First, let me tell you of the baggage. On the one hand, I have been to Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia many times over the course of thirteen years. I have taught as a visiting professor at the Philosophy Faculty in Sarajevo and lectured elsewhere in the country, made lifelong friends of all kinds, and have grown both personally and professionally with the help of so many. I have had some of the happiest days of my life and some of the darkest episodes while in Bosnia. I cherish them all. Through all those magnificent highs and heartbreaking lows, I have come to love Bosnia and its people. On the other hand, I am an academically trained philosopher albeit one with practical interests, always with a theory in hand and an eye for argument. I usually take my time reading, interviewing, deliberating, and reflecting on matters pertaining to Bosnia, sometimes publishing in the academic Dijalog and at other times in the more widely read Bosnia Daily.

People Had Had Enough

Now, let me tell you of the situation. It is with all this baggage that I find myself in a rare situation, one in which I am watching events as they unfold in Bosnia. Although I witnessed firsthand and photographed the celebratory frenzy that took place at Vječna Vatra following the arrest of Radovan Karadžić, I find myself watching from afar. All during the spring and reflecting on matters pertaining to Bosnia, sometimes publishing in the academic Dijalog and at other times in the more widely read Bosnia Daily.

Yes, hundreds of people in Banja Luka! Unlike the photos of some of the other cities, those of Sarajevo remind me of the recent Ukrainian protests. But why now? Surely, those who were suffering from unemployment and witnessing their inept politicians living the good life were as disgusted last June as they are in February. So why throw stones and burn buildings now? Mr. Niksic has made mention of “hooligans.”” This sounds familiar. We have heard this same blame game from the mouths of leaders in the UK, Syria, Iran, and Egypt. Perhaps there was a hooligan presence. That will eventually be proven one way or another. Even if proven to be the case, hooliganism is neither the entire story nor should it be. The issues of unemployment, corruption, a dysfunctional Mostar, mines, greed, and political power remain the stuff from which future discontent will be made and objected to by those in need. What changed between the time of the Babylution and the burning of the presidency building? Slapping on one theory after another will provide a range of answers to the why question. There will be no shortage of analyses in the days and weeks to come. No doubt, Zizek has already gone viral on this, finding the Bosnian unrest to be just another instantiation of his theoretical apparatus. What’s new! But I will save my theory rich explanation for another day. I simply have many questions.

A Violent Demand

I hope the current firestorm will gain the attention of those who failed to recognize the Babylution for what it was — a peaceful yet sincere request for change. Now they must contend with a violent demand for that same change and share some of the blame for its emergence. If this most recent bout of unrest doesn’t bring about change, what will? I suspect we know the answer to that question — a ratcheting up of violence by both sides. I am hopeful, however, that Bosnia is far from being a fragile House of Cards.