

able images broadcast on television, atrocities that we thought were no longer possible at the end of the 20th century.

The perceived justification of our mission there has been very much influenced by the world situation.

• (1120)

It is horror-stricken that we have witnessed and are still witnessing children much like our own dying in the streets, injured left to die in hospitals without care and without necessities. The world had come to hope for a new order which would not lead us to expect atrocities such as those we have seen once again in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989 provoked a euphoria as sudden as it was unexpected. On December 31, 1989, von Karajan went to what, for 42 years, was known as East Berlin to conduct Beethoven's Ninth. It was like living in a dream: Vaclav Havel had just crowned the velvet revolution in Prague, "solidarnosc" was on its way to power in Warsaw and Hungary was once again free. The Warsaw pact had just crumbled like a pack of cards, after more than 40 years of dullness and dictatorship. All this happened at the end of 1989; it happened, and this cannot be over-emphasized, without bloodshed, without a single gun being fired.

As everyone else, I felt I was a witness to historic events, I felt a certain amount of pride at seeing some ideals such as liberty and democracy make giant leaps. Eighteen months later, Boris Yelstin was waving a three coloured Russian flag on top of a tank. The USSR had just collapsed.

As soon as the cold war ended, we started thinking about creating new institutions to take over, to mark out what was soon called the new world order. In particular, all the European countries, the United States and Canada formed the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe designed, in the words of the then Secretary of State James Baker, as a new forum to ensure peace and dialogue from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

What remains today of this burning hope for a new world? Of course, the Czech republic, Poland and Hungary seem on the right track. However, Russia seems to be failing. Then on our TV screens, we witnessed the tragic war in the former Yugoslavia, which has been going on for the last two years.

In this new world order, one expected international law to be enforced. The relations between states would not be governed exclusively by the mere balance of power. The strong would no longer be able to bring the weak to their knees. The new order became reality once, in the winter of 1991, when Kuwait was defended against Iraqi invasion. Cynics have said there was something underground in Kuwait that seemed to be as valuable as the people living on the surface, and perhaps more valuable.

Government Orders

In Bosnia-Herzegovina there are three communities: the Muslims, the Serbs and the Croats. The first are the descendants of Slavs who converted to Islam after the Ottoman conquest, some 500 years ago. So these are three very ancient communities, with equally deep roots in the same soil. Demographically the Muslims are the largest segment of the population with 1.9 million inhabitants or 44 per cent, followed by the Serbs at 31 per cent and the Croats at 17 per cent. But unlike the other two groups—and this is no small detail—the Muslims cannot count on a sizeable community of fellows in a neighbouring republic.

After Slovenia and Croatia became independent, neither the Muslims nor the Croats in Bosnia wanted to stay in a reduced Yugoslavia where Serb predominance would be still greater. They called for the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina in late February 1992. The Bosnian Serbs refused to be part of this new state.

If the Serbs had been content to fortify their position and mark out a territory for themselves where they formed a majority, we would have seen a political impasse that would probably have led to long and laborious negotiations. But unfortunately that was not what happened. The Bosnian Serbs were quickly able, with the assistance of the Yugoslav army, a relatively well-equipped force dominated by Serbs, to take control of 70 per cent of the territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including territories where they were only a tiny minority, to expel the non-Serbs systematically, especially the Muslims, and even to execute a certain number of them.

We can all recall the internment-camp stories that held the headlines in the summer of 1992. A number of these camps still exist today. Moreover, cultural and religious symbols have been systematically blown up, including 16th century mosques that were part of the world's shared heritage, and houses often burned to the ground.

• (1125)

In reaction, and this is the spiral, the same treatment has been inflicted by the Muslims on the Serbs and the Croats and by the Croats on the Serbs, obviously on a smaller scale.

A journalist from the Paris daily *Le Monde*, Yves Heller, summed up the situation nicely on October 1 last, and I quote: "The Muslims, who are the victims of an "ethnic cleansing" of unspeakable savagery, have lost very large territories in western Bosnia which the Serbs have conquered with extreme brutality—"

We know today that "cleansing" was discussed in the corridors of power in Belgrade, capital of Serbia, at the end of the eighties.