

## Politics or Culture? —The Yugoslav Conflicts and the Prospects for Peace—

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Speaking only a few days before the so-called peace agreement in Dayton, Ohio on the future of Bosnia, I first offered some basic information about former Yugoslavia, its constituent units, structure, ethnic composition, economics and role / position in the international community. After a couple of glimpses on recent history it was emphasized that: a) it was a unique country in many ways and survived since 1945 because of a delicate, continuous "balancing of balances" and b) it lies at the crossroads of the Christian / Muslim world, of Europe / Middle East and ex-Soviet Union, of former Ottoman / Austro-Hungarian empires, of Catholicism / Orthodoxy and thus between traditional Croat and Serb cultures and between the Cold War blocks.

It is not a predominantly ethnic or religious conflict but a politico-structural conflict making use of ethnicity. Whereas the *war* started in 1991, the *conflict* started with the oil crisis and later changes in Western capitalism by which Yugoslavia lost much of industrial base. International debts accumulated, international financial organisations introduced austerity programs; unemployment and social deprivation followed, in a country already experiencing growing internal socio-economic disparities between its rich North and poor South. From this social crisis followed a political and constitutional crisis as the secession strategy by Slovenia and Croatia. Only then followed the war. The world has dealt with the *war*, but not with the *conflict*.

Instead of being an impartial "conflict doctor", the international community made a series of grave mistakes which, over time, only aggravated the situation.

Obsolete Cold War conflict analysis and lack of relevant institutions prevented adequate conflict management. Only United Nations personnel in the field did more good than harm.

Violence is a sign of despair, of lack of constructive solution-oriented thinking. Due to the "conflict illiteracy" of the international community and the bewilderment after the so-called end of the Cold War, we have experienced four years of increasing "Balkanization" of this international community. Nothing worked, e.g. the "safe zones" was a fraud, and no important actor wanted to make the necessary resources available for the United Nations, but certainly for the "United NATOs". In addition, the international media and public cried out that "we must do something". Thus the massive bombings of only one side and the de facto end of the UN peace-keeping mission both there and in Croatia (which the West has helped to become probably the strongest military power in the region).

Genuine conflict-solution and long-term peace-building and reconciliation among human beings there? Well, can probably be developed anywhere but in Dayton, Ohio. Its "peace" will, in reality be little more than a deal - presumably with secret sub-deals - and lead to a de facto NATO occupation of Bosnia.

The three presidents negotiating there are deeply responsible for the war in the first place and neither individually nor collectively do they represent the citizens of what was since May 1992 independent Bosnia. Their agreement will hardly be put at a referendum so those who are to live their lives under the provisions of the deal could democratically decide about it. This is the *fait accompli* of leaders *against* their peoples, after having fought wars *against* these people but likely to be hailed as a historic peace one of these days. The international community want peace *from* Bosnia, which is not the same as peace *in* Bosnia.

Thus, I challenged the audience to believe in and work for alternatives to such handling of conflicts peace-making in our disordered, immoral world of today.  
(Lecture in English)