

## The Balkans: broken but mendable

By WAYNE ANDERSON

Story ran on Tuesday, December 05 2000

Security was tight when we were in Zagreb, Croatia, on Nov. 24. The 15 nations of the European Union were meeting there to decide what to do about the unrest in the Balkans. The European Union had also invited the presidents of Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Albania and Slovenia. Also represented were Montenegro, the smaller of two republics that make up Yugoslavia, and Kosovo, the southern province that is now being governed by the United Nations.

Arshad Husain, a child psychiatrist at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and I were returning from running workshops in Kosovo and Bosnia for the International Center for Psychosocial Trauma. In Tuzla, Bosnia, we had just conducted a five-day workshop for 40 students and professionals on leadership for economic recovery. They had found our American ideas of democratic leadership styles stimulating and different from what existed in Bosnia.

As we drove into the airport, a combined force of soldiers and police met us. They pulled our car to the side and fired questions at Victor, our driver, who had just brought us in from Tuzla, Bosnia. He answered the queries in short staccato bursts of Bosnian. After they had carefully perused our passports, matched our faces to them and run a mirror on wheels under all sides of our car, they let us pass.

### Continuing hate and distrust

This meeting of the European Union worried many of our friends in Kosovo and Bosnia. Part of the problem is that none of the other countries and provinces in the Balkans trusts the Serbs. The people I talked to in Kosovo and Bosnia were concerned that the European Union would insist on closer integration of the former Yugoslavian provinces. The Kosovars and Bosnians feel that would give entirely too much power to the Serbs.

Even the recent election of President Vojislav Kostunica in Yugoslavia and the democratic defeat of Slobodan Milosevic have not reassured them. As one of our informants said, "They're just putting a new face on the same old brain. Kostunica still thinks like a Serb."

At lunch one day before the summit, the education minister for the canton of Tuzla said the Serbs, who control more than half of the former Bosnia, are not being cooperative in carrying out the details of the Dayton Accord. The Serbs' attitude over the past five years has continued to be one of defiance of the agreement. Five years after the Dayton Accord, many provisions are unfulfilled. A major bone of contention is the failure to make it possible for refugees to return home.

The Albanian Kosovars continue to seek vengeance on the Serbs for their brutality during their recent conflict. At present, they resist letting any Serbs remain in what they see as their territory. In response to some recent killings by Albanian Kosovars of Serbs in the area bordering Kosovo, Serbs are asking for weapons so that they can defend themselves.

Many in Croatia were also unhappy about the meeting. There were protests while we were there by the Croatian veterans of the recent war who wanted an apology and reparations for the damage done by the Serbs who caused the war.

Dangling the carrot

At this summit, the European Union came up with a big carrot with which to drag the conflicting parties into some level of harmony. If the parties cooperate in building a democratic system and practice tolerance of the minority populations in their countries, the EU leaders offered \$4 billion in economic aid. Offered as an additional inducement was duty-free access for 95 percent of the Balkan nations' industrial and farm products. Opening up the EU markets to the Balkans would do much to stimulate these countries' economies.

A further encouragement for good behavior is the possibility of the Balkan countries entering the European Union as full members. EU rules are that only democratic nations living in peace with their neighbors and with market economies and solid human rights records need apply.

An additional proviso for acceptance by the European Union is that these countries must cooperate with the war crimes tribunal in The Hague by turning over people accused of committing atrocities.

Given the high rates of unemployment and shortage of funds to rebuild devastated economies, one would expect the Balkan countries to rush to cooperate. Despite these potentially strong rewards for changing their behavior, many in the European Union have doubts that enlightened self interest will carry the day. The level of hatred of each other is such that many people in these countries are willing to do great damage to their own interests if it also results in damage to the enemy. It is especially questionable whether the Albanian Kosovars and the Serbs will be able to control their need for vengeance.

After 50 years of communism these Balkan countries are finding it difficult to make the change to democratic-style leadership. My own observation is that even more than our democratic politicians, former communists like to talk and talk and in talking feel that they in some way have solved a real problem.

I have felt a great deal of frustration after group members at meetings I've attended have failed to make specific plans for action. In addition, the reports I've seen indicate that, as we saw in Russia, there has been much favoritism, organized crime and corruption. The Balkan countries have promised to cooperate in reinforcing independent justice systems to fight these problems.

In addition to the anger at Serbs and the insistence on the removal of all Serbs from Kosovo, there is strong disagreement on what the status of Kosovo should be. The European Union will probably insist that it remain an autonomous province within Yugoslavia. The Albanian Kosovars want an independent country free of control by the Serbs.

#### Holding out hope

The offer by the European Union is handsome. It opens the possibility of rebuilding destroyed economies and developing true democratic political systems. The growth of a market economy, however, will take time. We must remember there is much to unlearn after 50 years of communism, and new leadership styles will need encouragement.

But, under the watchful eyes of the European Union, there is a potential for these countries to become an integral part of the European scene. When that is accomplished, perhaps we will have seen the end of wars within and between European nations.