

SAND_AK - FROM A PARADIGM OF POLITICAL CRISES AND A POTENTIAL SAFETY CRISIS-SPOT IN FRY TO ITS POSSIBLE ROLE AS AN INTEGRATING AREA OF SERBIA AND MONTENGRO

Each conversation about Sand_ak as one of the paradigms of political crises in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, that is in Serbia and Montenegro, would have to be started with basic data about the area itself, about the causes and the nature of problems that exist concerning Sand_ak and within it, starting from the time when it was, under the title the *"sand_ak question"*, for the first time the subject of interest of the international community, far away in 1858.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ Under the title *"sand_ak question"* about political problems of Muslims-Bo_njaks from Sand_ak on international scene is being discussed, from time to time, for more than hundred years. Unfortunately, the most common reasons to discuss Sand_ak were sufferings of Muslim Bo_njak population or, as it would be said today, human rights violations. Because of these reasons about Sand_ak was the first time discussed on international scene in 1858, concerning so-called *"Kola_in affair"*. At that time horrible cruelty in the slaughter of almost 600 Muslims in Kola_in was the reason it was discussed about Bo_njaks on international scene and decisions about pretending that performed ethnic cleansing of Kola_in and its surrounding did not exist were made. But, expelled population that returned stayed in their homes just for the next several years, more precisely until 1879. Then, by decisions of Berlin Congress Kola_in and surrounding, and some other towns and areas, was given to Montenegro, along with the obligation to respect rights of domestic population concerning safety, property and religion. However, Montenegrin authorities violated and interpreted decision about annexing territories in their own way - as the right to expel non-Montenegrin population - in armed actions they completely ethnically cleansed this area and in homes and properties of Muslims-Bo_njaks they brought Montenegrins. In Berlin Congress about the rest of Sand_ak was discussed as separate item on agenda and then Austria-Hungary got all rights to occupy it but partially, as for territories (to the Lim) and for military restrictions (to station 5000 soldiers in Pljevlja, Priboj and Prijepolje). Turkey kept civilian management and it will keep it until 1912. Next time about Sand_ak will be discussed between two world wars. The cause is, again the slaughter of 150 Bo_njaks in _ahovi_e, committed between 8th and 11th November 1924 by Royal Army and police of Yugoslavia from that time. From _ahovi_ and surrounding was then

Unfortunately, the *"sand_ak question"* or, the *muslim-bo_njak question*⁴¹, with smaller or greater intensity, has lasted a hundred and fifty years and there is a great number of facts which are necessary to know and keep in mind in discussions about Sand_ak as paradigms of political crises and a potential crises-spot area.⁴² Along with that, the

expelled all bo_njak population and _ahovi_e was officially named Toma_evo, as it is called today. Exactly with the same practice - violent "cleansing" of territories from Muslim Bo_njak population (murders and expelling and other forms of state repression), and by hiding their material and spiritual legacy, starting with physical destruction of religious buildings and tombs to destruction, renaming of towns and taking literary works of certain authors and whole people - Yugoslav authorities will continue to solve "sand_ak question" until the end of 20th century, and according to some indications, especially according to the relation of present authorities in Serbia and Montenegro, can realistically be assumed that it will be like that in 21st century.

⁴¹ Although real ethnic name of Yugoslav muslims is - Bo_njaks - party commission in former socialist Yugoslavia determined for their national name to be taken word Muslims and under that name they have been declaring themselves on three population surveys - in 1971, in 1981 and in 1991. In that time communist authorities original name - Bo_njaks - avoided because of Bosnian Serbs and Croats who make half of Bosnia and Herzegovina population, to remove direct link and identification with Bosnia, that Bosnia belongs to Bo_njaks as Serbia identifies with Serbs, Croatia with Croats, Slovenia with Slovenians, Macedonia with Macedonians, Montenegro with Montenegrins. During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, bo_njak intellectuals started initiative original national name to be returned - Bo_njaks and so was decided on All bo_njak Congress, in October 1993. Since then the word Bo_njaks officially is used for the name of people who in former SFRY had name Muslims. But, Bo_njaks in Serbia and Montenegro lost the status of nation, and in Constitution of FR Yugoslavia and in everyday life they don't even have recognized the status of national minority. True, after the change of authority in Serbia, representatives of authority publicly showed political will to allow Bo_njaks to call themselves by their original name and in public communication they use term Bo_njaks, but that is not official yet. Because of all that, Sand_ak Bo_njaks until recently used compound word - Muslims-Bo_njaks. The aim was to respect the fact that in the constitution of former SFR Yugoslavia they were treated as people under the name of Muslims, but also to point out the fact that they are firstly Bo_njaks, and secondly that they are part of Bo_njaks from Bosnia and Herzegovina and other republics of former SFR Yugoslavia. Also, by adding to their constitutional name original name Bo_njak, they showed political willingness and intention that in constitutions of present republics, Serbia and Montenegro, change the name Muslim, which was artificially and beside democratic procedure given to them, to original name Bo_njak. Finally, new authorities in Serbia allowed that they state so on population survey held in the first part of April this year. Unfortunately, authorities in Montenegro still manipulate with national name of Bo_njaks, and population survey is postponed for two years and they still insist on the word Muslim.

⁴² *"Sand_ak question"*, that is bo_njak question in Sand_ak is not solved until now solely for the reason that regimes in Serbia and Montenegro persistently tried to solve it in the same way it

Serbian-Montenegrin regime in last ten years tried to solve the "*sand_ak question*", that is, the question of Bo_njaks in FRY, by ethnic cleansing of the majority population, and instead of a solution, even more with its aggressive and anachronous national, actually national-chauvinist politics, it actualised all unsolved and suppressed questions and created even more problems. Because of that, even for a short survey of the basic data about the further and closer prehistory of the "*sand_ak question*" a lot of time, space and effort are necessary. On the other hand, it is very risky to leave out facts from the pre-history of the "*sand_ak question*" and the present the essence of present problems and point to possible solutions today in an understandable way.

Considering that neither time nor space allow us such a presentation of the whole problem, I will limit myself just on analyses of the facts that appeared as a result of long historical processes and which in the beginning of the 90s motivated the Serbian-Montenegrin regime to solve the "*sand_ak question*" and to solve it in the very same way because of which Sand_ak became a paradigm of political crises – by use of violence, crimes, repression and ethnic cleansing. For a better understanding of the objective problems in Sand_ak and, eventually, Sand_ak as a regional problem, and especially for objective and rational viewing of possible democratic solutions of the "*sand_ak question*", that is, the bo_njak-muslim question in FR Yugoslavia, in footnotes I will give broader explanations and name further important data and events from the last ten years. I do that for two reasons: firstly, through those explanations of events and situation in Sand_ak from the time of Milo_evi_'s reign we can scope, it could be said, the complete issue of problems in Sand_ak; and, secondly, without those facts the causes of the present state truly cannot be understood, and along with that, neither can we view solutions of the problems in Sand_ak nor Sand_ak as a regional problem.

was created in some periods by violence, crimes, repression, ethnic cleansing and division of Sand_ak territory - in others - by ignoring, covering-up and state programs by which were encouraged processes of moving away or assimilation of Bo_njaks - because of which Sand_ak has become paradigm of political crises.

But, if, eventually, someone has an interest and a need to scope problems of this region more completely, they can in more detail find out about some further important data and facts about the pre-history of the problems in Sand_ak and Sand_ak as a regional problem in an article published by the Helsinki Committee from Sand_ak, under the title *“Short information on Sand_ak”* and in *“Analyses of politics of new Serbian and Montenegrin leadership”*.

Sand_ak - one of paradigms of political crises and a potential safety crises-spot in FRY

I will continue in a completely direct way, with the statement that Sand_ak has, according to evaluations of objective and relevant observers and analysts, from the beginning of the collapse of SFRY until present, from the aspect of safety in FRY and in the whole region, represented "the region of high risk" and from the aspect of human rights violations, the region in which the heaviest forms of human rights violations based on national grounds, in concrete, towards citizens of the bo_njak nationality were performed.⁴³

⁴³ When, from the early spring 1992, Milo_evi_ started to realize planned and well prepared war by openly/hidden aggression on Bosnia and Hezegovina, military and civilian authorities in Serbia and Montenegro the territory of Sand_ak literally turned into a war zone on which they, according to planned goals and estimations of situation and "relation of power" installed adequate number of armed military and police forces and armed all military capable Serbian and Montenegrin population, and one part, so called volunteers, organized into paramilitary formations.

For all the time the war was led in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Sand_ak all four categories of Serbian and Montenegrin armed forces in border area towards Bosnia and Herzegovina (area of Pljevlja and Priboj) performed terror over Bo_njaks, with all elements of war cruelty, and on other areas they conducted repressive measures that only enemy army and authorities that occupy perform.

Helsinki Committee from Sand_ak, beside large number of individual human rights violations, noted following heavier forms of crimes and violence: 18 armed assaults on villages; six kidnappings on citizens from trains, buses, apartments, in which were kidnapped and murdered 51 Bo_njaks; 36 murders of citizens; 229 woundings and around 10.800 physical abuses of citizens. Beside violence over citizens, systematic destruction of Bo_njaks property was performed- houses set on fire, mining of economy buildings, destruction of vehicles and religious buildings.

As an explanation for such a situation usually the fact that makes Sand_ak a special region in the FR Yugoslavia and in the Balkans in general is taken. That is why I will name some of the basic facts in order to analyse it, when Sand_ak is an issue, these facts are the sources of the conflict and the answer to the question - what is it that makes Sand_ak a regional problem or what are the causes of the problems in Sand_ak.

Possible sources of political crises

The first fact which could be the cause for problems in Sand_ak and make it a regional problem is its *population*. Mainly, the population of Sand_ak is, in a national and religious sense, *mixed*. There are mostly

Of course, after each crime, murder, kidnapping, citizens ran away from their places out of fear, and during armed assaults on villages inhabitants were literally expelled because except setting houses on fire, they were murdered by attackers. During armed assault on village Kukurovi_e, 18th February 1993, all houses in village were set on fire, three older people were murdered and the rest of population expelled. Such destiny happened the area of Bukovica near Pljevlja (Montenegro) in which eight innocent citizens were murdered and twelve kidnapped. Beside that, in several occasions the police conducted campaigns of mass repression towards bo_njak population. In that way was ethnically cleansed, completely, whole area of Bukovica in which were 28 villages settled by exclusively Bo_njaks, and 31 village in the area of Priboj, and partially (from 30% to 80% population), several hundreds of villages in the area of Pe_ter and Bihor. (Data are just about cases that noted and in reliable way (with obtained evidence) researched HCS. In that sense, they cannot be considered as true, because it is absolutely certain that not all cases are grasped. According to the data of political parties, their comities for human rights and other NGO's, can be considered that data of HCS are 40-50% of complete number of cases.)

About proportions and aims of that violence two data tell enough: seeing in Sand_ak events "their" "Crystal night", British Jews on 1st August 1992 in THE GUARDIAN published protest and appeal in which they called international community and their Jewish community to "stop nazis" because that is *"too close to our Jewish community so we could be silent in front of the nazis"* And really, according to writings of Podgorica weekly MONITOR, the slaughter of Bo_njaks was announced several times for orthodox holiday (for Petrovdan, 11th July, for St. Ilija, 2nd August 1992, etc.) Finally, sole fact that in the area of Sand_ak there were no classical war operations, and that some of the crimes (kidnappings and executions of citizens) were qualified as war crimes by International Tribunal for war crimes and by some Yugoslav courts, tell that Milo_evi_ in Sand_ak conducted secret war with similar aims as in Bosnia and Herzegovina - ethnic cleansing of Bo_njaks.

Bo_njaks, then Serbs, Montenegrins, Roma, Albanians, Hungarians and Jews.⁴⁴

The second aspect of this fact is that the *majority of the population of Sand_ak* make, on the level of Serbia and/or Montenegro, *national minority*, Bo_njaks. So, in Sand_ak *minority population* are Serbs and Montenegrins, who, on the level of Serbia and Montenegro make *majority* and, as it is said in our country they are constitutional peoples, because countries are named after their national names and in constitutions mostly they are mentioned and taken care of.

I am stating these facts because the crises in the area of former Yugoslavia are most often explained with inter-national hostility, and the wars of the 90s are mostly defined as inter-ethnic, that is, inter-national and even religious. Finally, the fact that Bo_njaks are the majority population in Sand_ak must be brought in connection with the fact that

⁴⁴ According to population survey from 1991, in Sand_ak live 419.994 inhabitants, what is five times less than in Kosovo although area of Sand_ak is not significantly (for around 1.000 km_) smaller than Kosovo area.

From total number of inhabitants, 257.849 live in Serbian part, and 162.000 in Montenegrin part of Sand_ak.

National structure of population has always been mixed. There are most Bo_njaks, then Serbs, Montenegrins, Roma, Albanians, Hungarians and Jews. Total, 228.446 Bo_njaks live in both parts of Sand_ak, they represent 54% of total population.

Bo_njaks are majority population in both parts of Sand_ak: 155.544 Bo_njaks live in Serbian part of Sand_ak, what makes absolute majority of 62.8%, and 72.902 live in Montenegrin part of Sand_ak, so they represent relative majority of 46.7% compared to 37,4% Montenegrins. 9.3% Serbs and 6.6% Albanians and small part of ethnic groups.

Except in Sand_ak, Bo_njaks live in other parts of Serbia and Montenegro. Of 175 municipalities, how much was in Serbia in population survey in 1991, just in five municipalities Bosnjaks did not live. Outside Sand_ak is noted 106.579 Bo_njaks: in Serbia 90.867 and in Montenegro 16.712. Excluding one part in Vojvodina, in Serbia and Montenegro they lived mostly in towns, where they gradually, for employment in industrial companies, settled in bigger or smaller number, individually or in "spontaneous" formed but unorganised city parts that were created out of former labourers colonies. But, in Vojvodina they are mostly inhabited in villages in Banat where authorities resettled them from parts of Sand_ak, where villages were set on fire by ~etniks in WWII, as colonists after the end of war.

Serbia and Montenegro led war against their compatriots in Bosnia, and especially because of the goals and consequences of that war.

The second fact: Sand_ak represents historically, culturally, politically and economically a circled part, that is an area, a province, a region, which had autonomy long before the present Yugoslav autonomous units Kosovo and Vojvodina.

Except in the far past, Sand_ak was an autonomous unit at the beginning of the creation of socialist Yugoslavia, in 1943. Sand_ak then, with acceptance and suggestion of the highest organs of the Yugoslav authority and participation of representatives of all ethnic groups, had almost the same status and exactly the same name and power as future federal units (republics). About that time, witness founding and other documents created during two and a half years an autonomy of Sand_ak. However, immediately after the end of WW II, under brutal pressure of Belgrade Sand_ak's autonomy was revoked. Then again the territory of the region was divided between the republics of Serbia and Montenegro, by a border that was established by military conquest and ethnic cleansing during the Balkan wars at the beginning of the 20th century, but also on the grounds of decisions by the international community from the end of 19th century, more precisely, by decisions of the Berlin Congress, and on the grounds of political bargains among federal republics in previous communist regimes. Of course, by the nature of politics of that time, and politics in general, everybody took care of their and some other interests, and only then of the needs of the Sand_ak population.

In the context of these facts causes of the problems in Sand_ak and of facts that can make it a regional problem, especially because of the situation that appeared at the beginning of the 90s when the bloody collapse of ex-Yugoslavia started, can be found.

The third fact which could also be the cause for problems in Sand_ak and can make it a regional problem is directly connected to the division of the territory of Sand_ak, firstly between Serbia and Montenegro, but also because parts of the territory that were given to Bosnia and

Herzegovina and Kosovo after WW II. In that way, Sand_ak became a region that spreads through territories of Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina and is closely connected with them in every aspect.

This fact is also important, beside other things, because Serbia and Montenegro were, as was already said, at war with Bosnia and Herzegovina and practically and literally were at war with compatriots of the majority people in Sand_ak - Bo_njaks.⁴⁵

Of course, and for those facts, Sand_ak could have been a potential crises-spot point.

Analyses of possible sources of political crises

It is certain that those are serious circumstances because of which conflicts usually appear or they are at least explained by them. The truth is also that those circumstances motivated the Serbian-Montenegrin regime to undertake measures in order to solve the "*sand_ak question*", but it is a matter of anachronous and aggressive motives and national-chauvinist programmes, which, from the aspects of civilization and democracy, even from the aspect of postulates of present religions and traditions of living in Sand_ak, cannot be accepted and justified as necessary, reasonable and meaningful.

⁴⁵ In any other question concerning wars of the 90's in international community there is no agreement about Milo_evi_'s responsibility for those wars, even for war crimes. Sole fact that international community brought sanctions to Yugoslavia speak in favour of that, and at London Peace Conference was clearly said that it was aggression of FRY on Bosnia and Herzegovina. Besides, Milo_evi_, before the wars, many times publicly threatened with war (promised "war conflicts", "armed fight", "if we are supposed to fight we will fight" , etc.) and at night meeting in June 1991 with presidents of municipalities and chiefs of local departments of Internal Affairs Ministry he announced the decision to "go to war". Beside, the syntagm "Balkan butcher" was launched by very significant international factors. That it is not the case of political rhetoric but legal fact and qualification it is clear from chronology of events since his arrival to power in Serbia to his abolishing from power and extradition to the International Tribunal for war crimes committed on the area of former Yugoslavia which brought up the charges against Milo_evi_ for genocide in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

The essence is that, in the case of Sand_ak, neither of the given situations themselves, I emphasise this, was productive or influenced a re-opening of the "*sand_ak question*", that is, the bo_njak question, in Sand_ak and in the whole Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In the following I will try to prove this statement and point out that in these facts given there is the quality that a solution of the "*sand_ak question*" is really necessary and possible or at least prove that it is not an obstacle for democratic a solution, the least cause of problems in Sand_ak and that it does not make Sand_ak a regional problem.

I will start with the analyses and answers in the order of which the facts that could be the cause of problems are stated.

Analyses of the first fact: The national and religious structure of the population was always mixed. Also, the dominant population was bo_njak, but that was never, even in the 90s, the cause of conflicts between Bo_njaks on the one and Serbs and Montenegrins on the other side.

Understandably, that war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later in Kosovo, did, as in the whole region, create certain inter-national tensions but they did not produce conflict situations between citizens of different nationalities. On the contrary, they created direct and aggressive politics of the regime to make inter-national conflicts, majority members of all national communities, because of that became extremely aware and tactful in everyday conduct in relation with the members of other national communities.

That confirms the following official data about processed criminal and misdemeanour acts that concern disputes, fights or murders between citizens of all nationalities: of over 4.000 criminal and misdemeanour acts, as much is noted in three Sand_ak municipalities (Novi Pazar, Tutin and Sjenica) for the period between 1990 and 1995, just in three cases participants of conflicts were of different nationality, and those were the cases of usual disputes in cafés.

Unfortunately, these data tell about inter-national division, about the non-existing of normal life together on the level of everyday life of citizens. The practise of the Serbian-Montenegrin regime that, on one side, gives privileges to citizens of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality in all segments of social life, and on the other, that towards Bo_njaks conducts complete discrimination, based on law regulative,⁴⁶ and even police and army repression, as it is performed upon population under occupation and enemies, is responsible for that.

During the war, acts of repression of Bo_njaks in Sand_ak by Yugoslav police and army, paramilitary formations that acted as their part, had all elements of war cruelty.⁴⁷ Along with that, as in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other war zones in the area of ex-Yugoslavia, the regulations of war concerning humanitarian rights and international regulations and obligations that address the population of occupied territories were broken: without any reason and cause in a cruel way, in houses, working and public places, citizens were murdered just because they were Bo_njaks; residential, economy and religious buildings in the property of Bo_njaks were burnt and mined; armed assaults on civilian settlements were performed, civilians were taken hostage and murdered after failed exchanges for their fighters who were captured by the Bosnian-

⁴⁶ Helsinki Committee from Sand_ak identified and made thorough analyses of four discriminating laws, one regulation and one legal surrogate on whose grounds citizens' discrimination on national grounds is performed and areas where majority population is of non-Serbian nationality. Those are: Law on territorial organization of Republic of Serbia in local self-government, Law on special conditions of real estate trade, Law on space planning of Serbia until 2010 and Law on proclaiming insufficiently developed areas of Republic of Serbia until 2005, and regulation Program of assignments and measures for assignments and measures for faster development and slowing unastisfactory migrations in municipalities Novi Pazar, Tutin, Sjenica and Prijepolje and Instructions of Federal Ministry for Traffic and Communication with which is forbidden the return of refugees who in some of European countries looked for asylum. It is indicating that two laws were adopted in Serbian Parliament after the signing of Dayton agreement, what points out that Milo_evi_ not even then gave up on his plans concerning Bo_njaks in Sand_ak.

⁴⁷ According to The Statistical Review made by HCS, of completely 2.246 noted crimes and violence, 1770 were performed by police and army, by paramilitary 114, by members of the army of Bosnian Serbs 90, by citizens of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality who were close to the army and the police structures or were organized in their units 87 and by "unknown executors" 98. In those crimes and violence were included murders, kidnappings, woundings and brutal abuse of citizens with severe body wounds.

Herzegovinan army in the war zones in Bosnia and Herzegovina or they were murdered in their own houses, in working places, on public roads. They expelled civilian population massively and made their return to the homes they were driven or had run away from impossible.⁴⁸

That, as well as other numerous facts about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the repression in Sand_ak, and especially its goal and consequences - ethnic cleansing - actually point to other conclusions: firstly, that Milo_evi_ tried to solve the *"sand_ak question"* by repression, that is, the question of Bo_njaks in the FRY, because crimes and discrimination were performed towards Bo_njaks who lived outside Sand_ak, in other towns in Serbia and Montenegro;⁴⁹ and secondly, that

⁴⁸ According to the statements of the leaders of nationalist party of Bo_njaks SDA, from Sand_ak moved around 90.000 citizens. According to rare (mostly, in function of dementia) statements of official representatives of former authority that number of citizens who moved away is not larger than 40.000 and of course, according to their statements it was not the case of expelling or moving away under pressure but the case of volunteer departure to European countries. In the report from 25th October 1996 Special commissioner for human rights UN, Ms. Elizabeth Rehn, writes that *"as a result of violence 60-80.000 Muslims left Sand_ak region since 1992 and found shelter in various Western European countries."* International crisis group in the report from 9th November 2001 estimates that 80.000 Bo_njaks left Sand_ak because *"Milo_evi_'s regime from the beginning of war in Bosnia in March 1992 until the end of 1993 over Muslims of this region conducted official state politic of persecution"*. Considering total number of Muslims-Bo_njaks in Sand_ak (224.446), any number in question, it is great percentage of moved population. That fact itself points to dimensions and weight, aims of repression by what moving was started. In any case, it is large number of miserable people who experienced all tragedy of refugee, starting with the shock because of murder or kidnapping of the members of the family, setting houses on fire, the sole act of expelling, running away or "voluntary" departure from homes, to the problems they met as refugees, and in the end, problems and impossibility of the return to their own homes.

⁴⁹ In towns outside Sand_ak most murders of Bo_njaks were performed in Belgrade and Podgorica. According to researches of HCS in Belgrade in period from October 1992 until October 1993 12 murders were performed of which HCS investigated 8. Some less murders of Bo_njaks were performed in Montenegrin towns outside Sand_ak. But, as in Serbia, most murders were performed in capital of Montenegro, Podgorica. As in Belgrade, those are murders of workers from Sand_ak who worked in Podgorica companies.

Except Belgrade and Podgorica, murders and other violence over Bo_njaks were also performed in other towns in Serbia and Montenegro. HCS noted and researched murders of Bo_njaks in three towns in Serbia and wounding and violence in two towns in Montenegro. In Montenegrin towns outside Sand_ak there were no murders but in all towns where Bo_njaks live violence is noted, starting with armed assaults on houses, mining of stores, wounding and one rape.

Bo_njaks in Sand_ak were part of the war plans of Slobodan Milo_evi_ he had in relation with Bo_njaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The basic thing is, that to such a situation not the facts about the national and the religious mixture and the national structure of the population in Sand_ak but anachronous and high-state-policy politics of the Serbian-Montenegrin regime contributed.

Analyses of the second: There is no doubt that there was dissatisfaction among Bo_njaks because of the violent revoking of Sand`ak autonomy in 1945, and especially because of the way in which it was done and because of the division of the Sand_ak territory between two republics, and later, the giving of the town of Rudo with surrounding parts to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to Kosovo the significantly bigger and richer town of Kosovska Mitrovica. However, they never opposed to these decisions, neither individually nor in an organized way. It can be said that Serb representatives made more resistance to the violent revoking of Sand_ak autonomy. It is a characteristic example of professor dr. Sreten Vukosavljevi_, the first and the only Council President, who demonstratively left the last Assembly session and refused to sign the act by which the autonomy of Sand_ak was revoked.

Beside that, it should also be kept in mind that thanks to solid national politics in ex-Yugoslavia, especially after 1965 (when the Minister of Internal Affairs, Aleksandar Rankovi_, was replaced, one of the toughest and most brutal executives of the continuousness of Serbian national-chauvinistic and organizer of state terror over citizens of non-Serbian nationality) the position of members of all national minority communities, even Bo_njaks was significantly improved. As a result of that improvement, Bo_njaks in the last thirty years of existence of Yugoslavia solidly integrated in all segments of social life in the frame of these two federal republics, and the idea of Sand_ak autonomy was completely suppressed. A significant role played the fact that citizens in previous Yugoslavia, no matter to what Yugoslav nation and national community they belonged, were equal concerning chances of achieving individual and collective citizen, national and minority rights, and in not

achieving political freedoms and as victims of other citizens' rights violations by the communist regime.

But when the violent and bloody collapse of ex-Yugoslavia came about (SFRY), aggressions on the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the regime of Slobodan Milošević and the Montenegrin political and state duet Bulatović-Urošević, members of minority peoples became the main victims of their national-chauvinist politics.

To the members of national minorities in question and drastically reduced individual and collective rights they enjoyed in previous Yugoslavia (Croats, Hungarians, Roma, Slovaks, Rusins, Bulgarians and Romanians), and to Albanians in Kosovo and Bosnians in Sandžak they completely revoked them and conducted police and army dictatorship which usually make authorities that occupy.

In that way, Albanians in Kosovo, Croats in Vojvodina and Bosnians in Sandžak became victims of violence of "inner" aggression of the Serbian and Montenegrin state national-chauvinism of paramilitary formations, oppositional parties and national associations of Serbs and Montenegrins. It is understandable that such politics created and encouraged the feeling of power that in time became arrogant behaviour and in individuals close to the authority, aggressiveness towards members of the minority nations, on behalf of members of the Serbian and Montenegrin people.

On the other hand, such behaviour of the majority citizens of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality, and especially state national-chauvinistic politics created a strong feeling of humiliation and danger among the minorities and encouraged organised political and later armed resistance of Kosovo Albanians toward the Serbian and Montenegrin regime. For the same reasons, the national party of the Bosnians, Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak, developed the idea of a "*special status of Bosnians*" and in autumn of 1991 they conducted a referendum concerning Sandžak autonomy.

The essence is, it was not the question of separatism but exclusively legal and legitimate demands for Sand_ak autonomy, which, in the newly created situation at the beginning of the 90s, as a measure for human rights protection, democratisation and decentralisation of society, supported all Bo_njaks. Beside that, measures to put into practise the results of the referendum were never undertaken, so referendum was significant just for the party and the regime, because in essence it had a propaganda and a political character. In any case the referendum did not create political problems in Sand_ak, except for the fact that a chance to the regime was given to use that publicly justified violence against the members of the Bo_njak community.

Analyses of the third fact: Problems in Sand_ak did not appear because its territory spreads on territories of Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, nor because Serbia and Montenegro led conquering war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and against compatriots of the majority peoples in Sand_ak, the Bo_njaks.

In the first place the territory of Sand_ak which was given to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo after WWII, is not a matter of dispute, and nobody seeks a return or rearrangement of the borders.

On the other hand, in Sand_ak there was no danger of an upraise or an armed rebellion of the Bo_njaks. It is true, Bo_njaks participated with their compatriots in Bosnia and Herzegovina because of the crime committed upon them but that was a question of emotions they could not and were not allowed to show publicly. On the contrary, Bo_njaks from Sand_ak, beside numerous crimes and abuses performed upon them and complete discrimination in all segments of social life, did not react in any way.⁵⁰ Beside that the danger that the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina

⁵⁰ There is no doubt that the cause of calm endurance of discrimination and violence was created by political and constitutionally legal insecurity and heavy repression of the regime over Bo_njaks in previous period. In that sense, it can be said that their fear is absolutely rational. But, it is the case of suppressed civil courage and national consciousness, what encouraged other corrosive processes of self degradation, starting with adjustment to the status of non-existing and/or citizens of second order to hiding of their national identity and accepting to achieve their citizens' rights through "Serbian connections" and/or with bribery of officials in local organs of management, police, even army and ministries.

endangers the region of Sand_ak did not even exist in theory, because since the beginning of the war they were pushed 300 kilometers from the border of Sand_ak and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

So, the attempts to justify the problems in Sand_ak by the national mixture of the population, inter-national tensions, legal and legitimate demands for autonomy of Sand_ak or closeness of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, actually represent part of the war propaganda the regime spread with the goal to justify and cover-up its responsibility for the violence performed upon Sand_ak Bo_njaks by Yugoslav army, police, paramilitary formations and a certain number of militant citizens of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality who were close to the police and military structures or organized in their units.

In essence, the hostile attitude of the Serbian-Montenegrin regime towards Bo_njaks and Croats in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was basically motivated by the same war goals as in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. To such a conclusion, mainly consequences of war actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and state terror in Sand_ak like ethnic cleansing point. However, beside the consequences there are other numerous proofs and clear indications that Bo_njaks in Sand_ak and those who lived outside Sand_ak, in towns in Serbia and Montenegro, were part of planned political actions of great Serbian national-chauvinism which was conducted at the beginning of the 90s and during the war against Bo_njaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵¹

⁵¹ Muslims-Bo_njaks from Sand_ak and Bosnia and Herzegovina were parts of unique plans of national ideologists, and when they did not speak of them and when they mentioned them in their projects of national programs. For both options, there are many examples, and here we mention just two well known texts which "most directly influenced on forming public opinion" and for Muslim-Bo_njaks, on both sides of the Drina, they brought tragic events: Memorandum of dr Stevan Moljevi_ from 1941 and Memorandum of SANU from 1986, and on events that followed and came out of these documents

In Memorandum of dr Stevan Moljevi_, one of the ideologists of creation of Greater Serbia out of "all Serbian countries", and some other law professors, which was published on 3rd June 1941 in Nik_i_, quite openly was presented the plan for ethnic cleansing from non-Serbian population, and towards Bo_njaks, those who lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as those who lived in Sand_ak was planned application of practice "three thirds": one third to kill, one third to expel and one third to baptize. Unfortunately, the plan is realized to the great extent.

Undoubtedly, the aim of wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was *"to unite all Serbian countries"* or, as independent analysts said *"the creation of Greater Serbia"*. According to the consequences of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina - the ethnic cleansing of territories, it can be concluded that the aim of terror in Sand_ak was – the ***creation of ethnically pure Serbia and Montenegro***, in Sand_ak whose territory in Serbia, as Kosovo, they consider the *"cradle of Serbianity"*, Vojvodina for *"Serbian Piedmont"* and Muslims Bo_njaks *"as centuries long Serbian enemies"*.⁵²

In Memorandum of SANU the same plan was presented in significantly more subtle way, but that document of SANU from 1986, as general belief and objective academic valuations is considered political and nationalist program conducted by Slobodan Milosevic as a war plan "Ram" for Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Sand_ak as a plan of "controlled destabilization", with unique aim - ethnic cleansing.

But, Milo_evi_ in front of domestic and in front of international community skillfully hid his plans and practice concerning Bo_njaks in Sand_ak. Serbian-Montenegrin regime in the same way acted in the case of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although he, in front of the whole world and international community performed open aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina at the same time he was convincing that world and international community, and he believed in that, that they believed him - "that Serbia and Montenegro do not participate in war." But, facts say it is not so. Beside other things, international community brought sanctions to Yugoslavia because of the wars it led in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Finally, Tribunal, except for the crimes committed in Kosovo and Croatia, accused Milo_evi_ for crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and on the ground of commanding responsibility. There are, of course, other numerous proofs that FRY practically started and led war and Serbs from there brought into war.

⁵² Such relation towards muslims, that is Bo_njaks, is motivated with the fact that Bo_njaks in large number accepted Islam after arrival of Turks and on *"kosovo myth"*, which represents very mixed and complicated mythological scheme because it is mixture of pagan magic and Christian myths and legends with indisputable historical event - battle with Turks in Kosovo in 1389. In any case, it is hard to explain it in several words but it is quite certain that it significantly influenced national and political consciousness of Serbs, and there are opinions that it performed key role in forming socio-psychological character of ethnic Serbs. Here we state two examples of such understanding of muslims Bo_njaks and *"kosovo myth"*.

Dobrica _osi_, who is by many considered to be the main ideologist of newer Serbian nationalism, and by Serbs "father of the nation", in his book PROMJENE- CHANGES, that was published in 1992, among other things writes: *"Muslim state, wish for the state Bosnia and Herzegovina, created on confession is extremely anti-Serbian."* And some time before, at symposium "Tradition and contemporary" held on 29th November 1987 in Swedish Royal Academy, _osi_ claimed that Kosovo loss from 1389 is even today preoccupation of Serbian

In any case, Milo_evi_, beside war goals he had in relation to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, had the goal to solve the "**sand_ak question**" or the "**muslim-bo{njak question**" as a part of one plan: The creation of ethnically clean and Great Serbia.⁵³

heroes, "*who in people's spirit and soul do not stop to fight against Islamic half moon, for honorable cross and golden freedom.*"

⁵³ Complete problem of human rights conditions and in general, chances to solve that problem, was additionally hard and complicated by cunning and it could be said successful politics of the regime by which it was marginalized and was pushed away safety and human rights violation problem in Sand_ak. For these reasons regime ruthlessly in front of international community denied the fact that human rights in Sand_ak are violated and at the same time persistently ignored demands of political factors, NGO's and citizens from Sand_ak themselves to stop with repression and discrimination and to solve constitutional legal status of Bo_njaks who in previous SFR Yugoslavia had status of the nation and in Constitution of newly formed FRY and in Constitutions of both republics, they did not get any status, not even the status of national minority. With the aim to completely suppress the problem of human rights violation of Bo_njaks and to cancel their national characteristics, the regime changed the name of the region Sand_ak into Ra_ka area, which is now used in official and public communication.

On the other hand, because of the wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo, of course, and because of complete media blockade of Sand_ak, problems of human rights in Sand_ak are insufficiently familiar to domestic and international public. Because of that was, after expelling delegation of OECD mission that was in Sand_ak until the middle of 1993, insufficient and inadequate interest of international community for condition and solution of problems of human rights in Sand_ak.

Such condition regime used to systematically and thoroughly without any obstacles violate human rights, trying to keep it as long as possible in order to achieve the aim to ethnically Sand_ak or at least to marginalize Bo_njak community and make it minority in Sand_ak. When during spring and summer the question of return of mission OECD in FRY was started again, officials from state and political structures, and leaders of all opposition parties reacted in panic, claiming that in Sand_ak human rights are not violated and they opposed to the return of delegation and mission OECD to Sand_ak. It is indicating that in the same way publicly reacted the leader of the party "Gra|anski savez Srbije" (GSS) - although it was considered to be the party of citizens' beliefs and they had great number of followers among citizens of Sand_ak. The attitude of GSS is to Bo_njaks even more strange because the party, in previous years, by attacking the regime of Slobodan Milo_evi_ stated examples of human rights violations in Sand_ak and in several cases publicly protested in participated in organization of protests because of violence over Bo_njaks. But, those who know parties and complete condition in Serbia, claim that such attitude of GSS confirms the fact how serious and deep are roots of Serbian nationalism and how much in politics, religion, culture and mentality is present Serbian ideology of ethnically clean Serbia. Because of that is totally justified fear of Bo_njaks in Sand_ak that regimes in Serbia and Montenegro will continue with the politics of pressure and that they will succeed to ethnically clean Sand_ak. That fear comes out of the sole fact that both regimes succeeded in that and that until now they undertook everything in order

Crises in the relations of Serbia and Montenegro as the source of instability in Sand_ak

Unfortunately, there is a fourth fact that also has to be questioned, although it does not belong to the category of historically given, unchanged facts, but it was created as a consequence of inter-state, inter-republic relations of Serbia and Montenegro, which were war allies in wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Really, it is the case of heavy and serious political crises and deteriorating the relations between the Serbian and the Montenegrin leadership that could, undoubtedly cause additional and essential problems in Sand_ak. The essence is, that this time the crisis imperiled neither because of the national mixture of the population in Sand_ak nor because of legal and legitimate demands for Sand_ak autonomy in the context of necessity and publicly proclaimed choices for democratisation, decentralization and regional division of Serbia and Montenegro but because of nationalist and authoritarian politics of the Serbian and Montenegrin regime that were not ready or willing to create a dialogue and political solutions of the crises.

As the broader public knows, at the time when Milo_evi_ was in power, there was a real danger that Sand_ak, for the first time since the beginning of the Yugoslav crises from the beginning of the 90s, becomes a region of war actions, because the whole border between Serbia and Montenegro runs over Sand_ak and divides it into two parts. The whole situation was additionally complicated by the fact that the Bo_njaks at the elections voted for Milo _ukanovi_ and the Montenegrins from the north of Montenegro, from the part of Sand_ak run by Montenegro, for pro-Serbian Momir Bulatovi_. Because of that, the Serbian side, explaining the whole dispute as the dispute of people, of course

to circle processes they started with repression and continued with discrimination based on law, dual application of laws and illegal measures - creating unbearable life conditions by making population poorer and poorer by economic and production disintegration and marginalizing Sand_ak and whole Bo_njak community.

Montenegrins, or as they like to say, Serbian people, and the authority represented by Milo _ukanovi_, who was, according to them, just supported by the police, the Bo_njaks and the Albanians.

On the other hand, in order to preserve the undeserved image of a democrat and to stick to the illusion that he is protecting the Bo_njaks and other members of minorities, _ukanovi_ discreetly but persistently supported these theses, and in a very smart way abused the trust, naivety and political disintegration of the Bo_njaks, and armed a large number of young people. So if there had been a conflict with Serbia, those would have died for an idea contrary to their interests, for the separation of Montenegro from FRY, that is, for the division of Sand_ak between two independent states.

Fortunately, there is no danger of armed conflicts between Serbia and Montenegro any more, or that Sand_ak becomes potentially a conflict-zone, because with the help of the international community all ideological and national divisions within Montenegrins on the basis of a Serbian and Montenegrin option calmed down. However, the way of the Montenegrin and Serbian leadership to solve the crisis itself can, undoubtedly, cause additional and essential problems in Sand_ak. Beside that, Sand_ak has until today, remained an area in which, institutions violate individual and collective citizens' rights on national grounds, starting from teaching units in primary and secondary schools to social politics and state programmes of development. The most lethal is that with a separation of Montenegro from Serbia, that is, from FRY, which is what the Montenegrin leadership works for, will be endanger the life interest of Bo_njaks and, in a most lethal way and without any possibility of removing the consequences in the hardest way, they will be endangered and their citizen and national rights will be suppressed. In that way, the Serbian and Montenegrin regimes are once again solving the "*sand_ak question*" in one of the ways in which it was solved in the past and because of which Sand_ak has become a paradigm of political crises by the "perfect" separation of Sand_ak territory and citizens' and human rights violations of Bo_njaks.

On the other hand, it is absolutely certain that to the idea of Sand_ak autonomy or some kind of autonomous region neither Serbs nor Montenegrins from Sand_ak would object on the condition that it gains ethnic autonomy and "*special status*" for Bo_njaks. When during WW II ex-Yugoslav republics were formed, that at present are independent states, more representatives of Serbian nationality than Bo_njaks. When autonomy was violently revoked, they opposed with far more energy to the revoking of autonomy members of the Council, that is the Assembly, of Serbian nationality than members of Bo_njak nationality.

Objectively, today's situation is not like it is because the long-lasting national-chauvinistic politics of the previous regime had deep consequences, and citizens of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality are still not liberated of nationalistic ideas towards so called national interest, to which non-determination and a doubt of new authorities in Serbia to radically end with the politics of ethno nationalism contribute.

Final considerations

No matter that not even one of the given circumstances themselves produced crises in previous years, there is no doubt that they motivated the Serbian-Montenegrin regime to remove them violently. And in that way, it actualised them and made necessary to approach a solution of the *"sand_ak question"*.

On the other hand, newly created circumstances of present crises in the relations of Serbia and Montenegro, and especially the attempts and the determination of the international community to bring democracy to Serbia and Montenegro and Eastern Europe in general, to develop and stabilise them through mechanisms of European Council and especially Stability Pact, create a necessity for defining a new approach to the solution of the *"sand_ak question"*.

That approach must firstly must be democratic, because democracy represents the source and guarantee of stability, and a means of transition and reconstruction. On the other hand, neither the regimes in Serbia and Montenegro, nor the international community so far tried to solve the *"sand_ak question"* in a democratic and complete way. The facts themselves that are not disputable – that the solution of the *"sand_ak question"* lasts for a hundred and fifty years and not even one of the until now applied non-democratic questions produced results, except that for decades the agony of the Sand_ak population is prolonged and the status of Sand_ak is kept as a potential conflict-spot - imperatively determine such an approach.

Democracy means, maximum respect of human rights of all members, no matter of what national and religious belonging, but also respect of the historical fact that the citizens of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality in previous periods were privileged in all segments of social life and Bo_njaks were exposed to cruel forms of state repression and complete discrimination. But, beside that, the traditionally good international relations are not disturbed to the extent that solutions for life together based on mutual trust and pluralism, could not be found.

Beside the traditionally good international relations, there are two more facts that make a solution of the "*sand_ak question*" possible, but also necessary for a democratic solution. It is true that Bo_njaks form the majority population but now that percentage is insignificant and most probably below 54%, that is 4%, because Bo_njaks constantly moved away under systematic and heavy pressures.

On the other hand, the population is mixed, literally, in all Sand`ak towns and almost all village settlements. Out of 734 settlements, just a few dozens of villages are ethnically homogenous, but those are small village settlements so that just 3,41% of the total population live in ethnically clear places.

Both data represent real assumption for equality but also make it necessary to seek a solution not by ethnic criteria but in the frame of democratic principles, needs and the necessity to establish regions and decentralise Serbia and Montenegro.

It should also be kept in mind that Sand_ak represents a historically, culturally, politically and economically circled unit, that is, an area, a region, a province, which had autonomy long before the present autonomous Yugoslav units, Kosovo and Vojvodina, and that autonomy was violently revoked to Sand_ak in 1945. Because of that, Bo_njaks are constantly dissatisfied. Of course, the fact that Sand_ak is divided between Serbia and Montenegro should be respected, but also the existence of their mutual state, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, that is, Serbia and Montenegro, is in question and that it is with recent agreement of Serbian and Montenegrin leadership mortgaged on three years.

We in the Helsinki Committee from Sanda_ak respect the legitimate and legal demands of Montenegro for separation from the common state, but we are against a "perfect division" of Sand_ak between members of the present federation. The reasons are of legal, humanitarian, but also that political nature. Firstly, such a "perfect division" would mean an additional punishment, which could be measured with death punishment, for the Bo_njak population which was in the previous period ruthlessly

punished by the Serbian-Montenegrin regime - by state repression and ethnic cleansing.

Secondly, such a "perfect division" would mean not just a division of one "historically, culturally, politically and economically circled territorial unit, that is an area, a region, a province", but also a division of families and their property, because the border between Serbia and Montenegro not just divides Sand_ak into two parts, but in a large number of cases, it runs through the property of a family and between the households of two brothers.

Naturally, such a division would create un-compensating economic damage to a large number of families and produce other unsolvable problems which would further produce tensions in the region and the existence of the "*sand_ak question*" and Sand_ak as a regional problem in decades to come.

Because of that, we believe that Serbia and Montenegro should have in mind the given historical, but also other circumstances created in the last ten-fifteen years in Sand_ak, and to respect attempts of the international community to bring democracy into region of Serbia and Montenegro, Eastern Europe in general, and to develop and stabilise it through Stability Pact.

Sand_ak as a possible integrating region of Serbia and Montenegro

Considering the given reality and determination of Montenegro to step out of the present federation with Serbia, and because of ethno-nationalistic politics of the present regime in Serbia, there is a drastically smaller number of options for a solution of the "*sand_ak question*" in a completely democratic way and in the frame of the international community.

However, in the present situation it is possible to foresee some solutions that would satisfy Bo_njaks and which would not jeopardise members of other nationalities and the state interests of Serbia and Montenegro. Here

we will state some concepts of national parties of Bo_njaks, for which we believe they deserve to be taken into consideration, and that they can be solid ground for talks.

Possible solutions

Under the condition of that community of Serbia and Montenegro survives, are predicted solution is that to Sand_ak as a historically, culturally, politically and economically circled unit, that is, an area, a region, a province, autonomy which was violently revoked in 1945 returns. It is considered that in that way the "*sand_ak question*" would permanently be solved.

In that case, Sand_ak would have a "*special status*" as a personal and territorial compound an autonomous unit in the frame of Serbia and Montenegro, but also on a federal level.

In both parts of Sand_ak representatives would be chosen separately for republic authorities: in the part of Sand_ak that belongs to Montenegro for representatives in this republic, and in the part of Sand_ak that belongs to Serbia for representatives in the Serbian Parliament, government and in all republic institutions. On the level of the whole entity representatives for federal organs would be chosen, that is, for organs of the state community of Serbia and Montenegro.

On the same grounds and with application of the rule of right and other democratic principles of state management, competence of republics would be divided in the area of economy, finance, health, social politics, education, culture, etc. The essence is, that republic borders would not be changed and in the republics all authorities would still remain but all major questions would be solved in agreement and with an agreement of entity organs in all Sand_ak, on the basic values of democracy, civilian society and the rule of right.

But, if it would come to a complete separation of Montenegro from Serbia, the formation of so called "*over-boarder autonomy of the*

region" is predicted. That would mean to form two autonomous units, one of the part of Sand_ak that is ruled by Serbia, with the main seat in Novi Pazar, and other of other part of Sand`ak that is ruled by Montenegro, with the main seat in Bijelo Polje. Relations between these two entities would be regulated in a similar way as the relation between Serbia and Montenegro.

In the frame of this concept is estimated that election units for a republic parliament coincide with autonomous entities, and that in elections citizens choose representatives of entity authorities. Of course, it is estimated that the installment of other mechanisms for achieving democracy and values of civil society, human and citizens' rights protection is necessary.

According to our opinion, the least that should be done is that in this phase, in the frame of constitution of both republics and publicly proclaimed decisions of present ruling structures for democratisation, decentralisation and regional division of Serbia and Montenegro, is to form two boroughs, one from the part of Sand_ak under the rule of Serbia, with the seat in Novi Pazar, and the other from the part of Sand_ak under the rule of Montenegro, with the seat in Bijelo Polje.

To coincide election units for republic and eventually for federal parliaments with these new boroughs, and on elections to choose borough managers, and not to appoint them by republic authority as it was done until now.

In that case, the question of autonomy must be solved in the frame of decentralisation and democratisation of Serbia and Montenegro and European integration.

With such solutions, we are convinced, that Sand_ak would, for the first time in history, have an integrating role between Serbia and Montenegro. This is of extreme significance in the context of known interpretations of Serbian and Montenegrin historians and politicians according to which the Great Powers, by maintaining or re-giving autonomy to Sand_ak, wanted to separate Serbia from Montenegro and to disable Serbia to

have an exit to the sea. Whatever happens, with such solutions Sand_ak would gain all assumptions to become stability factor and Bo_njak community and all citizens of Sand_ak would be active participants in maintaining the community of Serbia and Montenegro, and would motivate and start processes of establishing international and good neighbouring relations of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A scenario for the beginning of a solution of the "sand_ak question"

To begin today with solving the problems in Sand_ak, should it be started from undisputable facts: that the citizens of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality in the previous period were privileged compared to Bo_njaks and all other members of minority national communities and that for all people it is characteristic to give up privileges with difficulties, even if they were gained contrary to democratic principles. It must be taken into consideration that to most citizens of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality there are still closer ideas of political structures of an authority who are "convinced nationalists" than ideas of reform, democracy and decentralisation.

Those are the main reasons for the still present deep inter-national division of citizens and mutual mistrust of the national parties in Sand_ak, in which political life is not democratic and consolidated in a satisfactory way. What is encouraging is that not even one national party of Bo_njaks has extreme and for Serbia and Montenegro opposed versions for solution of "*sand_ak question*" in their plans. According to their present concepts for the solution of the "*sand_ak question*", it could be said that all interests of Serbia and Montenegro and realities such as the national structure of the population and the division of Sand_ak between the present members of the federation, and determination and opinion of international community to stabilise this region.

Respecting these facts and especially accepting visions and the practice of the international community, is a pre-condition for installing

democracy and stability in this region. That is why: political action of governments of Serbia and Montenegro is imperative

The majority population should be socialised in a democratic mental pattern that will contribute to develop a consciousness of mutual state identity within minority and non-constitutional peoples.

The governments of Serbia and Montenegro should start initiatives and actions to promote values of democracy, decentralisation, regional division and regional cooperation and stability in Sand_ak and in the region.

The representatives of all nationalities from Sand_ak and on more levels should establish communication, with the aim to regain, international trust and to develop consciousness about the necessity of life together, without discrimination for the one part and privileges for the other, lost with wars and anachronous national-chauvinistic politics of previous regime.

Processes for decentralisation and as a precondition for democracy, but also as mechanism for human rights protection and the protection of unique things of national and cultural identity, to form autonomous political-territorial regional units, one in the frame of Serbia and the other in the frame of Montenegro, should be started.

The role of the international community

If it is to be started from the undisputable fact that not even in one case, from the opposed sides of former Yugoslavia, even of those who were allies such as Serbia and Montenegro against Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, could agree on anything without active and determined mediation of the international community, then, one could conclude that it is necessary to make an agreement with active participation of the international community.

On the other hand, the solution of the "*sand_ak question*" is put as a politically neuralgic point because without doubt there exist problems and because of that, Sand_ak is a regional problem. The way in which it will be solved is less important, but it is important to solve it on principles, starting with the Final Act in Helsinki from 1975 to the European declaration on local self-management.

In any case, I am convinced that, on the one hand, it is necessary to start solving the "*sand_ak question*" and to solve it in a democratic way, and on the other hand, that the international community should start an initiative and participate actively in its solving.

efko Alomerovi

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