

# No respite in death's cold waiting room

By Paul Harris

SARAJEVO, Dec 30 (IPS) - It is early morning in Kosevo Hospital, a once top-rank modern city health centre reduced by shell fire and siege to the condition of some medieval charnel house. On this day, it will take in seven civilians — who will be pronounced dead — and more than 50 injured, as Serb forces pour unrelenting fire into the city. Doctors fight to save lives in the emergency surgical unit as the generator-driven lights flicker on and off. They pause for a moment in the gloom when the generators briefly falter.

In Sarajevo virtually every commodity has disappeared from the cupboards and streets of the city. The most ordinary of products has become a curiosity to be offered for sale at a staggering price in deutschmarks, the only currency recognised in the city.

Today, the people live on 200 grammes a day of food — rice, pasta and canned fish bearing the labels of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and European Community (EC).

The besieging Serbs' Christmas present was to blow up the power lines which had recently been providing at least a minimal supply of electricity — six megawatts for 380,000 people.

With the failure of electricity, telephones stop working and the water pumps grind to a halt. In weeks before, since U.N. teams restored electricity, a trickle of water had reached most homes. At Christmas, however, there was no electricity or water.

Hardly surprisingly, organised rubbish collection has ceased throughout the city and the empty tins with the stars of the EC — items which will not burn and generate heat for the cold population — spill rubbish all over the pavements. Roaming packs of dogs, turned out onto the streets by owners unable to feed pets, leap onto the bins and scavenge for scraps.

There are virtually no cats left — they have been killed and eaten by the dogs. Rats have grown large and fat scurrying from bin to bin.

The health risk has now become sufficiently severe to bring French U.N. troops onto the streets to clear the worst of the

festering mounds. Other engineering units are occupied with clearing streets of cars — abandoned due to war damage or merely left because of rising fuel costs. The visitor. An extraordinary number of women dress up to walk the dangerous streets, their hair meticulously arranged, make-up painstakingly applied, wearing the smartest outfits they can find.

According to one resident, the women are saying, "we may die thirsty but we will die beautiful". One woman is known to regularly walk in the most dangerous places in her best attire, making her own, personal, statement to the snipers. As the shrapnel flies, it is at first bizarre to see so many people with umbrellas hoisted to keep off the rain. But one old lady puts it in perspective: "There is no point to survive the grenades and then catch a cold. In my unheated apartment, with so little food and no medicine, I would then surely die".

People have become fatalists. What will be, will be. The spirit, however, is far from being broken. As one student puts it, "the most tragic thing here is that death has become normal. We live in a state of being somewhere between life and death."

Doctors are now talking about 'Sarajevo Syndrome', a sort of post traumatic stress syndrome — except that the stress situation carries on, unrelieved. You notice the wide-eyed looks on the faces of some passers-by — not just faces etched with tragedy or shell shock but evidence of deep psychiatric problems taking root.

The term 'Sarajevo Syndrome' is used by Dr Ismet Ceric, director of the city hospital's neuro-psychiatric clinic. He believes that 90 percent of the citizens show physical signs of stress and some 30 percent are now severely affected. His clinic can only treat the most serious of cases.

Through all this unrelieved horror and tragedy, the town retains an apparently inexplicable, irrational, charm — a magnetic quality which draws you back.

A poignant beauty shines through. The dignity and gentleness of these terribly abused people is evident on every street corner and in every apartment where the visitor is constantly humbled by the warmth and generosity of the hospitality which can be so ill afforded.

## In the black Mountains

**Montenegro or Crna Gora in serbian language, the black mountain, is a area south of Serbia and together with Serbia today's leftover of Yugoslavia. 644'000 people live here altogether, 61.8% Montenegrins, 14.6% Muslims, 9.3% Serbs, 6.6% Albanians, 4.0% Yugoslavs and 2.7% "miscellaneous" according to official figures. As small as it is, Montenegro suffers all the big problems of former Yugoslavia.**

by Roland Brunner, Podgorica/Montenegro

After Yugoslavia split in pieces, when Slovenia and Croatia in the north, Macedonia in the south and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the heart left the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, Montenegro together with Serbia constitutes since April 27, 1992, the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Before, on march 1st, a referendum was pushed through,

in which the majority of the montenegrin population opted to remain within Yugoslavia.

### A long way from Belgrade

It is quiet a way from Belgrade to Podgorica, capital of Montenegro and former town of Titograd. One train per day, scheduled departure at 10.30am, scheduled arrival at 5.30pm, leaves Belgrade for Montenegro. Leaving some 15 minutes late, it arrives at 8pm in Podgorica - for those who are lucky enough to get a place in the train. People stands all the way, some 9 hours in the corridor. There is no way to move in this train. Tons of bags are travelling with, closing the last small chance to the toilet. But therefore the ticket for the 9 hours trip costs only some 4 German Marks.

### Slow motion in the black mountains

People in Serbia blame Montenegrins for being lazy and unwilling to work. In reality it seems to be rather a slow motion attitude like anywhere else on the rather agricul-

tural country side against the rush and the hurry of urban metropolys like Belgrade. The former name of the city, Titograd, is still as common as the new one and all the cars still drive with TG on the number plates. The Lenin-Street still belongs to Lenin and somehow there seems to be still a lot of Yugoslav feeling around. Also in politics, Montenegrins take the things a bit cooler. Even if there are lots of tensions, people and politicians here try to avoid everything that could bring war to Montenegro. The war in former Yugoslavia is present here on many ways: the consequences of the sanctions, radical political options and parties, pressure on ethnic groups, violations of human rights or just with red berrets of Karadzics troupes fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina spending a relaxed weekend in Titograd before going back to warfare. There are some 50'000 soldiers of the official Yugoslav Army in Montenegro. The army's central intelligence service is one of the main ruling forces in the country. When for example the Montenegrin foreign ministry went to Italy to discuss the reopening of the ferry line between the Montenegrin harbour town of Bar and Italy, the army organized an incident on the sea to undermine the agreement. Italy immediately reacted and the army succeeded to isolate Montenegro once more.

#### **White or green?**

Politically, there are two main streams in Montenegrin politics: either proserbian like Sesels Radicals, Momir Bulatovics Democratic Party of Socialists DPS (the Montenegrin Part of Milosevics SPS) or the Peoples Party, or then promontenegrin like the Liberal Party of Montenegro. The proserbian are called the "White", the promontenegrin the "Green" side. At the elections on december 20, 1992, Milosevics Socialists won 46 out of 85 seats in the Montenegrin Parliament, holding so with a minority of votes a majority of representatives. Sesels Radicals got additional 8 representatives. Till one month ago, a multi-party coalition including the white Peoples Party and the green Liberal Party formed the government - controlled by a DPS majority. Peoples Party and Liberals are represented in parliament with 13 representatives each. Both parties left the government coalition then, with opposite reasons: While the Peoples Party accused the Parliament for supporting the independency of Montenegro and separatism and for "betraying Serbia", the Liberal Party blamed the Parliament for being too close to Milosevic and to serbian policy. Already before, the basic consensus between them consisted only in the will to maintain peace and keep power in Montenegro. All other issues were controversial. Today, DPS controls almost the whole government, but there are some signs for splits inside the party. One wing seems to develop some closer attachment to the promontenegrin cause, to the "green side". The main green party as well as the opposition outside the two main forces - mainly the small Social-Democrat Party SDP, a fusion of Socialist and Reformist Party, representing some 5 percent of votes with 4 representatives in parliament -, hopes to link up with this dissident current for some new majority. But their chance is very limited. When the war in former Yugoslavia started, the army distributed all kind of weapons to its followers and proserbian, loyal people. Sesels Radical Party stated more than once, it will never accept any step of independency of Montenegro and it would be very willing for any warfare if needed...

#### **Partys as the only chance?**

1991, at the outbreak of the war, there were many and strong civil initiatives in Montenegro. The Citizens Committee for Peace organized mass rallies with some 10'000 people against the war. Most of these NGOs still exist on

the paper, but are not active anymore. The frustrations of the war, the media propaganda and the tough political climate affected many of its activists. Many gave up any activity, but the main leaders and spokesmen and few spokeswomen changed their field. The pressure on the NGOs, the media boycott on their activities and the whole political situation led them into the parties. Parties and the Parliament seemed to be the only place to have some influence and some uncensored public statements. So many key activists joined parties and are today members of Parliament. Almost all former NGO leaders are today to be found either in the Liberal Party or in the small Social-Democratic Party. They gained their reputation in the mass movements and are still attached to any idea of civil initiative - even if there are no illusions any more about the influence and impact like in the years just after the collapse of socialism all over eastern Europe. Additionally to this frustration, the level of self-discipline is very high. Everybody is aware, that any step could provide the pretext for the other side to start a war. The space for political activities is very small as everybody knows, that any attempt looking like a step to independence for Montenegro would immediately allow the Radicals and other forces on the "white side" to start a civil war or rather a slaughter and massacre on the "green side". Even if the will for independency of Montenegro is growing among the common people - due to the difficult economical and political situation -, there is a high level of discipline on the side of green parties and NGOs. The Democratic Forum for Human Rights or the Movement against Fascism are aware of their responsibility and their small room for political steps. That's maybe why Montenegro still is quiet cool. War did not arrive here (yet?), not because there would be no problems, but because people aware of the problems know, they can not solve them.

#### **MONITOR - the independant voice from the black mountain**

One magazine represents this dilemma more than all other activities. MONITOR, a weekly magazine published in Podgorica, is in the meantime a established institution in Montenegro. At its start october 1990, 150 intellectuals decided to publish the first independant printed media in Montenegro since 70 years. Based on liberal, pacifist, european ideas, the magazin immediately got on crash course with the state authorities and state controlled medias. The office of MONITOR was blown up more than once and all its redactors got threats by phone and in the street. Today things cooled down. Still MONITOR is not beloved by the government, but today's threats look like peace compared with the starting time. About 6000 copies of MONITOR are distributed weekly, more for free than for any reasonable price. Even if the price in the Kiosk looks quiet expensive when you buy the new issue, the money monitor gets some 4 to 6 weeks later is almost nothing. With some 2000 percent inflation per month, there is just nothing left. The editors are aware, they give MONITOR for free, but some private enterprises and international media support still allows them to go on with the publication. MONITOR's chief editor, Miodrag Perovic, works as professor for mathematics at the university and like all other editors and journalists can not live on the MONITOR money. But MONITOR is even expanding. The plan to start a independant MONITOR Radio station is in the meantime quiet realistic and even the possibility to start a TV station seems somehow possible. Also plans to start a daily paper exist. Walking a very small path along huge gaps, MONITOR steps forward to develop an independant civil opinion and public.