

Bosnia Herzegovina on the scene: the dialectics of autonomous development and external determination

As severe as the misery on the Balkans may be – there is never a beaten perpetrator. Instead, the wrongs are, as usual, attributed to the other. A bad precondition for peaceableness, which should last longer than the exhaustion of the past war.¹

Ten years ago, on April 6 1992, the war in Bosnia Herzegovina began. Two million people became refugees and 250 000 died in a war that proved to Europe that the collapse of post-stalinism did not introduce a new golden age.² Rather, this tragedy of Bosnia Herzegovina illustrated that the ‘new world order’ (George Bush) brought about a new type of war as well. Unlike in the past, when national movements aimed at creating new states, now the destruction and segmentation of a state and the presumed ‘return’ of its parts to the Serbian or Croatian ‘empire’ were central. Worse even: ideological paradigms (ethnicising, ‘the politics of identity’) and the methods of this new war (elimination, expulsion or enslavement of non-combatants) were geared at the destruction of other identities, as well as at the exploitation of occupied territories or besieged cities (the privatisation of the war).³ The ‘Memocid’ (Juan Goytisolo) – symbolised in the destruction of the library in Sarajevo on August 26 1992, in which was harboured the richness of a century-old Islamic-Bosniak culture – is a symbolic expression of what can be called the systematic extinction of the ‘other’.

Ten years later, the Presidents of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the Presidential triumvirate of Bosnia Herzegovina, assembled at the same place of events

* Important conversations for this article took place during a trip through Bosnia Herzegovina in the context of the project ‘Migration, minority policy and separatism in south-eastern Europe’, funded by the Hans-Böckler Foundation (31 May-9 June 2002). The title of the piece is after the historian and specialist for south-east Europe, Walter Markow, according to whom history rests on the ‘bipolarity of autonomous development and external influences. Every society develops its substantial tendencies in so far and for so long as it meets the resistance of its environment governed by different preconditions. It is possible that the internal dialectical contradiction inherent in each social structure determines its future. It is equally possible that it is determined by external pressure. In the latter case, the quantitatively superior socio-economic circumstances of one society are projected upon its weaker neighbour without a necessarily ensuing qualitative shift.’ See Klein, Fritz and Irene Markow (eds.) (1999): *Grundzüge der Balkandiplomatie. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse*, Leipzig, p. 72.

1 Hondrich, Karl Otto (1995): ‘Grenzen des Lernens’, in: Hondrich, Karl Otto (ed.) (2002): *Wieder Krieg*, Frankfurt, p. 95.

2 Eric Hobsbawm coined this formula with regard to the 1960s and 19970s. See Hobsbawm, Eric (1995): *Age of Extremities. The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, London.

3 See Kaldor, Mary (1999): *New & Old Wars. Organized Violence in a Global Era*, Stanford University Press.

for a symbolic meeting. The world was still waiting for an apology from any high-ranking Serbian politician. But President Koštunica who, presumably, regards Radovan Karadžić as a patriot, remained silent or evasive. Thus, what remained was the announcement for closer co-operation with respect to questions of repatriation, the struggle against organised crime, etc. However the relationship between the former Yugoslav states may develop in the future, the western Balkans as a region of conflict, restoration and the repatriation of refugees has mostly disappeared from view after the improvised *modus vivendi* in Macedonia. Only the power struggle between Koštunica and Đinđić, the relationship between Montenegro and Serbia or, once in a while, reports from Kosovo are mentioned in the big European newspapers. Bosnia Herzegovina seems only to be worth a headline if some connection can be drawn to Islamic terror networks. Arabic *Mujaheddin*, former fighters on the side of the Bosnian Army and, sometimes, recipients of Bosnian citizenship after the war, now damage the country's reputation although there is no proof of either the involvement of the Bosnian government or of a 'Talibanisation' of society. On the contrary, the government co-operates and, following American requests, has handed over a group of suspicious Algerians.⁴ On top of this, in March 2002, offices were searched of an Islamic welfare organisation, the Benevolence International Foundation, in Sarajevo and Zenica. Documents found during these searches led to the arrest of Enaan Arnaout, Director of the Foundation, who is suspected of having been in contact with bin Laden until 1999.⁵ Additionally, the Attorney General of the Bosnian federation is investigating the case of the former head of the secret service, Bakir Alispahić. During the war, he presumably participated – with the support of Iran – in the creation of a special unit for terrorist operations.

The embarrassing quarrel about the extension of the UN mandate has also led to some short-lived attention. Once again, the lack of sensitivity towards the 'semi-protectorate' became obvious. 'America and its Bosnian hostage' – this title hits the spot:⁶ Washington's battle against the International Criminal Court has done severe damage. Some may remember the dictum by Mustafa Cerić, the *Rais* of Bosnian imams, who stated in 1992 that, in the face of ethnic cleansing, concentration camps and mass rapes witnessed by the west without interference, the west has no right to 'teach the Bosniaks ethnic lessons in the future.'⁷

Nevertheless, it is mainly westernised codices that have obtained significance in Bosnia Herzegovina. How their effects are received needs to be analysed in the face of the decreasing interest on the part of the international community and NGOs. One indicator of the waning interest is the decline of financial support, particularly in Kosovo, but also in Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia, resulting necessarily in a reduced humanitarian involvement. In Sarajevo, too, noticeably more and more of the so-called

4 Wolf Oschlies (2002): 'Bosnien-Herzegowina. Stagnation mit Pyrrhus-Siegen', in: *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 5, pp. 589-593. Even more fundamentally: Armin Beinsen (2002): 'Muslimanstvo and "Bosniakdom": Islam in the Discourse of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegowina', *South-East Europe Review*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 17-26.

5 *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ), 6 May 2001.

6 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), 30 June 2002.

internationals are leaving. Rent levels are falling, the pressure to lay off is increasing, and more and more highly qualified locals apply for fewer and fewer openings. One is spoilt for choice, says Jürgen Buxbaum, Director of the the south-east European office of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Sarajevo. The payment morality of donor countries has steadily decreased since September 11. Should this lead to a failure to reconstruct multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, says the head of the UNO provisional administration, Michael Steiner, the 'humanitarian justification' of the NATO military intervention in 1999 would collapse,⁸ leading to yet another loss of credibility of the west in the Balkans.

Nevertheless, the number of refugees who have returned to Bosnia Herzegovina (which presently has a population of some four million people) points to a positive trend. Since the end of the war, according to the UN High Commissioner for refugees, 850 000 people have returned to their former residential areas. The numbers for 2000 and 2001, 159 000 in total, are reasons for the UNHCR's own optimism:⁹ one pillar of international stabilisation policies has thus proved successful. Many Muslims, mostly elderly people, have returned to western or eastern Bosnia where, in parts, the war has resulted in a straightforward swap of populations.

The formerly multicultural University town of Banja Luka, for example, has become an 'almost exclusively Serbian town and a cultural wasteland,'¹⁰ with a high level of poverty. A tour through this city at the beginning of June 2002 has confirmed such an impression. The cafés and bars are frequented by a rather well-off clientele – young people in western branded clothing, guys in suits with black sunglasses, etc.

The psychiatrist Diana Đurić confirms the pauperisation of large sections of the population. Only every 25th family lives *above* the poverty line. In Republika Srpska (RS), people predominantly feel that they are being exclusively held responsible by the west for all the war crimes and that they are excluded from many humanitarian support projects. There is hardly any funding for Đurić's work with people traumatised by the war. One patient threatens to cut off all contact with his own sister if she marries a Croatian: 'That's not what I lost my legs for.'

Unlike in Banja Luka, farther north in Prijedor the percentage of Muslim Bosnians is growing and the almost even parity of pre-war relations should soon be reached. Close to both towns, in the village of Micije, the first – Croatian – refugees began to return no less than four years ago. It seems that, after getting over their initial mistrust, Serbian villagers have begun to accommodate themselves with the 'newcomers'. The initial grudge over houses rebuilt with the support of 'help for self-help' funds has by now waned. The mostly elderly people – there are hardly any families with children – seem to treat each other civilly. A Serbian villager hits the mark: 'Better Croats than

7 Quoted in Juan Goytisolo (1993): *Notizen aus Sarajewo*, Frankfurt am Main, p. 105. The spontaneous willingness of the EU to take over the endangered police mission has, at least partially, saved the credibility of the west, since the training of ethnically-mixed police units is a central prerequisite for a multi-ethnic state and its future perspective.

8 *Frankfurter Rundschau* (FR), 28 June 2002.

9 see NZZ, 28 June 2002.

10 Rüb, Matthias (1998): *Balkan Transit. Das Erbe Jugoslawiens*, Wien, p. 115.

Turks.’¹¹ Many refugees have been encouraged to return by the improved security situation and the pushing back of the nationalists since the 2000 election. To them, the RS is *per se* not enemy territory any more – in spite of local resistance and although representatives of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) are awaiting new opportunities.

The situation being such, the west wants to save money? Positive signals like the re-opening of the destroyed mosque in Srebrenica must not be ignored. Bearing in mind that, almost exactly one year ago, a Serbian mob managed to block the laying of the foundation stone of the Ferhadija mosque in Banja Luka, one of the most important sacred Islamic buildings in the Balkans blown up by Serbs in 1993, it is obvious that the nationalist potential is a volcano ready to explode.¹² Generally speaking with regard both to the politics of the west and the psychological set-up of the Bosnian population, ‘Every return of a refugee is a victory over ethnic cleansing.’¹³

Against this background, the discussion about the perspectives of these multi-ethnic societies destroyed by war and violence, as summarised two years ago by Stefan Troebst, has not lost its importance. These societies, ‘Cannot be reconstructed, merely built anew under supportive circumstances.’ Next to the necessary transition to a younger generation in state and society, persistence and, most of all, ‘Lots of money’ from the west is a precondition.¹⁴ With this argument, the Leipzig historian occupied a position of mediation – based on the concept of the Balkan Stability Pact – in the quarrel between two circling traditions of thought concerning demarcation along ethnic lines and the reconstruction of the pre-war statute through the return of all refugees, to be guaranteed by the international community.¹⁵

Can what before the war had developed through century-long processes of learning and communication be reconstructed into a Bosnian particularity, mirrored partly in the novels by Ivo Andrić? The Croatian philosopher Rada Iveković points to the collision of western ideas of modernisation with traditional Bosnian mentality:

The Bosnian particularity is the kind of integration, of symbiosis, that goes beyond differences and that relegates these differences to their proper place, it is the cultural plurality and the living diversity of coexistence. This coexistence did not have to be constructed, it existed like the fruit of a long history of mingling and exchange, as a well-deserved unity. This has been destroyed by the war on a large scale, so that now it needs to be rebuilt what before has always existed.¹⁶

One precondition to tie in with the Bosnian particularity of ethnic co-existence is the reconstruction of a ‘normality of familiar amicability’ (Karl Otto Hondrich) which, in pre-war times, was at least widely spread and which entails pushing back

11 Quoted in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 17 March 2001.

12 Thirty people were wounded by stones, 18 returned refugees among them.

13 Werner Blatter of the UNHCR, quoted in *NZZ*, 7 February 2002.

14 Stefan Troebst (2000): ‘Ist multiethnische Gesellschaft rekonstruierbar? Von den Kriegen in Jugoslawien zum Stabilitätspakt für Südosteuropa’, in: *Kommune* Vol. 9, p. 49.

15 See, as summary, *ibid.*, p. 44.

16 Rada Iveković: *Autopsie des Balkans. Ein psychopolitischer Essay*, Graz, Wien, p. 165.

aggressive collective identities in favour of individual life choices and, thus, triggering collective learning processes. But the economic revival necessary for this reconstruction is nowhere in sight. According to a report by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, the official unemployment rate is 40%, while some estimates have it at 50% plus x; in any case, it is the highest unemployment rate in Europe.¹⁷ Poverty, it follows, is the 'misery of the nation.' This is no surprise, given the *per capita* income of just \$1075 in 2001. This socio-political scandal correlates with a still-unbroken 'brain drain' and high suicide rates. Diana Đurić suspects that 60% of the population would like to leave the country. Very few young people, such as the resolute Rebeka Kotlo of the Human Rights Centre Mostar, want to stay. Her colleague Drazen Pandza says that, out of the 42 students of his graduation class of 1992, only five still live in Bosnia. The others have been killed in the war or have emigrated.

A lack of foreign investment, an inflexible bureaucracy based on the right strings being pulled, insufficient regional co-operation, delayed privatisation and other reasons are all indicators against economic recovery any time soon. The only hope is the free trade agreement of the southern European states which, of course, begins to demonstrate some effects only slowly. Zana Gojačić, representative of the Chamber of Foreign Trade in Sarajevo, reports on daily inquiries by German companies and 'exchange platforms' for contacts and co-operation in Mostar or Banja Luka due to take place in September.¹⁸ But, despite an improved infrastructure, rebuilt with international support, and solid numbers of skilled labour, Bosnia has no more to offer than good intentions to co-operate. 'The economic situation is desperate,' states Jürgen Buxbaum. In his estimation, there is hardly any investment specifically in Bosnia despite the rising consumption levels. Even the formerly blooming agricultural sector only produces for the domestic market. There are, says Buxbaum, few local entrepreneurs willing to take risks. If new businesses are founded, it is in car wash facilities and bistros. Fast money and great prestige – this mentality can be found elsewhere in other south-east European states.

As tourists continue to stay away from isolated Banja Luka and from Mostar, the pulsing centre of Sarajevo, with its elegant shops and cafes, gives the impression of bustle and prosperity. A 'virtual economy', as ICFTU employee Yasmin Redzepović states, based on a bureaucratic Moloch and, without 'raja' (connections) or 'stela' (bribe money), no official stamp can be obtained. This is the only way, for instance, for underpaid teachers and medical doctors to survive. But the problem lies deeper. Almost everything (housing, surgery, even justice in the courts) still works only through raja.¹⁹

A widespread allegation brought against the closure of ineffective factories recommended by the international financial organisations is that closing the factories merely destroys money; rather, further investment in maintenance is necessary. Both

17 http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/bcr2/bcr2_20020322_4_eng.txt

18 FAZ, 24 June 2002.

19 Gosztanyi, Kristof and Rüdiger Rossig (1998): 'Ohne Raja geht noch wenig', in: *Ost-West-Gegeninformationen*, Vol. 4, p. 10ff.

the trade unionists at the ICFTU reject this allegation: most of the enterprises are not worth the recapitalisation; they are run-down 'shit heaps' that should be scrapped. External initiatives provide a reason for hope, however. The German-Bosnian-Herzegovinian Economic Club, founded by the Regensburg entrepreneur Frank Bassen and art professor Manfred Dinnes, is one of these cases. Their project 'Machines for Peace' encourages companies to sell used or new equipment into the region cheaply. The club is also supportive with regard to customs formalities and other problems.²⁰

Foe images, or hidden animosities, still shape Bosnian society: often, one's own misery is blamed upon someone else. Villagers begrudge returned refugees their new houses built by the international organisations. Additionally, this has led to a well-developed mentality of 'taking': 'One takes what is being offered and demands more.' Examples are numerous.²¹ One Bosnian anecdote illustrates the vicious cycle of an eternal blame culture combined with unchanging inactivity: when Bosnian and Serbian soldiers meet and complain about outstanding pay, the Croats are to blame. When Croats and Bosnians meet, it's the Serbs' fault. Serbs and Croats blame the Bosnians but, when the soldiers of all three nations meet, they agree that the international community is responsible for their outstanding pay.

The policy pursued by the international community preaches reciprocity and rationality; it authorises payments and initiates their control. In Bosnian reality, they encounter an unshaken belief in authority, corruption, repression, lethargy, guilt and omitted atonement, but also a kind of spontaneity and improvisation that trained administrators often cannot deal with. 'No chance for a viable Bosnia', is the harsh verdict of a study conducted by the Soros Foundation which gives no credit whatsoever to the post-Dayton process. The total level of support over the past six years, approximately \$5bn, so the study comments, has been wasted. The 'market fundamentalism' supported by the west, the ensuing boom in organised crime, and the failure of foreign advisors effectively to fight it – all this could not lead to the creation of a state fit to survive.²² Such reports are grist to the mill of all those who doubt the chance successfully to 'reconstruct' a stable multi-ethnic state. 'As if we had anything in common,' reads the headline of a large daily newspaper:²³ Dayton with its stumbling blocks, separate networks of communication, ethnic school curricula, an ethnically-fragmented economy and bureaucracy, etc. These are, indeed, barriers to any of the promising transformation processes.²⁴

Similarly arbitrary is still, in parts, the relationship between Bosnians and Croats in Herzegovina. Amelia Božić, an employee in the OHR office Mostar, reported on June 6 2002 that there was nothing encouraging about the divided city, with its dual universities, hospitals, administration, etc. There is no agreement even about daylight saving

20 See 'Maschinen für den Frieden', FR, 30 January 2002.

21 Quoted in NZZ, 17 March 2001 and 26 March 2001.

22 FAZ, 14 March 2002.

23 FR, 21 November 2001.

24 See also Salih Foco (2001): 'The political-economic and social status of Bosnia and Herzegovina', *South-East Europe Review* Vol. 4 No. 2, p. 50.

time. The dedicated Croat, who lives in the Muslim western part of the city and who speaks fluent German, illustrates with an anecdote the absurdity of ethnic delimitation and simultaneous insistence on equality: as one of his first measures, former EU representative in Mostar, Hans Koschnik – against whom two assassination attempts had been made by Croats – had suggested measures effectively to contain the rat plague in the destroyed old city, which is settled by Muslims. The Croatian representatives immediately insisted that, in the Croatian part of Mostar, there was an even greater ‘rat plague.’

Such calamities notwithstanding, there is a clear overall perspective which, as the former representative of the international community, Wolfgang Petritsch, elaborates, could induce optimism:

As Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes increasingly European, Europe is embracing the country. Instead of working on an exit strategy, the International Community with the EU in the lead is implementing an entry strategy.²⁵

Petritsch’s perspective on a democratic, multi-ethnic Bosnia Herzegovina is noble, and so was his battle against the nationalistic dinosaurs between 1999 and 2002. Last year, it was openly speculated whether the proclamation of ‘Herceg-Bosna’ could lead to a third, Croatian, province in Bosnia Herzegovina. Only the dismissal of Ante Jelavić, a member of the Bosnian presidential committee, enforced by Petritsch, together with the isolation of the HDZ, managed to prevent this, however; yet still without convincing the majority of Croats in western Herzegovina of an all-Bosnian project (‘construct without Croats’).²⁶

After tedious negotiations, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) forced in April 2002 a far-reaching constitutional change upon the Bosnian agents: Bosnians, Serbs and Croats are recognised in both the Bosniak-Croat Federation and in the RS as constitutive peoples and must, therefore, be represented in all the state institutions. The protection of minorities guaranteed under the Constitution is significant, because only on this basis can the return of refugees to their places of origin stand a chance. Also, the exclusive claim of the Serbian nation – as formulated in the Constitution of the RS, which envisions a return to Serbian lands – is hereby void. Nevertheless, critics claim that Petritsch had watered down the historical decision of the Bosnian Constitutional Court in June 2000 in favour of the Serbs.²⁷ This case illustrates the minefield through which the external engineers of a multi-ethnic society have to manoeuvre.

Suspiciously eyed by all sides, the main administration of the High Representative in Sarajevo retreats from the outside world. To a question on how to take Petritsch’s remark

25 Quoted according to ONASA, Independent News Agency, 9 May 2002.

26 See especially FAZ, 3 March 2001 and NZZ, 5 March 2001.

27 On this issue, see the critique by Dunja Melčić (2992): ‘Ein historisches Urteil mit schäbigem Nachspiel. Wie die bosnische Verfassungsreform verspielt wurde’, in: *Kommune* No. 7, pp. 34-37. Here, she accuses the High Representative of giving preference to the Serbian population, and not following the decisive points of the supreme constitutional court which denies the state-character of the entities.

that he – given the country’s authoritarian mentality – acts like ‘a benevolent dictator’,²⁸ the new head of the social department, a slightly nervous Alsatian focused on diplomatic rhetoric and on getting across positive economic trends, winces. Awkward silence spreads in the windowless, bunker-like conference room while, outside, the June sun glares. No, the former High Representative is being interpreted incorrectly, a confident Briton assists. The international administration does not interfere with matters to do with the Bosnian agents. Its mission is to observe and to advise, as well as to offer a platform for dialogue, for instance on the relationship between employers and trade unions. The latter, criticises the ICFTU, does not happen frequently enough while the OHR is too hesitant to fire corrupt executives.²⁹ Such encounters – given weight also by local organisers – create the impression that, sitting in the OHR office is a bunch of bored bureaucrats, interested only in serving their two years – on an average salary of Euro 7 500 per month. Even worse: far from reality, they are stewing in their own juices.

Petritsch’s policy, probably to be continued by Paddy Ashdown (‘Paddy the last’³⁰), rests on the twin bases of establishing a functioning market economy and its political superstructure. But this perspective, with its political and economic implications, externally determined by Dayton and the post-Dayton process, takes – despite insistence to the contrary – too little into account the autonomous development of Bosnian society, which is based mainly on ethno-pluralistic interaction. Not only economic reconstruction is the call of the hour, however, but also the peaceful co-existence of nationalities. The latter can only be successful if there is a willingness to reconcile and to forgive. How can this happen in face of all the horror? The war has laid open the limits of inter-ethnic co-existence, of cultural learning, of the Bosnian particularity, in short. Albeit without the same frightening brutality, Srebrenica was everywhere in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995: it has been less than ten years since, for instance, Croatian-Bosnian special units massacred at least 104 inhabitants of the 500-soul village of Ahmici. The crucifixion of the local imam at the portal of his mosque was the sad climax of this orgy of violence. For the imam of Zenica, Ejub Dautović, this reveals such an ‘abysmal and psycho-pathological hatred’ against Islam, against the cultural ‘other’ in general, that it seems entirely unexplainable.³¹ On the other hand, even in 1998, five Bosnian Croats were murdered in the by-then Muslim town of Travnik, without the – presumably known – perpetrators being arrested.³² Forgiveness as part of reconciliation, according to the psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (following Hannah Arendt), is geared towards the perpetrators, not their deeds. Thus, this kind of forgiveness is an eminently personal matter, independent of one’s origin. Herein lies another key to the reconstruction of a damaged multi-ethnic society. Here,

28 See NZZ, 27 March 2002.

29 ‘Competence in leading a company was not as important as his nationality,’ remarks Gavriilo Grahovac, the Secretary for Economic Reconstruction (quoted in FAZ, 24 June 2002). This principle is still valid, as Buxbaum and his colleagues confirm.

30 Many observers presently assume that no successor will be named for Ashdown.

31 Erich Rathfelder (1998): *Sarajewo und danach. Sechs Jahre Reporter im ehemaligen Jugoslawien*, München, pp. 118ff, particularly p. 125f.

western NGOs and their local colleagues, but also initiatives like the 'story café' in Novi Grad, barely an hour from Banja Luka, lay important ground-building blocks for a reconciled society.

In his representative office in Sarajevo, where the co-existence of cultures was part of everyday life until 1992, one of the highest ranking leaders of the Bosnian Islamic community, Ismet Spalić,³³ formulated the following expectations towards an effective intercultural dialogue³⁴ which would contribute to reconciliation. About 1 200 mosques have been destroyed and 80 imams have been killed, and it is about time, says Spalić, that Croats and Serbs offered an apology and took up the suggestion to rebuild every destroyed mosque. The Bosnians have not destroyed any churches and are waiting for such a gesture – while also, one might add, an apology from the Yugoslav President who, on July 16 2002, has visited Sarajevo, would be an appropriate action.

About the continuing terrorist hysteria of the international security forces – just at the beginning of June, a suspicious Saudi Arabian welfare organisation in Travnik was spectacularly searched – Spalic, who lost his closest relatives in the war (a Bosnian Serb grenade exploded while they went for water) – can find only bitter words: today, every Muslim seems to be a potential terrorist. 'What does "Islamic terror" mean? Is anyone talking about "Christian terror" when bombs explode in Northern Ireland or in the Basque region?' Without the solidarity of the Muslim world both during the war (military support) and after it (the rebuilding of mosques), Bosnian-Muslim identity would have long come to an end. So, what's the use talking?

The particular identity of one of the largest lay Muslim congregations in the world, with roots going back to the middle ages, has recently been pointed out by Predrag Matvejević.³⁵ It is shaped by its being torn between Islam and the exchange with occidental Christian culture. The often smooth transition between the cultures in everyday life – one may think of the oriental-looking ornaments on some house walls when travelling the country, of Bosnian coffee being offered everywhere and by everyone, of similar musical styles, etc. – is the key to reconciliation and, so far, its effect has been two-fold: both pragmatic and reflexive. Like in Turovoi, for example, near Sarajevo, where Bosnians and Serbs have been living together for generations and where people feel betrayed by the politicians. 'Could the war start again?' 'No,' says one Serb to the journalist putting the question, 'Not as long as we live. We have learned our lesson'.³⁶ Nataša Tesanović's approach is equally pragmatic. The director of *Alternativna Televizija* in Banja Luka wants to overcome nationalistic structures of thought by dealing with war crimes. Through 'professional reporting', say about the Milošević trial, a le-

32 Margaret Vandiver (2001): "Reclaiming Kozarac: Accompanying Returning Refugees", in: Sokolović, Dzamal and Bieber, Florian (eds.): *Reconstructing Multiethnic Societies: The Case of BiH*, Ashgate Publishers, p. 174.

33 This conversation took place on June 7.

34 There is presently an inter-religious dialogue with Christian denominations.

35 See: 'Ein Fluss ohne Strömung und Mündung. Vor 10 Jahren begann der Krieg in Bosnien', in: FR; 6 April 2002.

36 Quoted in NZZ, 7 February 2002.

thargic population has, partly, been jolted awake. Pragmatic is also the impression given by the youth representatives of the SDS in early June in Banja Luka, in touch as they are with the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation and who place emphasis on co-operation with the OHR while simultaneously preserving 'Serbian identity'. The television journalist obviously wants assertively to enlighten, whereas the SDS youth plans to make do without reconciliation. Rather, they have relativised matters and left it at that. Karadžić? Company with him had long since been parted. And war crimes were also committed against Serbs, is the reasoning.

Coincidentally, meeting with no public protest – not even from the Bosniak-Muslim side – Karadžić's new book was launched on May 26 in Sarajevo. It was left to his wife to present his comedy, *Sitovacija*, in which he, among other things, refers to the multi-ethnic co-existence ordered by the international community. One fictive dialogue reads as follows:

Edi: You learn coexistence!

Radojca: Learning is a life-long process. We've learned that for years and still are in first grade.

Edi: Bad teachers, then. We good teachers. We you promote...

Radojca: In the Hague?

Edi: No, you go there yourself (...).³⁷

In contrast, reflective reconciliation is practised in Travnik, where the cultural centre *Kaleidoscope* plans to revitalise Bosnian culture. The magic formula is 'culture+youth+tradition beyond ethnic boundaries' and focuses on recoverable cultural identities in Ivo Andrić's birthplace. This recovery may be about women's tattoos from the middle ages, presented artfully, or about the earlier practice of gold washing. Particularly successful with young people is the performance of old songs on newly and skilfully built musical instruments, and with the appropriate costumes on 'authentic sites' by the local group *Ultra Red Orchester*. Sanela and Enes, the 'heart' of *Kaleidoscope*, are hopeful despite the tight budgets. Their 'inventory of disappearance', like their concept of a centre for cultural exchange in general, has resonated well with the Swiss Foundation *Pro Helvetia* which has funded the construction of the centre. Thus, an oasis of spirituality has developed in Travnik. This project, with Bogumil-like critical overtones, deserves to be copied. In Bosnia, there still remain pioneers for cultural co-existence.

A pragmatic conclusion: as significant for the complicated process of reconciliation could prove to be the Bosnian football league which, in August 2002, kicked off for the first time since the beginning of the war. This could possibly support the development of a national – one might also say, collective – identity, particularly since Bosnian football fans, no matter their ethnic background, have been left to observe,

37 Quoted in Wolf Oschlies, 'Der Kriegsverbrecher als Komödiant', in: *Die Zeit*, Nr. 25 (13 June 2002), p. 36.

slightly frustrated, the success of neighbouring national football teams. The Croatian team has, after all, reached the quarter-finals of the World Cup.

The diffusion of external influences with endogenous factors, and the dialectics of external factors and external directives on the one hand and the autonomous potential for development on the other, is a far from completed process in Bosnia Herzegovina. 'Everything that has become – this is its asset compared to everything that has been thought – is a successful combination': it remains to be seen if this prognosis, formulated by the late historian Walter Markow, will come true.³⁸

38 Markow, *ibid.*, p. 72.