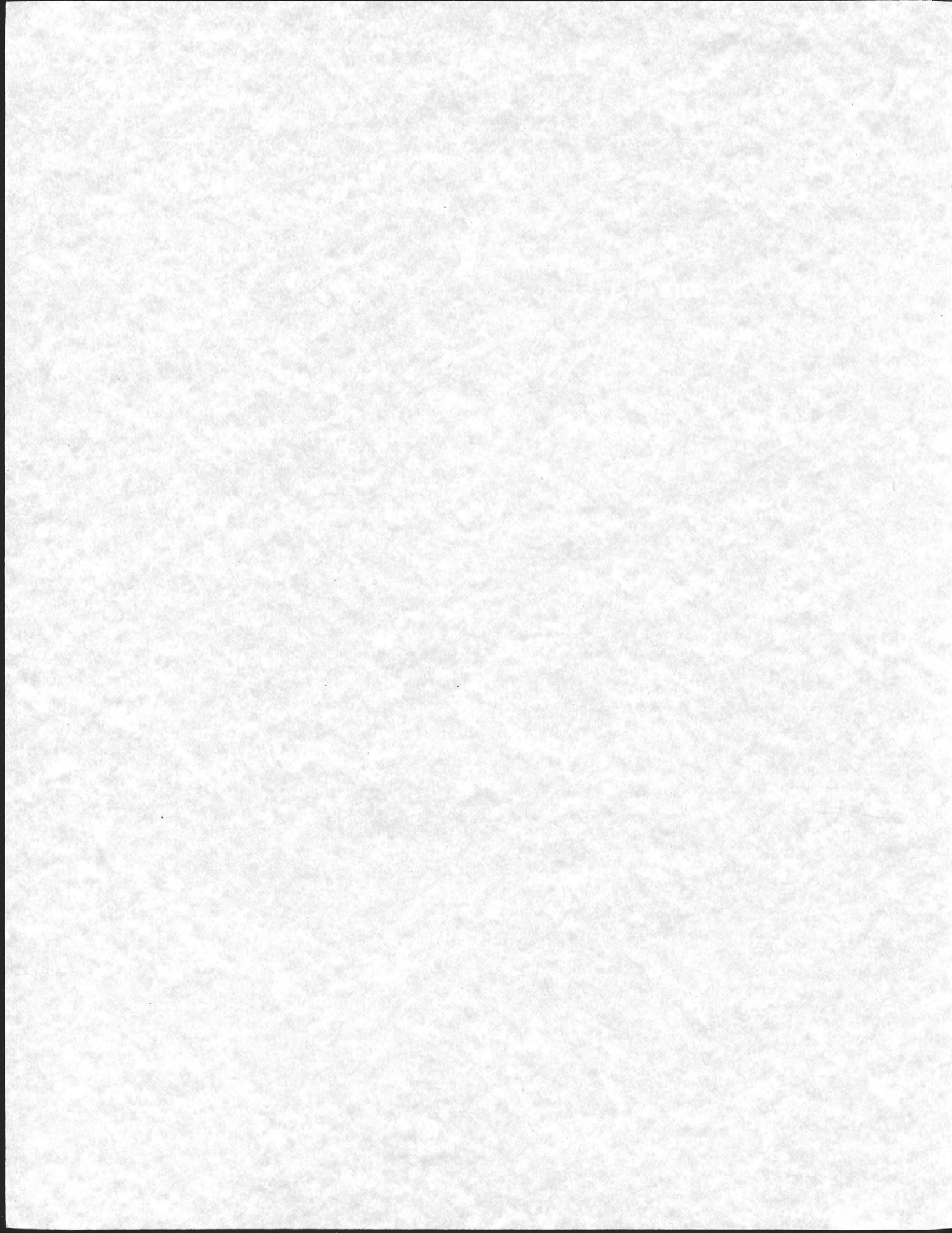


Center for the Study of Societies in Crisis
Dallas, Texas

SARAJEVO:
SPONTANEOUS REPATRIATION TO A CITY UNDER SIEGE
1992 to 1995

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INTRODUCTION

This study — of repatriation to Sarajevo, a city under siege — is the final report in the Center for the Study of Societies in Crisis's examination of voluntary return to places that are experiencing conflict. Sarajevo is a city that has been under siege since the spring of 1992. As of this writing, it still is.

It is important to see how repatriation to a sophisticated European city is similar to — or dissimilar from — the other returns analyzed in the study. Most of the reports in this series have dealt with repatriation in developing countries. From the end of World War II until the end of the cold war, refugee migrations were limited almost exclusively to such areas. However, the upsurge in nationalism that followed the dissolution of communist states in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union now threatens the world with a new kind of refugee — and a new kind of repatriate.

Bosnia-Herzegovina and its capital, Sarajevo, were among the early victims of this post-cold war nationalism. War erupted in the country in the spring of 1992, forcing the Bosnian Muslims and Croats to try to defend themselves against ethnic Serbs. On the surface, the war appeared to be a violent expression of Slav nationalism. But the reasons for the war are significantly more complicated. Whatever the justification, within a few months of the outbreak of the conflict, the Serbs had killed thousands of people. Countless others had been raped, tortured, or rounded up into concentration camps. Hundreds of thousands had fled — or been forced to flee.

"This was a different war now," Ed Vulliamy (1994) writes in *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War*. "These people were not 'refugees' in the strict sense of the term, in flight from warring armies. Their removal was the *subject matter*, not a side-effect of 'the war'. That these people should die or lose their homes, through whatever means necessary, was the raw material, the aim, of the [war]."

In the spring of 1993, the Muslims and Croats of central Bosnia turned on each other, again for a complicated set of reasons. By the time those hostilities had simmered down a year later, more people had been killed and more refugees and displaced people created.

As a whole, the refugees and displaced people from Bosnia — and especially from Sarajevo — are significantly different from the average cold war-era refugee. The Bosnians are a well-educated group who had an enviable standard of living. Although many Bosnians fled the country because they feared for their lives, and with good reason, a significant number of Sarajevans left the city because they did not wish to live without a ready supply of water, gas, and electricity. (This is not to imply life wasn't dangerous in Sarajevo after the war began; on numerous days, the Serbs rained several thousand shells on the city and people died.) Unlike residents of other communist countries, Yugoslavs were allowed to travel outside their country; many had worked abroad. Furthermore, unlike most of the earlier studies, the Bosnian

government and the Muslim refugees/repatriates were not hostile to each other. In fact, the government has apparently welcomed back the returnees. These characteristics not only set the Bosnians apart from earlier refugees, they significantly affected the kinds of experiences the Bosnians had as refugees and as repatriates.

Few, if any, of the Muslims and Croats expelled from the northern and eastern parts of the country have been able to return — or are likely to be able to do so in the foreseeable future. But residents of central Bosnia have been repatriating themselves, largely without assistance, for some time. So, too have small numbers of Sarajevans.

It would appear, at first glance, refugees cannot return to a city under siege. According to the dictionary, a siege is "the encirclement of a fortified place by an opposing armed force intending to take it, usually by blockade and bombardment." But such encirclements are rarely perfect. Even in the early days of the siege of Sarajevo, smugglers found ways to bring such items as cigarettes and alcohol across confrontation lines. Once the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) took control of the Sarajevo airport in the summer of 1992, residents found a way out of the city — and back into it. Under the cover of darkness, Sarajevans dashed across the airport each night, braving not only the guns of Serb soldiers stationed just meters from the runways but also the armored vehicles of UNPROFOR soldiers who patrolled it. UNPROFOR quickly became one of the forces guarding the city, trying to keep people in.

A year later, the Bosnian government completed a tunnel under the airport, creating a safer path in and out of the city. By early 1995, the siege of Sarajevo was so loose five hundred satellite dishes reportedly had been imported into the city.

Nobody knows for sure the number of refugees and displaced people who have returned to Sarajevo since the war began. Perhaps ten thousand, perhaps less. But an informal survey, done by the INTERTECT office in Sarajevo, has indicated the vast majority of those returning to the city are women and children seeking to be reunited with their husbands and fathers who remained behind in the city.

DEMOGRAPHY AND GEOGRAPHY

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Bosnia-Herzegovina was a part of Yugoslavia, a communist country with a relatively high standard of living, until it declared its independence in 1992. Bosnia is a mountainous republic, making up the central and largest part of the Dinaric mountain range. It is composed of two provinces: Bosnia, the larger part of the republic, spreads across the eastern, central, and western parts of the state. It contains most of the population and all but one of the biggest cities.¹ Herzegovina primarily comprises the Neretva River Basin. The entire country is often referred to simply as Bosnia.

Croatia, another former republic of Yugoslavia, borders Bosnia on the north and west. (Bosnia's coastline is only a few kilometers on the Adriatic Sea, carved from Croatia's Dalmatian Coast.) Serbia and Montenegro, which together make up the rump Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, are on Bosnia's eastern and southern borders.

As Noel Malcolm (1994) notes in *Bosnia: A Short History* (1994), there is a strong connection between Bosnia's geography and its ethnic makeup:

Bosnia . . . has often been called the microcosm of the Balkans. There is no such thing as a typical Bosnian face: there are fair-haired and dark-haired Bosnians, olive-skinned and freckled, big-boned and wiry-limbed. The genes of innumerable different peoples have contributed to this human mosaic. The country is heavily mountainous, with terrain ranging from the dense forests and lush upland pastures of north-central Bosnia to the arid and gaunt landscape of western Hercegovina; it is divided by rivers, most of which are non-navigable. An impenetrable mass of land, it stands between two of the main routes through which waves of invading populations entered the western Balkans: the Dalmatian coastal strip, and the lowland thoroughfare which led from Belgrade down through Serbia to Macedonia and Bulgaria. So the direct effect of those invasions on Bosnia was probably much smaller than their impact on the fertile lowlands of Serbia or the eminently plunderable Dalmatian coastal towns. But the indirect effect, in terms of the accumulation of racial types, was probably greater. Mountainous areas act as refuges for populations which, in flatter country, would otherwise be exterminated or driven away. In the case of Bosnia, the Slav invasions of the sixth and seventh centuries established a linguistic identity which eventually replaced all others. But the signs of racial diversity are there for anyone with eyes in his head to see.

¹ The Bosnian province has several major cities: Sarajevo, the capital; Zenica, an industrial town in central Bosnia; Tuzla, an industrial area in northeastern Bosnia; and Banja Luka, with a mixed economy in northern Bosnia. Mostar, which had a military/industrial base before the war, is the major metropolitan center in Herzegovina.

Before the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Bosnia had the most ethnically diverse population in the federation, reflecting, in part, the republic's location between Croatia and Serbia. According to the 1991 census, Bosnia-Herzegovina had a population of almost 4.4 million people. Of that number, 44 percent were Muslim Slavs, many of them a secular, educated, urban elite. Thirty-one percent were Orthodox Serbs, often farmers and shepherds. Seventeen percent were Croats. And the rest fell into a category called *other*. Of the republic's 109 municipalities, 37 had clear Muslim majorities; 32, clear Serb majorities; and 13, clear Croat majorities. In addition, 15 municipalities had simple Muslim majorities; 5, simple Serb majorities; and 7, simple Croat majorities.

Before the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina began in 1992, Serbs lived in the northern and eastern regions of the country, while Croats tended to congregate in western Herzegovina and parts of central Bosnia. Muslim majorities could be found along the eastern border, in central and north-central Bosnia, and in the far, northwestern corner of the republic. "[T]hey were," as Mark Thompson (Ali 1993) writes of the Bosnian Muslims, the most dispersed nation. . . . Serbs and Croats cohabited in relatively few districts, whereas Muslims lived with both throughout the republic. Muslims were the cement in Bosnia-Herzegovina."

Sarajevo

Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, is located in the east-central part of the republic, in a long, narrow valley. The city straddles both banks of the Miljacka River and wanders up into the foothills of the surrounding mountains. As Roy Gutman (1993) says in *A Witness to Genocide*:

Sarajevo, with its skyline of minarets, church steeples and synagogues, was testimony to centuries of civilized multiethnic coexistence. It was a place of learning and of commerce, a westward-looking city in an exotic setting created over the centuries: a European jewel. This was the site of the Olympics in 1984, with an ancient bazaar where young people in blue jeans drank Turkish coffee to the strains of pop music in the cobblestoned marketplace.

The 1991 census treated the five districts of the municipality of Sarajevo — Sarajevo-Center, Hadzići, Ilijaš, Pale, and Trnovo — as one single district. According to that census, just under 526,000 people lived in Sarajevo district. Some 49.3 percent of them were Muslims; 29.9 percent, Serbs; 6.6 percent, Croats; and 14.2 percent, others.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The war currently being waged in Bosnia-Herzegovina is not an ethnic conflict, despite the fact numerous politicians and journalists have labeled it as such.² Nor is the war based on religious differences, although some parties to the conflict would like to characterize it that way. Nevertheless, claims of irreconcilable differences in ethnicity and religion have played a major role in the war, if only as a pretext for committing countless numbers of almost unspeakable atrocities. Furthermore, the Bosnian Serbs often profess their desire to separate from the rest of Bosnia because they say they fear Muslim fundamentalism, but the conflict actually reflects a different set of concerns. Nationalism turns out to be an excuse — not a reason — for the atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as is true in several other parts of the world. It has also proved to be a useful tool for politicians who want to keep power for themselves.

The Run-up to the War

In the decade following the death of Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia's long-time communist dictator, Yugoslavia began to disintegrate along nationalist lines. Growing Serb nationalism alarmed the other nationalities in Yugoslavia and encouraged their own nationalist movements.

Writing in his *Bosnia: A Short History*, Malcolm (1994) notes:

On 28 June 1989 several hundred thousand Serbs assembled at the battlefield site of Gazimestan, outside the Kosovar capital, Priština, to celebrate the six-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. For many weeks a ferment of national feeling had been created inside Serbia; the bones of Prince Lazar who died at the battle, had been taken on a tour of the country, becoming an object of pilgrimage wherever they were. In the courtyard of the monastery at Gračanica (south of Priština), while people queued to pay their devotions to the Prince's bones inside, stalls sold icon-style posters of Jesus Christ, Prince Lazar and [Serbian President] Slobodan Milošević side by side. At the ceremony on the battlefield Milošević was accompanied by black-robed metropolitans of the Orthodox Church, singers in traditional Serbian folk costumes, and members of the

² Oxford's Adam Roberts might argue this point. In his introduction to Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics* (1993), he states: "The term 'ethnicity' easily suggests that criteria pertaining to race and language are decisive in determining group identity. However, some deep conflicts of our time involve rival groups which are of similar or identical race and language — as in Northern Ireland, or (if to a lesser extent) in some of the terrible conflicts in Yugoslavia. In these cases, what binds a group together, separates it from others, and fatefully leads it into action, is not just (and perhaps not at all) language, or religion, or skin-color, but also a sense of common vulnerability: past history and present experience teach who are one's enemies, and who are one's friends. Security is thus one major key to identity. Whether or not it is right to apply the term 'ethnic' to all these conflicts is not very important."

And as Moynihan points out in the same volume, in the former Yugoslavia, the Serbs and Croats — who make up the largest nationalities — had only "the smallest differences in genealogy; with, indeed, practically a common language." He concludes: "Ethnic conflict does not require great difference; small will do."

security police in their traditional dress of dark suits and sunglasses. 'After six centuries', Milošević told the crowd, 'we are again engaged in battles and quarrels. They are not armed battles, but this cannot be excluded yet.' The crowd roared its approval.

Although the Kosovo commotion was symbolic, its tone was in keeping with what was to follow. In addition, Croatian nationalist feelings had been growing since the Croatian Spring was suppressed in the early 1970s, and Serbian nationalism of the 1980s had helped bring that nationalism back into being, at least in part.

When the Serbs refused to accept a Croatian as the next federal president of Yugoslavia in 1991, Slovenia and Croatia had had enough. On June 25, both countries declared their independence. The following day, a column of federal army tanks rolled into Slovenia. But Slovenia, which had few Serbs, was quickly dropped from the federal army's plans. By late August, Croatia and Serbia were at full-scale war. Finally, in early 1992, after the fall of Croatia's Vukovar, a peace settlement was agreed to in Croatia. The plan placed the territory conquered by the Serbians in a limbo of United Nations (UN) protected zones.

The War

As Vulliamy (1994) writes in *Season in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War*:

Bosnia's war unfolded in modern Europe, at the birth of the New World Order, although it often looked like a war from another time. . . . The war has baffled that new world. It has been erroneously portrayed as too complicated to understand. In reality, although it is being fought in the labyrinthine cauldron of Balkan history, Bosnia's war is cruelly simple. It is the result of the resurrection in our time of the dreams and aggrieved historical quests of two great Balkan powers of medieval origin, Serbia and Croatia, and the attempt to re-establish their ancient frontiers with modern weaponry in the chaos of post-communist Europe.

At the time of the Croatian war with Yugoslavia, Bosnia had few options. It could follow Croatia and Slovenia out of Yugoslavia, or it could remain in a federation with Serbia and Montenegro, both predominantly Serb areas. The Muslims and Croats in Bosnia chose independence. The major Serb political party, the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), boycotted the election, held on February 29 and March 1, 1992, and forbade Serbs to vote. Nevertheless, an amazing 99.5 percent of those voting — or 64.7 percent of those eligible to vote — opted for independence.

There was plenty of warning of what might come. After the war began in Croatia, troops from the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) were stationed throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, clashing with Bosnian residents, harassing non-Serbs, and looting and burning property, particularly in Herzegovina. But, more importantly, the JNA made serious preparation for war. As Vulliamy (1994) reports:

Much of the armour coming back from service in the Croatian war had come through Bosnia, and stopped there. There were 100,000 full-time soldiers of the Yugoslav army working to put the plethora of military bases, air bases and arms factories on another war footing, against another breakaway republic. The Yugoslav army was mobilising men and further weaponry across the border from Serbia, and distributing arms to the Serbian irregular columns being formed in the villages.

Although violence marked much of March 1992, the war didn't begin until April. On April 6, Serb snipers atop the Holiday Inn fired on a peace demonstration, killing several people. Vulliamy (1994) describes the day: "The government police mounted a grenade attack on the Holiday Inn, which changed hands that afternoon. Throughout the rest of the day, police units and Serbian mortar shells crashed into the city centre from the hills above, sending a pall of smoke rising into the spring air." The European Community recognized Bosnia's independence on April 6; the United States and Croatia granted recognition the following day. The Bosnian Serbs declared the independence of their Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina on April 7, claiming two-thirds of the republic.

Meanwhile, in early April, paramilitary units from Serbia raided Bijeljina, a predominantly Muslim town in northeastern Bosnia near the Serbian border. This was the first of a series of attacks on Muslims and Croats in northern and eastern Bosnia. Arkan's Tigers,³ who were heavily armed and had recently finished dealing with Vukovar, claimed the Muslims were planning to massacre local Serbs. They began to liberate parts of Bijeljina, and by April 4, reports indicated bodies were lying in the streets. Bijeljina was an important area to Greater Serbia. It connected two regions: (1) a strip of land across northern Bosnia that would link the occupied areas of Croatia to Serbia and (2) another piece of land running down the Bosnian border to the ethnically Serb areas of eastern Bosnia. Arkan's main aim was to terrify local Muslims into flight.

Within days, other towns with large Muslim populations in eastern Bosnia had gotten the same treatment. In these attacks, federal army artillery units usually bombarded the town for several days. When the town gave up, the paramilitaries moved in. By the time General Ratko Mladić, the general in charge of Bosnia, had completed his sweep of the eastern part of the country, some two hundred thousand Muslims had been displaced or killed.

The Serbs then crossed northern Bosnia, which was half Muslim. In Brčko, the first town, refugees reported the Serbs killed everyone they could find. What Vulliamy (1994) calls "the most ferocious 'ethnic cleansing' of all" began in the villages and towns around Banja Luka and Prijedor in the Bosnian Krajina. The writer notes:

Between 150 and 200 homes, shops and mosques were being burned or dynamited every day in the Krajina, sending a tide of refugees towards Croatia which the UNHCR [United

³ The group's leader, Željko Ražnjatović, was an underworld figure before being recruited by the communist internal intelligence service.

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] called the 'most serious refugee crisis since the Second World War.' 'Whole communities,' said Peter Kessler, the organisation's spokesman,' and whole towns have been emptied.' By the end of May, half a million people had been wrenched from their homes, and their number would more than double before the summer.

The Office for Population Resettlement and Property Exchange opened in May in Banja Luka with the assistance of the local SDS. "[T]hugs were sent to rob, dynamite, kill and torture, which would produce queues of people anxious to flee. . .," Vulliamy (1994) reports. "The office's business ethos was this: life could be made so awful for the Muslims and Croats in Banja Luka that people would pay their life savings to be ethnically cleansed, which was the political goal in the first place."

Within six weeks, the federal and paramilitary armies were able to chisel out an area of conquest covering more than 60 percent of Bosnia. And some two hundred and fifty thousand Muslims were driven from their homes in the Bosnian Krajina during one wave of cleansing in September.

Vulliamy (1994) writes:

Unlike the siege of Sarajevo, which was there for all to see, the ethnic cleansing programme was not for public consumption. [Bosnian Serb President Radovan] Karadžić's intellectual shadow, a Serbian member of the Bosnian presidency, Nikola Koljevic, later admitted to me that Sarajevo was designated a piece of violent theatre which would captivate world attention and draw it away from the principal programme. Professor Koljevic . . . chastised me over tea and cakes in a smart Belgrade hotel: 'It amazes me that you all took so long to get the point. Poor Sarajevo! That was all you could think about. The crossroads of Europe! None of you had ever been on holiday in Trnopolje, Ha Ha!'

"What was still not fully understood was that ethnic cleansing was not a by-product of the war," Malcolm (1994) writes. "It was a central part of the entire political project which the war was intended to achieve, namely the creation of an homogeneous Serb area which could eventually be joined to other Serb areas, including Serbia itself, to create a greater Serbian state."

Meanwhile, back in Sarajevo, the Serbs closed all entrances to the city on May 2, beginning the siege of Sarajevo. Several particularly deadly attacks took place. The Serbs, for example, targeted a bread queue in the center of the city; twenty people were killed. In June, the Serbs shelled a crowd of people lining up to take money out of one of the few banks remaining; twenty-one people died.

In the summer of 1992, UNPROFOR got the Serbs to agree to allow it to run the airport and to bring in humanitarian aid for the people of Sarajevo. But the Serbs had pointed several

hundred heavy guns at the city, including tanks, mortars, howitzers, and anti-aircraft machine guns. Sometimes the Serbs would shell a housing block, for example, and just as the crowd was running away from the first blast, they would send a second shell nearby, right in the path of those fleeing the first bomb. For months, the city's residents had crowded into their basements to escape the Serbs' shells.

By the spring of 1993, the Muslims and the Croats in the country went to war against each other in earnest. When the Serb offensive in Bosnia began, the Croats usually fought under their own Croatian Defense Council (HVO) units or, for awhile, the Croatian Defense Association, or HOS. In some cases, Bosnian Muslims fought in the HVO, largely because it had better weapons due to its connection to Croatia and the Adriatic coast.

For a short while, this alliance held. Then the Croats formed their Union of Herzeg-Bosna. Meanwhile, the HVO began moving into Bosnian government-controlled areas with more Croats than Muslims. Before long, the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian government forces were viciously fighting each other in places such as Novi Travnik and Prozor in central Bosnia.

Several months later, by the winter of 1992-93, the HVO had reacted to the Vance-Owen Plan, the UN-European Union peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina, and was trying to fulfill by force what had been promised it on paper. In most areas designated Croat by the plan, the HVO told the Muslim forces to place their soldiers under Croatian command and to surrender their arms. If not, the Muslims would face the consequences. With the coming of spring, another period of killing had arrived in central Bosnia.

Eventually, however, the Muslims fought back. Travnik was among the first areas to be free of its HVO soldiers. The HVO fled, with some three thousand civilians, to the Serbs for shelter. "By mid-summer," Vulliamy (1994) writes, "the central Bosnian front, or mesh of fronts, had become a rabid madhouse, a yard-for-yard battle for razed territory."

Mostar, the largest town in Herzegovina, was under attack by the Bosnian Croats. The Croats evicted — and sometimes killed — Mostar's Muslims, forcing them to the eastern side of town. By the time of the Washington Agreement in early 1994, an effort to stop the fighting between the Muslims and the Croats, few buildings in the eastern side of the city had escaped without damage.

In February 1994, the Serbs shelled Sarajevo again, this time killing sixty-eight people at the central market and injuring more than two hundred. Enough was finally enough, at least for a while. This time, UNPROFOR ordered the Serbs to remove their heavy weapons from an area twenty kilometers from the center of Sarajevo or face attacks from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This they more or less did, at least for several months.

Meanwhile, in October 1993, Fikret Abdić, a man who went to jail in 1987, declared his area to be the Republic of Western Bosnia. He said he had obtained a path through the Serb-occupied Krajina and Croatia to Rijeka. Now he had Muslims fighting each other. In August

1994, Abdić's families seemed to have run out of power and had to leave the Velika Kladuša area. But by late November, Abdić and the Krajina Serbs began to mobilize draft-age men from the Turanj and Batnoga refugee camps in the United Nations Protected Area (UNPA) North. The mobilization violated international law pertaining to refugee camps, but as many as seven thousand men were mobilized. In short order, the men — who were helping the Bosnian Serbs and Krajina Serbs — had begun to take back Velika Kladuša.

In the summer of 1995, two of Bosnia's so-called safe areas, Srebrinica and Zepa, fell to the Serbs and sent thousands of people fleeing for Tuzla. Countless others in Srebrinica — primarily men and boys — disappeared. Western powers, in an effort to appear tough, warned the Serbs NATO would use serious air power against them if they attacked the other so-called safe areas, Gorazde, Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Bihać. However, the main question was: how long could the United Nations remain in Bosnia-Herzegovina? A few weeks later, Croatia attacked the Serb-held areas of its own country, taking back much of the area.

As of this writing, the war goes on in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Serbs control about 70 percent of the country.

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By January 1995, the Bosnian Health Office reported 144,255 people had been killed during the war in Bosnia. Those figures include not only those who are direct victims of the war but also those people who have been reported missing. An additional 167,844 have been wounded, including 34,400 children. Slightly more than 10,000 people have been killed in Sarajevo, including 1,672 children, and 58,746 have been wounded, including 14,847 children. The number of people who have fled Bosnia because of the war totals 1,165,000; the number of displaced within the country is 892,000.

REFUGEES FROM SARAJEVO

According to the Bosnia-Herzegovina Ministry of Refugees, some one hundred and twenty thousand Sarajevo residents left the city in the weeks before the war or after it started in the spring of 1992.

The 1991 census figures for the municipality of Sarajevo indicated 526,000 people were living in the region surrounding the city before the war started. Perhaps 200,000 to 250,000 of those people lived in what residents consider the city of Sarajevo, the four communes of Old Town, New Town, Center, and New Sarajevo. By late 1994, some observers were saying less than a third of the original residents were still in the city. By early 1995, other people said only 17 percent of the original residents of Sarajevo had elected to stay behind, although these figures could be an underrepresentation of the remaining numbers. By the summer of 1995, people who had undergone more than three years of war, were leaving the city, unable to take any more fighting.

According to the Ministry of Refugees, there are an estimated one hundred and thirty thousand displaced people currently living in the government-held parts of Sarajevo, but an estimated eighty thousand of them fled Serb-controlled parts of the city, such as Grbavica. The remaining fifty thousand were displaced from the Serb-occupied territories, primarily in eastern Bosnia. The people from eastern Bosnia had few, if any, other options, in large part because they were, for the most part, agricultural workers who would have had difficulty finding jobs elsewhere. (A number of them went first to Herzegovina, but after the war broke out between the Muslims and the Croats there, many of them chose to go to Sarajevo.) Between sixty thousand and eighty thousand Serbs are thought to have left Sarajevo.

The residents of Sarajevo began to leave the city in the months prior to the outbreak of war. Most chose to head for Croatia, in large part because they knew the people and spoke the same language. It did not hurt they had the same enemy, the Serbs. The exodus intensified — and possibly reached its peak — in March 1992, a month before the war began. "It was obvious something terrible was about to happen," said one young man. In the run-up to the war, all means of transportation — airplanes, trains, buses, and private cars — were used to escape the city. Additionally, significant but unknown numbers of people continued to leave the city by any method possible during the month of April, after the war started.

When the war began in early April, many of Sarajevo's remaining Serb residents were able to fly out. Despite the fact some battles were being fought in the surrounding hills, the Sarajevo airport remained open for almost a month longer, closing only after the war escalated significantly on May 2. JAT, the Yugoslav state airline, continued to operate out of Sarajevo until that date, flying charterlike flights primarily to Belgrade. In addition, the JNA, which controlled the airport, flew numerous military transport planes from Sarajevo, each packed with passengers. Seats on the planes were in much demand. Lucky passengers knew someone who

could get them a ticket; they also tended to have the right names — i.e., of Serb origin. By the latter part of April, JAT was flying only two flights a day.

Potential passengers had to make their way through a maze of barricades, not only through town but on the road to the airport. "After the barricades had been up for twenty-four hours, everyone knew which ones were dangerous," one Sarajevan said during the winter of 1994-95. "For example, the barricades toward Grbavica were dangerous. The way to the airport was a danger zone as well. In fact, the Serbs still hold that barricade." The JNA also set up a checkpoint, complete with a tank, at the entrance to the airport. Although nothing reportedly happened to non-Serbs who attempted to pass the checkpoint, most Croats and Muslims were afraid to try.

Like airplane seats, bus tickets went to people who had connections. Buses were headed in all directions, particularly Zagreb and Belgrade, but fighting in parts of Croatia and in Mostar between the HVO and Serb forces made some routes particularly difficult. One man, for example, left Sarajevo by bus, but at Brčko, at the border between Bosnia and Croatia, the bus would go no farther. Driving or walking across the bridge over the Sava River was an invitation to be shot by the Serbs. After two days, the man took a small boat across the river. Cars rarely left the city in April.

Other people piled on trains to leave Sarajevo, but train traffic probably stopped sooner than airplanes, since the trains had to pass through territory already under Serb control. Train tickets, like those for buses and airplanes, were in demand. But it was a much less secure way to travel. Soldiers from Serb paramilitary forces often checked passengers on the trains, sometimes handing out physical or verbal abuse.

After May 2, when the Serbs blocked exits from the city, convoys of women and children were still leaving Sarajevo. (One of the organizations that created these convoys was later accused of selling some of the orphaned children in Europe.) Getting on the convoy also required connections. People without such connections came to the departure location and waited until allowed aboard. On May 18, a ten-mile-long convoy, consisting of eighty buses and one thousand other vehicles, left the city for Croatia, but Serb gunmen held the convoy hostage for two days outside Sarajevo. In August, two children being evacuated were shot before the convoy could leave the city; one was three years old; the other fourteen months. The Serbs also shelled the children's funeral.

These convoys continued for several months, when the Bosnian government stopped them, claiming they were a kind of ethnic cleansing. Convoys, however, continued, though reduced in frequency, until December 1993, when two of them departed Sarajevo, one for Serbia and one for Croatia. These government-sponsored convoys were largely for the sick and elderly (a number of young women managed to obtain medical papers indicating they were pregnant) and for ethnic groups, such as Slovenes, Macedonians, and Jews who were not considered parties to the conflict.

In the summer of 1992, the United Nations took control of the airport, primarily to bring in food aid for Sarajevo. Once the airport was under UN control, Sarajevans found a new, but dangerous, way to leave town: running across the airport at night. (Local police refuse to indicate how many people were killed at night at the airport.) The airport crossing was particularly dangerous early on, when the battle for the suburb of Dobrinja, bordering the runway, was being fought.

UNPROFOR allegedly offered some Sarajevo residents — those with money and the right connections — another way to exit the city. Widespread rumors contended UNPROFOR soldiers were selling seats on UN planes, usually through a Bosnian contact, for an average price of 3,000 to 4,000 deutsche marks. UNPROFOR press passes, which got holders onto UNHCR flights, could reportedly be bought for DM 1,000.

Some people also took jobs with UN agencies or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to acquire UN cards so they could leave safely. In addition, some agencies provided people with UN cards to help them get out. (One local hire for an international NGO is said to have provided most of his relatives in Sarajevo with cards, unbeknownst to his employers.) Others manufactured fake cards — in the early days, the UN cards were easy to duplicate. One American with an UNPROFOR press card claimed he had helped several hundred Sarajevans leave the city on UNHCR flights before he was caught. Press people also helped their interpreters leave the city.

Running across the airport or buying an expensive seat on a UN airplane remained the only entrance or exit from the city for a few months, until Bosnian government troops completed a small, narrow tunnel under the airport, connecting Dobrinja on one side of the airport with the government-held town of Butmir on the other. At first, the Bosnian Army's 1st Corps, which operates the tunnel, limited it to soldiers and what little weaponry it could import into the city. But eventually the tunnel's fund-raising potential won out. Exiting the tunnel tends to require a significant number of papers from various governmental agencies in Sarajevo — and possibly bribes.

As of this writing, the Bosnian military forces are not allowing draft-age males to leave the city. But stories abound concerning young men who have found ways around the rules. One man, for example, heard his former military unit was leaving the city, so he put on his old uniform and mixed with the rest of the soldiers as they filed through the tunnel. After the group exited, the young man managed to separate himself from the others. He shed his uniform and bought a bus ticket for Zenica in central Bosnia, where relatives had arranged for him to pick up the necessary papers. In three or four days he was in Split, on Croatia's Adriatic coast.

Once the so-called blue road across the airport opened in the spring of 1994, thousands of people were able, with the proper papers, to leave Sarajevo by bus or car — and to go into the city. However, the blue road closed again in June, allegedly because the Bosnian Serbs insisted the Bosnian government was using the road to import weapons.

Most people leaving Sarajevo went, at least initially, to Serbia or Croatia. Croatia was relatively receptive to Bosnian refugees, in spite of what it said, until spring 1993, when the Croats and Bosnians began fighting each other. Bosnian Muslim refugees in Croatia remained fearful of Croat authorities, at least until the Washington Agreement, which promoted a confederation between the two countries. Many still are.

REFUGEES IN CROATIA AND ELSEWHERE

In the summer of 1994, after the Croatians recounted their displaced people and refugees, the new list indicated 196,870 displaced people and 183,028 refugees were living in Croatia. Most of the refugees were from Bosnia. In addition, some refugees had obviously not wanted to be counted. UNHCR has indicated up to 10 percent of Croatia's displaced people/refugees may not have been registered. Furthermore, many Bosnians of Croatian decent had been given Croatian passports in the period following Croatia's declaration of independence.

According to UNHCR, its employees got refugee status for about one hundred thousand Bosnians who arrived in Croatia. It provided them with the necessary papers, followed their cases through the Croatian government, and objected when people were not given refugee status. UNHCR employees also stopped the expulsion of refugees at such places as bus terminals, police stations, and seaports. Furthermore, UNHCR's employees were able to get some expelled cases readmitted to Croatia. At the same time, UNHCR also lacked the staff and/or information to solve a number of problems. How many refugees failed to enter Croatia because they lacked documentation or how many were refouled (returned) because UNHCR employees were not present is unknown.

When the war began in Bosnia in April 1992, Croatia initially accepted Bosnian refugees, both Muslim and Croat. Many people, believing the war would not last long, went to their summer houses on the Adriatic coast or other such accommodations. Because the Croatian government had announced it would not construct refugee centers, a number of people were put up in local hotels. These hotels essentially became refugee centers. (Croatia also refused to permit international organizations to build refugee centers in the country, but it finally allowed several to be built and others to be improved.) Croats also took in a number of refugees and received money for doing so.

In July 1992, however, Mate Granić, Croatia's deputy prime minister, said his country could take no more refugees and appealed to wealthier nations to open their borders. Croatia, he said, would now offer only transit visas, not places to stay. After this date, Muslim refugees who traveled to the Croatian border were told that without letters of guarantee from relatives or friends in Croatia or other European countries, Muslims would not be permitted to enter the country.

About this time, the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) found about two thousand people sleeping on the ground of a schoolyard in Posusje, Herzegovina, waiting to enter Croatia (Frelick, date unknown). According to the Red Cross, two hundred people were arriving at the border each day. In addition, some thirty-five hundred "permanent" displaced people were living in private homes or hotels in town.

By September, the Croatian government announced letters of guarantee would no longer be taken into consideration. USCR reported the transit of refugees would be allowed only in

"exceptional cases when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees arranges their accommodation in other European countries." Transit visas were for twenty-four hours, and those who had them could not apply for refugee status in the country.

Earlier that summer, Croatia and Bosnia also announced an agreement to return refugees to so-called safe areas in Bosnia. The agreement applied to men aged eighteen to sixty and to women aged eighteen to fifty-five if they did not have children under fourteen. Some 3,700 draft-age men were apparently sent back to Bosnia — in spite of UNHCR's efforts. UNHCR, however, was able to give protection letters, which contained the organization's seal, to some draft-age males from Bosnia. Employees from at least one NGO helped by gathering necessary information and distributing the letters in the refugee camps. In a number of cases, the letters prevented the refoulement of those who had them.

By the summer of 1993, after the Muslims and Croats had begun to fight each other, UNHCR (UNHCR 1993) noted:

In a wave of arrests lasting 24 hours between 29 and 30 July Croatian police detained some 1,500 foreigners and carried out checks in refugee centers across the country. UNHCR was deluged with calls for assistance from families who had relatives arrested in the mass sweep. Following meetings between UNHCR and Croatian government officials, as well as members of the diplomatic corps, the Croatian government announced that some 1,000 persons were found to have claim to refugee status.

After seeking further clarification, UNHCR was informed that some 200 others who committed criminal activities would be charged with those acts but would be granted refugee status as well. The remaining group — which was said to be involved in serious crimes — had been returned to countries of origin, including BiH. UNHCR has insisted with government officials that those people who arrived prior to the BiH conflict are under protection in the same way as registered refugees, and that forced return to a war-zone in any case is unacceptable.

Regardless of Croatia's policies during this time, a number of Bosnian refugees found homes in Croatia, particularly until the Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims began to fight in the spring of 1993. After that war began, Bosnian Muslims had a more difficult time in Croatia. At that point, the Croatian government began talking about rounding up people to put in refugee camps. When the government began moving a few people — particularly gathering refugee men for the HVO or the Croatian army — many went underground, sending their women to do the shopping. And some people returned to Bosnia. UNHCR, in large part because of its protection officers, resettled a number of refugees at risk during this time.

When fighting between Muslims and Croats ended in 1994, the situation improved. However, once the Washington Agreement was signed, Croatia announced it would no longer take refugees from areas of Bosnia under the control of the confederation which the agreement

set up. On the other hand, UNHCR has said Croatia would continue to accept refugees from areas, such as Banja Luka, under Serb control.

A number of people in Serb-held northern Bosnia who want asylum elsewhere cannot reach the border. Nevertheless, many non-Serbs leaving the area have to wait in one of Croatia's UNPAs for a considerable time before the Croatian government will allow them into the country. UNHCR then has to promise the Croats the refugees will be resettled in third countries, but UNHCR often lacks sufficient places to resettle them. Furthermore, new refugees who entered Croatia with private convoys expecting resettlement have found they are illegal aliens with little chance of receiving a visa to a third country. The fact that UNHCR had to negotiate every refugee arriving in Croatia has meant a slowdown in the number who could cross from Bosnian Serb territory.

Croatia's slowness in accepting Muslims has meant authorities on both sides of the border are less apt to become concerned by a sudden, massive outflow of people from the region. Unfortunately, the situation could get worse at any moment, and non-Serbs remaining in northern Bosnia could be at risk. Furthermore, the Bosnian Serbs have benefitted from this slow movement of refugees, because the numbers leaving stayed below the international community's tolerance level.

By preventing refugees from crossing the border into Croatia, the UN organizations sent to help the conflict's victims became, in effect, their wardens, preventing their escape. According to Minear, et al., in *Humanitarian Action in the Former Yugoslavia: The U.N.'s Role 1991-1993* (1994), Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who was with the UN Commission on Human Rights until the summer of 1995, reported in 1992 that the large number of refugees from Bosnia into Croatia meant that "UNPROFOR has been forced to violate the principle of non-refoulement." For example, in Sarajevo, UNPROFOR was given orders to stop civilians trying to escape the besieged city, apparently because the agreement between UNPROFOR and the Serbs called for it.

Most expert observers agree that there are at least two things UNHCR could have done to help improve the situation for refugees in Croatia: (1) it could have put pressure on Croatia to reopen its borders to Bosnian refugees and (2) it could have provided additional financial support to the country so that it would take more refugees.

Most governments were unwilling to take in Bosnian refugees in sizeable numbers. (As of June 1993, for example, France and Britain had accepted less than 5 percent of Germany's total of more than 300,000 people from the former Yugoslavia. Germany's figure, however, included Croats and Serbs from their 1991 war.) Options to become refugees in other countries were given to those who had been in most danger. Others were simply left out of resettlement efforts.

Bosnians who managed to be resettled in other parts of the world have also had widely differing experiences. Some, such as those in Sweden, have been offered a relatively good

living. In America, for example, refugees can go to work immediately upon arrival. But in other countries, refugees are unable to work and, in some cases, even to go to school. In Denmark, for example, most refugees are not allowed to work. In Germany, refugees can work only a few hours a day, mostly at menial tasks. Hungary provided *humanitarian protection* to its refugees, who are primarily people from northeastern Bosnia, not refugee status. However, the Bosnians in Hungary have room, board, medical attention, and the possibility of certain work in agriculture. Freedom of movement in camps has been reduced, however, ostensibly to protect refugees. Schools in refugee centers in Hungary offer Bosnian curriculum; secondary students go to trade schools of their own choice.

REPATRIATION

Bosnia-Herzegovina

No one knows for sure the number of repatriates to Bosnia-Herzegovina. The number is, however, relatively small. Few, if any, Bosnian Muslims and Croats have returned to areas in northern or eastern Bosnia. Nevertheless, some Bosnian Croats and Muslims have returned to Herzegovina and central Bosnia.

"Elsewhere, signs of hope could be seen and felt as refugees slowly return home in some areas, sometimes on buses plying the Zagreb-Tuzla route that went unused for nearly a year," UNHCR wrote in September 1994. "But in marked contrast, the political authorities across the region seem to be hardening their positions, and in most cases the general public seems inclined to follow, despite the likelihood that continued human misery . . . if not war, will be the end result."

For example, at that same time, UNHCR noted "16 Bosnian refugees in Denmark voluntarily returned to Mostar to rejoin their families. The group left with the promise that the Danish government would allow them back within three months if their repatriation soured, but the movement of the group, which included 14 former detainees, represents a promising sign."

Some eighty-seven refugees returned to Zenica with the help of Equilibre. In addition, some people have made it back from Macedonia, and several hundred children have returned from Libya. The Swedes have also expressed some interest in repatriating people to the Tuzla area. And in the spring of 1995, the International Organization for Migration was looking into ways of returning people to central Bosnia.

However, in some areas of central Bosnia, particularly around Vareš, Croats have been denied the right to return to the area as long as Muslim refugees are not allowed to return to Croat areas, such as Kiseljak.

Nevertheless, refugees and displaced people have been returning — usually on their own — to Bosnia-Herzegovina. For example, a number of detainees from the concentration camps in northern and eastern Bosnia have left asylum in countries in Western Europe to return home to find their families. (The Bosnian government refused to allow members of these families, numbering several hundred, to leave.) Although not technically refugees, several thousand people have been forced out of northern Bosnia by the Serbs, primarily into the Tuzla area.

Those returning to Bosnia include:

- People who fled the northern and eastern areas of Bosnia, including people detained in Serb concentration camps.

- Detainees of Serb concentration camps who have been released in Europe and have come back to find their families in Bosnia.
- People repatriating to Sarajevo, particularly those who thought the war would be short term.
- Women and children returning to Bosnia — and particularly Sarajevo — to be with husbands and other family members.

Sarajevo

No one — not UNHCR, not the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), not the Bosnian government's Ministry of Refugees — admits to knowing how many refugees or displaced people from Sarajevo have returned to the city. Undoubtedly, the number is small, perhaps no more than ten thousand returnees, if that many. But people have been returning.

After May 2, 1992, when the Serbs closed the entrances/exits to the city and the siege began, there were no ways — other than the convoys — to get into or out of Sarajevo until UNPROFOR took over the airport that summer. At that point, Bosnian soldiers and enterprising civilians began running across the airport at night. Many of these civilian airport travelers were people who were trying to leave Sarajevo. Others wanted to reach Hrasnica, a suburb bordering the airport, to buy goods and smuggle them into Sarajevo, often for profit. A smaller number were trying to get back into the city. Included in this group were men who were attempting to get family members out of the city. Some of the people trying to get back into the city, particularly after the Croats and Muslims began fighting each other, had a difficult time. Often they were pinned down on the road from Herzegovina to Sarajevo by the fighting.

The trip across the airport was potentially dangerous. Serb soldiers were adjacent to the airport. Furthermore, UNPROFOR soldiers policed the area at night, intercepting many of those attempting to cross the airport and returning them to their starting locations. Although several Sarajevans were interviewed who used this route to enter the city, many people say the number was relatively small. However, by the summer of 1993, United Nations military observers said as many as two hundred people were crossing the airport at night, many of them returnees.

People who crossed the airport — interviewed in August and September 1993 — complained the actions of UNPROFOR soldiers had not only caused the deaths of several airport crossers but had endangered their own lives. Several people reported UNPROFOR soldiers picked them up in armored personnel carriers (APCs) as they were attempting to cross the airport, drove them around in circles to confuse them, and then let them out so close to the Serb lines they could hear the soldiers talking. The Bosnians said UNPROFOR soldiers often focused their APC spotlights on the airport crossers, exposing them to Serb gunfire.

One person said the actions of UNPROFOR soldiers at the airport led to the death of her sister-in-law and another woman at the airport. After apprehending the women, UNPROFOR

soldiers had left the group on the Butmir side of the airport, close to the Serb lines. The sister-in-law was shot and killed as the women raced for the safety of a nearby trench. Another woman, who had been shot at the same time, reportedly bled to death near the runway after UNPROFOR soldiers refused to give her first aid or to take her to medical facilities.

There were also unconfirmed reports of UNPROFOR soldiers raping women who were attempting to cross the airport. Other women said UNPROFOR soldiers had touched them in inappropriate places, made suggestive remarks, or offered to provide them rides across the airport in exchange for sex.

One Muslim woman, who used the airport to return to Sarajevo, said her ex-husband convinced her and their five-year-old son to leave the city shortly after the war began in Sarajevo. The three obtained fake papers, which indicated they were Serbs, from a bar in the city. Then, as they were about to set out, they were asked to take a Serb family with them part of the way. The father in the Serb family had been a teacher of history at the ex-husband's high school, and although the Muslim family did not know whether the Serb family recognized them, they agreed to take the family along. The Muslim family reached Split with little trouble. The wife went on to Zagreb, and the ex-husband returned to Mount Igman, just outside Sarajevo, to his army unit.

Once the wife reached Zagreb, however, she knew she and her son had made a mistake. She wanted to be back in Sarajevo with her mother and father — regardless of the consequences — and for almost a year, they explored that possibility. One aid agency offered to hire the woman and to try to smuggle the son back into Sarajevo in an aid package, but they decided that method might have a doubtful outcome. At one point, the woman said, she even talked with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, who told her she should not return to Sarajevo. It was too dangerous to live there, he said.

However, the woman persevered. When she learned people were crossing the airport into Sarajevo, she decided she and her son would also try. Eventually, the woman and her son boarded a bus in Zagreb and were finally let off at Mount Igman, near Sarajevo. Then they hitched rides to the spot in Butmir from which they would attempt to cross the airport.

Late in the night, they began their effort from a trench in Butmir. First, however, they had to scale a dirt embankment perhaps eight feet high. Then they had to get across two runways to Dobrinja, a suburb on the Sarajevo side of the airport. In between Butmir and Dobrinja were French and Ukrainian UNPROFOR soldiers. And around the airport were Serb forces.

The Muslim woman and her son climbed the embankment and ran. Somewhere out on the airport, they encountered UNPROFOR, which took them back to Butmir. They climbed the embankment again and ran. And again encountered UNPROFOR. This time, the woman says, Ukrainian UNPROFOR soldiers took her son aside and offered him some candy. They offered her something else — perhaps sex, perhaps not. She declined, and they returned to Butmir.

Finally, she says, she realized the UNPROFOR soldiers always took people back to their starting point. The next time UNPROFOR grabbed her and her son, she told them she had left Dobrinja, and they dropped her there.

The airport runway route was abandoned in 1993, after the tunnel under the airport was completed and people began using it to come and go from the city. At one point, Sarajevo city officials indicated an interest in prohibiting displaced people from rural areas of the country from entering the city. But this effort, which reflected the great urban-rural divide in the country, apparently never came to anything. However, soldiers who controlled the tunnel reportedly were charging those entering the city one deutsche mark for each kilo of food they carried.

Most repatriates to Sarajevo returned after the blue road across the airport opened in the spring of 1994. People returning to Sarajevo at this time, many of them women and children who wished to rejoin husbands and fathers, experienced few problems in getting back into the city, although several people on the buses to and from Sarajevo were killed by Serb snipers. People still continue to come to Sarajevo, crossing Mount Igman by bus and using the tunnel to enter the city, although the Serbs now shell its entrance in Butmir.

One young woman, a lawyer before the war, had left Sarajevo with her daughter, then two years old, in November 1992. They had departed the city on a convoy bus with her parents, an aunt and innumerable other people, all hoping to escape the war. Now, a little more than two years later, the young woman and her child are back in Sarajevo, reunited with their husband/father, a banker who believes someday Bosnia will be a beautiful country.

The mother and daughter had returned by airplane from Canada, where they had eventually received landed immigrant status. In Zagreb, Croatia, they had boarded a bus for Sarajevo. In Split, another woman had boarded the bus, also with a child. "Thank God," the woman had said, "I'm not the only person taking a child back to the city. I thought maybe I was crazy." About half of the twenty people aboard the bus were refugees returning to Sarajevo.

The only things the woman misses about the outside world, she said, were utilities. "In Canada before Christmas everything was so nice. There was so much electricity. I could take a shower every morning. That's what I miss now, not food, not anything else. But I have a husband and my daughter has a father. That's the most important thing."

An additional number of people, also probably small, returned on UN aircraft. Several people who used UNHCR or UNPROFOR cards to get on UN airplanes leaving Sarajevo returned the same way.

Generally, more people left the city in the winter than at other times; refugees returned in the spring and summer. As cold weather approached Sarajevo, people began to worry about how they were going to make it through the winter, when cooking and heating supplies were low. In the spring, refugees often began to consider returning to Sarajevo, particularly those

who had left the city before the war or in its early days, when people thought the war would be short. Refugees from such places as Germany also began to return. They were concerned about their apartments, among other possessions in Sarajevo, and were afraid the government would take them. For awhile, the news media reported trolleys had begun to work again in Sarajevo, and, in some cases, utilities were functioning more or less regularly, though not constantly. Now, however, much of Sarajevo lacks utilities and the trolleys have again shut down.

REPATRIATION PATTERNS AND ANALYSIS

During the first year of the war, there were some ricochet repatriations — refugees who left and soon returned. But the number may be smaller than in most other repatriations studied. First, Sarajevo was a besieged city, surrounded by hostile forces. After the siege began in May 1992, there were few ways to get back into the city. The main method at the time — running across the airport — was dangerous, although a number of people used this crossing. Second, many refugees from Sarajevo were educated people who had bank accounts elsewhere in Europe, savings they could take with them, or prospects for jobs in other countries. Many had worked abroad, in places like Libya, and were willing to return there. These refugees were able to sustain themselves for long periods. Third, Croatia, at least initially, treated the refugees from Bosnia relatively well, in part because the two countries had a common enemy, the Serbs. Furthermore, Croatia had offered dual citizenship to Bosnians of Croatian/Catholic background.

Nevertheless, people did return then and later. The peak was probably in the summer of 1994, when people were able to use the blue road across the airport into Sarajevo.

Factors Influencing Repatriation Decisions

There were a number of push and pull factors affecting Sarajevo repatriations.

Push Factors

Several push factors have influenced people to return home. These include:

- Discrimination against refugees in various countries of asylum. In some places, such as Croatia, Muslim refugees were not always treated well. However, instances of public abuse have been rare outside Croatia. In Croatia and other such places, some refugees decided to return home. In addition, some people who did not experience abuse themselves decided to return home simply because they did not like living in places where they were not wanted.
- Lack of job or educational opportunities. In some places, such as Denmark, people living in refugee centers have been denied the right to work or, in some cases, to go to school. Some of these people have left the country and returned to Bosnia.
- Housing problems. The housing situation for some refugees has been difficult. In such cases, refugees have opted to go home.
- The war in central Bosnia between the Croats and the Muslims. The problems with the Croats over the war in Bosnia and the subsequent treatment of Muslim refugees by Croatia caused some refugees to decide to go home.

Pull Factors

There are several pull factors influencing people to return to Sarajevo:

- Family reunification. The largest number of people returning to Sarajevo have been women and children seeking family reunification with husbands/fathers they left behind. At the same time, however, reunification can be a two-way street. Some of those currently leaving Sarajevo are men who are planning to join their families abroad.
- Sarajevo apartments. A number of people have returned to Sarajevo to check on their apartments and remained there. The government of Sarajevo, which dispenses apartments to refugees and displaced people, can take apartments from residents who have left the city. Although many people worked out arrangements that left apartments in the control of members of their families, others were unable to do so. To keep their apartments from going to displaced people from eastern Bosnia, some people returned home.
- The improvement in Sarajevo. When the war began, things were particularly rough in Sarajevo for the first two years. Then in February 1994 NATO air strikes were threatened unless all major weapons were withdrawn. From that point, things began to get better in the city. Utilities improved, and in the winter of 1994-95, electricity was imported from Bosnian government-held territories, giving residents of Sarajevo a small amount of electricity every day. Water and gas were coming into homes regularly, usually every other day. Telephone service to the outside world was reinstated. Furthermore, trolleys had begun to deliver people up and down the main thoroughfare in town, although the trolley traffic was sometimes disrupted by Serb snipers. Even the blue road crossed the airport for a few months after the 1994 weapons ultimatum. Such improvements encouraged some people to return to Sarajevo. (As of this writing, however, the city lacks most utilities, and trolleys are not running.)

Patterns of Action After Repatriation

All residents of Sarajevo share more or less equally in the humanitarian assistance distributed by UNHCR. People returning simply apply to the appropriate municipal authorities. The standard handout varies but usually consists of small amounts of cooking oil, rice or pasta, soap, etcetera. UNHCR, however, gives much of its flour to the local bakery in Sarajevo to be turned into bread. Many people in the city — perhaps as many as 65 or 70 percent — may have no other source of food but humanitarian aid.

Housing issues, however, could make it difficult for some people to return. Serb shells destroyed or damaged about one-third of the housing in Sarajevo. While one hundred and twenty thousand people left, some fifty thousand displaced people from eastern Bosnia and eighty

thousand people from such places as Grbavica poured into the city, in some cases occupying the homes of the people who had fled. Technically, the people from eastern Bosnia get the house or apartment until one year after the war, but in reality, the city still has not yet worked out how it will deal with such issues.

Few jobs in the city pay real money. People working for NGOs, UNPROFOR, and other United Nations agencies earn several hundred deutsche marks per month, sometimes more. But much of the rest of the population earns only the equivalent of a small amount of money from the work they do. Nevertheless, many men are thankful for their jobs, since they often provide them with working-obligation papers that keep them out of the army.

Problems Experienced by Returnees After Repatriation

Most repatriates indicated they met few problems on returning, other than the difficulty with utilities in Sarajevo. Young men who return to Sarajevo also face the possibility of serving in the army.

Protection Issues

Although UNHCR and ICRC are currently operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina, protection issues are not significant causes of concern for many of those who have returned.

An important exception may be young men who do not want to fight. As of this writing, the Bosnian government has not provided men who left with any indication they will not have to fulfill their military obligations if they return. One exception to this is the men from Velika Kladuša to whom the government offered a six-month amnesty on military service; few, if any, of these men accepted the offer.

Issues such as housing, an important one in Sarajevo, have technically been decided in favor of the displaced who currently occupy the house or apartment. Yet in all likelihood this issue will be settled in the future on the basis of need — Sarajevo's need.

POLITICAL ISSUES

Although a number of Sarajevans who remained in the city throughout the war have now begun to leave, others are returning, some of them men who returned have decided to fight for the Bosnian government.

The Attitude of the Bosnian Government Toward Repatriation

The official policy of the Bosnian government toward repatriation, as adopted by the confederation, is supportive. However, it is not yet clear whether this attitude is sincere. During the spring and early summer of 1994, when the blue road was open across the airport, the Bosnian government made some efforts to promote repatriation of its refugees. However, the Bosnian government currently is, in large part, being run by men who believe in Muslim nationalism. Many of the people who would like to return to Sarajevo are the people who might not support this government.

The Attitude of UNHCR Toward Repatriation

UNHCR, the agency responsible for refugees and repatriates throughout the world, believes it is too early for people to return to Sarajevo. Cynthia Burns, chief protection officer for Bosnia, said the agency has indicated it does not support the promotion of repatriation but will do nothing to stand in the way of voluntary returns. She said she did not think the agency had ever detailed why it believed it was too soon for people to return, but obviously the fact the country was still at war was a factor. Also, she pointed out, the government of Bosnia had not responded to a standard document UNHCR had sent it, detailing amnesty, property rights, and other issues involved in repatriation.

Karen AbuZayd, who was in charge of UNHCR operations in Yugoslavia until the summer of 1995, said the organization began discussions on repatriation with the Bosnian government in the spring of 1994. Those conversations developed a bit through the spring, she said, although UNHCR was never enthusiastic about the possibility of helping people return, in part because the Bosnian government had no draft amnesty law. "For us to promote repatriation," AbuZayd said, "we would have to have [such a law]." Furthermore, she pointed out, the Bosnian government was capable of running its repatriation efforts without UNHCR and had never asked UNHCR to fund shelter packages or other programs for returnees.

As 1994 went by, conditions deteriorated in Bosnia. At the same time, AbuZayd said, organizations such as that of the Saudi Arabian high commissioner helped people return. Nevertheless, she said, UNHCR provided airfare or busfare for people returning who asked for help and mobilized UNPROFOR to assist returnees from Macedonia and the children who had gone to Libya.

After AbuZayd returned to Geneva, she wrote a paper for the High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, suggesting the organization should develop different policies for governments, such as the one in Bosnia, that were not hostile to the people who were returning.

"My protection officers have been very reluctant [to assist with repatriation]," she said. "They see what nasty things happen to minorities, to Muslims going back to Croatian areas and to Croats going back to Muslim areas. People don't get on the food lists; kids can't go to school. In part, I am fighting with my own young officers." What — if anything — UNHCR will do about AbuZayd's proposal is unclear.

UNHCR, which was apparently criticized for not helping people leave Bosnia when the war began, may also be concerned it will be criticized again by people who believe it should not be involved yet in repatriation.

A woman who was part of the first group of medical evacuees to return in January 1995 said she tried for almost two years to get back to Bosnia. An agency she believes to be UNHCR — but was not certain — apparently blocked her efforts until January, having decided it was too early for people to return. The woman said she was told the organization was "saving her from herself." AbuZayd denies UNHCR people would give such instructions.

The Attitude of the Host Countries Toward Repatriation

Although no European country today is fond of refugees, few have publicly expressed sentiments indicating the refugees from Bosnia should go home. In fact, a number of people believe the war in Bosnia is a long way from being over. Nevertheless, many of these countries would be glad to see their Bosnian refugees repatriate. Several countries — Hungary is a good example — have not given Bosnian refugees refugee status. Instead, refugees there have *humanitarian protection*. Croatia remains at the moment something of a problem also. At this time, Croatia is accepting no refugees from the confederated territory, although it still — sometimes a little slowly — takes refugees from Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

COMPARISON TO THE REPATRIATION MODEL

In the International Study of Spontaneous Repatriation, researchers developed a model for repatriation during conflict based in large part on studies of repatriations in Central America.

In the model, refugees usually divide into two groups: (1) people who live in refugee camps and (2) those who settle among the host country population. The people who left Bosnia and Sarajevo fall into both categories. In the model, refugees who settle spontaneously are the ones most likely to repatriate on their own. In the repatriates to Sarajevo, this appears to be largely the case.

Earlier repatriation studies showed refugees living in camps often develop a common political outlook and establish a number of mores and norms associated with the struggle in their homeland. In most of these cases, the refugees were fleeing the government or were part of groups that had risen up against the government. In Sarajevo and Bosnia, the Muslim and Croat refugees, at least at first, supported the duly elected government and were fleeing the insurgents, the Serbs. That fight is still going on. However, after some months, the Croats and Muslims began to fight each other in central Bosnia. That fight, however, has at least quit for the time being. The conflict between the Muslims and the Croats probably increased the number of returnees to Bosnia and to a lesser degree to Sarajevo.

Over time, camp solidarity begins to break down. Those who find themselves at odds with the majority leave the camp and either settle elsewhere in the country of asylum or repatriate. In the model, this group forms the second group of repatriates. This phase in repatriation probably has had little effect on Sarajevo.

In the model, early returnees send information back to the refugee community about conditions at home, leading them to believe they can return safely. In some cases, the refugees living in camps send scouts to check on the situation at home and determine whether it is safe to go back. Communications were somewhat more sophisticated in Sarajevo. Many refugees could monitor the progress of the war in Bosnia, and Sarajevo specifically, in newspapers and on television and radio. Although the international mail service for Sarajevo stopped with the siege and telephone communications were interrupted, many people found ways to keep in contact with relatives outside. In the beginning, the main way in which people did this was by two-way radio. Now telephone service usually exists in Sarajevo — though it sometimes takes days to reach Sarajevo from places like Zagreb. In general, the level of understanding about the situation in Sarajevo is high. In fact, UNHCR representatives in Sarajevo indicated no one returning to Sarajevo was unaware of what to expect. It is doubtful that many, if any, scouts were dispatched to check out conditions in the city. Since most repatriates were returning women and children, they relied on reports from their families about conditions in the city.

In other countries, repatriation is often directly linked to the return of displaced persons. However, in Sarajevo this does not appear to be the case, at least so far.

In the model, official repatriation is often linked directly to spontaneous repatriation. The numbers of returnees becomes too large for the international community to ignore, and it is forced to set up a program of protection and assistance. In Sarajevo, the numbers are too small and UNHCR's official policy still discourages return.

At the moment, it does not appear large numbers of Sarajevans are likely to return in the near future, either spontaneously or through some sort of organized program. Unlike the situations in Central America, a number of Sarajevans left because they did not want to live without electricity, water, and gas twenty-four hours a day. Many of these people will not return until the creature comforts are back. The longer these people are away, the more likely they are to find jobs, adapt to their countries abroad, and not return. In addition, a significant part of a whole generation of young people is likely to be missing from Sarajevo — those people in their twenties and thirties who were able to learn a foreign language and find jobs abroad.

In the repatriation model, the initial exodus of refugees is accompanied by an immediate ricochet repatriation. In other words, many people who leave quickly recognize that they should not have done so and that they can return without jeopardizing their lives. However, in Sarajevo, there was only a very small ricochet effect. Although a number of Sarajevans left the city expecting the war to be brief and to return quickly, events proved otherwise. At this writing, the war in Bosnia has not been resolved. Serb forces still occupy the hills around the city. Although some of the guns were withdrawn in February 1994, following NATO's threats to bomb Serb targets, most of them have now returned. Entrance and exit from the city is still controlled, in part by the Bosnian government and in part by the Serbs. Furthermore, until the Bosnian military completed the tunnel under the airport, returning to Sarajevo was a dangerous proposition.

In the international model, neither the type nor level of reintegration assistance given by the government or international agencies proved to be a major draw. With the exception of only a few projects, little organized repatriation has occurred in Bosnia or Sarajevo. (Equilibre refugees, the children from Libya, the people from Macedonia are among the few in Bosnia.) Therefore reintegration assistance is almost nonexistent.

In the conflicts from which the model was derived, people repatriating outside official channels generally stay outside the system; few apply for assistance, even when it is offered. In Sarajevo, little, if any, repatriation assistance has been offered. However, almost all residents of the city qualify for humanitarian assistance and receive it. Repatriates are rarely an exception.

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