

## BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: THE NEW GOVERNEMENT PUT TO THE TEST

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A plume of white smoke was spotted in Sarajevo on 28 December 2011: an agreement was finally reached between the two entities and, above all, between the main Bosnian parties with a view to constituting a central government. It had taken fourteen months to reach that point! But the political class of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BH) had nonetheless succeeded and avoided breaking the sad ‘record’ of Belgium!

Still, one had to wait nearly a month and a half for the composition of the government to be finally determined! This lassitude just reflects the permanent and appalling procrastination of a milieu where there is an admixture of personal interests of a ‘certain elite’ which goes back to the crisis of the years 1991-95, the persistence of latent nationalism which, for most of the time (except in the RS) does not call things by their proper name, and a pronounced taste for nannying by the International Community which sometimes verges on therapeutic relentlessness. One has to say that this assistance perfectly suits the local politicians and ‘businessmen’ – who are often one and the same.

It seems far away, this ‘Balkan Springtime’ which certain young observers believe will follow from the various protest movements that we saw in 2011<sup>1</sup>, without their realising that the Balkans are not the Maghreb.... Spring is coming, to be sure, but at the usual Bosnian pace: one of homeopathic modifications which, above all, must not harm the interests of personalities in authority and which corresponds to a distribution along ethnic quotas (sorry, it is not politically correct to use this word; better to say ‘quotas respecting identity criteria going back to the Dayton/Paris accords’).

One may therefore reasonably wonder about the scope of this ‘major result.’ Presented as a step forward, will the arrival of a new central government be the ‘open sesame’ for the logical rapprochement with the EU? Will it lead to an economic boom for Bosnia-Herzegovina at the moment when Europe itself is experiencing a grave crisis in this sector? Will it put an end to patronage, work on the black, or a level of unemployment that no one has truly combatted over the past sixteen years? You would have to be naïve to believe so. Since one has to catch hold of something, these are nonetheless the scenarios that some people put forward. But this seems more to be self-delusion than a clear vision of the facts: nothing, or nearly nothing, has

<sup>1</sup> Igor Štiks, Bosnian sociologist in Danas dated 22.10.11, cited by the *Courrier des Balkans [Balkan Post]*.

changed since the accords which put an end to the recent conflict (which is in fact less and less recent).

In mid-November 2011, the High Representative and Special Representative of the EU (HR/EUSR), Valentin Inzko, who had just had his stay at his post extended, presented a very critical report (yet one more) condemning the entire Bosnian political class, which he holds entirely responsible for the obstruction of the institutions. The *Republika Srpska* (RS), as usual, was cited as being one of the major actors of this obstruction<sup>2</sup>, but the federal authorities were equally cited for their blockage. The HR-EUSR report above all placed the six main political parties at the same level of responsibility. If the presence of the ‘nationalist’ groupings (SDS and SNSD for the Serbs; HDZ BiH and HDZ 1990 for the Croats<sup>3</sup> and SDA for the Bosnians) in this indictment was not a surprise, it was astonishing to see there the supposedly ‘multi-ethnic’ SDP. However, upon a closer look and with several years of practice with the given party, one can say that it was only just, because, if the validity of such a party is undoubted and praiseworthy in BH, one is entitled to ask, ever since 1996, about its real usefulness, whether it is not just there to serve the ambition of certain politicians.

Several days later, a new meeting of the six major parties proved Mr. Inzko right and no agreement came out of it. The two Croat groupings, with the support of the Serb representatives, continued to push for the candidacy of Mme Bojana Krišto for the post of Prime Minister. The distribution of positions by political party continued to pose insoluble problems. In a sign that nothing fundamental had changed, Sulejman Tihic (SDA) found himself compelled to suggest, as a way out of the deadlock, a compromise based on the ...census of 1991. He thereby aroused the anger of Milorad Dodik, the great defender of the Peace Accords! Thus, they ended up raising the prospect of new elections in October 2012! At the same time, the exasperation of the population clearly emerged. This is so, because in the long political time-out<sup>4</sup>, the population, the great majority of whom is indifferent or fatalistic, followed these negotiations from another age half-amused, half-irritated. This irritation found expression in placards posted around Sarajevo which made direct allusion to a certain form of collusion or of connivance among the parties within the context of power-sharing, including sharing financial resources<sup>5</sup>.

When, on 4 January 2012, Vjekoslav Bevanda, an established economist from Mostar belonging to the HDZ-BiH was appointed, it was without any major local repercussions. A man with experience<sup>6</sup>, he is considered to be highly competent and he rather easily won over the Serb parties, even if, and this is not very original, some people mention some ‘scandals’ in this regard. Momir Dejanović, Director of the Political Sciences Centre of Doboj, says the he allowed more than two billion KM (around a billion Euros) of tax evasion when he was the Federation’s Minister of Finance.

Finally, on 10 February, the Bosnian parliament passed a vote of confidence in the new proposed government. It took sixteen months to reach this result! And with what outlook? The prospects were summed up by a representative of the International Crisis Group (ICG) as ‘a great deal’ remains to be done<sup>7</sup>. No manifestation of satisfaction has, however, been noted

<sup>2</sup> One must say that the threat brandished by Mr. Dodik of organising a referendum in Banja Luka, which in the end he did not do, raised the temperature in April (the idea was abandoned in May under pressure from the EU) and, more precisely, from Catherine Ashton).

<sup>3</sup> These two parties demanding, as in the heyday of Herzeg Bosna, the self-proclaimed Croat entity of 1992, the creation of a third entity on an ethnic basis, showing, once again, as if there were any need, their hostility to the Federation imposed by the Dayton/Paris Accords.

<sup>4</sup> Without a *vacuum*, because the preceding government managed only current affairs.

<sup>5</sup> A text directed at all the authorities together carried on the placards, cited by *le Courrier des Balkans* [*The Balkan Post*] on 18.11.11 : ‘You are united in your laziness and by crime’.

<sup>6</sup> He was, among other posts, Minister of Finance of the Federation from 2007 to his appointment.

<sup>7</sup> “The formation of the new government is a positive stage but it is not enough. This government is going to have the difficult task of attacking a long series of obligations which have been deferred for a long time”.

among the population, which regarded this farce with apathy and resignation, because nothing, or nearly nothing, has changed for it and the delay is not going to improve its daily life. The opinion currently widespread in the capital is that this loss of time only served the purpose of satisfying personal ambitions (Mr.Lagumdžija is particularly meant) or those of the nationalist parties (Croat, in particular). It also served the aims of the Serb SNSD which, based on this fact, could suggest, without saying directly, that the central state was an illusion. For some, the open projects since 1996 are indeed very numerous and for others, they are stock still. You can prepare a chaotic list if you wish!

## The unified State

What unified state? The magic wand of Dayton has lost its magic and the international community is alone seeking to persuade itself that the solution invented at the end of the domestic conflict was a success. The best proof has just been provided during this long period of political uncertainty. It has clearly emerged that the question of the distribution of portfolios was the most important (especially for the major actors and political groupings, which essentially sought to have their preeminence prevail) and that the central political void did not really bother anyone, neither the Croat-Bosnian Federation<sup>8</sup>, nor those in RS.

It is patently obvious that the interest of the two entities is to keep the real power at their level. But, because the international community has decided (and because it is to provide proof of good will), it is politically correct to operate a central structure which, fundamentally, no one wants by restricting its prerogatives. So, nothing has changed at the bottom and, as in 1996, people continue to speak of ‘ministers’ in the two entities, even in the cantons of the Federation. The persistence of this term demonstrates a determination to maintain the structures in place, while the title is evidently associated with emoluments and benefits linked to the position. Any downgrading to the rank of ‘Director’ or ‘Department Chief’, terms which would be more appropriate at the level of local structures, would result in a diminution of the life style and prestige of those presently holding these titles.

Indeed, what is the official term associated with ‘Bosnia-Herzegovina’: Federated Republic, Federal Republic, Confederation? For the present, people speak of the ‘State’ of BH or, more often, of the ‘Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina’. This term is eminently deceptive, because it implies national unity and it is only at the international level that it represents a certain community of interests. Moreover, sometimes the international instances have to bang their fist on the table to win respect, even in contexts which are minor for the outside observers but characteristic of local peculiarities<sup>9</sup>.

And, when so many things remain to be done in order to try to strengthen the rule of law, a crucial question could once again put a light to the powder keg: the problem posed by the district of Brčko. In an article dated 15 December 2011, the *Courrier des Balkans* very properly directed attention to this important point of the Dayton Accords, for which the PIC (*Peace Implementation Council*) had just proposed the end of international supervision. Long a source of contention between the two entities during the conflict, Brčko, the narrow passage of the Posavina corridor, the veritable umbilical cord of the RS connecting it to Serbia, could well see the majority of international authorities leave its territory. Under the authority of a supervisor and of a special Court of Arbitration, the district enjoyed, in fact, complete administrative autonomy which allowed it, after some years, to build a solid economy and to develop rather good relations between the various communities. But, as

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<sup>8</sup> The term of Federation is improper, because this artificial entity was never recognised as such in terms of international law.

<sup>9</sup> It thus took a clear threat of exclusion from the bodies of the International Federation of Football for the federations of the two entities, which had never had any representation on the international level to be dissolved in 2011 (and by the way, one can note that it took 16 years for FIFA to appreciate the fault...).

often is the case, this prosperity has kindled envy and the local politicians are now accused of corruption and embezzlement. Confronted with these facts, the ICG has stated that it is impossible for the international community to improve the situation and has suggested the possibility of halting the supervision of Brčko, while maintaining the Court of Arbitration and guaranteeing the autonomy of the district. A decision should come during the next meeting of the PIC, in April. It is superfluous to say that this announcement provoked a near unanimous outcry, all of which shows that this problem is still very sensitive. Good relations or not, Brčko remains a *casus belli*. There is nothing new there, which prompts one to think that the announced progress has been artificial and founded on local personal interests.

## The Croat and Serb peculiarities

One of the main characteristics which came down to us directly from the conflict has never disappeared: Serbs, like Croats of BH continue to enjoy privileged relations with the ethnic entity to which they belong. These links go well beyond the notion of belonging to a Bosnian state and, despite some positive signs, are still quite real.

In the RS, despite the non-native minorities, whose relocation after the migrations of the conflict is not truly simple, to be a Serb is still a proof of belonging to the Serb Nation, i.e. relations with neighbouring Serbia remain essential. President Tadić, despite his efforts to win the confidence of the International Community and promote the image of a new Serbia, knows very well that he will never be forgiven for 'letting go' of the Serbs of Bosnia. The loss of the Krajinas in 1995 and the exodus of hundreds of thousands of persons before the Croat advance of the *Oluja* offensive were played down by Mr. Milosević, who even exploited the arrival of refugees to try to insert them in Kosovo in order to counter the Kosovar omnipresence. On the other hand, it would be inconceivable in Belgrade for the Serbs of Banja Luka to become Bosnian citizens without any other prospect than becoming a minority in a single state. It is therefore necessary for Belgrade, *nolens volens*, to support Mr. Dodik and his government.

The presence of the Serb President<sup>10</sup> was thus noted during the celebrations of the twentieth anniversary of the Serb state of Bosnia on 9 January 2012. And even if he was obliged, in a veritable juggling act, to say that he bore unfailing support for the RS...while defending himself from wanting to attack the integrity of BH, his presence had great importance for Mr. Dodik. It is obvious that the Serb President, while speaking of respect for the integrity of the Bosnian state also was acting as his own advocate with respect to Kosovo<sup>11</sup>. Relying on this support, but also on the support of Russia (Mr. Dodik has been decorated by the Russian ambassador on behalf of President Medvedev), but also ... of the HDZ of BH, which had sent a noted delegation, the President of RS was thus able to make a solemn declaration<sup>12</sup> which, reasonably, should have stirred a commotion in the international community. But, apart from some comments of principle and some Bosnian media invective, nothing came of it.

This support lent by the Croats of BH to Mr. Dodik, confirmed for some time already and reiterated repeatedly over time (the Serb leader has known, since, how to return the favour by supporting the Croat claims in the context of forming the central government) is, to be sure, not disinterested. The specter of the third entity continues to hang on, nearly twenty years after the creation of the ephemeral 'Herzeg Bosna', the self-proclaimed entity of the Croats of BH. Relying on the till now unfailing support of Zagreb, the Croats of BH, in particular the

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<sup>10</sup> But also that of the patriarch of Belgrade, Irenej, of Prime Minister Cvetković and of Deputy Prime Minister Dacić.

<sup>11</sup> Despite several promises of negotiations, Belgrade has still not recognised Priština and it is doubtless the recent referendum organised in Mitrovica, which rejected nearly unanimously the authority of the Kosovar capital over the region with a Serb majority, is not going to advance the process.

<sup>12</sup> 'The Republika Srpska is free and shall continue to exist as this was the wish of the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for it' (Reported by *Courrier des Balkans* [Balkan Post] on 10.01.2012).

two HDZ nationalists, while seeming to play the game desired by the Dayton Accords ('Federation' and 'Central Power'<sup>13</sup>) have not renounced a possible recognition of an entity of their own. Nevertheless, these claims have, it would seem, less and less of a chance to be realised with the passage of time.

On the one hand, the demographic weight of the Croats has diminished considerably since 1996<sup>14</sup>. It appears illusory that this factor can suffice to influence the international community, even if Mgr Puljić regularly denounces the harrassment and vexations to which the flock is subjected (almost all Croats, obviously), essentially within the Federation. It must be admitted that he is not completely wrong. The case of Sarajevo is edifying and it is nearly impossible, for example, to provide a young Croat with schooling outside the Franciscan religious school<sup>15</sup>.

On the other hand, it is not excluded that Croatia, facing the prospect of membership in the EU which is taking shape, but also facing the victory of the center-left 'Kukuriku' coalition of Zoran Milanović, is tempted to put the brakes on its assistance to the Croat community of BH. The nationalist parties HDZ BH and HDZ 1990 risk, in particular, paying a heavy price for the 'realpolitik' of Zagreb. Nevertheless, it is not very likely that the various types of assistance will end and that the benefits granted by Croatia to the Croats of BH would be eliminated. For the same reason that Belgrade does not suddenly cut off its aid to the RS, the Croat rulers do not run the risk of seeing themselves disqualified, including by their own electorate, whether in Croatia or in BH<sup>16</sup>. The Croats, like their Serb counterparts, are aware of the need to move on, to take their respective countries out of the isolation in which they find themselves, but not at any price and, above all, not by offending the supranational consciousness of the two ethnic groups. This notion still has a long way to go, all the more so as it is still also identified with religion and the clergy, who are omnipresent. In fact, they cannot go further presently than to show their 'nationals' of Bosnia-Herzegovina that their future is in their own hands and that they find themselves in Sarajevo. But if change is possible, there is good reason to suppose that this will take at least one generation. The Balkans are located in Europe, but the Balkan states have a logic and sensibility which for some time to come will defy the modern Western concepts.

In the face of nationalist rhetoric which has lost some of its velocity but is recurrent, the Bosnians don't have a choice. Since 1992, they can define themselves only by relating to historical episodes more or less grounded and, since the 1960s-70s, on a community of religion<sup>17</sup> (and of language –reinvented, like all the other languages 'liberated' from the Serbo-Croat vernacular). The Federation is a structure which, just as for the Croats, was imposed on them at Dayton. It is not certain that they attach vital importance to it. For them, like for the Croats, the real power is located presently in the cantons of the Federation. The

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<sup>13</sup> Mr.Bevanda, recently designated Prime Minister, belongs to the HDZ BiH.

<sup>14</sup> In the absence of a census since 1991, we remain with estimates and the somewhat partisan statements of the Cardinal of Sarajevo, Mgr Puljić and it seems that the Croat population presently numbers around 450,000 persons.

<sup>15</sup> An anecdote reported several months ago to the author is symptomatic of the near impossibility for Croats to send their children to school in the public schooling of the capital: returning from one of the first school days, a young Croat replies to his father, who asks about what they did in class : 'the school mistress taught us that you have to be polite in the morning and greet the teacher and comrades.' 'Perfect,' his father responds, content with such a first slice of the school year. Encouraged by this approval, the little boy thought it good to add: 'Yes, you have to say 'Salam Alleykum!' and he was taken aback to get a slap in the face in response.

<sup>16</sup> One must remember that the Croat diaspora, including that of BH, has the right to vote in the national elections of Croatia. Nonetheless, more and more it cold-shoulders the ballot boxes of Zagreb (just 6.23% of voters on 4 December 2011). President Tudjman wooed the Croat voters of BH, who found in the HDZ of Zagreb and its leader a natural affiliation and voted massively for them.

<sup>17</sup> Tito had very well discerned the risk of abuses by creating a 'Muslim' nationality, hoping, in this way, to avoid any takeover.

federal structures are, at best, a necessary evil and it is certainly the Bosnians who are the most interested in the united structure of the State of BH (a possible census is expected to confirm their numerical predominance). In order to maintain a certain unity of thought among the Bosnian population (which, in its majority, rejects this rhetoric), some eminent representatives of the community regularly stir up the Islamist threat, knowing perfectly well that the Croats, like the Serbs, will not remain insensitive and inactive. The reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić, relying on the support of a certain part of the International Community (not necessarily Muslim), sometimes issues harangues and is a regular participant in this dangerous game, which can only stir up tensions. While the Orthodox Church remains rather discrete in tone, the Catholic Church does not remain so and Mgr Puljić does no less than the Reis as regards virulence. This mixture of genres (politics-religion-ethnicity) is very disadvantageous, but very real and has hardly changed since 1996.

### **The problem posed by the ‘mujahidins’**

The State of BH and more particularly President Izetbegović did nothing at the time of the conflict to prevent the arrival of volunteer fighters for the Jihad, quite the contrary. Many hundreds of them thus came to take part in the fight against the Serbs. While most of them left Bosnian territory, a certain number, in particular from Wahhabi communities, settled for the longer term in various regions of the Federation or in the district of Brčko, often by marriage (fictive, for some). Thus, former combatants from the Jihad are still present and do not hesitate to proselytise. They join in this context a certain number of former ‘trainees’ in Pakistan or in other countries professing strict Islam who came back at the end of the conflict.

These Islamist communities have never truly been disturbed, even if, from time to time, some checking was carried out. And thus they were ‘integrated into the landscape,’ to the point of believing that any risk of explosion had been eliminated. And on 28 October 2011, when a certain Mevlid Jašarević, a Muslim Serb citizen from the Sandžak, wearing the typical dress of the Wahhabi and carrying an assault rifle, headed towards the entrance of the American embassy and then opened fire, no one reacted initially since such an act against the principal support of the BH seemed improbable. And yet...!

To be sure, this nightmare wake-up call such as the Bosnian population had erased from its memory, provoked reactions, some of them extreme (denounced generalised insecurity, diabolisation of Muslims by non-Bosnians, etc....), but also some arrests, of which we did not hear anything spoken since, by the way. As from the next day, the Serb police dismantled a fundamentalist network at Novi Pazar and, in the course of the operation arrested sixteen Serb nationals and a Bosnian citizen. For its part, an operation carried out at Gornja Maoca, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in a well-known ‘fief’ of Wahhabism, only had limited results (questioning of two persons).

And so, do the (ex ?) mujahidins remain a security risk in BH? Without a doubt! But not necessarily in the form that they were in the 1990s and certainly with less physical threat<sup>18</sup>. Less visible, less numerous, for the most part very closely watched, it is not they who pose the problem. Exploiting as everywhere else in the world situations of weakness and precariousness, some preachers who benefit from the tacit or declared support of a certain number of authorities are, on the contrary, more dangerous and insidious. The presence of ‘rear bases’ serving some Jihad sympathisers, even Al-Qaeda, remain, moreover, a strong probability. The ‘mujahidin’ problem is thus not totally resolved, but it has changed its shape. It is true that the adoption of judicial procedures targeting extremist groups is still held up, with each camp for years now assigning the blame to the other. The Minister of Internal Security (SDA) has, in particular, clearly accused the Serbs of obstruction for the sake of protecting extremist groups, ‘fascists and radicals of all types.’

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<sup>18</sup>A single attack which might be categorised as terrorist at Bugojno, around a year before.

## An economic situation which is constantly deteriorating – the cause of many evils?

As in all societies, questions of money are divisive. It is true that in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina settling the disagreements of an economic or financial nature is, for all, still more complicated than anywhere else! The political complexity renders any negotiation inextricable and the delays have been building up since 1996, whether over perfecting the annual central budget or in solving the succession of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (RSFY) of Tito. Nothing, or nearly nothing has progressed (in the second case, it is true that the fault only goes back to Bosnia-Herzegovina)<sup>19</sup>. The sharing of the twenty-three diplomatic and consular representations of the ex-Yugoslavia, officially done like the rest of the operations of sharing under the agreement of 29 June 2001, has not still been achieved. According to *Dnevnik (ARYM)*, some discrete negotiations were still going on. Since then, there has been no news...

One example is characteristic of the weakness and fragility of the Bosnian State : the adoption of the central budget for 2011, on 13 February...2012<sup>20</sup>! The cumbrousness of the procedures and the systematic obstruction of some who, curiously, ‘discover’ faults at the last minute<sup>21</sup>, each year regularly result in delays and hesitations follow one another, causing situations of penury which remind one of 1996 and the period immediately after the crisis<sup>22</sup>. In this context, emergency procedures are regularly put in place, as in olden times.

The new Prime Minister has stressed, like the others before him, by the way, that the economic recovery of the country is the principal priority of his government. The *International Crisis Group* has recently estimated that the long political crisis which BH has just lived through, beyond the ironic or disillusioned criticisms of both national and outside observers, has led BH to the brink of an ‘economic and social abyss’. Everything has happened as if the crisis which is striking the international actors, in particular, the case of Greece, could not reach Sarajevo, Banja Luka or Mostar. This unconcern coming close to irresponsibility demonstrates to what extent the personal or partisan interests of the Bosnian leaders in their near totality work to the detriment of the interest of the populations. The Bosnian political class is continuing the struggle of the 19th century without being aware that the country has entered the 21st century.

However, the reality is clear: since 1996, progress in the economic domain remains extremely limited. Bosnia-Herzegovina remains one of the poorest countries in Europe. Forecasts for growth have been cut in half. The IMF estimated in November that the GDP should grow by 1.7% in 2011 and by 0.7 % in 2012, but that was before the crisis. A recent report<sup>23</sup> provided macroeconomic indicators which were full of contrasts and, while certain points of strength were underlined (major private transfers thanks to the diaspora, a successful bank reform, positive results from cancellation in 2000 of 67% of the debt to member countries of the Paris Club and financial assistance from the IMF, conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Accord with the EU in 2008), many black points appeared. The weakness of exports, which are not very diversified and are dependent on the evolution of world commodity prices, was revealed. This concerns most especially changes in the price of aluminium and other raw materials of the mining or energy industry, which remain the main

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<sup>19</sup> Dnevnik(ARYM) of 26 April 2011 carried the new report of the meeting of the committee charged with carrying out the division of the property of ex-Yugoslavia abroad.

<sup>20</sup> Dnevni Avaz of 13.02.2012.

<sup>21</sup> The SDA, through Bakir Izetbegović, has in particular issued reserves and it would appear to be the height of irony to see the RS and Mr.Dodik be more proactive in the adoption of the central budget.

<sup>22</sup> Certain ministerial buildings were no longer being heated at the start of February for failing to have paid the previous bills and many thousands of officials were not paid in January. The administrations live on credit for the telephone, fuel, heating...

<sup>23</sup> COFACE Report of 12.02.2012.

motors of the economy, with, from time to time for 2011, a small upturn for manufacturing production. But, like many other observers, the authors of the report point out major risks factors which were supposed to have disappeared sixteen years after the peace accords: the institutional and ethnic fragmentation, a very high rate of unemployment (*43% of the population, apart from the grey economy estimated, in reality to be 'just' more than 20%*), the shortcomings in infrastructures and in the business environment.

Nevertheless, international investments should still be relatively large in 2012<sup>24</sup>, according to this same report. This situation could permit a certain optimism. But the financial situation of the government still does not seem simple for the year under way, though a certain reduction of the public deficit and continuation of the process of privatisation could contribute to creating a positive climate. However, the release of loans agreed by the IMF within the context of credits granted in July 2009 remains subject to the achievement of certain structural preconditions which have not yet been reached. Moreover, the public debt, which is mostly denominated in foreign currencies, presents a certain vulnerability. Finally, the part of informal employment (put more simply, work 'on the black') is growing constantly in some sectors such as the public buildings and works sector, food catering and retail trade, all of which means tax revenues which are missing for the administration. Nonetheless, tax fraud has had a tendency to diminish because the VAT is being applied with more rigour and companies, even family enterprises, are subject to it (this is in fact major progress). All the same, substantial additional revenue could be extracted by the State from the production of electricity by the hydro-electric and thermal power stations whose construction has just been announced.

As regards microeconomics, it would appear that it has reached the limits of feasibility. The majority of the population is experiencing more and more difficulty in making ends meet, to use a popular expression. Unemployment really affects more than 20% of the population and without doubt is a matter of concern to nearly one active member of the population out of two. Nonetheless, work 'on the black' or the grey economy remains a palliative which cannot be ignored. The second job, known at all times and practiced right up to the level of the middle class, even sometimes in still higher strata, is becoming more and more necessary. The prices very easily get out of hand<sup>25</sup> and no improvement has been seen in daily life, including in the capital (roads constantly deteriorating, drainage work done 'in emergencies', repairs after natural catastrophes such as landslides, floods or accumulation of snow carried out in keeping with feeble financial resources, i.e. in general left to the initiative of the local authorities, etc....).

The central government, but also the governments of the entities, have made several reforms, but their effect remains limited and the first restrictions are beginning to appear, with the first reductions of salary, in RS as in the Federation. This measure is, of course, unpopular, but no one is protesting because having a regular job is already a subject of satisfaction, almost a privilege. On the other hand, chaos persists in the administrations. But there is no question of reducing the excessive number of functionaries, because their number artificially reduces the level of unemployment. As for absenteeism, there are no numbers available, but it suffices to visit any government department whatsoever to understand its extent. This situation cannot last in the present financial context and it must one day be settled for good.

One has to be astonished at the capacity of the population for resistance. But the great majority remain apathetic. Only those who have nothing more to lose (retirees, the long term unemployed, those who have lost their bank accounts) dare to take part in the limited protest movements. The population would have a hard time, even if it so wished, to express its claims

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<sup>24</sup> Construction of electric power stations, continuation of construction of highways and a planned gas pipeline towards Austria, in particular.

<sup>25</sup> During the recent snowy episodes at the start of 2012, certain foodstuffs suddenly underwent high rises in price in certain regions (for example, in and around Mostar an egg cost 1 KM).

in a coordinated manner. Indeed, how do you make yourself understood in the absence of credible and recognised opinion leaders and with trade union organisations totally absent from the social scene - they often come to attention through their dishonest compromises with the political authorities and bosses of companies. It sometimes happens that some militants try to break the consensus, but they are then victims of sanctions, most often, illegal sanctions<sup>26</sup>. The 'Great Day' of revolution has not come to BH, not yet, at least! Meanwhile nepotism is rife at all levels and the 'system' installs its own at all positions of responsibility (rewarding, to be sure), without a care for their competence, and once they are installed, it is nearly impossible to envisage their departure, because the beneficiaries of these emoluments form a bloc...

But the population also has other problems to worry about, including housing. As regards the capital, the price of one m<sup>2</sup> puts housing, new housing in particular, beyond the pocketbooks of most Bosnians. And yet, many construction projects for building whole complexes often with the offer of luxury services have been completed. But the properties remain terribly empty. It is true that when they were launched, these programmes were intended by their promoters for a large international community. Since that community has steadily declined, the demand has fallen considerably. Moreover, in the well known search for immediate profit (the same thing has been seen in Montenegro and in Croatia), the owners or speculators have caused the real estate market to 'ignite'. And even if a slight decline has been noted very recently, the value of the properties offered for sale is much too high and not in keeping with the goods and services offered. As a consequence, in many places, it has become impossible to re-house refugees and displaced persons. In this context, the programmes for moderate priced rental housing of the type in Sarajevo-East (RS) is rare. In this very case, even if the reasons for it are as much political and election-driven as social, they have nonetheless allowed for rehousing a large community of displaced persons.

In most of the real estate or commercial projects, one can also think that the objectives are of another kind. In particular, one has spoken often of money laundering with reference to the veritable 'flowering' of big retailers (Hyper or supermarkets), especially in Sarajevo, where, in a few years, more than ten shopping centres have opened. They survive thanks to a well-to-do clientele which is not very numerous. And what can you say about the shopping area of Vitez, which claims, with reason, to be the largest of its kind in the Balkans. Here the large retailers set up side by side constitute a veritable burgeoning city.

Finally, the population is suffering from the stagnation of investments and of 'useful' achievements in the infrastructure sector. In this domain as well, the progress made sixteen years after the Dayton Accords, however spectacular it may be, is minimal in the final analysis. Trying out the roads of BH very often seems like an adventure as soon as you leave behind the '*magistralis*' (national highways). And even on them, the works are often uncertain. The construction of the Sarajevo-Zenica highway north is progressing very slowly, hardly faster than that of the bypass around the capital, which will be especially important. This is, unfortunately, a subject of permanent bitter and disillusioned pleasantries. The completion of the highway towards the major industrial city at the center of Bosnia is still set for 2017, but this final date is becoming more and more improbable, because while the project is achievable technically and financially, political differences and private interests penalise it very greatly. And the Bosnians must meanwhile wait still more time to be able to reach the Croatian coast in less than three hours. A beginning of the highway section has been achieved, at Ploče, in Croatia; but from the Bosnian side of the border, nothing has been undertaken. Another small section was supposed to be launched, going from Sarajevo in the direction of Mostar. At the present pace, ten years will be needed to complete the entirely of a project which represents, it is true, a major investment considering the landscape and the work to be done.

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<sup>26</sup> Radio Free Europe 21.10.11.

Meanwhile, some very minor progress has been noted to restore operations on railway lines over more than sixteen years. The connection to the European network is a reality and one can, with a good dose of patience, reach Sarajevo starting from whatever country of Europe (the voyage lasts twenty-seven hours between Paris and Sarajevo...). But for the Bosnian traveller, the possibilities are very limited and you have to take into account the existence of two separate companies in the Federation and in RS, all of which necessitates, on the ex-IEBL (*Inter Entity Boundary Line*) a change of locomotive and of conductor... This aberration and the existence of two companies does not unduly bother the international community, which has nonetheless threatened drastic measures in order to resolve the problem (much less important) of the football federations...

### **The diaspora, an essential source of revenue for the Bosnian population**

As in the time of Marshal Tito, the diaspora remains an essential element of the local economy. The former supreme leader understood perfectly well the utility of it by authorising (nonetheless under certain conditions) seasonal or temporary immigration of workers to Western and Northern Europe. These workers brought in a lot (in foreign currency) to their families, but also to the Yugoslav State, as well as to the constituent republics of the RSFY. In our time, the situation has not changed and the Bosnian *Gastarbeiter* send in to the country each year nearly two billion Euros (14% of the GDP in 2011). In addition, when this diaspora returns on vacation, the expenditures generated locally are like a breath of oxygen for the merchants (the incoming amounts which result equal the total budget of the Federation...).

But this situation, which ensures a certain social peace, will doubtlessly not go on forever, because the situation of the emigre workers remains, by definition, precarious. Given that the economic crisis has just gotten worse, one may imagine that reactions of a protectionist nature could occur and limit the possibilities of the emigres. The present hope in BH thus rests in the prospects for joining the European Union and the threat of a crisis is deliberately ignored within the major part of the population for the sake of new favourable prospects which are seen. Indeed, many destitute Bosnians appear to be waiting for this moment to be able to go and work abroad with the help of the already established diaspora. Seasonal activity paid in Europe (periods of three to six months) would permit those who have the possibility to live properly all year long in BH.

### **Corruption, one of the main scourges of Bosnian society**

*Radio Free Europe* posed a very good question on 27 January 2012: 'Who will dare to denounce corruption'? The fact that this question was posed is already revealing: it is not a question of knowing if there is corruption in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but of knowing if, one day, someone belonging to the system would dare to break the omerta. Because you need a good dose of courage (or of despair) to take the risk presently and agree to be, at best, harrassed as an informer at one's place of work, or at worst fired without explanation other than that, unstated, of having tried to disturb an 'established order' in which bribe-givers and bribe takers share promotions and increases and where there is not even a hope that justice will investigate the often flagrant cases...And yet, everyone or nearly everyone practices it...or submits to it.

BH has made some progress in the ratings of *Transparency International*, which each year draws up a ranking of countries in the matter of corruption. But everything is relative. Indeed, it went from 99th rank in 2010...to 91st in 2011. In 2010, the *Courrier des Balkans* published the retranscription of a broadcast by *Radio Sarajevo* which vigourously criticised the practice of corruption throughout the Balkans and in particular in BH, a practice which, according to the authors, was constantly growing and involved more and more persons. At the time, not so long ago, the director of *Transparency International* for BH, Srdjan Blagovčanin wrote: 'The political elites are the motor of corruption in Bosnia-Herzegovina. 'Small' corruption, which touches sectors such as health, education, the administration and

the police finds its origins in the bigger swindles'. Has anything really changed since? Frankly, no, and this 'constant' does not date from yesterday, to be sure. Yet, the struggle against corruption was one of the essential conditions of the roadmap set by BH in its search for respectability....and credibility vis-à-vis international authorities. But what do the latter say when the Bosnian citizen must give something under the table (or more) to hospital staff in order for one of his near and dear to be somewhat better treated during a hospital stay ; when he has to pass an envelope to the surgeon for a relative to be operated on in priority order ; when he does the same with the gravedigger, if it turned out badly, in order to have a decent quality funeral. Because, all during his life, this citizen had to 'contribute' to the meet the needs of university professors, doctors, officials, service providers and others. The silence is deafening!

The great majority of the population which was present and powerless as spectators during the recent political farce lasting sixteen months, which reflected and hoped for an improvement, which could not (did not wish or dare) to emigrate, and which waited for changes after the last elections, they all feel more and more frustrated. They did not truly believe in an improvement in their material situation, but waited above all for the gradual elimination of corruption, hoping that the big cases held in suspense would finally be adjudicated. But the families and groups who have been unduly enriched still hold onto the levers of power or are protected by the same. The elimination of 'profiteers' was one of the issues of the formation of the government and, on the contrary, the population sees those whom it hoped would be eliminated have become notables. The chasm between the population and its leaders risks becoming still deeper.

Is no one au courant? In BH, the question should instead be worded: is there anyone who is not au courant? One could in fact think that the media would try to provide information on this situation and denounce the irregularities (at least the more flagrant ones!). But for that they must be free and independent, which is far from the case if one reads the editorial of *Radio Free Europe* dated 26 January and published in the *Courrier des Balkans* on 12 February.

RFE says what for years and right up to the present everyone can affirm, namely that every publication, every television channel defines itself according to identity and political criteria. This statement may seem severe, but it is certainly real: most Bosnian journalists are too closely linked to politics and to the world of business to produce an objective work. And what is valid for political or economic 'truth' also applies for criticism of corruption. It is obvious that the interested parties deny these assertions, which are clear to any informed observer. Some (rare) journalists acknowledge, at best, that many journalists are too conformist and both as a result of ambition and to avoid alienating themselves from possible support in the future, do not take risks. This explains the paltry quality overall of the Bosnian media. Đjuro Sušić, a philosopher and eminent specialist on the media, has said: 'The truth creates heroes, interest creates slaves'. This phrase, in the opinion of some Bosnian journalists, may be perfectly applied to their fraternity, most members of which are essentially guided by private and financial interests.

## **Culture and the educational system**

Among the many good intentions which emerged during the settlement of the conflict, one was especially praiseworthy: to prepare the future by educating young people to be more tolerant and respectful of one another. A number of programmes were launched. They aimed at realising, for example, the ambitious idea of 'two schools under the same roof.' In principle, this idea was worthy, but in practice we see nearly everywhere where there are two schools under the same roof, they are very rarely running at the same tempo! Except in very

rare exceptions<sup>27</sup>, it has not been possible to make young people live together peacefully : contrary to the hopes of the International Community, they are still imbued with the culture of their milieu and of their ethnic attachments. This programme essentially was tried out in the Federation and, like it or not, has been a failure. Initially, for better or worse, it tried to bring together young Croats and Bosnians, but the Serb pupils, in their great majority, are not brought in and those residing in the Federation mostly are sent for schooling to the RS or to Montenegro. In 2010, just thirty-four out of fifty-four schools which operate within this model of ‘two schools under the same roof’ continued the experiment. Moreover, as was emphasised by CERI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) in its report of 7 December 2010, the pupils sent to study in these schools were subjected on a daily basis to harrassment relating to their ethnicity and entrance via separate doors (often according to different schedules) was frequently the case.

Even as regards standardisation of the programmes, one cannot speak of progress, except perhaps for Brčko, where some encouraging experiments have been carried out. And when there is the application of the single programme, this is during courses with homogeneous ethnic groups. The non-homogeneity is especially blatant in the teaching of history, with the programmes offered by one or another not really promoting interethnic reconciliation. A dispassionate reading of the people’s past in general would make it possible to go beyond the cleavages and hatred, and to progress. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, this stage is far from being achieved. As in many other domains, one can only hope that time will bring changes. The problem is that it is also necessary that people be made to forget certain too cruel and bloody events which have punctuated the history of this region, perhaps more than other regions of Europe<sup>28</sup>. It is often said that the ‘pilots’ of the Bosnian governmental vehicle are steering while looking only in their rear view mirror, all of which is, without doubt, not the best way to avoid the obstacles on the road! This is surely true, but it is also a constant factor in the whole region, where one not only just remembers History, but lives it in everyday life. And the model often proposed, taken from the Franco-German reconciliation seems hard to apply. It is true that wars have often set two West European nations against one another, whereas in the Balkans and in Bosnia-Herzegovina in general, what we have is peoples who often come from the same initial mould, but who had a destiny sometimes diametrically opposed and have recently torn one another to pieces.

In another area, integration of the Roma people, another one of the conditions demanded by the European Union for allocation of assistance, the fight against the marginalisation of this population, traditionally doomed to pariah status in the Balkan societies, has barely begun. With the help of various charitable associations, the fight against illiteracy and the exclusion of this community has been initiated. Estimated to number tens of thousands of persons, the Roma population was, up until now, very poorly integrated into the educational system<sup>29</sup>. Poverty, alcoholism and illiteracy of the families complicated this task still further. BH is therefore included in a ten-year programme (2005-2015) of integration of the Roma, which has ‘education’ as one of its pillars. But the Bosnian Roma do not have any system of reference, unlike their counterparts in Bulgaria and Romania, and no Roma has reached a social position which could encourage young people to follow his example.

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<sup>27</sup> At Mostar, for example, and one still has to put the local success in a relative context. The International College (College of the United World) was presented not long ago as ‘a unique experiment’. Other creations from time to time also exist but are not being developed.

<sup>28</sup> The most recent in time (Srebrenica) is not ready to be forgiven by the Bosnians and one only has to see the scope of the annual commemorative ceremonies of 11 July to appreciate that they go well beyond the simple celebration of the memory of the victims, with the mass burials of the identified victims of the year (613 in 2011). Since there are still probably hundreds of remains of victims to find, identify and bury, one can imagine that the perpetuation of the memory of the massacre will not serve the cause of reconciliation. And the memorial site of Potočari, with its thousands of tombs, will always be a reminder of the folly of one of the ethnic components.

<sup>29</sup> Estimations closest to reality from Caritas: 70% totally or partially illiterate, 18% of the children having finished primary schooling and 7% a secondary course.

Another section of the cultural sphere is in complete bankruptcy: museums and other places of collective memory. If we make a pastiche of the statements attributed to General Millán Astray during the civil war in Spain, one could say ‘When I use the word ‘culture’, I take out my bunch of keys!’. For the lack of funds, most museums, in particular in Sarajevo, are threatened with closure. After the National Art Gallery and the Museum of the History of the Second World War<sup>30</sup>, it is now the National Museum which faces the threat of closure for economic reasons. Founded by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1888 and opened to the public in 1913, it houses invaluable collections which have survived the various conflicts, including bombardments to which the capital was subjected at the start of the 1990s<sup>31</sup>. It also houses a botanical garden and is often the site of various official events. Closed for a long time at the end of the recent conflict, its rehabilitation and its functioning were made possible thanks to a certain number of donations and substantial assistance from UNESCO. But for many years, financing has been missing and the old Austro-Hungarian building could once again deteriorate silently.

The same fate could strike the Vjećnica, the imposing library in the very characteristic Moresco style which is finally starting to get rid of the rubble caused by the bombardments and where restoration work is still not completed. But this threat is without doubt unfounded, because colossal funds were already allocated for the repair of the building, which is one of the most important witnesses to the modern history of Sarajevo. It would be astonishing if its restoration stopped where it is now. But how can one not envisage the worst! In total, there are seven cultural centres which could be forced to close their doors for lack of financing (national, federal or municipal).

### **The Armed Forces and the sharing of military property**

As usual, as regards armies, you have to seek encouraging or, at least, significant signs on the ground. An initiative of several associations of former soldiers of the Federation was somewhat surprising in mid-January 2012. Considering the disastrous situation of many hundreds of their counterparts in RS, demobilised like them but without any indemnity, they organised a collection to come to their aid. In effect, while the demobilised soldiers received in the Federation a derisory assistance of around 150 Euros, those of RS got nothing and found themselves completely destitute! Facing this state of affairs, many dozens of former soldiers of the Federation took the initiative to give five Euros each to come to the aid of the colleagues in the RS. The creation of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina, deemed initially as something which would be very difficult to achieve, is without doubt one of the rare successes of the Dayton Accords. The facts mentioned reflect in any case the ambiance prevailing within the armed forces, even if multi-ethnicity cannot really be confirmed outside some operational detachments (sent to Iraq, for example) and central institutions.

As regards the pooling of military real estate, the situation has been nearly blocked for a certain time already. Although the Bosnian Presidency has clearly stated that it favours admission to the MAP (*Main Action Plan*), the stage preceding integration, NATO has just as clearly repeated that all military real estate property must be registered as belonging to the State of Bosnia-Herzegovina. But the two entities for sixteen years have balked at handing over their (self-proclaimed) property rights. The situation appears to be blocked and one does not sense the slightest political will on either side to smooth out the disagreement. The integration of Bosnia-Herzegovina in NATO does not seem likely in the immediate future.

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<sup>30</sup>Including part of the collection, stored without any precaution in the open air, behind the building, has steadily deteriorated (a helicopter was lost to arson in 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Including the famous and priceless Haggadah, a 16th century manuscript written in Hebrew, brought in by Jews who were fleeing the Spanish Inquisition.

## **Is the EU a credible prospect?**

While NATO remains just a dream, is the same true of the EU for the authorities in Sarajevo? No, if you believe the initial statements of Mr. Bevanda, who reaffirms that 2012 will be the year of the EU for BH! The Prime Minister has, in any case, clearly defined rapprochement with the EU as the top priority for his government. The problems which Europe has experienced and the Greek case are not even mentioned. This political autism has a rather simple explanation, but no one says it openly : Europe is seen essentially as a creditor which could compensate for the more or less announced departure of certain international institutions and organisations from Sarajevo. For many, including on the political plane, the EU is synonymous with subsidies. It was consequently necessary to be well positioned to get from it the maximum, which would be one of the explanations for the delays in constituting the government. Bizarrely, the obligations inherent in a rapprochement, *a fortiori* in integration in the Union, are only rarely mentioned before the general public.

It is obvious that the forthcoming admission of Croatia has made people envious. But with respect to BH, it seems absurd to read the very optimistic statements, except that we know that their authors wish to play on the attraction to the Union and do so to gain sympathy, even provoke enthusiasm among the population. But there is a big distance between saying this and what Mr Bevanda forgot to say – that the road will be peppered with preconditions, almost none of which is currently satisfied. First comes a declaration of formal candidacy, which is what states wishing to join the EU and believing themselves prepared to join must do: this is still far from the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Prime Minister also forgets to say that the decision to admit a candidate to the various stages is neither a right, nor is it automatic. Moreover, it was made clear during the conference of Zagreb in 2000 that the Balkan states will each be integrated at their own rhythm and according to their own merits. As for Bosnia-Herzegovina, the latest European report describes very concretely the progress of reforms as ‘very limited’. Some modest results have been noted, such as the relaxation of the visa regime and some rare progress has turned up concerning the rule of law and cooperation with the TPIY. Despite the efforts in its direction in response to European demands, the Roma community continues to be subjected to discrimination.

In addition, for a strong signal to be perceived by the Bosnian population, it would be helpful if a major proof of trust were given to the local authorities. There are not many possibilities for that and if it is excluded that other subsidies can arrive in the present state, only a withdrawal of the EU police mission (MPEU) and/or of the European force grouped within the ‘*Althéa*’ mission would have real impact. Both have seen their mandates extended, by six months for the first and by one year for the second. The maintenance of these forces<sup>32</sup> is the essential proof of the unfavourable opinion from the international community, and in the event, of the EU as regards the political, economic and security outlook of BH. As long as these forces will be maintained, the submission of a candidacy cannot be envisioned for Sarajevo. This is precisely where the problem is posed and it would not be completely illogical to see the Bosnian authorities request, within a relatively short time period and according to the authorised procedures, the departure of these components which, so long as they remain, do not bother the population given their modesty, but could be presented as brakes on integration, the objective in which so many place their last hopes. As viewed from Brussels, do you keep *Althéa* because it is the only force allowing the EU to watch over the implementation of the reforms and over respect for the commitments, or because it allows certain European states to ‘show their muscles’? The question will arise again in a doubtless more precise manner in 2012, all the more so as a number of European countries are only making symbolic contributions if at all (The Netherlands has given nothing since November 2011), essentially for economic reasons, since the contributions are voluntary and are for the account of the contributors. The force is presently very clearly below the two thousand two

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<sup>32</sup> Supported, in particular, by Austria, Slovakia, Hungary and Turkey, the principal contributors, but also by Great Britain.

hundred men required (until recently people spoke of one thousand three hundred, of which less than one thousand coming from the European countries).

## **Overall appraisal and prospects. What can the new government bring?**

Ever since the announcement of the formation of a new government, the international community as a whole, Valentin Inzko at its head, did not conceal its great satisfaction. The HR-EUSR has nonetheless called upon the new team to ‘make up for lost time’ and adopt ‘urgent measures to stimulate economic growth and employment’. Will this exhortation be heard or will it be lost among the little games of the politicians?

An initial element of response, rather favourable, was given by the Parliament the day after the formation of the government team with the passage of the law on a census of the population and of the law on public assistance. As for the first, it should make it possible to resolve a problem posed fifteen years ago (actually still further back, given that no demographic data exists since 1991) the solution to which was always rebuffed. This census is feared by some, considering the large number of displaced persons and, above all, the emigration. The Croats, in particular, could see their influence diminished, because their relative weight without doubt must decrease, but all the leaders fear the reality of the numbers. Nevertheless, this operation is indispensable, because all the present calculations, those of the International Community just as those of the Bosnian authorities, derive from estimates or extrapolations from old data going back more than twenty years. It will be very important to keep an eye on the questions posed during the operations of gathering the information. More concretely, it will be essential to examine how they process the questions of ethnic membership and, above all, to see whether the same possibility will be left for those citizens who wish to go beyond the ethnic cleavages and declare themselves to be ‘Bosnians’, as during the period of Marshal Tito, when it was possible to state one’s nationality as ‘Yugoslav’.

One of the first actions of the Bevanda government must be to define a fiscal framework for the years 2012-2014. This necessity is moreover a demand of the IMF, just as it is demanded by the European Commission, for whom the framework is an essential condition for obtaining the aid awaited by Sarajevo. But the Prime Minister must demonstrate firmness and convince all the partners (is this term well chosen?) that BH is coming to the limit of what these international institutions can tolerate and that the world economy (above all, the European economy) will not long be able to maintain the country on its drip without real proof of a serious and genuine intention to make progress. In the same note, it will be necessary to impose a serious ‘weight control regime’ on the public sector and drive out fictive jobs and ‘phantom’ officials, who are very numerous and put such a strain on the budget. Without doubt, it will also be necessary to reduce a certain number of operational expenses, in particular related to the lifestyle and benefits of the leaders. This goes for the central government level, but above all at the region or cantonal levels, where the lowest ‘minister’ of a canton, for example, is granted benefits which border on indecency...

Up to now, the risk of ‘social contamination’ has not been very big. Whether we speak of atavism or fatalism, lassitude or individualism, Bosnian society taken altogether has not for the moment gone beyond the stage of veiled criticism or discussions in limited milieu. Nevertheless, the bankruptcy of the social policy conducted by the entire class of leaders ever since the end of the conflict, based on patronage and corruption, is a matter of public notoriety. But it is a long way from that to some popular revolt or of demonstrations on the order of those in Athens or Thessalonika and no one dares to take this step despite the growing difficulties. In the absence of a credible and charismatic leader, in the absence of trade union or sectoral organisations which could carry sufficient weight with the government, a social explosion should not really be expected, except if ethnic ‘ingredients’ of one or another side are introduced, all the more so as the resources of individuals are not

limitless. You frequently hear '*Ima veze*'!<sup>33</sup> Indeed, there is always a way and the Bosnian 'system D' is an everyday reality based essentially but not only on unreported employment (working on the black) and the grey economy. To be sure, the authorities have been asked to fight against fraudulent work and to ensure real finances coming from VAT and taxes. However, you have to be aware that in the immediate future and, no doubt, for a long time to come, it is not possible to cut the branch on which one is seated... It is true that it is now sixteen years people are waiting for results!

But it is in the mentalities that we find the major problem and there change will doubtless be difficult to obtain. One of the perverse effects of massive international involvement since the conflict is that it has created a veritable 'culture of permanent dependence'. The International Community takes part of the responsibility because its good intentions and will, praiseworthy to be sure, to help the country to restructure itself and to function has led the rulers, consciously or not, to rely on outside aid, but also no longer to undertake anything at all which might provoke the ire of the HR-EUSR. To put it clearly, some measures or reforms envisaged, founded on a reality, customs and 'Balkan' practices are systematically shocking and, in certain cases, have led to their cancellation or prohibition. In this case, for the Bosnian leaders, who are still little inclined to create the rule of law, it is simpler and less tiresome to leave things alone, to wait for the representatives of the International Community to decide for them at the central level and to devote themselves to their personal interests within the two entities!

## **Are there solutions to this situation ?**

Taking into account the impressive number of states, of summits, of specialists (sometimes self-proclaimed) which have been attempting for the past sixteen years to find a solution to the Bosnian problem, it is not our intention to propose a miracle solution. However, a cool analysis of the question and results can be considered as a basis for reflection, though it obviously does not take into account the interests which are not acknowledged by one or another party.

At the start, one must ask a fundamental question: what is necessitating presently such close assistance and strict supervision? Are the threats which weigh on BH still the same as in 1996? Some still exist and will not be reduced to zero without difficulty, because they touch the foundations of the societies composing Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the first ranks among them figure interethnic hostility and its corollary, the lack of discernment in interfaith relations<sup>34</sup>, whose eradication will require, in the best of cases, one generation.

A second threat, which necessarily did not give its name, has disappeared in the violent form which troubled the West but remains alive and well: the rise in power of radical Islam and the presence of elements from outside BH. While many believed that the phenomenon was limited to some Wahhabi settlements which were well known and manageable, the attack of 28 October 2011, rather incomprehensible in its realisation, has reminded us that one cannot judge this subject only in the national context but must look at the regional level. The multiplication of mosques (some are old, rebuilt mosques, but many are new<sup>35</sup>) and madrassas, criticised by some, would not in fact be disturbing and could not be seen as an expression of active proselytism if it were compensated by respect for other faiths. In particular, in the capital, this was not always the case. Reciprocity coming from the two other faiths exists moreover. Religion and ethnicity always go (and will go) hand in hand. A risk of

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<sup>33</sup> In the spoken language, literally 'There are means', more correctly: 'It is possible.'

<sup>34</sup> The prelates of the three major religions are, in this context, also all responsible for making what are often excessive statements which stud their sermons or statements. Officially, they fight with barbed remarks during the official interfaith gatherings and there they even show proof of overtures.

<sup>35</sup> From before the end of the conflict, the construction of many mosques had been noted, including in areas in particular of the Serb side of the IEBL where, historically, they had never been...

radicalisation therefore obviously exists, but perhaps not more than in our cities of Western Europe. And a greater opening up of the population to the world outside can break the walls of the Bosnian microcosm and bring in a certain tolerance. For that, from both sides it is essential that there be no outside meddling.

The threat of armed conflagration is the third major risk. There, as well, the conditions have somewhat changed. One must recall that at the start of 1992, the presence of the forces of the ex-Yugoslav Army and, above all, of the large military stocks which Tito had spread out over the entire territory of Yugoslavia in the context of his concept of Generalised Popular Defence, had enabled the belligerents to massively equip themselves at very little expense! The creation of the unified army of BH is without doubt one of the most successful creations of the Dayton process. Not everything is perfect, far from it<sup>36</sup>, but the insistence of the international community and of the international organisations has made possible steady and substantial reduction of personnel, strict control of materiel granted, the setting up of a force (which still nonetheless lacks the desired multiethnic character) and the launch of a programme to reduce excessive armaments.

To be sure, despite numerous '*Harvest*' operations to gather up arms, many personal weapons (or collective weapons, though they are less numerous), are still held by individuals. In most cases, we are talking about 'preventive measures,' and the recent conflict reminded everyone of prudence and, at times, of the utility of being able to defend oneself...But in other cases, it is criminal organisations (of all sizes) which trade in and hold veritable small arsenals, allowing the Underworld and the gangs of Western Europe to supply themselves<sup>37</sup>. In this precise case, the danger remains very real even if, as one of the traffickers questioned in the report cited said, the prices have risen because stock is shrinking (in fact, these are local stocks, because other supply networks exist). This illicit trade, like all other 'specialised' criminal networks (trafficking in human beings, drugs, etc..) are identified as finding in BH a terrain which is still favourable. This is a real threat which it is necessary to take into consideration a bit more every day.

As regards a potential conflagration of the whole region, one can, without going too far, state that it has been reduced to its weakest expression, even if Kosovo remains a hearth of latent crisis. Perhaps one day it will be necessary to add the region of the Sandžak, in the South of Serbia and close to BH, about which people speak from time to time and which still presents a certain number of factors for a potential crisis. The neighbours of BH presently have other preoccupations than to stir up some quarrel with it and interests which are clearly posted – in particular, integration into the European Union (Croatia is nearly there, Montenegro seems to be well on the way and Serbia is missing only – if one can say – recognition of the independence of Kosovo in order to get on board<sup>38</sup>). This acknowledgement of respectability causes them to seek good quality in their relations with their neighbours. But if Croatia seems for this reason tempted to keep a certain distance from the Croats of BH, Belgrade will no doubt have more difficulty limiting its support for the *Republika Srpska*.

Some threats have been identified and are recurrent, while others have assumed greater importance. What are the possibilities we can envisage for the future, knowing that it is not a question of playing the sorcerer's apprentice and that some of them have already been tried and shown their limits? Some will without doubt be deemed to be iconoclast, but in envisaging them we only show an inevitable pragmatism after so many years spent compensating for the faults of a system put in place by the International Community and having limits which are now long well known.

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<sup>36</sup> The question of putting together real estate is slow in being settled, because the entities defend their own interests.

<sup>37</sup> See the excellent reporting on this subject broadcast by the French channel M6 on 12 February 2012.

<sup>38</sup> The agreement reached on 24 February is in this sense, but Belgrade has not gone so far as to recognise the State of Kosovo.

One possibility, the simplest and most satisfying morally, would be to wait for the generation of leaders who arose during the 1992-95 conflict pass on the baton. Aside from the fact that that would perpetuate a disastrous situation for the populations and the habit of dependence, it is not very likely that the next generation will do better than its predecessors and will not be tempted to take the same tortuous paths. The International Community could pursue another record, that of Cyprus, where the partition resulting from the Turkish invasion has still not been either ratified or settled after thirty-seven years of effort. Moreover, as with the divided island, a costly force would be necessary, financed in this case – and this changes everything – by the contributors (without doubt, less and less numerous) and the representative offices of the international authorities would have to be kept in place in BH.

The second solution: wait for, if not the Messiah, then the emergence of a new Tito (or cause such emergence). The history of the Balkans and of the territory of former Yougoslavia in particular has shown that: a certain unity and more or less long periods of calm have been obtained in all ages only because a strong institution or leader, firm and charismatic at the same time, unified (if necessary, by force) the various components of the state. At present no personality seems capable of playing this role in Bosnia-Herzegovina. All the leaders, with rare exceptions, are entangled in the mesh of their own ethnic group and only have slight room for manœuvre. This solution is therefore illusory.

The third possibility: faced with the patent failure of a programme of stabilisation resulting from the Dayton Accords, which the great majority acknowledge is unsuited to the reality of the moment and ineffective (apart from some rare signs of progress), the International Community could call for a ‘Dayton 2’ in order to give greater responsibility to the Bosnian authorities<sup>39</sup>, or, if necessary, force their hand. It is not certain that someone will launch into this adventure by proposing such a solution. Without considering that such negotiations might end by giving birth to another monster under pressure from some states which are very much engaged at the sides of the entitites.

A fourth idea: an intelligent media campaign could announce the total disengagement of the forces, of the European police mission and of the offices of international institutions, as well as the blockage of all assistance unless really effective measures are undertaken. This announcement could provoke a salutary electric shock, because the Bosnian decision-makers would quickly feel themselves affected where it hurts: in the pocketbook. But one would then have to agree to ‘Balkan’ solutions being introduced, something which has not been tolerated for a long time. This extreme measure is certainly not desirable, but it is worth envisioning it, above all in the present context.

Finally, an intermediate solution, including some ideas which were previously issued could consist both of intensifying and firming up international pressure and making it binding on pain not of suspension, but of elimination of the assistance related with the withdrawal of the *Althéa* mission and of the MPUE, this latter replaced by enhanced and direct cooperation with the national and supranational structures of police and, above all, accepting the idea that while aiming at integration in the EU, BH is not and never can be a European state like the others. It will be appropriate in this context also to accept, based on this fact, that it can have its own procedures adapted to the local conditions, decided upon by its leaders, in accordance with the wishes and needs of its population, to which an action framework would be set, though without the sword of Damocles of the Powers of Bonn. Because in wishing to make BH a paragon of democracy and demanding perfection in all aspects, the International Community may end up discouraging what local good will there is.

*«Errare humanum est, perseverare diabolicum ».*

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<sup>39</sup> But too many voices arise when one speaks of eliminating the powers of Bonn.

**COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT** (\* : members of the preceding government).

Prime Minister : Vjekoslav BEVANDA (HDZ)

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers: Zlatko LAGUMDŽIJA (SDP)

Deputy Minister: Ana TRIŠIC-BABIĆ (SNSD)\*

Minister of Finance and of the Budget, and Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers: Nikola ŠPIRIĆ (SNSD)

Deputy Minister: Fuad KASUMOVIĆ (SDA)\*

Minister of Internal Affairs: Sredoje NOVIĆ (SNSD)\*

Deputy Minister: Denisa SARAJLIĆ-MAGLIĆ (SDP)

Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations: Mirko ŠAROVIĆ (SDS)

Deputy Minister: Ermina SALKIČEVIĆ-DIZDAREVIĆ (SDP)

Minister of Justice : Bariša ČOLAK (HDZ BiH)\*

Deputy Minister : Srđan RADULJ (DNZ)

Minister of Security: Sadik AHMETOVIĆ (SDA)\*

Deputy Minister : Mladen ČAVAR (SDP)

Minister of Human Rights and Refugees: Damir LJUBIĆ (HDZ 1990)

Deputy Minister : Radmila MITROVIĆ (SDS)

Minister of Defence : Muhamed IBRAHIMOVIĆ (SDA)

Deputy Minister: Marina PENDEŠ (HDZ BiH)\* et Mirko OKOLIĆ (SDS)

Minister of Transport and Communications : Damir HADŽIĆ (SDP)

Deputy Minister : Rudo VIDOVICIĆ (HDZ 1990)\*

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