

1 Chapter 12 1  
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3 Serbian Political Elites and the 2  
4 Vance-Owen Peace Plan: 3  
5 ICTY Documents as Historical Sources 4  
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8 Vladimir Petrović 8  
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14 There is hardly a shortage of scholarly production on the former Yugoslavia. War 14  
15 created particular context in which scholarly disputes raged with unusual vigor, 15  
16 with academics serving as policy recommenders, testifying as expert witnesses 16  
17 in criminal trials, petitioning, quarrelling and performing other functions coming 17  
18 from the immediate urgency of the situation in their torn field. After two decades, 18  
19 much of this academic 'fog of war' is lifting. There was some success in critical 19  
20 reflection, in singling out points of disagreement, as well as creation of generally 20  
21 accepted common ground, in differentiating between legitimate and illegitimate 21  
22 interpretations, as well as delineating scholarly contentions from politically 22  
23 motivated pseudodebates.<sup>1</sup> Still, much of this work is in progress, as the field is 23  
24 only gradually demobilizing. 24

25 In furthering this process, academia is in position to benefit from the activity 25  
26 of International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), whose 26  
27 impact on the field of Yugoslav studies is readily noted, but not yet sufficiently 27  
28 recognized. Formed in the spring of 1993, this institution has been operating for 28  
29 more than two decades, indicting 161 persons, of which 74 was sentenced, 18 29  
30 acquitted, 13 transferred to national judiciaries, with 36 proceedings terminated 30  
31 and 20 still on trial. In the course of this activity, over 4,500 witnesses have been 31  
32 heard during 7,500 trial days, generating over 1.6 million pages of transcripts and 32  
33 still a uncalculated but significantly larger stock of evidentiary documentation. 33  
34 Material of highest confidentiality, which would under normal circumstances 34  
35

36  
37 1 An overview of the some debates in Post-Yugoslav studies was provided by 37  
38 Ramet (2005). There were a number of attempts to tackle the most burning issues: 38  
39 Friedrich Naumann Stiftung was since 1997 sponsoring the meetings between Croatian 39  
40 and Serbian historians, which resulted in no less than 11 volumes, entitled *Dijalog* 40  
41 *povijesničara/istoričara*. Another joint endeavor to approach the most problematic topics 41  
42 was organized and published by Ingraio, C. and Emmert, T. (ed.) (2009) Similar projects 42  
43 were also implemented by Center for History, Democracy and Reconciliation, Institute for 43  
44 Historical Justice and Reconciliation and Joint History Project of Center for Democracy 44  
45 and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe. 44

1 remain inaccessible for decades, was gathered, exhibited in numerous trials, 1  
 2 partly disclosed and is frequently only couple of clicks away at the Court Records 2  
 3 database of the Tribunal.<sup>2</sup> Many state secrets of former Yugoslavia are up for 3  
 4 grabs, giving huge impetus to the research, but posing additional challenges. Only 4  
 5 a single trial, the one against Slobodan Milošević, former president of Serbia 5  
 6 and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, created over 46,639 pages of transcript of 6  
 7 around 400 witnesses, plus 930 exhibits on 85,526 pages and 117 video records 7  
 8 tendered by the prosecution, and additional 9000 pages of exhibits including 50 8  
 9 videos tendered by Milošević. The transcript alone stretches across no less than 9  
 10 50 volumes in a recent publication in Serbian by the Humanitarian Law Center 10  
 11 (Sudjenje Slobodanu Miloševiću Transkripti 2006–9) Faced with the piles of 11  
 12 documents deriving from this enormous legal tube, researchers are running a risk 12  
 13 of getting easily discouraged but cannot afford to overlook this enormous source 13  
 14 which creates a particular heuristic situation, amounting to a scholarly ‘state 14  
 15 of emergency’.

16 Such a situation is rare, but hardly unheard of. Students of contemporary 16  
 17 German history would undoubtedly recognize parallels with the effect of 17  
 18 Nuremberg on historiography. Evidence from captured Nazi archives, displayed in 18  
 19 the famous International Military Tribunal, and less known but no less important 12 19  
 20 subsequent trials influenced the scholarly output significantly. One of Nuremberg’s 20  
 21 prosecutors, Robert Kempner (1950: 448) gave an encompassing overview of 21  
 22 this development, rightfully concluding that ‘no scholar and student can analyse 22  
 23 the recent past and the contemporary scene without looking into the Nuremberg 23  
 24 records and document collections’. And indeed, collections of documents 24  
 25 streamed from the Nuremberg proceedings, enabling the inquires into the most 25  
 26 recent past, additionally galvanized by growing number of chairs in contemporary 26  
 27 history and the emergence of collective volumes, periodicals and even entirely 27  
 28 new institutions. The gradual interiorization of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in 28  
 29 Germany led to long-term collaboration between prosecutors and historians in 29  
 30 documentation of Nazi crimes and to increased understanding of various aspects 30  
 31 of this part of European history (Pohl 2009: 119–20).

32 This parallel has its limitations. International interest in former Yugoslavia 32  
 33 is not comparable with interest in Nazi Germany, and Yugoslav successor states 33  
 34 have both limited capacity and profound lack of will to deal with their recent 34  
 35 atrocious past. It is therefore ever more important to develop methodological 35  
 36 tools to cope with the documentary legacy of the ICTY. How to wrestle with 36  
 37 this heap of information in a constructive way? Ongoing debates are centered 37  
 38 around preserving the documentary legacy of the ICTY in an archive which 38  
 39 would make them available for future research. However, as we know all too 39  
 40 well, documents do not speak for themselves. Mere sensational content and wide 40  
 41 availability of the material, begs for caution. Amassed through the selective logic 41  
 42 of criminal investigations, and circulated through equally selective logic of media 42  
 43

44 <sup>2</sup> See ICTY Court Records, <http://icr.icty.org/>.

1 consumption, ICTY documents as a rule entered the public sphere in a raw form, 1  
 2 through fiery headlines, leaving limited space for reflection and elaboration. 2  
 3 This is the weak link. In order to maximize their epistemological effect, these 3  
 4 documents need to be carefully scrutinized, brought into connection with other 4  
 5 available information and contextualized within an existing body of knowledge. 5  
 6 In order to facilitate such development, the Humanitarian Law Center and Institute 6  
 7 for Contemporary History from Belgrade created a series of publications entitled 7  
 8 *End of Yugoslavia*, which publishes ICTY generated documents assembled around 8  
 9 chosen research topics (Petrović (ed.) 2010/2011, Nikolić (ed.) 2011, K. Nikolić 9  
 10 and V. Petrović (ed.) 2011/2012). As it is beyond the scope of this contribution to 10  
 11 provide a detailed overview of the documentation made available by the ICTY, 11  
 12 or to pronounce definite methodological dictums on its usage, I would settle for 12  
 13 the demonstration of the importance, usefulness and limitations of such materials 13  
 14 by focusing on the collapse of the Vance-Owen peace plan for Bosnia and 14  
 15 Herzegovina and inferring interpretations of the relations within Serbian wartime 15  
 16 political elites. 16

17 The Vance-Owen peace plan (VOPP) was the first comprehensive proposal 17  
 18 for ending the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was created under the umbrella of 18  
 19 the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia and presented in Geneva 19  
 20 by its co-presidents Lord David Owen and Cyrus Vance at the beginning of 20  
 21 1993 at the peace negotiations between the three warring parties in Bosnia and 21  
 22 Herzegovina. The conference was opened on January 2 with a presentation of a 22  
 23 draft proposal containing two documents. The first, entitled *Agreement relating* 23  
 24 *to Bosnia and Herzegovina*, outlined the state's future constitutional framework, 24  
 25 mapped the division of provinces, defined relations between provinces and central 25  
 26 authorities, and provided for coordinating cooperation on humanitarian efforts. At 26  
 27 its heart was the concept of maintaining the international subjectivity of Bosnia- 27  
 28 Herzegovina along with its decentralization into 10 de facto ethnically delineated, 28  
 29 yet territorially unconnected provinces. The other document, *Agreement for Peace* 29  
 30 *in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, dealt with the implementation of the truce, gradual 30  
 31 demobilization and withdrawal of the military in the designated provinces (The 31  
 32 *Vance-Owen Plan. The Balkan Odyssey Digital Archive. University of Liverpool*).<sup>3</sup> 32

33 While co-presidents Vance and Owen were explaining the political aspects of 33  
 34 the plan to delegations of Bosnian government, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, 34  
 35 headed by Alija Izetbegović, Radovan Karadžić and Mate Boban, UNPROFOR 35  
 36 commander General Satish Nambiar detailed on the military provisions with 36  
 37 Generals Sefer Halilović, Ratko Mladić and Milivoj Petković. Soon it became 37  
 38 obvious that consensus was not at hand.<sup>4</sup> Although the Croat delegation agreed 38  
 39 39

40 \_\_\_\_\_ 40  
 41 3 This archive contains personal collection of documents from the activity of the 41  
 42 conference gathered by David Owen. See also the official documents from negotiations in 42  
 43 Ramcharan (1997). 42

43 4 Atmosphere from negotiations is conveyed by Owen (1996: 94–159). Detailed 43  
 44 account found in Gow (1997: 235–40). 44

1 to all the provisions of VOPP, the Bosnian delegation accepted the constitutional 1  
 2 principles and the peace agreement, but deemed the maps unacceptable. The Serb 2  
 3 delegation provisionally accepted the maps and the peace agreement, but objected 3  
 4 to the constitutional principles. In the absence of consensus, the Geneva talks were 4  
 5 suspended on January 5 as representatives of warring sides dispersed to continue 5  
 6 internal consultations. These turned out to be particularly dramatic on the Serbian 6  
 7 side. Serbian political elites debated the plan in Belgrade at the meetings of 7  
 8 Council for the Coordination of Positions of State Policy created by the President 8  
 9 of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.<sup>5</sup> The meetings of this body held on 9 and 21 9  
 10 January 1993 were attended not only by key officials of Serbia and Montenegro, 10  
 11 but also by the top leadership of Republika Srpska (Radovan Karadžić, Momčilo 11  
 12 Krajišnik, Ratko Mladić, Nikola Koljević) and Republika Srpska Krajina. Such 12  
 13 attendance made meetings of this Council a podium for debating the peace 13  
 14 treaty. Made available by the ICTY, introduced as evidence in the Milošević trial, 14  
 15 transcripts of these meetings are shedding considerable light on the positioning 15  
 16 toward peace process within Serbian political elite.<sup>6</sup> 16

#### 17 18 19 **Confrontations over the Vance-Owen Peace Plan at the** 19 20 **Coordination Council** 20

21  
22 Meetings of the Council for Coordination revealed significant disagreement 22  
 23 between its members about the merits of the peace plan. The leadership of Bosnian 23  
 24 Serbs was unanimously and adamantly resisting the peace offer, at a price of 24  
 25 complete confrontation with the international community. As the establishment 25  
 26 of provinces envisaged by the VOPP would have required abandoning large 26  
 27 parts of territory put under control of Serb forces from the second half of 1992, 27  
 28 Radovan Karadžić claimed: ‘In our deep conviction, the proposal is intentionally 28  
 29 made for Serbs to decline. The map is provocatively anti-Serbian, so are the 29  
 30 constitutional principles. (...) They ask our cooperation on our own destruction. 30  
 31 This is perfectly clear to us and this is why we cannot accept anything which does 31  
 32 not define our destiny completely.’ Momčilo Krajišnik added: ‘We concluded 32  
 33 33

34 5 This Council, founded by Dobrica Ćosić upon assuming the position of President 34  
 35 of FRY, was beside him composed of the federal Prime Minister (Milan Panić), Serbian 35  
 36 President (Slobodan Milošević) and Prime Minister (Radoman Božović), Montenegrin 36  
 37 President (Momir Bulatović) and Prime Minister (Milo Đukanović), federal ministers 37  
 38 for foreign and internal affairs (Ilija Đukić and Pavle Bulatović), special adviser to FRY 38  
 39 President Svetozar Stojanović and other governmental officials if needed. Sessions of the 39  
 40 Council were frequented by leaders of Republika Srpska and Republika Srpska Krajina. 40  
 41 Details about the formation of the Council and its activity in Petrović (2010: 19–30). 41

42 6 See Exhibits P469.40 and Exhibit P469.39, Prosecutor vs. Milošević, Case no. IT- 42  
 43 02-54 in *Stenographic notes from the Council for the Co-ordination of positions of State 43*  
 44 *Policy – 09 and 21 January 1993.*) Available at <http://icr.icty.org/> – Both transcripts are 44  
 44 published in Petrović (2010: 186–247).

1 that the basic fact is we cannot accept the ultimatum posed by European 1  
2 Community and United Nations – to acknowledge Bosnia and Herzegovina as 2  
3 a state’ (Petrović 2010: 38, 41–2). Their counterproposal was formulated by 3  
4 Nikola Koljević: ‘We were thinking for longer time about this idea – the need for 4  
5 All-Serbian Assembly, which would gather all the legitimate representatives of 5  
6 Serbian people in different parts of former Yugoslavia. We think of this as a very 6  
7 important and big move, much different from small steps we used until now, 7  
8 while we were trying to outsmart more cunning people than we are. To organize 8  
9 such assembly would be a huge step’ (Petrović 2010: 46). 9

10 Presidents of the FRY, of Serbia, and of Montenegro – Dobrica Ćosić, Slobodan 10  
11 Milošević and Momir Bulatović – were of a different opinion, convinced that a 11  
12 unilateral rejection of the plan would lead to further strict sanctions, and possibly 12  
13 a military intervention. Continuation of negotiations was especially advocated by 13  
14 Slobodan Milošević: 14

15

16 This is not the place to convince each other about our strategic goals – they 16  
17 are clear and there is nobody at this table who does not share this view. Our 17  
18 strategic goal is for Serbian people to be free and equal on the Balkans. (...) 18  
19 Even though the plan in its current form is not favorable to us, neither are the 19  
20 principles. But we need to work to turn it around to more favorable definition of 20  
21 our concerns, as they still contain our main favorable component and leaning. 21  
22 Namely, the plan accepted making ethnic boundaries, which was until recent 22  
23 considered unimaginable (...) Hence, I am in favor of the approach which would 23  
24 be “softening” their principles an turning them around (...) Therefore I am for 24  
25 pragmatic approach to the existing conditions and circumstances, adjusting to 25  
26 the international environment and using the opportunity to carry things further, 26  
27 rather than to opt for immediate confrontation, after which practically there is no 27  
28 other step. (Petrović 2010: 62–5) 28

29

30 Karadžić was unmoved by this argument, sharing his impression of 30  
31 international negotiators with the members of the Council: ‘I have to tell you that 31  
32 they are real scoundrels, criminals completely amoral and ready to cheat. (...) 32  
33 Trust me, it would be a catastrophe for us to accept this’ (Petrović 2010: 73). As 33  
34 a result, at the continued peace talks in Geneva, in the discussion on the draft 34  
35 plan, all sides, and the Serb one in particular, had a number of objections. The 35  
36 negotiators, however, insisted on signatures. Mate Boban, the president of Bosnian 36  
37 Croats, signed all three documents presented. Bosnian Serb delegation did sign the 37  
38 military agreement this time, but not the demarcation maps. Following that, Alija 38  
39 Izetbegović refused to sign the documents, however supporting the constitutional 39  
40 principles of the VOPP settlement. 40

41 Having deemed this phase of negotiations as unsuccessful, Vance and Owen 41  
42 closed the negotiations in Geneva on 30 January. They presented their report on 42  
43 3 February in New York, requesting support by the UN Security Council for its 43  
44 acceptance, which marked the beginning of the phase of international pressure 44



1 towards the warring parties that aimed to achieve consensus on the peace project. 1  
 2 Existing divisions within the Serb political elites regarding their view of Vance- 2  
 3 Owen peace plan deepened in the spring of 1993, after moving the negotiations 3  
 4 from Geneva to New York. With local actors still refusing to sign the offered 4  
 5 maps, new US presidential administration also showed signs of losing interest 5  
 6 in this agreement by announcing more decisive steps directed toward ending the 6  
 7 war (Kovačević 2007: 103–12). At the same time, the Army of the Republika 7  
 8 Srpska continues its offensive in eastern Bosnia, making the Serb side yet again 8  
 9 the only stonewaller of the peace process. UN Secretary General appealed to 9  
 10 Bosnian Serbs to end the war by signing the agreement; peace negotiators Cyrus 10  
 11 Vance and David Owen increased the pressure, and there was a hint of a changing 11  
 12 strategy of the US from the threats of stricter sanctions against FR Yugoslavia, to 12  
 13 the announcement of lift and strike policy – lifting the embargo on arms import 13  
 14 in BiH, and, if necessary, air strikes to follow. Under this sort of international 14  
 15 pressure, the Serb political authorities' divergence on the matter became more 15  
 16 apparent. Emboldened by the three-month signature evasion, unaffected by the 16  
 17 threats, and even encouraged by the prospects of pressure politics forcing FRY 17  
 18 into an open military engagement, Bosnian Serbs' authorities undermined any 18  
 19 agreement based on preserving international subjectivity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. 19  
 20 For their part, FRY elites took note of the changing role of the international 20  
 21 factor. They foresaw the possibility of replacement of the existing plan with 21  
 22 offer less favorable for the Serbian side, if not with military intervention. Hence 22  
 23 the increased pressure on Bosnian Serbs to accept the agreement while still on 23  
 24 the table. 24

25 Within this pattern interesting nuances evolved. Serbian President Slobodan 25  
 26 Milošević was building and internationalizing an image of an 'honest broker'. In 26  
 27 an attempt to maintain control over increasingly self-conscious Bosnian Serbs, he 27  
 28 was pressuring them into signing the peace treaty ever more aggressively. In this 28  
 29 he enjoyed support of his Montenegrin colleague, Momir Bulatović: 'We honestly 29  
 30 wanted peace and were ready for every reasonable compromise and concession 30  
 31 to make this goal come true. Leadership of Republika Spaska did not share our 31  
 32 views (...) nervousness in the Yugoslav leadership grew' (Bulatović 2005: 158–9). 32  
 33 To be sure, it was not pacifism which motivated these two presidents, but the 33  
 34 desire to loosen international pressure, to lift economic blockade and stabilize 34  
 35 their hold on power. Serbian political scene was torn apart between the support for 35  
 36 the Vance-Owen plan advocated by Serbian Renewal Movement and Democratic 36  
 37 Party, and the position of Serbian Radical party which denounced its acceptance as 37  
 38 high treason. Hovering between these two positions, Milošević confused even his 38  
 39 own party stronghold, the Socialist Party of Serbia, which diverged, albeit barely 39  
 40 noticeably, on hawks and doves (Jović 2001: 106–28). As Milošević's rhetoric of 40  
 41 Serbia's non-engagement in the war long became an empty, confusing phrase, his 41  
 42 power base was threatened. 42

43 President of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Dobrica Ćosić, did not share 43  
 44 these concerns. In an open breach with Milošević since the removal of federal 44

1 Prime Minister Milan Panić (end 1992), Čosić was ever more isolated from real 1  
 2 decision making. The Serbian Radical Party was routinely raising the issue of 2  
 3 his disposal in the Federal Assembly, an initiative behind which one could easily 3  
 4 see Milošević's desire to get rid of him; 'Feeling that my efforts are pointless 4  
 5 is growing thicker. Šešelj and Milošević's people are slandering and degrading 5  
 6 me' (Čosić. 2002: 303). In turn, Čosić distanced himself from the politics of 6  
 7 Serbian president and relies on his 'special relations' with Serbian opposition, 7  
 8 but with leadership of Bosnian Serbs as well. He was criticizing Milošević's 8  
 9 dismissive attitude to them, still attempting to maintain the semblance of 9  
 10 coherent and coordinated approach to foreign policy: 'We were pulled together 10  
 11 by circumstances of foreign affairs. We have no choice. Forced to cooperate, 11  
 12 we avoid talking over our differences', recollected Čosić (Đukić 2001: 224). 12  
 13 Two presidents travelled to Geneva in two separate airplanes, but they held 13  
 14 their ground together during negotiations. However, over the time, Čosić grows 14  
 15 indecisive regarding the VOPP.<sup>7</sup> Intimately disgusted with the peace plan, Čosić 15  
 16 was forced to play the role of his unwilling advocate. In that sense, he attempted 16  
 17 to use his authority with Bosnian Serbs and to sway them to accept the agreement 17  
 18 with less bullying than Milošević. 18

19 It is far from certain that leaders of Bosnian Serbs understood, or cared to 19  
 20 understand these contradictory messages from 'homeland'. Their policy was 20  
 21 much clearer. Exercising control over two thirds of Bosnia, they were sure that 21  
 22 the threat of international military intervention was void. They also showed a 22  
 23 lack of interest in economic difficulties posed by sanctions, as well as absolute 23  
 24 determination to terminate the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina for good. 24  
 25 A decentralized state with three scattered Serbian provinces, as proposed by the 25  
 26 VOPP was for them an unacceptable step back. They engaged in the peace talks 26  
 27 in order to avoid responsibility for prolonging the warfare, and also because of 27  
 28 push from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, on whose material support their 28  
 29 military success was resting.<sup>8</sup> There was no lack of quarrel in this leadership as 29  
 30 well, generated not as much with goals of war as by personality issues, corruption 30  
 31 and power struggle. Radovan Karadžić, the head of the self-proclaimed state of 31  
 32 Republika Srpska, caused considerable animosity with his leadership style. By 32  
 33 \_\_\_\_\_ 33

34 7 Although he supported the agreement on the January meetings of the Council, 34  
 35 but on March 19 1993 he confides to his diary; 'If I was sure that this would save us, I 35  
 36 would suggest Karadžić to sign Vance-Owen plan in this American version. But I know 36  
 37 that Karadžić and his men can't do it. Their military and their people conditioned them 37  
 38 with their freedom, lawfulness and justice. They also conditioned us in the FR Yugoslavia. 38  
 39 We are all in a dead-end' (Čosić 2002: 302). Still, after two days he concludes that 'we 39  
 40 can't resist the pressures of foreign factors. We are forced to give in, and I have to hold 40  
 41 responsibility for these fateful decisions. I have to be the first one to spell them out' (Čosić 41  
 42 2002: 306). 42

43 8 Full weight of this support became obvious with the disclosure of minutes from 43  
 44 the sessions of Supreme Defense Council of FRY. This material, in dire need of annotated 44  
 publishing, was a subject of thorough research by Jungic O (2012). 44

1 his side there was Momčilo Krajišnik, head of the Assembly, operator behind the 1  
 2 scenes and an overlord of wartime economy of theft. Their manner was openly 2  
 3 criticized by vice-president of Republika Srpska Biljana Plavšić (Plavšić 2007: 3  
 4 10–25) On the list of her accusation was also the claim that Karadžić and Krajišnik 4  
 5 are not much than Milošević’s cronies. Her colleague Nikola Koljević attempted, 5  
 6 mostly unsuccessfully, to mediate in these issues of ‘inner politics, that is in the 6  
 7 struggle about who will hold the power, in this case financial’ (Koljević 2008; vol I: 7  
 8 212).<sup>9</sup> Behind this dissonant bunch one could detect the ever-growing influence of 8  
 9 the Army of Republika Srpska and its Chief of General Staff Ratko Mladić, who 9  
 10 was barely hiding his contempt toward political elite of Republika Srpska. He 10  
 11 maintained direct communication with the military leadership of Federal Republic 11  
 12 of Yugoslavia, which was in turn formally under supreme authority of Dobrica 12  
 13 Ćosić, but in practice financially dependent on Slobodan Milošević’s purse. All 13  
 14 these factors confused the situation – the balance of power within Serbian political 14  
 15 elite remaining elusive even to its own members. 15

16 In the continuation of negotiations, Bosnian Serbs stood behind their approach 16  
 17 in New York, much the same way that did in Geneva. However, this time Bosnian 17  
 18 President Alija Izetbegović signed the entire peace treaty, leaving Serbian side 18  
 19 isolated and exposed to the full weight of international pressure. ‘They stood 19  
 20 behind their positions firmly’, wrote Vladislav Jovanović, Serbian minister 20  
 21 of foreign affairs at the time. ‘They could not imagine losing the territorial 21  
 22 connection with Serbia. My attempts to sway them to elastic tactic failed. I was not 22  
 23 authorized to exercise greater pressure, and even if I were, it would be fruitless. 23  
 24 Karadžić, Krajišnik and the others from the leadership were simply mentally not 24  
 25 ready to accept the unchanged maps. I believe that Milošević was also aware of 25  
 26 its imperfections and main strategic fault, but he was more realistic and convinced 26  
 27 that not much more could be extracted from the existing situation. Negotiation 27  
 28 round ended with complete fiasco in New York. Nobody could see what comes 28  
 29 next’ (2008: 139). What immediately followed was an increase of international 29  
 30 pressure. The UN Security Council drafted resolutions increasing the severity 30  
 31 of economic sanctions, with US administration preparing more strict measures 31  
 32 and European Community threatening the complete isolation of Federal Republic 32  
 33 of Yugoslavia. Ćosić and Milošević were unsuccessfully painting this gloomy 33  
 34 perspective to Karadžić, Krajišnik and Koljević in an attempt to sway them. 34  
 35 Ćosić summarized his sentiments after the meeting: ‘With current leadership and 35  
 36 the way they relate to each other, this country is truly beyond salvation’ (Ćosić 36  
 37 2002: 315–17). In the following days the crisis reaches new heights. David Owen 37  
 38 announced the possibility of military action with the purpose of cutting the supply 38  
 39 lines of Army of Republika Srpska with Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a 39  
 40 reaction for continuation of Serbian offensive in the area of Srebrenica, proclaimed 40  
 41 a protected area by Security Councils’ Resolution 819 issued on April 17 with the 41  
 42

43 <sup>9</sup> Relationship within Bosnian Serb leadership was a subject of an ICTY expert report 43  
 44 authored by Treanor (2008: 64). 44



1 purpose to stop Serbian advance and relieve the grave humanitarian crises in this 1  
 2 city crowded with refugees from all over Eastern Bosnia. On April 18, Resolution 2  
 3 820 of the Security Council severed the sanctions against FRY (UNSC 17/18 April 3  
 4 1993, Resolutions 819 and 820). Execution of this decision was delayed until April 4  
 5 26, but its withdrawal was conditioned with Serbian signature on peace proposal. 5  
 6 As this deadline was nearing, Dobrica Ćosić convened another expanded 6  
 7 session of the Council for Coordination, held in Belgrade on April 20. This 7  
 8 meeting hardly brought anything new. Ćosić was critical toward the plan, yet 8  
 9 stated that its acceptance was unavoidable. Federal Prime Minister Radoje Kantić 9  
 10 and Chief of the Yugoslav General Staff detailed on deterioration of economic and 10  
 11 military position, whereas Milošević, Bulatović and Đukanović urged Bosnian 11  
 12 Serbs to fight for some final concessions within the VOPP and seal the deal. 12  
 13 However, Radovan Karadžić adamantly insisted that Vance-Owen peace plan 13  
 14 was unacceptable and declared that even if he wanted to, he cannot sign it unless 14  
 15 the National Assembly of Republika Srpska explicitly authorizes him to do so.<sup>10</sup> 15  
 16 The pseudodemocratic smokescreen served to withstand pressures coming from 16  
 17 international community, but also from Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This was 17  
 18 a new stake in the poker game of this notorious gambler. 18

19

20

### 21 **Confrontations over the Vance-Owen Plan at the Assembly of** 21

### 22 **Republika Srpska** 22

23

24 The National Assembly of Republika Srpska consisted of Serbian deputies who 24  
 25 withdrew from the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina in October 1991. It 25  
 26 was composed of 82 deputies, out of which 73 belonged to Radovan Karadžić's 26  
 27 Serbian Democratic Party. Presided by Momčilo Krajišnik, after frenetic legislative 27  
 28 activity over foundation of Republika Srpska in the spring of 1992, the Assembly 28  
 29 was barely convening, only to reemerge during negotiations over the Vance-Owen 29  
 30 plan.<sup>11</sup> 30

31 The peace offer was discussed in January, and no less than four times in April. 31  
 32 Sessions were held in Bileća (April 2 and 3), in Bosanski Novi (April 23), and 32  
 33 in Bijeljina (April 26). The deputies took the hard line – in Bileća they refused 33  
 34 the plan, condemning at the same time policy of international pressure and 34  
 35 threatening with complete Serbian withdrawal from negotiations. Around this 35  
 36 time, presidents of FR Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro were changing their 36

37

38

39 <sup>10</sup> Parts of this meeting are quoted in Ćosić (2002: 343–57). 39

40 <sup>11</sup> Transcripts from all the sessions of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, 40  
 41 exhibited at the trial of Momčilo Krajišnik are available at United Nations. ICTY Court 41  
 42 Records, <http://icr.icty.org>. See also the expert report created for the Milosevic trial by 42  
 43 Donia, R. (1998). *The Assembly of Republika Srpska, 1992–1995, Highlights and Excerpts*, 43  
 44 available at <http://icr.icty.org/>. More on the Assembly in Petrović (2011 (vol II) 78–87) On 44  
 the political context in which the Assembly was operating see Nikolić (2011: 37–57).

1 strategy, attempting to exercise their influence directly on the MP's, bypassing 1  
 2 their troublesome leadership. They wrote a joint letter carried by Serbian minister 2  
 3 of foreign affairs Vladislav Jovanović to the Bijeljina Assembly, on April 26, 3  
 4 urging for acceptance of peace offer. This was a miscalculation, described in the 4  
 5 memoirs of Biljana Plavišić: 'The session lasted with interruptions from noon 5  
 6 until early morning of the following day (...) everybody felt that the real event is 6  
 7 more than 200 kilometers from this building, in Milošević's office (...) Such was 7  
 8 the "democratic" decision making by The Papa, as Radovan, Momo, Koljević and 8  
 9 Buha called him' (Plavšić 2005: 218–20). Revolted, Plavšić called upon deputies 9  
 10 to confront these interventions of Yugoslav, Serbian and Montenegrin president 10  
 11 and attacked Vladislav Jovanović, asking him bluntly whether he is minister of 11  
 12 foreign affairs or their postman. The Assembly declined to comply with the VO 12  
 13 peace proposal, and instead voted the text of a warmongering Appeal to the Serbian 13  
 14 People. It called for a 'fight to the end. Serbian people, they are writing you off, 14  
 15 but you will with your pride and Orthodox spirit defend your being and maintain 15  
 16 your place in history, as an old European Orthodox people. Your destiny is in your 16  
 17 hands' (Večernje novosti, 27 April 1993). Accordingly, the Assembly called for 17  
 18 referendum on Vance-Owen peace plan and scheduled it for May 15th. As it was 18  
 19 clear that in wartime it is next to impossible to organize a fair referendum, this 19  
 20 manoeuvre fooled nobody. Strengthened regime of international sanctions against 20  
 21 FR Yugoslavia entered into force on April 27th. Simultaneously, US diplomacy 21  
 22 showed signs of exasperation with the Vance-Owen settlement and was toying 22  
 23 with the idea of air strikes on Serbian positions, and Russian President Boris 23  
 24 Yeltzin criticized the decision of the assembly. In Serbia, the Serbian Renewal 24  
 25 Movement and Democratic Party urged for signing the plan and label the decision 25  
 26 suicidal. Only the Serbian Radical Party welcomed the decision (Politika, 1, 2 and 26  
 27 3 May 1993, 6) Meanwhile, Western media speculated on a potential list of targets 27  
 28 for air raids. 28

29 In such a situation, co-chairmen of the Peace Conference, Cyrus Vance and 29  
 30 David Owen embarked on the last attempt of hunting for signatures and called for 30  
 31 the final round of negotiations in Athens on May 1. Delegations headed by Ćosić, 31  
 32 Milošević, Bulatović, Karadžić, Tuđman, Izetbegović and Boban assembled, 32  
 33 received by Greek Prime Minister Constantin Mitsotakis, co-presidents (including 33  
 34 Vance's successor Thorvald Stoltenberg) and special envoys of USA and Russia 34  
 35 (Reginald Bartholomew and Vitaly Churkin). Final concessions had been made 35  
 36 to make the peace package more appealing to Bosnian Serbs, including the 36  
 37 creation of a Northern Corridor. All that remained was for the delegations from 37  
 38 FR Yugoslavia to exert pressure on Karadžić to sign the treaty.<sup>12</sup> Time was running 38  
 39 out. Dobrica Ćosić recollects: 39

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43 <sup>12</sup> UNSG 1–2 May 1993 *Report of the UN Secretary General*. S/25709 in Petrović 43  
 44 (2011: 67–71). See also Owen (1996: 157–64). 44

1 It was a real political drama. We were torturing each other for 10 hours in my 1  
 2 apartment with the same arguments. Milošević, Bulatović and I were firmly 2  
 3 set to force Karadžić, Koljević, Krajišnik and Buha to sign Vance-Owen plan. 3  
 4 Bosnian Serbs defended heroically (...) Milošević was cruel and incredibly 4  
 5 persistent to break Karadžić and his friends, he was cruising around the kitchen 5  
 6 table like a wolf. Karadžić, Koljević, Buha, Krajišnik – pale and confused, who 6  
 7 knows if they slept, desperately persistent (...) There were only 20 minutes until 7  
 8 the beginning of the conference. Mitsotakis told us that Izetbegović and Tudman 8  
 9 will leave the hotel and Athens if the conference does not begin immediately 9  
 10 at 13h. He stood above Karadžić, took his golden pen and lifted it in front to 10  
 11 Karadžić, waiting for the signature. Karadžić also took his pen and placed it 11  
 12 on the paper, but did not sign. He bowed his head down (...) The three of us, 12  
 13 Milošević, Bulatović and me, yelled together: “Sign, Radovan, sign!” He was 13  
 14 silent, looking at the paper, motionless and gloomy. Then he spoke in a broken 14  
 15 voice: “I’ll sign, but only if approved by our Assembly”, and he signed Vance- 15  
 16 Owen plan with his pen. (Čosić. 2002: 369–70) 16  
 17

18 Such hasty ending of the conference in Athens was followed by the sudden, yet 18  
 19 intensive campaign of Yugoslav media directed to secure the elusive agreement. 19  
 20 Belgrade daily Politika devoted a special edition to praising the agreement, and 20  
 21 similar chord was struck on influential state television news Dnevnik (Politika, 1. 21  
 22 May 1993). Behind the media smokescreen there was a continuous pressure on the 22  
 23 leadership of Bosnian Serbs, exercised now by the Yugoslav military as well, using 23  
 24 its influence on General Mladić. On May 4 Mladić conferred with Montenegrin 24  
 25 President Momir Bulatović, chief of the general staff of Yugoslav military Života 25  
 26 Panić and a group of generals. Panić was warning: ‘Today I spoke with Čosić and 26  
 27 Milošević. The plan is signed in the last moment, and they all fear that assembly 27  
 28 could reach some decision which would be harmful to Serbian people. We are all 28  
 29 in favor of accepting the signature. If you are ready to support, we expect you to 29  
 30 take the floor after Karadžić, as your word has a great weight. It is important now 30  
 31 to gain time. We have no more resources for war, we need a break (...) If the plan 31  
 32 is not accepted, there goes Yugoslavia’. Bulatović was both flattering and warning: 32  
 33 ‘General Mladić is a person of greatest influence on Serbian people, greater than 33  
 34 even Karadžić. Clinton signed everything – he needs only to give a green light for 34  
 35 the intervention.’<sup>13</sup> Mladić was listening silently. He came to this meeting straight 35  
 36 from conferring with his field officers, who were of one voice that army rank-and- 36  
 37 file is against the VOPP. He remained elusive about his own position. 37

38 And so again all the attention shifted to the Assembly of Bosnian Serbs, 38  
 39 gathered in the hotel Rajska dolina on Jahorina Mountain near Pale. From the early 39  
 40 morning of May 5, deputies were arriving there, as well as Bosnian Serb political 40  
 41 leadership, military commanders headed by Mladić, heads of municipalities and 41  
 42

43 <sup>13</sup> Diary of Ratko Mladić, *Sastanak, 4/5/1993* (P01483), *Referisanje organa GŠ VRS,* 43  
 44 *3/5/1993* (P01483) Available at: [www.icr.icty.org](http://www.icr.icty.org). 44

1 some of the bishops of Serbian Orthodox Church. The guests attended as well – 1  
 2 presidents of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro and even Greek Prime minister 2  
 3 Mitsotakis, all four determined to secure Karadžić's signature. What followed in 3  
 4 the wide presence of international and local media was an open Assembly session 4  
 5 which lasted for entire day and much of the night, bringing the culmination of the 5  
 6 conflict within Serbian political elite. It begun with Karadžić's expose on reasoning 6  
 7 behind his Athens signature. He held a highly ambiguous speech, proposing the 7  
 8 ratification of the VOPP with very strange wording and argumentation: 8  
 9 9

10 The plan that you are all familiar with is basically catastrophic (...) That plan 10  
 11 denies our right to self-determination ... and it demands from us to return to 11  
 12 Bosnia and Herzegovina (...) Those pressures are very clear and visible to you, 12  
 13 as well as most brutal. We are being threatened with the total destruction of 13  
 14 Serb people in these areas. (...) I conditionally signed that plan in Athens, I 14  
 15 was acting under a lot of pressure, totally consciously (...) That plan gives us 15  
 16 an opportunity to write 43% of this territory as Serb national territory and that 16  
 17 is something we never had (...) I have to recommend to you to verify this plan 17  
 18 because there are real dangers that are above us. The things we are losing are big 18  
 19 as well (...) It is up to you to decide. (Petrović 2011: 108–242) 19  
 20 20

21 The floor was given to the guests, who supported the plan much more directly. 21  
 22 Ćosić attempted to reason with the deputies: 'Of course, the plan that is before 22  
 23 you and the conditions that we have been offered as conditions of peace are not 23  
 24 ideal. They are even painful. But, they can give us now, in peace, all that we 24  
 25 failed to achieve in the battlefield.' Milošević was more energetic: 'Let me say 25  
 26 it immediately, I think that the decision for peace has no alternative (...) I am 26  
 27 convinced and I hope that this Assembly will have the wisdom and the courage to 27  
 28 make such decision' (Petrovic 2011: 121, 124). However, as deputy after deputy 28  
 29 took the stand, it became obvious that the general mood is shifting toward refusal 29  
 30 of the plan. Particularly radical were the deputies coming from the regions which 30  
 31 would remain outside Serbian provinces according to the VOPP. The last chance 31  
 32 of its acceptance was buried by expose of General Ratko Mladić, who addressed 32  
 33 the Assembly showing two maps of Bosnia and Herzegovina: 'I would like to, 33  
 34 in the name of the Main Staff and the Republic Srpska Army, give you some of 34  
 35 my views on the situation. (...) Not everybody sees that the way us soldiers can 35  
 36 from the immediate proximity. Gentleman, this is the real situation at the territory 36  
 37 of the former Bosnia and Herzegovina yesterday at noon (...) This is the result 37  
 38 of our leadership, our people and our army. And this is the map of Vance-Owen 38  
 39 plan. (...) This map was drawn by the representative of Vatican and by the same 39  
 40 ones who planned the disintegration of Yugoslavia. (...) While the deputies were 40  
 41 visualizing the amount of territory which would be abandoned, Mladić continued 41  
 42 fuming about international conspiracy, ending his speech with a barely disguised 42  
 43 threat: 'I would like to thank you for your attention. I haven't said all this in order 43  
 44 to affect your decision. The army of Republic of Srpska and our people know 44

1 that our representatives will do anything to protect their people' (Petrovic 2011: 1  
 2 203–12). In such charged atmosphere, the deputies withdrew to a private session 2  
 3 to confer on different proposals. Not only the media, but also the guests, Čosić, 3  
 4 Milošević, Bulatović and the others, were excluded from this meeting of deputies. 4  
 5 'We were not allowed to enter there', remembers Momir Bulatović. 'We 5  
 6 asked in vain, mostly Milošević, to go there and also tell to the deputies what 6  
 7 we thought might be good for them. They said that would not be necessary and 7  
 8 we should not worry. All will be fine and the plan will be accepted, they said. 8  
 9 With meals and booze, but in complete political insignificance, we waited for 9  
 10 consultations to end, in order for the Assembly meeting to continue. Instead of 10  
 11 continuation, the end followed abruptly' (Bulatović 2005: 162). Upon return of 11  
 12 the deputies, it was apparent that the mood swung in the direction of rejection 12  
 13 of the plan. Presidents from Yugoslavia in vain took the floor again. Čosić urged 13  
 14 deputies to reconsider: 'Dear brothers, we have no more means to support you, 14  
 15 I tell you this with a full responsibility and with a grave heart! (...) The vast 15  
 16 majority of the Serb people haven't got the faith for the continuation of the war, 16  
 17 the faith in the meaning of the war, faced with a terrible blackmail and with the 17  
 18 possibility and reality of military intervention.' Milošević also took the floor, this 18  
 19 time assuring and pleading, rather than threatening: 'Whether we give up on our 19  
 20 goal? I shall tell you – no! We do not give up on our goal. The question then, if 20  
 21 we look at the plan, is not whether the plan represents completion of the goal. Of 21  
 22 course it does not. (...) But that it represents the way towards the ultimate goal, 22  
 23 of course it does' (Petrovic 2011: 216, 228). Mitsotakis also joined them in the last 23  
 24 appeal, but it was too late. In the confusing and somewhat chaotic atmosphere, 24  
 25 the Assembly has refused to ratify Karadžić's signature on the Vance-Owen plan 25  
 26 and with 51 votes for, 2 against and 12 abstaining decided again to put the plan to 26  
 27 a referendum. The news broke to the journalists waiting in the antechambers, and 27  
 28 to the small but enthusiastic crowd of people assembled in front of the hotel. With 28  
 29 TV cameras still rolling, filming their failure, Milošević, Bulatović and Čosić left 29  
 30 Pale immediately, angry and exasperated. In the following days, Milošević did 30  
 31 his best to convince international community that his support for the peace offer 31  
 32 was genuine. In revenge for his recent humiliation, he refused to allow Bosnian 32  
 33 Serb leadership entry to Serbia, and the river Drina became a border, at least for 33  
 34 a short while, severing the communication with the Bosnian Serb territory. At 34  
 35 the same time, green light was given to the Belgrade media to voice discontent 35  
 36 with the warmongering of Bosnian Serbs.<sup>14</sup> The first serious breach among Serbian 36  
 37 political elites went public. 37

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14 Reactions of the press in Petrović (2011: 247–58).



## 1 Considerations on the Polycentric Character of Serbian Political Elite

2  
3 Moving from factual reconstruction to possible interpretations of these events, it  
4 needs to be noted that the nature, scope and depth of the breach between Serbian  
5 leaderships was much debated at the time. Doubts appeared, as negotiating  
6 constellations of conciliatory Belgrade authorities and unyielding Bosnian  
7 Serbs kept reoccurring in the next two years, stalling the peace projects. Shrewd  
8 observers, like Florence Hartmann, were sensing a double game: ‘Slobodan  
9 Milošević could not accept Vance-Owen peace plan. But to refuse it meant losing  
10 the trust of the international community (...) Therefore, he used the deceit’  
11 (Hartmann. 2001: 210). In her view, Milošević was to simulate acceptance to  
12 the peace offer and exercise token pressure on Bosnian Serbs, at the same time  
13 encouraging General Mladić to trash the plan, burying it therefore at a minimal  
14 price for Serbia. An indirect but strong argument in favour of Hartmann’s  
15 hypothesis emerged as the new evidence from the ICTY appeared over the time,  
16 such as minutes from the sessions of Supreme Defense Council which showed  
17 both the depth of Serbian involvement in war in Bosnia and the supreme role of  
18 Milošević as the key player.<sup>15</sup> Transcripts from other wartime meetings of Serbian  
19 leadership even seemed to confirm the existence of a ‘two track strategy’, best  
20 expressed by Karadžić in a conversation with Milošević in August 1995, recorded  
21 in the diary of General Mladić, which also found its way to the courtroom in The  
22 Hague: ‘We should move on two tracks – you do what you are doing and tell them  
23 that we are all crazy, and we’ll do things on our track.’<sup>16</sup>

24 However, did these tracks part ways in 1993? Tempting as it is to view Serbian  
25 wartime project as a monolith, there are also strong arguments to agree with James  
26 Gow that ‘despite a shared long term program, Milošević was insistent that, at  
27 least tactically, the Plan has to be ratified. However, he came away shattered,  
28 genuinely furious, and, it was said, humiliated’ (Gow 1997: 247). Through the  
29 available documents we see Milošević consistently convincing Bosnian Serbs to  
30 accept the peace offer, his pressure steadily growing from January to May, his  
31 vocabulary bordering open threats, through confrontations at closed meetings and  
32 in public alike. Lord David Owen also largely confirmed this interpretation as  
33 a witness at the Milošević trial in the ICTY. He was cross-examined at length  
34 by Milošević, who overplayed his hand in an attempt to make the most of this  
35 ‘pacifist’ image: ‘Well, you said yourself, Lord Owen, that we spent hours and  
36 hours putting forth arguments for reasons to accept those peace plans. Now, do  
37 you consider that we should have used force against Republika Srpska?’ Owen  
38 responded ‘Well, I don’t think it was necessary for you to use force. I think it was

40  
41 15 See Jungic (2012) Minutes are available at: Stenographic Records of the Sessions  
42 of FRY’s Supreme Defense Council *Sense Tribunal* <http://www.sense-agency.com/home/icty.59.html>.

43 16 Diary of Ratko Mladić, *Sastanak, 4 5.1993* (P01483), *Sastanak srpskog*  
44 *rukovodstva, Dobanovci, 25.8.1995* (P01489) Available at: [www.icr.icty.org](http://www.icr.icty.org).

1 necessary for you to cut off fuel supplies, anything other than bare humanitarian 1  
2 necessities, and to cut off ammunition, cooperation and many other things' (Lord 2  
3 David Owen, *Prosecution vs. Milosevic* 2003, 28469). This interchange actually 3  
4 helps navigating the labyrinth of Serbian wartime policies, by moving away from 4  
5 the question whether Milošević was unwilling or unable to enforce the peace plan, 5  
6 toward investigating how far would he go to secure the peace settlement. 6

7 In order to understand the nature of this question, it is necessary to underline 7  
8 some of the aspects related to the polycentric character of Serbian political elite 8  
9 at the time. It is beyond doubt that none of the Serbian leaders were thrilled 9  
10 with the peace offer. This plan was putting an end to the idea of merger between 10  
11 Serbia and parts of Bosnia under Serbian control, which was a transparent goal of 11  
12 leadership of Republika Srpska, as well as hidden hope of Yugoslav leadership. 12  
13 The plan was also disabling the territorial merger of Serbian provinces in Bosnia 13  
14 and undoing the creation of coherent Serbian entity, which for Karadžić and his 14  
15 collaborators was unacceptable. However, Belgrade had more complete insight 15  
16 into economic damage caused by international isolation, as well as considerable 16  
17 fear of international intervention. These considerations boiled down to retreat from 17  
18 long term strategic goals to a policy of short term concessions. Once subscribed 18  
19 to this turn, Milošević, undoubtedly a central figure of warfare, experienced 19  
20 unexpected limitations which sprung from the very political structures he helped 20  
21 establish. Research by Nina Caspersen (2010) indicates that Serbian waging war 21  
22 by proxy induced considerable propelling of local political actors whose goals 22  
23 more frequently than not collided, both mutually and with the Centre. It was a 23  
24 matter of time when would these tensions reach the top. Completely identified 24  
25 with the war they were waging, political leadership of Bosnian, or for that matter 25  
26 Croatian Serbs as well, was uncompromising. Directly overseeing the campaign 26  
27 of violence which was turning into strategy of ethnic cleansing, sweeping through 27  
28 Serbian controlled parts of Bosnia from April 1992 onwards, leaders of Bosnian 28  
29 Serbs knew they had crossed all limits (Boutros Ghali 1994). A peace proposal 29  
30 which would not entail some sort of internationally recognized statehood, if not 30  
31 full merger with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia would suddenly not only 31  
32 disempower them, but potentially make them dispensable. 32

33 Dispensability was an issue in Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as well. Its 33  
34 president and de jure supreme commander of its military Dobrica Ćosić was 34  
35 brought to power in summer 1992 on an explicit whim of Milošević, alongside 35  
36 with the federal prime minister, US citizen and businessman of Serbian origin, 36  
37 Milan Panić. They were expected to help to improve damaged international image 37  
38 of Serbia, and primarily to contribute to lifting economic sanctions. Instead, by 38  
39 the end of the year Panić unsuccessfully ran against Milošević in December 1992 39  
40 for Serbian presidency. He enjoyed Ćosić's tacit support, grounded in the idea 40  
41 that Milošević is a burden which needs to be removed in order to capitalize on 41  
42 wartime gains. The failure to do so resulted in a backlash – Panić was removed 42  
43 from the office and Ćosić remained politically isolated. Therefore, although it 43  
44 seemed that Ćosić and Milošević were on the same page regarding the peace offer, 44

1 their approach to its enforcement differed, as their mutual conflict was entering 1  
2 terminal stage in the first half on 1993. Positioning toward war in Bosnia played 2  
3 an important role in this fight. Both presidents had an image to maintain. This task 3  
4 consisted from constant declarative support to the peaceful solution and struggle 4  
5 to lift the sanctions on the one hand, but at the same time of clear solidarity with 5  
6 the cause of Bosnian Serbs. Therefore, neither Ćosić, who intimately sympathized 6  
7 with the Bosnian Serbs leaders, nor Milošević who despised them and also was 7  
8 suspicious of their ties with Ćosić, were in position to do whatever it takes to bring 8  
9 about peace. 9

10 To be sure, peacemaking was not high on the priority list. What Milošević and 10  
11 Ćosić aspired to achieve was a breather which would allow Serbia to stabilize 11  
12 its international position and economic situation, They were anyhow convinced 12  
13 that the plan would fail in the implementation stage, that the emerging conflict 13  
14 between Croats and Bosnians would bring it down, that further concessions could 14  
15 be won over for the Serbian side if appearances of cooperation are maintained. 15  
16 However, entering such risk seemed unappealing to Bosnian Serb leadership, 16  
17 which consolidated over the staunch resistance to the peace offer. Convincing 17  
18 them could not suffice. Surely, if Belgrade switched from reasoning with Bosnian 18  
19 Serb to threatening them with complete closing of borders on Drina River and 19  
20 withdrawal of military support, the chances for success of the Vance-Owen peace 20  
21 plan would have been higher. Ćosić, however, never entertained such option, and 21  
22 potential political damage of such course made it unappealing for Milošević as 22  
23 well. Underlining commitment to a common cause was limiting their options. 23  
24 Bosnian Serb leadership easily used this cleavage between key political actors 24  
25 in Serbia, advancing their own political project. Military leadership of Bosnian 25  
26 Serbs did the same, neglecting the warnings of their colleagues from Army of 26  
27 Yugoslavia. Understanding that they evolved from mere proxies of Belgrade, and 27  
28 comprehending that Serbia becomes a hostage of its warmongering strategies, 28  
29 Bosnian Serbs were not ready to yield. The cleavage between the Serbian political 29  
30 elites turned into a gap through which the Vance-Owen plan slipped, alongside 30  
31 with a chance to put a stop to a war which lasted for another two and a half 31  
32 terrible years. 32

33  
34 \* \* \* 34  
35 35

36 About 20 days after the faithful decision to drop the peace proposal, UN Security 36  
37 Council passed Resolution 827 (15 May 1993) to 'establish an international 37  
38 tribunal for the sole purpose of prosecuting persons responsible for serious 38  
39 violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the 39  
40 former Yugoslavia'. As ICTY was slowly emerging in the next couple of years, few 40  
41 believed that the main actors would face justice. Yet, Ratko Mladić and Radovan 41  
42 Karadžić were indicted in 1995, Slobodan Milošević in 1999, Momčilo Krajišnik 42  
43 and Biljana Plavšić in 2000. While Krajišnik and Plavšić were sentenced, former 43  
44 to 20 and latter to 11 years in prison, Milošević was transferred to The Hague in 44

1 2001, where he died in 2006. Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić were hiding for 1  
 2 years, but were ultimately handed over by Serbian authorities in 2008 and 2011. 2  
 3 At the time of writing, their trials are in full swing. These are the last huge legal 3  
 4 venture of the ICTY, which is gradually dwindling and is supposed to be succeeded 4  
 5 by residual Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals. Among many other 5  
 6 responsibilities, this body is assigned with preservation and management of 6  
 7 the ICTY archives. In the course of the completion of its activities, numerous 7  
 8 gatherings and conferences were devoted to the legacy of the ICTY, and the issue 8  
 9 of its abundant archival holdings was repeatedly addressed. Scholars also took 9  
 10 part in these debates, albeit individually, even though it is apparent that the scope 10  
 11 and importance of that material deserves organized and systematized approach on 11  
 12 the level of a heavyweight institute. Such awareness will hopefully grow in the 12  
 13 coming period. 13

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