. Paradoxically, the West has blamed only the Serbs, totally ignoring the fact that historically hostilities end when the losing side surrenders. What kind of perverse logic holds that the winning side should stop while opponents continue shooting? How are so-called humanitarian concerns advanced by

policies that have the effect of promoting the killing?

Wars generally end when the losing side recognizes that it can no longer expect its supporters to make additional sacrifices. In the American Civil War, General Robert E. Lee at one point realized that the cause was lost, that he could no longer ask for sacrifices that would be futile, and asked for an armistice. Ironically, the West, by its intervention in the Yugoslav conflict, has not promoted its ending but rather its continuance.

Again, reflecting on our Civil War, we know that the warship *Alabama* was built in England and was permitted sail to join the Confederate navy. And two ironclad ships were being constructed for the Confederacy, but the project was stopped at the last moment. Had the British been more determined (alas, there was not a powerful media to push them), and if the technology for delivering food to the Confederates had been available, perhaps the Civil War would have lasted another four years!

We should also note that the West's intervention in Yugoslavia's civil war poses some interesting questions in the field of international law. First of all, there are at least two historic international acts that need to be mentioned. The signers of the Treaty of London in 1915 agreed that after the war Bosnia-Herzegovina, a large part of Dalmatia, and a large part of present day Croatia should go to their ally, Serbia. Another ally, Montenegro, was promised a part of the Dalmatian coast, including the city of Dubrovnik. With the creation of the Yugoslav state, these and other one-time Austro-Hungarian areas went to that state. Moreover, following the First World War, the Versailles treaties of Trianon and St. Germain treated the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (i.e., Yugoslavia) as the successor state of Serbia. All international agreements to which Serbia was a party were transferred to the Yugoslav state. These two international acts gave to Serbia more than Serbia's Milosevic ever dreamed of claiming.

Another aspect of the international law question concerns the action of several sovereign European nations acting to assist in the destruction of another sovereign European state. They did not wait for the outcome of the civil war but worked actively to determine the outcome. They sought to provide a figleaf of legitimacy by the hasty recognition of se-

cessionist republics. The question as to whether this was consistent with the basic principles of the international system and the Charter of the United Nations cannot be avoided. Moreover, there certainly will be questions about efforts to create laws of war for a civil war in the midst of it, and even to suggest the names of persons who might be brought to trial for war crimes.

As we know, civil wars are the most tragic of all wars, in which many atrocities are com-

Western leaders sought to justify their actions on the ground that Serbia's Communist leader was primarily responsible for the civil war in Bosnia.

mitted. Witness the Confederate prison of Andersonville, where tens of thousands of Union soldiers were held and where over 12,000 died.

Past atrocities do not, of course, excuse those that have been happening in Bosnia, where all three sides have been guilty. Serbian shelling of Sarajevo with its helpless civilian population has been the most obvious, but the Croatian and Muslim shelling of smaller cities has been equally repugnant, if on a smaller scale. Similarly, Serbs, Croats, Muslims, and Albanians have all been guilty of ethnic cleansing. But where has there been a civil war without atrocities?

In the final analysis, the question of the culpability of the Western leaders for what has happened cannot be avoided. They sought to justify their actions on the ground that Serbia's Communist leader, Slobodan Milosevic, was primarily responsible for the civil war in Bosnia. This position ignored several key elements: (1) the Bosnian civil war was part and parcel of the Yugoslav civil war, which began with the secessions of Slovenia and Croatia; (2) the Bosnian Serbs, whose forebears had lived there for centuries, fought for the defense of their lives and homes; (3) in anticipation of defense needs, Communist dictator Tito had made Bosnia-Herzegovina the Yugoslav army's arsenal, so that the Bosnian Serbs had no need of importing arms from Serbia; (4) the sizable military units from Croatia were a significant factor in the Bos-

nian conflict; (5) the Bosnian Muslims' rejection of an EC proposal in early 1992 for a three-way division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, after originally having joined the Serbs and Croats in accepting it. Seemingly, the West ignored all of these factors.

What can be said about the responsibility of powerful great powers that engaged in punishing only one of the three parties involved in the dispute, especially when there was ample evidence that the other two parties were very much implicated in bringing that dispute about? Who is to be held accountable for the horrendous harm that has been visited upon the Serbian people and Serbian nation as a result of the lack of evenhandedness on the part of the West? There would seem to be no way that the Serbian people can be compensated for the damage done as a result of the denial to them of vital medical care, or the general setback to the society as a result of the costly and irreparable brain drain resulting from the UN sanctions, to mention but two specific areas.

Without any attempt to exculpate Serbia's Milosevic for his contribution to the Yugoslav tragedy, it certainly appears that the West's determination to lay sole blame on him is but a lame effort to justify a one-sided policy. At the same time, any objective effort to assign responsibility for the Yugoslav civil war and its consequences must include all Yugoslav leaders—Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Muslims, Macedonians, and Albanians—as well as the media in the West, which battled unashamedly to make foreign policy but with no corresponding responsibility.

In terms of the future, it seems appropriate to ask what can be learned from the West's mismanagement of the Yugoslav crisis. We need not wait until the Yugoslav tragedy plays itself out, however, before setting forth a few basic principles as guides for the United States and other great powers. In sum, they are: (1) Do not take lightly getting involved in the destruction of an existing internationally recognized nation state; (2) Avoid taking sides in civil wars, particularly when the issues are not clear; (3) Offer advice, and perhaps even facilitate the formation of arbitration tribunals, but insist that the parties reach political settlements before considering diplomatic recognition; (4) Clearly define the issues of national interest; (5) Encourage allies to act on the basis of the foregoing principles. Other observers may suggest additional or modified

sensible guides to action as a way of avoiding similar tragedies in the future.

NOTE

1. It is interesting to note that in all census figures from 1910 to 1971 the Serbs were the largest ethnic group in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the census

of 1971, the category "Muslim" as an ethnic concept was officially introduced for the first time. Prior to that time, Muslims who thought of themselves as Serbs reported that they were Serbs; some said that they were Croats; some said that they were Yugoslavs. Consequently, we find that in the 1991 census the Muslims were approximately 44 percent, the Serbs 34 percent, and the Croats 17 percent.

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UNRECONSTRUCTED NAZISM ON DISPLAY

*The Germans warmly support the Croats.
Kenneth Roberts says this reuniting of
second world war allies is distasteful*

Split
THE PRIESTS were in black, as were the gunmen — two of each, across a ping-pong table, playing red-faced and shouting for forfeits of *travarica*, the local herb brandy. A scatter of nuns sat round the room, drinking Turkish coffee served by a buxom, peroxidized blonde with thick make-up and a dark moustache. Party time in Croat-controlled Bosnia — Hogarth would have had a field day.

I had been invited by Goran, who stood at the door, mirror sunglasses reflecting the neon light, grenades hooked into his bootlaces. He too was in black — black T-shirt, black fatigues straining against a generous gut, black fingerless gloves, black pistols, and black beret sporting the silver badge of the second world war Ustasha fascists. I had first met him that afternoon, at the entrance to the Mostar headquarters of the Croatian Defence Council (Hrvatsko Vijeće Obrane, or HVO). He had introduced himself memorably, in a broad American accent: 'Ah'm Goran. Ah like three things in life: Ah like kissin', Ah like fuckin' an' Ah like killin'.' A British army driver, smoking by his Land-Rover, had offered helpful advice between puffs — 'I'd kiss 'im 'n drop me trousers, mate

— two out of three ain't bad.'

But Goran had contented himself with handing me his pre-war business card, which bore a photo of the Catholic shrine at nearby Medjugorje and the legend 'Goran's Taxis and Tours — Pilgrimages a Speciality'. His gleaming Mercedes, also black, shone amongst the rubble. Its taxi sign had been replaced by an HVO badge and grenades rolled on the dashboard: Goran's taxi-driving days were over, at least temporarily. Fifty years old, and Rambo at last. I don't know whom Goran kisses, but he kills Muslims. His tally is branded into the butt of his AK-47. He considers the 'Turks' a stain on the Catholic lands of Hercegovina and is an enthusiastic supporter of the symbolic destruction of Mostar's 500-year-old Ottoman bridge. Taught the Turks a lesson. Goran is unlikely to be impressed by this week's agreement on a Muslim-Croat federation.

There are many Gorans in Bosnia now, in all the armies, but those in Croat ranks are the most distasteful for their open display of unreconstructed Nazism. Such display is not limited to Bosnia — the swastikas daubed on gutted Bosnian Muslim homes are replicated in Croatia proper, sprayed on walls alongside the horseshoe 'U' of Ustasha. The Croatian government has revived many of the paraphernalia of

the Nazi puppet régime headed by Ante Pavelic in the early 1940s. Streets and squares have been renamed after Ustasha heroes. Zagreb's former Square of the Victims of Fascism — named in memory of the millions of Jewish, Serb and Muslim victims of Pavelic's concentration camps and massacres — is now the Square of the Rulers of Croatia. Plans are well under way to reinstate the kuna, the currency of the fascist state. The Croatian flag once again sports the *sahovnica*, the red and white chequered shield which symbolised Pavelic's state — symbolism which some veterans of Tito's army equate with a reunited Germany flying the swastika.

The Croatian President, Franjo Tudjman, is himself a former Partisan. But in a display of coat-turning exceeded only by his ex-communist counterpart in Belgrade, he has become lioniser-in-chief of the 'Independent Croatia' which his erstwhile Nazi enemies established in Zagreb in 1941. This unashamed harking back to the second world war is commonplace — the Croatia Airlines in-flight magazine now trumpets the 're-emergence of Independent Croatia', leaving out the fact that its only previous emergence was by Hitlerian decree, while the government suggests reburying Ustasha dead in the same plot as the Jewish victims of Croat-run concentration camps.

Hand in hand with this glorying in former fascism walks Croatia's growing pretence of being a sound European nation. The EC flag flutters all around the country, normally in close juxtaposition to the Croat emblem. Croatian papers refer constantly to the modern European nature of the nation, as if such repetition would eventually allow them to slide unnoticed through the EC's back door.

To be sure, Croatia looks European. Zagreb's opera house is as perfect an Austro-Hungarian inheritance as will be found anywhere outside Austria. The Italianate coastal towns of Istria and Dalmatia owe





as much to Greek and Venetian expansion as any Mediterranean ports. It is only the atmosphere of the place that jars. The one aspect of governing 'Independent Croatia' in which Tudjman has found immediate common ground with his fascist predecessor is the omnipresence of the state.

The country lives under a heavy police influence, overt and secret. Military policemen are entitled to stop cars in the street, as are the traffic cops. Political opponents run old-fashioned risks — in September nine leading members of the secessionist Dalmatian Action Party were incarcerated 'on suspicion' after their offices had been destroyed by a bomb. Non-Croat citizens are effectively without rights — in November the Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights claimed that over 1,500 non-Croat families had been forced from their homes in Split alone.

The media are not disposed to make waves — Hrvatska Television is state-controlled and managed by one of Tudjman's closest cronies, a former vice-president. Most of the major newspapers are owned by government pension funds, or leading supporters of Tudjman's HDZ party. Even so, editors who display independence of thought find themselves periodically summoned to police offices for 'guidance'. The military police recently issued instructions that no paper should refer to the Serbian Krajina without the prefix 'so-called' or 'self-declared'.

Much of the heavy-handedness and most of the fascist symbolism derive from the new-found influence of the Croat diaspora. Expatriate Croats, many of them former Ustasha activists who fled to South America or Australia after Tito's victory, leapt to the defence of Croatia in 1991, pumping more than \$8 million into the coffers of Tudjman's party as Yugoslav army tanks tried to batter Zagreb back into the Federation. Their subsequent financial and military assistance has gained them a strong voice in domestic

policy.

One of the strongest voices is that of Gojko Susak, a Canadian millionaire whose practical and financial contributions in 1991 resulted in his appointment as Croatia's defence minister. With continuing influence over the inflow of funds, Susak and his partners have guided a gigantic rearmament programme in open defiance of UN and EC embargos. Over the last year the Croatian air force has increased its fleet of MIG-21 aircraft and MI-17 helicopters several hundredfold and has also bought a number of Hind helicopter gunships. The army has upgraded its weaponry of all natures, from small arms to anti-tank missiles. The helicopters, along with Croatian army troops and armoured vehicles, have been deployed in operations against the Muslims in central Bosnia in full view of EC monitors and British troops.

From a purely domestic viewpoint, all of this can be satisfactorily explained. Croatia is an embryonic and vulnerable nation which has over the past two years suffered humiliating reverses at the hands of the Krajina Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims. Rabble-rousing nationalism and heavy-handed rule can be rationalised as essential means to the end of victory. Flouting international resolutions and embargos is a cheap way for an embattled leader to show strength — especially when the international community turns a blind eye.

It is less easy to explain that lack of international reaction to the resurgent fascism so evident in the building of the new Croat nation. British suggestions of economic sanctions on account of Croatia's military involvement in Bosnia have been repeatedly blocked by Germany. German monetary aid has flowed into Zagreb's coffers. High-ranking Bundeswehr officers have visited the Croatian army, including units with elements deployed against the Bosnian Muslims. In November the Croatian press announced that the American government had signed a contract for the repair of US naval vessels in Croat ports. And when the UN attempted weakly to

threaten Zagreb with Serb-style sanctions in order to lift the Croat blockade of key Bosnian routes, the Americans declared that the time was not ripe for 'symmetry in sanctions, a view enthusiastically endorsed by the Papal nuncio in Zagreb.

There are several possible explanations for such international tolerance. First, the bulk of Catholic German opinion seems vaguely well disposed towards Croatia in its struggle against Islamic or Orthodox foes. Many Germans have fond memories of or continuing links with Croatia, which in the 1980s became the German holiday-maker's equivalent of the Costa Brava. The Bonn government produces unconvincing reasons for its policy of support — a desire to avoid domestic trouble from Croat *gastarbeiters*, or a need to maintain links in order to exert pressure on Zagreb. But at present there are also upwards of 250,000 Bosnian refugees in Germany, some of them made homeless by Croat troops. And, almost two years into the Bosnian war, there is no discernible sign of German influence preventing Croat atrocities. The uncomfortable truth appears to be that Germany is siding with Croatia, at least tacitly, to avoid domestic pressure from those who feel emotional ties with their former partners in tourism and genocide.

On the American side, there are none so blind as those who will not see. Swastikas, black uniforms, rape and pillage, fade into insignificance beside the demonic image which the State Department has built for the Serbs. To talk to a US official about Serbia in 1994 is to hear powerful echoes of Iran in 1979. As in Vietnam and Central America, the enemy of America's enemy is America's friend, no matter how reprehensible. This week, in Washington, Goran and his colleagues will be transformed from brutal thugs into stout defenders against Serb aggression.

The only other party with any knowledge of the area, the UN, has no reason to love the Croats, having had daily experience of their excesses and obstructionism, both in Croatia and in Hercegovina. But the bloated hierarchies of the UNHCR and UNPROFOR are too comfortably installed in Zagreb, single-handedly driving up rental and restaurant prices, to press for the sanctions which would logically lead to their removal to less salubrious surroundings.

Back at Goran's party, a sweat-soaked priest threw an arm across my shoulder, the other waving to embrace the room. 'The Holy Trinity,' he roared. 'The Church sustains us, the HVO protects us, Caritas [the Catholic aid agency] feeds us.' And the world conveniently ignores us, he might have added.

Targets for a Balkans bullet

Send more troops! The cry of the frontline general down the ages is heard once more. A week ago it was 3,000, then 5,000, now 10,500, or as General Sir Michael Rose put it yesterday morning: "The more the merrier." Publicly denying a commander in the field more men must be the hardest decision for a prime minister to make. Denying them to General Rose, the ablest man yet sent to Bosnia, will be even harder. America, France and, so far, Britain are gritting their teeth to say no. Yesterday, Douglas Hurd, the Foreign Secretary, appeared to wobble. He should not. No more troops.

Last week saw foreign intervention gather alarming speed. President Clinton decided that where Lord Carrington, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen had failed, he could succeed. He believes that their failure was due to a lack of military muscle. He has that muscle. He used it two weeks ago in the bombing threat against the Serbian guns and last week in shooting down four Serbian warplanes. It felt good. Now he will raise the stakes. He will be the peacemaker. Bosnia, we are told, has moved to the top of the President's agenda.

Some types of death are said to follow a set pattern: a struggle, a gasp, a rattle, then silence. "At the still point of the turning world," wrote Eliot, "... there the dance is." Likewise the deadly dance of intervention. The pattern seems horribly inevitable. Politicians and the media keep a relentless beat. Governments protest: "No more troops, no more mediation." Yet

*Simon
Jenkins*

they are mesmerised. They cannot stop. All the posturing, all the bombast and humbug and desperate, painful charity are mere noise. Last month's mortar that killed 68 in Sarajevo market has become a ghostly echo of Princip's 1914 bullet.

Mr Clinton had begun by sabotaging the recent Croat-Serb *rapprochement*, which both sides were beginning to acknowledge out of sheer exhaustion. It was the work of Serb and Croat leaders locally, was upsetting the Bosnian Muslims and had no Great Power sponsor. That sort of peace, a cynic might say, puts world statesmen out of business. It threatens the most gilded of closed shops.

Instead the State Department flew Croat and Muslim leaders to Washington and there concocted a Croat-Muslim confederation within Bosnia. The chief selling point of this statelet to the Muslims was that it notionally pushed the Serbs from some 20 per cent of the land they currently occupy. As a wider selling point it was one in the diplomatic eye for the Russians. The plan neatly pre-empted Moscow's bid for an international peace conference on Bosnia. It also made

the European Union's long mediation look even more sickly.

This is the first "American-brokered" deal for Bosnia. Mr Clinton's prestige is behind it. He told John Major last week, and tells every nervous congressman and senator, that he has made no commitment of ground troops. But suppose his peace deal begins to crumble? Suppose the Russians somehow up the stakes? Bosnia is now "top of the agenda". Might America's commander-in-chief not feel obliged to send troops, when there is another atrocity on television and the taunts from Britain and France get more shrill? Bosnia is now big diplomacy. More is at issue than peace within its borders.

But back to those troops. The United Nations, we must recall for the umpteenth time, is in former Yugoslavia to assist in the supply of humanitarian aid to victims in a civil war. Some argue that this is not a civil war. It is aggression by Serbia and Croatia against the infant Bosnia. Even were this a sensible definition of the conflict, it does not alter the reason why UN troops are there. Nobody initially believed that outsiders had any



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place in fighting this war. Everybody declared such involvement would be mad. The shooting down of four warplanes last week may have been covered by a UN resolution. But it had nothing really to do with humanitarian aid.

General Rose does not want more troops to keep aid convoys flowing. Sarajevo, like most cities under prolonged siege, has found ways of supplying itself and its people are not starving. The troops are wanted to secure ceasefires. They are wanted to push back sieges round other towns, such as Tuzla and Maglaj. They are wanted to impose a UN-brokered peace on every enclave. They have received their first shot of that seductive narcotic, air support. They are unlikely to resist asking for more — or being given it unasked.

There are two ways of viewing such troops. The first is that they are vital cement for the ceasefires. Without them, the country cannot build a lasting peace. They are the guarantors of safe havens, the masterbuilders of reconciliation. The second is that what they do will end up being the opposite. They relieve exhausted local commanders of the need to keep discipline and make compromises face-to-face with their enemies. As so often with external intervention — Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Cyprus — peace becomes just a sullen stand-off. It cannot be imposed but must

emerge from the logic of war. The agents of war must themselves be the agents of peace.

I take the second view. But even on the first, more troops should not be sent. They will be drawn into wider confrontations, hobbled by ever more acrimonious superpower diplomacy. Their mere presence is an incitement to escalation and the taking of sides. The division of territory will become more not less controversial. Ever more troops will be demanded and sent. Bosnia could keep half a million occupied for a lifetime.

This is exactly the risk the American plan now proffers. It appears even more fanciful than its predecessors, and more provocative. If it starts to fail, the president will come under intense pressure to assist it militarily. Russia will be under no less intense pressure to help the Serbs resist. Somebody should stand behind the leaders of both countries, night and day, whispering "Vietnam" and "Afghanistan" in their respective ears.

In a doubtless influential article in *The New York Times*, the American strategist Albert Wohlstetter has pushed the Washington plan to the next point on the ratchet. He wrote that putting the new federation "in a position to defend itself against Serbia would require only a transient use of allied ground forces". Those American ground forces were needed to deter an escalation in Russian support for Serbia. The arms embargo should be lifted. (Muslim troops would incidentally be freed to open up new fronts against the Serbs.) This is madness. "Only a transient use of ground forces" might be the epitaph on a myriad soldiers' graves. Do Americans no longer read history?

Professor Wohlstetter is the Dr Strangelove of the new American power projection. During the Soviet threat, that projection was needed to meet might with might, to sustain a balance of nuclear terror. Under the new American superiority, every foe is merely another a Saddam Hussein: one big punch and he is (almost) finished. Thus the Bosnian Serb army is dismissed as a wretched, undisciplined rabble. It can be pushed down with a feather. So was General Giap's. So once was General Aidede's. Such comparisons may seem glib, But what other argument is to hand?

Nothing would do more to boost the militancy of the Serb army than a Croat-Bosnian spring offensive. Nothing would do more to tighten its moral hold on its new Russian friends. Nato spokesmen last week derided Russia's sabre-rattling in Serbia and foreign minister Vitali Churkin's warning of "all-out war" if America escalates the conflict. Spokesmen say that Russia has done the right thing at Sarajevo and anyway needs to keep in the West's good books. Russian realpolitik would not risk the reform movement for an East-West confrontation in a far-off land.

I am sure Princip thought the same when he pulled the trigger in Sarajevo. Chaos theory got the better of common sense. In this latest overseas adventure, the Americans are relying on philanthropy and enlightened self-interest keeping the upper hand in the Kremlin. Such gullibility would be bizarre, even if intervention might bring peace to Bosnia. Since it will not, the risks being taken are astonishing. We are all dousing ourselves in petrol and searching round for a match.

We should get our troops out of Bosnia and let the Bosnians seek, find and keep their own peace.

Staged Incidents Distort Balkan Policy

by George Bogdanich

The recent Sarajevo market explosion has re-ignited the debate about the extent to which public policies are distorted by wartime disinformation. Colonel David Hackworth, *Newsweek's* military correspondent, calls staged incidents -- attacking friendly targets to discredit your enemy -- the "oldest ruses of war". The use of such tactics by Croat and Muslim forces to encourage intervention in the current conflict is beyond doubt, despite recent articles and opinion pieces to the contrary.

In early 1992, a BBC documentary film crew followed British mercenaries fighting on the Croatian side as they took part in a coordinated disinformation campaign against the Yugoslav National Army which had signed a ceasefire agreement in Croatia. The film "Dogs of War" shows the black-shirted soldiers as they go off on a nighttime mission to set off explosives in Osijek, Croatia, which is controlled by their allies. When the explosives detonate, Croatian forces fire toward Serbian artillery positions which they believe are attacking them, and the Serbs fire back. We learn the ruse has been completely successful the next morning as an unwitting radio reporter from another BBC unit announces that the Serbs are responsible for the "worst violation since the cease fire began."

This type of sabotage, known as "psy-ops" in intelligence circles, is used with increasing frequency in Bosnia. Juka Prazina, former leader of a Muslim militia in Sarajevo acknowledged to the Croatian newspaper *Globus* that he often fired on Bosnian government forces led by General Sefer Halilovic to induce them to retaliate against the Serbs. Aid workers and Bosnian civilians have also died as a result of these sinister propaganda tools. BBC reporter Misha Glenny observes that when an Italian relief plane was shot down in the summer of 1992, "newspapers from Washington to Tokyo reported that the Serbs had perpetrated this heinous act", though a UN investigation later linked the missile which brought down the plane to Croat and Muslim forces in the area. Col. David Hackworth has confirmed other incidents blamed on Serbs but staged by Muslim forces that same year. These included an earlier marketplace explosion caused by a claymore mine and a deadly mortar attack on civilians gathered outside a meeting between Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and Douglas Hurd which was witnessed by a UN soldier.

"There have been innumerable instances where those of us who have covered these conflicts have fallen into the disinformation trap," writes Sylvia Poggioli of National Public Radio a respected veteran reporter who worries that "policies in Western capitals or lack of it has increasingly been based on news reports." Following the terrible massacre at Markale Market in Sarajevo on February 5, President Clinton found it "highly likely" and Secretary of State Warren Christopher offered his "gut feeling" that the Serbs were responsible for the explosion. According to U.S. News and World Report, however, Pentagon officials who have been closely monitoring the area for more than a year, argued that the bombing was done by "the Muslims who fired on their own people to provoke Western air strikes."

Publicly, the UN Protection Forces in Sarajevo took the position that the shelling could have been done by either side. The existence of a UN classified report naming the guilty party, however, has been reported by BBC reporter Misha Glenny and French television TF1. Glenny says he has not seen the report, but Bernard Volker of TF 1 reported that the UN privately holds Muslim forces responsible for the explosion and adds that these findings were sent to NATO ministers by EU mediator David Owen who feared military action against the Serbs would derail the peace process. Pressed about this recently by interviewer David Frost, Lord Owen deftly turned the question aside without denying the substance. A spokesman for UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali at first denied the existence of a classified report, but that has been downgraded to a "no comment" as Volker stood by his story and as more detailed reports linking Muslims to the explosion have appeared in Italian, Greek and Israeli newspapers.

Classifying sensitive information, of course, gives the UN Security Council flexibility to pursue the policies of its dominant members. But the official explanation of the Markale market massacre by the UN is too flimsy to hold for long. Try finding a credible military source who believes that a mortar round with fewer than 2 kg. of explosives can cause 68 deaths and 200 injuries. Paul Beaver, of *Jane's Defense Weekly*, the most widely quoted authority on military matters, says "I find it difficult to contemplate that a 120 mm mortar shell could cause this number of casualties even in a confined space like the Market...I'm not aware of such a high number ever having been killed by a single shell."

A senior Israeli military expert in sabotage and ballistics interviewed by the Israeli newspaper *Davar* and the Italian *Corriere Della Serra* also dismissed the UN's public explanation. The Israeli officer said that the effects of the explosion in Sarajevo were very similar to those caused by a cone-shaped device (containing 15 kg of explosives) which is used by Afghan-based mujahadeen and Lebanese Hezbollah soldiers now fighting alongside Bosnian Muslim forces. Key evidence that the market explosion was not a mortar shell is offered by Sevket Karduman a New York physician of Turkish origin specializing in trauma who treated the first victims of the explosion to arrive at a Sarajevo hospital. Karduman, interviewed by *CNN* as well as *Davar*, was surprised to find that victims had burning and hollow wounds instead of the shrapnel one would find from a mortar wound.

"Eighty percent of the injuries were from the waist down," he noted. The mortar shell explanation is further undermined by the fact that victims interviewed by the *Washington Post* and Islamic radio station *Khayat* in Sarajevo say they did not hear the telltale loud whistling sound which accompanies an incoming mortar shell.

Against a wealth of credible evidence to the contrary, some columnists and reporters deny the existence of staged incidents in Sarajevo. It is an article of faith among advocates of intervention that the much disputed breadline massacre of May 27, 1992 was caused by Bosnian Serbs and that craters on the scene a year and a half later supposedly confirm this. But a UN investigation, conducted only a month after the explosion, linked

the tragedy to "Bosnian forces loyal to Alija Izetbegovich" according to classified briefings to UNPROFOR Commander Satish Nambiar quoted by the London *Independent*. UN investigators said that the tragedy which killed 22 was caused by a "command-detonated" explosion, not a mortar shell. A UN official quoted by the *Independent* in August of 1992 stated: "The impact that it is there now, is not necessarily similar nor anywhere near as large as we came to expect with a mortar round landing on a paved surface."

Those unable to accept that Serbs could be blamed for a Muslim act of terror need only recall that last year's explosion at the World Trade Center was blamed initially on Serbs. Two networks and then FBI Director William Sessions suggested Serbs were key suspects, because of a phone call received by someone taking credit for the blast on behalf of a non-existent "Serbian Liberation Front."

The impact of psy-ops and sabotage in an era of instant global communications can hardly be overstated. The "breadline massacre" led, three days later, to the imposition of one-sided sanctions against Serbia that have quadrupled the infant mortality rate there and impoverished the economy of both Serbia and its neighbors. The Markale market explosion prompted a NATO response that still threatens to internationalize the Balkan conflict in ways that no one can foresee.

Ignoring or suppressing information about staged incidents is dangerous for several reasons: These operations have repeatedly torpedoed cease fire agreements and negotiations that might have led to a political settlement. They distort public opinion in ways that force elected officials to respond against sound intelligence. Finally, their very success encourages new incidents of deadly sabotage. Given the uneasy international alliances that now hover over Bosnia-Herzegovina, we can ill afford another spark that could inflame the entire region.

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