
Party of Democratic Action

We need a program for rebuilding Bosnia

On April 17, the delegation from the Committee to Save the Children of Bosnia met with leaders of Bosnia's ruling party, the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), including Halid Genjac, the president of the General Board of the SDA; and Dr. Ismet Grbo, SDA chief of public relations. The following are excerpts from this discussion.

Dr. Ismet Grbo: Our diplomacy has achieved results, and the situation is calming down. Whether it calms down completely, depends on the United States and Europe, but especially on America. Peace is the precondition for any reconstruction. We have little time here to discuss concrete projects, but we can give some outlines.

The two things that could cause problems, are the elections in Bosnia and the elections in the United States. Probably we will have to be patient until the fall; but we have to do what we can now, to get the aid that is needed for Bosnia. We must make sure that interest in Bosnia does not fall off in America, because of the elections. It must not happen that Bosnia is forgotten.

The truth must be told about Bosnia. Some people are spreading ideas about how Bosnia is "fundamentalist." This is a way of avoiding responsibility for Bosnia. From CNN, etc., we know that there are tunes in American politics that just multiply the propaganda of our aggressors. This directly helps both Belgrade and Zagreb, and creates a more difficult situation for the American troops here.

You can see for yourself, that all we are asking for is freedom of religion. We are not building up an Islamic state structure. But you cannot expect us to give up Islam, any more that we ask you to give up your religion.

Many of our children suffered because they were told that they were Muslim children. Fifty thousand Bosnian children have been displaced, and we still do not know where all of them are. They are all over the world. Thirty thousand women were raped, and 15% of them have now had children. We do not know where many of these people are, and what their condition is. A huge number of people are missing. These are all things that influence the reconstruction and development of our community.

After the Dayton Accord, it was said that work would begin on a Clinton-Marshall Plan. A few days ago, a donors' conference took place. It was said that the Islamic countries

should go to Sarajevo and make preparations, and then there would be a conference in Brussels later. The idea is that the money should be given by the Islamic countries. If we operate in this way, the situation will explode.

We are working to prepare legislation that will create minimum social and legal security.

We have been told to wait until the elections, and then aid will come. Many important Americans have told us that Bosnia should be armed, so that we can defend ourselves. But now this issue is delaying the implementation of the agreement here.

Let me review for you our most important requirements:

We need urgent reconstruction of lodgings, so that people can return to their homes. One-third of our people are living outside Bosnia, and every third person here is not at their own home. We need to return to a normal life, to create conditions in which the refugees can return here. They don't need to be given cooked fish, but they need to be able to fish for themselves. They need basic education, tools, food, and a workplace. Production is now zero, and profit does not exist.

Halid Genjac: Three days ago, an important meeting took place. Thirty thousand people were there, most of them Bosniacs. President Izetbegovic's words to them are useful, to answer some of your questions. He said that we have to think about reconciliation in Bosnia; the war criminals have to be brought to trial, but we must have reconciliation among the ordinary people, Serbs and Croats. I think that the American people can play a role in this.

Meeting the press

The two delegations then proceeded to hold a press conference at the SDA's headquarters. About 40 people attended, including three television stations and all the major Bosnian newspapers. See p. 44 for a sampling of the press coverage that resulted. Dr. Grbo of the SDA spoke first.

Grbo: As you know, we've been hosts to our guests from the Schiller Institute, representatives from different countries. Afterwards, they're going to introduce themselves, and give the main data, and point to the questions they're investigating here in Bosnia.

The topic of today's talks was how to provide help to Bosnia, in a situation where we are preparing for elections. Also, there are preparations for elections in the United States going on.

In Bosnia, it is evident that there is still a crisis. The process of implementation of agreement is going on, and in the United States, their pre-election campaign has some influence regarding providing help to Bosnia.

We also discussed the so-called "Marshall-Clinton Plan," and it was advised that it is going to follow the implementation of the Dayton Accord, which also means the starting-up of big public works.

During these talks, we agreed on several issues. It is very necessary to spread the truth about Bosnia all over the world, in order to stop the prejudices against Bosnia. Bosnia should remain in the public eye of the United States and the world.

The third issue which we discussed was in regard to the continuity of aid, till Bosnia receives some kind of financial injections, which will start production in our country.

An invitation to visit the Schiller Institute was accepted. Now I'm asking representatives to take the floor, and give a short word about the Schiller Institute.

Paolo Raimondi: The delegation here is from the Committee to Save the Children of Bosnia. It was created about three months ago, following an appeal that was issued by the president of the Schiller Institute in Germany, Helga Zepp LaRouche. I want to tell you a little bit about the Schiller Institute, and the reason why the Schiller Institute created a committee and campaigned over the past few years for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Schiller Institute is an international political-cultural organization, present in most of the countries of the Western world, as well as in the developing sector. We were the institution which, before the war of aggression of Greater Serbia began, had warned that this was the gameplan in this part of the world. We stressed this, because we saw something that many people in the Western world knew, but nobody wanted to say: that there was a geopolitical gameplan for the destabilization of Europe, to bring war back into Europe after decades of peace.

The forces that I identify as a geopolitical interest have a name, and we named the names. They are London—former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Lord Carrington, the British oligarchy around the Windsor family—together with former French President François Mitterrand, together with those forces in the United States which are in an alliance with the British. I'm talking about George Bush, Henry Kissinger, Lawrence Eagleburger, James Baker.

You have been the victim of this geopolitical gameplan. Without the green light which was given by these forces, Greater Serbia, the Chetnik forces, would not have moved. You have been martyred, and you have suffered in the last four years, because of these operations. You saw Lord Carrington come here, Cyrus Vance come here, the United Nations come here. It is the continuation of this geopolitical destabilization of continental Europe.

So now, coming to the present situation.

First of all, we are campaigning for and we support the national sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, against all types of supranational interference.

We are campaigning for the right of Bosnia-Herzegovina to have economic development. This is why we are campaigning for a Marshall Plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina, but, directly linked to the national sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, not something that comes from the outside as a

policy which is dictated. In this context, the role played by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank is de facto the continuation of the destabilization policy of the last four years, because you cannot impose conditionalities on a country like Bosnia-Herzegovina after four years of destruction and aggression. It is immoral even to think, let alone to demand, that the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina must pay the debt of the old communist Yugoslavia.

Bosnia-Herzegovina has the right to a sovereign national bank. It has the right to a national currency; it has the right to issue credit for its own purpose, for reconstruction. And a Marshall Plan, supported from the outside, must be integrated, connected with this principle of sovereignty.

If the World Bank program is simply tolerated or implemented by the West—I don't want to say if "it is accepted by you," because I know that they come to dictate policy—but if the West, the United States, and western Europe, tolerate once again this interference, this will be the continuation of four years of destabilization. And it will lead to other wars.

We from the Schiller Institute say that this policy of the IMF and World Bank is not a mistake; it is not due to incompetence. It is a conscious policy. Because, in our experience, what we have seen of the activity of the World Bank and the IMF over the last 20 years, in Latin America, in the developing sector, and in eastern Europe after the fall of communism, *proves* that their policy leads to destabilization and economic collapse.

We are also campaigning that the question of the war criminals should not be dropped, even if we have to campaign for the next 50 years. If this issue is covered up in the West; if they are not put before an international tribunal, then their policy will have been accepted. That would be an invitation for the continuation of the same policy elsewhere, not only here.

This is why we are suggesting that the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina should file an official lawsuit against these war criminals, the high-level war criminals, so that international organizations and institutions, governments, and citizens, can mobilize to sustain this demand for a tribunal against war criminals.

The Schiller Institute has come to learn everything possible about the situation here, to make sure that we can bring out the truth about the war and the present conditions.

Dr. Jozef Miklosko: We created this Committee, which is international and ecumenical. We want to awaken the conscience of people all over the world. Especially in the United States, there are many politicians, congressmen, churches, who are responding positively to this cause.

So, we created a movement from all over the world with the slogan "To save the children of Bosnia!" We know that the children of Bosnia are suffering very much. And they are the future of your country. Therefore, we are trying to coordinate and also organize this help for children.

The second important issue is the debt forgiveness. In the letter by Pope John Paul II, "As the Third Millennium Draws Near," it is written that on the millennium all debt should be forgiven, especially of the poor countries, and we think that Bosnia should be the first example of this generosity. It is absurd that Bosnia, the victim, should pay the debt of the aggressor.

Third, we always stress the generous reconstruction plan for infrastructure into Bosnia.

We underline very much the need for cooperation of all three religions. When we go back home, we shall further the campaign, and help to create interest about Bosnia in the world.

Ben Swan: I personally am involved in this project, having been contacted by the Committee to Save the Children of Bosnia-Herzegovina. I'm involved, because I understand the necessity of maintaining peace in Bosnia, a stable peace, a just peace, as part of maintaining peace in the world. Because if we lose peace here, I'm concerned that it would be the beginning of a greater conflict.

My interest for travelling here, was for the purpose of fact-finding, to see and to understand, to get information, to talk to the people here, so that I can go back to America with a greater understanding, in order to help to educate the citizens of the United States, in order that we can personalize the condition and the experience of Bosnia.

We recognize that this is an election year in America, and we recognize that the pressures on President Clinton are affecting the extent of that nation's involvement. But, I believe that if the people of America knew and understood better the importance of maintaining peace here, and the importance of America's involvement here, it would be much more politically appropriate for the United States to extend or expand its involvement here.

Since I've been here, I've extended invitations to people who I've met with here, to come to America, to help bring the information to the citizens of America, so that we can mobilize public support for broader American economic involvement and support for the restructuring of Bosnia. I am personally convinced that the work of Ron Brown, in attempting to gain the involvement of business and industry from the private sector in America, was a great effort, and we should not allow it to die, but to push it forward and to mobilize it in a stronger way.

During the question and answer session, one member of the press said that she wished to thank Mr. Raimondi for his remarks, because for a long time, the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina had faced a dilemma: "Either the world had gone crazy, or we were crazy. Now, Mr. Raimondi has said that we are not crazy. We are very thankful to him."

Theo Mitchell: I'm grateful that the Schiller Institute extended the invitation to me to be a part of this committee. Certainly, there's nothing like being present, on site, to see

for yourself after also meeting with people and talking with them, to understand the physical destruction and, certainly, the circumstances of a great nation, and certainly a great people. There's nothing like actually learning the facts, and hopefully we will be able to use history, this, as an example that this will never happen again.

We haven't learned anything, as human beings, from World War II and the genocide which the Nazis inflicted upon people here in Europe. Had there been the pursuit of the war criminals here, as occurred during that period, it is possible this would never have happened, and that is one of the concerns I have, that it never happen again. Because if Europe goes up again, the world is going to be involved the next time. We cannot afford that.

The United States has a great responsibility to help in the reconstruction of this nation, and should have involved itself more readily, earlier on, to perhaps save what it could have saved several years ago.

My job is to go back to the United States and tell the people what the reality here is, so that the politicians will realize, up to, and during, and after the election, that reconstruction is essential, necessary, and indispensable to save this nation and its people. And a pursuit of the war criminals must, in fact, be brought about, so that they will not involve themselves in the disruption of Europe again. Thank you.

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