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The Bosniaks, the Croats and the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Experiences of Yugoslavia

In Permanent Gap

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Now that integration into Europe is on the public agenda, the discourse in Bosnia-Herzegovina is tending to build up a narrative about Bosnia-Herzegovina that is not actually integrating but returning to Europe from which it was "torn away" when it joined the Yugoslav state in 1918. Similar narratives, characteristic of Croatia and Slovenia, may have found their way into Bosnia-Herzegovina too. Indeed, what happened to Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1918 up to 1992, and was it really "abducted" from Europe where, as part of the Habsburg Monarchy, it had spent the last decades of the 19th and first decades of the 20th century? Has Bosnia-Herzegovina returned to the Balkans since 1918, where it had been up to 1878 and wherefrom, now in the early 21st century, it is trying to join Europe or – in line with this new narrative – is it once again "making a break" for it? What, in this sense, are Bosniak, Croat and Serb experiences of Yugoslavia and what memories of Yugoslavia are they building in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

BETWEEN THE STATE OF SLOVENS, CROATS AND SERBS AND THE KINGDOM OF SLOVENS, CROATS AND SERBS

They experienced Yugoslavia differently. The Bosniaks and the Croats joined Yugoslavia in 1918 after centuries of life in multi-ethnic empires. The Bosniaks experienced the Ottoman Empire as their own, while the Croats mostly saw the Habsburg Monarchy as best suited to their national interests as a whole. Bosnian Serbs mostly nourished bad memories of these two empires. Hence, Yugoslavia was for them a state best suited to their national interests in toto. These all seem to be the starting points for Bosniak, Serbian and Croatian understanding of the very act of establishment of the Yugoslav state in 1918. "A Bosniak is never satisfied with anything. He is a threesome. What suits a Croat is unacceptable to a Muslim or a Serb, and the other way round. The Muslims aim for some kind of autonomy and integration into Hungary, at least most of them do, the Serbs yearn for some kind of Serbian state, while the Croats want to be incorporated into Croatia," said General Stjepan Sarkotić, head of the administration for Bosnia-Herzegovina, at an audience with Emperor Karl in the spring of 1918.

And yet, though the true will of the people in Bosnia at the time regarding the establishment of the state of Yugoslavia is hard to determine, the standpoints of the political elites (or whoever today believes that they belong to this group) about the issue can at least be outlined.

The end of World War I left the Muslim political elite totally disoriented. Although historical processes clearly indicate that great monarchies – and thus the Habsburg Empire – were nearing their end, in 1917 Muslim politicians submitted to Austrian Emperor Karl a memorandum in which they dreamed of Bosnia-Herzegovina with a special autonomous status within the monarchy! At the time everyone was involved in the creation of a new state, including a section of the Muslim youth that, under the

influence of various structures from Serbia, had already joined youth movements bent on destroying the monarchy, the great majority of Muslim politicians looked upon the falling monarchy as Bosnia-Herzegovina's future! It was only in September 1918 that they came to accept the Yugoslav idea and caught the train that took them to the proclamation of the Yugoslav state. Having wandered for a long time and been quite at a loss during World War I and having vegetated on the political margins at the time that the state was being created, in the autumn of 1918, this elite finally managed to recognize the main course of history and accept the fact that a new state had been established. According to records, as early as spring 1918 the reis-ul-ulema Jamaluddin Čaušević, a Muslim religious dignitary, told Dr. Anton Korošec

that he supported the establishment of a Yugoslav state, saying, "Do whatever you have to do, and I will stand by every action that brings freedom to our people. I am fed up with our own, Turkish and German rule." His views were compatible with those of Muslim political leaders whom only developing circumstances pushed onto the "Yugoslav train." An analyst from Sarajevo is likewise on record as writing that Muslims were somewhat anxious about what awaited them in the new, Yugoslav state, their qualms deriving, among other things, from their traditional struggle for Bosnia's autonomy throughout history – their "desperate … struggle against the entry of foreign troops into Bosnia, as testified by the struggle against the entry of Austrian troops in 1897." "No wonder, therefore, that some felt uneasy anticipating the entry of the Serbian army, for they misguidedly saw it as a foreign army of occupation." Besides, the literature often quotes an argument justifying Muslim fears of life in a Yugoslav state: an alleged statement by Stojan Protić promising an easy solution to the Muslim question saying, "Once our army has crossed the Drina river we shall give the Turks twenty-four hours, or even forty-eight, to convert to the faith of their ancestors. Those refusing to obey will be beheaded,

as happened in Serbia earlier." Although proved beyond any doubt to be a fabrication, at all crucial moments in the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina that statement was brought up as clear evidence that the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be, from the very beginning of the Yugoslav state, cast in the role of poor wretches. But the Muslim elite overcame these fears and shortly after Serbian troops entered Bosnia-Herzegovina in early November 1918 honored them with a special, magnificent banquet in the Officers, Club in Sarajevo. The guests were served "perfectly prepared dishes of Bosnian-Muslim cuisine." Along with other social celebrities of Sarajevo at the time, the "flower of Muslim citizenship and intelligentsia" attended the ceremony. The Croatian political elite in Bosnia-Herzegovina – having long dreamed of a triadic system in the Habsburg Empire only to realize later how unrealistic that idea had been compared to the predominant Yugoslav idea – also joined in the process of Bosnia-Herzegovina's unification with the Yugoslav state. All Croatian political groups, including leading circles of the Catholic Church in Bosnia-Herzegovina, backed the "Yugoslav solution." Together with Serbian political representatives, Croatian politicians also clearly demonstrated this support at a meeting with Hungarian prime minister Count Istvan Tisza in September 1918 when, in a special memorandum, they cast their vote for Yugoslav unification. Shortly afterwards, even the Catholic Church in Bosnia-Herzegovina issued a circular calling on its believers and the priesthood to be "loyal to the new authorities" and did not label the entry of Serbian troops into Bosnia-Herzegovina as a form of occupation. "The people need not be afraid of them. They should be told that this is not a hostile occupation, but that the Serbian troops have come at the request of our authorities, to put an end to plundering and other illegal acts…"

Serbian political and religious leaders were the most actively involved in Bosnia-Herzegovina's unification with Serbia. Torn between the idea of Bosnia's unification with Serbia in a common

state and that of broader Yugoslav unification, the Serbian political elite in Bosnia-Herzegovina preferred the latter. Serbian political representatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina had worked for the Yugoslav Committee in London, while in Bosnia-Herzegovina proper several outstanding Serbian politicians – of whom the most active were Vojislav Šola, Šćepan Grđić and Danilo Dimović – had endeavored to come closer to their Croatian counterparts (Jozo Sunarić, Đuro Džamonja, Vjekoslav Jelavić and others) and strengthen the Yugoslav movement. When their dream came true in late 1918, the main objective of the Serbian political elite was attained: a large state incorporating the majority of Balkan Serbs was established. "God bless the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes," said the Metropolitan of Sarajevo Evgenije Letica on December 5, 1918 rejoicing at the establishment of the Yugoslav state.

All in all, regardless of some assistance from Serbian and Croatian figures and, by the end of the process, from a small group of Muslim politicians from the circle of Mehmed Spaho and Halidbeg Hrasnica, both of them young and barely influential at the time, Bosnia-Herzegovina was not a major factor in the establishment of this state in 1918. Besides, it did not join the Yugoslav state in 1918 in the same manner as Vojvodina and Montenegro, which had first united with Serbia and then with Croatia and Slovenia. Bosnia-Herzegovina entered the Yugoslav state in a roundabout way – through the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs that brought together Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This creation, though termed "a state," functioned in October and November 1918 without internationally recognized sovereignty and by its character was more of a provisional rather than a real state. It had, however, functional institutions of provisional government, in which representatives of Bosnia-Herzegovina were included. The Committee of the People's Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs /SCS/ constituted on October 5, 1918 in

Zagreb with the participation, from Bosnia-Herzegovina, of Serbian and Croatian politicians (Danilo Dimović, Đuro Džamonja, Kosta Majkić, Jozo Sunarić and Vojislav Šola) addressed Serbian and Croatian leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina, saying that Bosnia-Herzegovina would have 18 deputies in the Plenary Council (8 Serbs, 4 Croats and 6 Muslims). Still, out of the six planned Muslim members, only two were elected to the Council (Hamid Svrzo and Mehmed Spaho). Dr. Halid-beg Hrasnica was only later added to the list.

The People's Council of SCS for Bosnia-Herzegovina was established in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There is much controversy about the exact date of its establishment, but what can be said with certainty is that the event took place before October 24, 1918 when the Main Committee of the People's Council of SCS for Bosnia-Herzegovina initiated the formation of territorial committees. Gligorije Jeftanović was the president of the Main Committee, and Jozo Sunarić and Halid-beg Hrasnica vice-presidents. At the suggestion of the Main Committee, the Central Committee of the People's Council of SCS decided on October 30, 1918 in Zagreb that "the Presidency of the People's Council of SCS should be in touch (….) with the People's Council in Sarajevo about members of the government." Svetozar Pribićević told the meeting of the Central Committee that Atanasije Šola from Sarajevo had informed him that they "were waiting for a decision by the People's Council before assuming power." At a meeting on November 3, the Central Committee discussed the issue and approved the appointment of "autonomous authorities (…) in Bosnia," which meant that the People's Government for Bosnia-Herzegovina had been formed in the meantime. Atansije Šola was at the head of the government made up of 11 ministries. Six members of his Cabinet were Serbs, four were Croats and one was a Muslim. On November 1 the government formally assumed office in Bosnia-Herzegovina from Stjepan Sarkotić and already on November 3 sent a

special diplomatic mission to Višegrad to talk to the commander of the Serbian Army about the role Serbian troops should play in the establishment of law and order in Bosnia-Herzegovina at a time when the "old regime" was falling apart while the new one was barely effective. On November 6, 1918 Serbian troops arrived in Sarajevo.

It is interesting to follow the relationship between the People's Government for B-H and the Zagreb-seated People's Government of SCS. When the establishment of the Government of People's Council of SCS for B-H was decided, Matko Laginja, politician, lawyer and the Council's commissioner for Istria, argued that in the State of SCS all institutions should comply with the Central Government in Zagreb and, in that context, put an emphasis on the government in B-H. "The Bosnian Government can only be a branch office of the Central Government. No government should be special." Was this really the case?

When Dr. Mate Drinković, the commissioner for defense in the People's Government of SCS in Zagreb, delegated some of his officers to "keep law and order" in Bosnia, Sarajevo responded promptly. The meeting of the People's Government for B-H of November 10, 1918 communicated to him that there was nothing for these officers to do in B-H given that they (the government) had invited the Serbian Army and its commander Duke Stepa Stepanović whose troops had already entered B-H and they had been enforcing law and order. Therefore, the communication quotes, the government in Sarajevo is returning these officers, suggesting to the Zagreb-seated government "to deploy them, at your convenience, to keep law and order in Yugoslav regions in need of their services." "Some of the officers who had come to Sarajevo at the order of the government in Zagreb, i.e. Defense Minister Mate Drinković, the government in Sarajevo will be put at the disposal either of the armed forces or the commanders of the Serbian Army." Establishment of any army whatsoever, concluded the government in

Sarajevo, would be met with disapproval by the people and, therefore, "we deem that such an attempt should not even be made… Serbian troops will be keeping law and order here." In conclusion, the communication asks the Zagreb-seated government to "seek the consent of the People's Government for Bosnia-Herzegovina or at least of a member of the People's Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina prior to taking such major decisions so as to avoid any misunderstanding."

This shows how far the government in Sarajevo relied on the Serbian Army, although B-H entered the Yugoslav state in 1918 through the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs rather than via direct unification with Serbia as proposed by the Serbian Government. The Serbian government's plans for B-H's direct unification with Serbia rather than through the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs are substantiated in many writings as well as in the many telegrams local authorities sent to the Serbian government calling for direct unification with Serbia regardless of the views of the Central Committee of the People's Council of SCS in Zagreb. On the grounds of these documents some researchers have argued that the people in B-H were delighted with the arrival of Serbian troops and prospects for unification in a Yugoslav state.

FACING NEW REALITIES

The very act of proclamation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on December 1, 1918 was not accompanied by any grand manifestations of excitement by the masses in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Whether or not the common people were aware of this piece of news also remains disputable. The fact that telegrams advocating direct unification with Serbia were sent to Belgrade from some parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina even after December 1, when the new state had already been proclaimed, leaves room for various interpretations, not only of the identities of the authors of those telegrams but also of the state of affairs in the field after

unification. The common people had other worries. Serbian peasants were making use of the time of instability and rather inefficient government to maltreat landowners and seize their lands, Muslim landowners were looking for a way to protect their own lives, while the common people were just trying to survive the cold winter of hunger.

Still, the question of the position of some religious and ethnic communities, but also of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a whole, in the newly-formed Yugoslav state was raised. Formally, all religious communities were equal before the law. It took time, however, for that equality to prove itself in real life. Religious communities were subject to political influence throughout the life of the First Yugoslavia, and the agrarian reforms had a greater effect on the Islamic religious community and the Catholic rather than on the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church cooperated closely with the state, given that their views about the necessity of centralization coincided.

The state mainly controlled the activity of the Islamic religious community, except for the first decade when this community retained its autonomous status from the Habsburg era. For its part, the Islamic religious community demonstrated its loyalty to the state. This was most evident in reis-ul-ulema Jamaluddin Čaušević's address to Regent Alexander during his visit to Sarajevo in 1920. "Your Royal Highness," he said, "allow me to emphasize in this solemn hour that the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina truly love your Royal Highness and the entire noble house of the Karađorđević dynasty. I am obliged by my love for the homeland to stress that the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina would like to see the noble person of Your Royal Highness as the source of their full equality and equity!"

The attitude of the Catholic Church was approximately the same. During the Regent's visit in 1920 Archbishop of Sarajevo Ivan Šarić emphasized Bosnian Catholics' loyalty to the new

state and their endeavor for "a wonderfully prosperous and even more glorious Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes." Nevertheless, regulation of the status of the Catholic Church was beset by many problems as testified by the failed Concordat project with the Vatican.

Though formally equal, some communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina were faced with multiple challenges in everyday life after the proclamation of unification. Muslim landowners were badly affected by agrarian reforms, the Muslim and Croat populations were subject to plunder and assaults, especially in the borderland with Montenegro, and political elites organized in parties by religion and ethnic origin – with the exception of the Communist Party, which prioritized social issues over religious and national – were preoccupied with debates on the number of seats in provisional representational institutions, not because they believed that this number proved Bosnia-Herzegovina's actual position in Yugoslavia, but rather, as they saw it, as a way to best represent the religious and ethnic interests of the communities they stood for. Bosnia-Herzegovina had 42 representatives in the Provisional People's Representation (PNP) of the Kingdom of SCS. However, they did not act as a single delegation advocating the interests of B-H. Instead, they advocated the interests of the parties that had delegated them, many of which had their seats outside Bosnia-Herzegovina. They participated in the Yugoslav Club (members of the Yugoslav Democratic Party and the Croatian People's Party) and the Radical and People's Club (members of the Croatian People's Community), but some of them were also in the Non-Partisan Club.

Bosnia-Herzegovina's status in Yugoslavia was defined in the St. Vitus Day Constitution of 1920, the declaration of which had obtained the support of B-H political parties. The Constitution provided centralism. The reasons why representatives of the Yugoslav Muslim Organization – the political party mostly standing

for the social, political and religious interests of the Muslims, and originally for federalization of the state – voted in the highly centralist Constitution as such, have been the subject of a lengthy public debate. No doubt that one of the reasons for their support was that the government had promised to respect the historical borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina when organizing the administration, i.e. to protect its territorial integrity. The promise was met under Article 135 of the Constitution but the loose wording of the provision left room for some municipalities and even districts to integrate with other regions if so decided by 3/5 of the vote in the Assembly. Consequently, it happened that the Constitution and the subsequent law on the state's division into 33 regions – 6 of which related to Bosnia-Herzegovina within its historical borders – provided territorial entirety for Bosnia-Herzegovina but, at the same time, opened the door to disintegration of that entirety. And, indeed, this is what happened in 1929, though not through the possibility allowed by the constitutional provision, but at the time of dictatorship when the Constitution was suspended. This was the first time Bosnia-Herzegovina was territorially dismembered in the Yugoslav state and it was also the first partition in the period between the two world wars that scarred the Bosniaks' memory of Yugoslavia as a state openly hostile to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Under the law of October 3, 1929 on the state's name and division into administrative regions, Yugoslavia was divided into nine banates (or, *banovina*) and Bosnia-Herzegovina into four (*Vrbaska, Drinska, Savska and Zetska banovina*). Two banates out of the four had seats outside B-H, and the Muslims were in the minority in each (the Serbs were in the majority in three banates and the Croats in one). This fact was played on in subsequent political activity, but also in political propaganda and publishing – even in scholarly books – to emphasize the anti-Muslim and anti-Bosnian character of the state's administrative division, and anti-Bosnian and anti-Muslim dimension of the new policy of integral

Yugoslavianism. This division certainly signaled abolition of the provincial specificity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, preserved for some time after 1918. More importantly, as the border at the Drina river was annulled, the latter found itself almost in the midst of the *Drinska Banovina*.

Between the two world wars, the Bosniaks were notably concerned with Bosnia-Herzegovina's specificity. Ever since the establishment of the Yugoslav state their policy was to preserve Bosnia-Herzegovina's entirety and the main promoter of that policy was the Yugoslav Muslim Organization. In the mid-1930s, following the dictatorship (either overt or covert) the Bosniaks established the Movement for the Autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the other hand, and in opposition to the ideas of autonomy advocated by the Yugoslav Muslim Organization, there emerged another movement formed by some Muslim and pro-Croatian politicians and led by Hakija Hadžić. The Movement cooperated with Bosnia-Herzegovina's Croats active in the Croatian People's Movement and its leader Vladko Maček. As Maček put it once, the objective of his Movement was to unite Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia on "the grounds of the Croatian ethnic majority" (according to him, Catholics and Muslims made up the Croatian community). "Should this turn out to be impossible to accomplish, we could accept a compromise on B-H that remains as a complete entity but obtains autonomy," he said. With this blurred idea about safeguarding Bosnia-Herzegovina as a whole, Maček won over some Muslim politicians dissatisfied with Mehmed Spaho, leader of the Yugoslav Muslim Organization, for his coalition with Milan Stojadinović in the mid-1930s. Spaho was blamed for having renounced his party's program for autonomy, though at the time of dictatorship he said on several occasions that Yugoslavia should become federalized. "Federation or separation," he allegedly told British archeologist Arthurs Evans in 1932. However, his coalition with Stojadinović imparted fresh vigor to the Muslim

branch of the Croatian Peasants' Party (HSS) that advocated federalization as a solution to the Yugoslav crisis, but never detailing the federal units that would make up the state.

In the late 1930s, the Bosniak leading party, the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (JMO), supported Serbian-Croatian negotiations on a compromise between two conflicting concepts (centralist and federalist). They did not have the remotest idea that the establishment of the *Banovina of Croatia* /*Banate*), emerging from partitioned Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1939, would create that compromise solution. The notorious Cvetković – Maček Agreement was nourished in the memory of the Bosniaks as a perfidious Serbian-Croatian pact evoking concerns for the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the late 20th and the early 21st century.

While the Bosniaks were struggling for Bosnia-Herzegovina's integrity and autonomy within Yugoslavia – all the time wavering between the Serbian and Croatian confronted blocs, sometimes siding with the former and sometimes with the latter – Croatian and Serbian political leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina proper were divided into those who favored Bosnia's unification with Croatia and those aiming at its unification with Serbia. Some of them, however, stood for safeguarding Bosnia-Herzegovina's autonomy from Croatia and Serbia alike, as they thought it far better to have autonomy than lose a part of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

WARTIME SPLITS AND POLITICAL (DIS)ORIENTATION

When World War II broke out, Bosnia-Herzegovina faced new challenges. Against the backdrop of the Bosniak autonomy movement of 1939–40 – still active though not homogeneous in practice – and in wartime conditions that smashed the state of Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina was incorporated into the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) in its entirety. The Drina river became the border once again. However, the division into 12 big administrative districts – six entirely in the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and

six only partially – annulled its historical and political territorial integrity. The seats of five big districts were located outside Bosnia-Herzegovina's historical borders.

Establishment of the Independent State of Croatia was the outcome of Yugoslavia's defeat in the war, and the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina had no say in the matter. Most Croats and Bosniaks accepted and welcomed the newly-established state and even hailed the entry of German troops, while the Serbs had many reasons to distrust the NDH from the very outset.

Dissatisfied with the Cvetković – Maček Agreement and the establishment of the Banovina of Croatia, some Muslim politicians who used to form the Muslim branch of the HSS joined the Ustasha movement upon the outbreak of war in 1941 and integrated into structures of the new NDH regime. They believed that integration of the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina into the NDH was more acceptable than partition, whereby a part would go to Croatia and another remain reserved for the Serbian portion of the Yugoslav state. Others had an eye on autonomy from the very start and so in April 1941, their delegation, in cooperation with some Serbian activists, urged reis-ul-ulema Fehim Spahu to initiate autonomy for B-H with the German authorities within the new world order. This attempt ended in disaster: the Serbian members of the delegation were killed while the NDH regime strongly cautioned Muslim members to stay away from anti-government activity. Later on that "spark of autonomy" developed into the still mysterious Memorandum, allegedly sent straight to Hitler in late 1942, asking for B-H autonomy from the NDH. However, all this underlined how lost the Bosniaks were during the war, how divided and committed to various political and military formations. In the historical arena of World War II, the Bosniak divide constituted a large spectrum ranging from loyalty to the NDH and participation in Ustasha, *Domobran* (homeland defenders: transl. note) and German military formations, through activism in the troops

of the "Yugoslav Army in the Homeland" and the movement for autonomy, to struggle in the Partisan movement, which offered a new vision of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an equal member of the Yugoslav federation. The first signs of the Bosniaks' shaken trust in the NDH were already visible in the autumn of 1941 in the so-called Muslim resolutions that indicated crisis in Bosniak circles. When they realized that the NDH was no protection from *Chetnik* pogroms, the Muslims' trust in it began spiraling downward and rapidly shifting to the Partisan movement.

The Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina mostly welcomed the NDH as their nation-state, especially in Western Herzegovina where news of its establishment was met with "euphoria." The idea of the NDH as the final realization of the centennial dream of a Croatian nation-state had been nourished for a very long time, therefore, it was simply referred to as "our state," "the Croatian state," and the like. This was due to the Croats' bad experience with monarchist Yugoslavia on the one hand and, on the other, to promises about the new state being solely "Croatian and peasant," which were music to the ears of the peasantry making up the majority of the B-H population, especially the peasantry in areas with a Croatian majority population, such as Western Herzegovina. Experiences were quite different in areas with an ethnically mixed population. However, already during the war the idea of the NDH as a Croatian nation-state was challenged by the realities of the crimes committed in the name of that centennial dream. In the broader context of relations between the warring parties, this was what gradually destroyed this state and eventually wiped it out by the end of the war. However, promoters of the idea popped up for decades following the end of World War II.

Unlike the Croats and the Bosniaks, the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina distrusted and opposed the NDH from the very start. As early as April 1941. albeit still timidly at the time, they gave vent to their feelings. Loyal to Yugoslavia on the one hand, and exposed

to legal and physical violence on the other, the Serbs refused to recognize the NDH as a state in which they saw a future for themselves. They soon rose up in arms: first in June in Eastern Herzegovina and then, in late July, in other parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In June, it was more of a spontaneous revolt against violence than anything else and the rebels were predominantly well-off peasants, the clergy and the middle-class. The June rebellion was mostly organized by the Communists in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The two movements cooperated at the beginning, but split up over time and some of the rebels in the June rebellion joined the Communist ranks, while others transformed themselves into the Chetnik movement. In late 1941, the two movements became distinct: the Partisan movement fought for a new social order, although committing crimes in its struggle, especially against the Muslims, while the other was barely concerned with Bosnia-Herzegovina and believed in a post-war revival of Yugoslavia with the Serbs playing a leading role. As the war neared its end, the Partisan movement was on the up and up, among other things thanks to recruitment of rebels who used to fight against the Partisans and were accomplices in the crimes against the Muslims and the Croats. This sowed the seed of Muslim and Croatian distrust in the Partisan movement, which found notable expression in their memorial culture in the early 1990s. The final result of World War II in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a heavy toll in human lives: out of 320,000 people killed, 164,000 were Serbs, 75,000 Bosniaks, 64,000 Croats and about 9,000 Jews.

All in all, World War II in Bosnia-Herzegovina was multi-layered, with everyone fighting everyone else, and "five fronts were in confrontation – the occupying force, the Ustashas, the Chetniks, the Muslims and the Partisans" The occupying troops had two wings: one in the hands of the Germans and the other of the Italians. "Of all the countries making up the Yugoslav state, B-H had the most complex war situation." In the end, the Partisan

movement, which after noisy and fierce debates among the Communist elite opted for Bosnia-Herzegovina's equality within the Yugoslav federation, emerged as the winner. The debates on Bosnia-Herzegovina's status in the future Yugoslav state (an autonomous or a federal unit) were not at all present on the scholarly and social agenda in the aftermath of the war, even once they had been placed on the social scene, and they were not explained adequately against the social, military and political backdrop of World War II, but used instead as an argument for the alleged anti-Bosnian and anti-Muslim orientation of the Partisan movement. However, the truth is that the Communist leadership's dilemma about the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina derived from its commitment to the Soviet model, according to which only ethnically pure historical regions could have the status of a republic, while ethnically mixed areas such as Bosnia-Herzegovina just the status of an autonomous unit in a federation of national republics. And yet, that dilemma was settled in 1943 and 1944 when ZAVNOBi H (the State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Bosnia-Herzegovina) sessions finally defined Bosnia-Herzegovina as a federal unit, equal with other republics within the Yugoslav state.

THE EXPERIENCE OF SOCIALISM

At the end of World War II in Bosnia-Herzegovina "the Serbian masses were in the winning camp, the Muslims were in second place, while the Croats occupied the back seat (…) With the luggage of old legacies and new controversial tendencies Bosnia-Herzegovina was opening a new chapter in its history" when it had to actually put into effect the equality it had formally obtained in the war. It was only in the late 1960s that Bosnia-Herzegovina, faced with the centralism of the Yugoslav state over the initial decades of socialist Yugoslavia, realized its full equality.

Likewise, some peoples in B-H proper were challenged with preserving the national equality that had been proclaimed in the

war. Though formally equal, though mostly on the account of developments duringthe war,, their experience of socialist Yugoslavia was a different story. Some regions with a majority Croatian population such as Western Herzegovina had been marginalized for almost two decades. At the so-called Mostar Council in 1966, the leadership of the B-H League of Communists raised its voice against it, began removing the Ustasha "mortgage" from the entire population of this region and thus launched the process of Western Herzegovina's integration into the larger B-H frame. However, that process has been never brought to an end while marginalization of the Croat – populated regions – evident in the aftermath of the war – would leave resentful memories of the period of socialist Yugoslavia in the minds of the Croats. The Croatian political elite of the 1990s particularly insisted on those memories, emphasizing that the Croats had been subjugated in socialist Yugoslavia. The hardship the Croats had undergone in the aftermath of the war and their mass migration abroad in search of work was stressed. In the early 1970s, for instance, the Zagreb-seated *Glas koncila* (Voice of the Council) magazine that was distributed throughout B-H underlined that "one Croat in every five is away from his homeland" and that "sad and painful is the very thought that this flower and hope of the Croatian people has to earn his daily bread away from our *Beautiful* Homeland." The repression against the Croats during and after the *Croatian Spring* of the 1970s was a major argument used to support this thesis. One of the HDZ leaders in B-H said, "We, the Croats, have definitely served our time," referring to many Croats who had spent years in jail at the time of socialist Yugoslavia. The fact was that the percentage of the Croats in the population structure of B-H steadily dropped throughout the period of socialist Yugoslavia (according to the census of 1948, the Croats made up 24% of the entire population, but only 17% in 1991), as a result of their emigration either to Croatia or

abroad (mostly to Germany), but also of the growth of the Muslim population.

After the war not only the Croats but the Bosniaks, too, were faced with the challenge of rounding off their national integration. In the early 1960s, the B-H Communists initiated recognition of the Muslim nation, which they campaigned for with scholarly argumentation throughout the 1960s. By the end of the 1960s, the reality of the Muslim nation was definitely recognized by the B-H and Yugoslav Communist elites. Subsequent denials of the Muslim nation, especially in the 1980s, were used to create preconditions for destruction of the Yugoslav state and the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although in Yugoslavia the Bosniaks were fully acknowledged as a nation, became a major cultural and social factor and expanded demographically (from 30% of the B-H population in the 1948 census, the percentage of Bosniaks grew to 43% in the census of 1991), in the 1990s the Bosniak political elite was building a negative image of their experience of Yugoslavia. They emphasized the Muslims' subjugation in the socialist era, insisting that that their national identity had not been recognized, that they had not been adequately represented in the army officer corps, in the police, etc, that they had been exposed to various waves of violence (hardship in the aftermath of World War II and trials of members of the Young Muslims group in 1947, 1949 and 1983, a hard life and migration to the Sandžak and Turkey, especially in the "Ranković era"), and the like.

The B-H Serbs emerged from the war as the greatest victims and perceived Yugoslavia as their " home sweet home". Researchers have proven that in the socialist era they had occupied key political and social positions in Bosnia-Herzegovina for a long time. The story about mass atrocities and genocide against them fanned the flame of the Serbs' perception of their major contribution to the creation of the Yugoslav socialist state and their responsibility for its safekeeping. In the early 1990s, Serbian political leaders

in B-H kept reminding the people that the Serbs had suffered the most in World War II and had been the biggest victims of the conflict with the Cominform, underlining that the loss of their demographic majority in B-H was a consequence of the misguided policy of the Communist elite which, having recognized the Muslims' national identity, had ruthlessly worked against Serbian national interests, etc.

The truth is that the percentage of Serbs in the entire population of Bosnia-Herzegovina almost crumbled at the time of socialist Yugoslavia (from 44% of the population in 1948 it fell to 31% in 1991). Despite that fact, the majority of Serbian Communists were devoted to Bosnia-Herzegovina's affirmation as an equal federal unit of Yugoslavia throughout the socialist era. What seems most convincing is that the B-H Communist movement as a whole was not ethnically oriented since the Communists endeavored to affirm and develop all national identities and opposed the building of a supra-national identity that could have disturbed the ethnic balance – a major factor of B-H, s integrity. This was evident in the 1960s and 1970s when some circles promoted Yugoslavianism and Bosnianism as national identities. The Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina turned down both options flat, arguing that anything like that could lead towards centralization and unitarianization of the country (Yugoslavianism) or denial of the Serbian and Croatian national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bosnianism).

The Communist movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina remained loyal to a man to Yugoslavia for a very long time. Thanks to this unity, Bosnia-Herzegovina modernized its society in the socialist era, made economic progress, integrated its infrastructure, set up scientific and cultural institutions, and opened itself up to the world. In the mid-1980s, however, serious cracks started appearing in this unity and continued spreading and multiplying in the second half of the decade and, finally, after much scandal and heavy political propaganda, brought Bosnia-Herzegovina closer to the

bloody war of the 1990s. In the early 1990s, the Serbian political elite was rapidly turning its eyes towards Belgrade and pinning its hopes on survival of Yugoslavia as a safe haven for its identity. On the other hand, by promoting the story about marginalization of the Croats the Croatian and Bosniak elites were practically preparing their compatriots for Yugoslavia's inevitable disintegration – which, indeed, took place soon afterwards.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA IN YUGOSLAVIA'S FINALE

As in 1918 when the state of Yugoslavia was established, Bosnia-Herzegovina was no major factor whatsoever in its disintegration in the 1990s. After the parliamentary elections in 1990, national parties (the SDA, SDS and HDZ) came to power in Bosnia-Herzegovina and differences in the way they perceived the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia became evident in almost no time. The HDZ promoted Yugoslavia as a loose federation, the SDS was opposing to the very idea and insisted on a "democratic Yugoslavia organized as a modern state," while the SDA did not take a firm stand, but advocated "a modern state" that would be neither a confederation – as the Croats wanted – nor a federation, the Serbian concept. As the time went by, ideas about the future constitutional status of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia took shape within the SDA, which eventually resulted in the Izetbegović – Gligorov proposal for Yugoslavia as an asymmetrical federation. When that proposal was turned down, like the one for safeguarding a "rump" Yugoslavia that would include neither Croatia nor Slovenia, the door opened wide to Bosnia-Herzegovina to leave Yugoslavia. On that road, however, it had to overcome new stumbling blocks. Non-national (left-wing) parties were weak and only in power in Tuzla and Vareš, while the resentment of the citizens in all other parts was represented by a bloc of national parties that were already at loggerheads. This situation led towards Bosnia-Herzegovina's implosion. The ruling political

parties, including the SDS and HDZ, which had their sponsors in Serbia and Croatia, could not reach agreement on a single matter of any importance. Debates in the republican assembly were fierce, brimming with nationalistic rhetoric, even warmongering, and were often conducted in a rough and crude manner. The strategy implemented in the field was a strategy for the breakup of the B-H entity through so-called regionalization. In late 1991, when the majority in the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina voted for independence from Yugoslavia – a vote verified in the referendum of early March 1992, it became clear that the course towards independence would be a bloody one. The SDS opposed the outcome of the referendum on independence, mobilized the Serbs with the idea about "remaining within Yugoslavia," and decided to realize its policy through war. Before war actually broke out, with the assistance of some smaller Serbian parties (though not supported by the Serbs active in non-national parties), the SDS had established parallel Serbian institutions in municipalities and but also all over Bosnia-Herzegovina. Simultaneously, the HDZ in B-H also formed the Croatian Community (later the Republic) of Herceg-Bosnia thus lessening the chances for the survival of B-H as a whole outside Yugoslavia. Nonetheless,, in the situation as it was in the early 1990s when the political actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina stood no chance whatsoever of influencing the course of history in any major way, by following that course Bosnia-Herzegovina joined the states that had become independent of Yugoslavia. The turnout in the referendum of February 29 – March 1, 1992 was 64% of the electorate (mostly Bosniaks and Croats) and 99% of the people who went to the polls voted for an independent and sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina. On April 6, 1992, the European Union acknowledged an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina and other countries followed suit. For the first time after several centuries, Bosnia-Herzegovina had the opportunity to develop

its identity as a state outside other large state structures, including Yugoslavia. It started down a road that turned out to be very thorny.

CONCLUSION

The Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats experienced Yugoslavia differently, above all, monarchist and socialist Yugoslavia. Bosnia-Herzegovina did not contribute much to the creation of the Yugoslav state, which it joined indirectly, through the so-called State of Slovenians, Croats and Serbs, and its Bosniak, Serbian and Croatian representatives were not equally active in the process. Most Serbs and Croats adopted the idea of a Yugoslav state relatively early in the process but most Muslim politicians, after a long period of vacillation, only caught the "Yugoslav train" at the very end of the war. However, once they entered Yugoslavia, they accepted it as a state and actively participated in its constitutional structuring, but were negatively affected by certain government moves, principally the agrarian reforms. The Croats and the Serbs competed against each other over organization of the state, but most researchers claim that both Croats and Bosniaks were marginalized in monarchist Yugoslavia.

The experience of socialist Yugoslavia was quite different. Socialist Yugoslavia ensured not only formal but true equality, especially as from the early 1960s. However, when perceived from the angle of the country's disintegration in the 1990s and the experience of war and hardship, socialist Yugoslavia is pictured badly, which is then transferred into a historical experience. For example, the level of modernization Bosnia-Herzegovina attained in the Yugoslav state is denied. This approach, however, has nothing to do with the real historical experience of the Yugoslav state, especially of socialist Yugoslavia.

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