

ALIJA IZETBEGOVIC—THOUGHTS OF A MODERN MUSLIM THINKER

Muhidin Mulalic

Introduction

This analytical research evaluates the accomplishments of a modern Muslim European thinker. It briefly explores Izetbegovic's illuminating biography, a biography that projects his religious and national resolve, his passion for peace and justice, and his contributions to humanity. The research also examines his outstanding insights into the Muslim dilemma, projected in an inadequate understanding of Islam, rejection of Islam as a way of life, apathy of the Muslim masses and inconsistencies in the implementation of the Islamic order. The last part of the research explores Izetbegovic's regeneration program that involves the implementation of Islam in all aspects of life, the renewal of Islamic thought and the emphasis on Muslim unity and solidarity.

Alija Izetbegovic: A Short Biography

Alija Izetbegovic, former president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, co-founder and then honorary leader of the SDA (Party of Democratic Action), was born on August 8, 1925 in Bosanski Samac. Izetbegovic died on October 19, 2003 at the age of 78.

He was born at the time of wars, the holocaust, and destruction, which had left marks on his personality. Izetbegovic was also brought up in an anti-Muslim milieu. He witnessed frequent oppressions of his own people and their struggle for self-identity and the quest for recognition. Hence, since his youth, he dedicated his life for the cause of his people. During the Second World War, for instance, Bosnians suffered religious and

ethnic persecutions and oppressions. In his best capacity and during this hard period, Izetbegovic helped out his people. He also became a member of the Bosnian group, "Young Muslims." In 1946, Izetbegovic was arrested for his involvement in this organization. He was behind bars for three years on the charges of propagating pan-Islamism and for promoting hatred. After serving the jail sentence, he successfully completed his studies in commercial law and held the post of a legal consultant.

In 1970, Izetbegovic wrote *The Islamic Declaration* and circulated it to the people in confidence. Although the book was written in 1970, it was not published until 1990 due to the fearful attitude of the communist regime towards the Bosnians. The book was the major reason for the Yugoslavian communist regime to send to prison several Bosnian intellectuals, including Izetbegovic. In the famous *Sarajevo Trial*, this group of Bosnians was accused of conspiracy against the state and for planning to set up an Islamic state in Bosnia. Izetbegovic received a 14-year jail sentence. However, his sentence was reduced to five years and eight months, and in 1988, after the collapse of communism, Izetbegovic, together with all the other political prisoners, was released.

After the fall of communism in Yugoslavia, Izetbegovic realized the need to establish a political party to bring together his people. In 1989, in Zurich, Adil Zulkarpasic and Izetbegovic found a short-lived Muslim Party of Yugoslavia. In 1990, Izetbegovic became one of the leaders in the creation of the SDA party. The party became the most influential political party in Bosnia and won the 1990 elections. On May 25, 1990, after the first party elections, Izetbegovic became its first president, and was elected as the first Bosnian president.

Izetbegovic was aware that the disintegration of Yugoslavia was at hand. Therefore, he proposed the establishment of a self-governing and independent federal republic under a unified Yugoslavia, but the Serbia and Croatia turned down his proposal. After the collapse of all peace attempts, in June 1991, Slovenia and then Croatia were the first