

SARAJEVO PARADOX:

Survival throughout History and Life after the Balkan War

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PROLOGUE

Sarajevo – Still There

In April 1992 Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its independence from former Yugoslavia, triggering the war—already started between Croats and Serbs—to spread into its territory. This conflict subsequently resulted in one of the most brutal wars in Europe. Particularly ravaged was the capital city of Sarajevo, which was under continuous siege by Serb forces for almost three and a half years. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed in the war, more than two million were displaced, thousands of women were raped, and many cities, towns, and villages throughout the country were heavily damaged. The atrocities carried out in the name of “ethnic cleansing” appalled the world. The war officially ended in November 1995, after the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed.¹⁻³

Bosnia-Herzegovina with its capital, Sarajevo, is run now as an international protectorate within its old-historic borders and is divided into two constituent entities: the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, encompassing the Muslim-Croat Federation, and the Serbian Republic (*Republika Srpska*).⁴ The war and subsequent division brought about major changes in the ethnic and demographic profile of Sarajevo, with Bosnian Muslims, *Bosniaks*, making up 78.3% of the population, versus less than 50% before the war. The overall population in the city decreased about 24% (from ~362,000 in 1991 to ~275,000 in 1998). The original city-dwellers comprise only about 30% of the present inhabitants. The population has also become older, with 14.4% children 14 years, 67.9% people 15-64 years, and 17.7% people 65 years.⁵

There has been a plethora of published literature, either impartial or inclining to one or another ethnic side, describing various aspects of war in the Balkans. Some still argue about the stability of peace in the region, sharing the skepticism that hatred among people and a sense of ethnic divide are still prevalent, that the wounds are too deep to heal, and that the war will start again as soon as military forces are withdrawn. There are many paradoxical situations related to almost every aspect of life in Sarajevo. They range from such common things as schooling and employment to government administration and the newly imposed quasi-democracy. The bare everyday survival and the civic normalcy of the citizens (as evidenced by rich social and cultural interactions) despite the highest rate of unemployment and the highest economic disparities in history, the admiration and eager openness to western culture yet pious acceptance of Islam and new (previously unobserved) religious habits are just a few of these

paradoxical situations. However, one of the greatest paradoxes is probably the fact that Sarajevo still exists and in some ways is more dazzling and magnificent than ever before. The city lies in a valley surrounded by hills and mountains, offering a perfect setting for a siege and an easy target for shelling. The fact that it has not been completely flattened out (the outside world reacted to its occupation only a few years later) is the highest tribute to its people's survival and resilience. In 1992 the United Nations proclaimed Sarajevo the 14th most dangerous place on earth. Today Sarajevo is considered one of the "hottest cities" in the world and among the 10 most popular tourist attractions.⁶

This paper addresses the changes in cultural, economic, social, and political life of Sarajevo caused by the changes in the ethnic and demographic profile of its population (as an ultimate consequence of war), supported by official information available in Bosnia and outside. It also includes some personal memoirs and impressions of the authors who grew up and lived in the city earlier (JZE, TJ, WI), and of one who has been living in the city all the time, enduring and witnessing all the horrors of war yet surviving (BV). Although this paper does not purport to give yet another explanation into the latest conflict in former Yugoslavia and offer reasons for it, a brief historical perspective of the region is presented with the intentions of bringing more insight and better understanding to the rest of the discussion.

LOOKING BACK

"The Balkan region has a tendency to produce more history than it can consume"
(Winston Churchill).

Bosnia-Herzegovina, located on the Balkan Peninsula—south of Croatia and Slovenia, west of Serbia and Montenegro—and in the heart of former Yugoslavia (Figure 1) was populated in ancient times by Illyrians, Thracians, and Celts. Sarajevo itself sits on the site of ancient settlements from the Neolithic period.⁷ At the beginning of the Christian era the entire area became part of the Roman Empire, which was succeeded by Byzantium. Slavic tribes from the Carpathian Mountains settled there in the 7th century AD and mingled with the Croat (western) and Serb (eastern) peoples, also Slavic tribes.^{1,4} Some argue about the exact time when these South Slavs started calling themselves Serbs or Croats.⁸ Since Bosnia-Herzegovina was centrally located between the Roman and Byzantine Empires, it served as a constant battleground between them. By the 9th century AD the entire region was Christianized. The western parts, influenced by the Romans, embraced Catholicism and were dubbed "Croats" while the eastern parts, influenced by Byzantium, embraced the Eastern Orthodox denomination, its people dubbed "Serbs." Throughout history both Croats and Serbs were able to form their own independent states; this was occasionally also true for Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite its multiple religions and ethnicities.^{1,4} However, it is important to emphasize that all people in the area, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, were Slavic Christians of similar origin, a notion frequently rebutted by some nationalist factions.

The Battered and the Battering

Between the 9th and 11th century Bosnia-Herzegovina was controlled intermittently by the kingdoms of Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Byzantium, or some combination of these, after which the kingdom of Hungary gained control and ruled for about one century. Subsequently, the country was independent for about a century and a half, under the rule of Ban Kulin

(*banovina* – a similar type of state structure as in Croatia) and King Tvrtko. During that period Manichaean sects, who had already swept the Christian world, came to the Balkans where they called themselves “Bogomils.” The original Bogomil teaching was Gnostic and opposed all forms of rule, violence, and slavery. They resented Byzantine culture, Slavic serfdom, and any imperial or church authority.⁹ This dualist doctrine, doomed and branded heresy by Christians (both Catholic and Orthodox), was accepted in Bosnia and even declared the official state religion. The acceptance and popularity of the Bogomils in Bosnia were probably a result of the desperate attempt to remain autonomous from Croatia and Serbia and to claim territory between the east and west.¹⁰

Not many traces of the Bogomils’ existence are left, which is arguably attributed either to their persecution or to their conversion to Islam when the Balkans were conquered by the Ottoman Empire in 1462.^{8,9} According to some, the Bogomils quickly converted to Islam and aligned themselves with the new government in order to gain protection and privileges. The area remained under Turkish rule for more than four centuries, with Sarajevo as its cultural and political center. Some Bosnians as well as many Serbs and Croats fled during the Turkish takeover and escaped to nearby countries while others were coerced into dropping their Christianity and converting to Islam. During Turkish occupation adherents to Islam were the privileged class while Christians became servants to Muslim landlords.¹ Ottoman Turks introduced their customs, administration, and property concepts into the area. They reinforced their dominance by building mosques and other hallmarks of Islamic culture.

Many of these hallmarks had survived centuries only to be destroyed or damaged at the end of the 20th century. One example is the famous *Gazi-Husrev Beg* mosque and library (presently still under restoration), built in 1530 and 1537, respectively. The mosque is central to the old Turkish city quarter, known as *Bascarsija*, which has been recently submitted for recognition as a world heritage.⁷ While the Ottoman Turks were conquering the Balkans in the 15th century, the Sephardic Jews, expelled from Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella, arrived there as well. The Sephards settled predominantly in Sarajevo, contributing their own influences to its multicultural flavor.

In 1878, upon the Ottoman Turks’ withdrawal and by the decision of the Berlin Congress, Bosnia-Herzegovina became an Austro-Hungarian province with Sarajevo as its capital city. Since the very beginning of that reign Sarajevo experienced tremendous growth and prosperity. From 1881 to 1884 some major projects and buildings were conceived, many of which are still in existence. These include the city transportation system via streetcars, a water and sewage system, a main cathedral, a museum of natural history, a brewery, and the first hotel, *Evropa* (destroyed in the 1992/95 war and currently under reconstruction). The city hall, *Vijecnica*, one of the hallmarks of Austro-Hungarian architectural style with pseudo-Moorish accents, was opened in 1896. In more recent history *Vijecnica*, which housed the National and University Library—the largest in the country, was almost completely burnt down in the 1992/95 war. According to the 1910 census there were 51,919 people living in the city of Sarajevo in 1910. The ethnic distribution in Bosnia-Herzegovina comprised 43% Serb Orthodox, 23% Croat Catholics, and 32% Muslims.⁷

In June of 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a member of the Serbian supported nationalist group known as “Young Bosnia,” assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Austro-Hungarian heir. This event triggered World War I. In this region of Europe, WWI ended by the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, its central government in Belgrade. Bosnia-

Herzegovina was part of the Kingdom but ceased to exist as a distinct political unit and was not recognized within the Kingdom's name. In 1929 the ruling king Alexander dissolved the Parliament and all political parties, established royal dictatorship, and named the entire kingdom "Yugoslavia" (Land of South Slavs). However, confrontation and struggle for dominance between the Serbs and Croats—with Bosnia-Herzegovina in the crossfire—persisted throughout the years until the eve of World War II. During the war (1941-1945), Sarajevo and the entire country was ravaged by Germans, as well as by Croat (*Ustase*) and Serb (*Cetniks*) nationalists.¹

COMMUNIST-STYLE PEACE

A Prelude to the Horror

The Partisan leader of World War II, Marshal Josip Broz Tito, united all the major ethnic groups of the region (Serbs, Croats, Slovenians, Macedonians, and Montenegrins) and formed a communist/socialist federation of Yugoslavia in 1946. The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was comprised of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1974 two autonomous provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo, were established and Muslims were recognized as a "nationality."

Under the communist/socialist government led by Tito and within apparently united ethnic groups in the state's infrastructure that carried the logo "brotherhood and unity" (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*), nationalistic attempts from Croats and Serbs were subdued, although they did not disappear. For roughly 40 years, united Yugoslavia endured Tito-style communism, a milder variant of the one Stalin imposed in the Soviet Union and the entire Eastern block. The country thrived more than others in the Eastern block—Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania—and boasted freedom of travel and relative prosperity. A "western style" of living was adopted and greatly favored by the majority. Religion, however, was suppressed, as was, to some extent, freedom of expression, individuality, and anything out of the ruling communist-party-line, which identified itself with the government. This repression was imposed on Bosnia-Herzegovina more than on the other republics, because of its multi-ethnicity and fear of possible unrest. The communist party followers, whether genuine or fake believers, were the elite, the richest and the most powerful, regardless of their abilities and skills. Young people, especially students (even those still in high schools), were actively targeted as recruits to join the "Party" and were promised (and received) employment, housing and other privileges as an incentive.

Characteristic of this period was also the negation of preexisting history and anything related to the previous kingdom and past. Tito was glorified along with "Party" leaders and there was an obsessive adoration for Partisan fighters of World War II. Numerous movies were made and many books were written to chronicle and admire their battles and victories. History textbooks for schools were adapted to teach primarily the four years of World War II. New monuments were constructed, new holidays and folklore were invented, and new music was composed. Most of the streets and buildings were renamed to honor Partisans and their victories. The staples of Tito's rule, idolized and worshiped before, were detested and dishonored after his death (1980) and even more so with the collapse of communism in Europe (1989). In the new Bosnian state, however, there is a renewed sentiment for Tito and some hallmarks of his rule.

In the Name of God

Throughout history both the Croats and Serbs competed for control over Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although Bosnia-Herzegovina was more or less able to keep its autonomy through the centuries, it has not evolved into a separate nation, neither has there been a complete assimilation of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims within its territory. The desire and readiness of Bosnia-Herzegovina's people to have their independent state have always been questionable. Among its people the Muslims clearly had the strongest feelings of a common "Bosnianness." This was understandable since Bosnia was their only homeland, with weak connections to Turkey as a possible safe haven in case of exile or trouble. The Bosnian Croats, on the other hand, were inclined toward unity with Croatia, while the Bosnian Serbs had the weakest Bosnian identity and the strongest aspiration toward unification with all Serbs and the creation of a Greater Serbia.¹⁰ In addition, it appears that the selective memory and history, altered by some factions, whether Serbs, Croats or Muslims, kept creating and inflaming a form of nationalism that always denied the multiculturalism and subsequently the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even more tragically, this nationalism kept feeding the hatred, hostility, and antagonism among people.

Frequently, religion has been conveniently used to disguise real motives and to support claims for power and control. Demagogues of all three nationalities took advantage of different religions to manipulate and deceive not only the people within, but the outside world as well. The conflict has been presented as inherent, timeless, unavoidable, and therefore beyond control. The origin of Bosnian people, however, is the same: they were all Slavs and Christians, mixed together yet divided and split in the crossroads of powers, before they became Bosnian Muslims, Croatian Catholics or Serbian Eastern Orthodox. Unfortunately, this is the main argument for some Croats and Serbs to support their claims that since Muslims are either Serbs or Croats, all of Bosnia-Herzegovina belongs to either greater Serbia or greater Croatia.¹¹ Nevertheless, it is still beyond comprehension to understand where all the hatred came from to cause this recent cataclysm among a once homogenous people, regardless of the history and time which made them culturally, ethnically, and religiously heterogeneous.

INDEPENDENCE

A High Price to Pay

When communism and Tito's Yugoslavia started collapsing after Tito's death in 1980, the conditions for the formation of Greater Serbia, a desire continually held by some Serb fractions, became more favorable.¹² The opportunity occurred in June 1991, when Croatia and Slovenia (two of the six republics within Yugoslavia) proclaimed independence.^{12,13} Serbia reacted with a military attack on the two republics, which triggered war in the entire region and escalated in Bosnia, the third republic to proclaim independence in April 1992. The Bosnian proclamation of independence was more a way out (if not the only way out) after the collapse of Yugoslavia, than it was a genuine enthusiasm and wish of its people.¹⁰ The populations of all three nationalities within Bosnia would probably have preferred some modest authoritarian Yugoslavia to suppress antagonism and confrontation even if it meant not knowing what was going to happen in the future.

The war in former Yugoslavia, and particularly the siege of Sarajevo, was one of the greatest tragedies of modern time. For all sides the war was a deliberate and futile distraction to no discernible gain. It was a war against civilians, against history and its monuments, against religious icons, and against civilization as a whole. It resulted in some 250,000 casualties and millions of refugees and displaced persons. Several hundred thousands of refugees returned, many to find no home and no place to live (60% of the homes were destroyed), instead being resettled in temporary dwellings, where some still live.^{1,4} The war statistics for Sarajevo, from April 1992 until July 1995, are as follows: 10,514 civilians, of which 1,598 were children, died from cold/hunger or disappeared; 1,741 people, of which 356 were children, were injured or became permanently disabled; 19,834 people, of which 3,381 were children, were hospitalized.⁷ In addition to the human catastrophe, the cultural destruction, and the national and private property damage, the country's infrastructure and economy were completely crippled.^{10,11} The war formally ended after the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in November/December 1995.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

The graveyards are everywhere in Sarajevo. Since the city's new cemetery (*Novo Groblje*)—despite a large expansion—could not take all of the dead, bodies were buried in various places. After the war these bodies were relocated to the sites of the old Turkish or Austro-Hungarian cemeteries scattered around the city. These cemeteries also had to be expanded in order to accommodate the new demands. The graveyards now are beautifully kept and manicured. The Muslim graves are simple, with white tombs placed in neat rows, while the Catholic and East Orthodox ones have vaults and crypts of all kinds, some very elaborate. The sections lie next to each other, motionless and quiescent. The expansive view of them from the hillsides is spectacular, evoking tranquility and peaceful melancholy. From an even further distance, the cemeteries look like white patches completely detached from the human tragedy they hold.

The New State and its Democracy

According to information posted for the 2000 census, there are 390,534 people in the canton of Sarajevo, which incorporates nine municipalities (nearby suburbs that were previously considered separate villages).⁷ The people from these municipalities were not previously included in the city of Sarajevo's population, meaning that the number of people living in the city is probably still lower than before the war (362,000).

The current government system, along with the Constitution, was outlined in the Dayton Accords. Bosnia-Herzegovina is a single state with its capital, Sarajevo, and two constituent entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (roughly half of the country), in which Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats comprise the majority, and Republika Srpska, which has a Bosnian Serb majority. Bosnian Muslims, descendants of families that embraced Islam during the Ottoman Turks' rule from the 15th to the 19th centuries, identify themselves now as "Bosniaks" (*Bosnjaks*). The central government has a three-member presidency, one from each ethnic group.¹ There are three main political parties, which reflect the ethnic divisions: the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) have mostly Bosniaks as followers while the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) and the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina (HDZ) predominantly consist of Serbs and Croats, respectively. The fourth one—a moderate Social Democratic Party (SDP)—is the only major party with some multiethnic electorates. The SDA and SDS won the 2002 elections in their respective territories after a ferocious and abusive campaign by most of the major party politicians. The polls show an increasing public

disenchantment with mainstream political parties and growing numbers of undecided voters. The issues of main concern to most voters are employment, corruption, and social and health services—not nationalist issues. The 2002 elections were the first elections that Bosnians organized on their own without outside supervision.

The ultimate decisions and administrative tasks, however, are dealt with by foreign powers through the “Office of the High Representative,” which has headquarters in both Sarajevo and Brussels and consist of about 200 international policy makers, rendering Bosnia-Herzegovina an international protectorate. Based on the Dayton Accords and as a part of Stabilization Force, Bosnia-Herzegovina has also been divided into three security sectors that are supervised by French, British and American troops.¹⁷ This poses two questions: (1) how independent is Bosnia-Herzegovina?, and (2) what would be the situation if it were completely sovereign? The international community through its representatives regulates all aspects of life in Bosnia-Herzegovina, from local services, school admissions, and international sport competitions to Bosnian-elected government administration. The international edict is enforced by threats of economic sanctions and dismissals of noncompliant Bosnian officials. This imposes restrictions for Bosnian people in decision-making and in developing and implementing their own policies. Some argue that this autocratic control has caused the biggest fragmentation in Bosnian society, intensified the ethnic divide, and encouraged nationalists.¹⁸

A COMMON MAN

The Morning After

Each war brings the possibility for some to capitalize on a black market, embezzlement, corruption, and drug smuggling. This was not different in Sarajevo, where some people became extremely rich and powerful. This created a huge economic disparity between people, one not present in such magnitude in the former communist Yugoslavia. While some suddenly have become “movers and shakers,” living in luxury and abundance previously unknown, others still spend their days digging through garbage cans on the streets to find anything useful, including food leftovers. The middle class, practically nonexistent anymore, was most affected. A class that makes the foundation for a stable state has been crippled by the war and there seems to be no prospect for its recovery, at least not in the near future. The officially stated unemployment rate is 37%¹⁹. However, the loss of jobs due to the closure of some big companies (previously owned by the government and now open to private bidders) is not included. A more realistic estimate of this rate is about 60%.

Thousands of people from all walks of life, including professionals, left the city during the war, not to come back. Many who stayed and survived the war left in post-war years—and many are still leaving—unable to cope with the new state structure and system. This trend is particularly prevalent among young intellectuals and college graduates who cannot find decent jobs, if any, and have become disillusioned with the new system. They are spread all over the world, including some states of former Yugoslavia. This exodus creates brain-drain not just for the city, but for the entire country, threatening its long term future. Those who have stayed suffer from economic hardship due to unemployment and low salaries. Most of the people living in the city now are newcomers (only about 30% are the original city dwellers). These people are either refugees from other parts of the country or others who took advantage of the

postwar anarchy and moved in from neighboring villages and provinces (one such being Sandjak, a southeastern Muslim province in Serbia).

It is unknown—at least to most citizens—where most of the money that was poured into Bosnia-Herzegovina by the world community for its reconstruction (\$4 billion in the first three years after Dayton)⁴ ended up. Some uses of the money are obvious: many buildings have been repaired or completely rebuilt; some parts of the city look better now than ever before. This is particularly true for many of the mosques: several old ones have been restored and dozens of new ones are being built all over the country. Many other buildings, regardless of whether they were destroyed in the war, were restored to their magnificent beauty and look better now than when they were first built (**Figure 2**). However, it is still possible, even in the downtown area, suddenly to come across the ruins of a destroyed and abandoned building squeezed among the others on a street row.

The largest contributors to the economy are sales and trade, which once employed about 20% of people. The industry is in a very slow comeback, employing now about 19% of the population. Food, tobacco, electromechanical, and chemical industries are the strongest, as well as the textiles and furniture production. Other important contributors to the economy are tourism, restaurants and hospitality management, and financial services.¹⁹ Additionally, small businesses and services are flourishing, although with uncertain future and longevity. Still, money is in short supply and many businesses operate at a loss or trade for goods and services instead of actual money. In many places salaries are late, even for several months. Jobs are insecure, save for those in government institutions. People who are laid off due to closures of previously government-owned companies are minimally reimbursed, although they may have spent their entire lives working for the “common (socialist) good”. While this might be quite normal for a capitalist economy, it is a rather new aspect of life for people who endured half of the century under socialist/communist rule, in which lay-offs were nonexistent and everyone had some kind of a job.

The Art of Survival

The average salary for professionals is about \$250-\$300/month. The average retirement pension for professionals with some 30 years of work behind them is about \$100/month. Non-professionals have a much lower monthly income. A supply of food for a four-member family is about \$200/month. For example, a loaf of bread or a carton of milk (1 liter) is about half a dollar. Fruits and vegetables are also inexpensive (from a western standpoint). The average prices for clothes and shoes, however, are comparable to those in the US. There are many boutiques and western-brand stores where prices are astronomical. Italian fashion and imported goods are the most popular. The least expensive cars are called “Skodas” (originally from the Czech Republic, bought by Germans, and assembled in Sarajevo), which run at about \$5,000 plus 7% tax. Other cars start at \$7,000 with 30% tax. Still, many people have new cars. Sarajevo is not different from any other European city regarding the assortment of cars, fashionable clothing, and various other goods available (**Figure 3**). The assortment is better now than in all the years of socialist Yugoslavia, when Sarajevans, eager to keep up with the latest fashion, would travel abroad to Italy, Austria, and Turkey to do their shopping.

Education and housing expenses have remained at pre-war rates, negligible throughout the entire communist/socialist regime. Schooling, including university education, is almost free. There are also foreign schools (not free), starting from elementary education to 8th grade.

The most well known are the French, American and Turkish schools (the latter two called “colleges”), which run from \$200 to \$800 per month, per child. Although very expensive, they are full and quite popular. The Music and Ballet schools for children are still free and available to any child with some talent. The University of Sarajevo in its present state was established right before World War II. It was severely vandalized during the recent war, but continued to operate despite the drastic drop in student and faculty body. The university is under reconstruction of its physical and academic structure, carried out in collaboration with the European Union Rectoral Conference. It also holds partnerships with over 30 universities from Europe, the US, Canada, and Arab countries.²⁰

Housing expenses for most people are relatively low and almost nonexistent for some. Immediately after the war many were able to buy their pre-war apartments and flats (previously leased from the government or through their place of work for a small monthly rent). The government sold the flats to people who lived in them for nominal prices. For those who did not benefit from the immediate post-war giveaways or did not have an apartment to buy back from government, the situation is rather bleak. The apartments (either new or old) cost much more now, from \$400-\$1,500 per square meter, depending on the region of the city. Typically, those close to downtown are valued the most. Some apartments in the city—and even more so around the city—house refugees or people who illegally moved in during or immediately after the war. The process of moving refugees out and returning property to the original owners/inhabitants is slow, complicated, and rather painful for the latter (**Figure 4**). This is especially true for the owners who left the city and are still living abroad. Even when the newcomers do move out, the process can take another 1-2 years and is an extremely frustrating and nerve-breaking experience.

The Easy Side of Living

There are numerous cafes and restaurants in Sarajevo now, considerably more than in the pre-war period. In downtown Sarajevo every street corner or patch of sidewalk has tables and chairs with an operational café/restaurant. The numerous cafes are hard to regulate, particularly the size of their allocated space on the sidewalks. Many expand their space at night when the city inspectors are not on duty, bringing out more tables and chairs so that traffic is often obstructed. The cafes are usually filled with patrons throughout the entire day with a culmination of crowds at night. People go out regardless of the day of the week for coffee, plum brandy, beer, food, but more importantly to see others and to be seen. The atmosphere is rather similar to the summer night-life in Rome, Madrid, or Zagreb.

There is a renewed expression of religion by Muslims. Dozens of new mosques were built in the city and its outskirts after the war, presumably financed and supported by Arab countries. There are now 42 religious institutions of which 34 are mosques, four are Catholic, two are Eastern Orthodox churches, one is an Advent church, and one a synagogue.²¹ The mosques hold services five times a day, every day. The main service takes place at mid-day when the mosques are full with men of all ages praying (**Figure 4**). At that time, the recorded muezzin’s voice calling out prayers is broadcasted from the sound speakers on minarets and blasts throughout the city. This is quite a new expression of faith, which did not exist to this extent before. The broadcasted prayers from the minarets tended to be heard before, but more as a tourist attraction in the summer than as a political statement, as appears to be the case now. This could partly be due to a new religious freedom, otherwise suppressed in communist Yugoslavia, but also to the intensification of fundamentalist religious beliefs.²⁰ In any case,

this renewed religious enthusiasm and the implication that everyone should be a believer stand in ironic contrast to the atheism favored and promoted in the past 40 years.

Another new habit that has recently developed involves the fashion of some young Muslim women. They wear all-covering women's dresses of a foreign look and flavor. These "burqas" consist of long coat-type dresses with long sleeves, usually of a pale greenish, bluish or grayish material without patterns. Long slacks of the same material and color are visible under the dress. Matching scarves cover the head and face entirely, except the eyes. Ironically, the mothers of these young women typically dress in the western style clothing, often wearing jeans and sneakers. In the pre-war period the everyday Muslim robes of this region were quite different and were worn mostly by elderly women. They consisted of very wide and large pants, *dimije*, draped at the ankles, typically of some patterned, colorful material. The women would also wear a white blouse with sleeveless waistcoats over it and a wrap-style oblong scarf to cover only their hair.

The "Mujahedeen" (literal translation from Arabic, "holy warriors") can be frequently seen on the streets of Sarajevo. They came from Islamic countries to fight on the Bosnian Muslim side. Under the Dayton Peace Accords they were supposed to leave Bosnia by the end of 1995², but many of them stayed on. Some married local women or set up their own Islamic communities in some of the Bosnian villages and subsequently even obtained Bosnian citizenship. The Mujahedeen can be easily recognized and distinguished from the local population by their typical, narrowly shaped beards and darker skin.

All Over Again

Most of the city streets, squares, and buildings in Sarajevo have been renamed once more. The old communist names, many of which represented symbols of the fight against the Nazis and fascism, are gone, as are the Serbian names and symbols, regardless of whether they originated from Bosnian or Serbian Serbs. The new names are metaphors closely tied to Bosnian Muslims or readoptions of names from the Turkish occupation. History text books are being changed again, this time to focus and teach children in schools mostly, if not only, about Muslim traditions. Some argue that this is a normal process occurring in other states undergoing regime changes (Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Baltic States), as well as a natural method of establishing collective identity in a new state and securing territorial integrity.²²

It is remarkable how the city remained culturally vibrant during the siege. The artistic community was able to overcome the horrors of ethnic cleansing by producing art of all kinds and involving the public. The city, otherwise deprived of all living essentials—food, water, heat, light—and any safe public or private place, regularly organized art exhibitions and theatre and concert performances. Especially commendable was the String Quartet, which performed every week. The reputable and once fashionable Literary Club was also active during the war, serving as a gathering place for poets, writers, and journalists of all ethnicities. Particularly impressive was the destiny of the newspaper "Oslobodjenje" (Liberation), which was originally established as a communist newspaper in 1943. It remained conservative and government-controlled until the collapse of communism, when it started reporting more objectively and employing journalists of all ethnicities. The newspaper's buildings, twin 10-story towers, were shelled for five continuous months by Serb tanks, but the paper never missed an issue. The rubbles of the destroyed towers will be preserved as a memorial of the war. Although Oslobodjenje is still the main daily newspaper in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there are others which

are gaining readership throughout the country. Particularly progressive and unbiased are the weekly magazines “Dani” (Days, in Sarajevo) and “Slobodne Novine” (The Independent News, in Banja Luka – the capital of Republika Srpska). Both are gaining popularity for their impartiality and their fearlessness for publishing the truth regardless of the ethnic lines by which most of the country is divided.

The cultural tradition in Sarajevo continues, even more intensely now. It has seven drama theatres, of which four are newly established to enable cultural or religious expressions. The Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Opera Theatre have regular seasons. Art and literary exhibits and various festivals occur frequently. The city’s four main museums and ten galleries have been repaired and are operational, as are the seven main movie theaters.²¹ The film industry is particularly vibrant. The movie “No Man’s Land” (2001), made as a harrowing and powerful satire on a war conflict, won the 2002 Academy Award and Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film.

EPILOGUE

What Next?

Although the Peace Agreement was signed in 1995, the questions "Did the war really end?" and "What did the Peace Agreement actually mean for people in the region?" still remain. Some called it “Clinton’s debacle in Bosnia,”^{23,24}; for others it was the end of bloodshed, atrocities and horror.¹² The latter was certainly true for the Bosnian people. The Dayton Accords, although fragile and shaky at the beginning, proved to be the only proposal that worked toward the end of bloodshed and distraction. It enabled the return of human dignity and the establishment and recognition of newly formed, independent states.^{2,25} Some argue that it is naive to expect that all the wounds created during the war have been healed by now. It might take an entire generation before peace will be fully established. People in the region might need foreign political leaders and continuous international support in order for peace to become stronger and lasting.²⁶

Many argue that the freedom of the movement is not as free as it should be: repatriotization of refugees is slow, indicted war criminals have not been turned over to the War Crimes Tribunal, there is no real democracy or free elections, the people are divided by ethnic lines, and economic activity is weak.^{2,24} These statements might be true, but they must be taken with a grain of salt when viewing the situation from an alternative standpoint. It is true that many refugees cannot return because their homes were destroyed or taken by other refugees. Many, however, do not want to return because they have established new homes and lives in Western countries. The nationalists, supported by some media, are still incensing the public with ideas of ethnic division and hatred, but most of the people would like to resume some normalcy without conflict and hate. The statements that “Elections in the Balkans are either tragedies or farces,”²⁴ could be true, but, on the other hand, people in this entire region have always lived either in a monarchy/kingdom structure or under communism: they never knew about or experienced democracy.²⁷ They now have to learn what real democracy and real elections are, and this is not a simple process.

The facts need to be evaluated: some ten years ago, the worst war in Europe since World War II raged in Bosnia. Today, there is peace—perhaps fragile and imperfect—but

peace. This change from war to peace is the single most important fact of life for the people of Bosnia, as well as for the people of all other states in the region. It means that the killing fields are once again playgrounds, that cafes and market places are full of life, not death, that the water, lights, and heat are on, that there is shelter from the wind and cold, that running an errand does not mean running a death race against snipers, and that women are no longer prey to systematic campaigns of rape and terror. Peace means all these very basic things, which many people never even think about. However, as the international community works to make sure peace endures and as the Balkan people are enjoying it more and more, its reality must be kept in a right perspective.

A Day in a Life

It is mid-morning on a warm, bright day in June 2002. The cluster of cafes on a steep street near the Medical School is already full of people. The patrons are typical; men of all ages, freshly groomed and neat, and women, mostly young, attractive, and fashionable, probably students on a break from their classes. The most typical order is coffee (Turkish, espresso or cappuccino) or a foreign (Heineken) beer. The blurred voices and humming noises can be heard all around. A lady in her eighties comes up the street and approaches the cafes on her way to a nearby small grocery shop. She is distinguishable from the mass of other passers-by. Her grayish-white hair is stylishly combed and a colorful necklace with matching earrings complements her casual, semi-length skirt and blouse. Her posture is straight and elegant and neither the steepness of the street nor her high-heel shoes slow her down or make her breathless.

Later that day, two sisters, six and seven years old, born in Sarajevo so as just to escape the war, come home from school. They are cheerful, happy and beautiful. They continue chirping and sharing little stories from school with their mother while she drives them to their ballet class. Their mother's youthful features and delicate beauty were not affected by the hardship that she endured before they were born. After the class they stop by their grandparents' apartment. The grandma, still young, vibrant, and in the peak of her working-professional career, has made chocolate treats for them. The girls show off the new dance piece just learned, chirp, sing, and eat chocolates. The grandpa, in his late fifties, looks older with his completely white hair and beard, yet handsome and sophisticated. He does not talk much, just watches them and smiles distinctly. The girls leave to finish their homework. Before they settle at their desks at home, they will dance and sing once more for their father, who just returned from work.

On a Final Note

In 1984, Sarajevo successfully hosted the 14th Winter Olympic Games. Many agree that these were the largest and best organized winter games up to that point. These were also the first Olympic Games conducted in the socialist country. At the beginning of 2002, the Bosnian Olympic Committee announced it would support the city's bid to host the games in 2010. The attempt was also supported by the outgoing president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Juan Antonio Samaranch. It was viewed as an excellent opportunity to revive the economy with new jobs and tourism, as well as to heal the scars of the conflict and diminish the ethnic divide by bringing together Federation and Republika Srpska teams to work together and athletes to compete in an international setting. The disappointment was obvious when the application was rejected by the IOC in August 2002. Sarajevo apparently had good chances

and sympathy from many IOC members but the ethnic divide slighted its competitiveness. This rejection, however, did not discourage local authorities to try even harder and start planning for a more comprehensive 2014 Games bid. The popular logo of the people in charge is: “We want to take Sarajevo out to the World; we also want the World to come to Sarajevo” (*Sa Sarajevom zelimo u svijet, ali zelimo i svijet u Sarajevu*).²⁸

Figures 1-5

See Ernst-figure.pdf

CAPTIONS FOR FIGURES

Figure 1. The map of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the surrounding newly formed independent countries

Figure 2. Main post-office built in Austro-Hungarian period. It was burnt and destroyed in war (left) but restored to its magnificent beauty (right).

Figure 3. Sarajevo Open Market (top) – a site of two mortar attacks (in February 1994 and August 1995), resulting in about 100 casualties and 200 injuries. It has never been confirmed who launched the attacks: Serb forces who maintained the siege of Sarajevo or Muslim defenders who wanted the attention of the outside world. Below is a covered deli, *Trznica*. Both are restored now and are flourishing with products and customers.

Figure 4, *Jahorina*, the site of the 1984 Olympic Games, now part of *Republika Srpska*

The former stylish winter homes of Sarajevo families, now inhabited and changed by the displaced newcomers. Some were demolished in the war and never repaired

Figure 5. Men praying in the courtyard of the *Gazi-Husrev Beg* mosque (left), while inside of the building is being restored after war damages. The mosque is shown on the right. Inside the courtyard is a *sedrvan* – a circular fountain, covered by roof and supported by columns -- also under construction. It is used for hands and feet wash-up before prayers.

NOTES

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