
Eyewitness Report

'Be more radical in your campaign for the reconstruction of Bosnia!'

by Paolo Raimondi

On March 25-29, Paolo Raimondi and Elke Fimmen, European representatives of the Schiller Institute, visited Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, for a series of high-level discussions. The visit had been undertaken in the context of the recent call by Helga Zepp LaRouche, the president of the Schiller Institute in Germany, to create an international Committee to Save the Children of Bosnia, and to mobilize institutions, including governments and parliaments, and a grassroots movement to demand a Marshall Plan type of program for the reconstruction of this heavily destroyed country.

During the visit, the delegation was received by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the parliament, which held a regular session devoted to discussions with the Schiller Institute about the causes of the Greater Serbian war of aggression and the solutions for a stable peace in the region. On March 28, the main national television news program reported the visit and announced that, later in April, an international delegation of the Committee to Save the Children of Bosnia would come to Sarajevo.

Even if there are no hostilities at the present time and people can freely walk the streets, to enter the city is a horrifying shock for any visitor. We came along the road from the Croatian coast, through the devastated city of Mostar, and reached Sarajevo from the west. We could see the still-smoking, burned-out buildings in the districts of Ilidza, Grbavica, and Vogosca, which had formerly been inhabited exclusively by a Serbian Orthodox population that was forced by the Chetniks to leave in the first two weeks of March when, under the Dayton Accord, these districts were about to come under the legal authority of the Bosnia-Herzegovina government.

The terrorists of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic made it impossible for the Serbian people to stay, producing an exodus of about 40,000 refugees toward the territory controlled by the so-called Serbian Republic of Pale; they threw thousands of families into desperation, and used the occasion for renewed war propaganda. Nonetheless, our friends in Sarajevo reported that about 10,000, mainly elderly people, stayed in their homes, even if the homes were badly damaged.

Further toward the center, one could see that the bus station had been destroyed, with dozens of burned-out buses.

And then, one after another, high-rise apartment buildings of 6-10 floors, totally destroyed or burned-out.

Western betrayal

What everyone reminded us, is that this crime, this war of genocide, lasted more than three and a half years, that people had to live through three winters without food, heat, medicine, and water, and with the fear and desperation arising from having been abandoned and forgotten by the Western world, Europe in particular. Many in Bosnia can answer why Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic and Karadzic have sent their terrorists to kill and massacre, but they cannot find an acceptable answer for the Western betrayal.

Sarajevo was, and will be a beautiful city, an encounter of many religions and cultures that for centuries, despite problems, lived together in peace. Like Jerusalem, you could see mosques near Catholic or Orthodox churches as well as synagogues, where people would gather to pray to the universal God. All the religious sites we saw had already been repaired and were back in use.

The city is built along a small river, the Bosna, and the streets run parallel to the river. To understand better the drama of the people of Sarajevo, one has to visualize the plan of this long city and bear in mind that both on the left and the right of the valley, there are two ranges of mountains, a few kilometers away, from where, for over three and half years, day and night, the Chetniks fired millions of mortar rounds against the civilian population. In the city, there were no militarily important strongholds which survived the first day of the aggression. In this way, almost all the tall buildings, with their windows and balconies facing the mountains, were totally destroyed. Only those with their flanks to the mortars, although damaged, remain liveable.

Hunger was the daily guest

We were the guests of two families who lived in one of these buildings. They were happy to be able to have guests, to speak with people about their horrible experiences, to experience the slow return to normal life. The biggest fight to survive, they said, was to keep their human dignity and intel-

lectual life. Hunger was the daily guest at the dinner table: Some bread and a few other items distributed by humanitarian aid organizations were not enough. One exceptional time, they were able to buy a chicken. Try to figure out, they said, laughing, how three people can eat a chicken for six days!

But the bigger problem was the lack of water: They had enough to drink, but none for hygienic necessities. Without being able to wash oneself or flush the toilet, they said, one risks losing one's dignity. Every night they risked their lives to collect rainwater from the roofs of destroyed houses and to transport it hundreds of meters and then up to the fifth floor.

The old man decided to again study the German language from some very old book; the other host would go every day to the university to teach agricultural matters, risking being hit by grenades or terrorist snipers, who were sometimes positioned just 300 meters away.

They learned that there was much behind this dirty war. They learned, the hard way, that the genocide of Milosevic and Karadzic has been supported by outside interests. They can explain to the dumb Europeans or Americans the meaning of British geopolitical games. They saw the corruption of the U.N. leadership and forces, the complicity of Lord Peter Carrington, Cyrus Vance, David Owen, Gen. Michael Rose, Gen. Louis MacKinsey, Carl Bildt. Above all, they will never forgive the disgusting performance of François Mitterrand, who came to Sarajevo with a message to the Chetniks to continue their massacres. They are tired of the war, but they are more disturbed by the dirty games of international institutions than by another grenade. They know that they have been, and are still the victims of a supranational scheme. After the Dayton agreement, everybody waits for reconstruction.

Reconstruction desperately needed

All infrastructure—industrial, agricultural, and productive complexes—has been totally destroyed. The situation in Sarajevo gives the parameters for the entire country: Some 250-300,000 people are now living in the city. Only 10,000 have a regular job, mostly in indispensable services, such as hospitals, schools, and transportation. Nobody is employed in the production of goods. The elderly and families with children fear the suspension of most humanitarian aid; there are rumors that drastic cuts may come around July. The elderly are really in danger. The elderly couple who hosted us described their situation: The man, who worked for 40 years as the chief of the accounting office of a big firm, gets a monthly pension of about \$10.60. His wife, who worked for 40 years in the sales department of a supermarket, gets about \$6.25 per month. In the past three months, neither got their pensions, because the government had no resources to cover them. The arrears of these pension payments have been one of the primary targets of the World Bank anti-inflationary program for Bosnia. The World Bank has warned the government not to pay the poor pensioners, after three and a half years of unimaginable suffering!

This is the real problem of Bosnia: After this long period of political and military intervention, now, at the moment of reconstruction, again surfaces the same supranational diktat, whose real aim is to sabotage reconstruction. On April 1, the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina became a member of the World Bank, the condition imposed to be able to discuss anything for the future. James Wolfensohn, the president of the World Bank, came to Sarajevo and signed a miserable \$75 million of credits. A few days before, the local media were reporting these arrangements, saying: "After paying some old debts, Bosnia-Herzegovina is now in discussion for new credits." This is another "gift" of the World Bank: Bosnia has to pay about 17% of the old communist Yugoslavian debt—of those who committed genocide against them! It is clear that the presence of the IMF and World Bank and other U.N. organizations is to make sure that there is no Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Bosnia.

The death of U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and his economic delegation in the plane crash near Dubrovnik, was a dramatic loss of life and opportunities for the reconstruction of Bosnia. But these efforts should not lose momentum. One of the leading political figures, who knows about the past years' activities of the Schiller Institute, told us: "I have a prayer: Be more radical in your fight for the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina."

On April 1, at a conference on security in the Balkans in Tirana, U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry called for a Marshall Plan for Bosnia, as the United States realized the Marshall Plan for Europe after the end of World War II.

Bosnia's leadership is targeted

Many contacts have indicated that international interference, such as that from the World Bank, is the main problem for the future of Bosnia. In addition to the IMF, the World Bank, and the U.N., other entities, such as the Soros Foundation, have been identified as threats to national sovereignty. In view of the national election campaign that is scheduled to take place before the end of September, one can monitor an explosion of independent candidates and independent media, supported by these international institutions to "guarantee the democratic process." Many Bosnian citizens involved in this game may not be aware of the real intentions behind them, which is to destroy the current political and military leadership of Bosnia. The reason for this opposition from abroad to the Bosnian leadership, is the decision of the Bosnian people and its leadership not to back down to the Chetnik strangulation and to the U.N.-London-Mitterrand demand to capitulate!

In recent days, the question of national sovereignty has become the focus of discussions in the political life of the country. Edehem Bicakcic, vice president of the Party of Democratic Action, the majority party, raised this issue in an interview with the main daily, *Oslobodjenje*, on April 5. He called for the establishment of a central agency to control bank activities, and for a monetary system and other national

defense measures to prevent “the loss of Bosnia-Herzegovina sovereignty.” President Alija Izetbegovic, in an interview with the weekly *Ljiljan* on March 30, warned that “internal and external forces seeking the disintegration of Bosnia are on the offensive.” Speaking about the difficulties involved in returning displaced people to their homes, he said: “There are attempts to convince the world of equal guilt of each side, that legal Bosnia-Herzegovina authorities are not immune to narrow-mindedness and nationalism, and that Bosnia-Herzegovina is not viable. Some errors, which exist, are used, and abused, to supply poison for this propaganda. However, the situation demands that these errors must not be made, because the world tends to equal our errors to the crimes of the others.”

Extremely important was the joint call issued on April 2 by Izetbegovic and former Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic, the main challenger in the next election campaign, who stated: “We warn the world that division of Bosnia-Herzegovina will not mean a disaster only for our State. It will cause permanent instability in the Balkans, jeopardizing the peace in Europe.” In the *Ljiljan* interview, Izetbegovic had attacked such propaganda and the Bosnian media, including *Ljiljan*, which compete in exposing crimes which Serbs and Croats have committed against Bosnians. “Of course, the crimes should not be ignored or covered up, but is there anything good, human among those three nations? Does any gesture of concern for the people of different religions and nations ever occur in our Bosnia? I do not believe there are no such examples.”

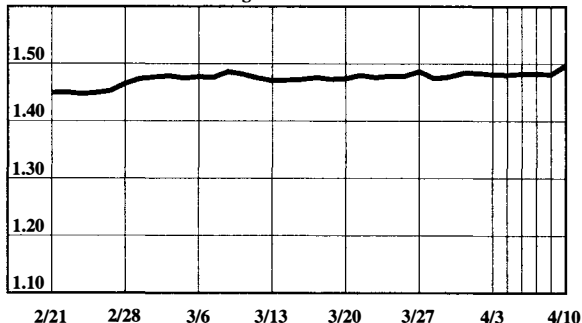
Indeed, there are many examples. One is the regular Friday meeting of the Bosnian humanitarian organizations, including the Muslim Merhamet, the Catholic Caritas, the Orthodox Debrotfor, and the Jewish La Benevolencia, that coordinate support and aid distribution to all the poor and refugees without distinction. A second one is the excellent school organized by the Catholic Church open to the children of Muslim and Orthodox families, a place of study and play open to life and to the future.

Contacts and friends in Sarajevo emphasized two questions: the time and the punishment of war criminals, starting with Karadzic. President Izetbegovic, in the interview, stated that “time is the enemy, not the ally of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Federation,” meaning that the postponement of the solution of the economic and political problems undermines the present provisional stability. All the religious leaders whom we met also underlined: If economic reconstruction does not start now, the young men without jobs could be pushed into criminality just to feed their families. In the fight for justice and the respect for fundamental human rights, it is mandatory that the leading war criminals, such as Karadzic, Milosevic, and Ratko Mladic, be tried for genocide. No excuse, deal, or coverup can be tolerated. Time will not put aside the criminals’ responsibility. It is a question of justice for the people who suffered and of morality for the rest of the world. Anything else would make accomplices of us all.

Currency Rates

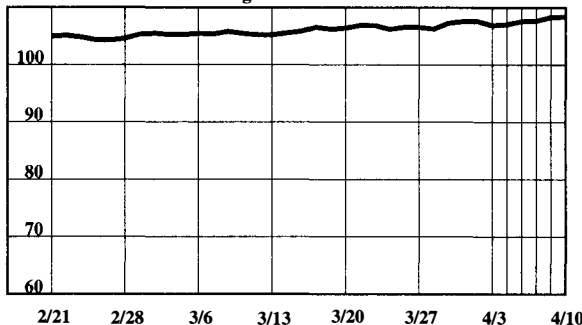
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



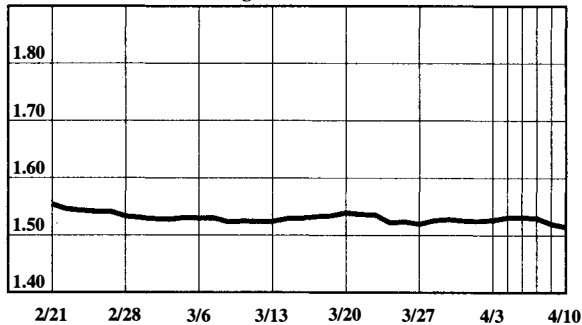
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

