



Peace and Crises Management Foundation

Fondation pour la Paix et la Gestion des Crises

Boris Vukobrat



**LETTERS OF
THE PRESIDENT**

BORIS VUKOBRAT

Letters of the President

Belgrade, 2012

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FOREWORD

From September 1992 onwards, with the main aim of informing a certain number of people of the views of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation, *Letters of the President* have been published once a month initially and somewhat less frequently afterwards. They have presented a view of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia and the global problems of former Eastern European countries. There has been no major event that we failed to react to, consistently proposing ways of peaceful settlement of disputes and the integration of the whole area of former Yugoslavia into European and world development trends.

Our ideas have been received with approval by those striving for a constructive resolution of the wartime and post-Dayton situations, often inspiring discussions and plans.

In view of all this, it seemed logical to me that integral version of the Letters should be published now, thus providing an opportunity to review the activities of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation in the most convenient way. Faced with taxing problems, which have often led a considerable number of protagonists of the Yugoslav conflict from one form of extremism to another, the Foundation has striven to maintain a balanced attitude and, through its proposals and initiatives, improve the lot of those who were forcibly placed into a marginal position. We know almost everything about despair, and very little room has been left for hope. This is what our work is based on, and I should think that this book provides clear evidence of that.

At the same time, recollecting once more the watershed dates and events is deeply justified by the fact that the ideas presented here were associated with reason and aimed at peace, economic development and new forms of co-operation. That is what continually makes them relevant, and with the passage of time the validity of our basic principles is only confirmed anew.

Paris, September 2012
Boris Vukobrat

FOREWORD BY PHILIPPE DOUSTE-BLAZY

Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations,
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Culture and Health, President of UNITAID*

When, in August 1992, I entered Sarajevo from the direction of Pale, I discovered, for the first time in my life, the meaning of the word "horror".

As a doctor, a member of the first generation that did not experience war, I was confronted with the horror of a civil war and madness of ethnic cleansing, only a two-hour plane flight from Paris. It was a fateful moment, the one that convinced me that nothing was ever completely won. I realized that European values which had made it possible to find a mosque, temple and church in the same street were challenged.

In his *Letters of the President* written from 1992 until 1998, Boris Vukobrat had almost a prophetic vision of everything that would happen later. When now, in 2012, we read this once again, we conclude that, unfortunately, all the things the author had feared already happened.

Whether it is about the temptation of using violence, war as a dead end, the protection of minorities, the issue of Kosovo, the case of Macedonia or inter-religious dialogue, proposals made by Boris Vukobrat and his Peace and Crises Management Foundation are still the focus of attention. In March 1993 he wrote: "The worst is yet to come."

The scene that is now in front of our eyes imposes a very strong commitment upon us.

Paraphrasing Vukobrat, Jean Mateoli, President of the Economic and Social Council, wrote in *Le Monde* journal that year: "The idea of former Yugoslavia division within ethnic criteria is not only criminal but also absurd."

Even then, peace through solidarity and the construction of the future were the guiding principles of his Foundation. Who would not accept them? He also wrote: "Prepare peace and refuse the unacceptable."

All the solutions he recommended to the highest officials of the friend countries and allies of the former Yugoslavia: the time for reflection, warning of the horrors that could arise from the break-up, re-introduction to the region, the threat

* United Nations Organization where as Vice Presidents help him Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, Bill Gates and Da Lula

of violence spreading to other regions, the fight against injustice and danger of the Fourth Balkan War are the signs that now, more than ever, we need to have in mind.

I like when, on behalf of rejection war and virtues of utopia, he quotes Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustigier, as well as when he emphasizes the role that France can and must play.

It teaches us to be lucid in front of the egoism of great powers.

In 1994 he noted that the division of Bosnia is a misconception and crime.

He warned us of the dangerous myths and recommended a Stability Pact in Europe, which would allow it to "re-establish peace," and to avoid new drama, which in 1998 he called "collapse from inside".

He shows us the path that favors cooperation over conflicts.

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*T*hough it could have been logically assumed that the collapse of communist Eastern Europe and the subsequent breakdown of the Soviet Union would consolidate peace on our old continent, it has not been the case. It's been two years since the Berlin wall fell down, two years since the Marxist regimes in Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia were overthrown, one year since the coup d'état in the Kremlin failed and yet war is raging in Central Europe

Such a war made up of several local ones had not been foretold by anybody, and no one seems to be able to check it. Whereas the old European nations had been living on good terms for half a century, under opposite political regimes indeed but in peace, disputes are arising which everybody thought long forgotten, and they have arisen stronger and fiercer than ever. In Yugoslavia, Moldova or the Caucasus nationalist feelings aroused by governments in search of legitimacy have produce horrific wars which may well extend to the whole continent.

Might is right

Bigger powers have been caught unawares by the spreading fire and are helpless to put it out. As they are unable to get out of the cold war patterns, they are still hesitating between intervention and restraint. The hasty measures they take are stirring up the crises instead of cooling them down. As a matter of fact they are overtaken by the course of events and they can't even make their voice be heard amid the cacophony of the nation-state concerto which is threatening the peace of the world.

There is indeed a great temptation to resort to force in order to bring back some order in Central Europe, to make use of compelling military action, air or sea blockades, political and diplomatic pressure; the method proved successful in Iraq during the Gulf war and appears to many people as the only one likely to put an end to the conflicts that are spreading over Europe and which despite a non-ethnic origin might well become authentical ethnic confrontations. But the long term efficiency of the method is doubtful as the conflicts it should resolve are so deeply rooted in the very nature of our continent.

It is indeed feasible to slice up the artillery that rains death over Sarajevo day after night, but it won't be so easy to silence the Serbs, Croats and Muslims that are fighting throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, while on the other hand the totalitarian governments in Zagreb and Belgrade cannot be expected to be forced into reconciliation as their very survival depends on the worst-case scenario.

Let us speak boldly and apply the same reasoning to other areas of Europe: one can hardly imagine how any foreign military operation could bring Moldova back to the peace; it is still more difficult to envisage that military action could stop the fighting between Azeris and Armenians, Ossetians and Georgians, and we dare not even think what would happen if the Crimea became a battlefield between Russians and Ukrainians.

Peace through Crises Management

Western democracies are slumbering in wealth and dare not face the truth; they do not see that the war raging on their doorstep may well break into their own house. Released after forty-five years of living under the threat of a common enemy, they do not realize the obvious fact that 1992 Europe is as much exposed to conflict as it was in 1914 and 1939. They are misled by their so called common views and they are underestimating the consequences of Eastern European confrontations.

Their current inability to impose their views despite the means available to them is obviously not due to mere circumstances. It shines a harsh light on the bare fact that force cannot in any way resolve the conflicts that have sprung out of the remains of collectivism in Europe.

A way other than military action must therefore be found to bring war to an end. We believe that the proper one would be to set up a highly flexible process of prevention and crises management the methodology of which has still to be invented. Its scope would need to be defined and limitations set, but it should be able to resolve the existing conflicts in Europe or those that are about to arise without resorting to arms, and it could probably work as well anywhere in the world when ethnic communities are in dispute.

Need we specify that such an attempt is far from being utopian? The first step is to clearly define the causes of the conflicts implies an open minded attitude free from any ready-made judgment. Then practical solutions have to be proposed, whether territorial, institutional, cultural or economic, which can soothe the political, ethnic and religious antagonisms that underlie the present conflicts. And the final step will be to define the legal and diplomatic tools that will locally en-

force the solutions adopted and define the international guarantees that may be required.

Unless we accept the idea that the new Europe can only be built as a result of wars which will undoubtedly be more dreadful and merciless than earlier ones, we must definitely take the path to peace that goes through crises management.

The Role of the Foundation

It goes without saying that neither governments nor international organisations are at present in a position to undertake such thinking; their structures and positions can only be modified very slowly in consequence of the changing international environment. If we leave it to them to use their imagination to find a solution that will put an end to the tragedy being played out in too many places in Europe, we shall be resigning ourselves to watching History unfold without attempting to alter its course.

These thoughts led us to set up Peace and Crises Management Foundation. It is a private agency, governed by Swiss legislation, completely independent, whose aim is to propose solutions for peaceful settlement of the conflicts that are raging at present in Europe, especially in the Slav countries. It is a forum for meeting and debate, a sort of think tank where political leaders, diplomats and international experts will be free to take new ideas on board.

A letter similar to the one I am sending you today will be issued every two weeks. It will keep you informed on our work and on the meetings we organize. I sincerely hope that you will find it interesting.

Boris Vukobrat
President

LETTER N° 2
15 September 1992

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*F*or the next several months, Geneva will be the focal point of attention, as it the centre of negotiations aiming to end the continuing war and tragedy in Yugoslavia. In Geneva, a committee of seventeen members, under the aegis of the United Nations and the European Community, will continue the talks that were initiated in London at the end of August. Their purpose: to convince the fighting sides to achieve reconciliation and eventually to restore peace. .

The difficulty of this task is such that Cyrus R. Vance, the American Co-Chairman, has expressed his doubts regarding the possibility of an arrest of fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the near future. In my opinion, a resolution to the crisis is not so unreasonable, despite the continued fighting.

War as deadlock

The view that the war is at a deadlock is based on the fact that the crisis has neither been resolved by violent warfare nor by the partition of the country into several independent republics. Why is this so? In part, one can attribute it to the fact that the various Yugoslav peoples have mingled and co-existed for centuries and that any decision based upon an arbitrary ethnic division of territory would not be accepted by them and could incite further violence. The Balkans is the crossroads of Northern and Southern civilized worlds and imposing arbitrary ethnic zones would engender endless warfare.

After a full year of war, brutal massacres and destruction, it is clear to all those leading the war, that violence is not the answer. The minorities are clamouring for freedom and they are too numerous to be silenced by force.

Therefore, another solution to the crisis must be found: one that takes into account the historical fact (which, nevertheless, the fighting parties try to deny) that Yugoslavia has been and will remain a community of diverse peoples, a community welded by time, and one that cannot be separated artificially. Given the fact that cities, villages and even families are multi-ethnic, it is crucial to arrive at a solution which respects this societal complexity.

Besides the recently created republics, there are regions in Yugoslavia, that since time immemorial have existed as political and geographic entities. In essence,

these homogenous regions, such as Dalmatia, Istria and Krajina, have existed as areas where their inhabitants freely practiced their religions - Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim. In addition, they have spoken the same language and shared a common sense of belonging to the same community. It is here that men, women and children, who never wanted this war, show their profound solidarity.

The Yugoslav regions have not been destroyed by the war, for they are too deeply rooted in history and have become a home to the diverse populations. It is my opinion that if they are given political and economic capability, peace can be restored. In view of the terrible crimes committed by extremists of all sides, the institution of such a plan seems difficult. It is only a gradual and conservative implementation which will allow the populations to finally control their destiny and once again restore peace.

Great expectations

The idea of building peace based on a regional revival is our plan for Yugoslavia and the Balkans; it could also apply to other European countries where nationalism has superseded the ashes of communism and where conflict is a threat. Without changing the integrity of states, a prerequisite to peace in Europe, decentralized political systems could be devised which would guarantee individual liberties to populations that have been longing to be free for too many years. After half a century of domination by all powerful one party states, there would be democratic regimes instituted, similar to those in Western Europe.

This was our idea when we established the Peace and Crisis Management Foundation. We launched a research programme to explore a plan of regionalisation as a path to peace. Taking Yugoslavia as our first problem of study, our intention is to develop a model which would allow for the resolution of ethnic conflicts through liberal economics and political decentralization.

The initial findings of this study, carried out by distinguished university experts, have found it feasible to create a community of regions which would replace the former federation of Yugoslavia. The regions would be organized within the existing republics and the community would guarantee the freedom of ethnic and religious minorities. This community would be based (as in Switzerland) on autonomous entities which would control their respective administrations.

Conventional means cannot be expected to bring about any alleviation to the utter distress and suffering that the Yugoslavs are now experiencing, as are many other ethnic groups in Europe. We must use imagination and innovation based on

the lessons of history to find realistic solutions to the confrontations threatening European peace.

Let me insist that far from being utopian, such a project seems to be the only one likely to put an end to this most dreadful of conflicts and prevent a chain reaction that will set fire first to the Balkans and then to all Europe.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*I*t is very tempting for Europeans to believe that what is currently taking place in Yugoslavia is exceptional and can only occur in the Balkans. However, the same causes produce the same effects, and unfortunately it is foreseeable that the collapse of communism will cause violent nationalist outbursts everywhere and will lead to an increase in conflicts at the very heart in the future.

The world's attention is currently focused on Bosnia-Herzegovina, but there are in fact signs of equally horrendous conflicts in many places, which will put our continent to fire and the sword if nothing is done to resolve them.

- In Czechoslovakia, where the division of the country appears to be occurring peacefully, the Hungarian, German, Polish and Ukrainian minorities are beginning to stir and Slovakia could easily find itself facing claims from ethnic groups once it becomes independent.
- In Romania, everyone is aware that the Hungarian minority, which is concentrated in the western regions of the country, is calling for unification with its motherland. Everyone is also aware of the restlessness of Hungarians in Vojvodina, Yugoslavia.
- In Poland, the people of German stock who inhabit Upper Silesia are close to demanding integration into reunified Germany.
- In the Baltic States, the Russian minorities - 28% of the population of Estonia, 33% of the population of Latvia - who are excluded from politics, are asserting their right to differ and are insisting on the respect of their rights.
- The situation is the same in Moldavia and in the Ukraine where the break-up of the USSR has isolated large Russian minorities and revived ancient ethnic tensions.

In short, even putting aside what is happening in Caucasia or the Muslim republics of the CIS, there is a definite ethnic fever sweeping Europe, threatening the internal stability of its countries, calling into question borders which have existed since the beginning of the century and contributing, from north to south and east to west, to a dangerous uncertainty over the evolution of inter-European relations.

Western Europe is also affected

The major nations of Western Europe appear to believe that their current prosperity protects them from nationalist dangers. There are, however, two facts, at least, which should urge them to be extremely cautious.

The first being the unfortunate precedent set for their peoples by the ethnic problems occurring in the East. In Belgium, for example, the language row could quickly develop into the break-up of the country. Even in France, little would be required to transform the Corsican problem into an all-out crisis. And Ireland is an example of the excesses to which confrontation between minorities can lead. Having witnessed that European nations did not hesitate to recognize countries like Slovenia, Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina as sovereign states, these minorities will sooner or later be tempted to demand the same treatment. And it is difficult to see according to what logic they will be refused the right to independence, which has already been recognized in other instances.

The second fact is the sharp increase in nationalism in countries such as Germany, which seemed to have been cured forever of this old demon. The attacks against minorities in the former GDR in the last few weeks prove that nobody is safe today from xenophobic sentiment. This sentiment is spreading every day and could rapidly degenerate if governments do not succeed in putting an end to it.

We should be aware that the combination of unrest amongst minorities and the rise in xenophobia may create the conditions for an uncontrollable explosion within the European Community itself, which is so justifiably proud of its social and economic progress. Action must therefore be taken while there is time. This means finding institutional, legal and political solutions which, in the future, will allow reconciliation of the necessary unity of states with the indispensable protection of minorities, and which will guarantee the basic freedoms of every individual whilst safeguarding the integrity of nations.

On regionalization

In a previous letter I explained my belief that the only way to bring peace to the Balkans is to form, in place of the Yugoslav Federation, a Community composed of Regions which are free to govern themselves. Today, I would like to express my conviction that such a solution could in fact be applied to all those countries of Europe where different peoples coexist, often unsuccessfully.

Short of redrawing the borders within Europe, which would set off a never-ending series of conflicts, ethnic problems have to be resolved within the limits of the ex-

isting states. Whilst not interfering with their external borders, their internal composition should be modified to reflect historical and cultural realities. Switzerland, with its cantons and communes, where people of diverse races and religions have lived harmoniously for centuries, is living proof of the viability of such a solution.

Regionalization, that is to say, the organization of a modern country on a very basis, is not only possible but also desirable in all places where historical, migratory and geographical factors have brought peoples together. This may not be a miracle cure but it is without a doubt the most effective way of allowing composite nations to live in peace.

The work that our Foundation is conducting on this subject is progressing in strides and I will give a detailed report on this in a few days' time. In the meantime, I invite all those of you who have ideas on this matter to share them with us as quickly as possible. Europe is finally rid of communism, but we are surrounded by many dangers and we need the help of everyone in the difficult search for a form of democracy which is adapted to the complexities of the situations within each country.

Boris Vukobrat

President

LETTER N° 4
15 October 1992

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The coming winter will be a terrible one for the people suffering from the war in the Balkans. If the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina doesn't stop soon, the victims and refugees will number not in the thousands, but in the hundreds of thousands, not only in this region, but also in Serbia, Croatia, and everywhere else in ex-Yugoslavia. And one of the most horrifying tragedies in Europe's long history will take place in its own backyard, not far from some of the richest cities in the world.

In light of such a prospect, the mobilisation of the entire world is called for in the effort to find a solution to the Yugoslavian problem while there is still time, that is to say, before the harshness of nature finishes off what the folly of men has begun.

Since no one yet has been able to bring an end to the violence, since neither persuasion nor force have been able to make the belligerents lay down their arms, it is time we turned to the only solution left: the political solution.

Three factors

The factors in the equation to be solved, both in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as elsewhere in what was once Yugoslavia, are by now well-known. I'd like to briefly state them here:

1. The States born of the Yugoslavian disintegration have been recognized by the international community; they are now an irrecusable reality.
2. The borders of these States, drawn by the communist regime after the Second World War, have since been accepted by the international community; they must not be rectified by force.
3. The intermingling of the different peoples within these States is so complex as to preclude any solution based on ethnic criteria.

If attaining independence by these new States has meant plunging the country into war, it is only because their leaders refuse to consider this threefold reality, being more interested in consolidating their own power than in ensuring the welfare of their people. They have imposed laws and institutions which could only lead to war, because they fail to recognize the multi-ethnic character of their nation.

The result of this wilful error has been the massacre of innocent people, the great majority of whom desired only to live together, side by side, as they had always done in spite of their turbulent History. The only way to correct its tragic consequences is to return to the logic which, over the centuries and under different empires, has shaped the Balkan area: that of the regions traced by History where peoples of different origins, cultures and religions coexisted together.

This is what I've written in my letter several times, that peace will not come to the Balkans unless we recognize the inviolable character of these historically established truths; rather than seeking to separate what God has united, we must seek to set up institutions made to guarantee the independence of each community, in keeping with the others, desires.

To succeed in this will not be easy because of the wounds inflicted by war, but it is possible if we are willing to accept the lessons of the past.

A plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Peace and Crises Management Foundation, within the context of the work being carried out in Geneva under the leadership of Mr. Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, has put forward a political settlement plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Last week the Foundation submitted a synthesis paper which summarizes the work done over the last six months by a team of Yugoslavian, Swiss, French and Austrian specialists. I'd like to recall its main points here.

Starting from the notion that the intermingling of peoples, races and religions in Bosnia-Herzegovina is an irrecusable reality, we suggest that the future political, economic and social organisation of the country be based on the regions established by History. The main regions are Bosnia (Sarajevo), Herzegovina (Mostar), Bosanska Krajina (Banja Luka) and the region of Tuzla (Tuzla); should it seem necessary, this number can be enlarged to six by adding to the first four Eastern Herzegovina and Cazinska Krajina.

Within the State of Bosnia-Herzegovina, each of these regions would be set up as an autonomous entity, with its own geographical and economic area, its own parliamentary and executive institutions, capable of enacting its own social and fiscal legislation, in short, retaining a great amount of independence with regard to the center. As in the Swiss cantons -which serve as a model in many ways- the regions would delegate to the center those duties pertaining to the common interest which they could not assume: national defence, money, foreign affairs, the judiciary system. Like the Swiss cantons, they too would be multi-ethnic. Their citizens

would each thus be doubly protected: by their Region and by their State. Their rights, both individual and collective, would be guaranteed by a series of fundamental texts which would protect, in particular, minorities against persecution.

The Democratic framework

The implementation of such a system, despite all appearances, remains possible. First of all, it would presume the definition of a detailed institutional plan, which can very well be drawn up within the context of the Geneva conference. It would then be submitted directly to the people through universal suffrage, under UN and EEC supervision; finally, it would require the appointment, again through universal suffrage and under the supervision of international authorities, of men and women to run the Regions.

The objection will undoubtedly be raised that a return to peace is a necessary prerequisite to any solution of this type. However, my reply is that the initiation of such a project would set off an irresistible dynamic, which the belligerents - who do not represent a majority of the people - could not oppose. And I would add, for those who remain sceptical, that after suffering through such a terrible ordeal, the people themselves, who did not take part in the war, will take up the implementation of a plan which embraces their desires in every way.

The combination of democracy and regionalisation is today our last chance to give back the homes to the men, women and children who, because of war, have been forced to flee the land where they had been peacefully living together. We must give it a try without further delay, before the snow, cold and hardship make a vast cemetery of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*W*hen the Yugoslavian crisis broke out two years ago, it was attributed to specific circumstances, unique to Yugoslavia, and, hence, believed to be an isolated case. However, with the passing of time, the same causes behind the war in the Balkans seem to be found all over Europe, where they threaten to produce the same effects. It may be that the war ravaging Yugoslavia is only the prelude to a greater tragedy, just as the Spanish War in the Thirties preceded and anticipated World War II.

It is therefore important not to underestimate the danger represented by this conflict, and not to make the mistake of considering it to be an atypical phenomenon, an accident of History resulting from a combination of factors unheard of on the Old Continent.

In fact, the savagery of the Yugoslavian crisis is extraordinarily banal. There is nothing exceptional about the circumstances which led up to it; as we all know, they are the consequence of three developments:

- First, the collapse of communism in Central Europe, with its corollary, the economic failure of collectivist system;
- Second, the upsurge of nationalism, a result of the injustice, the humiliation, the poverty and the oppression engendered by communism which is now exploited by unscrupulous leaders
- Finally, the short-sightedness of Western European democracies that, by accepting the division of Yugoslavia, jeopardized the delicate political balance in the Balkans.

It is hoped that Europe will have learned, through experience, not to make the same disastrous mistake with other Central European countries as was made with Yugoslavia. But the two main causes of the tragedy are present in most of the former Eastern Bloc countries, and they pose a real, terrifying threat to world peace.

This is why, today, we must not look for a solution aimed solely at the Yugoslavian situation; on the contrary, we must conceive formulas which aim for a smooth resolution of the problems common to all the peoples recently emancipated from the yoke of communism.

Protecting minorities

In my previous letters I've said that granting real autonomy to the regions established by History undoubtedly represents the most promising path to take, and I've outlined how this could be applied to Bosnia-Herzegovina. I'd like to insist now on one of the most essential points in this proposition, which concerns the protection of minorities.

The formulas proposed by the experts for ensuring the individual and collective rights of ethnic or religious minorities are all rooted in the idea that protection can only come from laws or from a Constitution. However, it has been proved that the inclusion of such provisions in the basic laws of a country doesn't guarantee anything: as we see every day in those States born of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, nothing is easier than violating minority rights by turning the laws away from their initial objectives.

Don't get me wrong, however, in saying this, I don't mean to imply that it is useless to adopt laws with provisions for safeguarding minorities against eventual repression by the majority, only that such provisions do not suffice to build solid foundations for a democracy.

Freedom, in fact, is the fruit of a subtle alchemy whose main ingredients are laws and institutions, but which also includes culture, economy, and, as a general rule, the free organization of society. It is a dangerous illusion to think that endowing the former communist countries with a corpus of laws and institutions copied from the Western model will be enough to make them true democracies.

True democracy can be established on the ruins of communism only if the whole social and political body agrees to the basic principle that one's freedom ends where the other's begins. This means that, along with the effort to give the new democracies institutions adequate to their aspirations, it is also necessary to create an economic and social environment which supports freedom. And it is precisely for this reason that a democratic economy must be organized in close conjunction with its citizens.

The older democratic nations of Europe have been able, over the centuries, to reconcile democratic organization with the centralization of power; they thus combine the advantages of a large degree of freedom with a strong government. But they are not models which can be immediately transferred to the nations emerging, enfeebled, from half a century of communism. Their leaders need to under-

stand that democracy develops faster and more easily at the local or regional level than at the national level.

Use imagination

The Swiss, maximizing their taste for individual and collective independence, imagined for themselves a political system based on local economic democracy. And this is precisely the principle that the new Republics in Central Europe should follow, while making allowances for their specific characters. The intermingling of different social decentralization can resolve the inevitable problems arising out of ethnic and religious coexistence.

That this is true is demonstrated by the fact that wherever communism imposed its ruthless law, authoritatively effacing the differences born of History, grave troubles have ensued. In Yugoslavia, this led to war because the country became the focal point of antagonisms a centralized State could no longer control. But similar troubles everywhere else are creating tensions which could degenerate at any instant into bloody conflicts. It is thus necessary, indispensable, to give more power to the people themselves, to let them organize their own lives together as they have done in past centuries.

Western European governments do not really favor instituting such a system because it goes contrary to their own development and they fear, unconsciously, the "boomerang" effect which might be produced by reorganizing the countries in Central Europe along these lines. But they have the choice of favoring either the emergence of very decentralized democracies in the East or the proliferation of chaos, brought about inevitably by the clash of nationalisms in tight spaces where freedom doesn't really exist.

We cannot, it seems to me, afford to doubt this.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*I*n order to solve the problems in Central Europe, which have arisen due to the confrontation between ethnic groups, with different languages, cultures and religions, we must first determine why, all of a sudden, the natural coexistence of these peoples has given way to armed conflict.

Civil war in this region of the world is not, in fact, inevitability. For centuries, its various peoples enjoyed a harmonious coexistence and were linked in many ways; and as such time as clashes did occur, peace quickly prevailed over war. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century, when they were caught up in quarrels between the major European powers, that the Balkans became the stage for bloody ethnic conflicts and endless political battles.

In many respects, what is currently happening in Yugoslavia is a further illustration of this. If certain European Community countries had not exerted pressure on their partners, in order to encourage the break-up of the country, the war would never have reached its present stage. Everyone, including those who were in favour of such a dangerous option, is now convinced that hasty recognition of the Yugoslav republics was in fact a serious error, for which the civil populations are now paying.

Albania and Kosovo, a case in point

It is difficult, or indeed impossible, to reverse the current situation, but an attempt can at least be made to avoid the same mistakes in the future; particularly in Kosovo, where widespread murmurs of discontent in recent weeks are giving cause for concern.

Western chanceries are aware that nationalist forces are hard at work in Albania, threatening the authority of the leaders who were democratically elected a few months ago. These agitators are simply former communists and are therefore experienced in the techniques of mass manipulation. Aided by the poor economic situation, they are promoting the idea that Albania should intervene in Kosovo, to defend their brothers of the same race. They are also vehemently denouncing the moderation shown by the Albanian and advocating violent action as the best policy.

This attitude plays straight into the hands of those people in Belgrade who would like to extend the war to Kosovo, and even to Macedonia, in order to remain in power, and who use the same nationalists arguments to convince their people to support them. Recent history has shown us, with the confrontations between Croatia and Serbia, the inevitable consequences of such an approach.

The situation is therefore quite clear. If Albania's leaders do not receive the diplomatic and political support which they need, in order to protect themselves from the attacks being directed against them, and if nothing is done to stabilize the situation in Kosovo, this region will be witness to a next bloodbath. But this time, there will be hundreds of thousands of deaths.

The Regionalization of Kosovo

As people are aware, our Foundation presented a peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina at the beginning of October. This plan, which is part of a set of proposals aimed at solving the problems of former Yugoslavia, is based on the idea of organizing the country into autonomous regions, which would have effective powers in a wide variety of areas. The manner in which our plan was received in Geneva leads us to conclude that it is both realistic and reasonable.

Before the end of the year, we will present a series of texts, which will define the contents of this programme, and which are currently being worked on by a team of specialists.

Without going into detail here on the provisions contained in this document I would like to say that our regionalization project would be perfectly applicable to Kosovo and would certainly ease the tensions which are developing in this region, including with Albania. Kosovo is, in fact, made up of two historical regions, Metohija and Kosovo, which could be set up as multi-ethnic, autonomous regional entities, and which, once equipped with the appropriate institutions, would be able to maintain close relations with Albania, whilst remaining part of Serbia and the New Community.

Nothing stands in the way of such a form of organization, except the desire of a few people to extend the war to Kosovo, in order to divert the attention of their peoples and maintain their shaky hold on power. I therefore believe that the international authorities, which are attempting to find a peaceful solution to the conflict which is tearing Yugoslavia apart, could use this concept as a basis, just as they are already considering the idea of regionalization as a means to ending the

war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. By anticipating the events to come and acting accordingly, they would no doubt be able to alter the course of history.

I would like to add that Serbs at least, the many who are anxious to restore peace—approve of the regionalization plan. In fact, a few weeks ago, in Belgrade, university professors, political scientists, economists and respected journalists all clearly expressed their support for this form of organization, seeing it as the best way of bringing about the economic development of the country and establishing a real democracy.

The idea of regionalizing Kosovo, like the idea of regionalizing Bosnia, is not completely utopian. It reflects an undeniable natural reality and can certainly form the basis of a solution to the Yugoslav conflict. Yugoslavs themselves, however, are too involved in their fratricidal battles to settle their differences alone.

If Europe's major powers stop protecting their own disagreements onto the Balkans and put all their weight into making regionalization the foundation of the political, economic and social organization of the new Yugoslav states, the Geneva Conference will surely produce a peaceful solution within a short space of time.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The problems facing Croatia, like those facing Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, could most likely be resolved by adopting the regional structure, which we are putting forward as the basis for a solution to the Yugoslav question. To a greater extent than the other Balkan states, Croatia is made up of original and distinct entities, which have acquired their own identity over the centuries and which are calling for recognition of their specificity.

Croatia is not, and cannot be, the centralized national entity which its leaders want it to be. The presence in Croatia of large minorities, of very diverse religions, of many cultures and traditions, means that only a decentralized political system, which allows Croatian citizens to manage their affairs directly, without having to use intermediaries, can make this country a real democracy. If the regions which form Croatia are not, somehow or another, granted the right to free self-government, the disturbances which are causing bloodshed in Bosnia-Herzegovina will eventually spread to Croatia and war will return with increased ferocity.

Dalmatia, Istria...

Historical events have meant that the regions which presently make up Croatia have characteristics which are as distinct as anywhere else in former Yugoslavia. Throughout history, these regions have, more often than not, been aware of their originality, whether they were autonomous or formed part of a larger entity.

Regardless of the region -Dalmatia, Istria, Dubrovnik, Rijeka- this regional identity exists in some form. It is so much a part of each region's heritage that some people consider themselves first and foremost citizens of their region, then Croats. Furthermore, it is significant that this attitude can be found amongst all ethnic groups, whether they form a majority or a minority.

The war going on in certain parts of Croatia would be more likely to come to an end if the authorities in Zagreb were to call on their people to vote on a clear and simple political project, based on the idea of organizing the country into multi-ethnic entities. These authorities are currently having great difficulty in keeping together the pieces of the puzzle they have constructed. Regionalizing their country would restore the cohesion which has been lost through centralization.

I would like to make it quite clear that I am not suggesting Croatia should cease to exist as a sovereign state. Having been recognized by the international community, and as a member of the United Nations, Croatia is today an undeniable reality, and its existence cannot be called into question. However, there are many countries around the world where regional and cantonal diversity are recognized, within the framework of a Unitarian state. Take for example, the United States or Italy, Germany or Switzerland, there is a long list of states in which peoples have lived harmoniously together for centuries.

In fact, I believe that Croatia already displays the characteristics necessary for it to become one of this group of democracies. Its population comprises several ethnic groups which have their own traditions and practice different religions. It is composed of naturally formed geographical regions, which have their own particular physical characteristics and which are distinguished by their history. Its inhabitants have always coexisted harmoniously, although appearances would seem to suggest they should be divided in every way. Thus, Croatia appears to be the prototype of a country where peace and well-being can only exist in a democracy based on regional institutions.

A four-tier structure

People will tell me that setting forth such principles is not enough to restore peace to this country and erase the devastation caused by the war.

Of course it is not! The aim, however, is to demonstrate that it is possible for men and women of different religions, ethnic groups and cultures to live in harmony, here, as well as in all the other unfortunate regions of Eastern Europe where nationalism has followed in the wake of communism, to the great detriment of their peoples. If one of the states which resulted from the collapse of Yugoslavia were to seize the initiative, peace would rapidly return to the Balkans.

In a few days' time, the work that has been carried out on behalf of our Foundation over the last six months, by a team of reputable European legal and economic specialists, will be made public. People will then realize that it is possible to respect the wishes of everyone, within a four-tier political structure - communes, regions, states, community- without infringing on the rights of the new Balkan states. People will also realize that Croatia is one of the countries where such a structure could be most naturally put into place.

Letters of the President

In order to lift the Yugoslav states out of the rut into which their leaders have lead-
ed them, we should look at the lessons of history. The peoples of this region are
less willing. Therefore, they must be persuaded to finally listen to their peoples.

It is not aggravated nationalism, based on ethnic criteria with no human or his-
torical root, which will bring internal peace to Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Kosovo or
Macedonia. This will only happen if the central power recognizes the specificity of
each of the regions which make up its country. This fact can no longer be denied,
and it must now be recognized, so that we can learn from the lessons it offers.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*I*n the face of the grave troubles which are afflicting numerous peoples in Central Europe, being able to handle the crises, however peacefully, is not enough. It is even more important to know how to prevent them and, towards this end, how to analyse, understand and imagine ways we in the modern world can anticipate events so as to keep them from becoming tragedies.

As we come to the end of 1992, a year marked by so much bloodshed in the heart of the Balkans, Macedonia demands our consideration: not only because it is greatly affected by the tragedy shattering Yugoslavia, not only because it could become the future scene of a new internal war, but also because it gives western powers the opportunity to redeem the errors they have made over the past two years.

A Case in Point: Macedonia

I have just returned from this country which has had the courage to reject nationalism as a political tool and which, despite the pressures put on it, has refused to close itself off. In speaking with President Kiro Gligorov I was struck by how concerned Macedonia is, today, to avoid the mistakes which led to war in the other Yugoslavian Republics.

There, as elsewhere, different peoples -Macedonian, Serbian, Albanian, Bulgarian- have lived together and practiced their diverse religions, Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, for centuries. There, as elsewhere, State borders do not coincide with the geographical positions of the different peoples who, through the caprice of History, have been scattered across the territories of several States: Macedonia, of course, but also Albania and Bulgaria. There, as elsewhere, the folly of a few, who now serve the cause of ultra-nationalism with as much fervour as they did that of Communism, threaten the peace of these peoples who believe in liberty and justice.

It isn't very difficult, today, to see where the next crisis to spark off the region will come from, which threatens this time to degenerate into a Balkan war, the third in less than a century. In the halls of the great world powers the script has already been written, and even the press is playing the dangerous game of political fiction.

Rather than imagine the worst, like those who have already resigned themselves, I think it is necessary to seek while there is still time, the economic, political and diplomatic solutions that will allow us to prevent any conflict.

Such solutions exist. They are dictated by History, geography, and reason. Let me reiterate them briefly here in the order of classification put forward by our Foundation:

1. First of all, it is necessary to recognize the Republic of Macedonia as a sovereign independent State, endowed with the same powers as the other Republics formed out of what was formerly Yugoslavia. This is necessary in order to avoid coming up against the unsolvable problem of reuniting peoples across borders, but also to permit the country to have access to European and international financial institutions without whose aid it will have little chance of surviving in the months to come. In view of this, we should remember that Macedonia was the only country whose recognition was recommended by the Badinter Commission because of the democratic quality of its constitution and institutions.
2. It is just as essential that the borders of the new State be guaranteed to protect it from the upheavals ravaging the northern Balkans. Such protection cannot be dependent on a handful of "Blue Helmets" whose aim is to make sure that Macedonia's sovereignty is respected; it must be organized by the international community in such a way that no one would think of violating the new State's independence.
3. Macedonia itself must establish a legislative "corpus" that will guarantee each of its citizens the freedom of thought, of religion, of speech which is their right. Protection of minority rights and recognition of the cultural identity of each and every person are essential prerequisites which must be formerly reasserted by the country's highest authorities and presented as the very foundation of Macedonian democracy.
4. Regional economic cooperation should be the cement which unites the peoples. Between the Vardar upper valley -in northern Macedonia- and the lower valley -in southern Macedonia, between the regions east of Macedonia and the regions west of Bulgaria, between Kosovo and Macedonia, between Albania and Macedonia, ties have existed for centuries: they can and should be reinforced. Exploiting Macedonia's hydraulic resources could be very beneficial to northern Greece, and the port of Thessaloniki is also a natural outlet for

Macedonian products. We all know that wherever people, goods and money circulate no one dreams of making war.

5. Finally, it is necessary -and this goes for all the States, old or new, that make up the Balkans- to set up a democracy based on natural and historical regions. Living together harmoniously can only be achieved if the administrative and political organization remains close enough to the individual to ensure that ethnic issues do not take over the general interest. Macedonians, more than others, have a sense of moderation, have a natural disposition, toward this form of government which is bound to prevail throughout the developed world.

Greece's Key Role

Macedonia is, along with Slovenia, the only ex-Yugoslavian State which has become a true democratic Republic; its President is the only statesman who has chosen the difficult path of moderation and humanism. But, paradoxically, Macedonia is the only country in the world which, for obscure reasons, is refused recognition by the international community. This is a great injustice and it is time we undid it. Greece, which vehemently opposes this recognition for fear, it seems, of a great Bulgaria looming on its northern doorstep, should understand that recognition of Macedonia is in fact essential for the protection of its vital interests. As the major regional power, Greece would naturally play an important role in the organization of this vast economic area whose development is hindered only by the narrow-mindedness of political leaders. Above all, through the stabilization of borders, Greece could effectively contribute to eliminating the threat that the inextricable mixture of peoples, religions and cultures constantly poses for all of the Balkans.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Should we try to put an end to the war ravaging Bosnia-Herzegovina through the use of force, or should we refrain from any military action whatsoever and continue to seek a political solution to the conflict, hoping that reason will prevail? Competent statements who truly wish to find a solution to this tragedy have opposing ideas on this subject, which only proves that there is no miraculous formula for stopping the fighting and bringing a halt to the executions.

This is a tough debate, material as well as moral, but the real question is not whether we should resort to war in order to combat the war, but how should peace be established and on what basis? Once the hostilities have ceased, how can the Republics born out of ex-Yugoslavia become true democracies, capable of guaranteeing freedom to their people? How can they learn to live together? How can they enter into the world market economy? And lastly, how can they be integrated into the European Community?

Amid the violence which marks the beginning of the year, as the whole world has its eyes turned on Sarajevo and as western forces prepare for military intervention, it seems to me that we should be considering the future of Yugoslavia.

Some will say that it is useless to think of peace while the war is accelerating, that we haven't time to dream while thousands of men, women and children are on the verge of death. I would simply reply that lasting peace has always been drawn up in the middle of a crisis, and I would give as an example Jean Monnet who, at the height of World War II while Europe was up in fire and arms, laid down the foundations of what was to become fifteen years later the Common Market and the European Community. Who would have thought that the Germans, the English, the French and the Italians together would one day constitute a second world power? And why wouldn't what was possible then, in even more tragic circumstances, be possible today? Isn't what differentiates humans from animals the fact the former are able to project themselves into the future, in other words, to hope?

Proposals for Yugoslavia

The Peace and Crisis Management Foundation which it is my honour to chair, feels that the time has come to formulate proposals which reconcile what today seems

irreconcilable: the Yugoslavians people's desire to be free and to live together in harmony within and organizational framework capable of guaranteeing their individual rights.

This project was not born fully armed out of the brain of some irreducible dreamer. It is the fruit of the methodical proceedings of a group of international experts who worked from a series of "proposals" which we submitted to them. It attempts to give practical answers to the three main questions underlying the restoration of peace in the Balkans and, more generally, everywhere else in Europe where the clash of nationalities incites or can incite hate and fear: firstly, the question of the rights which every Yugoslavian citizen, regardless of Republic, is entitled to; secondly, the question of the political and administrative organization of the Republics out of Yugoslavia's disintegration and which are now independent countries; thirdly, the question of the institutional structure which would oversee relations between the Republics who, while existing independently, would cooperate together, in those areas necessary to their functioning at the international level.

We think that the Yugoslavian region of the future should be organized around three main structures: the Regions, the Republics and the Community.

- First of all, the Regions: given the fact that they exist since time immemorial, we think that the internal organization of each Yugoslavian Republic should be based on its regions. This means that the autonomy of the Regions must be constitutionally recognized, with each one designing the legal and legislative framework which would allow its citizens to live freely, regardless of their race or religion. Of course, it is not for us to specify the number or the geographical boundaries of these entities, considering that such essential questions should be left to the citizens themselves; but we do suggest that the Regions be given full power over their own administration and development.
- As for the Republics, although retaining a certain amount of liberty, they should be obliged to give the Regions free reign over their particular economic and social policies. The sovereignty of the Republics, recognized by the international community, remains intact, but it must commit itself to respecting the specificity of those regions which existed long before it did, and which have always shaped the lives of the Yugoslavian people.
- Finally, the relationship of the Republics between themselves could be organized within a community of very flexible structures designed to oversee those functions pertaining to the common interest which the Republics could not assume due to insufficient means or size. Thus, to a certain extent, the Yugoslavia

of tomorrow would somewhat resemble to the EEC of today. And establishing democracy in the Yugoslavian area around these three structures is precisely that will allow the Community of the Republics from ex-Yugoslavia to be incorporated into the European Community.

An act of faith

The document which we will be publishing does not claim to solve every problem, nor to miraculously conjure up peace out of the chaos of the present. It is the fruit of that experience which Europeans have gained over the last half of our century; and it is, above all, an act of faith for the future.

A crossroads for different people, cultures, and religions, my country is not, as is frequently remarked, doomed to eternal war. Its wealth lies in the diversity of the people that make it up, and we must help it to establish the democratic structures needed for peace and stability. Today it is a country torn apart only because the leaders who were to guide it ahead instead betrayed its expectations, and chose the path of violence in order to consolidate their power.

We all know that the war will not last forever. Sooner or later peace will return to the Yugoslavian region - I hope with all my heart that we will not have long to wait - and the people will rediscover the solidarity which lies deep within them.

When that day arrives, they will need to have at their disposal a project which can transcribe their hopes into political terms. It is for this reason that we are going to publish our "Proposals".

The solution we are proposing is undoubtedly not the only one imaginable. At least, however, it exists and can thus be used as the basis for a dialogue which, I am sure, is not very far off.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Certainly, Europe is not to be blamed for the tragedy in Yugoslavia, even if, out of ignorance, its all too hasty recognition of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina only provoked the various extremists into starting a war. The key to peace, however, lies with Europe. For Europe has the capacity, though it may not be aware of it, to resolve the Balkan conflicts before it becomes an European war, providing it acts without further delay.

All that needs to be done is to accept those Republics born of Yugoslavia's fragmentation -which are now sovereign States- into the Community. Europe, without modifying any of its internal political structures, could do this by allowing these new States to benefit from its customs and economic union regulations and by according them the associate status already granted to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

Once more, this will seem like a preposterous idea to many people. Yet, just as our Proposals for organizing Bosnia-Herzegovina into Regions (cf. our Letter 31 October 1992), now form the basis for the present United Nations project, this suggestion, which seeks to forge peace by linking the Yugoslavian Republics to the European Community, will soon seem perfectly valid.

Numerous advantages

Everything, in fact, points toward such a solution:

1. Integrating the Yugoslavian Republics, including Macedonia, into the European Community is the surest way for the Twelve to guarantee that borders on the Old Continent remain inviolable. European leaders have realized how their hasty recognition of the ex-Yugoslavian Republics only opened up a Pandora's Box of nationalist sentiment; they have also realized how this now threatens peace on the entire continent. If the new Yugoslavian States were admitted into the Community, the initiatives of those who wish to divide up Europe once more -this would be fatal for the Community- would be checked immediately.
2. Integrating the Yugoslavian Republics into the European Community would compel their governments to respect the same democratic rules as those that govern the other European States. Not only would their leaders be obliged to

strictly conform to laws protecting citizens and ethnic groups, but they would also have to consult the people, and not seek to deceive them as they have been doing, on decisions about their future. The proposed institutional process that our Foundation has made for restoring peace in the Balkans would thus be greatly facilitated.

3. Integrating the Yugoslavian Republics into the European Community would extend the European security zone to the Balkans. As a result, demilitarization of the region would become possible since existing structures such as the CSCE, the CIS, the WEU and even NATO would constitute a solid guarantee against outside aggression for the new States. This would not, of course, solve the problems linked to domestic security within the Republics themselves, but as the democracies in the west have achieved sufficient control of such techniques, they could serve as models for the new States.
4. Integrating the Yugoslavian Republics into the European Community would eliminate, both geographically and thus economically, the gap that separates Greece from the rest of Europe. The Yugoslavian region, in fact, constitutes a natural link between Western Europe and South-Eastern Europe, and adjoining it to the other twelve countries of the Community would consolidate Europe's mass by completing it, thereby giving the European Community zone the continuity which it presently lacks.

This operation would, of course, mainly advantage Yugoslavia, which would be able to benefit from a quick economic recovery. Europeans, however, would also benefit from it for, contrary to widespread opinion, Yugoslavia is not a poor country: it has many natural resources; its people are skilled and hardworking; it is very dynamic.

A very limited choice

To all those who remain unconvinced by these arguments, I would add that the price of integrating the Yugoslavian Republics into the European Community would be much less to pay than that of a possible war in the Balkans. Specialists have estimated that even a restricted military intervention in the ex-Yugoslavian area would be at least as costly as the Gulf War. Moreover, they are aware that even at this price peace is not guaranteed; there would still be the risk of a generalized conflict spreading to Southern Europe, with the consequences which we can all imagine.

The choices facing the European Community are, it seems to me, actually very limited: the Community can either let things deteriorate in the Balkans to the point of no return, but then a military intervention on its part will one day be necessary,

and the resulting amplification of the war would go beyond its control; or it can choose to be open and welcome the Yugoslavian Republics into its midst, thus bringing an end to a conflict which, by now, directly threatens its vital interests. Such an act, I would add, would show to the rest of the world that Europe had become a veritable political power, capable of taking decisive action in favour of peace. Europe, confronted with the worst tragedy on its continent since World War II, would demonstrate that it had begun to assume its responsibilities, even as its economic prosperity does not necessarily guarantee the security that its people's desire. If Europe can resolve the Yugoslavian crisis without having to resort to war, it will prove to the world that it has become a major power to be dealt with.

Let me say, in conclusion, that integrating the Yugoslavian Republics into the European Community would not pose any major problems. The States in question are not very big: their size approximates that of Belgium, the Netherlands or Portugal; altogether their population adds up to less than half the population of France. In other words, there are really no obstacles to the procedure I've suggested above.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*T*ime and again we said that the worst was still to come in the Yugoslav affair that the war would escalate to such an extent that peace in Europe would be directly threatened. Well, here we are! By adhering to an ultra-nationalist policy, leaders in Zagreb, like those in Belgrade, have caused a further increase in destructive violence. Finally, the world is beginning to realize that the whole of the Balkans may erupt, as they did at the beginning of the century.

Under no circumstances is war the means to achieving peace. In order to implement political solutions, this war, which bears certain resemblances to the most horrific wars of this century, due to its brutality, must be immediately brought to an end.

A three-point plan

I believe that there are three courses of action to be taken without delay.

1. Before the terrorism of the nationalist regimes, which are fighting over the Yugoslav territory, causes the war to spread to the whole of the Balkans, and beyond, we propose that Bill Clinton, or Boris Yeltsin organize a meeting to be attended by Helmut Kohl, John Major, François Mitterrand, Turgul Ozal (in his capacity as chairman of the Islamic Organization Conference) and Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Secretary General of the UNO). At this meeting they would agree on the only means of stopping this war without military intervention. By this, I mean they would decide on an effective embargo, which would isolate the warring Yugoslav republics from the rest of the world and prevent their leaders from obtaining weapons and ammunition. Unlike the existing embargo, this would not affect the civilian population, but it would put an end to the trafficking which is making a few people rich whilst causing the ruin of most. With no supplies, the armies and militia which are laying the country to waste would finally be forced to halt the violence and terror. Seeing them weakened, the civilian population would undoubtedly have the courage to finally speak out. At this meeting it would of course be essential for the statesmen to agree on a corresponding proposal to be put to the Security Council of the United Nations.

2. The second part of the plan involves organizing a conference of religious authorities, whose agreement would be a major contribution to peace. Our Foundation made this move two months ago, unfortunately without any effective result. The Foundation is reiterating its proposal to organize a meeting between the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church in Belgrade, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Zagreb and the Reis-ul-ulema of Sarajevo. The religious leaders are obviously not able to prevent fighting, but a formal commitment to unite their efforts in order to restore peace to former Yugoslavia, ceremonially witnessed by the world, and would undoubtedly have a determining influence on the course of events. Why should the "truce of God" not succeed where the efforts of diplomats have failed? In the final stages of this century, in which we have seen that materialism cannot provide people with the happiness they hope for, religion could prove to be a key force, the only one, maybe, which is capable of silencing weapons.
3. The third course of action involves associating the Yugoslav republics with the European Community. I have already expressed my conviction (cf. Letter N° 10) that such an association would compel all the republics of ex-Yugoslavia to adopt the same rules of democracy which govern the peoples of Western Europe. I would like to add that by including Albania in this association, the European Community would be defusing potential conflicts. Having lived under the yoke of communism for almost half a century, the peoples of Central Europe can still see no end to their suffering. By forming an association, the European Community would give them hope that their present hardship will not last forever.

A new role for the UNO

These three courses of action would create the conditions for a return to peace in former Yugoslavia. But they would not, of course, resolve the problem of democratization of the Yugoslav republics, nor the problem of their future relations with one another. Only the UNO, in close collaboration with the European Community, is able to carry out this task successfully, as it is a long and complex process.

I am not going to reiterate the proposals we are making in this respect, as the readers of this letter will shortly be receiving the detailed project for the republics of ex-Yugoslavia, which has been drawn up by our Foundation. I would like to add here, however, that whilst conducting peace negotiations, the UNO could play a decisive role in stopping the hostilities; by, first, bringing its forces up to the level required to maintain order, then giving these forces a more specific mission,

which would no longer be to "keep" the peace, but to "make" it, by disarming the belligerents and protecting the civilian population when it is in danger. This could only be done by applying a new United Nations resolution which modifies the mandate of these forces.

This new role for the UNO is essential for the settlement of the Yugoslav conflict, but also for resolving future conflicts in the world. For nothing would be more dangerous for world peace than a demonstration of the powerlessness of the United Nations in ex-Yugoslavia. By failing to command respect, the League of Nations discredited itself forever and was not able to prevent the Second World War.

We should not forget this precedent.

And we should remember that the Yugoslav problem is not, as people have said from the beginning, a problem of the coexistence of different ethnic groups, but of nationalism which has been fired up by extremist regimes. Croats, Serbs and Muslims, who all speak the same language, belong to the same people, the southern Slavs. Thus, there will be no solution to this crisis as long as people try and separate what was united by God.

Boris Vukobrat

President

LETTER N° 12
15 February 1993

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The danger of the Yugoslavian conflict spreading to the rest of the Balkans, and from there throughout all of Europe is now so great that stopping the war in this region has become a categorical imperative. It is true that the United States and Russia have expressed their intention to work together toward a political solution, but although this is certainly a step in the right direction, the possibility of a confrontation between these two powers should not be underestimated in the event of a diplomatic failure in resolving the Yugoslavian crisis.

We are all aware that at the root of this war are the Serbian, the Croatian, and the Bosnian political systems whose survival is dependent on the war, and that, as a consequence, political hyperbole and military escalation are their only means of momentarily forestalling the condemnation that their own people will sooner or later bring against them. We are also well aware that domestic problems in both the United States and Russia could very well work against the peace process if the conflict worsens or intensifies.

The war must therefore be stopped. Right away. By any means.

One summit, three measures

We had suggested (cf. my last letter) that the United States and Russia take things into their hands and work in close relation with Europe. This is now a reality since the Russians and the Americans have agreed to act together. So now, in order to bring the conflict to a rapid end, we suggest that the President of the United States and the President of Russia meet anywhere and why not in a city symbolic for the many peace treaties which have been negotiated and signed there in the past: I'm speaking, of course, about Paris.

This summit, the first between Mr. Bill Clinton and Mr. Boris Yeltsin, would only concern Yugoslavia. It would be entirely dedicated to determining the ways and means of imposing peace on those governments that live off of war and ruin their own people. It would demonstrate that the two "Big Powers" intend to put an end to the conflict and it would be a formal warning to all those who maintain their power through arms, hate, and violence. For those peoples who have suf-

ferred under such strong-arm tactics for so many months, this would be the first concrete sign that peace was finally on the horizon.

This summit, it seems to me, should adopt three measures to be implemented under the supervision of the United Nations:

1. Extend the embargo to include all of the belligerent parties as a means of finally cutting off the supply of arms, and munitions and money which allow the governments to carry on and get away with their slaughter of civilian populations. This embargo would not affect those products needed for survival, such as food, medicine etc., but it would be an obstacle between the belligerents and their suppliers, an impermeable wall which traffickers would not be able to get through.
2. Put the Russians and the Americans in charge of conducting the negotiations between Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia so that neither Sarajevo, Zagreb or Belgrade would be tempted to play off any existing or supposed rivalries between the two "Big Powers". Creating such a diplomatic "front" would further the cause of peace much more than the fruitless international discussions which, at present, allow the various participants in this war to pursue their manoeuvres in the field even as they play along in the negotiation process.
3. Dispatch, under the aegis of the United Nations, an international force of 45.000 to 50.000 men to Yugoslavia in order to bring a halt to the fighting and protect the people from the delusions of their leaders. This force would be equally made up of Russians, Americans and Europeans. In command would be a European, in order to emphasize the fact that the resolution of the Yugoslavian crisis is essential for the future of peace in Europe.

These three measures may not immediately restore peace in the Balkans, but they would contribute to creating a new climate and they would show the leaders of the Yugoslavian Republics that the world powers were firmly resolved to bring an end to this war.

Europe's Role

But should Europe, one might ask, be content to play a secondary role in the peace negotiations process? Would her only part be to direct military operations on the terrain in highly dangerous conditions?

Of course not!

Once assured that the hostilities would soon cease, Europe could proceed to make the gesture that would set the dynamics of peace in motion. This would consist of offering to bring the Yugoslavian Republics into immediate association with Europe, the only condition being that their governments respect the democratic laws already in place there. To be sure, Europe would stipulate that this opening up of its borders would not apply to the labour force, as this would only add to its own unemployment problem; but the free circulation of goods and people, the abolition of trade barriers, and the elimination of borders would end the isolation of the Balkans, which is one of the causes behind the tragic situation in Yugoslavia today.

It is not up to Europe to end the war ravaging Yugoslavia, as it has been frequently observed over the past few months. However, Europe does have the capacity to organize peace on a very concrete basis, that is, based on economy and commerce. They themselves benefited from the aid of the United States who helped them rise from their ruins and learn how to live together again after World War II, and so no one is in a better position than the Europeans to give the Yugoslavian peoples the support they will need. There cannot be any doubt that opening up the European Community to the ex-Yugoslavian Republics, from Slovenia to Macedonia, from Serbia and Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, would give them the jumpstart needed for peace. And Europe surely owes this to these peoples who are so close to her both geographically and historically.

By an overly hasty recognition of the Republics - their leaders had not even taken the measures needed to ensure a budding democracy, nor had they negotiated any sort of future - Europe contributed to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and thus to the outbreak of the war. If, however, Europe makes the gesture of welcoming these same Republics into her midst, guaranteeing the establishment of a truly active economic exchange, then she will be contributing decisively to the settlement of the conflict. Peace, I'm sure, will not return to the Balkans unless forceful measures are taken in terms of military action, and unless, at the same time, in the heart of Europe, a favourable economic structure is set up. The two "Big Powers" most certainly hold the keys to the first course of action; Europe holds the keys to the second.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*F*or the first time since war broke out in Yugoslavia, lay and religious intellectuals, from all the Yugoslav republics, have met to discuss the future. This meeting, which is a major event if one considers the gulf which separates these people in everyday life, took place on 23 February in one of the rare places where different races and peoples come together to discuss the problems they have in common. I am talking of course about UNESCO in Paris. The meeting was organized by UNESCO's Director General, Frederico Mayor, and it resulted - a further surprise - in a common declaration calling for peace and entente.

I was invited to the meeting and I took part, and I must confess that it gave me great hope.

People will object that intellectuals do not hold the power and are hardly in a position to change the course of events. Be that as it may, the entry of these people onto the scene, even just for a day, in camera, is very significant. Indeed, it bears witness to the fact that writers, artists, academics and journalists have realized that war is no solution to any problem and that the time is approaching when ideas will triumph over brute force. The meeting thus represents a step forward in solving the conflict which is laying Yugoslavia to waste, because it allows a voice other than that of roughnecks and demagogues to be heard.

We have not stopped repeating that the war will end on the day a way is found to start a dialogue between the brothers in arms. And what took place at UNESCO last week is the first tangible sign that this dream may become a reality.

Indeed, it was about time, because despite the fact that the New York negotiations have started again and that American parachute drops are being made over cut-off regions in Bosnia, the situation in former Yugoslavia is continuing to worsen.

All-out war

The war is being perpetrated by unscrupulous political leaders whose only means of salvation is the escalation of nationalism and violence. The civil population affected by the war is suffering from hunger, fear, cold and deprivation which leave it open to all kinds of excesses. And unfortunately the war seems to be intensifying. Even the major world powers are at a loss for how to deal with the deteriorating

situation and avoid the worst. The United States is supplying humanitarian aid in order to gain time and prepare its public opinion for more direct intervention. Russia is toughening its position because it fears the Yugoslav virus may be contagious. And Europe is not able to agree on what policy to adopt.

Although it is a terrifying thought, we have to admit that all the ingredients for a Balkan crisis like the one at the beginning of this century are there, and only immediate and drastic measures can prevent a repetition of that drama.

I am not going to reiterate the proposals which we have made in order to create the right conditions for a return to peace, in particular those which involve rebuilding former Yugoslavia on three political levels - Regions, Republics and Community, but I would like to highlight two major points which were a leitmotiv of the UNESCO round table.

1. The first of these points is the importance of ideas, once violence reaches absurd proportions and war transforms a country into a desert. Even if they are not aware of the fact, Yugoslav intellectuals can play an essential role in the peace process. Because they know how to express general ideas and emotions or sentiments in terms which are understood by most people, because they have the gift of communication, they are the only people today who can speak out and clearly say what the victims of this horrendous war are feeling - that the war has gone on for too long and that they desire to live together in harmony. Sceptics should remember great intellectuals such as Thomas Mann, Vercors, Benes, Camus, Brandt, Malaparte, Gramsci, Malraux, Popovic and Nator, during the Second World War, or more recently, Soljenytsin and Sakharov in the Soviet Union. There always comes a time in a conflict when writers and other intellectuals mobilize the energies around them by the sheer force of their thought. I believe that this moment has come for Yugoslav intellectuals.
2. The second point is the role that information and the media are playing in the Yugoslav drama. Everyone is aware that the arms embargo imposed by the UNO is not being respected by any party and that the "warlords" can obtain whatever instruments of death they desire in order to achieve their objectives. Everyone is also aware, however, that the war of the media is one of the main causes of the drama that former Yugoslavia is experiencing, and that the hostilities would never have reached this stage if information and ideas had freely circulated in the area. Therefore, the first priority, if peace is to return to the Balkans, is to re-establish communication between people and enable them to learn the truth. This can only be achieved through free circulation of news-

papers and books, and freely broadcast sounds and images.

Thus, whilst strengthening the embargo on weapons and lifting the embargo on food and medication, it is essential to lift the other embargo, which is on information and culture. It is not enough to offer political support to the independent media which still exist in former Yugoslavia, the official media also have to be freed up by applying the decisions of the CSCE on the freedom of information. UNESCO, which included the principle of free access to information in its charter, should firmly commit itself to this task, which is indispensable for peace.

An independent radio station

Leaders in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are aware that their power is very fragile and have therefore simply taken control of the media. Not only do they impose their one-sided views on their peoples, which falsify their perception and create a poisoned atmosphere, they are also accomplished in dealing with the foreign media, whom they supply with incomplete and deformed messages which then travel around the world. The result is that those who speak, as we do, of agreement, peace and reconciliation are muffled by those who make war and preach violence.

This is why I have suggested that UNESCO create an independent radio station in Paris which would broadcast objective information and commentaries both in former Yugoslavia and Europe. Political repression and war have caused dozens of very talented journalists to flee Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo and many other Yugoslav cities. It would thus be easy to form a team of media professionals who could relay things as they are, on the air.

Western governments have all the necessary means for such a medium at their disposal. And we know, having studied this matter in detail, that in a short space of time it is possible to set up a radio station along the same lines as the major independent stations of Europe. Once people are prepared to embark on such an adventure no technical obstacle is insurmountable.

Weapons will never silence weapons in what was Yugoslavia. But if its peoples, the victims in this war, finally see the truth, they will take it upon themselves to oust the unworthy leaders who are bringing them ever closer to doom.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

On 15 March the Forum du Futur in Paris, chaired by Jacques Baumel, a French member of parliament, former minister and Chairman of the International Diplomatic Academy, organized a colloquium on "The Dangers of a Balkan War", which met with widespread interest. In front of approximately two hundred people, including diplomats, army officials, journalists, industrialists and academics, five French experts on problems in Central Europe presented their views on the development of the conflict which is tearing former Yugoslavia apart. The lucidity and moderation with which they did so deserve praise.

The worst is still to come

I would like to briefly summarize the presentations here because they demonstrate a remarkable awareness of the seriousness of this conflict.

- Jacques Baumel, first of all, explained the stakes in the conflict. He dismissed all the belligerents and expressed the belief that only joint intervention by Russians, Americans and Europeans could put an end to the carnage. If this concerted effort is not made and if the war spreads beyond Bosnia-Herzegovina to Kosovo there is a real risk of another Balkan war. Nobody knows what might happen then and the international community will find itself dealing with formidable unknown factors.
- General Le Borgne expressed doubts as to whether the conflict would spread, but this did not stop him from emphasizing the absurdity of the UN soldiers' mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He pointed out that it is dangerous to make soldiers do work which is not their own and suffer one humiliation after another. In any case, it will be impossible to put an end to the war by stationing a few thousand soldiers in a country with such difficult terrain.
- Jacques Rupnik, a researcher at the Centre for International Studies and Research, was even more pessimistic. He analysed both the situation in Kosovo and Macedonia and the increase in tension in the Hungarian community in Vojvodina and concluded that the whole of Central Europe is being progressively destabilized, which could lead to a large scale confrontation right in the middle of the continent.

- Pierre Hassner, a professor at the Foundation for Political Science, was hardly more optimistic as far as the development of this conflict is concerned. He said that the Yugoslav war is perhaps, like the Spanish war, a forerunner of much more threatening conflicts, such as those which could tear apart the former USSR. "It seems to me," he said, "that in this affair we have repeated all the mistakes of the thirties."
- François Géré, a researcher at the Foundation for National Defence Studies and a specialist on the United States, analysed the American position and explained the reluctance of President Clinton to take military action in former Yugoslavia. The White House, as well as American public opinion and Pentagon and State Department officials, consider the Yugoslav matter to be an entirely European affair which the Europeans have to resolve themselves.

Diagnosis

The facts clearly stated by these renowned experts simply go to confirm what we have been saying here all along - that the worst is not already behind us, but is still to come. Jacques Baumel wanted one person directly concerned by the conflict to take the floor in this debate, so at his request I presented a diagnosis of the conflict which I would like to briefly outline here.

1. The only people who wanted this war were a handful of politicians, all former communists who have converted to ultra-nationalism and who wish to maintain their grip on power at any cost. The peoples did not want this conflict, but they have to suffer from it and have no alternative but to flee when they have the chance. This is born witness to by the millions of people who have fled the fighting without taking part, and perhaps more so by the refusal of young people to enlist in the Croat, Serb and Bosnian armies.
2. Those responsible for the war in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are using the media as a weapon, behaving like any totalitarian regime and using classic methods of ideological propaganda. They are aided, quite unwillingly, by Western countries, where the press continues to print their statements whilst ignoring the voices of their opponents and where politicians are maintaining an embargo on books and newspapers which prevents the Yugoslav peoples from realizing that they are being manipulated.
3. Yugoslav peoples well and truly exist as such. 85% of these peoples are Slavs and 70% of them speak the same language - Serbo-Croatian. They have lived together and with other peoples for centuries. They practice different religions, just like Protestants, Jews and Catholics in France, Germany or Switzerland. Fur-

thermore, due to mixed marriages many Yugoslav families are a combination of Serb and Muslim, such that dividing up territory according to so called ethnic criteria would mean splitting up most families.

4. It is dangerous to use the term "ethnic minority". The current war is the direct result of this. The peoples of former Yugoslavia are so inextricably intertwined, that an ethnic group can form a majority in one region and a minority in the next. Therefore, people should avoid reasoning in terms of minorities and majorities because this can lead into the trap of "ethnic cleansing". It is precisely for this reason that I do not approve of the Vance-Owen solution in its present form.
5. The war is being perpetuated largely because people are unable to communicate. People in former Yugoslavia have no access to independent media, they cannot move around, they are isolated by economic difficulties and therefore they live in citadels and are unable to live normally like other civilized peoples in Europe. At the same time they suffer from the arbitrary actions of small groups which use violence and hatred in order to impose their will. It is this system which has to be broken down if the conflict is to be brought to an end.
6. The conflict which is laying my country to waste provides a cover for some of the lowest forms of trafficking - arms trafficking of course, but also drug dealing and money laundering which have proliferated in the ruins of Yugoslavia. And major Western financial institutions seem to have no qualms about accepting enormous amounts of capital from former Yugoslavia. There are powerful forces which would like the war to continue because it is an opportunity to make huge profits. But it must be emphasized that the danger for Europe is very great because the war in Yugoslavia is like a cancerous growth at the centre of the Old Continent and an immeasurable threat to democracy.

The only conclusion to be drawn from all this, as experts said throughout the colloquium and as I have been repeating here for months, is that all possible means must be used to stop the war. This is the most pressing concern for civilized nations today.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*S*lowly but surely the situation in what was once Yugoslavia is deteriorating.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia the violence is steadily increasing and the atrocities are multiplying. In spite of the courage shown by certain UN commanders, their forces are having enormous difficulty in fulfilling their mission, and there are alarming rumours that the conflict is likely to spread to Kosovo and Macedonia.

In New York, where diplomats are attempting to find a peaceful solution, the negotiations appear to be constantly overtaken by developments in the field. The military situation is worsening so quickly that whenever it seems that an agreement is about to be reached, after much effort, the text is already outdated because of intensified fighting.

In other words, we are witnessing the worst. By this, I mean an escalation of the conflict, a dialogue between people who do not listen to each other, the massacre of civilians, general destruction of the country's infrastructures and the spread of the conflict to new regions. The powers of Europe - Germany, France, Italy and Great Britain, who thought that the fervour of the fighters would diminish with time and hoped that a peaceful solution could be found by being patient, are beginning to understand that the Yugoslav conflict could spark a third Balkan war.

The leaders of America and Russia, who until now have taken great care to stay out of the debate, are finally realizing that by doing so they have only encouraged the extremists on both sides who are profiting from the Yugoslav drama. Unfortunately, the United States has not managed to clarify its position on former Yugoslavia. In Washington, the hesitation of foreign policy makers gives the impression that no official line has been adopted and that the teams responsible for putting a policy into action have not been appointed. In Moscow, the situation inside the country is obviously of greater concern to leaders than the Yugoslav problem, despite the fact that, unlike the United States, Russia does already have a policy.

The superpowers must intervene

I have said here a number of times that only the joint intervention of the two superpowers would halt the process which is leading the whole of Europe towards

a re-enactment of the tragic events of the beginning of this century. I would like to add that, if an even worse scenario is to be avoided, it is essential for them to intervene very soon. By allowing the worst to occur, the tinderbox of the Balkans will be ignited and the whole continent subsequently engulfed.

I believe that this action should be twofold.

- Firstly, military action. At some point it is going to be necessary to intervene directly in order to separate the warring parties and simultaneously impose a strict embargo on weapons and ammunition. Everyone is aware that in spite of the measures taken by the UNO, the supply of heavy artillery, shells, bullets and grenades has not been interrupted and the belligerents can carry on their killing unhindered. The intelligence services of the superpowers know perfectly well who is controlling this trafficking, how access is gained and who the recipients are. Therefore, it is in fact possible to take effective action and block the flow by cutting off land, sea and air access to former Yugoslavia. The United States, Europe and Russia have all the necessary means at their disposal to do both these things, without running the risk of getting caught up in the inferno themselves.
- Secondly, political action. There is no point in trying to arrange an agreement between people whose only means of survival is war. The people in power in Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo are prepared to hold onto it by any means. It is only by stirring up nationalist sentiment that they have been able to rise to power and cling onto it, and now they will do their utmost to continue along the same path, even if this means imposing terror and destitution on their people. However, their power is not of the kind which will enable them to hold out against the United States and Russia, if these two countries clearly demonstrate their determination to put an end to the conflict. They are only holding out at the moment because the positions of Washington and Moscow are not sufficiently clear. Should these two countries take a definite stance, the current leaders in former Yugoslavia will see their power crumble.

The Russian and American Presidents will undoubtedly have a lot on their minds when they meet in a few days' time, but the situation in the Balkans is becoming so dangerous that they should take advantage of this "summit" to agree on a common policy and to implement it. Stopping the war in Yugoslavia is now an absolute necessity, and, of all current problems, peace in the Balkans is the most serious. If the superpowers do not make this vital decision, in a few months' time they could find themselves facing even greater dangers.

France's role

The European Community can also play a role in creating a collective awareness of the risks posed by the situation in former Yugoslavia. Having made many errors in assessing the situation, the EC has now fully understood just what is at stake in this conflict, which is now of direct concern to it, and some member countries can play an important role in resolving this problem. In particular France, which has been steadily increasing its commitment to peace since fighting broke out and therefore has a certain degree of influence in the region.

As France is now coming out of a long phase in which its action was limited by the uncertainties of its elections, and new politicians are coming to power, it is in a position to contribute even further to resolving the crisis. In fact, the fate of Yugoslavia has always occupied a special place in French diplomacy and it is one subject on which the French President and the new majority agree.

Now, more than ever, my country, which has been virtually torn apart, needs the help of its friends. It should not be abandoned at a time when it is in such complete disarray. France has also had many dark moments in its history, but has always been able to find unity again through common sense and determination. Now it can surely help to convince Russia and the United States that it is time to impose peace on the Balkans.

Let us hope that France succeeds while there is still time.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

A special presentation of the Russian version of "Proposals for a New Commonwealth of the Republics of Ex-Yugoslavia", recently published by our Foundation, was held in Moscow on 30 March 1993. Among the one hundred and fifty people gathered together on this occasion, organized by the Institute of Economic and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, were many important figures and academicians from all over Russia. Notably, six high-ranking Russian dignitaries took the opportunity to comment on and publicly express their support of our project: Vitaly V. Zhurkin, Academy Member and Director of the Institute of International Relations of the Academy of Sciences; Gavril K. Popov, former Mayor of Moscow and a member of the Presidential Advisory Commission of the Russian Federation; Aleksandr N. Yakoviev, Academy Member and Vice-President of the Gorbachev Foundation; Anatoli A. Sobotchak, Mayor of St. Petersburg and member of the Presidential Advisory Commission of the Russian Federation; Yuri M. Lujkov, Mayor of Moscow; Gregory A. Yavlinski, economist, administrative council member in the Nizhni-Novgorod district, and the author of "Five Hundred Days".¹

Of greater importance, perhaps, was the announcement also made on this occasion by Anatoli Sobotchak regarding the forthcoming publication in Paris, Moscow and Belgrade of a book of Proposals that concern the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Issued within the framework of the studies being carried out by our Foundation on the states of change in Central and Eastern European countries, this work will be co-signed by Gavril Popov, Aleksandr Yakoviev, Anatoli Sobotchak, Gregory Yavlinski and Alexis A. Alexeiev. It will be published by the Swiss editor, CopArt.

Regions and Republics

I bring these two events to your attention because the idea of founding a democracy based on Regions in an area which has long been closed off from the rest of the world, and subject to the dictatorship of a one-party system and a collectivist regimen, seems to be slowly but surely catching on. Our proposal, which started

¹ Peace and Crises Management Foundation will soon release talks from this conference; this document will be sent to the recipients of our Letter.

from a simple common-sense idea based on the close observation of existing realities in the Balkans, has thus in less than a year become - as a result of our work in collaboration with top worldwide specialists in the field - a political project of potential use not only in reconstructing the Yugoslavian area, but also to the great Russian Federation.

This is even more significant given the fact that the longstanding western democracies have taken little more than a polite interest in this idea. Merely content to acknowledge our Proposals, they have not taken them into consideration in seeking a solution to the crisis that is ravaging the Balkans. Too self-assured to propose political programs diverging from their own, or, conversely, too insecure to stray from the beaten path they have followed pell-mell throughout their own History, these nations have chosen neither to approve nor disapprove of our Proposals.

Their leaders support these Proposals in private but refrain from making any comments in public, as if such ideas, put to use, could turn out to be dangerous; similarly, this attitude is reflected in the media in the form of a dogged silence, indeed, of a rather shameless censorship.

Even as I deplore this absence of reaction as regards the West, I am struck by the interest that those in the East have shown for our Proposals. This is proof, for me, that despite the overwhelming difficulties facing their leaders, these nascent societies already possess qualities such as imagination and the ability to look towards the future and to imagine it alternatively. Though their voices have been silenced for over half a century, they will burst forth again on the world scene with new strength and the full desire to make up for lost time on the road to democracy, to free-trade, to a new market economy.

Founding a democracy based on the historical, geographical and cultural realities which define the different Regions within a modern Republic may not interest the West at all; in the East, however, this is the basis on which great hopes are being built.

A Natural Corrective

In the Slavic world where States have often been artificially demarcated, usually by force and violence, it is no coincidence that the Regions have remained natural entities assuring the daily life and the co-existence of their various peoples. Though forced to accept arbitrary borders and to conform to abstract political molds, the different communities have been able to maintain their identity within a regional configuration.

This is the reality which needs to be restored to the CIS and the Balkans because it is the only one which can incorporate both the principle of inviolable borders - without which there can be no stable international order - and the democratic organization of a society. This is why we have chosen the Balkans as our privileged experimental ground.

The fact that leading members of the Russian community support us in this endeavour, and that they have elected to take the same path, greatly encourages us to persevere in the difficult task we have undertaken. Given the situation in the East today, only a new revolution, this time founded on realities and not on myths, is capable of resolving the innumerable contradictions leftover from the past.

Democracy, as it has been instituted over the centuries in the West, is not an easily attainable ideal. It is thus an illusion - a dangerous one which must be abolished at all costs - to think that democracy in both political and economic terms can be instituted over a period of several months in countries that have never known such a system. The only way to progress towards this goal is to create an environment which will gradually allow it to take root; hence, to proceed within a natural configuration.

There is no substitute for Regions whose contours have been traced by History for they have always existed, and their inhabitants, like their various peoples, have always felt at home there. What other configuration could thus be more appropriate?

Boris Vukobrat

President

Le Monde

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EX-YOUGOSLAVIE PROPOSITION

*par Jean Mattéoli**

ANS le concert discordant des idées qui sont émises ici et là pour mettre fin à la guerre de Yougoslavie, il «mi est une qui, récemment, m'a frappé. C'est colle qui imprègne un petit livre aussi original que surprenant, dont le titre est à lui soul un programma: *Propositions pour une nouvelle Communauté tins Républiques de l'ancienne Yougoslavie*.

L'auteur, quo je connais bien, est yougoslave; ni serbe, ni croate, ni bosniaque, mais simplement yougoslave et n'ayant pas l'intention d'acquérir une autre nationalité, alors même qu'i pourrait lue, par ton origine, sa famille et son passé, aussi bien serbe que croate ou bosniaque. Le livre, quant à lui, énonce une idée simple et riche de conséquences si on veut bien le considérer avec attention; if rappelle que la Yougoslavie a toujours été composée d'entités géographiques qui ont souvent été indépendantes dans le cours de l'Histoire et au sein desquelles les hommes de t du te s origines, de toutes religions, de toutes cultures vivaient harmonieusement. Sans aller jusqu'à dresser une liste de ces régions, qui constituent en quelque sorte la structure naturelle de la Yougoslavie, I donne des exemples qui, en effet, parlent d'eux-mêmes : la Dalmatie, l'Istrie, l'Herzégovine, la région de Dubrovnik, etc.

Imaginer un partage de l'ancienne Yougoslavie selon des critères ethniques, explique Boris I. Vukobrat, n'est pas seulement criminel, mais absurde, pour la simple raison qu'il faudrait alors diviser bon nombre de familles. Ce qu'il faut retrouver, c'est précisément l'ordre qui régna durant treize siècles lorsque chacun vivait en bonne intelligence avec son voisin sans prétendre lui imposer sa loi parce qu'il était différent. Et cet ordre ne peut s'organiser que dans le cadre façonné par l'Histoire.

L'autour de cette suggestion, révolutionnaire dans le climat actuel qui règne dans les Balkans et pourtant parfaitement rationnelle, ne se limite pas k l'énoncé d'un principe, aussi raisonnable soit-il. Il suggère que les régions historiques de l'ancienne Yougoslavie deviennent les cellules de base de chacune des Républiques reconnues par la communauté internationale - ta Croatie, la Bosnie, l'Herzégovine, la Serbie, le Monténégro - ou qui ne tarderont sans doute pas è l'être - la Macédoine - et qu'elles soient toutes dotées d'une grande autonomie. Plus le pouvoir politique, administratif et économique sera proche des citoyens, écrit-i en substance, et plus te cohabitation des hommes sera harmonieuse. Le système imaginé est en réalité

très proche de celui qui gouverne la Suisse et les Etats-Unis: il paraît bien adapté à ces Etats multiethniques et multi religieux que sont toutes les Républiques de l'ancienne Yougoslavie.

Et, comme il faut bien que ces dites Républiques réapprennent à vivre ensemble comme l'ont toujours fait leurs devancières dans le passé, Boris I. Vukobrat préconise l'institution d'une communauté aux liens très souples mais capable d'assumer les responsabilités que les Etats ne peuvent assumer. A bien des égards, le schéma qu'il suggère est celui qui a conduit les douze pays du Marché commun à édifier l'Union européenne: la principale différence est qu'il propose de brûler les étapes afin de permettre aux Républiques de se relever rapidement de leurs ruines.

Boris I. Vukobrat est non seulement un bon économiste, mais un chef d'entreprise avisé qui a fait de son groupe de sociétés l'un des premiers de son secteur. Lorsqu'il aborde ces questions, il sait du quoi il parle et sa double expérience de la gestion des affaires dans le monde occidental et dans l'ancien monde communiste lui permet de faire des propositions très concrètes: son discours est empreint d'un solide bon sens qui mérite d'être entendu par tous ceux qui, de bonne foi, cherchent une solution au terrible drame yougoslave.

**Jean Mattéoli est président du Conseil économique et social*

J'avoue avoir lu avec un grand intérêt ce livre même si je ne partage pas toutes ses conclusions. Mais ce qui m'a le plus frappé dans ces propositions: d'un Yougoslave à l'usage de ses concitoyens, c'est l'extraordinaire optimisme qui s'en dégage. Tout en reconnaissant que l'on peut qualifier ses propositions d'utopiques, Boris I. Vukobrat rappelle d'un mot que l'idée de la construction européenne est née dans l'esprit de Coudenhove-Kalergi, de Maurice Druon ou de Jean Monnet avant la seconde guerre mondiale ou tandis qu'elle battait son plein; et pour bien faire partager son optimisme, il écrit: « Puisque les utopies d'hier sont devenues en Europe la réalité d'aujourd'hui, pourquoi les espoirs d'aujourd'hui ne deviendraient-ils pas la réalité yougoslave de demain ? »

Alors que de cette malheureuse Yougoslavie, déchirée et meurtrie, que nous aimions tant ne s'élèvent plus que des bruits de bottes et des cris de haine, je trouve pour ma part réconfortant que se fasse entendre la voix d'un homme qui n'a pas renié son pays et qui parle de paix, de réconciliation, d'espoir. Par les temps qui courent, admettons-le, ce n'est pas si fréquent.

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Behind the reluctance of Europe and the United States to intervene in the Yugoslavian crisis there are many different reasons and motives. But one reason which is fundamental lies in the fact that the Europeans and the Americans see this conflict as just another episode in a kind of immemorial tribal war dating back to the beginning of time. This idea underlies all the analyses which can be read on the subject and serves to justify the abstention of governments, their slowness to react under urgent circumstances, their unwillingness to become caught up in what they consider to be a fatal process.

The thesis, crudely stated, can be resumed as follows: the different peoples living in the Yugoslavian area have never ceased to fight each other throughout their History. Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, Bosnians, Montenegrins are naturally violent and prejudiced. Incapable of living together in peace, they only know how to destroy, slaughter and exterminate each other. From these premises the logical conclusion is: let the inevitable happen. When the victims number in the millions, when the combatants have no force left, then peace will come of its own accord. So there's nothing else to do but to wait!

Thirteen Centuries of Harmony

The men or women in the street, in Paris, New York, London, Bonn or Madrid, may not have enough historical background to recognize the tragic error - as well as the great injustice - on which this argument is based. But the politicians, journalists, diplomats and academics who go along repeating this refrain, thus contributing to the propagation of the myth, do not have the same excuse. If they took the time to read their History books before they talked about war, they would see that, contrary to their allegations, the Southern Slavs have lived on good terms together for thirteen centuries; up until the twentieth century, to be exact.

As these Southern Slavs were used to living in States with changeable borders that were altered to please the dominant empires surrounding them, since they practiced tolerance by necessity - for their country lay at the crossroads of three great religions: Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim - it would never have occurred to them to embark on a campaign of mutual destruction. Certainly, they had the reputation of being formidable warriors, and, like every European nation in the past, they

would occasionally take up arms against their neighbours for brief periods of time. But ethnic clashes were unthinkable for the very good reason that the peoples themselves had greatly intermixed. A perfect example of their harmonious and natural co-existence was to be found in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Peace reigned in the Balkans during these thirteen centuries because life there was spontaneously organized within regions which were constituted by well-defined boundaries. These regions, which have been traced by History and shaped by geography, represented a true homeland for the men, women and children who lived there; rules and institutions were set up to guarantee that the beliefs and convictions of each person would be respected. Dalmatia, Istria, Herzegovina, the Dubrovnik region, and many other regions retained their distinctive characteristics. In their relationship to the reigning central power, which was usually quite far away, they enjoyed great autonomy, and it would have never crossed the mind of any of their citizens to set about killing each other off.

But this sensible, coherent well-balanced political system, which was perfectly adapted to the Balkans, came apart in modern times. The great powers that arose attempted to impose their centralizing and authoritarian systems on populations who up until then had been living in small territorial entities where power was not far removed from the individual. An infernal process was set in motion which has since turned Yugoslavia into what it is today: a land of ruin that its own civilian populations must flee in desperation as they try to escape the bloody atrocities committed by small armed groups. Communism, for more than half a century, held the pieces of this puzzle together by force; but with Tito gone and his successors locked in a vicious struggle for his succession, hate, encouraged by some to consolidate their power, began to take over the natural kindness of these peoples.

But the fact remains, and it cannot be emphasized enough, that this is only a recent phenomenon, for intolerance is not part of the Yugoslavian tradition. It is, rather, the negation of this tradition.

Back to the Source

I have already said this, but I'll repeat it again: we will not put an end to this senseless war by accepting the unacceptable, that is, by an ethnic-based partitioning of the former Yugoslavian territories. Rather, if the process is pushed to the limit as the extremists wish, we will only end up setting off a hundred-year war which, in turn, will probably develop into a more widespread conflict, as has already happened in the past.

In order to restore peace in the Balkans, we should learn from History: first of all, stop believing - or pretending to believe - that the Yugoslavian peoples like to slaughter each other; remove those political leaders who seek to hold onto their own power by pitting one side against the other; refuse to accept the idea of dividing up the Yugoslavian area according to ethnic criteria; return to the logic of old, in which people's lives were shaped by historical and geographical realities; and, finally, give the Regions back their former institutional and political role of organizing society.

In adopting the myth of an ancestral hate deeply dividing the Yugoslavian peoples, Europe and the United States may be able to keep their conscience clear, but what they need is to open their eyes before it is too late: peace will not come to the Balkans as long as Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians, Orthodox Christians, Catholics, and Muslims cannot be assured of living together as they did in the past. And this will be made possible only by reinstating the indisputable entity of the Region within the boundaries of those Republics born out of ex-Yugoslavia.

I would like to add that this holds true not only for my country, but for others in Europe, for example, where many outright or potential conflicts could be avoided in the future if, rather than looking solely toward the State as the only viable entity, we are willing to begin taking regional realities into consideration.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

On Wednesday, 2 June 1993 in the main auditorium of the Economic and Social Council in Paris there is to be an event of the kind History likes to single out as representing a major political watershed. This event will be the presentation of the "Proposals for Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)" jointly drawn up by five notable Russian personalities, and to be published in three versions, Russian, French, and English, by the editor CopArt.

I am devoting the present Letter from the Foundation to this very special occasion because of three important features which I wish to point out:

The first one is that the authors of this book are all top-level political leaders:

- Sergueï S. Alexeiev, a renowned lawyer, headed the first Constitutional Commission on Soviet History; he is a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the Russian Federation.
- Aleksandr N. Yakovlev, a member of the Academy of Sciences, was one of Mikhail Gorbachev's closest collaborators and is presently Vice-President of the Foundation set up by Gorbachev and the President of the Russian-American Foundation in Moscow.
- Gregori A. Yavlinski, one of the prominent reformers, is an eminent economist and the author of the economic program known as the "Five Hundred Days"; he is an economic adviser for the Nizhni-Novgorod region.
- Gavril K. Popov, former Mayor of Moscow, is also an economist and a member of the Presidential Advisory Commission of the Russian Federation; he is President of the International University of Moscow.
- Anatoli A. Sobchak is the Mayor of St. Petersburg; as a lawyer, he contributed to the present plan for the Russian Constitution and he is also part of the Presidential Advisory Commission of the Russian Federation.

There could not be a more competent team of men dedicating their thought and energy to the future of this immense Commonwealth of nations, created out of the disintegrated USSR Political analysts, scholars, economists, and lawyers, these five men are also familiar with power, which is indispensable to the future success of any democratic program in Russia and the CIS.

A Tribute to France

The second feature of this gathering that we are organizing on 2 June is that it is to be held in Paris, with the participation of the five authors and in the presence of two personalities of note: Mr. Jean Matteoli, Chairman of the Economic and Social Council, which is the third Constitutional Assembly of France; and Mr. Maurice Druon, Permanent Secretary of the French Academy.

The fact that these Russian political leaders have chosen to present the resume of their work in the French capital, and that this presentation will take place in the Palais d'Iena, is highly symbolic. For my part, I interpret this as proof that the ties of friendship and solidarity between Russia and France are stronger than ever, and that they can only be deepened by the immense changes taking place in Moscow.

The "Proposals for Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States" being presented in Paris on 2 June represent, I believe, an important step in the democratization process occurring throughout Eastern and Central Europe. Written by clear-sighted men who desire with all their heart to help their country through its transformation, these Proposals contain a loftiness of vision reminiscent of those texts written two centuries ago by the Founding Fathers of the United States of America. And I consider their being brought out in France to be a sign of destiny for Russia and for the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Our Foundation's Role

The third feature that I would like to bring up is the fact that our Foundation is at the origin of this book.

The five men who co-sign this work saw in our Proposals for Yugoslavia a potential model for all of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, and they joined forces to reflect on the political destiny of their own country. Taking as a their starting point the relationship between Regions, Republics and the Commonwealth of States which we had already laid out, they decided to divide the task between them in order to come up with an overall plan for Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Their work is exactly in keeping with our reflections on the Slavic world, in general, and on Yugoslavia, in particular.

This is important because the Peace and Crises Management Foundation was created precisely for the purpose of proposing sensible and pacific solutions for the passage from communism to democracy and from collectivism to a market economy. For, indeed, this double passage poses the same problems for every government, whatever their national particularities may be. What is most impor-

tant, therefore, is to have a flexible ground plan in place to propose to the former communist countries.

We will have fulfilled our role if our reflections and our work on this subject contribute, even just a little, to helping make the passage from one political State to another a smoother one. And this is why 2 June is such an important date for us. If, as we believe, this turns out to be the starting point of a great debate between East and West in Europe, we will have achieved the first of our goals.

This, however, will not mean the end to our quest for a happier and more peaceful future. On the contrary, it will serve to encourage us in continuing the task we have set for ourselves.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

You may be a little surprised to receive this letter a few days late, but I thought it important to inform you as soon as I could about the extraordinary meeting which took place in Paris on 2 June 1993.

On that day, as you will remember, five eminent Russian figures came to Paris to present their Proposals for Russia and the Republics of the CIS. These five men were: Sergueï Alexeiev, Gavril Popov, Anatoli Sobchak, Grigori Yavlinski and Alexandre Yakovlev; having come together under the dome of the Palais d'Iéna, headquarters of France's Economic and Social Council, the third Constitutional Assembly of the French Republic, they each spoke in turn before a semicircle of two hundred people.

The personal distinction of each of the authors of this book¹ was very impressive but the audience itself was not any less distinguished. Among the numerous ambassadors, political officials, heads of major companies, and journalists to be seen in the auditorium were Mr. Maurice Druon, Permanent Secretary of the French Academy, Mrs. Hélène Carrere d'Encausse, Sir Fitzroy McLean and Mrs. Anne Lauvergeon, Assistant Secretary-General to the Office of the President of the Republic.

It was, as a matter of fact, a meeting of some of the most illustrious minds of our time from France and Russia. And this is why I feel that 2 June 1993 will go down as a significant date in the Histories of these two countries.

Peace through Solidarity

The opening address was made by the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mr. Jean Mattéoli, who started off by observing that this meeting was indeed an exceptional event. After briefly evoking the history of Russia, he went on to describe the remarkable work done by the five authors of the "Proposals", and he hoped that it would lead the way to an equitable and lasting accord between the countries of the CIS.

¹ "Proposals for Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)" was published in Russian, French and English by the editors of Copart.

Seconding these views, Mr. Maurice Druon then paid tribute to the work carried out by our Foundation, at the same time touching on the great difficulties we are encountering due to the prevailing situation in Central and Eastern Europe.

After this double introduction, each of the authors came forward to speak about their contribution to the "Proposals for Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States". I will not elaborate on their words in detail, for to sum them up in a few sentences would not do them justice;² I will just say here that all five speakers insisted on the immediate imperative of endowing the CIS with a practical content. If we are to prevent what is happening in Yugoslavia from happening in the ex-URSS, they said, the legal and institutional structures which will allow our various peoples to live together in peace must be set up without further delay. Only democracy can solve the problem arising from the abrupt disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Those who read our Letter know the extent to which our Foundation is concerned with this issue, certainly one of the most serious issues confronting the modern world today. Our readers should also know, however, that we are not the only ones working to determine the ways and means of making the difficult transition stage from totalitarianism to democracy a successful one. In fact, the great merit of the 2 June meeting was to demonstrate in a formal way that men and women from different horizons and different countries share in the same preoccupation and show the same determination.

I would like to point out here that the idea of establishing - in the countries which have freed themselves of the yoke of communism - a democracy based on strong autonomous regional structures is slowly but surely gaining ground. It is an idea which is valid not only for countries such as the former Yugoslavia, for whom it offers a solution to the conflicts now tearing it apart, but even more, perhaps, for a huge country like Russia, as well as for the countries of Old Europe. For though these latter believe themselves immune to the torment of nationalism, they too will have deal with it when their time comes.

Building a Future

In the short term, I do not think that the 2 June meeting will bring about any changes in Russia and the CIS. But I do believe that it will have significant long-term effects.

²We will soon issue a detailed description of this event.

It is quite remarkable, as Mr Jean Mattéoli pointed out with emphasis, that such high-ranking Russian personalities agreed to work together on a single volume dedicated to their ideas regarding the future; it would be hard to find another such gesture in recent times. The fact that these five prominent leaders, two of whom are involved in the drawing up of the new Russian Constitution, chose to be seated one next to the other in such a symbolic place in order to declare their common hope of building a true democracy in Russia is a sign that great changes are in store for their.

Our Foundation was, no doubt, only an instrument of destiny in this affair. But I would like to conclude by saying that we are proud to have arranged and organized this event. If we needed a reason to persevere in the rather thankless mission we have undertaken, it would be found in the outstanding round of speeches that we heard on 2 June in the Palais d'Iéna. Everywhere around the world institutions such as ours must encourage leaders to meet and talk, outside of the well-worn official circles, if lasting peace is to be achieved.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*A*s this past June was very an eventful month for our Foundation, I decided to wait until 1 July in order to tell you about it.

While tensions continue to rise in the Balkans where a policy of forced ethnic segregation is being practiced with no further restraint since the great powers have chosen to abstain, our Foundation has been continuing to broaden its field of action.

It is our belief at the present time that, far from resolving the Yugoslav question, the solution being imposed on Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Serbian and Croatian governments will lead to greater chaos not only in the Balkan area, but throughout Central Europe as well. Such a solution is wrong because the divisions imposed on the terrified populations are artificial. In the end, there fore, this will never make -a lasting solution; it will only serve to further aggravate existing problems.

Unwilling or unable to make the political leaders - those that use war to keep themselves in office - see any reason, we have decided to move resolutely in the direction we have laid out for ourselves: the one which, sooner or later, will lead to the creation of a commonwealth of States made up of highly autonomous multi-ethnic regions.

We have thus been able to participate in various initiatives which I feel it would useful to let you know about.

The Beaver Creek Conference

The first of these initiatives gave me the opportunity, in connection with the American Enterprise Institute's 12th annual conference held in Beaver Creek, Colorado, to meet four former heads of state or of government: President Gerald Ford, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Lord Callaghan, and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt.

Initiated by ex-President Gerald Ford, these yearly meetings have been going on for over ten years. The four statesmen meet, along with other prominent American figures, to discuss the world's great problems, to exchange new information and to take a common stand on questions of general interest. Other persons who have experience in one specific area or another may be asked to come and participate.

The meeting that I was invited to was held in a private location on 17 June. There, I was able to present in detail the Foundation's Proposals for settling the Yugoslav question.

As a measure of discretion which I'm sure you will understand, I cannot enter into the content of this discussion here except to say that it focused on the conditions for restoring peace in ex-Yugoslavia and, beyond this primary objective, on the formation of a new Commonwealth of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia.

Given that the recipients of this Letter are already familiar with our Foundation's Proposals, I will not go over the details of this plan which has come to be recognized as a prudent and pragmatic one. I would like to say, however, that the four eminent men whom I met with in Beaver Creek asked me to put down in writing a plan which could potentially bring an end to the war in the ex-Yugoslavian territories, this being the topic which was discussed at length during our meeting.

From the UN to the White House

Two other important meetings were also part of the agenda on this trip to the United States.

The first was with the Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations in charge of political issues, Mack Gouling; the second was with Gennone Walker, special assistant to President Bill Clinton and head of the National Security Council (NSC).

Coming within the context of the explanatory campaign our Foundation has undertaken since the beginning of the year, and coming after the presentation of our Proposals at the Moscow Academy of Sciences in March, these meetings gave me the opportunity to insist on two specific points:

The first one is that the war which is devastating ex-Yugoslavia must be stopped at all costs. Not only because the civilian population is victim to a most atrocious and unjust aggression, but also because the forced division of the territory on ethnic terms will only, in the end, exacerbate the conflict and cause it to spread to the rest of the Balkans. By artificially separating communities which have always lived together, those responsible for this historical injustice are setting the conditions for a much more dangerous explosion which, sooner or later, will set off the entire region and draw Europe into a new Balkan war. The international community, rather than submitting to the law of the strongest - as it seems to want to do - should step up the pressure against this ethnic partitioning which would only be an overture to all the extremists in the world and would serve to justify any exaction.

The second point is that the only possible solution to the conflict tearing apart what was once Yugoslavia is the formation of a commonwealth of Republics endowed with strong regional structures: a sort of confederation based not on ethnic entities, but on multi-ethnic regions which History has delineated and which naturally shape the political, economic and social life in this part of the world. We will not bring an end to the war by imposing on these people a solution which is not in keeping with their ancestral customs and their highest aspirations, but rather by allowing them to live tranquilly side by side as they have done throughout the past centuries. Enough examples of this type of co-existence can be found in the modern world, which means that it should be possible to reconstruct such a structure in the former Yugoslavian region within a reasonable amount of time and in a peaceful way.

In any case, those who have been driven from their homes have only one desire: to come back home. This could lead either to endless conflict or, if the homecoming is properly handled, to laying the ground for lasting peace.

The main impression that I got during the conversations with my hosts on the other side of the Atlantic was of their great sense of helplessness before this human and political tragedy.

Without condemning anyone in particular, the different people I spoke to made it clear that the solution adopted by the international community - that of the hasty and ill-prepared recognition of the Yugoslavian Republics' declared independence - was the worst one possible. And all of them said they were greatly concerned about the effects ensuing events would have on world peace.

I don't know whether the Proposals I presented in the name of the Foundation for Peace and Crises Management will convince them or whether they will act on the basis of these Proposals, but it is my feeling that the idea of regionalizing the Yugoslavian area within the existing Republics is gradually gaining ground. At any rate, the reactions to this idea were very positive, which proves at least that they are realistic.

A Colloquium in Belgrade

All of these themes and many others were at the center of the debate which took place in Belgrade on 16 and 17 June, a debate of great symbolic value.

Organized by our Foundation and the Institute of International Economy and Politics of Belgrade, this colloquium, whose focus was our Proposals for ex-Yugoslavia

and the book of Proposals for the CIS countries which we have just published through Editions CopArt (cf. my last Letter), brought together seventy noted personalities not only from Serbia, but from a diversity of diplomatic, media, academic and scientific spheres. It showed how much ground has been gained by our ideas regarding the creation of a new commonwealth of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia.

I will not go into detail here as regards the different talks given during the two days' work since they are soon to be published in their entire. But I would like to emphasize the fact the Yugoslav personalities present unanimously supported our Proposals as the basis for an "operational" project which would lay the groundwork for a solution to the Balkan crisis.

Although those participating in the Belgrade colloquium made it clear that they were aware that such a project probably couldn't be implemented for a long time, given the current situation, they gave it their entire support. It is important, they pointed out, to have these political and economic concepts worked out for the future; though they may seem utopian now, the day will come when we will all be in need of them.

With this in mind, the participants came up with four propositions for broadening the scope of our Foundation's Proposals:

1. Bring together experts from the former Yugoslavian Republics interested in the project and involve them in the work done by the Foundation in order to integrate more concrete elements into the Proposals; among these experts would be those who participated in the Belgrade colloquium and also, of course, specialists from the other Republics. The knowledge they have of the Yugoslavian problem would add to the discussion and thus contribute to making the final project more realistic.
2. Get the project out to the public by making it more accessible to the people everywhere in the former Yugoslavian territories. This could be done by distributing Serbian and Croatian language editions of the Proposals, which the editor CopArt has just come out with in "paperback". It could also be done through the media: radio, television, the press.
3. Organize a colloquium on the Project itself which would include representatives from all of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia. Such a colloquium could be set up with the help of one or several international organizations. It would then take place in a country close by, such as Switzerland, in the presence of international observers.

4. Seek the support of independent international organizations and institutions. Such support is needed if we want the Project to have a wide enough appeal so that all parties present take it as the basis for a worthwhile discussion.

Preparing for Peace

In order to understand how far we have come in one year we should think back to the first colloquium that was held in Belgrade in September 1992. At that time the participants, although they recognized the validity of our Proposals, considered them to be somewhat utopian.

It is true that our Project has been reworked in depth with the help of many international specialists; among other things, it now includes the existence of the independent Republics recognized by the international community.

We believe today that our Proposals constitute one of the only plans, if not the only one, capable of reconciling fact - the partitioning of Yugoslavia - with necessity - the reconstruction of a new commonwealth of nations in the Yugoslavian area.

After talking with many eminent figures from Western Europe, Central Europe, Russia and the United States, we are convinced that the principle of setting up Republics with regional structures is the only one which can guarantee the harmonious co-existence of the peoples within the same geographical area.

What we must do now is convince the others, all those - in ex-Yugoslavia or elsewhere - who are likely to play an active role in restoring peace. This is what we are going to be working on next: without underestimating the difficulty of the task ahead of us, but knowing that no obstacle is insurmountable if the cause is just.

The war in ex-Yugoslavia will not last forever, and though we must do everything we can to restore peace as quickly as possible, we must also do everything to make sure that the political solution which prevails is the most realistic and the most in keeping with the peoples' aspirations. The only thing that counts, in fact, is the way they will live together once this groundless and senseless war is over.

There is no denying that the very idea of dividing up the Yugoslavian area along ethnic lines is outrageous, just as it is undeniable that the artificial cleavages the conflict has created between the people must disappear. And this will demand a lot of time, effort, intelligence and understanding on the part of the victims of this tragedy.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*T*he Group of Seven summit in Tokyo would have been a good occasion for the world's leading powers to come out in opposition to the ethnic partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They instead endorsed a position hardly apt to deter these who, for fifteen months now, have waged a senseless war against their own people. It was almost like being back in the days of the League of Nations when the major powers, neutralizing each other in effect, helped favour the rise of extremist tendencies in Europe.

I am aware, of course, that the problem of Yugoslavia is not the only one our world is faced with today; that Somalia, Cambodia, and Iraq - just to mention some of the most critical ones - also demands the attention of the international community.

But it is hard not to wonder at the way the treatment differs according to the aggressor.

To bring Iraq back into line after its invasion of Kuwait, the allies did not hesitate to send over 500,000 soldiers and an impressively outfitted army; without wavering for a minute they decided to fit the crime to the punishment by striking out with force against a violent and arbitrary act. What keeps them from acting with the same determination in the former Yugoslavia, where acts are being committed that are just as reprehensible, for they seek nothing less than to dismember alive a country whose international sovereignty has been recognized?

There is, in all of this, something we cannot accept, even if there are good reasons behind the major powers' reluctance to get entangled in another Balkan war.

Not to Accept the Inacceptable

I personally fear, and this is my profound conviction, that the same causes will produce the same effects: that the abstention of the major powers on the issue of ethnic partitioning in Bosnia-Herzegovina will eventually lead to tragic events similar to those which arose as a consequence of the weakness of the League of Nations in the 1930s.

Accepting the unacceptable, in fact, can only result in the endless recurrence of takeovers by force, of executions and injustices. If any warlord with no legitimate

popular support, whose only authority arises from his capacity for malice, can still be considered as a valid negotiator by the highest international authorities, and his territorial conquests still upheld by the major powers after negotiations in which the most basic of rights are trampled, the way is then open for extremists of every kind. In the future there would be no opposing a wider scale repetition of the scorched earth policy which worked so well in the former Yugoslavia.

I quite understand that the lack of strategic or economic incentives - natural gas, oil, or precious minerals - dissuades the major powers from getting involved in such a risky venture. But it seems to me that this abstention will only establish an unfortunate precedent. Since Central Europe is a patchwork of peoples inextricably linked together by History, I fear that those borders which seem the most secure will soon be disputed, with no justification other than force.

Bosnia-Herzegovina - where atrocious crimes are being committed against a peace-loving people - has become a Pandora's Box threatening to unleash a host of troubles. Carving this country up along ethnic lines - which make no sense for the Bosnian people are almost equally made up of Croats, Muslims and Serbs - only serves to encourage those demagogues who wish to carve out a place for themselves in Old Europe by fomenting nationalist tendencies in the people.

Though the collapse of communism promised a new era of peaceful and unprecedented development in Central Europe, the powerful upsurge of nationalism has led to crisis after crisis, confrontation after confrontation. Have we not seen the Greeks expulse Albanians by the thousands just because they represent the other, the Rumanians and the Hungarians lash out at each other, the Czechs and the Slovaks refuse to live together? And are these not harbingers of events to come?

On Democracy

What ails the democracies is not called cowardice so much as indifference and forgetting the lessons of the past.

I would like to give an example of this which is taken from a recent event. Over a year ago the Peace and Crises Management Foundation, which had just come into existence, invited the main leaders of the democratic movement DEPOS to come to Paris. Our aim was to show French political leaders and the media that there existed in Belgrade an opposition movement which was contesting the government's policy of violence. The presence of this delegation, which spoke notably for Vuk Draskovic, was deliberately ignored by the French political community: not a single government official deigned to receive one or the other of its members;

newspapers and television passed over this event in silence; these men were not even allowed to speak at a conference on Yugoslavia being held at the French National Assembly. These envoys from the Yugoslav opposition were received only by a few farsighted and courageous officials, among them Mr. Jean Mattéoli and Mr. Maurice Schumann.

The truth is that it was not until Vuk Draskovic and his wife were violently abused, and after their long imprisonment and hunger strike, that Europe and the rest of the world finally took an interest in the fate of this opposition. And it is precisely those who yesterday refused to admit the existence of a democratic movement in Belgrade, who, today, are clamouring the loudest in favour of the oppressed. There is, in all of this, a lesson and a moral.

The lesson is that, contrary to what one might have thought, our longstanding democracies are not automatically sympathetic to the struggle for rights and justice; this struggle is often thwarted by preconceptions, hasty judgements, and media imprecision.

The moral is that, sooner or later, truth emerges from the darkness where it has been kept covered up. The world has been compelled to recognize a truth which, though rejected nine months ago, now stands out as evident.

If any proof were needed to show that it is of the utmost importance at the present time to unflinchingly defend those ideas which will allow Yugoslavia to heal its wounds, it is surely to be found in this incident.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*A*s you were informed in my letter of 1 July 1993, I provided the four statesmen who received me in Beaver Creek (Colorado) on 3 June with a plan for restoring peace in the former Yugoslavia. In this document, drawn up in the name of our Foundation and sent out as agreed to President Gerald Ford, Yaléry Giscard d'Estaing, Lord Callaghan and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, I set out thirteen measures as follows:

1. Confirm as inviolable the borders between the former Yugoslav Republics; any future adjustments to be made only through negotiations carried out under international supervision.
2. Formally establish the rights of minorities in all the former Yugoslav Republics; this includes repudiating the forced relocation of population groups as well as any partitioning based on ethnic criteria.
3. Tighten the embargo on arms and ammunition with regard to all the ex-Yugoslav Republics directly or indirectly involved in the conflict. This embargo, approved by Resolution 724 of the UN Security Council, is not being enforced. Collateral to the war, ex-Yugoslavia has become the hub of all kinds of traffic in arms. This traffic keeps the belligerents supplied and enables them to continue the hostilities. It directly threatens peace in Europe. The aim of this measure, a first step, is to make sure that the arms embargo is equally respected by everyone, including Croatia and Slovenia.
4. Isolate Bosnia and expand UNPROFOR's mission so as to prevent the Croats, the Serbs, and the Bosnians from imposing a forced ethnic partitioning on the civil population, which would constitute a dangerous precedent for the whole of Europe. This would involve reinforcing the UN troops already present, and isolating the Bosnian territory to make it impossible for the war to be externally sustained from bases in Croatia, Serbia or Montenegro.
5. Adopt a new UN resolution with provisions for extending the measures in Resolution 836 to the protection of civilian populations, including authorizing the use of force in the event of a threat to those populations on Bosnian and Croatian territory.

6. Change the UN's passive stance in Krajina into actions directed towards hastening the negotiations and preventing the civilian population from falling victim to arbitrary rule or militia violence; in consequence, ensure the free movement of persons and goods in this region and throughout the rest of the former Yugoslavia.
7. Protect Macedonia by providing guarantees against any outside intervention which would extend the war into its territory. This would mean strengthening the international force deployed there.
8. Appeal directly to the political leaders in Croatia (Franjo Tudjman), in Serbia (Slobodan Milošević), and in Bosnia to end the fighting. France and Russia could prevail on Serbia, Germany and the Vatican on Croatia, the United States on Bosnia, and Great Britain on all of the belligerents. The combined action of the five major powers and the Vatican would no doubt hasten the end of the conflict.
9. Cease all negotiations with political leaders determined to be guilty of war crimes who are without any mandate whatsoever and who are responsible for the executions committed in Bosnia. This measure is essential for re-establishing the moral authority of the United Nations, accused of being accommodat- ing to these men.
10. Guarantee the freedom of the press in all the ex-Yugoslav Republics. The conflict has been sustained all along by media wars waged by the Serbian, Croa- tian and Bosnian governments. The independent media should be empow- ered to pass information freely and should be protected from governmental interference. This could be done by granting international financial and tech- nical aid to those media which have retained their editorial independence in the ex-Yugoslav Republics.
11. Set up and operate an independent radio station somewhere in Europe where its freedom can be fully guaranteed, to broadcast to the Balkans. This radio station would provide objective information and news on the situation in ex- Yugoslavia. Assistance would come from the European Community and the United Nations.
12. Support, through the international community, the creation and expansion outside of ex-Yugoslavia of international editions of independent media whose audience would be the large Yugoslav communities in Europe's major cities.

13. Endorse the InterAction Council's initiative which asks that the European Community, Russia, and the United States of America convene a conference which would bring the different States in the region together to draw up a treaty that would bind the different parties on matters of security, the guaranteeing of borders, the protection of minorities, and economic cooperation.

I wish to point out that the InterAction Council is a private institution dedicated to forging cross-continental ties through the association of forty former heads of state and of government, including those to whom our document is addressed, who meet regularly to exchange information and discuss the major political and economic issues of our times.

I believe that our Foundation's Peace Plan, as you have it above, is in keeping with those judgements as expressed by the four statesmen to whom it is addressed. And I am confident that, with their support, it can serve as the basis for laying down a peace process to be imposed upon ex-Yugoslavia before the conflict spreads from a national to an international level.

This war will not be brought to an end until we are determined to see that human rights and the rights of minorities are respected throughout the territory. The use of force, though it may seem to be triumphant today, will never be a solution.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

I am anxious to draw your attention to a meeting organised by our Foundation which will take place at Ohrid in Macedonia on 9 and 10 September 1993.

This meeting will be devoted to the current and future problems of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia. It is the latest in a series of meetings we have organised over the last two years to promote peace in the Balkans and prepare the process of reconstruction once hostilities have ended. At the heart of this enterprise is the plan we have drawn up to put an end to the war and to organise relations between the states born out of the break-up of Yugoslavia.

It is not my purpose to reiterate the measures, of which the readers of this letter have been kept informed week by week, and which in our view would settle the conflict and lay the foundations of sustainable peace. But I must not neglect the opportunity to emphasise the importance of Ohrid as the venue for the forthcoming meeting.

The symbolism of Ohrid

Ohrid has not been chosen by accident. Situated in a magnificent area to the south of Skopje, Ohrid is a tranquil town on the banks of a lake bordering Albania. It is a meeting-point for different cultures in a Macedonia crippled by the economic effects of a war in which it plays no part.

It is a matter of grave concern for everyone that, should the situation in ex-Yugoslavia continue to worsen, Macedonia could become the target of yet harsher aggression and brutality than that already endured by my hapless country in recent months. Every attempt is being made to maintain internal harmony in Macedonia, and to safeguard the peaceful coexistence of its various racial and religious communities, while violence rages and lawlessness holds sway beyond its borders.

Macedonia has been chosen, then, as the meeting-place for politicians, academics, and journalists from all the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia, precisely because it has succeeded in preserving peace.

Slowly but surely Macedonia is advancing along the path of democracy. By clearing the obstacles resulting from the hostility of some of its neighbours, Macedonia has won such admiration and respect with the world's most powerful nations that they are prepared to protect its territory, should it be threatened with attack.

By choosing Ohrid as the theatre in which to debate the problems of the future Yugoslav community, we are redoubling our commitment to pluralist democracy founded on the strictest respect of the rights of ethnic groups, regardless of their numeric magnitude, and on the protection of Human Rights. In this way we are asserting that peace is the business of men and not of chance, and that tolerance and solidarity are the preconditions for the re-establishment of peace. Violence and lawlessness can never yield any lasting solution to national disputes.

I have no doubt whatever that this magical place will give rise to fresh ideas, for Ohrid has been the scene of peaceful coexistence since earliest antiquity.

Time for discussion

The Ohrid conference is due to take place at a moment when the prospect of just and sustainable peace seems in the eyes of the world to have vanished for ever. A solution to the conflict is desperately being sought. This conference will demonstrate that dividing up the ex-Yugoslav Republics along ethnic and religious lines will solve nothing. Only solutions such as we have outlined will allow the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia once again to live together in peace and harmony.

For months now, we have been saying that the war will not be stopped by preventing Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs from living side by side. Today it is clear that we were right to reiterate this view, even if events may seem to have proved us wrong.

Any political solution which seeks to re-establish peace by imposing an artificial set of divisions on the civilian population will do no more than create the conditions for future conflict, harsher and more crushing still than what has already taken place. The history, geography, cultures, and religions of ex-Yugoslavia mean that the establishment of a form of democracy, based on strong regional structures, is primordial. It would be highly naïve, and extremely foolhardy, to believe that an artificial division of the population will enhance the prospects of lasting peace.

The solutions currently proposed are based on the mutual exclusion of ethnic and religious communities. They pay no attention to the traditions and aspirations of

these communities, serving only to pave the way to even worse conflicts than those which we witness today as we stand helplessly by. It is therefore absolutely vital, at a time when violence has the upper hand, and when the international community seems resigned to the status quo, to discuss the steps which will need to be taken once those who have wanted and have waged this war have been turned back by their unhappy quarry.

Even the worst conflicts come to an end. This conflict will be no exception. Sooner or later the will to live will win out, and governments will be obliged to find a fair and peaceful solution. This is why we must not delay in preparing the structures which will allow the establishment of peace even before the actual foundations can be laid. This is no utopic vision. We must be sure to build these foundations on rock, not on sand.

These are the aims of the Ohrid conference, which, following the two meetings in Belgrade in 1992 and 1993, will attempt to outline the political, economic, and institutional structures capable of assuring long-term peace in the Yugoslav region, once the guns have finally been silenced.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The first of the President's letters put out by our Foundation was addressed to you exactly one year ago today, at which time I proposed to send them to you regularly in order to keep you informed of our on-going work.

I would like to take the occasion of this first anniversary to recall the actions and the positions we have taken in working towards a peaceful solution to the conflicts ravaging the Balkans, or towards finding new ways of facilitating the transformation process within the former people's democracies.

The hazards of partitioning

The first of these truths is that peace will not return to ex-Yugoslavia as long as we insist on founding it upon ethnic segregation. The unnatural separation that heinous leaders are forcing on their people in order to satisfy personal ambitions cannot be enforced through violence, not through negotiation. Any solution tending towards the creation of artificial divisions within a population will inevitably give rise to new troubles.

In other words, the vainly protracted discussions being carried out under the aegis of the UN and the major powers are doomed to failure. They may lead to a temporary settlement, but the consequent resolutions will go unheeded, so inextricably interwoven are the peoples, the religions, and the cultures in this corner of Europe where North and South, East and West have always met.

It is possible, even probable, that the major powers will persist for some time in their illusion that the Yugoslav problem can finally be resolved by their bringing the fratricidal parties together around a negotiation table. But it will soon become apparent that by agreeing to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina according to criteria that violate the most basic of human rights, they will have helped to foster a cancer whose growth they will then need to contain at all costs.

Let's make this very clear: the solution that seems to be emerging from the current confrontation is the worst one imaginable. It will not restore peace to the Balkans, and, furthermore, it will be the cause of antagonisms which will be more serious even than those of today.

In saying this I know that I am going against the general opinion, at the risk of being generally repudiated. But I am too familiar with the concrete realities of this country not to say anything. Were I the only one to assert this, I would still think it necessary to repeat that we will never stop this war until we recognize and accept the composite nature of each of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia.

Learning from the Regions

This remark leads me to a second truth which is just as obvious as the first. The only way out of the present predicament is to reconstruct each of the Yugoslav Republics around those incontrovertible historical entities represented by the regions.

So true is this that despite immense pressure from the government within the Republics as they try to unify their territory, the desire for regional autonomy is growing stronger every day. To take just one example, Slavonia, Istria, Dalmatia do not wish to blend into the Croatian landscape any more than Croatia wishes to blend into the Yugoslav landscape; and if the centralized power in Zagreb tries to force them to do so they will resist, using whatever means are at their disposal.

What else could be expected from them; given that their inhabitants have lived together in homogeneous, well-knit communities which cut across ethnic or religious differences since time immemorial, sharing the same values, the same traditions, the same goals? One would have to be naive to believe that a political power, even authoritarian, could so easily blot out the collective memory of this reality. It may be possible to deny it for several months, or several years, but there is no doubt that the desire for regional autonomy will resurface sooner or later, powerful and compelling enough to overcome the centralization of power required by political regimes devoid of any popular base.

History will not allow itself to be manipulated forever. One day it will revert back to its natural course - in the Balkans, as well as elsewhere - and the regions will then be seen to be more alive there than ever.

The Major powers' Mistake

The third truth I would like to re-evoke is the following: the major powers are wrong to think that they can settle the Yugoslav issue through their endorsement of an unjust solution. Accepting the ethnic partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to end the war at any cost is a terrible mistake. Beyond the

dangerous precedent this would set, which would serve to encourage every extremist regime in the future, it is also a grievous illusion: nothing solid can be built on crime, violence, and the violation of fundamental human rights.

I understand the international community's wanting, in a praiseworthy effort to avoid further bloodshed, to put pressure on the belligerents by alternatively brandishing the carrot and the stick; but I do not understand why it is prepared to accept such an unnatural solution, knowing full well that even greater tragedy will ensue.

Indeed, one doesn't need to be an expert in the matter to predict what will follow if the present proceedings are allowed to pursue their course. Seeing that law and justice have been blithely flouted without any protest from the major democracies, the most violent factions, those who are presently recognized as valid negotiators, will not hesitate to break the agreed-to settlement. And once again the international community will be called on to put a stop to schemes which will end up threatening peace throughout the rest of Europe.

There is only one way to restore peace in the Balkans: by respecting the basic principles of democracy. Any infringement of these principles will only prolong the ordeal of those who are suffering now.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Last week, as the fighting in ex-Yugoslavia continued with even greater violence, twenty-one men and women¹ willingly came together in Ohrid, Macedonia to see what they could do to find a path that would at last lead to peace.

Having come from Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and from Serbia, they spent two days comparing points of view, exchanging ideas, clarifying differences, finding points of agreement.

The focal point of these exchanges was, as you already know (cf. my Letter dated 15 August 1993), the "Proposals for a New Commonwealth of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia" which were published by our Foundation nearly a year ago. These "Proposals," serving as the basis for the discussions, were thoroughly examined, analysed, and finally recognized as constituting a potential point of departure for a true Balkan peace plan.

A formal declaration

I would thus like to devote the main part of this Letter to re-transcribing this document in its entirety, as it represents an important milestone on the long road we have embarked on.

"The participants at the round table "Possibilities and Ways of Cooperation and the Creation of Linking Bonds in the Area of the Former Yugoslavia", which was convened by the Peace and Crises Management Foundation in Ohrid on 9 and 10 September 1993, 1993, stated unanimously that, in spite of the growing dangers from the spreading and the intensification of the war, a peaceful alternative is possible.

In assessing the possibilities of the deterioration of the situation in the Balkans, they agreed that a dialogue creating the conditions for joint approaches based on compromise is the only way of reaching a peaceful solution of the existing problems.

Attempts to implement exclusive, intertwined and clashing national programmes, including partitions based strictly on ethnic criteria, can only provoke new wars, so the only solution is a compromise between the different nationalities, which will leave all the parties neither fully satisfied nor dissatisfied. This implies the acceptance of a civic rather than a nationalistic concept.

¹ Compare with the attached list of participants.

The general framework of the project discussed at the round table ("Proposals for a New Commonwealth of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia"), the author of which is the President of the Foundation, Mr. Boris I. Vukobrat, can serve as a basis for this. It includes nine basic principles: democracy, rule of law, protection of minorities, prohibition of discrimination, decentralisation and the subsidiary principle, individual and economic freedoms, the inviolability of borders, integration into Europe and market economy. The participants at the round table in Ohrid consider that, taking into account the specific features of the different republics and regions, certain modifications would have to be made in the process of concrete implementation of solutions, in accordance, naturally, with the above mentioned principles.

The participants pointed out the necessity of making further efforts to elaborate and promote the ideas of cooperation in this region and of taking the first steps in order to create closer links between groups and individuals in all quarters of the former Yugoslavia who would be willing to take part actively in the promotion of these ideas, i.e. in opening the first paths and creating modalities of cooperation. The necessity of gaining political support of all democratic forces and structures for such a concept was also pointed out at the meeting. Furthermore, it was proposed that a large-scale conference on security and cooperation in the region, based on the principles of the CSCE be convened.² It was stated that the necessity of various forms of cooperation and linking is dictated not only by the imperative of peace, but also by common economic, geographic, cultural and other interests; furthermore, the possibility of economic integration of this part of Europe was stressed.

A proposal was made that, before taking steps towards integration at the official level, meetings should be organized of intellectuals with civic convictions from all republics of the former Yugoslavia, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania, as well as meetings on lower levels of linkages and cooperation, such as expert discussions on a possible customs union and common energy and transportation systems.

Kosovo deserves special attention, according to the participants of the meeting, who underlined that a solution for this problem should be based on democratic principles and full respect of the national interests of all the inhabitants of this region.

Everything must be done to put an end to the horrors of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in other areas of conflict. The participants expressed their deep conviction that the creation of new states based purely on ethnic criteria cannot lead to a durable peace.

²This proposal had already been included as a thirteenth measure in Vukobrat's Peace plan that you recently received.

Only dialogue and negotiated agreement, therefore, can lead to a peaceful outcome of the crisis in this region."

An important first step

Certainly, the men and women who endorsed this text are not elected representatives and cannot claim to speak for all of the Balkan peoples. Yet, coming from deep within the suffering afflicting their country, theirs is the expression of a reality which will one day prevail. In refusing to accept any partitioning along ethnic lines, they are the ones who are in line with History; and History, sooner or later, will prove them to be right.

Boris Vukobrat

President

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Ljubo BABIĆ, President, Association of Bosnians and Herzegovinians, Belgrade
Danilo BURZAN, Journalist and publicist, Belgrade
Tomislav CORKEVSKI, Chancellor, University of Skoplje
Milan DJURČINOV, Member of Macedonian Academy of Science and Arts, Skoplje
Baton HADŽIJU, Journalist, Pristina
Jokica HADŽIVASILEV, Former Director of the International Workers` Movement Institute, Belgrade
Srdjan KERIM, Kopeshim, Paris
Risto LAZAROV, Journalist and publicist, Editor and Director of the Balkan Forum, Skoplje
Slavko MILOSAVLEVSKI, Historian, University Professor, Skoplje
Skeljzen MALICI, Vice-President, Social and Democratic Party of Kosovo, Pristina
Drita MERKULI, Internal Medicine Institute, Pristina
Aleksandar NENADOVIĆ, Journalist, Belgrade
Dragoljub NAJMAN, Executive Secretary of Interaction Council, Paris
Branko PRIBIĆEVIĆ, Faculty of Political Sciences, Belgrade
Davor RAJČIĆ, University of Zagreb
Predrag SIMIĆ, International Politics and Economics Institute, Belgrade
Nebojsa SPAIĆ, Peace and Crises Management Foundation Representative, Belgrade
Ratomir TANIĆ, Vice-president, Civic Alliance of Serbia, Belgrade
Mirce TOMOVSKI, Journalist, Skopje
Azem VLASI, Solicitor, Pristina
Boris VUKOB RAT, President, Peace and Crises Management Foundation, Paris
Miladin ŽIVOTIĆ, Belgrade Circle - Independent Intellectuals Association, Belgrade

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Those who have been carefully following recent events in ex-Yugoslavia will have noticed that a fundamental change is taking place there. In the States which were formed out of the disintegrated Yugoslav Federation the desire for regional autonomy is now making its reappearance.

The Republics instituted, to their own advantage, a centralized structure that guaranteed them absolute power, with the result being inefficiency, authoritarianism, arbitrariness, waste, and economic paralysis. So as the euphoria of independence wore off, Croats, Slovenians, not to mention Bosnians, began to see that the problem had merely been displaced, and not at all resolved. Their material situation had deteriorated substantially because of the war, while their freedom had not necessarily been secured. In many ways, in fact, it had been reduced.

Authority Contested

However, in contrast to what happened two years ago, almost everywhere today there is the feeling that neither Ljubljana, nor Zagreb, nor Belgrade, nor even Sarajevo is able to look after the specific interests of their regions. It is for this reason that the desire for internal autonomy is now reemerging with undeniable force.

An Iniquitous Partitioning

What is troubling is that the State where this revival is presently most needed - in other words, in Bosnia-Herzegovina - is unfortunately the State where great efforts are being made to stifle it.

In fact, the regionalization that is being forced on Bosnia-Herzegovina goes against the idea of regional autonomy, for it is based on ethnic divisions which have no relation whatsoever to any cultural or historical reality. In place of the clearly defined entities which fostered the intermingling of ethnic and religious communities, this plan presumes to substitute inconsistent geographical zones which would cut the communities off from each other. In political terms, this is an aberration; in human terms, it is a crime.

The illusory hope that peace will spring forth from this monstrous scheme prompts the major powers to back it and to declare their intention to enforce its implemen-

tation through the use of arms. Little do they realize that, in doing so, they are setting off a time bomb in the very heart of Old Europe.

Peace will never return to the Balkans unless the different Yugoslav communities are allowed to live together on good terms, as they have done in the past. There has been too much ethnic and religious intermixing over the centuries for exclusion to be the basis of a stable political system.

Those, in Geneva or elsewhere, who are willing to let the Warlords divide up the spoils of Bosnia-Herzegovina without requiring that they respect human rights or prove their legitimacy, are making a mistake which History will make them pay dearly. They are not only consenting to an intolerable injustice, to the violation of democracy's most fundamental principles, but they are also creating the pre-conditions for a general explosion throughout the Balkans. If this logic is followed through, they will be responsible for tragedies even more terrible than those of today.

Their responsibility will be all the greater since Bosnia-Herzegovina is made up of regions which have nothing to do with human artifice, but which were built stone by stone, day after day, over the centuries. As a crossroads where different peoples and religions came together, these regions forged a composite civilization founded on diversity, tolerance, and solidarity. Ethnic and religious criteria were never pretexts for exclusion; and even when certain individuals tried to impose such criteria, it never worked for long.

If we want to restore peace to this war-torn country, we must go back to the wisdom of ages, recreate the regions where Bosnians have always lived, relearn the lessons of History. Given the present situation, I know this will not be easy, for the international community has let itself get caught up in the quagmire of ethnic partitioning. But it is better to admit a mistake than to let an irreparable act be done.

The Risk of Contagion

I would like to add that, above and beyond the specific Yugoslav case, the major powers' decision to recompose Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines contains within it a grave threat to world peace. This decision, if carried out, will set a precedent which will only incite extremists of all kinds, all over the world, to carve a fief for themselves out of their nation's own flesh, using the most intransigent nationalism to wage war against its people.

Let us suppose for an instant that the *fait accompli* in Bosnia-Herzegovina is legitimized by the Owen-Stoltenberg plan and that the international community accepts the country's division along ethnic lines. Who then could prevent fortune hunters in any of the eighty-eight entities that comprise the huge Russian Federation from taking up the nationalist cry in order to form their own personal State?

Imagine what could have happened in Russia two weeks ago if certain people had attempted to take advantage of the chaos reigning in Moscow to divide up the regions or the Republics in the Russian Federation along ethnic lines. In the bleak economic and social climate created by the collapse of collectivism, it is not difficult to set desperate people against each other. An ethnic conflict would have spread like wildfire from one end of the empire to the other, jeopardizing peace all over the world.

Those who defer to the *fait accompli*, who are prepared to endorse the ethnic partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina must be made to understand, before it is too late, that they are making a double mistake.

- They are creating conditions which will lead to a "tribalization" of the European continent, and this will be the cause of another hundred years' war.
- They are conferring the status of statesmen on these fortune hunters, thus absolving them beforehand of their crimes.

On this point two observations are in order.

The first is that, by accepting as valid representatives those very individuals who, through the use of arms, are attempting to force the ethnic partitioning of ex-Yugoslavia, the Geneva negotiators preclude any solution which would comply with the most basic principles of international law. They thereby legitimize all extremist actions and the most serious of human rights violations. Thus, they already vindicate the atrocities which have been committed and which are committed every day in the Balkans. However, the populations who have been victim to this savagery will never pardon their leaders for the wounds they have received; when they are finally able to speak out freely they will repudiate, once and for all, these leaders and those who went along with them.

The second point is that the Yugoslav example proves that the international community maintains a double standard. Leaving aside the particulars of who is guilty and to what degree, it seems to me that we cannot punish one side for bombing Sarajevo - the straw which, in the eyes of the international community, broke the camel's back and led to the sanctions - while practically defending the other side

even as they destroy Mostar and other towns. It is hard to believe that the international community would react in such a way, for this constitutes nothing less than an encouragement to those who feel they have the backing to do whatever they like.

After two years of unrelenting war it is time the major powers realize that because their actions are not grounded in fairness or in the law, they only serve to reassure the aggressors and thus to prolong the hostilities.

Boris Vukobrat

President

LETTER N° 27
15 November 1993

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Today is the day on which the European Economic Community becomes European Union, in accordance with the Maastricht treaty. This is, at least theoretically, a decisive step towards the political unification of the Old Continent. But such a move has failed to correct a mistake which could prove disastrous, and jeopardise the efforts of the European Union to assure lasting peace on the continent.

I refer to its obstinate and incomprehensible refusal to recognise the Republic of Macedonia as a free and independent state.

Much More than a Simple Injustice

Macedonia is a democratic nation which has sought and won its independence by peaceful means. Its institutions have been freely elected. It has furthermore been admitted into the United Nations Organisation, and been recognised by forty-five countries. And yet the European Union still refuses to recognise Macedonia as a state in its own right. Macedonia's unceasing attempts to establish normal diplomatic relations with the European Union have come to nothing because one of its members, Macedonia's powerful neighbour Greece, is opposed to its recognition.

Were the formal recognition of the Republic of Macedonia no more than an inconsequential diplomatic act, a mere gesture intended only to signal to the world the country's existence, then little harm would be done and Macedonia's wounded pride would quickly heal. But, in reality, the refusal to grant Macedonia the status it justly claims has profound political and economic consequences.

In the first place, it prevents Macedonia, despite its pressing needs, from participating fully in institutions such as the Council of Europe and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which form the basis for cooperation between the countries of the continent. At the very moment when this country most deserves unflinching support in its brave struggle for freedom, it suffers directly from the international sanctions in force against Serbia. Its gross national product has dropped by practically 50% in two years. What is more, the country is cut off by hostility on all sides.

In addition to the intrinsic injustice of its attitude, Europe is making a three-fold mistake.

Depriving Macedonia of its international rights because one member of the European Union is not in favour - with no real justification - is first and foremost an utterly arbitrary and indefensible action. Once a state satisfies the necessary conditions, its international recognition should automatically follow, and no-one should be able to impede it. Given that the commission presided by Robert Badinter has rendered a verdict unquestionably in Macedonia's favour, it is scandalous that the governments of Europe should not have hastened to implement its recommendations, especially since they did so for the other countries of ex-Yugoslavia.

What is more, the refusal to recognise Macedonia will ultimately encourage those, in the Balkans and elsewhere, who resort to force to settle their differences. This nation respects international law and submits without question to the requirements of democracy, and yet cannot make its voice heard in the chorus of European nations, for no other reason than that the international community itself fails to play by its own rules. Taken to its logical conclusion, one has a better chance of being heeded and respected if one resorts to violence than when one bows to international law.

Failing to recognise Macedonia ultimately means deliberately plunging this little country into grave economic and financial difficulties. Of all the Balkan countries, apart from Bosnia Herzegovina, it is Macedonia that suffers the most from the consequences of the war in ex-Yugoslavia. Not only has it been unable to carry out indispensable economic reforms, but it also bears the brunt of the closure of the frontiers with its neighbours to the North. The trade routes which provided its life-blood have dried up, whilst economic aid is granted oh so sparingly, especially by the European Union. As a result, Macedonia's economy is threatened by strangulation.

All this is absurd and sickening.

Towards a Third Balkan War?

Moreover, this could alas lead to the third Balkan war that all Europe dreads.

What issue is there other than hostilities spreading throughout the region? The Republic of Macedonia is governed by a man of wisdom, President Kiro Gligorov, thanks to whom internal stability has been maintained against all odds. A crossroads between various civilizations and made up of very diverse ethnic and reli-

gious communities, Macedonia has nevertheless shown remarkable restraint, especially given that it has been surrounded by destructive combat. Indeed, despite two years of relentless fighting in ex-Yugoslavia, Macedonia remains a haven of peace and tolerance.

Declining to recognise Macedonia amounts to condemning it to isolation introversion, abandoning it to the appalling pressures caused by hostilities all around. It might even mean condemning Macedonia to the same fate as Bosnia Herzegovina, except that if war broke out in Macedonia, it would result in an international crisis, for it has borders with Bulgaria, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, and Greece.

Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine that political tension, the inevitable result of economic destitution, would not lead to social unrest. The application of intelligence becomes ever less effective as the political institutions which guarantee a country's relative prosperity crumble one after another.

By refusing to succour Macedonia in its hour of need, the European Union accepts *de facto* the tragedies which could result from the crisis it is thus failing to avert. In an effort to satisfy the unreasonable demands of one of its members, it ends up allowing the Yugoslav conflict to spread. Indeed, by treating what is currently taking place in Yugoslavia as the affairs of an entirely separate continent, the European Union is laying the foundations for widespread strife.

Irrespective of geopolitical considerations, an entity as significant as the European Union cannot afford to ride roughshod over the very principles it has established. If it is prepared to sideline justice at the bidding of one of its members, it clearly cannot claim to exercise any kind of moral authority, over its neighbours. Indeed, it places its credibility in jeopardy, effectively absolving in advance any abuse of law and liberty on the continent it bestrides.

At the European Community summit in Brussels on 29 October, the French President François Mitterand forewarned his partners of the danger of war on a European scale: "There is a very real risk of a conflict in Europe at the start of the next century". This is especially worthy of consideration as the predicted conflict could turn out to stem from the Balkans.

Why then does France hesitate to turn its convictions into policy? For months now, France has been supporting Macedonia's attempts to win the recognition of the European Union, only to shrink back in the face of Greece's objections.

Letters of the President

Must we wait for war to break out in the south of the Balkans, for today's political conflict to become a religious one - as some people wish Belgrade and Athens, in the secret hope of winning Russia over to their side - before we finally open our eyes to what is happening?

Boris Vukobrat

President

LETTER N° 28
15 November 1993

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The coming winter promises to be even harsher than the last for the innocent populations of Bosnia Herzegovina. Yet the negotiations hosted by the United Nations, in the hope of putting an end to the conflict there, are making no progress. The mediators in Geneva are utterly bogged down, whilst the fighting in ex-Yugoslavia grows in violence with every minute that passes and the price paid becomes ever heavier. Far from relenting with time, the war continues to gather momentum.

What is still more alarming, if such is possible, is the spread of the conflict to the south, where it finds new means and incentives. Macedonia, whose fate I brought to your attention in my letter of 1 November, is now directly threatened by the diverse yet terrifyingly effective coalition of men whose purpose is furthered by violence.

Why nothing changed

The impasse in which the international community finds itself, in the face of an ex-Yugoslavia torn apart by conflict, has, I feel, two main causes:

1. After failed attempts to find a way out of the situation which prevails in Bosnia Herzegovina, efforts are now being made to find an "umbrella" solution to the conflict. The very people who only yesterday insisted on the need to take one step at a time and deal separately with each area of conflict now advocate an overall approach to the many and varied problems. Such an attitude is doubtless worthy of praise. But it comes too late and will take too long to lead to effective negotiations. Something must be done forthwith. It is true that we have consistently opposed the idea of separate talks with men devoid of democratic legitimacy, men who are so very far from acting on behalf of the beleaguered populations they claim to represent. This change of attitude thus strikes us as a step in the right direction. But it will not lead to peace in the short term. And what matters right now is not a political solution which suits everyone and takes all claims into account. The really pressing issue is to put an end to hostilities where they are firmly entrenched, namely in Bosnia Herzegovina, and to prevent the war from spreading to other areas and reaching the south of the Balkans. The all-inclusive approach proposed by international negotiators clearly deals with none of these issues. It must therefore be opposed as unrealistic, however attractive under some lights.

2. The second explanation for the impasse in which the international community finds itself is the fundamental error it has committed in approving the principle of partitioning Bosnia Herzegovina on ethnic lines. Though I have already said it countless times, I cannot but repeat that a political settlement of the Bosnian problem cannot rest upon the forced separation of the republic's communities. The lattice of interconnections is simply too complex for such a solution to succeed. If pursued, it would lead to the forcible division of families: relatives would no longer be able to visit each other, wives would be kept apart from husbands, parents would be separated from their children. Such an idea is clearly absurd, immoral, nay inhuman. It is therefore doomed from the start. By letting it be understood that they accept such principles as the basis for peace, the negotiators in Geneva have without doubt prolonged the war and exacerbated the misfortunes of the very populations they intended to help and relieve. They have inadvertently encouraged those responsible for all the killing, the very men who base their power on hatred and exclusion. In fact, it is quite clear that the ethnic partitioning of Bosnia Herzegovina will solve nothing. The war will only be ended by a political solution which allows the communities of ex-Yugoslavia to live together, intermingled as they always have been.

It is high time we understood this and acted accordingly.

Stopping the war

Allow me to outline afresh how in our opinion the human suffering in ex-Yugoslavia could be brought to an end. Two months ago our Foundation put forward a thirteen point programme which met with approval in numerous international circles. This programme stressed and continues to stress the overwhelming need to put an end to fighting on the ground. Indeed, it is pointless to come up with political solutions to the Yugoslav issue without first forcing the arms to fall silent. Such an objective is possible if one is prepared to employ the necessary means. In a recent appearance on French television, Général Morillon, who for many months commanded the United Nations troops in ex-Yugoslavia, voiced the immediate necessity to reinforce the means of intervention open to these troops. We feel that peace could indeed be re-established in Bosnia Herzegovina if the number of blue berets were increased and if the arms at their disposal had sufficient clout to command the respect of the aggressors. Meanwhile, the absence of resolve and the palpable indecision of the most influential members of the international community are interpreted by the warring parties as a guarantee that they will go unpunished come what may.

Though I shall not reiterate here the thirteen points of the programme drawn up by our Foundation, I remain convinced that spectacular results would be achieved by the determined application of those points which advocate blocking the sources which allow the warmongers to replenish their supplies. War cannot be waged without arms, ammunition, oil, and money. Let us set about reducing, if not interrupting, this trade, on an equal basis for all sides, and we will see the intensity of the war diminish in consequence. If the United Nations troops are reinforced - as they must needs be - they could soon be establishing peace.

None of this is beyond the ken of an international community determined to halt this anachronistic war. Now is the time to act. For the impending winter will oversee the deaths of thousands, not to say hundreds of thousands, of men, women, and children, unless a few simple measures are rapidly put into effect.

Before we can talk peace we must stop this war.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Date: 23 November 1993

Place: Pierre de Coubertin Stadium in Paris.

Event: A friendly match between the French handball team and a team composed of players from the republics of ex-Yugoslavia.

Spectators: French, including some key figures - Jean Mattéoli, President of the Economic and Social Council; Guy Brann, vice President of the National Council of French Employers; Nelson Paillou, chairman of the French Olympic Committee; Jean-Pierre Lacoux, President of the French Handball Federation... - Bosnians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs and Slovenians.

*W*hile the war rages on in the Balkans, we have seen proof that it has by no means destroyed the willingness of people to act together, side by side, whilst still retaining their specificity. This demonstration was necessary. It was made with panache, by sportsmen who realise that one day the weapons will be silent and the peoples will have to learn to live together again. It is of little importance, in fact, that the Croat players were the only ones who were not able to join the ex-Yugoslav team. We know that the pressure exerted on them was too great for them to disregard the ban on participating; and, although we deplore the extreme violence of the position adopted by Croat leaders against this match for peace, we also know that the players' hearts were with us at Pierre de Coubertin. The words of hatred and their implications will not be able to mask the voices of those striving for peace for very long.

A symbolic gesture

Our Foundation played a leading role in the organisation of this meeting. An association with the French Handball Federation, who's President, Jean-Pierre Lacoux, arranged its involvement, because the meeting responded perfectly to the peaceful and brotherly ideal of sport, the Foundation worked to make it an undeniable success.

The aim of the match was not only to draw a large crowd and make a collection for humanitarian aid, to alleviate the suffering of civilian victims of the war and the winter. It was also intended to demonstrate that the blind violence of the war-

ring factions in the Balkans has by no means destroyed the deep-rooted solidarity which unites its peoples.

I know full well, we know full well, that the Yugoslavia that existed for over half a century will not be recreated from its ruins. But I also know that once peace has returned, Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Serbs, Montenegrins and Slovenians will again establish normal relations. Whilst still belonging to free and independent states, they will have to talk, trade and launch undertakings again and rebuild the destroyed infrastructures, in order to be able to communicate as they have done for centuries.

Quite apart from these vital exchanges, they will have to establish common goals and build economic and financial institutions, in the same way that, from the end of the Second World War, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands laid the foundations for their future association. These are inevitabilities of life, which never tolerates hatred and exclusion for long.

One day, when the terrible trials experienced by the Yugoslav peoples are over, when reason has finally prevailed, people will remember this 23 November 1993, when top level sportsmen showed the world, on the polished floor of a particularly famous sports hall, that people, taken individually, were still able to forget their differences and think only of their natural solidarity.

Media approval

The international press made no mistake. It hailed this meeting as a fine example. Key media, such as *L'Equipe* and *Liberation* in France, reported on the various turns of this event. But they were not the only ones, and I would like to point out here that everywhere in ex-Yugoslavia it received favourable comments. Of course, there were notes of disagreement here and there, from those who are prospering as a result of the war and who still hope to maintain exclusion in order to keep their fragile grip on power; but from all the ex-Yugoslav republics there was a murmur of hope.

This event is particularly significant because the attitude of the media has not always been exemplary since the beginning of the war, and many have supported the most extreme positions. The fact that the same media which approved the use of violence and justified the criteria of ethnic division commented favourably on the match on 23 November shows that something is changing in people's minds.

I personally see in all this the first tangible sign that there is new hope. Although I do not believe that the war is going to end tomorrow, I am convinced that, this time, an unstoppable momentum has been created and that, over and above the international negotiations in Geneva, a movement of solidarity is taking shape, which will only continue to grow.

Let us hope that musicians, writers, poets, painters, sculptors and film and stage actors are inspired by the example of these sportsmen. If they decide to forget their parochial quarrels and talk about peace with one voice, they will rapidly oblige the political leaders, who cannot find a way out through war, to enter into dialogue.

The Peace and Crises Management Foundation is there, in any event, to welcome all those who believe in a peaceful future for the Balkans. It will support with all its means any initiatives taken in preparation of the future.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*F*or several weeks a rumour has been circulating in Belgrade, according to which I am seen as prospective Prime Minister of Serbia, or even of new Yugoslavia. Media as reputable as *Borba*, *Politika* and *Vesti* have been spreading this rumour and everywhere questions are being asked as to the validity of this information.

I owe the truth to those who are kind enough to read this letter, and therefore I think it is essential to make it clear that so far no one has officially suggested that I take the destiny of Serbia or ex-Yugoslavia in hand. Of course, I have personally heard this rumour concerning myself, but, however strong it may be, it is still just a rumour, an indistinct murmur, being passed around. I have taken note of it, without drawing any conclusions.

A sign of the times

In all honesty, I would not even think of commenting on such a non-event, despite it being announced by journalists reputed for their earnestness - if it did not seem to me to be indicative of a radical change of attitude.

Everyone is in fact aware of my positions on the Yugoslav problem. These positions have not only been enlarged upon publicly in many different public and private establishments, they have also been published in Serb-Croat, English, French and Russian. The very fact that my name is being mentioned for a position of great responsibility in Belgrade indicates that the political programme drawn up by our foundation is not utopian. Having initially been rejected on the fallacious pretext that it did not suit the reality created by the war, it has now become acceptable for many. Some people, and important ones at that, now even consider that this is the only programme capable of bringing Yugoslavia out of the deadlock it has reached.

I am not surprised by this turnaround, which had to happen sooner or later. My only regret is that it has occurred so late, at a time when war is wreaking death and destruction, there is misery everywhere and people are facing the most terrible ordeals. If the political leaders had not been so brash, and more respectful of justice and the law, it would not have been necessary to wait so long for wisdom to prevail over passion.

As a candidate for nothing and only wishing to help my country become a modern democratic nation, I would all the same like to use the opportunity presented by the articles in the Yugoslav press to briefly recall the conditions for our possible participation in the reconstruction of the country.

There are five conditions:

1. The immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and the start of a peace conference aimed at putting the following four points into practice.
2. Recognition of the principle that the borders of the republics resulting from the dismemberment of Yugoslavia cannot be modified by force. This applies to all states, starting with Bosnia-Herzegovina, and presupposes the renunciation of violence as a form of political action.
3. Abandonment of plans for partition based on ethnic criteria. Such plans run contrary to Balkan tradition and historical realities. Furthermore, they are immoral and undemocratic. Basing peace on them will create the conditions for an endless series of conflicts which will ultimately put Europe to fire and the sword.
4. Support of the international community, i.e. the United Nations, but also the major powers which, in one way or another, have a say in the settlement of the Yugoslav issue- the United States, Russia, France, Great Britain, Germany and Italy. All-round solidarity will be essential, in order to heal the wounds inflicted by the war, in the same way that Europe owes its post-war security and success to the Marshall Plan.
5. Lifting of the embargo which is placing a heavy burden on Serbia and new Yugoslavia. The international sanctions are not in fact reducing the fervour of those who are using violence to remain in power in any way at all. The sanctions only affect the civil population and arouse further nationalist sentiment. As a result, they have the opposite of the desired effect, which is a return to peace.

Serving in order to save

I personally have no political ambition; but it is obvious that if one day I am asked to participate in the recovery of my country, I shall not decline, because when war broke out and I saw Yugoslavia sink into an appalling crisis, I made a personal commitment to do what I could.

However, it should be made clear to all that should I be called upon, I will rigorously implement the double programme drawn up by our foundation - on the one hand, the thirteen points of the Peace Plan¹ presented last summer to four former heads of state or government of the United States, France, Germany and Great Britain - Gerald Ford, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Helmut Schmidt, Lord Callaghan; and on the other, the *Proposals for a New Commonwealth of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia*² which we published a year ago.

For the first time in its very long history, Serbia finds itself accused of crimes against humanity. There is no more urgent task than to return it to its place in the chorus of European nations. If I can contribute, in some way or another, to this great action, I will do so with my full enthusiasm and entire faith.

History will not stop at the sad episodes of the present. It will prove that is right who trust in democracy to resolve disputes between people. Let us hope that it does not wait too long to prove them right.

Boris Vukobrat

President

¹ Compare with my letter from 1 August 1993.

² Compare with the "Proposals for a New Commonwealth of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia," published in the edition of CopArt.

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*O*n 10 January a meeting of particular importance of NATO heads of state and government will be held in Brussels. This “summit”, which was initially intended to open the Atlantic Alliance to the new democracies of Eastern and Central Europe, will be devoted, as you know, to reinforcing political and military cooperation between the members of the Alliance; it will in particular strengthen the role of the Western European Union (WEU) as the “European pillar” of the Atlantic Alliance.

However, it will also deal with war in ex-Yugoslavia. This is of symbolic importance and shows to what extent the problems in the Balkans are henceforth central to international concerns. This issue is one of the top items on the agenda and will surely be one of the most important that western leaders have to discuss at the beginning of 1994. After two years of mindless violence, it has in fact become clear to all that the continuation of the war in ex-Yugoslavia is a direct threat to peace in Europe. Aside from the fact that the war is causing an intolerable loss of human life as well as enormous economic damage, it is tending to spread beyond the borders of ex-Yugoslavia and is thus destabilising the entire south of the Old Continent. Experts and politicians are now aware of this fact: if the new year does not see an end to the conflict, it will be impossible to prevent it engulfing the whole region and probably even more.

A unique opportunity

The Brussels “summit” will certainly not restore peace to ex-Yugoslavia like the wave of a magic wand. But it can be a start to the process which will finally silence the weapons in Bosnia-Herzegovina and elsewhere.

It is quite unusual, in fact, for the heads of state and government of Europe and North America to sit down at the same table in order to discuss a current problem; and the solemnity of this meeting itself will lend particular force to the decisions which result from it. Indeed, the proportions of the Yugoslav question are now so great that it eclipses all other problems. Having been freed of the threat posed by the East-West conflict, the NATO countries know that they absolutely have to restore peace to the Balkans, or risk never reaping the benefits of the great thaw between the two parts of Europe.

Therefore, this is a unique opportunity for the western community to clearly express its determination to put an end to the conflict. Not by banging its fist on the table, as it has done until now without taking steps which would prove its determination, but by adopting the political and military measures which would force the belligerents to lay down their weapons. If the United States and the major European powers finally decide to speak with one and the same voice, no one, in Belgrade, Sarajevo or Zagreb, can pretend not to hear; and the constraint will become so strong that the most extremist leaders in ex-Yugoslavia will be forced to yield.

As an observer of the situation and the parties involved, I am convinced that a firm declaration by the countries of the Atlantic Alliance in Brussels on 10 January would result in a change of attitude of those who are fiendishly adept at making the most of European divergences and differences in order to pursue their war aims. Such a declaration would not, of course, be enough to reconcile the Yugoslav brothers in arms, but it would represent a clear, concise warning to Croat, Serb and Bosnian leaders; and, above all, it would restore hope to the civilian victims of this conflict from another era. This declaration would represent a clear break with the series of tragic events which have marked the last two years.

The role of Russia

May I suggest here to the heads of state and government who are going to meet in the political capital of Europe that they do not attempt to resolve the Yugoslav problem alone, but that they do their utmost to obtain the active support of a very major power which must be part of this process; I am talking about Russia.

Russians are part of the Slav people and have always had a strong influence on the countries of this part of the world, therefore, they can and must play a corresponding role in the negotiations which will put an end to the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia. Nothing durable or stable can be achieved without them, particularly now that they have joined the camp of democratic nations.

The real problem is to convince them that the time has come to impose peace in the Balkans and, in order to do this, to make the necessary gestures, so that they join the other European powers.

In spite of its difficult internal situation, Russia is required to take the place in Europe's affairs that it lost due to a destructive ideology. Russia cannot be kept out of the major problems facing a continent in mid-transformation, whose peoples are re-learning to live together, having been separated for too long. And the set-

tlement of the Yugoslav problem is a good opportunity to establish effective cooperation, which will be the best guarantee of peace in the future.

Although Russia's interests are not exactly the same as those of the United States, Great Britain, France or Germany, it should not be very difficult to establish a minimal programme which all can agree on. The inviolability of borders, the rejection of any territorial division based on ethnic criteria, the respect of human rights and granting UN forces the means to impose peace are all provisions of resolutions adopted by the United Nations; now it is a matter of strictly applying them.

The most important thing at present is to bring an end to the fighting in ex-Yugoslavia and to stop talking in a vacuum. There is no doubt that peace is within reach; now the chance has to be seized and held onto.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

As we have seen, the NATO "summit" in Brussels determined nothing. Like the Geneva conference, where one set of negotiations follows another without ever obtaining a result, it did not produce a single concrete decision. This is proof, as if it were necessary, that the major powers do not understand the seriousness of the problem or, if they do understand it, are unable to act for a lack of common will.

In the face of such disinterest and ineffectiveness, the mood would be one of utter despair were it not for a voice being raised, saying out loud what the victims of the war in ex-Yugoslavia are murmuring or thinking: that it is not the people who want and who are running the war, but small groups of men motivated by power, who can only assert themselves through violence, terror and arbitrary actions.

That voice belongs to a man of the Church, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, who very aptly resituated the drama with just a few words, when he appeared on the French television programme *La Marche du Siècle*, presented by Jean-Marie Cavada, on 10 January.

Rejection of the war

What was it that Monseigneur Lustiger said so calmly and with such impact, due to his choice of simple words to express a simple truth?

Firstly, that the war in ex-Yugoslavia is not an ethnic conflict, that is to say, a conflict between peoples who are determined to deny each other's existence, nor a war of religion; having spoken with members of all the communities in ex-Yugoslavia-Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic-he is convinced that these peoples are not at the source of this conflict.

Secondly, that it is the ambitions and desires of a small few that have laid Bosnia-Herzegovina to waste.

Finally, that the men and women ousted from their land will return as soon as the hostilities have ceased, because for centuries it is there that they have lived and they cannot imagine living elsewhere.

In just a few words, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger expressed what most Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Serbs and Slovenians are thinking. Without undue emphasis, but with calm certainty, he summarized the wishes and hopes of several million men, women and children, who are directly or indirectly victims of the war and have lost everything except for their hope.

For those of us who day after day, week after week, month after month, follow the unfruitful talks in Geneva, Brussels and elsewhere, there was the most extraordinary contrast between the moving words of this priest and the futile diplomatic farce being played out by states anxious to be at the forefront, but quite determined not to act. We were able to compare the useless pomp and ceremony of official meetings with the message of a man who deeply feels the hardship of a sacrificed people and who expresses his compassion in terms which are understandable to all.

I personally do not doubt for one moment that the Cardinal's extremely moderate words will have more effect in the long term than the talks between the heads of state and government who met in Brussels to celebrate Atlantic solidarity. Having had the privilege of discussing ex-Yugoslavia with the Cardinal, I can assure you that his sadness is not feigned.

It would obviously be naive to believe that a few sentences spoken before a camera are enough to change the course of history. However, quite often, expressing a conviction at the right moment allows the idea to germinate which will one day lead to a decision. Without over-exaggerating the importance of Monseigneur Lustiger's remarks, I believe that they are the indication of a general awareness, amongst Europeans in general and particularly amongst French people, of the intolerable nature of this war.

They are no doubt still only a cry; but this cry shatters the agitated silence of the mighty of this world.

The virtues of utopia

In view of this fine example, let us recall once again that it is not by giving injustice force of law that an end can be brought to an internal war which is dishonouring Europe.

If the Yugoslav problem is to be solved before it sets Europe ablaze, clear, logical decisions are required: we must reject the division of territory according to ethnic criteria and the modification of borders by force, treat criminals - all criminals - as

they deserve, impose peace on the ground and reject pretences of action, extend the embargo to all the belligerents and demand the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Even if it means being considered a utopian, I wish to state once again that a gesture demonstrating the determination of the major powers - the United States, the European Union, Russia - to no longer tolerate the intolerable would be sufficient to make the warlords on the ground yield and allow the people to make their voice heard. Having been abandoned on all sides, the victims of this abject war do not have the courage to rebel against their oppressors; but if they had even the slightest impression of being listened to by the rest of the world, they would stand up to those who are using their bodies as a shield.

There is, in fact, no form of oppression which people do not reject sooner or later. Quite simply because people cannot live for very long, at least in our times, without being able to enjoy the basic freedoms of living in peace on the land of one's forefathers, speaking to one's neighbours and thinking without being subjected to the dictatorship of those who are strongest.

I do not know how the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia will manage to shake off the tyranny which is crushing them, but I know that the day is at hand when they will rediscover these freedoms.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

As long as Europe continues to seek a solution to the Yugoslav crisis by accepting discussions based on immoral and unrealistic principles it will suffer one failure after another. It is extremely naive or completely cynical to believe that it is possible to put an end to the war by trampling on the most elementary rights of the human being, by ignoring people's desire to live together as they have always done in the past and by taking account of ethnic separation criteria which are a negation of law and democracy.

The result of such an approach is, in any case, perfectly clear today: not only has the fighting not stopped, but the international community, led by the United Nations, has recognized that it is powerless to keep the belligerents in check.

The apparent consensus which united the major powers - the United States, Russia, the European Union - has disintegrated and, worse still, there is a lack of agreement between military heads and political leaders within the UNO. Rather than dying down, the conflict is escalating and creating an ever deeper division between the democracies.

Two key principles

It would be untruthful to say that this development is of great surprise to us. Since the beginning of the hostilities we have been repeating that peace will not return to the Balkans until two fundamental principles have been acknowledged by all and accepted as the basis for a political settlement.

1. Firstly, the respect of the multi-ethnic and religious nature of the states involved in the conflict.
2. Secondly, the rejection of any forceful modification of the borders recognized by the international community.

Any direct or indirect violation of either of these principles can only prolong the conflict, violence and executions. On the other hand, any decision based on these principles would necessarily promote peace.

As an attentive observer of the tragedy occurring in my country, I have the feeling that these two truths are beginning to be understood by those same people who

are making war with such disregard for people's rights. And when I see that Belgrade and Zagreb are drawing up an agreement with the intention of establishing diplomatic relations, I tell myself that the denial of the existence of others, which is the root of this war, is perhaps about to give way to a more realistic appraisal of the situation.

I do not personally believe that the weapons can be silenced by excluding one or other of the belligerents from the community of nations and subjecting their peoples to an embargo which only affects the weak. Since the beginning of the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia I have been convinced that dialogue is the only means to restore peace; not a dialogue like the one in Geneva today, based on the idea of exclusion which guides a few warlords for whom peace is the worst possible scenario, but a dialogue between the peoples, conducted by their true representatives.

France's hour

In my view, it would be enough for a voice which commands respect to speak out today and recall the two principles mentioned above in order to completely change the situation.

After two years of destruction, few people in ex-Yugoslavia today still feel the desire to fight. The great majority of Bosnians, Croats and Serbs long for peace, that is to say, to be able to live on the land where generations of men and women have lived without experiencing the wish to tear each other apart.

That voice could be France's. Firstly, because, from the outset, France has been the most committed western power on the ground in the quest for peace. Secondly, because it has been able to condemn crimes without laying equal blame on the peoples and their leaders. Finally, because it still has a great influence in the region, even if it has the impression that it is not being listened to when it talks about peace.

Whereas all the solutions proposed in order to bring an end to the conflict have failed so far, a peace plan put forward by France and based, as we have suggested, on the existence of autonomous multi-ethnic regions within the states recognized by the international community and the all-round acceptance of the principle of not using force in order to modify borders would most likely meet the approval of all.

Everyone is aware that the war will soon end for a lack of fighting men; but everyone is also aware that the most difficult thing today is to find a language which

is common to the belligerents. Indeed, the ideas of guaranteeing minority rights - that is, for all minorities - within the states which resulted from the break-up of Yugoslavia and making a commitment to not use force to change the outlines of these states are simple ideas which are acceptable to everybody and which have the added advantage of adhering perfectly to the principles of democracy.

To those who have doubts about the possibility of such a programme being accepted, I say that peace in the Balkans will be based on simple ideas, not on unreasonable plans, because these plans take no account of historical realities.

It will not be long before we realize that what was yesterday's utopia has become the only realistic way in which to tackle and solve the problem. And it will not be the first time in history that a dream will finally prove to be the most practical solution to an apparently insurmountable problem. The most striking demonstration of this was already made half a century ago, by those who conceived the European Community at the height of the Second World War.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*W*e do not know what the consequences of a NATO military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina might be. However, we are very well aware of the inevitable result of a division of the country according to ethnic or religious criteria, and we are even more aware of the price of limiting the settlement of the Yugoslav question to this republic only.

As I have already said a hundred times what I think of a solution which would confirm the partition of Bosnia, I will not dwell on this subject, except to recall that the respect of borders which are recognized by the international community is an essential precondition for peace in the region. I would, however, like to mention a problem which no-one appears to be concerned by and which will arise once the weapons have been silenced in ex-Yugoslavia.

This problem concerns relations between today's fratricidal fighters, once Sarajevo has been freed from the deadly hold which is suffocating it and there is finally peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Preparing the post-war period

It will of course seem quite out of place to raise this question whilst nothing has been resolved and a new escalation of the war is possible. Yet, I am convinced that it is precisely now that this question should be examined.

Let us suppose indeed that reason finally triumphs over passion and the brothers at war in Bosnia are reconciled with each other. Let us suppose that, having surrendered their weapons, they agree to allow their peoples to finally live free of all constraint, in a society which is once again stable and safe. What will happen?

Situated as it is at the heart of former Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina will obviously not be able to exist as an autarky. In one way or another it will have to trade the goods it produces and those it lacks with its neighbours to the north and south and to the east and west. The political freedom which Bosnia-Herzegovina will enjoy will be meaningless if it is not accompanied by the essential freedoms of trade and movement of people.

Furthermore, one of the most serious errors of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan is that it makes no provision for Bosnia-Herzegovina to have access to the Adriatic and the Sava. Both of these natural communication routes are in fact indispensable for it. Moreover, we know from experience that creating new Dantzig corridors would result in endless conflicts.

In any case, in the future, Bosnia's relations with Croatia and Serbia will have to be organized in such a way as to enable it to once again communicate with the rest of Europe, I personally believe there is only one solution to this fundamental problem. Once hostilities have ceased, a community composed of the republics of former Yugoslavia should be created. This community will have very flexible structures which allow each of the states freedom of action whilst promoting trade, which is the very basis of the market economy. There is no point in separating the fighters in Bosnia-Herzegovina and encouraging them to cooperate in the search for a political solution to the conflict, if efforts are not simultaneously devoted to the organization of future relations within the Yugoslav area.

Today's world provides us with enough examples of composite entities, in which very different peoples and nations coexist harmoniously, for there to be little difficulty in finding a model for the structure of these relations. However, it would be a grave mistake to wait until the fighting has ceased and a peace agreement has been signed in Geneva or elsewhere, in order to examine the possibilities.

The European example

It seems to me in any case that if the international community were to envisage the post-war period now, this would hasten the end of the war itself. By mapping out even a very rough framework for relations between the former belligerents in ex-Yugoslavia, the international community would bring new hope to the millions of men, women and children whose daily lives are a trial and who despair of an end to their suffering. Such hope would no doubt help to determine the outcome of the peace negotiations.

Europe itself, devastated by war, only decided to look to the future when respected voices raised the subject and spoke not in terms of confrontation, but in terms of cooperation. If men such as Jean Monnet had not envisaged the future European Community in the midst of war, the wounds of that war would probably not have healed for decades.

If this was possible at the height of the Second World War, why should it not be possible today in the Balkans? The gap which separated the peoples of old Europe was surely wider and deeper than the gap dividing the countries of former Yugoslavia; and yet this was overcome.

For several months now, our Foundation has been reflecting on what will have to be done tomorrow in order to bring Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, and also Macedonia and Albania, together within a single community. I have myself outlined such a project in my "Proposals", published a year ago. These ideas are no doubt neither perfect nor ideal; they must be discussed, criticised and completed, but they can serve as the basis for a concrete project, involving all the countries concerned.

As strange as it may seem, it is now that the future of the Balkans has to be considered, calmly and serenely, far from the combat zone. If this future is to be peaceful, we have to accept the necessity of looking very far ahead, beyond the next two or three years and the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is the next half-century which must be prepared, that is to say, the long period during which the successor states of Yugoslavia will be firmly anchored to the European Union and will become one of the main factors of stability in southern Europe.

The happiness of future generations depends on the ability of the people of today to build a solid community structure.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Two events, which have occurred almost simultaneously, have prompted me to combine the two letters from our Foundation for the month of March: the first is the agreement signed in Washington between the Croats and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina; the second is the offensive carried out by Greece against Macedonia. Both these events call for comments on our part, as they concern fundamental aspects of the war in ex-Yugoslavia.

1. The Washington agreement officially recognizes for the first time a reality that we have been continuously describing for the last two years: the interweaving of peoples, which makes any partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina based on ethnic criteria impossible. Now, after months of blind violence, tens of thousands of people are dead and wounded and immeasurable destruction has been wreaked, two of the belligerents are finally facing the truth. This marks considerable progress, which does not absolve the crimes committed in the name of a suicidal ideology, but which opens the way for a reasonable and humane solution to the conflict.

Since the brothers at war, having killed each other, are beginning to recognize the principles that we have been continually reiterating, let us go a step further in the reasoning and look at what may now happen.

It is clear that the Washington agreement can only last if it is widened in concentric circles to include the whole of ex-Yugoslavia. It would be pointless to only apply it to those regions disputed by Croats and Muslims in view of the situation in the rest of the Bosnian and Croatian territories. Therefore, Serbs from Bosnia and Krajina must be included, followed by Serbs from Serbia and Montenegrins, and finally all the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia. Only then will peace return to the Balkans.

It is of little importance what form the future entity will or could take. What is more important is that the Washington agreement, which is the first serious attempt to bring an end to the war, marks the beginning of the construction process of a variable geometry community, in which the states will maintain their independence whilst cooperating with each other and respecting the peoples they accommodate.

In order to sustain the momentum of the movement started in the capital of the United States, two essential conditions must be met: firstly, Europe must acknowledge the failure of its peace plan- the Owen-Stoltenberg plan-which would only have caused the war to spread if applied; secondly, the West must allow the Russians to assume their rightful role in the peace process. Due to their tragic misjudgement of the Yugoslav reality, the European powers have largely contributed to the misfortune of those people they wished to protect. They must now welcome to the negotiating table, as a partner with equal powers and obligations, a country which is at least as preoccupied as they are by the situation and which can exert a moderating influence on the Serbs.

2. This is all the more necessary since Europe has not exactly excelled itself with respect to the second issue that concerns us today; I am talking of the shameful behaviour of Greece with regard to Macedonia. How can Athens' announcement of the closure of its northern borders in order to starve its neighbours be seen as anything but a violation of people's rights? How can democratic nations which claim to defend human and minority rights allow one of their partners - and current President of their Union - to make iniquitous decisions which contradict all the principles they defend?

No one can ignore the fact that the nature of the Macedonian affair is terribly destructive. If one of the countries of the European Union unilaterally grants itself the power to suffocate a country which has done it no harm and its partners only make ineffectual protests, Europe will one day re-live what it experienced sixty years ago when the Third Reich decided to forcefully subjugate the countries around it.

Macedonia has been recognized by the international community; it has a seat at the UN; it has been accepted alongside Germany, the United States, France, Great Britain, Italy and Russia; the White House has even made the gesture of posting soldiers along its borders. It is an inexcusable crime to allow this country to be asphyxiated by Greece due to a quarrel over a flag.

If the European Union does not succeed in making Greece back down, then it must oblige Athens to renounce its membership. If, despite this, Greece persists with its tragic intention, the international community, within the framework of the United Nations, must be brave enough to do likewise. It is only by demanding that its members respect the law and rules enacted by democratic nations that lasting peace can be established on our planet.

Letters of the President

This undoubtedly requires consistency and courage. Yet, that is the price of ensuring that the lives of people on earth are happy.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*I*t will be generally acknowledged that the relative peace that has been established in Sarajevo and most combat zones of Bosnia-Herzegovina is fragile. It only hangs by a thread which may be broken at any moment by a careless gesture, a misunderstanding or a provocation.

It must therefore be consolidated, which requires convincing Belgrade that the time has come to find a reasonable solution to the conflict. Regardless of what pressure maybe exerted on the belligerents, the Yugoslav problem will not be resolved until the republics of former Yugoslavia sit down at the same table and define the terms of a fair agreement which will allow their populations to live without fear of being forced to leave their ancestral lands. Serbia naturally has a say in this matter, just as Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina do.

Joint action by the United States and Russia

This supposes that all those involved in the search for a peaceful solution ensure that their actions converge. This applies to Europe, as its contradictory interventions have too often worsened the situation they were intended to resolve, and it applies even more so to the two powers which can today exert a determining influence on the brothers at war-the United States and Russia.

It is clear to me that the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina started to change when Moscow and Washington demonstrated their will to put an end to the war. However, they have thus far not coordinated their action in order to produce an overall peace plan. For the time being, they are each following their own path and are only concerned with scoring points, which may cause new breaches. The war cannot be brought to an end solely by talking or threatening; what is required is joint action.

This is made easier today by the fact that the solution appears obvious. It is outlined in the agreement signed between Croats and Muslims in Washington a few days ago and is the solution that we have been proposing for the last two years: respect of the borders of the Yugoslav republics as recognized by the international community, autonomy of the historically defined regions which make up each republic, protection of ethnic or religious minorities, creation of a variable-geome-

try commonwealth linking the republics of former Yugoslavia within one entity. As these principles based on common sense are contrary to the plans drawn up so far, it needs to be clearly said that the Owen-Stoltenberg plan is invalid and it should no longer be referred to.

Only then will peace return to the Balkans. The plan we are proposing has a natural basis and is logical, consistent and balanced. It responds to historical and geographic demands. It corresponds above all to the desires of civilians, who did not want this war and who wish to return to their homes and their land.

It is possible that minds in Sarajevo, Zagreb and Belgrade are not quite ready to accept such a solution, but the facts will soon convince those who are most reluctant; and if the United States and Russia put all their weight behind such a plan the war will soon be just a bad memory.

Return of individual property

In this context, one problem is quickly going to become of paramount importance: the return of men, women and children who have fled their homes in ex-Yugoslavia in order to escape the war.

According to figures quoted in Brussels by the European Union, there are currently 4 500000 displaced persons or refugees awaiting the end of the war; 4 500000 persons who have lost everything and who are going to try, as soon as there is peace, to return to their native towns and villages. Population movements on this scale cannot just be allowed to occur. They must be prepared with great care in order to prevent this return from generating endless conflicts.

At a time like the present, when attention is focused on historic events such as the lifting of the siege of Sarajevo or the Washington and Moscow negotiations, thought must firstly be given to this very concrete, precise problem. In order to achieve peace, these millions of persons whom the war has robbed of everything must be allowed to resettle in their homes.

It is not necessary to be an expert to be aware of the extreme complexity of a situation which may rapidly become explosive, even whilst elsewhere political leaders have agreed to settle their differences. Europeans, who experienced large population movements during and after the Second World War, know from experience the enormous difficulties that such movements cause. They are in a better position than anyone to appreciate the risks.

In the coming weeks this vast issue must be considered without waiting for the weapons to be definitively silenced in ex-Yugoslavia, practical solutions must be envisaged, in each region a legal and institutional framework must be created which will guarantee the rights of each individual and arbitration bodies must be defined which will allow individual and collective conflicts to be settled as they arise.

Once again, it is by foreseeing what may happen that peace can be given a real chance.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Those who believed that NATO's demonstration of force would ensure the return of peace to Bosnia-Herzegovina can today see that this was an illusion. Not only is fighting continuing in several areas but there is even a renewed threat to Sarajevo.

Unfortunately, this situation was predictable and it is hard to comprehend how this was not understood from the outset. The fact is that the belligerents can only be made to respect a cease-fire through a formal agreement between the major powers. However, it is clear that at least one of the powers, Russia, was not given its say with respect to the military intervention aimed at protecting the Blue Helmets who were under threat. This situation was all the more surprising considering that Russia has sent units to Bosnia-Herzegovina and was therefore entitled to be consulted.

This political error deserves to figure quite high on the already long list of lost opportunities. It demonstrates to what extent those people who are supposed to help restore peace in ex-Yugoslavia are very removed from the reality of the situation on the ground and are thus incapable of fulfilling their mission.

The egoism of the major powers

To a certain extent one can understand that the United States, Europe and Russia are pursuing different goals in this matter. However, the danger of a general explosion in the Balkans today is so great that reason must prevail over egoistic considerations. If one considers the situation just to the south of Bosnia, between Greece and Macedonia, between Albania and Greece, one can see that an even worse explosion is possible, or even likely, in a region where ethnic and religious passions are at a peak.

The most important thing at the present time is to put an end to the war which is devastating Bosnia-Herzegovina. Everyone agrees on this point but no one is making the necessary gestures in order to achieve this aim. The Americans and Europeans believe that it is enough to make gestures in the air in order to silence the weapons on the ground, the Russians believe that the mere fact that ex-Yugoslavia is part of the Slav world means that they will be listened to as arbitrators. None

of them are on the right track and cannot hope to resolve the Yugoslav problem using this approach.

Only the consultation of all parties, an agreement on the aims and means and a clear desire to act jointly will allow a reversal of the process which is currently leading to a general resumption of hostilities between Serbs, Croats and Muslims, which could extend the war to Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania and which could even mark the beginning of a new cold war between East and West. If the United States, Russia and the European Union really want to restore peace to ex-Yugoslavia, their leaders must stop acting in isolation in favour of one or other of the parties as this only encourages them to continue fighting.

This requires great political wisdom, according to which each party recognizes the point of view of the others and acts consequently. If we accept that the priority today is to put an end to the fighting then the American, Russian and European representatives present in Bosnia-Herzegovina must act in a concerted manner in order to establish peace. At the same time their governments must clearly indicate their desire to bring the war to an end and use all the means at their disposal in order to convince the belligerents of their determination. A few gestures would be sufficient to create the right climate for a definitive suspension of hostilities. These are not necessarily spectacular gestures but they must be made jointly and must concern very precise points rather than vague ideas.

What is at stake in the Balkans today is not only the fate of ex-Yugoslavia but also the future equilibrium of Southern Europe and the future relations between the European and Slav worlds. The stakes are such that if the tendency towards defiance prevails over the will to cooperate, the whole of Europe will once again be playing with its fate for at least another half-century.

Abandoning the Owen-Stoltenberg plan

In this context, one of the most significant gestures which could and should be made is to simply abandon the peace plan drawn up in Geneva and known as the Owen - Stoltenberg plan.

This plan is both unrealistic and immoral because it confirms the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines. It rewards those who have traced bloody lines between Croats, Serbs and Muslims. It can only lead to an endless series of tragedies. Abandoning this plan as a basis for settling the Yugoslav conflict is a necessary precondition for any serious negotiations.

The Europeans continue to advocate the application of this plan in Bosnia-Herzegovina with an obstinacy which demonstrates their misappreciation of the problem. They are thus preventing themselves from playing a role in the reconciliation of the brothers at war. If peace returns to Bosnia one day, it will be based on recognition of the fact that the ethnic or religious communities are too intertwined to be artificially allocated to different territories.

We will not recall here the proposals made by our foundation on this subject more than a year ago, but it is clear that as time goes on events on the ground only confirm what we have been proposing. The independent republics which resulted from the break-up of Yugoslavia will not resolve their problems through unnatural ethnic or religious divisions. They will only achieve peace the day they accept the fact that they are naturally composite entities and that they must establish strongly decentralized political systems. It should be acknowledged that peace will be re-established at such time as the historical regions of ex-Yugoslavia are granted the autonomy they have always wished for.

The Owen-Stoltenberg plan proposes peace based on the violation of the most fundamental rights of the human being. This is in clear contradiction with all the principles of democracy. Therefore, this plan can by no means be accepted as the basis for reasonable negotiation. The sooner the West realizes this, the sooner the real problems can deal with.

But time is marching on.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The Gorazde tragedy is a grotesque illustration of what happens when one attempts to apply an artificial solution to a human problem. This tragedy will soon be repeated if the major powers persist in their desire to create ethnic enclaves in Bosnia-Herzegovina, The creation of such enclaves can indeed only stimulate conflict on the ground. It encourages the besiegers to multiply their attacks in order to try and create an irreversible situation whilst their there is time and it incites those under siege to twist the truth in order to obtain international public support.

Continuing along this path can only lead to a general stalemate and perpetuate the war, which has already clearly proven that force will never provide a long-term solution.

How many more people must die before this fact is recognized? How much more suffering must be borne before this policy which so clearly contradicts historical and human reality is abandoned.

Secret diplomacy

Amidst the flood of bad news with which we are bombarded every day a ray of hope has appeared as a result of the Gorazde tragedy.

It is the announcement of a top-level meeting between the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations in order to try and find a solution to the Yugoslav drama. We have been suggesting such a meeting for some months now, as we believe that only a formal agreement and concerted action by the major powers will silence the weapons in the Balkans. The decision to hold this meeting is an important step in the right direction and we can only welcome this move.

May we say, however, that this conference will only have a positive effect if it is prepared extremely carefully. In more concrete terms this means that before the meeting a consensus must be reached on the basis of a solution and, in particular, that these preliminary discussions must be held in the utmost secrecy.

It is indeed common knowledge that powerful and well-organized pressure groups have been working on the side-lines since the beginning of the war in

ex-Yugoslavia in order to sabotage any attempts at conciliation. These groups are highly skilled in seduction, intimidation and other more concrete forms of persuasion and are thus able to pervert the normal diplomatic process. They prevent the experts from carrying out their work with the necessary serenity, they stir up the media by providing them with false or distorted information and they make use of international public support which they try and shape in order to best suit their interests.

In this context of pressure and misinformation the only way to reach a viable solution is to ensure that those who are responsible for suggesting an overall settlement to governments are no longer subject to these pressures. Until now, all talks have been held in the public arena leaving those involved entirely exposed. It is time that this public diplomacy gave way to secret diplomacy.

To those who may take offense at such a proposal, I reply that in today's highly mediatized world discretion is becoming a cardinal virtue once more. It is not only an essential condition for any serious negotiation, it is also the only way in which bold gestures can be made, without which there will never be lasting peace in the Balkans.

As soon as possible

While we are on the subject, I would like to repeat once again that in order to make progress towards peace in ex-Yugoslavia, the Owen-Stoltenberg plan must first be definitively abandoned.

This plan is based on the acceptance of a principle which is iniquitous, morally unacceptable and politically dangerous- the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina according to ethnic criteria. This plan can only lead to a hundred years' war in the Balkans. Using it as the basis for a settlement in ex-Yugoslavia is a rejection of peace.

Once this precondition has been fulfilled- for it is indeed a precondition - no effort must be spared in order to convene the meeting as quickly as possible. Further delays would only increase the opportunities for aggression, accentuate the suffering of the civilian population and play into the hands of those who wish to prolong the war in order to serve their own interests.

This meeting of four is imperative and of utmost urgency because the war has already gone on for too long in ex-Yugoslavia, because there are also worrying tensions in the south of the Balkans, because covetous looks are once again be-

Boris Vukobrat

ing cast on Dalmatia and Istria and quite simply because the fighting has already killed, wounded and displaced too many people in this region of the world.

Peace can no longer wait.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Messrs,

François Mitterrand
Boris Yeltsin
Bill Clinton
John Major
Boutros Boutros Ghali
Jacques Delors,

After two years of a brutal war which has destroyed Yugoslavia, devastated a part of the Balkans, killed and wounded tens of thousands of people and forced millions of men, women and children to flee their homes, you have decided to take the only action which can bring the violence to an end; to meet in order to impose peace on the belligerents.

You are of course not responsible for the tragedy which has been occurring in former Yugoslavia for the last two years; but if you had accurately assessed the problem at the outset, if, rather than waiting, you had taken the decisions that the situation clearly demanded, if you had shown determination instead of expressing your disagreement, the weapons in the Balkans would have been silenced long ago and no one would have dreamt of institutionalizing the ethnic division of the disputed areas. By leaving the extremists unhampered in their plundering of Yugoslavia you have assumed responsibility for the degeneration of this conflict which could well set Europe ablaze once again.

Therefore, those of us who from the very beginning have been appealing to you to intervene would like to reiterate the basic rules which would guarantee the return of peace to ex-Yugoslavia if adopted at your summit meeting.

One must first understand...

You are well aware that the republics which formerly made up Yugoslavia and which are today being torn apart did not turn against one another in order to settle obscure ethnic quarrels dating back to the mists of time. These republics are constituted by a single people - the Southern Slavs - 75 % of whom speak one and the same language - Serbo-Croatian - and who have inhabited the same geographical area for centuries - the Balkans. These people practice different religions

- Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism or Islam-but they have a common culture, traditions and way of life. Nothing and no one will ever be able to raise artificial barriers between them or divide them for very long.

You must therefore abandon the unacceptable idea which forms the basis of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan and which if applied would only exacerbate the crisis rather than resolve it.

You must stop believing that the Yugoslav peoples no longer wish to live together, as they have always done in the past. It is only because certain ambitious, power - hungry men with no scruples were set on carving out personal strongholds in ex-Yugoslavia that the end of communism has been a descent into hell for the Yugoslav peoples. This group of men used hatred and exclusion as weapons in order to achieve their aims and stirred up conflict, making hatred and injustice into political tools and using the media to manipulate information to their advantage. With the support of small groups of extremists they succeeded in tracing bloody divisions across the country.

You must understand that the Yugoslav people-be they Croats, Bosnians or Serbs - did not embrace the cause of those who were promoting exclusion. Although at times they may have listened to the nationalist speeches directed at them, they never supported the senseless quarrel between their leaders. On the contrary, whenever they had the opportunity, the Yugoslav people expressed their desire to live in peace in a pluralist society where all individuals could practice the religion of their choice, in the place where they were born and where their ancestors had lived before them.

Above all, do not forget that the war has doubled in violence each time that new maps have been discussed and attempts have been made to base peace on the ethnic division of the territory of one or another of the Yugoslav republics.

... And then act

This is the unavoidable reality that you must now acknowledge in order to make amends for the errors committed throughout these two years of war. It is only thus that a long-term solution to the conflict can be obtained.

Just under a year ago our Foundation published a book of "Proposals for a New Commonwealth of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia" in which, with the help of renowned international experts, we drew up the framework for an overall settlement of the Yugoslav crisis. We urge you to take these proposals as the basis for

your peace plan. They are both realistic and fair, because they exclude any idea of ethnic division of Bosnia-Herzegovina or any other Yugoslav republic.

The underlying principles are simple:

1. To revive the regions which history has formed in the Balkans. These are autonomous entities where ethnic groups and religions previously coexisted without conflict.
2. To formally confirm the borders of the Yugoslav republics and allow them to subsequently create a variable-geometry commonwealth, within which each republic will be free and independent and will delegate only those responsibilities which it cannot reasonably assume itself.
3. To convince the Serbs, by expressing your steadfast joint determination, to participate in the agreement signed between Croats and Bosnians in Washington. This agreement is a first step in the right direction, but will resolve nothing if it is not extended. Indeed, it must not be forgotten that the vast majority of Bosnian Serbs are not extremists and that many of them live in areas which are wrongly considered as being Muslim.
4. To enable the commonwealth to be incorporated as soon as possible into the European Union, which will be the surest guarantee of peace in the Balkans in the future.

There is no obligation more urgent today than enabling the four million Yugoslavs displaced by the war to return to their homes, and only a plan based on the four principles set out above can allow this obligation to be met. You have the power and it is your duty to impose this plan on those who are still fighting and thereby violating the most fundamental of human rights. If you do not do so, not only will you be judged guilty by history but you will also face a war which will engulf the whole of Southern Europe.

The opportunity with which you are now presented can ensure harmony between justice and peace: it may be the last. Do not allow it to pass.

Boris Vukobrat

President

15 July 1994

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The gathering of Yugoslav intellectuals, which has just been held in Geneva, is of historic importance. Not only did these men and women proclaim their faith in peace and democracy, they also did not hesitate to express their conviction that the solution in ex-Yugoslavia will be the result of tolerance and respect of others. .

I believe that you should also have a copy of the declaration adopted by the conference, because it is valid and is based on ideas which are dear to us.

STATEMENT

I

"Under the patronage of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and State Council of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, the city on Lake Léman was host, between 27 and 30 June 1994, to a conference of independent intellectuals for peace in the region of ex-Yugoslavia."

"Among others, Mr. Federico MAYOR, Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Olivier VODOZ, Vice-President of the Geneva State Council and Mr. François Fouinat, personal representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, addressed the 27 participants at the meeting coming from all parts of ex-Yugoslavia."

II

"After a democratic spirited debate, expressing varying opinions, the participants at the conference agreed that the armed conflicts in the Balkans must be stopped as soon as possible by all available means, in accordance with the resolutions adopted up to now by the UN Security Council, and that all concerned, without exception, must participate in this."

III

"We consider that peace is only possible on the following bases:

- Not accepting the changes of internationally recognized borders by force or through imposed solutions.*

- *Maintaining the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a democratic, multinational and multiconfessional state, which has taken on more meaning than its mere local character and became a symbol of the defence and preservation of Helsinki Europe.*
- *Not accepting demographic changes by force, genocide, "ethnic cleansing", so-called humane and "voluntary" transfers of populations or any other forms of pressure.*
- *Canceling the validity of all unilateral acts or contracts of property transfer based on violence and constraint.*
- *Ensuring the free and safe return of the refugees to their homes, with property and other compensation, and the creation of the necessary conditions for a safe and free life.*
- *Accelerating judicial procedures against war crimes and war criminals, including the treatment of rape as a war crime, with particular attention to the protection of the witnesses and the victims during the procedure as well as later.*
- *We suggest that UNESCO initiate the trials of those guilty of the destruction of sacred sites, cultural monuments and nature.*
- *The non-acceptance of these principles for the establishment of peace in the region of ex-Yugoslavia creates a dangerous precedent for the changing of the borders by force, the creation of ethnically pure states and the encouragement of an expansionist ideology based on racism, inciting the return of Fascism and Nazism not only in the states-successors of the former Yugoslavia, but also in the whole of Europe."*

IV

"Therefore, the conference considers:

- *that peace cannot be reached without the mutual recognition of the states-successors of ex-Yugoslavia and without the acceleration of the succession process.*
- *that peace cannot be reached without a consequent implementation of parliamentary democracy, civil rights and rights to citizenship, human rights and individual and collective minority rights.*
- *that it is necessary to enable the free reestablishment of communications between individuals and groups, which has been impossible due to the war and the dissolution of Yugoslavia.*
- *that the media are also largely responsible for the war in ex-Yugoslavia. Peace cannot be established without independence of the media searching for the truth and*

not accepting to spread what the national leaders proclaim to be the truth. All bans and limitations on the work of the journalists, the free flow of information, cultural exchange, no matter whether they are imposed by national or international authorities, are contrary to this.

- that it is necessary to create and cultivate a climate in which mutual understanding and friendship will not be politically condemned and manipulated;*
- that with a view to ending the war as soon as possible and reducing mutual tensions, it is necessary to intensify mutual individual and group contacts, as well as the NGOs' activities.*
- that it is necessary to accelerate the aid programmes of UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, the European Union and those of NGOs with a view to alleviating the heavy consequences of the war, the victims of which were all the layers of the population, and in particular women and children.*
- that one of the first steps towards overcoming the atmosphere of hatred must be the restoration of all sacred sites, which should be rebuilt by those who control de facto the territories on which the sacred sites were situated.*

The participants at the conference also presented a series of other concrete proposals for actions that will be published in the near future."

V

"It is of particular importance that:

- We support and encourage the continuation of the negotiations between the representatives of the Republic of Croatia and the Serbs from the territory under the control of the international community, in view of finding a peaceful and gradual solution, in accordance with the decisions of the UN Security Council, with full respect of human and minority rights on the territory under the control of Croatian authorities as well as on the territory under the control of the international community.*
- We support the efforts of the international community with a view to preventing the extension of the war to Macedonia or to any other part of ex-Yugoslavia. We suggest the start of a dialogue between the neighbouring countries view to preserving peace and developing widespread cooperation.*
- We support the efforts to resolve the problems of a potential war zone in Kosovo on democratic principles, through the creation of democratic institutions and through dialogue.*

- *We support the attempts to create realistic bases for common life in Vojvodina and Sandzak, through a democratic dialogue, and with full respect of the rights and the identity of all ethnic communities living in these regions."*

VI

"In accordance with their mutually expressed opinions, the participants at the independent conference on peace in ex-Yugoslavia, held in Geneva, decided to come up with an initiative to establish a continuous conference under the patronage of UNESCO and the Republic and Canton of Geneva as a unique non-governmental forum."

"We therefore appeal to all those who wish to contribute to ending the hostilities as soon as possible and to establishing peace between the states-successors of ex-Yugoslavia, to engage themselves actively, as individuals, as groups or as NGOs, in the spreading of the ideas of a civil society, the rule of law, as well as the integration of the whole region of ex-Yugoslavia into the community of Europe."

"The participants at the conference suggest that one of their next meetings be held in Sarajevo."

It goes without saying that our Foundation supports all initiatives that were taken by those participating in the Geneva conference.

For months, we have been striving to find a humane and fair solution to the conflict which is tearing Yugoslavia apart, and we can therefore only support the efforts of these independent intellectuals. We also hope that they will be offered encouragement by all well-intentioned men and women.

Boris Vukobrat

President

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Ivica CERESNJES, President of the Jewish community of Sarajevo
Ivan-Zvonimir ČIČAK, President of Helsinki Watch, Zagreb
Biserka GALL, Painter, Paris
Sacha GOLDMAN, Film producer, Paris
Jurij GUSTINČIĆ, Journalist, Ljubljana
Dusan JOVANOVIĆ, Theater director, Ljubljana
Zorica JOSIĆ, Psychologist, Paris
Zlatko KRAMARIĆ, Mayor of Osijek
Dusan MAKAVEJEV, Film director, Belgrade
Orhideja MARTINOVIĆ, Lawyer, expert on human rights, Zagreb
Dragoljub NAJMAN, Executive Secretary of InterAction Council former Vice-Director General of UNESCO, Paris
Aleksandar NENADOVIĆ, Journalist, former Chief editor of "Politika", Belgrade
Bozo NOVAK, Journalist, former Director of "Vjesnik", Zagreb
Nikola PETROVIĆ-NJEGOŠ, Architect, Prince of Montenegro
Vladimir RALEV, Businessman, Geneva - Skopje
Slobodan SELENIĆ, Writer, Member of the Serbian Academy, Belgrade
Rade ŠERBEDŽIJA, Actor, Zagreb - Ljubljana
Dusan SIDJANSKI, Professor at the University of Geneva
Kemal SIRBEGOVIĆ, Painter, Paris
Veton SUROI, Journalist, Pristina
Gordana SUŠA, Journalist, Belgrade
Mirko TEPAVAC, Former minister, former Director of "Politika", Belgrade
Tibor VARADY, Professor at the University of Novi Sad former minister in the Panic Government, Belgrade
Luka VINČENTIĆ, Catholic priest, Zagreb
Dinka VUČKOVIĆ, Psychologist, Zagreb
Boris VUKOBRAT, Businessman, President of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation, Paris
Sonya ZORAN, Journalist, Zurich

15 August 1994

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

As observers of the international scene we have no doubt that the creation of the Contact Group on Yugoslavia, comprising the United States, Russia, France, Germany and the United Kingdom heralds a new form of international cooperation. It is a form of cooperation which meets the demands of our times and in which each of the major powers involved plays an appropriate role, since, thanks to the Contact Group, the United States is no longer acting alone as the world's policeman, Russia has once again taken its place amongst the major powers, Germany is finally carrying the diplomatic weight which corresponds to its economic might and France and the United Kingdom are acting apart from the European Union.

Furthermore, many signs indicate that this institution is preparing to widen its field of action beyond the Yugoslav crisis. It is adapted to the harsh realities of the modern world and is sufficiently trim to avoid the paralysis which affects large international institutions, and sooner or later it will be required to increase its actions for peace. The proof of this is that it is already discussing all the major issues of the world's troubled regions.

In other words, and we can only regard this as positive, the war ravaging ex-Yugoslavia has led to the emergence of a new informal institution, admittedly lacking real decision-making power but capable of reconciling the points of view of the major powers and of helping to define a common policy, which is an indispensable precondition for any kind of consistent action on the ground.

Our Foundation, whose objective is to reflect on means of crisis management which are adapted to the problems of our time, can only welcome the appearance of this institution on the international scene. From the very beginning of the conflict in Yugoslavia, our Foundation emphasized the fact that although the solution to the crisis depended primarily on the Yugoslavs themselves, the agreement of the major powers - particularly Russia and the United States - was a necessary precondition for any negotiated settlement.

Respect of the unity and diversity of the Yugoslav peoples

We are however perturbed to see that the Contact Group has not managed to avoid following the beaten track and that its first action is in fact contrary to its

objective. Is it not simultaneously advocating the unity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its division according to ethnic criteria? This is a contradiction which can only prolong the hostilities !

Yet it is clear, after the failure of peace plans based on the same principle, that the war in Yugoslavia will only end at such time as the international community abandons the harmful idea of dividing the country along ethnic lines. This is so obvious to anyone who knows the reality of the Balkans, with its extraordinary interweaving of peoples and religions, that it is shocking to see diplomats of great experience proposing solutions which have no chance of long-term success.

International pressure may well force Bosnian Croats, Serbs and Muslims to feign acceptance of an imposed partition for some months; but it is certain that sooner or later, and sooner rather than later, the conflict will re-ignite with even more ferocity than before.

For two years we have repeatedly said that peace will only return to Yugoslavia the day when it is generally understood that it is unrealistic and dangerous to attempt to separate peoples who form a single entity. From this point of view, I would like to say how scandalous it is to plan a division of Bosnia that is not desired by the Bosnian themselves, that has been imposed on them by unworthy leaders and that is contrary to the most basic principles of international law.

On this subject, may I point out the inconsistency of a policy which advocates the return of Rwandan refugees to their homes whilst prohibiting Bosnians from returning to their villages. In the very short-term such inconsistency can only lead to terrible disorder.

The Contact Group will only be playing its role if it radically changes its policy to differentiate it from positions adopted by its predecessors. In concrete terms this means that it must recall two fundamental principles:

1. Bosnia is a republic whose unity and diversity must be respected: respect of its unity means respecting its borders and its territorial integrity; respect of its diversity means respecting the human mosaic which forms it. This can be done by establishing a democratic political system based on the recognition and the autonomy of the historical regions of which it is comprised, a political system whose viability has long been proven by Switzerland along with many other nations.
2. Bosnia cannot be isolated from its neighbours. There are too many political, economic, cultural and human ties which link it with Croatia, Serbia and Mon-

tenegro for it to be able to resolve all its problems alone: it is plain to see that Slovenia is too weak to resist the designs of Italy and Macedonia is being strangled by the intolerable actions of Greece. At the same time, therefore, whilst establishing a decentralized political system in Bosnia, it is essential to work at creating a commonwealth of Yugoslav republics, similar in principle and with similar institutions to the European Union, which will provide the only lasting protection from external pressures.

The partition of Bosnia - an error and a crime

This is nothing revolutionary or excessive and I am surprised that the Contact Group partners are not making a deliberate break with the positions adopted until now by the international community. It has been undeniably proven for a long time already that the partition of Bosnia is both an error and a crime: an error because there is no chance that it will restore peace to the country, and a crime because it condemns its peoples to endless conflict.

It is only by respecting the rule of common sense, according to which a family should be able to live where its ancestors lived regardless of ethnic group or religion, that peace can be restored to the Balkans. And one must be very presumptuous or very naive to believe that the attempts of the major powers to impose a separation contrary to the most profound desires, the history, traditions and interests of the Yugoslav peoples will solve the problem.

Let us hope that the Contact Group diplomats remember that even the most well designed political schemes cannot be imposed against the will of People themselves.

Boris Vukobrat

President

LETTER N° 42
15 September 1994

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*F*or the last three months, the entire world has had its eyes riveted on the terrible exodus which has cast the people of Rwanda out on the road. Humanitarian organizations and the media take turns denouncing without interruption this intolerable outrage, the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children thrust from their homes by a senseless war: through image, through sound, or in writing they describe the terrible despair and the physical misery which has become the lot of this unfortunate population.

Yet, much closer to home, indeed right next door, exactly the same tragedy is being played out, and no one seems to care any longer. This is the tragedy of the 3,800,000 people who have been driven from their homes in one or another of the ex-Yugoslav Republics and who are condemned to err through the Balkans or the rest of Europe while they await the end of the war: 3,800,000 men, women and children, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who no longer interest world opinion, whom television camera eyes and radio station microphones now choose to ignore.

Nevertheless, this human drama is going on right in the heart Europe, less than an hour away by plane from the big capitals of the Old Continent, on land which resembles in every way the land under the feet of the French, the Germans, the English, the Swiss - all those people whose democracies are based on the respect for Human Rights.

So why this injustice? Why does what provokes outrage in Africa not move a soul when it comes to Europe? Do these refugees and displaced Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats belong to a different race of men undeserving of the respect and compassion of those who are well-off?

A Dangerous and Iniquitous Principle

What this is, for those of us trying to speak the language of reason, is an incomprehensible deviation; it is also, and this is no doubt even worse, a monumental error. When a tragedy reaches such proportions, attains such a magnitude on the Richter scale of human catastrophes, no political solution will put an end to it. Any project not based on reuniting dispersed families in the place where they once

lived is bound to fail from the very start. And nothing in the world can prevent the victims of the exodus from using any means to one day try and get back home.

That is why we have always said, and we will never tire of repeating it, that if we want to restore peace to ex-Yugoslavia, we must begin by solving the problem of the displaced persons and refugees. But not by keeping them where accident and exile have led them; rather, by returning them to where they were born, where they once lived in happiness and peace, where their roots once flourished. Human beings are social animals who cannot live for long outside a group; no matter how advanced they are, they still come from a family, a village, a plot of land, a region, a country. And only those who understand nothing of the human soul would advocate uprooting it in order to resolve a conflict.

On this subject, I would like to recall here the declaration signed by Yugoslav intellectuals in Geneva last June (cf. my letter of 1 July) which, in point 3, calls for: "the free and safe return of the refugees to their homes, including fitting compensation as well as the creation of conditions prerequisite to a life of safety and freedom."

And, if I must, I shall say it once again: it is precisely for this reason that the Contact Group's Plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina seems to us doomed to fail. In endorsing the absurd principle of ethnic division for this country, it goes contrary to the very nature of human beings. It is not only unrealistic, it is also iniquitous. And as such, it has absolutely no chance of being adhered to if put into practice.

For proof of this, we need only consult the information coming in every day which shows that "ethnic cleansing" is still being practiced out in the field, in defiance of the Contact Group's decisions. The only way to definitively end the war is to permit the return of families to the place where they lived for centuries without any thought of fighting each other. In other words, to do exactly the opposite of what is being proposed by the Contact Group and the major powers that compose it.

Five Principles for Peace

One against all, you might tell me, cannot possibly be right.

Well yes, it is possible! There are forces, instincts in human nature which are more powerful than emotion, logic or even faith itself. And one of the strongest of these forces, of these instincts, is the attachment to one's native land. Because they were able to see this, though everything was collapsing around them, men such as General de Gaulle or Winston Churchill were able to carve out a special place for themselves in the History of their country.

I, of course, do not presume to one day occupy the same position, but I know that future events will prove me right. Peace will never come to Bosnia as long as the international community persists in endorsing an ethnic partitioning of the country; there will never be a political solution to the Balkan problem as long as the 3,800,000 refugees and displaced persons are not allowed to return to their homes. And in order to allow this return, the plan which was drawn up by our Foundation two years ago must now be accepted.

1. Allow families to live where their ancestors lived and built their houses.
2. Accord the historical regions of the Balkans the self-government they should have.
3. Reaffirm the former Yugoslav borders, safeguard them against aggression, but ensure that the autonomy of the regions is respected.
4. Create a new commonwealth out of these Republics which would leave each free to make their own decisions, while maintaining a coherence of the whole.
5. Associate this commonwealth, when the time comes, with the European Union in order to guarantee its durability.

Who could possibly deny the irrefutable logic behind these principles?

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*W*ith time, more and more voices are being raised against the planned partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines. These are not the voices of informed diplomats or politicians who are aware of the deadlock that the Yugoslav republics and the major powers are entering, they are the voices of intellectuals - poets, journalists, academics - who are speaking out against the irreparable harm being done to their nation.

From the outset, I have condemned the partition of the country as being contrary to international law, contrary to the principles of democracy and unfair. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to express my joy at finally seeing the truth gradually emerge. I would also like to express my hope that the movement for the respect of the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia will gain momentum and eventually be joined by all.

Dangerous myths

In order to support this statement I would like to quote the article which a well-known dissident from ex-Yugoslavia, Mihajlo Mihajlov recently published in the journal "Problems of Post-Communism" (Fall 1994). In a manner which is simple and intelligible to everyone, this text in fact explains what most citizens of ex-Yugoslavia think but cannot or do not dare say.

Mihajlov begins by making a concise analysis of the myths which, from the beginning of the conflict in the Balkans, have impaired the judgement of those who are attempting, with the best of intentions, to bring the hostilities to an end. These myths have become the basis for resolving our situation.

"The first myth is that the bloody slaughter between Serbs and Croats is only an outbreak of 'centuries-old ethnic hatreds and conflicts'. In reality the first fighting between Serbs and Croats occurred during World War II, in the middle of the twentieth century."

"The second myth is that the Yugoslav state was 'an artificial creation' of the Versailles conference. In fact all states are artificial. Yugoslavia was established on 1 December 1918, some weeks before the beginning of the Versailles conference."

"The third myth is that there is a long historic friendship, both ethnic and strategic, between Russia and Serbia. This myth is used regularly in the media around the world to explain recent Russian policies in Bosnia. Yet, during the last two centuries, Russia and Serbia have been real allies for fewer than fifteen years, at the beginning of the twentieth century."

When speaking about the last myth the author explains that it is not the end of the dictatorship which caused the bloodbath. In fact, one dictatorship - communist - was replaced by another - nationalist.

"The final myth is that the fall of the dictatorship led to the ethnic conflict. In 1987 - before democratization began - the press in each of the Yugoslav republics was already becoming much more nationalistic. In all of the republics, the major media were monopolies of the republican authorities (as they continue to be today). As one Yugoslav writer said, 'Before anyone was killed by bullets, they were killed ten times over by words.'"

The author explains that using such myths as the basis for reasoning, and thus for politics, will never result in a lasting solution to the war devastating ex-Yugoslavia and will only play into the hands of those who depended and still depend on violence in order to impose their will.

"From the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis", writes Mihajlo Mihajlov, "the international community lacked any vision of a solution to the problem. Its goal was only to stop the fighting, which in effect meant rewarding those who had fought for an ethnic division on their own terms... The contradiction between self-determination and the inviolability of borders ran like a red thread through all the efforts of the international community."

This is followed by an accurate analysis of the mortal danger of using ethnic or religious criteria as the basis for resolving the Yugoslav conflict. It contains this comment which ought to be embossed in gold letters at the top of all peace plans:

"Acceptance of the nationalistic version of self-determination, which in practice is the international community's posture today, comes down in the end to an acceptance of genocide."

Readers of this letter are aware that for two years our Foundation has been reiterating this same truth. Any solution based on the division of one or other of the republics will inevitably lead to new catastrophes, renewed violence and more injustice. It is not by ignoring this blatant fact that the international community will restore peace to the Balkans.

Five lessons, five principles

All this is said in such a clear and comprehensible manner that Mihajlo Mihajlov's article deserves to be published here in its entirety. For lack of space I shall only quote his conclusion because it raises debate and establishes five major lessons for the whole of humanity today:

1. Humanity needs to develop new principles for the political salvation of multi-ethnic regions and a clear vision and political programme for a world that has become deeply interdependent. The lack of such a vision is the underlying source of the mistakes made in dealing with the Yugoslav tragedy.
2. The idea of ethnically-clear states should be condemned, not in a partisan fashion or in a reaction to particular crimes, but consistently and in principle, as incompatible with democracy.
3. Democracy is the only unifying force that can establish peace on our ethnically, nationally, and religiously diverse planet. Yugoslavia is the world in miniature, a highly sensitive area where the major religious and socio-ethnic lines cross.
4. Russian policy in the Balkans does not depend on an illusory Russian-Serb friendship, but on Russian-Western relations. If Russia and the West unite on a coherent vision for the world, they will also unite over the Balkans. If Russia and the West unite only to affirm the principles of self-determination and inviolability of borders, they will clash on the application of these principles in the Balkans and elsewhere.
5. The lack of political will to resolve the Balkan problem, which has been widely noted, is a result of the lack of vision. From this flow inexorably the lack of policy and the lack of unity among the Western powers. The lack of vision is a spiritual illness of the democratic world. In this sense, the wars in the former Yugoslavia are only a symptom of the wider malady

Boris Vukobrat

President

LETTER N° 44
15 November 1994

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Towards the end of this century, after two world wars and at the cost of tens of millions of human lives, Europe had finally come to embrace the fundamental principle of the inviolability of borders. Having lived in peace with itself for over half a century, it was basking in the prosperity born of domestic stability in the European countries that comprised it

And then, due to the fall of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, a handful of irresponsible men set out to modify this European order by revising, through the use of force, the borders in one of the most unstable regions on the Old Continent: the Balkans. Yet far from opposing such an enterprise, the democratic nations let Yugoslavia be dismembered, invoking the right of nations to self-determination, which thus justifies any such enterprise no matter how cruel.

In doing so, they opened up the Pandora's Box of nationalism; they abetted the excessive violence by their abstentions, and encouraged *de facto* ethnic partitioning which is contrary to their deepest convictions. And the result has been to rouse up Irredentists from one end of Europe to the other, menacing world peace and bringing back old threats that we thought were to be forever things of the past.

After Greece, Italy

The European governments may have thought that they were buying their peace of mind by breaking one of the most sacred rules of democracy. If that is the case, they were badly mistaken. For, as it turns out, not only did the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia embark on the most insane of civil wars, but, as a consequence of this conflict, neighbouring powers were also overcome with the insane hope of expanding their own territory.

Of these, the first was Greece, who believed it had found a timely opportunity to widen its borders to the north; suddenly, as it began threatening Albania and subjecting Macedonia to unfair economic practices, the equilibrium in the southern Balkans was thrown into question. And now even Italy - so well - behaved, whose wild dreams we were sure had been extinguished - has begun to cast lustful eyes on Istria; though, in all likelihood, Italy is not about to make any claims yet on Rijeka, both Slovenia and Croatia are beginning to wonder what the real reasons are behind the solicitude that is being shown them.

Those of us who have been carefully monitoring the situation as it develops in the Balkans can only condemn such covetous Italian desires, while sending out a warning to those in Rome or elsewhere who may be tempted to carry them out. We should also add, however, that none of this would be happening today if, from the very beginning, the major powers had opposed the forceful modification of existing borders in the region. Having failed to do their duty when they were able to act, they are now at a loss for any effective means of action in the field; their sabre-rattling cannot hide the great fragility of their position, faced as they are with adversaries who are very determined, who have seen through the ambiguity of their attitude and who play with brilliance on their divisions.

As difficult as it may be to make a volte-face, the major powers need to admit to their failure now, draw their conclusions and change their policy while there is still time. If they do not do this they will soon find themselves confronted with situations infinitely more dangerous than those they are now facing in ex-Yugoslavia; in the northern as well as the southern Balkans, covetous desires will become inflamed to such a point that borders will burst and territorial conflicts will proliferate from one end of the peninsula to the other.

For a Stability Pact in Europe

In an interview to be published this month by the Parisian magazine, *Enjeux du Monde*, Edouard Balladur pointedly remarks that the prerequisites to lasting peace in Europe are the inviolability of borders and respect for national territory. It is necessary, he says, that we institute procedures designed to resolve problems involving neighbouring countries through negotiation and not through force. In order to do that, he concludes, it is essential for us to draw up a Stability Pact that will be binding to nations from east to west, and from north to south on this continent.

Only such a schema, in fact, is capable of saving Europe from the fate it is presently heading towards as a result of the errors of the last two years; however, it must apply to ex-Yugoslavia as well as to the countries in the Baltics, to Poland, to Hungary, to Rumania, and of course to Italy. Since France, through its Prime Minister, is willing to make such a commitment, it must also refuse, in keeping with the same logic, any Balkan peace plan based on the violation of existing borders; it must furthermore propose that the territorial integrity of the Yugoslav Republics be formally recognized, and see to it that this principle is respected.

In conclusion, I would like to say that if a great nation like France, which remains the land of freedom and human rights, thus comes forth in defence of the invio-

lability of borders bequeathed by History, then its partners and allies will follow suit, and it will have set in motion a negotiation process which sooner or later will lead to peace.

True peace, that is, not the illusory truce which the propositions put forth by the Contact Group tends to implicate.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Not only was the Bihac tragedy predictable, it was also inevitable from the moment the major powers, represented by the Contact Group, adhered to a policy absolving all conquests in advance. This tragedy has, unfortunately, proven us right on three essential points:

1. Any peace plan based on the division of Bosnia, regardless of the criteria, is doomed from the outset. Only the respect of territorial integrity and the organisation of this territory according to the principles governing the western democracies can put an end to the violence, can lead to a harmonious coexistence of the different communities and create the conditions necessary for the reconstruction of the country. As long as the international community gives the impression, be it justified or not, that it is prepared to pay for peace with the partition of one or other of the republics of former Yugoslavia it will only add fuel to the fire and cause further tragedies. How could it be otherwise when all continue to demand more than they have and are not concerned with the wishes of others?
2. Bosnia is gradually becoming a bone of contention among those who actually want to restore peace there. Not only is Bosnia setting the major powers against one another, in particular the Russians and the Americans, it is also causing divisions within each government among supporters of different policies. As we predicted, the war in ex-Yugoslavia is damaging the fabric of peace being created in Europe since the fall of communism. It is providing arguments to all those, in East and West alike, who are nostalgic for the days of the "Cold war" and who conceive of international relations in terms of antagonism rather than in terms of solidarity or cooperation. If the crisis worsens even slightly the demons of what we thought was a bygone era will return in an even more malicious form.
3. The "Lebanonisation" of the Balkans is the inevitable result of a *de facto* acceptance of attempts to modify borders by force and the partition of Bosnia according to ethnic or religious criteria. What has just occurred in Bihac will be played out again in all regions of Europe where nationalist and religious fervour are given free rein. Having learnt from experience, extremists of all kinds will not hesitate to embark on the most dangerous adventures as they will no longer

have to fear the reactions of the international community which is tangled up in its own contradictions and is incapable of ensuring respect for law, justice and freedom, which are the pillars of any democracy.

If the facts did not confirm the gloomy prognosis that we have been reiterating here for months we would be ashamed to state yet again that peace in Bosnia is inseparable from the territorial integrity of the country. The Bihac tragedy, however, proves once more that our reasoning is correct. I am therefore going to repeat the conclusions reached by our foundation a long time ago.

Peace in ex-Yugoslavia is inseparable from the unity of each country, from respect of its territorial integrity and its borders. Moreover, it can only be achieved if a pluralist democracy based on the market economy, administrative decentralisation and regional autonomy is created. In order for normal life to resume in this war-ravaged area all people must be able to live where their forefathers lived and to work with men and women who do not have the same ethnic origins or the same religious convictions should the situation arise; and it is, of course, essential to reconstitute in one way or another a community of the Yugoslav republics, for which the European Union shall be both one of the models and the guarantor.

If the belligerents and those attempting to separate them cannot somehow or other be made to accept these simple ideas the world will inevitably suffer great tribulations and the accumulation of errors will eventually set the major powers against one another.

Is it too much to ask the western democracies, which have proven the viability of their political and economic system as opposed to collectivism, to respect the principles of which they are so justifiably proud? Is it really excessive to urge them to demand of others what they have imposed on themselves by constantly improving this system for years?

It is futile to believe that the Yugoslav conflict can be brought to an end by trampling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights underfoot. It is just as futile to think that a global crisis will be avoided by closing ones eyes to what is going on in Bihac and elsewhere. On the contrary, the more arbitrary action and hatred are allowed to get the upper hand, the further the war will spread. This is the logic of violence, which is never content with the victories it gains and continues to thirst for more blood, more victims and more destruction.

In any event, we cannot be expected to remain silent. The messages flooding into our foundation from all over the world are proof that in spite of appearances the

Letters of the President

ideas of which we have made ourselves the harbingers are relentlessly gaining ground.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*A*s the new year commences our thoughts go to the peoples in the Balkans who have been condemned to violence, destitution and injustice by their leaders, to the millions of men, women and children who have been forced to abandon their homes by the most absurd war and who are aimlessly wandering the roads of Europe. May 1995 alleviate their physical and emotional suffering, return them to their homes and finally restore their hope!

May the new year also see the powerful of this world, those who can help solve the Yugoslav problem, make the provisions necessary to silence the weapons that can still be heard. In pursuit of this aim may they also abandon the dangerous illusion which inspires them to promote the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina according to ethnic or religious criteria.

Arbitrary equations

The current antagonisms can clearly not be resolved by attributing portions of the Bosnian territory to one or other community, but only by allowing each family to return and live where it has always lived. Because every man and every woman belongs to a line of descendants which has its own history, its own traditions, its own home and its own memory. There is no mathematical calculation that can establish a balance different from the old one - life in all its complexity cannot accommodate abstract equations which have been developed by men around a negotiating table who do not feel the real wrench of war inside them. Sooner or later life will resume its normal course.

And sooner or later life will impose its unshakable law in Bosnia and elsewhere. Thus, I believe that instead of seeking to create artificial borders in order to separate those who are fighting it would be wiser to reflect on how they can coexist peacefully in the same geographical area: to envisage the institutions which will allow them to settle their differences without using weapons, to organise a system of economic and financial solidarity which will provide insurance against unemployment and marginalisation, to define the rules which will allow the peoples to control their own destiny by ensuring that power is shared and not held by a warlike oligarchy.

I would like to pay tribute to the men of good intentions, such as former President of the United States Jimmy Carter, who are working to obtain a truce amidst the fighting, but I wish to add at this point that, unfortunately, such interventions will not restore peace to ex-Yugoslavia. I would also like to emphasize that there is an extreme danger that any solution to the conflict which does not resolve the problem of relations between Croats and Serbs will only result in even worse crisis.

There is no doubt in anyone's mind, after three years of merciless war, that no external intervention will provide a solution to the Yugoslav problem. Neither the European Union nor the United States nor Russia nor NATO, in particular, are capable of making a proposal which will satisfy the belligerents. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that each attempt to do so has in fact had the opposite effect and only added to the tension.

Secret diplomacy

In this context, from my personal point of view, there is only one possibility. A meeting of representatives of the different forces in confrontation in ex-Yugoslavia must be convened in the utmost secrecy where they can present their demands to one another and attempt to reach a compromise which is acceptable to all. Winter tends to cool the ardour of fighters on the ground and is therefore a good time for this kind of meeting.

It is in precisely this manner that eternal conflicts have recently been brought to an end. I am referring, of course, to the war in Lebanon, the Israeli- Arab conflict and the war in Ireland. This is the only way in which people can lay the foundations of an honourable peace, as the negotiations are held far from the cameras and shielded from international curiosity. The negotiators are not required to gesticulate in order to justify the slightest action and can thus speak frankly.

It is vain to believe that external powers can restore peace to ex-Yugoslavia, only the Yugoslavs are in a position to find a compromise between their contradictory demands. However, the external powers can act as intermediaries in the initial phase of negotiations by performing the role of "good offices". This is already a considerable contribution!

I believe that this approach would have every chance of succeeding where two years of sterile public negotiations have failed, for passions have dulled as the ruins have piled up. Faced with the disastrous situation created by the war and unable to keep the promises upon which they built their power, the leaders them-

selves have realized that they are becoming mired in a hundred years war which will only increase in violence and will be won by none.

Pride and international media pressure mean that none of them will make the first move. But if they have the option to speak face to face, without risk of their comments being immediately repeated, amplified and distorted, I am convinced that they will not pass up this opportunity.

Make way for secret diplomacy!

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The monthly "Enjeux du Monde", which is published in Paris and read by a number of politicians, stated the following in its January 1995 issue:

"Developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the failure of the peace plan drawn up by the Contact Group have brought the idea of re-establishing Yugoslavia in a federal form to the fore once again. This idea has been advocated from the beginning of the hostilities by the Peace and Crises Management Foundation, headed by businessman Boris Vukobrat, and is gradually gaining ground in western chancelleries as well as in Russia. It opposes any thought of dividing Bosnia according to ethnic or religious criteria and recommends the constitution of a federation composed of the existing Yugoslav republics, which will in turn each be a federation of regions with a large degree of economic and administrative autonomy. This project could also serve as a basis for the peace plan that France will submit to its European partners when it assumes presidency of the Union on 1 January."

In order to complete the above, we are publishing an Aide-Mémoire that was drawn up by our Foundation and distributed to various public figures.

This text could serve as the basis for a general agreement that would bring peace to former Yugoslavia.

AIDE-MEMOIRE

*Outlining the Proposals and Statements by the President of the Peace and Crises
Management Foundation Boris Vukobrat*

I Objectives

In February 1993, the "Proposals for a New Commonwealth of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia" were published in English. These Proposals outline nine fundamental principles.

1. The Yugoslav peoples must be able to freely determine their destiny and their form of government. They are victims of the violence practiced by authoritarian and nationalistic governments; it is their leaders not they who wanted war. The Yugoslav peoples fervently desire peace, freedom and self-determination - that

is to say democracy; democracy is indeed the basic principle which should form the foundation of the new Commonwealth.

2. The second principle is the rule of law. Indeed, the protection of the individual can only be fully guaranteed under the rule of law, where the actions of the public powers are subordinate to the law, where those who hold political power are subject to democratic control, and where an independent judiciary ensures respect for the law. The organization of the State must, to my mind, be founded on the essential principle of the separation of power. The foundations of a rule of law are the freedom, the dignity, and the protection of the individual. They are laid down in international conventions and in most of the constitutions of the European states. They must also become the norm in the constitutions of the States of the new Commonwealth.
3. Up to the present, the protection of individual rights has held a privileged place in political thought. But, the Yugoslav example shows just how important the question of the protection of ethnic groups is and how much its enforcement requires concrete solutions. The third principle upon which the new Commonwealth will be constructed will therefore be the protection of ethnic groups. Democratic structures, decentralization and separation of powers and individual protection of human rights are not sufficient to protect the rights of these groups; these rights must be laid down in the constitutions at all levels of government.
4. The fourth principle that I propose as a basis of the new Commonwealth is the prohibition of all discrimination. All people must be equal in the eyes of the law and no one should suffer from discrimination because of his or her religion, language, colour, sex, or culture.
5. The fifth principle is the decentralization of power. The closer citizens are to the process of resolving problems, the better they exercise their democratic rights and the faster problems are resolved. All state and regional organizations of the new Commonwealth must, therefore, be based on the principle of subsidiarity. The decentralization of power will make violations more difficult and will lead to better protection of minorities; the application of the principle of subsidiarity will strengthen and consolidate the position of the Regions.
6. The sixth principle is that of personal freedom, which is inseparable from economic freedom. Only private ownership and free enterprise, combined with social responsibility, can lead to a lasting improvement and stabilization of the economy. Without a minimum of material security, freedom is an illusion.

In order for economic prosperity to return, and with it, the confidence of foreign nations, there must be a stable political order; but political stability is not possible unless it is based on individual responsibility and initiative. Economic freedom must therefore also be laid down as a basic principle in the different constitutions.

7. The borders of the States, recognized by international organizations, cannot be modified except in application of international public law and respect of the will of the constituent population. This seventh principle must also be laid down in the basic texts of the new Commonwealth.
8. The eighth principle is the integration of the Commonwealth into Europe. This progressive integration can only occur by concluding international treaties; it also presupposes that the political and economic system of the new Commonwealth is based on the European institutions (the Council of Europe, the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Community). This implies that the Regions, the States, and the Commonwealth have constitutions based on the principles which have just been described, as well as the corresponding political and judicial bodies. Each level of politics must, however, assume its responsibilities in relation to the system as a whole.
9. The ninth and last principle upon which the new Commonwealth must be based is the market economy. It has not only demonstrated its effectiveness compared with economic systems based on central planning and collectivism, it is also an essential condition for the integration of the future Commonwealth of Yugoslav Republics into the European Community."

It is evident that the proposals are not formulated for the immediate present but for the future.

It must also be stressed that this Commonwealth will probably have to be created by applying the method of variable geometry, i.e. a few independent states might decide to establish an association in the field of energy, or transport, or water systems, etc. while a different configuration of states might agree to pull their forces together in the monetary field, in foreign trade and/or investments, etc.

On 15 July 1993, following the request made by former President of the United States, H. E. Mr Gerald Ford, former President of the French Republic, H. E. Mr Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, H. E. Lord Callaghan of Cardiff, and former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, H. E. Mr

Helmut Schmidt, Mr Vukobrat published, on behalf of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation a Plan for the Restoration of Peace in ex-Yugoslavia.

This Plan was sent to the Heads of State of the United States of America, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and Germany, as well as to the Secretary General of the United Nations and to the President of the Commonwealth of the European Union.

The Plan was also published and distributed to the press.

The text of the Plan reads as follows:

'This proposed plan for restoring peace on the territory of former Yugoslavia contains thirteen measures as follows:

1. Confirm as inviolable the borders between the former Yugoslav Republics; any future adjustments to be made only through negotiations carried out under international supervision.
2. Formally establish the rights of minorities in all the former Yugoslav Republics; this includes repudiating the forced relocation of population groups as well as any partitioning based on ethnic criteria.
3. Tighten the embargo on arms and ammunition with regard to all the ex-Yugoslav Republics directly or indirectly involved in the conflict. This embargo, approved by Resolution 724 of the UN Security Council, is not being enforced. Collateral to the war, ex-Yugoslavia has become the hub of all kinds of traffic in arms. This traffic keeps the belligerents supplied and enables them to continue the hostilities. It directly threatens peace in Europe. The aim of this measure, a first step, is to make sure that the arms embargo is equally respected by everyone, including Croatia and Slovenia.
4. Isolate Bosnia and expand UNPROFOR's mission so as to prevent the Croats, the Serbs, and the Bosnians from imposing a forced ethnic partitioning on the civil population, which would constitute a dangerous precedent for the whole of Europe. This would involve reinforcing the UN troops already present, and isolating the Bosnian territory to make it impossible for the war to be externally sustained from bases in Croatia, Serbia or Montenegro.
5. Adopt a new UN resolution with provisions for extending the measures in Resolution 836 to the protection of civilian populations, including authorizing the use of force in the event of a threat to those populations on Bosnian and Croatian territory.

6. Change the UN passive stance in Krajina into actions directed towards hastening the negotiations and preventing the civilian population from falling victim to arbitrary rule or militia violence; in consequence, ensure the free movement of persons and goods in this region and throughout the rest of the former Yugoslavia.
7. Protect Macedonia by providing guarantees against any outside intervention which would extend the war into its territory. This would mean strengthening the international force deployed there.
8. Appeal directly to the political leaders in Croatia (Franjo Tudjman), in Serbia (Slobodan Milošević), and in Bosnia to end the fighting. France and Russia could prevail on Serbia, Germany and the Vatican on Croatia, the United States on Bosnia, and Great Britain on all of the belligerents. The combined action of the five major powers and the Vatican would no doubt hasten the end of the conflict.
9. Cease all negotiations with political leaders determined to be guilty of war crimes who are without any mandate whatsoever and who are responsible for the executions committed in Bosnia. This measure is essential for re-establishing the moral authority of the United Nations, accused of being accommodating to these men.
10. Guarantee the freedom of the press in all the ex-Yugoslav Republics. The conflict has been sustained all along by media wars waged by the Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian governments. The independent media should be empowered to pass information freely and should be protected from governmental interference. This could be done by granting international financial and technical aid to those media which have retained their editorial independence in the ex-Yugoslav Republics.
11. Set up and operate an independent radio station somewhere in Europe where its freedom can be fully guaranteed, to broadcast to the Balkans. This radio station would provide objective information and news on the situation in ex-Yugoslavia. Assistance would come from the European Community and the United Nations.
12. Support. Through the international community the creation and expansion outside of ex-Yugoslavia of international editions of independent media whose audience would be the large Yugoslav communities in Europe's major cities.
13. Endorse the InterAction Council's initiative which asks that the European Community, Russia, and the United States of America convene a conference which

would bring the different States in the region together to draw up a treaty that would bind the different parties on matters of security, the guaranteeing of borders, the protection of minorities, and economic cooperation.”

As can be seen, almost a year and a half later, the Plan is still valid (except for paragraphs 4 and 6) and continues to be an objective which should be attained.

Here it should be added that the Peace Plan of the Contact Group aiming at the ethnic division of Bosnia should be abandoned and replaced by the expansion of the Washington agreements. The Bosnian Serbs should be included in the Bosnian Federation and in addition to the Confederation with Croatia, the Bosnian Federation as a whole should enter into a Confederation with Serbia (and Montenegro).

II Dangers

We firmly believe that unless the Proposals and the Peace Plan are accepted and implemented, serious dangers loom ahead.

The first danger is the expansion of the war, first of all by engulfing Serbia and Croatia and then, by expanding into Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, and reaching ultimately Greece and Turkey.

The second danger is even broader in nature and can already be observed. It concerns political conflicts among NATO Member States which have created, around the issue of ex-Yugoslavia, the most serious disagreements within the Western Alliance since World War II.

The third danger is the re-ignition of conflicts between East and West, evidenced by the fact that it is on the issue of ex-Yugoslavia that Russia cast the first veto in the Security Council since the end of the Cold War.

The United States and Russia must immediately start back channel talks to bring the two countries back together on important foreign issues, particularly the Balkans.

III Means

The solution of the Yugoslav crisis must start from Belgrade, where the crisis started. Belgrade remains the key for the totality of ex-Yugoslavia. It is only by either replacing or changing the current policy that a solution can be found.

Letters of the President

It is our assessment that any attempt to replace or overthrow Mr. Milošević would result in a civil war in Serbia itself. We are therefore in favour of changing Belgrade's policies. This can be obtained by:

- a) A firm attitude on the part of the member-States of the Contact Group and
- b) A radical change in the power structures in Belgrade.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

At present, it is quite clear that the protagonists in the Yugoslav tragedy are actively preparing for a new armed confrontation, as soon as weather conditions permit, i.e. at the end of the winter. It is equally clear that, from this point of view, the United Nations troops on the ground are a major obstacle to the renewal of hostilities. Although one can understand the fears of the Croatian government, which worries that UNPROFOR's presence will only serve to preserve the status quo and eventually result in acceptance of the fait accompli by the international community, one should remain aware of the huge threat that this withdrawal would pose to peace and stability in Europe and the rest of the world. In other words, war should not be an option.

It must be made as clear as possible to world public opinion that a withdrawal would have two immediate consequences:

1. A bloodbath, which would make the massacres of the last three years seem inoffensive by comparison. The build-up of weapons in an area as small as the Balkans and the interests of politicians in the region are indeed such that the result would be the loss not of tens but of hundreds of thousands of human lives.
2. An extension of the conflict, both to the north and the south, which would turn the whole region into an inferno. After Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, Albania, Greece and Turkey, in addition, of course, to Serbia and Montenegro, would find themselves involved in suicidal confrontations, leading to globalization of the conflict.

Western leaders are aware of this double prospect and are endeavouring to find a peaceful solution to the Yugoslav problem, but public opinion, too often deluded by the media, is generally not aware of this likelihood. It will therefore be a painful realization.

Two preventive solutions

In light of this critical situation I think it needs to be stated in no uncertain terms that procrastination would expose the whole of Europe, and even the entire world, to serious outbreaks of disorder. The political climate in the eastern Mediterranean

and in the Slavonic world, particularly Russia, is so tense that a widespread explosion in the Balkans would be sure to set these strategic areas ablaze.

In order to avoid this kind of chain reaction, I am convinced that two decisions must be taken immediately:

1. Russians and Americans must sit down at the same table and agree on a joint intervention. Only their concerted action can halt the infernal spiral that has been triggered. The European Union certainly has a role to play in settling the conflict, but it can do nothing if the United States and Russia have not first agreed to act together. This was always a prerequisite, but today it is more necessary than ever, now that violence once again seems set to become the only form of dialogue between the conflicting parties.
2. Parallel to this high level agreement, the United Nations Security Council must reject the request it has received for withdrawal of UNPROFOR from the areas where it has intervened. Not only does it have the power to do so, it also has a duty to do so, as keeping peace, even if it is precarious and unstable, depend on keeping troops on the ground. The UNO has an overall responsibility in this affair - a military, political and moral responsibility - and history would judge it a crime not to fully accept this.

I would like to add that, in this respect, international law acts in the United Nations' favour. The UNO is not obliged to bow to the injunctions of states. Its mission is to maintain or establish peace, once such a decision has been taken by its highest bodies with due respect to legal form. We know from experience that the Organization generally plays a determining role. Was it not, for example, the withdrawal of UNO troops from the intervention zone where they were stationed that made war between Israel and Egypt inevitable in 1967?

No law without sanctions

To those who say that such a decision by the Security Council would be a violation of international law, one can counter that international law does not exist *per se*, but is indeed established by major institutions - courts of justice, international organizations, arbitration courts, and various communities. Maintaining United Nations forces in combat zones, in ex-Yugoslavia and elsewhere, does not, therefore, require any other justification than a strong international will.

I wish to add that the decision to keep UNPROFOR on the ground, in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, should be accompanied by a formal warning to those who

may be tempted to attack it. The absence of sanctions, as a response to violations, lends no force to laws. It is thus essential to make it clear that any direct or indirect threat to "Blue Helmets" would be met with immediate retaliation.

This vital reassertion is one of the arguments in favour of a joint initiative on the part of the United States and Russia, as only this rapprochement will make possible retortion or coercion measures really effective. That is why I have taken care to place this at the top of the list of current priorities.

Peace is not an unattainable goal, but it is time to work seriously towards its return and preservation.

Boris Vukobrat

President

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THE YUGOSLAV SOLUTION IS YUGOSLAVIA

Flora Luis

PARIS - French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe has called for yet another high-level international conference on Bosnia which he describes as a "last chance scenario for everyone". The US State Department is ir-resolute. The spokesman and there was a very clear consensus that something needs to be done but a conference would have to be very well prepared.

On and on, around and around - a Croatian ultimatum to the United Nations that could bring a big new war on its territory in April expiry of the Jimmy Carter arranged more or less Bosnian cease-fire by May; insistence by Senate Majority leader Bob Dole on the United States unilaterally lifting the arms embargo then. The winter has been a bit of relief for Sarajevo, but the spring promise renewed heil.

In a remarkable series of interviews with fighters at the front Le Monde's correspondent Remy Ourdan reports that they expect the war to go on indefinitely although it makes no sense to them. Some even want that to happen. He quotes Goran, a Bosnian Serb: "We can only restore a life together if we go back to the old Yugoslavia".

And worst of all, he quotes Damir, a 26 year old Serb born in Pale, now the capital of the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic: "All I know how to do is to make war... If we kill every Muslim on the planet we'll have to declare war on other people so we can go on fighting... There's no hatred at the front, we are just crazy. My job is to kill. We've all been dead for three years. My buddies and I love Russian roulette but we put three bullets instead of one. Next time I'll put six. There's no more fear."

The diplomats get nowhere because they offer no incentive for peace, nothing but chopping up the maps into smaller and smaller bits. The UN troops are called peacekeepers on the assumption that it is enough to ask the fighters politely to stop, that they have just been waiting for the chance that what comes next can be worked out later. The "international community" has run out of the ideas.

Except for one which it has not thought of trying out which some Yugoslavs have been arguing for these bloody years. It is that, after all, the only solution to Yugoslavia is Yugoslavia, a confederation looser than the old federation but still linked together.

That is what Slovenia and Croatia kept seeking until they gave up in 1991 and proclaimed independence bringing war with Serbs. It can provide the framework for resolving the fragmentation of Bosnia giving Bosnian Serbs ties to Serbia and Bosnian Croats ties to Croatia, and giving Serbs in Croatian Krajina ties to Serbia. It would end the dangerous dilemma of Macedonia.

It is an idea that Boris Vukobrat, a Serb born in Croatia and married to a Muslim, has been urging for some time with increasingly vocal support from people in all the former Yugoslav republics. It is based on a requirement for democracy and market economy in all constituted states, minority guarantees and local autonomy.

Mr. Vukobrat has worked out a detailed proposal and solid arguments which I have explained in an article in the fore coming issue of Foreign Policy magazine. It is an idea whose time has come because all the other ideas have proven unworkable and nefarious and because it is the only one that answers the question: If the war is stoppen what then? Without any answer the war won't stop.

Meanwhile, the Bosnian issue is erasing relations in Western Europe on which the

continent's future depends, and complicating US relations with both Europe and Russia at a particularly difficult moment. Common habit is to wrung hands, call a conference and say it can't go on. But it can, unless there is a serious proposal.

The war was foreseen and was not inevitable. It would have taken energetic, insistent diplomacy by the powers to head it off through this kind of new Yugoslavia solution but nothing like what has been experienced to no avail since war started.

It is not true that the former Yugoslavs have been killing each other for centuries, or that their state was some kind of artificial unwanted construct. Those are excuses to reject responsibility for helping them find their way out of their quandary. They got themselves into it and they have paid heavily, but nobody gains by leaving them there.

Mr. Juppe's conference will be useful, even urgent, provided it is to launch the idea of reconstituting Yugoslavia. Then the State Department will not have to mumble mindlessly that "something needs to be done". It will have something to do.

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*H*aving failed to convince the actors in the Yugoslav tragedy to finally agree to halt the fighting and seek a political solution to their dispute, the international community is confronted with a new tragedy.

Not only have its intervention forces in the region been rendered powerless, there are even fears that they will be taken hostage by one or other of the belligerents. In the list of possible scenarios this is probably the worst thing that could occur.

All that can be done in this situation is to make preparations for the time - which will inevitably come - when the madness of a few gives way to the pressure of the majority and finally allows the countries of ex-Yugoslavia to establish a harmonious coexistence.

It is indeed true that nothing can be built as long as the weapons have not been silenced, but it is even more so that as soon as peace has returned a community of regions in which there is freedom of movement for people, goods and capital will have to be constructed in this vast region comprising the Balkans and south-eastern Europe. Particularly at the present time, when there is an ever-increasing tendency towards integration worldwide and global trade has increased 9% on preceding years.

I am among those who believe that in the modern world a close relationship exists between human rights and the market economy. Indeed, freedom is not divisible. If artificial barriers are erected between countries, it is inevitable that at the human level this will result in multiple infringements of the freedom of each individual. Alternatively, if obstacles which hinder or prohibit trade are removed, individual freedom is promoted simultaneously. Indeed, there can be no democracy in society without democracy in the economy.

It will undoubtedly be said that thought can only be given to economic reconstruction once hostilities have ceased. We firmly believe, however, that it is only possible to break this vicious circle by proposing an alternative; and economic logic, in its implacable rationality, and which by definition goes beyond borders, can be the driving force which will cause reason to prevail once more. The war will not go on for ever, for even the worst things must inevitably come to an end.

Therefore, thought must be given as to how economic relations between the republics of ex-Yugoslavia and in the region will be organized in the future. Far from being utopian, this is an essential step in so far as it allows a plan to be drawn up for future relations between the countries of the region.

A conference in Paris

Working on this principle, our foundation has decided to bring together close to fifty experts on the Balkans and the countries of South-Eastern Europe in order to hold a debate on two fundamental questions:

1. What are the appropriate forms of cooperation to be developed between countries, whose leaders are today doing their utmost to ensure total separation in all areas, in order to ensure that the transition to democracy and establishment of a market economy are both rapid and complete?
2. What kind of relations should be established between these countries and the European Union in order to make their integration into the community of fifteen possible within a reasonable time frame, i.e. ten or fifteen years at the most?

In order to answer these questions we have extended an invitation to economists, not only from all the republics of former Yugoslavia but also from Albania and Bulgaria, who share the belief that nothing lasting can ever be built by hatred and violence in the world of humans. These people will meet for three days - 7, 8 and 9 June - in the prestigious surroundings of France's Conseil Economique et Social to exchange their views on the reconstruction of the region's economy and the binding of these countries to the European Union.

This sharing of ideas will not necessarily produce a project meeting with the agreement of all, but at least areas of strength and convergence will be discernible which will one day allow a viable economic entity to be built in the region.

Readers of this letter are fully aware that for over two years our foundation has been working on creating the conditions for such a dialogue. Convinced that sooner or later the weapons will be silenced, that the warmongers will be removed from power and that reason will prevail, we have woven a network of close relations between people and institutions whose competence will one day be indispensable for the reconstruction of the countries that have been devastated by the war. And the reason that we have today invited them to debate publicly is that, contrary to appearances, the climate is right for such a meeting.

Exposing a reality

Why?

Essentially because no-one, be it in ex-Yugoslavia or elsewhere, believes any longer that peace can be imposed by force. After three years of uninterrupted war, extraordinary violence and mass destruction, the proof is there that weapons are powerless to pull the belligerents from each others throats; and in the minds of many, the idea is taking hold, having been previously rejected outright, that the time has come to build peace, not on the basis of an artificial political agreement, but on the tangible realities of economics and trade.

I am not claiming that the Paris meeting will miraculously produce a peace plan attractive enough to make the belligerents on all sides put an end to their confrontation; but I am convinced that a debate of this nature held in such a place as this can create a major momentum and expose a reality which is being masked by weapons.

Boris Vukobrat

President

15 May 1995

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The world is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Europe with great ceremony. Heads of state and government from the Old and New Worlds are travelling from one capital to another, giving speeches which talk of remembering, of peace and of reconciliation, and speaking of the present in long asides. This is a present full of turmoil and fury, giving rise to threats that we hoped would never return or hoped were at least banished from our immediate universe, but which are in fact looming larger than ever from the Balkans.

What was happening yesterday in Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka and is happening today in Western Slavonia and Zagreb unfortunately owes nothing to chance. And one did not need to be a fortune teller to predict this new twist in the war. From the moment the leading nations refused to take the measures necessary to impose peace on the belligerents it was inevitable that the end of the truce would mean the outbreak a blinder and more unjust violence, desired by small groups and encouraged by the media.

The powerful of this world, gathered in Moscow for a solemn commemoration, can now only reflect on the lessons of this new failure. Worse still, they have to prepare for an escalation of the war, which will involve, firstly, humanitarian workers and intervention forces, then volunteers, and finally, if the course of events remains unchanged, military contingents. All this could have been - and still can be - avoided by resolute joint action by the United States and Russia first, and the European Union and the United Nations. But little time remains before the conflict takes an even worse turn and engulfs the whole of the Balkans.

At France's Conseil Economique et Social

Being unable to directly influence events, I am keeping to the course I set myself two years ago: we must follow the example provided by Europe's founding fathers, who dared to lay the foundations of their union whilst war still raged on the continent; and all those who, tomorrow, will face the tremendous task of normalizing relations in ex-Yugoslavia must be brought together, with a viable project as a focus. The first stage will be an international conference held in Paris, to be attended by experts from all the republics of former Yugoslavia, as well as Bulgaria and Albania, in order to study the conditions for effective economic and financial cooperation once peace has returned.

I would not be so immodest as to claim today that this meeting will change the course of history, but I have observed that it has already aroused enormous interest. We are receiving messages of support and encouragement from everywhere. Those to whom we have extended invitations, who include many people in positions of great responsibility in their countries, have all indicated that they will be present in the semicircle of France's Conseil Economique et Social when its President Mr. Jean Mattéoli opens the debate. Even the international institutions, which tend to be so ponderous, are rushing to support us. Thus, at a time when the resumption of hostilities in Bosnia and Croatia should give rise to scepticism and despair, precisely the opposite is occurring.

New hope

I would be exaggerating if I said that this situation surprised me. However, I must admit that this result exceeds my expectations and lends validity to our initiative. Peace is no doubt still a long way off, but the number of people preparing it is continually increasing. And everything would seem to indicate that this movement will become irresistible, and one by one the obstacles facing us will be overcome.

This is not a matter of debating for three days in prestigious surroundings before a select audience, it is a matter of defining the relations which will allow the republics of South-Eastern Europe to produce and trade freely once the weapons have been silenced. Plant, transport, energy, finance, currency, investment - every element of modern economics will be discussed on 7, 8 and 9 June. As peace can only result from exchanges, the work to be accomplished over these three days is all-encompassing. And to be consistent it must be necessarily conducted step by step, in the same manner as the work of those who conceived of the European Community as early as 1943.

I would like, if I may, to add a personal note to the preparation of this event. Many of our family members, our friends and our acquaintances have been caught in the downward spiral of war and are suffering in body and mind as their country is torn apart, devastated and humiliated. I would like to be able to offer these men and women, who have done nothing to deserve this terrible fate, the infinitely precious gift of hope.

May the meeting at the Palais d'Iéna attain this goal and trace the contours of a peace based on work and exchange, which will ensure its longevity.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Whilst the dramatic events we are all aware of were unfolding in Sarajevo, our Foundation, in respect of its commitment, brought together economic experts from the countries of the Balkans and South-Eastern Europe. Over three days, in the hemicycle of the Conseil Economique et Social in Paris and in the presence of observers from many countries, our guests studied the current problems and the economic prospects facing the region.

This is the document they adopted as a result of their work.

„From 7 to the 9 June, under the patronage of Mr Jean Mattéoli, President of the French Conseil Social et Economique in Paris, following the initiative of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation, with the support of the Commission of the European Union, in collaboration with the international network "Europe and the Balkans" of the University of Bologna and with the assistance of the monthly review Le Monde diplomatique, a conference was organized on the theme:

THE BALKANS AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE: WHAT ECONOMIC FUTURE FOR THE REGION?

The scientific director of the conference was Professor Branko Horvat.

I

- 1. The conference was attended by 48 participants and 13 guests from countries of the region and other countries concerned by the region's economic problems.*
- 2. The conference participants expressed their conviction that the economic development of the countries of the region is greatly compromised by the war raging in one part of the region.*
- 3. The conference participants stated their great satisfaction at having had the opportunity to meet at a time when contact between them is difficult, in order to study the problems relating to development, the market economy, privatization and regional economic cooperation in South-Eastern Europe.*

4. The conference involved four round tables dealing with the following subjects:

- a) Economic policy, system and development.
- b) Market economy and privatization.
- c) Regional economic cooperation
- d) Relations with the European Union.

5. Two proposals were adopted at the conference:

- a) The organization of further conferences of the same nature, each conference preferably concentrating on a specific problem, which would enable the subject to be elaborated upon and discussed in greater detail
- b) The organization, as rapidly as possible, of a conference on the rehabilitation and economic reconstruction of the countries of the region which have been affected or devastated by the war. Invitations are to be extended to representatives of the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations and the European Union.

On Friday the 9 June 1995 the conference adopted a final document resulting from debate on the principal topics dealt with.

II Economic Policy, System and Development

The presentations and debates examined the problems of macroeconomic stability, restructuring of companies, international trade, labour policy, the social costs of the transition and general economic prospects.

The speakers highlighted the importance of economic policy as a key to macroeconomic stability, in view of its impact on sustainable economic growth. It was also emphasized that price stability needs to be supported by institutional reforms, privatization and microeconomic restructuring in order to endure.

Finally, it was pointed out that macroeconomic transformation and stability can only be achieved if accompanied by economic growth rather than recession.

The participants underscored the importance of restructuring companies in the transition process. They drew attention to the role that autonomy of companies can play in this context and to the dangers of state interventionism. They also stated that the influence of competition and the market determines the ability of companies to adapt to rapid changes.

The crucial impact of international and inter-regional trade on economic growth and development was strongly emphasized. The speakers underlined the detrimental effects of interrupting trade relations and economic protectionism.

Attention was also focused on the social costs of economic and political changes, and in particular on the problems of unemployment, poverty and a general fall in the standard of living.

Finally, it was indicated that the economic future depended on changes in economic policy, the aim of which should be stability, economic growth, liberalization of trade and social welfare.

III MARKET ECONOMY AND PRIVATIZATION

The presentations, contributions and discussions dealt with the relationship between macroeconomic stability and privatization during the transition period, the aims and methods of privatization, the relationship between the transferal of ownership and economic development, industrial policy and the taxation system. Special attention was paid to a critical analysis of developments to date in the process of ownership transferal.

The participants emphasized the need for development of market economy institutions, liberalization of the economy and privatization, and in particular the need to promote free enterprise and competition and open up the economy.

They also highlighted the importance of a stable legal framework and a precise definition of all ownership rights for privatization.

It was observed that the goal of privatization, accompanied by all the changes in the macroeconomic environment, by industrial policy and reform of the taxation and financial system, is economic growth and efficiency.

The participants underscored the vital importance of development of the private sector, the involvement of employees in the capital market and the promotion of extra-firm ownership.

IV REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Many participants in the discussion spoke of the need to make a realistic analysis of the political and institutional processes in South-Eastern Europe which will serve as a basis for establishment of a liberal system of economic cooperation and creation of a stable regional environment.

The resumption of mutual cooperation would be a valuable step towards making this region part of the broader international integration processes.

The liberalization of trade, joint infrastructure projects and the development of the institutions and financial mechanisms which would encourage other forms of integration are considered as the best starting points for re-establishing economic ties.

It was generally held that the lack of resources (natural, financial, technological) of the small recently created economies, as well as the many restrictions on access to European and international markets will play an important role in bringing the region's economic players closer together in the future.

The participants were convinced that the European Union will play a major role in regional economic cooperation in Southeastern Europe, either by drawing up an international post-war reconstruction plan, by supporting specific European projects, or on a commercial basis.

V RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

The unanimous view of the participants was that relations with the European Union are an essential factor for economic stabilization, development, reconstruction and increased economic cooperation in South-Eastern Europe.

The discussion revealed that the European option and progressively joining the European integration movements are the only realistic alternative, in order to overcome past under-development and instability in the region due to non-economic factors.

The participants expressed their conviction that the countries of South-Eastern Europe have to seek and find their own model in order to adapt their institutions to the contemporary realities, by means of all-encompassing regional liberalization processes and by establishing close links with the European Union as well as among themselves. The institutional models proposed must not be rigid, as the entire development and cooperation process must be based on the principle of voluntary action.

It is expected that the European Union will express its commitment to seeking stability and security in the region in a clearer and more concrete manner through economic cooperation.

At the same time, the countries of South-Eastern Europe could take advantage of the fact that the European Union is prepared to support and encourage regional economic cooperation in order to stimulate trade, growth, production and employment.

It is expected that the European Union will encourage bilateral meetings between experts, entrepreneurs and bankers in order to further economic cooperation.

VI

The participants declared that the organization of the conference was excellent and expressed their gratitude to the organizer for having enabled a free and creative dialogue to be established."

Although I do not pretend that the conference held at the Palais d'Iéna heralds the end of the trials overwhelming the Balkans, there is no doubt in my mind that bringing together specialists from the countries of the region in order to debate on its economic future is an important step in the right direction. And that is why I consider that the 7, 8 and 9 June 1995 will remain of historical importance in the process of restoring peace to this part of the world which has been afflicted by so much suffering

Boris Vukobrat

President

THE BALKANS AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE: WHAT ECONOMIC FUTURE FOR THE REGION?

THE OFFICIAL OPENING WAS ATTENDED BY THE FOLLOWING:

1. MATTEOLI Jean - President of the Conseil Economique et Social de la Republique Frangaise
2. BENAVIDAS Pablo - Director at the Commission of the European Union

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS:

1. ANASTASSOV Radoslav - specialist, Sofia
2. BABIĆ Stojan - professor, Belgrade
3. BAJEC Jurij - professor, Belgrade
4. BASHOTA Genc - specialist, Pristina
5. BIANCHINI Stefano - professor, Bologne
6. BOGETIĆ Željko - specialist, Washington
7. BOGOEV Ksente - Academician, specialist, Skopje
8. CEROVIC Bozidar - professor, Belgrade
9. CRNOBRNJA Mihajlo - professor, Montreal
10. DAVIČO Leon - journalist, Messery
11. DE L'ARGENTAYE Bertrand - Director at the Commission of the European Union
12. FITI Taki - professor, Skopje
13. GLIGOROV Vladimir - professor, Vienna
14. HORVAT Branko - professor, Zagreb
15. IVANOVIĆ Petar - professor, Podgorica
16. KALDOR Mary - professor, Brighton
17. KOZUL Zeljka - specialist, Geneva
18. KUMAR Andrej - professor, Ljubljana
19. LABUS Mirosljub - professor, Belgrade
20. MADŽAR Ljubomir - professor, Belgrade
21. MARJANOVIĆ M. Mirjana - professor, Skopje

22. MENCINGER Joze - specialist, Ljubljana
23. MILANOVIĆ Branko- specialist, Washington
24. MILOVANOVIĆ Milic - professor, Belgrade
25. MINIĆ Jelica- specialist, Belgrade
26. MINXHOZI Luljeta - professor, Tirana
27. NAJMAN Dragoljub - member of the Executive Board of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation
28. PAPIĆ Zarko - specialist, Paris
29. PETKOVSKI Mihajlo - professor, Skopje
30. PETROVIĆ Pavle - professor, Belgrade
31. POPOVIĆ Tomislav - professor, Belgrade
32. POPOVIĆ Dejan - professor, Belgrade
33. POSARAC Aleksandra - specialist, Belgrade
34. PRASNIKAR Janez - professor, Ljubljana
35. STANKOVIĆ Fuada - professor, Novi Sad
36. STIBLAR Franjo - professor, Ljubljana
37. STOJANOV Dragoljub - professor, Sarajevo
38. ŠUVAR Stipe - professor, Zagreb
39. TALKA Mirela - professor, Tirana
40. UDOVIČKI Kori - specialist, Washington
41. UVALIĆ Milica - professor, Peggione
42. VESELINOV Dragan - professor, Belgrade
43. VUJAIĆ Ivan - professor, Belgrade
44. VUKIĆEVIĆ Dragan - professor, Podgorica
45. VUKOBRAĆ Boris - Chairman of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation
46. VUKOTIĆ Veselin - professor, Podgorica
47. WACHTEL Howard - professor, Washington
48. ZUNKO Dubravko - professor, Zagreb

LIST OF GUESTS

1. CALIĆ Marie - Jeanne, specialist
2. DENIĆ Bogdan - professor
3. GARDNER Hall - professor
4. INDERMUHLE Jean- Jacques - Ambassador, member of the Executive Board of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation
5. IAKOVLEV Aleksandar N. - member of the Russian Academy of Sciences
6. JAMES Christopher - businessman
7. MACLEAN, Sir Fitzroy
8. MOROKVASIĆ Mirjana - specialist
9. PREVELAKIS Georges - professor
10. SIRC Ljubo, professor
11. STAMBUK Herman - businessman
12. VOLKOV Vladimir K. - member of the Russian Academy of Sciences
13. WIGET Ernst - member of the Executive Board of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Although neither morals nor logic plead in favour of such a solution, all the peace plans proposed to date in order to put an end to the Yugoslav war are more or less based on the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Such a division is by definition artificial, as the peoples living in this region are interwoven like pieces of a patchwork and thus form an in dissociable whole.

The question is therefore not whether the project which the diplomats are currently concentrating on is fair or unfair - it is in any event unfair - but quite simply whether it is viable. Indeed, even though the chancelleries concerned appear to believe that it has a chance of succeeding, everyone knows deep down that it is not viable and that it will inevitably result in new tragedies.

The modern world actually has a long and painful experience of divisions which cut countries in two; it knows the cost of carving artificial borders into the flesh of nations with no thought for their geography, history, culture and traditions, which often date back thousands of years. Germany, Korea, India, Vietnam, Ireland, Palestine, Cyprus were - or still are - deep wounds which have given rise to most of the serious crises of the last half century. And in order for peace to return to these lands that were only divided as a result of political folly, it was necessary to rebuild what the strategists had unwisely destroyed.

Such is, and will always be, the instinct of peoples who will never allow unnatural decisions to be forced upon them, no matter how great the pressure. Thus, just as Vietnam and Germany were reunified, just as Korea is slowly reunifying before our eyes, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and even Yugoslavia, will one day retrieve their unity. Such is the force of the past; such is the irrepressible instinct of human beings.

In the meantime, all those who are basing hopes for a return to peace in the Balkans on the division of Bosnia are setting further problems in store. Aside from the fact that they are trampling upon the principles which form the basis of their democracies and in whose name they claim to be intervening in the Balkans, they are committing two fatal errors:

1. They are publicly acknowledging that force prevails over law and that the international community has no power.

2. They are condoning "ethnic cleansing" as a means of settling conflicts and are raising it to the level of normal government practice.

It was for allowing such terrible deeds to be committed that Europeans, Americans and Russians paid a very high price just fifty years ago: fifty million dead, seventeen million displaced persons in Europe and individual and collective tragedies to which the world had never before been witness... And to finish, a new conflict - the cold war - which opposed them for forty years. If the statesmen of today were to take the time to look back they would be more courageous and would not resign themselves to accepting the unacceptable in order to rid themselves of a problem they cannot solve.

It is these obvious facts, and certain others, that I tried to bring to the fore in Moscow and Washington during my recent visits to Russia and the United States that I made following invitations from high ranking representatives of these two countries. The basis of my reasoning was the work of our Foundation, which for almost three years now has been seeking a peaceful and natural solution to the Yugoslav crisis; and using this I tried to impart a simple message: the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be a thoughtless act which would sooner or later set the whole of Europe ablaze. The United States and Russia can, if they unite their efforts, prevent this historical error and impose a fair peace based on law, not on the violation the most sacred rules of the law of nations. But they must act in concert and, above all, refuse to condone a solution contrary to law and morals.

In order to ensure that my message was clear I gave the people I talked to a document covering the following main points:

1. The solution to the Yugoslav problem, and more generally to the Balkan problem, involves a close but flexible association of the states which make up this region: Bosnia, Croatia, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. But it is essential that the borders of these countries are first respected.
2. Only the recognition and respect of these borders can allow the more than four million people displaced by the war to return to their homes.
3. As far as Bosnia is concerned, the emergence of a flexible confederation recognized within its borders should be favoured. This would be a multiconfessional Bosnia in which each individual would be free to practise the religion of his or her choice.
4. Finally, the major powers involved in the conflict - the United States, Russia, the European Union - must exert all their influence on the belligerents so that they

finally agree to seek a peaceful solution to their dispute and stop pitching their peoples against one another.

There is doubtless nothing revolutionary about these proposals, but there is no point in creating complex plans when the reality is simple. On the contrary, I am convinced that the current equation will only be solved if the current situation, which is already too confused, is not complicated any further. Reason and common sense can surely succeed where the best experts have failed.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*W*e are determined that our voice not be confused with that of the players and observers celebrating the agreement concluded in Washington between Croats, Muslims and Serbs. Not because we do not welcome the progress that this represents as compared to the war, but because it leaves aside the key problem which must necessarily be resolved in order for peace to return to the Balkans; I am referring to the refugees.

All experts agree on the figures: more than four million people - or approximately 50% of the total population of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina - have been forced out of their homes by weapons in the course of the last four terrible years that former Yugoslavia has experienced. These four million men, women and children, who are refugees or have been displaced, are living in harsh and often appalling conditions and dream only of one day returning to their house, their village, their region. It is a dangerous illusion to believe that this human mass will resign itself to the exile which has been iniquitously imposed upon it.

New tragedies

That is why I do not believe, we do not believe, in the durability of the peace plan which is being formulated in Washington under the guidance of the President of the United States with the more or less forced agreement of Europe and Russia. This plan is essentially based on the ethnic division of Bosnia and will inevitably result in new tragedies if it is applied in its present form. As it does not provide a solution to the problem of the refugees who are wandering throughout the Balkans or who have found unstable refuge outside of ex-Yugoslavia it is doomed from the outset.

I am aware that I will be begrudged having said aloud what the diplomats are stubbornly refusing to admit. But can one remain silent when the democracies give force of law to a clear violation of the most fundamental human rights? And should one accept the unacceptable on the pretence that a semblance of peace in the Balkans is necessary for the re-election of a head of state, even if that state is the world's greatest power?

If the refugee problem is not resolved before everything else there will be no lasting peace in Bosnia, Croatia or Serbia. And the only manner of solving it is to ensure the return of the displaced persons to the same place from which they were driven by the war. This can obviously only be achieved in a political system where brute force is replaced by law and where every individual is guaranteed the freedom of movement.

Birthright

By giving force of law to the ethnic cleansing practiced in ex-Yugoslavia the major powers believe that they can buy peace at a bargain. In reality, they are only creating the conditions for an even worse conflict. Already, Croatia believes that it has the right to deprive Serb citizens of their possessions in defiance of the law of nations. Already, the minorities present in Bosnia are preparing to vindicate by use of weapons the right to return to their homes, which they have been denied by the international community. Already, an increasing number of vendettas are being carried out from one end of Bosnia to the other with no regard for the official agreement concluded in New York. The least one can say is that the olive branch being proffered in the United States is a long way from becoming the weapon of the belligerents on the ground.

For two years I have continued to write, and I will continue writing, that any agreement which is based on the ethnic division of one of the states of former Yugoslavia is doomed from the start. Not only will it bring further misfortune, it will inevitably set the whole of the Balkans ablaze. And it is not the presence of fifty thousand blue helmets, or even one hundred thousand, that will change anything in this state of affairs. People are so deeply attached to the soil upon which they were born that they will never cease vindicating their rights over their home and their land. If they do not succeed in ensuring respect for these rights by law they will always resort to violence, even if this means laying waste to their country. And there is nothing that will ever resist this natural inclination.

Therefore, before the problem of the institutions of the future Bosnian confederation is tackled, a clear and fair answer to this major question must be found.

It would be better to convince oneself of this whilst there is still time.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Every move made, every action taken which contributes to restoring peace in ex-Yugoslavia should certainly be encouraged and commended. But every move made, every action taken whose aim or result would be to muzzle the clash of arms, and which would sign away the quality of the peace by endorsing an unjust situation should be condemned - for moral reasons, of course, but also for political reasons. For an artificial solution to the Yugoslav conflict would inevitably lead to terrible new conflicts.

The international community, we hear, is ready to accept a solution based on the partitioning of Bosnia according to ethnic or religious criteria. If this information is true, then we can only expect a temporary, fragile peace to be restored to ex-Yugoslavia, for the peoples concerned will never accept what would amount to an endorsement of the ethnic cleansing which has been practiced in Bosnia and elsewhere throughout the many months of war by all sides, by the Serbs as well as the Bosnians, and, of late, especially by the Croats. The only chance of ending this conflict once and for all is if the men and women who have been driven from their homes by the war are allowed to go back.

Having said this, let us now suppose that, while there is still time, the United States, Russia and Europe come to realize how dangerous their present position is and decide that peace should be based on allowing refugees to return to their homes, on the refusal of any form of ethnic and religious partitioning, on the recognition of Bosnia's borders - precisely as we have been demanding for many months. What else would be needed in order to ensure lasting peace in ex-Yugoslavia?

Five Conditions

On this essential point, the answer is clear: true peace will never come to ex-Yugoslavia as long as reconstruction plans have not been drawn up and as long as the international community does not act together to help the country recover from its ruins. Just as the Marshall Plan enabled war-ravaged Europe to repair the damage left by one of the most terrible conflicts in history, in the same way and in the same amount of time, the Yugoslav region can also become a zone of prosperity. What man has destroyed, man can remake; that is, of course, except for life itself.

This should not lead us to believe, however, that the major powers can buy peace by pouring millions of dollars into the Balkans. In this vast operation - bringing about the birth of a prosperous Yugoslav region - in which collective and industrial wounds are to be healed in part through the generosity of the West, nothing could be more dangerous than to open up credit lines with no conditions attached; this, in fact, would create an intolerable situation which would saddle future generations with the burden of reconstruction and which could result in aid going not at all to helping the countries destroyed by war to get back on their feet, but to the warlords for their own personal profit.

When the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) was set up after the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was expressly stated - in Article 1 of its Charter - that credit would be granted only to those countries that respected the following five conditions:

- Establishment of the rule of law
- Instituting a multi-party political system
- Holding free elections under the supervision of international observers
- Upholding human rights
- Instituting a market economy

These five conditions are not new. They were defined some time ago and they constitute a sort of minimum guarantee that assures contributors that their aid is effectively going towards establishing political and economic democracies where dictatorships and collectivism once reigned supreme. Applying these conditions to the Yugoslav case is even more imperative, since Western powers seem to be willing to accept as valid representatives the men who, through blindness, ambition or greed, plunged their own people into war.

Such a mistake - for, as I have said before and I'll say it again, this is a mistake and a very serious one - can only be corrected by laying down very strict rules. To help the countries of ex-Yugoslavia to get back on their feet is certainly an essential task; but money is useless unless it serves first and foremost democracy and its necessary corollary, the market economy. For the truth is that a political democracy cannot exist without an economic democracy.

Choosing the right people

I would like to add that I personally believe the time is drawing near when we shall have to entrust the work of defining and implementing the equivalent of a Mar-

shall Plan for the Balkans to the Yugoslavs, under the supervision of the European Union. The qualities of these men and women will be determining factors, for the success or failure of these reconstruction programs will depend on their work. And so we must make it a point, when the time comes, to ask what the attitude of each person was during the war.

It is not too early, today, to begin thinking about what will happen in ex-Yugoslavia if the belligerents finally agree to muzzle their arms. An improvised, ill-prepared peace devoid of a democratic base is bound to fail from the outset; but a peace which is built on the five principles mentioned above, enforced by just men and women, and based on strict, but fair management of international aid would have every chance of enduring.

Let us think about it, let us wager on it.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The peace which is currently taking shape in the Balkans is by no means a reflection of the real desires of the Yugoslav peoples. However, it is still peace, an essential step along the path to political settlement of the conflict. Moreover, the form of this peace which the warring parties have been obliged to accept is also likely to be modified, which could make it acceptable.

We should therefore welcome this development and pay tribute to those responsible - the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, his secretary of State, Warren Christopher, and negotiator Richard Holbrooke. Barely two months ago, the idea of silencing the weapons and replacing violence with dialogue seemed wildly optimistic. This dream has become a reality and those who were instrumental in this achievement must now be granted recognition, even if the solution is far from being the best.

Three truths

I would like to recall three truths, which are not necessarily pleasant, for the benefit of those, notably the Europeans, who are complaining that their diplomatic victory was snatched from them by the Americans who only stepped in at the eleventh hour.

- The first is that they failed where the United States succeeded because they were unable to exert their full weight when it was time to change the course of events. In spite of their persistence and courage from the outset of the conflict, their efforts on the ground did not receive the necessary diplomatic support. This is precisely what distinguishes a State from a coalition of States. When the former decides to become involved it does so with all its power and determination, but when the latter makes this decision it seldom has the necessary cohesion to impose its views. In this affair Europe has proven to the world that it is not yet a major power.
- The second truth is that the United States has experience in this type of operation, which gives it undeniable efficacy. It is true that the United States generally waits longer before making a commitment, but once it has accepted this it has a firm resolve to succeed, doing everything within its power. Europeans

are aware of this as they have twice been saved from disaster, in 1917 and 1944, by American intervention on their soil. It is, therefore, not surprising that this should occur once again in the context of the war in ex-Yugoslavia, and the Europeans should draw the logical conclusions from this instead of complaining.

- The third and most important truth is that as yet nothing in ex-Yugoslavia is definitive. I would even go as far as to say that the end of the fighting is just the new beginning. Europe does in fact have a trump card - its geographical proximity, its common history and its cultural kinship with the Yugoslav peoples. It is its economic and financial power and its political influence which means it can play a role in peace-building that the United States cannot because it is generally too distant from Europe and from the Balkans in particular. Once Europe overcomes the differences which prevented it from imposing peace in ex-Yugoslavia it will be in the best position to ensure the triumph of law, by guaranteeing that the decisions made in Dayton are correctly applied, that refugees can return to their homes and that justice is rendered. Nevertheless, it is clear that what happens now depends largely on the players on the ground.

Our Foundation, which has been battling constantly for the last two years to ensure the victory of these ideas, is naturally fully prepared to assist Europe in this endeavour.

The Balkans and Europe

This holds particularly true in view of the fact that the independent States of ex-Yugoslavia wish to be incorporated into the European Union, as they rightly consider that their economic and social problems will be more easily resolved if they can share in the Union's prosperity. Indeed, there could be nothing easier than for the European Union to remind those whose fratricidal conflict has laid their country to waste that Europe is a democratic edifice and that being part of it implies respect of its underlying principles - political freedom, a market economy, respect for human and minority rights...

The major weakness of the Dayton agreements lies in the political legitimacy granted to men who deliberately chose war in order to succeed in their ambitions, and in the sanctioning of immoral and unjust principles, such as the division of territory according to ethnic and religious criteria. In fact, these decisions formally contravene both the spirit and the letter of the treaties which form the foundations of the European Union. It is thus very simple for the Europeans to remind

those who wish to join their community that they can only do so through the respect of law and justice.

It also follows that Europe should require the leaders and peoples of ex-Yugoslavia to demonstrate their ability to cooperate and maintain good neighbourly relations, through the strengthening of economic ties and freedom of movement for people and goods, before becoming part of the European family.

Germany, France and Great Britain, who complain that they were kept on the sidelines of the peace process, must now realize that they are in a position of strength. They should offer all the countries of ex-Yugoslavia the opportunity to draw closer to the European Union so that their wounds may heal more quickly, but should also use the opportunity to demand that they adopt democratic principles, without which a free society cannot exist. Thus, necessity will see to it that the artificial and dangerous divisions which currently form the basis of the peace agreements are erased, as if by some miracle.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*J*ust as we were among the first to hail the peace being drafted a few months ago, when the United States came down with all its weight to silence the arms in the Balkans, we are among the first today to express our satisfaction that the NATO forces have arrived in Bosnia to enforce the Dayton accords. This does not, however, prevent us from saying that such a peace, imposed as it is on unwilling belligerents, could turn to catastrophe if it is not built upon solid foundations: in other words, if the leaders of the three countries involved - Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro - remain deaf to the aspirations of their peoples.

Mostar, Sarajevo, Eastern Slavonia, Gorazde, Prevlaka... so many dark areas on a map drawn by the hand of diplomats, in their own manner. Each of these points could, at any moment, become the spark that sets off a new round of violence that re-ignites the war, even as international public opinion believes that the problem of ex-Yugoslavia has been settled. And the reason for this is that such a peace, advocated by the United States with the consent of Europe and Russia, is based on a situation of great injustice: the imposition of boundaries which partition a previously united territory into ethnic divisions.

In my opinion, the negotiators in Dayton have taken on a great responsibility in the face of history by hinging their peace on a principle which is unjust, immoral and which, as such, must be irrevocably condemned. However, I also think that the suspension of hostilities provides an unparalleled opportunity to rebuild what the folly of men has destroyed; that it is possible, in spite of everything, to profit from a peace with shaky foundations.

Three proposals

Consequently, our Foundation is more than ever determined to act to make sure, first of all, that the last four years of war are not merely a prelude to renewed violence, and secondly, that ex-Yugoslavia finally gets the chance to play the role which geography and history have reserved for it.

Our proposals, which take into consideration the present situation in ex-Yugoslavia, revolve around four vital points:

1. The Dayton Agreement has been implemented in such a way as to leave little hope for the eventual return of refugees - those from Bosnia-Herzegovina, as

well as those from Krajina. These refugees have the potential to become an army of the discontented, easily mobilized by extremists of all kinds promising to make the return to their homes possible by force.

2. It is essential that the new States created out of the former Yugoslav Federation - Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia-Montenegro, and even Slovenia - get started on the road to economic reintegration as early as possible, for this is the only possible solution to their tremendous post-war problems. The process of reintegration should at once include communication systems, transportation, energy, all forms of cooperation which would lead to the unification of the Yugoslav territory, as opposed to the current tendency towards separation and division. To believe that each of these entities has no need to exchange goods, people and services with any of the others when, before the war, economic and social interaction could not have been more extensive, would be a fatal illusion. Moreover, if the Americans and Europeans hope to keep to the calendar they so painstakingly put together in Dayton and confirmed in Paris, then they will have to see to it that the process becomes irreversible before the end of this year.

This problem is not as easy to resolve as it may at first seem. Certainly the people themselves, victims of the war, wish to produce and trade as freely as they once did; but it is not in the interest of their leaders to encourage economic ties the immediate consequence of which would be to shatter the isolation on which their power is based. On the contrary, these latter can only benefit from keeping their borders closed off as long as possible to the other countries of ex-Yugoslavia.

Much is at stake in the economic integration of the Yugoslav area, not the least of which is the budding peace process itself. The quicker integration is achieved, the lower the bill the West will pay to maintain non-conflictual relations between the former belligerents. Though based on an artificial, Manichean vision of the situation in ex-Yugoslavia, the Dayton accords can be amended, in particular, by making sure that close economic ties are established between the different entities that emerged from the war. For this to happen, however, it is necessary to proceed rapidly and to ensure the irreversibility of the integration process.

3. The third vital point is information. We all know and agree that one of the most powerful weapons used in the recent war was misinformation: in other words, words and images, writing and sounds used to stir up hate, pit one group of

people against the other, manipulate the truth, twist the facts. Most of the massacres carried out during those terrible years may be attributed to this weapon, so expertly handled by those who had learned to use it when Communism ruled with an iron hand over Yugoslavia.

The Americans have, in fact, understood this very well. While positioning their contingent of NATO troops on the ground in Bosnia, they will also be on the air - from a radio station set up to broadcast in English in the Sarajevo and Tuzla areas. Thus, the voice of freedom, equity, solidarity and tolerance will be heard for the first time since the outbreak of the hostilities. Of course, a radio operated by the military can hardly be expected to be a model of objectivity, but in comparison to the previous situation, in which only abuse or calls to murder were hurled back and forth, this is a great improvement.

The cue has been given, and it seems imperative to us that the implanted communication systems broadcast news and information in Serb-Croat, the only language understood by all of the civil population; later on, using these systems as a base, an audio-visual network can be built up, the aim of which will be to broadcast information that is calm, impartial, and verified. Abolishing the verbal and televised oppression which made the war possible is a prerequisite to the institution of those democratic structures which are so necessary to lasting peace in ex-Yugoslavia.

4. The fourth vital point concerns the opening up of the Mediterranean. Just over one month ago - from the 26 to 28 November 1995 - in Barcelona, twenty-seven ministers representing the fifteen European Union nations and twelve other countries on the Mediterranean signed a pact the purpose of which is to create, over the next five years, a new and powerful political, economic, and financial community. Beyond affirming their solidarity and membership in a common culture, they decided to contribute 4.6 billion ecus - or 6.1 billion dollars - to developing the eastern and southern borders of this vast area. This marks a first step in the readjustment of European policy which, until then, seemed to focus almost exclusively on the East.

When peace reigned in the Balkans, the country that was then Yugoslavia held an important place in the strategic balance of the region. On the shores of the Adriatic, yet also turned towards Central and Eastern Europe, ex-Yugoslavia was a leading player on the Mediterranean scene. Moreover, since it - justifiably - had the reputation of being partial to its independence, it was widely respected by the international community.

This situation, a natural consequence of the country's geographical position, was of course destroyed by the war. However, ex-Yugoslavia is still in the same place on the world map, and the reasons that made it an inevitable force in the Mediterranean area make it indispensable to the equilibrium of the region today. The independent States which have emerged from the war must agree to speak as one in the newly formed concert of Euro-Mediterranean nations. For, individually, they will count for nothing if they choose to come to the negotiating table alone. But the opportunities presented by the Barcelona conference are too important to be ignored by Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia-Montenegro today.

A Beginning

The peace signed in Paris can hardly be called just or reasonable. But, to its credit, it exists. What is important now is to consider it not as an end, but as a beginning; taking what we have and adding a bold touch here, a fine touch there, making the necessary corrections.

Two different scenarios are conceivable at this time. The integration process in Bosnia can be successful if coupled with the reintegration - in the broadest sense of the word - of the other ex-Yugoslavian regions, and this would lay the foundations for lasting peace in the area. On the other hand, if this dynamic of peace is not created and if the artificial borders are left to sit, then we can only expect one of two possible consequences: either NATO will have to keep its troops in ex-Yugoslavia forever, or else a new war will break out as soon as the troops have left.

Everyone agrees, but it never hurts to remind ourselves: peace cannot be decreed; it is built up day by day. And so, the major powers having succeeded in halting the exchange of gunfire, let us take advantage of the time ahead to lay down the foundations for a new Yugoslav community: a community, like the European Union, of free nations which, in turn, are made up of highly autonomous, geographically and culturally coherent entities: the regions.

And in the end, as things evolve, they will turn out as they should: ex-Yugoslavia - different, no doubt, but very much alive - will become a group of nations to be reckoned with once again.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*I*n a few weeks, general elections will be held in Albania and, given the prevailing situation in the Balkans, they will necessarily be of great importance. Whereas peace seems to be returning with measured steps to ex-Yugoslavia, despite the tensions which remain in the area, the Albanian question has yet to be considered. Though the violence of the conflict that raged in Bosnia-Herzegovina for four years may have relegated this question to the background, it nevertheless remains entire and unresolved, constituting a serious threat that hangs over the whole region

Since we are all acquainted with the problem, I will refrain from going into detail, but I would just like to point out that Albanian minorities are widely found throughout the different countries in the Balkan area, and namely in Macedonia and Greece. Within the Yugoslav Federation, comprised of Serbia and Montenegro, Albanians are well-established, for they make up the majority of the population in Kosovo and a minority in Montenegro.

A Preparatory Conference

Some people might have imagined that the end of the war in Bosnia would lead to an alleviation of tensions in the area, tensions which on several occasions in the recent past were on the verge of breaking out into new territorial, ethnic and religious conflicts. This question, however, was not treated during the negotiations which ended the hostilities, and, as a consequence, it remains dangerously unresolved. If we want lasting peace in the Balkans, this is a question which must now be brought to the fore.

If we continue to wait, on the other hand, we will see the same tragic scenario - which cost tens of thousands of lives in Bosnia, thrust four million men, women and children on the road to exile, and caused endless destruction - repeated in Kosovo. This is, of course, the last thing anyone would wish, now that the hope of a lasting peace is gradually taking root in the minds of all.

Our Foundation, taking the point of view that further procrastination in settling the Albanian question could mean an eventual chain reaction in the Balkans, is proposing to organize an international conference on the future of Kosovo. We

believe that the world is being given a unique chance to anticipate, in order to prevent, events which, if nothing is done, will be as inevitable as those which submerged ex-Yugoslavia after 1991. Since we at the Foundation see no initiative of any sort being taken in this direction, we feel it is our duty once more to make the first move.

Our idea is to bring together approximately forty personalities from all of the countries concerned by the Albanian question, and invite qualified representatives from the international community to participate in these two or three days of study. Albanian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Serbian specialists will compare and confront points of view and propositions regarding the problem of Albanian minorities, in general, and the question of Kosovo, in particular.

Obviously, the situation in the region being as it is, one conference will not resolve problems of such magnitude and with such deep roots. However, it will at least allow us to compare opinions, to initiate a real dialogue and, in doing so, to create an environment favourable to in-depth discussions.

We are living in a time in which the resurgence of traditional conflicts could at any given moment flare up into destructive cataclysms. Unable to anticipate the conflicts, the international institutions and the major powers try to administer as best they can the slow process that leads to peace. Yet, in the time needed to set up the indispensable procedure of arbitration, the number of individual and collective tragedies only increases. It is thus necessary to learn, while there is still time, how to avert the tragedies we know to be inevitable.

That is what we wish to accomplish through this conference, not by endowing it with the purpose of drawing up the terms of an ambitious agreement, but by proposing that it lay down the framework within which to accommodate future negotiations: descriptions of participant profiles, schedule of talks, practical modalities of the discussions, place and role of international authorities, search for appropriate institutions to oversee these negotiations.

An Empirical Process

It seems to us that we would be ill-advised to wait much longer to begin discussing the Albanian question, that we are being offered a historical opportunity to avoid making the same mistakes that led to the war in ex-Yugoslavia. However, experience also tells us that a great amount of pragmatism is required if we are to avoid hardening the positions of the drama's protagonists. Proceeding empirically, by defining the framework of the negotiations, drawing up a list of participants

for the future international conference, and examining methods liable to make these negotiations a success, seems to us to be the best path to follow.

May I add, in conclusion, that this plan, which was submitted to a few top-ranking international figures in charge of Yugoslav affairs, has been favourably received. Thus, I am not the only one to think and say that we must take advantage of the current movement in favour of peace to gather the specialists around a table and find a pacific solution to the Albanian question.

May this appeal on behalf of reason be heard before it is too late!

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

It may happen that the monthly letter sent out by our Foundation provokes a reaction, and it is only natural. Such reactions are generally positive, but readers sometimes express disagreement with the ideas we defend. We take great interest in the opinions of such critics for they compel us both to refine our analysis and to clarify our stands.

Such is the case with the painter Slobodan Jevtić, who, not long ago, wrote to me a long missive. I would like to quote considerably from it here, for it seems to me to illustrate a certain widely held attitude concerning Kosovo and the Albanian question, an attitude which could have dramatic consequences, an attitude we are trying to fight.

The thesis...

The following are the arguments as expressed by our critic in reaction to the April 1996 Letter (N° 57) concerning the Albanian question:

"I understand your desire to influence the changes taking place in the Balkans. But there are also other areas of tension in Europe linked to national, ethnic or constitutional problems.

Has it ever occurred to you, for example, to call for a "forum of intellectuals" to consider the Corsican question? On what basis can the French "Constitution" be imposed on the Corsican people?

You must also be aware that "Savoy", in France, wants to be recognized as a State. Or you might want to look into the plight of Alsations or the Basque people. And what about the Irish conflict which is tormenting Great Britain?

In all these regions of Europe, one finds a situation of ethnic stratification, but no one is making the slightest move to deal with the problem by calling a conference like the one you suggest for Kosovo.

What gives us the right to interfere in the problems of the Albanians, the Macedonians, the Greeks, the Serbs and the Bulgarians? Is it the right of the mightiest? Or could it be an excuse to pacify the region so that American capital can sink its stake into the coast of poor Albania?

Whose side, dear Sir, are you on? It seems fairly easy, for me, to figure out what is behind your attitude: an American transfusion, even just a drop in the middle of this economic chaos would satisfy you. But look at how the result of unthinking interference by "foreign personalities" (Genscher, Badinter, etc.) plunged Yugoslavia into a nightmare of insanity and horror...

It is thus with fear that I see your meeting and your debates leading to the carving up of Kosovo.

Forgive me for not being able to share your opinion. I do not wish to push my reasoning too far, but I also had the feeling that for you too Croatia should become "Greater Croatia", that Muslim Bosnia should become "Greater Bosnia", while Serbia, with its 12 million souls, cannot become great and unified."

... And our response

My response to the arguments above is contained in three points which complement each other to form a whole:

1. There is a big difference between the Corsican, Basque, and Irish problems on the one hand and the Albanian problem on the other hand, which makes any comparison between them impossible: for despite the violence which those separatists sometimes use, their issues are, in democratic countries, regularly put to the voters through electoral processes which irrefutably show that the separatists are a minority. This is not the case with the inhabitants of Kosovo who have never been given the opportunity to express themselves freely on the question. If there were any real democracy in Kosovo, the people would have been consulted long ago. We can also hope that in a democracy worthy of the name, the problem of ethnic origin or of the alteration of borders would become unimportant.
2. In proposing to organize an international conference on the Albanian question, our Foundation is not seeking to encourage the creation of a "Greater Albania" by carving up Serbia, Macedonia and Greece. We only want to prevent a repetition of what happened in ex-Yugoslavia in general, and in Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular.

In setting up such a conference we have no intention of providing the participants with ready-made solutions; nor do we expect to come up with a miraculous solution after a few day's discussion of a very complex problem. All we want is to merely create a context in which specialists from all sides can

meet, define a common approach to the problem considered and agree on the methodology required in the given situation.

There does not exist, nor can there exist any immediate, simple solution to the Albanian problem. But the idea recently put forward by the President of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and of Arts regarding the partitioning of Kosovo contains the seeds of a real catastrophe. The painful experience in Bosnia and the controversy attending the application of the Dayton accords show that carving up of a region or a country can never be a reasonable solution and that it inevitably leads to new and endless conflicts.

3. If it is imperative to involve the major powers in this search for a solution to the Albanian question - and this is not called for as regards the Corsican, Basque or Irish problems - the reason is that the international community will only mobilise in a crisis which threatens international peace. And this is the case with the Albanian question.

Leaving Serbia to deal with this problem on its own would be a grave mistake indeed, even if Belgrade cannot and must not be ignored in searching for a just solution. The Albanian question is not confined to Kosovo only. With varying intensity it arises in southern Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Greece. So, it is evident that the Kosovo problem cannot be resolved without treating the whole of the Albanian problem as it appears throughout the Balkans.

I would also add that it is not in Belgrade's best interest to try and resolve the problem on its own. It is evident enough that neither Macedonia nor Greece will be willing to give up a part of their territory; nor, moreover, will Albania consent to any such amputation, on her part. Consequently, if the leaders in Belgrade work towards a solution in close cooperation with their neighbours, they will make allies and not adversaries of them.

Their current attitude, however, based on a refusal to negotiate, means that the search for a solution remains one-sided, which is unacceptable for the international community. Such an attitude could lead to pressuring the Serbs, and this would inevitably work against them by forcing them to resolve the Kosovo problem without considering the Albanian question as a whole.

As for the Albanians, it is obvious where their interest lies: in making sure they, in turn, do not get caught in a crisis in which they would fall the first victims; in living freely in the countries where they have permanently settled, and doing so without

altering the existing borders - in other words, without jeopardizing the political and territorial stability of the region that was so hard to come by.

Finally, it is the international community that must be the guarantor of the settlement reached, enforcing the agreements that will be signed, helping dissolve the atmosphere of mistrust reigning in the Balkans. Let us hope they will be effective this time in preventing a new conflict to flare up instead of seeking to put out the fire once the situation has gotten out of control.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*F*our years ago, when the Peace and Crises Management Foundation developed the concept of regionalisation and integration of the territory of former Yugoslavia, and more generally of the Balkans, we were judged by many to be Utopians.

Today, however, this idea is at the core of the policy which aims to establish lasting peace in this part of the world, and it has won a great number of supporters - so many, in fact, that this 'includes some we would almost prefer not to have among us.

A European Interest

During their visit to the countries of the region, Jacques Santer, President of the Commission of the European Union, and Lamberto Dini, President of the Council of Ministers, spoke resolutely in favour of such an approach. They explained that this was based on the conviction that the path to European Union membership for these countries required total compliance with the peace agreements and regional co-operation, which would contribute most to stabilisation of the Balkans.

The message that these two European leaders wished to impart to their partners in the dialogue was that co-operation "is not an option but a necessity" and that "any individual strategy for entry to Europe is out of the question". "In your relations with the European Union," they said explicitly, "do not request advantages for yourselves that you are not prepared to grant to the other states in the region".

The most encouraging aspect of this new approach to the problem is that Europe seems to have finally understood where its own interest lies and that this interest coincides perfectly with that of the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia.

During a round table held recently in Belgrade the explanation for this change was given by the editors of the Italian geopolitical magazine "Limes", Luccio Caracciolo and Michel Koriman, themselves creators of the "Euroslavia" project that some have considered to be identical to our own. "The problem", they explained, "is preventing the Yugoslav epidemic from spreading throughout Europe." They cited northern Italy and Corsica and pointed out that in Europe today there are a good forty issues of this kind to be resolved, each of which is capable of igniting an inferno. "Just remember", they added, "that barely ten years ago Yugoslavia was

the most stable and prosperous of all socialist countries. What seemed inconceivable at the time - a bloodbath - has occurred in the heart of Europe and can reoccur at any moment in other places. The logical conclusion: a regional approach must be promoted within the European Union at all costs and form the pillar for stability of the entire continent."

We have been saying nothing less ourselves for the last four years.

A National Interest

I do not wish to reiterate the arguments that our Foundation has developed since its creation, but I will simply recall what must be done in order to bring lasting peace and prosperity to nations which have so often been deceived.

The interest of the peoples and states of the region in adopting a joint approach is linked to their interest in joining the European Union, that is to say, in becoming fully-fledged members of the European institutions. It is clear that Europe will not accept them with their disputes, their intolerance, their wars, their hatred and their deadly virus of dissension. Taken apart, the states of ex-Yugoslavia do not amount to anything. Taken together, they amount to little but hold a certain weight nevertheless.

The first condition for rapprochement with Europe is obviously the end of war, which has been made possible by the Dayton agreements. In the forthcoming period peace must be built and all solutions must be explored to ensure that it is lasting. This implies firstly abandoning extremist ideas, nationalism and projects for the creation of "greater", "ethnically pure", "national" or "fundamentalist" states - which concerns Serbia as well as Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece or any other state. I would add that those who have caused distress to millions of persons by separating them and dividing land, peoples and families, and who would even have divided the air that we breathe if it were at all possible, must be removed from their posts.

The second condition is that all states recognise each other within their internationally recognised borders. Not because these borders are good or bad, but because recognition of them constitutes the precondition for peace and they may only be modified by negotiation and mutual consent. Following this the importance of these borders must be diminished by opening them up to the free movement of persons, goods, capital, information and ideas.

One year ago our Foundation organised a conference in Paris on the subject of the "economic development of the Balkans and South-Eastern Europe". The support lent to us by the European Union, highlighting the necessity of working to strengthen economic links in the region, constituted a strong signal. The final document adopted by the most distinguished experts from the ex-Yugoslav states, Albania and Bulgaria already gives an unequivocal sign when it states: "The renewal of mutual co-operation would be an important step towards inclusion of the region in the process of international integration."

The third condition is the creation of a context formed by individual or collective rights and freedoms - which will be given maximum protection - within which individuals and the community will consider that it is of little importance to know the name of the state that they will live in since it will be a state which will protect them and which will allow them to develop economically, politically, culturally and socially.

Implementation of this Idea

The greatest obstacle confronting the idea of co-operation and regional integration is formed by the interests of the leaders who are keeping themselves in power, not in order to ensure the well-being of their peoples or to assume the responsibilities that go with this, but for a love of power and of the advantages that this provides them with.

The idea of reintegration of the countries of the region has always been, and today continues to be, looked upon unfavourably by the leaders of the Balkan mini-states. It is condemned by the Presidents of the states, by their senior diplomats, by their advisors and by their propagandists and the official media because it reflects the interest of the peoples and would see an end to arbitrary rule.

The leaders of the Balkan countries have understood the message that was addressed to them by the European leaders. They are well aware that they will not be able to enter the European Union without co-operation and regional integration, but they do not want to make such a move. The reason for this is clear since joining Europe would imply the adoption of the European code of behaviour and European standards, which imply political and economic democracy, respect for human rights and the rights of ethnic groups, freedom of the press and alternation in political rule.

The ideas are alive and developing. They can also become reality. That is why the question "how" is as important as the question "what".

From an external point of view, the answer to this last question involves joint action by all the influence-wielding world powers which are concerned by this and which formed the Contact Group. From an internal point of view, it involves the creation of political systems based on the rule of law and respect of the norms which form the basis of modern societies. The fact of knowing "who" is governing is of little importance at such time as a politician can only be at the head of a state if he acts in the interest of all its citizens.

The most important thing today is that the ideas of prosperity, progress, co-operation and integration are taking root not only in Paris or Rome, but also in those places where it matters most, that is, in Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Rijeka, Skopje, Sofia, Tirana... It is only fair to acknowledge, however, that these ideas have always existed in these places and that the voice of reason has never ceased to make itself heard - tolerance in the face of extremism, co-operation in the face of conflict, integration in the face of break up, construction in the face of destruction, progress in the face of regression, reality in the face of myth, justice in the face of injustice, legitimacy in the face of despotism, democracy in the face of totalitarianism.

It is indeed extremist movements which have been stronger in recent years, but it is in the interest of all that moderation gain the upper hand and that alternation become an institution.

I hope that ultimately common sense and ideas like these that we are developing will lead to the definition of common interests, just as the forces of nature ensure that the great masses of water which flow down the same mountain in a thousand streams find appeasement in the bed of the same river.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The hard facts are there. By refusing to accept this prime truth the leaders of the Yugoslav republics pitched their peoples into war, the international community found itself obliged to act in order to prevent the fire from engulfing the whole of the Balkans and today the embers are still threatening to re-ignite.

These facts are nevertheless simple. They can be summed up by the words of the American journalist Flora Lewis when she said, "The Yugoslav solution is Yugoslavia".¹ In other words, the conflict will only really come to an end when the brothers at war agree to re-establish normal relations and stop believing that they can just draw a stroke across several centuries of common history.

The latest aspect of this issue is that the leading negotiator of the peace agreements, the American Richard Holbrooke, is now expressing identical views himself. Having favoured a solution which more or less endorses the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina - the recent elections bear witness to this - did he not state upon his return to the United States that the development of economic relations between Belgrade and Sarajevo, Zagreb and Banja Luka is the real key to a return to peace?

The Confederative Approach

In pronouncing those words the American diplomat was merely stating what we have been repeating here for almost three years - peace will return to the Balkans the day that people and goods can once again move freely within the Yugoslav area. Any solution based on an opposing principle is destined to fail and will inevitably result in renewed hostilities.

I am aware that the current trend in Western circles is to allow a division of Bosnia which would be guaranteed by the presence of large NATO forces on the ground. After IFOR 1 there would be IFOR 2, then IFOR 3, and so on... However, we know from experience what the consequences of such a division are. Cyprus, Cashmere and the two Koreas are there like festering sores to remind us that violence, hatred between communities and political instability are the price to be paid for such unnatural divisions.

¹ Flora Lewis, "The solution to the Yugoslav problem is Yugoslavia" (*The International Herald Tribune*, 10 February 1995).

In the case of Bosnia, the application of such a formula would undoubtedly have even more damaging effects. The different denominations are inextricably interwoven as most families are mixed and the artificial borders created by the war do nothing to prevent the different communities from seeking to join one another. The result would be a never-ending series of conflicts which would force the western countries to maintain considerable military forces there.

The surest way to create an endless war in the heart of Europe is to pursue that logic to the end.

That being said, another solution exists, the other branch of the alternative. It is precisely what we advocated from the outset of the hostilities in ex-Yugoslavia and what we have been proposing in vain for months. It would seem, however, that the best minds are beginning to acknowledge that it could in fact be the right one and it would therefore be opportune to define its outlines.

It is based upon the idea that only the economic integration of the Yugoslav area, that is to say of the republics resulting from the break-up of Yugoslavia, can provide a lasting foundation for peace. In the same way that this occurred in Europe following World War II, it is now necessary to begin weaving a tight network of economic, commercial and financial relations among these countries. Without seeking to modify the borders which have been recognised by the international community or to bring these peoples together in an artificial manner, it is essential to restore traditional trade flows, to recreate the infrastructures which make such exchanges possible and to progressively define common monetary instruments.

A model for this already exists. It is the Europe of Fifteen which in the course of a long transformation has gone from a simple common market to an economic community followed by a political union, and which will equip itself with a single currency in a few months.

Concentric Circles

As for the political dimension, the only structure which is capable of breaking down the barriers erected by the war between the communities and which can ensure the coexistence of different denominations and the construction of a viable economic area is a double confederation - between Bosnia and Croatia, on the one hand, and Yugoslavia and Bosnia on the other. The geometry of the relationship between the successor states of ex-Yugoslavia would be one of concentric circles and would lead them to establish permanent contacts which would rapidly quell any sources of conflict.

It should also be noted that such a system would simultaneously resolve the problem of relations between Croatia and Yugoslavia. The two republics could establish economic and political co-operation either directly or through Bosnia, which would soon prove fruitful for both.

The hard facts, as I said, are there. If the various governments wish to solve this seemingly irresolvable equation that they have set and if the international community wishes to avoid a long series of tragedies and unnecessary expense then the path outlined here must be explored without further delay. Indeed, the experience of Europe proves that there is no dispute, no matter how old nor how implacable, which cannot be appeased at such time as people agree to exchange goods and services.

Peace through trade, trade through peace - this method is as old as humankind! It has thus been tried and tested.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The French Institute for International Relations IFRI, which is one of the most highly rated research organisations in Europe, and the Foundation for Peace and Crises Management, which I have the honour of heading, decided to join forces in order to explore the future of the Balkans. They pooled their resources and organised a day of reflection on 12 February in Paris on the following topic, "Current situation and prospects for co-operation in former Yugoslavia".

This conference, which was strictly private, brought together some forty personalities, approximately half of whom had come directly from Banja Luka, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Podgorica, Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje and Zagreb. The conference was chaired jointly by Thierry de Montbrial, Director of the IFRI, and Dragoljub Najman, member of the board of directors of our foundation, and provided a forum for the leading economists and political scientists of ex-Yugoslavia to exchange their points of view on a region which is currently seeing a cautious return to peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, whilst the threat to peace increases in Kosovo.

The debates are to remain confidential and I am therefore unable to comment on the contributions made by specific participants during the conference. I would, however, like to reiterate the four major topics on the agenda of this meeting and briefly summarise the conclusions.

1. The economic situation. The conflict plunged the states of former Yugoslav into a severe economic depression. It is possible that the resulting "balkanisation" process will continue, which will only exacerbate the situation. On the other hand, the development of real economic co-operation in the region would most likely allow seemingly insoluble problems to be resolved.
2. The political situation. This is characterised by the weakness of democratic institutions, an inclination towards ethnic division, infringements of personal freedoms, appalling treatment of minorities and a lack of respect for private property. The only means of making progress in this field is to establish political and economic democracy throughout the area of ex-Yugoslavia.
3. The national question. Nationalism is at the root of the major upheavals which have occurred in the region over the last five years. In order to combat this phenomenon it is absolutely essential to ensure that the existing borders are

respected, the peace agreements are implemented - particularly the Dayton Accords - and that peaceful means are used in order to resolve the inter-ethnic problems which have not yet been overcome (the Kosovo problem in particular).

4. Regional co-operation. In the same way that this was established between France and Germany following the Second World War, regional co-operation will certainly play a key role in the definitive reconciliation of the peoples in this area. But it will be necessary to proceed in a pragmatic manner and to begin by normalising political, economic and social relations within the states which resulted from the break-up of Yugoslavia.

As Chairman of the Foundation for Peace and Crises Management I would like to add some personal comments on this meeting, which I am convinced will one day be considered an important date in the process which restored peace to the Balkans.

- Whilst the Dayton Accords brought about the suspension of hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina they did not solve anything. Their implementation is capable of producing both the best and the worst - lasting peace or an ethnic division of ex-Yugoslavia giving rise to a succession of conflicts. Therefore, it is vital to supplement these agreements with provisions which will eliminate potential sources of confrontation.
- Foremost amongst these is political democracy. That is to say, establishment of the rule of law in states where, in spite of appearances, the arbitrary rule inherited from the communist era persists. The Balkans will only become stable at such time as each of the countries which form them accepts the verdict of universal suffrage, guarantees freedom of the press, respects individual and collective freedoms and ensures that the legislature and the judiciary are fully independent.
- The countries of former Yugoslavia cannot hope to enter the European Union as long as their relations with one another remain conflictive. The community of fifteen would admit them, but it is not prepared to arbitrate their disputes and, above all, it will not accept any breach of its governing principles. If the republics which resulted from the break-up of Yugoslavia wish to one day be fully fledged members of the Union they will have to accept all its rules, particularly democracy and the market economy, and provide firm evidence that they adhere to them unconditionally.

- This presupposes that normal trade flows are established between them as of now. The economists who participated at the 12 February meeting all observed that the war has not destroyed the Yugoslav economic area. They pointed out that if the barriers are lifted trade will return, bringing with it a thaw in political relations, which in turn would be the best guarantee for peace between the former belligerents. The example provided by Germany and France is there once again to demonstrate that the economy can rapidly create firm relations of confidence between arch enemies.
- Therefore, rather than seeking to build peace on the basis of a power struggle, where the international community would necessarily have to serve as guarantor by means of a permanent intervention force which would be both costly and ponderous, thought must now be given to the creation of a free trade area in the Balkans, which will one day give birth to a common market, itself the prelude to a political community. This plan was successfully experimented in western Europe immediately after the Second World War. There is no reason that it should not provide equally positive results in former Yugoslavia.

I am quite aware that it is presumptuous to sum up in a few lines the debates which filled a whole day, but I do not believe that I have been unfaithful to the ideas of the men and women who participated in this meeting in highlighting these different points. And I am happy that their convictions match ours, since for nearly five years we developed these same arguments in the face of general indifference and even hostility.

Assisted by the war, eyes are beginning to be opened not only in ex-Yugoslavia but also in Europe, in the United States and in Russia. Proof of this exists in the conclusions adopted by the Council of the European Union on the 28 and 29 October last year, all of which favour a pragmatic approach to the Yugoslav problem and, by coincidence or out of necessity, take up our own ideas.

From the outset we wrote here that peace would return to the Balkans at such time as political democracy was combined with economic democracy, as the trade and financial links suspended by the war were fully resumed, as the hundreds of thousands of men and women driven from their homes were able to return without fear to the place they had always lived, as the political and social structure of the Yugoslav republics was no longer based on ethnic divisions but on historical and cultural realities and, finally, at such time as the past served to shape the future rather than vice-versa.

The time is near when these obvious facts will acquire force of law and will impose themselves on all. That is the lesson that I have drawn from the ten hours of debate which took place one day in February 1997 in the heart of the French capital. Do I really need to add that I see this as the germ of a radical change in the quest for a definitive solution to the Yugoslav problem?

Boris Vukobrat

President

PRESENT-DAY SITUATION AND PROSPECTS FOR CO-OPERATION IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

The meeting was organised by IFRI and Peace and Crises Management Foundation
12 February 1997.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Jean-Jacques INDERMIIHLE, Former Ambassador of Switzerland

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Letters of the President

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Boris VUKOBRAT, Chairman, Peace and Crises Management Foundation
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Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Since our Foundation began actively participating in the quest for a solution which would bring an end to the tragedy brought upon the peoples of the Yugoslav successor states by their leaders, there have very rarely been occasions when I have been able to inform you of something good and encouraging, as is the case today

A delegation from the student movement which gained renown during the winter of 1996-1997 visited Paris from 28 April to 1 May upon the invitation of our Foundation. This visit can justifiably be remembered as a memorable occasion, as the delegation, comprising six students representing the movement which organised and led the protests, restored Serbia's real image.

It is for that reason that the names and activities of these young men and women who presented the image of a Serbia of the future in the French capital deserve to be noted: Miodrag Gavrilovic, President of the Student Federation, who was the person behind the four months of protests and chaired the initiative council; Dusan Vasiljevic, official spokesperson for the protest movement, who from the first day dared to openly criticise the regime which had demonstrated its lack of scruples by committing electoral theft, and confirmed this by shedding the blood of the people; Aleksa Grgurevic, the youngest of the students, who found the strength to organise and co-ordinate the action taken in the streets of Belgrade for four months, without any financial support, today's President of a new organisation which grew from the protests - Students' Initiative - which is prepared, if necessary, to immediately resume the battle; Nikola Stefanovic, who was among the leaders of the student protests in Nis, Serbia's second largest city which was known up until then as Mr. Milošević's stronghold; Aleksandra Molnar, leader of the student movement in Novi Sad, a city which did not suffer from large scale electoral theft, but whose students showed a high degree of conscientiousness and solidarity; Jelena Urosevic, spokesperson for the students of Kragujevac, a university center in the heart of Serbia.

In their own words it was an "honour and a pleasure" for the highest representatives of the French state and many figures from student, academic and political life to welcome these young people to Paris. The delegation, which showed the world

a side of Serbia which had thus far remained hidden, met with French youth representatives of the political parties and the student union movement. They talked with figures such as Mr. Denis Tillinac, Mrs. Daniele Mitterrand, Mr. Jack Lang, but also with the representatives of institutions such as the Senate - Mr. Maurice Schumann; the Economic and Social Council - Mr. Jean Mattéoli, its President; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the French Academy; the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights; the Courts - in the person of Mr. Louis Edmond Petiti, President of the Bar and Judge at the European Court of Human Rights; the University of Paris - Mrs. Gendrou-Massalou, its Director. Mrs Gendrou-Massalou accepted the students' invitation to come to Serbia just one week after their visit to Paris.

At all these meetings the students demonstrated great maturity and showed that they were aware of their responsibility. They drew the attention of those they met to the fact that it will be impossible to organise future democratic protests without them.

The symbolic as well as the political importance of the welcome extended to the Serbian students in Paris is considerable. This is reflected by the renown of the French figures who received the student delegation, but also in the message that they transmitted to them. Thus, Mr Rouillard pointed out to those he met that the very fact they were invited to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay was proof of France's attachment to the democratic youth of Serbia.

But in view of the current situation in their country the tangible results of this visit are just as important. Throughout their meetings, the students emphasised that the goals of their visit were, above all, the return of Serb student organisations, student and teacher exchanges, as well as access to foreign books, the development and the consolidation of freedom and autonomy for universities, the association of the students of Serbia in free organisations which are not submissive to the regime, preservation of the spirit of the protests, the establishment of democratic and legal standards in Serbian society - especially freedom of the media and fair electoral conditions, affirmation of the principles of the market economy, of the separation of powers, of respect of the Constitution, of human laws and rights and, finally, to change the negative image of Serb citizens in the world. They also drew attention to the fact the protests demonstrated that the people had turned their backs on Mr. Milošević, but did not have total confidence in the opposition either. Thus, the students have become a third, alternative force which implies a major responsibility, of which they are aware and which they are willing to assume. This approach has produced tangible results - not only are the contacts established being maintained, but it was decided that the French representatives

would visit Serbia in order to participate in conferences organised by the students. The Serb student representatives took part in the international student conference in Montpellier. Decisions were taken to arrange an exchange of students, teachers and books, to organise a course for students from Serbia in France and to establish a direct televised link between the students of Serbia and the European Court of Human Rights.

Future and hope are the two words that I have used most frequently in my letters, but also on many other occasions, as I have done my best to contribute to the search for a peaceful, fair and democratic solution to the crisis which has caused such upheaval in former Yugoslavia. Following the Serbian students' visit to Paris, I understood even better than beforehand to what extent these two words are right and, more importantly, realistic.

On a more personal note I would like to say that I am proud of what these young people have proved they are capable of doing. They have proven their ability to talk, to think and to act according to the principles of the democratic world. The same principles which we too work tirelessly to uphold. We heard these young people defending not only the same positions as ourselves, but also giving great thought to the noblest of ideas that form the foundations of democracy.

All of this encourages me to say in conclusion that the future and hope do exist, stronger than ever. Having heard everything that the media had to say about these students, we were able to see for ourselves, thanks to our meeting in Paris, that they are in fact even more deserving.

The success of this visit and its symbolic, though at the same time tangible and even political importance, encourage me to reiterate what I wrote at the start of this Letter - there have rarely been occasions when I have been able to talk positively about the situation in ex-Yugoslavia and that is sufficient reason to repeat the words which are of prime importance in such a situation - future and hope.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

One of the fundamental causes of the crisis and war in ex-Yugoslavia - and which could also be the cause of a new outbreak of hostilities - is the non-democratic nature of the regimes governing the ex-Yugoslavian States, particularly Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia and Bosnia. Dayton has shown us that only the concerted intervention of the international community could convince the leaders of these countries to act in accordance with the rules of democracy. Just as it allowed us to treat the symptoms, international pressure thus remains the key to eliminating the causes of the crisis. An important event is about to take place which could be a turning point - positive or negative - for the future development of ex-Yugoslavia. I am referring to the Serbian Presidential and legislative elections which are set for September 21, 1997.

The international community could play a key role in these elections by ensuring the legality of the electoral campaign and procedures and by making sure that the Albanians of Kosovo are present on the political scene. Their presence would favour the democratisation of Serbia as a whole and be a step towards finding a solution to the explosive problem in Kosovo.

Fair elections

Due in large part to discord and incompetence demonstrated by the leaders of the pro-democratic opposition parties, Slobodan Milošević's regime has been fortifying its structures and strengthening its position in the political area, but not in the social and economic one. Using the method of outvoting in the National Assembly, the regime has been able to impose electoral conditions which leave no chance for the pro-democratic opposition parties. Suffice it to say that the election committees are controlled by the same people who headed them during the municipal elections last year, in other words, by those who organised the electoral fraud that led to massive demonstrations for three months. Moreover, one of the most important electoral laws concerning constituencies was changed without the consent of the opposition parties and, of course, to the advantage of the regime in power. As for the media, the situation has hardly improved. The regime's propaganda continues to promote Slobodan Milošević's party while "diabolizing" the opposition. A large majority of the population is

kept in the dark and swamped with false or malicious information. The presence of OSCE observers would certainly help guarantee electoral procedures, but the question remains as to whether this would be enough to ensure truly democratic campaign and elections. Given the situation, the pro-democratic opposition comes across as confused and divided, with some parties saying they will present candidates and other saying they will boycott the elections altogether. However, if we wish to treat the causes and not merely the symptoms of the illness, the question of whether or not there will be a boycott is not of crucial importance. If there is a boycott, the regime will use satellite parties who will give it legitimacy; if, on the other hand, the real opposition parties - though they have no chance of winning - do participate under the present conditions, they will be the ones who will offer the regime this legitimacy. Whatever the case, progress will not have been made on the road to democracy. Therefore, what is crucial is to ensure fair, democratic, impartial conditions for all political parties and groups, to avoid a boycott, and to prepare and organise elections which will finally be a real - and not merely formal - step towards creating a democratic system in Serbia. This is the point which seems to have escaped outside observers and, in particular, judging by their public statements, those from the United States.

Elections in Kosovo

A particularly important factor in these elections - which are essential for solving the political crisis in Serbia and in ex-Yugoslavia - is the Kosovo issue. This is a problem which has not been resolved since it became public in the second half of the Eighties, and which over time has become more critical and more complex. As a consequence of the brutal violation of Kosovo's constitutional status, the situation of the region, which enjoyed real autonomy in the past, remains uncertain. Despite attempts to bring both sides - Serb and Albanian - to the table, along with political opponents, no discussions have been set up and each side refuses to budge from their irreconcilable positions. Our Foundation has tried several times in the last few years - the last time being at the beginning of this year - to set up political discussions without predetermined solutions or conclusions; yet, although both parties said they were willing in principle, and found our Foundation's intentions to be good, a meeting between representatives of both sides never materialised. Under the circumstances, the Albanians and their political parties have decided not to participate in the Serbian elections, convinced that they have nothing to gain from them. They believe they have no chance of being heard in the Serbian Parliament, nor do they expect to

be understood or supported by any party; rather, they believe that participating in these elections would only confer legitimacy on Serbia, whose regime has trampled on their constitutional rights and has shown no sign of changing their attitude. Albanians represent the majority of the population in this Serbian province which, today, is practically under police and military control. For this reason, they do not accept their political attachment to Serbia and the Yugoslav Federation; they want to be recognised as the independent Republic of Kosovo. In recent years, the Kosovo Albanians have set up a parallel government and refuse any connection with official State institutions and structures. Thus, they regularly boycott elections at all levels, local, Serbian or Yugoslav. The Albanian boycott, despite the fact that many of their arguments deserve consideration, has several negative consequences:

1. The Albanian population is becoming increasingly isolated from the State to which it belongs, in their strong desire for an independent State of their own, which leads directly to war.
2. The Serbian regime constantly uses it as an excuse for further repression.
3. The boycott furnishes an opportunity to extremists on all sides to radicalise the Kosovo issue.
4. It automatically means the election of candidates belonging to the party of the regime in power.

Thus, as a result of the new electoral law, Albanian abstention would offer this regime 42 of 250 seats in Parliament.

Treat the Causes, not the symptoms

The international community has decided to solve the Kosovo problem by stipulating respect of human rights and of the national rights of the truly oppressed Kosovo Albanians as a condition for the re-inclusion of Serbia in international institutions and for the lifting the "external wall" of sanctions. At the same time, it is clearly seeking a solution which would be found within the framework of the existing State and not through the secession of Kosovo. It is aware that attempts to alter the borders of ex-Yugoslavia led to the horrors of the Bosnian war and it knows that war in Kosovo could be even more terrible, with the danger of it spreading throughout the region to Albania, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. Treating the causes - the non-democratic nature of the regime in Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia - is not possible as long as the Kosovo issue remains unresolved. For this reason, if fair and democratic conditions can be

guaranteed, it is very important that the Albanians and their parties participate in the upcoming elections in Serbia, and win their 42 seats in the Serbian Parliament. This would be a step towards the democratisation of Serbia and towards a solution to the Kosovo problem. It would thus create the opportunity to open up necessary discussions on the political and constitutional status of the region. Let us hope that awareness of this necessity will prevail in official, Albanian, and pro-democratic Serbian opposition circles, as well as in the international community which should put all its efforts into treating the causes, so as not to have to dress horrible and incurable wounds or start counting casualties once again.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*A*t a two week interval I had the opportunity to present our Foundation's ideas on the definitive settlement of the crisis in ex-Yugoslavia to the highest political authorities in Washington and in Moscow

The high level of responsibility held by the figures I met with on these two occasions and the quality of their ideas makes my duty to inform you in detail about the talks I had with them. At a time when the major powers are finally becoming aware of the limitations of their action and that it is impossible for them to preserve peace on a lasting basis in the Balkans, the need for new approaches appears greater than ever. The close attention and understanding with which my remarks were met are proof to me that there has been a real development in the approach of the major powers to the problem of former Yugoslavia.

Eleven key points

My discussions in both the United States and Russia dwelt on the following thoughts and proposals:

1. The political situation in the countries of former Yugoslavia, with the possible exception of Slovenia, is characterised by an absence of hope for the present and vision for the future. This applies to the peoples of the region as well as their governments.
2. The sole aim of those who currently hold power in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia is to remain holding onto it at all costs. The result is resurgence in ultra-nationalism throughout ex-Yugoslavia and a return of the tensions which marked the years 1991-92-93.
3. The opposition parties, of which there are many, do not constitute an acceptable alternative in any of the republics of ex-Yugoslavia. They are, in fact, undermined by internal quarrels which render them incapable of acting effectively against the powers in place, which in turn shamelessly exploit their divisions.
4. The Dayton Agreements led to a suspension of hostilities in Bosnia, but have not restored peace to the Balkans. This region is slowly but surely moving to-

wards a Cypriot type solution, where the communities will live separated by international forces which will have to be kept in place permanently.

5. The main defect of the Dayton Agreements, as our Foundation has continued to reiterate since their signature, was to reinforce the borders which endorse the ethnic division of Bosnia, rather than guaranteeing the protection of the borders recognised by the international community. This prohibits the establishment of lasting peace in the region.
6. This is made all the more obvious by the constant flow of weapons into ex-Yugoslavia. Whilst efforts are under way to gather up and destroy obsolete weapons, the conflicting parties are being supplied with ultra-modern weapons, which only create the conditions for new confrontations.
7. Peace can only result from the restoration of Bosnia's previous territorial integrity, the return of refugees to the towns and villages from which they were driven by the war and the establishment of real economic co-operation between Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and even Slovenia.
8. This peace remains inconceivable as long as the Bosnian, Croat and Serb leaders who caused and conducted the war in ex-Yugoslavia remain in place. The American Secretary of State Madeleine Albright recently realised for herself during a visit to the Balkans that the aim of these leaders is not to create the conditions among themselves for a peaceful coexistence but to simply remain in power by all possible means.
9. Western governments are placing the emphasis on stability in the Balkans and in pursuing this goal are strengthening the position of the Bosnian, Croat and Serb leaders. Yet, it is only the advent of true democracies in the republics of ex-Yugoslavia that will create the conditions for lasting stability. Since the current leaders do not wish to establish democracy in their respective republics the calculation of the western countries is bound to prove wrong.
10. Our Foundation underscores the fact that there cannot be peace and lasting stability in ex-Yugoslavia if the following principles are not established and respected by those in power: the rule of law, a multiparty system, free elections, freedom of the media, respect of human rights and the creation of a market economy.
11. We point out that when the world's democracies accept a departure from these principles in the hope of stabilising a conflict situation, they are creat-

ing favourable conditions for new conflicts. The principles of democracy are not negotiable, in the Balkans as much as in the other regions of the world.

An approval in principle

These different points were discussed one after the other and generally met the approval of the people I spoke with, in spite of their seemingly divergent approaches and interests. At the beginning of the conflict which bathed the Balkans in blood our ideas were perceived as utopian, even by those with a benevolent attitude. In the course of my recent visits to Washington and Moscow, however, it became clear that the leaders of America and Russia now consider them as a reasonable approach to resolving this crisis which is threatening the stability of south-eastern Europe.

Another important point to which I drew the attention of those I met is the futility of efforts devoted to persuading the Bosnian, Croat and Serb leaders to grant their peoples the freedom and democracy to which they aspire. As long as those in power cannot be circumvented, it is vain to base the quest for democracy and freedom of the media on those very persons who have built their power on autocracy and war. Unfortunately, certain recent events lead me to conclude that the "realpolitik" which has already caused so much damage in the recent past as well as in the course of history is still very much present, and that the major powers are once again short of ideas as to how to achieve real progress in the democratisation which former Yugoslavia so desperately needs.

On the other hand, I had the impression that all the political figures I met in Moscow and Washington are slowly but surely becoming aware of the important role that the Kosovo Albanians (20% of the population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) could play in the overall settlement of the crisis, if they participate in the parliamentary and Presidential elections which are scheduled for the autumn in Serbia. I presented detailed reasoning on this point in my last Chairman's Letter.

Thirdly, I highlighted, once again, the importance of stronger action to be taken by the international community with respect to freedom of the media. One must never forget the harmful role played by the media in the lead up to the tragedy in ex-Yugoslavia. The harsh truth of the matter is that even before the first victims in ex-Yugoslavia were struck down by bullets, they had been killed ten times over by the pen of a journalist. In order to confront this phenomenon more must be done than banishing the extremist media and closing down their relay stations. Positive action must be taken in order to support the independent media which

survive as best they can under the yoke of authoritarian regimes and to focus more attention on this issue in the free media of the western world.

In a temporary conclusion, I can say that in the course of July 1997 I became convinced that both Russians and Americans are more determined than ever to reach a lasting settlement of this crisis. Whilst not exaggerating the influence of our Foundation, this gives me hope that through the efforts we have exerted over the last five years we have played a certain role in this new awareness.

Do I need to add that this strengthens our determination to continue along the path that we chose at the outset of the hostilities in former Yugoslavia.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The recently elected President of the Republic of Serbia, who previously served as the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Milan Milutinovic, is a close associate of the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević. Mr. Milutinović's final victory, coming after months of electoral confusion, raises thoughts about the international position of Serbia and Yugoslavia today and in the near future. I therefore thought it might be useful to send you a translation of an article I wrote on this subject for the renowned Belgrade daily, "Naša Borba", which appeared in its Sunday supplement on 27-28 December 1997.

Since then, the European Union has terminated the favourable terms of trade it had accorded Belgrade, thus confirming my analysis of the situation in the article entitled:

DESTRUCTION FROM THE INSIDE

"Never before have Serbia and Yugoslavia been in a worse international position, not even during the period of very severe sanctions. And I mention only in passing the distress caused by this terrible international position, especially for those living outside of their country - former or present-day Yugoslavia - and who remember the prestige their country once enjoyed throughout the world. Back then, they were proud to be Yugoslav; now, though they may not regret their personal choices, they are forced to agree with those who begin every conversation with unpleasant questions and remarks. More important than these feelings, however, is the deterioration of everyday life in Yugoslavia as a direct result of this grievous position, the worst any country can be in today. Yet, rare are those who understand the gravity of the situation; what seems to prevail is the delusion that the worst is over and that it is only a matter of time before the exterior wall of sanctions is abolished.

On the contrary, this wall will remain up until the international community's stipulated conditions are met; there is, moreover, a very real danger that even tighter sanctions will be introduced. Many seem to have forgotten that the Dayton Accords specifically call for the reinstatement of sanctions if all the conditions agreed upon are not fully satisfied.

Thus far, the international community, following the lead of the United States, has not yet resorted to the extreme measures mainly on account of the so-called reasons of "political realism". But these reasons are constantly changing and will soon be cause for bringing back the sanctions and their disastrous effects if official policy in Belgrade does not change.

During the uncertain pre-electoral period, the international community, though somewhat concerned about the possibility of Vojislav Seselj's coming to power, was convinced that the present regime in Belgrade would be able to do what it had promised. It thus put off taking measures. But now that the reason for putting them off no longer exists, we can expect greater pressure to be exerted on Belgrade to fulfil the conditions necessary for Yugoslavia's reintegration into international, political, financial and other institutions.

Belgrade, however, does not seem at all willing to submit to these demands. The Yugoslav leaders, as they have done countless times before, insist on making things worse with a senseless and unnecessary show of obstinacy: this can be seen in the way they handled the Kosovo situation as well as in their leaving the Bonn Conference. In the end, when the international community sees that offering Belgrade the proverbial "carrot" is getting them nowhere, they will be forced to resort to the persuasion of the "stick". This prediction is well-grounded and the reasons are clear. Let us not forget that after much irresolution, the major powers finally succeeded in setting up the "Contact Group" and bringing the Balkan leaders to sign the peace agreement. And there is no doubt that the international community wants peace in the region, primarily to protect its own interests. Thus, in order to prevent the outbreak of a new crisis, they will do everything necessary to make all parties, and especially Belgrade, do what they demand.

We are all aware of what still needs to be done. The Dayton Accords must be implemented down to every last point. Certainly, there was some initial ambiguity in their proclamation of a homogeneous Bosnia which was then divided into two distinct entities. With time, however, we have realized that the international community has no intention of considering these entities as the basis for a future division; they simply serve to indicate the political aspirations and equal rights of all the peoples of Bosnia and their representatives. In other words, Bosnia will not be partitioned and the dreams of those who sought to do so will remain just that: dreams which are turning into nightmares for those who rave for the whole world to hear. The terms of the Dayton Accords require that all war criminals be extradited to the International Tribunal in The Hague: this is a certainty, and the only uncertainty is how the accused will be

brought there. This applies to the Serb "warlords" in Bosnia as well as to those in Yugoslavia. They will be extradited through agreements reached with national authorities, through the intervention of NATO forces in Bosnia or, for the criminals who have taken refuge on this side of the river Drina, through economic sanctions against Belgrade.

The next issue concerns Kosovo, a problem which poses the biggest threat to peace not only in Serbia and Yugoslavia, but in the Balkan region as a whole. Any outbreak of fighting in Kosovo would automatically involve Albania and Macedonia, followed inevitably by Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece. This would mean a conflict between countries belonging to NATO and those in the Partnership for Peace, something the international community could not allow happening under any circumstances.

The obstinacy of the Serb party in the negotiations on succession issues is such that even Sir Arthur Watts, a man of typically British composure, finally lost his patience and had to remind the participants that negotiating is not the same as haggling in a souk. International leaders are becoming even more impatient: Gonzalez's proposals are aimed at nothing less than establishing a truly democratic system, and President Clinton's decision to prolong the sanctions, while insisting that Milo Djukanovic's electoral victory be recognised, is additional proof that events in Yugoslavia are being watched. This shows us that the world is determined to make sure its demands are fulfilled. The refusal of a leader to recognise the electoral defeat of his protégé is contrary to democratic principles; and thus, the case of Montenegro is but one more illustration of the anti-democratic stance of the Belgrade regime.

Before going into the disastrous consequences of Belgrade's refusal to comply with the international community's demands, I would like to point out that these demands are actually in the interest of Yugoslavia itself. Even if the international community did not ask us to respect all the conditions which must be fulfilled, even if they did not threaten to ruin us by letting us face a total economic disaster for failing to comply with their demands, even if we were not threatened by sanctions and if our economy was not at a standstill as it is now, we should do what is being asked of us for our own sake. A homogeneous, multi-ethnic Bosnia, where the Serbs and all other peoples cooperate harmoniously among themselves and with their neighbours is in the interest of everyone, of the Bosnians as well as of the Serbian people and their mother-country. Moreover, extraditing those accused of war crimes to the Tribunal in The Hague would help to free the nation of its collective guilt.

The problem of Kosovo calls for a political solution, and this is of vital importance for the region itself as well as for its inhabitants. The delay in finding and applying this so-

lution will only result in greater numbers of victims and a critical separation between Kosovo and Serbia- Yugoslavia.

The establishment of a democratic system by and within the State, both politically and economically, is by nature the only way life can get back to normal. And even if this were not so, the conditions laid down by the international community should be respected. Moreover, even if we were to believe that tougher sanctions would not be imposed, the existing exterior wall of sanctions would be enough to destroy us. Certainly, our athletes compete internationally, we can take a plane from Surcin airport and travel around Europe, we have access to imported consumer goods and so we probably feel that the situation is nearly back to normal; yet, none of these things can do much for an economy that has already reached rock bottom.

Without boosting productivity, without capital, there cannot and will not be any money, whether for athletes, travelling or, more importantly, for importing products needed for bare survival: oil, gas, or consumer goods. Poverty will thus continue to grow. The only way to end this vicious cycle is to boost production, but this is impossible without an injection of capital. However, we have no access to the only sources of capital - foreign loans and investment - for they lie outside that exterior wall of sanctions which, according to our state officials, is practically non-existent. One of the many disastrous consequences of the self-induced international isolation of Serbia and the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), though it may not be obvious at first, is the fact that other countries are moving into markets which will later become impermeable. Western capital and industries produce goods ranging from minor products such as toothpaste to strategically important products. Manufacturers of these goods have already linked up with partners in the East European market, and there are few who have not already signed agreements with companies in the Czech Republic, in Poland, Hungary, Croatia or elsewhere. The international position of Serbia and the FRY has thus never been worse, not even during the period of very severe sanctions, for domestic reserves have since been exhausted. Public opinion is obviously not aware of this disaster, otherwise it would find a way to make itself heard.

Equally disturbing is the fact that the regime in power is either unable or unwilling to grasp this situation, otherwise it would stop acting against its own interests. Since we know through experience that this regime only worries about the personal interests of the ruling oligarchy, that is, about its survival, we must conclude that this regime is working towards its own downfall: society and the State are being destroyed from the inside; social unrest, discontent in the army, among the police, among doctors, teachers, workers, old-age pensioners, students, and minority groups - in short, among eve-

ryone - is growing and will continue to grow until serious conflicts of one kind or another break out. Such a situation can only lead to the imposition of extreme measures and the use of violence.

Time is running out. This regime needs to understand that it ought to do what is demanded of it in its own interest, that this is the only way to save not only its citizens and their State, but itself. And finally, it should understand that this is the only way it can remain in power for a little while longer, or at least survive in a world of democratic political competition."

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

As days, months and years have passed, the positions I have taken in my letters and that I have defended both personally and as part of our Foundation's work since 1992 have proved to be well-founded and to constitute a real alternative to the prevailing situation in Yugoslavia. Recently, however, I received a somewhat critical letter from an old friend, in which certain questions, doubts and even reservations were expressed with regard to our positions. This letter prompted me to re-examine some of the underlying principles of our action and consider them in light of the everyday reality. I have concluded - and I cannot hide the satisfaction this gives me - that what we have been defending from the outset is perfectly justified.

In his letter my friend levels a certain number of criticisms and I think it is thus best to take each one in turn and try to respond to it.

Co-operation rather than conflict

Firstly, the author of these criticisms disputes the point that the break-up of former Yugoslavia was an error and considers that this should be recognised as a reality. "The break-up of former Yugoslavia, he writes, was the result of the objective socio-political situation existent in this community and any attempt at 'in integrum' reconstitution must be deemed unrealistic."

To which I would answer firstly that neither I nor our Foundation have ever challenged the right of peoples to self-determination or questioned the reality of the newly created states. On the contrary, from the very beginning we have advocated mutual recognition and at a time when this position was seen by some of these states as a very serious blow to their sovereignty and by others as high treason.

Secondly, we have never suggested creating a new Yugoslavia on the territory of the former one and have never promoted the reunification of the states resulting from its dissolution. What our Foundation proposed, and still considers as the best solution, is the establishment of close relations between the former Yugoslav republics, which would guarantee co-operation and allow conflicts of interest to be overcome. Thus we propose the creation of an association, an organisation or a union - and not a state - which would enable each country to establish links

with the others pursuant to its own interests. To put it more simply, we suggest that the states resulting from the dissolution of former Yugoslavia work together as the European powers have done since the end of the Second World War, progressing from the Coal and Steel Agreement to the European Union, and resolving common problems or conflicts of interest through agreements and co-operation, thereby avoiding confrontation and hostilities.

I also consider that working together in this manner is essential in view of the fact that certain regimes, resulting from the decomposition of ex-Yugoslavia, are doing their utmost to prevent just that. They no doubt fear it will ultimately weaken their hold over the peoples they govern. Hence, the new Croatian constitution contains an insane piece of wording (Article 17 of the Official Gazette) which has not provoked the slightest protest from Europe, the United States or any other democracy:

"It is forbidden to launch any procedure aimed at creation of an association between the Republic of Croatia and other states by means of an alliance, where this association would result, or could result, in the re-establishment of a common Yugoslav state structure, or any kind of Balkan state formation whatsoever."

We would like it to be known to all that the development in the Balkans of a community of free nations is precisely what we are striving to achieve - linked to one another through close co-operation and adhering to the principles of democracy that the other countries of Europe have imposed upon themselves.

"The desire of those who govern the former Yugoslav republics to perpetuate their power is perfectly legitimate", our critic continues, stating that "in all the former Yugoslav republics democracy has advanced to such an extent that if they had really wanted to, their peoples would already have rid themselves of their autocrats".

Clearly, one cannot dispute that the desire of those wishing to remain in power is legitimate. However, what is disputable to differing degrees in the former Yugoslav republics is the methods used to achieve this end, and it is precisely these methods that we question. They range from control and manipulation of the media, to the control that the parties in power exert over state institutions - including the army, the police and the most important companies - and even extend to provocation and war, all in order to maintain a hold on power. The most striking example of what may be done to retain power is probably the current Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, although the situation in the other former Yugoslav republics is not necessarily better, since neither three months of protests in Serbia, which were viewed favourably by Europe, nor the elections in Montenegro, which

placed a new team in power, were enough for "the people to rid themselves of the autocrats". This is simply because these autocrats are using every possible means of manipulation and constraint to prevent any alternation in power.

The integrity of Bosnia

"I am not certain that maintaining the territorial integrity of Bosnia is the best solution. When people do not wish to live together, any attempt to impose a common existence upon them inevitably produces negative results. That is why I increasingly share your criticism of the Dayton Agreements, but for reasons contrary to yours", writes my correspondent, implying that the said Dayton Agreements have not guaranteed Bosnia's integrity.

I would gladly agree with him if it were not for the fact that he is confusing cause and consequence. It is not in fact true that the Bosnians (the Muslim Bosnians as well as the Bosnian Serbs and Croats) do not wish to live together, and even less true that they are unable to do so. Even during the war, the most horrific scenes of terror alternated with mutual assistance, or even sacrifice for others, at a time when the slightest demonstration of compassion towards anyone belonging to another nation or religion was more dangerous than committing the worst crime. In reality, the war was not conducted by the peoples of Bosnia. They were forced to fight by their respective leaders, who used the media to provoke fear, hatred and the need for revenge. This fear and hatred never existed of their own volition, and although they surfaced at times over the centuries, they were always artificially induced. Once this foolishness had passed, the country always returned to a harmonious existence, not in spite of the differences, but thanks to them and thanks to the characteristics that the peoples shared. Any attempts to tear Bosnia apart, to divide, it, have led in reality to devastation, suffering and death, as has recently been the case.

The idea of dividing Bosnia is indeed a consequence of the desire of the oligarchies of the three Bosnian peoples to maintain their hold on power, a desire which runs counter to the interests and the desires of the men and women of Bosnia, of its three peoples and three religions. On the other hand, the desire to safeguard the integrity of Bosnia is not only the result of an abstract feeling of justice, nor even of pure nostalgia, it is also a political necessity, for at least three reasons:

- The first is that only a unified Bosnia can prevent the recognition and legitimisation of ethnic cleansing, which, once established as a principle, could have dramatic consequences at an international level.

- Secondly, only a unified Bosnia will enable the refugees to return to their homes.
- Thirdly, in the event of division, a new conflict would be inevitable, as rather than disarming, the three parties in Bosnia are continuing to amass weaponry.

"The 'cyprusisation' of Bosnia reflects the political reality", states our critic with regard to the return of refugees, adding that even more rigid borders than the existing ones would have to be drawn between the ethnic communities if all refugees were to return to their homes.

Not only is this position inhumane, it is also based on a mistaken premise. Whatever the political reality may be, it is never unchanging. In fact the contrary is true. Any political reality is the reflection of a particular moment in time. Allowing the "cyprusisation", that is to say the division of Bosnia, preventing the return of its refugees to their homes or making them understand the "absurdity of their claims" - for it is in those terms that our critic considers the idea of a return of refugees - would be an endorsement of the current situation in ex-Yugoslavia. Yet it is precisely that "reality" which was at the origin of the war and which must therefore be changed. It is this change that I am striving to achieve through the work of our Foundation.

The transformation of the political reality, the structuring of the societies and states according to democratic principles, respect for human rights and the rights of national minorities, the market economy, freedom of the media, the creation of societies and states with open boundaries which are willing to co-operate and intermingle and are endowed with replaceable and responsible power structures, establishment of the rule of law, participation in global trends, the principles of regionalisation and integration, the creation of societies where everything is subordinate to the interests of the individual and not power - these are the values that I uphold. The fact that the daily reality does not correspond to this vision is all the more reason to step up the action that we have undertaken to promote change.

I also note that the appeals we voiced from the beginning of the conflict, which advocated these values but did not meet with a response, have ultimately gained support from the international community. Today, in the former Yugoslav republics there is an increasing number of individuals, institutions and organisations whose approach to peace is based on the very principles that form the pillars of our Foundation's activities.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The realization of the wish of the contemporary world to have all its segments living in a way which entails the highest standards achieved, with respect to Serbia and the contemporary Yugoslavia, is getting ever less attainable.

People in this country will soon be deprived of all important information from the world, and from local political, economic, and the overall social life. Despite the attempts of the democratic public segments and of a considerable number of media professionals and public figures to path the way for free information and for expressing different opinions and attitudes, the informational dark can soon become absolute if some steps are not taken quickly.

The latest Public Information Act, passed by The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, marked a new wave of repression against the independent media. Before this Act, the Government of Serbia had passed a decree by which it defined how the media should act, and this was justified by the immediate threat from NATO air raids. Pursuant to the Decree, the first step was shutting down the editorial offices of the following daily papers: "Nasa Borba", "Danas" and "Dnevni Telegraph". The electronic media did not fare any better. After a long-lasting uproar against the local and the independent TV stations, the following radio and TV stations were prohibited to work: TV Pirot, the "City" Radio in Nis, the Senta Radio and the "Index" Radio. In other words, the regime has taken advantage of the present situation to settle the final accounts with those of different opinions. The genuineness of this statement is confirmed by the previously passed Act on University, whereby the autonomy of this educational institution was utterly suppressed. The intellectual elite was put under such circumstances that are not only inconvenient for scientific and educational work, but also suppressive to all creativity and initiative. Many renowned University teachers and scientific researchers were deprived of all possibilities of professional work and, furthermore, of earning a living.

The repression against the media and against all that criticize the current establishment, has been taking place for years. That began when, left without any solution for numerous political, economic, development and other issues, the authorities started enkindling the sense of being endangered within their own people, which effected a destructive wave of nationalism. Firstly, that wave blew away about a thousand and five hundred employees from one of the provincial TV centers,

TV Pristina. The dismissed were, needless to say, exclusively Albanians, who were proclaimed enemies only because of their national provenance. The regime then continued to settle accounts with the Serbs of different attitudes and the target groups always comprised the journalists of non-Serbian nationality. In 1992, Vojislav Seselj went public with the names of approximately thirty journalists of The Serbian Broadcasting Corporation, whom he defined as intruders in the national TV Company, and most of them were of Croatian, Moslem, Macedonian, and other nationalities. In January 1993, among a 1.100 people who were dismissed from The Serbian Broadcasting Corporation, there were all the journalists from Seselj's list and at the same time, all the members of the newly formed trade union "The Independence".

Tens of journalists were compelled to stop doing their job in the Novi Sad TV, charged with the autonomist affiliations, and the same number of people were made to stop working in the "Politika" daily and in other publications of this company, in Tanjug national agency, and in other editorial staff directly controlled by the authorities.

That the regime will relinquish persecuting the independent media, which worked under much more difficult circumstances, has been proved to be a mere delusion, many times. Having "purified" all directly controlled editorial staffs from the "turn-coats"; the ruling oligarchy carried on their most repressive methods: prohibitions, court trials, hectoring, confiscating property, draconian fines, preventing the distribution of the papers. By these methods, the further work of the disobedient papers was made impossible.

The aim of such measures is obvious: no different opinion can reach the public. Pressed by the Kosovo issue, the regime does not want the public to know any true fact about their actions, which may be discerned by many as directed against their own people's interests. The ruling regime simply does not know how to surmount the moment of possible activation of the Kosovo electorate, which will certainly not be inclined to them. That, along with the increasing dissatisfaction with the ruling structures, can be the decisive moment for the fall of the present authorities.

The latest Informing Act has, in terms of civilization, placed Serbia further away from Europe and from the modern world. Neither was the previous Act, and the whole corpus of acts that settles the acting of the media, on an envious level, and they were not compatible with the democratic achievements of the most progressive communicological models.

So far, there has also been a legislative confusion and a contradiction of the effective acts, which the authorities have used at any conveniences: to support the media of an apologetic attitude towards them, and to make the work of those with different or critical opinions difficult, or even impossible. At the moment, the work of the journalists and of their editorial staffs is impossible already, because any free or critical opinion is threatened with an 800.000 dinar- fine, which is four hundred times more than an average salary of a journalist.

The people who struggled for free and autonomous journalism are made to have auto-censorship prevailing in their work, or to withdraw from working and thus endanger the already difficult way of earning a living for their families. That the latest Act is not a mere menace, prove two fines pronounced only two days after the Act was passed. The editors and the journalists of the "Evropljanin" journal were fined to two highest sums so far-800.000 dinars respectively, and two 400.000 dinar-sums respectively, which makes all of two million four hundred thousand dinar- fine to one editorial only.

The people of democratic principles need no explanation of what the consequences of such a state of affairs may be. The possibility of an absolute media-manipulation and the lack of true information deprives people of a basic human right, and, what is more, decreases the chances of any progress in civilization. Thus, the goals of the darkest minds from the most influential political spheres of the today Serbia will be achieved: the complete closure, the isolation from the world, and the possibility of settling accounts with the so called "enemies", "traitors", and "mercenaries", in their own way. However, evil cannot be isolated. This Serbia could generate further conflicts, not only on her own territory, but also in the Balkans and in the whole

Europe. The latest measures taken by the Serbian authorities additionally prove the real character of the regime of Slobodan Milošević and his wife Mirjana Markovic.

It is good that the democratic world reacts sensibly to the latest repression against the Serbian media. Those voices, and the beneficially of the international protagonists, however, must be expressed more strongly. There are a lot of voices, but the world is one and only.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*T*he period of armed conflict in Yugoslavia is now over.

We hope this will be a lasting peace, for it marks the end of the tragic, ten-year cycle of crisis that resulted in the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, the loss of countless human lives and unimaginable material damage.

The last in the series of armed conflicts that tore the Balkans apart - the two and a half months of punishment inflicted upon the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for its years of misguided policy - has done nothing to improve the situation in the region. On the contrary, it has created new tragedies with their aftermath of death, refugees and destruction. NATO bombings have resulted in ethnic homogenisation and, initially at least, even greater support for the regime.

The Peace and Crises Management Foundation highlighted the inevitability of such an outcome in its public analyses and appeals long before NATO action began. May I remind you in particular of remarks made in the Letter from the President dated October 1998 concerning the planned NATO intervention:

“Even though it is clear that the unreasonable policy of the Serbian and Yugoslav regime must be condemned and punished in a suitable way, the use of NATO military force for the purpose of bombing targets in Yugoslav territory would come to no good. It would be counterproductive because, in addition to killing many innocent people, which is certain to happen, it would only intensify the nationalist homogenisation of the people, and increase their feeling of animosity towards the international community, something that hardly needs to be pointed out to anyone familiar with the situation and the predominant mentality in Serbia. At the same time, those who have been opposing the pernicious policy of the regime would be subjected to even greater pressure, even persecution. It is difficult to envisage what the next move of world diplomacy might be under such circumstances, while the possibility of continuing local Serb-Albanian dialogue would become highly uncertain.”

Our fear that the use of force would have no positive consequences and would significantly reduce the scope needed for action by democratic forces and civil society has proved exact. Our years of effort aimed at demonstrating how the

Kosovo question must be addressed within the global framework of the Balkan region, through a democratic process and, of course, without modifying existing borders, regrettably failed to receive the support we had hoped for.

Late last year, when analysing the possibilities for solving the Kosovo crisis, I wrote:

“All the proposals for resolving the crisis that are based on the principle of home rule in Kosovo, along with legislative, judicial and police autonomy, which would in no way endanger the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, should be considered reasonable. I also believe that the introduction of a transitional and temporary solution, as an interim phase, should facilitate efforts aimed at providing a political solution to confrontations in Kosovo and open up the possibility of finding a lasting solution once the necessary preconditions are created. This interim phase includes the presence of an international force to maintain peace but also oversee political activity during the period in question.”

We must now help put Yugoslavia once and for all on the road to democracy and renewal. The world must recognise that it has a role to play in restoring living conditions which international action has significantly undermined. Of course, much remains to be done in Yugoslavia itself. The main priority, however, is a policy of openness, tolerance, improvement of inter-ethnic relations and freedom of the media and political activity that will lead to the creation of a genuine and effective parliamentary system. Individuals and groups who have nothing to reproach themselves and who are still abreast of the situation must speak out publicly, with greater courage and firmness. They must take action within political parties, independent organisations or even individually. Non-governmental organisations, which bring together personalities capable of expressing all the interests and needs of civil society, can become a driving force for the changes that must now take place. These institutions must be given all possible support, both within the country and by the international community.

In my Letter From The President dated August 1997 I made the following observations with respect to Kosovo and our thoughts on the democratisation of Serbia: “The international community has decided to solve the problem of Kosovo by making the return of Serbia to international institutions and the lifting of sanctions dependent upon the recognition and respect of human rights and national minorities in Kosovo, both of which are seriously endangered. It is not possible to deal with the causes, i.e. the non-democratic character of the regime in Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, without first resolving the problem of Kosovo.”

The return of peace in accordance with the demands and recommendations of the international community, and the deployment of international forces to control and maintain the peace process at last provide the preconditions required to tackle the problem from a different angle: incite and encourage underlying tendencies towards an open, civil society and thus provide the support needed by those groups and individuals who genuinely aspire to democracy.

And so we invite all those who have the necessary power to contribute, by whatever means possible, to the recovery of Yugoslavia. Sanctions and embargoes have so far proved ineffective, as our Foundation had warned. Accepting the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in international organisations and institutions would be the best possible means of encouraging democratisation and would allow all forms of potential, in particular human potential, to fully develop. This is, without a shadow of a doubt, the surest way for the country to become part of the international community and cease once and for all to be an element of instability.

Talk of projects for renewal and reconstruction can be heard in various quarters, from the Stability Pact to new integrations, each with the aim of democratising and modernising the Balkans. From a very early stage, in particular in late June 1993, at the height of the Bosnian war, our Foundation was already suggesting what now forms the basis of the different projects and proposals. Indeed, both at that time and on several later occasions we emphasised that a regional structure was the natural framework for political, economic and social life in that part of the world. We can but congratulate ourselves on the adoption of this idea by the most influential circles of world opinion.

Our Foundation resolutely supports the demands of democratic political parties, numerous independent organisations, independent unions and the Serb Orthodox Church, as well as many other institutions, personalities and ordinary citizens, for the resignation of Slobodan Milošević. Indeed, there can be no true democratisation or development within the region as long as Serbia has not broken free of the sinister political regime personified by its President. We therefore believe the idea of a transitional government of experts, formed by those who have not taken part in the crimes and criminalisation of society, is the only possible means of bringing this ten-year nightmare to an end.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Three months have elapsed since hostilities in the Yugoslav federation came to an end, NATO ceased bombing Kosovo and Serbia, and peace came into its own again - at least on the face of it - in this part of the Balkans; three months of efforts by the United Nations to resolve the innumerable problems spawned by the fratricidal war between the opposing factions and to effect a reconciliation between communities that had taken up arms against each other.

How can NATO's intervention be assessed after a hundred days, and what consequences will it inevitably have in the near future?

It is impossible to answer this twofold question without first recalling the objectives laid down by NATO when it decided to resort to armed force in order to put an end to Serbian abuses in Kosovo, namely: to protect the region's Albanians, destabilise the regime of Slobodan Milošević, and bring peace back to the Balkans.

A Negative Balance Overall

Having examined the situation carefully, we cannot but conclude that the results in evidence after the three-month air intervention are the exact opposite of what was initially intended.

- With regard to Kosovo, first of all, it has to be recognised that NATO's intervention failed to protect the region's Albanians; indeed, after 24 March they were exposed first to the terror of the Serbian army or militias and then to the horrors of air strikes by the Alliance's bombers. Never before had they suffered as much.

Kosovo's Serbs and the region's non-Albanian population in general have been the victims of systematic ethnic cleansing carried out under the indifferent, not to say accommodating, gaze of the KFOR. This completely rules out - at least for the time being - the possibility of building a multi-ethnic Kosovo.

- In Serbia itself, Slobodan Milošević obviously has not been destabilised by NATO's intervention. He not only remains in power but has managed to split up and marginalise the opposition once more, seizing the opportunity to pose yet again as the champion of Serbian unity and independence.

He has been all the more successful in this endeavour as the first decisions of the United Nations administrator in Kosovo (introduction of the Deutschmark as official currency, transformation of the KLA into a police, selective application of the UN Security Council's Resolution 1244) have actually strengthened his position in Serbia proper.

It should be further noted that the KFOR is obviously condemned to remain in Kosovo for several years. On the one hand, no Serbian government can renounce Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo; on the other, with the passage of time Albanian desire for independence, or even for building a "Greater Albania", can only grow; finally, the most extreme elements of the KLA will inevitably become increasingly aggressive.

To crown it all, the domestic position of Slobodan Milošević has been significantly strengthened by the international sanctions, which have in no way bothered the Serbian nomenclature; the population, on the other hand, has been hit very hard. These measures have only increased the State's stranglehold over the economy and given a boost to the black market, i.e., to crime. They have also allowed the Serbian authorities to block all evolution towards a liberal economy.

- If we look at the Balkans in general, we find that NATO's armed intervention has ultimately left the region more unstable than ever. Montenegro, Macedonia, Vojvodina, Romania or Bulgaria - the Balkan crisis has now affected all these States, which had hitherto been spared. Albania is now even more unbalanced on the domestic plane than before NATO's air strikes. The Danubian countries have been heavily penalised by the interruption of traffic on the river. Finally, hard drugs from Kosovo - in the first place heroin - are flooding the European Union.

What are the options now?

If the international community's objective is to remove Slobodan Milošević, as NATO's highest-ranking officials have repeated again and again and in every possible way over the past six months, it seems to us essential that the following steps be taken with no further delay:

1. Cease to support the nationalist opposition in Serbia in the hope that it will eventually take over, but, on the other hand, extend staunch support to independent trade unions, non-governmental organisations, and political groups that have not been discredited by collaboration with the regime or the nationalist parties. In other words, rely on the elements of civil society and support

the platform drafted with the participation of our Foundation and recently adopted by a number of Serbian organisations as their programme.

2. Step up pressure against members of the current Serbian power élite and their families by all available means: visas and travel documents, study and training courses abroad, bank accounts outside Serbia, etc. ... The powers that be should thus be made to realise that the days of impunity are over and that henceforward they will be held accountable to their own people as well as to the international community.
3. Immediately lift the embargo and economic sanctions which have hit the Serbian people hard; at the same time encourage Serbia's opening to the outside world as much as possible. This can be done without much difficulty, by facilitating foreign travel, multiplying incentives for private enterprise, fighting the black market and economic crime, and aiding the gradual establishment of a market economy.
4. With respect to Montenegro, Slobodan Milošević's threats and provocations should be taken seriously, so as to avert the risk of civil war which they could trigger off.
5. Overtly encourage moderate elements, such as Ibrahim Rugova, in Kosovo itself; keep at a distance from the KLA hardliners, who will have to be confronted sooner or later anyway. Organise the return of the Serb community and, more generally, apply the UN Security Council's Resolution 1244 in a non-selective manner.
6. Finally, with regard to other countries in the region:
 - Stabilise Albania by providing it with the necessary means to resolve its economic and financial problems, and reinforce the authority of the government by supplying it with the kind of assistance it needs most.
 - Buttress Macedonia too by massive economic aid, preserve its integrity and unity, and help resolve its dispute with Greece.
 - Finally, induce the Hungarian government to follow a moderate policy vis-à-vis the Hungarian ethnic minorities in Romania, Serbia and Slovakia.

All these measures are available to the States and governments that labour to bring peace back to the Balkans. Before they can be implemented, however, the political will to do so have to be voiced clearly and unambiguously. But that is precisely the heart of the problem.

Boris Vukobrat

President

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

*P*olitical parties, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, students' associations, and Serbian expert groups met in Belgrade on 26 and 27 October at a gathering entitled The Path to Changes. All the participants, who represented a total of 71 organisations, adopted the text of the Fundamental Rallying Principles; 48 parties or organisations signed the Declaration of Intent to Cooperate, in which common goals and methods of fighting the present regime were laid down; a number of others expressed the desire to join.

Discussion was focused on the methods of joint action and the principal democratic changes to be implemented tomorrow. Organised by the Peace and Crises Management Foundation in collaboration with the Nezavisnost (Independence) Branch Trade Unions, the event was attended by the representatives of a dozen states that have retained diplomatic missions in Belgrade, a representative of the United Nations, and numerous journalists. In Serbia itself, the gathering received wide media coverage.

There is no doubt that this event raised a glimmer of hope in the profound darkness into which Serbia finds itself plunged after ten years of Slobodan Milošević's rule and the NATO bombing. It clearly indicated the path that must be followed if the crisis in Serbia is to be resolved and peace brought back to the Balkans. It also augurs the emergence of a third political force in Serbia and foreshadows its future magnitude.

Who constitutes this third political force?

All those who marched in the large-scale demonstrations of 1996-1997, which received worldwide media coverage, are part of this third political force: the citizens who do not vote, those who vote for the opposition for want of anything better, non-governmental organisations, independent trade unions, the few intellectuals who remain free, the rapidly impoverished middle class, the young with no future, the ceaselessly demonstrating students, bereft of prospects in spite of their education, the workers with no farmland to feed themselves, the peasant farmers plundered by the state at every harvest, the unemployed and those about to join their ranks, the minorities who fear for their future, the refugees from Krajina, Slavonia, Bosnia and Kosovo, third-generation emigrants uncontaminated by the national-

ism of the past ten years. But also those for whom no one speaks and whom no one remembers: the forgotten, abandoned to themselves; the dissatisfied, most of them desperate; the representatives of a silent majority whose political views are still inchoate. United and cooperating, they would be a movement for liberty, a front for democratic change, a new force that could transform the face of Serbia.

Are not the seeds of this hope already to be found in this gathering of political parties, non-governmental organisations, independent trade unions, students' associations, and expert groups?

What will be the methods of action of this third political force?

Since the inception of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation, its acts and letters have affirmed the fundamental principles needed to establish democracy and build a civil society in the former Yugoslavia, in the Balkans, and most especially in Serbia.

As the country on which peace depends, Serbia should be the focus of our deliberations. The decentralisation and regionalisation of power are the fundamental principles we have ceaselessly advocated. Indeed, in future it will no longer be the state that devolves part of its power to the regions as historical and economic units, but the regions will be those that transfer to the state some of their powers, depending on their needs and decisions. This economic and political democracy - the two being inseparable - will be implemented from the bottom up, instead of being imposed or obstructed from above by the coercive power of the state, media manipulation, or the machinations of political parties.

The various populations will be able to express and harmonise their needs in perfect freedom. Consequently, the now all-powerful political élites will find themselves deprived of their power and unable to do any harm. The building of civil societies can then begin in the territories of presently nationalist states - overtly antidemocratic ones as well as those that affect a parliamentary façade.

Is all this no more than utopia? Most certainly not. It is rather a political pragmatism whose realism has been proved by the example of some modern states and which is, in fact, the only possible option for the Balkans, with their extreme heterogeneity of histories, peoples, cultures, religious faiths and customs. In this way the chaos of embittered differences could be transformed into a synthesis, a polyphonic richness.

Is not all this heralded by the present gathering of political parties, non-governmental organisations, independent trade unions, students' associations and expert groups, and their future joint actions?

Can the third political force alter the state of affairs in Serbia?

The most optimistic among us dare not yet assert that the third political force in Serbia has now been constituted, nor even that the non-governmental organisations and independent trade unions can alter the state of affairs overnight. Especially as such a project would come up against the present criminal regime and, to be quite honest, certain opposition parties as well. The process, it has to be acknowledged, has only just begun.

It will require a great deal more of effort, willpower, energy, and political sagacity. But this project is a first step in the right direction; a first step which calls for the following proposal.

In recent years, the European Union, Russia and the United States have tried to abate and resolve the crisis in the former Yugoslavia in ways that they considered appropriate. Their attempts - known widely enough to need no rehearsal here - have ended in failure. Various nationalisms and the manipulations of cultural and political élites do not bear exclusive responsibility for the situation. The way to the Balkan hell was equally paved with the good intentions of the western democracies and the political conflicts among them. The economic cost of the vacillation and the ignorance, already high, will soon become enormous. A quick and easy way out of this dead end would be for the European Union, the United States and Russia to place their entire economic and political power squarely behind the future democracies and firmly to support the creation and activities of the third political force in Serbia, which is now struggling slowly and painfully for free expression. Would this not be a decisive step in the right direction?

The answer to this question is an obvious yes. But the decisive step depends on the administrations in power and the public opinion that can influence them. In a word, it depends on all of us.

Boris Vukobrat

President



Boris Vukobrat was born on 5 March 1940 in Zagreb.

He graduated from the Faculty of Foreign Trade in Belgrade. He worked as a journalist in the journal *Economic Policy*, where he was fired due to his political inadequacy and the three articles he wrote about the disastrous consequences of the brain drain from Yugoslavia in the early sixties. At the end of 1965 he moved to Paris with his wife. He lived there very modestly, worked in the Renault Company and at the same time studied French language and culture at the University of Sorbonne and Economics at the High Polytechnic School of Foreign Trade in Paris. Having graduated, he got the job in the company Copechim and after a while was appointed as the Head of the company. Copechim became one of the leading companies in international trade of petrol and petrochemical products.

In business, he pays special attention to the trade relations which the former USSR and Eastern European countries have with France and Western European countries. For his contribution to the improvement of economic relations between Russia and France, he was awarded the medal *Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur* in 1983 and became the youngest foreign holder of France's most significant award for peacetime merit. He was declared as benefactor of the French Academy, which is an honor given to only a few people. Along with Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Giovanni Agnelli and the French Academy, he was a Co-Founder of the Francophone University, Senghor University of Alexandria, in 1990. The second time, in 1993, he was awarded a high award *Officier de la Légion d'Honneur* from President Mitterrand's personal fund for peacekeeping activities of the Foundation.

As he became more and more successful, Boris Vukobrat started to invest in his home country and founded Copechim Offices in all the major cities of the former Yugoslavia. He founded a flower farm in Konavle in line with the highest world standards, thus proving that in Yugoslavia too you can do business and have production at the world's highest level by applying modern economic and production principles. The farm was completely destroyed in the war led in the region of Dubrovnik in 1991.

When the war broke out in the former Yugoslavia, Boris Vukobrat decided to do everything he could to stop it. He invented a concept for a new community of former Yugoslav republics that would be based on the principles of regionalization and integration. He sent the project to hundreds of experts - political scientists, economists, sociologists, lawyers, writers and journalists - with an appeal to improve it with their ideas. Based on the proposals and findings made at the round tables where forty experts from various fields worked on the Proposals, in September 1992 he compiled and published *Proposals for a New Commonwealth of the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia*. These proposals were designed within the framework of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation, which has been established in Switzerland, in order to look into the situation in Eastern European countries and propose solutions to problems arising in the transition from totalitarianism to democracy and from collectivism into market economy. The project attracted a lot of attention from the international community. Former Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, asked Vukobrat to use the same principles to develop proposal solutions to the former Soviet Union crisis. Peace and Crises Management Foundation did that by hiring a group of prominent Russian experts of different political stripes. The proposals were compiled in the book *Proposals for Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States*.

Boris Vukobrat is a Co-Founder and Honorary President of the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations of Southeast Europe - CIVIS. CIVIS Association was founded by the representatives of non-governmental organizations in Serbia and Southeast Europe on 4 June 2007. CIVIS is active in the areas of inter-religious dialogue, promotion of human rights and values of civil society, as well as the acceleration of the European integration of the Western Balkans.