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AUTHOR: Paul Shoup

CONTRACTOR: University of Virginia

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Paul Shoup

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NCSEER NOTE

The main body of this paper is an interpretive description of the chain of events leading to, and encompassing the Bosnian crisis of 1992, and an analysis of their causes and consequences, beginning with a brief history of the area and becoming increasingly detailed to June 1992. In the penultimate section (pages 40-43) the author gives his "bottom line" perception of the crisis and possible resolutions of it. He ends with five brief principal conclusions (pages 43-45).

Professor Paul Shoup
Dept of Government and Foreign Affairs
University of Virginia

THE BOSNIAN CRISIS OF 1992**

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(This paper reflects work in progress. The author welcomes comments. Please address them to Paul Shoup, Radio Free Europe, Oettinger Strasse 67, 8000 Munich 22. FAX: 089-2102-3215)

"Zar u ovoj ludnici nije dovoljno ludila? Zar niko sem Bosanaca i Hercegovaca ne moze shvatiti da bi podjela BiH po nacionalnom principu ovaj rat ucinila jos gorim i bestijalnim? " (Zlatan Cabaravdic, Vreme, May 11 1992 p. 14)

For the past two months, we have been witness to the agony of a civil war in Bosnia-Hercegovina. Of all the republics of the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia Hercegovina --or Bosnia as we shall refer to the republic, mindful of how, when the violence finally clamped its grip on Mostar, the people of that city gathered in a rally for peace, and for the first time in their history said, "We are Bosnians"¹ -- least deserved this fate. The destruction of Bosnia, furthermore, marks a point of no return for Yugoslavia, her final demise, either as a "Third Yugoslavia," a "Greater Serbia", or a loose association of successor republics. No one can say what now lies ahead, except, perhaps, a period of turmoil, ending in boundary changes, exchanges of population, and possibly the end of the new-born state of Bosnia itself. The

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¹ Vreme,

blame for this situation lies above all with the national parties who have sought to carve up Bosnia into national mini-states. Yet all the players in this tragedy, including the international actors, bear responsibility for the present situation.

While the subject of this paper was to be the "fault lines and politics of Bosnia," the events of recent months have overwhelmed the distinction between domestic and international events suggested by this theme. Fault lines there are in Bosnia, as never before in her history, but they are the product of divisions within Bosnian society which have been activated by the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the collapse of communism, forces which have their origins outside Bosnia proper.

Before the present crisis, Bosnia was a society where the three major nationalities - Moslems, Serbs and Croats - lived in apparent harmony. The region's boundaries, with some interruptions, were among the most enduring in the Balkans. Yet, at the same time, Bosnia was a region which lived under the shadow of her neighbors. The presence in Bosnia of Serbs, Croats, and Moslems of undetermined nationality excited the cupidity of Croatia and Serbia in the 19th century, just as it has today. Bosnia's autonomy, stable borders and her tradition of tolerance could survive only under the benevolent patronage of others - at one time Austria, at another Yugoslavia. Absent such patrons, Bosnia was a nationalists' delight and a statesman's nightmare - a witch's brew of ethnic Slav nationalities, who left alone, might live in peace, but could always be aroused - through fear, cupidity or ignorance - to communal violence and ethnic warfare. These facts conditioned the history of Bosnia: for the most part, united, and at peace, under Austrian and Yugoslav rule; yet also subject to violent periods of civil war and partition, notably during World War II.

Now let us turn, first to the problems of Bosnia's borders and her ethnic makeup, which occupy such a prominent role in the present crisis.

The civil war is not being fought over Bosnia's boundaries with the remaining Yugoslav republics. These, for the moment, remain intact, a mocking tribute to the principles of "no border changes without consent" enshrined in the Helsinki Agreement of 1975. As for Bosnia's internal boundaries prior to World War II, it is best to leave a discussion of the problem for another occasion. Suffice it to say that these borders (for example, of the Banovina of Croatia) are of little help in deciding where the boundaries of national units should be drawn today.

Prewar data on the ethnic make-up of Bosnia are, on the other hand, still relevant for understanding the present situation - especially if, as one (Moslem) commentator callously noted, one counts both heads and gravestones.² This is because the national composition of the population of Bosnia has undergone dramatic changes as a result of demographic trends, changes in census categories, and casualties and outmigrations resulting from World War II. (The single greatest difference in census data for the prewar period and today, is that Moslems are now recognized as a nationality in their own right.)³ According to Kocovic, out of a total population in 1931 of 2.323 million in Bosnia in its present boundaries, 1.02

² [Counting heads and gravestones - footnote to be added]

³ In the 1948 census, Moslem Slavs were identified as Moslem - Serb, Croat, or Unspecified; in 1953, as "Moslems unspecified," in 1961 "Moslems in the ethnic sense," and in 1971, 1981, and 1991, "Moslems". For the of the Moslems in Bosnia, see Zachary Irwin, "The Islamic Revival and the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina," The East European Quarterly, Vol. 17, No. 4, (January, 1984), pp. [??] and Irena Reuter-Hendrichs, "Jugoslaviens Muslime," Sudosteuropa Mitteilungen, Vol 29, No. 2 (1989), pp. 105-115.

million were Serbs, 715 thousand Moslems, and 516 thousand Croatians.⁴ In 1991, of a total population of 4.124 million, 1.9 million were Moslem, 1.4 million Serb, and 755 thousand Croatian (43.7% Moslem, 31.4% Serb and 17.3% Croatian, to cite a now very familiar statistic).⁵ In brief, while Serbs were approximately half the population of Bosnia in 1931, and more than double the number of Moslems (assuming that the data on religious persuasion reported in 1931 can be equated with nationality), the situation has now almost reversed itself, with the Moslems the dominant nationality, and the Serbs reduced to less than a third of the total population.

Differential rates of population growth, and outmigration from certain regions, continued to alter the population structure after World War II. Croatians, whose number has fallen absolutely, now base their claims to territory on the census of 1961. Serbs, in order to justify their territorial ambitions, insist that national boundaries within Bosnia be established by settlements, not by districts. Finally, the census of 1991 shows a considerable decline in the number of Yugoslavs in comparison to the census of 1981, a reflection of the polarization going on in Bosnian society after 1990. This has rendered the 1991 census suspect by all three national groups, because, somewhat perversely, when the number of Yugoslavs was greater, they could be claimed as one's "own," just as the Moslems, at an earlier time, were claimed to be Serbian, or Croatian.

⁴ Ljubomir Kocevic, Zrtve drugog svetskog rata ()p. 143. The Enciklopedija Jugoslavije, Vol. 2, p. 35, gives the number of Moslems in Bosnia-Hercegovina as follows: 1910 - 606,306 (31.9%); 1921 - 587,316 (31.1%); 1948 - 788,403 (30.7%)

⁵ "Nacionalni sastav stanovništva, 1991," Jugoslovenski pregled, No 1, 1992, p. 4.

The history of Bosnia mirrors that of other parts of Yugoslavia. She has never been an independent state since the middle ages (a point used by the Serbs to throw doubts on Bosnia's status as a state, although Slovenia did not even enjoy the distinction of independence in medieval times). Yet there may be a lesson for Bosnia's present leaders in the region's medieval past: King Tomislav, the encyclopedia tells us, was recognized by the Pope, who crowned Tomislav king of Bosnia in 1461. This offered little protection to Tomislav, who was beheaded by the Turks in Jajce two years later. Austrian rule was more benign, and Kallay, until his death in 1903, tolerated and perhaps nurtured those qualities of traditional Bosnian culture which we find most appealing today. In the interwar period, Bosnia was brought under Serbian tutelage, but the influence of the JMO (Yugoslav Moslem Organization), was not inconsiderable in Belgrade. Mehmet Spaho - who opposed the creation of a Greater Croatia in 1939, and recommended that Bosnia either be granted autonomy or ally herself with Serbia - assiduously protected the rights of the Moslem landowning class, while not challenging Serbian rule. ⁶

In 1939 Bosnia was partitioned for the first time, following the creation of the Croatian Banovina; then, in 1941, she was absorbed into Independent Croatia. The war was a time of death and rebirth for Bosnia (if only the same could be said now!). While the Croats, Serbs and Moslems engaged in bloody internecine ethnic struggles, they were also drawn into the struggle against the Germans and Italians through the Partisan movement. Bihac, a Moslem city, became a Partisan shrine, the birth place of AVNOJ Yugoslavia. The

⁶ Wayne Vucinic, "Yugoslavs of Moslem Faith," in R.J. Kerner (ed), YUGOSLAVIA (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), Chapter XV.

encounters between the Partisans and their foes involved towns and regions which are now flash points in the civil war - Kupres and the Neretva Valley, for example. While history is not exactly repeating itself, a knowledge of the Partisan campaigns of World War II is useful in sorting out the conflicts taking place in Bosnia today.

Bosnia Hercegovina was the linchpin of the federal system created by the Communists after the war - a republic where three of the six major nationalities co-mingled and shared in power. Over time, the Moslems, showing their traditional adoptability, were absorbed into the mainstream of political and economic life in the republic. Bosnia, while economically backward, experienced rapid economic growth, thanks in part to the defense industries which were located in the republic, far from Yugoslavia's vulnerable borders with the rest of Eastern Europe. The turmoil of the late 1980s, triggered by the rise of Milosevic and the mobilization of the Serbs outside Serbia in support of Serbian nationalist goals, at first passed Bosnia by. Yet Titoism, which seemed so deeply entrenched in Bosnia, succumbed to nationalism as elsewhere in Yugoslavia. In the elections of November and December, 1990, the voters gave their overwhelming support to the three national parties. The Party of Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije, or SDA) won 34% of the seats; the Serbian Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka, or SDS), 30%; and the Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, or HDZ), 18%. The opposition parties (the two strongest were the Alliance of Reform Forces, led by Nenad Kecmanovic, and the former Communists, the Party of Democratic Change, led by Nijaz Durakovic) ended up with only

38 of the total of 204 seats.⁷

(The elections to the State Presidency, which took place in two rounds, in November and December, produced a similar result: Fikret Abdic and Alija Izetbegovic, of the SDA (Party of Democratic Action) won the greatest number of votes, followed by two Serb members of the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party), Nikola Koljevic and Biljana Plavsic, and two Croatians, Stjepan Kljuic and Franjo Boras. Nenad Kecmanovic also ran as a candidate for the Alliance of Reform Forces, and received 21% of the vote - more than Franjo Boras - but failed to secure a seat on the presidency.)

It was against this backdrop that Bosnia faced the challenge of survival posed by the collapse of Yugoslavia. This challenge had two components: making the coalition of three national parties function, in the best Bosnian tradition, as a model of coexistence and tolerance which the rest of society could emulate; and fashioning an agreement over Bosnia's future, either within a new Yugoslavia, or as an independent state. Even with the best will in the world, these were formidable challenges, bound to test the new Bosnian leadership.

On the domestic front the formation of a coalition was at first hailed as an example of the Bosnian skill at compromise. Alija Izetbegovic, President of the SDA (Party of Democratic Action), was elected by the collective state presidency as President of Bosnia; Jure Pelivan, a Croat, was chosen Prime Minister; and Momcilo Krajisnik, a Serb, became President of the National Assembly. The arrangement seemed to reflect the need for balance

⁷ For the election results, see John B. Allcock, "Yugoslavia," in New Political Parties of Eastern Europe and The Soviet Union, Bogdan Szajkowski, editor (Harlow: Longman Group, 1991), pp. 311-319.

and compromise in government, while the three national parties were represented in equal numbers in the State Presidency.⁸

One gains the impression, nevertheless, that over time the government of Bosnia became largely a province of the Moslems and the Croats.⁹ Izetbegovic dominated the scene, thanks to his international prestige and popular support among the Moslems. The two most critical posts in the government apart from the premiership - those of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Interior - were in the hands of the Moslems (Haris Silajdzic and Alija Delimustafic). This is not to say that it was not possible for the three parties to cooperate, on occasion, among each other, and with the army as well. Furthermore, the institutions of government, if ineffective, did have a tradition of impartiality to defend. Radio TV Sarajevo did this brilliantly.¹⁰ The Ministry of the Interior tried to remain above national divisions, but was eventually forced by the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party) to submit to reorganization and parcelization in April of 1992. The absence of consensus in the decisions of the

⁸ Milan Andrejevich, "Moslem Leader Elected President of Bosnia and Hercegovina," Report on Eastern Europe, Jan. 18, 1991, pp. 30-34. Note, also by the same author, "Bosnia-Hercegovina: Yugoslavia's Linchpin," ibid., Dec. 7, 1990, pp. 20-27; "The Future of Bosnia Hercegovina: A Sovereign Republic or Cantonization," ibid., July 5, 1991, pp. 28-34; "Bosnia and Hercegovina Move toward Independence," Ibid., Oct 25, 1991, pp. 22-26; "Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Precarious Peace," Ibid., Feb. 28, 1992, pp. 6-14.

⁹ For a negative assessment of the work of the government of Bosnia, stressing the absence of cooperation among the national parties, see Mensur Camo, "Saz, gusle, tamburica," Nedjelja, Nov 24, 1991, pp. 11-12. According to one critic, Jure Pelivan only appeared three times before parliament after his appointment and late November 1991. See Zdravka Latal, "Politicka kriza - ekonomska katastrofa," Nedjelja, Nov. 24, 1991, p. 13.

¹⁰ For the work of RTSA and its director, Nenad Pejic, see Vreme, April 13, 1992, pp. 8-9. Note that everyday RTSA broadcast three news programs on TV: Croatian HTV; Serbian TVS; Yutel, and of course, RTSA news.

Presidency and other organs - a major complaint of the Serbs - by no means justified the Serbian effort to break down the ministries along national lines, each serving its own ethnic constituency, unless of course, these institutions were anti-Serb, a point argued vociferously by the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party), but yet to be convincingly proven.

At the same time, democratic procedures were for the most part ignored under the impact of repeated crises, both domestic and international. Parliament was largely shut out of the decision-making process, much to the chagrin and anger of the opposition.¹¹ Most power came to be concentrated in the hands of the Presidency and its Crisis Command (Krizni stab) headed by Ejug Ganic.¹² In this respect, Bosnia did not differ greatly from the other Yugoslav republics, where concentration of power in the hands of the President was the rule. Informal consultations among the national parties were also engaged in to some degree in Bosnia, although the practice could hardly be said to have contributed much to the democratic process.

It was with a divided and largely undemocratic government, then, that Bosnia faced her second challenge: responding to the collapse of Yugoslavia. While Bosnia had no territorial disputes with neighboring republics, and had been able to avoid being drawn into the controversies over Kosovo and economic reform (while playing the role of a mediator in the debates over constitutional revisions), she was peculiarly vulnerable on other grounds. This

¹¹ For a biting critique of the system by one of the leaders of the opposition Moslem Bosniak Organization, see the interview with Professor Muhamed Filipovic, "Alija je zakasnio," Nedjeljna Dalmacija Jan 30, 1992, p. 6.

¹² Ibid.

became evident as the crisis deepened, above all, when Slovenia and Croatia decided upon secession.

The source of this vulnerability lay, as we know, in the need for some type of social contract among the three nationalities if the unity of Bosnia was to be preserved. The underlying issue, then, was this: on what basis could the three nationalities base their cooperation, or coexistence? What were the principles that should govern such a social contract? As the crisis in Yugoslavia deepened, the debate over this question became the focus around which the future of the republic revolved. The fact that the controversy finally degenerated into a struggle over territory does not diminish its significance in understanding the Bosnian crisis.

That the terms of such cooperation were in dispute was apparent in the argument over whether Bosnia, after the collapse of communism, was Yugoslavia writ small, or Bosnia writ large. Izetbegovic flatly denied the comparison between Bosnia and Yugoslavia: Bosnia, he argued, had existed longer than Yugoslavia; the relations among her nationalities were more authentic, and so forth. From this it followed that the foundation upon which relationships among the three nationalities was based derived from Bosnian traditions and modern European experience - in brief, the Bosnian (the Serbs would say, spitefully, Moslem) version of a civil society.

On the other hand, Radovan Karadzic, president of the Serbian Democratic Party, favored the analogy between Yugoslavia and Bosnia: just as Yugoslavia was an artificial state, in which Serbs received short shrift, so was Bosnia; just as Yugoslavia was destined to break into its component parts, so was Bosnia. From this it followed that the relationship

among the nationalities must be based on consensual decision making (no major decisions should be made without the consent of all three nationalities), and that each nationality should develop its own institutions (parliaments and so forth). Behind these notions lay the territorial imperative: each nation should have, or create, its own territory. If Bosnia was not Yugoslavia writ small, she would have to be remade in this image.

(For the opposition, on the other hand, the failure of Yugoslavia to democratize was the major point - and Bosnia, ran the risk of making the same error as Yugoslavia by falling under the domination of the national parties. The supporters of this point of view also professed to see a contradiction in the Serbian position, which at one and the same time argued for a confederation in Bosnia and for a strong federal government in Yugoslavia.)

It was the struggle to persuade, or enforce one or another of these views on the Bosnians as Yugoslavia disintegrated and the civil war spread, which constituted the heart of the Bosnian crisis up to the time of the outbreak of the civil war. This struggle, in turn, can be broken down into three periods: (i) the spring of 1991, prior to the secession of Croatia and Slovenia in June; (ii) the period between June, 1991, and Bosnia's bid for recognition as an independent state, December 20, 1991; and (iii) the period between December and Bosnia's recognition on April 6. The first two periods will be examined in a somewhat cursory fashion, the third in more detail.

(i)Spring 1991: Opportunities Foregone: The period of the spring of 1991 must be considered one of opportunities foregone - the opportunity, that is, to make the three-party nationalist coalition function, and for Bosnia to sort out her relations with the rest of Yugoslavia. Izetbegovic, Stjepan Kljuic (President of the Croatian Democratic Community),

and Karadzic, were , after all, not the most radical in their respective national parties. All three were prepared, albeit on their own terms, to support the integrity of Bosnia.

Izetbegovic and Karadzic could agree that as long as Yugoslavia remained intact, Bosnia should not seek to secede. The Serbs, it is true, were engaged during the spring in "self-organization": that is, creating alternative organizations in case the cooperation of the three parties should break down. These efforts, meanwhile, did not yet pose a threat to the integrity of the republic, assuming that the three national parties could still cooperate at the national level.¹³

It was during this period that Izetbegovic played a prominent role in trying to resolve the Yugoslav crisis, pushing the idea of a "Yugoslav state community" in an effort to resolve the constitutional crisis which had arisen over the threat of Slovenia and Croatia to secede. Karadzic may have been dubious about some aspects of this plan, which tried to preserve the international status of the Yugoslav state while devolving most real power to the republics. But as long as Izetbegovic showed some receptivity to the notion of an asymmetric federation, which would have allowed Bosnia to remain in a close union with Yugoslavia, Karadzic was willing to give Izetbegovic his support in the search for a solution to the constitutional crisis.¹⁴

¹³ A Serbian National Council had been formed in October, 1990, and a "Regional Community of Communes" in Bosanska Krajina in April of 1991. See *Borba*, April 15, 1991, p. 5.

¹⁴ Izetbegovic met with Tudjman, Milosevic, Bulatovic and Kucan in the spring of 1991 to persuade them of his plan for a loose union of the republics, the "Yugoslav state community." In early February, Izetbegovic had talks with Kucan, in Sarajevo which produced agreement over principles of self-determination and sovereignty for the republics, and appears to have contemplated some elements an "asymmetric federation," which would have made his plan for

Yet a commitment to preserving Yugoslavia on the part of the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party) and the SDA (Party of Democratic Action) did not translate itself into a willingness to find a compromise solution over the issue of Bosnia's internal structures, either as a unitary, "civil" (gradjanska) and sovereign state, as Izetbegovic wished, or as Yugoslavia writ small, as Karadzic proposed. The immediate issue was that of Bosnian sovereignty. As Yugoslavia disintegrated in the spring of 1991, Izetbegovic pushed for a declaration of sovereignty, claiming that the choice was between "sovereignty and chaos."¹⁵ Karadzic was equally insistent on the right of the Serbs to set up parallel organs of government, arguing that this was the only course open to him if the Bosnian government and presidency would not honor the principle of consensus. Izetbegovic hardly helped matters by using the office of president for purposes which, if not reflecting purely political priorities, fell outside the domain of tripartisanship - turning up in Croatia on the occasion of ceremonies for the promulgation of a new Croatian constitution, paying official visits to Libya and Iran, and pushing his own views about the future of Bosnia on his trip to the United States and other foreign capitals during the summer of 1991.

a Yugoslav state community more acceptable to Karadzic. All this appeared to be encouraging to Karadzic, whose interview with Borba, Feb 26 is remarkably tolerant toward Izetbegovic, although also containing radical ideas of a greater Serbia. The notion of an asymmetric federation met with shock and consternation among the ranks of the SDA and other Moslem politicians, however. For this issue, see FBIS, Eastern Europe, for February, 1991 and Karadzic interview in Borba Feb. 26 see FBIS, Eastern Europe, March 6, 1991 p. 54. Izetbegovic's scheme for a Yugoslav state community was modified, becoming more "confederal" with the passing months; the final version, presented as a joint proposal of Izetbegovic and Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov, called for an "alliance" of the republics which would have some characteristics of a state community. See FBIS Eastern Europe, June 4, p. 29.

¹⁵ Izetbegovic sovereignty or chaos remark. FBIS, Eastern Europe, Feb 22, p. 45.

In brief, the differences in outlook between the national parties were already too great to be bridged. For the Serbs, the only reality was Yugoslavia, of which Bosnia was necessarily a part. For the Moslems, and to a lesser degree the Croatians (depending on whom you talked to), Bosnia was the reality, Yugoslavia, fast becoming an anachronism.

(ii)June 1991 - December 1991: The second period is that of turmoil and uncertainty following the outbreak of the civil war which, miraculously - it seemed at the time - passed Bosnia by. The incursion of the Montenegrin reservists into Hercegovina (in September) and the destruction these reservists wreaked on the village of Ravno; the near lynching of the Minister of Interior of Kninska Krajina, who unwisely ventured onto Bosnian soil; the threats of civil war which accompanied the Bosnian bid for EC recognition in December - all these events and the struggle with the army over the mobilization of Bosnians to fight the war in Croatia kept Bosnia in turmoil during the fall months.¹⁶

These tensions were accompanied by the establishment of Serbian autonomous areas in September,¹⁷ and a growing confrontation between the SDS(Serbian Democratic Party) and SDA (Party of Democratic Action). With Yugoslavia in an advanced state of dissolution, Izetbegovic insisted that Bosnia adopt a declaration of sovereignty. Such a declaration was

¹⁶ For analyses of the Bosnian situation in the fall of 1991, see "Drina bez Cuprije," Vreme Oct 21, 1991, pp. 20-25, and Tihomir Loza, "Igra Zivaca," Nedjelja Nov 24 1991 pp. 14-15.

¹⁷ The SAO, or Serbian Autonomous Area, of Eastern and Old Hercegovina was founded on September 12, followed by the SAO of Bosanska Krajina on Sept 16, the SAO of Romanija on Sept 18, and the SAO of Northeastern Bosnia on September 20. Andrejevich, Report on Eastern Europe, Oct 25, p. 25. The Croatian region of Herceg-Nove was, established later in the fall.

pushed through parliament over the strenuous objections of the SDS(Serbian Democratic Party) on October 14. In the heat of the debate Karadzic threatened that a war could break out which would threaten the Moslem population with annihilation should Bosnia secede from Yugoslavia¹⁸ (Izetbegovic answered that such threats only strengthened his resolved to push ahead with plans for an independent Bosnia.)¹⁹ The Serbs reacted with measures of their own, setting up their own Assembly of the Serbian Nation of Bosnia Hercegovina on October 25; declaring that the laws of Bosnia would no longer apply to the Serbian Autonomous Areas; and holding a referendum on November 9-10, in which the Serbs voted to remain in Yugoslavia.²⁰ Bosnia, during the fall of 1991 became a divided society in fact in not in name; in the words of Nedelja:

¹⁸ Radio Sarajevo quoted Karadzic to the effect that the Serbs would not consent to leave Yugoslavia, and than "Do not think that you will not lead Bosnia Hercegovina into hell, and do not think that you will perhaps lead the Muslim people into annihilation, because the Muslim people cannot defend themselves if there is war...How will you prevent everyone from being killed in Bosnia Hercegovina?" FBIS, Eastern Europe Oct 16, 1991, p. 44.

¹⁹ Izetbegovic replied that "His manner and his messages perhaps explain why others also refuse to stay in such a Yugoslavia. Nobody else wants the kind of Yugoslavia that Mr Karadzic wants any more, no one except perhaps the Serbian people. Such a Yugoslavia and such a manner of Karadzic are simply hated by the people of Yugoslavia...and I then say to the people of Bosnia Hercegovina that there will not be war, that is my prediction based on the facts, on some confirmed facts. Therefore sleep peacefully, there is no need to fear, because it takes two to tangle." FBIS Eastern Europe, Oct. 16, p. 44.

²⁰ For a good account of the referendum, see Nedim Sarac and Tihomir Loza, "Zabranicimo otcepljenje," Nedjelja, Nov 17, 1991, pp. 12-14. Three different ballots were available, one of them a "yellow" ballot for non-Serbs. The ballot used for non-Serbs asked if the voter wished Bosnia to remain in Yugoslavia; the ballots for Serbs, whetehr they favored the Serbian people remain in Yugoslavia. The article notes the threats of Radoslav Brdjanin, Vice-President of the AR Bosanska Krajina, that all directers in Bosanska Krajina who do not vote, will lose their jobs! (p. 14).

"two assemblies, two presidencies, two governments and almost no opposition"²¹

Nevertheless, war was avoided, and this was a signal achievement. This success was, at the time, attributed to Izetbegovic's willingness to collaborate with the army (which wished to keep Bosnia intact as a base of operations for the war in Croatia),²² and because the Moslems were not ready, or willing, to go to war. (In Izetbegovic's words, "it takes two to tangle")²³. To quote Tihomir Loza at the time "the crowning incident that [proves] that a common life is impossible has yet to happen."²⁴

The reality was more sobering, and less flattering to Izetbegovic and the Moslems. By December Slobodan Milosevic, president of Serbia, had decided to push for a cease fire in the civil war and requesting a UN presence in Croatia. A war in Bosnia clearly did not serve his purposes. The army, for its part, was anxious to keep Bosnia intact, and at peace. This was evident in the agreement between General Kadijevic and Izetbegovic in October, cited above; in a meeting with the army's top generals with Izetbegovic at Christmas, meant to defuse the crisis created by the debate over recognition;²⁵ and in the efforts of the army to

²¹ November 24, 1991, p. 13.

²² On October 15 Izetbegovic and General Kadijevic, Minister of Defense, met in Sarajevo, immediately after the crisis occasioned by the adoption of the sovereignty declaration. They pledged that they would attempt to keep the war from spreading to Bosnia. See Andrejevic, Report on Eastern Europe, Oct. 25, p. 24.

²³ See footnote 19.

²⁴ Nedelja, Dec 22, p. 9.

²⁵ Vjesnik, Dec. 27.

organized joint military-Ministry of Interior police patrols, which helped maintain some semblance of order in those parts of Bosnia under Serbian and Moslem control. (Joint patrols were set up in Sarajevo after the March 2 events described below, and functioned until the outbreak of the fighting in April.)

At the same time, Karadzic and the SDS made it abundantly clear what lay in store for Bosnia if Izetbegovic went ahead with his plans to hold a referendum and declare Bosnia's independence. The Serbs would, in turn, assert their own independence. If the division of Bosnia into national regions had not yet been agreed to, the result would be bloody civil war.

(iii) December 1991 to April 1992. The third phase of the Bosnian crisis encompasses the period from the decision of the EC in December to grant recognition to Slovenia and Croatia, to the recognition of Bosnia by the EC April 6. During this period the Moslems and Croatians threw their support behind a referendum for Bosnian independence. The declaration of independence which followed, on March 3, marked the first steps toward war, which broke out on a massive scale after April 6. Up to December, the focus was on saving Yugoslavia in the hope of saving Bosnia; after December, on saving Bosnia, as a means of stabilizing and rebuilding a loose association of successor states to Yugoslavia.

In assessing this situation, it is necessary to take a step backward and examine the options open to Bosnia as the Yugoslav crises developed. Broadly speaking, five were available.

(i) The best hope for Bosnia lay in preserving Yugoslavia as a loose confederation, possibly with closer ties among some republics than others (the asymmetric solution). This

was the policy advocated by Izetbegovic prior to June of 1991.

(ii) If the preservation of Yugoslavia was no longer possible, the safest, if most unpalatable course for the Moslems and Croatians, was to link up Bosnia with Serbia and Montenegro in a new Yugoslav federation. This would avoid the risk of the civil war spreading to Bosnia. This option was dangled in front of the Moslems by Milosevic in the summer of 1991, but fell through, primarily because of opposition with the ranks of the SDA (Party of Democratic Action) and Izetbegovic's own priorities, which lay elsewhere. The idea was in any case fiercely opposed by the Croatians.²⁶

(iii) A third alternative was to form a confederation with Slovenia and Croatia. Zulfikarpacic, of the Moslem Bosnjak Organization, supported this option for Bosnia before the civil war broke out, and Izetbegovic clearly preferred this option to the "Eastern solution," as he called association with Serbia²⁷. The idea surfaced again in talks between the SDA (Party of Democratic Action) and HDZ (Croatian Democratic Community) in Split in May, 1992, - but in 1991 could only be achieved at the price of civil war.

(iv) A fourth possibility was to agree to the partition of Bosnia, as the Serb and Croat nationalists wished. Not only was this in principle unacceptable to the Moslems, but it was also a dangerous course to pursue in lieu of international support and guarantees for the

²⁶ For an analysis of the negotiations, which involved the Moslem Bosnjak Organization and Belgrade, see Danas, Aug. 13, 1991, pp. 28-29. According to this account, Izetbegovic participated in some of the discussions, but later repudiated them, after knowledge of the talks became known. On this occasion, it was the turn of the Croats to feel left out, and Kljuic threatened an armed rebellion if the talks were not carried out through government channels.

²⁷ Danas, July 16, 1991, p. ????. FBIS, Eastern Europe, Feb 13 1992 p. 55.

existence of a Moslem state - support which was not forthcoming at this time. Nevertheless, Tudjman and Milosevic remained drawn to this solution, as we know, and on at least two occasions discussed this option as a way of avoiding a civil war between Croatia and Serbia.²⁸

(v) The fifth, and remaining alternative, was to internationalize the Bosnia problem, and to push for an independent Bosnia, not ruling out links with both Serbia and Croatia once hostilities had ceased. This was the course which Izetbegovic pursued from June onward, when it became clear that Croatia was bent on a final rupture with Yugoslavia. (Even before the elections of 1990, Izetbegovic did not hesitate to make it clear that if Croatia and Slovenia were to secede from Yugoslavia, Bosnia would immediately declare its independence. As he put it, "Bosnia will not remain within a geographically different Yugoslavia.")²⁹)

Three decisions of the EC brought the goal of recognition measurably closer to realization during the summer and fall of 1991. The first was to accept the republics as participants in the peace process; the second, to recommend that the solution to the Yugoslav crisis would entail the preservation of the republics in their existing boundaries; and the third, the decision that Yugoslavia no longer existed, or, as the Badinter Commission put it,

²⁸ At the meeting in Karadjerdevo, in March of 1991, according to Dusan Bilandzic, who was present, the discussions broke down because Milosevic demanded Serbian minority areas in Croatia - Krajina - as well as Serbian regions of Bosnia. See Bilandzic, "Znam tajne adjute Franje Tudjman," Slobodni Tjednik, Ozujka 1992, p. 22. See also Zeljko Vukovic, "Da li su Tudjman i Milosevic delili BiH," Vreme, June 10, 1991 pp. 22-23.

²⁹ FBIS, Eastern Europe, 1990,p. 73.

was "in a state of dissolution" (a finding that was hotly contested by the SDS in Bosnia).

Still, international recognition of Bosnia was not assured until the EC could sort out its own internal differences over how and when to recognize the republics as successor states to Yugoslavia. Speedy recognition of Croatia and Slovenia was pressed by Germany. Bosnia, for her part (in concert with Macedonia) urged recognition of all the republics simultaneously, arguing that the early and uncoordinated recognition of individual republics would lead to a spread of the war.³⁰

The decision of the EC on December 17 to recognize those republics which met certain criteria, including support for the provisions of the November 4 Hague Conference recommendations for a solution to the Yugoslav conflict, set the stage for the Bosnian campaign for recognition. On December 20 the Bosnian presidency, over the opposition of its two Serbian members, requested recognition from the EC.³¹(This followed the re-election of Izetbegovic to a second one year term of office, on the same day.) After an exchange of correspondence with Serbia, on the one hand, and Bosnia on the other, the Badinter commission agreed that Bosnia met EC criteria for recognition, on condition that she hold a referendum which would confirm that the majority of the population were in favor of independence.³² The decision, curiously, referred to the Serbs in Bosnia as a "minority," rather than one of the three constituent nationalities of Bosnia, a point to which we shall

³⁰ Vjesnik, Dec. 16 and Guardian Dec 16, 1991.

³¹ Borba Dec. 23, 1991, pp 1-2.

³² Politika Jan 17, 1991, pp. 6-7.

return later.

The decisions of the Badinter Commission polarized the political situation in Bosnia still further. Izetbegovic was now given the green light to hold the referendum for independence which he had so long desired. The Serbs reacted predictably. On December 18 the Serbian autonomous region of Bosanska Krajina declared that it was part of Yugoslavia, not Bosnia, and that the EC decisions on Bosnia did not therefore apply to its territory³³. On December 21 the Serbian Assembly announced the formation of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and on January 9, declared the republic's independence. (The Serbian Republic of Bosnia Hercegovina was recognized by the RSK - the Republic of Serbian Krajina - just before Christmas.)³⁴

The crisis could have led to civil war, but for reasons noted above, was contained. Belgrade, hoping to end the fighting in Croatia, was eager to avoid a conflict in Bosnia, and threw her support behind the idea of a new Yugoslavia made up of Serbia and Montenegro within their existing ("AVNOJ") borders. The possibility was left open for other Serb regions in Yugoslavia to join the federation, but it was left unclear when and how this might be accomplished.³⁵

This new line permitted the SDS in Bosnia to take a more flexible approach on the

³³ Politika Dec 18, p. 2.

³⁴ Vjesnik Dec 25 p. 8.

³⁵ This line was most fully articulated in the conclusions of the convention for a new Yugoslavia, which met in late December in Belgrade. See Politika Dec 31 and Jan 1-2, 1991-1992, for the "Conclusions of the Convention for New Yugoslavia."

question of Bosnian independence. This was already apparent in December when Karadzic addressed the opening session of the Serbian assembly. While asserting that, as a result of the decision to apply for recognition, "in a constitutional and legal sense Bosnia Hercegovina has ceased to exist," Karadzic suggested that Bosnia Hercegovina might be transformed into a confederation. The Serbs would have the right to be "federally" tied to Serbia and Sarajevo would have the status of an extraterritorial city.³⁶ The plan had a striking resemblance to the notion of a "Yugoslav state community" which Izetbegovic had urged as a solution to the Yugoslav crisis the previous spring.

After the December crisis, the tensions in Yugoslavia eased, as the cease fire in Croatia went into effect. The campaign to gain international recognition for Bosnia, which Izetbegovic and his Foreign Minister, Haris Siladzija, pursued with great skill, also began to pay off. The United States was drawn back into the Yugoslav crisis, on the side of the Bosnians, perhaps at the urging of Cyrus Vance, who had become increasingly concerned over the situation in Bosnia. The surfacing of a new proposal for a "Community of Independent Former Yugoslav Republics," purportedly raised in conversations between Izetbegovic and Vance in early January (and later somewhat sensationally described as the "Vance Plan" seemed part of this effort to reconstruct Yugoslavia, at Izetbegovic's urging, with Bosnia as the linchpin.³⁷ (It bears remembering, in light of subsequent criticisms of

³⁶ Borba Dec 23, pp. 1-2.

³⁷ For a good analysis of US policy at this time, see the article by Vladimir Drobnyak, in Vjesnik, Jan. 17, 1991. Note also Politika, Jan 30, 1991, which suggests that the US position made a certain allowance for cantonization prior to recognition.

the decision to recognize Bosnia, that the policy of support for Bosnian independence had the unanimous approval of the European nations, as well as the United States, in contrast to the differences of opinion which surfaced over the question of recognition of Croatia.)

But the closer that Bosnia came to holding a referendum for independence, the more the internal divisions in Bosnia came to the surface. The SDS (Serbian Democratic Party) made it clear that the Serbs of Bosnia would exercise their right of self-determination if Bosnia was foolish enough to declare her independence. Although it was inopportune for the Serbs to propose the union of Serbian Bosnia with Yugoslavia, it was still possible to push for the formation of a confederation, so loosely constructed that it would leave the Serbian portions of Bosnia free to merge with the new Yugoslavia, made up of Serbia and Montenegro, at some future date.

Such a solution to the Bosnian question was also attractive to the extreme elements in the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union), if not to Stjepan Kljuic. Tudjman was repeatedly drawn to the idea of the partitioning of Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia, as we have noted earlier.³⁸ In July, Mario Nobile, a senior advisor to Tudjman, in an interview with the London Times, suggested that the partitioning of Bosnia was the "only peaceful solution" to the Yugoslav conflict.³⁹ A key part of the deal would be the creation of a Moslem state in the center of Bosnia and a voluntary population exchange, according to this Times account.

³⁸ It has been suggested that Tudjman always raised the territorial issue when faced with a loss of territory in Croatia. T. Sutalo, Borba Feb 11, 1992 p. 5. Sutalo cites the example of Herceg-Nova, formed a day after the loss of Vukovar....

³⁹ London Times, July 12, 1991.

In the middle of January, talks were held between Tudjman and Nikola Koljevic (joined by Franjo Borac, one of the two Croatian members of the Bosnian Presidency), signaling a rapprochement between the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party) and the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Community).⁴⁰ Koljevic came forth with a plan for a confederal Bosnia, shortly thereafter - a reasonable proposal, in fact, which could have formed the basis of an agreement over regionalization if it had been embraced by the remaining leaders of the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party).⁴¹

The real bombshell fell with the adoption of the "Livno Declaration" by the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) in early February. The document suggested that the referendum be reworded, and that it affirm that Bosnia was a state built on the sovereignty of its three nationalities.⁴² This was followed by the resignation of Stjepan Kljuic as president of the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Community) in late January⁴³, and secret talks between Karadzic and Josip Manolic the end of February.⁴⁴ The Croatian position that emerged was not, on the surface, greatly different from that of the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party),

⁴⁰ Koljevic came out with his plan shortly after the talks, at which, according to one account, the participants agreed that Bosnia was a "Turkish creation." See Loza, Nedjelja, Jan 26, 1992.

⁴¹ The plan is described in Borba, Jan. 16, p. 8.

⁴² The wording for the referendum suggested at Livno began as follows: "Should sovereign and independent Bosnia Hercegovina, a state community of its constituent and sovereign nations, Croats, Moslems, and Serbs, on their national territories..."Borba , Feb 11, p. 5.

⁴³ The struggle against Kljuic was led by Mate Boban and the radicals in the HDZ from Western Herzegovina , especially Jozo Maric, President of the Gruda opstina. For an excellent account of the Kljuic affair, see Politika Feb. 5, 1992, p. 8 by I. Stojkovic.

⁴⁴ Borba Feb 29-March 1, p. 3.

calling for a Bosnia made up of "sovereign" constituent nations linked together in a confederal relationship. (In the event, the version of the referendum placed before the voters was that adopted by the Bosnian national assembly, reflecting the position of the SDA [Party of Democratic Action] and the opposition that Bosnia should declare her independence as a sovereign, state of its citizens, not its constituent national groups.)⁴⁵

These events were paralleled by a shift in the position of the EC. The EC Conference on Bosnia had been set up by Lord Carrington in early February. At the second session of the conference in Lisbon February 22-23. The EC mediator, Jose Cutilheiro, the Portuguese ambassador to the United States, put forth a formula for a settlement which for the first time called for a Bosnia of regions, while requiring the three national parties leaders to pledge to accept the independence of Bosnia.⁴⁶ Judging from the intense consultations with the Yugoslavs that preceded the Lisbon meeting,⁴⁷ the EC and the US considered the proposal as the key to reaching a Bosnian settlement.

The agreement of all three national parties to this proposal was, in turn, widely viewed in the Western press as a breakthrough in the talks on Bosnia.⁴⁸ The agreement was

⁴⁵ The wording of the referendum was as follows: "Are you for a sovereign and independent state of Bosnia and Hercegovina, a state of equal citizens and the peoples of Bosnia Hercegovina - Moslems, Serbs, Croatians and persons of other nationalities (naroda) who live there?" Politika Feb 5, 1992.

⁴⁶ Vjesnik Feb 27, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Genscher was in Croatia several days before the Lisbon meeting, and Izetbegovic met with Eagleburger on February 20. Carrington met with Milosevic on February 27, after the conference.

⁴⁸ See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Feb 24, 1992.

a bitter disappointment to Izetbegovic, however, who was forced to accept the regionalization of Bosnia along national lines as the price for gaining the support of the Serbs for the independence of Bosnia.⁴⁹ Zeljko Vukovic, writing for Borba, commented that "the maximum that can be hoped for is that the idiotic and devastating parcelization and democratization of [these] "national totalitarianisms" be accomplished - in peace."⁵⁰.

Karadzic, on the other hand, was triumphant, sensing that the parcelization of Bosnia had begun, although the powers of the Bosnian government as set out in the Lisbon document far exceeded those which Serbs were ready to tolerate in practice. The Croatian representative to the talks remained low key, but had every reason to be satisfied with the Lisbon proposals, which balanced the Croatian desire for regionalization with the need to preserve a Bosnian government (if only to prevent Serbian Krajina in Croatia from seceding and uniting with Bosanska Krajina).

The Lisbon agreement did not, as we know now, produce the hoped for breakthrough in the negotiations over Bosnia. Most important, no attempt was apparently made to resolve the issue of where the cantons would be located. In the follow-up in Sarajevo at Villa Konak the end of February, a number of maps were circulated in greatest secrecy, the beginning of the "battle of the maps," about which we shall have more to say below.⁵¹ On March 9, after strenuous negotiations in Brussels, a second version of the Lisbon agreement was produced,

⁴⁹ See "Lisabonski teferic," Vreme, March 2, 1992, p.???

⁵⁰ Borba, Feb 25, p. 5.

⁵¹ SLOBODNI TJEDNIK, March 11, p. 9. ST published one version showing seven cantons divided among the three nationalities.

which placed greater stress on confederal relations among the national units.⁵² While the agreement offered a great deal to the Serbs, Karadzic found the proposals inadequate, insisting that the Serbs of Bosnia would accept nothing less than their own state, linked with the two other nations through a loose confederal arrangement.

Karadzic's refusal to approve the new agreement was ominous, coming as it did shortly after the declaration of Bosnia's independence in early March.⁵³ One possible explanation was that the radical wing of the party, with its strongholds in the Serbian autonomous regions, had grown in power after the events of March 2-3 (discussed below). In any case, contrary to the position of the Yugoslav rump Presidency, which had come out in favor of the Brussel's accords, the Serbian assembly voted to reject them, on March 11, arguing that the proposals placed too much power in the hands of the central authorities.⁵⁴

One final effort was made to settle the question of Bosnia's internal structure, prior to recognition, at the meeting of the Conference on Bosnia which took place in the third week in March at the Villa Konak in Sarajevo. The negotiations produced proposals for the restructuring of Bosnia similar to those suggested at Brussels. The one novelty was the

⁵² Vjesnik March 12. The proposal permitted the constituent units to have ties with neighboring states and a virtual veto power over the actions of the central government, through an upper house which would require 4/5th vote to approve legislation. { ⁵²}

⁵³ Borba March 10, p. ???

⁵⁴ Vjesnik March 13, p. 7. While Karadzic said that borders were not a question, it appears that the boundaries of the national regions, or cantons, were not settled at this meeting. See Borba March 7-8, that Karadzic offered Cutilheiro a map of BH divided into mini-units with "corridors" joining them into some sort of archipelago, which Cutilheiro apparently rejected out of hand.

appearance of a map prepared by the EC and distributed to the press at the end of the conference, about which we shall have more to say below.

If one is to understand the difficulties that these negotiations were encountering, it is necessary to return to events within Bosnia. In retrospect, it appears that the referendum for Bosnian independence on February 29-March 1 was a turning point in the Bosnian crisis. Although the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party) did not attempt to block the referendum, the Serbs refused to participate, and remained adamantly opposed to any declaration of independence made before Bosnia's internal transformation - into some kind of confederation - had been accomplished. The referendum, by setting in motion the procedures which would result in independence and recognition, was, from the Serbian point of view, a step toward civil war.

This is suggested by the events of early March. The referendum was held largely without incident. The official results showed a victory for those who favored an independent Bosnia: 62.68% of the total number of voters in Bosnia voted in favor of independence, almost precisely the outcome one would expect if all the Moslems and Croatians supported the referendum, and the Serbs, as was the case, failed to vote.⁵⁵

The day following the referendum, however, Serbian barricades went up in Sarajevo, accompanied by Karadzic's now familiar threats⁵⁶. (The ostensible reason was the shooting

⁵⁵ Borba, March 4, p.1

⁵⁶ The events of March 2 and 3 are very well covered in the Western press. See The Guardian, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, and Suddeutsche Zeitung for March 3 and 4. Karadzic, speaking on Belgrade TV, said that "I am afraid we cannot avoid an interethnic war on the same scale as the Indo-Pakistan war."

of several Serbs at a wedding over the weekend.) The Serbs demanded that the negotiations over the future of Bosnia be brought to a conclusion before the declaration of independence was adopted; that independent Sarajevo TV be replaced by national television channels; and that the Ministry of Interior be reorganized along national lines. These demands were first acceded to by Izetbegovic, then repudiated after the army stepped in and the people of Sarajevo took to the streets to protest the terror. Encouraged by the support of the masses, and convinced that the Serbian side had suffered a major defeat, Izetbegovic went ahead and declared the independence of Bosnia on March 3. His actions were ratified by parliament (absent the Serbs) the same night.

The motives of the Serbs in setting up the barricades on March 2 have been debated; most commentators saw it as a dry run for a Serbian takeover⁵⁷. It is also very possible that the Serbs were seeking to paralyze the Bosnian government at this crucial juncture (in effect, to stage a coup), but were blocked by the army⁵⁸ and the peace demonstrators, setting the stage for the "rural war" and the siege of Sarajevo that followed. (It should be kept in mind that if the Serbian demands had been met, and the central government had fallen under Serbian control or been paralyzed, the Lisbon "formula" for Bosnia might have received a warmer reception from the Serbian assembly.)

Be this as it may, the terrorist actions of the Serbs were a blunt warning aimed at dissuading the Bosnian government from declaring independence prior to the end of the

⁵⁷ [Comments on March events.]

⁵⁸ The Guardian of March 3 quotes the commander of the Sarajevo military district (this would be General Kukanjac) that what the Serb militants were doing was "sheer madness."

negotiations with the EC. If this was the intent of the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party), it failed, for on March 3 Izetbegovic declared Bosnia independent. On March 6, the same day a large rally for peace was held in Sarajevo, Karadzic made a call for an army takeover, and warned that if the EC were to recognize Bosnia before it was transformed, there would be civil war.⁵⁹ The army refused - just as it had turned down the offer of the Milosevic forces to take over power in Yugoslavia on March 9 the previous year.

It was against this backdrop that the meeting of the conference on Bosnia took place in Brussels over the weekend of March 8-9, and that the EC met on March 10, amid some confusion, to issue a joint declaration with the United States reiterating the Western position against threats to the integrity of Bosnia, but delaying recognition.⁶⁰ The meeting of the Conference on Bosnia at Villa Konak on March 18 was, as we have seen, unable to reach agreement over the boundaries of the national units. This meeting was followed by another session of the conference (its sixth), on March 31 in Brussels, which proved equally futile.

Meanwhile, during the month of March, all three national camps prepared for war. Fighting broke out in the Croatian area of Bosanska Posavina in the city of Bosanski Brod in the middle of March. The conflict then spread to Hercegovina, where Croatian forces engaged the army and reservists in the area of Mostar. The first engagement of Serbian forces on any scale occurred in Bijeljina around April 1, when what started as a local dispute between extremist Serbs and Moslems sparked the intervention of the forces of the Serbian

⁵⁹ Borba March 6 and AP dispatch of this date.

⁶⁰ See The Guardian, and the New York Times for March 11.

Guard, under the command of Zeljko Raznjatovic (Arkan).⁶¹ This first phase of the struggle was characterized by the breakdown of law and order, the takeover of power throughout the republic by the national parties and their "crisis staffs" (krizni stabovi), and local struggles between Serbs and Croats in anticipation of major battles to come.

By April 6, when the EC recognized Bosnia (followed by the US the next day), Bosnia was on the brink of full-scale war, and panic had seized the population.⁶² Western hopes that recognition would head off the civil war had clearly not been realized. Under these conditions, recognition became a gamble, a move which would hopefully bolster the Sarajevo government and deter the Serbian extremists.⁶³ In the event, recognition did not halt the fighting, but precipitated (or at least was coterminous with) a full scale attack on Moslem areas of Eastern Bosnia by Serbian irregulars, Arkan's national guard, and Yugoslav army reservists from Serbia. Fighting broke out in Sarajevo on April 7, and on April 8 the Yugoslav army entered the fray.⁶⁴ Instead of slowing or halting the war, as in Croatia, recognition had apparently accelerated the pace of Bosnia's decline and destruction. The Bosnian crisis had become the Bosnian tragedy.

⁶¹ Arkan's incursion into Bosnia was a major factor in escalating tensions, and was accompanied by the reports of the massacre of Moslems, which provoked an agonized appeal from Izetbegovic. A list of the victims in Bijeljina is given in BORBA April 7; they are all Moslems. For more on this event, see below, on the US response to reports of the massacre.

⁶² See Borba April 6: "Teror, smrt, anarhija," reads the headline on page 1.

⁶³ See FINANCIAL TIMES April 7 which notes the feelings of PINHEIRO, Portuguese PM that EC should not give support to the radicals in the Serbian camp by withholding recognition.

⁶⁴ [Borba on fighting breaking out]

What we propose to do in the remainder of the paper is to comment on the role of the main actors in the drama, and close with some comments on what form a solution to the problem of Bosnia might take, if it is agreed that the present state of affairs must not be allowed to continue.

First, it is appropriate to comment on Izetbegovic's role in the crisis. It is apparent from this account that Izetbegovic was not without blame for what transpired. From the beginning, he pushed for the creation of a sovereign, "civil" Bosnian state, utilizing his not inconsiderable influence in the West to gain support for this end. This led him to support the referendum for Bosnian independence, a suicidal policy, given the conditions that prevailed in Bosnia in the spring of 1992. Furthermore, Izetbegovic was not concerned with working by consensus, despite his reputation as a politician skilled at compromise. While his optimism that war would not come to Bosnia was calculated to soothe tensions, Izetbegovic at times seemed to misread the situation badly (for example, in a interview with Der Spiegel in January, he predicted that the Serbs were exhausted from the civil war with Croatia, and would have to return Vukovar and Baranja to Croatia!)⁶⁵

Yet one cannot, for these reasons, lay the responsibility for the civil war on Izetbegovic's shoulders. While the Serbs were justified in complaining that the Bosnian government failed to act by consensus, the Serbian resort to violence was a gross violation of

⁶⁵ Der Spiegel Jan (12 or 13).

that very same principle. Karadzic needed only the flimsiest of excuses to go to war, and was determined to divide and polarize Bosnian society into warring national communities, a situation which he apparently thought would work to the Serbian advantage. Whether Izetbegovic could have achieved more by adopting a more conciliatory attitude toward the Serbs is therefore an open question.

The Serbs, for their part, stated clearly and unequivocally that they would go to war if Bosnia declared its independence prior to restructuring, which in effect meant the creation of Serbian, Moslem and Croatian states within the old republic's boundaries. (We have seen that there was disagreement over whether to accept the Brussel's accords within the Serbian camp, in mid-March, yet there is no sign that Karadzic was committed to accepting the Lisbon formula.) This stand was perfectly in keeping with the Serbian position that they would not allow themselves to become a "minority" in Bosnia.

On the other hand, it does not follow from this that the Serbs were the aggressors in the civil war.

First, it is unclear what role Karadzic played in the events which led to the emergence and spread of the civil war in March. The attempted coup in Sarajevo was clearly his affair; but the fighting that followed began in a number of different parts of Bosnia, and was, as we have seen, not at first the work of the Serbs.

It is also unclear whether the Serbian incursions into Bosnia after April 6 were premeditated, or were a response to Croatian moves and the general disintegration that was taking place in Bosnia at the time (although the former seems more likely). In the last analysis, it is not certain that Milosevic wanted the war to break out when it did. Unlike the

situation in December, when he was able to negotiate a cease fire in Croatia, Milosevic was not in full control of events in Bosnia. Paradoxically, the army proved to be a serious obstacle to the game plan Milosevic and Karadzic had worked out for the dismantling of the Sarejevo government in early March. Throughout March, the army acted as damper on the fighting in Sarajevo. Unfortunately, this only shifted the scene of the fighting to the rural areas, where Serbian forces from Eastern Hercegovina and Bosanska Krajina took the offensive, joining in the siege of Sarajevo in the first week in April.

This paper has had less to say about the Croats and the HDZ in Bosnia, simply because it was the Croatian policy, by and large, to keep a low profile during the disputes over the future of Bosnia. The triumph of the radical (Hercegovinian) wing of the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) in the spring of 1992 has been noted. The initially favorable reception of the Croats to the Lisbon and Villa Konak proposals for restructuring Bosnia was replaced, toward the end of March, by a hard line, evident when Milenko Brkic repudiated the EC "Konak" map, insisting that the borders between the three national units would have to be drawn on the basis of the 1961 census (!)⁶⁶ It became abundantly clear that the Croats had lost interest in an independent Bosnia when they struck the first blows in the civil war, in the middle of March, and subsequently, when they agreed to partition most of Bosnia with the Serbs, in the Graz accords of May.⁶⁷ One can only add that the motives

⁶⁶ BORBA March 23 1992 p. 7.

⁶⁷ The agreement was signed on May 6 in Graz by Mate Boban (for the Croats) and Karadzic for the Serbs. The agreement disingenuously purports to be a spin off of the EC conference, and calls for the rapid reconvening of the conference, while in actual fact providing for the partitioning of Bosnia. Three of these points deal with areas in dispute between the two sides (the region of central Bosnia, around Kupres; Mostar; and the north central region of

of the hard-line Croatians (not the moderates, like Kljuic) were essentially no different from those of the Serb radicals, with the difference that the Croatians had to give some consideration to the need for a central government in Sarajevo, for reasons suggested earlier.

Finally, some observations are in order on the role of the international community in bringing about the crisis in Bosnia. A common argument in Belgrade, after all, is that recognition of Bosnia by the EC and the United States was mistakenly made before the negotiations over Bosnia had been completed, thus precipitating the civil war. The Western press has made the same criticism of the recognition decision.⁶⁸

There is a great deal of truth to this charge in one sense: with the best of intentions, the negotiations conducted by Cutilheiro were not handled well. It is difficult to know who was at fault: the EC, which seemed more interested in the appearance rather than the reality of agreement, or the Yugoslav participants, with their constant dissimulating. One had the strong impression that the EC was inhabiting one world, the delegates of the national parties from Bosnia, another.

(As an example, one can point to the Brussels negotiations of March 31, when the three delegations from Bosnia declared that they were in complete agreement with the Villa Konak agreements which they had been busily denouncing several days earlier. The expert commission set up at Brussels to determine the final boundaries of the national units was then

Bosanska Posavina). See Novi Vjesnik May 8, p. ?, 1992.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Viktor Meier's analysis of Western mistakes in dealing with Bosnia, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, April 25. (In earlier dispatches, Meier favored recognition of Bosnia.)

instructed to report back to the conference on May 15 - six weeks - as fighting was breaking out all over Bosnia!) ⁶⁹

Furthermore, the EC negotiators seemed slow to grasp that the central issue was territory - where the boundaries of the national units would be drawn. Perhaps because the issue of regional boundaries was so intractable (and because Izetbegovic would not tolerate a discussion of the issue), the problem of boundaries kept being put off. The first maps demarcating national boundaries within Bosnia were circulated, it appears, at the Villa Konak meeting at the end of February. The map drawn up by the EC negotiators on March 18 was apparently handed out to the press before getting the reaction of the national parties, setting the stage for a wholesale attack on the EC plan in the weeks that followed.

The absence of any agreement on where the regional boundaries were to be drawn in turn gave the green light to Serbs to push ahead with their claims to over half the territory of Bosnia. This fact may explain the despair felt by Izetbegovic at the Lisbon meetings February 22-23, since in lieu of an agreement over the boundaries of the national units, consenting even in principle to the regionalization of Bosnia was an extremely dangerous move, opening the door for a deal between the Croats and Serbs to divide up Bosnia at the expense of the Moslems.

On the other hand, it is misleading to suggest that the EC and the US, by recognizing

⁶⁹ The March 18 conference was also something of a fiasco - the final communique was never signed by the three national parties, and an SDA spokesman said later that the party was opposed to the agreement but did not wish to take this stand publicly, for fear that it would be blamed for blocking the accord!)

Bosnia, ignited the Bosnian civil war, as is implied in those accounts critical of the EC's actions. This is true for three reasons. First, there was no indication, prior to recognition in April, that the three national parties were near agreement on where the boundaries of their respective national units were to be drawn. (Making recognition conditional upon such an agreement, furthermore, while it might have spurred the Moslems and Croatians to compromise, would have had precisely the opposite effect on the Serbs.) Second, by the middle of March, the radical (rural) factions of the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party) were in control, and Belgrade seemed unwilling, or unable, to place pressure on them, as it had in dealing with Milan Babic in the Serbian Republic of Krajina (in Croatia) in December.

Third, by the beginning of April, Bosnia was already at war. While it is true that the major incursions from Serbia came a few days after April 7, it must be remembered that the local conflicts which began as early as the middle of March had important strategic ramifications, especially in respect to the ability of the Serb autonomous regions to link up in a common front against the Croatians and Moslems. Once the war broke out, Serbian intervention was just a matter of time. It might have come sooner but for the desire on the Serbian side to give the appearance of being provoked into action by the EC decision on recognition.

What is often lost sight of in the debate over recognition is that by April 6, the situation in Bosnia had deteriorated to the point that the EC had to act. Failing to recognize the Sarajevo government at this point would have given the green light to violence and anarchy in Bosnia, for which the EC would certainly have been held responsible. Recognition was granted Bosnia not because it was a state, in the legal sense, but because it was fast

losing all the attributes of a state; not because Bosnia was strong and stable, but because it was weak and fragmenting, and the EC had no other means at its disposal to prop it up.

An argument can be made, nevertheless, that the recognition of Bosnia should have been approached differently by the EC and the United States. To make the case requires that we look at the Bosnian problem in its entirety. This we propose to do in our concluding remarks.

We may begin by observing that if the goal of Western policy was to preserve an independent Bosnia, the means were, in their totality, self-defeating. The Western powers did not take the utterances of the Serbs seriously enough - that is, at their face value. At times, it seemed that West did not even understand what the Serbs were saying about the need for consensual decision-making, restructuring of the Bosnian government, and the territorial issue.

This was already obvious in the approach taken by the Badinter Commission to the issue of the recognition of Bosnia. The objections to recognition submitted to the EC by the Serbian government were acknowledged but dismissed by the commission with the assurance that the Serbs would be accorded the rights of a - minority! Having thus disposed of the Serbs, it was suggested that Bosnia could be recognized if she was to carry out a referendum in which the majority of the population favored independence. The issue of whether all three nationalities should give their approval before Bosnia declared independence was passed over, perhaps because international law provided no precedent for the Bosnian situation.

(Indeed, how and where the Badinter Commission hit upon the notion of a referendum is something of a mystery. Perhaps Izetbegovic planted the idea in the minds of the EC

officials, who passed it on to the commission. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that the Serbian reply to the original EC decision of December 17, which contested the conditions laid down for recognition by the EC, placed emphasis on the right of self-determination of nations [not republics], and pointed to the referenda that had been held in the two Krajina in support of this principle. One suspects that the Badinter Commission, unversed in the affairs of the Balkans but sensitive to legal arguments [and with hardly enough time to read anything but the briefs placed before it by the republics], may have concluded that a referendum in Bosnia would satisfy the Serbs, or at least counter Belgrade's arguments about the right of the Serbs outside Serbia to national self-determination. All speculation aside, it is important to emphasize that the Badinter insistence on the holding of a referendum, without specifying that it be approved by each of the three nationalities, was the first step toward civil war in Bosnia.)

If, however, the West was mistaken in pushing for Bosnian independence - assuming that we are right that such a move was bound to provoke the Serbs - what might the West have done to preserve Bosnia? It must be admitted that there is no obvious answer to this question.

The solution did not lie in withholding recognition from all the republics until a peace settlement was reached. This approach was tried and failed during the period September - November, 1991, when the Yugoslav peace conference was attempting to end the civil war in Croatia. While there many reasons why the peace conference on Yugoslavia failed, one contributing factor was the virtual absence of any discussion of the question of borders. At the time, and perhaps properly so, such a discussion was seen as complicating

the peace talks, and possibly delaying recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, as well as being against the spirit and letter of the CSCE principles to which the EC was bound.

Nor did it seem that raising the issue of borders would serve any other purpose in the case of Bosnia but to complicate affairs immensely, and invite partition. One can imagine that Vance argued this position, as well as the US ambassador, Warren Zimmerman, in discussions with Serbian and Bosnian leaders.

Yet with the benefit of hindsight one can suggest that the key to avoiding a civil war in Bosnia was to acknowledge that the republic had become fragmented into national regions by the spring of 1992, and that Bosnia could not be saved unless an agreement could be reached over where these borders were to be drawn. Understandably, the EC was reluctant to raise the issue of national regions. The disappointment, even bitterness, of the SDA (Party of Democratic Action) and the opposition over the Lisbon accords is also easy to grasp. Lagumdžija, in his characteristic biting style, called the Lisbon accords a "Frankenstein monster" which the Europeans would never apply to themselves. We have quoted Cabaravdic and Nikolic earlier in the paper. Be this as it may, at some point the negotiations over Bosnia had to take into account the fact that the partition of Bosnia was already well underway. The error, it would seem in hindsight, was not to draw the necessary conclusions and focus the negotiations on where the boundaries of these national regions would lie (as well as their number), before the matter was taken into the hands of the HOS, the Serbian National Guard, the radical nationalists from Banja Luka and Trebinje, and Duvno.

The bottom line is that the civil war in Bosnia is being fought over territory. The participants are nationalists obsessed with turf, from the peasant armed to protect his village,

to the leaders of the petty fiefdoms scattered around the republic, to the national party leaders themselves. These are the persons whom Srebrov denounced as the "sowers of death,"⁷⁰ and whom Kljuic so caustically dismissed on the occasion of his forced resignation as president of the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Community).⁷¹

We already have a glimpse of what Bosnia will look like under the rule of these nationalists, who can think of nothing but territory, and the division of all property and jobs along national lines. For example, in Bihac, the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party) is attempting to divide state enterprises among the three national communities (Serbs get the gasoline stations, Moslems the textile factory...it is like a bad Bosnian joke).⁷² Karadzic wishes to transform Sarajevo into another Beirut. A policy of ethnic purification has been ruthlessly pursued by the Serbs in Eastern Bosnia, by the Croats in Bosanska Posavina and Western Hercegovina, and by the Moslems in the Serb inhabited villages in central Bosnia. This is the "new" Bosnia which the radical nationalists wish to create, and with which the West will have to come to terms.

Yet there is still a part of Bosnia worth saving, urban Bosnia, outside the national enclaves, where the traditions of intermingling of the nationalities is strongest, and where rejection of the war is widespread. This Bosnia should not be sacrificed for the sake of a formula that does nothing more than establish a truce among the warring nationalist parties

⁷⁰ "Iza vas prvejava smrt," *Borba*, April 1, 1992, p. 9.

⁷¹ [Kljuic remarks]

⁷² [Division of property in Bihac]

within the framework of the EC Conference. Any solution to the Bosnian question must be rooted in the reality of these two Bosnias. Any solution which is predicated solely on coming to terms with only one side of this equation is bound to fail.

The choices seem to boil down to the following:

First, Bosnia could remain in its present boundaries as a loose confederation. After a cease fire, negotiations would recommence between the national parties, perhaps under the auspices of the United Nations. Serbian claims to 65% of Bosnian territory would be scaled back and Moslems and Serbs encouraged to return to their homes. Croatian claims to territory will be similarly adjusted. Sarajevo would be made an extra-territorial city, and spared parcelization. In effect, an attempt would be made to return to the situation as of March 18. (This solution would be resisted by the Serbs, and supported by the Moslems and Urban Croats, once a cease fire was arranged.)

Second, Bosnia could be partitioned between Serbia and Croatia, and a rump Moslem state formed under Serbian domination. The West, Croatia and the Moslems would all oppose this solution.

Third, those areas contiguous to Croatia and Serbia in which co-nationals, Serbs and Croats, were in the majority could be permitted to secede, and Solution No. 1 applied to the area that remained. The resulting "new Bosnia" would be more urban (and more Moslem) and stand a better chance of preserving the "old" Bosnia. However, that bastion of Serbian radical nationalism, Bosanska Krajina, would remain in the new state, as would the Serbian Autonomous Region of Romanija. (This proposal might be opposed by the Serbs, but would be favored by the Croats. The plan would be in the best interests of the Moslems,

although they might not accept it, since the number of Croats remaining in Bosnia would be greatly reduced.)

Fourth, one could adopt the radical solution proposed by Vuk Draskovic: Kninska Krajina in Croatia and Bosanska Krajina would merge into a new Serbian Krajina, which would join a loose confederation with a Bosnian state formed along the lines suggested in Solution Three. Croatia would be compensated with Western Hercegovina. The Croats would accept this solution only under duress, and then only if they could be sure that they could recover Baranja and the Western Srem from Serbia. The Moslems would certainly resist this solution, especially if it meant the secession of the Moslem counties of northwest Bosnia.

Fifth, push for a unitary Bosnia along the lines advocated by Izetbegovic. This seems to be a formula for continued civil war, and could only be imposed on the Serbs through foreign military intervention. Yet this solution, which in essence is opposed to any and all efforts to divide up Bosnia along national lines, is passionately defended by many urban intellectuals and others (peace advocates, workers, students) in Bosnia. These courageous foes of the national insanity which has gripped Bosnia should not be let down by the West.

I would like to close with several observations:

First, the imposition of sanctions on Bosnia marks a major new involvement of the United States and Europe in the formulation and implementation of a solution to the Bosnian question. This may not be fully apparent at the moment, but will become more so as the effects of the embargo on Serbia are felt, and pressures begin to mount for the UN to

organize its own peace conference on Yugoslavia.

Second, the negotiations on Yugoslavia are moving out of a first stage, where efforts were made to uphold the status quo by according recognition to the republics within existing boundaries, to a second stage, in which problems of borders will have to be addressed. There is little enthusiasm for this step, to be sure, but the Bosnian situation may serve as an opening wedge in a discussion over the Serbian-Croatian border, as well as other unresolved border disputes.

Third, it is no longer possible to save the Bosnian state as we knew it (or liked to imagine it was). The best course of action in principle would be to try to recreate that state in a smaller version of the old Bosnia, absent the rural areas which have spawned the radical nationalist movements. This solution is deficient because the most radical Serb nationalists are to be found in the rural communes of Bosanska Krajina, which lie in the very heart of Bosnia, forming a barrier between the two largest concentration of Moslems in northwest and central Bosnia.

Fourth, the removal of Milosevic will not solve the problem of what to do with Bosnia. All Serb political parties support some form of autonomy and statehood for the Serbs in Bosnia, although they may differ on where the boundaries of such a Serbian state should be drawn. If the West wishes to bring the irregulars and radical nationalists in Bosnia in line and gain a settlement of the Bosnian question, they would be well advised to work through Milosevic. The manner in which Babic's resistance to the presence of UN forces in the Republic of Serbian Krajina was overcome, thanks to the intercession of Milosevic, is instructive.

Fifth, the Bosnian question is a Western responsibility. By recognizing Bosnia in order to save it, the West helped create and sustain the present tragic situation. Nationalist leaders in Bosnia exploited the weakness of the central government to wage war, while Croatia and Serbia, mindful of Western commitment to maintaining Bosnia's integrity and independence, feigned ignorance of what was going on, leaving the irregulars to their own devices, thus setting the stage for the present chaos. The resulting situation is the worst of all possible worlds: Western governments, unwittingly, have created a situation in which the most extreme nationalist elements in Bosnia are free to act at will, since the Bosnian government is too weak to enforce its rule, and the Serbian and Croatian governments are barred from entering the fray, lest they be accused of aggression against Bosnia. Only when the responsibility of the West for the present situation and for its resolution becomes clear, will the discussion of the future of Bosnia begin in earnest. For the Bosnians, it cannot be soon enough.