

- The most debated theme concerned the question of establishing democracy. Some participants feel that the process of continuously intervening in Bosnian affairs amounts to treating the region as an "intensive care patient" and thereby increasing a sense of isolation and dependency instead of allowing Bosnians to take care of their own politics.

Other participants maintain that there is no alternative in the near term to "twisting their arms" to change Bosnian politics. Though democracy is the goal, the progress until now has not resulted from any internal consensus but from prodding. No development could have happened had there not been a derogation of sovereignty in the Dayton agreement. In fact, the US has been behind crucial decisions, especially the timing and manner of the elections. The majority of citizens want Bosnia to be fragmented, not united and independent. Regrettably, polls showed last summer that the most aggressive segment of the population is highly educated. Politicians will probably continue to drag their feet for years, and so international intervention must continue.

In fact, many or most of the groups promoting democracy in Bosnia have stated all along that they favor strong intervention -- indeed, even the establishment of a protectorate there for a considerable period until the conditions for fair elections can be established. Recently Carlos Westendorp has been given a wider mandate and is using it to solve some issues where the elected officials have balked. In no sense does this make Bosnia a protectorate, but it may suffice to get it through its crisis. In any case, instead of concentrating on Sarajevo, it makes sense for the international community to work on building civil society throughout the country. There is now enough progress in RS to make it appropriate to fund projects there.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM NGO PARTICIPANTS:

For the OSCE and Electoral Reform

- The chairman of the OSCE electoral commission can make rules and break deadlocks that would otherwise occur. If the present electoral system continues to result in deadlocks, that alternative exists and should be used. Too much obstruction has been tolerated. On the other hand, the 1998 elections should not be treated as a make-or-break event. To state that September is crucial would be a big mistake, because in fact the extreme nationalist parties are likely to win. Several years of attention will be required.

- A new formula is needed for elections. It is important for each party to demonstrate that it can work in a coalition with another party or parties. At present, Dodik has a working coalition, but this will not happen in the Federation, so it is necessary to change the rules enough to make that possible.

- The Serb Civic Council in Sarajevo — a democratic NGO supporting a multicultural Bosnia — complains that the current constitution of Bosnia requires that Serbian representatives to the federal parliament be elected only in RS, while Croatian and Bosniac representatives to the federal parliament may be elected only in the Federation. They object to the fact that Serbs in the Federation, as well as Croats and Bosniacs in RS, are unable to be represented by members of their own community. They would