
Interview: Jacob Selimoski

Serbia's war of aggression in Bosnia is no 'religious war'

The grand mufti of Bosnia, Jacob Selimoski, was interviewed by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach and Leonardo Servadio at the Seventh International Meeting for Peace, held in Milan, Italy Sept. 19-22 by the Italian lay organization Community of St. Egidio. The conference was attended by some 350 leaders of the world's religions. Its purpose was to continue the ecumenical dialogue initiated by Pope John Paul II in Assisi eight years ago.

EIR: What are the true causes of this war?

Selimoski: First and foremost, Serbian nationalism. There has always been a Serbian national program, since 1872 in fact, when they decided to build one great Serbian state in the Balkans. The only thing that has changed has been the way they try to put the program into practice. By 1980, the program was updated, and went under the name of "The Memorandum." Its fundamental tenet was that all Serbs must live in one single state. In other words, everywhere there is a Serbian, there lies his land. But, if one analyzes history from above, it is quite clear that Bosnia-Herzegovina never did form part of Serbian territory, neither in the remote Middle Ages, nor in Serbia's contemporary history.

The history of Bosnia-Herzegovina dates back 1,000 years, from the Bosnian King Tvrtko until our days, always as an autonomous element. During the Ottoman Empire, Bosnia was a special province, that is, an independent administration. With the Congress of Berlin, under Austria-Hungary, Bosnia was again an independent territory. It had its own government, with its seat at Sarajevo. After World War I, in 1918, Bosnia, inside the Yugoslavian Kingdom, was also an independent state.

In 1937, the Yugoslavian Kingdom was yet again modified. At that time, Bosnia was divided into three sectors, two under Serbian influence and one under Croatian. This lasted until World War II, until 1941. The partition of 1937 was a failure, which is why it held only four years. After World War II, in the Socialist Federated Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia became an independent republic, like all the other republics of the Yugoslav Federation.

I stress all this, because I want it to be clear that no part

of Bosnian territory has ever been part of the Serbian state. Thus, the Serbians have no historical reason to form a Serbian entity in the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Yugoslavian Federal Army was under the command of Serbian nationalists.

To fill out the picture of this act of aggression, let me add that Bosnia happens to be a member state of the United Nations. I can say that in the first three months of the aggression, the Serbian people in Bosnia were not waging war; it was the Federal Army which came in from Yugoslavia. It was the old Federal Army which was waging war against a democratically elected, official government of Bosnia. This is a classic case of aggression. Unfortunately, this seems to have been forgotten by Europe and by the international institutions. They have allowed this to go on, by adopting ineffectual means and resolutions. Today, the greatest part of Bosnia is occupied. They have carried out crimes unheard of in Europe, raping little girls and women over 60.

This is what can happen in this war. These acts of rape are a political and psychological act, in order for people to be so afraid that they will leave their homes. It is a means of ethnic purification. It is the same question, with the destruction of the mosques and churches of non-Serbian believers. Thus, the Muslim community has already lost more than 900 mosques. Most of these holy sites were not destroyed during combat, but were blown up or pulled down and wrecked after the battle.

What astounds me is how Europe can remain silent, Europe which does not dare even to find out when constructions of such great value as the Great Mosque at Banja Luka, or those at Mostar, or so many others are destroyed. I think that if a holy site in Europe were destroyed, even one, there would be a great uproar. These constructions which even now are being destroyed are part of European culture, they are on the European soil, and they were built by civilized people who lived in Europe.

This has led to great loss of life. The real number will doubtlessly be known only after the war. What is certain, is that more than 250,000 people have been killed, mainly civilians—young women, old people, and children. There

Sarajevo's archbishop rejects partition plan

The archbishop of Sarajevo, Vinko Puljic, answered questions from reporters at the Milan conference of the Community of St. Egidio on Sept. 22.

Q: How can peace be achieved?

Puljic: That is a question that should have been asked at the beginning of the war, when it was the time to react.

Q: Do you think partition now is inevitable?

Puljic: The war has to be ended as a priority. Bosnia-Herzegovina should stay as it is, undivided. It is not an artificial entity, but has always been composed of three peoples.

Q: Are you opposed to armed intervention?

Puljic: I did not say I was opposed to an intervention. The war has to be ended; then we have to educate the population to the need for peace.

Q: Is it correct to place aggressors and victims on the same plane?

Puljic: Not only is it not correct, but it is a great injustice to compare one with the other.

Q: What role do religions play in arriving at peace?

Puljic: Religion has to educate the victims to be able to withstand the war and to persevere, and the politicians are those who seek other means for peace.

Q: What do you see as the political future of ex-Yugoslavia?

Puljic: There can be a happy future for ex-Yugoslavia if the borders are respected, and also human rights.

Q: What do you expect from Italy? You had a dramatic experience in leaving Sarajevo.

Puljic: Sarajevo is a city which is suffering in this situation, but it is not the only city. I expect those holding political positions to raise their voices ever more loudly to redress this situation. We thank you for all humanitarian aid you have provided.

are already 50,000 war invalids, including 10,000 children. This is happening every day, before our eyes.

What is more, now it is to be tolerated that Bosnia be divided up according to ethnic lines. Is there such thing as an ethnically pure nation anywhere in Europe?

The tripartition will not stabilize Bosnia. The European position, the Vance, Owen, Stoltenberg program, has only helped Serbia to realize its dream of Greater Serbia. I can state with absolute certainty, that the proposed Serbian Republic to be set up inside Bosnia, with Krajina, will join Serbia. Those who killed, burned, and murdered, will be decorated. There will be a great exodus of Macedonians, Muslims, and the whole weight of Serbian nationalism will fall upon the European institutions.

EIR: Perhaps Europe has done nothing because someone wanted this war. England attacked Germany, when it wanted to recognize Bosnian independence, as the "Fourth Reich."

Selimoski: Europe agreed when Bosnia declared its independence, as Croatia and Slovenia had done. The EC thereby gave its moral support, guaranteeing international recognition. Thus, the old European strategic alignments were reborn. That is why Germany was referred to as a country which wanted to extend its influence over Croatia and Bosnia, and thus control the Adriatic. But these declarations came from circles which had strategic interests there in World War I, i.e., France and England, which did everything possi-

ble, through the Serbians, to have direct influence in the Balkans.

Unfortunately, the Bosnian people are paying the price for these intrigues. We have been lied to, and Europe stabbed us in the back.

If Bosnia is divided, there is no doubt that the war will spread to Kosova and Sandjak. In that case, there will be another Balkans war, which will destabilize all of Europe, and draw it into that war.

The main reason for World War I was Bosnia-Herzegovina, especially Sarajevo. The real cause, was that Serbia wanted to rule Bosnia and colonize it. It had formed Serbian associations which were working at destabilizing Bosnia, by fomenting political discord. The murderer of the Austro-Hungarian Emperor, Gavrilo Princip, was a member of a Serbian extremist organization called Young Bosnia.

If Europe were to tell Serbia that Europe's interests are not served by the prosecution of a Greater Serbian project, the war would stop, because only Europe, along with the United States especially, has the economic and military power to stop this.

Europe is being destabilized. The forcible changing of borders cannot be tolerated. We, the citizens of Bosnia, especially we Muslims, are the conscience of Europe. The Serbians have not won. They have been able to prosecute the war longer, because they have a large army, while the Muslims and the Croats had no weapons. Bosnia must be saved as

a state of many religions and cultures. Lord Owen is trying to sell Bosnia out for his own interests, or the interests of his milieu. He should be stopped.

EIR: What has to be done to stop the war?

Selimoski: The international community must impose a cease-fire. Second, everyone must be disarmed. There must be an international body which will make it possible for the expelled to return to their homes. The Bosnian people must be consulted by referendum as to how they want to live in Bosnia. No one has asked the Bosnian people. They are just manipulated. I am sure that were there a referendum, the people would decide to save their nation from destruction.

Humanitarian relief must be sent from village to village; coupled with a vigorous military action, the strategic centers of Bosnia could be put under control. Then Bosnia could be demilitarized.

EIR: What do you hope from this conference here?

Selimoski: I take as positive, every opportunity which arises to tell people what is going on in Bosnia. This war—and that is the position of all the three religions—is not a religious war. It is about territory. Personally, I believe the Serbian Church has done the least to try to avoid the war, and, once war had broken out, to intervene to stop it. The Serbian Church did not take a clear stand on the war. On the one hand, it was split between the nationalist aims of its state, and on the other, the fact that religion does not allow war.

EIR: What can the Muslim nations do?

Selimoski: I believe the Muslim countries have done what they could, but they do not have great political strength in the world. The U.N. Security Council is made up of only five powers, which run everything. There are no Muslim states there. In Europe, there is no other Muslim state. The financial situation of a number of Muslim countries has been exploited in part to get humanitarian aid sent in.

We should not entertain any illusions about the Muslim world, nor should Europe fear the Muslim world because of Bosnia. The Muslims in Bosnia, in Sandjak, in Kosova, the Albanian Muslims in Albania, in Greece, in Bulgaria, are just Europeans who happen to be Muslim. We lived there before Islam came.

A Muslim state cannot be set up any old which way. In Europe, the states respect the principle of laicity, which for us European Muslims is perfectly suitable. But as citizens, we demand religious freedom. Bosnia is a much bigger problem for Europe and the West, than for the Arab world. But if the West does nothing, if 1 million Muslims have no option but to live in an economically destroyed state, an enclave, they will leave, and if that is what certain people in Europe actually want, well, I don't think that precisely represents European civilization.

French govt. and ADL join drug lobby to 'fight xenophobia'

by Mark Burdman

Under cover of fighting xenophobia, the French government (headed by the "Gaullist" RPR party) is cosponsoring a conference on Oct. 14-15 with the 1990s enemies of the late General de Gaulle among the international drug-legalization lobby and the "education reform" mafia. The Paris conference sponsors include the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), *Passages* magazine, the U.S.-based masonic group called the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), the city of Paris, the Paris mayor's office, and the French Foreign Ministry and Culture Ministry.

Superficially, the conference appears innocuous enough, given that its theme is "Xenophobia," and it will bring together parliamentarians and intellectuals from Russia, Israel, Egypt, the United States, Germany, Poland, Belarus, and Croatia, among others. The conference is organized into four round-tables, each of which is sponsored by French media institutions. The first three round-tables are sponsored respectively by *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, and by the French TV network France 2.

It is with the fourth round-table, however, that the real nature of the gathering becomes manifest. This is sponsored by the weekly *L'Événement du Jeudi*, on "Revisionism, Denial: the New Forms of Anti-Semitism." Featured speakers include ADL National Director Abraham Foxman and ADL President Melvin Salberg, as well as such friends of the ADL in Europe as Ignaz Bubis of Germany and Serge Klarsfeld of France, and the Paris lawyer Samuel Pisar. Pisar is well known for having represented two of the more disreputable figures of the 20th century, the late Armand Hammer of Occidental Petroleum and the late Robert Maxwell, the British publisher who stole millions of dollars from workers' pension funds to finance his speculative ventures.

Government in paradoxical position

Following this fourth panel, French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua will give the final summing-up address. Pasqua is in a funny position, indeed. For years, he has put himself forward as a leading protagonist of the "war on