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### **BOSNIAKS AND BOSNIA**

(reflecting on the topics: name, language and script, homeland, state)

Name. The complex and dramatic political situation that the Bosniaks found themselves in at the junction of the 19th and 20th centuries, on the one hand, and during the last decade of the 20th century, on the other, determined both their becoming alienated from their historic ethnic name and their returning to it. The idea of Bosniakhood as an inter-confessional and transnational category is usually referred to in connection with the period of Austro-Hungarian rule and its minister Benjamin Kállay, but in fact the idea of 'Bosniaks of three faiths' was conceived and began to develop near the end of the Ottoman rule. However, it was Kállay who then further established the idea of 'a state nation' in Bosnia under the Austro-Hungarian rule and proposed a national policy of, seemingly more acceptable, Bosnianhood, which was certainly unacceptable for the aroused nationalisms in Bosnia, supervised and controlled by their mother countries. The offered model of Bosniakhood/Bosnianhood, as the life saving solution for the alleviation of growing nationalistic pressure, was not accepted by those to whom it was addressed (Serbs and Croats); in fact, it was crudely rejected. A paradoxical but logical consequence of this practice is that - Bosniaks themselves, whom the 'term and attribute' Bosniak historically and practically referred to, became alienated from that name. Bosniaks reverted to having their religious attribute be their ethnic denomination - Muslim - not only because their ethnic denomination had been revoked for some time and misused for political purposes, but also because they realised that they could successfully resist the appropriation and assimilation imposed by both Orthodox Bosnian Serbs and Catholic Bosnian Croats, only by insisting on their religious distinctiveness, i.e. by claiming that they were members of the Islamic religion - Muslims. During the decades that followed, Serbs and Croats identified Bosniakhood - through no fault of Bosniaks - with unitarianist aspirations, and they considered themselves victims of such a policy in advance. All of the above contributed over time to the growth of hatred of Bosniakhood, which was consciously supported by the nationalistic historiography of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and, later, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, because it accelerated the process of alienation of Bosniaks from their ethnic name. This is why Bosniaks, during the national and nationalistic turmoil of the late 1960s, did not choose to use their historical name when the state allowed them to declare themselves, in the census, as a distinctive ethnic group, but instead were content to retain their religious attribute as their ethnic name (Muslims). The revival of the Bosniak ethnic denomination within the publicist writing of the political-emigration as well as during the time prior to the first democratic parliamentary elections after the Second World War (late 1980s), aroused the consciousness of Bosniaks only to the point that they denoted their language as Bosnian - in the 1991 census, in what was then Yugoslavia. Finally, Bosniaks made the crucial reversal to their historical ethnic name during the aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the decision was made official at the First Assembly of Bosniaks, in the Autumn of 1993.

Language and script. Bosniaks have called their mother tongue Bosnian ever since ancient times. The fact that some Franciscan writers in Bosnia called their mother tongue Bosnian too, does not bring into question the continuity of that language, but relates to the common Bosnian framework of peoples that have shared the same living space for centuries. On the other hand, without analysing this question within Croatian culture, this issue of language belongs to the past in view of the unequivocal decision of Bosnian Croats to call their language Croatian. Even the political usage of the language's name, occurring near the end of the Ottoman and during the Austro-Hungarian rule - which tended towards an inter-confessional and transnational meaning - never brought into question the established continuity of that language. Today's disputes and contentions regarding the name Bosnian for the mother tongue of Bosniaks as well as the insistence on the claim that the name of the language must be derived from the name of the nation and not from the name of the homeland - are all unfounded and extralinguistic; they are, in fact, nationalistic and petty-political. As for the script, in accordance with all the cultural developments in the social environment of the

Balkans and Europe, most Bosniaks today use the Latin script. During the pre-Islamic period, i.e. the Middle Ages, Bosniaks and other ethnic groups in Bosnia shared the following scripts: the Glagolitic script, and a form of the Cyrillic script called Bosnian Cyrillic script. While the usage of the Arabic script or Bosnian Arab script by Bosniaks for the purpose of transcribing their mother tongue had been most prominently present during the period of the Ottoman Empire, when the script had been adopted and adapted to the sound system of the Bosnian language, its presence extended throughout the Austro-Hungarian period and could be traced until the beginning of the Second World War. Along with the prevailing usage of the Latin script, Bosniaks still use the Cyrillic script for expressing their mother tongue in Sanjak, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia.

The relationship between the Bosnian language and the Croatian and Serbian languages, spoken in Bosnia and beyond, (in this case the Montenegrin language should also be added) is marked by the indisputable fact that they are all standardised languages with a common basis, which nevertheless also possess many specific qualities in each national variation: colloquial speech, oral and recorded literature, science, recorded documents and various aspects of everyday practice. Compared with Croatian and Serbian, Bosnian and Montenegrin lack, to a very large extent, grammars and orthographic textbooks that would regulate and direct language usage at the levels of common and distinct features respectively. A logical approach to this issue should not artificially separate the Bosnian language from everything that is common and practically irreplaceable, nor should it hide everything that is undoubtedly specific or particular at any of the possible levels: phonetic, lexical, morphological or syntactic. There is an illustrative saying that relativises the language differences and indicates the interlacing of linguistic expression of Serbian and Croatian: 'A Serb has a house and in his house a homemaker, and a Croat has a home and in his home a housewife!'. This saying can – in order to indicate the common linguistic roots, the above interlacing, as well as the complex interrelationship regarding both the common and specific features – be extended, without intending to be final, as follows: 'A Serb has a house and in his house a homemaker, and a Croat has a home and in his home a housewife, and a Bosniak has both a home and a house and in his home a woman of the house!' A reasonable way of cultivating the Bosnian linguistic garden will take care of the established and harmonious balance between both that which is common (to Bosnian and neighbouring languages) and that which is distinct. In the process of regulating the Bosnian language – regarding both the ongoing process and the one that is yet to come – the 'struggle for differences' with regard to our neighbours' linguistic usage is absurd and a waste of time for the Bosniak culture, already burdened with numerous basic needs.

Homeland. The homeland of Bosniaks is every country where they are autochthonous. Bosnia is their central mother country in addition to Montenegro and Sanjak, while the states of ex-Yugoslavia – Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia – are all, in different ways, the countries where Bosniaks emigrated. Today's presence of Bosniaks in the above mentioned regions is related to their exodus to Turkey, where they emigrated more or less intensively over the course of a whole century – from the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia (1878) to the 1970s. The smaller or larger groups of Bosniaks who now live in Macedonia and Kosovo, are descendants of those families who had to remain there because they were unable to reach Turkey. As for going abroad to work, which was a process that took place in ex-Yugoslavia with an uneven intensity from the late 1960s to the 1990s, the most important Western European country where Bosniaks emigrated was Germany. This circumstance contributed to the fact that, during the aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), when Bosniaks were persecuted and exiled, most of them found refuge in Germany but they were also dispersed all over Europe and overseas countries. At present, Bosniaks live, in smaller or larger communities, in dozens of countries, as emigrants from a long time ago, former foreign-workers or recent refugees and exiles. It is a generally accepted estimate that the number of Bosniaks who live all over the world, today, exceeds the number of those who live in their mother countries.

State. The earliest system of government that Bosniaks lived in was the medieval Bosnian kingdom. After the Ottomans invaded Bosnia and after the downfall of the Bosnian kingdom (1463), the Ottoman Empire became the system of government under which Bosniaks will spend more than four centuries. Under the Ottoman Empire, Bosniaks were just one of the ethnic groups within the densely populated and multiethnic empire which, at the peak of its

power, covered an area of three continents (Asia, Africa, Europe). Bosniaks, being Muslims, enjoyed certain advantages during the period of the Ottoman Empire which was an Islamic state – they partook in the governing and could hold the highest religious, military and administrative posts, except the post of Sultan – but their basic disadvantage was the fact that the idea of ethnic selfhood was gradually and then finally suppressed, which left long-term disadvantageous consequences manifested by their delayed national awakening compared to their neighbours in Bosnia (Serb and Croats). The Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina was another system of government for Bosniaks, who spent the following forty years as the subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, under which Bosnia and Herzegovina became 'corpus separatum'. Regardless of the unfavourable process of alienation from their ethnic name during that time, some progress was made in the area of the social life of Bosniaks, which was important for the growth of their ethnic consciousness (struggles in the Bosnian Parliament, the foundation of political parties, the issuing of political newspapers, educational autonomy etc.). The position of Bosniaks within the above three systems of government was different each time, starting from the basic religious level, so that they were: Bosnian Christians in the Middle Ages, one of the Muslim-millets (i.e. groups) during the Ottoman Empire (1463-1878), and Mohammedans (Muslims, Moslems) during the four-decades-long period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1878-1918). The period of the Ottoman Empire is the one whose circumstances contributed to the suppression of the sense of ethnic selfhood – and it is irrelevant whether the Ottomans' failure to see the ethnic selfhood of Bosniaks was deliberate or not. It was probably not a carefully planned anti-Bosniak policy. The reaction of the Porta, as directed by Istanbul, in subduing the Movement for Bosnian Autonomy led by Husein-kapetan Gradašević whom the Porte denied everything that was, at the same time, granted to Duke Miloš Obrenović was spontaneous and not a product of a systematically developed and thought-out policy. On the other hand, during the Austro-Hungarian rule, a planned but carefully concealed anti-Bosniak policy was conducted, which became apparent through the process of calculated and deceitful encouragement of the emigration of Bosniaks to Turkey, and through the concealment of acts of conversion by the Catholic clergy. And while the Austro-Hungarian state policy was not so openly anti-Bosniak, during the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (and later, during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) the anti-Bosniak state policy was more or less open. The seizure of land from Bosniaks under the auspices of the government (the Land Reform Law, aimed at Bosniak landowners) as well as the impoverishment and social disregard of Bosniaks were present to such an extent that a Bosniak politician at the time noticed, without exaggeration, that the government had taken away everything from his people, except pride (Džafer-beg Kulenović). However, thanks to the skilful political manoeuvring in the Parliament, Bosniak politicians (Mehmed Spaho, before all) managed to ensure the continuity of Bosnia as an integral part of the then Yugoslavia, until the division of the country into banovinas (provinces). The anti-Bosniak policy carried out by the sociopolitical structures of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia put Bosniaks, on the eve of the Second World War, into a highly unenviable position. Suljaga Salihagić, a sagacious political analyst of the position of the Bosniaks at the time, wittily noticed in his booklet called 'We, Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims in the Fold of the Yugoslavian Community' that Bosniaks, as far as government employment is concerned, could only be promoted to be attendants. The anti-Bosniak policy continued during the following system of government, the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia, despite the fact that Bosniaks made an immeasurable contribution to the anti-fascist war against the 'occupying forces and domestic traitors'. In addition to the previous 'guilt for being Turks' (i.e. abandoning their 'ancestral faith' and joining 'the occupiers', Turks), a further blame was put on Bosniaks for their participation – during the Second World War – in the administrative and military structures of the fascist state known as the Independent State of Croatia (in which they were civil servants, political activist and Domobrans), as well as in the military of the Third Reich (in the so-called SS 'Handžar' Division), despite the fact of the Bosniaks' substantial and more significant anti-fascist - political (Muslim proclamations against the persecution of Serbs, Jews and Gipsies) and military contributions. Nevertheless, Bosniaks saw better days during the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia when, thanks to the thorough public educational system, there was an explosion of Bosniak experts in various fields, including many first-rate scientists, sportsmen and artists, greatly owing to the activities of the Sarajevo University and various scientific institutes (numerous various-ly-oriented institutes, the Academy of Arts and Sciences of Bosnia and Herzegovina). The rise of Bosniaks in the field of the arts on the

Yugoslav plane was foreshadowed by two superlative literary works published in the same year (1966), 'Death and the Dervish', a novel by Meša Selimović, and 'The Stone Sleeper', collected poems by Mak Dizdar. Other works by the same authors followed and then new, younger authors (Sušić, Ibrišimović, Sidran, Horozović), visual artists (Berber, Hozo, Zec, Tikveša, Dragulj) and movie directors (Kusturica) appeared. All of this contributed to the rise of 'republic statehood', which worried the ideologists of nationalistic territorial claims to Bosnia, which would – from the nearest east and from the nearest west – become apparent in the roughest manner during the aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995). Prior to the aggression, the Bosnian-Herzegovinian right to independence was officially recognised (the Badenter Commission) which meant – in view of the (un)favourable situation and inadequate military readiness of the pro-Bosnian resistance forces – serving this country to the executioners on a platter: the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was executed before being given an opportunity to stand on its feet. The international indication that the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina existed was very clear (international recognition by the UN, international acknowledgement of the aggression and of the genocide of Bosniaks). Under such circumstances, the Bosniak SDA (Party of Democratic Action) leadership, having been no match for the dramatic reality, started to waste the political capital of being the politicians whose state policy led to the international recognition of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by accepting to negotiate with the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party) and the HDZ-HVO (Croatian Democratic Union – Bosnian Croat Army) executioners, pretending not to see or even acquiescing to the internal erosion of the already fragile multiethnicity of the army, the police forces and the state institutions. Following such developments, after the Geneva and Washington Peace Agreements, the Dayton Peace Accord was signed, where the representatives of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina finally made official what they had – by recognising the Republic of Srpska – earlier announced, i.e. drawing demarcation lines within Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus making an unprecedented type of social system and system of government that cannot be found anywhere else in the world: a Republic and a Federation, where the inhabitants of the Federation of (half)Bosnia and Herzegovina have different opinions about the Federation itself. Some claim that it is a Federation of cantons; others claim that it is a Federation of ethnic groups. And what is worse, 'Dayton's rachitic infant' never began to 'toddle', not even at the level of (reduced to its geographical term) Bosnia and Herzegovina nor at the level of the Federation (where, regardless of the changes of the name, a parastate named Herzeg-Bosnia still continues to function within the pseudo-Federation). Thus, for years now, Bosniaks have been in a paradoxical situation where they, beginning with something that in reality does not exist (the Federation), talk about something else that also does not exist (statehood), and even try to celebrate it at times. The cynical analysts of the political situation in the Federation view such situation as the punishment for Bosniaks who, during the election campaign, symbolically joined their flag to the flag of the weaker one of the two partners in Bosnia, not knowing that the weaker partner had already made an agreement with the stronger one. Or: Bosniaks are, because of their political gullibility, doomed to live in the pseudo-entity from where they should fight for the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina with those who actually do not want it as such. It is a devastating fact for Bosniaks that their political leadership hypocritically talked about the integral Bosnia while, at the same time – i.e. from Lisbon to Dayton and after – they were working on the disintegration of the country. All of this makes Bosniaks a unique nation in the world: while others were either dying or trying to obtain the independence of their country by political means, Bosniaks were doing the same in by undoing the system of government that could have led them to the establishment of their own state. Here is the guiding idea of such a short-sighted policy: We will not demand it (a separate system of government for each of the three ethnic groups in Bosnia), but we will finally get it, because the others are more determined and persistent in asking for it, so the international community will eventually accept it in order to stabilise the peace in Bosnia. This policy has cost Bosniaks dearly, so today, instead of living in a normal country, they live in a windswept area, in the unenclosed and unprotected land of their ancestors, which belongs to everyone and no one in particular: it is everyone's when it comes to importing into Bosnia whatever anyone wants and then selling it to its poor inhabitants, or when it comes to exporting from Bosnia whatever anyone wants (including the most precious thing, the youth, the smartest and the brightest); it is no one's when it comes to investing here, except when the investments are in the interest (either short-term or long-term) of the investors themselves. Bosniaks today live in stable countries all over the world

only as (former) guests-workers or (recent) refugees. Their homeland Bosnia is not a real state and, by the way they treat it – it will never be one.

Translated by Mirza Džanić

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