

Bosnia Roundtable

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR FOREIGN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa

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Report by Metta Spencer

Participants: Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, M.P., Nedžad Basic, Charles Court, Mihailo Crnobrnja, Mohamed Dzuuhur, Lorna Jean Edmunds, Donald Fleming, John Graham, Eric Hoskins, Robert Howse, Steve Lee, Reno Lukic, Eileen Oleniuk, Malcolm Peat, David Rudd, Metta Spencer, Dennis Stevens, Marie Gervais Vidricaire, Steve Wallace, Kate White.

Marie Gervais Vidricaire launched the meeting with an excellent and encouraging summation of the projects in which Canada has been engaged in Bosnia. Next the meeting turned to a general discussion of the current situation, followed in the afternoon by a discussion of specific policy recommendations. Finally, after the discussion had gone on for a good part of the day, we were joined by Minister Axworthy, who listened and answered questions. Most of the following points were made by only one or two speakers, but (except where noted) they were not disputed by others and can probably be taken as representing a consensus.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN BOSNIA

- We discussed whether the basic Dayton plan can be sustained or whether stabilization will inevitably require that Republika Srpska (RS) be allowed to join Serbia and the Croats join Croatia. While some people had resigned themselves to that depressing outcome, most others insisted that Dayton will remain "the only game in town," and reported signs that the situation may be improving lately. There have been some very encouraging changes in the last two months — especially since Dodik took office. Some 18 deputies of the SDA actually supported the Dodik government, which is a breakthrough. Over two-thirds of the municipal elections have been validated.
- The peacekeepers are performing their functions well, and NATO is discussing the future of SFOR. No longer is there any intention of specifying an end-date; instead, what is planned is to specify the desired end-state and develop means of measuring progress toward that state. We will need a light touch in measuring progress, for most Bosnians do not know how to behave like a liberal democracy.
- The return of refugees is disappointing — only some 25,000 have returned home so far. Professor Lukic has been looking into the type of initiative that works best in encouraging the return of refugees and has concluded that it is the "Open City" concept. The Canadian contribution of \$450,000 to UNHCR has already partly been allocated to funding the Open City initiative and DFAIT has suggested to CIDA that they ask it be devoted more to that, especially to two recently opened towns in RS.