OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

TRANSCRIPT

"Saving Bosnia: Looking Back at George Soros's $50 Million Intervention After 25 Years"

A conversation with Mark Malloch-Brown, Aryeh Neier, Hrvoje Batinic, Beka Vuco, Martha Loerke, Dobrila Govedarica, and Dzenana Trbic

Moderator: Laura Silber

Recorded December 11, 2017

* * *TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE: background noise frequent, only transcribed when particularly intrusive. Batinic's accent is difficult at times.* * *

ANNOUNCER:

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LAURA SILBER:

I want to say thank you, everyone, for coming today. This was really organized by Veka-- Beka Vuco and Marina Pravdic, so I wanna especially give a big shout out to Beka and Marina for organizing everything. And before we begin, I want to say that we see our foundation in Sarajevo, they'll be on the line.

And we hope that they will participate during the session. I'll be calling on you. I wanna give you guys a heads up on that. Do you hear us okay? Do you see us? Excellent. And it's gonna be very exciting to have them participate. If you can see on the screen over there, there's a note from George Soros that calls for the opening of the foundation.

So we'll be talking all about that today. You see Beka Vuco, who is responsible for all things in the Western Balkans and was also with the Open Society Foundations and--

at the very start of our work in the Balkans. Mark Malloch-Brown, I'm sure many of you know him. Mark was not with the Foundations at the time, although he's now a member of the global board of the Open Society Foundations. And Mark was really instrumental in George Soros's first trip to Sarajevo, and I'm really looking forward to hearing Mark tell all of us about what that was like.

And Aryeh Neier, who definitely needs no introduction. Aryeh Neier was president of the Open Society Foundations and was the founding president, and we're so delighted to have him here. And he'll talk about many things as we go through the day. And I'm Laura Silber, and the microphone is sort of on and off.

So if we could first start out with showing a short film that we put together which really tells the story of the founding of the efforts of the Open Society Foundations in Bosnia, starting about 1993. And many of the people you see on the screen are also in the film. So if we can kick it off and maybe turn off the lights, that would be great.

* * *TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE: video not transcribed.* * *

LAURA SILBER:

So that film lays out pretty nicely the situation for the foundation and what the aim of the foundation then and now is. And first of all, I wanna salute you in Sarajevo, who, as you can see, played a role in the film and in all of our efforts in Bosnia. If you don't mind, we'll start out with Mark. Mark, if you could describe what it was like. How did it happen that George came to you and said, "We have to do anything, something." And-- or did you go to him and say that?

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

No, this-- this was very much one where George came to me. We knew each other actually originally introduced by Aryeh-- because-- in those days I earned my living-- as sort of mercenary on foreign elections, always working for exactly the kind of progressive candidates that George believed in.

So my early relationship with George was, you know, he just took a sort of-- a secondary pleasure in watching me sort of working in places like Chile and the Philippines and ocas-- occasionally trying to find ways he could help. But he knew that I had in-- before that worked for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

So as he cast around his in those days much more limited network than today, to think who could help him think through what to do in Sarajevo, he called me on a Saturday morning. And, you know, it was a quite astonishing call, even by-- after 30 years now of having such calls from George. Which is, how could I spend $50 million to save Sarajevo? You know, and I think I had one child on my lap and another one who I was trying to get her socks on. And you know, sort of put them down and said, "Say that again?"

And-- you know, I have to say, my-- my first plan was not terribly successful, which was I thought that UN HCR, as a UN agency, would have access and-- the-- the best thing was to write a very large check to-- to UN HCR. Which we initially began to do, only to find that UN HCR, despite its best intentions as an intergovernmental UN agency simply wouldn't cross the lines to deliver assistance inside Sarajevo.

And that secondly-- it was, you know, just extraordinarily cautious about criticizing what was going on inside Sarajevo. It would not call a genocide a genocide, and George rightly got increasingly impatient. So, you know, I found myself having to go back to UN HCR and asking for our money back, which doesn't usually happen in those-- (LAUGH) and, you know, we then constructed very much with George's intimate engagement, as you can see from these photographs and his, you know, presence there in Sarajevo-- we-- we constructed-- an extraordinary two part strategy.

One was, as you heard in the film, the-- trying to repair the water and the electricity through a complete sort of rogue effort of an extraordinary Texan, who I know Aryeh will speak of, Fred Cuny, who'd worked with me on refugee programs in Southeast Asia, and who literally working-- with, again, those cited in the film.

You know, we smuggled in the material to repair the water and electricity. And, you know, very much part of that was the guy with the mustache sitting beside George on the flight into Sarajevo, a guy called Lionel Rosenblatt, an ex-state department official who'd, you know, equally colorful career, and smuggled-- Vietnamese who'd worked with America out of Vietnam on the eve of the fall of Saigon-- in a famous episode.

So we were a pretty kind of colorful lot who didn't really respect any of the international rules. And Fred Cuny was famous in Sarajevo for the fact that he was so indignant at the lack of American support to what was going on, that outside his house he flew a Texan flag-- as a mark of his indignation and independence from a government that he felt was failing.

And so that was track one to try and really do what the international community was certainly failing to do, which was restore the basics of survival in the city. And track two was to begin a hell of an international row to try and force action. And, you know, we assembled an extraordinary group of individuals in Europe and the U.S.

And I'm very sorry Mabel isn't with us, because as a very young-- advocate, Mabel was very instrumental in-- in assembling that group. But we, you know, we-- we sort of made the case relentlessly. Conservatives, liberals, Jews, non-Jews-- what-- Northerners, Southerners. We had people like Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan involved. You know, all of us that, to our governments, that this simply they could not s-- stand idly by-- as genocide occurred in the heart of Europe.

And, you know, that advocacy campaign-- I-- you know, I now am the chairman of the international crisis group that came out of this, and I'm always cautious about claiming credits for advocacy campaigns, because you know so many other voices and influences and factors weigh into changes of government policy. But this is one of those occasions where I think this campaign was singularly almost-- but at least, you

know, in-- a majority way of-- of the factors that changed, responsible for changing Western policy towards Sarajevo. The dramas of Srebrenica and everything else obviously were the evidence for that.

But the figures who just relentlessly worked the newsrooms and editorial boards at the *New York Times* and *The Economist* and the BBC-- and who, you know, called on parliaments with just great vigor, and governments, and just simply wouldn't give up were this network of people who came together as part of this coalition. And as I say, all inspired by George at the beginning.

And, you know, it was a classic case, his money was important, but his energy and his leadership and his utter refusal to accept this tragedy in the heart of Europe-- this blight to his already emerging concept of open society, was what I think-- you know, literally made the difference. Sarajevo owes a lot to George.

LAURA SILBER:

Thanks, Mark. At the time, I was a journalist covering the wars and the breakup of what was then Yugoslavia. And I remember, and it's a very different time, obviously, for journalism. But it was a time when there was this alliance, in a way, between the frustration on the part of the reporters who were covering the wars. And while there wasn't a unity or a unanimity of view, there was certainly a real frustration, which I think Mark touched on, from the press too, in the sense of what we're reporting on, no one was working to stop.

And the, what we called then the international community, seemed so unable, so out of this, that effort, which Mark was describing, if we could just, before we go to you, Aryeh, if we could maybe talk to our colleagues in Sarajevo. Dzenana, Hrvoje, and Dobrila, you were on the ground. You both-- Dzenana and Hrvoje, you-- you were in the foundation at that point. Dobrila, you hadn't yet joined.

If I could ask you maybe to say what was it like when-- whether it was Beka or George, who first made contact with you from the Open Society Foundations? When did you learn that we would start such an effort, and what did it feel like? After all, you were in the middle of a war.

HRVOJE BATINIC:

As far as I can remember-- the first person closely related to the foundation was-- unfortunately, it-- Mr. Fred Cuny that came. And-- at the time, the foundation was still in-- in the one room of the-- (UNINTEL) building in the Constitutional Court. (UNINTEL PHRASE) got one room. And-- when the Mr. Fred Cuny entered the room, he was a huge man like mountain, and that fact was kind of encouraging.

He was radiating some kind-- of optimism, really, and immediately started to be very friendly and make no-nonsense talk. You know, (UNINTEL) was talking with him

how to do this and that. And that was, to me personally, my first contact with someone from outside world who is coming and-- is giving impression that he is really willing to do something, and that he can really do something. And that doesn't much care about all the problems and all the obstacles that he'll prob-- probably-- assuredly will be against all these efforts.

And-- and that-- that's one of my most vivid memories of-- from those times, was-- was winter '93 towards '94-- I'm very (UNINTEL) with chronology.

LAURA SILBER:

That's--

HRVOJE BATINIC:

Later, Beka came. Beka came. Beka brought me-- one book that I asked-- to read, and that was also very important, you know, that-- (UNINTEL) coming-- apart from all other, much, much more important things. You are supplied with-- with a book from-- one of your favorite authors. So you can kind of still be in touch with the normal living-- and live like a normal human being, reading books and things like that.

And that was one of the most important part-- in Soros' effort in Bosnia, apart from this-- humanitarian effort in classical terms, all these things which are not well known-- the water, to electricity, and all these things, this-- effort to-- sustain the culture life in the besieged city-- as a part of our message to the outside world that-- we are normal human beings and normal human needs, and that it's not quite a proper thing to be killed just like that.

And that was also kind of a message ourselves to ourselves, that we are still human beings and that we want to live normally, to have a theater and things like that. Later Susan Sontag came, also the foundation was involved in her first visit. And later she was producing the-- the-- the-- *Godot* in-- in besieged Sarajevo. And I could go on with this.

LAURA SILBER:

Hrvoje, that's really helpful for bringing to life and also making apparent what was distinct about George Soros's approach, was giving the-- the element of cultural life or the newsprint. Aryeh, how did you think of things like that?

ARYEH NEIER:

Well-- it did seem to me-- very important to try to sustain the cultural life-- of-- the

city of-- of Sarajevo. It was very important-- to the people with whom I was in contact with i-- Sarajevo. And so-- it became very important to me. And-- I-- got into trouble with the-- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees staff in Zagreb, who controlled-- the flights into Sarajevo.

Because I brought Susan Sontag with me-- into Sarajevo, and listed her as a humanitarian worker, and tried to persuade them unsuccessfully that sustaining the cultural life of the city of Sarajevo had-- had something to do with humanitarian work. So they were furious at me for-- for doing that. I-- I want to tell one story about Susan's arrival. And-- it suggests something-- significant about the city of-- of Sarajevo.

The night-- we arrived-- was-- I think one of the-- worst points in the-- the war. It was-- April-- 1993, and-- I had come with Susan and her son, David Rieff-- was also there, because David was a journalist covering the-- the war in Bosnia. And he was able to get in-- on that basis. And Zdravko Grebo was the-- the director-- of the foundation. So-- that evening, we wanted to go out for a drink someplace, and Zdravko told us-- there were two places open.

There was-- a place that served vodka, because the Ukrainian soldiers-- in-- Sarajevo-- with the UN provided it with vodka. And there was a place serving red wine, because the French soldiers-- were providing red wine. So we chose a red wine. And so there were the-- the four of us at the table, Zdravko, Susan, David, and-- and me. And at a certain point, somebody got up from a nearby table and approached-- Susan Sontag. And-- those of you who remember Susan know that she was quite distinctive looking-- and said, "Are you Susan Sontag?" And she said yes.

And-- he said, "Would you mind joining our table-- for a while?" So she agreed. And then, as the three of us remained at our table, we watched one person after another, from other tables in the same place, approach Susan. And before the evening was out, she had sat at every table-- in the bar. And-- I was saying to-- to David Rieff, "Can you imagine any bar in New York-- where everybody would want to sit and talk with-- with Susan Sontag?"

But it was-- important-- to-- to people to sustain the cultural life. You saw in the film-- Haris Pas-- Pasovic-- who-- staged the Sarajevo Film Festival-- and-- at a certain point-- a number of-- well-known-- film actors wanted to go to-- to Sarajevo to take part-- in the film festival. And they were blocked by the United Nations-- High Commissioner for Refugees. And at that moment-- I was with-- Sadako Ogata-- who was then the-- the High Commissioner. And I was asked to-- to intercede.

The-- the actors, I remember-- were Daniel Day Lewis-- Jeremy Irons-- and Vanessa Redgrave. There were-- there were some others, but those are the names-- that I remember. And again, I tried to make the-- the plea to Mrs. Ogata-- that the-- the cultural life-- was important to the humanitarian effort-- in-- Sarajevo. And she was having nothing of it. So I lost-- that particular round. And they were unable to-- to attend the-- the film festival.

If-- if I may, while-- while I have the floor-- Mark talked about-- Fred Cuny and Hrvoje talked about Fred Cuny. And-- he was-- for us-- really the hero-- of the-- the entire effort. Fred was-- a humanitarian assistance-- specialist. He was-- regarded as the master of disaster. And-- one of the-- the persons who served on our five member committee to-- determine how George's $50 million would be spent-- was Morton Abramowitz, who was-- at one time, U.S. ambassador to Turkey, and another time-- U.S. ambassador to Thailand.

And Mort had worked with Fred Cuny-- particularly when the-- the Kurds fled from-- Saddam Hussein's-- Iraq into-- to Turkey and Iran-- a flight of about two million people. So Mort knew about Fred's-- capacity to do humanitarian work. And he took on an extraordinary-- series of-- of projects.

The best known-- is the water project. And the water project was this: Fred observed-- that a lot of the people who were being killed-- by sniping-- from the hills around Sarajevo had gone to old wells that supplied the brewery in Sarajevo, to collect water in plastic jugs, and to bring the-- the water back home, because-- there was no other source of-- of clean water. And with the water, they were moving very slowly. And so they were very easy targets for the snipers-- on the hills.

And a lot of people-- were getting killed-- dragging water. They had-- children's carts, and in the winter-- children's sleds on which to-- to drag the plastic-- bottles of-- of water. So Fred-- decided-- that there was a place that the river that goes through Sarajevo-- past-- near-- a mountain-- a hill. And that there was an old road tunnel-- that went through that hill.

And so-- what he did, with the help of-- a Sarajevo-- engineer, who was part Bosnian, part Kosovo-- Kosavan-- Faruq-- Shlako (PH)-- they designed-- a very long, narrow water purification system-- so that it could fit in a road tunnel. It was 200 meters long. And-- Fred-- got it manufactured-- in Texas, and then rolled-- onto UN relief flights coming into Sarajevo. And he had it timed so that within seconds-- the-- the sections of this water purification system would be pulled by trucks off the-- the UN-- relief flights-- and then trucked to that-- tunnel under the hill.

And because of the hill-- the Bosnian/Serb shelling wouldn't do any damage-- to the-- water f-- purification-- system-- within the-- the tunnel. And in that way, he got-- clean water-- to most of the-- the residents of Sarajevo. He couldn't get the water to-- to people who lived on the hills, because gravity wouldn't get it-- to them.

So he built a separate, small water f-- purification system, and got the Jordanian troops-- in-- Bosnia, with the-- the UN to guard the small water f-- purification system-- to serve the-- the people-- on the hill. But all of his projects had that level of-- ingenuity, that sense that-- you could overcome-- any problem. And those humanitarian projects used up a s-- a fair amount of the money-- that George provided. But they really helped the-- the city of Sarajevo to survive.

LAURA SILBER:

Thanks, we'll definitely be back to you. Now, Beka has laryngitis, so she'll be-- have difficulty speaking. But we have to be patient. And just to say that Mabel van Oranje couldn't make it today because of the snow yesterday in London, so she's flying as we speak. So we miss her.

Beka, you were on that first flight with George Soros. You were probably one of the few people, if not the only person, from the region at that flight. What was it like for you? What did George say on the flight? I imagine it was very noisy, because it was a C-130, but what was it like? What was that atmosphere like? And-- and what did you expect to find? And how soon after did you meet Hrvoje and Dzenana when you got to the-- to Sarajevo?

BEKA VUCO:

I do apologize, really. I will try my best. That was not my first time that I went to Sarajevo, I went before that. But it just happened that George decided to go. And it was November of 1993, and he was in Sarajevo the day when the Mostar Bridge was bombed, the same day when this happened-- in the-- we were in Sarajevo. So we actually not only went to Sarajevo, but also we were there when this terrible thing happened.

LAURA SILBER:

To interrupt to say, so when the Mostar Bridge was bombed, the person who's-- was named responsible was the man, Slobodan Praljak, who recently committed suicide in the Yugoslav cr-- war crimes tribunal by swallowing poison after the verdict of guilty was passed. So it was quite a (UNINTEL)--

BEKA VUCO:

So-- you could get to Sarajevo either through Zagreb, Split, or Ancona, on special flights. You had to have a UN-- special permission. And you would never know when you could get on the plane. You could sit one week in Split and wait for the cease fire to get on the plane. So when finally George decided to go, we were not very happy, because, you know, security issues. But you saw a lot of pictures there with him, with a flak jacket.

And I have to tell you one little anecdote. Before we were going-- his wife called me and said, "Do you know where you're taking him?" I said, "Well, I am not taking him. It's his desire." So I was warned that we have to take good care. So we did. And you saw probably the pictures of George in the flak jacket with the helmet-- for the--

duration of the flight.

We flew from Zagreb, and I was extremely nervous. Because we had no idea how-- what will happen. There was no armored cars at that point. The foundation did not have, in 1993, an armored car. We had-- we bought one later on. So actually when we got in the car after the airport, the driver was driving extremely fast. And I said, "Could you please slow down?"

He said, "No, we just have to go-- be faster than those rifles from the hit-- from the hill above." So it was-- I was extremely nervous. But at the same time, proud that he wanted to come and that we did our best. The second anecdote is we stayed at the famous Holiday Inn Hotel, which of course, did not have electricity, water, and so on.

So we had this very heavy-- west-- vests. And we were given bottles of water. So we started going up the stairs, and he said, "This is very heavy, these vests. Could you take it please?" So I had my vest and his vest, and the water to carry up those steps. We got into the room, and he said, "What do I do now with these bottles of water?" I said, "Well, you try to wash your hands." So there was a lot of anecdotes.

But he was amazing, because that evening, at the Sarajevo hotel, we also managed to get a little reception. And we invited a lot of people. They all came. And we provided food for people who really were-- without food for so long. So there was a lot of anecdotes, but it's really fortunate everything went very smoothly. And he was very cautious. And there are pictures here from the plane. In the middle, this was-- actually a cargo plane that we flew.

And in the middle, between the seats, were actually pipes. And those were the pipes for the gas project that Fred Cuny-- provided. And it was really Fred who organized everything so that it went so smoothly. And it was amazing. It was an amazing visit that I will never forget in my life.

LAURA SILBER:

Dzenana, you were there that day that George Soros arrived. What was it like? What did you expect? Were you worried that it would amount to nothing in the sense of-- that-- what did you think would be accomplished by it?

DZENANA TRBIC:

To be very honest, I didn't have any expectations in terms of accomplishments, bigger accomplishments. But I was amazed-- what amazed me the most is the mere fact of-- our colleagues coming to the besieged city. The-- the prevailing feeling-- during the siege was the one that you were left out, cut off from the rest of the world.

That you were in isolation and-- you were left to the mercy of the soldiers, you know, around the city. So the very fact of the colleagues-- coming to-- coming to the city in-

- in dangers, actually it was dangerous-- conditions, was something that brought us hope-- that, you know, we were not left alone. And that meant a lot. And I don't think we ever actually said it to-- to our colleagues, to Mr. Neier, to-- to Beka Vuco-- Beka Vuco came, I think most often, and of course, Mr. Soros. We never actually said how much we appreciate that. But that-- it-- the act of c-- I saw it as an act of-- of collegiality, actually.

LAURA SILBER:

Mark, you and Aryeh have both known George for decades. This was not the typical philanthropy for George. This was something unusual. Did you-- did you talk at the time with George, why do you think George was motivated? Was it a sense of that he could act on the international stage? Was it because of his-- experience as a child, as a boy growing up in Budapest? Could you shed any light on what do you think was-- were some of the motivating factors for George?

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

Well, yes, although I'll be interested in Aryeh's answer to it as well. But, you know, I-- I think it was, you know, a mixture of things. One, he was-- you know, he was finding his stride as an advocate for Open Society. This, after all, came after-- the huge success that the foundation had had-- at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the years around that. You know, arguably still, all these decades later, its single most impactful-- set of interventions.

And so, you know, I think George had suddenly, you know, gathered a huge ambition to, and-- and recognition that the right kind of interventions could make extraordinary transformational-- change. I think the second was this-- this view of how could this happen at the heart of Europe?

That, you know-- a Berlin Wall had gone down around issues of, you know, spreading freedom and openness and democracy, you know, suddenly faced this challenge. And so a strategic sense that this had to be resisted and-- and-- and defeated. And-- and, you know, the coalition of people he brought together, as I said, represented very disparate political ideologies, we came from different religious or-- or not necessarily relig-- actively religious, but different religious traditions.

So, you know, I mentioned we had a Muslim prince in our number as well as-- you know, someone like George, but also a prac-- very much a practicing Jew like Mort Abramowitz, and-- and-- and others. So it was a v-- and obviously a lot of us just straight, mild-mannered Christians as well.

So, (LAUGH) you know, and-- and I think for George, all of that was, you know, very important, because you know, he-- he saw that, you know, the extraordinary sort of miracle of Europe, a place where people have been able to live together-- over

centuries, despite religious and other differences. And in fact, at their best, have celebrated those differences, and been much more than the sum of-- the straightforward sum of them, that all that vision of everyone that he had-- you know, come to from the horrors of his sort of childhood in Hungary, seemed to him endangered by what was happening-- in Sarajevo.

If this could happen in Sarajevo, what then for London and Paris and other places later? So, you know, I-- I think he really felt this was the frontline of the fight for what kind of Europe it was going to be. But there was within it this sort of anomalous thing, which is, you know, it had gone on bedeviling the foundation ever since, which was George's view as an investor that humanitarian assistance is very bad value for money.

That, you know, your money goes out, people are kept going today, but you know, it-- it doesn't provide a solution. And what I think therefore was very powerful for him about what we were able to do in this case was the humanitarian actions both-- allowed things to be held together till a political solution could be found, but through their sheer bravura and challenging of conventional wisdom, Fred and his pipes-- you know, blew away the official consensus that nothing could be done to save Sarajevo.

And in that sense, I think it put political solutions on the table that otherwise people would have d-- avoided. So here was, you know, a humanitarian investment which actually, in the longer term, transformed the political and therefore the economic prospects-- of-- Sarajevo.

So I think, you know, it-- it-- it-- it's echoed down through the life of the foundation since, this challenge, "Okay, we'll do humanitarian assistance, but as long as it can have that kind of payoff." And it's, to be honest, rather hard to replicate Sarajevo every time.

LAURA SILBER:

And I think part of it, for George, at the time was, and he's said it since, is that humanitarian spending was a defeat. It meant failure. It meant that we had failure-- failed to prevent a disaster. So it's not only investment, but it really is a sense of that all the political efforts had failed. Aryeh, George has often said when you were running the foundation, that he left human rights and justice to you. At this time, you were thinking about what to do, how to bring the leaders, the people responsible for what was happening in Sarajevo and across the former Yugoslavia to-- to justice. What was going on behind the scenes? And can you talk a little bit about your role and the idea behind forming the International Criminal Tribunal?

ARYEH NEIER:

When-- when George first called me about-- this, I was still at-- Human Rights

Watch. And-- sometime-- before this-- we had issued a report for the first time using the term "war crimes"-- in the-- the title of the report. I issued it with a call for the establishment of an international criminal tribunal to deal-- with the situation.

One reason that this was novel-- at the time-- is that international humanitarian law in that era-- was quite different-- from what it is today. The only place in the Geneva Conventions in which there are references to-- to war crimes are in the-- the language of the Geneva Conventions-- grave breaches-- are the sections dealing with international armed conflict.

And so in those days-- we did not think-- that-- you could-- deal with-- abuses in an internal armed conflict-- as war crimes, and you couldn't establish-- an international tribunal-- to-- to deal with that. But in the case of Bosnia-- there were three internationally recognized states. There was-- the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was-- Serbia and Montenegro. There was Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina had been internationally recognized.

So this was an international-- armed conflict. And so the concept of war crimes applied-- as international humanitarian law-- was then regarded. So I-- I took advantage of that to issue a call-- for an international-- tribunal. The call would have-- fallen without a trace-- except that it exactly coincided-- with the publication of news articles-- about camps-- in-- Bosnia. That is Omarska and Keraterm.

A journalist named-- Roy Gutman-- published the-- the first stories. And the day that he published those stories in-- *New York Newsday*-- the State Department-- officer-- was asked at the noon press briefing whether the State Department had information confirming Roy Gutman's stories about these camps.

And the State Department spokesman said, "Yes." And then it was a news story everywhere that the State Department had said-- that there were these camps. And camps-- reminded everyone-- of the Nazis. And so suddenly this call for an international-- criminal tribunal-- was something people picked up. It was a way of trying to respond-- to this idea of camps.

And when George-- allocated the-- the $50 million-- for Bosnia, I went to my-- fellow members-- of the-- committee that would disburse the funds, Mark-- and-- Morton Abramowitz, and Prince-- s-- Sadruddin Aga Khan, and a Swiss-- general, Air Force general named Kurt Balajat (PH).

And I asked them, could I use $2 million of the $50 million-- for the human rights cause? And with that-- I used-- the money to try to promote the establishment-- of an international criminal tribunal. The UN had agreed to establish a commission on war crimes-- before it established a tribunal. But it gave the commission no money. And so-- we gave it money out of that $2 million, and the MacArthur Foundation matched-- our contribution. And they had money-- and-- they published five volumes-- on the war crimes that were being committed-- in-- Bosnia and other parts of the-- the former-- Yugoslavia. And that and the various other activities that we supported out of the-- the $2 million helped create-- the momentum-- for the

establishment of an international cr-- criminal tribunal.

And then in January 1993, George-- actually allocated the money-- in December of 1992, but we had started this even before the-- money was formally-- allocated-- on the basis that he-- had-- pledged-- this amount of money. Madeleine Albright became the-- U.S. representative to the United Nations. And she grabbed hold of the issue and-- helped to-- to push it. And-- by May 1993-- the UN Security Council had approved a resolution establishing the International Criminal Tribunal-- for the former Yugoslavia. Then-- then the headaches really began. Because initially it was nonfunctional. And it took us-- quite a while-- to actually-- get it moving. But-- eventually that did take place.

LAURA SILBER:

I remember covering the first case at the tribunal, and it was an amazing to all of us--

ARYEH NEIER:

The Tadic case.

LAURA SILBER:

Yeah. Just to see it come-- alive, that that-- this kind of thing that had seemed so, like, riddled with so many problems, not even to mention, I mean, the fact that the parties on the ground, many of, you know, the Serbian side, most emphatically, was-- didn't recognize it.

ARYEH NEIER:

No, and look, it had no capacity to-- get people-- in front of it. This first case that-- that Laura mentioned was a man named-- Dusko Tadic. He had been a guard at one of these camps, a low level-- person. And then the Bosnian Serbs wanted to draft him in their army. And so he left-- Bosnia-- and went to-- to Germany, went to Munich-- to escape the-- the draft.

And on the streets of Munich, survivors of that camp recognized him. The German authorities took him into custody and turned him over to the-- International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. And that's how the tribunal got its first case. And except for that series of events, it would've had absolutely nothing to do-- in that earlier period.

Later on-- you know, things changed. Tony Blair is reviled these days, but he appointed a foreign secretary-- named Robin Cook. And Robin Cook wanted to make-

- the-- tribunal work. And so he had British troops-- in Bosnia-- arrest-- people who were wanted as war criminals. And that's really how the-- the tribunal-- started to take off.

LAURA SILBER:

And while the court was getting underway, the foundation was also operating. And Beka, you were in frequent touch, frequently visiting the Foundations. How-- one of the things the Foundations are best known for, I think, were the scholarships of that day, and the fact that so many people from former Yugoslavia, from Bosnia, went abroad to continue their studies. And if you could say a little bit th-- about that. We also have Martha Loerke here in the audience. So just to hear a little bit about that whole program, and how much it meant.

BEKA VUCO:

Again, I apologize for my voice. But I was in the Balkans, so that's why. So in 1992-- already-- I was called by a friend of mine, Celia Hawkesworth, she is a professor at that time-- she was a professor at the London University of-- Serbo-Croatian language and literature. We were-- that's what it was called at the time. And she said-- "What are we going to do? I have tons of people from Bosnia/Serbia here, can we-- can George give something to them? They wanna study, but we have to help them." So that's how actually the idea began.

So I went to George and Aryeh, and they approved the first batch of money, so to say. And then I formed a board. It was a board from all the former Yugoslav people who had to escape Yugoslavia at the time, whether they had to go because of the political reasons or they just were avoiding the draft, or whatever reason. And they were in Paris and Amsterdam-- Austria, so on.

So we actually started the program. But I will ask Martha, who then took over the program, as the scholarship director of OSF, and-- the program was established in 1993, and we closed it officially in 2000 with a huge conference in Budapest. But actually, she can tell you a little bit more, but I think it's so amazing when you, today, meet some of those people who have come back to Bosnia, or you just meet them somewhere else. And when they said that a small, supplementary grant that we gave them, maybe $500, $1,000 meant so much at that particular moment. Martha, please.

MARTHA LOERKE:

I-- I won't say too much-- except to-- say that the basic data was somewhere over 2,000 grants given over a period of five years with an extension for renewals so that the students could continue their studies. The amount spent, it's really not about the

money, but it was somewhere around two m-- $20 million.

And I-- I'll just share, perhaps, that the-- committee-- that-- the board that Beka brought together-- was incredible. And-- I had just started at the Foundations at that time, in December 1994. And I have to say that a lot of the learning curve that I went through in those years of that selection process, I would like to thank you, Beka, because I learned a ton. That committee was incredible. That was some of the hardest decisions I've ever seen anyone having to make, and certainly some of the hardest I ever had to make in this foundation.

BEKA VUCO:

Unfortunately-- we have lost touch with many of people, because at the time, many of them did not want to be named by name, and we completely really, you know-- appreciated that. We also published a book, which is called *Children of Atlantis*, because after we received the first essays that they wrote as part of the application process, we were just stunned what was written in those applications.

So-- actually, the CEU press published the book with a wonderful photograph on the cover by Gilles Peress, who really extensively covered the war in Bosnia. And that book is a testament that many of those people today are somewhere in the world. We don't know where. Or many of them came to Bosnia, and I know that for sure. But that we, at the moment, really changed their lives in a way.

LAURA SILBER:

I had the privilege of running-- we were doing a film on the scholarships, and the role that George Soros and the program has played. And I ran across the scholars from rec-- scholarship recipients from the former Yugoslavia. And there was a physicist from MIT, and a breast cancer specialist in Yale, and the kind of s-- and the hard sciences. And then you would meet some poet, and some--

BEKA VUCO:

Bosnian ambassador to the UN at one point--

LAURA SILBER:

An unbelievable range of people who I think it really made the-- the difference. Mark, one of the people I met was someone called Zlata Filipovic. She wrote something called *Zlata's Diary*, that we played a role in supporting her. And I met her actually years after the war, at an ICG benefit dinner. And when we opened this-- session today, you talked about-- that was one of the ICG's great advocacy triumphs.

ICG was really born in that moment, and I'd love to hear something about it. I know that you and George and Mort Abramowitz played a huge role, played the role in founding it. And-- if you could tell us that story of how the organization came to be and about your conversations with George, it's really a fascinating one. And that-- the fact that ICG still plays such an important role today.

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

Well, yes. And you're right, I mean, ICG came out of this. It was a child of the success there, rather than-- in any way the author of it. And the success was very much the Foundation's-- OSF's-- in its earlier incarnation. But on-- on not the trip that George-- went in, but on a separate trip, Mort Abramowitz and I-- went in. And it was just when the tide politically and in military terms had turned.

And it was clear that NATO was going to end the siege of Sarajevo, and it was a very dangerous trip for that reason. Because the-- I think there were quite a few people who would've liked to have taken a pot at-- shot at-- at-- at Mort or myself-- what was emerging as the role we had played as a group in this. But as we sort of took one of these Hercules planes out and corkscrewed up into the air to avoid-- being shot at, you know, Mort leans across on the Hercules and says to me, "You know, we-- we did this pretty well. We should do it again."

And-- out of that sort of airplane yelling at each other, as you do in a Hercules, because there's so much noise, and Mort was wearing this silly tin helmet-- you know, which-- they always said to politicians, never wear a tin helmet even if you're in v-- inspecting a tank, you know? It did for Dukakis when he ran for president, those of you who remember it. Well, Mort looked every bit as absurd in this tin hat as he leaned over to me and said, "You know, we should do it again."

And I-- I-- I-- but the really, you know, what we realized was that this thing that we'd ended up finding our way to modeling in-- in-- in Sarajevo of, you know, a high-powered advocacy with real thought and attention given by first-class policymakers to what were possible solutions to this terrible thing, so that when we went to see governments we weren't just saying, "You gotta do something."

But we're putting down in front of them a blueprint for what they could do, and being willing to-- to-- to sorta put behind that-- pressure through the media and, you know, a much noisier, louder campaign in support of the sort of policy recommendations and the discussions with senior officials that that entailed. We thought, you know, here's something that can work. And it was out of that concept that the crisis group was born.

Now, at the beginning, we had a second idea in the crisis group, because it really was a child of Sarajevo, which was we wanted to keep Fred Cuny and the pipes. And we imagined that-- you know, a second str-- strand would be that kind of activist humanitarianism-- that would actually shame governments into recognizing the

worst solutions, and that you could fix problems, and would-- would add to us. And, you know, tragically-- Fred was to die soon afterwards on a mission for the foundation-- in-- in-- in Central Asia. And--

ARYEH NEIER:

Chechnya.

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

Chechnya, sorry. In Chechnya. And that-- you know, that sort of leg to ICG sort of died with him. And-- we've just become a policy and advocacy organization. But as I say, you know, whatever successes crisis group has had since, you know, the model has, you know, remained f-- profoundly founded on that experience in Sarajevo.

LAURA SILBER:

I'd like to turn to our colleagues in Sarajevo. And as the war raged on, so after this initial-- humanitarian intervention by George Soros, and then in time the international community got its act together to deliver humanitarian aid, inside the foundation, how did you continue operating during the war years as '93, '94, and '95, how did you continue to operate and what-- how did you sustain from the program such as education programs and other things, and how did you function in these circumstances?

HRVOJE BATINIC:

Well, the-- in the-- at the very beginning, there were just three or four, something like that. And-- (UNINTEL) it was Grebo-- there was one guy who was very short (UNINTEL). And we had our-- our lawyer, (UNINTEL) which is still with us, as our-- collaborator. And-- (UNINTEL) three of us (UNINTEL).

But-- it was first month or two, and then the foundation was-- it seems to me-- apart from all this extraordinary situation, and that it was-- the humanitarian aid's touch was put a stamp on it all. I think that-- also there was an intention that the Bosnian foundation should-- kind of work as any normal sort of foundation in the world. And it would develop the blueprint how to found-- how the local foundations are working.

So we-- we had-- the vocabulary-- of the foundation that was actual at the time. And-- this-- this-- notion of-- programs, like media program, for instance-- that was-- entitled (?) to me. And then culture, and very soon it was obvious-- we were joined by our colleague (UNINTEL) as operating director. And the-- the-- the job was accumulating. And so that, (UNINTEL) was-- working on-- bringing up more people,

and so it came-- it then came Aida Cengic, Dzenana, and-- Admela Handrovic (PH).

So the staff was growing, and we had-- an array of programs. And-- of course, it was not a normal social life in general, a normal cultural situation but all these programs were developing approaches as if the situation was normal. And we were offering our help in all these-- domains of normal life, apart from the humanitarian-- basic humanitarian actions, we were-- getting people from media, people from culture, and-- and-- and discuss-- they were approaching us with new projects, and we would say to them-- what we would like to do, and they were offering their ideas-- to do things.

Now there are many things-- for instance, in media program, there was one project-- a huge thing. It was, all the dimensions, I think this 200 tons of print paper that was imported in Sarajevo. It was a kind of really special operation, and Fred Cuny was of course engaged in it-- not only it was treated as a strategic material by the guys around the city, however, we managed to put that print paper in the city of these 200 tons, the (UNINTEL) was-- six tons was—lost, which is naturally.

And all this paper wasn't only for the-- newspapers, but for anything that you could print, textbooks-- books-- various kind of materials. Anything that you could print was on this print paper. I think there still-- there are many copies of these books and things that we have printed them on-- on-- on that-- that paper.

The council program-- was getting its momentum, and-- you know, a kind of-- of-- Ministry of Culture, so to say, in Sarajevo, because of course, there were no other funding at the time for the culture. And-- the spirit of this cultural-- battle was developing. And although you-- you could be a bit cynical about it-- that with culture you cannot beat tanks and shells-- but you can rise in spirit, so that in a sense, you can-- all this suffering is kind of-- it's easier to suffer when you-- okay-- you have a day with shells and everything and you are trying to get water and things like that, but in the evening you go to the theater, and all these things are kind of-- dubious. But-- at a day, you maybe saw two or three people dying in front of your eyes. But then in the evening you go the theater. There is something strange in this. But the strangeness is a part of human life.

And in-- in condition of Sarajevo, I think it was-- it was okay to-- again, you are behaving in-- in kind of-- special ways. And-- I-- I leave that to sociologists, theologists, and philosophers still to these days. Of course, it wasn't like that just in Sarajevo. There are notorious stories from-- from-- from Nazi camps, and-- and I think it's normal. And the foundation was hugely participating in-- in-- in these things and developing-- all these activities and-- and-- and fields of activities.

So-- although we had a touch of humanitarian aid, for instance, in media program we were ready to develop any newspaper, even those that we knew that maybe in the future we will not help them. But at the moment, we-- we were going t-- with the philosophy of anything that can push-- help them and create a normal situation in which you can choose. Then later you can choose. And-- the transgression towards

normality was-- in few-- (UNINTEL) more years.

I remember when Soros-- Mr. Soros came in '96, and we had-- a-- (UNINTEL) breakfast in Hotel Bosnia and-- (UNINTEL) correct-- I'm not sure if I call correctly, but he said-- "Well, those heroic times are past for us now, and-- and probably this foundation cannot be engaged-- terms as it was such a big thing anymore."

But you don't have to be worried with that, we are lucky that we can go-- live normally now, and-- work-- try to work as-- as normally and as usual and-- war-- belongs the past. So the foundation became more and more normal like any other-- in-- in-- in the--

DZENANA TRBIC:

Network.

HRVOJE BATINIC:

In the network. And-- continued-- working and developing-- and at one moment, we (UNINTEL) quite a huge institution, I think up to the year 2000.

LAURA SILBER:

Thank you. Before we go to questions, Aryeh, I wanted to ask you, often in situations, an organization reflects the external realities of the war rivalries. What was it like heading the foundation, and Beka, in your position as well, when various members of what was first a Yugoslav foundation, which was first a foundation for all a country of 23 million, and as the country fractured and independent foundations were forming, with people whose countries were fighting against each other, how did you navigate that? And what happened, both internally and also on the ground?

ARYEH NEIER:

I-- I don't think it was difficult to-- to navigate that. But as-- although the-- the countries were-- fighting-- against each other-- the people in the different-- foundations, in the different parts-- of the-- the former Yugoslavia were basically-- united in their-- antagonism to-- to ethnic-- nationalism.

And-- they saw themselves-- engaged in the-- the same cause. The foundation in Croatia was-- very much involved in the-- efforts on behalf of the-- the Bosnian refugees-- in-- Croatia. They were-- Bosnian refugees also in-- in Macedonia, and similarly the-- the Macedonian foundation was very involved in the-- the support of the-- the Bosnian refugees.

But the-- the foundation in-- Serbia, which also established at that stage a branch-- in Kosovo-- before it became an independent Kosovo foundation, and a foundation in Slovenia-- involved people who-- knew each other. They had been involved in-- opposition to-- to ethnic nationalism prior to the-- the outbreak of the conflicts-- in the former Yugoslavia.

And they did not-- descend into nationalism-- themselves. So-- there were different roles that we had to play. For example-- in Serbia-- or-- then, the Federal Republic of-- of Yugoslavia-- there were sanctions-- against-- Yugoslavia. But the sanctions also-- included-- or blocked-- medical supplies.

And so we-- played a role during that period-- in helping to get medical supplies-- into-- to Serbia, because they had been-- victimized, or the people who needed the-- the medical care-- in Serbia had been victimized because of-- the-- the actions-- of the-- the Milosevic-- government. Beka-- dealt with the-- the foundations-- on a day to day basis-- much more than I did. But Beka-- am I right, that-- this was not-- difficult?

BEKA VUCO:

Well, no. It was-- it was not difficult, no. It was really the act of balancing-- balancing people-- individuals. And I think-- I think-- we have to remember that was the time with not internet, no phones, no communication what we have today. But we managed to really communicate somewhat.

I was traveling throughout the Balkans as much as I could, and-- after the date when the courts were signed, in November of 1995, I organized the first meeting of all the foundations in the spring of 1996 in Ljubljana. We kind of felt Ljubljana is the safest and-- I think it was, actually, at that point. So it was an amazing moment when people, as Aryeh mentioned, many of them knew each other from former Yugoslavia, when (UNINTEL) met (UNINTEL), when Carmen and Pluhowsky (PH) came and met Vlad Emlicen (PH), for the first time actually, we helped them.

I think at that time also the visa regimes were much easier. We also, at that time, as Aryeh mentioned, we had a branch office in Kosovo, but also we had a branch office in Novi Sad in-- as well as in Podgorica in Montenegro. And in 2000, 1999, after the bombing, we actually went a little bit ahead of the history and opened the individual foundations in to-be countries, Kosovo and Montenegro.

And so-- we continued with these annual meetings-- and then slowly the phones and internet were coming. Today, of course, that's not a problem. But I think that those were really days of balancing and being very sensitive to many of the issues. I remember when Hrvoje came for the first time out of Sarajevo. We invited him to a huge media conference in (UNINTEL) that Mr. Soros attended, with-- with-- because media was, I think aside from the human theory on aid, one of the most important things that we were fighting at-- at that time. Radio, print media, television and so

on.

Hrvoje was, like, out of the cage, out of the ghetto. And, you know, he's very thin in his life anyway, he's very thin today as well. And we all thought that he's so thin because he, you know, did not have food and all that stuff. Not really, he looks almost the same. But sitting with him and George and talking about Bosnia was really-- things that one cannot forget. So we did manage to balance and communicate in spite of the really terrible difficulties.

LAURA SILBER:

And Mark, you've worn so many hats in your life. And I remember when I was a journalist I would call you and-- I think you were at the World Bank at that point. And-- you've seen both from working within a humanit-- working with a humanitarian organization, working at a humanitarian organization, in journalism, in government, what was it about the peculiar alchemy of this initiative?

Was-- could we just say it's George Soros? Could we say it's the people who are all on this panel and in the foundation in Sarajevo? What made this so memorable, and have such a lasting impact, and such an important-- important thing at the time, but also something that we remember so well?

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

No, well, I-- I mean-- I-- I-- you can't sort of have lived your life seeing as many crises unfold and get resolved in some cases and not resolved in others without realizing the extraordinary importance of the confluence of individuals and events-- and-- and, you know, the word lucky doesn't seem to belong in a sentence about Sarajevo at that time, but we got lucky.

Because there were journalists like you and Samantha Power-- trying to write also from-- from Sarajevo and Srebrenica-- and many others who, you know, just kept on banging away at the conscience of the West, and who did manage to sort of, you know, persuade their editors. Because you were all women who were very hard to say no to, and you were disproportionately women, actually, if I recall correctly, who were out there as stringers and different ways--

(OVERTALK)

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

Well m-- yeah, maybe they didn't get such front page billing from their editors, I don't know. They were a pretty formidable group of-- of-- of-- of journalists anyway. And, you know, and-- and then it was sort of we got lucky with our politicians too.

We, in a number of countries, you know, were seeing political change. In the U.K. from a conservative government that didn't want to know anything about this to a labor government under Blair.

In-- the-- the U.S.-- you know, a Clinton administration that, you know, on the one hand was wary of engagements, on the other hand-- you know, didn't-- it was also a little bit believed in the same ethical foreign policy-- that-- that we'd seen elsewhere. So all sorts of things-- came together.

But I don't think that takes away from the catalytic importance of what George and many in this room did. You know, because they sort of framed the issues and set the arguments, and exposed Sarajevo to that international spotlight that ultimately forced the hand of policymakers to make a difference.

But as I say-- you know, that-- you-- the-- I wish it was so simple, one could just say, "Thank you George, for doing that." It's never like that. And it's, you know-- it-- a lot of different activities came together in this particular ant hill-- and it made a difference.

LAURA SILBER:

Thank you. I'd like to turn to the audience to see if there are any questions, comments for any of the panelists. And if I could ask you to take-- in the back, if you can take-- Marina has the microphone.

MARK:

Hi, my name's Mark, thank you for being here. I enjoyed the discussion here. I've been to Sarajevo-- a number of times and have a lot of friends there. And there-- they tell me it's worse off now than it was ten years ago or even 20 years ago. So I wanted to ask-- how do you evaluate the impact of the civil society organizations that were funded-- founded by Soros, and maybe give an example of the most successful one. Thank you so much.

LAURA SILBER:

Terrific. I'd like to turn to Dobrila Govedarica, who is head of the foundation, and she should be somewhere. Is-- hi, Dobrila.

DOBRILA GOVEDARICA:

Hi to all. After 25 years-- operation in Bosnia, I would say that-- that sort of foundation was-- the key to development of civil society here. There is-- a wide range

of-- different organizations and different fields that they cover. And-- we as a foundation are considered as-- partner to them. Not just a donor.

We do not have a classical adm-- bureaucratic approach to civil society. We are here to help, to assess, to understand. And being-- locals, with a local board that practically ran the foundation-- we are probably the best one to-- understand what this society deserves and need. Thank you.

LAURA SILBER:

Beka?

BEKA VUCO:

I just wanna add, for people who don't know, we also have an office in (UNINTEL) where we have two staff members. And we opened the office just after the Dayton Accord as a media center, because that was the easiest way to register the office. But today, it's a branch office of our foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And we, as Dobrila explained, we operate on all the territories, including, of course, Mostar, where we have a number of projects. So the civil society is really-- we try from many angles to help them. And I think what she said is that really the strength of what happened in the '90s really, in a way, resembles today's operations of the foundations.

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

I must ask, because there's a question--

LAURA SILBER:

And-- and sorry--

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

--if I may, just only because he-- Mark at the back said that things are much worse now than-- than 20 years before. But I'd love to hear somebody answer that point, because it's, you know--

LAURA SILBER:

And I was actually going to answer it. I think part of it is the frustration, and you in Sarajevo-- obviously know better, but it's the frustration with the political situation,

with the unbelievably complicated constitution of their 13, I think, separate constitutions and-- with-- the Dayton agreement, and it's really difficult to the-- to govern.

And with the lack of political will from the political parties, and so there's so many obstacles to-- running a country, and to governance and to-- participation, that I think the lack of economic prospects, the lack of political prospects, and all of that I think is what has made it f-- feel to some, perhaps, the lack of persp-- prospects for the future. But I don't know that it's a failure of civil society. I think it's really the political and economic realities of Bosnia and the Balkans today. Other questions?

QUESTION:

Yes-- I was trained in foreign policy and did work as a foreign policy analyst early in my career, but I was at no time-- a Balkans specialist. I-- I worked for support of Bosnia and have western involvement to support the Bosnians in the early '90s. But still-- don't have special expertise.

I'm wondering if you could take a few moments just to update myself, this audience about the psychological and social dimensions of what's going on in Yugoslavia today. About a year or so ago-- I-- I met a woman, a Serbian woman-- in her 20s who said her family had to leave Serbia because they were-- westernized.

They-- they didn't believe in-- in-- a Serbian myth of, "The whole world's against us-- we never did any atrocities, and Serbia's under siege." And-- and she said and they had this Western, more open attitude. And they were so reviled by their neighbors that they felt compelled to emigrate. So it wasn't-- and so I'm wondering, to what extent are the people of the former Yugoslavia still, you know, sit-- (UNINTEL) in-- in these old hatreds? Or to what extent are they learning to live together and leaving them behind? I mean, I don't know, and I'm wondering about this.

LAURA SILBER:

Should we-- I can take a stab at it, but if-- unless anyone in Sarajevo wants to answer that.

DOBRILA GOVEDARICA:

Actually, it is not about the people, it's about political class. Since they captured the country-- they provide the jobs, they control everything. And-- they would like to have their own people with them, submissive of course. If the people-- are let to live peacefully, I would say that Bosnia would-- soon become close to normality.

But political leaders-- practically-- provoke every day with some crisis, all of them, all

three of them. And they-- feed the people the fear. When you live in the fear-- especially young people-- you would try to find some better place for you. We lost-- more than 100 young people in past three years. They realize that-- there is no-- real prospects in this country. It is difficult--

(BREAK IN TAPE)

DOBRILA GOVEDARICA:

--and build their life here. And if I may add, I am-- I belong to a minority in Sarajevo. I was there during the war, and-- I still live there, and I don't have any problem. So-- if you do not need a job from the government-- if you-- are more or less independent, and there are a lot of such people working for-- or businesses or some internationals, they can live normally in Sarajevo as anywhere else. So if I can repeat, it is not about the people, it's about political claws.

BEKA VUCO:

I'm sorry, I didn't hear your name, so--

(QUESTION: UNINTEL)

BEKA VUCO:

Okay. Well, we-- we will have to organize a second panel for your topic, because this is really a huge issue and a huge question which we cannot really generalize. There are parts of the Balkans which are getting better, which are part-- there are parts of the Balkans that are stagnating.

And then there are parts of the Balkans that are coming down-- going down. So it depends where we are at what moment, political moment. And I agree with Dobrila, that it is really the political will that is really driving the-- the-- the region at this moment. There are a lot of good things that have happened since the wars.

But there are a lot of bad things as well. So it's really something that we have to really wait and see. I mean, I'm willing to talk, but I really think that we cannot say in one sentence. Because today's Macedonia is very different from the one three months ago. Today's Serbia is somewhat different than a couple of years ago, and so on and so on. Today's Kosovo, again, is a country that is not yet recognized by four plus two countries in Europe, so that it cannot really go forward toward the European Union.

So there are a lot of political obstacles which are keeping the Balkans. And yes, there is a lot of people who are leaving the countries still, but it's mostly the young people who really don't see the future. I know a lot of friends and colleagues who have returned back in their 50s, 60s, 70s, because it's home, and that's where they wanna

be. So we can talk more, but no generalization, please.

LAURA SILBER:

Yeah, I was in the Balkans-- a couple of weeks ago. And in a strange way, while-- it seems there's both sort of contradictory trends. I think that there's actually the possibility to make another step in terms of normalizing relations, and in a way, in the Balkans, out of sync with some of the trends we're seeing, whether it's in the United States or elsewhere. So it could go in many different directions, some of which are actually positive. I think I saw another hand. Take the woman in the back, yeah.

HELENA FINN:

Thank you. Thank you so much, my name is Helena Finn, I'm a former U.S. diplomat, and I did have some direct involvement in all this. What I really want to ask you is you've mentioned Mort Abramowitz a number of times, and he played a very important role. Whether or not there is cooperation these days, we will ignore Washington-- but-- out in the field, whether or not there is constructive, positive cooperation-- on the U.S. diplomatic side from-- from the career people. You know, the people who were like me.

LAURA SILBER:

Sure. There def-- definitely is. I-- I think that, I mean, when I was in Belgrade, Beka arranged for us to meet with the American ambassador, who is obviously-- predates the current president, and so there's-- still a very strong presence, I think, on the ground in the western Balkans in particular, but elsewhere.

BEKA VUCO:

It was just announced a couple of days ago that-- Yee-- Yee, that's his last name, he's the-- Hoyt Lee-- Yee is the new ambassador to Macedonia. It's one of the best choices that they could make, somebody in Washington who really cares for the Balkans, and I think that he, with the new government of Macedonia, will push the country forward very fast.

But also, for instance, even though Croatia, we don't have an office in Croatia anymore, but we kind of consider Croatia still part of the region because we work with Croatia very much. Croatian ambassador, a very nice lady, was pulled-- out of Zagreb in one week's notice by the White House. So depends. Depends who it is, and who-- but as I said-- at this moment, there are a couple of ambassadors, a very good ambassador in Bosnia, excellent ambassador in Kosovo as well. So it really depends

on the personality.

LAURA SILBER:

(UNINTEL) in Budapest, which I recognize is not part of the Balkans, has been very, very outspoken in defense of freedom of the press, freedom in the media, in defense of the Central European University. So I think there's still elements of the diplomatic tradition.

QUESTION:

I think it's generally recognized today that the great-- greatest threat to civilization in the world today is, of course, between Kim Jong-un and Trump, these two crazy teenagers. Do you think the Open Society could find a place to help facilitate some kinda resolution so-- (LAUGHTER)

LAURA SILBER:

No problem. (LAUGHTER)

BEKA VUCO:

We'll do it right now.

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

It is worth saying that the international crisis group borne out of this, supported to this day from its inception by OSF and George, you know, is doing a lot of work on exactly this. And you know, trying to identify, you know, what are the pressure points that have been missed at both ends to get these-- the two sides to back down and try and find-- a sensible way forward.

LAURA SILBER:

If you could identify yourself that would be great.

KAREN KAPLAN:

Oh sure. My name is Karen Kaplan, and I have a question kind of for everyone, just to end on perhaps, pluralism and the press. I happen to be advising the Aga Khan

Development Network right now, so we've been talking a lot about pluralism. I'm currently working with one of the male journalists from Bosnia days-- Michael Meyer, who is now the dean of the new graduate school in Nairobi.

You had such a memorable group of people, whether it was-- George, Muslims, Jews, Christians, you all came together and you had this confluence of remarkable people. Do you have this chronicled, where we could read these anecdotes and for-- to inspire today in these different times of crises globally?

LAURA SILBER:

We have some of it chronicled, and some of it I think lives on in either-- whether it's film or in-- yeah. So we've done some of it ourselves, and others have done some of it. It depends specifically what-- whether we're speaking about in Bosnia or outside. So we can be in touch for sure.

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

I would just say, you know, it was a remarkable group of individuals-- unique. But what I have found, having in one way or another participated in a lot of the sort of global crises in the last 25 years, is that the-- it's like-- you know, it's like a bright light that attracts moths. It's bright young journalists, their first overseas assignment, many of them, you know, taking a plunge and going actually without a contract and then offering to write for the *Washington Post* or the wherever, *FT*.

And-- it's the same with the humanitarian workers and the diplomats. You know, it's-- it's really extraordinary. And I, I mean, I still to this day do a lot with Afghanistan, which I've been involved with since the early days. And you know, I look at when the crises of Afghanistan happened, when the Russians left, when-- 9/11 happened.

You just saw an extraordinary attraction of the very best from every organization involved, because it was where people wanted to be to make a differences. And then, you know, things fall into a rut. And the diplomats they send are the people they can't post anywhere else, the humanitarian workers like the special hardship allowances, but you know, never leave their enclaves.

And you know, you just time after time see on-- on the side of the international actors in these-- these kinds of crises, this great influx of wonderful people. And then it all sort of settles down and a much less impressive crowd take over often, is my observation from outside. (LAUGH)

BEKA VUCO:

I want to say something which, you know, I-- actually never said before. Yes, George

made it all happen, because we were working and spending his money. But Aryeh really helped the-- the thing. (APPLAUSE) With-- without him, and without-- him really being on the helm of our foundation for such a long time, he always had an open door.

My-- my office was a couple of offices down the hall from his. And every time when I would pass by, he would call me like this. And then I would come. And then it was always some question on the Balkans. So-- there was a question, how did we do it and the balancing? But without him, with the understanding, how can we help, how can we really use the money properly, nothing of this would be possible. So thank you Aryeh.

LAURA SILBER:

I think that'll be our last question, thank you.

MARLENE SPOERRI:

Hi, thank you. Marlene Spoerri from Independent Diplomat. Listening to you today, it's striking how many parallels there are to today's Syria. And what we don't see necessarily is some of these creative solutions being applied. I wanted to ask, you know, do you see any room for application of these kind of creative solutions to really actually affect change, and ensure that, you know, the UN and others are taking this more seriously?

(OVERTALK)

ARYEH NEIER:

...give me more time to think.

MARK MALLOCH-BROWN:

Yeah, no, it's a really-- it's a really good question, because, you know, obviously Syrian situation has produced some extraordinary innovations, particularly the white helmets. You know, but the white helmets, which is I think everybody knows, this-- these extraordinary Syrian civilians who, you know-- go and rescue people and, you know, who have been injured in-- in attacks, et cetera, and have just run and built an extraordinary sort of internal humanitarian network.

Precisely because, you know, as dangerous as we all claimed Sarajevo was, and it really was, with terrible casualties, you know, actually we were going in and out of it as internationals. Whereas in Syria, you know, the level of-- the fact that

humanitarian aid workers have become a target has, you know, in some ways suppressed the ability of outsiders to play as-- creative a role as perhaps was possible in-- in-- in Sarajevo. Because you need that interaction between the extraordinary people who are there and the outsiders to sort of come up with the solutions.

So I think the situation has got a lot more difficult. And you know, I-- I look-- I'd rather, I mean, I agree with you. I've been incredibly frustrated, and I frankly go to the crisis group that I chair as well, that I just simply don't think we've been as imaginative in finding solutions for Syria as-- as for earlier crises.

ARYEH NEIER:

You know, I-- I have focused-- trying to get-- some kind of accountability for the-- the war crimes, the crimes against humanity that-- have been committed in-- Syria. And at different times, you know, I've offered-- proposals at one point. I thought I might be able to get some support for the notion of-- an Arab League-- court that would-- deal with-- war crimes in-- in Syria.

And it was not to be, too many of the-- the governments of that region-- felt that they might someday-- be called before-- such a tribunal, and they weren't willing to-- to support it. There are other efforts-- that have been made, and thus far-- at every stage-- those have failed-- to-- to provide a mechanism for accountability, you know, for the war crimes committed in Syria. So Syria-- is, to me, the-- the greatest frustration-- of the-- the contemporary period. I can think of nothing-- where-- there has seemed to me-- such wholesale-- failure by the-- the international community-- as the-- the situation in-- in Syria today.

LAURA SILBER:

I think, and also with Bosnia, ultimately you had the ability with the international politicians. So whether it was who was heading the UN or who was in government in the various countries, and I think that we obviously are so far from that today with Syria, yeah.

ARYEH NEIER:

(UNINTEL) have to play the-- the-- the international-- the geopolitical effort. In making the Yugoslav tribunal-- effective, one of the critical things was getting a chief prosecutor. At that point, the Russians were-- determined to block-- anybody from a NATO country, and they would have vetoed.

At a certain point, I was pushing an Indian to be the-- chief prosecutor, but Pakistan was a member of the security council. And even though the person I was pushing was chair of the India-Pakistan Friendship-- Council, it didn't work. Pakistan was

interested in blocking it.

At one point-- there was a proposal for-- an Egyptian American-- who recently died, Cherif Bassiouni, to be the-- prosecutor. And-- he was blocked on the ground that he was a Muslim-- and therefore-- he would be biased in that. The way it ultimately-- we ultimately managed to get-- Richard Goldstone-- appointed, after about 14 other people-- had been considered-- is that Goldstone had been appointed to the-- South African Constitutional Court by Nelson Mandela.

And-- Mandela had given his approval-- for-- Goldstone to take a leave-- to serve as chief prosecutor for the-- Yugoslav tribunal. And-- the Russians-- felt that they had supported Mandela-- extensively-- during the period that he was in prison, and in opposition to the Apartheid government.

So they didn't want to-- ruin their relationship with-- with Mandela. And so they allowed the-- the Goldstone-- appointment-- to take place. And if the Goldstone appointment had not taken place, the Yugoslav tribunal would never have become-- a significant factor. His personal-- credibility helped to make-- different governments-- willing to-- to work with him, and begin to-- to apprehend-- people to-- to come-- before the tribunal. So the-- the geopolitical-- elements of this are always, you know, crucial. And sorry we didn't have Mabel van Oranje-- here today, because she worked on the geopolitical-- elements of it. And she did it extraordinarily well. And she would've added a dimension to-- the discussion-- this afternoon.

LAURA SILBER:

Well, as Beka said, we'll have to organize round two. I wanna thank everyone, I wanna thank the audience and everyone for coming and participating, and particularly the panelists, our colleagues in Sarajevo-- thank you for sitting in and being such active participants via video in the evening. And Beka, for organizing, Mark and Aryeh, thanks a lot.

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *