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## A Call to Lift the Arms Embargo Against Bosnia-Herzegovina

To: United Nations Security Council, General Assembly, Secretary-General

To: President Bill Clinton, U.S. Congress

We are peace and human rights advocates who have long urged a progressive U.S. foreign policy, and a just and democratic international order. We recognize that a lasting peace in the Balkans ultimately requires regional demilitarization. Yet this recognition must not stop us from responding now to the genocide taking place in Bosnia-Herzegovina. An immediate first step should be to lift the cruel arms embargo imposed against Bosnia.

For the past 15 months, the embargo has locked in place the unequal and unjust distribution of force that has all but destroyed Bosnia. When Yugoslavia broke up into independent states, its army, the fifth largest in Europe, did not break up with it, but remained almost entirely in Serb hands. The embargo has had little effect on the ability of the Yugoslav Army and the Serb militias to wage war in Bosnia, but has made it virtually impossible for Bosnian democratic forces to defend themselves.

In effect, the embargo has constituted an intervention on the side of the aggressor. Therefore we call for an immediate lifting of the ban on arms to the Muslim-led government of Bosnia, which has repeatedly stated its commitment to uphold a democratic, multi-ethnic society.

We respect the concerns of citizens committed to peace who argue that lifting the arms embargo would only serve to further escalate the level of violence in the region and prolong the war, but we are not persuaded by them. On the contrary, we believe there are three compelling reasons to lift the embargo now.

First, lifting the embargo would not only permit the Bosnian victims of aggression to defend themselves, but could help shorten the war by letting the Serb forces know that their assaults will be met with resistance. Second, effective resistance now could help deter the spread of aggression to Macedonia and Kosovo, by all reports the next intended victims in the Serbian expansionist program. Finally, ending the embargo would free the Bosnians from exclusive dependence for arms on the few suppliers so far willing to circumvent the embargo. Some of these Islamic sources may subject the Bosnians to unwelcome pressure to retreat from their goal of a democratic, secular and multicultural state.

Simple justice demands the right of self-defense for the Bosnians, but an international peace effort could and should proceed simultaneously. This would include insistence that the Croats cease their aggression in Bosnia; support for the democratic opposition in Serbia, particularly anti-war media

and organizations; vigorous prosecution of war criminals (of whom the vast majority but not all are on the Serbian side); and air-lifting humanitarian aid, under military protection, to all civilians in need.

The United Nations, the United States, and the European Community bear a heavy responsibility for pursuing a policy of pseudo-evenhandedness that has in fact strengthened the side of aggressive Serb expansionism. It is time to admit the terrible failure of this policy, to lift the arms embargo, and give the Bosnian government a chance to survive.

Alenka Arko

Shlomo Avineri--Professor of Political Science, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel)

Fatima Basic--President, Bosnian Children Relief (Canada)

Saban Basic--Relief Coordinator, Bosnian Children Relief (Canada)

Richard Caplan--Institute for War & Peace Reporting (England)

Daniel Cohn-Bendit--Frankfurt City Ministry for Multicultural Affairs (Germany)

Bogdan Denitch--Michael Harrington Professor of Social Science, Queens College and Graduate School, CUNY

Manuela Dobos--College of Staten Island, City University of New York

Ariel Dorfman--writer

Sam Farber--editorial board, Against the Current

Jonathan Fine

Michael Foot--British Labour Party

Elinor Fuchs--School of the Arts, Columbia University

Todd Gitlin--Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley

Thomas Harrison--Campaign for Peace and Democracy

Adrian Hastings--Department of Theology, University of Leeds (England)

Judith Hempfling--peace activist

Christopher Hitchens

Quintin Hoare--New Left Review (London)

Adam Hochschild--writer

Marko Hren--former director, Ljubljana Peace Institute

Andrea Imredy--peace activist

Julius Jacobson--New Politics

Phyllis Jacobson--New Politics

Vlasta Jalusic--director, Ljubljana Peace Institute (Slovenia)

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Dr. Lynne Jones--former chairperson, European Nuclear Disarmament  
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Kasumi--writer and artist

Joe Kraus

Tonci Kuzmanic--University of Ljubljana

Joanne Landy--Campaign for Peace and Democracy

Michael Lerner--editor, Tikkun

Paul Levine--Professor of American Literature, University of Copenhagen

Robert Jay Lifton--Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology,  
City University of New York

Steven Lukes--European University Institute, Florence (Italy)

Branka Magas--New Left Review  
(London)

Tomaz Mastnak--Senior Fellow, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Erika Munk--Yale School of Drama

Marlene Nadle--journalist

Nigel Osborne--Faculty of Music, Edinburgh University (Scotland)

Eva Quistorp--member of the European Parliament; chairperson, Women  
for Peace (Germany)

Rudi Risman--Department of Sociology, University of Ljubljana

Dr. Alfred Saah--Johns Hopkins University

Edward Said--Columbia University

Charles Scarlott

Jennifer Scarlott--Campaign for Peace and Democracy

Kerry Scarlott

Nadia Tazi

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Cornel West--Afro-American Studies Program, Princeton University

Margaret Willig-Crane--former director, New Initiatives for Full Employment

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**Dear Editor:**

Boston Review's symposium on "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" was unusually moving and bracing. No transcript can convey the passion filling the high-ceilinged hall of the Kennedy School that night. Students, citizens, media, and even professors crammed together, leaning over balustrades on the third floor for a glimpse of the talking heads below. Intellectuals will always be with us. It's time we figured out what to do with ourselves.

I left the symposium excited and not a little confused. The conversation focused on the role of black intellectuals. What did this have to do with the rest of us? How could we find our way to a community we might best serve our gifts by serving? bell hooks's memorable remark about the need to harmonize the truth of our knowledge with the truth of our lives isn't so easy to put into practice. Not all have direct access to communities toward which they nevertheless feel affectionate, if often theoretical, connection. Not everyone has a family member with a drug problem. Without a personal tie to suffering that is extreme enough to be classified as a public danger, people of genuine goodwill inevitably get caught up in trying to heal and build within their private worlds. Most people believe life gives them enough to worry about. Part of what issue-oriented intellectuals can do is to keep giving us perspectives reminding us that inner-city poverty is not competing for our attention against the pressures of the illnesses of parents, the unemployment of neighbors in the suburbs. They need to keep redrawing the borders of our world until we better understand the reasons we've needed to create human rights organizations in the first place.

The word "community" seemed a key term in the evening's conversation. It's a surprisingly obdurate concept. How many of us inhabit just one community? How many of us feel our primary responsibility is toward our community of residence?

Most intellectuals I know lament the loss of community. Part of what they mean is that there aren't enough jobs in the neighborhood, in the intellectual community, to sustain them. There's serious underemployment in the polis of the mind and this affects the way intellectuals connect, or fail to connect, to their community of residence.

As an out-of-towner, I continue to marvel at the mystery that is Boston. How does one get to take part in its civic life if: a) one is not a native; b) one is childless; c) one is not a homeowner? These conditions describe the circumstances of countless resident intellectuals, many of whom really do have a strong desire to contribute something to their adopted community. I suggest the panelists help create organizations which make it easy for interested parties -- teachers, writers, scientists -- to bring their knowledge

to communities beyond their immediate neighborhoods. The administrative side of such an organization should be a joy to work with, and would in itself create jobs for all parties.

For a few years now Agni has been trying to establish a poetry in the schools program which would send local writers into inner-city schools. Students would meet with writers among the best in their field. Teachers would get a break from routine. And the writers themselves would get to know the wider community within which they tend to inhabit an all-too-restricted circle. The word community might again begin to seem horizonless, large, open.

Initially we'd conceived of this as a volunteer program. However, I think, given how value is measured and communicated in this culture, the writers and administrators should be well paid. No need to teach students implicitly that the serious pursuit of literature is the province of the privileged.

Finally, I'd like point out that most intellectuals are themselves relatively poor. The speakers at the podium are notable exceptions. Indeed, the younger generation of intellectuals in this city is one of our more vulnerable populations. They are not threatened by crack, but they are in danger of losing the hope and faith that led them to pursue their intellectual and spiritual ideals. Many of them make their living as part-time lecturers and administrators affiliated with area universities which too happily take advantage of the disorganized migrant mind-laborers moving through these parts. Sometimes these young people make as little as \$8,000 a year; the best paying lecturer's posts (at Harvard) offer circa \$25,000. Their students obviously absorb the lessons offered by their teachers' lives. The evening's panelists may not know this; or they may not care to hear it; or they may feel powerless to affect the corporate, hierarchical design of our universities. Yet they do after all have a responsibility to their immediate professional community. It's one in which they might even be able to exert some influence. Unfortunately, solidarity among intellectuals is as rare as solidarity among the working classes. It seems that intellectuals are always pointing somewhere else. It seems often that they are hired to point somewhere else. Perhaps if they began to look at their own places of employment and ask themselves what values they see enacted there, they may find themselves in an uncomfortable position. Let us start by setting order to our own homes. Let us start by making the intellectual life both appear, and be, the sort of life a kid growing up in the inner-city might want to lead. And at the same time, let's make use of the truth of our knowledge on behalf of those others whose lives give meaning to the word.

I look forward to the next session.

Askold Melnyczuk

**Editor, *Agni***

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