

speakers maintained, that if there had been intervention in 1991, as many as 100,000 lives would have been saved.

Yet there were two arguments against military intervention. The first one was the view of the conflict resolution specialists who assert that any solution imposed by force can never be a true resolution of the conflict, and that any unresolved conflict will reappear in a different, but equally pernicious, manifestation. I have already discussed this argument above.

The second argument was advanced in a private conversation by a man who blamed the Serbs for the preponderance of the war crimes, but who nevertheless would not have sent troops to protect their victims. He claimed that the world should not have permitted the break-up of Yugoslavia. The politicians who asserted these claims of independence were criminals, he said, who inflamed nationalist antagonisms in their republics and incited people to vote for secession. Furthermore, he continued, all those who illegitimately declare independence must bear the consequences of their own reckless actions, even if one unfortunate consequence is to be victimized. The world must show separatists that if they declare independence unilaterally, they cannot call upon the United Nations or NATO to come and defend them or fight a war of "national liberation" for them. Only if a state is partitioned legitimately, properly protecting the rights of minorities and other stakeholders, may its leaders invoke the support of the international community if then they need help in defending themselves against an aggressor.

Probably only a few of the conference participants would have accepted this tough-minded argument but, right or wrong, it does buttress a position that virtually all participants endorsed: that henceforth all partitions of states must be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and within a better-codified framework of international law than exists today: No more support for unilateral secessions!

Lessons in Preventing War and Restoring Peace

Among the speakers arguing for a conflict-resolution perspective on the Yugoslav conflict, several suggested ways in which ordinary citizens can help build peace. Combat hate speech everywhere and at all times, not just sometimes, at some places, and against only some peoples. Train local citizens in civil disobedience. Send in "armies" of social workers and peace brigades wearing white helmets, some of them carrying camcorders. We need conflict journalism — analyses of the conflicts underlying the fighting

— and not just war reporting. Consult the people on the ground. Give people a voice so they can express themselves and allow for self-regulation. Act early. Once blood has flowed it is harder to resolve conflicts. Early mediation costs thousands of dollars, as compared to billions later for a war. Work with local groups at their invitation. Learn the language, preferably before arriving there. Commit to stay for one or two years. And, above all, listen and talk to all sides!

It is instructive to recognize the long-term failure of Tito's methods of imposing unity on his country. No "truth commission" or war crimes tribunal was set up to establish facts about the atrocities of the 1940s.²⁶ No formal mechanisms were created for conflict resolution between the country's ethnic communities. In fact, people were not permitted to mention their bitter memories of the civil war. Consequently, the repressed guilt was left unacknowledged, unforgiven, and unhealed. Probable lesson: at some point after a war, the tragic history of violence and injustice should be described fully and publicly as a lasting record in the society. Another lesson may be this: Having confronted the past, the state and non-governmental organizations should set up institutions led by well-trained mediators to cope with new ethnic conflicts as they continue arising in the future.

Economic sanctions, which are meant to restrict the options of rulers, usually tend to keep them in power while harming mainly ordinary citizens, including activists who are trying to bring about change.

Turning now to the participants who believe in military intervention, the most widely accepted lesson seems to be this: Intervention in local conflicts should be undertaken swiftly, with a credible threat of force, and the resolve to use it. A lack of decisiveness by the great powers is a contemptible failing that costs more lives than it saves.²⁷

Finally, a third lesson was proposed by a minority of those who do not necessarily oppose military intervention on principle but did oppose it in the Yugoslav wars: Separatists who declare

²⁶Yugoslav communist courts were inconsistent, though often hard on former Nazis.

²⁷This lesson was rejected by many participants in the audience, of course. The main argument against it seemed to be that intervention in favor of one side in conflict destroys international organizations' credibility and makes regimes reluctant to admit them to their territory.