

**INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR MINORITY STUDIES AND INTERCULTURAL
RELATIONS (IMIR)**

BOSNIA: TOLERANT HOSTILITY

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MAY 2004

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Methodology of the Study

This study was conducted by an urgent anthropology team made up of an expert in Balkan history, a historian-anthropologist, a linguist-anthropologist, and a journalist specialized in Balkan affairs.¹ This is the usual format of teams conducting urgent anthropology studies in the Western Balkans.

The fieldwork was carried out on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina from May 3 to 9, 2004, and included dozens of interviews in Sarajevo, Pale, Maglaj, Zenica, Visoko, Kakanj, and other smaller population centres. The history of Bosnia and Herzegovina and, more specifically, the Bosnian situation immediately before and during the Ottoman period, has been one of the team leader's research interests for years. The field researchers also had previous experience of this type of fieldwork, having conducted a series of interviews across Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1998.

The purpose of the study was to establish the state of interethnic relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina almost nine years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Also, to corroborate or reject the preliminary hypotheses that there is a revival of Islam as well as infiltration by non-traditional strands of Islam, such as the Wahhabiyah and Ahmadiyah. One of the top priorities of the researchers was to establish the levels of normalization of the administrative, economic, social, and cultural life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As in all studies conducted by the urgent anthropology method, the researchers aimed to produce an analysis of the present situation and shorter-term forecasts of developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on a snapshot of society, institutions, and the achievements and failures of the European presence in the country, as well as on the life histories of randomly selected respondents.

Individual or group interviews were conducted with more than 50 randomly selected respondents from different social groups: urban residents, rural residents, intellectuals, military and police officers from SFOR. The respondents included people from all ethnic and religious communities in the Federation and in Republika Srpska, as well as their religious leaders.

The War of Architecture

One of the most striking observations of our team as we travelled around Novi Pazar and Sandzak and entered Bosnia was the feverish construction activity in two spheres: On the one hand, just like everywhere else on the Balkans, the nouveaux riches are building houses designed with dubious taste, in which they are investing their illegal earnings from marauding and profiteering during the wars, from the grey economy, and from people and drug trafficking.

¹ Antonina Zhelyazkova, Valeri Grigorov, Donka Dimitrova, and Tanya Mangalakova.

Or, as we established in Bosnia, one of the most frequently cited issues concerns the feverish search for European *donators* who grant funds for building new homes to anyone who can prove that his or her house was destroyed during the war. Almost 80% of the housing stock in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been renovated, and new houses are seldom built over the foundations of old ones. In most cases this is the more economical variant, since there is a very real danger that unexploded shells or landmines might lie hidden in the ruins. That is why thickly overgrown ruins or bullet- and shell-pocked old buildings are an invariable feature of the landscape. Often the new houses are situated on the other side of the road and form something like a new settlement. The windows face the ravages of war across the road. The new houses are built immodestly, they are much bigger than the old ones, and have two, three or even four floors. Some of them are yet to be plastered and painted on the outside, but all are fitted with PVC or aluminum windows and doors. The biggest houses are usually the most kitschy ones – they are decorated with ponies, ducks, lions, dogs and other plaster or stone figures, and many of them also have replicas of ancient Greek columns and statues.

It is obvious that there is a desire to develop an entirely new architectural concept in Bosnia. The new houses commonly have elaborate facades, conched entrance halls, and omnipresent elements such as colonnades and sculptures decorating the portals, garden walls and terraces. The yards and gardens are clean and well-tended, with mown grass. The contrast between the old and the new houses is so striking that the gloomy comments of the respondents who do not have new homes seem justified. They confirmed the rumours that some people had deliberately set their houses on fire in order to apply to donors for their reconstruction, but with a brand new design.

We note this as a possible cause of future hostility: owners of poor old houses versus owners of new rich houses.

On the other hand – and this was more important for our study – there is intensive construction of places of worship, religious schools and boarding schools, as well as other religious sites. This hyperactive religious construction has obviously become a compensatory mechanism designed to fill the void left by the end of fighting and the enforcement of a still uncustomary peace, despite the tensions of unallayed hostility that can be felt in the air. As an elderly respondent told us bitterly, “We hate each other very much, but we live in a kind of *tolerant hostility*.”

Hostility has found a new vent and has a new face, and this face is architectural.

Both religious communities, Muslims and Christians, are engaged in large-scale construction. Hundreds of mosques, churches, turbehs, chapels, and monasteries, some of which are of high cultural and historical value, have been restored or built all over the country.

We will start our description from the district of Sandzak in Serbia, because our respondents convinced us that a Christian wall was being built here entirely deliberately to counter the just as material Islamic arc in this geographical area. Our subsequent observations verified what we initially assumed to be exalted claims by

rival members of the religious communities. Moreover, the religious, cultural, and political influence of Bosnia is entirely visible in this part of Serbia. Bosnian language, along with Arabic and English, has been introduced as a subject in the curriculum of all *medreses*, as well as in the Islamic Academy. Although our respondents in Sandzak frequently told us that “this is a Turkish cultural zone,” in fact there is no Turkish influence, the Ottoman cultural heritage is being replaced, and the presence of Bosnia is tangible. The ideological continuity between Bosnia and Sandzak is unquestionable.

In Novi Pazar, Serbia, two new mosques have been built in recent years, bringing the total number of mosques in the town to 27. There are five Christian churches, but there are also several monasteries in the vicinity. The Sopocani Monastery (13th century), which is about 20 km from Novi Pazar, has been restored very recently. It used to be a convent, but the nuns have been sent to Kosovo and replaced by monks. According to local rumours, the hegumen of the monastery is a war criminal from the Bosnian war. The monks are ultra-radical Orthodox fanatics. Part of them have come from Kosovo. The rebuilt Djurdjevi Stubovi Monastery (12th century) is also several kilometres away from Novi Pazar. One of our respondents, a female Muslim journalist, said that it had been virtually in ruins, with nothing left of it except the foundations, but that in the last two or three years the monastery had been rebuilt completely and filled with monks from Kosovo. The oldest church in Novi Pazar is called Petrova Crkva (11th century) and has likewise been fully restored. Our respondent’s comment was laconic: “The Serb Church is building an Orthodox wall in Sandzak in order to fence itself off from the Islamic arc that is descending from Kosovo and Bosnia.”

This comment sparked an argument between us, because the truth is that Novi Pazar, as well as some of the nearby villages, has been almost depopulated of Serbs. And while around the mosques and *medreses* there are crowds of young people, among whom Mujahideen-style beards and full body covering are in fashion, the area around the churches is almost deserted. The ethnic picture has changed in the past few years. At present, 81% of Novi Pazar’s population are Muslims who identify themselves as Bosniaks. Serb respondents claim that their own number is constantly decreasing because of the continuing tendency for Serb families to live in cultural discomfort and to migrate towards Central Serbia or to the nearby towns of Kragujevac and Kralevo: “We don’t trust our neighbours and we live in insecurity”; or “There is a jihad against us all. They traffick drugs, buy and sell weapons and women, while we try to survive in poverty”; or “We’ve broken off all contacts in the last 10 or 12 years since the war in Bosnia. We say hello to each other, but we have no other contacts.”

Sjenica has a Muslim majority, and just 17% of its population fall in the category of “others.” In the nearby town of Tutin the Muslims are 98%.

Bosnian scholars slant population statistics, presenting Muslims as the leading ethnic community even in towns where they are a minority. For example: “Priboj, 36,000 population: 12,000 Bosniaks (33%) and 24,000 others (69%)”; or “Nova Varos, 23,000 population: 2,000 Bosniaks (9%) and 21,000 others (91%).” No effort is made to

specify at least who those “others” in this inverted statistics are, even though they constitute 91% of the town’s population.

The architectural and religious divide in Novi Pazar is entirely visible. The Serbs live in the northern part, which is new, with more modern architecture, and where the natural centre is the Sveti Nikola Church. At night this part of town is quite busy, with cafés, restaurants and discos full of young men and women. It looks like a busy quarter in any European provincial town.

In the southern part of Novi Pazar life is organized around the old centre, the headquarters of the Islamic community and the two *medreses*. It looks like a typical Oriental quarter, with narrow and steep streets, a bridge over the river, and many goldsmith’s shops, bazaars, and little shops selling Islamic literature and all kinds of religious attributes. The southern part of town, which during the day is full of milling crowds – in the bazaars, shops, and cafés in which women never set foot – is virtually deserted at night. As we were told by a veiled young female respondent who is a student at the Islamic Academy, “We are all trying to observe the rules and to live according to the Shariah.”

We asked several young men in one of the cafés why Novi Pazar was full of bearded men. They told us they were Bosniaks and asked us whether we were Christian or Muslim. Then they decided that we were not to be trusted and answered our questions frivolously: “The bearded men are artists, that’s why they have beards.” “But aren’t they a bit too many to be artists, all of them?” we retorted. Answer: “You can safely write down that you’ve been in the Town of Artists.”

On our way to Bosnia we observed and took photos of the renovated grave monuments both on the outskirts of Novi Pazar and in the villages near Sjenica. The new architectural ideal in Sandzak is grave monuments from white marble shaped as thin miniature minarets. Since the monuments commemorate people who died between 1970 and 2003 yet appear to be more or less the same and new, we concluded that this is a new fashion and that the monuments have been renovated recently just like many of the mosques. It is obvious that the old grave monuments in Ottoman style – modest tapering stones or stone slabs with the respective turbans – are no longer considered sufficient as an expression of strong commitment to Islam. People obviously need symbols that will demonstrate clearly and unambiguously the religious identity of the population centre, family, and person, even though he or she is dead.

Incidentally, we must admit that in Dervent, Bosnia, we saw a large Christian cemetery. These were ordinary, sad graves of normal size – with three-metre-high crosses towering over some of them.

On the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina architectural rivalry has acquired almost dramatic (it is impossible to refer to anything in that country as comic), grotesque proportions. As a respondent told us very sadly, “There’s no question that it’s only churches and mosques that are being built here. No one’s building factories.”

Fortunately, the most important old Muslim architectural masterpieces in Sarajevo have been preserved. The warring sides agreed at the very beginning of the siege that they

would not target mosques and churches. In the rest of the country, however, there was large-scale destruction. According to one of our respondents, a religious leader, about 1,000 mosques were destroyed during the war. The number of Orthodox and Catholic churches destroyed in the war is smaller but likewise impressive. More than half of the mosques and many of the churches have already been restored, and the others are in the process of restoration.

In addition to the restored old mosques, there are about 150 newly built ones. The places of worship from the golden age of Ottoman architecture (16th-17th century) are eclipsed by mosques in Arab classical or modernistic style, financed by the King of Jordan through Queen Rania's foundation or by Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, whose mosque in Tuzla is so opulent that it is known as the "Golden Mosque"; there are also mosques in the specific Maghrebi style, financed by Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. This geographical-architectural eclecticism is compounded by mosques in Indonesian style, financed by the government of Indonesia.

We asked a leader of the Muslim community whether he thought that the financial support for religious construction coming from countries from the Near and Middle East and the Maghreb wasn't a bit too much. His answer: "We mostly restore mosques, because the Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina doesn't have the resources to build new ones. We are grateful to the donors who build beautiful mosques. The European Union hasn't built us a single mosque. Back in the past on the Balkans, when we had a sultan in Istanbul, we knew who was to blame for our problems. Now the sultan is in Brussels but, by the way, we don't know his name. We only presume that it might be Prodi or Solana. Back in the past on the Balkans we knew the name of the sultan and could speak out, criticize, but now we don't know who our sultan is. If Mr Prodi or Mr Solana wish to build a mosque in Bosnia, we will accept this with gratitude and name the mosque after them. That's better than them being upset because we're building mosques with Saudi money. When Europe gives us money we'll call them *European mosques*. We aren't fanatics so we won't accept one donation but refuse another. Let Europe give us money to renovate the mosques and we'll tell the Saudis, 'Thanks, but now you should help others because Europe is protecting and defending us and building us mosques'."

We tried to argue with him: "But the EU countries gave money for reconstruction of the houses destroyed during the war, didn't they? All those new houses on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina are a fact thanks to the donations from the EU and the USA. At the same time, Saudi Arabia and the other Muslim countries finance construction of mosques and *medreses* only." The Muslim leader answered as follows: "The Saudis granted funds for the reconstruction of 1,000 houses in Brcko, for renovation of the railways in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today Saudi Arabia is ready to give us more than the government is willing to accept because the institutions are afraid that the EU and USA will label it a terrorist money." Question: "You are obviously accusing the EU countries of a one-sided approach or bias?" Answer: "There's a problem and that's obvious. Germany granted 200,000 former Marcs for the restoration

of the Orthodox monastery in Mostar but hasn't granted funds for the renovation of a single mosque even though it knows that mostly mosques were destroyed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sweden is the only European country that helped us renovate the mosque in Maglaj."

Albeit on a more modest scale (due to the lack of such generous foreign aid), intensive construction of churches and monasteries is likewise under way. One architectural feature that is extremely interesting is the abandonment of the classical style of Orthodox church belfries and the assertion of a brand new style that is foreign to the Orthodox tradition and that symbolizes the rivalry between the religious communities. The new belfries tower over the landscape, rising at a huge height similar to the minarets. They may be as many as 40 or 50 metres high and, when viewed from a distance, are very difficult to tell apart from the minarets unless you see the gilt or silvered crosses that crown them.

In every town or village in Bosnia and Herzegovina the rivalry between mosques and churches starts from their number, which is aimed to represent approximately the ratio between the Muslim and Christian communities in the respective town or village. In the town of Bijeljina, one half of the 34,000 pre-war population was Muslim, and the other half was Serb and Croat. After the war the population increased to 50,000, of which just 10% are Muslims.² Some 11,000 Muslims have settled in the town closest to Bjeljina, Janja, which they keep ethnically clean. Bijeljina is a typical example of a town affected by postwar ethnic cleansing and population exchange. It used to have five mosques and two Orthodox churches. At present the four mosques destroyed during the war are being rapidly rebuilt, whereas the Serbs have already built six churches.

The new monastery complex named after St Vasilije Ostroski in Bijeljina is a classical example of the new architecture which we will tentatively call *religious architecture of superiority*. It is also the seat of the Orthodox eparchy. Hidden behind high walls, the new complex encompasses two old buildings which have been renovated and serve as the headquarters of the bishop. They were restituted to the Serb Orthodox Church. Several new buildings were built on the restituted land between 1996 and 2001: the Church of St Vasilije Ostroski Miracle-Worker, the monastery, the belfry, and an open-air chapel for liturgies. Everything in them is brand new and very opulent. The church crosses are gold and their glitter can be seen from a distance. Everything is richly decorated with representations of all Serb saints and kings, and there is also a silver icon of the Holy Virgin. Brocade, gold and silver abound, and the frescoes are in bright and Renaissance colours. The chapel for liturgies is decorated with frescoes of Serb saints, who alternate with Serb peasants in traditional costumes; Christ is portrayed on the dome. Venetian blue prevails. Everything in the monastery refectory is new and opulent: cabinets, tables and chairs of solid dark wood.

² We failed to establish the exact number of Bijeljina's population, because according to some respondents it has now grown to 100,000, of which 90% are Serbs and 10% are Bosniaks.

The church belfry rises several metres above the high minaret of the restored mosque nearby. “Could the belfry really be higher than the minaret or is this simply an optical illusion,” we asked a 26-year-old hieromonk in the monastery. Smiling with evident satisfaction, the young man confirmed that the belfry really is higher: “So that the sound of the bells will carry at a great distance. Besides, the churches in town are six while the mosques are only five,” he said, stressing the importance of numerical superiority too.

A respondent whom we approached outside the headquarters of the Islamic community in Bijeljina explained that it was important for the local Muslims to restore and preserve the mosques in their original style and size. It is entirely obvious that this is far from the truth. We viewed the ongoing reconstruction of a mosque in the centre of Bijeljina that was destroyed in the war. It is surrounded by high walls that do not allow outsiders to peep at the courtyard. The domes and minarets are obviously different from what they must have been before the war. We guessed that upon completion the minaret might be a metre or two higher than the latest belfry. In this rivalry he who builds last has the advantage.

The architects of the religious buildings in the Brcko district must have had a rather peculiar imagination. There we saw the most futuristic church, whose cubist shapes and belfry piercing the clouds would depress even the most pious laic. The size of the walls of the giant new mosque under construction in the centre of Brcko is even more staggering. Thick walls of several rows of layers of bricks are built over high ferroconcrete foundations. The walls and foundations are more than a metre and a half thick. Our team unanimously concluded that the mosque was also designed to serve as an impregnable fortress. Its minaret is truly unique: constructed entirely of fibre-glass, it is reminiscent of a space station, especially with the huge glass crescent that crowns it.

The architectural battle fought through the number and height of places of worship is under way in smaller population centres too, such as Zenica – which has seven or eight mosques, because 80% of the population are Muslims, and four churches, one Orthodox and three Catholic ones – Maglaj or Doboj.

In the town of Kakanj there is a new large mosque, which is not open to the public yet. The worshippers gather in municipal rooms at the foot of the new mosque, which have been adjusted to serve as a masjid until the mosque opens. The giant domes are plated with shining white metal, and a huge crest of the same glittering metal stands on one of the domes rather than at the top of the minaret. All this tops the massive concrete structure of the mosque itself, which looks rather like a giant whitewashed bunker.

The small town of Gradacac, which has a well-preserved fortress, starts with a mosque, followed by two churches and then another mosque. In the square around the successive mosque there is a marble monument to those killed in the war; their names are listed on the monument which looks like a cross between a bower and a turbeh. Monuments to those killed in the war are also an invariable feature of the landscape around mosques.

In sum, there is total architectural kitsch and chaos – we were unable to identify any schools, aesthetic considerations, traditions or attempts at harmony with the surroundings. The purpose is clear: huge places of worship that can hold many people, a massive structure that can serve as a shelter should the need arise, and external domination designed to inspire awe among those who profess the *foreign faith*.

State of Post-Dayton Society in the Two Entities and the Brcko District

Under the Dayton Peace Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been partitioned into two entities and one district with a special status: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, and the District of Brcko. The Federation is divided into ten cantons. At the same time, Bosnia and Herzegovina functions as an international protectorate and all decisions taken by the two entities as well as by the cantons must be approved by the Office of the High Representative. As one of our respondents, a professor of sociology and law, put it: “In Bosnia and Herzegovina the process of exercising sovereign statehood is very difficult. It cannot be sovereign because it functions as a semi-colonial state. The international factor operates like a colonial master who makes all decisions concerning politics, the economy, and all other spheres of life. On the other hand, the division into entities does not allow basic mechanisms of the state to function on the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Railway transport is not functioning normally yet, nor is the rest of the economy. The absence of a fundamental decision on the state level, namely on the future status of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is tangible.”³

“The tripartite presidency and the way it functions shows global dysfunctionality; the majority of decisions on significant political issues cannot be made by a single round of voting only. Even if just a single member of the presidency is against the implementation of an important reform in a given entity, no concrete action to solve the problem can be taken. People in both the Federation and Republika Srpska are struggling to survive, they are resigned to their fate, and do not reflect on the question of reconciliation.”⁴

The majority of respondents shared the professor’s opinion. On the one hand, they admitted that the signing of the Dayton accords had ended the war and prevented further genocide, but on the other all felt strongly that Dayton had legitimized the ethnic cleansing conducted during the war and had later given the green light to what would be the “finishing touches” to the massive population shifts.

Most of our respondents felt nostalgia for “the lost harmonious and unified fatherland” and dreamed of Bosnia in future as a unified multiethnic state divided into cantons. In January 2004 the NGO European Stability Initiative advanced the idea of abolishing the two entities and transforming Bosnia into a three-layered federal state with central,

³ *Balkanite* +, No. 24, February 2002, p. 15. For details on the administrative and political structure of Bosnia after Dayton, see *Bosnia: A Case Apart*, ed. A. Zhelyazkova, IMIR, Sofia, 2001.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

regional, and municipal government, and 12 autonomous units: the ten cantons of the current Federation, Republika Srpska, and the District of Brcko. For the time being, this plan has been rejected by the Serbs from Republika Srpska. They categorically refuse to give up their present autonomous status. They are afraid that they will have a subordinate status within a unitary state. They do not see political integration with Sarajevo as a solution to the problem. If they cannot achieve unification with Belgrade they would prefer to strengthen their autonomy and entity.

For ordinary people the dream of a unified Bosnia naturally evolves into Tito-nostalgia. Two Serbs and one Bosniak from Kakanj aged 45 to 47, whom we interviewed, admitted having portraits of Tito at home: “In Tito’s time life was real, now we have democracy which means looting.”

We asked a respondent who is a scholar whether the reunification of Bosnia and Herzegovina was possible. His answer: “For ideological and political reasons this reunification is unacceptable to the Serbs. But there are countless problems even in the Federation, where Croats and Muslims are united in some way and have common bodies of local government – the Croats frequently complain that they are in a second-class position. In none of the entities are there any signs of processes that might lay the beginning of reunification. Let’s take, for example, the sphere of education: in Bosnia and Herzegovina today there are three systems – a Croat, a Bosniak, and a Serb one – which means three histories, even three mathematics, three literatures, and so on. There is division and alienation in absolutely all spheres of life. Although in an intellectual and moral sense political and economic reunification would mean a lot and is a wonderful prospect, in all likelihood it would remain only an idea, a beautiful dream.”⁵

The war has resulted in massive displacement of the population aimed primarily at ethnic homogenization. In purely human terms, this is not something that everyone can endure. We met people who have chosen to return to their home towns or villages despite the fear, despite the deaf and silent hatred that surrounds them. They have returned home and are trying to live normally, but they actually live in fear and under permanent stress.

In Visoko we spoke with a Muslim artist and a retired Serb actor. The Muslim opened up only after the Serb left: “I lost everything in the war. In August 1994 the town was besieged by Serb tanks and guns on the hills. They shelled us, and my sister died not because she was hit but of fear. I couldn’t bury her in the daytime because we were constantly under fire. We organized her funeral in the night by torchlight. I had a Serb neighbour who regularly told me when there would be an attack and in which direction so that we could survive. I have forgiven everything because it’s up to God, not up to me, to judge. But not everyone can forgive.”

The Serb and the Muslim, an actor and an artist, are interesting to portray. Both were artistic, intellectual people and maintained an impeccable relationship between one another – of mutual respect for their talent. At the same time, when they were together

⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

they categorically refused to discuss the war and constantly tried to turn the conversation to the history of Visoko. They were proud of the town's old history and were obviously ashamed and blamed each other for its recent history, so they preferred to avoid the subject. Each told us about the war only in the other's absence. They were a real-life case study in *tolerant hostility*.

Before the war the Serbs were 12% and the Croats around 3% of Visoko's population. Today the majority of the population are Muslim Bosniaks, the Serbs have decreased to 2%, and the Croats are probably less than 0.5%.

The best known on the Balkans Catholic Franciscan classical lyceum (high school) is in Visoko. The school building is newly painted and beautiful. The garden is well-tended, clean and lovely, and there is perfect order everywhere – everything is green, and tall pine-trees are in perfect harmony with blossoming magnolias and well-kept flowerbeds. This is like an oasis of beauty and order that has escaped the ravages of war. The nun on duty was strict and reserved, but she invited us to wait in the lobby for one of the Franciscan teachers, Friar S., who told us about the history of the school: The high school of the Franciscan Order was founded in 1882 for all of Bosnia and initially functioned for one year in Kresevo and then for 17 years in Travnik. The school building in Visoko was built in 1900 and initially served to train only future monks of the Franciscan Order. Between the two world wars the school started admitting not only Catholics but also students from other ethnic and religious communities – Jews, Serbs, Muslims, virtually everybody. It had students from Slovenia, Serbia, Albania, and elsewhere. The student population exceeded 500, of which 200 were trained for Franciscan monks. After World War II the rules became stricter and the school no longer admitted secular students but only candidates for monks. Those rules are still in force. The school admits only children who pledge to serve the Order and is generally open to applicants from other Balkan countries too – Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Croatia. At present only 70 children are training for monks at the school. According to Friar S., that is because during the war most of the families with children emigrated to Croatia. During the war the school was evacuated to Croatia, where about 130 students continued their studies for four years. “There were Serb troops, they fired constantly and we were afraid to keep the children here, so we moved from 1992 to 1996.” After the war part of the children stayed with their parents in Croatia, while the school and half its students returned to Visoko. Asked how Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats got on together in Visoko at present, Friar S. gave us the now familiar answer: “The relations are civilized [he had in mind tolerant intolerance]. Perhaps that's because very few have been left, the Orthodox and the Catholics are barely more than 2 or 3%. Everyone's Muslim.”

The truth is that wherever people from a particular religion or ethnic community have ventured to return to their home town or village among the compact communities of the *Others*, there is a tacit agreement that they will ignore each other and avoid contacts as much as possible. If the population centre has a river, it should preferably divide the two religious communities, with the bridge or bridges crossed only when that is

necessary to keep the local economy functioning. This is a sort of tacit, specific local apartheid.

The Economy

We discussed the state of the economy with an MP from the Social Democratic Party: “Foreign investments in Bosnia and Herzegovina have dropped by almost 120% in the last two years. This is a dramatic decline. It’s entirely obvious to everybody that nationalism cannot be the guiding ideology because it’s not something from which one can make a living. Unemployment has risen. The low economic indicators are due to the fact that there are no strong institutions or political stability, and there are social tensions because of the slow pace of reforms. In general, all this is a result of nationalist government. It seems to me that the High representatives and observers of the EU cannot realize that this, precisely, is the root of all evil. Of course, corruption and crime are a big problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but they aren’t the main one. They are a consequence of nationalism, which creates political instability and encourages criminal structures. If we want the State to survive, we must eliminate all kinds of radicalism and fundamentalism, whatever nation or religion they might come from.”⁶

Many of the local factories are closed or operate with reduced capacity and outdated equipment and production techniques. The big metallurgical plant near Zenica, which employed 35,000 workers before the war, now has jobs for 4,000, of which only half are filled. Investments are declining every year, and there is stagnation in production and consumption. This process is largely associated with the significantly reduced trafficking in goods and profits from it, which constitute the bulk of local investments. EU donor grants are likewise decreasing because of the disappointment with the country’s slow progress and because of the new geopolitical priorities.

The standard of living is within the usual range in this region. The average monthly wage is 250 to 300 KM (Convertible Marcs), and the monthly pensions vary between 70 and 500 KM. The unemployment level is defined as very high. Different sources confirm that it is around 50%. A significant part of the jobless people are actually employed in the grey economy.

We spoke precisely about unemployment with several young bearded Muslims near the new mosque in Kakanj. They smiled calmly and told us politely: “We aren’t concerned about unemployment. It’s unpleasant, true, but it’s not up to us to be concerned, Allah knows best and when He decides there will be jobs for us.” This attitude differs from the anxiety of the middle and older generation of men. They are concerned about unemployment, they are pessimistic and certainly do not rely on Allah to take care of their employment and families. Here we must note the generational difference in

⁶ The latest elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were held several months after our field study, were again won by the now traditional nationalist parties.

perceptions of the objective economic and political situation, which are due foremost to the different degree of religiosity.

Everyone tries to dodge taxes, but this applies especially to the big businessmen who acquired their capital during the war. The majority of people, irrespective of their national and religious identity, bitterly hate the war profiteers: “They behave like local feudal lords and ignore the laws. While we were dying on the fronts and our families were being wiped out they were marauding, and they are now multiplying the fortunes which they’ve made from our blood and suffering.”

It is obvious to us that some old hatreds have subsided, but that new tensions and reasons for hostility have appeared during and especially after the war.

In the last few years Bosnia has become a major trade centre on the Balkans. Because of its weak administrative control and porous borders, the country is a preferred destination of cheap goods from the Middle and Far East, which are then easily shipped on to neighbour countries. The huge Arizona Market, which is midway between Tuzla and Brcko, is emblematic in this respect. It sprung up entirely illegally in the Brcko district which, as a “no man’s land,” was in a state of total anarchy. In the years after the war this town-sized market was legendary for the entire Balkan underground world – here one could buy everything from white goods, hi-fi equipment and stolen cars to women, weapons and drugs. That is when it grew to the size of a town. Today great efforts have been made to legitimize and place Arizona under the control of the local authorities, although it is not clear how effective those efforts have actually been. Arizona has changed visibly thanks to the construction of new modern market halls and specialized shops. Either way, this market provides a livelihood for almost half of the population of the Brcko district, irrespective of ethnic identity.

Villages Versus Towns

In addition to the ethnic shifts, our team observed the social impact of the intensive processes of rural-to-urban migration. As a result, the towns are going through a period of unprecedented growth and large-scale construction. Construction is also under way in the villages, but those who have returned to live there are fewer and often more than half of the houses are empty. This new urbanistic boom generated by the uncontrollable migration of rural populations to the towns usually causes distress to the indigenous urban population. Many of the respondents who are indigenous urban residents qualified it as a *peasant invasion*, and there are factors that can lead to tensions between the local residents and the new settlers.

Here is what a respondent told us when we expressed surprise that brand new houses in the villages, obviously built with EU funds, were locked up and empty: “It’s not enough to have only a new house or roof over your head. People feel insecure, they sell their new houses and look for a new homeland or a new place to settle down because in the place to which they have returned and where they have a new house they feel insecure and cannot satisfy their religious, educational, administrative or other needs.

In most cases people settle in the entity or population centre that is closest to their national and religious identity so that they can feel secure.”

Even during our field study in 1998, a professor of literature who was a refugee from Sarajevo to Pale described the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a *war of villages against towns*. Back then she told us the story of her family, noting that during World War II, just as during the recent war, there was a tendency for peasants to oust old urban families and move into their homes. This is what she told us about herself: “ I left my home in Sarajevo with nothing but a small bag of toiletries. I can never return there. I’ve learned that a large Muslim family from the nearby villages has moved into my home. I cannot bear the sight of shepherds eating with my grandmother’s silver cutlery food placed on the piano... I’ve already been through this once as a child, when peasant Ustase threw us out of our home in Mostar where we were one of the oldest families. We started building a new home for ourselves in Sarajevo precisely with this silver cutlery that belonged to my grandmother – that was the only thing we took when we fled Mostar. Now I am starting from scratch in Pale for the third time. I’m too tired to go back.”

Our present respondent likewise claimed the following: “The whole war was against the towns and the urban population. That’s how it started, whatever military historians might claim now – the peasants attacked the towns. The tendency towards urban migration has continued after the war too. This naturally leads to disproportion. The towns are developing, their population is growing, they start prospering, while the villages remain undeveloped. This divide will grow because the towns will continue developing while the villages will deteriorate increasingly. At present there is a hidden conflict between towns and villages, but it might deteriorate into a new aggression if the circumstances for that are appropriate.”

The urban population in Sarajevo experienced such an urbanistic cataclysm in the 1980s too. In connection with the 1984 Winter Olympics new housing developments were built in the capital city, and after the Games tens of thousands of families from the villages were housed in them. In this way, Sarajevo’s population increased by one fifth in just several years. The scale of the present urban migration and concentration in the towns of large *alien social groups* surpasses even the memories of the Olympics.

In this connection, a young Muslim respondent who fought in the “Green-Beret” units that defended Sarajevo delivered a furious tirade: “In Sarajevo there are new people from Sandzak, from Eastern Bosnia – Foca, Gorazde, Visegrad, Zvornik. They are said to be Muslim refugees. But they are Muslim on paper only, if they have to they go to the mosque in order to show themselves as Muslims. The people who come to Sarajevo are usually people who have lots of money. There are no institutions to ask them how they made their money. They take part in privatization, they open shops and restaurants. Meanwhile, you feel like an endangered species – you know nothing, you can’t understand what’s going on. We submit to those who have money. In my native Sarajevo the indigenous Sarajevans have withdrawn into their shells .”

There is a similar atmosphere of disharmony in the Serb town of Pale. Before the war Pale was a mountain resort village near Sarajevo with a population of 3,500, and of 12,000 in the municipality. At present the population is 35,000. There are no visible conflicts between the Serb indigenous residents and newcomers, but as one of the respondents noted, “The local residents are vastly outnumbered by the new settlers and no one’s pleased or happy about that.”

This statement was amazingly accurate, because Pale is a new town with the gloomiest and most unfriendly people we have ever seen. No one smiled, no one showed any curiosity or desire to talk with the newcomers, everybody looked at us with suspicion and coldness. This is a town of refugees from almost the entire territory of Bosnia, the majority from Sarajevo, who are convinced that everybody is treating precisely them unjustly. Even our seasoned team, which has travelled to all kinds of places for years, found it difficult to make friends in this town despite the fact that it was full of young people and children. The only people who talked and laughed were those who got drunk in pubs. As a respondent who is a police officer put it, “Pale is a boiling pot.”

The pessimistic attitudes of Pale’s residents are also partly justified by the fact that they are often a target of SFOR and police operations aimed at tracking down Radovan Karadzic as a war criminal. In a successive operation designed to find Karadzic, on the night of March 31/April 1 SFOR troops invaded the home of the local priest. There was no trace of Karadzic, but in the course of the operation the priest and his son were wounded badly and had to be flown by helicopter to the military hospital in Belgrade.

A Serb who has returned to his home town of Kakanj, which now belongs to the Muslims, told us the following: “After the war I was housed in a small village in Republika Srpska, where I lived in full comfort – I had a pension as a war invalid, a new house, security, respect. But I couldn’t settle down – I’m used to life in the big city and, besides, my native house is here. I was driven by nostalgia and returned home. Now I live in abject poverty, in fear and without a job, but I want to live in the town and to be on my own territory.”

Incidentally, this concentration of people in towns is not entirely unreasonable because it offers better chances for a normal life. In the small population centres it is almost impossible to find a job or to provide an education for your children if you are from another nationality, because there is complete ethnic segregation in the education system. To quote a Serb respondent, “It’s as if we are in the 19th century – we live in ethnic segregation. You go back to your native town or village, your house is restored and nice, but how will you make a living if you are a minority, where and by what curricula will your children study? That’s why, for example, the number of Croats and Bosniaks who have returned to Banja Luka is catastrophically small.”

Weapons

There are large amounts of unlicensed weapons among the civilian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina and this remains a problem for the country. SFOR has

reported a number of cases in which whole arsenals have been found in the most unexpected places. There are also shocking cases in which, for example, a family was found to have kept a tank in its farmyard or, as a respondent told us, a huge howitzer was found in a hayloft.

Respondents who are military officers told us about a case in which Dutch troops from SFOR were sent to search a remote house in a distant hamlet where an elderly father and son lived in virtual isolation. In the basement of the house they found an arsenal of 80 weapons of all sorts. The two elderly men, who were visibly very upset, confessed that they were stockpiling the weapons for self-defence because they feared for their lives. When the commanding officer ordered the confiscation of the weapons and the troops started loading them on trucks, the two men burst into tears and the father broke down. They begged the troops to take them along too in order to protect them or to leave them some weapons for self-defence. Their terror and depression were so genuine that the officer decided to let them keep one of the shotguns for self-defence.

A policewoman told us a similar case about a mother and her son, who wept when an impressive amount of weapons were confiscated from their home. This is what the son told the troops: “My father was killed before my very eyes when the war broke out... Please let me keep the weapons or kill me because I can't do without weapons...”

Several months before our field study, SFOR conducted several operations in which they seized surface-to-air missiles too. Military officers told us about various operations in which they had confiscated 180 small arms, 50,000 cartridges, or other kinds of heavier weapons.

Our respondents from the local communities were reluctant to answer questions about weapons, but all admitted that they did not doubt they would start fighting again if the international peacekeeping force withdrew, so they needed to be armed in order to avoid being caught by surprise as in 1992.

The military and international police officers were tolerant when we discussed this phenomenon of anxious stockpiling of weapons. When we pointed out that in all likelihood if SFOR withdrew another fratricidal war would break out, a colonel from SFOR reacted in defence of the local people: “Just think how those people feel after everything they've been through. At least two generations must pass before the wounds of the past can heal. They can't do without weapons. Weapons are a kind of security guarantee for every person in this country. If something happens tomorrow, they won't be caught by surprise once again. They are still very emotional – every single family has lost someone in the war.” Question from us: “The bitterest conclusion from what we have seen both in Kosovo and here – and this is apparently confirmed also by what we now have in Afghanistan and Iraq – is that it seems that your peacekeeping missions must last forever?” The colonel: “No. They must last until people come to terms with the past, until the entire nation, virtually everybody, will have a personal stake in avoiding conflict, in living and prospering in peace.” We interrupted him: “So this means two generations?” Answer: “Two generations. Until they feel they have security and realize that this security depends on their behaviour...”

Our conclusion is that the majority of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still suffering from postwar depression. In 1998 the symptoms of postwar depression were obvious: in the course of our interviews, the respondents told us their stories and wept constantly irrespective of their gender, age, ethnicity or religion. In 2004 this depression has been apparently overcome and suppressed, but it nevertheless exists. Fears, hatreds, memories, grief for the dead, nostalgia for the lost native places and homes, shattered dreams, insecurity, disappointment, pessimism are continuing to haunt everybody we spoke with during our field study. They no longer weep and keep up an appearance of normal behaviour in everyday life. On the surface, they are preoccupied with everyday concerns such as housing, donors, the crop, wages, prices or their children's education. Below the surface, however, there is deep gloom, pessimism, and hopelessness which are not displayed to strangers. Their consciousness is apocalyptic like a print by Dürer. For example, during our interview a Bosnian professor suddenly leapt from the table, sat at the piano and started playing beautifully but too loudly. His embarrassed wife explained: "We spent months in the shelter, when we were under fire he would play the piano to drown the blast of the exploding shells, he simply couldn't bear the sound." He must probably still hear the explosions.

The Bulgarian military and police contingent have felt and understood perfectly the state of the Bosnian population, because they are not performing their mission formally only but have an intimate knowledge of the Bosnian mentality and language.

Our conclusion is that the majority of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina feel a need of and possess weapons.

The SFOR operations designed to confiscate weapons are of course obligatory, but they are doomed to remain futile because people will inevitably continue procuring weapons. As regards the question of weapons and the prospects of the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we recommend heeding the words of our two respondents, the colonel and the policewoman from Bulgaria: *they need us – two generations.*

Another problem resulting from the legacy of war are the landmines planted across the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. When he heard us enthusing about the country's lovely landscape and lush vegetation, a respondent who is a military officer sobered us sardonically: "You can rest assured that Bosnia will increasingly become an environmental haven. The country will be overgrown with ever more luxuriant, pristine vegetation. Because no one's crazy to take, for example, their family on a picnic in the mountains at the weekend. They would hardly survive amidst the landmines." Another respondent added: "For at least another one hundred years there will be zones in Bosnia where no human has set foot, and they will thus remain the only environmentally clean place in Europe."

Experts think that because of the complexity of the task and insufficient funding, it is practically impossible to clear Bosnia and Herzegovina's entire territory of landmines. Different kinds of landmines were planted on the country's territory, some of which are impossible to deactivate. There are signs warning of the danger of landmines in many

places, but people have now also become used to taking particular paths which they know are safe and sending their children to school along them. To date, nine years after the end of the war, just 10 to 15% of the landmines have been cleared.

The logic behind the specialized analytical centre's decisions on precisely which areas are to be cleared and when is not entirely clear. The centre is probably applying some kind of economic logic, but what you actually see in Bosnia looks rather unpleasant: tiny fields cleared of landmines and obviously thickly surrounded by landmines, reached by way of particular marked or unmarked paths. In this way large areas of rich arable land remain inaccessible to farmers. The same also applies to timber in the forests. As regards construction, as we mentioned earlier new houses are never built over the foundations of old ones.

It is too early for a possible withdrawal of international military experts and police advisors from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As regards the European police mission, its mandate is limited to observing and advising the local police. The UN mission also certifies all local police officers. Our observations and interviews with local people and international police officers suggest that all this is insufficient and that there should have been a smoother period of transition and transformation of these law enforcement activities. Because the majority of people in Bosnia are afraid of going to the local police station and reporting a crime or complaining of human rights abuse. To say nothing of doing that in writing and openly declaring their name. Especially in cases involving war criminals, and arms, drug, and people trafficking. The only effective form of reporting such cases are the nationwide anonymous phones established across the country's territory some time ago. Either way, people prefer to report their problems and complaints to representatives of the UN missions, who are not empowered to investigate and provide direct assistance.

Islam

Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina is naturally similar to its Balkan version and has basic specific features that distinguish it from the form of Islam professed in the Arab world. As everywhere on the Balkans, Muslims in Bosnia have cohabited with Christians and Jews for centuries, and in most historical periods they have lived together in peace and harmony. The Muslims, as the other religious denominations, did not practice their religion actively before the war. They celebrated the major Muslim festivals of Kurban Bairam and Ramazan Bairam. They did not abstain from alcohol, but did not eat pork. This fact is sometimes explained not by strict observance of the religious rules but, rather, with the mountainous landscape of Bosnia and the shortage of feed grain, which accounts for the small number of pigs kept in the country.

According to a Croat respondent, Bosnian Islam has European characteristics and is accustomed to tolerance towards the others. As a result of the war, however, radical Islam – which is not typical of the Balkans in general – has now appeared in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A respondent who is a Muslim religious leader explained that the tolerance of Bosnian Muslims is due, among other things, to the Bogomil legacy: “The Bogomils had the custom of gathering together and worshipping God openly and outdoors, on the hills or what we call *dovi*, *dovišta*. In June, July and August the Muslims in Bosnia, on the territory of which there are many *dovišta*, go to those places near Olovo, Ključ, Lastavica, Zenica, and elsewhere. We Muslims regards these *dovišta* as our sacred places. And there’s something else too – we are very rational and for us faith is everyday life, we adjust our faith to the particular time and place, and we also adjust the particular place and time to our beliefs. Muslims all over the world believe in the doctrine of monotheism, and this is something which they have in common with Christians too. The doctrine in both Saudi Arabia and Bosnia is the same. We likewise bow, but because we are in Europe we cannot accept the ethics of hegemony of a single culture only – not only for the Muslims but also for the Christians and the Jews. All churches, mosques and synagogues face East because the Orient means the place where the sun rises. Our orientation is towards the East, and the West is the place where the sun sets. There’s a difference between me the Bosanec⁷ and the Saudi, and this difference is that I have Bosnian experience of Islam whereas he has Saudi experience of Islam. We have a specific feature – we have lived among Orthodox Christians and Catholics for centuries and they have influenced our way of thinking in some form, just as we have influenced theirs; we interact.”

We asked him whether non-traditional strands of Islam had appeared in Bosnia and if they were influential. Answer: “In Bosnia and Herzegovina there are no Muslim sects that are significant enough to deserve our attention. There are individual cases of followers of the Ahmadiyah, just as there are individual cases of Muslims who accept the teaching of the Wahhabiyah. There are also small communities of dervishes, but by tradition there are no Bektashi. These are small groups and they cannot change that which is the traditional Islam of the Bosanci.”

Question: “What do you think about Huntington’s thesis of the clash of civilizations?”

Answer: “I think that the idea is ill-intentioned. Civilizations don’t clash but complement each other. If you have two civilizations and there is a clash between them, one of them definitely isn’t a civilization. There can be a clash between freedom and non-freedom, between civilization and barbarism, but not between civilizations.

“Muhammad was a reformer. He came and abolished the institution of the clergy. Until then clerics had the status of kings, people even believed they were extraterrestrial. Muhammad was a reformer because he abolished this mediation between God and people, because he reformed the attitude to the faith. Muhammad abolished racism – he told the Arabs that there couldn’t be superiority of Arabs over non-Arabs or of whites

⁷ We learned from this religious leader as well as from quite a few respondents from Sarajevo that the Muslims in Bosnia do not wish to be called Bosniaks – because this sounds pejorative to them, something like a common person, a peasant – but officially wished to be called and to call themselves Bosanci (sing. Bosanec). These new claims to the ethnic designation are not yet popular in the provincial towns and cities. A respondent from Sarajevo told us the following: “When they call me a Bosniak and not a Bosanec, it’s as if they are spitting in my face.” This is a new development compared with 1998.

over blacks. Today's Muslims don't need a reform of the doctrine. What they need as modernization is a reform of the organization. The Muslims aren't organized in a structure that is adequate to the present age and, because of the lack of adequate organization, they make big mistakes in the world."

A respondent from Sarajevo, who insisted that we call him *Bosanec* and who is a native citizen of Sarajevo, answered a series of questions which we asked him in connection with the radicalization of Islam: "Foreign mercenaries took part in the war. The policy pursued aimed at attracting funds from Arab donors, from the sheikhs. In 1993 the Mujahideen came to my combat unit. There were translators, people who had studied Arabic in Cairo. I claim that we here in Bosnia are the purest Islam. We Bosnian Muslims are pure Muslims. And having a long-bearded Arab coming and telling us what kind of trousers we must wear is something which I can't accept. They told us that we mustn't wear trousers but something like robes. Our trousers were longer and covered the ankles, which was supposed to be a haram (sin). The ankles had to show," our respondent noted sarcastically. "In my opinion, when you come to us you must comply with our culture and our customs."

We asked him about the length and shape of beards, because since Sandzak we were becoming something like experts on the subject. Answer: "According to Islam, the beard must be fine. I don't want my beard to look like a goat's. We like short, not long beards. When they saw that this wouldn't work here in Sarajevo, the Mujahideen moved to other combat units – among the rural population, who were starving. They starting giving them humanitarian aid, but only to those peasants who accepted their customs. The peasants gradually became their followers because they were hungry. They were Wahhabi, whereas we are Sunni. Here in Sarajevo besides the Arab missionaries there were a couple or two from Afghanistan and Pakistan, but when they saw that it wouldn't work they went to the countryside. As regards the beards of young men in Sandzak, this isn't our influence, they are doing it as a form of resistance against the Serbs."

Our final conclusions are that in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is a strong radicalization of Islam among the young generation. These are young people who were children during the war. They are now aged between 15 and 25, and they do not know the liberal, eclectic version of Islam in Bosnia that is also characteristic of the entire Balkans. Nor do they know relations of tolerance and goodneighbourliness between ethnic and religious communities. These are precisely the young people whom we saw during our whole trip: young people who spent their days around mosques or serviced religious bookshops, who were not concerned about unemployment because it is up to Allah to find them a job. One evening in Sarajevo we peeped inside one of the old mosques in the centre of the city and were stunned by what we saw: many boys aged 15 or 16 were kneeling and praying. It were as if the nearby high school had come to the mosque *en masse*. And this was at a time of day when their peers would usually head for the disco or for a walk in the main street to take a look at the girls.

The other change is the declining influence of the Sufi orders of the Mevlevi (Mawlawi) and Naqshbandi, which are traditional in Bosnia but have now almost disappeared. Yet precisely the Sufi are the Muslims who are most tolerant towards the other religions, who profess peace and understanding, and do not turn Islamic prescriptions and rules into a compulsory and fanatic dogma. What has happened in Bosnia is something which we have also observed among the Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia: marginalization of the Sufi Bektashi and an attempt to oust them to the periphery of the Muslim community, perhaps because of their supra-national, supra-confessional, and pacifist philosophy. In fact, Islam spread on the Balkans in the 15th-18th century largely through those particular orders. In Bosnia there is a definite move towards some kind of stricter and non-traditional norms of pure Sunnism and, in any case, towards a visible departure from the strand of Islam that is traditional on the Balkans.

Since the end of the war the countries from the Near and Middle East and Indonesia have launched an ambitious programme for revival of the Bosnian religious legacy. This is manifested not only in the construction of new mosques and reconstruction of destroyed ones, but also in the effort to impose their own methods of purifying Bosnian Islam, which is considered to be deviant. For the Muslim countries it remains incomprehensible how Islam in Bosnia could possibly have so few bans and so much understanding and borrowing from other religions. Even during but especially after the war, more than 300 religious humanitarian organizations gradually moved into and started operating in the country in an attempt to bring Bosnian Muslims into line. A young Bosniak woman told us how during the war they would be stopped in the street and offered money in exchange for going to particular mosques. According to a Catholic priest, after the war the young girls in Koranic schools were paid 100 euro a month in exchange for wearing full head and body covering.

Young radicals, such as those from the Organization of Islamic Youth, inculcate in believers the idea of a future Islamic Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many religious periodicals have been launched, and near the mosques one can commonly see specialized Islamic bookshops staffed by youths aged around 16 to 20. In the smaller population centres children and young people gather around the bookseller, discussing, explaining, preaching and, generally, feeling like a circle of the initiated.

In Maglaj (a town with a 10,000 population, 95% Muslim), while we were arguing precisely about beards and headscarves with a young man with a Mujahideen beard in the square around the mosque, we saw a conspicuous elderly man in an elegant old-fashioned suit and fez coming our way. It turned out that he was a deputy of the imam and a barber who performs the responsible function of circumciser. In terms of their appearance and philosophy, the two men personified the generational division of the Muslims in Bosnia. The elderly man with the fez demonstrated his staunch commitment to the Ottoman tradition and to the specific Bosnian Islam, complaining to us that the young were exercising inadmissible – considering his age and status – pressure over him to grow a beard: “I don’t want a beard, it’s silly. Back in the past the

followers of Muhammad in Mecca grew beards so that they could recognize each other and be different from the rest. Beards are entirely untypical of the Bosnian Muslim tradition.” Unlike the elderly man, who was friendly and readily answered our questions, the bearded young men were suspicious and tried to make us leave because it was time for the Friday noon prayer and we should not distract the believers. One of the bearded young men was a student of Islamic theology at the university and told us upon departure: “ We want to live according to the Shariah so that we can go to heaven. Islam is the supreme religion, all other religions are inferior, they are lower than Islam. True Muslims follow the laws of Allah.” He urged our team to convert to Islam so that we could step on the right way, because Islam is against drugs, against prostitution, against dishonesty.

A Brief Account of the Lives of Three Classmates from Kakanj

The town of Kakanj has a population of around 45,000, and that of the municipality is around 70,000. Kakanj is located in the Zenica-Doboj canton. Following the ethnic shifts after the war, the town’s population now consists of 50% Muslims, around 30% Croats, 10% Serbs, and 10% Roma. Before the war the majority were Serbs, but in the post-Dayton population exchanges the Serbs went to Doboj and the Bosniaks to Kakanj. They agreed to exchange their houses when possible. Or to buy/sell each other’s houses.

The three men are sitting in the centre of the town opposite a large apartment building currently under construction. They are sitting on a plank propped by crates, and leaning against the wall of a house. They aren’t drinking anything – they have no money for coffee or beer. Probably that is why they aren’t in a café. They are chain-smoking. Two Serbs and one Bosniak, all of them aged 47. They are former classmates. The Bosniak and one of the Serbs had shared a desk in class for years. The other Serb, who had sat on the last desk in the second row, is now sitting on a separate crate. Although they are young, all three have very bad teeth – they lost them as a result of malnutrition during the war.

All three feel as if they are bewitched – they are so used to one another that they can be together again despite the war, despite the hatred and the fact that they fought on opposite sides. It turns out (after we become friends they admit it) that they are sitting like dropouts in the street because they cannot go together to a café – everyone must know his place; there is segregation. People disapprove of their friendship. But they cannot live without each other. The Serb who shared the desk with the Bosniak justifies himself to us: “We’ve been together since we were children, I’m used to discussing everything with H. I know that he’s Muslim but I can’t confide in anybody else. We could barely wait for the war to end so that we could be together again. That’s how he feels too.” They glance at each other with the sort of mocking affection that marks a true male bond.

During our conversation they keep nudging and interrupting each other, arguing and disputing – this is entirely natural, considering that one is Serb and the other Bosniak, and that they fired at each other during the war. They are deeply ashamed of this and are trying somehow to forgive each other. They are doing it awkwardly and clumsily. At the same time, they answer our questions almost simultaneously and almost identically – they think and feel the same way about all issues, be they political, economic or historical. It is obvious that they have been together for years and have formed their views together.

The third ex-classmate, the other Serb, is silent and sullen. He doesn't join in or interrupt them, and all he does is snort occasionally. They are somehow aloof from him too. We eventually understand that he fought with passion and belief – he killed many people and was himself wounded heavily twice. He has been recognized as a hero in Republika Srpska. He would be lynched in Kakanj, but his ex-classmates have not given him away as someone who did his best during the war even though they despise him for it. The other two fought because they were forced to in order to survive, and it is easier for them to restore their friendship. He was driven by nostalgia to leave Republika Srpska, where he received an invalidity pension and benefits as a war hero and had regular medical care, to return to his home town and friends, where he lives in external and internal hell. His life is hell because he lives in fear, because he is in pain from his wounds but cannot get medical care, because he is poor and jobless, because he hates the Muslims to death but lives in a town that used to be his but is now theirs. One of his arms is crippled but the pain is in his stomach, where he was wounded badly. He has no medicines, we give him some of our painkillers, he gobbles them down in handfuls without water. He doesn't beg or ask us for anything. Not even for our medicines, which obviously relieve him. He is proud and embittered. In his opinion none of them should blame Izetbegovic, Karadzic and Tudjman for the war: "America is to blame, because in the last 50 years they have been fighting abroad in order to avoid fighting in their own country. They have been fighting abroad since the Second World War. The Muslims are their disgrace. Just see what they are doing."

The Bosniak: "Before the war there Catholic and Orthodox Bosanci in Bosnia. After the war they told us, we are now Croats and Serbs. For our part, we were Muslims but we suddenly became Bosniaks. We didn't have enough problems as different religions so someone decided to divide us into different nations."

The two who shared a desk claim unanimously that "the good life was in Tito's time, and also that the war is the product of three people – Izetbegovic, Karadzic and Tudjman. That's why it's amazing that they have continued ruling the country for eight years now. The SDS [Serb Democratic Party] was in power, now it's the SDA [the Bosniak Party for Democratic Action] or the HDZ [Croatian Democratic Union], and they merely change places. They take turns to loot the state treasury. On the whole, democracy means looting because there are no jobs and the enterprises are looted one by one – here only a few jobs have been left in the mine, in the thermoelectric power

plant and in the cement factory, half of which has been privatized. It's not clear how long even those jobs will be available."

Question: "Don't you argue with one another about who's worth voting for when there are elections? New parties were also created several years ago – for example, the Liberal Social Democratic Party – which offered an alternative uniting all nationalities on the basis of a common anti-nationalist platform. They failed because none of you voted for such liberal parties." The Bosniak answers as follows: "We don't argue and we don't speak, we even go to the polling stations together and then in the dark booth everyone votes for his representative." His friend adds: "We are all afraid that if we elect an alternative party and our side falls from power they might start a new war. It's better to let them make fortunes in power rather than to start killing each other again."

All three suggest that we stop talking for some time in order to observe the work in progress on the large apartment building across the road. We watch in silence, while they spit and don't even swear but virtually snarl in hatred. We become afraid and ask them, "So what's all that about?" They answer together, interrupting each other: "These are the marauders, here are the bloodsuckers, take a good look at them... They looted, plundered and became millionaires during the war. They profited from everything – they sold weapons to the Serbs and the Croats to kill us. Or vice versa... Fuel, foods, property... they sold our blood... we were dying from starvation and thirst, while they are now laundering money to make even greater fortunes – they'll sell the big and nice apartments in this new building to their own kind again, because they were likewise war profiteers and can afford to buy them. It's a vicious circle. They are Muslims but I hate them just as much [says the Bosniak]... one day they'll pay for it dearly..."

We leave abruptly because we couldn't possibly have a happy or optimistic end to our conversation. Not this time.

In Lieu of a Conclusion: The Dangers in Bosnia

In Bosnia and Herzegovina we established something very important that undermines the normal civic thinking of society: the lack of confidence in the multiparty system. A lack of interest in political life. A lack of confidence in and utility of creating new parties and different political platforms.

Our respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not show any interest in discussing and arguing about political life and political parties. The overemotional politicization that is familiar in all postcommunist countries and new democracies is absent in Bosnia. Our all too familiar postcommunist division of society and confrontation depending on people's partisan sympathies and antipathies are absent in that country.

The three former classmates' listless comments on their participation in elections were extracted only because we were very insistent, but their answers betrayed their total indifference to the subject. Our other respondents found it pointless to answer such questions at all, and demonstrated boredom.

The absence of particular indicators in field studies in conflict or post-conflict regions is something like a bad medical diagnosis. People in Bosnia are totally **demotivated politically**. Even the otherwise active people who make some sort of attempts to create alternative parties and to test themselves in election races are passive too. This is probably due to the post-Dayton introduction of the tripartite model, which is assumed to be inevitable because of the protectorate. Perhaps that is precisely why the whole energy of society is channelled towards the construction of churches and mosques, and towards a sort of religious rivalry.

People in Bosnia and Herzegovina are suffering from acute postwar stress, which is difficult to identify because it is suppressed but which generates various internal phobias, sociopathies and fears that are intensified by life in a state without a clear political and administrative status. A possible withdrawal of the international military and police contingents might unlock part of those depressive fixations, and society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, irrespective of national or religious identity, might head in an unknown and unpredictable direction. People are preparing for that.

October 2004

Sofia

IMIR