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GVSU—UNIVERSITY OF SARAJEVO EXCHANGE—A RETROSPECTIVE

E. F. Gearhart

The International Studies Institute—later to become the Center for International Studies—was created in 1970 to facilitate international cultural and educational exchange and to increase cultural diversity in the Grand Valley State Colleges (GVSC). An advisory board composed of representatives from the various colleges assisted the Institute in carrying out its mission.

Summer study abroad programs for students from GVSC and other American colleges were established in Austria, France, and Italy/Yugoslavia (Slovenia). Programs in other countries followed. A foreign student program was also initiated and soon attracted more than one hundred students from countries around the world to study at GVSC. Arrangements were made for GVSC students to study at numerous foreign universities during the academic year. Exchange programs of various kinds and duration involving students—and sometimes faculty—were negotiated and administered by the International Studies Institute with a number of foreign institutions including one in Egypt, the Academy of Economics in Krakow, Poland, and the University of Sarajevo.

The agreement with Sarajevo, signed initially in April, 1975, was very broad in its provisions and committed both institutions to a wide array of endeavors. It was ultimately approved by the governing bodies of both institutions and received the blessing of both the Yugoslav federal and state governments.

The influences and motivations which led to the agreement with the University of Sarajevo were many and varied. GVSC had secured a federal grant to send a community group, including a number of GVSC faculty, to Krakow, Poland during the summer of 1975. Contacts arising from this visit led eventually to an exchange agreement with the Academy of Economics there. Subsequent to the summer visit a small number of GVSC students attended regular academic sessions at the Jagellonian University in Krakow. A bridgehead had been established in Eastern Europe.

Arend D. Lubbers, President of GVSC, had maintained a keen interest in Yugoslavia since the summer of 1951 when, as a Community Ambassador from Holland, Michigan, he had worked with other students on building a stretch of railroad bed near Doboje, Bosnia. During this summer he made a brief visit to Sarajevo.

I had first visited Yugoslavia in the summer of 1968 in the company of Dr. Michael Petrovich while we were both on the faculty of Hope College. Dr. Petrovich, who was later to be interpreter of Serbo-Croatian for Presidents Ford, Carter, and Reagan, had left Yugoslavia illegally during the communist regime. We were relieved to cross the border outside of Trieste without incident.

We traveled along the Adriatic coast, stopping at points of interest, and spent a few days at the port city of Zadar as guests of the rector of Novi Sad, whom Dr. Petrovich had once accompanied on a trip to several American colleges and universities as a State Department Escort. We finally arrived in Dubrovnik where we vacationed for several days. I was fortunate to be able to return to Dubrovnik for at least a few days each summer for many years thereafter. Dr. Petrovich had written his doctoral dissertation on this city, the "Pearl of the Adriatic," and had many contacts there.

While at Hope College Dr. Petrovich had developed a Balkan Studies curriculum which was offered at the Vienna Summer School, which I directed. At the close of the formal academic session in Vienna, we accompanied the participants of the Balkan Studies program on a three week study tour through all of the republics of Yugoslavia and parts of Rumania and Bulgaria. We had also been successful in the late '60's in procuring federal grants for several Hope faculty to visit Yugoslavia.

On a later visit to Dubrovnik, my wife and I drove from Vienna accompanied by Don and Nancy Lubbers. Don, who had recently been appointed president of GVSC, had given the convocation address at the close of the Hope College Vienna Summer School. When the Lubberses left Dubrovnik by ship for Italy a few days later, my wife and I continued by car into the interior of the country. We drove through miles of vineyards along the way, stopping for lunch at Mostar, famous for its bridge spanning the Neretva river. This bridge was built during Turkish rule in the 16th century.

Our trip was purely serendipitous. We arrived at Sarajevo late in the evening and took a room at the largest hotel in the city, Hotel Europa, which we found by following the streetcar tracks into the center of town. The city lies in a valley like a bowl, surrounded by mountains. This makes it hot in summer and retains the pollution produced by industrialization. Many of the wooden houses on the outskirts bordering the sides of the mountains and in the older sections have latticed overhangs on the second story. Green cypress trees line the river or stand in small groves, providing a relief of color and nature in contrast to the drabness of modern buildings erected since WW II. Upon exploring the city the next day, we discovered that the famous Beg's Mosque was situated in the street behind the hotel. It has a splendid fountain in its courtyard, and the calls to prayer emanate from its minaret daily. We learned that Sarajevo contained 70 other mosques.

At the time of our visit, the area to the east of the hotel was open, and gypsies hawked their wares. The gypsies were later banished to the outskirts of the city, and this area was built up into a fancy bazaar with shops of different kinds catering to the tourists. Both have since been destroyed by the war. East of this, in an area called Bas Carsija, was the ancient crafts and tradesmen's quarter with narrow streets containing the shops and workplaces of various artisans. It was a fascinating place to visit, and we spent a few days in Sarajevo before continuing our journey. We were intrigued by the strong Moslem influence and the mixture of cultures which was evident.

An important influence on the success of the exchange was the fact that Gerald R. Ford, who grew up in Western Michigan, was President of the United States dur-

ing 1974-76. Coincidentally, the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Bijedic, was a Bosnian from Mostar. During his official visit to Washington, Dr. Petrovich served as President Ford's interpreter. Both men were aware of the GVSC-University of Sarajevo exchange activities, and, at one point in their discussions President Ford said to Prime Minister Bijedic, "Take good care of them," meaning, of course, GVSC. This remark certainly did no harm to the relationship between the two institutions, and the officials of the Yugoslav federal and state governments became increasingly helpful.

In 1974 Dr. Petrovich joined the GVSC faculty as an associate professor. His contacts in Yugoslavia were numerous and influential. He learned that the University of Sarajevo would be receptive to overtures regarding an eventual exchange agreement. Negotiations were commenced and culminated in formal meetings in Sarajevo in April, 1975 between representatives of both institutions.

The delegation of the University of Sarajevo consisted of twelve members, including the rector, two vice-rectors, two deans, several members of the various faculties, and the Secretary General of the university. GVSC was represented by me and Dr. Petrovich, who also served as interpreter. At the last moment, James McClafferty of the Grand Rapids Public Schools and James Farmer of Community Education were added to the delegation to give it a wider community base.

During the course of these meetings, a fourteen-point agreement in principle was negotiated and signed on April 25 by Vice-Rector Emir Humo and me, representing our respective institutions. This agreement was reviewed in the fall of that year during a visit by a delegation from Sarajevo and signed by President Lubbers and Rector Zdravko Besarovic. An honorary degree was conferred on Rector Besarovic by GVSC during this visit. In 1987 the University of Sarajevo conferred an honorary degree on President Lubbers during the GVSC delegation's visit to Sarajevo. This agreement, which was subsequently formally approved by the governing bodies of each institution, contained a provision for an annual exchange of delegations to take place in Allendale and Sarajevo in alternate years "...in order to discuss reports, produce initiatives for new endeavors, and to sign working documents relative to current and future cooperative efforts." Thus the foundation was laid for a broad-based program of educational and cultural exchange which would be updated annually and which has endured until the recent outbreak of civil war in Yugoslavia.

A summary of some of the items listed in the protocol will give a better understanding of the breadth of the provisions in the agreement. The institutions committed themselves

1. To provide an annual summer program of study for up to 25 students and a faculty leader at each institution.
2. To provide for study by students at each institution during the regular academic year on a reciprocal basis.
3. To exchange faculty from each institution annually for the equivalent of one full year.
4. To hold international symposia with simultaneous translation at each institution in alternate years.

5. To undertake the joint publication of a scholarly journal.
6. To exchange athletic groups.
7. To exchange cultural groups.
8. To exchange professional literature.
9. To include faculty from each institution in scholarly conferences.
10. To study the feasibility of establishing an American Studies Center at the University of Sarajevo and a Yugoslav Studies Center at GVSC.
11. To exchange delegations annually at alternate locations. The purpose would be to review past activities and initiate new endeavors.

It is not my intent to provide a comprehensive chronicle of all the activities which ensued as a result of this exchange agreement, but examples will illustrate that the objectives were taken seriously and implemented where possible. From the beginning, representatives of the University of Sarajevo had stressed the importance of broadening the impact of the exchange by including representatives from other institutions in the reciprocal activities whenever possible and appropriate. Thus, at the first Symposium which was held at Sarajevo in March, 1977 on the theme "The Impact of Industrialization on Society," papers were given by faculty from the University of Mannheim, Germany, and the Free University of Brussels, Belgium, in addition to faculty from GVSC and the University of Sarajevo. GVSC was represented by professors John Bornhofen, Gilbert Davis, Anthony Travis, William Yerkes and Herbert Gutman of the Graduate Center, City College of New York.

The second Symposium was held in April, 1978 at GVSC on the topic "Social Change in the Contemporary World." The keynote address was given by Dr. William H. McNeill, Distinguished Service Professor of History of the University of Chicago. The Yugoslav ambassador to the United States, Dimce Belovske, also attended. Delivering papers for the American contingent were faculty from GVSC, Western Michigan University, Denison University, Ohio State University, Hope College, and Western Theological Seminary, thus fulfilling the mandate to include sister institutions in our activities.

The following year the Symposium was held in Mostar and Sarajevo on the theme "Theories and Methods of Education in Contemporary Society." Professors Barry Castro, Reid Holland, Antonio Herrera, Bennett Rudolph and Douglas Kindschi, who led the delegation, gave papers for GVSC. It should be obvious that faculty members from many disciplines were included in these activities.

Delegations exchanged visits annually and often included community members. The 1977 University of Sarajevo delegation consisted of Vice-Rector Dr. Emir Humo, the Secretary General of the University, Dr. Suleman Resulovic, and three professors. Tours for the delegation to factories in Detroit, our capital in Lansing, and points of interest in Chicago were arranged. Dr. Humo later became Rector of the University of Mostar and subsequently ambassador from Yugoslavia to Panama.

The host institution tried to arrange activities of interest for the members of the visiting delegation. When I think back on my visits to Yugoslavia, I remember delicious meals. Restaurants are often situated along running water where a large

water wheel slowly turns a spit holding a roasting lamb. There is often a spring-fed pool containing trout. Among the food I found especially delicious, in addition to roast lamb and trout prepared in various ways, were stuffed grape leaves; *aiva*, -a salad made from peeled, roasted red peppers; *serbian* salad, composed of chopped tomatoes, olives, cucumbers, onions, and feta cheese; *travnicki sir*--a kind of pungent feta cheese; *moussaka*, a baked dish consisting of slices of eggplant, ground lamb and tomatoes covered with a cheese sauce; and *sarma*, stuffed cabbage leaves. These would be followed by *baklava* for dessert and, naturally, thick Turkish coffee: the ubiquitous *cevapcici* and *rasnjici* are well known to tourists. The sight and smell of cooking food create an instant appetite! Our Sarajevo colleagues were generous hosts.

Faculty members were exchanged on a regular basis. Among the early faculty to represent GVSC in Sarajevo were Patrick MacVicar-Whelan, Tony Parise, Kenneth Zapp, and Ingrun Lafleur. The latter two continued to be active in the exchange activities during their tenure at GVSC. Many Yugoslav professors have taught at GVSC over the years, but Dr. Peter Mandic has returned most often. His last teaching assignment was in 1991. He returned to Sarajevo in December of that year.

Yugoslav universities sponsor an annual assembly in Dubrovnik called "University Today" to discuss issues of relevance to them. Representatives from GVSC have been invited to attend these meetings, and at times have been specifically invited to deliver papers. President Lubbers and Vice President Niemeyer have done so on different occasions. For the sake of convenience and economy, the annual meeting of delegations has often been held in conjunction with the "University Today" when hosted by the University of Sarajevo.

The most noteworthy exchange of athletic groups to date has been the trip to Yugoslavia in 1976 by the GVSC basketball team and the visit to the United States the following year by the Sarajevo basketball team "Bosna." The GVSC team played a number of games with clubs throughout Yugoslavia, winning about half of them. Considering that the Yugoslav clubs were semi-professional, the performance of the Lakers was commendable. Commenting on this trip, coach Tom Villemure stated, "It was one of the greatest experiences of my life, and I'm sure many of the players felt the same way." When the Lakers played the Yugoslav team at the Silverdome in November of the following year, the Lakers were victorious. The Yugoslav team played a number of games with teams from various American colleges and universities.

Exchanges of books and professional literature between the two institutions were made on the basis of a value determined at the annual meeting of the delegations. Initially, this was set at \$2,000 per institution.

The publication of a scholarly journal, which was envisioned in the early years of cooperative efforts, never became a reality despite much discussion and planning. However, papers delivered at the symposia were published, and two books were co-authored by Peter Mandic and Antonio Herrera. *Education for the Twenty-First Century: From Traditional Education to Technological Revolution* was published in English and Serbo-Croatian at Belgrade in 1989. *Multi-Cultural Education*, completed

during Professor Mandic's last visit to GVSU in 1991, remains in manuscript form because of the war.

Some other of the objectives were not achieved. Despite much study and effort, the proposed American Studies Center at the University of Sarajevo and the Yugoslav Studies Center at GVSC never materialized. Among the unsuccessful attempts at cultural exchange was the proposal by GVSC to send a Brass Ensemble on tour to Yugoslavia and the proposal by Sarajevo to send a folkdance group to tour the United States. Because of the size of the folkdance group and the expense entailed in underwriting a U.S. tour, these efforts never came to fruition. However, individual performers were exchanged.

The young Yugoslav violinist Faruk Sijaric spent several weeks at GVSC in the spring and summer of 1978 and played a number of recitals. While here he made the acquaintance of Dr. Anthony Kooiker of Hope College, who had been the accompanist of the noted American violinist Albert Spalding during the late '40's. Dr. Kooiker accompanied Mr. Sijaric on several occasions and later received an invitation from the U.S. American Center in Sarajevo to tour Yugoslavia, which he did in the summer of 1979.

Each year varying numbers of students from the two institutions spent a year enrolled at each other's institution. Records were kept so that equity could be maintained. This was also the case with professorial exchange and the summer programs for students. Everything possible was done to meet the specific interests of the visiting student groups, which varied from year to year. This was particularly true of the student groups from Sarajevo, for which a special curriculum and/or study tour was frequently requested. Efforts were made by both sides to involve guest students in regular activities of the institution and area.

Sarajevo is a complex mixture of ethnic and religious groups. Those of us who were privileged to meet often with university and government representatives in Bosnia were impressed by how well the university and political entities dealt with this ethnic and religious multiplicity in the rotation of officials. For example, we might be told that the next rector would be a Muslim or Serb or whatever the rotation demanded. It was all scheduled in advance. Thus, it is with sadness and dismay that we view the disintegration of humanity and civility among our friends and colleagues in Sarajevo. Even some members of the original University of Sarajevo delegation which negotiated the initial agreement in 1975 have become mortal enemies. We can only hope that under United Nations leadership the fighting will be brought to a halt and that reasonable people will find solutions to the problems which plague this troubled country. It will not be easy, so we commiserate with our many Yugoslav friends who must experience continued hardships and disruption in their lives. Certainly, it is doubtful that normal exchange activities between GVSU and the University of Sarajevo can be resumed until the civil war is ended.