

SONJA BISERKO

Yugoslavia's Implosion

The Fatal Attraction
of Serbian Nationalism



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PUBLISHER



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NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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To my brother Željko Biserko

Foreword

I

This is a courageous book, in which the author indicts a large portion of her society, and most especially politicians, for aggressive nationalism. This, she argues, has been the main reason both for the wars of 1991–99 and for the continued volatility which characterizes Serbian political life. This is also a work of passion, reflecting simultaneously a deep sadness about the decisions and actions taken by Serbian political figures over a period of more than a century, and a determination on her part to work for a better future for Serbia. Biserko has many admirers but, inevitably, she also has foes, and has been attacked at times in the local nationalist press.

I first met Sonja Biserko in 2001, when she was spending a year at the U.S. Institute for Peace in Washington D.C. Her reputation as a champion for human rights preceded her, but I had not visited Belgrade since 1989, when the escalating drumbeats for war were unmistakable. Since 2004, I have visited Belgrade on a number of occasions, most recently in December 2011, affording us on each occasion the opportunity to meet. My respect for her work has only grown over the years and the international recognition she has received shows that I am far from alone in this regard.

Biserko began her career in the Yugoslav foreign service, back when Josip Broz Tito was still president of the country. She was posted to the Embassy of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in London from 1975 to 1979, where she encountered, for the first

time, émigré literature, especially of the Chetnik diaspora. She subsequently returned to Belgrade to work in the UN department of the foreign service, before being posted to Geneva in 1984, to work with European issues at the UN Commission for Europe. It was at this time that she encountered members of the Albanian diaspora, whose discontent with the status of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo was palpable, and also members of the Serbian diaspora, whose views concerning Kosovo were at odds with the views of Albanians. By the time she returned to Belgrade in 1988, the disintegration of Yugoslavia was well underway and, within her department, as elsewhere in the country, there were lively discussions about the future of the country, with alternative visions sketched and debated. At the end of 1991, after the outbreak of the Serbian insurrection in Croatia – an insurrection supported by the Yugoslav Army, which Serbian President Slobodan Milošević controlled – she resigned from the foreign service and began opposition work. Her resignation was, in fact, a protest against the war policy of the Milošević regime. In collaboration with other anti-war activists, she launched Anti-War Action and became close to the Civic Alliance, a liberal political party which has remained on the margins of the Serbian political scene.

In the meantime, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Yugoslavia had dissolved at the end of the 1980s. In 1994, she took the lead in establishing the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, starting with a staff of eight persons. That same year, the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, based in New York, awarded her a prize for her work in human rights. Since then, the Helsinki Committee/Serbia has been active in various domains, assisting Serb refugees from Croatia in 1995, organizing Serb-Albanian dialogues, hosting conferences on human rights (especially focusing on Kosovo), and publishing books, reports, and bulletins in both Serbian and English across a range of topics from controversies

concerning the Second World War to annual book-length reports concerning human rights in Serbia. Among these publications is a compilation of contributions on the theme, *Srebrenica: From Denial to Confession*, which she edited – issued in 2005, on the tenth anniversary of the massacre (officially recognized as a genocide) of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys by Serbian troops under the command of General Ratko Mladić.

In 2005, she was included in a group of 1,000 Women for Peace who were collectively nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Four years later, she received the Human Rights Award of the City of Weimar, and, in February 2010, she was honored, by Croatian President Stjepan Mesić, with a high decoration for her contribution to the promotion of human and civil rights, especially of minorities, and for her contributions to the normalization of relations between Serbia and Croatia. Later that year, in November 2010, she was invited to Oslo, to receive the Lisl and Leo Eitingers Prize for Human Rights, conferred by the University of Oslo. In a speech in her honor, Inga Bostad, Pro-Rector of the University of Oslo, praised Biserko for her commitment to “truth and human equality, freedom and moral integrity.” In April 2011, Biserko was named an Honorary Citizen of the city of Sarajevo, in recognition of her consistent opposition to the aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina during the years 1991–95, and in 2012 she was recognized by the parliament of the Republic of Kosovo for her contribution to advancing the social status of women.

The publications of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia (many of them available as pdf documents at the Committee’s website) have been used in both government and academic circles, both at home and abroad. There are about 15,000 visits to the Committee’s website on average every day.

Biserko's argument in this volume is twofold. First, she argues that Serbian nationalism, traceable back to the nineteenth century, was the main factor in generating the break-up of socialist Yugoslavia and propelling its people into internecine conflict. Second, she argues that Serbian nationalism continues to be a problem even today, in spite of Serbia's defeat in 1995 and again in 1999. Serb nationalists are fond of citing novelist Dobrica Ćosić's claim that Serbia wins its wars, but loses the peace. In fact, what some Serbian politicians hope to do now is to "win the peace" in spite of having been defeated twice over in recent memory. What "winning" would mean at this point in time would entail annexation of the Republika Srpska portion of Bosnia-Herzegovina – although both the previous and the present government of Serbia have repudiated any such ambition – and partition of Kosovo (although newly elected President Tomislav Nikolić speaks as if Kosovo were still under Serbian sovereignty). Serb nationalism, like nationalism everywhere, is thus about land. But it is not only about land. It is also about culture and the national religion, both of which – nationalists stress – need to be preserved and safeguarded from perceived threats (whether real or not).

But what is nationalism? One way to think about it – and I believe that this also accords with Biserko's point of view – is to view a nationalist as someone who places the interests of his or her own nation over the interests of other nations (to the extent that seizure of land from another nation and the expulsion of members of that other nation are considered "justified" by the nationalist), the interests of members of his own nation over the interests of members of other nations, and the interests of his own nation as a collectivity over the interests of individual members of his own nation. This last point is often ignored, but the way in which the Milošević regime plundered the economy and the country's own citizens, in order to

finance the war and to enrich those close to the regime, reflects the fact that nationalism is not a doctrine of human rights, but rather a doctrine which repudiates human rights, even of the members of one's own nation. This also means that encounters with other nations are seen as zero-sum games, in which a gain for one side is seen as necessarily coming at the expense of the other side. This way of thinking about nationalism allows one to speak of degrees of nationalism: in practice, the more radical nationalists are those who are the most consistent in acting out the principles enumerated above. Viewed in these terms, it is clear that nationalism is anti-individualist, anti-liberal, and inclined to xenophobia. But there is more: because there is a correlation between nationalism and violence toward outsiders and because, at a certain level, such violence affects the entire society, politically active nationalists may be said to do injury *to their own nation*, as well as to other nations.

At this point in time, the alternative to nationalism should be obvious. The example set by France and Germany after 1945, in setting aside old resentments, quarrels, and distrust, and in building a new relationship based on mutual respect, trust, and cooperation, provides a model for other nations. Moreover, the European Union itself may be understood as a community of states working for the common good, and rejecting zero-sum thinking. The challenge for Serbia today is to escape the vicious cycle of denial, self-righteousness, self-pitying, and – in the case of more extreme nationalists such as Bosnian Serb President Milorad Dodik – refusal to accept documented evidence about past events. For Dodik and those Serbs who prefer myth to documentation, it is easy to claim that 700,000 Serbs died at Jasenovac; the truth, however – as historical researcher Nataša Mataušić has shown – is that just over 80,000 persons were killed at Jasenovac and that, among these, just over 45,000 were Serbs. The insistence on a much higher figure, especially when demographic research has shown that the total number of Yugoslav dead

in World War Two came to just over one million, reflects not only a lack of moral integrity and contempt for historical truth, but also a vicious political agenda. Sonja Biserko's book is, thus, a welcome contribution to addressing the problem of Serbian nationalism and a vital corrective which will assist readers to comprehend the meaning of the suffering in the lands of the South Slavs and the Albanians.

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Introduction

THE SUBJECT OF THIS BOOK

In this book I deal with the roots and consequences of the Serbian nationalism that has dominated the Serbian political scene for two centuries. I focus on the last quarter of the twentieth century and first years of this century. Those are the years when the most extreme form of that phenomenon caused the break-up of Yugoslavia and hampered the emergence of a functional, democratic, modern state.

Throughout Serbia's history—from medieval times to the present day—the issue of what territory should be encompassed with the borders of the Serbian state has always prevailed over other concerns, including national (popular) sovereignty and participative democracy. This book not only explores the longstanding policies, ideological patterns, and actors that led to the collapse of the Yugoslav federation amid the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War II; it also seeks to explain why Serbia is still unable to come to grips with both its recent past and its current reality. As the following chapters argue, Serbia, still seesawing between archaism and modernity, not ready to give up delusions about itself and the contemporary world, is prone to further instability, political regression, and even fragmentation.

Yugoslavia's disintegration has been a subject of hundreds of scholarly publications, but its complexity as a paradigm of the post-communist development has still not been thoroughly

researched. Post-communist societies have been, as a rule, saddled with weak or ruined economies, dysfunctional institutions, corruption, crime, and demoralized societies. The belief that those countries could morph overnight into democracies proved fallacious. Nationalism has been present in most the post-communist world as a substitute for the failed ideology. Most post-communist societies have been multiethnic and have had no mechanisms to deal with tensions and conflicts generated by the newly arisen nationalism. However, Serbian radical nationalism, which led to the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, was unique in the sense that the Serbian political leadership had neither the political will nor the skill to respect basic international standards in resolving the Yugoslav crisis.

During the past two centuries, the development of the Serbian nation and the Serbian state has been marked by a conflict between patriarchy and modernity that slowed the creation of a “complete state”¹ and made the cultural integration of Serbs into the international community more difficult. That clash resurfaced in the final quarter of the past century when, seeing the possibility of the emergence of a genuinely confederal and multiethnic Yugoslav state as a loss of identity, many Serbs embraced the revived concept of “Greater Serbia,” a concept that drew its strength from the patriarchal, collectivist model of state and society, from an ethnic-religious understanding of a nation, and from an emotional reliance on the glory of the medieval Serbian empire.

The collapse of Yugoslavia was the outcome of a long process and its nature was determined by the combined effects of international and domestic developments. My personal approach to those developments reflects the insight I acquired, as a senior diplomat,

1 That term was coined by Zoran Đinđić. Emblematic of that idea is his study *Yugoslavia as an Unfinished State* (Novi Sad: Književna zadruga Novog Sada, 1988); and Nenad Dimitrijević's essay “Serbia as an Unfinished State,” *Reč* (Belgrade) 69, no. 15 (2003).

into the dramatic events that shook up the federal administration in the late 1980s. I was also deeply involved in the creation of the first anti-war movement in Yugoslavia, the European Movement in Yugoslavia, the Forum for International Relations, and the Helsinki Human Rights Committee (HCHR) in Serbia. Like hundreds of thousands of citizens of the former Yugoslavia, I have witnessed around me and personally suffered terrible family losses and misfortunes caused by the wars of the 1990s.

Eventually, I began intensive research into the collapse of Yugoslavia. My evolved understanding of the Serbian response to the challenge of the Yugoslav transformation has been based on that research and on conversations with fellow researchers, political analysts, scholars, politicians, both at home and abroad, including in Washington, D.C., where I was a fellow at the United States Institute of Peace. As the president of the HHRC, a human rights defender, a political columnist, and the editor of numerous publications, I continue to observe and analyze political developments, while striving to persuade the public and policymakers to uphold human rights and establish a free, democratic, and multiethnic society, at peace with itself and its neighbors. All of these elements have led me to the conviction—shared by the majority of serious political analysts and researchers in the region and beyond—that nationalistic ideologies lay at the very root of Yugoslavia’s horrific end.

The collapse of communism and the political confusion that accompanied its aftermath presented the Serbian nationalists with a singular opportunity to capitalize on the impending break-up of the federal state and retailor the country in accordance with the centuries-old Greater Serbia program. Serbian political elites considered the historical moment propitious for translating their idea into reality because of the political vacuum created by the collapse of the social system, the Serbian domination over the army, the mobilization potential of the Kosovo myth, and the conviction that Russia,

perceived as Serbia's traditional ally, would render them all necessary support to that end. But the Serbian ambition to redesign Yugoslavia as a unitary and centralized state under the domination of Serbia could not be realized, despite Serbia's military preponderance, because of the stiff resistance from other nations of the former Yugoslavia, resolved to defend their constitutional rights as equal and sovereign peoples.

This book analyzes the policies and philosophies espoused by the Serbian political and intellectual elite from the early 1970s onward, when Yugoslavia began its metamorphosis into a genuine federation. Against the backdrop of patriarchal and authoritarian Serbian society, academics and other members of the intellectual elite have always played a major role in shaping the outlook of the entire society. Their interpretations of the nature and future of Yugoslavia and the position of the people within that federation greatly influenced the Serbian people throughout Yugoslavia, preparing them psychologically for the ensuing wars. The political elite used quasi-historic explanations, attractive because of their simplicity. In the prewar decade, the principal message the elite tried to get across was that the Serbian people would not be victims once again, would not be toothless in the face of a new genocide. In fueling a sense of victimhood, the Serbian elite evoked memories of World War II, when the Ustaša fascist regime in Croatia committed genocide against the Serbs and others, killing as many as seven hundred thousand Serbs in one concentration camp alone. This allowed the Serbian leadership to reconnect with the past and to promote the idea of "getting our retaliation first." Such an approach was backed by the Yugoslav People's Army, and its support helped persuade the Serbian people that a war to build Greater Serbia would be brief and easy.

As this book shows, despite Serbian forces being ejected from Kosovo in 1999 and Slobodan Milošević being ejected from the Serbian presidency in 2000, Serbia's elites (and much of its public)

have not abandoned their territorial aspirations. The period after 2000 abounds with instances attesting to the wide support the project implemented by Milošević enjoyed. The assassination of Zoran Đinđić in 2003 laid bare the Milošević legacy and the depth of society's devastation and demoralization. Vojislav Koštunica, and later Boris Tadić too, showed during their terms in office that Serbia has continued to pursue Milošević's policy by other means and that it has for the most part succeeded in this (Bosnia and Kosovo are still ethnically divided).

Without support from the international community, above all the European Union and the United States, Serbia appears incapable of bringing forth internal changes that would enable it to move in the direction of Euro-Atlantic integrations.

The new reality in Serbia has inspired many international researchers to analyze Serbia from a new angle: its resistance to modernization. A number of valuable books and analyses have been written, including Florian Bieber's *Nationalismus in Serbien vom Tode Titos zum Ende der Ära Milošević* (Lit Verlag, 2005); James Gow's chapter with Milena Michalski, "The Impact of the War on Serbia", in the book Sabrina Ramet co-edited with Vjieran Pavlaković, *Serbia since 1989* (Washington Press, 2005). Holm Sundhauzen's book published in 2007², as well as Sabrina Ramet's many books and analyses, are among the best works to have been published on the subject outside Serbia. Within Serbia, numerous works have been published. Notable among these are the annual reports for 2000–2008 by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, which focus on Serb nationalism and its new forms that burgeoned during the various terms in office of Vojislav Koštunica during that period. Valuable studies have also been written by critically minded Serbian historians and sociologists such as Latinka Perović, Ivan Đurić, Olja

2 Holm Sundhauzen, *Geschichte Serbiens 19./20. Jahrhundert*, Bohlau Verlag Ges. M.b.H und Co. KG, Wien.Köln.Weimar 2007

Milosavljević, Olga Popović-Obradović, Dubravka Stojanović and Jovan Byford.³ The reports for the ICTY by internationally acclaimed experts such as Robert Donia, Audrey Budding, Renaud de la Brosse, Yves Tomic, Anthony Oberschall, and many others, are also worthy of mention.⁴

I am convinced that analyses of what happened in the territory of the former Yugoslavia which exhibit less passion and emotion and more rational judgment are yet to be written. During the 1990s, all the actors and analysts who reacted to day-to-day developments often did so without going into the essence of this phenomenon. For some time the international community encouraged the relativization of responsibility in hopes of speeding up a resolution to the situation in the Balkans. But as it turns out, the truth always emerges, albeit belatedly.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

This book consists of five chapters in addition to this introductory chapter. **CHAPTER 1** deals with Serbian nationalism, and more particularly with the development of the Serbian national program. The chapter traces that development from the nineteenth century to the 1990s, focusing on the years from the promulgation of a new Yugoslav constitution in 1974 to the break-up of the Yugoslav state and the coming of war in the early 1990s.

Serbian elites looked upon the 1974 constitution—which established the country as a federation of equal republics, each with the right of secession from the confederation of Yugoslavia—as a plot to break up the Serbian people and the beginning of the end of

3 Some of these studies have been published by the Helsinki Committee; see www.helsinki.org.rs for details.

4 These reports are available on the ICTY and Helsinki Committee Websites. The documents collected by the ICTY and kept in its archive are a major source of information for a study of the phenomenon of Serb nationalism at the end of the twentieth century; see <http://www.icty.org/sections/LegalLibrary> for details.

Yugoslavia as they saw it (i.e., as an extended Serbia). They argued that Serbia's boundaries at the time were neither national nor historical borders, and set about reviving the Kosovo myth, which served to rally Serbs politically, just as it did at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The struggle for Josip Broz Tito's inheritance in 1980 started amid a deep crisis to which the political and intellectual establishments had no answers. The Serbs saw any attempt to reform Yugoslavia in the new circumstances as a scheme to deprive them of a state of their own. Serbian leaders at the time used the slogan "First, the state—second, a democracy" to block democratization and prevent the necessary pluralization of interests.

In 1986, the Serbian Academy of Sciences issued the "Memorandum," a document that was at once pro-Yugoslav and anti-Yugoslav in that it suggested a transformation of the country through its recentralization. The authors of the Memorandum argued that the Serbian people could not look to the future serenely amid so much uncertainty, and demanded that all the nations in Yugoslavia be given the opportunity to state their national aspirations and intentions. Restated, that meant that Serbia could define its own national interest and decide its own future. In essence, the Memorandum restated the Serbian national program advanced at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth: namely, the "liberation and unification of the entire Serb people and the establishment of a Serb national and state community on the whole Serb territory."

The period preceding the outbreak of the war was characterized by three phases: first, attempts to preserve the old system; second, the crystallization of two concepts for resolving the crisis; and third, the war itself. In the first phase, shortly after Tito's death, members of the political and intellectual establishments strove to preserve their positions without making much effort to resolve the crisis by

systemic reform, for any bold move threatened to alter the balance of forces established in Tito's day. The second phase was marked by the rise, in 1986–87, of Slobodan Milošević, the first politician to step forward with a proposal for overcoming the Yugoslav crisis by reinforcing federal institutions and the central government with Serbia playing a dominant role. This program was diametrically opposed to the view that had meanwhile evolved in Slovenia, which saw a future for Yugoslavia only if it substantially decentralized power to the republics. Later, Croatia joined Slovenia in its demands.

Checked in its efforts to assert Serbian dominance within the federal system, the Serbian elite, led by Milošević, reverted to its national program, which had been prepared informally in the early 1970s and articulated in the 1986 Memorandum. The Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia in September 1987 marked the turning point in efforts to resolve the Yugoslav crisis and brought about a rift within Serbia's political establishment. Milošević and the nationalist political orientation triumphed over the old guard, and subsequently Milošević engineered the largest purge of the party so as consolidate Serbian power in anticipation of a forthcoming showdown in Yugoslavia. The Eighth Session was the key event in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. It was followed by the so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution of 1989 that managed to homogenize both the then Serbian Communist Party and the nation. It opened space for Milošević to centralize Serbia under the slogan, "One people, one state, one court of law."

After the dissolution of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia at its extraordinary fourteenth congress in January 1990, Milošević announced that "Serbia has to prepare itself to live without Yugoslavia." The adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of Serbia in September 1990 marked the end of the first phase of preparations to destroy Yugoslavia. This constitution usurped two paramount federal functions: national defense and foreign relations. It

deprived autonomous provinces of their constitutional functions and excluded Serbia from the legal system of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). It was the first secessionist document, a fact underlined in Article 135, which states that Serbia will enforce federal legislation only if it is not “contrary to its interests.” On March 15, 1991, Milošević declared in one of his speeches on Radio Television of Serbia that “Yugoslavia does not exist any more.”

Having failed to export his anti-bureaucratic revolution to other republics, Milošević went ahead with implementing his plan with the help of his supporters, namely, other parties that had previously set out Serbia’s expansionist aims in their programs. These parties were the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) led by Vuk Drašković, the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) of Vojislav Šešelj, and the Serbian National Renewal (SNO) party of Mirko Jović. All these parties effectively promoted the fascist Chetnik movement from the Second World War and drew on its traditions.

Chapter 1 concludes by assessing the degree to which Serbia achieved its war aims by the time the Dayton Accords brought an end to the fighting in Bosnia. Some Serbian nationalists expressed disappointment with the results of the war, which had not seen Serbia extend its borders as they (and the Serbian Orthodox Church) had hoped. Others, however—among them, Milošević and the leading nationalist ideologue of his generation, Dobrica Ćosić—saw reason for satisfaction: the republics of the former Yugoslavia were now organized along ethnic lines; the Serbs in Bosnia had achieved an internationally recognized degree of autonomy in an ethnic Serbian entity, Republika Srpska; and, in the words of Ćosić, the Serbian people were “coalescing in a living space in which it can cover civilizationally and culturally and develop economically.”

CHAPTER 2 shifts attention from the Serbian political elite to the Serbian military. The chapter examines how the nature of the Serbian nationalists’ agenda ensured that the Serbian military would

occupy a prominent, even at times dominant, political role, because the dream of a Greater Serbia could only be realized by an exercise of power, including military power.

Throughout the twentieth century, whatever the structure of the state, the Army has played an active role in politics. Usually, it has served as a loyal instrument of the regime, fighting to enlarge Serbian territory or to maintain order within the country. But it has also been a force to be reckoned with, even by the king or the Communist leadership, and has at times operated as an independent political actor, formulating and pursuing its own goals for the nation.

The Serbian leadership and the military had an identical stance on the 1974 Constitution, and in the early 1980s they both pressed for its amendment with the aim of recentralizing Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) grew more powerful and influential as the 1980s advanced and Yugoslav society became more militarized. The YPA and the Serbian leadership were also in full agreement that Serbs had played a decisive role in the establishment of Yugoslavia, both in 1918 and in 1945, and that they constituted an integrating factor because of their size and distribution in the country.

By 1990, the YPA had become the de facto Serbian army, with General Veljko Kadijević, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's minister of defense, pledging that "the YPA shall defend the Serbs and define the borders of the future Yugoslavia." A shared commitment to recentralization was the glue that bound the YPA to the Serbian leadership, but in the process of pursuing that objective, the YPA relinquished its founding principles—namely, to defend the people of Yugoslavia from external threats. Actions that ultimately brought about the downfall of the YPA included the boycott of the federal parliament; the subjugation and decommissioning of the Territorial Defense Units; siding with the Serbian government during wars in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina; and mobilizing volunteers to replenish the swiftly diminishing rank and file forces.

Despite failing to secure victory in the wars of the 1990s—including in Kosovo—the Army still enjoys a powerful position within Serbia. Political leaders continue to try to exonerate the Serbian military from responsibility for war crimes, and the Army as an institution continues to enjoy the confidence of the people.

CHAPTER 3 deals with the Albanian question, which Serbia tried to “solve” during most of the twentieth century by assimilation, repression, ethnic cleansing, and division. State terror gradually radicalized the Albanian population, alienating moderate Albanians who had sought to find a political compromise within Yugoslavia, and boosting popular support for the idea of secession. In 1981, Albanian demonstrations in Kosovo gave Serbian nationalists a pretext for raising the Serbian national question and fomenting Serbian nationalist sentiments. The YPA pushed its way onto the political stage and virtually occupied Kosovo. Milošević, who had risen to power on a nationalist tide generated by the Kosovo myth, abolished Kosovo’s autonomy by force in 1990. The challenge to Serbian rule posed from 1996 by the Kosovo Liberation Army, an Albanian guerrilla group, was met by repression by Serbian security forces, which in turn prompted NATO intervention in 1999.

After the NATO intervention, Belgrade systematically widened the gap between the Serbian and Albanian communities in Kosovo. The strategy of the Belgrade regime—not only Milošević but also his successor, Vojislav Koštunica—proceeded along two tracks: negating and undermining the international mission and preparing to partition Kosovo. The Kosovo Serbs, especially those in the north, continued to be manipulated and used to destabilize Kosovo. As the Belgrade regime became increasingly isolated, various forces worked to protect local Serbs and prevent their expulsion while constantly pressing for cantonization.

The partition of Kosovo was incorporated into the state policy of the FRY, playing into the hands of the nationalists. The Serbs’

unwillingness to participate in Kosovo's development ensured that no major progress was made in terms of reforms or the integration of Serbians into Kosovo institutions. The Albanian population grew ever more frustrated. After eleven Albanians and six Serbs were killed and thousands were displaced from their homes in a few days of rioting in March 2004, the international community was forced to adopt new criteria in an effort to solve the Kosovo issue. The new policy, however, was no more successful than the previous one.

The declaration of independence by Kosovo on February 18, 2008, triggered a fierce backlash in Serbia, including street riots and the torching of foreign embassies in Belgrade. As a result, countries that had recognized Kosovo withdrew their ambassadors from Serbia. The Serbian authorities sought an opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on what they termed Kosovo's "illegal" declaration of independence.

Even after the declaration of Kosovo's independence Belgrade refused to accept the new reality and was seeking ways to partition Kosovo.

This book does not focus on the role played by international actors in the break-up of Yugoslavia, a subject that has been covered extensively in many other English-language publications. However, the book does devote some discussion to the roles played by Russia and the West insofar as they influenced the calculations, actions, and reactions of Serbian nationalists and their foes. Thus, chapter 3 discusses how the absence of a consistent Western policy toward Kosovo and the West's tardiness in deciding to support Kosovo's independence encouraged Serbia's hopes that Kosovo and Bosnia would both be partitioned. Serbian expectations were also boosted by Russia's entry into the Balkans, which led many Serbs to harbor the illusion that Russia would rush to the defense of Serbia's interests. Russia in fact prioritized its interests and used Serbia as a bargaining chip in its dealings with the West.

CHAPTER 4 brings the discussion of Serbia up to date. The legacy of Slobodan Milošević remains a burden for the Serbian people and an obstacle to shaping the new Serbian state. Serbia is slowly completing the process of settling on territory that is far smaller than that to which it has laid claims for decades. The frustration is all the greater because the Serbian elites continue to regard the matter of the state as an open issue, hoping that a changed international constellation may result in different attitudes to the Serbian question and to a redrawing of borders in the Balkans.

Chapter 4 begins by reviewing the damage inflicted by Serbian nationalists on Serbia as well as on its neighbors over the past thirty years. The policy of war was Serbia's response to the unstoppable process of Yugoslavia's decentralization and democratization in the face of the other republics' increasing autonomy. The Serbian nationalists were not prepared to make the effort required to create and maintain so complex a community. Instead of seeking a solution through negotiation and consensus, Serbia spent the last decade of the twentieth century waging war to recompose the Balkans—to wrest control of the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Serbs believed that by reverting to pre-Communist, antidemocratic traditions, they could turn the clock back and refashion Yugoslavia in the self-image of a historically victorious power.

Yet, despite its military superiority, Serbia failed to crush the resistance of the other Yugoslav peoples, who proved to be more resolute opponents than Serbia had anticipated and whose democratic aspirations earned them international sympathy.

The NATO intervention in 1999 forced the complete withdrawal of Serbia's military and security structures from Kosovo. Under the terms of the Kumanovo Agreement of June 1999, Serbia lost all sovereignty over Kosovo and the former province was placed under international administration. UN Security Council resolution 1244 later provided that a decision on Kosovo's future status be

taken subsequently. The NATO intervention led up to the ouster of Milošević and opened up an avenue for transition.

As the second part of Chapter 4 emphasizes, without an understanding of the events of October 2000, no one can grasp the significance of the presidential elections in the years thereafter. In the eyes of most of the world, the removal of Milošević marked the end of the Yugoslav crisis and signaled a radical shift in the political complexion of Serbia. In reality, the changeover was the result of a consensus among Milošević's close circles and the international community, a recognition that Milošević had to be removed because while he remained in power, Serbia would remain unstable and might collapse economically. The international community had great expectations of the FRY and its potentially stabilizing role in the region, and quickly moved to end the country's international isolation. Milošević's removal and the coming to power of a reform-minded prime minister, Zoran Đinđić, gave the transition in Belgrade a democratic face, but behind the scenes the nationalists continued to hold sway. Đinđić managed to chart a vision of Serbia as a member of modern Europe's democratic, pluralistic fraternity, but after his assassination in 2003, Serbia was back to square one—with the rightist nationalist Koštunica in charge of the government and pursuing Milošević's policy by other means.

Serbia's neighbors always doubted that the events of October 2000 marked a break with Milošević's policy, and the results of elections in recent years in Serbia have justified their doubts insofar as nationalist and populist parties have usually ended up as key elements of governing coalitions. The establishment of an independent Kosovo in February 2008 may be the last phase in the dissolution of Yugoslavia, but it is by no means the final nail in the coffin of Serbian nationalism. Serbian aspirations toward Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo have not ended. Serbian nationalists still seek the unity of all Serbs within one country and the unity of

all so-called Serbian lands. While this ambition persists, the region remains fundamentally unstable.

Chapter 4 also shows that Serbia's elites (its political, military, cultural, religious, and other elites) were unanimous in their support of the Serbian national program. Actually, it was they that had framed the program in the first place; Slobodan Milošević came later and was skilfully installed with a view to implementing the program. The consensus of opinion regarding the national project was precisely what blinded Serbia to seeing an alternative. In his important and highly relevant book *Geschichte Serbiens. 19.-21. Jahrhundert*, the German historian Holm Sundhausen concludes that "the history of Serbia would have taken a different course had her elites been interested in regulating the state and society rather than in territorial expansion. It could have been a highly developed country, but that was sacrificed in the name of a grand idea that during the 1990s set Serbia back by a hundred years."⁵

In **CHAPTER 5**, the final chapter of this book, I draw some general lessons from the Yugoslav experience for policymakers, academics, and activists working to maintain communal and regional peace in the face of entrenched animosities and high tensions between ethnic or national groups. Some of these lessons are specific to Serbia and its neighbors, but most are pertinent not just to the Balkans or even to Europe as a whole but to all parts of the world where nationalist passions have the potential to ignite a violent conflagration. For instance, the break-up of Yugoslavia points not only to the fact that the parties to a conflict mired in historical grievance need external help in resolving their dispute peacefully but also to the need for the international community to accurately understand the nature, causes, and course of that conflict, to reach consensus on how to handle its conflict management efforts, to avoid the temptation of

5 Holm Zundhausen, *Istorija Srbije od 19. do 21 veka* (History of Serbia from XIX to XXI Century), Clio, Beograd (2008), p. 507.

short-term and hasty “solutions,” and to reach out to the public in the affected region so as to explain the essence of the crisis and the kinds of actions needed to defuse it. As demonstrated by the continuing hold that nationalism exerts over most of the population of Serbia, and by the continuing fidelity of Serbian elites to their dreams of Greater Serbia, the full normalization of relations and lasting peace are conditional on political and public recognition of the true nature of the causes of the conflict.

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Serbian Nationalism and the Remaking of the Yugoslav Federation

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: FROM THE NAČERTANIJE TO THE MEMORANDUM

The phenomenon of Serbian nationalism cannot be understood merely by studying the history of the “second Yugoslavia,” the socialist state founded in 1943 that was formally dissolved in 1991. The roots of Serbian nationalism run much deeper. They run, indeed, back to the beginning of the nineteenth century—to the foundation of the modern state of Serbia. The main pillar of Serbian nationalism is the medieval Serbian empire of the fourteenth century, the most powerful Balkan state of time, which Serbs not only glorify but also wish to resurrect in the form of “Greater Serbia,” a patriarchal, Orthodox, ethnically homogeneous state. The fact that this ambition is wholly unrealistic has not affected its ability to inspire fervid devotion among many Serbs. The efforts of Serbia’s political and military elites in the past two centuries to rebuild the medieval empire have caused recurrent conflict with the other states and peoples that share the same territory. This, indeed, was the principal cause of the wars in the 1990s, when Yugoslavia—created to allow southern Slavs to coexist peacefully but which Serbian nationalists regarded as an opportunity to reinvent medieval Serbia—broke bloodily apart.

The Nineteenth Century: The Načertanije

In the formative period of Serbia as a nation-state, the idea of the resurrection of the medieval empire became the core of the Serbian foreign policy program. This plan was formulated in 1844 as the “Načertanije” (or “Draft Plan”) of Ilija Garašanin, minister of internal affairs in the government of Prince Aleksandar Karadorđević.

In the Načertanije, Garašanin set out the goals of Serbia’s territorial reconstruction as follows: “The state, which has got off to an auspicious start but must yet spread and grow stronger, has its firm foundations in the Serb empire of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and in the rich and glorious Serb history.”⁶ The objective of the Načertanije was to bring together in one state all territories in which Serbs were living—whether as a majority or a minority of the population—and to assimilate people belonging to other nations and religions into the Serbian nation and the Orthodox Church. This plan would become a major guideline for Serbia’s contemporary as well as future foreign policy strategists and was used to justify modern Serbia’s historical, national, and territorial claims, first as an independent state and later as part of the Yugoslav Federation.

Serbia (together with Montenegro, Romania, and Greece) was granted independence at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. The new states were obliged to recognize their subjects’ freedom of religion and guarantee their right to citizenship irrespective of their religion. The recognition of the new states in the Balkans failed to eliminate tensions in the region, however, because most local national movements believed that their legitimate claims had been given scant regard (Albanians, for instance, did not have a sovereign state of their own until 1913).

6 *Srpski nacionalni program*, Dokumenti, Načertanije Ilije Garašanina [Serbian National Program, Documents], (Beograd: DMP and Grafomark, Beograd 2000) p. 21.

The Serbian national program faced competition from the national agendas of other peoples, for the Balkans have been home to many different peoples for centuries, and in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of them began trying to build modern states of their own. Because most dreamed of large national states, their dreams clashed and ended in bloody wars and prolonged periods of oppression. When, during the Second Balkan War in 1913, the Kingdom of Serbia and the Kingdom of Montenegro annexed the bulk of the present-day territory of Kosovo and Macedonia, the goals of the Načertanije came closer to realization. But this tripling of the size of the Kingdom of Serbia's territory was accomplished at the expense of its Albanian population. Under the Serbian military Kosovo turned into an oppressed and heavily exploited king's feudal estate.

Post-World War I

On December 1, 1918, the first Yugoslavia was created from the ashes and rubble of World War I. From its inception, the new state—officially called “the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes” until 1929, but from its birth known colloquially as the “Kingdom of Yugoslavia” or, more simply, as “Yugoslavia”—represented the framework for the realization of the Serbian national program. But the Yugoslav state embodied common south Slav aspirations as well as disparate national interests, leading to a fundamental paradox: On the one hand, the Serbs wanted it to be a unitary but not equitable state—they wanted Yugoslavia to fulfill Serbian aspirations. On the other hand, the Croats and Slovenes wanted Yugoslavia to be an unambiguous federal system. Even as the new state was being built, the proponents of centralism and federalism clashed, their conflict raising the national issue as the key to the survival of the Yugoslav state.

Serbian politicians were torn between the desire to see all the scattered Serbs living in one state and the idea of *Yugoslavism*. People's Radical Party leader Nikola Pašić pushed for a unitary state that would afford the Serbs political domination and looked upon federalism as a state of disarray. His ambition for Serbia to become the leading nation in Yugoslavia and the Balkans rested on the belief that "Serbs have always had a flair for greatness and freedom."⁷ Serbian politicians had always looked down on the other nations, especially on the Croats, the chief opponents of the Serbian national agenda. In 1912, for instance, Nikola Stojanović (1880–1965), a lawyer, politician, and newspaper publisher, displayed a curious mixture of arrogance and belligerence:

*The Croats ... aren't and can't be a separate nation, and they're already on the way to becoming Serbs. By adopting the Serbian language as a literary language, they have taken the most important step towards unification. In addition, the amalgamation process goes on outside the sphere of language. By reading Serb poems, any Serb poem, by singing any Serb song, an atom of fresh Serb democratic culture passes into their organism. ... This struggle must be fought to extermination, yours or ours. One side must succumb.*⁸

The Serbs watched the creation of the first Yugoslavia with mixed feelings because they suffered from two collective psychological complexes simultaneously: a *superiority complex*, by which, through a conjunction of historical circumstances, they touched off World War I and came out of it, after suffering fearful losses, on the side of the victorious powers, having "liberated" the Slovenian and Croatian nations from Austro-Hungarian rule; and an *inferiority complex* that led them to establish a Serbian nation-state on a

7 Nikola Pašić's quotation taken from Latinka Perović, *Ljudi, događaji, knjige* (People, Occasions, Books), (Beograd: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2000) p.129–32.

8 Nikola Stojanović, „Do istrage naše ili vaše,” [To the extermination of either ours (Serbian) or yours (Croatian) *Srbobran*, August 1902.

territory roughly coinciding with that of Yugoslavia but that fell far short of their expectations.

The Croats, whose insistence on a federal arrangement for Yugoslavia was ignored, continued to press for such a solution. Every attempt by the Croats to organize Yugoslavia on a federal principle, notably under the leadership of Stjepan Radić, met with resistance from Belgrade. Hoping to curb nationalistic and separatist tendencies, King Aleksandar Karađorđević dissolved Yugoslavia's National Assembly, outlawed all political parties, and imposed a dictatorship in January 1929, subsequently changing the name of the country from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. From then on, government officials pursued a policy of imposing an integral Yugoslavia across the territory of the Southern Slavs to rub out the identity of the constituent peoples. The Yugoslav unitary state emphasized the common ethnic characteristics of what was supposedly one and the same nation with three different constituent peoples. Yet the effort to create an integral nation proved futile. While the Serbs strove toward national unity as the basis of state centralism, the Croats and the Slovenes continued to champion national pluralism as a prerequisite for federalism.

The centralist policy of the first Yugoslavia relied for the most part on oppression and violence, with the regime branding all political organizations and movements—federalists and republicans alike—as “antistate” and outlawing them under the Law on the Protection of the State. The unitary concept, unacceptable to Yugoslav peoples other than Serbs, failed to ensure basic conditions for transforming Yugoslavia into a democratic state. Because of the clash of various national ideologies stemming from the different pasts of the Yugoslav peoples and from the Serbs' refusal to acknowledge them, the Yugoslav state was unable to ensure respect for the fundamental democratic principle on which it had been formed—the principle of self-determination. Serbian leaders came increasingly to the opinion

that Serbs and Croats could not live together, that a break was inevitable, and that Serbia should concentrate on building Greater Serbia.⁹

Serbia believed that it deserved a vanguard role in the 1934 Balkan Entente, the collective defense arrangement designed to discourage the territorial claims of various European countries. With the assassination of King Aleksandar that October, the Yugoslav dictatorship ended and the problem of restructuring the state surged to the forefront, threatening the very existence of Yugoslavia. The Serbian claims on Yugoslavia were neither economically nor culturally founded. Arising from a predominantly agrarian economy, Serbia's political culture could not assimilate the much more developed western parts of the country. The state restructuring problem revolved around the issue of Croatian sovereignty, which had become acute. The 1939 Cvetković-Maček agreement between Yugoslav prime minister *Dragiša Cvetković* and Croat politician *Vladko Maček* establishing the Banovina (province) of Croatia was a concession to growing Croat discontent, an effort to mollify the pro-autonomy movement in Croatia lest it grow into a separatist movement. The agreement immediately agitated the Serbs, who countered with demands that a Serbian banovina be set up on ethnic Serbian territories.

At the forefront of the criticism of the Croatian banovina was the Serbian Cultural Club, which viewed the agreement as an anti-Serbian deal that “left the Serbs in the Banovina of Croatia in such a frame of mind that they no longer feel at home there.”¹⁰ The club postulated that because “the Serbs were the chief architects of Yugoslavia,” the state “needs them more than ever before.” Such statements exemplified the attitude of Serbs toward the state:

9 In 1927, the brochure “Amputation” was circulated by Serbian nationalists, drawing a line of demarcation between Greater Serbia and Croatia running from Virovitica to the Adriatic sea by way of Grbišno Polje, Sisak, Karlovac and the River Kupa, and leaving the Croats a stretch of the littoral from Bakar to Rijeka.

10 *Srpski glas*, No. 16, February 29, 1940.

Unlike Croats, the Serbs had a “husbandlike attitude towards the state” and “the state and the concerns of the state were foremost” in their minds. This difference in attitude was attributed to a difference in culture: Serbian culture bore “an epic, heroic, historic stamp,” whereas Croat culture was

*quotidian, accommodative, made up of folklore and of an international material heritage; they [Croats] glorify, celebrate in verse, delineate and dwell upon everyday occurrences such as birth, marriage, death, harvest, ploughing and the joys and mishaps associated with their daily work and merriment. So if one is to have a state, the Serb attitude must prevail. The propensity towards compromise which characterizes the Croats is not a trait of independent peoples such as the Serbs. ... The Serbs want a strong state that rises above individual interests to make sure that Serb interests as a whole are not trampled upon.*¹¹

The choice of the lands incorporated into the Banovina of Croatia also provoked strong objections. The inclusion of Dalmatia in the Banovina of Croatia was seen as a direct threat to the Serbs. Dalmatia—or, more specifically, access to the seas off the Adriatic coast—was and remains a major aspiration of Serbian nationalists: “without a Serb Dalmatia there can be no strong Serbdom.”¹²

Because the Croats were preoccupied with their banovina, the Serbs’ task became that of taking care of the “state as a whole.” The Serbs would “combine their forces to defend what is ours.” (A minority of Serbian nationalists were more accommodating. Slobodan Jovanović, for instance, urged greater awareness among Serbs that “there can be no Yugoslavia without a community with the Croats” because the state could not be held together by the government

11 *Srpski glas*, No. 15, February 22, 1940.

12 *Srpski glas*, No. 23, April 18, 1940.

and the administrative apparatus alone, but only by “Serb nationalism combined with Croat nationalism.”¹³

In response to the Cvetković–Maček agreement, Stevan Moljević, a lawyer from Banja Luka and a prominent adviser to Chetnik leader Draža Mihailović, argued for the creation of an ethnically homogeneous Serbia to encompass the entire ethnic space inhabited by Serbs.¹⁴ The frontiers of the Serbian state as defined by Moljević were almost identical to those of Yugoslavia, leaving out only Slovenia and parts of Croatia (around Zagreb and in Istria). This project became the official political program of Draža Mihailović, leader of the Chetnik movement founded in 1941 from remnants of the Yugoslav Army defeated by Germany in April of that year. On December 20, 1941, Mihailović sent instructions to the commanders of the Chetnik detachments, ordering them to “cleanse the state territory of all national minorities and non-national elements.”¹⁵ In effect, this was the implementation of the Moljević program. The idea was resurrected forty years later in a document that became known as “the Memorandum” and that helped set the stage for the wars of the 1990s.

TITO'S YUGOSLAVIA

World War II and Its Aftermath

The 1941 occupation of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers, the establishment of the Independent Fascist State of Croatia, and the installation of a puppet regime in Serbia gave rise to an anti-Fascist movement with the Communist Party at its head. Serbs and Croats strove to realize their respective nation-states by relying on the

13 Slobodan Jovanović's lecture at the Serbian Cultural Club, *Srpski glas*, no. 4, December 7, 1939.

14 Stevan Moljević, “Homogeneous Serbia” (1941). Reproduced in *Srpski nacionalni program*, DMP and Grafomark, Belgrade, 2000, p. 57.

15 Mirsad Abazović, *Kadrovski rat za BiH*, Savez logorasa BiH, CID, Sarajevo, 1999.

Chetnik¹⁶ and Ustasha¹⁷ movements, both of which committed genocide—the Ustashas against Serbs, Roma, and Jews in Croatia and parts of Bosnia; the Chetniks against Muslims in eastern Bosnia (the scene of another Serbian genocide in 1992–95) and Croats.

The decision to revive Yugoslavia was taken at the first session of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in 1942; the settlement of the national question was crucial for reintegration of the country. The second AVNOJ session, held the next year, reaffirmed the process of federal institutionalization of Yugoslavia. On the basis of these preliminary deliberations on how to organize the country, the AVNOJ presidency set up a committee in June 1945 to determine a boundary between Vojvodina (a province in the north of Serbia) and Croatia; a law on the administrative division of Serbia was passed that September.

With the Communist Party at its head, the People's Liberation Movement (the political incarnation of the Partisan resistance movement) brought together all Yugoslav peoples and united them in the second Yugoslavia organized on a federal principle. This anti-Fascist movement, along with that in Albania, was unusual in that it was not created by Soviet Russia. Yugoslavia became

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- 16 The Chetniks first appeared in Macedonia in the first half of the nineteenth century as fighters against Ottoman rule and were especially active in the wake of the Serbo-Turkish War of 1886–88. They became less active after the creation of the Balkan League in 1912. They fought during World War I and afterwards set up an association fostering Chetnik traditions. The movement was then headed by Kosta Pećanac, who later threw his weight behind the quisling forces of occupation. At the head of the movement stood Draža Mihailović, minister of war of the government exiled in London. In 1941, he broke off the short-lived cooperation with the partisans and raised the slogan of “the time is not ripe yet.” Their goal was an ethnic state (i.e., a Greater Serbia) and genocide of Muslims and Croats.
- 17 A Croatian ultranationalist, fascist, and Roman Catholic organization created in 1929, following the imposition of dictatorship within Yugoslavia. From 1933, the Ustasha operated abroad, with headquarters in Italy and training camps in Hungary, and proclaimed the goal of an independent Croatian state. From 1935 onwards they began terrorist operations within Yugoslavia. On April 10, 1941, they proclaimed the Independent State of Croatia (NDH)—a puppet state of Nazi Germany—set up concentration camps and carried out reprisals against the Serb population, Jews, and anti-fascists. The largest of these camps was at Jasenovac, where some 80,000 people were killed.

a supranational substitute for all the national identities that had inflicted such deep wounds on one another in the recent past. The Communists sought to abolish the separate national myths and create a new one of “Brotherhood and Unity,” a slogan that had tremendous appeal in a country ravaged by war and that focused the people’s attention on the reconstruction of the country. The World War II defeat of the Chetnik movement was only a temporary setback for Serbian nationalism, however. The Serbian national identity found expression in Yugoslavism—albeit a Yugoslavism that the Serbs insisted should be dominated by the Serbian code.

Although Yugoslavia’s constitution of 1946 established a federal organization of six republics, the ideological and one-party character of Yugoslavia imposed in practice a state centralism that gave rise to a “supranational hegemonic bureaucracy that sought to establish its foothold in the most numerous nation.”¹⁸ The constitution was modeled after the Soviet Constitution—that is, a one-party state with a strong central government that relied on the Army as the mainstay of its legitimacy as well as the guarantor of its survival. The Army became so powerful that it was commonly referred to as the “seventh republic.” Its importance and role as arbiter in domestic affairs were enhanced by Yugoslavia’s unique position in the international arena.

Determined to find its own path to Socialism, in 1948 Yugoslavia officially broke with the Soviet Union.¹⁹ This split dealt a serious blow to the monolithic Communist bloc, the first visible sign that the system was not functioning, and causing the West to view Yugoslavia

18 Latinka Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga – ishod rascepa 1970/71* (The closing of the circle), Svijetlost, Sarajevo, 1991.

19 On June 28, 1948, the Comintern adopted a resolution in Bucharest condemning the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the name of European Communist parties led by the Communist Party of the USSR. The conflict was about prestige and ideology, namely, whether the Comintern and Stalin himself would dictate the foreign and domestic policies of all countries belonging to the Socialist camp and whether Yugoslavia was entitled to its own “national road to socialism.” The clash was triggered by Tito’s aspiration to chart an independent foreign course especially vis-à-vis the “Balkan peoples’ democracies.”

and its leader, Josip Broz Tito, with increasing interest. In 1952, the Yugoslav Communist Party was renamed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), adopting a policy of worker self-management that was sometimes called “Titoism.” The unifying role of the party, its ideology, and Tito helped diminish resistance to modernization.

The split with USSR had its impact on the Serbian elite. A number of those who took the side of Stalin in this conflict (mostly Serbs and Montenegrins) were sent to Goli Otok concentration camp in the Adriatic. Some historians refer to 1948 as the beginning of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.²⁰

A tide of change began to sweep over the entire Soviet bloc after Nikita Khrushchev delivered his “secret speech” denouncing Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956. Amid political relaxation, people began to talk about the repressive measures carried out under Stalin and the responsibility of individual Communists for the silencing of all dissent and the construction of a vast network of *gulags*. Even though Khrushchev was forced to blunt de-Stalinization in the face of resistance from Soviet bureaucrats, he succeeded in reducing the role and importance of the Communist leader.²¹ There was to be no going back. The dismantling of the Stalin legacy was under way and the Party would no longer exercise total control over the ideological and spiritual life of Soviet society.

Following the ideological break with the USSR, Soviet internationalism was replaced by “Yugoslav socialism.” State power, concentrated in the hands of the federal leadership, gradually assumed democratic forms through communes, which enabled citizens to manage their daily affairs. The relationship between the federation and the commune, and between the republic and the province,

20 For instance, Milorad Ekmečić in an interview with *Nedeljni telegraf* in 1998, 20 May 1998 said that 1948 was the beginning of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

21 Aleksandar Jakovljević, *U vrtlogu sećanja* (In a whirlwind of remembrances), (Belgrade: Forum pisaca, 2000)

stagnated until the mid-1960s. This socialist version of Yugoslavism was being developed for the purpose of keeping national exclusiveness at bay. The dominant idea at the time was that Yugoslavia would develop from a federation of republics into a federation of communes.

Between 1961 and 1962, a lengthy and public debate erupted about national identities. On one side of the debate was Dobrica Ćosić, a strong supporter of Tito at the time and a man who would become the most influential Serbian nationalist of his generation. Ćosić argued for a stronger role for the federal authorities and closer cultural cooperation between institutions throughout Yugoslavia. On the other side, Dušan Pirjevec,²² a writer from Slovenia, pressed for greater decentralization and local autonomy.

Because Yugoslavia increasingly fostered certain features of a market economy as a result of its ties with the West while simultaneously retaining many characteristics of the Soviet model, it became the chief lever of international Socialist power. Unrelenting pressure from the Soviet Union, which kept a vigilant eye on Yugoslav developments and made frequent threats, forced the Yugoslav leadership to create a specific model for Socialist economic development. The concept of self-management by workers led to structural changes in Yugoslav society, albeit under the umbrella of the state—in fact, the concept of self-management marked the start of the democratization of Yugoslav society.

In the first postwar years, the nationalization of industry, transport, commerce, and banking, along with agrarian reform and the new political organization of society, had created an institutional

22 Pirjevec objected to the view that socialist Yugoslavism was a prelude to a supra-national integration, with the Slovenes and Macedonians being the first to be fused into a Serb-Croat linguistic community. Socialist Yugoslavism as a supranational integration, he argued, was completely unnecessary given that all nations were directly integrating into world processes. For this reason, he said, there was no need for the Slovenes to integrate into mankind through such Yugoslavism. It was published in the Slovenian journal *Naša sodobnost*.

framework for the massive mobilization of labor and increases in production. The key role the Yugoslav state played in the process of accelerated industrialization reinforced its position in the new social structure. Industrialization triggered migration from rural areas to towns, first within republics and then toward the more developed republics in the west of the country.²³

In 1963, the country officially changed its name to the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Internal pressure in favor of decentralization resulted in the adoption of a new constitution, popularly referred to as the “self-management charter” because it introduced self-management in all spheres and at all levels.

The issue of the interdependence of national and economic relations came into sharp focus at the Eighth Congress of the LCY in 1964, which placed the intercommunal dynamic within the context of economics. In view of the different levels of development in the republics, the question of economic sovereignty was at the forefront of the congress’s deliberations, bringing to the surface all the contradictions between “a decentralized and democratic society and a centralist party.”²⁴

The debate at the Eighth Congress yielded guidelines for economic reform launched in the mid-sixties, the goals being changes in the system of production and the convertibility of the dinar. The reform soon encountered difficulties and provoked fears that the Socialist model was being abandoned and that social differences would deepen. The fact that the LCY both initiated every change and stuck to its political monopoly nullified the attempted reforms. Even Tito found it necessary to point out that some people were confusing “the unity of the people with the liquidation of nations and the

23 In the 1960s, the growth rate fell and unemployment rose to about one million. The unwillingness of Yugoslavia’s leaders to renounce the political monopoly of the economy led to solutions that only temporarily mitigated the economic crisis, and some three hundred thousand workers and experts emigrated to the West.

24 Latinka Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga*, p. 37.

creation of something new and artificial, that is, of a uniform Yugoslav nation, which smacks a little of assimilation and bureaucratic centralization, of unitarianism and hegemonism.”²⁵ In his memoirs, Mihajlo Marković, a professor of philosophy at the University of Belgrade in the 1960s and later an ideologue of Milošević’s Socialist Party, accuses Tito of preventing the creation of a Yugoslav nation. He quotes Tito’s comment at the Eighth Congress: “to be a Yugoslav means only to be a citizen of the SFRY.”²⁶

Monumental Changes: 1966

Conflicts within the political establishment began to occur with increasing frequency. The Brioni Plenum in 1966 and the dismissal of vice president and State Security Service chief Aleksandar Ranković marked a break with the unitary-state concept espoused by the LCY. Because Serbian nationalists believed that a centralized Yugoslavia was the path to Serbian dominance, they viewed Ranković’s downfall as a threat to a unitary Yugoslavia. Accordingly, they organized themselves to find a successor to Tito.

Dobrica Ćosić, who identified himself with a unitary Yugoslavia, wrote the following in a letter to Tito on June 28, 1966: “Ready to suffer every possible consequence, I wish to assure you of this: The political downfall and ruin of Aleksandar Ranković has set into motion in Serbia a process of moral, political, national disintegration and caused a rift that our generation will find hard to bear and overcome morally. After such a downfall and ruin of Aleksandar Ranković, I fear that Tito will no longer be the Tito he was, nor will the LCY be what the world believes it to be in the avant-garde renaissance of Socialism and in the overcoming of all that makes up the Stalinist epoch.” Ćosić warned Tito that the peasants were on the side of Ranković, that the Serbian people were loyal to him, and that

25 Quoted in Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga*, 37

26 Mihajlo Marković, *Juriš na nebo*, (Beograd; Prosveta, 2008).

they considered him “the incarnation of Serbdom, a man bidden by history to personalize politically this age and state. ... [T]hey respect him because they believe him to be the state symbol of Serbia.”²⁷

Croatian politician Branko Horvat described the Brioni Plenum’s dismissal of Ranković and ensuing crackdown on the State Security Service as the “formal beginning of our third revolution,” the first, in his opinion, having taken place in 1941 and the second in 1948 (the break with the Soviet Union). Parallel with this development was a gradual shift toward the concept of a republican statehood in response to the centralist and unitarian tendencies. The Brioni Plenum made it possible to embark on processes that galvanized the whole of Yugoslavia, including Serbia, and sharpened the clash between the LCY’s conservative and reformist wings. The articulation of demands to democratize the country coincided with increasing manifestations of the problem of intercommunal relations in the wider Yugoslav context, for the national “emancipation” (the process of national profiling of Macedonians, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Croats, and Slovenes) had raised the question of the character of Yugoslavia in all respects, especially economic.

The political demise of Ranković created a political climate that encouraged national movements throughout the country, including an awakening of the ethnic Albanian population. Democratic forces in Serbia capitalized on the Brioni Plenum to push through major decisions concerning the political system, especially the role and character of the State Security Service, and to transform the LCY. Even the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia sharply criticized the work of the State Security Service in Kosovo as a “drastic example of chauvinistic practice”—that is, of favoring Serbs at the expense of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

However, Ranković’s dismissal and the reaction in Serbia to the move were the first signs of a clash between two different concepts in

27 Dobrica Ćosić, *Piščevi zapisi 1951–1968* (A writer’s notes), (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2000) p 263.

Serbia itself, both within the Communist movement and outside it. The conflict revolved around the attitude of the League of Communists to democracy, the national question, and the character of the Yugoslav state.

Although the demand for changes in the federation seemed almost universal—the major exception being the nationalistic Serbs—reforms, especially comprehensive reforms, quickly ran into obstacles such as personal empowerment, the LCY's political monopoly, the ideological strength of social egalitarianism, and state centralism.

Attempts at Reform: 1968–74

In the aftermath of the Brioni Plenum, the sense of national self-identity surged in Yugoslavia. The relaxation of repression in Kosovo led to Albanian student demonstrations in support of republican status for the province in Pristina in 1968. The demonstrations spread to other towns in Kosovo and Macedonia. A result of the changing worldview was the acknowledgement of the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo, which was reflected in the composition of the government (the percentage of ethnic Albanians increased from 61 percent in 1961 to 73.7 percent in 1971). Ethnic Albanian party members educated in the Albanian language in schools opened after the war began to appear on the scene and Kosovo Albanians' ties with Albania intensified. Their dialect was standardized to conform to literary Albanian in use in Tirana, and their collective name—Shqiptar—was changed to “Albanian” in official Yugoslav use. In 1968, special organs of the League of Communists of Serbia were established for Vojvodina and Kosovo. These changes in the cultural sphere were reflected in the 1974 Constitution, which affirmed the autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo, the latter's name being changed from Kosovo and Metohija.

At the same time, a massive political movement was taking shape in Croatia in response to the collapse of the 1965 economic reforms. The Croats insisted that economic stagnation could be solved only by strictly controlling the distribution of foreign exchange among the republics and putting all the republics' books in order, which would enable each republic to know how much it was paying into the state coffers and what it was receiving in return. The Slovenes, too, pressed for greater economic independence, raising the issue of financing the construction of interrepublican highways in their state. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, a similar push for increased independence led in 1968 to the League of Communists proclaiming the Muslims a "separate nation," a move designed to counteract pressure from Serbia and Croatia for Muslims to declare themselves Serbs or Croats. Nationalist sentiments were also stirring in other parts of Yugoslavia, with debates about the status of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (Orthodox churches are national and therefore identified with the state) and the distinctiveness of Montenegrin culture prompting Serbian nationalists to deny that either republic was a nation.

Serbia itself was also affected by the process of self-awareness, though there was considerable ambivalence regarding the increasingly vociferous demands for decentralization. This ambivalence was the outgrowth of the Serbs' perception of the character of the Yugoslav Federation, which, according to most members of the Serbian political establishment, could only be "unitary and centralist." However, in that period of dynamism in Yugoslavia, a liberal and a nationalistic tendency crystallized in Serbia. The liberals who appeared on the scene in 1969–72 were the first political elite who understood the significance of a true federation and the equality of nations in a multinational state. The fact that republican leaderships were raising the question of national sovereignty was proof,

contended the liberals, that attempts to handle the national issue through centralism would only aggravate nationalist discontent.

The debate on amendments to the constitution led to a discussion in Serbia on the rights of the autonomous provinces within Serbia and the federal state. Liberals were aware that the Albanian issue in Kosovo required a permanent solution to prevent the increasing radicalization of Albanian nationalism. The differences between the two Albanian camps—one envisioning Kosovo as a republic within Yugoslavia, the other insisting on secession—were deepening amid opposition to solving the problem of ethnic Albanians' rights. The challenge to the province's status within the federation elicited a negative Albanian reaction. Fadil Hoxha, Kosovo's representative on the Executive Bureau of the LCY Presidency, stressed that "no one has demanded that Kosovo should become a republic, nor that it should be outside Serbia."²⁸

The liberals were aware that the issue of Vojvodina called for a solution outside the centralist matrix because of the province's history. (Until it became part of the Kingdom of Serbia in 1918, Vojvodina had been part of Hungary for some nine hundred years. It had a substantial minority population—including half a million Hungarians in the aftermath of World War II—but enjoyed only a limited degree of autonomy prior to the 1974 Constitution.) Although this position was bitterly opposed in Serbia, amendments calling for a change in the province's status to "Socialist autonomous province" and altering the principle of its organization (so that it became part of the Yugoslav federation) were nevertheless adopted.

The liberals were resolute opponents of Serbian imperial nationalism, their program being based on the more independent position of Serbia from Yugoslavia and federal institutions. They were noted for their advocacy of a "modern Serbia" concentrating on

28 Quoted in Latinka Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga* (Closing the Circle), (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991) p.175

economic advancement. Being profoundly reform-minded, the liberals urged the relaxation of the party's control of the economy and the appointment of young, educated cadres. What set them apart from the dominant political orientation in Serbia was their attempt to end the identification of Serbia with Yugoslavia and the equation of Serbian identity with Yugoslav identity (i.e., they wished to disabuse the Serbs of the "burden of Yugoslavhood"). Latinka Perović, the secretary-general of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, stressed that "Yugoslavia is the best means of achieving Socialism and the national progress of each people" and that "the Yugoslav state does not exist by itself—that is, the Federation does not exist independently of the republics." She also espoused a "linguistic decentralization."²⁹ The liberals did not want Serbia to play the role of "defender of Yugoslavia," especially after the Croat national movement gained momentum. They believed that the unification of Serbs would not solve the Serbian problem, so they focused their efforts on creating a program centered on Serbia as a republic rather than on the Serbian people. With the benefit of hindsight, one can argue that such a program might have helped Yugoslavia to break up in a peaceful fashion.³⁰

The liberal effort to define Serbia's national program went beyond the traditional dilemma of Serbianhood or Yugoslavism and was ultimately incorporated in the 1974 Constitution. The Serbian liberals' main idea was that Serbia's graduation to a modern state depended on ending Serbia's identification with Yugoslavia—in short, they sought to emancipate Serbia from Yugoslavia. They took the position that centralism was not in the interest of Serbia because it was an exhausted concept—Yugoslavia was legitimate only as an institutional agreement of mutual interests.

Perović explained the liberals' position in the following way:

29 Latinka Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga*, p.313.

30 *Ibid.* p.165

Given the ingrained view within the Serbian population that Yugoslavia was primarily the state of the Serb nation, and given that the forces of centralism had always looked to Serbia for support, we believed that it was necessary continuously to offer proofs to the other nations that there was another conception of Yugoslavia in Serbia. This was not a question of our generosity, but of our own democratic need. It was necessary to persuade the Serbian population that centralism was contrary also to Serb national interests, and that equal responsibility of all nations for common affairs was a condition for the existence of both socialist democracy and Yugoslavia's unity. This is why the central committee of the Serbian League of Communists agreed on 26 December 1968 to support the constitutional changes.³¹

The process of decentralization that the liberals promoted was to culminate in the far-reaching changes to Yugoslavia's constitution adopted in 1974. But the liberals were no longer in positions of power when those changes occurred. In 1972, liberal leaderships throughout Yugoslavia—including in Serbia—were ousted by a variety of conservative and nationalistic forces, including the Army, the Communist Party, students, and intellectuals. Conservatives in Serbia rejected the liberals' national program, opening the way for organized intellectual circles that called for an all-Serbian policy as the only alternative. Paradoxically, with the constitutional change in 1974, the liberals' fate was sealed—under liberal auspices and in the atmosphere of freedom, the Serbian nationalistic agenda was consolidated.³²

After their removal from the political scene, the liberals were passed over in silence. In the words of Ivo Banac,³³ a Croatian

31 Ibid. p.93

32 Olga Popović-Obradović, *Srpski liberali 1969–1972* (Serbian Liberals 1969 – 1972) na Okruglom stolu lista *Ekonomist* (Round Table organized by the weekly magazine *Economist*), www.heslinki.org.rs

33 Widely known for his book, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press (1984)

historian: “In 1972 in Serbia, and in Serbia alone, this silence was part of a drive to cleanse the Communist movement of internal differences in order to prove that its integral nationalism had no alternative. This, after all, has been the fate of liberal traditions in Serbia from the nineteenth century to the present day.”³⁴

The new dynamic of Yugoslav society was manifested most strikingly in the sphere of culture. The authorities refrained from prescribing what ought and what ought not to be done and intervened only when a political taboo was being broken. In such an atmosphere of tolerance, “ideological judgments and interventions did not strike at the roots of creative work.”³⁵ Individualization and creative endeavor were permitted.

Amid recession, economists debated what road to choose, the prevailing opinion being that a free market would increase the gap between rich and poor. Serbian economists were particularly worried by a tendency toward modifying the relationship between the Yugoslav Federation and the republics. While the philosopher Ljuba Tadić tried to prove that the establishment of “market-oriented Socialism” was impossible, Croat and Slovene economists and politicians believed that decentralization would give greater freedom to economic initiative.

Accumulating problems, especially economic ones, amid the relaxation of party control led to demands for substantial change. Student demonstrations became particularly important. Student protests in Yugoslavia were strongly influenced by trends abroad, especially in France, the United States, Italy, and Germany. Students revolted in response to economic problems, above all unemployment, and demanded the democratization of political life. They criticized social inequalities and society’s stratification, as well as

34 Ivo Banac, *Raspad Jugoslavije*, (The Dissolution of Yugoslavia) (Zagreb: Durieux, 2001) p. 30.

35 Nebojša Popov, *Sukobi, društveni sukobi/lzazov sociologiji* (Conflicts, social conflicts/a challenge to sociology) (Belgrade: Centarfdt, 1990), 114.

capitalism and the market economy. Serbia was the chief proponent of a command economy. In 1964–68, Praxis, a group of professors from Belgrade University’s Faculty of Philosophy (including Miha-jlo Marković, Ljubomir Tadić, and Svetozar Stojanović), couched the students’ demands in theoretical terms in their journal *Praxis*.³⁶ These included the development of self-government (albeit without decentralization), equality of the forms of property ownership, a well-regulated market economy, maximum social security guarantees, and support for science, art, and culture.

However, the students’ momentum was exploited by “highly organized forces whose aim was to arrest the developments set in motion by the ongoing economic and social reform and the reorganization of the LCY.”³⁷ While the reform-minded forces tried to capitalize on the student demonstrations, the dogmatic and centralist camp was bent on achieving the opposite. Milentije Popović, president of the Federal Assembly of Yugoslavia between 1967 and 1971, saw the two-sided importance of the demonstrations: “There are still people who cannot distinguish between the dissatisfaction of the students with some phenomena and the reactionary political conspiracy behind that.”³⁸

Svetozar Stojanović, a philosopher and a member of the Praxis group, described the student movement in Belgrade, in the September/December 1968 issue of *Praxis* in the following words:

The action program of the Belgrade students in June 1968 was identical to the ideas of the Praxis group. All the people associated with Praxis took an active part in the June events and the largest portion of them were expelled from the Party organization because of this activity.

36 According to Mihajlo Marković, the journal *Praxis* was founded with the idea that “as committed and responsible intellectuals, we should investigate the crisis, and as philosophers to identify its underlying causes and explore possibilities for its practical resolution.” See his memoirs *Juriš na nebo*, Prosveta, 2008, p. 40.

37 Latinka Perović. *Zatvaranje kruga*, Svijetlost, Sarajevo, 1991. p.54.

38 *Ibid.*, 63.

The party organization is constantly trying to isolate the Praxis group, keeping it away from all mass media. It has not, however, succeeded in isolating it from students.

Throughout Yugoslavia the reforms brought to the surface a new political generation but as Vlado Gotovac, a Croatian writer, pointed out, this was a “generation without credit, without proof of loyalty earned in battle, without the discipline” of their elders. The attempt of this new generation to put the liberties proclaimed by Socialism to the test was frustrated by the war generation, which derived its legitimacy from its heroic struggle. Thus “life in all its spheres remained the purview of one generation,” which, instead of “immediately devolving its historic responsibility on the youth, strove to preserve its elasticity.”³⁹

THE DECENTRALIZATION OF YUGOSLAVIA AND THE RISE OF SERBIAN NATIONALISM

Constitutional Reform

For more than three quarters of a century, the Yugoslav people searched for a formula that would guarantee the equality and integration of all. Yet the attempt to define Yugoslavia through a federal structure without ensuring political democracy and economic liberties was the cause of the country’s ultimate disintegration.

The decisions made by AVNOJ led to the 1946 Constitution, which called for a federal organization based on the right to self-determination for the six constituent republics and was modeled on the Soviet Constitution of 1936. The subsequent constitutions (1953, 1963, and 1974) and their amendments (1967, 1968, 1971, and 1981) further refined the concept of “self-management” to reflect changing socio-political and politico-cultural developments.

39 Vlado Gotovac, *Moj slučaj* (My case), Cankarjeva založba Ljubljana-Zagreb, 1989, p. 9.

In the first postwar years, the federal formula seemed to work; the national question appeared to have been solved by the one-party structure, led by Tito, which reconciled opposing national interests. But though Tito tried to neutralize national conflicts by introducing a supranational sovereignty, he failed to prevent their recurrence in the long run.

Because the Yugoslav Federation—even in its loosest form, in the early 1970s—was subject to arbitration by the federal leadership, individualism and nationalism were always limited. The economic and political system was unable to provide a sufficiently sound base for genuine and permanent economic, political, and cultural integration within Yugoslavia. Although the end of the one-party system at the end of the 1980s was greeted by the different Yugoslav peoples as the beginning of the affirmation of their statehood, society lacked a sound foundation and institutions that could hold those peoples together.

The constitutional amendments of 1971 and the debates surrounding them marked a turning point in the attitude of the Serbian political elite. Serbia was dissatisfied with the direction in which the country was drifting. The conservative forces, notably the dogmatic structures within the party and nationalist circles, saw the dismissal of Aleksandar Ranković in 1966 and the subsequent trend toward greater decentralization as a threat to Serbian interests. Discussions held at Belgrade University's Faculty of Law in 1971 were the precursor of, as well as the framework for, all that followed.

A group of professors headed by Mihajlo Đurić put forward the platform of the Serbian national program. They viewed the prospect of the confederalization of Yugoslavia as a plot to break up the Serbian people and argued that Serbia's boundaries were "neither national nor historical borders" and that the "boundaries of all the republics were more of an administrative than a political nature." Đurić insisted that recognition of such boundaries as state borders

was arbitrary and untenable, and he argued that “with perhaps the exception of Slovenia, the boundaries of no republic in Yugoslavia are adequate, especially not those of Serbia.” In the event of a break-up, the Serbian people would continue to live in four to five republics, but in none of them would they be “able to live their own lives.”⁴⁰

Not only did the Faculty of Law professors challenge the federal character of Yugoslavia, they also formulated the objectives of the “anti-bureaucratic revolution” of 1989 that threw Yugoslavia into a bloody war. Vojislav Koštunica and Kosta Čavoški, lecturers at the Faculty of Law, were actively involved in promoting the Serbian national program for decades.

The democratic trends that were emerging in the Yugoslav republics corresponded to similar developments in Eastern Europe, especially in Czechoslovakia, as well as in the Soviet Union. In the case of Yugoslavia, these developments were mostly in response to economic stagnation and in support of demands for economic liberalization. Slovenia and Croatia were in the forefront of the drive for greater economic decentralization and for putting the country’s accounts in order. The federal leadership was quick to react, not only to preserve its own position, but also because it was under pressure from the Soviet Union and from conservative forces—including the party and the Yugoslav People’s Army (YPA). Having been branded as Ustashist and separatist, the Croat mass movement was harshly crushed in 1971, with around three thousand people being imprisoned; in Serbia there were no arrests of liberals but around three thousand people were removed from their jobs in 1972.

The federal leadership’s crackdown in Croatia and Serbia could not have been possible without the support of the conservative and dogmatic segment of the Serbian party structures. The federal leadership had always relied on the conservative wing in the League of

40 *Pravni anali* (Legal records), Beograd, 1971, No 3, p.232

Communists of Serbia because both were in favor of centralism and unitarism. The 1972 sacking of liberal republican leaders marked the victory of the dogmatic wing in the party and reversed the liberal process. The internal rift never healed: the wave of liberalism made the 1974 Constitution possible.

The adoption of the 1974 Constitution was preceded by extensive public debate. The attitude of the Serbian elite toward other peoples began to be discussed openly. Once it became clear that the emancipation of the Yugoslav peoples could not be stopped, intercommunal tension within the LCY increased; this tension had set in during the 1960s, after Tito realized the danger of “creeping Serb predominance and opted for institutional innovations to ‘federalize the Federation,’ that is, to breathe some genuine federalism into the rhetorical formulas.” These innovations were forced by public pressure, though the hopes for a Greater Serbia did not diminish. Stipe Šuvar noted:

Greater Serbianism is alive in the endeavors to disprove the national individuality of the Montenegrin and Macedonian peoples, as well as the ethnic distinction of the Muslims, in the attempts to arrogate the cultural heritage not only of these peoples but also of the Croat people (as manifested in the attitude towards Dubrovnik and old Dubrovnik and Dalmatian literature), in the extraordinary, almost racist intolerance of the Albanian people and their settlement in Kosovo, in the striving to accentuate the supremacy of Serb national history and culture, in the laying claim to Bosnia-Herzegovina and to large parts of Croatia. ⁴¹

The 1974 Constitution could be called fundamentally undemocratic because it did not fully address all the accumulated problems of society. It also left the LCY enjoying a political monopoly. However, it identified many of them—especially economic ones, above

41 S. Šuvar, *Nacije i međunacionalni odnosi* (Nations and intercommunal relations), Naše teme, Zagreb, 1970.

all, those having to do with the market as a precondition to genuine democratic transformation. The constitution was key to the transformation of the country. A wing of Serbian Communists headed by Marko Nikezić and Latinka Perović recognized the essence of the federal option for the future of Yugoslavia, and therefore also of Serbia, and took part in the formulation of amendments to the 1974 Constitution.

The federalization of Serbia under the 1974 Constitution reflected different historical and national legacies, political cultures, and modes of economic development. The 1974 Constitution was forced through by the republican and provincial establishments, although, paradoxically, the proponents of these changes were soon replaced. The departure of these fundamentally liberal party members meant victory for the conservative wing and the nationalist opposition.

The replacement of the liberals was partly the result of pressure from the Soviet Union, whose attitude toward Yugoslavia was very aggressive. The Soviet Union dreaded the possibility that the Yugoslav Communist model might gain support in the Soviet Union. The Soviets, who were keenly aware of Yugoslavia's weaknesses, particularly in the national sphere, tried to enhance their presence in Yugoslavia, especially in the structures opposing decentralization—that is, in the YPA and other strongholds in Serbia and in other republics.

The Aftermath

Many in Serbia saw the new constitution as a signal to Serbs to fight for their “dangerously imperiled national identity and integrity, which is the basic precondition of their further historical self-preservation.”⁴² Serbian nationalists elaborated on the thesis that for the Serbian people there was no possibility of a life with others; they could not use the Cyrillic script in Bosnia-Herzegovina and they had no right to their own name in Montenegro. Although the Serbs

42 *Pravi anali, (Legal Records) Beograd, 1971.No. 3*

cared about their life with the other Yugoslav peoples—with whom they had a common history—the argument ran, they must divest themselves of each other in order to “think of their survival.” The discussion of amendments to the 1974 Constitution raised the question of “historical accountability to the Serb people” and threw into focus matters of the utmost importance (e.g., the question of Serbia’s “identity and integrity, that is, the question of its unification under international law”).⁴³ The 1974 Constitution was clearly a pretext to raise the Serbian national issue on what Professor Radoslav Stojanović termed “the objective fact that nations tend towards their unity.” “Serb nationalism hoisted its banner when Serbia was confined within the Pashalik of Belgrade, so another reduction of Serbia to a Belgrade pashalik will rekindle Serb nationalism.”⁴⁴

The last decade of Tito’s rule was characterized by the domination of Yugoslavia by the YPA, which exercised its constitutional role as the guarantor of Yugoslavia’s integrity—with the 1974 Constitution, the YPA was invested with a capacity to impose law and order if necessary. Yet the YPA, which was assigned a major role in the defense of the country under the system of Territorial Defense (adopted in response to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia), was opposed to the confederation of Yugoslavia and the creation of republic-states as outlined in the 1974 Constitution. The attitude of the YPA toward the 1974 Constitution became similar to attitudes prevailing in Serbia.

Tito had consented to the 1974 Constitution because he believed that he still had the main say in any arbitration; he believed his most effective tool was the YPA, which could be used to quash dissenting opinion or behavior. In addition, Tito’s insistence that the LCY was a cohesive factor in Yugoslavia prevented the country from becoming a true federation in spite of the normative changes made to that effect.

43 *Pravni anali* (Legal records), Beograd, 1971, No. 3, p. 232.

44 *Ibid.* p. 266.

The Serbs' view of the 1974 Constitution influenced their behavior during the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Most Serbs believe that the constitution destroyed the unity of Serbia, was the cause of many problems in Serbia, and led to the break-up of Yugoslavia. In the opinion of most Serbs, the fact that the constitution established the republics as states rendered the possibility of a solution to the Serbian national question remote. Having decided that the 1974 Constitution marked the beginning of the end of Yugoslavia as they saw it (i.e., an extended Serbia), Serbia's elite set about reviving the "Kosovo myth"—the belief that the Serbian defeat at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and the consequent long period of slavery under the Turks must be avenged by ousting Muslims from Kosovo and restoring the territory to its rightful owner, Serbia. The myth rallied the Serbs politically, just as it had at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Ćosić Emerges

Any discussion of constitutional amendments brought to the surface contradictions within the LCY in spite of its commitment to democratization. In Serbia, a segment of the humanist intelligentsia headed by Dobrica Ćosić was preoccupied by the national question. Disappointed by the collapse of the unitary Yugoslavia concept and of integral Yugoslavhood, as well as by the 1966 departure of Ranković as a symbol of such a Yugoslavia, Ćosić ceased being a Communist devotee and principal proponent of Yugoslavhood to become the champion of the Serbian national question. He was also disturbed by the fact that the Yugoslav republics were growing in power.

Ćosić played a specific part that enabled him to say things Serbian nationalists in the party felt but could not or did not want to say. He also acted as go-between between the political leaders and the nationally oriented intellectuals who had never accepted Yugoslavia as a feasible community.⁴⁵

45 Latinka Perović in *Snaga lične odgovornosti*, (The Power of the Individual Responsibility), grupa

While serving as a member of the Serbian LCY Central Committee in the late 1960s, and wielding considerable influence both within the party and outside it, Čosić was the first to publicly oppose “Albanian nationalism,” which consisted of demands for greater equality for Yugoslavia’s ethnic Albanians. At the fourteenth session of the League of Communists of Serbia Central Committee, Čosić challenged the fundamentals of the party’s national policy. This marked the beginning of the switch from Yugoslavism to the advocacy of Serbian unity. Čosić and the historian Jovan Marjanović impugned Albanian demands as a manifestation of nationalism, Albanian centralism, separatism, and anti-Serbdom; they were expelled from the Central Committee in May 1968.

Čosić advanced the thesis that ethnic Albanians as a nation had the right to unite and should be supported to that end. Aware that Serbia was no longer able to keep Kosovo under its control, he argued that Serbs had the same right; he suggested that a division of Kosovo would be the best solution for Serbia. Čosić believed that Serbia should be content with the acquisition of Vojvodina and that it had no demographic potential to hold its own against the ethnic Albanian population’s explosion in Kosovo.

Following his 1968 expulsion from the Serbian LCY Central Committee, Čosić firmly embraced the nationalists to become the chief middleman between the nationalists and the dogmatic wing in the party. The Serbian Literary Society, which Čosić presided over in 1969–71, and the Praxis Movement threatened the existing regime and President Tito. These groups favored a nationalistic and/or dogmatic (Stalinist) attitude toward political developments in Yugoslavia.

The Serbian Literary Society became the bastion of the Serbian nationalist opposition, insisting that any major changes should be postponed until after Tito’s death in the hope of raising the Serbian question then without much of a problem. After becoming its

president, Čosić brought together many leading Serbian writers, scientists, philosophers, artists, and businessmen. He also helped established links with Prosvjeta, the Serbian cultural society in Croatia, and launched activities to achieve the “spiritual unity of the dismembered Serb nation.”⁴⁶

Čosić played a central role in Belgrade “dissident” groups: He was connected with the Faculty of Philosophy professors contributing to the periodical *Praxis*, participated in the seminars of the Serbian Philosophical Society, and attended sessions of the Free University. His connections with all kinds of personalities in the alternative scene added to his power and influence. His books were published without any opposition and he was admitted to the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) as a permanent member in 1977. His novels were influential in propagating the widespread belief that Serbian history was nothing but Serbian tragedy.

In his novels, particularly *Vreme Smrti*, Čosić elaborates on the concept of the Serbs’ tragic history, glorifies Serbian patriarchalism and agrarianism, and argues that the Serbs were the losers within the state framework of Yugoslavia. The thesis set out in *Vreme Smrti* became dominant in the formulation of the Serbian national program at the end of the twentieth century, concluding that, because the Serbian state was not strong enough to incorporate the territories in which Serbs lived alongside other people, the Serbs must expand their state in a northwesterly direction.⁴⁷

Upon his accession to SANU in 1977, Čosić said that the Yugoslav state was “essentially unfavorable for the Serbs” and observed that,

46 Mihajlo Marković, *Juriš na nebo*, str. 88

47 The disillusionment with Yugoslavia was couched in even stronger terms by Danko Popović in his novel *Knjiga o Milutinu* (*A Book About Milutin*), published in 1986, reprinted more than twenty times, and translated into many foreign languages. The publishing house L’Age d’Homme of Lausanne, owned by Vladimir Dimitrijević, was a major promoter of such books in the West. These books exerted significant influence on Western public opinion because, with the exception of Ivo Andrić, no translations of major works by Yugoslav authors existed at that time.

although the Serbs won wars, they lost out in peace. “How can a people so dignified, proud and great in war be so humble and obedient in peace?” he wondered.⁴⁸ Ćosić’s view of the Serbs’ plight in Yugoslavia was predominant. The subject was treated in many books, with the Jasenovac concentration camp in Croatia, where 80,914 people, among whom were 45,923 Serbs and 16,045 Roma were killed during World War II, becoming a potent symbol for the Serbs of their recent historical suffering and of the existential threat posed to them in Croatia.⁴⁹

The allegedly unfavorable situation of the Serbs was raised at the political level, where Petar Stambolić and Draža Marković were the chief advocates of the Serbian cause. A *Blue Book* calling for amending the 1974 Constitution was published in 1977, but it failed to secure support from other republics and the federal leadership.

POPULISM EMERGES

In the 1980s, the general mood in Serbia reverted to the heady goal of Serbia as a ethnic modern state, an image sustained by epic poetry, oral tradition, the Serbian Orthodox Church, political parties, and “all the elements of mass and elite nationalism” until it became “the people’s ideal.” As chief ideologue of the national project, Ćosić “never recognized the AVNOJ boundaries” and advocated a “plebiscite, along with the right of self-determination of peoples,” not republics.⁵⁰ According to Ćosić, the AVNOJ boundaries were “Communist, provisory, because they are unfounded (save in the case of Slovenia) either ethnically, or geo-politically, or

48 Dobrica Ćosić, *Pristupne akademijske besede* (Accession Speeches to the Academy), (Belgrade:Serbian Academy for Science and Arts, 1978) p.37, p. 131.

49 The data concerning the exact number of dead at Jasenovac comes from research conducted by Natasha Mataushich, Museum Adviser at the Croatian Historical Museum and President of Board at the Jasenovac Memorial; See Natasha Mataushich “Jasenovac 1941–1945, Logor smrti i radni logor, Jasenovac, Zagreb 2003

50 Interview with Ćosić in *Politika*, 21 January, 1991

economically, or communicationally.”⁵¹ Ćosić insisted on the “democratic principle of self-determination and a peaceful parting of the ways” and on equal rights for the Serbs in Croatia.⁵² He was prepared to “grant the same rights to the Shqiptars [i.e., ethnic Albanians] in Kosovo” because he considered the principle universal.⁵³ Ćosić’s formulation of the right of self-determination carried the seed of conflict because, in his view, Serbs would be able to exercise their right of self-determination six times: in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, and, of course, Serbia.

However, the economic situation was unfavorable for reform and Yugoslav politicians did their best to maintain the status quo. For the first time, Yugoslavia faced serious problems in servicing its external debt of US\$20 billion as well as its internal debt. Prime Minister Milka Planinc’s attempts to start reforms failed and the problems that had been poisoning the relations between the republics, such as the question of foreign exchange, surged to the surface. The government found it increasingly difficult, in the midst of a global recession, to obtain credit from financial institutions demanding serious reform.

Commissions led by Sergej Kraigher, Josip Vrhovec, and Tihomir Vlaškalić were set up to deal with the crisis. Yet the majority of intellectuals involved were weighed down by their Yugoslav experience and sought solutions in conformity with it, rather than looking to the East or to the West. Speakers at numerous seminars and congresses argued for a multiparty system as a substitute for the played-out one-party rule, criticizing in particular the party’s monopoly on economic activity. The political trend was heterogeneous and, in some aspects, even pan-Yugoslav; yet in Serbia, following the

51 Interview with Dobrica Ćosić in *Politika*, 26 July 1991

52 Ibid.

53 Quoted in Slavoljub Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra* (Chasing the Wind) (Politička ispovest Dobrice Ćosića – Political Confession of Dobrica Ćosić), (Beograd; Samizdat Free B92, 2001)

publication of the SANU Memorandum, the trend assumed a predominantly Serbian national character.

Despite the criticism, the party was resolved to preserve its economic monopoly. The dogmatic wing, which had prevailed in nearly all the republics during the 1970s, branded maverick intellectuals as “special war” agents. This line was particularly strong in the YPA, which continued to defend the Socialist system. In Croatia, Stipe Šuvar published the *White Book* in 1984, in which he tried to discredit the critical-minded intellectuals and focused on Serbian nationalism as the major threat to the Yugoslav federation.

Efforts in the political and cultural arena gradually fused into a very broad front, with Ćosić playing a key role in fomenting anti-federation sentiments and arguing that Yugoslavia as a state framework was no longer adequate as far as the Serbian people were concerned. He saw a way out of the “Yugoslav existential crisis in a democratic reform of the entire social, economic, and state organization of Yugoslavia, whose elementary agent would not be a sovereign state as a ‘bureaucratic kingdom,’ but man as an individual, a free citizen.”⁵⁴

A Vacuum after Tito’s Death

The death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980 deprived Yugoslavia of its only central political arbiter and rendered further monolithic unity impossible. The key question became what method to use to address contentious issues. The struggle for Tito’s inheritance had actually begun in the 1970s, when it became clear that Yugoslavia could not be preserved as a centralized federation, though that was precisely what the Yugoslav Serbs wanted. Those Serbs who held power in Serbia saw every attempt to transform Yugoslavia as an attack on themselves. The 1966 Brioni Plenum, the student demonstrations and

54 Dobrica Ćosić, ‘Srpsko pitanje’ (The Serb question), address at an assembly of the Writers’ Association devoted to the discussion of a new draft constitution, March 27, 1988.

the first ethnic Albanian demonstrations in 1968, and the 1974 Constitution shaped the developments of the 1980s. In 1977, a campaign was launched in Serbia to amend the 1974 Constitution, and the *Blue Book* analyzing the position of Serbia and its autonomous provinces was circulated. Dragoslav Marković, a chief advocate of amending the Constitution, declared that “Serb nationalism has for a number of years fed on the unresolved constitutional question of Serbia following the adoption of the 1974 Constitution, on its disjunction and trinomy, on the burning problem of the Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo, and on Albanian separatism.”⁵⁵

It turned out, however, that altering the constitutional status of the provinces was not so much a step toward recentralizing Yugoslavia as a means of destabilizing Yugoslavia. After Tito’s death, General Nikola Ljubičić (also President of Serbia from 1982 to 1984) took over the helm of Serbia after serving as the head of the YPA for thirteen years. His position that “Yugoslavia will be defended by the Serbs and the [YPA]” betrayed the belief that Yugoslavia was a Serbian state and the YPA was its army. In the absence of a unifying leader and ideology, the government relied more and more on the Army, which had played a key role in crushing reform-oriented movements during the 1970s. The Albanian demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981 were used as a pretext for raising the Serbian national issue and for fomenting Serbian nationalist euphoria. The YPA pushed its way onto the political stage and virtually occupied Kosovo.

The question of Tito’s successor had been raised during discussions of constitutional amendments. One idea that was floated in the mid-1970s was a collective presidency to take over the role of president of the republic after Tito’s death. In fact, Tito himself had proposed the idea, stressing the need for the state leadership to consist

55 Mirko Đekić, *Upotreba Srbije: Optužbe i Priznanja Draže Markovića* (The Utilization of Serbia: The Accusations and Admissions of Draža Marković), Beseda, Belgrade, 1990.

“not of republicans,” but of the best republican cadres who would address Yugoslavia’s problems objectively and contemplate non-republican solutions to those problems.⁵⁶ Edvard Kardelj was of a different opinion, arguing that federal agencies should not seek to act as surpranational organs and should instead allow each republic to decide who would represent it.

The struggle for Tito’s inheritance was conducted amid a deep crisis to which the political and intellectual establishments had no clear answer. Their lack of decisiveness and responsibility and opportunism created room in which nationalists were able to advance their national projects as pseudo-solutions to the economic crisis. The general unpreparedness for change was augmented by Yugoslavia’s sui generis position based on its geostrategic location and the bipolar division of the world. This position gave Yugoslavia a special role on the international political stage that was far greater than its real importance and inculcated in the Yugoslav elites a narcissism that blinded them to the fact that Yugoslavia was losing its geostrategic relevance in the radically changing international scene.

Despite its estrangement from the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia failed to find a formula that would set it on the road to becoming a market economy. The Communist Party retained a tight grip on its political monopoly and some parts of Yugoslavia were simply unwilling to accept a market orientation and the laws of free market economics. In addition, Serbian nationalists opposed every effort to transform Yugoslavia before Tito’s death, hoping to be able to play a crucial role once Tito was gone.

Freedom of Expression

The 1980s were characterized by the relaxation of constraints and the raising of previously politically taboo questions amid demands for free speech, to which authorities reacted in a confused

56 *Borba*, 22 September 1970.

and somewhat inert manner. Immediately after Tito's death, Čosić and his circle prepared to launch the magazine *Javnost*, which was designed to create a new platform⁵⁷ with clear political goals similar to those formulated by the Polish political movement, Solidarity. No sooner was the platform announced than the publication of the magazine was prevented by the Belgrade communist organization, which accused Čosić's circle of intending to muscle in as a "political partner" and operate as a legalized political opposition. The magazine platform was also criticized by many other politicians as well as intellectuals. Among the latter was Oskar Davičo, an ardent leftist, who said that the programmatic text impugned socialist self-management in the name of a left-wing radicalism.

Javnost never saw the light of the day. The editors responded to the magazine's ban by explaining that they "did not desire the polarization of the intelligentsia." However, their Socialist leanings are quite clear, as evidenced by a draft text penned by Čosić and Ljubomir Tadić which urged that "a democratic, humane, enlightened Socialism may indeed be realized only by the total mental and moral forces of the people, as indicated a hundred years ago by Svetozar Marković, the founder of the first *Javnost*."⁵⁸

Čosić's circle pursued its ambitions through various other activities. For instance, university professors, philosophers, and members of the Praxis group held regular private sessions, called the Free University, at which they discussed theory, gave lectures, and exchanged views on various matters. Sharing a discontent with the state of existing institutions, the circle saw the Free University as a quest for an alternative. Leftist students and intellectuals also attended and took part in the sessions. The circle, operating as a closed group, was

57 Leading figures on the magazine included Čosić (editor), Ljuba Tadić (editor in chief), Dušan Bošković, Zoran Gavrilović, Nebojša Popov, Svetozar Stojanović, Zoran Đinđić, and Lazar Trifunović.

58 Slavoljub Đukić, *Čovek u svom vremenu* (Man Facing the Challenges of Era), (Beograd: Filip Višnjić. 1989).

watched by the police. On one occasion in 1984, police raided a flat where Milovan Đilas, a leading dissident, was giving a lecture entitled “On the National Question in Yugoslavia.”

Twenty-eight people were arrested on flimsy charges; six were sentenced to two years imprisonment (in the event, they were released early). The way in which the case was handled highlighted the disintegration and illegitimacy of the country’s legal system. Furthermore, at that time the charges raised in this political show trial just wouldn’t wash. The issue of free speech brought together intellectuals from all over Yugoslavia.

Around the same time, the “Šešelj affair” unfolded. Accused in Sarajevo of plagiarizing the work of a Muslim intellectual, Vojislav Šešelj moved to Belgrade, where he was feted as a Serbian victim of Muslim persecution in Sarajevo. He joined the Belgrade dissident circle and in 1984 published “Essay on Socialism and Intellectuals,” in which he alleged that by restricting freedom of speech, Socialism had betrayed its ideals.⁵⁹ He was tried and convicted over the essay, in which he had called the party undemocratic, had insisted that the Serbs and Serbia had been discriminated against in Communist Yugoslavia, and had suggested that the federation should comprise only four republics: Slovenia, a reduced Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia. His eight-year prison sentence was reduced to two years on appeal, and he later incorporated his intellectual recomposition of Yugoslavia into the programmatic declaration of his Serbian Radical Party (SRS).

These affairs, which attracted international attention, provoked protests and led to the establishment of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Thought and Expression, made up of twenty-three intellectuals, including Čosić (the committee was often referred to as the “Čosić Committee”). In a 1991 interview with *Politika*, Čosić described the committee as a failure, though the struggle for political

59 *Savremeni*, 30/3–4, 1984.

freedom—which united intellectuals in all parts of the country—resulted in a petition to amend Article 133 of the Criminal Code, dealing with verbal offenses.

Interestingly, Stipe Šušteršič, a leading Croatian sociologist and politician, and a titular leader of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia from 1988 to 1989, organized a discussion in 1984 about the ideological struggle on the cultural front based on the “White Book,” which contained quotations from works by 186 authors (most of them Serbian, some Slovene), which had been published in the Yugoslav media between 1982 and 1984. The quoted works were presented as unacceptable, antisocialist, and openly nationalist. The Serbian intelligentsia condemned this document as a Stalinist attack on freedom of thought. Šušteršič, however, had correctly identified an explosion of dogmatic nationalism.

Kosovo Becomes a Serbian Issue

Simultaneously with the first tentative steps to modify the political system, the drama in Kosovo began to play out. Serbian nationalists, acutely conscious of the “demographic problem” (i.e., the fact that the Albanian population’s birth rate was outstripping that of the other ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, raising the possibility that the Albanians might soon outnumber Serbs) resigned themselves to the fact that they could do nothing about the problem in Kosovo and took advantage of ethnic Albanian demonstrations to raise the question of the Serbian position in Yugoslavia. The propaganda machinery was set in motion, alleging a genocide against the Kosovar Serbs, their forced emigration, the rape of Serbian women, and various other crimes. Rather than establishing a dialogue between the two sides, the Serbs used the ensuing public debate over the demographic problem and the Kosovo myth for their own agenda: the political mobilization of Serbs.

The activities of the Kosovar Serbs were coordinated from Belgrade by Čosić. He organized a petition signed by 215 Serbian intellectuals, including several representatives from the Serbian Orthodox Church. The petition, published on January 21, 1986, made the first mention of a genocide against Kosovo Serbs; according to its authors, 200,000 Serbs and Montenegrins had been forced to leave Kosovo because of decades of harassment at the hands of Albanians, who sought to create an ethnically pure Albanian Kosovo. The petition, which triggered demands for amending the Constitution, stated:

The genocide in Kosovo cannot be suppressed without far-reaching social and political changes throughout the country. But such changes are inconceivable without changes in the relations between the SAP [Socialist Autonomous Province] and the SR [Socialist Republic] of Serbia and/or the SFR [Socialist Federal Republic] of Yugoslavia. The genocide cannot be prevented by the policy which made it possible, the policy of the gradual surrender of Kosovo and Metohija—to Albania: an unsigned capitulation which leads to a policy of national treason.”⁶⁰

The signatories of the petition were mostly advocates of a unitary Yugoslavia under Serbian domination: Antonije Isaković, a writer and academician; Tanasije Mladenović, the editor of the literary journal *Književne Novine*; Živorad Stojković, a publicist; Mihajlo Đurić, the aforementioned professor tried for criticizing the constitutional amendments; Mića Popović, a painter; Predrag Palavestra; Vojislav Koštunica; Kosta Čavoški; Nebojša Popov; Zagorka Golubović, and others. A later analysis by independent intellectuals titled “Kosovski Čvor” (the “Kosovo Knot”) proved that rape, especially intercommunal, had not been conducted on a mass scale and that most Serbs and Montenegrins had emigrated for economic reasons. But the petition indicated a consensus among Serbian intellectuals on the issue of Kosovo, a consensus that was manifested later, especially

60 Quoted in *Književne novine*, 15 January – 15 March, 2003

during the 1999 air war by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It was, in fact, the first time that the Serbian intelligentsia mobilized publicly and homogeneously on the national issue.

Taking the Idea of Genocide a Step Further

Ćosić was busy on several tracks at the same time, conducting preparations for amending the constitution, organizing a campaign to raise awareness of the perceived threats to the Serbian nation, and paving the way for the Serbian embrace of the SANU Memorandum. As part of these activities, the Committee for the Collection of Documents on the Genocide against the Serbian and Other Peoples of Yugoslavia in the Twentieth Century was set up in 1985. Ćosić, a committee member alongside Vladimir Dedijer, was entrusted with framing the principles for the committee. Ćosić believed this to be a politically risky job as well as a task of historic importance, because “one ought at last to catalogue and name the criminals. As a reminder and warning.”⁶¹ He argued that “Yugoslavia is the only European country which has not yet made an exact inventory of its victims of war, or marked all the genocidal killing fields. We are still disputing the genocide, interpreting it in a tendentious and utilitarian manner, haggling over the number of slain, finding excuses for Jasenovac [the Ustasha-run concentration camp], blackmailing [each other] with revanchism.”⁶²

Postwar Yugoslavia’s practice of hiding documents that could have been used to make sense of historic events, especially documents regarding victims, as well as putting forward false or questionable interpretations in support of the ruling ideology was not unique to Yugoslavia in post-1945 Europe. The fact that the role of the Chetnik movement in World War II was never fully explained created room for manipulation and historical revisionism. The anti-Fascist

61 Dobrica Ćosić, *Piščevi zapisi, 1981–1991 (Writers’ Notes)*, (Beograd: Filip Višnjić, 2002) p. 150.

62 Dobrica Ćosić, *Srpsko pitanje I, (The Serbian Question)* (Beograd: Filip Višnjić, 2002) p.112.

movement was for the most part identified with the Serbs, while the participation of other peoples in it was marginalized. The crimes committed by the Chetniks remained overshadowed in the public mind by those perpetrated by the Croatian Ustasas.

In fact, Yugoslav authorities had exaggerated the number of victims in World War II in order to get as much compensation from Germany as possible. The real number of victims remained a secret until the early 1990s. Inflated losses, especially with regard to Jasenovac (where they claimed that 700,000 of their ethnic kin perished), were part of the mythology that helped enlist the Serbs in Croatia to throw their weight behind the Greater Serbian project. When the Committee for the Collection of Documents on the Genocide was set up, Serbian nationalists launched a campaign to disclose the tragic fate of Serbs and Jews in World War II to prove that both had been victims of Croat and Muslim persecution.⁶³

The Society of Serb-Jewish Friendship, established in Belgrade in 1987 under the auspices of the Serbian government, played a prominent role in spreading such messages. Representatives of the society, which was supported by Slobodan Milošević, paid several visits to Israel after June 1990. The society made much of Serbian resistance to Nazism and stressed the spiritual affinity of Serbs and Jews as victims of Nazi persecution.⁶⁴ It also had more specific tasks, such as

63 The figure Serb propagandists use is 700,000 Serbs, Jews, and Roma killed in the Jasenovac concentration camp. Two independent demographers (one Serb and the other Croat) have come up with 70,000–83,000. Vladimir Žerjavić in "Opsesije i megalomanija oko Jasenovca i Bleiburga. Gubitak stanovništva Jugoslavije u drugom svetskom ratu" [Obsessions around Jasenovac and Bleiburg, Demographic losses of Yugoslavia in the Second World War], Zagreb, Globus, 1992; Bogoljub Kočović, "Žrtve drugog svetskog rata" [Victims of the Second World War], Sarajevo, Svijetlost, 1990

64 During World War II, almost the entire Belgrade Jewish community perished in the Holocaust. Having embraced the main ideas of National Socialism, especially those concerning racial purity, Serbia's authorities under General Milan Nedić turned into diligent executors of the occupier's policy against the Jews. Jews were denied the right to work, robbed of their property, and stripped of all their civil rights. Olja Milosavljević, *Potisnuta istina. Kolaboracija u Srbiji 1941–1944* (*The Suppressed Truth, Collaborationism in Serbia 1941–1944*), Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Belgrade, 2007. State Counselor Harold Turner

the establishment of diplomatic relations between Serbia and Israel. (The SFRY did not have full diplomatic relations with Israel because of its nonaligned policy and close relations with Arab countries.) The society, under the leadership of Klara Mandić (murdered in 2001 under mysterious circumstances), and supported by the philosopher Ljubomir Tadić, organized a “Serbia Week” in Israel with the assistance of Dušan Mihajlović, the president of the New Democracy Party and the Serbian minister of internal affairs.⁶⁵

In a 1985 letter to Israeli writers, Vuk Drasković described the Serbs as the late-twentieth-century Jews: “For the Serbs, every square foot of Kosovo is Jerusalem, for there is no difference between Serb and Jewish suffering. The Serbs are the thirteenth, lost and unfortunate tribe of Israel.”⁶⁶ Serbian authorities manifested their “sympathy” with Jews through numerous articles stressing the friendly relationship between Serbs and Jews—even though anti-Semitism (a deep-rooted phenomenon in Serbia) was on the rise, as evidenced by ever more frequent desecrations of Jewish cemeteries.

The National Issue Persists

As the idea of a Socialist Yugoslav lost legitimacy, the Serbian national elite closed ranks and discussion of the Yugoslav issue revived. Interestingly, the number of citizens who considered

reported to Berlin as early as August 1942 that Serbia was the only country in which the Jewish and Gypsy question had been solved. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin Books, 1994. In consequence, Belgrade was officially declared the “first city of a New Europe to be Judenrein (cleansed of Jews).” World Jewish Congress, <http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/communities/show?id=34>.

In recognition of their successful solution of the “Jewish question,” Nedić’s Serbia and Nedić himself received a published tribute from the Reich leaders. Mirko Đorđević in Nedim Sejdinović, *Antisemitizam u Srbiji: od vožda, preko Nikolaja, do grafita*, 26 March 2005, <http://www.nedimsejdinovic.com/?m=200503>.

65 Gordana Janičijević interviews Klara Mandić, ‘Njene rane nema ko da leči’ (No one to heal her wounds), *Duga*, June 11–24, 1994.

66 *Naša reč*, No. 373, Middlesex, England, November 1985.

themselves “Yugoslavs” increased from 1.3 percent in 1971 to 5.4 percent in 1981. “Yugoslavs” were most numerous in Croatia (where many Serbs declared themselves as such), Bosnia (where “Yugoslavs” included offspring of mixed marriages as well as members of all three peoples but mostly Muslims), and Vojvodina (where most self-described “Yugoslavs” were members of minority groups).

While the issue of a joint state was being considered, Serbia’s insistence on constitutional amendments, reflecting a desire to reestablish Yugoslavia as a centralist federation, prompted a debate on educational curricula. While Serbia strove toward greater uniformity in education, Slovenia argued that each republic should tailor the curricula to suit its specific national culture. In the 1980s, the starting point in the development of basic common curricula was the idea of an integral system of education on a Marxist basis. Uniformity would be achieved through a set of basic common curricula in all subjects throughout Yugoslavia, the content of each subject selected according to the percentage of each nation (e.g., 50 percent relevant to the Serbs and 7 percent each to the Slovenes and the Albanians). The hope was to thus solve the problem of the Serbian minority in Kosovo because the 1974 Constitution had granted the republics and provinces full jurisdiction in the sphere of education. Other organizational criteria were those promoting brotherhood and unity, Marxist training, and the traditions of the national liberation struggle and the Socialist revolution in Yugoslavia.

The quest for a solution to the Yugoslav issue presupposed a “strong Yugoslav state,” and the revived debate on the prospects for creating a Yugoslav nation failed to win much support because the other Yugoslav peoples were apprehensive of a resurgence of Serbian hegemony. A segment of the Serbian elite believed that Yugoslavia could survive only by constituting a single Yugoslav nation on the model of the United States. Mihajlo Marković believed that the “Serbs have accepted such an option” and that the “state nationality”

ought to be “defined on the basis of citizenship, not on the basis of ethnicity.”⁶⁷

In October 1985, the Belgrade group (with Čosić at its head) debated the fate of Yugoslavia with Slovenian intellectuals grouped around the *Nova revija* magazine. The Slovenes stressed:

*We [Slovenes] are looking for our own solution to ensure our autonomy, and it is only on that basis that we're going to work out our attitude to Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav idea is of secondary importance for Slovenia. The party ideology cannot articulate Yugoslavia's prospects. It seeks to preserve the status quo and to perpetuate it. ... We wish to be in Europe, we want Europeanization for Serbia too. We expect Serbia to resist Asiatic totalitarianism. The Serbs must solve the Albanian problem first of all. That's the road to de-Balkanization and Europeanization. It's a traumatic problem, but it must be solved because it is threatening Yugoslavia, so Serbia can't Europeanize before the Kosovo problem is solved. European traditions must be at the root of a reform of Yugoslavia. That's the only way for the Serbs to renew their national consciousness and to repudiate Bolshevism and Cominternist traditions.*⁶⁸

For their part, the Serbian intellectuals' scorned Slovenian ambitions. Slovene writer Taras Kermauner was appalled by their suggestion that “Slovenes should focus their language on writing lower, populist literature which will with time change over to Serbian and to use Serbian in public life and high culture.”⁶⁹ Kermauner said he had figured out what lay in store for Yugoslavia. “The arguments of the Serbian academics were as follows: the Slovenes cannot have a state of their own because they are not up to it; the Croats cannot have one because they are genocidal by nature; the Bosniaks

67 Mihajlo Marković, *Društvena misao (Social Thought)*, SFRY Official Gazette, 1999.

68 Quoted after Dobrica Čosić, *Srpsko pitanje – demokratsko pitanje*, Beograd, 1992

69 *Globus*, 22 January 1996

[i.e., Bosnian Muslims] cannot have one because one cannot have new nations emerging in Europe at the end of the twentieth century; the Macedonians cannot have one because they are Serbs.”⁷⁰

The debate brought to the surface the two sides’ fundamentally different views about Yugoslavism. Čosić contended that for Slovenes “Yugoslavism is exclusively a political, that is, state category devoid of integrative content and aspirations.”⁷¹ Drago Jančar, president of the Slovenian PEN club, believed that the Slovenes were being forced to accept “some kind of Yugoslav super-nation which is built neither on Serbian mediaeval culture nor on Croat Renaissance nor on Slovene Baroque and Protestantism, but which is no doubt built on political power and resorts to simple solutions. It is the generals that talk about it the most. Its only substance are the empty rituals involving stadium spectacles and relay races, the prittle-prattle about unity.”⁷²

After the talks, Čosić and his group decided on another, ongoing option that was soon to be launched in the Memorandum. At the SANU meeting on 24 May 1984, Čosić gave a hint of the institution’s activities to come. “The body of knowledge that exists within the Academy,” declared Čosić, “should not remain confined to the professional disciplines, but should be integrated into wisdom, general experience, and a collective strategic vision.”⁷³

One of the first books to demonstrate in no uncertain terms that the Yugoslav system was in crisis was by Jovan Mirić, a political scientist from Zagreb. Writing critically about the 1974 Constitution, Mirić suggested that the Federal Assembly should be recomposed to operate at three levels, representing the working class, the citizens,

70 Ibid.

71 Dobrica Čosić, *Knjževne novine (Literary Magazine)* 15 (November-December 1987)

72 Ibid.

73 Dobrica Čosić in *Godišnjak SANU, XCII (Almanac of the Serbian Academy for Sciences and Arts)* (Beograd: SANU for 1984 and 1985)

and the republics. His book *System and Crisis*⁷⁴ provoked a broad debate throughout Yugoslavia, whose inhabitants were becoming increasingly vocal in their demands for the “one person, one vote” electoral system, an option favored by the Belgrade elite.

The response of Serbian intellectuals and politicians to the Yugoslav crisis varied from advocacy of a national agenda to urging greater unity in culture and politics. Yet they were all basically in favor of either a Yugoslavia according to Serbian wishes or a Serbia within the borders being drawn by Vuk Drašković and Vojislav Šešelj, who essentially embraced Moljević’s World War II territorial ambitions. The SANU Memorandum was the turning point toward a clear definition of the Serbian national program because it summed up the history of the Serbian people, catalogued and articulated their grievances, and laid down the direction in which Serbian national policy was to proceed. Once such a clear course of action was adopted, nearly all the differences among Serbs on how the Yugoslav crisis should be resolved were obliterated.

The SANU Memorandum

The Serbs regarded any attempt to refashion Yugoslavia as the loss of their state. The slogan “First the State, then Democracy” shows the relative priority they attached to democratization. In the mid-1980s, the Serbian elite officially reverted to its national program, which had been in preparation at an informal level since the early 1970s, as expressed in the SANU Memorandum.

In June 1985, SANU established a Committee to Prepare a Memorandum on Social Issues. Although the official version of the Memorandum was never released, a draft version appeared in the daily newspaper *Večernje novosti*, causing an immediate public uproar. In Serbia, the Memorandum divided the political leadership; in all the other republics, the Memorandum was considered an articulation of

74 Jovan Mirić, *Sistem i kriza* (System and Crisis) (Zagreb: CEKADE, 1984).

the Serbian nationalist program. Ivan Stambolić, the Serbian prime minister, commented that the Memorandum “is the juncture of our definite parting of the ways in Serbia and a prelude to a political showdown.”⁷⁵

In trying to influence the outcome of the Yugoslav crisis through the Memorandum, SANU wanted to reach policymakers. The SANU Memorandum substantiated the allegation that Serbia and the Serbs were in an unequal position in Yugoslavia. The Memorandum was at once pro-Yugoslavia and anti-Yugoslavia in that it suggested a transformation of the country—something Čosić publicly advocated—through recentralization. It also provided for the possibility of the suggestion being rejected:

*The unresolved question of Serbia's statehood is not the only defect that should be eliminated through constitutional amendment. Under the 1974 Constitution, Yugoslavia has become a very loose state community in which consideration is being given to other alternatives, not only the pro-Yugoslavia one, as testified to by the recent statements of Slovenian economists and the earlier positions of Macedonian politicians. In view of such considerations and of such thorough disintegration as has already happened, one cannot but think that Yugoslavia stands in danger of further decomposition. The Serb people cannot look to the future serenely amid so much uncertainty. For this reason one must give all the nations in Yugoslavia the opportunity to state their aspirations and intentions. In such a case, Serbia could itself make a choice and define its national interest.*⁷⁶

The names of the Memorandum's authors were not disclosed immediately; they were revealed much later. The Memorandum was first circulated as an informal paper and SANU tried to deny its

75 Ivan Stambolić, *Koren zla* (The Root of Evil) (Beograd: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, 2002)

76 *Memorandum SANU* (The SANU Memorandum), *Odgovori i kritike* (Replies and Criticism), Kosta Mihajlović, Vasilije Krešić, SANU, Belgrade, 1995.

relevance. The economist Kosta Mihajlović, the historian Vasilije Krestić, the writer Antonije Isaković, and the philosopher Mihajlo Marković played key roles in framing the document. Despite official claims that Ćosić was not involved in writing the *Memorandum*, he was in fact behind it; the document reflects Ćosić's key ideas about Socialism and the resolution of the Serbian national issue. From the very beginning, Ćosić defended the Memorandum against attacks from the Yugoslav public and the political leadership of Serbia. In his opinion, the motive for a political harangue against SANU lay in the fact that the “draft Memorandum cogently exposed the undemocratic constitutional structure of the Titoist Yugoslavia laid down by the 1974 Constitution [as] testified to by the inequality of the Serbian people, the bureaucratic and parasitic character of social self-management, the restrictions on civil rights, and the universal criticism of Titoism.”⁷⁷

The Memorandum consisted of two parts: “The Crisis of the Yugoslav Economy and Society” and “The Position of Serbia and the Serb People.” It warned that the seriousness of the Yugoslav crisis was such that, unless addressed earnestly, the crisis could lead to the break-up of the country. “Idleness and irresponsibility, corruption and nepotism, the absence of legal security, [and] bureaucratic caprice ... are everyday phenomena. The collapse of moral values and of the reputation of leading social institutions, the lack of trust in those who take decisions, leads to apathy and dissatisfaction in people.”⁷⁸ The Memorandum did not reject Socialism but directed criticism against Tito's Yugoslavia—against, that is, the confederalization of Yugoslavia through the 1974 Constitution.

The Memorandum attached the most blame for economic problems to the economic reforms carried out in the 1960s, when “all

77 Dobrica Ćosić, *Piščevi zapisi 1981–1991*, Vilip Višnjić, Belgrade, 2002, p. 203.

78 Kosta Mihajlović, Vasilije Krestić, *Memorandum SANU* (The SANU Memorandum), *Odgovori i kritike* (Replies and Criticism), (Belgrade: SANU, 1995)

went in the wrong direction.” It also blamed the disintegration of the Yugoslav economy on the confederation of the country under the 1974 Constitution, especially on the stipulation that every decision must be taken by consensus. The Memorandum stressed that the process of democratization had been cut short in 1960 by “bureaucratic decentralization” and called for democratization through a multiparty system and multiple-candidate elections.

The part of the Memorandum dealing with the position of Serbia and the Serbian people alleged that, in addition to the general problems common to all, the Serbs faced three additional ones: “the economic backwardness of Serbia, the unresolved legal status [of Serbia] vis-à-vis Yugoslavia and the provinces, and the genocide in Kosovo.” It further claimed that Serbia was in an inferior position with regard to Croatia and Slovenia because Serbia had subordinated its desires to Croatian and Slovene interests. The Memorandum stated that the Serbian population in Kosovo was the “victim of physical, political, legal, and cultural genocide” and that the Serbs in Croatia were “exposed to assimilation.”⁷⁹ The main argument was that the decentralization of Yugoslavia was the root of both the Yugoslav crisis and the problems of the Serbian people—that the “republicanization” of the economy had led to the disintegration of the economy and the state.

The Memorandum activated two key myths of the Serbian people, those of Kosovo and Jasenovac, thus mobilizing Serbs. In essence, the Memorandum reiterated the Serbian national agenda from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, calling for “the

79 The Memorandum states that “The physical, political, legal, and cultural genocide against the Serb population of Kosovo and Metohija is the gravest defeat in the liberation struggles conducted by Serbia from Orašac in 1804 to the uprising in 1941.” Of the Serbs in Croatia, the Memorandum says, “Lika, Kordun, and Banija remain the least developed regions in Croatia, which has given a strong impetus to the emigration of Serbs to Serbia, as well as to [their] migrations to other parts of Croatia, where Serbs, as a minority and socially inferior group of newcomers, are very susceptible to assimilation. In any case, the Serb people in Croatia are exposed to a refined and effective assimilatory policy.”

liberation and unification of the entire Serb people and the establishment of a Serb national and state community on the whole Serb territory.”⁸⁰

The Memorandum raised key issues relevant for the realization of a national program, particularly the issue of borders, which became a key topic of public debates. Another issue that entered the public discourse with the Memorandum was Islamic fundamentalism (a clear reference to the Yugoslav Muslims, Bosniaks, and Albanians). The document fueled negative stereotypes about other Yugoslav peoples, notably Croats, perceived as a principal threat to the survival of Yugoslavia due to their alleged separatist aspirations. It underscored the belief that Slovenes and Croats saw Yugoslavia as a vehicle for saving their ethnic territories, an opportunity for a makeover from the defeated to the victorious, which made them treat Yugoslavia as “a transit country.”

THE ANTI-MUSLIM CRUSADE

Muslims were “a particularly vulnerable community on account of the specific geopolitical situation, given that their distribution prevented the establishment of a Greater Serbia.”⁸¹ Long before the outbreak of war, the authors of the Memorandum fostered negative stereotypes of Muslims as an alien, inferior, and pernicious factor.⁸² The thesis underlying the preparations for war was that it is going

80 From Garašanin, Moljević, Ekmečić, Ćosić ect.

81 Norman Cigar, ‘Uloga srpskih orijentalista u opravdavanju genocida nad muslimanima Balkana’ (The role of Serb Orientalists in justifying the Genocide of the Balkan Muslims), Institute for Study of Crimes Against Humanity and International Law, Sarajevo, and Bosnian Cultural Centre, Sarajevo, 2001, p. 21.

82 In doing so, they were following in the footsteps of many others. plowing a prejudicial furrow. not only Serbia but Europe as a whole has embraced an anti-Muslim ideology at various times. Europe’s thesis about an “Ottoman peril” is dealt with at length by Edward Said (Edward Said, *Orijentalizam, zapadnjačke predrasude o Orijentu* (Orientalism, Western Prejudices about the Orient), Svijetlost, Sarajevo, 1999). The subject is also discussed by Tomaž Mastnak in *Evropa: istorija političkog pojma* (Europe: History of the Political Idea), Beogradski krug, 2007. Mastnak argues that hostility towards Muslims has been of key importance for the constitution of Europe and especially for the articulation of European discourse.

to be fought “against infidels,” that is, against traitors who have betrayed the centuries-old interests of the Orthodox Church and the Serbian people. Much was made of the allegation that with sheer numbers on their side Muslims threatened to displace Serbs and turn them into a minority in their own territory. At a Round Table on Scientific Research in Kosovo in 1988, Miloš Macura, a Memorandum author and Yugoslavia’s foremost demographer, put forward the thesis that “the demographic objectives, which are not essentially different from those of past times, evidently stem from certain modern aspirations. The pre-Islamic, pronatalist ideology enjoys Islam’s strong support,” meaning “that the pronatalist consciousness is upheld by the clan leaders, khojas and parents, so that the profuse and uncontrolled procreation has the backing of the three most important institutions of traditional society: brotherhood and tribe, Islam as the organized religious community, and family as the major institution of society.”⁸³ Miroljub Jevtić warned that the Muslim population could achieve its goal of living according to Allah’s word in the Balkans only if it gained the strength to do so through numerical superiority. Thus, according to this theory, Muslims encouraged a high birth rate in order to conquer the land in the Balkans. According to Jevtić, religion is one way to promote a high birth rate because the Muslims are bidden by their religion to have as many children as they can. Jevtić believed that global Islamic planners were intent on Islamizing Serbia as a first step in the penetration of Europe.⁸⁴

In a series of articles published in daily newspapers and magazines, as well as in the Army weekly *Vojaska*, Professors Darko Tanasković and Miroljub Jevtić regularly portrayed Islam as inferior, backward, and violent. The treachery of the Bosnians who allegedly converted to Islam was a pet topic. At the height of the anti-Islamic

83 Miloš Macura, ‘Problem rađanja Kosova’ (The problem of births in Kosovo), *Zbornik Okruglog stola o naučnom istraživanju Kosova*, SANU, Belgrade, 1988.

84 Professor Dr Miroljub Jevtić, ‘Turci (opet) žele Srbiju’ (The Turks [again] covet Serbia), *Srpska reč*, 19 August 1991.

campaign in late 1991 and early 1992, when it became clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina was not going to remain in Yugoslavia, Tanasković interpreted the Muslim population's appeal to Turkey for help as a "tacit reversion to the role of renegade as of yore," noting that to a Serb "a renegade is the worse enemy." Tanasković asserted that "threatening a Serb with a Turk is archetypally worse and more ill-omened than threatening him with Germans."⁸⁵ Much was made of Islamic fundamentalism as a greater threat to Yugoslavia than Serb-Croat relations. Instances of the realization of Islamic ideas in Sandžak and Bosnia were pointed out, though the emphasis was on the Albanians. An Albanian threat was repeatedly warned against because it meant the disappearance of Christian churches, cemeteries, population, and the building of mosques and the spreading of the Islamic way of life.⁸⁶

As part of the preparations for war, Serbs dealt at length with the subject of lay fundamentalism, alleging that fundamentalists held power in their hands and were pursuing their goals "in a perfidious way, under the guise of the interests of the Muslim community within the framework of the Yugoslav community."⁸⁷

During the anti-Muslim campaign, which gained momentum in the 1990s, Muslims were warned that any "formation of a coalition [on their part] with Ustasha Croatia and Ustashe parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to help them gain the upper hand in Herceg Bosna on paper, will be considered illegal and a declaration of war to all Serbs."⁸⁸ At the same time, warnings were uttered that "there will never again be any room in these parts for Turkey, for Asia."⁸⁹ It was pointed out that "Muslims are genetically a corrupt people

85 *Epoha*, June 7, 1992, p. 22.

86 Mirosljub Jevtić, 'Islam bez maske' (Islam without a mask), *Intervju*, September 15, 1989.

87 Mirosljub Jevtić, 'Alahove vojske' (Allah's armies), *Duga*, September 9–22, 1989.

88 Vuk Drašković's speech at Gacko, August 19, 1990.

89 *Ibid.*

who converted to Islam and, of course, this gene now simply condenses from one generation to the next. It is getting increasingly worse, it manifests itself in simple terms and dictates like thinking and behavior. It is all in the genes.”⁹⁰ Leaders and prominent intellectuals argued for war and ethnic cleansing as a legitimate means for the accomplishment of just goals. Republika Srpska president Biljana Plavšić stated: “I’d rather we cleared Eastern Bosnia of Muslims completely. Now, having said *cleared*, I wouldn’t want anyone to take this literally to mean that I’m speaking about ethnic cleansing. As far as we are concerned, however, they have subsumed a quite natural occurrence under the term ethnic cleansing and classified it as a war crime.”⁹¹ Plavšić had in mind the numerical superiority of the Serbs and reckoned that only the Serbs could win a Bosnian war, because “there are twelve million of us, so if six million die, the remaining six million will live decently.” In SANU circles, it was rumored that Čosić made a similar remark in 1990 when he reportedly said that “eighty thousand Serb casualties is acceptable for the achievement of national goals.”⁹²

90 Svet, September 6, 1993, Biljana Plavšić, one of three top Bosnian leaders charged with war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should perhaps be explained that in Serbia Muslims are often referred to as “converts,” even though it was their ancestors who converted many centuries ago.

91 *Ibid.*

92 For a more detailed account see Sonja Biserko, *Srpska elita i Bosna* (The Serbian Elite and Bosnia) in Helsinki Charter No 109–110, July–August 2007, (Helsinki Committee bymonthly magazine) http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/hpovelja_t03.html

THE RISE OF MILOŠEVIĆ

The prewar period was characterized by two phases: attempts to preserve the old system and the crystallization of concepts for resolving the crisis. In the first phase, shortly after Tito's death, the political and intellectual establishments strove to preserve their positions without making much effort to resolve the crisis by systemic reform, for any bold move threatened to alter the correlation of forces and upset the balance established by Tito. The second phase was marked by the advent of Slobodan Milošević, the first politician to step forward with a concept for overcoming the Yugoslav crisis by reinforcing federal institutions and the central government with a dominant role for Serbia.

Milošević came to power as a Titoist bent on invigorating Yugoslavia. He was a staunch supporter of Socialism because, he said, "the idea of Socialism and self-management, regardless of all the difficulties it is encountering in practice, represents the ideal of small peoples and all oppressed people all over the world. These are the sources of all the energy we need to rid ourselves of our problems and to be able to live better."⁹³ He lauded "democratic Socialism as a rich and democratic society."⁹⁴ Milošević strengthened his standing with the dogmatist circles in the party by accusing the reformers of "washing their hands of Socialism." His advice to them was to "get out of the League of Communists and its forums."⁹⁵

Early on, Milošević avoided commenting on nationalist manifestations and eschewed publicly criticizing the SANU Memorandum, although its first part reflects his idea of how Yugoslavia should be recentralized. Mihajlo Marković and Kosta Mihajlović, members of the committee that framed the Memorandum, later became

93 Slobodan Milošević, *Godine raspleta* (The years of denouement), from a speech on the occasion of Veterans' Day in 1985, BIGZ, Belgrade, 1989, p. 56.

94 *Politika*, May 11, 1990.

95 Slobodan Milošević, *Godine raspleta*, BIGZ, Beograd 1989.

prominent members of Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). Nonetheless, sources quote Milošević as saying at closed meetings at the Security Institute:

*The development of nationalism in a multinational community is the greatest poison both the internal and the external enemy is trying to bring into our country. ... [W]hat other than dark nationalism is the appearance of the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy, which suggests the breaking up of Yugoslavia? This means the liquidation of the existing system of government of our country, a break-up after which no nation or nationality can survive. ... They criticize Tito's policy of "brotherhood and unity" on which alone Yugoslavia can survive. ... [I]t is not a question of a sentimental attitude, an attitude towards the historic personality who created this country; the point is that at this moment this country can survive as Socialist, as federal, only on the principles of Tito's policy.*⁹⁶

The Memorandum proposed a political and economic model and developed a thesis about a nonparty pluralism. This was precisely what Milošević was doing: he advocated a nonparty pluralism that contained a "pluralism of forces with Socialist leanings," whose ideologue was philosopher Mihajlo Marković. Milošević was backed by his wife, hard-line Communist Mira Marković, who formulated her faith in a Socialist future: "Mobilization of that majority, on the basis of science, and within the framework of politics, is the space in which Socialism wins its battle easily, and then continues along its historic, civilized path leading towards a community of free people, towards Communism."⁹⁷

Milošević pointed out that the historic role of Tito was of enormous importance for the Yugoslav peoples: "The revolutionary movement and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia brought forth

96 Slavojub Đukić, *Između slave i anateme*, p. 47.

97 Slavojub Đukić, *Kraj srpske bajke*, (Beograd: FreeB92, 1999) p.62.

Tito, who by his visionary inspiration and personal ability succeeded in bringing together all the Yugoslav nations and nationalities in the struggle for national and class emancipation. And also in the struggle for life together, the centuries-old dream of all the Yugoslav peoples.”⁹⁸

Milošević’s first visit to Kosovo in April 1987 made him aware of the potency of nationalism and marked a turning point in the treatment of the Kosovo problem. At a meeting of the Serbian LCY Central Committee in June 1987, Milošević acquiesced to the view that the situation in Kosovo must be addressed, though he did not adopt the nationalist line: “Yugoslavia as a state is not abolished, so it ought to and must exercise its functions. I know of no more pressing function of a state than its obligation to protect the physical integrity of all its citizens. ... [T]herefore I consider that one ought no longer to appeal to the Serbs and Montenegrins [in Kosovo] to be patient. ... [A]ppeals for patience sound hypocritical, to say the least.”⁹⁹

Until the Eighth Session of the Serbian Central Committee in September 1987, Milošević behaved as a politician trying to enlist the Communist Party in confronting the accumulated economic, social, and political problems, a politician taking a highly critical view of Serbian nationalism. The appearance of the energetic and determined Milošević was welcomed in the conservative circles within republican parties that were apprehensive of reform and transition and saw in him a chance to recentralize Yugoslavia. Conservative party stalwarts and leading figures in the YPA—men such as Nikola Ljubičić, Petar Stambolić, Dobrivoje Vidić, and Branko Mamula—played an important part in Milošević’s rise to power. A man of the system, Milošević quickly grasped the importance of a

98 *Ibid.*, address to the League of Communists of Serbia Central Committee Presidency, September 1987, p. 162.

99 Slobodan Milošević, *Godine raspleta*, pp. 154–56.

well-organized party structure and dedicated his energy to installing his cronies in important posts through a skilful personnel policy.

The Eighth Session of the Serbian Central Committee in September 1987 marked the turning point in efforts to resolve the Yugoslav crisis and brought about a rift within Serbia's political establishment. Serbian president Ivan Stambolić—who had been Milošević's political mentor—had submitted a proposal for changes to the constitutional status of Serbia for consideration at the meeting. During the previous several years, Stambolić had “obtained the agreement, consent, and support of all republican leaderships in Yugoslavia to work toward amending those parts of the Federal Constitution which pertain to the regulation of the position of the provinces and Serbia in the Federation, to eliminate the problems calling in question its statehood, its unity, without impairing the autonomies in their essential determinants.”¹⁰⁰ With Milošević, supported by the Army, calling for greater centralization and especially for no compromise with the Albanians in Kosovo, the Central Committee voted down Stambolić's policy of making agreements and compromises. Humiliated, Stambolić resigned as president.

The revival of the Chetnik movement had begun before the Eighth Session, but after Milošević prevailed, the movement played a prominent role in Serbian politics. Milošević never directly referred to the movement and its national program, nor did he want to be identified with it. However, all that he espoused coincided politically and nationally with the greater nationalist policy traditionally embodied in the Chetnik movement.

The installation of Milošević (first as a president of the Central Committee of the League of the Communists in Serbia then as a president of Serbia) and the political execution of Stambolić set the stage for the nationalists to refashion Yugoslavia. Following the Eighth Session party coup, Milošević engineered a purge of the party

100 Stambolić's expose in the Assembly of Serbia, September 1987, *Politika*, September 19, 1987

aimed at setting the scene for the upcoming showdown in Yugoslavia. As described later in this chapter, Stambolić and the local and provincial leaders were ousted to make room for the nationalists, who set out at once to alter the Serbian and Yugoslav constitutions.

The Eighth Session was followed by the “anti-bureaucratic revolution”—a populist phenomenon orchestrated by Milošević in 1988 and 1989 in which mass protests against supposedly corrupt and overly bureaucratic republican and provincial governments led to the resignation of the leaderships of Kosovo, Vojvodina, and Montenegro. The anti-bureaucratic revolution managed to homogenize both the Serbian Communist Party and the Serbian nation and opened space for Milošević to centralize Serbia under the slogan “one people, one state, one court of law.” But failing to export the anti-bureaucratic revolution to other republics, Milošević went ahead with implementing his plan with the help of those political parties that supported the creation of Greater Serbia.

Having won the support of the military leadership by his defense of Titoism, Milošević proceeded to reshuffle the editorial staffs of Yugoslavia’s major media outlets, especially the daily *Politika*, the weekly *NIN*, and state television, sacking seventy-two editors. The new editorial teams became part of Milošević’s inner political circle, playing a key role in starting the war and enlisting the support of the masses. Milošević could not have grown into the national leader he became if the people, dissatisfied and eager to change the petrified leadership personified by Stambolić, had not been in the right mood, a mood that had been fostered in the media. The people were ready for a new kind of leader and saw Milošević, on the strength of his utterances over Kosovo, as the man fit to rule the country.

In 1988, 19 November, at a rally in Belgrade held under the slogan “Brotherhood and Unity” and bringing together one million people, Milošević praised Tito’s Yugoslavia. He ended with the message: “Tito’s Yugoslavia was created in a magnificent revolution by the

Yugoslav Communists, the Yugoslav working class, and the Yugoslav peoples. It will not expire at the conference table, as its enemies hope it will. Yugoslavia, gained in a great struggle, will be defended in a great struggle.”¹⁰¹ At the same rally, the poet Milovan Vitezović uttered the now oft-quoted sentence: “Honorable people, this year will go down in our history as the year in which the people came into their own.” Serbian populism was in full swing.

Brimming with confidence, Milošević said: “We in Serbia no longer suffer from the complex that, just because we are the most numerous, we ought to sit like mice in their holes, or to acquiesce in things which are not in our interest. We do not want to be frustrated by those who are fewer in number.”¹⁰² As the crisis worsened, he announced, “We must make sure that we have an integral Serbia if we want the largest and most numerous republic to dictate the course of events to come.”¹⁰³

Milošević based his policy on populism. His meteoric rise to power was not lost on the intellectuals; they had gone over to his side in the second half of 1988. The national program of Čosić and his group came into the open now that a political leader had been found to espouse it. The power was in the hands of Milošević, but the future of Serbia was charted in the home of Čosić, who was hailed by Serbs as the architect of the program. In spite of their moral and political differences, the two worked in harness: Čosić in pursuance of his nationalist goals, and Milošević, the opportunistic leader, in pursuit of his interests. This commonness of purpose bound them together.¹⁰⁴ Many prominent intellectuals publicly supported Milošević, helping to consolidate his popularity among the masses.

101 Godine raspleta, p. 276.

102 Slavoljub Đukić, 1990.

103 *NIN*, 12 April 1991

104 Slavoljub Đukić, *Između slave i anateme* (Between the glory and the anathema).

The popularity Milošević enjoyed was best explained by Ivan Stambolić:

*The Serb people worshipped him like a god and believed that by identifying themselves with him they would become celestial. Milošević remained on his cloud while the people sank deeper and deeper into the mud. He always ridiculed the Serb people, who for him were a mere object of manipulation. Milošević and the Serb people were one, but today this synthesis does not exist: They are apart. The Serbs must face this fact. It will be a problem for them, but only in this way can they acknowledge and deal with their own defeat. Only by condemning Milošević can they acknowledge their defeat.*¹⁰⁵

Economic Woes and “Enemy Activity”

The federal leaders’ inability to confront Milošević, who destroyed everything in his path “institutionally and extrainstitutionally”¹⁰⁶ with increasing speed, stemmed from the exhaustion of the Socialist model and the leaders’ disinclination to do more than tinker with it. Because they were afraid of Serbian nationalism, they appeased Milošević (by allowing him to change the Serbian constitution, even though any change was meant to require the consensus of the other republics), which soon destroyed the already fragile balance in the federation. Since the early 1980s, the economic situation had been a serious challenge to the credibility of the federal leadership, which, although aware of the gravity of the economic problems, preferred to see the main threat as coming from abroad. The notion of a “special war” waged by both external and internal enemies against Yugoslavia was a thesis propagated chiefly by the YPA. In 1981, General Branko Mamula told the Internal Policy Committee that “enemy activity of all kinds against the armed forces has

105 Ivan Stambolić, *Koreni zla*, HOPS, Belgrade, 2002.

106 Slobodan Milošević, *Godine raspleta*, p.333

increased in the last three years” and that “a special war [is being waged] by sowing mistrust, defeatism, by spreading false allegations against the army, etc.”¹⁰⁷

A rift was widening between the dogmatic wing and those in favor of more liberal reforms, especially with regard to negotiating with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), without whose assistance Yugoslavia could not implement its Program of Long-Term Economic Stabilization or any other economic reform. A number of public as well as closed sessions of the LCY Presidency and the Central Committee were held in the mid-1980s at which, according to Draža Marković, “one and the same group—the most dogged of whom were Dragosavac and Hamdija Pozderac and, from the Central Committee, Miloš Minić—maintained that by accepting the terms of the IMF [regarding a restructuring of Yugoslavia’s debt] we would jeopardize the independence of the country and embrace ‘Thatcherism’ in our politics.”¹⁰⁸

Although Yugoslavia’s leaders and leading intellectuals saw the rise of nationalism as a response to the centralism and petrification of the bureaucratic circles and the main threat to the survival of Yugoslavia, they gave no serious thought to the crisis of the system itself. Most of them believed that the West was supportive of breaking up Yugoslavia precisely along those republic boundaries, and a great many subsequent analyses (especially by such generals as Branko Mamula and Veljko Kadijević and by elderly politicians such as Draža Marković) cited as evidence the 1978 political analysis of the situation in Yugoslavia prepared and presented by America’s Zbigniew Brzezinski at the Eleventh Congress of Sociologists in Sweden. According to Brzezinski, it was in the interest of the United States to help centralist forces in Yugoslavia that were prepared to resist the Soviet

107 Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija* (The Case of Yugoslavia) (Podgorica: CID, 2000)

108 Mirko Đekić, *Upotreba Srbije – optužbe i priznanja Draže Markovića* (The Utilization of Serbia and Confessions of Draža Marković), (Beograd: Beseda, 1990)

Union. At the same time, it was equally important to help all separatist-national forces as a “natural enemy” of Communism. Contradictory as the tactic of simultaneous assistance to centralist and separatist tendencies was, it was deeply justified. Brzezinski said that because the increase of Yugoslav indebtedness was favorable to U.S. interests in the long run, Yugoslavia should not be prevented from obtaining new credit, even at the cost of temporary negative effects on the creditors. Brzezinski discussed the possible lines of action the Soviet Union might take in its efforts to bring Yugoslavia back into the “Communist camp,” predicting that the Soviet Union would support chiefly the centralist forces that had manifested more pro-Soviet tendencies and rely on the old and new Cominform supporters, military and secret police personnel, and strata of society that had nothing to gain from the economic accomplishments of self-management in Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁹

Ćosić saw a different enemy behind Yugoslavia’s economic difficulties: “Having defended its state independence against Stalin’s imperialism and colonialism, [Yugoslavia] brought itself by its fateful policy into a colonial or semicolonial financial and technological dependence on international banking capital and multinational companies. Although we had freed ourselves of the Kremlin dictates, we subjected ourselves to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund.”¹¹⁰

While railing against the IMF for its efforts to subjugate Serbia, Ćosić lauded Milošević for his efforts to liberate the country. Ćosić commended Milošević’s political instinct for recognizing the “significance of the national question” and his

109 A Serbian translation was published in Mirko Đekić’s book *Upotreba Srbije – optuzbe i priznanja Draže Markovića*, p. 77. Draža Marković is cited as saying that a copy of the text was acquired by the State Security Service of the Croatian Ministry of Internal Affairs. The author of this text was unable to find a copy of the original version of the text during her stay at USIP.

110 Dobrica Ćosić, *Srpsko pitanje I*, (Beograd: Filip Višnjić, 2002)

struggle for the equality of Serbia in the Yugoslav Federation, on the wave of the general climate in the twilight of Titoism, a political climate, especially in Kosovo and Metohija, primed not by him, but by myself. Or, rather, it was primed by the people's suffering and the political wrath against the Albanian terror, which I merely somewhat articulated and directed. He took that over from me and inherited it. It was I who started that petition of the Kosovo Serbs, it was my own initiative. They had been coming to me all the time to complain because none of the Serb bigwigs cared about them. They collaborated with me practically clandestinely, for the police shadowed and persecuted them; Dušan Čkrebić and Draža Marković were particularly inconsiderate, though Slobodan [Milošević] did not distinguish himself in protecting the Serbs in Kosovo either. It was only after he had come to power that I realized that what was involved was a very serious matter ... it was both political pragmatism and a question of justice.¹¹¹

Ćosić was criticized by the opposition for fostering an atmosphere conducive to the amendment of the constitution, for supporting a referendum on the Serbian constitution, and for backing Milošević, who was consolidating his authoritarian rule. Ćosić believed that Milošević's statement that a new constitution must come before elections had "great influence on the outcome of the referendum, being motivated by fear of Albanian secession under the present constitution, which granted them an effective right of self-determination and secession."¹¹²

The prospects for Yugoslavia's survival were widely debated in the West, with many distinguished analysts offering mediation in the quest for a solution. Ćosić turned down an invitation from former West German chancellor Willy Brandt to go to Vienna to discuss the possibility of founding a social democratic party, which, in Brandt's

111 Dobrica Ćosić, 'Za Jugoslavijom ne treba plakati' (One should not weep over Yugoslavia), *Duga*, 9–22 July 1994.

112 Dobrica Ćosić, *Piščevi zapisi 1981–1991*, p. 292.

opinion, could save Yugoslavia. Brandt believed that “Ćosić is a person with the authority to create it.” Ćosić refused the offer because he was supposedly busy writing a novel. In reality, he was setting up the Serbian Democratic Party in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. He was in regular contact with Jovan Rašković, a psychiatrist from Croatia, and Radovan Karadžić, a psychiatrist from Bosnia. Ćosić ensured that Karadžić was elected president of the party’s branch in Bosnia by counseling “people from Bosnia who came to me to connect them with Radovan Karadžić, psychiatrist and poet, chief initiator of restoring the free and democratic life of the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who was working toward creating the party intelligently, tolerantly and persistently. Radovan frequently telephoned me at night to let me know what he had done and what was going on in Bosnia and Sarajevo, seeking my counsel and support. And he also needed money for the party.”¹¹³

Ćosić and Milošević met for the first time in June 1990 at the insistence of a friend and discussed “national and state policy, the Socialist Party, and the future of the Serbian people.” Milošević struck Ćosić as a “Communist possessing a modern concept of economics, communication, and development.” In December 1991, after the European Union acknowledged the break-up of Yugoslavia in conformity with the recommendation of the Badinter Commission, an opinion the Serbian elite took as an ultimatum, Ćosić feared that Milošević “did not have the political capacity and statesmanly vision” the historical circumstances demanded. Ćosić was assured by Milošević that he would “not bow to the ultimatum.”¹¹⁴ Ćosić interpreted the EU move as a “new Congress of Berlin” at which “imperialistic forces were deciding the fate of Balkan peoples anew.” He watched the reunification of Germany with apprehension because he believed that “the Germany that supported Slovene and Croat

113 *Ibid.*, p. 290.

114 *Ibid.*, p. 417.

secession and thereby broke up Yugoslavia is marching in the Balkans again.” The denial of the Serbs’ right of self-determination, Čosić lamented, was “the harshest decision of the twentieth century, depriving the Serb people of their freedom.” The Serbs were not fighting to create a Greater Serbia but for state unity, to be able to live as a free people where they live now: “[E]veryone fighting against Serb nationalism is fighting against human freedom.”¹¹⁵

A minority in the Serbian political elite was of a different opinion and advocated a pro-European policy that would promote Serbia’s modernization. Among such dissenters were Dimitrije Tucović, the first to report on Serbia’s criminal policy toward the Albanians during the Balkan Wars; Svetozar Marković and the Serbian Social Democrats and Communists; Serbian liberals such as Marko Nikezić and Latinka Perović; and the reformers under Ante Marković, who coalesced around the Civic Alliance of Serbia (GSS). Other dissenters included the Social Democratic Union, an offshoot of the GSS and even more radical in its criticism of Serbian expansionist policy, the League of Democrats of Vojvodina, the Reformers of Vojvodina, and some smaller parties such as the Coalition for Šumadija.

The Propaganda Campaign

The Albanian demonstrations in Kosovo in March 1981 demanding the status of a republic was a trigger for the already latent Yugoslav crisis. Yugoslav leadership brutally suppressed Albanians characterizing demonstrations as “irredentism” and “counterrevolution” while the Serbian media started a propaganda war employing a “rhetorical strategy” based on the alleged ethnic cleansing of Serbs in Kosovo, raping of women and girls, beating up Serbian men, all leading to repression in the southern province. A similar rhetoric was employed later regarding Croatia and Bosnia as an excuse, first, to spread fear among Serbs of a repetition of genocide and later to wage

115 *Ibid.*, p. 416.

war against all neighbors and commit war crimes. This propaganda strategy was implemented very skillfully both at home and abroad. Serbian nationalists proceeded from certain facts—all Yugoslav peoples were justified in some of their demands—and then clothed those facts in fabrications, half-truths, and outright lies.

The resort to lies was considered a legitimate means to attain just goals, for “in Serb history, the lie has served the Serb nation as often as courage,” as Ćosić repeated several times.¹¹⁶ This attitude toward the truth was best summed up by a participant in a meeting of national strategists, who said that “we ought to ponder on what kind of truth about ourselves we wish to project in the West.” Voicing a “partial truth” to be defended consistently by everyone everywhere was the only way to make Serbs “understandable to the foreign world.” The objective was to present “a cross-section view of Serb reality, a task in which all must participate.”¹¹⁷

The portrayal of the enemy—one’s neighbors of yesterday—as inhuman laid the groundwork for their destruction. The Croats were referred to exclusively as Ustashas, and the Muslims were referred to derogatorily as *balije* (a Turkish word meaning “peasant,” but also understood to denote an uneducated person of no consequence). Prominent leaders and intellectuals publicly propagated war and ethnic cleansing as legitimate means of achieving just objectives. While they depicted others as inhuman, Serbs kept denying their own crimes. Thus, the discovery of Serb-run concentration camps in Bosnia in 1992 was discounted by the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) as Western propaganda and disinformation: “In the name of God’s

116 Quote taken from Dušica Milanović, *Maske uma – o ketmanu i ketmanima*, Narodna knjiga, Alfa, 2003, p. 265. Ćosić often used this thesis in his novels, such as *the trilogy Deobe*: “We lie to deceive ourselves, to console others, we lie to fight fear, to encourage ourselves, to hide our own and somebody else’s misery. We lie because of honesty. We lie because of freedom. The lie is an expression of patriotism and the proof of our genuine intelligence. We lie with creativity, imagination and invention.” It eventually became the *leitmotif* of nationalistic propaganda.

117 Slobodan Despot, *Geopoliticka stvarnost Srba* (The Geopolitical Reality of the Serbs), Belgrade, 1997.

truth and on the testimony from our brother bishops from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from other trustworthy witnesses, we declare, taking full moral responsibility, that such camps have neither existed nor exist in the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.”¹¹⁸

Every method was used to mobilize Serbs throughout Yugoslavia, including the recollection of World War II crimes against Serbs, the revival of myths created at the time of the Turkish occupation, and outright lies. Jovan Rašković, one of those most responsible for whipping up Serbian rebellion in Croatia (a fact he later publicly acknowledged) and in Bosnia, invoked a social-psychological argument:

*The Croats effeminated by the Catholic faith suffer from a castration complex. That makes them totally incapable of exercising authority over others. They compensate for their humiliation with their great culture. As to the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and neighboring regions, they are the victims, as Freud might have said, of anal frustrations, which cause them to amass wealth and seek refuge in fanatical attitudes. Finally, the Serbs, the Orthodox, an Oedipal people, tend to liberate themselves from the authority of the father. From this spirit of resistance they draw the courage of warriors who are the ones capable of exercising authority over other peoples of Yugoslavia. It is no wonder that a situation of complete hatred and paranoia has developed in this country.*¹¹⁹

The SPC took an active part in rallying the Serbs and “went out to the people,” carrying the bones of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović from place to place and observing an elaborate code of religious and national propriety designed to support the claim that the Serbs are God’s emissaries. Church processions and the display of the bones of

118 “The extraordinary session of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church in response to the false accusations against the Serb people in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Orthodox Missionary*, June 1992, pp. 250–51.

119 Jovan Rašković, *Luda zemlja* (The Mad Country). Beograd, 1990, p 129–130

Prince Lazar were part of the run-up to the commemoration in 1989 of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. The commemoration took place simultaneously with a commemoration at Lazarica Church in Dalmatian Kosovo, an occasion used to rehabilitate the Chetnik movement.

The SPC had become involved in interpreting the events in Kosovo both inside Serbia and beyond its borders as early as 1982, when an appeal to “protect the spiritual and biological being of the Serb people in Kosovo and Metohija” was signed by twenty-one priests.¹²⁰ At the end of 1983, Atanasije Jefić published “From Kosovo to Jadovno,” which dealt with the suffering of the Serbian people in Yugoslavia. In 1990, the SPC Assembly requested the exploration of pits into which Serbs had been thrown during World War II in order to recover the remains and bury them properly. Funeral services commemorating victims of the genocide were held in Bosnia and Croatia throughout 1990 and 1991. These events were widely covered by all media establishments. The object of the campaign was to agitate the Serbs in Croatia by serving them a stereotype of Croats as a genocidal nation. The SPC stressed that a new, up-to-date Nacertanije was needed to define the frontiers of the new Serbian state within its ethnic borders, so that no one could make concessions and thus betray national interests.¹²¹

The Serbs in Croatia were assigned a special role to play in the anti-bureaucratic revolution. In a July 1990 supplement to the magazine *Duga* bearing the title “Serbs in Croatia,” academician and historian Vasilije Krestić wrote:

The unchanging values to which the Serb people in Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia have adhered during their life together with the Croats could be summarized in the fact that they care above all at all

120 *Pravoslavlje*, 1982.

121 Miroslav Radovanović, M.A., *Glas crkve*, 19-VII, 1991.

times to protect their Serb national particularity and to preserve their Orthodox faith. This correlation of faith and nation has been complete, for in guarding their faith the Serbs have defended their nation and vice-versa; and so, by standing in defense of faith and nation, they have saved themselves from the numerous violent onslaughts aimed at their conversion and assimilation. The Serb name in reference to people, language or church, which has systematically and deliberately been left out, deleted or altered, has been at the focus of all Serb demands, petitions and national-political programs. I shall briefly refer back to the various societies, organizations and institutions which the Serbs had under Austro-Hungarian rule in Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia. I am not going to do this because I wish to arouse your admiration of the glorious past, but because I am firmly convinced that we can draw many a lesson from the past, from how things were done by our forebears, who fought persistently and expertly for their survival¹²².

The works of Ivo Andrić,¹²³ the only Nobel Prize winner from the former Yugoslavia, were often cited abroad, especially his reference to the “controversies and afflictions of the Dark Vilayet”¹²⁴ (his description of a mysterious and hostile Bosnia)—and *Pismo iz 1920* [Letter from 1920], which states that “Bosnia is a land of hatred and fear.” Emphasis was often placed on a passage asserting that “there are more people in Bosnia than in other Slav or non-Slav countries with much larger populations and territories who are prepared, in fits of blind hatred, on various occasions and under various pretexts, to slay and be slain.” By presenting Bosnia in this way, it was clear what was to become of Bosnia later because the ground for all kinds of argumentation was already prepared.

122 Vasilije Krestić, *Srbi u Hrvatsko* (Serbs in Croatia), by weekly *Duga*, July 1990. (The whole issue was devoted to Serbs from Croatia without any date – it was part of propaganda)

123 Andrić was born in Bosnia to a Catholic Croat family.

124 http://www.ivoandric.org.yu/html/body_andriceva_riznica_ii.html#Pismoiz1920

Mindful of the changes in the international environment, especially the collapse of Communism, Serbian propagandists made much of the notion that Serbia had always been anti-Communist. In 1991, when the international community was trying to save Yugoslavia, Ćosić gave interviews to *Politika* in January and July in which he suggested that the “survival of Yugoslavia is a utopia” and that trying to “save Yugoslavia through political blackmail and economic pressure by external actors in the name of a fictitious anti-Communist ideology and European constellation will bring no good either to the Yugoslav peoples or to Europe.” He argued that while “Serbs have no right on national and democratic grounds to prevent Croats and Slovenes from seceding from Yugoslavia and creating their own independent states,” the Croats could “establish an independent state only on their ethnic territories”; otherwise, should they attempt to “establish [their own] state through the annexation of Serb ethnic territories, then they will become occupiers and provokers of war.”¹²⁵

THE COMING OF WAR

This final stage of Yugoslavia’s disintegration had two phases: in the first, Milošević used various forms of political violence, and in the second he switched over to armed violence.

Political violence was first employed in October 1988, when Milošević toppled the Vojvodina leadership in the “Yogurt Revolution,”¹²⁶ uniting Serbia under the slogan “one people, one state, one court of law.” Montenegro was annexed in January 1989 after the fall of the republic’s leadership. Under the pretext of a “replenishment of cadres,” Milošević’s cronies were installed in federal posts, giving Serbia a controlling majority in the federal leadership. A wave of demonstrations against the sacking of Azem Vllasi and the

125 *Politika*, January 21, 1991.

126 The Vojvodina leaders who tried to address the rally were pelted with yogurt cartons.

installation of policeman Rahman Morina at the head of the party swept across Kosovo.

In 1988–89, Albanians working at the Trepča mine in Kosovo were summarily expelled. They responded with protest marches and hunger strikes, to which the Serbian government in turn responded by arresting and imprisoning many of the protesting workers. The Federal Assembly held an emergency session at which Yugoslav president Lazar Mojsov disclosed an irredentist “headquarters document” on creating a Kosovo Republic (reportedly a copy of Tanjug news agency’s internal service bulletin distributed to federal agencies and found in a Pristina street; that document has never been seen by anyone).¹²⁷ The Federal Assembly gave the federal leadership the green light to impose a state of emergency in Kosovo. In March 1989, amendments to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Serbia depriving the provinces of their right to veto revision of the republic’s constitution were promulgated in Belgrade. The decision provoked mass demonstrations in Kosovo; twenty-two demonstrators and two policemen were killed. Simultaneously with his unification of Serbia, Milošević prepared a campaign against Slovenia and Croatia. The attack on Slovenia was occasioned by a gathering in Ljubljana in February 1989 in support of the Trepča miners, when the Slovenian president, Milan Kučan, declared, “AVNOJ Yugoslavia is being defended in Trepča.”

Milošević’s vision was diametrically opposed to the view that had been evolving in Slovenia, which saw Yugoslavia’s future only through substantial decentralization and a greater role for the republics. In 1989, Croatia joined Slovenia in its demands. The appointment of Ante Marković as federal prime minister was the last attempt to find a solution for Yugoslavia. Marković’s program presupposed economic reform in the hope of initiating political change, an expectation that had proved illusory since the 1970s.

127 *Politika*, 3. March 1989

Milošević continued to wage a campaign against Slovenia and Croatia and planned a detailed scenario for unmaking Yugoslavia. Because events followed each other with great speed, other republics were unable to react. Immediately following the demonstrations in Slovenia, Serbia declared a boycott of Slovenian goods, triggering the economic disintegration of Slovenia. The message of the Serbian politicians was that “No citizen of Serbia will beg the Slovenes to stay in Yugoslavia.” Soon afterward, Slovenia passed a declaration announcing the decision of the Slovene people to live in a sovereign Slovenia.

Following the isolation of Slovenia, the Belgrade leadership focused increasingly on Croatia, which for the most part failed to react to Belgrade’s provocations. Only after a long period of vacillation did Croatia resist, and a confrontation between Serbia and Croatia began. Using the media, Belgrade manipulated the eruption of Serbian nationalism; the Serbian population was used to organize rallies in Croatia. The Serbian Interior Ministry (MUP) was active in Bosnia-Herzegovina, destabilizing it by engineering police scandals (such as accusing Nenad Kecmanović of spying) as well as economic scandals (involving Agrokomerc).

With Milošević setting the pace of and calling the shots on the Yugoslav political scene through sheer determination and brazenness, every attempt by the federal government to appease him further upset the precarious balance. For instance, federal officials meekly accepted the invitation (from the Serbian leadership) to attend the June 1989 celebration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, only to be warned by Milošević: “Six centuries after the Battle of Kosovo, we are in battles again; they are not armed, though even such are not to be ruled out.” The lack of determination and purpose in the federal leadership, as well as the republics’ political and party leaderships, showed the degree to which politicians were afraid to challenge Serbian nationalism. The absence of a broader

all-Yugoslav solidarity in confronting Serbia's aggressive attitude also laid bare the impotence of pro-Yugoslav politicians in the republican leaderships to stand up to what had been a long time coming. It was only after he struck against Albanian miners that Slovenia pulled its men from the federal special forces unit. Slovenia warned that this was no longer a matter of relations within Serbia and that the future of Yugoslavia was at stake.

Paradoxically, while destroying the multiethnic autonomy in Vojvodina and Kosovo recognized by the federal constitution, Belgrade insisted on ethnic autonomy for the Serbs in Croatia although the federal constitution contained no provision for such autonomy.

After the dissolution of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia at its Thirteenth Congress in January 1990, Milošević announced that "Serbia has to prepare itself to live without Yugoslavia." He also said, "Our goal is to establish borders within which there will be no war. Outside those borders war cannot be avoided."¹²⁸ At the federal level, efforts were still being made to come to national agreement. The six republican presidents held summits at Ohrid, Brioni, Cetinje, Brdo (near Kranj), Belgrade, and Sarajevo to try to patch up their differences, but their disagreement only grew greater. Milošević's arrogant attitude at press conferences following these gatherings was publicly approved in Serbia, where most people understood his behavior as a reflection of his superiority. The first multiparty elections were held in 1990 in all the republics except Serbia. Milošević paralyzed the federation because he commanded four votes in Yugoslavia's collective Presidency, having managed to gain control of not only Vojvodina and Kosovo but also Montenegro. He refused to recognize the new legitimate government in Croatia and its representative Stipe Mesić (who was supposed to succeed Borisav Jović as president of the Yugoslav Presidency). He also fully embraced the nationalist program and employed mass rallies as a tool to achieve national

128 Borisav Jović, *Last Days of SFR Yugoslavia* (Poslednji dani SFRJ), p. 131.

objectives, especially following events in Novi Sad in 1998, an episode in the anti-bureaucratic revolution that led to the sacking of the provincial leadership. Mesić was installed in June 1990 as the new collective head of state by a European Community troika present at the inaugural session.

The adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of Serbia in September 1990 marked the end of the first phase of preparations to destroy Yugoslavia. This constitution usurped two paramount federal functions: national defense and foreign relations. It deprived the autonomous provinces of their constitutional functions and excluded Serbia from the legal system of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia—Yugoslavia’s laws would no longer apply to Serbia. This constitution was the first secessionist document; Article 135 states that Serbia would enforce federal legislation only if it is not “contrary to its interests.” Milošević declared in a March 1991 speech on Radio Television of Serbia that “Yugoslavia does not exist any more.”

Following the outbreak of war in Bosnia and the occupation of more than 70 percent of its territory by Serbian forces, as well as the break-up of the YPA into three armies (see the next chapter), Serbia passed the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in 1992, comprising Serbia and Montenegro, with the object of succeeding the SFRY. The new constitution allowed all who wished to join the FRY, primarily the Republic of Serb Krajina and Republika Srpska, to do so. Its provisions anticipated the unification of Serbian lands, which was Milošević’s objective.

In those crucial years, Milošević succeeded through machination and fraud and by playing on the contradictions and unpreparedness of his counterparts in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. He emerged victorious from every situation. By making use of rallies bearing the stamp of “democratic legitimacy,” he cowed his opponents. He believed that rallies “were a form of political reaction by the broadest public to the nonfunctioning of society” and that “in Serbia the

rallies made possible the functioning of the blocked institutions, as well as airing the commitments on which our social reform is based today.”¹²⁹

The West’s insistence on democratic elections as a precondition for a multiparty system was problematic for the Serbian régime and Milošević, though in all probability the former Communists turned Socialists in the SPS would have won even in a multiparty election. Nonetheless, as Borisav Jović testifies, Milošević was sceptical about the idea of such elections because “in that case, an Albanian party would be formed.” Because there were nearly two million Albanians, Milošević argued, “whatever name they might give that party of theirs, they would take over power in their environments and we would lose Kosovo.”¹³⁰

Milošević saw to it that neither his program nor his rhetoric contained nationalist undertones despite the fact that he had been articulating a post-Communist nationalist agenda since 1987. In his closing address to the Eighth Session, Milošević sharply criticized Serbian nationalism:

As to Serb nationalism, I think it politically unacceptable that the leadership of the League of Communists of Serbia should be threatened with charges of Serb nationalism. The Serb Communists and the Serb people have never been kind-hearted towards their nationalists. They [the nationalists] have never been spared punishment—neither criminal, nor political, nor moral. ... Serb nationalism today is not only intolerance and hatred of another people or of other peoples, it is a viper in the very bosom of the Serb people who has always, throughout its history, aspired to its unification with all southern Slav peoples. ... Today the Serb people would be harmed most by what the Serb nationalists say is best for it, namely intolerance and suspicion of others,

129 NIN, October 16, 1988.

130 Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFR* (The Last Days of the SFRY), (Kragujevac: Prizma, 1996) p. 61.

*leading to its virtual isolation – economic, political, social, cultural ... How could the small Serb people exist on its own and be its own master and free at the same time, when bigger peoples, though their own masters and free, cannot exist on their own in this world where all peoples and all people are increasingly interconnected and dependent on each other? ... I think it is beyond all doubt that every leadership in Serbia aware of the danger would be capable of acting towards the resolution of the difficulties in which we have found ourselves.*¹³¹

Ivo Banac describes this brand of nationalism as a

*new form of Serb integral nationalism bearing evidence of Fascist and Communist influence. Although it ostensibly supports parliamentary democracy, Milošević's ideology binds together antidemocratic ideas from both Left and Right. It is saturated with the Communist aversion to the "formalism" of democracy even though it retains the right-wing belief in the spontaneity of a homogeneous people. Milošević's ideology is also anti-liberal and anti-West. It has adopted the restorative Communist thesis blaming the West for the collapse of Socialism and Yugoslavia, as well as of the USSR. It also gives utterance to the reactionary pan-Slav idea that the present war is actually a crusade orchestrated by an Atlantic civilization of quantity against a Euro-Asian civilization of quality: an onslaught of vulgar materialism on spirit, sacrifice, and nobility.*¹³²

MILOŠEVIĆ'S COLLABORATORS

Milošević implemented his plan with the help of his mouth-pieces—the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) led by Vuk Drašković, the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) of Vojislav Šešelj, and the Serbian

131 Slobodan Milošević, *Godine raspleta*, Eighth Session address, 1989, p. 171.

132 Ivo Banac, *Raspad Jugoslavije*, p. 32.

National Renewal (SNO) party of Mirko Jović. They effectively promoted the Chetnik movement and drew on its traditions.

The SPO program looked upon the Serbian entity as independent of other republics and implied that Yugoslavia was entirely Serbia's creation. As to Croatia, the program was explicit: "Croatia within its present borders cannot be confederated before an autonomous province of Serb Krajina is established in Baranja, parts of Slavonia, Kordun, Lika, Banija, and northern Dalmatia, and before autonomy is guaranteed to Istria and Dubrovnik." Should Croatia nevertheless secede from Yugoslavia, "the autonomous province of Serb Krajina would be incorporated into the Serb state."

With regard to Kosovo, the SPO program envisaged "abolishing the Albanian state" created in Kosovo and Metohija, giving back to the Serbs the property "wrested from them in the Second World War," setting up a fund to finance "settling Kosovo with Serbs, with the object of re-establishing the comparative numerical strength of Serbs and Shqiptars [i.e., ethnic Albanians] as it was on the last day of freedom, 6 April 1941." It stressed that "all Shqiptars who established themselves illegally in Kosovo and Metohija or elsewhere in Serbia [are to be] returned as foreign nationals back to Albania" and, further, "all Shqiptars who were in any way involved in the Tirana occupiers' plan for 'Greater Albania' [stretching] as far as Skopje, Nikšić, Mt. Kopaonik, and the Morava River be banished." In the event of a confederation, the program called for "abolishing the autonomous status [of Kosovo and Metohija], [official use of] the Albanian language anywhere in Serbia, the right of Shqiptars to [display] the Albanian flag, and all anti-Serb oriented schools, police employment, hospitals, post offices, law courts, and the like."¹³³

Besides building its reputation on Chetnik traditions, the SRS resorted to Fascist methods in its political activities, copying

133 'Radikalizacija društva u Srbiji' (The Radicalization of Society in Serbia), 'Program SPO' (The SPO programme), (Beograd: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 1997), p. 152.

Dimitrije Ljotić and his Rally Party. In their program, the Radicals established the westernmost Serbian frontiers similarly to those drawn by the SPO, and focused on resolving the Albanian question. Their chief measure against the Albanians consisted of reducing their numbers through the “immediate expulsion of the 360,000 Albanian immigrants and their offspring”; “Serbian citizens who live abroad and operate there from separatist positions should immediately be deprived of their Serbian citizenship and forbidden to return”; and “all Shqiptars who so wish should be issued with émigré passports.” The SRS would people Kosovo with Serbs and “move [into it] all military and police academies and all military institutions not directly involved in the command of certain military regions, as well as a whole range of other state institutions, thereby creating the conditions for the transfer of tens of thousands of officers, noncommissioned officers, police officers, civil servants, members of their families, and the complete ancillary infrastructure.”¹³⁴

The SRS envisaged other implementing measures to encourage Albanians to emigrate, such as building motorways “with lanes deliberately spaced up to 1 km apart to follow the contours of the land, clearing wide belts along the roads through the most densely populated Shqiptar rural environments, [building] other facilities such as barracks, assault courses, depots with plots and room for colonies of settlers, in order to break up the Shqiptar ethnic space whereby they would lose their territory in depth, which is an important element of their feeling of security.” The program called for deliberately cutting off the power supply through “real sabotage of parts of the grid,” as well as the water supply, with the object of “making their life impossible.” Other methods included frequent checks by the financial police, the introduction of all kinds of obligatory permits and licenses, and infiltrating State Security Service operatives into various ethnic Albanian organizations to influence

134 *Ibid.*, ‘Programska deklaracija SRS’ (The SRS Programme Declaration).

their “activities, if not manage them” altogether. The Serbian Fascist ideas paraded in this program were implemented against the Albanians with far greater imagination until the NATO intervention.

The advocacy of an all-Serb reconciliation (i.e., between the Chetniks and the partisans) had long been proposed, and several new “objective histories” were written, notably by Veselin Đuretić, in support of the idea. In the early 1980s Vuk Drašković had attracted public attention with his novel *Nož* (The Knife), which dwells on Muslim crimes against Serbs. The book rallied the Serbian diaspora in Canada, the United States, and Australia. In the company of the poet Milan Komnenić and Vojislav Šešelj, Drašković toured these countries and Europe to promote Serbian interests and to collect financial help.

As Slobodan Inić observed, Serbian nationalism is “broader than the Chetnik movement and its past and contemporary nationalist program; but no program and no movement of the Serb people has expressed the nature, plans, and ambitions of Greater Serbian nationalism as fully and as directly as the Chetnik movement in Serbia did and still does.”¹³⁵

REALIZATION OF THE SERBIAN NATIONAL PROGRAM¹³⁶

The Serbian national program was overseen and approved by the Serbian elites gathered around Dobrica Ćosić and Milorad Ekmečić. As president of the FRY (1992–93), Ćosić took a direct part in negotiations on delimiting the peoples, one of the publicly proclaimed aims of Serbian politics.

135 Ibid., Slobodan Inić, ‘Cetnizacija političkog prostora u Srbiji’ (The ‘Chetnization’ of political space in Serbia), p. 137.

136 Some ideas from this part have been published in articles I have written and published in Helsinki Charter, Helsinki Committee’s bimonthly magazine. Also in Serbia: Between Archaisms and Modernity in Regional and Ethnic Conflicts, Perspectives from the Front Lines, Ed. Judy Carter, George Irani, Vamık D. Volkan, Pearson, 2008

Because redrawing borders, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, could not be achieved by voluntary resettlement, drastic measures including intimidation, expulsion and mass killings of Muslims were used to “liberate” imagined Serbian ethnic territories and attach them to Serbia. In the heady days of building an ethnic state, Velibor Ostojić, president of the Serbian Democratic Party executive committee, said, “Every corner of Serb land and Serbs are a heavenly wonder, an inspiration and an example to all peoples and countries, in particular to those that have lost democracy in the name of democracy.”¹³⁷

The genocide of the Muslims was carried out on the premise that the Muslims were preparing a genocide of the Serbs. It was stressed by Serbian nationalists that the “secessionist struggle of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims for the creation of a Muslim state draws its impulse first from the Islamic way of life, which has no points in common with European civilization, then from the Islamic centers and Islamic fundamentalist forces bent on breaking up the former SFRY.”¹³⁸ This thesis banked on sympathy from a Europe that was not quite sure what to make of Muslims. Nada Todorov blamed Islamization and its manifestations as “the root of evil” pointing out that tales such as those contained in *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights* that glorify Islam at the expense of other religions “accordingly influence the behavior of children and others in regions under strong Islamic influence.” According to Todorov, “Islam looks down on other religions, especially on Orthodoxy. ... The messages stay embedded in the consciousness or the subconsciousness.”¹³⁹

That a colossal ethnic engineering project was afoot was borne out by Ćosić: “Tuđman and I have agreed that it would be sensible and humane for states to lend a hand in organized population

137 *Borba*, March 22, 1994.

138 Nada Todorov, *Vojska*, April 8, 1993

139 *Ibid.*

transfers and exchanges. People can no longer return to their homes. We may have to set up special institutions and agencies to regulate the exchange of property, flats, houses. We must solve the conflict between the multi-national and multi-confessional communities.”¹⁴⁰ He proposed a similar solution in Bosnia: ”I talked with [Alija] Izetbegović as a representative of a neighboring state which is prepared to help, above all on a humanitarian level. By all means we favor demilitarizing and raising the blockade of Sarajevo and other towns, we wish to care for the refugees together. We certainly wish to appeal for an end to all kinds of ethnic cleansing and discrimination.” At this time, Serbs were holding 70 percent of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community was casting about for peaceful resolution.

The international offers dovetailed with the Bosnian Serbs’ war objective of ethnic division. The only problem for the Serbian side was the percentage of territory offered them. Čosić considered 50 percent a “satisfactory” offer, and urged the Bosnian Serbs to sign the 1993 Vance–Owen plan, which called for dividing Bosnia into ten regions and was backed by the United Nations. Čosić believed that the “Serbs have occupied more than they need. They ought to make a compromise to let the Muslim population consolidate as an ethnic whole. The Serbs and the Croats will reach certainly agreement on territorial issues. Very soon. Regarding the Muslims, we’ll make a go of it too because they will give up the idea of not negotiating directly with the Serbs. Izetbegović is no longer talking of waging war until final victory either.”¹⁴¹ The Bosnian Serb Assembly rejected the plan in May.

Historian and chief ideologue of the war in Bosnia Milorad Ekmečić publicly advocated the unification of all Serbs. He said that the “readiness to actually do something also for the benefit of the

140 *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, October 27, 1992, Jozef Riedmiller.

141 *Duga*, January 16–29, 1993.

Serbs must constitute a sound basis for the beginning of future peace. They want national unification with their national brothers in Serbia and Montenegro.” He believed that the “time has come for us to present our objectives publicly at an appropriate venue appointed by history—a session of representatives of all four Serb parliaments.”¹⁴²

The Serbian ideologues had plenty of reason to be satisfied with the developments in Bosnia once it became clear that the international mediators aimed for its ethnic division. In the early stage of the war, the United States treated the issue as a European affair, but the European Community (it did not become the European Union until 1995) was divided in how to respond to the unfolding crisis in Yugoslavia. Even if the members of the EC could have reached a consensus and opted for robust intervention, the EC’s foreign policy machinery was so weak as to have made it almost impossible to stage an effective military operation. The West’s ambivalence was apparent to all local actors, including Milošević, who felt he had a free hand to act as he wished. As they watched events unfold, many in the West came to the conclusion that the only solution possible should be based on ethnic principles, that is, on separation and division, just as the Serbian ideologues had planned.

Although he was sacked at the height of the Bosnian war for undermining the power of Slobodan Milošević, Čosić stuck to his objectives. As Milošević became internationally isolated after revelations of mass crimes and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, Čosić became a key interlocutor for the international community.¹⁴³ He was regarded as wielding influence especially among the Bosnian Serbs. Čosić focused on the necessity of a division of Bosnia, being “convinced that the break-up of Yugoslavia necessitated the break-up of Bosnia.” He made no secret of the fact that he had played a prominent role in organizing the Bosnian Serbs and been in close liaison with Radovan

142 *Večernje novosti*, April 29, 1993.

143 None of the major international mediators who visited Belgrade failed to see Dobrica Čosić.

Karadžić, a key implementer of the Serbian national program, effectively commanding him to accept the post of president of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS). Regarding the outcome in Bosnia, Čosić said in retrospect that he had always “advocated a federation of Bosnia and Serbia” and “insisted that the Muslims had every historical reason to be with the Serbs.”

Čosić viewed the situation on the ground in Bosnia toward the end of the war (1994) and the refusal of the Bosnian Serbs to accept the offers of the international community to solve the Bosnian question as a reflection of their independence, for “no one understood that the Serbian liberation movement in Bosnia had grown independent to such an extent that no one was able to exert a decisive influence on it: neither Slobodan, nor I.” He suggested (apparently still backing every move by Karadžić) the inevitability of a “split in Bosnia, of ethnic division of Bosnia and of long-term disquiet, of unstable borders—a Palestine-like situation in Eastern Bosnia, along the Drina, in Sandžak, in those lines of communication. There can be no peace there. The partition of Bosnia must be a matter of compromise. It goes without saying that no one will be content, but all must fight for statehood.”¹⁴⁴

As far as Bosnia was concerned, the Serbs accomplished their plans. Of the six objectives they defined at the outbreak of the war,¹⁴⁵ nearly all were attained and sanctioned by the international community.

Participants in the 1994 Second Congress of Serbian Intellectuals in Belgrade approved the creation of a Serbian ethnic state and

144 *Duga*, April 9, 1994.

145 Karadžić disclosed the Bosnian Serbs war objectives for the first time at the a session of the Assembly of Republica Srpska in 1992. They are known as six strategic objectives: first, separation from the other two communities (Croats and Muslims); second, creation of a corridor between Semberija and Krajina; third, elimination of the Drina river as a border, or abolishing the existing border between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; fourth, creating a border on the Una and Neretva rivers; fifth, partition of Sarajevo into Serbian and Muslim parts; and six, access by Republika Srpska to the Adriatic sea.

the unification of all Serbs. The Serbs had accomplished their aims by war. Biljana Plavšić, the vice-president of Republika Srpska, said that she expected the Serbian intellectuals to lend their support to unification because a decision to the contrary could “create a wrong impression about the desires of the majority of the Serb people and disappoint our fighters, who are risking their lives in order to realize the centuries-old dream of the Serbs to live in one state, to exercise their universal talents and to create a democratic, progressive and integral Serb country.” Addressing the gathering, Ekmečić said that “following its destruction through no fault of our own, Yugoslavia is now subordinated to the unification of the Serb people in its national state, at least until we have all of us licked our wounds clean. If Yugoslavia is fated again—it will be created in a more propitious day and age.”¹⁴⁶

Academic Pavle Ivić said that there was a “positive side to the war in that it had reinforced among the Serbs an awareness of the need for Serb unity and awakened dormant energies. The total unification of the Serbs, not only political but also economic, cultural, linguistic, has become the ideal of the people who have come to realize that there is no survival without reliance on the mother country to the east of the River Drina. What has been achieved in Republika Srpska is possible only in such exceptional situations. We are talking of a unique historical chance.”¹⁴⁷

In the opinion of academic Miodrag Jovičić, the secession of Croatia on the one hand and of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the other jeopardized the very core of the Serbian national being:

For this reason, the way it was carried out, it was unacceptable to the Serb people ... At the beginning of 1992 the Serb people made the decision to establish a separate Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina,

146 ‘Srpsko pitanje danas’ (the Serb Question today), Second Congress of Serbian Intellectuals, Belgrade 1995.

147 Ibid.

*later renamed Republika Srpska, and up till now it has managed, under constant fighting, in most cases to secure for it borders coinciding with the distribution of the Serb people in about 61 percent of the total territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Serb people in Bosnia and Herzegovina has de facto succeeded in realizing its right to self-determination. At this stage, its choice is Republika Srpska, which is a reality and which the international community must volens nolens recognize as a separate international entity. The unification of the Serb people and the creation of a powerful state based, of course, on democracy would constitute, in view of the geopolitical position of that state, a veritable bulwark against both the German and the Islamic-fundamentalist menace. Europe, which is treating the Serb people in such a shameful manner at present, ought to be grateful to it for this some day.*¹⁴⁸

The homogenization and consolidation of Serbian ethnic space in Bosnia took place after the July 1995 massacre in Srebrenica, which abolished all Muslim enclaves in the Serbian ethnic area save Goražde. The French newspaper *Liberation*¹⁴⁹ likened the fall of Srebrenica to Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815. With the Dayton Accords, the international community forced the Serbian side and the other parties to sign an agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina laying down the "entity" borders, an electoral system, human rights protection instruments, and the return of refugees and displaced persons. Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, would have joint institutions, a two-chamber parliament, a three-member presidency, a council of ministers, a constitutional court, and a central bank. Sarajevo would remain undivided.

148 Ibid.

149 *Liberation*, July 21, 1995

Milošević was satisfied with the success achieved in Dayton, from which he returned as “guarantor of peace in the Balkans.” He said at the time, “In a civil war like the one in Bosnia there are no winners, there can be no winners. All are losers, only peace is victorious. The arrangements made here implied painful concessions by all sides, but without such concessions it would not have been possible to succeed here, and peace would not have been possible. For this reason none of the parties should regret the concessions it made.”¹⁵⁰ President of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović, loser in both war and peace, said, “The peace agreed at Dayton may not be just, but it is juster than war.”¹⁵¹

Dissatisfaction with the Dayton Accords—above all over the loss of certain parts of Serbian territories—was expressed by the opposition to Milošević. Although the Bosnian Serbs were not happy with the Dayton Accords, they had no means of challenging them. They considered that parts of the Serbian ethnic space had unjustly been lost (with 20 percent of territory added). Vojislav Koštunica, the DSS president, said, “I don’t believe that the Dayton Accords, such as they are, will lead to further war and instability. But I am sure that in the wake of Milošević’s peace in 1995 the position of the Serbs has never been worse in the two centuries since they began creating their state.” Koštunica pointed out that the Serbian president had sent the Bosnian Serbs a message “congratulating them on Republika Srpska and wishing them peace and cooperation with the Muslim-Croat Federation. Now, mind you, not cooperation with the FRY, which means that he wrote them off once again and confirmed by his congratulatory message that they were going to live in another state,” for “if the RS [Republika Srpska] was recognized formally in Geneva, the border between RS and the FRY was recognized in Dayton.” As it later turned out, Koštunica anticipated Serbia’s real policy toward

150 *Večernje novosti*, November 22, 1995.

151 *Ibid.*

the RS. He said that the “moment has come to consider strengthening ties between the RS and the FRY, which ought to be strengthened in all fields.”¹⁵²

SRS President Vojislav Šešelj denounced the Dayton Accords as a “Serb defeat which is the result of the disastrous national policy of the Serbian president supported by the official policy of the USA in particular.” Šešelj aired the view that continued to predominate in the policy on Serbian lands, namely that the “Serb people will never be able to accept as final the results of this hysterically anti-Serb policy of Milošević and the international community, so a future democratic and nationally-minded government will surely know how to realize the aspiration of our people to enjoy a united and strong Serb state.”¹⁵³

Vuk Drašković, was more realistic in his assessment. He said that “had the war not been brought to a halt through the efforts of the Great powers, the whole of Republika Srpska would have fallen within weeks.” Drašković continued to regard Serbia as a power in the Balkans because “Serbia occupies such a geopolitical position as to constitute a bridge between Europe and Asia and between the West and Russia.”¹⁵⁴

Serbian strategists have more recently acknowledged the international circumstances that would frustrate the creation of an integral state of the Serbian people for a long time to come. In their view, the Dayton Accords were a reality to be reckoned with while retaining the same long-term goals. The union of Serbia and Montenegro with Republika Srpska would be delayed until a more propitious moment, that is, until the international constellation changed,

152 *Naša borba*, November 23, 1995.

153 *Ibid.*

154 *Naša borba*, December 11, 1995.

because “nothing ... stands in the way of unequivocally projecting such an objective as a strategic national interest.”¹⁵⁵

The January 1997 roundtable on the geopolitical reality of the Serbs in Novi Sad discussed the changes in the general geopolitical picture of the world.¹⁵⁶ The president of the Institute Executive Board, Milivoj Reljin, said that the changes in question had “imposed [on the Serb people as a whole] essentially different conditions in which it will have to realize its state and national objectives and interests.” Among the chief conclusions was the view that, from the standpoint of Serbian interests, “Republika Srpska is the only bright spot in the process of breaking up the SFRY,” pointing out that “Annex 7 of the Dayton Accords, that is, the Agreement on Refugees and Displaced Persons” posed the main threat to the survival of Republika Srpska. From the point of view of Serbian national interests, “that agreement is a double-edged sword because its implementation destroys the cohesive power of the RS and strengthens the hand of those forces which are ‘drowning’ Republika Srpska in the integral state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and, worse still, subordinating the interests of the Serb people to the interests of the Muslims.” In the words of Rajko Gnjato, the “Muslim policy” could be countered, among other things, with “the return of Serb refugees to the RS and promotion of population policy measures.” However, the optimism of the participants regarding the survival and overall progress, especially socioeconomic, of Republika Srpska was based on the belief that Republika Srpska and the Serbian people inhabiting it would be needed for some time by Europe as a bulwark against Islam, a barrier against the penetration of Islamic fundamentalism

155 Slobodan Samardžić, member of the team negotiating on the status of Kosovo, Minister of Kosovo and Metohija in the new government, ‘Evropska unija, raspad Jugoslavije i srpski nacionalni interes’ (the European Union, break-up of Yugoslavia and Serb national interests), *Geopolitička stvarnost Srba*, Institute of Geopolitical Studies, Belgrade, 1997.

156 The event was organized by the Institute of Geopolitical Studies, focusing on an analysis of the major crisis points in the Serb ethnic space. The Institute has many associates, including nearly all the academic signatories of the Memorandum.

into the heart of Europe. “When the reasons for its existence are no longer there our enemies, Croats and Catholicism, will destroy Republika Srpska and push the boundaries of Catholicism further east should an opportunity arise.”¹⁵⁷

The Academy of Sciences and Arts of Republika Srpska held a symposium in Bijeljina in October 1998 entitled “The Serbian Spiritual Space.” The symposium was attended by the authors of the SANU Memorandum. In his keynote report, Ekmečić defined the notion of the Serbian spiritual space as follows: “The Serbian spiritual space is the totality of cultural activities tending to come to fruition in a well-regulated state of the time, in all the provinces in which the Serb people and the ethnic groups as its offshoots have lived and still live, in all the forms in which they have manifested themselves.”¹⁵⁸ Philosopher Ljubomir Tadić told the participants that “our deepest spiritual and political interest binds us to never give up Kninska Krajina, Lika, Banija, Kordun, parts of Slavonia, Srem and Baranja in which Serb people have lived for centuries, nor the towns which have fallen under Croat and Muslim power: Grahovo, Glamoč, Drvar and Petrovac.”¹⁵⁹

The object of such gatherings has been to let the national ideologues gradually translate their ethnic engineering into state frontiers. This is best summed up in the statement of Čosić that the “Serb people is coalescing in a living space which it can cover civilizationally and culturally and develop economically”; he defined this process as “a territorial-ethnic rearrangement, perhaps, of a state-political consolidation of the Balkan space.”¹⁶⁰ The national

157 Rajko Gnjato, lecturer at the Faculty of Science, Banjaluka, ‘Geopolitičke perspektive opstanka Republike Srpske’ (Geopolitical prospects for the survival of Republika Srpska), *Geopolitička stvarnost Srba*, Institute of Geopolitical Studies, Belgrade, 1997.

158 Milorad Ekmečić, ‘Srpski duhovni prostor’ (the Serb spiritual space), Academy of Sciences and Arts of Republika Srpska, Srpsko Sarajevo.

159 Ljubomir Tadić, *Ibid.*

160 Dobrica Čosić, *Ibid.*

ideologues resigned themselves to the fact that the Serbian state boils down to Serbia, Republika Srpska, and Montenegro. Nonetheless, ambitions remained to incorporate certain “Serb territories,” particularly those affording an outlet to the Adriatic Sea.

The importance of the role of academics and intellectuals in the implementation of the Serbian national program was borne out by a number of them who appeared before the Hague Tribunal as witnesses for Milošević, including Mihajlo Marković, Čeda Popov, Kosta Mihajlović, Ratko Marković, Smilja Avramov, and Slavenko Terzić. Even Serbia’s military defeat in its attempt to implement the SANU Memorandum’s objectives did not force the authors of the Memorandum to resign publicly; on the contrary, they continued to defend their position throughout the early twenty-first century.

Ćosić and his group continue to be the greatest influence on mainstream opinion in Serbia. The group’s interpretation of the recent past has been adopted with minor modifications by universities, the media, and the dominant cultural elite. The group sees the wars of the 1990s within a timeframe that runs from 1941 to 1995 (i.e., the wars of the 1990s are seen as a continuation of World War II, which allows Serbian war crimes in the 1990s to be relativized and justified)’ it calls for the drawing up of a “ledger of crimes” perpetrated against the Serbian people; it claims that the initiators of the war were the Croats and Muslims, who exploited “immanent religious and national intolerance and exclusivity, or existential insecurity based on collective memory of the past”¹⁶¹; and it points an accusing finger at Tito, Communism, and especially at the 1974 Constitution, which “caused the constitutional-legal disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Serb People.”¹⁶²

161 From the preface by Dobrica Ćosić to Nikola Koljević’s diaries, *Stvaranje Republike Srpske* (Creation of Republica Srpska) (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2008) p.12.

162 *Ibid.* p.15.

The Army's Role in Political Life

The disintegration of Yugoslavia cannot be understood without comprehending the role and significance of the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA), which was always dominated by Serbs. Since the creation of the modern Serbian state, the Army has had an ambivalent relationship with the government. On the one hand, it has seen itself as the bulwark of a stable state and has championed an authoritarianism rooted in the highly conservative, agrarian character of Serbian society. The Army played a key part in the formation of the state—that is, during the Balkan wars in the early part of the twentieth century—and always enjoyed the sympathy and the respect of the Serbian people. On the other hand, the Army has sometimes operated as an independent political actor, taking upon itself the formulation of national political goals. In 1903, for instance, members of the military organized the “May coup,” in which the Serbian king, Aleksandar Obrenović, was murdered because of his pro-Austrian views and replaced by Petar Karađorđević.¹⁶³

This chapter charts the political role played by the YPA in Yugoslavia's struggles to define itself politically and territorially. After first sketching the Army's relationship with the state in the first seventy-odd years of the twentieth century, the chapter then analyzes the contest under Tito and in the immediate aftermath of his death to define the YPA's constitutional role; the YPA's opposition to the

163 Olga Popović-Obradović, *Vojna elita i civilna vlast u Srbiji 1903–1914. godine (Military and Civilian Authority in Serbia 1903–1914)*, Zbornik Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. i 20. veka – uloga elita (Serbia in Modernization Processes in the 19th and 20th century), ed. Latinka Perović, Beograd, Čigoja 2003.

decentralization of the Yugoslav state; the YPA's pursuit of its self-defined role of saving a federated socialist Yugoslavia, which saw the YPA gradually come to share the ambitions of the Serbian nationalist elite; the YPA's role in installing Milošević in power; its transformation into a purely Serbian institution; and its involvement in the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia.

A BULWARK OF THE STATE:

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ARMY UP TO THE 1970S

Dissatisfied with the territories granted it at the Congress of Berlin, Serbia made preparations for territorial expansion in the direction of its historical heartlands of Kosovo and Macedonia. Such appetites inevitably boosted the political profile of the army, a profoundly conservative body that distrusted parliamentarianism and advocated an aggressive foreign policy.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, an alliance of military, political, and intellectual elites seeking popular support had opted to solve the Serbian national question by war, a decision that was to ensure the centrality of the military in Serbia's political life. The two Balkan wars of 1912–13 were fundamentally wars of conquest enabling Serbia to expand its territory considerably. But before it had time to integrate the newly conquered territories, Serbia found itself sucked into the vortex of World War I, during which Serbia's armed forces suffered staggering losses at the hands of the superior Austro-Hungarian and German armies.

Early on in the war, on December 7, 1914, Serbia proclaimed in a document known as the Declaration of Niš that one of its war aims was the liberation and unification of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy made this goal attainable. For the Serbs, the creation of Yugoslavia meant the fulfillment of the dream of all Serbs living in one state. It also meant that the Serbs found themselves in the unaccustomed position of being

the relative majority (in 1981 the census number of Serbs was 36.3 percent of the total Yugoslav population or 8,136,578) that ruled over the rest. It was not surprising, therefore, that they identified themselves with the state: theirs were the dynasty and the army, and most state leaders were also Serbs. Those leaders supported and implemented a policy of “integral Yugoslavism,” perceived as a way of constructing the integral Yugoslav nation. But the ideology of integral Yugoslavism was dominated by Serbs, who were privileged as victors and unifiers and who kept reminding the Croats and Slovenes that Serbs had made the greatest contributions in terms of both casualties and victories. In other words, the Serbs regarded themselves as the champions of nation-building, the foremost lovers of freedom, and the saviours of Slavdom.¹⁶⁴

Whatever the nature of the regime in Belgrade, the Army served as the mainstay of the regime and the state’s official ideology. In the first Yugoslavia, the Army actively supported the king’s decision to abolish the constitution and rule by personal dictatorship. In the second Yugoslavia, the Army was no less unwavering in its support of a regime of a very different political stripe.

The post–World War II Communist government based its authority in large part on the moral legitimacy of the National Liberation Army (Narodna Oslobodilačka Vojska Jugoslavije, or NOVJ), the partisan force led by Tito that fought against the Nazi occupiers and quisling governments of Ante Pavelić in Croatia and Milan Nedić in Serbia.¹⁶⁵ Partisan delegates from all parts of the country formed the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ). In November 1943, AVNOJ decided that Yugoslavia should be organized as a federal state of equal nations and nationalities, and

164 *Ibid.*

165 The supreme command of the National Liberation and Partisan detachments of Yugoslavia (NOPOJ) was established on June 27, 1941; Tito was appointed commander-in-chief. He founded the First Proletarian Brigade in Rudo the same year; in 1942, he issued orders to create what would become the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia.

the NVO was entrusted with the task of winning the military victory that would allow this goal to be achieved.¹⁶⁶ The NVO was renamed the Yugoslav Army on March 1, 1945, and the Yugoslav Army was in turn renamed the Yugoslav People's Army on December 22, 1951, the new name formally emphasizing its popular, socialist, and revolutionary character.

Communist regimes, of course, have always relied on the army as a pillar of power. The Communist Party's vanguard role in these societies, founded on the concept of democratic centralism and political control, imparts a special character to civilian-military relations. As in the case of the Soviet armed forces, the Yugoslav military was essentially an army of the party, not an army of the people. The link between political officers and their civilian counterparts was close. High-ranking officers were members of the highest party and state organs. There was a close relationship between the political bodies in the armed forces and the security services; political officers were often assigned the duties of security officers and vice versa.

The YPA was a political army from its conception and relied on the ethic of "Brotherhood and Unity." Between 1945 and 1990, its political role was significant and, in certain periods, decisive. Although the Army was technically subordinate to civilian authorities and to the party at the federal level, it was closely allied with Tito and his successors regarding the most important matters of state.

Because of its geostrategic position during the Cold War, Yugoslavia developed a defensive structure in preparation for possible resistance to both Eastern and Western forces.

For much of the post-World War II period, the YPA's defense strategy was largely directed against a possible Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion, yet the Soviets were able to infiltrate the Army leadership with the goal of turning the Army against Tito. The State

166 At the beginning of 1945, the NOVJ numbered 800,000 troops, while the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (KPJ) had 140,000 members. Political commissars were appointed from the ranks of Party members to keep the NOVJ under political control.

Security Service (Uprava Državne Bezbednosti, or UDB)¹⁶⁷ played a key role in supporting Tito's resistance to and struggle against Soviet pressure in the NOV and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KJP) and in ensuring Tito's survival. Army officers were mostly trained and educated in the USSR after the war; Tito relied on the UDB out of fear of the Army's loyalty to Stalin.

Between 1954 and 1964, Yugoslavia enjoyed one of the highest growth rates in the world; the gross national product increased by 80 percent, industrial output doubled, agricultural output increased by 40 percent, the per capita national income increased annually by 7.6 percent, total exports rose by 121 percent, and total imports increased by 98 percent. Yet such robust growth could not be sustained in the face of the limitations of the centralist administrative system. Vast amounts of the national budget were spent on the Army; by 1990, the SFRY earmarked 4.6 percent of its national income (U.S. \$2.5 billion) for the YPA, which was the fourth largest force in Europe.¹⁶⁸ The incongruity between economic growth and the centralist administrative system was the main reason behind Yugoslavia's ongoing national debate about democratization and decentralization. The Army was seen as a guarantor of the integrity of Yugoslavia.

The Army resumed its political role in supporting the regime after wide-reaching purges in the 1960s. In 1966, citing "various deformities in the work of the State Security Service"¹⁶⁹ (i.e., misconduct and alleged eavesdropping on Tito), the Brioni Plenum dismissed State Security Service head Aleksandar Ranković and others. Ranković was removed because he was blocking the implementation

167 The State Security Service (UDB) was set up in 1946; it was part of the Federal Secretariat for Internal Affairs and was led by Aleksandar Rankovic.

168 According to the International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, 1990–91 (London: IISS), pp. 95–96, at the outbreak of the recent Balkan war, the YPA numbered 180,000, including 100,000 conscripts (when the members of the Territorial Defense organization were included, the total number of troops approached two million). At the time, the YPA had 1,850 tanks, 2,000 artillery pieces, 455 combat aircraft, 198 helicopters, and 60 warships.

169 Latinka Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga* (Closing the Circle), Svijetlost, Sarajevo, 1990, p. 41.

and attempted reversal of the politically decentralized and economically liberal reform process that had been agreed upon by Tito with the adoption of a new constitution in 1963. The State Security Service came under the control of the Army, and from then until the break-up of Yugoslavia, the Army's counterintelligence service played a key role in political events.

The Brioni Plenum raised the question of the role of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) within the system of self-management as well as of relations within the Party. Democratic forces in Serbia seized the opportunity to pass important decisions concerning the political system, especially with regard to altering the role and character of the State Security Service and transforming the LCY. They were particularly critical of the attitude of the State Security Service toward Albanians in Kosovo, which was described as a “drastic example of chauvinistic practice.”¹⁷⁰

As Serbia embarked on a process of liberalization that energized political life throughout the republic, other republics, especially Slovenia and Croatia, experienced similar shakeups. These processes provoked a reaction from “centralist” conservative forces in Yugoslavia, particularly in Serbia, as already mentioned where conservatives saw the departure of Ranković in 1966—and the passage of the 1974 Constitution—as signaling the beginning of the end of Yugoslavia.¹⁷¹ Serbian conservatives calculated that they could get the better of their democratic counterparts only by relying on the decision-making power of the federal center working in conjunction with the YPA. The conservatives sought to postpone political changes

170 *Ibid.* p.41

171 Aleksandar Ranković joined the Yugoslav Communist Party in 1928 and was active in the resistance during World War II. After the war, he was Minister of the Interior, heading the military and secret police. From 1948 to 1966 he also held the second highest post in the executive branch of the Yugoslav government; he served as vice president of the republic from 1963 to 1966. He was regarded as a possible successor to Tito, especially in Serbia, until he was removed at the Brioni Plenum.

until after Tito's death, at which point they anticipated being able to press for a revision of the 1974 Constitution.

The YPA's role as an instrument of internal intervention was first inaugurated in Kosovo during demonstrations in 1968. In 1971, the Army assisted the police in stemming Croatia's drive toward independence. At that time, Tito delivered a speech in the small Bosnian town of Rudo in which he made explicit the political role of the Army:

*There is also the question of the Army's role in preserving the achievements of our revolution. Although its primary task is to defend our country against foreign enemies, our Army is also called on to defend the achievements of our revolution within the country, should that become necessary. It cannot be otherwise. I say this, although I believe that we have sufficient forces outside the Army to be really able to ensure our peaceful development, and I believe that there is no need for fear any great excesses. But if it comes to shooting, the Army is also here. This should be made clear to all.*¹⁷²

Tito's comments did not sit well with Vladimir Bakarić, a prominent Croatian Communist politician. He told German journalists that the YPA represented "a certain potential danger at the present time. ... [T]he Army's function isn't to maintain internal order within the country, but to protect Yugoslavia's frontiers against foreign enemies. ... [A]ny attempt by the Army to seize power in Yugoslavia would unleash a civil war"¹⁷³

The role of the YPA in the political life of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) became significant in the 1970s. Tito

172 Marko Milivojević in *Yugoslavia's Security Dilemmas*, Berg Publishers Ltd.1988, edited by Marko Milivojević, John B. Allock and Pierre Maurer, p. 22.

173 Marko Milivojević in *Yugoslavia's Security Dilemmas*, Berg Publishers Ltd.1988, edited by Marko Milivojević, John B. Allock and Pierre Maurer, p.22. Vladimir Bakarić (1912–83) was a leading Croatian politician who held important positions in Croatia. He was also a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party from 1948 to 1969, president of the Federal Assembly (1953–63), and prime minister of Yugoslavia (1945–53).

increasingly succumbed to the influence of the YPA. The fact that he was physically weak and old may explain why he relied on the YPA in the midst of deteriorating intercommunal relations. “‘Brotherhood and Unity’ are inseparably linked with our Army,” Tito declared. “Our Army must not merely watch vigilantly over our borders, but also be present inside the country. ... [T]here are those who write that one day Yugoslavia will disintegrate. Nothing like that will happen because our Army ensures that we will continue to move in the direction we have chosen for the socialist construction of our country.”¹⁷⁴ The gradual delegitimization of the political system, which could offer no solutions for Yugoslavia’s mounting economic and political crisis, created a vacuum at the federal level into which the Army moved, at the same time wriggling free of civilian control and imposing itself as an autonomous force in the Yugoslav Federation. The civilian “command” mechanisms of society, though still in existence, began to function increasingly erratically.

THE SOVIET INFLUENCE

The Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia and the developments that preceded it underscored the challenges of dealing with the national issue in a complex state with a centralist concept. After the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956, the Czechoslovak leadership had tried to construct “a new, deeply democratic model of Socialist society compatible with [the] Czechoslovak condition” but received no support for the undertaking.¹⁷⁵ Czechoslovakia’s attempts to chart its own path failed because the country was invaded and occupied by Soviet forces

174 Marko Milivojević in *Yugoslavia’s Security Dilemmas*, Berg Publishers Ltd. 1988, edited by Marko Milivojević, John B. Allock and Pierre Maurer, p.22

175 Reports on events in Czechoslovakia by Tanjug (Telegrafic Agency of New Yugoslavia) quoted in Latinka Perović, *Zatavaranje kruga*.p.71 (Tanjug was founded on November 5, 1943. It had a leading role in the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool. It is now a Serbian agency based in Belgrade.)

in accordance with CPSU general-secretary Leonid Brezhnev's doctrine of limited sovereignty. The events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 had a great effect on Yugoslavia, particularly in terms of its effort to preserve its national sovereignty. Yugoslavia strongly supported Czechoslovakia, and the concept of a system of "total national defense"—the militarization of society "to strengthen the influence of the military factor in all spheres of life"—began to evolve.¹⁷⁶

Aware of the complexity of intercommunal relations in Yugoslavia, the USSR adopted an ever more hostile attitude toward Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union was especially worried by the growing demands for decentralization in Yugoslavia as well as the liberalization of the party structure. The Soviet leadership had always been apprehensive of the Yugoslav model, which as far back as 1948 had raised questions about the monolithic structure of the CPSU and its incontestable vanguard role in the world Socialist movement. The Soviet troop buildup near the Yugoslav border and military exercises in neighboring countries in 1968 were signals that the Soviets meant business. In 1971, Brezhnev insisted on the replacement of the reform-minded leadership in Croatia and—as Savka Dabčević Kučar,¹⁷⁷ then Croatian prime minister, testified—the Soviet leader told Tito: "If you won't do that, we will do it ourselves. We are in favor of the status quo regarding Yalta."¹⁷⁸ Kučar said that Tito told her explicitly that "the Army is getting ready around Zagreb"—readying itself to move against the Croatian government if it did not abandon its aims of economic decentralization and other steps designed to give Croatia greater control over its own affairs.¹⁷⁹

Czechoslovakia, Croatia, and Slovenia were all part of the same syndrome: They all expected support from the West, but that support

176 Marko Milivojević in Yugoslavia's Security Dilemmas.

177 Kučar was one of the most prominent Croatian communist political leaders in 70s. A leading factor in the Croatian Spring.

178 Interview with Savka Dabčević Kučar, HTV, May 7, 2001.

179 Ljudi iz 1971. – Prekinuta šutnja, Biblioteka VRIJEME, 1990.

would have meant the end of the East–West understanding which had emerged after Yalta (i.e., that the West and the Soviet Union would not seek to change the postwar division of Europe). None received Western support. The dangers of Croatian separatism and of the revival of Ustashism were exaggerated by the federal government and the Army in an effort to convince the general public that forces in Croatia were incapable of dealing with the movement, for greater decentralization of the republics and that federal intervention was essential. This excuse was used to reassert the role of the federal government, encouraging conservatives to rely increasingly on Tito, the police, and the Army. The Army’s suppression of the “Croatian Spring” in 1971 was a turning point because the movement in support of democratic and economic reform was so popular in Croatia, it could not be suppressed by any other means. Soviet intervention always loomed as a possibility if internal developments took the wrong course.

Thus, the democratization of Yugoslavia was overshadowed by “fear now of military dictatorship in the country and of Soviet influence, so the forces behind Socialist democracy gradually drew back and created room for both.”¹⁸⁰ The removal of the Croatian Communist leadership by Tito and the federal government was followed by the dismissal of the Serbian leadership (for moving toward the West) in 1972, marking a victory for the Stalinists and “unitarists.” The single-party system, the Yugoslav community model, and the Socialist economic model were all exhausted. The resulting vacuum was the main cause of Soviet fears and resulting threats.

The constant efforts of the USSR to secure an outlet to the open southern seas, such as the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, subjected Yugoslavia (and Albania) and the YPA to enduring pressure. In view of the events in Czechoslovakia, inadequate protection of the northeast Yugoslavia frontier became a cause for concern because

180 Latinka Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga, Svijetlost, Sarajevo, 1990, p. 104.*

the armed forces were concentrated mostly on the western border. Many generals, including Rade Hamović, were under suspicion of being in the service of the Soviets.¹⁸¹ Meanwhile, liberals and conservative hard-liners in the Army began to adopt increasingly different positions, with the former favoring and the latter opposing democratization of the Communist Party's unit in the Army.¹⁸² Conservatives claimed that most liberals were jeopardizing the unity of the armed forces at a time when the Soviet threat was very real. The conservatives' arguments won the day and most liberals were forced to leave the military or were marginalized within it. Although a new national defense doctrine was developed to deal with the Soviet threat, the danger was nonetheless exploited to strengthen the Army's influence in all spheres of life.

A NEW CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT, A GROWING POLITICAL ROLE

The internal use of the Army was an indicator of the delegitimization of the Yugoslav political system: the state could now only be held together by the threat of the use of force. The SFRY's increasing reliance on the YPA was reflected in the constitutional amendments leading up to the 1974 Constitution as calls for the decentralization and confederalization of the country grew in intensity. Tito was aware that decentralization was inevitable, but he insisted that the Army's role as guarantor of the integrity of the state be enshrined in the constitution. Article 240 of the 1974 Constitution formalized the role of the YPA, stating that the YPA would "protect the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the social system of the Socialist

181 Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija*, CID, Podgorica, 2000, p. 27.

182 *Ibid.*, p. 28 "Tito prevented a liberal victory in the Army: for a long time the battle was waged between the two powerful centres consisting of Gošnjak, Hamović, Nenezić and most generals in army command posts who advocated strong-arm tactics, on the one hand, and Ivan Rukavina, Bogdan Oreščanin, Ivan Dolničar and Veljko Kovačević who represented the liberal course."

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia established by the present Constitution.” The militarization of society was boosted by the creation of the Territorial Defense Forces in the late 1960s, as the “broadest form of total national armed resistance.”

The YPA and the Territorial Defense Forces were delineated under the 1974 Constitution as two equal components working in tandem to train personnel and operate in unison in the event of foreign aggression. Territorial Defense was under the control of republican and provincial leaderships, while the YPA was under the command of Tito and, after his death, the SFRY Presidency. (The reform-minded leaderships of several republics had been dismissed before the new Constitution came into being, but its provisions—including those regarding Territorial Defense—nonetheless reflected their desire to decentralize power. After Tito died, the YPA would seek to reverse this decentralization of authority.)

In 1978, the SFRY Presidency adopted the “Special War against Yugoslavia” policy, which defined the tasks of social self-protection as a prerogative of the Territorial Defense Forces. In fact, the “Special War” was a war that the Counterintelligence Service (KOS, or Kontraobaveštajna Služba) waged against domestic “enemies” (ethnic Albanian and Croat “nationalists,” Slovene “dissidents,” and so forth); it was an instrument by which the YPA broadened the scope of its spying to include state and party officials in the “suspect” republics and provinces.

After Tito’s death, military leaders began to argue about the concept of national defense. The argument intensified when Branko Mamula became head of the Federal Secretariat for National Defense in 1982 and reached a peak during the tenure of Veljko Kadijević in the late 1980s. The Army was by now an independent sector of the economy; in 1985, it earned some U.S. \$2 billion from exports of the armaments it produced.¹⁸³

183 The country’s armaments industry earned a total of U.S. \$13.5 billion from exports

The YPA's political engagement became particularly prominent after Albanian demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981.¹⁸⁴ Kosovo was placed under state emergency and endured de facto occupation by the YPA and the Federal Interior Ministry Special Worker's State Militia (the state paramilitary within the Interior Ministry, at that time under the control of the YPA). The suppression was brutal and cost many lives, and it denied meaningful civil and political rights to the predominantly ethnic Albanian population, creating bitterness, frustration, and a desire for revenge.¹⁸⁵

The heavy YPA presence in Kosovo after the 1981 demonstrations increased the Albanians' antipathy toward the Army. At the time, Albanian conscripts were the most numerous after Serbs and Croats. The forces in Kosovo were reinforced in 1982 to include three motorized brigades and one artillery regiment, one anti-armor regiment, one air defense regiment, and an engineering regiment. According to an operational plan, Kosovo was encircled on the periphery by the Skopje, Niš, and Belgrade armies in anticipation of further trouble.¹⁸⁶

As Branko Mamula (who was federal secretary for national defense from 1982–1988) stressed, from that time on the political role of the YPA was “no longer in dispute and all that mattered was the extent to which the Army would exist as an autonomous factor.” The YPA remained pro-Yugoslav and committed to constructing Socialism

in 1953–93, U.S. \$4.7 billion in 1986–90. These exports reached a peak in 1983, accounting for some 20 percent of the country's total exports that year. The share of the republics in these exports in the period 1976–91 was as follows: Serbia, 36.17 percent; Bosnia-Herzegovina, 23.83 percent; Slovenia, 13.11 percent; Croatia, 11.55 percent; Macedonia, 5.69 percent; Montenegro, 3.45 percent; and the Federal Secretariat for National Defense, 6.19 percent. Figures are from *Razbijanje Jugoslavije 1990–1992* by Duško Vilić, Boško Todorović, Biblioteka opsta izdanja, Belgrade, 1995.

184 A decision was taken and carried out to dismantle the Territorial Defense organization in Kosovo (numbering some sixty thousand, of whom 70 percent were ethnic Albanians), because, as Mamula pointed out (*Slučaj Jugoslavija*, p.41. and 42.) it was made up mostly of separatist forces. A much smaller organization was created, numbering seven thousand pro-Yugoslavia members.

185 Marko Milivojević in *Security Dilemmas*

186 Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija*, CID Podgorica, 2000, p. 41.

within the unitary state.¹⁸⁷ Mamula insisted on reorganizing the YPA and the Territorial Defense Forces to prepare for possible internal disturbances and conflicts as well to accord with the amendments to the 1974 Constitution. His main goal was to put Territorial Defense under Army control, and in 1982 a new strategy was adopted whereby the YPA was incorporated into the model of national defense and social self-protection. The Council for Territorial Defense had been formed in 1980, leading to the YPA's full organizational and command control of Yugoslavia's military forces, including the State Security Service and the Worker's State Militia. With YPA Colonel-General Franjo Herljević as federal secretary for internal affairs, the Council for Territorial Defense assumed the duties and powers previously assigned to local political authorities under Article II of the Law on National Defense, thereby increasing the YPA's military and political authority. Such a concentration of military, paramilitary, secret police, and criminal police power was unprecedented in Yugoslavia's postwar history and proved to be decisive in the collapse of Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁸

REORGANIZING THE ARMY, DISARMING THE REPUBLICS

As a result of skilful lobbying by the Army leadership, orchestrated by Mamula, the Law on National Defense of the SFRY was amended in 1982. Commenting on the resistance within the SFRY Presidency to amending the law, Mamula writes: "That was a valuable lesson for us—that any subsequent review of concept, strategy and defense plans must remain internal. We were forced to exercise caution and apply all kinds of lobbying to obtain their verification by the Presidency," a statement that indicates the degree to which the YPA had become independent.¹⁸⁹

187 *Ibid.* p. 51.

188 Marko Milivojević in *Yugoslavia's Security Dilemmas*, p. 36–37.

189 Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija*, CID Podgorica, 2000, p.34.

The Army leadership's argument in favor of amending the law was the need to modernize the armed forces; in fact, the effort boiled down to the abolition of the Territorial Defense Forces, whose headquarters were located in the republican centers and whose territorial jurisdiction was confined within republican borders. To bolster support for its actions, the leadership exaggerated the danger of external aggression in its demands for modernization and technological advancement.¹⁹⁰

The existing six army corps districts (each of which effectively belonged to a particular republic or province) and one independent corps district in Montenegro were transformed into three territorial theatres (central, southeastern, and northwestern, headquartered in Belgrade, Niš, and Zagreb, respectively) and one maritime theatre (headquartered in Split). The law abolished the Kosovo Territorial Defense because the province was regarded as a zone of unrest.¹⁹¹ Knin was accorded a prominent place in the new arrangement, acknowledging its importance as the crossroads for railroads from Zadar, Split, and Šibenik, and a division was formed to cover

190 Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija*, Quoted from the Austrian paper *Kleine Zeitung* from 29. August 1979: The appointment in 1979 of two Serbs to key posts—Branko Mamula as chief of the General Staff and General Nikola Ljubičić as minister of defense—"violated for the first time the unwritten precept that the two highest command posts in the YPA must not be in the hands of the same nation." When Mamula was appointed minister of defense in 1982, he dispelled all doubt about the YPA's role in the deepening crisis when he said that the YPA "cannot keep strictly to the barracks, it must walk onto the political stage. ... Any attempt to negate the political role of the [YPA] is therefore inadmissible." P. 48.

Anton Bebler wrote in *Slobodna Dalmacija* on April 28, 1991, that "the [YPA] continues to operate in accordance with the 'Mamula doctrine,' advocating orthodox Socialism and trying to restore an improved version of Titoism." This was precisely the platform of Slobodan Milošević when he made his debut on the political stage: "The idea of Socialism and self-management, regardless of the difficulties it is encountering in practice, represents the ideal of small nations and of all oppressed people all over the world. Those are the sources of the energy we need so that we can rid ourselves of our troubles and live better." (Rally at Zemun polje, 1985, Slobodan Milošević, *Godine raspleta*, BIGZ, Beograd, 1989. p. 56.)

191 See *Rat u Hrvatskoj i BiH*, ed. Branka Magaš and Ivo Žanić, Dani, Zagreb-Sarajevo, 1999. Martin Špegelj says that from the 1960s onward, conscripts from Kosovo were looked upon as unreliable. There was a plan, to be carried out in case of an external threat, to concentrate Albanian conscripts in remote areas where they would be pacified until the danger passed. P.45

the Serbian *krajin*as in Croatia. Rumors circulated that Mamula and his allies believed that the previous six army corps districts had to be “abolished to prevent their teaming up with republican leaderships.”¹⁹² Veljko Kadijević later wrote that the reorganization of the YPA and Territorial Defense succeeded because the territorial arrangement “completely disregarded the administrative borders of the republics and provinces.”¹⁹³ Some military circles perceived this arrangement as proof of collusion between YPA chiefs and the Serbian leadership to draw the boundaries of a future Greater Serbia.¹⁹⁴

The reorganization, which effectively subordinated the YPA and Territorial Defense to the Presidency of the SFRY, provoked discontent in the republics, whose top officials felt that relations between the federal center and the republics had been destabilized by ending the arrangement whereby each republic had its own army in addition to the federal one. This move, the republican leaderships complained, was motivated by political ambitions, not strategic necessity.

The abolition of the republican armies was followed by changes in personnel. The dominance of Serbian personnel in the republican branches (in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia) was henceforth very conspicuous: The majority of key posts were in the hands of Serbs such as Života Avramović, Milutin Kukanjac, Mile Kandić, Nikola Uzelac, and Savo Janković. After the YPA’s withdrawal from Slovenia and Croatia to Bosnia–Herzegovina in 1991, all the leading posts were held by Serbs.

An additional measure to neutralize, as Kadijević put it, the “deleterious effects of the 1974 Constitution” consisted of disarming the Territorial Defense Force in 1990—a move that left almost all non-Serb nations without any weapons. Only the Territorial Defense

192 Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada*, p. 75.

193 *Ibid.* p. 77.

194 See *Rat u Hrvatskoj i BiH*, ed. Branka Magaš and Ivo Žanić, Dani, Zagreb-Sarajevo, 1999.

Forces in Serbia and Montenegro were spared. Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina began to arm themselves in 1990 and 1991.

While the YPA was being reorganized, the Army was also obstructing the social and political reforms necessary for modernization, including modernization of the Army. The YPA sided with Serbia, which was unprepared to embark upon a transition to a market economy. The YPA was not interested in economic reforms because it feared a return to capitalism, a redistribution of power in favor of the republics, and the loss of its privileged status. It only paid lip service to the economic reforms pursued by the Federal Executive Council (SIV). The Army had by that time considerably boosted its independence by developing a network of its own production facilities.¹⁹⁵ Reform-oriented efforts were checked in 1985; a YPA faction accused the government of placing undeveloped republics in an inferior position by its market orientation and of pursuing a policy aimed at draining the underdeveloped regions and Serbia of their income to the benefit of Croatia and Slovenia.

Partly as a result of the increased influence of the YPA, a qualitative change in Soviet-Yugoslav relations occurred during the 1980s. In 1985, the Soviet Union agreed to grant a license to Yugoslavia to manufacture the latest Soviet tank—a first for a non-Warsaw Pact country. This new relationship with the USSR affected the YPA's equipment modernization program and, in turn, strengthened pro-Soviet sentiments within the YPA command. Yet fear of Soviet intervention was still rife and the southeastern theatre saw an increase in military maneuvers. The USSR grew increasingly insistent, especially in its demands regarding a base in the Mediterranean, its obvious choice being the Bay of Kotor in Montenegro.

195 This included a major military-industrial complex that aimed at both technological and economic independence in the production of weapons and equipment. In 1990, the military-industrial sector consisted of 53 enterprises with a workforce of some 80,000 and 1,000 subcontractors. The arrangement brought about a cooperative spirit as well as group interests and their safeguarding, *Borba*, March 5, 1990.

The Army's political power went beyond the institutional political system. Its monopoly on the defense of the country was extended and redirected to the defense of the country's Socialist ideology. The YPA became preoccupied with the economic and political crisis in the country and grew more firmly convinced that the future of Yugoslavia lay in a federal arrangement—that "it [was] possible to preserve Yugoslavia as a state, as well as the sociopolitical system of democratic Socialism."¹⁹⁶

The killing of four soldiers in Paraćin on September 3, 1987, by an ethnic Albanian conscript whipped up an anti-Albanian hysteria in Serbia, and the YPA seized the opportunity to warn that the daily deepening of the crisis in Yugoslavia might have "totally unforeseeable consequences for the survival of the Yugoslav community." Mamula's attack on nationalists in the wake of the incident in Paraćin, as well as the "Agrokomerc Affair"¹⁹⁷ and a special issue of the independent intellectual journal *Nova Revija*,¹⁹⁸ were considered in many parts of the country as harbingers of a military coup. *Nova Revija* declared that "it is high time the YPA stopped being a taboo topic and behaving as though it is a state within a state, immune to public criticism and control. If it is really a people's army, as its name

196 Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija* (Case of Yugoslavia), p. 99.

197 In 1987, Agrocomerc, an agricultural complex based in Velika Kladusa in Bosnia, was considered one of the most successful Yugoslav enterprises, employing thirteen thousand people. However, much of its phenomenal expansion was due to the extensive issuing of false promissory notes. The rise and fall of Agrocomerc cannot be explained simply in terms of economic crime, which was widespread in Yugoslavia at the time due to an overbureaucratized economy. The Serbian secret police tried to destabilize Bosnia by putting the blame for this financial scandal on the Bosnian government, leading to the dramatic resignation of federal vice-president Hamdija Pozderac.

198 *Nova Revija* emerged in 1982 and was a watershed in the contemporary intellectual history of Slovenia. In 1987, it published a special issue, issue 57 entitled "Contributions to the Slovenian National Program," which tackled the crucial question of how Slovenian civil society and its political state should be organized within the framework of a democratic republic. It provided a clear-headed, comprehensive, and unambiguous proposal for creating a democratic republic within a confederal Yugoslavia.

implies, then it must be accountable to the people (i.e., it must agree to be publicly criticized and controlled).” Further:

*For the first time in the history of socialist self-managing Yugoslavia, the Army has joined in public debate; pointed out real and invented difficulties, and real and invented enemies; and criticized the importance of the political structures to solve the accumulated problems. We consider that by this gesture it has overstepped the bounds of its constitutional competence, because it has no statutory power to decide, by the argument of its fists, when the Yugoslav social system is in danger. Such a decision must be left to the organs of civil popular government, above all to the Assembly of the SFRY.*¹⁹⁹

The government and civil society of Slovenia openly expressed their dissatisfaction with Slovenia’s status within Yugoslavia; they saw it tethered economically to the rest of the country, which preferred centralized Yugoslavia. Slovenia’s lively civil society and its desire to become part of the European Union became a bone of contention within the LCY and the YPA. In 1987, Slovenia demanded from the YPA that Slovenian conscripts be allowed to perform their national service in civilian arenas and that its officers be permitted to serve mostly in Slovenia.²⁰⁰ Slovenia also came forward with a new concept of the state (a loose federation or a union of states) in response to Serbia’s demand for the recentralization of Yugoslavia. This worsened the already strained relations between Slovenia and the YPA.

199 Protest letter from an assembly of *Nova revija* employees, addressed to the SFRY Assembly and published in the Ljubljana daily *Delo* on September 29, 1987.

200 In accordance with the constitution of the SFRY and the Law on National Defense, it was agreed that 25 percent of Slovenians should serve in Slovenia, but the YPA did not adhere to this agreement.

MILOŠEVIĆ AND THE ARMY JOIN FORCES

Slobodan Milošević's ascension to power unbalanced the fragile political status quo in Yugoslavia. According to Branko Mamula, the YPA was not yet on Milošević's side when Milošević emerged as a political force, and by late 1987 and early 1988 "there was still no fear that Serbia with Milošević and the YPA might work in tandem."²⁰¹ Although the YPA was arguing for a federal Socialist Yugoslavia, it did not dare oppose the putsch-like manner by which Milošević seized power for fear of raising other issues. As far as the YPA was concerned, Mamula writes, Slovenia was the Army's greater challenge because it directly denied the YPA's legitimacy. Hoping to create the impression that he enjoyed the backing of the Army, Milošević directed the media to circulate the names of some mostly retired generals from Serbia who "supported" him. General Ljubičić was involved in Milošević's installation, so his support was often mentioned, as was that of General Petar Gračanin, former chief of the General Staff and, later, federal minister of internal affairs; General Aleksandar Janjić, formerly in charge of the Army in Niš; General Milojica Pantelić; and General Pero Lalović.

Milošević did not become Serbia's leader solely on the wave of Kosovo Serb revolt or because the intellectual elite called on him to revive the Greater Serbia project; "There is no doubt that the role of General Ljubičić was decisive in the tug of war between Milošević and Stambolić (at that time president of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Serbia) at the Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia," which was held on September 23–24, 1987.²⁰² Once Milošević became the most powerful man on the Serbian political scene, he set a strategically important goal for the preservation of his power: to assert control over the Army. As soon as he had full control over the Army, Milošević turned

201 Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija*, p.121

202 *Ibid.* p.112

his attention to the Serbian police, transforming the public security service into a parallel military organization.²⁰³

Nothing could stem the tide of Serbian populism, and implementation of the Serbian national project began in mid-1988. Mistrust of the YPA grew in all republics, Slovenia in particular. *Mladina*, a provocative weekly magazine of the Slovenian Communist Party that had a youthful readership, often criticized the army as a retrograde institution. In response, the authorities arrested Janez Janša, the military correspondent for *Mladina* and two other people, and charged them with leaking military secrets. The documents in question were believed to be the plans for a takeover of Slovenia by the YPA. The crisis of relations between Slovenia and the YPA came to a head during Janša's trial. Thousands of citizens demonstrated every day of the trial until the suspects were released from custody in 1989.

Speculation that the Army might step in to salvage the fractured Yugoslavia increased in the country and abroad. Many members of the military and political circles in Serbia believed that the West was in favor of preserving Yugoslavia and that the West might support extraordinary measures under certain circumstances. Rumors circulated that the West had indicated to the YPA's leadership that it would raise no objection to the YPA staging a coup and deposing Milošević. Veljko Kadijević said that such rumors were a "very transparent

203 Budimir Babović, testimony delivered on June 13, 2003, in the trial of Milošević before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). He also said "Throughout this period, Slobodan Milošević had a position which de jure enabled him to directly control the highest level of the police hierarchy and thus exert a decisive influence on police organization in Serbia. Moreover, in some respects he had an obligation to exercise control and prevent breaking of the law. During the one-party system, he was the president of the party in power, controlling all the other levers of authority which only carried out the party's will. When the multiparty system was introduced, Milošević remained president of the Presidency, then president of the Republic of Serbia. His authority and obligations were then defined by the constitution and the law. His position relative to the Serbian police was not weakened when he moved from the post of Serbian president to that of president of the FRY. He retained undiminished power and acquired constitutional and legal authority because, as FRY president, he became the ex officio president of the Supreme Defense Council. In this capacity, he had legal authority over the police forces in peace and war."

ploy [by the West] because the overthrow of the Serb leadership with Milošević at its head was always on Western minds.” According to Kadijević, the object of that ploy was to “play the two main pillars of Yugoslavia—the Serb people and the YPA—against each other.”²⁰⁴ Aleksandar Vasiljević, head of the YPA Security Department, claims that information gathered by the KOS pointed to the contrary—that is, a “state coup would be interpreted as a blow to democracy in countries in which it had just taken root ... [an] act with far-reaching consequences for the development of democracy not only in Yugoslavia but also in Europe.”²⁰⁵

The republican leadership, the federal leadership, and the YPA all insisted that Yugoslavia must be reformed, but each had its own idea how this should be done. As minister of defense, Mamula wanted to reform the YPA in order to preserve the federation; Kadijević, who replaced Mamula in 1988 upon his retirement, worked in the same direction. Military leaders identified Serbia and Milošević as the only defenders of the SFRY, and the YPA sided with Serbia and drew apart from the other republics, especially from Slovenia and Croatia. After Branko Mikulić resigned as federal prime minister in 1989, Kadijević suggested that Milošević assume the post of prime minister because “on account of the political authority he has already established, the ability he has already demonstrated, especially the ability to provide simple solutions to complex problems, and the backing of all who are for Yugoslavia ... he could bring about a reversal in the further course of events.”²⁰⁶

Kadijević’s suggestion was disregarded, and a few months later he proposed the “immediate setting up of a team of experts to draw up reform of the state with the explanation that nothing will come of economic reform without a fundamental reform of the federal

204 Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada*, p. 88.

205 *NIN*, 19 June 1992

206 Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada*, p. 89.

state.” Already suspicious of certain leaderships (specifically in Slovenia and Croatia), the YPA began to operate in contravention of prescribed procedure; its excuse was that it could not “operate normally as all armies in the world more or less do because otherwise every written document of the Supreme Command would at once fall into the hands of the enemy,” the implication being that “the enemy” was the new governments of Croatia and Slovenia.²⁰⁷

The Army shared the Serbian leadership’s doubts about the compatibility of a federal system with a “multiparty” system (i.e., a system featuring parties from the various republics and provinces promoting not only different political programs but also different national programs).²⁰⁸ Rather than a multiparty system, Milošević and others favored a system of “non-party pluralism,” by which they meant a system in which there would be a plurality of forces but all those forces would share Socialist leanings, all existing in a one-party system. This idea was first formulated by the philosopher and chief ideologue of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), Mihajlo Marković, who argued that “at the present stage of social development any institutionalization of political pluralism in the form of multi-party organization would be unacceptable”²⁰⁹ He believed that “so-called transition [i.e., the swift adoption of the kind of political system found in Western European democracies] is to be ruled out in Serbia because Serbia has never for one moment taken that historical sidetrack. We in Serbia can only talk of the gradual, evolutionary transformation of society—from autocratic to democratic Socialism—which was set into motion as far back as the 1950s and early 1960s, and which, after long stagnation and crisis, achieved a decisive

207 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

208 Veljko Kadjević, *Moje viđenje raspada*.

209 Ninth YPA LCY conference, 1990

breakthrough and saw radical social transformation in the period between 1989 and 1995.”²¹⁰

RESISTANCE TO DEPOLITICIZATION, RUMORS OF COUPS

Any mention of the “depoliticization” of the Army was understood by the YPA as the “excommunication” of the armed forces from the social and political life of the country, thus erasing the “people’s” character of the Yugoslav People’s Army. In the YPA’s view, cutting off its roots among the Yugoslav people would mean the Army’s subordination to the ruling elite.²¹¹

In November 1989, the YPA’s Communists asserted that the future of Yugoslavia lay not in the restoration of the bourgeois parliamentary system or in etatist centralism, but in the federal Socialist and self-managing development of equal nations and nationalities. They argued that their opposition to a multiparty system was not connected to any special military interest but to the interest of a Yugoslavia built on the AVNOJ principles and the defense of that country. They believed that a multiparty system would exacerbate national and nationalistic divisions in the country.²¹² Lieutenant General Blagoje Adžić, YPA chief of general staff between 1989 and 1991, said in an interview in the Army weekly *Narodna Armija* that pluralization of Yugoslav society had no negative connotation because different views and interests exist in every society. Yet he believed that *political* struggle among various parties “does not suit the SFRY, its social nature, and its further development.” He also argued that depoliticization of the Army would separate it from society’s basic problems and from the social mainstream. Should that happen, the Army would cease to be a “people’s” army.²¹³

210 Mihajlo Marković, *Društvena misao, SFRY Official Gazette*, 1999, p. 132.

211 Tomislav Peruničić: “Suština zalaganja za depolitizaciju”, *Narodna Armija*, January 25, 1990, p. 22.

212 Čvrsto jedinstvo armije, *Narodna armija*, November 30, 1989, p. 1.

213 *Narodna Armija*, December 7, 1989.

Because of increasing criticism, especially from Slovenia, the YPA made some internal changes that were seen as a step toward depoliticization. For instance, the YPA modified Article 13 of its regulations on October 11, 1989. The sentence obliging persons serving in the armed forces to actively participate in the implementation of the LCY's policy was replaced with a statement that persons serving the Army are obliged to consistently interpret and implement the policy of the highest state organs.²¹⁴

The League of Communists of Yugoslavia split at the Fourteenth Congress in January 20–22, 1990, and all existing bodies of the LCY were dissolved. The disintegration of the LCY meant that the Army lost the most important maneuvering arena for its political activity—LCY plenums. In practical terms, this dissolution appeared to set the stage for the depoliticization of the YPA. *Vjesnik*, a Zagreb daily, commented that before the Fourteenth Congress, the Army had been a key political factor in Yugoslavia,²¹⁵ but that now the Army's position on Yugoslavia's federal arrangements was under review. The conditions were being created, or so it seemed, for transforming the YPA into a nonpolitical and professional army.

Such a prospect quickly faded, however, when multiparty elections were scheduled to be held in Slovenia and Croatia in the spring of 1990 and plans were made for similar elections in other republics. The Army may have disapproved of political pluralism, but it was not about to stand idly by and see its political foes triumph at the ballot box. The YPA had always had representatives in federal assemblies; in the absence of the LCY, the Army faced the question under the auspices of which party the Army's cadres would run as candidates. High-ranking active and retired officers sought to answer the question by forming a new party: the League of Communists—Movement for Yugoslavia, which soon became known as

214 "Army Drops Party From Regulations" Daily Report East Europe FBIS-EEU-90-031 p. 70.

215 *Vjesnik*, June 5, 1990.

“the generals’ party.” While other East European countries’ armed forces were in the process of depoliticization, in Yugoslavia the army was creating its own party—and, moreover, a party with the word “Communist” in its title.

The YPA’s official spokesman, Colonel Vuk Obradović, said in April 1990 that the Federal Secretariat for National Defense was following and analyzing initiatives concerning the so-called depoliticization of the YPA from the point of view of the need for the Army to maintain its all-Yugoslav character.²¹⁶ A former head of the YPA General Staff, General Stevan Mirković, asserted that the Army was not against the multiparty system but warned against its being introduced in Yugoslavia too quickly.²¹⁷ The YPA saw in Milošević a man who was openly for Yugoslavia, who wanted to strengthen the federal state in the same way the YPA wanted to. The YPA advocated the creation of a new Yugoslavia, not only in order to have a state of its own, but because it believed that there were “nations in Yugoslavia [that] really wanted to live in a joint state.”²¹⁸

The YPA was fiercely critical of the outcome of the multiparty elections in Slovenia and Croatia (discussed below), branding them as a victory of right-wing forces opposed to the constitution and identifying the Socialists, who won the first multiparty election in Serbia, as its ideological partner. The general staff judged that the country was on the brink of civil war and insisted on a joint meeting of the Supreme Command and the Presidency of the SFRY. At the meeting, which took place on March 12–15, 1991, the YPA proposed imposing a state of emergency, raising the combat preparedness of the YPA, and adopting urgent measures to keep the system within the country’s basic law while reaching agreement on the future organization of Yugoslavia.

216 “More on Election Impact,” Daily Report East Europe, April 26, 1990 p. 79.

217 “Mirković on removing LCY from Army” FBIS-EEU-90-098 p. 81.

218 Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada*, p. 90.

After the Presidency turned the proposal down, the YPA proposed a plan to protect and defend the Serbian people outside Serbia and to concentrate the YPA within the frontiers of a future Yugoslavia. By adopting such a course of action, the YPA placed itself firmly in the service of Serbia. From that time on, the YPA communicated only with those members of the Presidency who were in favor of preserving Yugoslavia.²¹⁹

On March 13, Kadijević secretly left for Moscow (only select members of the SFRY Presidency knew of his departure) to canvass support for a military-state coup in Yugoslavia, a request Soviet minister of defense Dmitri Yazov declined. The idea was to carry out simultaneous coups in Moscow and Belgrade. The object, at least in Kadijević's mind, was to preserve Yugoslavia in the form the YPA desired. But the Soviets would interfere in the Yugoslav crisis only when they felt the need to bolster their own reputation and influence in international affairs; they were not in a position to commit themselves.²²⁰ In trying to ensure its long-term influence in the Balkans by modifying the regional balance of power, the Soviet Union trod cautiously; it was extremely careful not to commit itself to any newly created state in the territory of the former Yugoslavia nor to embrace any ruling team or political option.²²¹

A COMMON CAUSE AGAINST THE CONSTITUTION

The ties between the YPA and the Serbian leadership were strengthened by a shared dissatisfaction with the provisions of the federal Constitution as amended in 1974.

219 Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada*

220 Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ*, p. 295.

221 The Russian military was less cautious, however, than were the Russian civilian authorities. Russia's military security intelligence had regular contacts with YPA and Serbian politicians (such as Gračanin, Milošević's brother), members of the Academy, and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The YPA disliked the Constitution in large part because it weakened its control over Yugoslavia's armed forces. According to Kadijević, the creation in 1974 of two equal components of the armed forces—the YPA and Territorial Defense—meant the “splitting of the unity of the armed forces,” while the powers of command and direction granted to the republics and provinces turned Territorial Defense Forces into state armies.²²²

Another principal YPA objection to the 1974 Constitution was that it led to a drop in the military budget in 1980s, which fell from 5.8 percent to 4.5 percent of the gross national product.²²³ Under the 1974 Constitution, the financing of the YPA was within the jurisdiction of the Federation, whereas the financing of the Territorial Defense Forces was in the hands of the republics, provinces, municipalities, and work organizations. As a result, Kadijević argued, the republics and provinces had the right to determine the federal budget by consensus.

Serbia, which favored a strong centralized state, likewise disliked the 1974 Constitution, and from 1977 onward had sought to amend the Constitution (so as to get rid of the autonomous status given to Kosovo and Vojvodina), but had failed because other republics would not relinquish the degree of sovereignty that the constitution gave them.

The attitude of the YPA to the constitution was identical to that of most of the Serbian political and intellectual elite, who would

222 Veljko Kadijević believes that the break-up of Yugoslavia was actually set in motion in the 1960s. He asserts that Edvard Kardelj's concept of a federalized Yugoslavia prevailed, as demonstrated by the sacking of Ranković in 1966. (Kardelj was a Slovenian Communist political leader considered the main mind behind the concept of the workers' self-management.) From 1962 to 1974, theoretical, legal, and normative preparations were made in all spheres of the country's life—political, economic, and military—to adopt a new constitution that would legalize the break-up of Yugoslavia. Kadijević believes that blame for the new concept attaches to Kardelj, “whose fundamental thesis [was] that the socialization of defense ought not to be conducted by any expert body, even less by the Army, but by society as a whole.” Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada Jugoslavije*, p. 67.

223 Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija* (Case of Yugoslavia) p.68

accept Yugoslavia only as a unitary state in which the republican borders delineated national units. They based their arguments on a provision of the constitution that stated:

*The working people and the nations and nationalities shall exercise their sovereign rights in the Socialist Republics and in the Socialist Autonomous Provinces in conformity with their constitutional rights, and shall exercise these rights in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia when in their common interest it is so specified by the present Constitution. The working people, nations, and nationalities shall make decisions on the Federal level according to the principles of agreement among the Republics and Autonomous Provinces, solidarity and reciprocity, equal participation by the Republics and Autonomous Provinces in federal agencies, consistent with the present Constitution, and according to the principle of responsibility of the Republics and Autonomous Provinces for their own development and for the development of the socialist community as a whole.*²²⁴

Both Serbia and the Army were pushing for the same change to the 1974 Constitution—recentralization of the state—and both were disappointed by the federal constitutional amendments of 1988, which did not include measures to strengthen the federal state. The YPA increasingly came to see itself as the only force holding Yugoslavia together.

Serbia, however, was allowed to amend its Constitution. It proceeded to adopt some changes to its own constitution in 1990, revoking the autonomous status of Vojvodina and Kosovo as defined by the 1974 Constitution. Two provisions of the new Serbian Constitution defined Serbia as the first separatist republic. Article 83, defining the role of the president, stated: “The President is in charge of the armed forces in peace and war and national resistance in time of the war; he orders general or partial mobilization [and] organizes

224 1974 Constitution of the SFRY, Basic Principles, p. 8.

defense in accordance with the Law.” Article 135 states: “[I]f acts of the federal state or any [other] republic are contrary to the rights and duties which the Republic of Serbia has, or jeopardizes its interests, and compensation is not secured, Serbian republic organs will introduce acts in order to protect the interest of Serbia”²²⁵ In its relations with other republics, the YPA continued to profess defence of the SFRY Constitution, overlooking the fact that Serbia, in the formal legal sense, had, by adopting a new constitution that unilaterally amended the federal constitution of 1974, dealt a fatal blow to the Yugoslav federation.

The YPA also raised no objections to a series of actions by Milošević that led to the ouster of the political leaders of Vojvodina, Kosovo, and Montenegro; nor did it respond directly to increasingly bitter attacks on Tito’s legacy by Serbian leaders and their allies in other parts of the country. In turning a blind eye to unconstitutional acts committed by Milošević and his supporters, the Army had the tacit support of other republics, which hoped that Milošević’s appetite would stop with Kosovo and Vojvodina.

THE ARMY’S MINDSET

The YPA was not a homogenous army. Its top echelons were divided into three factions: Titoist-centralist and pro-Yugoslav, Greater Serbian, and one that advocated professionalism and depolitization. General Špegelj claimed in an interview²²⁶ that these divisions pervaded not only the high command but also the entire officer corps.

Notwithstanding these divisions, the Army leaders’ views on domestic and external issues coalesced around a few main themes, with little variation: Yugoslavia, they believed, was exposed to a “Special War” in which the enemy was aggressive and reactionary

225 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, *Savremena administracija* 1997.

226 *Telegraf*, November 2, 1994

forces from outside (chiefly, from within the Croatian and Serbian diasporas) were conspiring with internal forces to disturb the stability of the Socialist self-governing system, compromise Yugoslavia's international prestige and nonaligned policy, and weaken the ability of Yugoslavia to defend itself. This Special War rhetoric against Yugoslavia intensified whenever international relations in Europe and the Mediterranean were tense or Yugoslavia faced internal political or economic difficulties.

Various groups in the country were engaged in this special warfare: remnants of the "class enemy" (i.e., nationalists in the republics), liberals, clerics, and other counterrevolutionary and reactionary forces. All were united, regardless of their political and ideological orientation, in organizing opposition in the country, with overseas support, to prevent the successful development of Yugoslavia as a socialist country.²²⁷ Although Socialism was collapsing in the USSR and Eastern Europe, prominent YPA leaders openly accused those who participated in debates on the transformation of Yugoslavia, especially after the first multiparty elections in 1990, of being the "same forces that once brought about the collapse of Yugoslavia. During the NOR [National Liberation War] they collaborated with the occupier and were politically and militarily defeated."²²⁸ Kadjević described those who called for foreign military intervention "traitors," pointing to Croatia's and Slovenia's republican governments.²²⁹ Mamula said that the YPA would intervene if necessary to protect the integrity and survival of Yugoslavia as a federal state. He asserted that Yugoslavia would be able to "control the situation within its borders, even if forced to use repressive measures, including the force of arms."²³⁰ Federal Interior Minister Petar Gračanin

227 Dejan Jović, "San o prinudnoj upravi", *Danas*, March 19, 1991, p.16.

228 Veljko Kadjević, in an interview with *Narodna armija*, December 6, 1990.

229 Veljko Kadjević, *Moje viđenje raspada*, p. 88.

230 Miroslav Lazanski, "Jugoslavija neće biti Lebanon", *Danas*, December 4, 1990, p.11.

said Yugoslavia should be organized as a “federation with a Socialist system,” and accused unnamed “extremist groups” of attempting to “degrade the very idea of Socialism” and of denying of all achievements of the country’s postwar development.²³¹

General Marjan Čad charged that the United States had decided to crush Socialism once and for all, that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev worked for Western interests and capitalism, and that the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact was not in Yugoslavia’s interest. At a meeting with Kadijević in Belgrade on November 12, 1990, he also claimed that the greatest threats to Yugoslavia were “alien” forces from within the country as well as from within the NATO Alliance.²³²

Despite these perceived dangers, the YPA felt confident of preserving a unified, Socialist Yugoslavia. This (mis)placed confidence was based in part on a (mis)perception of the evolving situation in the Soviet Union. In February 1991, for instance, General Mirković averred that “the USSR has lost some of its positions in Europe but is still strong, so nobody can threaten it.”²³³

A secret document from the Political Directorate of the Defense Ministry that was leaked in March 1991 through Croatian and Slovenian officials to the media stated that the process of disintegration in the USSR had slowed down and that the Soviet authorities had begun to act rationally by trying to preserve the federal state and institutions; decisive measures had been taken to halt separatist tendencies in some parts of the country; and even the Soviet Army had been engaged. Socialism had not been finished off. Nor had Yugoslavia been brought to its knees. Yugoslavia had, at great cost, resisted the anti-Communist hysteria, and the prospects of maintaining the integrity of Yugoslavia were realistic. The West had achieved

231 Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada*, p. 109.

232 Angst vor militärischer Gewalt nimmt zu” FAZ, November 22, 1990, p. 8.

233 “LC-MY Member Comments on NATO ‘Pressure’,” *Narodna Armija* (Belgrade), March 1, 1991, trans. in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), Eeu-91-041, p.33.

significant results but not its ultimate aim: Communism was not crushed in Yugoslavia. According to the document, the West maintained a firm position on the preservation of Yugoslavia: “[T]he idea of Yugoslavism and the orientation toward Socialism have much stronger roots than they [the West] estimated and ... the destruction of Socialism in Yugoslavia is not the same thing.”²³⁴

The authors of the text indicted the West for its efforts to bring down Communism and some at the federal level for their attempts to hinder the implementation of economic reforms or provoke unrest similar to scenarios in Bulgaria and Romania. “Yugoslavia can exist only as a state,” the document proclaimed. “If it is not a state, it is not Yugoslavia and is something else. The state can be either unitarian or federal. The unitarian state has failed. Yugoslavia can only be a federal community with some original rights and functions of a federation.” With this assessment of the situation, the document’s authors envisaged that over the following few months the League of Communists—Movement for Yugoslavia (SK-PJ) would become the main political force in Yugoslavia and the hub of all left-oriented political parties, associations, and organizations.²³⁵

As election campaigns gained momentum in the early months of 1990 in both Slovenia and Croatia, the YPA’s leaders took a two-track approach: publicly accepting the need for multiparty elections while intensifying attacks on the programs and election campaigns of non-Communist parties, especially the Democratic United Opposition in Slovenia (DEMOS) and the Croatian Democratic Community (SDC). Behind the scenes, the YPA exerted pressure against holding the elections.²³⁶ For example, Kadijević visited commands,

234 *Ibid.*

235 “Army Document Published on NATO ‘Pressure’”, *Narodna armija* (Belgrade), March 1, 1991, trans. in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), Eeu-91-041, p. 33.

236 This was conrmed by some leaders of the League of Communists of Croatia and reports in the media. See, for example, *Vjesnik Panorama*, Saturday supplement of the daily paper *Vjesnik Zagreb*, June, 9, 1990, p.7.

units, and institutions in the Fifth Military District (covering Croatia) just before the first round of elections in Croatia on April 22, 1990, seeking to spread anxiety and fear among voters tempted to vote for non-communist parties. Within the ranks of the YPA itself, generals in Croatia and Slovenia instructed their troops on whom to vote for. Not surprisingly, the generals urged their subordinates to support “the generals’ party,” and application for membership in the League of Communists—Movement for Yugoslavia was said to be a patriotic duty.

The elections did not turn out as the YPA had hoped. In Croatia, nationalists triumphed: the right-wing party HDZ (the Croatian Democratic Party) won the most votes, securing 41.5 percent of the vote, and Franjo Tuđman was elected president. The Communist Party in Croatia transformed itself into the Social Democratic Party and was the second-largest winner in the elections. In Slovenia, DEMOS (Democratic Opposition of Slovenia), a centrist coalition, won 55 percent of the vote in Slovenia, but Milan Kučan, the Communist candidate, won the presidential elections.

No action was taken by the federal government or by the YPA to disarm the open armed rebellion in August 1990 by the Serbian minority against the legal Croatian government in Zagreb. Two MiG-21 jets from the Yugoslav Air Force forcibly turned back three helicopters of the Croatian Ministry of Internal Affairs on August 17, 1990. Some YPA officers openly joined the Serbian rebellion in Croatia. A large cache of weapons was “stolen” from the YPA’s custody in Knin in September and October 1990.²³⁷

The YPA’s leaders never accepted the existence of the new democratically elected governments in Slovenia and Croatia, and in the aftermath of the elections the Army’s counterintelligence service became very active, mostly in Croatia, where it provoked ethnically-charged incidents in an attempt to present the new government

237 “Nova krađa vojnog oružja”, *Vjesnik*, Zagreb, June 9, 1990, p.7.

as regressive and pro-Ustasha.²³⁸ On December 21, 1990, the Croatian parliament adopted a new constitution that affirmed the right to secede and formally legalized a multiparty system. Two days later, Slovenia held a plebiscite on whether to become an independent state. The YPA made several threatening military moves on Slovenia's territory that prompted Slovenia to accuse the YPA of transferring Army units to Slovenia and handing weapons and ammunition to officers.²³⁹ Both Croatia and Slovenia claimed that the elections had put an end to the old social order and that, in the new multiparty parliamentary democracy, the Army did not have the role of solving interethnic conflicts and guaranteeing internal harmony and constitutional order. This argument was a dagger aimed at the YPA's heart, threatening not only the YPA's organization, composition, and size but also its purpose—and thus its very existence.

PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR WAR

Confronted with the prospect of the imminent demise of the Socialist federal state, the highest ranks of the YPA (now dominated by pro-Yugoslav and conservative officers) increasingly came to believe that it would have to defend its vision of the Yugoslav state by force of arms. Although the YPA did not promptly declare its war aims publicly, these objectives were nonetheless being defined in a variety of ways and arenas, as Kadijević confirms. Vojislav Šešelj and many other intellectuals, acting as Milošević's mouthpieces, announced regularly through various media that "Serb ethnic territories" had to be "liberated." The Army's principal organ, the weekly magazine *Narodna Armija*, carried regular interviews with Veljko Kadijević, Borisav Jović (the Serbian representative on the Presidency of the SFRY), and the prominent historian Milorad Ekmečić. Commandeered to project the Serbian program, *Narodna Armija*

238 FAZ, October 17, 1990, p. 3.

239 "Slovene Presidency Deems Army Actions 'Threat'", *Narodna armija* (Belgrade), December 18, 1990, trans. in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), EEU-90-243, 1990, pp. 69-70.

carried threats to “all who believed that they can break up Yugoslavia by a *fait accompli* policy.”²⁴⁰

As the crisis deepened, the Army leadership cast about for new ways of swaying public opinion. Among other steps, the YPA introduced the office of spokesman for the Federal Secretariat for National Defense and began issuing public statements. The propaganda effort through *Narodna Armija* was amplified by the launching of a journal of military-political affairs controlled by the YPA’s Military-Political Department, with the object of enlisting the support of active and retired officers and noncommissioned officers.²⁴¹

The perceived foreign threat was loudly trumpeted by Belgrade dailies, which claimed that the “Vatican has played a very significant part in the Yugoslav events,” the “Vatican has provided the funds to arm the Croatian army,” the “old imperial appetites have been revived in Austria and Turkey,” and so forth. Many intellectuals advanced the thesis that a “Fourth Reich” would soon follow the reunification of Germany.²⁴² However, the truth was the opposite: the international community strove to help Yugoslavia emerge from crisis. General Svetozar Oro, the head of the Political Department until his retirement in 1984, contends that the “external threat was invented in order to refashion the country into a ‘Serboslavia’ under the pretext of ‘saving Yugoslavia.’”

The YPA and the Serbian leadership were in full agreement that the Serbs were the salient factor in integrating Yugoslavia because they were its most widely distributed nation; they had created both Yugoslavias; historically speaking, they were Yugoslavia’s true champions; and Serbian national consciousness ought to be acknowledged as a counterbalance to other nationalisms not based

240 Veljko Kadijević, *Narodna armija*, June 27, 1991.

241 *Narodna armija* sought to discredit the leaders of new parties and movements, particularly before elections in Croatia and Slovenia.

242 Dobrica Ćosić, *Srpsko pitanje I*, Filip Višnjić, Beograd, 2002.

on statehood. The hegemonic centralism of Serbian policy coincided with the centralist attitude of the Army leadership. This position inspired all future actions of the YPA, which abandoned the principle (i.e., to defend all the peoples of Yugoslavia) on which it had been founded, boycotting the federal parliament, subjugating and disarming the Territorial Defense Forces, taking sides in the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and mobilizing volunteers to replenish the ranks combined to bring about the downfall of the YPA.

According to Martin Špegelj, a former general and the first minister of defense of the Republic of Croatia, during 1990 and in the spring of 1991 the YPA leadership was considering a military coup throughout the entire former Yugoslavia, including against Milošević. The intention was to “establish some Tito-like Yugoslavia, imbued with Markovic’s ideas, with Western support. Up to the attack on Slovenia, this idea was alive in the minds of the Army leaders in order to put a stop to both radical processes in Serbia and nationalism in Slovenia and Croatia.”²⁴³

It is instructive to compare the attitudes within the Soviet and the Yugoslav militaries around this time. Both militaries believed firmly in preserving Socialism and adamantly opposed depoliticization of the armed forces. Both were the most reactionary forces in the society and the biggest obstacles to the emergence of a multi-party democracy and a free market economy. Yet Mikhail Gorbachev and, later, Boris Yeltsin managed to control the Soviet/Russian army despite its conservatism and resistance to change. This was partly due to a pro-reform faction in the Army that helped Gorbachev dismantle the Soviet Union. In addition, the West played an important role (financially and logistically) in depoliticizing the Russian military, thus helping the military to play a constructive role in the political development of the country.

243 *Telegraf*, November 2, 1994.

Although as late as 1991 some parts of the country still believed that the YPA would save Yugoslavia from falling to pieces, a military coup could not be successfully staged for several reasons. In the first place, the YPA had come to be regarded in nearly all parts of the country as a Serbian army; indeed it was being deserted by the other nations in Yugoslavia. Second, the YPA had lost legitimacy as the guarantor of Yugoslavia because its chief objective, aside from maintaining the integrity of the country, seemed to be to preserve itself.

Šešelj the Warmonger

The preparations for war took a long time and were carried out at several levels, including in the media, public institutions, academia, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Army, informal discussion groups in coffeehouses and homes, and in the political arena. In the political forum, the chief warmonger was Vojislav Šešelj. Leader of the Serbian Radical Party, Šešelj openly promoted Milošević's war goals even though Milošević himself never spelled them out publicly.

Although a political rival of Milošević's, Šešelj was always in cahoots with the Milošević regime, his specific role being to announce its every war move. He was the most vehement advocate of the Greater Serbia project. The philosopher Ljubomir Tadić attributes the success of the alliance to a skilful use of hyperpatriotic slogans in electioneering, coupled with expressions of deep concern for the welfare of the citizens. In that "propaganda battle without mercy and scruples," Tadić says, "the sps stood behind a stage it had voluntarily ceded to the Serbian Radicals of Voivode Šešelj."²⁴⁴

The Programmatic Declaration of the Serbian Radical Party of February 1991 stated that the party would work for the "restoration of a free, independent, and democratic Serb state in the Balkans to embrace the whole of Serbdom, which means that its boundaries will encompass, in addition to the present Serbian federal unit, Serb

244 Ljubomir Tadić, *Kriza i Velikosrpski hegemonizam*, Službeni glasnik, 2008.

Macedonia, Serb Montenegro, Serb Bosnia, Serb Herzegovina, Serb Dubrovnik, Serb Dalmatia, Serb Lika, Serb Kordun, Serb Banija, Serb Slavonia, and Serb Baranja.”²⁴⁵

“We’re fighting, above all,” said Šešelj, “to make possible the secession of Slovenia, after which a wise and sensible government in Belgrade will carry out the amputation of Croatia. Of course, [the amputation] of that which we regard as Croatia. The territories in question lie to the west of the Karlobag–Ogulin–Karlovac–Virovitica line. Whether they are actually Croat territories, that’s really no concern of ours, they’re probably Italian. Next thing, we’re going to make terms with the Italians so that they can take over what’s theirs ... or they [the territories in question] are Austrian or Hungarian.”²⁴⁶ Šešelj also said: “We hope for the disappearance of Yugoslavia from the political stage. The most probable projection is that Yugoslavia will break up into three states: a Greater Serbia, a small Slovenia, and an even smaller Croatia.”²⁴⁷

In order to achieve these objectives, it was necessary to mobilize the Serbian nation, as well as the Croats and Bosnians, for what was to come. Hatred of all non-Serbs began to be manufactured in an organized manner.

Šešelj publicly advocated an exchange of population between Serbia and Croatia:

The Croats are a nation of cowards. They are not a nation in the real sense of the term. No wonder that Marx and Engels said that the Croats were the scum of European nations. These texts still exist and they can be consulted. And how will that war end? In my opinion, it will end very quickly with a Serb victory and the establishment of Serbia’s western borders. And the Croats will have to pay war damages. As for

245 Programme Declaration of the Serbian Radical Party, *Velika Srbija*, br.9. May 1991, p. 6–7.

246 From Šešelj’s interview to *Glas Podrinja*, March 21, 1991, published in Šešelj „Razaranje srpskog nacionalnog bića, p. 179.

247 From Šešelj interview to *Pogledi*, March 31, 1991, p.36.

*the Serbs and in those regions of present-day Croatia which are not Serbian, in my opinion, they should move to Serbia since they cannot survive in places where the Croats are a majority and which are under Croatian rule. A Serb under Croatian rule can only be a slave and live an undignified life. I also know that no Serb will accept this and that they will do anything to move to Serbia. Therefore, an exchange of population is inevitable.*²⁴⁸

What Šešelj openly advocated, Dobrica Ćosić, in his capacity as president of the FRY, discussed with Croatian president Franjo Tuđman in Geneva in 1993.²⁴⁹

During the winter and spring of 1992, Šešelj declared that there were two peaceful solutions for Bosnia-Herzegovina: either it would be incorporated into a rump Yugoslavia or it would be divided, and that any other solution would mean war.²⁵⁰ In other words, if the Muslims did not want to become part of a Yugoslav federation, Bosnia would have to be torn apart. He referred to the Drina as a Serbian river flowing through central Serbia. Regarding the Muslims—the majority population of Bosnia—Šešelj proposed (before violence erupted) giving them 18 percent of the republic's territory around the Bosnia River. Granting that in principle the Muslims had no objections to living side by side with the Serbs, he advised them to talk to the Bosnian Serb Democratic Party or deal with his Radicals, in which case “there will be no talking.” He was equally unsparing in his treatment of the Muslims of Sandžak (a region of Serbia next to Bosnia and populated by Muslims), threatening—just before the war

248 „Ratne novine“, August 18, 1991, in Šešelj, *Razaranje srpskog nacionalnog bića*, p.296.

249 Ćosić: “Tuđman and I agreed that it would be sensible and humane for the states to assist in an organized transfer and exchange of population. People cannot return to their homes any more. Perhaps we should consider [establishing] special institutions and agencies to regulate the exchange of property, flats, houses. Somehow we must solve this conflict between multi-national and multi-confessional communities.” *Duga*, January 16–29, 1993.

250 Vojislav Šešelj, Press Conference, 1992 (Belgrade: ABC Glas, 1994) p.52.

started in Bosnia—to unleash his “war-hardened volunteers” in case of any roadblocks or insurgency.²⁵¹

Šešelj had been opposed to recognizing a sovereign Macedonia, which was a part of Serbia before the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. In this regard, he advocated the use of force and the partition of Macedonia between Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Albania.²⁵²

The Programmatic Declaration placed special emphasis on Kosovo, urging the “suppression of the Albanian separatist rebellion by all means” and the taking of such measures as “preventing any form of Kosovo-Metohija politico-territorial autonomy, expelling allegedly 360,000 Albanian immigrants, preventing extension of state grants to national minorities, declaring a state of war and imposing military rule, dissolving the local organs of civil government financed from the state budget, closing down or conserving all local factories and production facilities, and abolishing all welfare payments to Albanians, especially those conducive to the excessive birth rate.”²⁵³

This program served as the informal agenda of the Serbian regime and its blueprint for creating a Greater Serbia. Cunning politicians, members of Milošević’s Socialist Party of Serbia conspired behind the scenes and let parties such as Šešelj’s trumpet their war objectives. The Radical Party emphasized the need to establish a Greater Serbia.

In the Serbian Assembly in 1992, Šešelj urged the expulsion of Croats from Vojvodina and Serbia, calling them the biggest enemies of the Serbian people and a “nation of criminals and cowards.” Being a fifth column and “Ustasha collaborators,” they needed to be

251 *NIN*, January 21, 1992.

252 *Ibid.* P.41.

253 Programme Declaration of the Serbian Radical Party, *Velika Srbija*, br.9. May 1991, p. 6–7

eliminated in a “most humane manner.”²⁵⁴ Croatia could not secede, he said, at least not within the AVNOJ frontiers; only the Slovenes had a chance to do so. He promised the assembly that Croats would no longer live in Serbia, offered to supply trucks and trains to move them out, and promised them that “when the government changes in Serbia we will displace the lot of you.”²⁵⁵ The Assembly listened in silence and the Socialists rubbed their hands.

When the war in Bosnia escalated, Šešelj became Milošević’s key ally in Parliament. However, that war also saw his first rift with Milošević, which occurred after Milošević tried to persuade the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Bosnia peace agreement, with Milošević going as far as to characterize Šešelj as a “personification of violence and primitiveness.”²⁵⁶ Indeed, Šešelj’s rudeness and thuggery made Milošević seem decent and acceptable in comparison.²⁵⁷

The Loss of Slovenia

Back in 1991, when Šešelj was just beginning to trumpet his belligerent rhetoric, the YPA was the only surviving Yugoslav institution (albeit one with a Serbian leadership) that wanted to preserve Yugoslavia or to create a new Yugoslavia for those nations, above all the Serbs, who desired such a state. The attempt to preserve Yugoslavia, however, was abandoned early on following the brief war in Slovenia.

254 *Osmica*, 22 April 1992.

255 *Ibid.*

256 Slavoljub Đukić, *Između slave i anateme, Politička biografija Slobodana Miloševića* (Between Glory and Anathema, a Political Biography of Slobodan Milošević), (Beograd: Filip Višnjić, 1994) p. 311.

257 Šešelj’s indictment charges him, inter alia, with “inflammatory speeches in the media, during public events, and during visits to the volunteer units and other Serb forces in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, instigating those forces to commit crimes”. See <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/ind/en/ses-ii030115e.pdf>. Anthony Oberschall, an expert witness in his trial, presented a report, „Nationalistic Propaganda of Vojislav Šešelj: contents, techniques, objectives and influences, 1990 – 1994,” in which he analysed most of his speeches.

The YPA intervened in Slovenia after Slovenia and Croatia passed their declarations of sovereignty and independence on the same day, June 25, 1991. The YPA succeeded in occupying most border crossings but had its barracks and lines of communication blocked by the Slovenian Territorial Defense and police. The main fighting took place on June 27–28. Slovenia’s Territorial Defense succeeded in taking back control of its border crossings, blocked the advance of the YPA, and captured about 2,300 federal soldiers. The YPA in turn bombed Ljubljana airport and some border posts.

By the end of June, the war was over and Slovenia had won. It owed its victory to a superior strategy (aware of the YPA superiority in arms, Slovenes adopted a strategy based on asymmetric warfare), its tactical advantage, and the full support of the Slovene people. Additionally, Slovenia had drawn up a detailed media management plan including an international media center established prior to the conflict.

The Ten-Day War formally ended with the signing of the Brioni Accord, the terms of which were favorable to Slovenia: a three-month moratorium on Slovenian independence was agreed, Slovenian forces were recognized as sovereign on their territory, and YPA units were to be withdrawn (a process that started soon after and was completed by October 26, 1991).

The YPA’s leadership had been divided on whether to mount a large-scale operation against Slovenia or adopt a more cautious approach. In the event, it seems that the YPA’s leadership, together with the Serbian leadership, merely went through the motions of defending Yugoslavia in Slovenia because their real intention was to withdraw the YPA to Bosnia and prepare for war there and in Croatia. After all, Slovenia’s Serbian community was not large enough to justify a legitimate Serbian claim to Slovenian territory.

Operational Plans for War in Croatia and Bosnia

Slovenia might have been quickly lost, but the YPA believed that it could successfully assume control of the entire territory of Croatia and so prevent the formation of a Croatian army and quell its aspirations for independence. The process of planning how to achieve this goal had begun in back in 1990 with the creation of “Ram.”

Ram (“framework” in Serbo-Croatian) originated in the offices of KOS, the YPA’s counterintelligence service, in 1990, when Communist rule was clearly losing ground in Slovenia and Croatia.²⁵⁸ This secret, highly complex operation involved hundreds of operatives, including members of Serbia’s State Security Service, which played the key role in arming Serbs in Croatia. Apart from pro-Serbian YPA leaders, crucial parts in the implementation of the plan were played by Jovica Stanišić, head of the State Security Service within the Serbian Ministry of Interior, and Franko Simatović, one of the most important persons in the military faction of the Interior Ministry. (Stanišić and Simatović were in charge of the “Military Line” within the Serbian MUP that organized paramilitary formations to fight for a Greater Serbia. It was through the Military Line that Milošević created his armed forces which were answerable to him personally.)

Ram was first publicly mentioned at the September 19, 1991, session of the federal government and was disclosed in the September 30 edition of *Vreme*, which stated that Ram had been discussed in

258 KOS numbered some one thousand officers before the war. Aleksandar Vasiljević describes it as the “most capable, most reliable and best organised security force in the country. KOS systematized all information on the YPA’s internal decision making, recorded all hostile acts committed or planned to be committed, analyzed every relevant development outside the purview of the YPA, and monitored everything abroad bearing on the security of the YPA and Yugoslavia.” *NIN*, June 12, 1992. KOS was not under civil control after Tito’s death. The SFRY Presidency tried to establish a commission that would monitor the work of the State Security Service, including KOS, but the initiative was under extraparliamentary pressure to be postponed because the “country was faced with more serious problems,” such as “economic difficulties” that should not “waste the energy of the Parliament.” Raif Dizdarević, *Od smrti Tita do smrti Jugoslavije, Svjedocenja*, sarajevo, 1999, p. 116.

regards to Bosnia as early as the previous spring.²⁵⁹ Ram was essentially a new version of an idea that had originally been put forward in June 1941 by Stevan Moljević, a Serbian lawyer from Banjaluka, in a memorandum titled “Homogeneous Serbia.”²⁶⁰ He had argued that “the Serbs’ first and fundamental duty” was the setting up a Serbian state “uniting all Serbs and all lands where Serbs live.” This Greater and ethnically “homogeneous” Serbia was to include all lands where any Serbs lived, together with whatever additional territories they might want for economic, strategic, or other reasons. If realized in the 1990s, this ambition would have meant creating a Serbian state that comprised almost 70 percent of the SFRY.

Ram’s main priority was to keep Croatia within Yugoslavia; Bosnia and Macedonia were not considered dangerous because they had no capacity to resist Belgrade’s plans. Ram contained plan for the western borders of a new Yugoslavia, a Yugoslavia in which all Serbs would live within the same state.

In early 1990, the SFRY Presidency (with Jović at its head) and the YPA took steps to seize the weapons kept at Territorial Defense civilian warehouses in Slovenia and Croatia and to transfer them to military stores, justifying the action on the grounds that the YPA alone was authorized to keep the weapons. Slovenia resisted this action, successfully ensuring that the majority of equipment was kept out of the hands of the YPA. But the decision stripped Croatia of weapons. In the first half of 1990, the YPA decided to form special motorized corps

259 General Ilija Radaković claims that plans to attack Bosnia were coded as „Ram“; see I. Radaković, *Besmislena YU ratovanja*, Beograd 1997, p. 7.; Stjepan Mesić claims that Milošević implemented *Ram* through installing „the governments“ of „servile chauvinists and petty politicians, dentists and warehouse keepers; and in Bosnia through Karadžić’s nationalistic organizations and with the help of the Banjaluka and the Knin corps aiming at cleansing and exchange of populations“ (S. Mesić, *Kako je srušena Jugoslavija: politički memoari*, Zagreb 1994, p.236.

260 Nikola B. Popović, ed. *Srpski nacionalni program*, Dokumenti [Serbian National Programme, Documents] (Beograd: DMP and Grafomark, Beograd 2000).

around Zagreb, Knin, Banja Luka, and in Herzegovina on the model of those in Kosovo—effectively imposing military rule.²⁶¹

At the operational level in Croatia, Ram was the responsibility of the Air Force's intelligence arm (i.e., V Corps and Air Defense). In the spring of 1990, KOS predicted that Ivica Račan's Social Democratic Party (SPD) would win in Croatia and thus guarantee the survival of Socialism there. (The YPA viewed the SDS, led by Jovan Rašković, as a Chetnik party.) However, the victory of Croatian nationalist Franjo Tuđman in the elections in April and May dashed the YPA's hopes, and the Army set about cutting Croatia in half in accordance with a plan code-named LABRADOR.

THE WAR IN CROATIA

A propaganda war to destabilize Slovenia and Croatia was launched that focused on the alleged resurrection of the Ustaše movement in Croatia and harping on its World War II role in order to mobilize the local Serbian population. Among the many incidents engineered by KOS was the desecration of the Jewish cemetery in Zagreb and the destruction of a Serbian Orthodox church. An intelligence network centered on Banja Luka and Zagreb was established.

Passions having already been whipped up by means of skilful propaganda, Croatian Serbs in the Kninska Krajina and Lika regions rose in rebellion on August 19, 1990, in what came to be known as the “log revolution”. This was the beginning of the plan to mark the hypothetical boundary Karlobag–Ogulin–Karlovac–Virovitica, cutting Croatia in two. These borders coincided with the borders that the YPA would define in the 1990s while prominent nationalists such as Drašković and Šešelj made those goals public.

The YPA changed tack and began to support the SDS (Srpska demokratska stranka, Serbian Democratic Party), Rašković's party, on the grounds that it was a “champion of Yugoslavia.” The people

261 Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ*, p. 146.

in charge of LABRADOR clandestinely filmed Croatian defense minister Špegelj (who was importing arms from Hungary) in order to prime the public in Yugoslavia for a coup and the mass arrest of the Croatian regime's top officials. The documentary on Špegelj was broadcast on television. The footage was used to encourage participation in mass rallies and protests in Croatia targeting both Špegelj and the Croatian government and expressing support for Yugoslavia and the YPA.²⁶² However, although a military coup seemed imminent, Kadjević never gave the go-ahead despite prodding from Jović and Milošević.

Within months—on January 23, 1991—the YPA's new operational deployment was published, prompting objections from within the YPA itself, especially among its Slovene and Croat personnel. In the meantime, Croatian Serb enthusiasm for war increased, fueled by news of clashes between Serbian paramilitary forces and Croatian government forces at Pakrac and Plitvice,²⁶³ and by media accounts of the Ustasha massacres of Serbs in 1941. When Croatian Serbs and the security services provoked clashes along what they envisaged would become the future boundaries of Yugoslavia (the Karlobag-Ogulin-Karlovac-Virovitica boundary), the YPA was deployed to separate the sides and secure the boundaries. The YPA, which had disarmed Territorial Defense in 1990, supplied Croatian Serbs with weapons.²⁶⁴ Arming of Croatian Serbs started already in 1988.

262 Milan Babić, president of the "Republic of Serb Krajina", spoke about the effect the footage had on Serbs in Croatia when he appeared as witness in the Milošević trial before the Hague tribunal. The evidence he gave was a major contribution to disclosing the activities of KOS and the Serbian State Security Service in Croatia. Charged with war crimes himself, he committed suicide in his cell at The Hague. See "Milošević vs Jugoslavija", ed. Sonja Biserko, Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, Beograd, 2004.

263 In spring 1991, Serb forces staged an unsuccessful coup, declaring Pakrac the regional capital of a Serb autonomous enclave. Violence accelerated to a peak in late 1991, as part of the wider Croatian war, Pakrac was heavily damaged. The YPA played a key role in staging this incident. The National Park Plitvice was the scene of the Plitvice Lake incident ("Bloody Easter"), the first armed confrontation between Croatian forces and the forces of the Republic of Serbian Krajina. Park was retaken by Croatia in August 1995 during Operation Storm

264 Interview with Svetozar Livada, *Erazmus*, No. 13, 1995, p. 19.

Željko Ražnatović Arkan, a criminal, later the leader of the Serbian Guard, (Croatia) was arrested at Dvor na Uni while transporting arms to Krajina Serbs in November 1990. Croatian Serbs started with so called Log Revolution (August 1990 by blocking the highways in Dalmatia). Escalation of incidents continued during the spring 1991 (Pakrac and Plitvice) to reach its peak in September with YPA attacks on Vukovar, Dubrovnik and Zadar. Vukovar was “liberated” on November 21 and almost 30 percent of Croatian territory was occupied by Serbs, while all non-Serbs were cleansed from the so-called Republika Srpska Krajina. Croatia was cut in two at Zadar, thus splitting a Dalmatia until 1995.

In an interview with *Vreme* on August 24, 1991, Janez Drnovšek, the Slovene representative in the SFRY Presidency and president of Yugoslavia in 1989–90, said that “because the Serb people are practically the only people maintaining the YPA under the present conditions, I believe that the fate of the YPA is linked to the fate of the Serb people in Croatia. If the Army were to stop supporting those people, that would practically be the end of it.”

War broke out in Croatia in the fall of 1991. The operational objective of the YPA in Croatia was to “defeat the Croatian army completely should the situation permit, [otherwise to defeat it] unflinching to an extent that would make it possible to reach the set objectives.”²⁶⁵ Very soon, however, it became clear that the YPA’s objectives were impracticable because “the YPA lacks the strength necessary to defeat the Croatian army completely.”²⁶⁶ Although Croatia’s Territorial Defense had already been disarmed by the YPA and the Croatian army was poorly armed, its morale, and that of the entire Croatian populace, proved a far greater asset than hardware.

265 Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada*, p. 134.

266 Veljko Kadijević informed the rump Presidency of the SFRY of this at a session on October 9, 1991, Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ*, p. 394.

The strength of Croat resistance forced a revision of Ram. The idea of keeping the whole of Croatia under Serbian control was abandoned and the leadership of rump Yugoslavia decided that the creation of the Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK) in the east of Croatia was the optimal objective. According to the revised version of Ram, the



western boundary of Serbia would run along a line connecting Virovitica, Karlovac, and Karlobag, which coincided with Šešelj's proclaimed war objectives. The YPA was given the task of "protecting the Serb people in Croatia by freeing all areas with a majority Serb population of any Croatian army and Croatian government presence."²⁶⁷ In Milošević's opinion, the plan to cleave Croatia in two would "still leave a Yugoslav state with some seventeen million inhabitants, which is quite enough as far as European states go."²⁶⁸

Because the Serbs were in power in the Krajina,²⁶⁹ Belgrade's leaders shrewdly decided to ask the United Nations to protect the Serbs with a peacekeeping force pending a political solution of the Yugoslav crisis.²⁷⁰ The rump SFRY Presidency wrote a letter on November 9, 1991, to the UN secretary-general, reasoning thus:

267 Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada*, p. 134.

268 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

269 The RSK was a self-proclaimed Serbian-dominated entity within Croatia, founded in 1991. It covered areas that bordered Serbia and where Serbs are a significant minority (Baranja and Vukovar), a large section of the historical "Military Frontier," parts of northern Dalmatia, the area centred around the city of Bjelovar, and central and south-eastern Slavonia.

270 Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ*, p. 407.

In that way the UN peace force would establish a buffer zone and separate the parties to the conflict until the Yugoslav crisis is resolved, with the engagement of the United Nations, in a peaceful and just manner based on international law. That would create the necessary conditions for the Presidency of the SFRY, as the supreme commander of the armed forces of the SFRY, to decide to disengage the YPA in the prevention of interethnic conflicts on the territory of the Republic of Croatia.²⁷¹

The UN secretary-general responded by sending a special envoy, Cyrus Vance, to Belgrade to negotiate the possibility of sending international troops to Croatia. On November 27, the Security Council adopted Resolution 721 regarding deployment of the UN peacekeeping operation in Croatia. Under the terms of an agreement known as the Vance Plan and reached on January 2, 1992, the UN Security Council sent 14,000 peacekeeping troops to Croatia.

With the entry of international troops into Croatia on February 21, 1992, the YPA and the Serbian leadership realized their objective of establishing the RSK and placing it under YPA protection.

Not only in Croatia but in other parts of Yugoslavia, too, the YPA was in a process of withdrawal, clearly exposing the fiction that the YPA represented and served all the republics of the federation.

In December 1991, the Serbian leadership decided on a “timely” YPA withdrawal from Bosnia-Herzegovina—that is, the evacuation of military personnel who were not from that republic, so as to provide political and legal cover for claims that was “Serbia not at war in Bosnia.”

Anticipating international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Milošević believed that such a move would prevent “total military chaos by having to move the army about from one part of the country to another.” Kadijević, who was told that a withdrawal was “strategically and politically essential,” although not in conformity

271 Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ*, p. 410

with “policy and practice in the YPA,” relocated 90 percent of his forces by December 25, 1991.²⁷²

The Serbian leadership also took the decision to pull YPA troops out of Macedonia in March 1992—Macedonia had voted for independence in a referendum in September 1991 and was expected to soon gain international recognition (in the event, Greek opposition delayed the granting of such recognition)—and to divide the YPA’s property in such a way that Macedonia was left practically without arms. Not all Serbs agreed with this move, however.

Jović contended that “their desertion of Yugoslavia is a mistake for the Macedonian people because their republic faces the overt territorial claims of Bulgaria and Albania.”²⁷³

THE USE OF PARAMILITARY UNITS

In 1991, the YPA sought to mobilize conscripts but ran into opposition from, to quote Kadijević, “parents, mothers, sisters, peacemakers, pacifists, etc.”²⁷⁴ who campaigned against the mobilization and tried to get their children out of the army. Many young people left Serbia to escape being mobilized. Faced with this opposition, the YPA turned to paramilitary units to bolster its forces.

Political parties in Serbia (with the same goals as Milošević) also set up similar units. For instance, the Serbian Renewal Movement—a nationalist political party founded in 1990 by Vuk Drašković created the Serbian Guards in the wake of the YPA’s defeat in Slovenia in the summer of 1991. With the ambition of growing into an all-Serbian army, the Serbian Guards first operated under the command of the First Army, and later under the Territorial Defense command in Gospić (the Territorial Defense had been disarmed elsewhere but it continued to exist in Serb-controlled territories).

272 *Ibid.*, pp. 420–421.

273 Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ*, p. 423.

274 Veljko Kadijević, *Mije viđenje raspada*, p. 142. (he mentioned it in several other places)

Volunteers from the ranks of the Serbian Radical Party (estimated at between 30,000 and 50,000 men) fought in the war from the very beginning. Their departure for the front was widely publicized on Serbian television. Men returning from the front flocked to Šešelj's party because "he instills security."²⁷⁵ Šešelj's volunteers became part of the YPA, while other paramilitaries had their own insignia but were under the YPA command. This arrangement was made public in an August 23, 1991 decree of the Serbian government on the enlistment of volunteers as Territorial Defense members. Article 1 of this decree states: "Replenishment of the YPA with volunteers shall be carried out in conformity with federal regulations."

The most disciplined paramilitary unit was the Serbian Volunteer Guard, which operated within the Novi Sad Corps and gave birth, in 1993, to the Party of Serbian Unity. Established on October 11, 1990, the Serbian Volunteer Guard "steadily prepared to resist the Ustasha army and its storm troopers."²⁷⁶ The founder of the Serbian Volunteer Guard was Željko ("Arkan") Ražnatović, who had a long record of collaboration with the State Security Service as its executioner of mainly Croat émigrés. In the 1970s, he had emigrated illegally to Western Europe and embarked on a career of violent crime. He was imprisoned several times but repeatedly managed to escape. He returned to Yugoslavia in the 1980s, when he rejoined the State Security Service. His paramilitary group was known as "Arkan's Tigers" and was entrusted by Milošević with helping to trigger wars in Croatia and Bosnia. The Serbian Volunteer Guard operated in close cooperation with the YPA—its source of weapons—and played a decisive part in the closing stage of the "liberation" of Vukovar. Arkan's reputation as a Serbian hero was thus established, and photographs of him began to appear on the front pages and covers

275 Borba, November 20–21, 1993

276 Borba, March 31, 1992.

of Serbian newspapers and magazines, including *NIN*, *Borba*, and *Vreme*.

After several of his fighters were killed, Arkan declared in an interview in September 1991 that the “Volunteer Guard will have no live prisoners to exchange because every captured enemy soldier will be shot.”²⁷⁷ Arkan was directly connected with General Simović, the Serbian defense minister.²⁷⁸ The most telling piece of evidence of this liaison is provided by Dobriša Gajić–Glišić, who writes that Simović’s staff watched in trepidation as Arkan spoke in a *Studio B* interview and gave a sigh of relief when Arkan, asked who his supreme commander was, replied “Patriarch Pavle” instead of Simović.

The fact that these paramilitaries were for all intents and purposes indistinguishable from the regular Army units was publicly acknowledged by both Arkan and Šešelj.²⁷⁹ Branislav Vakić, the Chetnik warlord and federal deputy of the Serbian Radical Party, said that as violence began to erupt in Croatia, Serbian volunteers and Chetniks “left for those parts of Krajina” at the invitation of the Territorial Defense and the Serb people.”²⁸⁰ According to Vakić, the party was urged by the YPA at the beginning of 1992 to

dispatch our volunteer units to Krajina. I sent a large group of volunteers from this part of Serbia to be trained at the YPA barracks at

277 *ON*, September 20, 1991.

278 http://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/ind/en/040727.pdf Together with Milošević, Arkan, Jović, Kadrijević, Šešelj, and ten others, Simović was found guilty by the ICTY of participating in (to quote the indictment) a “joint criminal enterprise that came into existence before 1 August 1991 and continued until at least June 1992. . . . Tomislav SIMOVIC, in his position as Minister of Defense of the Republic of Serbia from 31 July 1991 until at least 19 December 1991, formed, deployed, and provided substantial assistance or support to Serb volunteer units and other Serb forces involved in the perpetration of crimes specified in this indictment.”

279 Željko Ražnatović Arkan: “We’re not a paramilitary formation, we’re fighting together with the federal army. We’re fighting for the unification of the Serb lands and the Serb army. We want a new professional Serb army composed only of real heroes and soldiers. As for me, I don’t want to become an officer.” *Borba*, May 30, 1992.

280 *Telegraf*, September 28, 1994.

*Bubanj Potok outside Belgrade. The volunteers were issued with weapons in those barracks. In March 1992, we also sent a large group of volunteers to the Belgrade “4 Juli” barracks, where they were trained and given weapons and uniforms. In those six months, from January to July 1992, those barracks quartered and trained over 6,000 of our volunteers who were then deployed near Drniš, in Divoselo, and in Počitelj.*²⁸¹

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE YPA

The establishment of the RSK marks the de facto disappearance of an all-Yugoslav army. The YPA leaders who had waged war in Slovenia and Croatia and who were pro-Yugoslavia were pensioned off at the end of their missions. In May 1992, thirty-eight generals and admirals were sent into retirement by Branko Kostić, president of the SFRY from 1991 to 1992. Aleksandar Vasiljević, chief of KOS, said that he was in favor of preserving Yugoslavia, and he was among the generals sacked after the end of the war in Croatia (although he returned to the Army to become deputy chief of Intelligence and security head between March 1999 and 2001 during the Kosovo war).²⁸² Kadijević was replaced by Života Panić.

In May 1992, the YPA itself –or at least its official name—was sent into retirement, a consequence of the formation of a new state, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) by the republics of Serbia and Montenegro. Where once there had been a single force, the YPA, there were now three Serbian armies: the armies of the Republika Srpska Krajina (RSK), the Republika Srpska (RS), and the VJ. (Vojaska Jugoslavije, Army of Yugoslavia—FRY) All three, however, operated

281 *Telegraf*, September 28, 1994.

282 He was later indicted by the ICTY: “In his capacity as a YPA general and chief of the YPA Security Administration until May 8, 1992, in particular the military counter-intelligence service KOS, General Aleksandar Vasiljević, participated in activities designed to stir up hate, fear, and violence, which significantly helped attain the overall objectives of the joint criminal enterprise. Agents of the KOS directed and supported the local Croatian Serb political leaders and the local Serb police and military forces, including the TO staff and volunteers from Serbia.” <http://www.un.org/icty/indictment/english/mil-2ai020728e.html>.

under the same command in Belgrade. That the three armies acted essentially as one was best explained by Milošević (after his arrest in 2001 for financial fraud but before he was transferred to the international tribunal in The Hague), when he declared that he had “acted only in [the] interest of the state and people” and that “state money was spent on arms, munitions and other needs for the Army of the RS and RSK,” but *raison d’état* compelled these facts to be “kept as state secrets and could not be presented in the Budget Law.”²⁸³

Although the transformation of the YPA into a Serbian army was initiated in 1991 by Vuk Drašković through pressure on Minister of Defense General Tomislav Simović, Milošević insisted on the name “Yugoslavia” for both the state and the Army in order to lend weight to his contention that Yugoslavia had been broken up by secessionist Slovenia and Croatia with support from Germany, Austria, and the Vatican. Milošević believed that the FRY would be recognized as the successor to the SFRY. In a letter to Milošević titled “Theses on the Situation of the People, Society, and State,” Čosić, too, demanded the “urgent reorganization of the YPA and its transformation into a Serb army.”²⁸⁴ This double track or shrewd idea to keep the YPA as a cover for claiming to defend Yugoslavia was reflected in decisions making whether and how to mobilize for wars both in Croatia and Bosnia. It also explains why Milošević relied so heavily on police security forces and his most confidential man Jovica Stanišić, chief of the Serbian Security Forces.

Dobriša Gajić-Glišić writes that many volunteers refused to be sent to the Croatian front with insignias bearing the five-pointed red star, which represented the YPA. They were allowed to wear the Serbian tricolor, and Simović “gave serious thought to the tricolor as the symbol of the Serb army.” Asked by soldiers “whether there was going to be a Serb army,” Simović replied: “I can assure you that the

283 April 3, 2001, www.b92.net

284 Slavoljub Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, p. 187.

YPA is in effect already a Serb army. It ought to be transformed. I will press for legal provisions to this effect within the framework of the [FRY] Constitution.”²⁸⁵

The YPA was under the command of a general staff from Serbia and Montenegro throughout the fighting in Slovenia and Croatia—and later in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The FRY was the YPA’s base and source of “complete logistic support provided by the governments and other agencies from these republics.” The YPA was financed and supplied with fuel, food, and other necessities by the two republics and equipped by military contractors based on their territory. The YPA also depended on the medical service of these republics.²⁸⁶

THE BOSNIAN WAR

The independence of Croatia and Slovenia confronted Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia with a choice that they had tried to avoid by proposing the preservation of Yugoslavia as a loose asymmetrical federation. Once it was clear that this option was no longer possible, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia felt that they had no alternative but to demand their own independence.

Dobrica Ćosić became the federal president. The new federal state, the Republic of Yugoslavia, was proclaimed on March 27, 1992. The war in Bosnia would be fought by YPA officers of intermediate rank who would rise as the conflict progressed. The YPA was transformed into a Serbian army with strong Chetnik elements and placed in the hands of new leaders such as Momčilo Perišić and Ratko Mladić.

After KOS lost its battle for supremacy with the Serbian State Security Service, the RS Army operated with the State Security Service and Milošević began to rely increasingly on the Serbian Interior Ministry and State Security Service, which he could control

285 Extracts from the book by Dobrila Gajić-Glišić, *NIN*, April 24, 1992.

286 Ilija T. Radaković, *Besmislena YU ratovanja*, Belgrade, 1997.

completely and which played a leading role in ethnic cleansing. He once told Čosić, “You have the Army, I have the police. I’m stronger.”²⁸⁷ All federal institutions, including the federal State Security Service and the federal Interior Ministry, were marginalized.²⁸⁸

The YPA’s withdrawal from Slovenia and Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1991 amounted to a quiet occupation of that republic. For Yugoslavia, Bosnia was of “inestimable significance on account of the huge military potential located there: the factories that produced various equipment and weapons, the most up-to-date airfield [at Bihać], the countless barracks, missile units, aircraft.”²⁸⁹ Sarajevo was surrounded by artillery in late 1991. The war itself was incited by outside paramilitary groups.

In October 1991, while the war in Croatia was still raging, Alija Izetbegović proclaimed the neutrality of Bosnia-Herzegovina: “Bosnia and Herzegovina does not want to participate in this war; this is not our war. ... We can do nothing to prevent the war spilling over to Bosnia.” The SDS, (Srpska demokratska stranka or Serbian Democratic Party) the Serbian national party in Bosnia, reacted vehemently to this statement. The spokesman of the SDS said: “Bosnia must be an active factor in the cleansing of Yugoslavia, the Balkans and Europe of the fascist ideology and terror of *poglavnik* [headman]²⁹⁰ Tuđman and so-called NDH [the Independent State of Croatia] Ustasha ideology. By inviting neutrality in such a situation, Izetbegović has openly assumed the position of the first Ustasha deputy of Tuđman and the Ustasha state.”²⁹¹

287 Slavoljub Đukic, *Lovljenje vetra*, p. 229

288 In 1993, Stanisic took over the federal State Security Service building and all the documents kept there.

289 Interview with A. Vasiljević, *NIN* June 12, 1992.

290 *Poglavnik* was a term coined by the Ustaše, and it was originally used as the title for the leader of the movement. It was at all times held by Ante Pavelić and became synonymous with him. The more literal translation of the word is “head-man,” but the fascist titles “Führer” or “Duce” come closer to the meaning.

291 *Politika ekspres*, October 10, 1991.

In October 1991, MPs of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA, the Muslim national party) submitted to the Bosnia-Herzegovina parliament a memorandum defining Bosnia-Herzegovina as a sovereign state and legalizing the nonrecognition of the decisions taken by authorities of the rump Yugoslavia. The memorandum was adopted—and was roundly condemned by the SDS. In the parliament, Radovan Karadžić, president of the Republic Srpska of Bosnia-Herzegovina, warned, “This is the third, fourth republic that does not want to be in Yugoslavia. The road we have embarked upon is the same highway which took Croatia to hell, only in Bosnia-Herzegovina this hell would be worse, and in it the Muslim people might disappear. So don’t go around Europe trying to get something you are not entitled to.”²⁹² In a plebiscite held on November 10–11, 1991, Serbs in Bosnia opted to stay in the common state: Yugoslavia. Karadžić, speaking at a meeting of municipal mayors, said:

*Prepare the authority in your territories, in municipalities, regions, neighborhood communities, prepare the re-structuring and regionalization of municipalities. Believe me, in Europe they are not concerned with the law now. All they are concerned with is the factual situation and they make analogies. ... We have right on our side, and we have the factual situation. And that factual situation will be that Izetbegović cannot set up his authority in 70 percent of the territories. ... The army is here. ... Let’s not leave that machinery and that army alone. ... [We] would lose the state if we lost that army.*²⁹³

When the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina requested that the Conference on Yugoslavia held in The Hague in 1991 recognize the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Aleksa Buha, the RS minister of foreign affairs, declared: “The Serb people in Bosnia-Herzegovina

292 *Vecernje novosti*, October 16, 1991.

293 Bilten br.7, February 7, 1994, Drzavna komisija za prikupljanje cinjenica o ratnim zlocinima na teritoriji BiH (Bulletin of the State Commission for collecting evidence on war crimes on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina)

will not accept any dictate and in the spirit of their tradition, they will give the EU and its subsidiaries a resolute *no*.”²⁹⁴ In January 1992, the Declaration on the Proclamation of the Republika Srpska of the Serbian People in Bosnia-Herzegovina was adopted by the Assembly of the Bosnian Serbs; the Constitution of the Republika Srpska was promulgated on February 28.

On April 6, 1992, immediately after a referendum in which the majority of the Bosnia-Herzegovina population—Muslims and Croats, as well as some Serbs—voted for independence, the governments of the European Union and the United States decided to recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state. This decision met with general Serbian condemnation. Vojislav Šešelj advocated the “demarcation of the Serb territories in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the establishment of an autonomous Territorial Defense and police in the territories, controlled by RS of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and liberation of the territories, which, in terms of the population structure, belong to the Serb Bosnia-Herzegovina.”²⁹⁵ Čosić wrote to the congress of Serbian intellectuals in Sarajevo on March 26, 1992: “We Serbs, Muslims, and Croats, respectful of the historical experience and the present state of affairs among us, need to separate and partition as fairly as possible.” In his diary, Čosić noted: “The collapse of Yugoslavia compels the Serbs to find a state-political form for the solution of their national question. I see it now in a federation of Serb lands. This federation should encompass not ‘All Serbs,’ but all Serb ethnic areas.”²⁹⁶

Sarajevo, which was first attacked in April 4, 1992, and remained under siege for four years, served as a cover, drawing attention away from the ethnic cleansing of the predominant Muslim population in eastern and western Bosnia. Concentration camps, mass expulsions, and mass rapes were all part of a deliberate policy to create ethnically

294 *Borba*, December 23, 1991

295 *Vecernje novosti*, April 3, 1992.

296 *Vecernje novosti*, August 19, 1992.

pure Serbian territories. With a YPA contingent formally transformed into the army of the self-proclaimed Republika Srpska in May 1992, the Serbs held 70 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina territory until 1995.

On May 22, 1992, the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) was created from parts of the YPA consisting mainly of Bosnian personnel. It operated in the territories in which the Serbs had already established their autonomy. The transformation of the Second Army into the RS Army did not require much effort, save changing insignia and flags. Local Serbian politicians explained the new army in Bosnia-Herzegovina by the need to “engage the Krajina population with a view to establishing a unified armed force for the protection of the Knin Krajina, Lika, Kordun, Banija, Western Slavonia and the Bosnian Krajina.”²⁹⁷ The new army—incorporating forces from Knin, Bihać, Banja Luka, Tuzla, Sarajevo, Bileće, and as well as the V Corps—was placed under the supreme command of General Ratko Mladić.

On account of the YPA’s/RS Army’s military supremacy, the Belgrade regime expected a brief conflict—as did many Serbian residents of Sarajevo, who left the city without taking their possessions with them because Radovan Karadžić and Momčilo Krajišnik had reassured them that “everything has been settled and the war will be a short one.”²⁹⁸ The main Serbian objectives in the war were to capture Sarajevo and to ethnically cleanse territories in order to control the Drina Valley (populated mainly by Muslims), the Sava Valley (to secure a corridor through Bosnian Posavina), and the left bank of the Neretva River. Sherif Bassiouni, the chairman of the Security Council’s Commission to Investigate Violations of International Humanitarian Law in the Former Yugoslavia, said in testimony before the U.S. Congress on April 4, 1995:

297 *Borba*, May 7, 1992.

298 *Vreme*, August 29, 1994.

The policy of ethnic cleansing had a strategic logic, as well as a political logic, and it was carried out in a consistent pattern. The idea was simply to establish an area along the Drina and Sava rivers, which would make continuous the areas inhabited by Serbs in Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia, to facilitate the contacts between those groups.

The logic of the strategic purpose was also inevitable in its outcome. As the Serb population in those areas was much less than the non-Serb population, it behoved that logic to remove the population, which was inimical simply because there weren't enough people of the dominant group to be able to control those who were not. So, rather than risk having, if you will, an inimical or enemy group at your back, the strategic dictates were to ethnically cleanse them. The tactics were simple.

The tactics were really very simple and rather simplistic. The tactics were simply to engage in the type of violence that would cause people to leave, after many had suffered and been killed, with the fear of what might happen to them and with the terrorizing effect that it created. In fact, it is very telling that in 80 percent of the rape cases that we investigated, the acts of rape were done with the purpose of enhancing the element of shame and embarrassment of the victim, of her family, and of the community, so as to create a terror-inspiring effect that would cause people to flee and not to return.²⁹⁹

About eighty paramilitary formations took part in the Bosnian war, some of them fighting as part of the RS Army (albeit operating under Belgrade instructions), others independently. As in Croatia, every Serbian municipality in Bosnia set up an emergency committee, usually consisting of the local chief of police, the party secretary, and a military representative of the formation stationed locally. The cleansing was started by the Army and completed mostly by the

299 U.S. Congress files, April 4, 1995. http://ftp.fas.org/irp/congress/1995_hr/genocideinbosnia.html

police and the paramilitary units it had created. They were responsible for the gravest crimes committed during the war.

By the third month of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Republika Srpska had realized its territorial ambitions, which mirrored the program Moljević had set out in 1941. The Belgrade regime had succeeded in brutally wresting control of 30 percent of Croatia and 75 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina and establishing these areas as “Serb ethnic territories.” The ethnic divisions effected by the YPA at the outbreak of hostilities in order to keep the ethnic groups apart were then effectively (and unintentionally) cemented by the international community, which stationed peacekeeping troops along the borders of the new territories. In achieving these goals, Serbs committed major crimes, including genocide in Bosnia. Milošević came under international pressure following the first disclosures of mass crimes and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.

The Muslims had been unprepared for war. Izetbegović had believed naively that his neutral stance would prevent it. According to Aleksandar Vasiljević, the KOS had two of its men at the very top of the Muslim party.³⁰⁰ In March 1991, the Party of Democratic Action (SDA, Stranka demokratske akcije), a Bosnian Muslim group, organized its first paramilitary force, the Patriotic League, led by Hasan Čengić, but the Bosnian Army was not formed until May 14, 1992. The arms embargo on Yugoslavia imposed in September 1991 by a UN Security Council resolution, forced Bosnia-Herzegovina to smuggle in weapons, mostly from Iran. As the Bosnian Army grew, it was joined by Muslim refugees in increasing numbers until it eventually outnumbered its Serbian counterpart. Toward the end of the war, the Bosnian Army became ever stronger due to the high morale of its members.

The genocide against Muslims in Srebrenica in July 1995 marked the turning point of the war. After four years of terror against

300 *NIN*, June 12, 1992

Sarajevo and the entire Muslim population, the horror of the Srebrenica massacre compelled the United States to take military action. The Serbian carnage threatened to discredit the efforts of the United Nations and all international mediators who had become active agents in the war. From a moral point of view, Srebrenica was both a turning point in the Bosnian war and a symbol of the impotence and indifference of Western foreign policy. The West, which had simply ignored genocide in Rwanda, now reacted differently. The UN rapporteur for human rights for the former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, in his letter of resignation to the UN secretary-general stated inter alia: "Bosnia is the issue of stability of international order and civilised principles." He accused the international community and its leaders of inconsistency and a lack of courage in defending human rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina.³⁰¹

The fall of Srebrenica finally persuaded the Europeans to throw their weight behind the new U.S. strategy, which this time envisaged the robust use of force against the Bosnian Serbs. As it happened, the Serbs had provoked the West at a time when, for the first time, it wanted to be provoked. The ensuing NATO strikes and the Croat-Muslim offensive threatening to "liberate" Banja Luka reduced the amount of territory held by Serbs from 75 percent to 46 percent. The Croat-Muslim push was halted outside Banja Luka because the West, having witnessed the Serbian exodus from Krajina, feared a new refugee crisis. It was then that Milošević realised for the first time that negotiations alone could save the tottering Serbs from an utter rout.

Milošević failed in an attempt he made in 1993 to end the war in Bosnia by negotiation because of opposition from Radovan Karadžić and the leadership in Pale, the capital of Republika Srpska during the war. Milošević was desperate for peace on account of the untenable economic situation in Serbia, which could be mitigated only by the

301 Final (thirteenth) Periodic Mazowiecki Report/ 22 August 95/Part 1/E/CN/4/1996/9.

lifting of UN sanctions. After the Bosnian Serb leaders turned down a plan for peace put forward by the Contact Group (a group comprising Russia, Germany, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom), Milošević “imposed” a trade blockade against RS to bring it into line, charging that the Bosnian Serb leaders’ decision to reject the plan “runs contrary to the very interests of the citizens of RS, as well as against the interests of the whole Serb people and those of the FRY,” and accusing them of rejecting the peace plan “at a moment when Republika Srpska has been recognized on half the territory of the former BiH, when the acceptance of peace would have resulted in the lifting of the sanctions on those without whom they would not exist.”³⁰² Milošević believed that by rejecting the peace plan, the Bosnian Serbs “exhibited cruel callousness toward the interests of the overwhelming majority of the Serb people and of all citizens of Yugoslavia” and “arrogated to themselves the right to decide on the fate of the eleven million citizens of the FRY.”³⁰³

The Bosnian Serb leaders were backed by the Serbian Orthodox Church and the pro–Greater Serbia intellectuals, particularly Kosta Čavoški, Matija Bećković, and Vojislav Koštunica. They feared that Milošević might give up the conquered territories; only after the signing of the Dayton Accords, which most of them criticized, did the Greater Serbia proponents realize that Milošević had squeezed the maximum in “generally unfavorable circumstances.”³⁰⁴

After the fall of Krajina in August 1995, the Bosnian Serbs were all but beaten by the combined Muslim–Croat forces and were in danger of losing Banja Luka and Prijedor. However, the United States checked the Muslim–Croat offensive and accommodated the Bosnian

302 *Vecernje novosti*, August 19, 1994.

303 *Politika*, August 26, 1994.

304 Radovan Radinović, *Srpski narod u novoj geopolitičkoj stvarnosti* (The Serb Nation in the New Geopolitical Reality) in „Geopolitical Reality of the Serbs”, Institut za geopolitičke studije, Beograd, 1997, p. 28–29.

Serbs with a de facto division of Bosnia along ethnic lines.³⁰⁵ According to a report of Cherif Bassiouni's War Crimes Commission, Bosnian Serbs were responsible for nearly 90 percent of the crimes committed in Bosnia— approximately 120,000 victims (the final number is not known, though estimates made during the war were as high as 200,000). The dream of a Greater Serbia was shattered in mere four years, and Republika Srpska survived thanks solely to protection by the international community. Milošević, however, regarded the Dayton Accords as a victory because he got the best deal (half of Bosnia) in the given circumstances. (President Bill Clinton also looked upon Dayton as a victory because he was just about to start a new election campaign and was happy to have Bosnia and the Balkans forgotten by American voters.) Moreover, Milošević was treated by members of the international community as a peacemaker. Had he not undertaken the Kosovo campaign, he might have avoided being indicted by the ICTY. The agreement reached at Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995 marked the end of the three-and-a-half year war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It stated that the country would remain a single state within its existing borders but would comprise a Muslim-Croat federation (which received 51 percent) and a Serbian Republic (49 percent of territory). Its constitutional arrangement based exclusively on an ethnic principle prevents Bosnia from becoming a truly functional state.

THE LAST GASP OF GREATER SERBIA

The last act in the Yugoslav Army push to carve a Greater Serbia out of the territory of the former SFRY was played out in Kosovo. The 1998–99 Kosovo war was to have been the last phase in the rounding off and consolidation of Serbia's post-Yugoslav frontiers. The Army of Yugoslavia was given a key role to play in the Kosovo war,

305 Milošević threatened the West that Serbs from Bosnia, in case Republika Srpska were to fall, would be sent to Kosovo.

an opportunity for its professional and political rehabilitation. That opportunity, however, was not taken. As described in the next chapter, the Army once again tasted defeat, having to withdraw to Serbia with its war aims unfulfilled.

Unlike in the earlier wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the case of the conflict in Kosovo the army chain of command ran right up to Milošević, president of the FRY and chairman of the Supreme Defense Council. Although army units were first used in Kosovo in early 1988 in what would escalate into an all-out war, Milošević and his colleagues never declared a state of emergency, thus calling into question the legality of the army's role and of the use of armed violence in Kosovo. In addition to the Army of Yugoslavia, Serbian Ministry of Interior and Territorial Defense units were used in the conflict in Kosovo. Their objectives and conduct were described in the indictment that the ICTY handed out to Milošević:

The operations targeting the Kosovo Albanians were undertaken with the objective of removing a substantial portion of the Kosovo Albanian population from Kosovo in an effort to ensure continued Serbian control over the province. To facilitate these expulsions and displacements, the forces of the FRY and Serbia have intentionally created an atmosphere of fear and oppression through the use of force, threats of force, and acts of violence. Throughout Kosovo, the forces of the FRY and Serbia have looted and pillaged the personal and commercial property belonging to Kosovo Albanians forced from their homes.³⁰⁶

The federal assembly declared a state of war on March 24, 1999, in the face of threats of a NATO military intervention. At that moment, Milošević as FRY president became the Army's supreme commander. The three-month war in Kosovo was waged at several levels, with Anti-Aircraft Defense units detailed to deal with the NATO air strikes and the Army fighting the UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army) and the

306 <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/milutinovic/ind/en/mil-2ai011029e.pdf>

Albanian civilian population, and deporting 700,000 civilians to Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro. Because the armed forces of the FRY fought in Kosovo without the involvement of Serbia's federal partner, Montenegro, the FRY's military defeat was Serbia's defeat. The seal was set on it by the Kumanovo Agreement of June 1999, under which Serbia's forces had to pull out of Kosovo.

CONCLUSION

The YPA, once a well-respected force because of its actions in World War II, had enjoyed a highly privileged position in Tito's Yugoslav as its "seventh republic." "The army leadership held itself responsible for Yugoslavia in a political-state sense."³⁰⁷ However, when the YPA's leaders came to see the YPA's fate as inextricably linked to that of Serbia, which they regarded as the "guardian" of Yugoslavia, the YPA effectively stripped itself of its role of protector of all the nations of Yugoslavia.

The YPA's objective of vanquishing Croatia proved unrealistic as soon as it met with the resistance of a determined people. The YPA leadership's and Milošević's prediction that the war would last only a few weeks or months betrayed their inability to understand the changing situation both in the world and in Yugoslavia. Belgrade's fundamentally wrong perception of developments resulted in a series of misguided moves with no clear sense as to the outcome of the war.

YPA war goals in Croatia ranged from protection of the SFRY's territorial integrity (which was quite unrealistic after the war in Slovenia), the protection of "Serbhood" and the prevention of another genocide of Serbs, to the creation of a new Yugoslavia out of all the republics willing to stay under the same umbrella. The latter goal actually implied the establishment of a Greater Serbia with all Serbs in a single state simply called Yugoslavia. This mismatch of objectives led to

307 Martin Špegelj, *Prva faza rata 1990–1992: "Pripreme za agresiju i hrvatski odbrambeni planovi"* in *Rat u Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini*, ed. Branka Magaš and Ivo Žanić, *Jesenski i Turk* (Zagreb) and *Dani* (Sarajevo) 1999, p.39.

the irrational use of force and eventually the total collapse of the YPA, or rather of its pro-Yugoslav segment. In the aftermath of the Vukovar debacle, the pro-Yugoslav YPA leaders were retired and the remaining commanders ethnically cleansed, so that the army finally became a purely Serbian force in terms of both make-up and objectives.

The Army of Yugoslavia (VJ) inherited from its predecessor the fundamental problem of manpower: the young conscripts who made up most of its ranks did not want to fight and many of them fled the country to avoid being mobilized. They were replaced by volunteers with highly questionable professional skills and morals. Their wholesale use first by the YPA and then by the VJ (as well as by the Army of Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina) degraded the army morally and made it responsible for heinous crimes, including genocide.

In Kosovo, too, the army failed to grasp the situation, fooled itself into thinking it could hold off the might of NATO, and engaged in activities that saw its supreme commander sent to The Hague.

Yet, since the end of the Kosovo war, the army (which since Montenegro's independence has been renamed, accurately for once, the Army of Serbia) has continued to play a prominent part in Serbian politics since its defeat in Kosovo. It took an active part in the political processes that led to the change of government in 2000, playing the role of go-between in replacing Milošević with Vojislav Koštunica. A segment of the army was actively involved in campaigns against the pro-Europe prime minister Zoran Đinđić. It resisted any changes for a long time, primarily to avoid being called to account before the ICTY.

In 2006, however, the Serbian Army did join NATO's Partnership for Peace, opening the path toward full NATO membership. Further transformation of the Serbian Army will depend, as is the case with the militaries in most other post-communist countries, on its relationship with NATO.

The Kosovo Issue

NATION BUILDING AND THE KOSOVO MYTH

The Kosovo myth, which endures in the consciousness of the Serbian people as the pivotal event of their history, rests on the belief that the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 brought disaster to the medieval Serbian state, burying its chance for independence and ushering in a long period of slavery under the Turks. The pledge to avenge Kosovo has become the “vertical point of Serb history, for the Serbs have not forgotten that they were banished from a land which was the repository of all the most precious things they have created in their history”; the liberation of Kosovo in 1912–13 meant a “return to their homeland taken away by force.”³⁰⁸

The Kosovo myth played a significant part in the creation of the modern Serbian state in the early twentieth century. St. Vitus’ Day, which had been instituted in the nineteenth century in the belief that the Battle of Kosovo had been lost precisely on that day, was first celebrated as a national religious holiday in 1913, after the Turks had been decisively beaten. The holiday was said to honor the “chivalrous contest and the conquest of evil,” and to symbolize a bloody, unsparing revenge against Turks and Muslims in general.³⁰⁹ The

308 Radomir Lukić, *Značaj boja na Kosovu, kosovska epika i kosovski mit-simbol očuvanja srpske nacionalne svesti* (The significance of the Battle of Kosovo, the Kosovo epic and the Kosovo myth-symbol of the preservation of Serbian national consciousness), *Politika*, June 28, 1989.

309 Miodrag Popović, *Vidovdan i časni krst, ogled iz književne arheologije Slovo ljubve*, Beograd 1976, p. 129

possibility of using St. Vitus' Day to abuse the Kosovo myth was pointed out in the 1970s by Miodrag Popović, who wrote:

*The cult of St. Vitus' Day, which confuses historical and mythical reality, a genuine struggle for freedom and enduring pagan propensities (revenge, throat-slitting, oblation, worship of a heroic ancestor), contains potentially all the characteristics of environments marked by unbridled mythical impulses. As a phase in the development of national thought, it was historically necessary. But as a permanent state of the spirit, the cult of St. Vitus' Day can prove detrimental for those who are unable to disentangle themselves from its pseudo-mythical and pseudo-historical entanglements. In them, modern thought and man's spirit may experience a new Kosovo, an intellectual and ethical defeat.*³¹⁰

As early as 1980, the Kosovo myth was skilfully exploited by the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) with the goal of the political homogenization of the Serbian people. Use of the legend transferred “the conflict from the sphere of politics, economy, and history to the extra-temporal sphere of myth.”³¹¹ In the political vacuum after Tito's death, the SPC presented itself as the guarantor of traditional national security and the focal point of communal life. In 1982, twenty-one priests signed an appeal to the highest Serbian and Yugoslav authorities, as well as to the SPC Assembly and the Holy Bishopric Synod, to “raise their voice in the protection of the spiritual and biological being of the Serb people in Kosovo and Metohija.”³¹² Documents edited by prominent historians on old crimes and terror committed against Serbs were published in ever-growing numbers. In an official announcement in 1987, the SPC Assembly used the term

310 Miodrag Popović, *Vidovdan i časni krst, ogled iz književne arheologije* (St. Vitus' Day and the Holy Cross, an essay on literary archaeology), Belgrade, 1976, pp. 131–32.

311 *Ibid.*

312 Pravoslavlje, May 15, 1982.

“genocide” for the first time, implying an ongoing campaign against the Serbs in Kosovo. The SPC played a prominent role in the preparations for the commemoration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo at Gazimestan in Kosovo and at Krka Monastery in Croatia. The SPC saw these events as the “most significant events in the more recent history of the Serb people,” a revival of Serbian cultural and national consciousness, and the “awakening of the giant of the Balkans.”³¹³

Serbian nationalism fueled efforts in the 1980s and 1990s to recentralize the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) under Serbian domination or to create a new state entirely—one that would welcome only Serbs. Kosovo, the Serbian nationalists were clear, must be part of that state, but demographically Kosovo was no by no means purely, or even predominantly, Serbian. Indeed, the Serbian proportion of the population of Kosovo was declining. In earlier decades of the twentieth century, Belgrade had tried and failed to create a Serbian majority in Kosovo: first, through nationalization and colonization in the 1920s after the creation of the First Yugoslavia; and later by expelling the Albanians and Muslim population to Turkey between 1945 and 1966.³¹⁴ In the 1990s, alarmed at increases in the Albanian population and the effects of the 1974 Constitution, Serbian nationalists began to cast about for new solutions to the “Albanian question.”

THE ALBANIAN QUESTION

Ever since the Yugoslav state was founded, Serbs have grappled with the Albanian question. Serbia views Kosovo as its holy land and the cradle of Serbdom, yet since the mid-nineteenth century,

313 Radmila Radić, *Crkva i “srpsko pitanje”*, Srpska strana rata, ed. Nebojša Popov, Beograd 1996, p.281.

314 However, about 250,000 Muslims from Yugoslavia emigrated to Turkey (Branko Horvat, *Kosovsko pitanje*, p. 62), of which about 100,000 were Albanians (Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 323),

Albanians have been the majority population in Kosovo. After being part of the Ottoman Empire for five hundred years, Kosovo was liberated and reclaimed for Serbia in 1912, according to the Serbs, or was reoccupied, according to the Albanians. Such contrasting views set the stage for cycles of violence and reprisal throughout the twentieth century.

This twentieth-century history repeated a pattern established long before, a pattern evident during Ottoman rule and reinforced by the state frontiers delineated in the nineteenth century. As a commission of independent intellectuals from Belgrade whose intention was to demystify official Serbian statements about Kosovo commented in 1990, “Kosovo has traditionally been the scene of revolt, expulsion, ‘induced’ as well as forced emigration, colonization, punitive expeditions and, of course, violence. In this process previous domination by one side was always held out as the pretext and the justification for domination by the other.”³¹⁵

In 1913, the International Balkans Commission of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace published a report that explained the causes and described the conduct of the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, and concluding that the conflict had been “fanned by virulent nationalisms.”³¹⁶ The Serbs’ objective was the destruction of non-Serbs, and they used brutal methods to pursue that goal. Dimitrije Tucović, leader of the social democratic movement in Serbia,³¹⁷ wrote about these atrocities at length, specifically the massacre at the village of Luma (now in Albania) in 1913:

The reserve officers, who had received the order to burn the village down and to put all they found in it to the knife, resisted in vain; they

315 Report of the Independent Commission, *Kosovskičvor: drešiti ili seći?* (The Kosovo knot: to untie or to cut?), Chromos, Beograd, 1990.

316 Report of the International Commission, *To inquire into the causes and conduct of the Balkan Wars*, published by the Endowment, Washington, D.C., 1914.

317 Tucović died in World War I in the battle of Kolubara, in 1914, as an officer of the Serbian Army.

*kept inquiring ‘Surely not all?’ and informing the commander that except for women and children there was no one else in the village, but all was in vain. In two hours the village was wiped out amid scenes which defy description. The salvoes felled women holding the babies in their arms, little children whom the bullets had spared cried beside their dead mothers ... terrified women gave premature births. Five hundred souls were dispatched in two hours.*³¹⁸

Tucović also wrote that the “Serbian army was exterminating Albanians in Old Serbia and Albania, the Bulgarian Turks in Thrace, and the Greek Turks and Albanians on Devol, in the criminal belief that they were performing a ‘national’ deed, that by wiping those innocent people off the face of the earth they were ridding themselves of an enemy with whom it would be difficult to cope in the future.”³¹⁹

In 1914, Serbia tried to gain access to the Adriatic by “setting out to murder an entire nation.” Serbia was checked, but the “mistrust, and even hatred, by an entire nation” remained.³²⁰ The legacy of such actions has been difficult to overcome, particularly in relations with Kosovar Albanians, whom the Serbs made no effort to integrate into the first Yugoslavia. “Why did we not lend a helping hand in the creation of the Albanian state?” asked Serbian Socialist Kosta Novaković in 1914. “Why did we not strike up a friendship we sorely need with a country which may cause us much bother, a country which will do itself to death in the process of frustrating us? Why are our ruling circles not considering making such a friendship in the future?”³²¹

318 Quoted in Branko Horvat *Kosovsko pitanje* [Kosovo Issue], Globus, Zagreb 1989; Dimitrije Tucović: *Srbija i Albanci* (Serbia and the Albanians).

319 *Ibid.*

320 *Ibid.*

321 *Ibid.*

The answer to such questions was that Serbs believed that Albanians belonged to an inferior civilization and were hostile to the new state. Unlike Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks, and others, Albanians were not recognized as a minority.³²² In a petition on “The Situation of the Albanian Minority in Yugoslavia” addressed to the League of Nations in 1930, three Albanian priests—Gjon Bisaku, Shtjefën Kurti and Luigj Gashi—alleged that

*Yugoslavia has organized armed bands which are terrorizing Albanian parts and destroying many villages. Each act of destruction is followed by the colonization of Russian, Serb and Montenegrin settlers. Also, the regime misses no opportunity to provoke a mass emigration of the Albanian population to Turkey. The Yugoslav government’s reply to the intervention of the League of Nations was that the object of the United Committees of the Albanian irredentists was to link themselves to Albania.*³²³

The attitude of the new state toward Albanians is illustrated by a Radical Party report on the situation in Kosovo in 1921:

Local Serbs pose a major stumbling block for the consolidation of order in those parts because they have some crazy notion that Muslims ought not to live in a Serb state. Guided by this notion, they do not shrink from committing all sorts of crimes against the Muslims ... because they are committing these crimes in the name of the state, they are provoking an even greater hatred among the Muslims of the state ...

322 The Yugoslav government held that minority rights specified under the 1920 Treaty of St. Germain and other agreements only pertained to minorities who had joined the new Yugoslav state under the peace treaties concluded at the end of World War I. Other minorities—such as Albanians, Bulgarians, and Turks—were denied the same rights as those who had been part of the Kingdom of Serbia before the First World War.

323 Vladimir Đuro Degan, *Međunarodnopravno uređenje položaja muslimana sa osvrtom na uređenje drugih vjerskih i narodnosnih skupina na području Jugoslavije* (The regulation of the status of Muslims under international law with reference to that of other religious and nation-building groups on the territory of Yugoslavia), Prilozi, VIII, Institute of the History of the Workers’ Movement, Sarajevo, 1972.

*Local Serb inhabitants are perpetrating vicious crimes and the present disordered state of affairs in the aforesaid parts is largely due to their effects.*³²⁴

A state of siege was in effect in Kosovo for the years between the two world wars. Albanians were forbidden to move from one place to another and schools were prohibited from teaching in the Albanian language. Dragiša Vasić, a leading intellectual of the Chetnik movement, wrote about the Serbianization of the Albanians:

*The villages we passed through were deserted, having been put to the torch by our troops after being first demolished by artillery; the smoke that rose from a house here and there indicated that their occupants were still alive. The houses that had been spared belonged to our commissioners. ... We are thinking about hapless Albania which always was and will remain our grave and our disgrace for a long time to come, the Albania where on three occasions I had seen people die horrible deaths, (the country) whose tribes we pit against each other in order to rule them: that cold Siberia of ours is a promised land for corrupt officials who return from it wallowing in wealth; it is also there that every spring brings death to our wonderful soldiers and officers, our young martyrs the unwitting protectors of plunderers and the deceived defenders of criminals.*³²⁵

In addition to abolishing feudal relations by means of agrarian reform, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia attempted to colonize Kosovo. The idea was to settle Serbs and Montenegrins in order to nationalize and assimilate Kosovo. Between 1931 and 1941, Albanians were dispossessed of fertile land in the hope that they would emigrate to Turkey. The Inter-Ministerial Conference held in Belgrade in 1935 decided to displace Albanians from the border areas. After that, the authorities

324 Petrit Imami, *Srbi i Albanci kroz vekove*, Beograd 1999.

325 Dragiša Vasić, *Dva meseca u srpskom Sibiru* (Two months in Serbia's Siberia), Geca Kon, Belgrade, 1921, p. 21, 60.

launched a drive imposing restrictions on the ownership of land in Kosovo and Metohija: the land was declared state property and could therefore not be registered as privately owned.

The Serbian attitude to Albanians was expressed in its most radical form by Vaso Čubrilo^ʋvić, a noted Serbian scholar and political figure, in 1937 in “The Expulsion of the Albanians,” a report submitted to the National Defense Institute.

Čubrilo^ʋvić criticized the government for “wanting to apply Western methods in dealing with the huge ethnic problems in the unsettled Balkans.” He stressed that the Turks had brought to the Balkans the rule that the sword alone decided who won and who lost his power and nobility, as well as his home and estate, and that early Serbian leaders such as Karađorđe, Miloš, Mihailo, and Jovan Ristić had merely “purged Serbia of the foreign element and populated her with their own people.” The colonization drive had failed principally because

*the best land remains in the hands of the Albanians. ... It was a mistake not to have expelled the Albanians to Albania during their revolt shortly after World War One and not to have dispossessed them of the land to which they had no title issued by the Turks. Instead, our state has accustomed them to the Western European notion of private estate, something they did not have before. In this way, we prevented ourselves from carrying out nationalization ... Unless we square accounts with them, we shall face formidable irredentism in twenty to thirty years ... which is bound to throw into jeopardy our possessions in the south.*³²⁶

“If Germany can evict tens of thousands of Jews, and if Russia can transfer millions from one end of the continent to another, then no world war is going to break out over a hundred thousand evicted Albanians,” Čubrilo^ʋvić wrote. He suggested a strategy

326 Vasa Čubrilo^ʋvić, The Expulsion of the Albanians, *Memorandum* presented in Belgrade on March 7, 1937, Arhiv Vojnoistorijskog II-F2-K-69

of encouraging Albanians to emigrate by impressing on them how beautiful Turkey is and by encouraging religious fanaticism among them. He also advocated more blunt and repressive steps:

The state apparatus ought to exploit the law to the full in order to plague the life of the Albanians through fines, arrests, relentless application of all police rules, punishment of smuggling, wood cutting and setting dogs loose, statute labor and all other resorts an enterprising police force can think of ... the payment of taxes and all public and private debts must be enforced without mercy, all access to state-owned and municipal rough grazing prohibited, concessions and operating licenses for inns, trading establishments and artisan workshops revoked ... dismissal from state, private and self-government employment will accelerate emigration ... the Albanians are most sensitive about religious matters, so it is in that department that we ought to make them smart. This could be achieved by harassing priests, clearing cemeteries, prohibiting polygamy, and especially by stringently enforcing the law that female children must attend primary school ... Our colonists should be given weapons. Old Chetnik methods should be introduced in those parts and their objectives advanced quietly. In particular, a wave of highland Montenegrins should be let loose to provoke a massive clash with the Albanians in Metohija ... the whole affair should be presented calmly as a clash between fraternities and clans ... In extremis, local revolts could be provoked and quelled in blood ... not so much by the army as by colonists, Montenegrin tribes and Chetniks. There is yet another expedient: in 1878, Serbia put violence to very good use when it stealthily burned Albanian villages and neighborhoods in towns.³²⁷

As part of an arrangement with Turkey, which wanted to withdraw ethnic Turks from the Balkans, the Yugoslav government in 1938 drew up a plan to move 40,000 families between 1939 and 1944.³²⁸

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Turkish-Yugoslav Convention of 1938 on Regulating the Emigration of the

Ivo Andrić, assistant secretary in the Foreign Ministry of Yugoslavia at the time, sent a circular letter to the Yugoslav embassy in London in June 1938 that stated that “according to our estimates, the Turkish minority in Serbia is about 150,000, while the Turks hold that the number is up to 250,000.”³²⁹ The outbreak of World War II and lack of adequate financial resources prevented the implementation of this plan.

Italian forces occupied Kosovo and Albania in 1939. Regarding themselves as having been liberated by the Italians, who unified Kosovo politically and administratively with Albania to create a Greater Albania, Kosovo Albanians took revenge for decades of ill-treatment by the Serbian and Montenegrin population. Colonists were murdered and their homes were torched in attempts to drive them away. The number of Serbs expelled from Kosovo is difficult to judge, although Serbian sources often refer to between 80,000 and 100,000 people.

Anti-fascist movements in Yugoslavia and Albania cooperated closely during World War II. The Yugoslav Communist party helped found the Albanian Communist Party. After the war, many people expected Albania to become part of the Yugoslav federation. According to some sources, Tito told Albania’s Communist leader, Enver Hoxha, that Kosovo belonged to Albania. For instance, an Albanian newspaper in 1981 claimed that Tito declared, “Kosovo and other Albanian regions belong to Albania and shall be returned to them, but not now because the Greater Serb reaction would not accept such a thing.”³³⁰

Turkish Population from the Region of Southern Serbia in Yugoslavia

329 Petriti Imami, *Serbs and Albanians*, Belgrade, Samizdat FreeB92, 1999. p.262.

330 Miranda Vickers, *Albanians: A Modern History*, Columbia University Press, 1995, p.165.

THE STATUS OF ALBANIANS IN THE SECOND YUGOSLAVIA

Relations were strained by the time the second Yugoslavia was created in 1946. Kosovo had been liberated in the autumn of 1944, but some Partisan detachments retaliated against the Albanians and an uprising broke out in the spring of 1945. Units of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia put down the uprising and imposed an interim administration that stayed in effect until mid-year. Local inhabitants who had fought as Partisans—mostly Serbs and Montenegrins—returned to Kosovo and were given administrative posts. In July 1945, the recently formed Assembly of Kosovo and Metohija passed a resolution to incorporate Kosovo and Metohija into the federal unit of Serbia and expressed the conviction that the “peoples of this district will draw full support from the people’s government of Serbia and will be wholeheartedly assisted by the people’s government of all of Yugoslavia in their political, national, economic and cultural advancement.”³³¹ The incorporation into Serbia was approved by the Presidency of the Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) on July 23, 1945, and the People’s Assembly of Serbia passed a law on the Autonomous Province of Kosovo–Metohija on August 3, 1945. In September, the Provisional People’s Assembly of Democratic Federative Yugoslavia (DFY) granted the autonomous provinces special status entitling them to twenty-five seats (Vojvodina was allotted fifteen and Kosovo was allotted ten) in the Assembly of Peoples—the federal chamber of the Constituent Assembly of the DFY.

The status of Kosovo and Metohija in the second Yugoslavia was a complex and delicate matter because of the majority Albanian population in the province. At the beginning of January 1944, a National Liberation Committee for Kosovo and Metohija had been established in the village of Bujani on liberated Albanian territory. Of the forty-nine delegates present, forty-three were Albanians. The inaugural

331 Petrit Imami, *Srbi i Albanci kroz vekove*, Samizdat FreeB92, Beograd, 1999, p. 317.

conference issued a resolution urging Kosovo Albanians to fight alongside the Yugoslav peoples against the German occupiers and promised that all the peoples living in Kosovo would be able to vote on their future after liberation.

In the first postwar years, the federal policy of “Brotherhood and Unity” resulted in a rapprochement between most Yugoslav peoples—but the situation in Kosovo remained unchanged. The dissonance was greatest between Serbs and Albanians, and later Albanians and Macedonians. The Albanians did not believe that a unified Yugoslavia would bring them emancipation and anticipated instead that they would continue to be used as a symbol of Slav domination characterized by brutal persecution and terror. Albanians were not subject to the same level of repression as before the war, but they continued to be treated as an unreliable element. The police textbooks of the time stated that “national minorities, especially Albanians, are a suspect element because their members, even those who discharge the most responsible functions, may impart secret information to their mother country.”³³²

The cultural emancipation of Albanians was thwarted, the recently established Institute of Albanian Studies was abolished, Albanian folklore was suppressed and special spelling rules were developed for Yugoslav Albanians to set them apart from everyone else in Albania. Meanwhile, the 1938 plan to move people to Turkey was revived; according to various sources, it was to have affected between 120,000 and 213,000 people, mostly Albanians but also Turks and Muslims.³³³

The situation of the Albanians altered substantially only after the Brioni Plenum in 1966, when Aleksandar Ranković was sacked and various abuses by the police and state authorities were exposed.

332 As cited in Latinka Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga –ishod rascepa 1971–72*, Svijetlost, Sarajevo, 1991, p. 41.

333 Petrit Imami, *Serbs and Albanians*, p. 323.

The Brioni Plenum was the first showdown between liberals and the republics, on one side, and conservative forces opposed to the decentralization of power, on the other. Albanians viewed these changes as a sign of their impending liberation; although Albanians continued to be regarded as an alien element, 1966 marked the birth of Albanian political life in Yugoslavia. Albanian emancipation proceeded with great speed. A university was established at Pristina, and Albanian nationalism was sparked in the quest for ever-greater equality in the federation. Yet, there was little dialogue about the rising nationalism and almost no discussion of it between the Serbs and Albanians.

The Yugoslav state genuinely acknowledged the rights of Albanians for the first time in 1966. The recognition of these rights caused growing frustration among Serbian nationalists, who believed that concessions to the Albanians were part of a plot against Serbia. In May 1968, the fourteenth session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia was held in Belgrade to debate national equality. Historian Jovan Marjanović and author Dobrica Ćosić pointed to manifestations of nationalism in Kosovo, to “Albano-centrism and separatist tendencies,” and to “widespread anti-Serb sentiments among Albanians.” Ćosić stressed that there was widespread concern in Serbia about the “increasingly strained relations between Albanians and Serbs, a feeling of insecurity among Serbs and Montenegrins, a tendency among professionals to leave Kosovo and Metohija, an inequality before the courts of law and disregard for the law, and blackmailing in the name of one’s national affiliation.” Although he was irritated in particular by the increasing “sovereignty of Kosovo,” he also criticized “Vojvodinan autonomism,” especially “Hungarian nationalism and segregation.”³³⁴

Marjanović censured the “senselessness of the proclamation of a Muslim nation in Yugoslavia,” a symposium on Montenegrin national culture, and the “demands of bureaucratic nationalists

334 *Borba*, May 31, 1968.

for separate national armies, resulting in the compromise reached with them that 20 percent of conscripts should do their military service on the territory of their home republic.”³³⁵ The debate on the amendments that would result in the 1974 Constitution had begun; the common denominator in all the republics was the desire for greater economic and political decentralization. For Čosić, Albanian demands for substantive economic and political change were unacceptable because they did not square with his unitarian view of Yugoslavia. The speeches of Čosić and Marjanović were condemned as nationalistic, and both men were expelled from the Central Committee. The episode marked the beginning of the reawakening of Serbian nationalism; Dobrica Čosić remains its chief proponent and ideologue to this day.

Čosić wrote in his diary at the time:

The world being as it is, and Yugoslavia being as it is, the Albanians have every right to fight for the unification of their dismembered nation. One cannot live serenely in a “community” ruled by economic, ideological, personal and political Slovene-Croat hegemony; one cannot live peacefully in a “community” in which the republics’ new “self-management statehood” is being constituted and the members of a religion—Muslims—proclaimed a nation, while at the same time the Yugoslav Albanians are forbidden to unite with their mother country. It is thanks to this Yugoslav “democracy” that the Yugoslav Albanians in Kosovo have been made the national avant-garde and the Piedmont of the scattered Albanian people. The way things are developing at present, there is no other outcome and no other solution but to demarcate ourselves, to give the Albanians the possibility of self-determination, to recompose Yugoslavia’s territory and to set up homogeneous nation states in the Balkans. For in this “preserve of Tito’s” all

*possibility of creating an internationalist, democratic, modern community of people and nations has finally been lost and destroyed.*³³⁶

Ćosić was the first to demand revision of the national policy which had led to confrontation in Serbia. The liberals and a few intellectuals wanted the matter to be settled once and for all by granting Kosovo genuine equality both within Serbia and within the federation. They worked to pass the 1974 Constitution, which defined the status of the autonomous provinces as constituent elements of the Yugoslav federation: “the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo is a constituent part of the Socialist Republic of Serbia and of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.”³³⁷ The constitutional status of Kosovo and Metohija had changed in December 1968, when the province was given its own constitution, which defined the status as follows: “The Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo is the autonomous socialist democratic socio-political and self-managing community of working people, equal Albanians, Muslims, Serbs, Turks, Montenegrins and members of other nations and nationalities and ethnic groups, based on the power and self-management of the working class and all working people.” (The omission of the name “Metohija” from the official designation of the province was a concession to the Albanians. It was challenged in 1988 and the name was changed back to “Kosovo and Metohija”.)

Under the 1974 Constitution, the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo were established as constituent parts of the federation (i.e., their status was almost equal to that of the republics) and therefore entitled to bypass Serbia in pursuit of their interests. These changes were resisted in Serbia, particularly by Dragoslav Marković; a working group was formed including Professors N. Pašić and R. Ratković who prepared a study entitled *The Socialist Republic of Serbia and the*

336 Dobrica Ćosić, *Piščevi zapisi 1952–1968* (A Writer’s Notes), Filip Visnjić, Belgrade, 2000

337 *Ustav SFRJ* (Constitution of the SFRY), Prosveta, Belgrade, 1974, p. 685.

Autonomous Provinces as Its Constituent Parts—Their Constitutional Status and Practice, known as the “Blue Book.” A draft of the Blue Book was criticized at a meeting of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia and the project was shelved. Between 1968 and 1981, Kosovar Albanians enjoyed autonomy and rights that had previously been denied them.

Albanian nationalism increased during the 1970s, culminating in 1978 during the commemoration of the centenary of the Prizren League (a political organization whose foundation in 1878 is regarded as marking the birth of the Albanian nation). The celebrations encouraged many young people to commit themselves to Albania. The intensification of cultural cooperation between the Kosovar Albanians and Albania contributed to the strengthening of Albanian nationalism; slowly the “boundary between the affirmation of the nation and nationalism began to fade.”³³⁸ Tension increased among the Serbian population, which felt outnumbered and outvoted and could not reconcile itself to the fact that Albanians dictated political relations in the province. The language barrier created additional difficulties because many Serbs had never learned Albanian. Serbs began to move out of Kosovo, the most densely populated part of Yugoslavia, in search of better employment. At the same time, the price of land and housing rose due to increasing demand by the Albanian population.

Frustration and dissatisfaction grew as Kosovo’s economic problems intensified, as did the ever-growing discrepancy between Kosovo and the rest of Yugoslavia. Unemployment continued to spiral upward, especially among young people. Rural Kosovo had little to offer economically. Given the other economic problems Yugoslavia was facing, Kosovo, the most undeveloped region in the country, could not stay stable.

338 Petrit Imami, *Serbs and Albanians Through the Centuries*, FreeB92, 1999, p. 333.

THE ALBANIAN QUESTION EXACERBATES THE YUGOSLAV CRISIS

Tension in Kosovo mounted after widespread Albanian demonstrations in March and April 1981. At a meeting in Pristina, Fadil Hoxha, a member of the SFRY Presidency, condemned the “Kosovo Republic” slogan of demonstrators and said “Kosovo is represented in all the organs, organizations and institutions of the federation and of the Socialist Republic of Serbia on an equal footing. Kosovo participates in, and is responsible for, the formulation and realization of the foreign policy of Yugoslavia, the life and development, the present and the future of our socialist community.”³³⁹ Shortly afterward, Dragoslav Marković, the president of the Presidency of Serbia, insisted that the constitutional status of the province was untenable because it was acting like a republic. Interestingly enough, in 1982, the Rand Corporation published a report on the situation in Yugoslavia that indicated that “Moscow had somehow been involved in stirring up the Kosovo disturbances,” while Albanian “complicity was generally assumed.”³⁴⁰ As the Albanian question attracted increasing attention, so Serbian nationalism grew more intense and the Serbian elite grew more eager to rearrange Yugoslavia.

Ćosić and his circle started priming the Serbs for insurgency. Ćosić was convinced that “in October 1982, the reasons for insurgency were greater than in 1941.”³⁴¹ The propaganda machine went into action. The media demonized the Albanians, accusing them of terrorism and undermining the integrity of Yugoslavia as well as of the mass rape of Serbian women. Ćosić claimed that a counterrevolution in Kosovo had been started by young children: in an interview, he maintained that “the small children first started spitting and insulting old Serbs, who restrained from beating them, or punishing them

339 Quoted after Petrit Imami, *Serbija i Albanci kroz vekove*, FreeB92, Beograd 1999, p. 332.

340 According to a Ross Johnson conversation with various partners. *Ibid.*

341 Dobrica Ćosić, *Promene*, 1992.

for such shameful behavior. Children, under-age Shiptari, began raping Serb women and girls in Kosmet.”³⁴²

The theory was marketed that, due to a demographic boom, Albanians would in the next few decades turn the Serbs into a minority in their own country. The Serbian media suggested that increased Albanian birth rate was a mechanism to redraw the borders of the SFRY—“a new, bloodless vehicle for attaining what Albanians failed to attain through their armed rebellion.”³⁴³ Symposia were held recommending birth control as a means of controlling the birth rate. Serbian academics played an influential role in the anti-Albanian campaign. Miloš Macura, a demographer and a member of the Serbian Academy of Science, considered that “the high birth rate must be limited, for such a move would be in the interest of Kosovar women, local community and our whole community, in the interest of relations in Serbia and Yugoslavia.”³⁴⁴ More than two hundred prominent Serbian intellectuals signed a petition in 1986 demanding “the end of a lethal genocide on European soil,” and of the “banishing of the Serb people from Kosovo and Metohija [which] has been going on for three centuries.”³⁴⁵

The media whipped up anti-Albanian hysteria by portraying Albanians as demonic and inhuman in order to justify the wave of violence and repression that was to ensue.³⁴⁶ Analyses pointing to an Albanian terror campaign were regular features in the media. “In settlements in which they are in the majority, Albanians engage in institutional terror and sow a feeling of insecurity ... They rape

342 Quoted in Ljiljana Bulatović, *Ispovesti*, 1995.

343 *Politika*, *Odjeci i reagovanja*, December 6, 1988.

344 *Politika*, January 27, 1989.

345 Quotation from the petition sent to the federal bodies, January 21, 1986, *Književne novine*, January 15–March 15, 2003.

346 See, for instance, Renaud de la Brosse Expert Report on Political Propaganda and the Plan to Create ‘A State For All Serbs:’ Consequences of using the media for ultra-nationalist ends’ presented at the Milošević trial in the Hague Tribunal, in “Milošević vs Yugoslavia”, ed. Sonja Biserko, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Belgrade 2004

whomever they can, married women and girls, old women, as well as ten-year-olds. They rape them everywhere, in public places, at bus stops, in ambulance cars.”³⁴⁷ (The year this statement appeared only one case of rape was registered in the whole of Kosovo.)³⁴⁸

The media campaign induced a nationwide psychosis; a segment of the Serbian population, the nationalists in particular, developed persecution mania. A system built on “prejudice, perception and emotion by which to gauge all evidence of the Serb national identity being subordinated, threatened or disrespected” had been established. Even “conclusive arguments” were fabricated at times.³⁴⁹

A group of independent intellectuals in Belgrade set up a commission whose report refuted most of the accusations against Albanians leveled by the Serbian propaganda machine, particularly those alleging the rape of Serbian women. The commission concluded that the “image of Kosovo, built up in recent years, as a region in which the criminal offence of rape by far preponderates is incorrect. The allegation that Albanians rape solely or mostly female members of Serb nationality, an allegation made to draw the conclusion about there being ‘nationalist’ rapes calculated at driving the Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo, is incorrect.” The report maintained that “with regard to this particular criminal offence in Kosovo, procedure by the investigating authorities and penal policy there do not deviate from the average for the SFRY or other parts of Serbia for that matter.”³⁵⁰

This report was the first attempt in Serbia to deal with the Kosovo question in a different way, that is, on the basis of verified facts. The commission also concluded that in a situation of “troubled

347 Đorđije Vuković, *Theoria*, 3–4/1987, p. 56.

348 Report of the Independent Commission: *Kosovski čvor: dresiti ili seći?* (The Kosovo knot: to untie or to cut?), Chromos, Beograd, 1990.

349 Dušan Janjić, *Borba*, May 30–31, 1987.

350 Report of the Independent Commission: *Kosovski ičvor: dresiti ili seći?* (The Kosovo knot: to untie or to cut?), Chromos, Beograd, 1990.

inter-nationality relations,” any incident from the domain of “classic crime” assumes a special significance. It warned that any ethnic crime treated as a political act and a manifestation of national hatred, if given publicity (as was the practice and strategy at the time), could frighten the people of Kosovo and that the “conspicuous tendency for classic criminality to be experienced, and even treated, as political is in itself a ‘pathological’ phenomenon which corroborates the Commission’s thesis about the relationship in Kosovo being one of longstanding exclusion and domination.”³⁵¹ However, the report failed to attract public attention in Serbia.

There was at least one other attempt to come to terms with the Kosovo question. Professor Branko Horvat of Zagreb wrote *Kosovsko pitanje* (*The Kosovo Question*) in which he sought to consider every aspect of the problem, but his idea of encouraging a nationwide dialogue on Kosovo was not well received.

KOSOVO’S AUTONOMY IS ABOLISHED

The drama intensified during the preparation of the new Serbian Constitution that would, when promulgated in 1990, abolish the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina under the slogan “tripartite Serbia will be one again.” Slobodan Milošević was determined to press ahead with this policy and he could count on considerable popular support. The extent to which ordinary Serbs embraced this idea was illustrated by a 1988 rally in New Belgrade attended by one million people. Milošević also enjoyed strong support among the political and intellectual elite in Serbia. In the fall of 1989, *Politika* launched a column entitled “Odjeci i reagovanja” (“Repercussions and Reactions”) as a forum for discussing the issues raised in the Memorandum, including the demands for amending the 1974 Constitution and the alleged genocide against Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo. The column provided evidence of the extent to which the media

351 *Ibid.* p. 47.

had been used to serve the ruling ideology. Its contents and purpose squared with the concept of the Memorandum and a speech made by Milošević at Kosovo Polje on April 24, 1987, that set the tone for *Politika's* future popular rostrum. Milošević said that “any and every issue is up for discussion: justice, freedom, culture, language and script. Any and every issue is up for discussion, from the media to constitutional amendments, from nurseries to courts of law.”³⁵² Milošević took up the media’s argument that the Albanians’ birth rate, said to be the highest in Europe, was to blame for the fact that Serbs had become a minority in Kosovo. “As is well-known,” he said in an interview, “the birth rate of Kosovo is among the highest in the world ... This taboo topic has only recently been raised as a subject for debate. The socio-political aspects of the birth rate are also becoming increasingly pronounced. The peoples living with the Albanians are becoming minorities and are losing territory and living space.”³⁵³

The Belgrade regime’s attitude presented the Kosovo Albanians with a bleak future. As the Serbian politician and diplomat Koča Popović observed, “The Kosovo Albanians cannot relate their national and political identity to Serbia alone. There must be a Yugoslav option open for them ... Because, to put it this way, they can be both Albanians and Yugoslavs, but they can hardly be Albanians and Serbs.” The Albanian people, forecast Popović, will be “forced into armed conflict with Serbs and Serbia, which regards the demographic expansion of the Albanian minority in itself (which I don’t believe is ‘intentional’, ‘planned’) as an intrusion on its historical and other intimate interests. In this way, instead of calming things down, one is causing ever greater exacerbation.”³⁵⁴

Belgrade’s tirades and actions inevitably provoked an outburst of Albanian anger. A revolt occurred in Kosovo in November 1988 in

352 Slobodan Milošević, *Godine raspleta*, BIGZ, Beograd, 1989

353 *NIN*, 3. July 1988

354 Aleksandar Nenadović, *Razgovor sa Kočom*, Zagreb 1989

protest against the sacking of the provincial leadership and in defense of Kosovo's autonomy. Albanian intellectuals signed a petition against curbs on the province's autonomy in February 1989; miners at Trepča revolted on February 20. At an emergency session of the federal assembly, Lazar Mojsov, head of state, disclosed an irredentist staff document on the creation of a Kosovo republic. The "document" was actually a printout picked up in a Pristina street and distributed to federal officials by the Tanjug news agency's house service.³⁵⁵ Although a fabrication, the document was used as a pretext to impose a state of emergency.³⁵⁶

The SFRY presidency imposed the state of emergency in Kosovo in March 1989. The federal government under Ante Marković showed no resolve in dealing with the Kosovo question. Although federal officials were accused by Serbs of neglecting the Kosovo problem, the Serbs did not object to the fact that the federal government was silent about the methods used by the Serbian government to enforce its policy there. The opinion prevailed at the federal level that a concession to the Serbs in Kosovo would appease the Serbian appetite for other parts of Yugoslavia—a calculation that failed to take into account the increasingly aggressive character of Serbian behavior.

On March 28, 1989, Serbia promulgated amendments to the Constitution of Serbia severely restricting the autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo, a move that provoked disturbances in Kosovo in which twenty-two Albanians and two policemen were killed. By abolishing autonomy and then appointing his henchmen in Vojvodina and Kosovo to key positions, Milošević managed to obtain the two votes he needed to paralyze the federal presidency.³⁵⁷

355 *Politika*, March 3, 1989.

356 An interview with Husnija Bitić in 2008.

357 Each of the six republics and two provinces had an equal vote in the presidency, which made decisions by majority vote. By securing the votes of Vojvodina and Kosovo, as well as those of Serbia and Montenegro, Milošević could block any policy in the presidency.

On June 28, the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo was commemorated at Gazimestan. The speech which Milošević presented, as we saw previously, was bristling with minatory rhetoric, hinting broadly at the prospect of a new war. In the same speech, Milošević sent a message to Europe that Serbia was defending Europe from Islam:

*Six centuries ago, Serbia heroically defended itself in the field of Kosovo, but it also defended Europe. Serbia was at that time the bastion that defended European culture, religion, and European society in general. Therefore today it appears not only unjust but even unhistorical and completely absurd to talk about Serbia's belonging to Europe. Serbia has always been a part of Europe now just as much as it was in the past, of course, in its own way, but in a way that in the historical sense never deprived it of its dignity.*³⁵⁸

Dobrica Ćosić said at the time that “Kosovo is an unsolvable problem” and that the “Albanian movement is above all nationalistic.” He made the following suggestion: “We shall either give [the Albanians] territory, which means the loss of half of Macedonia and the break-up of Serbia as a consequence, or we shall use force as Israel does. That is a painful course to take, one that causes enormous damage.”³⁵⁹

After Slovenian and Croatian delegates walked out of the Congress on January 25, 1990, leading to the break-up of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the Serbian regime tried to provoke an uprising in Kosovo in order to create a pretext for imposing a state of war. At precisely that moment, however, the Kosovar Albanians called off their demonstrations at the urging of Ibrahim Rugova (1944–2006), president and the leader for many years of Kosovo in its struggle for independence, and a grassroots movement based on

358 <http://www.slobodan-milosevic.org/spch-kosovo1989.htm>

359 *Il Tempo*, June 27, 1989 according to *Borba*, July 7, 1989.

the “belief in democracy and peaceful protest as an efficient method of opposing the communist regime and Serb nationalism” gathered momentum.³⁶⁰ On July 2, 1990, just over a week after they had been prevented from entering the provincial assembly, 117 Kosovo Albanian delegates gathered outside the building on July 2 and read a declaration proclaiming the independence of Kosovo. The Serbian government struck back three days later and “temporarily” abolished all provincial institutions.

The desire to curb Kosovo’s autonomy was translated into corresponding legal provisions finally incorporated into the 1990 Constitution. Under the new constitution, which Serbia promulgated in contravention of the federal constitution, Kosovo and Vojvodina ceased to be territorial entities that could exercise state power and became integral parts of the Serbian Republic. Their constitutions were replaced by statutes to be adopted by their assemblies subject to the prior consent of the Serbian National Assembly. The provinces were stripped of their autonomous legislative power and their constitutional courts. In contrast to the 1974 Constitution, the 1990 Constitution did not grant the right to the equal use of the Albanian and Serbian languages.

In addition to the constitutional restructuring of the provinces, a range of measures and laws were gradually passed that effectively isolated the Albanians from the Serbian state. A law that restricted transactions in real property passed in 1989 was aimed at preventing the sale of property to Albanians.³⁶¹ The Law on Labor Relations in Exceptional Circumstances, the Law on Elementary Education, the Law on Secondary Education, the Law on High Schools, the Law on the Termination of the Work of the Assembly of the Socialist

360 Shkëlzen Maliqi, *Kosova, Separate Worlds*, (Pristina 1998).

361 *Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Serbia*, No. 30/89. Kosta Mihajlović considered the “sale of agricultural land to Albanians not merely the sale of agricultural land, but the sale of national territory.” From a discussion on Kosovo at the Serbian Philosophical Society in connection with Branko Horvat’s book, published in *Theoria*, 1–2/1987.

Autonomous Province of Kosovo, the Law on the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Law on the Abrogation of the Law on the Institute of Kosovo History, and many other statutes struck at the very core of the Albanians' identity and gradually took away their self-rule.

All organs of power in Kosovo were dissolved and the police were disarmed. A new state apparatus was established to further Serbian interests, effectively annexing Kosovo to Serbia and institutionalizing Serbian domination. The Belgrade regime took every measure to revive the unitary Yugoslav ideal espoused during the Ranković era.

The Albanians proclaimed the Kosovo Republic at a secret meeting in Kačanik on September 7. In this proclamation, they asserted their continuing control of the print media, commerce, schools, political and humanitarian organizations, professional associations, and a segment of the health service; the disbanded local government agencies were left without administrative and economic authority. The Democratic League of Kosovo—a conservative party founded in 1989 and led by Rugova—claimed the “political and moral” authority over the Albanians and took over administration of a series of “parallel institutions” mostly inherited from the days of autonomy. (In reality, this parallel system was very weak; lacking official premises, for instance, the institutions operated from private homes.) This political development led to the complete separation of the two communities. The mutual alienation was total: Serbs lived like a privileged minority under police and army protection and continued to administer Kosovo; Albanians, though in the majority, were marginalized and languished in conditions of national apartheid and segregation.

Milošević turned Kosovo into a power base in which he could oppress and rob the Albanian population with impunity. The Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) was already firmly entrenched there; Šešelj's

Radicals and Arkan's Tigers also established a presence, the latter occupying Pristina's Hotel Grand and converting it into the headquarters of the Serbian mafia organization in Kosovo. After creating the Party of Serbian Unity, Arkan became politically active; his army sowed fear as part of a "law and order" campaign.³⁶² His message to the Albanians was: "We won't negotiate with the *ballistas* [the name given to Albanian nationalists in World War II]. We will copy the American democracy model as the best, especially the provisions on immigration. Many Albanians in Kosovo are without personal documents, they did not respond to the population census and have a hostile attitude to the state, so we're going to return them to their mother country in a very democratic manner."³⁶³ Arkan viewed the situation in Kosovo as follows: "It's not true that the situation there is normal. I for one wouldn't have won [the election 1993] if the situation there were normal."³⁶⁴

MACEDONIA AS THE SOLUTION TO KOSOVO

Macedonia was also a target of the Serbian nationalists, who regarded Kosovo and Macedonia as part of the same territorial block of "southern Serbia" or "Old Serbia." If Kosovo was to be partitioned, then the Serbian nationalists saw no reason why Macedonia should not be partitioned, too—unless, that is, it took the side of Serbia against the Albanians. The Macedonians themselves had opted for independence in September 1991, once it became clear that Yugoslavia could not survive. Macedonia, however, did not gain immediate widespread international recognition as a sovereign state (because of

362 On November 3, 1993, Arkan and his followers founded the Party of Serbian Unity and he became its president, but the party failed to win any parliamentary seats despite an energetic promotional campaign. In the 2000 elections, however, the party received 200,000 votes and won fourteen seats in the Serbian parliament.

363 *Borba*, January 1, 1993.

364 *Borba*, March 19, 1993.

Greek protests that the new state's name suggested it had territorial designs upon Greek Macedonia).³⁶⁵

Serbian nationalists saw claims on Macedonian territory within the context of the solution to the Kosovo question. In his memoirs, Macedonian president Kiro Gligorov quoted Čosić, who opposed international pressure to recognize Slovenia and Macedonia: "You are not aware of what you are doing, it is our people and our land, we cannot give up the land that our Army throughout history has bled for. This part of Macedonia belongs to us."³⁶⁶ Arkan told the Greek newspaper *Ethnos* that the Serbs would "take their" parts of Macedonia.³⁶⁷ Šešelj said that a partition of Macedonia would "finally solve" the Macedonian question and simultaneously sever the "Islamic arch" being constructed by Turkey in the Balkans with American help. According to Šešelj, Serbia would take the area around Kumanovo "populated by Serbs deprived of their elementary human rights"; the western parts, "inhabited by some 300,000 Albanians," could be allotted to Tirana; and the east, inhabited by Bulgarians, could be allotted to Sofia. He would let Greece have the whole adjacent region bounded by a line running from Bitola to Prilep and populated by Greeks and Hellenized Vlachs, or so-called Tzintzars.³⁶⁸

The primary objective of Belgrade's constant reference to a Greater Albania scheme—an idea entertained in some Albanian circles—was to find a partner for its Greater Serbia project and to redraw Balkan borders.

On December 27, 1992, intelligence reports on a planned crack-down by Belgrade on Kosovo prompted U.S. President George H. W. Bush to send a warning to Milošević declaring that the United States

365 When they did recognize the new state, most countries did so under the name "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM) because of Greek sensitivities. This issue delayed Macedonia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community and obstructed its consolidation.

366 *NIN*, September, 13, 2001.

367 *Borba*, December 14, 1993.

368 *Borba*, November 3, 1993.

was prepared to intervene militarily if Serbia attacked ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. The threat was repeated by President Bill Clinton on February 19, 1993, and again by U.S. ambassador Madeline Albright at the UN Security Council in August 1993. “President Bush’s message was clear,” said Albright, “we are prepared to respond against Serbia in the event of a conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action. Secretary of State Christopher has firmly reiterated this message.”³⁶⁹

The United States—and the West as a whole—was equally concerned about the fate of Macedonia. The West believed that stabilization of Macedonia was imperative to prevent further conflict in the region. Responding to an invitation from Kiro Gligorov, president of Macedonia, the United Nations dispatched several hundred peacekeeping troops to Macedonia in late 1992 and early 1993, and these were soon joined by 550 U.S. troops. This force was to prove an effective deterrent to aggression in the region. Even the Yugoslav Army withdrew from Macedonia, and Milošević refrained for four years from an all-out military assault on Kosovo Albanians, content to use repression instead.

The Badinter Commission claimed that Macedonia met all the conditions for independence and Macedonia was admitted to the United Nations in 1993 as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), an action that speeded up its recognition by EU members, Turkey, and Albania. The United States recognized Macedonia in February 1994, while Russia recognized Macedonia as the Republic of Macedonia in 1992.

When, in 1996, Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia chose to recognize each other, Serbian nationalists were outraged. Historian Milan St. Protić, for instance, fumed that the “casualties suffered in the liberation of Macedonia in two Balkan wars and one world war were rendered meaningless by a stroke of the pen, all the

369 Security Council provisional verbatim record, August 9, 1993 (S/PV.3662, 9 August 1993), *The Yugoslav Crisis in International Law*, p.345

glorious victories of the Serbian army from Kumanovo to the breach of the Thessaloniki front were crossed out.”³⁷⁰

STALEMATE

The Albanians opted for the strategy of nonviolent resistance, which facilitated the annexation of Kosovo at the same time that it neutralized the ambitions of the Serbian war strategists. Albanian Gandhism came as a surprise not only to Serbs, but also to Albanians, who traditionally did not uphold values such as nonviolence or patience. Until 1989 and the Kosovo annexation, the prevailing sentiment among Kosovo Albanians was a desire for revenge. However, in 1990, a transformation occurred. According to Shkelzen Maliqi, a well-known Kosovo philosopher, art critic, and political analyst, the concept of nonviolence was formulated spontaneously and adopted as the most pragmatic and most efficient response to Serbian aggression. The impulse to turn away from the temptations of war and revenge also came in part from outside: the wave of democratic changes that brought down Communism raised the hope that the solution to the Kosovo problem and the Albanian national question lay in a peaceful transition to democracy.³⁷¹

The Albanian nonviolent movement functioned until the signing of the Dayton Accords at the end of 1995, which did not address the issue of Kosovo (because Milošević strongly opposed to doing so) and which thereby stoked the frustration of Albanians. By that time, some Albanians had begun to question the effectiveness of Ibrahim Rugova's policy of nonconfrontation and to urge resolution of the Albanian question through more active methods. The 1997 mass demonstrations in Serbia over the 1996 falsification of local poll results by the Milošević regime revealed the depth of the political crisis in Serbia. However, the Serbian opposition (which was no

370 Milan St. Protić, *Mi i Oni* (Us and them), *Hrišćanska misao*, Belgrade, 1996, p. 159.

371 Shkelzen Maliqi, *Kosova: Separate Worlds* (Pristine, 1998).

less nationalistic than the Serbian government) failed to put forward a solution to the Kosovo question that might have encouraged the Albanians to join in the demonstrations. The demonstrations weakened Milošević's position and temporarily deflected his attention from Kosovo; he used them as a pretext not to implement an education agreement he had signed with Rugova shortly before the September 1996 polls.

The Serbian opposition was under pressure from the international community to formulate a position on Kosovo, but a "broad autonomy for Kosovo along with European human rights standards" was all it had to offer. The Serbian insistence on the democratization of Serbia first, and the solution of Kosovo afterwards, convinced the Albanians that they had little to hope for from any political faction in Serbia. They were presented with the dilemma of whether to continue passive resistance, which had yielded no tangible results, or to move toward active resistance regardless of the attendant risks; an increasing number opted for the latter. The bloc in favor of "political dynamism" led by Adem Demaçi put forward a new program without spelling out concrete activities that would accelerate Albanian integration into a Serbian institutional framework.

Albanians grew increasingly frustrated by the protracted crisis in Kosovo and the apparently interminable postponement of a solution. Azem Vllasi, a Kosovar Albanian politician, said that "Albanians not only fail to see any justification for the preservation of the inadmissible status quo, they also feel humiliated and revolted by the fact that neither the Serbian regime nor the international factor takes the Kosovo question and their [the Albanians'] increasingly difficult position seriously."³⁷² The political paralysis presented radical factions with an opportunity to put other methods to the test; the subsequent emergence of a liberation army galvanized the political scene in Kosovo.

372 Naša Borba, March 21, 1997.

The collapse of the Albanian state in the spring of 1997 (following the collapse of several pyramid schemes, which incited popular anger and prompted armed insurgents to take to the streets demanding the resignation of President Berisha) alarmed the Kosovo Albanians, who felt that they had lost the moral and political support of their mother country. The events in Albania also increased international concerns regarding the stability of the region. The international community, especially the United States, was determined not to allow a repetition of what had happened in Bosnia. On May 22, 1997, U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright stressed the resolve of the United States to prevent Bosnia and its neighbors from being turned into an international center of narcotics trafficking.

The increasingly frequent European and U.S. delegation visits to Pristina led to no concrete proposals for solving the crisis, and the Serbs remained impervious to diplomatic pressure. The efforts of the international community to bring the two sides to a negotiated settlement through mediation bore no fruit. The European Union, particularly Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium, tried to have a large number of Albanians repatriated to Kosovo. The German government signed an agreement with the FRY to repatriate 130,000 people, most of them Albanians, to Kosovo, and similar arrangements were made by other governments. The outbreak of major fighting in Kosovo in 1998 prevented such arrangements from being carried out. Several groups of Albanians returned in spite of the Serbian government's reluctance to have them back.

The international community did not have a clear understanding of the Kosovo issue. Between 1992 and 1998, the international community favored internal self-determination and preservation of the territorial integrity of FRY. In fact, the United States was explicitly against Kosovo's independence. Rugova was confronted by U.S. reluctance to support Kosovo independence in a 1997 visit to Washington, D.C. Discussing Secretary Albright's meeting with Rugova,

James Rubin, spokesperson for the State Department, offered an unambiguous statement of Washington's position:

Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo are still denied their most basic human and political rights and suffer repeated abuses at the hands of Serbian authorities, particularly the police and the courts. Real progress on improving the situation in Kosovo remains a central element of the Outer Wall of sanctions against Serbia. There will be no relief from sanctions until Belgrade has taken concrete steps to address the legitimate grievances of the Kosovo Albanian community. ... At the same time, the United States does not support independence for Kosovo. The unilateral redrawing of borders would not contribute to the stability of the region. A solution to the problems of Kosovo can and must be found within the framework of Serbia and the FRY... The United States is deeply concerned about terrorist actions in Kosovo and political killings that have taken place there this year. The LDK should publicly condemn any such incidents. The trials in Kosovo of suspected terrorists, however, have fallen far short of Western judicial standards. Belgrade should not use concern about terrorism as an excuse to increase the pressure on the Kosovar Albanian community still further.³⁷³

The Serbian media watched the developments in Kosovo keenly, focusing on the activities of the self-styled liberation army, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which had first appeared in 1996 and which became increasingly active in 1997 and 1998 in the form of a guerrilla movement of lightly armed fighters operating without a single, unified command. Resentful that Kosovo had been left off the agenda at the Dayton negotiations and that, while they had been adhering to a non-violence campaign, Bosnian Serbs had used violence to secure their own quasi-state, young Kosovars began to turn to taking up arms. Violence against Serbian policemen and Albanians

373 James P. Rubin, spokesman, regarding Secretary Albright's Meeting with Dr Ibrahim Reugova, August 15, 1997 (file ID: 0708153.GWE Gopher)

judged to be disloyal to the Albanian cause became increasingly frequent and the KLA assumed responsibility for some of these attacks. In February 1997, the Serbian Interior Ministry arrested members of the KLA and other Albanian groups such as the National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo and the National Movement of Kosovo, whose program envisaged armed resistance to the regime. Albanians charged with membership in the National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo were sentenced by the District Court in Pristina for “association with a view to hostile activity, terrorism and endangerment of the territorial integrity” of the country.³⁷⁴

BELGRADE’S APPROACH TO THE CRISIS

The Serbian regime sought not just to abolish all aspects of Kosovo’s autonomy but also to change its ethnic structure. As Serbian Assembly Vice-President Pavić Obradović told Television Pristina in 1991, “The goal of Serbia’s policy in Kosovo is the full integration of Kosovo into Serbia and the Serbianization of Kosovo.”³⁷⁵ The Serbian regime claimed that Kosovo was Serbian land and that Serbs were therefore entitled to use all means necessary to reestablish the Serbian majority. One of those “means” was the mass settlement of Serbs—and Belgrade hoped that an influx of Serbian refugees from Croatia and Bosnia in 1995 (as well as the return of Kosovar Serbs who had left the province for economic reasons and because of increasing ethnic tensions) would help tip the ethnic balance. However, such hopes were frustrated because most Serbs from Bosnia and Croatia refused to settle in Kosovo. Only 15,000–25,000 Serbian refugees relocated there (many under pressure from Belgrade); many left Kosovo the moment they saw an opportunity to do so; and after the NATO intervention in 1999, most of the remaining Serbs departed permanently. (Hundreds of thousands of Albanians also left the

374 From the indictment raised by the Serbian court

375 Petrit Imami, *Srbi i Albanci kroz vekove*, Samizdat FreeB92, Beograd, 1999

province in the 1990s, following in the footsteps of others who had departed for Western Europe to escape the repression of the 1980s.)

Despite this failure to reshape Kosovo demographically, Belgrade never seriously considered the possibility of forming a genuine federation of Serbia–Montenegro–Kosovo—that is, any form of a united complex state. Serbia rejected the transformation of Yugoslavia into a loose federation and even turned down such an offer from the Hague Conference on Yugoslavia in 1991. All international attempts to preserve the FRY were manifestations of the international community’s misunderstanding of the character of Serbian nationalism and its aspirations. Serbian nationalists never renounced their intention to prevent Albanians from remaining in Serbia.

The failure to resettle significant numbers of Serbs in Kosovo forced the nationalists and Belgrade to recognize that they could not overturn the Albanian demographic dominance in the province and led them to embrace another option, one that had been talked about from the 1980s onward: division of the province. The key argument for division has always been the demographic expansion of Albanians, as well as the fact that Belgrade preferred to negotiate with Tirana, not with Pristina.

In 1996, Aleksandar Despić, president of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, proposed that Serbs and Albanians (he didn’t specify whether he meant the Albanian government or Albanians in Kosovo) begin talks on a “peaceful, civilized partition and demarcation” of Kosovo and Metohija along ethnic lines, a proposal identical to one made by Dobrica Ćosić two decades before.³⁷⁶ The Serbian elite had simply been waiting for the right moment to put forward such an idea. The proposal had been developed in detail in 1992 by Branislav Krstić, who suggested the establishment of a “peace

376 In his address to the annual assembly of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, in June 1996, Aleksandar Despic voiced his concern over the Albanian demographic explosion in Kosovo and maintained that division was the only solution. “The two possible roads”, *Naša borba*, June 10, 1996.

protection district”—an Albanian area that Serbia would not control. He showed the blueprint to Milan Panić, FRY prime minister, and to Dobrica Ćosić, who objected to it on the grounds that Serbia would end up having many Albanians on its hands. Ćosić arranged to discuss the matter with Života Panić, but was sacked before they could meet.³⁷⁷ The Albanians and the international community objected to the proposal, objections that Milošević brushed away, saying Kosovo and Metohija would remain an integral part of Serbia and dismissing both Albanian demands to reinstate Kosovo’s former status and calls for international arbitration of the issue.³⁷⁸

The Kosovo question dominated the media, public political debate, and academic discussion. The Institute of Geopolitical Studies held a two-day conference in June 1997 on the subject. The starting point of the discussion was the political crisis in Albania. Participants argued against granting territorial autonomy to an ethnic community whose “mother country falls apart of itself in every serious crisis.” The introductory report suggested that the Albanian question be solved on the “model of [Albanians’] rigorous integration in the states in which they live” and alleged that the Albanian state was established by powers determined to “prevent Serbian penetration to the Adriatic.”³⁷⁹ (Similar arguments had been proposed around the time the Albanian state was created in 1913. Nikola Pašić, the prime minister of Serbia at the time, had found such proposals unacceptable, being of the opinion that “northern Albania belongs to the Serbian empire.” In the Serbian parliament in 1913, he had insisted that Albania’s territory be divided between Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro.)³⁸⁰ The dominant argument at the gathering was

377 Branislav Krstić, *Kosovo između istorijskog i etničkog prava* (Kosovo between historical and ethnic rights), 1994.

378 Speech in Pristina, June 25, 1997.

379 Milivoj Reljin, *Očuvanje Kosova i Metohije nacionalni i državni interes srpskog naroda, i Kosovo i Metohija: Izazovi i odgovori*, Institut za geopolitike studije, 1997, p.18

380 Olga Popović-Obradović, *Kakva ili kolika država*, Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2008.

that Kosovo was of great geostrategic importance for the region, especially for Serbia, because Kosovo links Serbia with Montenegro and Macedonia. Kosovo's military-strategic importance was likewise underlined as being "part of the southern sector of the strategic front of the FRY" and, consequently, "part of the first line of its strategic defense." In the opinion of the majority of the participants, the loss of Kosovo would open a black hole in the most sensitive area of Serbia's state territory dominated by an Islamic population. The participants rejected international arbitration on the grounds that internationalization of the crisis would force "a solution contrary to the vital state and national interests of the Serb people as a whole." Participants also ruled out any "ethnic preponderance of the Albanians," insisted that the Albanians demonstrate total loyalty to the Serbian state, and proposed regionalization as a first step toward rearranging Kosovo and Metohija.³⁸¹ Political debates were dominated by the view that the Kosovo issue was a matter of ownership of territory. Participants ignored specific political issues, especially the practice of state terror, as well as the political aspirations of the majority population and its rights to be treated in conformity with international law.

One proposal to divide Kosovo had been circulating since 1988: the Kosovo cantonization project, authored by Dušan Bataković, a historian very close to the Serbian Orthodox Church (and who was appointed Serbian ambassador to Canada in 2007 and to France in 2009). Bataković envisaged joint Albanian-Serbian administration of Kosovo. Cantons would be established in the agrarian regions with a Serbian majority population and would include the Serbian monasteries and the land that was in their possession until 1941. The proposal was submitted to the French Foreign Ministry by the Serbian Orthodox Church in February 1999, after Bishop Artemije had made

381 *Institute of Geopolitical Studies, Kosovo i Metohija: Izazovi i odgovori* (Kosovo and Metohija: The challenge and the answer), Belgrade, 1997.

several visits to Washington and European capitals to canvas support against a proposal launched by U.S. diplomat Christopher Hill, on behalf of the international community. The idea was rejected by the international community on the grounds, noted Ćosić candidly, that “cantonization runs counter to the efforts of the international community to build an integral Kosovo.” This rejection did not, however, deter Ćosić from writing an appeal to the French people suggesting the territorial partition of Kosovo.³⁸²

Yet another proposal for carving up Kosovo came from Professor Svetozar Stojanović, a member of the Praxis group in the 1970s. Stojanović suggested that one-third of the territory of Kosovo be firmly integrated into Serbia while the other two-thirds secede, provided that the “Serbian state and its tax authorities were compensated for the huge amounts of money invested in that part of Kosovo and Metohija.” He later claimed that, had the West not persistently rejected the division of Kosovo, the “calamity of both the Albanians and the Serbs and other non-Albanian population would have been avoided.”³⁸³

THE CRISIS COMES TO A HEAD

With the refusal of the Dayton negotiators to discuss the future of Kosovo while rewarding the Bosnian Serbs with Republika Srpska, the Kosovo Albanians realized that nonviolent protest was less likely to lead to independence than were military options. Dayton was a key factor in bolstering support for the Kosovo Liberation Army.

But the Dayton Accords also brought the renewed involvement of the United States in the region. The Balkans clearly remained an arena for further potential conflict, something that the Clinton administration was eager to prevent, especially in the south—in

382 Dobrica Ćosić, *Vreme zmija*, Službeni glasnik, 2008, p. 38.

383 Svetozar Stojanović, *Na srpskom delu Titonika* (On the Serbian side of the Titonic), Filip Visnjić Belgrade, 2000.

Macedonia and Kosovo—which was seen as a potential danger to the stability of the entire region and NATO's southern wing. In addition, Washington and its Western European allies saw an opportunity to advance the goals of the Copenhagen Document, which had been drawn up in 1990 by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Copenhagen Document is not only a blueprint for a democratic Europe—a Europe governed by the rule of law and committed to the protection of human rights—but also emphasizes territorial integrity as the basis of European security.

In the wake of the collapse of Albania in 1997 and the resulting new dynamics in relations between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs, a variety of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were able to arrange meetings between Albanians and Serbs in hopes of mediating on behalf of Western governments while Belgrade continued to treat Kosovo as an internal issue. The U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Greek Elemetias Foundation, and many other groups offered their services in efforts to bring the two sides to the same negotiating table. The Rome-based Community of Saint Edigio brokered an agreement between Milošević and Rugova on education, one of the most politicized issues.³⁸⁴

384 The two sides met only when encouraged to do so by other actors. Only two meetings were convened in the country by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, the Kosovo Helsinki Committee, and the Pristina Committee for Human Rights and Freedoms. The first conference was staged in Ulcinj (Montenegro) in July 1997; it called for an international conference and mediation. The second one was held in Belgrade (Serbia) on November 21–22, 1998, several months before the NATO intervention.

The attitude toward Albanians in Serbia was revealed when the Belgrade daily *Naša Borba* presented its 1998 tolerance award to Albanian students; the gesture provoked an outcry in Belgrade, the chief objection being, "Isn't there anyone in our midst who deserved that award?" The intention of the panel (or at least of some of its members) was to make a gesture of goodwill against a backdrop of general hysteria, especially in view of the fact that the 1997 award had gone to Belgrade students. The award had informally been reserved for a prominent—and worthy—Belgrade intellectual, and the president of the panel resigned in the middle of the deliberations after realizing that the award would go to the Albanians.

The international community vacillated between proposing sweeping autonomy and republic status for Kosovo. The Albanians wanted an independent and neutral Kosovo, but would have settled for republic status.³⁸⁵ The Serbs were opposed to the restitution of Kosovo's former status and offered to make concessions mostly in the domain of human rights. However, the internal politics of Serbia and three-month-long civil demonstrations deflected Milošević's attention from Kosovo. Milošević shifted his focus: to survive politically, he staged a veritable terror campaign, including putting a stranglehold on electronic and print media.

The OSCE re-emerged as a mediator between the Serbian government and the opposition. Despite a solution that brought back the opposition into the Parliament, Milošević increased police repression in Kosovo. In response, the KLA grew more active and attracted increasing support among from the Kosovo Albanian population. The U.S. Special Envoy for Human Rights in the Balkans, along with European partners (the European Parliament, Council of Europe, OSCE, and different governmental and non-governmental delegations), tried to broker negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, but to no avail.

The West continued to be involved in regional developments. In the wake of Albania's collapse in 1997, the European Community was given a mandate for institution-building in what was now a devastated state.³⁸⁶ The United States was still focused on Kosovo as a potential flashpoint. In 1996, the United States opened the United States Information Service (USIS) in Pristina, the first international semi-diplomatic office in Kosovo; the USIS provided nearly U.S. \$30 million a year in humanitarian aid to Kosovo. Kosovo was also high

385 Fehmi Agani was ready to accept this proposal, aware that at that time there was no clear support for an independent Kosovo. See *Serbian Albanian Dialogue* (21–22 November 1998), Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Belgrade 1999, p.102.

386 The Serbian political elite considered the collapse of the Albanian state a stroke of luck because a weakened Albania was seen as an advantage to the Serbs in solving the Kosovo issue.

on the agendas of the UN Security Council, NATO, and other prominent international organizations.

By 1998, there was no doubt as to the direction in which events in Kosovo were headed. Western countries tried through mediators U.S. ambassador Christopher R. Hill and Austrian ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch (the European Union's Special Envoy for Kosovo) to bring about a settlement of the Kosovo crisis based on the province's pre-1989 autonomy. In its quest for a solution that would satisfy both sides to the dispute, the international community was frustrated by the complexity of the situation, as well as by the fact that Kosovo had experienced a prolonged period of state-sponsored repression.

ATTEMPTS TO STOP THE ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE

Clashes broke out in January 1998. The massacre of fifty-eight Albanian civilians in the village of Prekaz in February was of decisive importance to the escalation of war. During the next few months, fighting drove more than 300,000 people from their homes. After Milošević cracked down on the civilian population of Kosovo in 1998, internally displacing about 250,000 (the other 50,000 fled abroad), the UN Security Council responded with Resolution 1199, which demanded that all the parties cease hostilities at once, start a meaningful dialogue without preconditions, and help the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ensure the safe return of refugees and displaced persons.

In September 1998, NATO announced that it would launch air strikes to enforce Serbian compliance with Resolution 1199. Richard Holbrooke, wielding this threat, hammered out an agreement with Milošević in October 1998 that halted the Yugoslav Army offensive in Kosovo, averted a possible humanitarian catastrophe, enabled deployment of an unarmed civilian OSCE mission in Kosovo to verify compliance with the agreement, prepared the ground for the later

deployment of a NATO Extraction Force in Macedonia and a NATO Verification Mission in Kosovo, and bound Milošević to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1199. UN Resolution 1203 endorsed the creation of an OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission and a NATO Air Verification Mission.

Many displaced people returned to their homes after the Milošević–Holbrooke agreement. Yet the KLA was almost broken in an attack on Orahovac in October 1998. The international community increased pressure on the Serbs and threatened to intervene. Ambassador Hill, representing the Contact Group, tried but failed to persuade the Serbs to accept the international community’s plans to improve the humanitarian situation in Kosovo, facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced people, and launch a serious political dialogue on the province’s future.

The political elite in Serbia greeted the Milošević–Holbrooke agreement with near-hysteria. The nationalist opposition blamed Milošević for every setback. His agreement with Holbrooke was condemned as capitulation. Milošević was accused of underhanded deals with the West to sell Kosovo in order to stay in power. SPS spokesman Ivica Dačić denied the existence of any secret arrangements: “The agreement has not been supplemented by any annexes and subsequent interpretations.”³⁸⁷

The strongest reaction came from the Democratic Party of Serbia and its president, Vojislav Koštunica, who espoused the interests of the SPC and the nationalist bloc. He warned Milošević that Milošević had “not been given a mandate to negotiate with the U.S. envoy,” and that because the Milošević–Holbrooke agreement would leave Kosovo outside the legal system of the FR Yugoslavia, the agreement could be interpreted as a “criminal act of high treason.”³⁸⁸ Koštunica also counseled that in effect the terms of the agreement “guarantee the

387 *Glas javnosti*, November 6, 1998.

388 *Blic*, October 31–November 1, 1998.

territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of Kosovo in the same way the report of the Badinter Commission guaranteed the inviolability of the republican borders.”³⁸⁹ He believed that the Milošević–Holbrooke agreement would wrest Kosovo from the legal systems of Serbia and the FRY and pave the way for Kosovo’s secession.³⁹⁰ Koštunica doubted that Hill was the true representative of the Contact Group “because at least one of its members—say Russia—would hardly go along with this u.s. initiative.”³⁹¹ Koštunica insisted that the conditions for the start of negotiations on Kosovo were not in place in spite of Serbian president Milan Milutinović’s assurances to the contrary because “Hill’s plan would facilitate the break-up of the FRY and smacks of the Dayton Accords ... But unlike Dayton, which preserved the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the constitution being put forward for Kosovo would invest it with elements of separate statehood and make it much more than a federal unit.”³⁹² Koštunica said that the Serbian government would have to proceed from the crux of the problem in Kosovo, that is, from the Serb–Albanian conflict caused by malignant Albanian nationalism and megalomaniacal Albanian demands backed abroad, rather than treat the conflict as an innocuous dispute involving all ethnic communities in Kosovo.³⁹³

Vuk Obradović, the president of Social Democracy, said that the loss of control of Yugoslav airspace laid out in the Milošević–Holbrooke agreement caused enormous damage to the country’s defense capability and that the betrayal of the Serbian people could be the prelude to a new battle for Kosovo.³⁹⁴ The weekly *Vojska* accused NATO of being in collusion with Albanian terrorists and of

389 *Glas javnosti*, November 7–8, 1998

390 *Vecernje novosti*, November 7, 1998.

391 *Blic*, November 10, 1998.

392 *Blic*, November 17, 1998.

393 *Danas*, November 24, 1998.

394 *Parlament*, November 6, 1998.

manipulating the UN Security Council in order to secure for itself a status that would enable it to use force against any sovereign country that, in its assessment, might endanger peace in the region.

The reactions of other political parties were similar. Zoran Dindić said that his Democratic Party had worked out a plan for the cantonization of Kosovo on the model of the Vance-Owen plan for Bosnia. The plan envisaged absolute self-government for the Serbian entities, including police and judicial power, in order to protect the Serbs against being outnumbered and outvoted. Only ethnic cantonization could protect the Serbs, according to Dindić.³⁹⁵

Miloš Minić, former foreign minister of the SFRY (1972–78), was a rare old guard politician who warned Milošević about using repression against Albanians. As a fighting member of the Partisan-led anti-fascist movement of national liberation of Yugoslavia in 1941–45, he saw a similarity between the situation in Serbia and elsewhere in Yugoslavia in the 1940s and the situation in Kosovo. He believed that the KLA's armed struggle was developing somewhat along the lines of the Partisans' fight, which in 1941 grew into a popular uprising in Serbia. "It was these similarities that helped me to perceive the changing character of the armed struggle of the Liberation Army of Kosovo," wrote Minić, "to realize that the struggle of that organization of Kosovo Albanians was transcending the narrow framework of terrorist actions being conducted in Kosovo in recent months and turning into those forces' guerrilla warfare."³⁹⁶

Other parties in coalition with the SPS defended the Milošević-Holbrooke agreement. Momir Bulatović declared that the "agreement with Holbrooke was a most important step to preserve the unity of the FR Y and Serbia."³⁹⁷ Vuk Drašković argued: "It is in our interest that foreign observers, diplomatic missions,

395 *Blic*, November 2, 1998.

396 Miloš Minić, *Ratovi na Kosovu (1998/1999) i u Čeceniji (1994/1996)*, Sarajevo, 2000. p.51 i 58.

397 *Glas javnosti*, November 11, 1998

humanitarian organizations and media should have a presence in Kosovo. The more witnesses there are in Kosovo, the more it is in our favor ... The agreement removes the danger of foreign aggression and, I hope, [also the danger of] internal aggression which looms.”³⁹⁸

Hill, the U.S. special envoy, continued mediation efforts amid growing Serbian criticism, especially following the Contact Group’s initiative (supported by NATO) to bring the Serbs and Kosovo Albanians together in an international conference in Rambouillet, France, in early 1999. The Serbs in Kosovo, acting in tandem with the SPC and the nationalist bloc of which Vojislav Koštunica was the spokesman, became more and more vehemently opposed to any agreement with the Albanians. The government also assumed an increasingly recalcitrant stance. Koštunica warned that “aggravation of the crisis in Kosovo is part of a scenario to deploy foreign troops and seek a political solution whereby Kosovo would be removed from Serbia and the FRY.”³⁹⁹

General Ljubiša Stojimirović, chief of staff of the First Army,⁴⁰⁰ said, “Our state and our military leaders have expressed their determination to respond to the ultimata: We will defend ourselves because that is our right, duty and obligation. We will defend our freedom, territory, independence and integrity, we will defend truth against lies. We will defend justice against crime. We are preventing the creation of new mass graves such as Klečka, Glođani and others before they grow into a Jasenovac, into a new killing fields of Serbs.”⁴⁰¹ General Savo Obradović, commander of the Podgorica Corps, declared that the Yugoslav Army was ready to defend the fatherland with all the means at its disposal, and the Party of Serbian

398 *Nasa Borba*, October 14, 1998.

399 *Glas javnosti*, January 12, 1999.

400 The First Army covers northern Serbia

401 *Glas javnosti*, January 12, 1999.

Unity said it would reactivate itself in the event of a NATO attack on the FRY.⁴⁰²

The Belgrade regime claimed that it was dealing with Albanian terrorism, and hoped that the international community in general and the United States in particular would support Belgrade's fight against terrorism.⁴⁰³ Milošević said in a conversation with Knut Vollebæk, foreign minister of Norway (1997–2000), that the “organs of power will no longer tolerate terrorist activities.” For his part, Koštunica said that the “violence of the [KLA] is not without plan and object; it is not random violence but violence directed at bringing about an independent Albanian state at all costs.”⁴⁰⁴

The attitude of the Kosovo Serbs was perhaps best articulated by Bishop Artemije in response to Walker's remark that he failed to see why Serbs objected to being a national minority: “Was he sent here to make of us what we are not and what we cannot ever be, and to forbid us to be what we are and have been for over eight hundred years in these parts— namely, our own masters in our own land?”⁴⁰⁵

The racist outlook on the Albanians became more pronounced daily. Koštunica described Albanians as a “people who have no conception of the state, as the current situation in their mother country Albania testifies.”⁴⁰⁶ His DSS party saw the 1999 exchange of nine KLA members for captured Yugoslav Army (VJ) soldiers as a “devastating truth that VJ members have been exchanged for terrorists and the OVK put on a par with the VJ.”⁴⁰⁷

The Serbs failed to complete their troop withdrawal as specified in the Milošević – Holbrooke agreement and continued their

402 *Danas*, January 19, 1999.

403 At one point, U.S. envoy Robert Gelbard did make a reference to terrorism, but he later corrected himself by also condemning the state-sponsored terrorism of Belgrade.

404 *Blic*, January 12, 1999.

405 *Danas*, January 20, 1999.

406 *Politika*, January 24, 1999.

407 *Danas*, January 25, 1999.

repression of the civilian population. The United States and other members of the Contact Group put forward a peace proposal to present to Yugoslavia and Serbian government officials and Kosovo Albanian representatives⁴⁰⁸ at the Rambouillet conference on February 6, 1999. The proposal was the result of several months of intensive shuttle diplomacy by Hill and Petritsch. They, with Russian envoy Boris Mayorski, were the chief brokers for the proposed agreement, which would include a high degree of self-government for Kosovo with its own legislative, executive, and judicial bodies; full judicial protection of human rights and the rights of all national communities in Kosovo; and a local police force reflecting the ethnic composition of the Kosovo population.

The terms of the proposed Rambouillet agreement was condemned across the political spectrum in Serbia. Zoran Đinđić said that the Kosovo problem could not be dealt with as an isolated incident and should instead be seen as a result of the lack of democratic institutions, while Vojislav Koštunica predicted that the “new Dayton” would offer worse conditions than its predecessor and give Milošević a new political lease of life as the guarantor of capitulation.⁴⁰⁹ He also said that under the Rambouillet agreement the “Kosovar Serbs would become a national minority like the Egyptians, Roma or Muslims.”⁴¹⁰ The Contact Group plan’s ultimate object was “Kosovo’s exit from our country”; the “sole element linking Kosovo to Serbia and the FRY” was the “hapless and disarmed vj on the border,” denied its right to intervene on Kosovo’s territory.⁴¹¹ “Control of Serbia is more important to NATO than peace in Kosovo,” Koštunica alleged.⁴¹² President of the *Social Democratic Party* Nebojša

408 The Kosovo delegation consisted of 16 members including Thaci, Rugova, Surroi, Bukoshi, Agani, Qosja and others.

409 *Glas javnosti*, January 30–31, 1999.

410 *Danas*, February 9, 1999.

411 *Danas*, February 2, 1999.

412 *Glas javnosti*, February 23, 1999.

Čović predicted that if Milošević were to accept the proposed agreement (and nationalists feared that the combination of his unpredictability and the pressure he was facing might well lead him to accept it), “Kosovo [would] be swept away in a new storm” and he accused Milošević of being ready to give up Kosovo, observing that the state media were already busy making up justifications for such a decision.⁴¹³

Alongside Koštunica, the SPC was the most ardent defender of Kosovo against Milošević and the international community because, it said, “without Kosovo the Serb people will become an amorphous mass of living matter, without a past and without a real future.”⁴¹⁴ “Kosovo is where our memory, monuments, churches and monasteries are.” According to SPC Patriarch Pavle, “Our forefathers went there to defend their freedom and hearth, their land and faith that are ours now.”⁴¹⁵ The Serbian Writers’ Association condemned the proposed Rambouillet agreement as a “racist, Orthodoxophobic and anti-Serb gesture,” investing international law with the “legitimacy of terrorism, territorial annexation and lawful trampling on the sovereignty of a country.”⁴¹⁶ Professor Kosta Čavoški joined the chorus and said that because the Rambouillet agreement “recognizes the Albanian side as an equal negotiator at the international level, the possible agreement will have greater legal force than the constitution.”⁴¹⁷

The Kosovar Serbs, Bishop Artemije, Bataković, and others in the hard-line nationalist camp maintained that “with certain corrections of municipal boundaries it would be possible to form five Serb cantons having local Serb administration, police force and judiciary

413 *Glas javnosti*, February 2, 1999.

414 *Politika*, February 7, 1999.

415 *Glas javnosti*, February 13–14, 1999.

416 *Danas*, February 9, 1999.

417 *Glas javnosti*, February 23, 1999.

as well as effective institutional links with the Republic of Serbia.”⁴¹⁸ Vojislav Šešelj, on the other hand, let it be known that Yugoslavia was ready for bombing because, he said, Serbia was a “respectable military power, so if they make a grab for our territory they’ll need a large quantity of coffins in addition to weapons.”⁴¹⁹ If it came to U.S. aggression, he warned, “We Serbs shall suffer, but there won’t be any Albanians left in Kosovo. ... We’ll endure everything. Having sorted out the situation at the University and largely in the media, we’ll also straighten out the judiciary and won’t let foreign troops enter our territory.”⁴²⁰ Milošević declared, “We’re not going to give up Kosovo even at the cost of being bombed.”⁴²¹ General Nebojša Pavković said, “The defense of Kosovo has no price. It is our supreme commandment, an order we will certainly carry out at the cost of giving up our lives.”⁴²²

Reaction in Serbia to the proposed Rambouillet agreement showed that the Serbs—not only the regime but also a large part of the opposition—were unprepared to negotiate and were determined to oppose any imposition of a solution as well as NATO intervention. This arrogance was fuelled by goading from some circles in Russia for Serbia to take up the gauntlet. Russia’s military circles believed that any intervention would not last more than a week, after which NATO would be embarrassed by its failure to bring Serbia to its knees and Serbia would emerge the moral victor. There was a similar assessment in the West regarding the duration of NATO’s intervention, the difference being that Milošević was expected to knuckle under at the end of a week’s bombing. U.S. State Secretary Madeleine Albright in CNN’s *Larry King* talk show said “it’s going to

418 *Danas*, March 4, 1999.

419 *Danas*, February 12, 1999.

420 *Danas*, March 1, 1999.

421 *Glas javnosti*, February 20–21, 1999.

422 *Glas javnosti*, March 3, 1999.

be a sustained attack and it's not something that's going to go on for an overly long time."⁴²³ "Do not forget," recalled Jamie Shea, NATO's spokesman, "that many believed that he [Milošević] would surrender after 24–48 hours."⁴²⁴

The Serbian intention to expel the Albanians on a massive scale was substantiated two years later by Ratomir Tanić, a member of all the state delegations that had gone through the motions of negotiating with the Albanians over the years. In an interview with Radio Free Europe on March 11, 2001, he said:

There was a plan for ethnic cleansing. There was above all a plan to reduce the number of Albanians to under a million, and after that it could be claimed that there are less than 50 per cent of them and because of that they do not have the right to autonomy ... Our security organizations were not all engaged in settling scores with the terrorists, but were settling scores with the population. That is how, among other things, the Serb–Albanian conflict started in early March 1998. Instead of arresting the Jashari brothers and some others, as the rules of combat state, you attack the houses where they live, kill their wives, children, relatives...all that provoked the Albanian people. Milošević knew that with such measures he would provoke the Albanians into an uprising, and then he could say, we have a rebellion. And, as for incidents, I can give you some statistics of our MUP (Interior Ministry). Let's say, in 1991 there were eleven terrorist acts, in 1992 twelve, in 1993 eight, 1994 six, 1995 five, but in 1998, when Milošević started the provocation of the ethnic conflict, there were 1,885 terrorist acts. Then it's clear that the rise of terrorism is a consequence of ethnic cleansing, not its cause.⁴²⁵

423 Madeleine Albright, "Madame Secretary, a Memoir", Macmillan, New York, 2003, p.408.

424 Tim Judah, Kosovo: War and Revenge, Samizdat FeeB92, Beograd, 2002, p. 249.

425 Radio Free Europe on March 11, 2001. Ratomir Tanić, RFE/RL's South Slavic Service, interview "There was a plan for Ethnic Cleansing before the NATO Bombing,": Later Tanić, as a witness in Milošević's trial, claimed that the Yugoslav Army prepared "Operation Horseshoe," which involved the deportation of eight hundred thousand Kosovo Albanians and the killing of many

In view of this pronouncement, the following statement made by Zoran Lilić comes as no surprise: “If we are attacked, our legitimate right is to defend ourselves. Those who think that the question of Kosovo and Metohija can be solved through military intervention must reckon with a war of wider proportions and on the destabilization of Southeastern Europe.”⁴²⁶

Milošević reiterated to Richard Holbrooke that “foreign troops have no business on Yugoslav territory” and that “solutions which substantially deviate from equality would mean Albanian preponderance at the expense of all other national communities, which would no doubt cause a new ethnic cleansing of Serbs, this time from Serbia Proper.”⁴²⁷ Milošević’s wife, Mirjana Marković, let it be known that “we will not assume the role of new Jews without a major battle.”⁴²⁸

True to his role as Milošević’s chief warmonger, Šešelj announced to the Serbian people that they should brace themselves for intervention. “We are firm in our position that there will be no foreign troops in any part of Serbia and Yugoslavia; Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević told u.s. envoy Richard Holbrooke this to his face, all the envoys before him were told this, and Mr. Ivanov, the Russian foreign minister, will also be told this.”⁴²⁹ Šešelj was defiant and stern:

They cannot occupy us even temporarily without heavy fighting and staggering losses; if we fight, we stand a chance of defending our country, for this is our country; if they attack us and we declare a state of war, there will be no mercy for deserters and those who spread panic,

civilians, including the most prominent leaders of the Albanian community. The original text is posted at <http://www.danas.org/programi/interview>. He repeated the same claim as a witness in Milošević’s trial, see http://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/trans/en/020515ED.htm.

426 *Glas javnosti*, March 10, 1999.

427 *Glas javnosti*, March 11, 1999.

428 *Glas javnosti*, March 12, 1999.

429 *Glas javnosti*, March 13–14, 1999.

*defeatism and false information, be they top politicians or ordinary citizens. He who says we are losing the war spreads defeatism and kills the morale of the soldiers. Everybody who has been called up must present himself.*⁴³⁰

THE EFFECTS OF NATO'S NEW ROLE

Every Western diplomatic effort proved futile. Fighting on the ground continued. The massacre of forty-five unarmed Kosovo Albanians in the village of Račak on January 15, 1999, furnished the West with further proof that negotiations stood no chance. A Human Rights Watch report indicated that the massacre was a well-planned and well-executed attack by government forces on civilians in an area where the KLA had a sizeable presence and had conducted ambushes on police patrols.⁴³¹ The Serbs asserted that the victims were KLA fighters who had either been killed in combat or shot while fleeing. Koštunica said that U.S. diplomat William Walker, in denouncing the “alleged massacre of Albanian civilians in the village of Račak,” had “taken the liberty of judging the incident at Račak rashly and superficially.”⁴³² But the West was now weary of Serbian denials and excuses, and as the exodus of refugees continued, the massacre persuaded the West to adopt a tougher line on Serbs.

Holbrooke made one final attempt to persuade Milošević to accept and implement the Rambouillet agreement, visiting Belgrade on March 22 to tell the Serbian leader explicitly that NATO would launch a swift, severe, and sustained aerial assault on Serbian forces.⁴³³ When the assault began two days later with selective air raids, the regime in Belgrade thought initially it was just another NATO bluff. Many Serbians expected Russia to enter the fray on their side

430 *Glas javnosti*, March 24, 1999.

431 www.hrw.org, Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo, 2001.

432 *Danas*, January 19, 1999.

433 Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, Samizdat Freeb92, Belgrade, 2000, p.247.

and that NATO would soon cease hostilities, having suffered a moral, if not a military, defeat. Several heavy air raids convinced the regime and the public otherwise, however. As blackouts became routine and civilian water supplies were jeopardized, the regime clamped down on the media, instituted a partial draft, and proclaimed a state of war.

Negotiations had collapsed largely because of Milošević's refusal to allow a NATO-led force to guarantee the process. He refused to let NATO troops enter Yugoslavia's territory although he had green-lighted such a possibility in the Dayton Accords' Annex agreement with NATO. Opponents of intervention based their criticism on appeals to state sovereignty, arguing that Milošević was right to reject the Rambouillet agreement because it was a clear interference in the FRY's internal affairs.

Between the start of the NATO onslaught and its halt on June 19, 1999, Serbian forces killed 10,000 people and expelled 900,000 people from Kosovo, most of whom found refuge in Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro. In addition, 600,000 people had been displaced internally. There is evidence of rape of Kosovo Albanian women, torture, and theft. Some 110,000 Albanian houses were set on fire. The operations were carried out by the VJ, paramilitary formations, and police who drove the Albanians out in a systematic and organized way.⁴³⁴

434 Evidence was presented on these atrocities in Milošević's case at the ICTY, and at the trial of a number of top former Serbian political, police and military officials. On February 26, 2009, five former high-ranking Yugoslav and Serbian political, military, and police officials were convicted by the ICTY for crimes against humanity committed in Kosovo in 1999. As reported in a press release by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia ("Five Senior Serbs Officials Convicted of Kosovo Crimes, One Acquitted," 26 February, 2009, <http://www.icty.org/sid/10070>):

Five former high-ranking Yugoslav and Serbian political, military and police officials were today convicted by Trial Chamber III of the Tribunal for crimes against humanity committed in Kosovo in 1999.

Former Yugoslav Deputy Prime Minister, Nikola Šainović, Yugoslav Army (VJ) General, Nebojša Pavković and Serbian police General Sreten Lukić were each sentenced to 22 years' imprisonment for crimes against humanity and violation of the laws or customs of war.

The destruction of the property records of Kosovar Albanians, along with their personal identification and vehicle registration documents, is a telling piece of evidence that Belgrade had planned to oust Albanians from the province. Had the Serbs triumphed in the conflict with NATO, they could have turned back the “undocumented” Albanian refugees wishing to return to Kosovo on the pretense that they had been in Kosovo illegally in the first place. The targeting of Albanian intellectuals during the intervention was also part of the Serbian strategy for war. In Đakovica, for instance, eighteen professors were killed during the first days of bombing. The murder of Fehmi Agani in May was the biggest blow to the Kosovo

Yugoslav Army General, Vladimir Lazarević and Chief of the General Staff, Dragoljub Ojdanić were found guilty of aiding and abetting the commission on a number of charges of deportation and forcible transfer of the ethnic Albanian population of Kosovo and each sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment.

Milan Milutinović, the former President of Serbia, was acquitted of all charges.

Today's Judgement is the first handed down by the Tribunal for crimes perpetrated by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and Serbian forces against Kosovo Albanians during the 1999 conflict in Kosovo.

The Prosecution charged the six with crimes committed during a campaign of terror and violence directed against the ethnic Albanian population of Kosovo in early 1999. Each of the Accused was alleged to have participated in a joint criminal enterprise, the purpose of which was to modify the ethnic balance in Kosovo to ensure continued control by the Serbian authorities. The plan was to be executed by criminal means, including deportations, murders, forcible transfers and persecutions of Kosovo Albanians.

Analysing evidence from the trial proceedings in relation to crime sites across 13 of Kosovo's municipalities, the Trial Chamber found that there was a broad campaign of violence directed against the Kosovo Albanian civilian population during the course of NATO air-strikes in FRY that began on 24 March 1999. This campaign was conducted by army and Interior Ministry police forces (MUP) under the control of FRY and Serbian authorities, who were responsible for mass expulsions of Kosovo Albanian civilians from their homes, as well as incidents of killing, sexual assault, and the intentional destruction of mosques.

...

The Trial Chamber found that Nikola Šainović, Nebojša Pavković, and Sreten Lukić all participated in the joint criminal enterprise, and made a significant contribution to its execution.

The Chamber found that Nikola Šainović was “one of the closest and most trusted associates of [Slobodan] Milošević,” the former FRY President and “one of the most crucial members of that common [joint criminal] enterprise”.

“He was a powerful official in the FRY Government, who not only relayed information to Milošević and conveyed Milošević's instructions to those in Kosovo, but also had a great deal of influence over events in the province and was empowered to make decisions,” Judge Bonomy read.

Albanians because it created a political vacuum. Agani, a key figure on the Kosovo political scene, had been involved in the formulation of strategy and decision-making. He initiated the demand for republic status for Kosovo and mediated between power-wielding structures within the Albanian movement on one side and informal groups and power centers on the other.

The human rights situation in Kosovo had led to the NATO intervention, which was defined as a “collective” response to threats to international peace and security. NATO intervention was traumatic for both the Balkans and the Western countries because it was the first military intervention by NATO defined as a humanitarian intervention. Many questions were raised, especially by the European and American left. Several Western commentators criticized the NATO action, challenging why Kosovo was chosen for intervention among the thirty-seven wars raging around the globe at that time.

In justifying the intervention in a speech to the American Nation, u.s. president Bill Clinton said:

We should remember that the violence we responded to in Kosovo was the culmination of a ten-year campaign by Slobodan Milošević, the leader of Serbia, to exploit ethnic and religious differences in order to impose his will on the lands of the former Yugoslavia. That's what he tried to do in Croatia and Bosnia, and now in Kosovo. When our diplomatic efforts to avert this horror were rebuffed, and the violence mounted, we and our allies chose to act. Nineteen democracies came together and stayed together through the stiffest military challenge in NATO's fifty-year history. Finally, we have averted the wider war this conflict may well have sparked.⁴³⁵

NATO Secretary General Javier Solana justified the decision on the grounds that we “must stop an authoritarian regime from

435 Statement of the President to the Nation, White House, Office of Press Secretary, 24 March 1999

repressing its people in Europe at the end of the 20th century.”⁴³⁶ U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright, the main promoter of NATO intervention, based her justification on experiences in Bosnia, claiming that “regional conflict would undermine NATO’s credibility as the guarantor of peace and stability in Europe. This would pose a threat that America could not ignore.”⁴³⁷

Many pro-NATO interventionists believed that the use of force would guarantee that all countries would respect a certain minimum of ethical standards. In his essay “Kosova and the End of the Nation-State,” Vaclav Havel wrote that NATO placed

*human rights above the rights of [the] state. The FRY was attacked by the alliance without a direct mandate from the UN. This did not happen irresponsibly, as an act of aggression or out of disrespect for international law. It happened, on the contrary, out of respect for the law, for a law that ranks higher than the law which protects the sovereignty of states. The alliance has acted out of respect for human rights, as both conscience and international legal documents dictate.*⁴³⁸

Russia was bothered by NATO’s eastern expansion, and Russia’s reaction to the Kosovo crisis was partly motivated by internal considerations, above all the unstable situation in Chechnya and the fear of separatist movements at home. The prospect of a humanitarian intervention alarmed the Russians, who feared similar action on their own territory or in neighboring countries where Russia had special interests, such as Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as Armenia and Moldova, countries that had been given support at the NATO summit in April 1999 marking the fiftieth anniversary of the alliance.

436 http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/jan-june99/solana_3-23.html

437 *USIS Washington File*, February 4, 1999.

438 *The New York Review of Books*, Volume XLVI, Number 10, June 10, 1999, Vaclav Havel “Kosovo and the End of the Nation-State”

Russian solidarity with Serbia over Kosovo in the years preceding the NATO action had led Serbia to believe that in the event of NATO intervention, it could rely on Russian support. Serbia went so far as to expect Russian military engagement in such an eventuality. Russia and China urged a resolution to halt the escalation of hostilities but failed to push it through the UN Security Council. In March, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, a leading Moscow newspaper, proposed that the Kosovo action would trigger “the collapse of the u.s. global empire” and that it was in Russia’s interest to let “the United States and NATO with its demented West and East European members bog down as deep as possible in a Balkan war.”⁴³⁹

The Kumanovo agreement that brought an end to the NATO war against Serbia was signed on June 9; the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1244 the next day. The objective of the resolution was to “solve the grave humanitarian situation in Kosovo” and to “make possible the safe and free return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes.” The resolution also sought to open a political process for the resolution of the Kosovo crisis on the basis of a broad autonomy for the province (paragraph 11). The immediate objective of the resolution was to halt armed operations and legalize the envisaged international civilian and military (above all NATO) presence in Kosovo while bringing the process of settlement of the Kosovo crisis back on a political track within the framework of the United Nations.

Resolution 1244 demanded that the FRY end the violence and repression in Kosovo and withdraw all military and police forces within a set timeframe. The KLA was asked to stop offensive actions and to decommission its officers. The resolution also empowered the UN secretary-general to appoint a special representative for a civilian presence in Kosovo and to lay out the tasks of both the civilian and the military mission in consultation with the Security Council. The

439 March 25, 1999.

implementation of these provisions was entrusted to international military and civilian missions. The civilian mission was under the control of the United Nations, whereas the military mission was the responsibility of NATO, which was described as the “substantial participant in the international security presence” authorized to appoint the commander in chief.

The situation Resolution 1244 established in Kosovo transcended the framework of known legal-political categories. Because of its exclusion of the FRY army and police from Kosovo and its ban on their return to the province, Resolution 1244 effectively suspended FRY sovereignty in Kosovo and substituted an international administration for that of Serbia. Resolution 1244 also commanded “full compliance with the Rambouillet agreement,” which the Serbian National Assembly had rejected. The resolution authorized the UN secretary-general to “establish an international civil presence in Kosovo in order to provide an interim administration for Kosovo under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.” The Group of Eight foreign ministers had envisaged a “political process towards the establishment of an interim political framework agreement providing for substantial self-government for Kosovo, taking full account of the Rambouillet accords and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other countries of the region.”⁴⁴⁰ Thus, like the Dayton Accords, the Rambouillet agreement was enforced by the use of force.

The chaos that the Serbian police and paramilitary and the Yugoslav Army left in the wake of their withdrawal radically changed Kosovo’s society: having been deprived of all its institutions, it survived by reliance on clan and family ties. When the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) arrived, it found no civil government or organized police force, only the widespread destruction of homes

440 Resolution 1244 (1999) adopted by the Security Council at its 4011th Meeting on 10 June 1999

and the public infrastructure. The absence of a police force created a law enforcement vacuum that had to be filled by KFOR. The destruction of villages, as well as the slaughter of thousands of civilians and the expulsion of almost a million Albanians had traumatized the Albanian community, which upon its return to Kosovo reacted with astonishing violence. The entire remaining Kosovar Serbian population was seen as a target for Kosovo Albanians. According to a report from the OSCE issued in the fall of 1999:

Violence has taken many forms: killings, rape, beatings, torture, house-burning and abductions. Not all violence has been physical, fear and terror tactics have been used as weapons of revenge, substantial aggression, even without physical injury, exerts extreme pressure, leaving people not only unable to move outside their home, but unable to live peacefully within their home. . .

*The result of this has been a continuous exodus of Kosovo Serbs to Serbia and Montenegro and an inevitable displacement towards mono-ethnic enclaves, adding fuel to Serb calls for cantonization.*⁴⁴¹

The international mission was unprepared for such a turn and unable to prevent the expulsion of 170,000 Serbs and members of other minorities from Kosovo. About 70,000 left for Serbia, while others moved to the northern part of Kosovo.

The Belgrade regime could not reconcile itself to the new situation and continued to believe that Yugoslav forces would return to Kosovo. The expulsion of Serbs and other non-Albanians from Kosovo was used as an excuse for an outright rejection of any cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the new authority in the province. To prove that the international community was unequipped to deal with

441 OSCE, *Human Rights in Kosovo: As Seen, As Told*, vol. 2. 14 June–31 October 1999 (Warsaw: OSCE, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, November 5, 1999), <http://www.osce.org/item/17756.html>.

Kosovo, the regime strove to hamper UNMIK's efforts and to prevent the Kosovar Serbs from cooperating with UNMIK (which Belgrade saw as part of a malign "new world order.")⁴⁴² Bishop Artemije and Father Sava, who tried to further Serbian interests by participating in the Transitional Council (a high-level consultative body established under Resolution 1244 and meant to help pave the way for a democratic Kosovo), were sidelined over time; negotiating power remained in the hands of Kosovska Mitrovica—a town in northern Kosovo under the control of Belgrade.

The Albanians were dissatisfied with the behavior of Ibrahim Rugova during the intervention and afterwards. He appeared on Belgrade TV with Milošević in May,⁴⁴³ went abroad but failed to explain why he had done so, delayed his return until the war had ended, and came back only under pressure from the international community. Hashim Thaci, who had helped organize the KLA, appeared on the political scene as a substitute for Rugova. Amid an institutional vacuum immediately after the intervention, Kosovo found itself in a state of anarchy that the international presence could not immediately overcome, especially because the Albanians had functioned outside the institutions of the state for almost a decade. The military leaders who had fought the Serbian security forces took advantage of the situation to engage in illegal activities, including arms smuggling and trafficking in humans and weapons. As a result, the entire population of Kosovo felt insecure and Serbs in Kosovo increasingly feared for their lives and property. Most Albanians switched their allegiance back to Rugova as a moderate leader following a spate of retaliatory acts against Serbs and other non-Albanians and the criminalization of their society. Rugova was elected president in the 2002

442 The widely accepted belief that Serbs are victims of New World Order, the term especially in use by the Serbian elite such as Dobrica Ćosić in *Vreme zmija*, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2008, p.35

443 At the peak of the 79 days of NATO bombing, Rugova went to see Slobodan Milošević in Belgrade to discuss the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Photographs of the two men were sent around the world and were considered by some Albanians as evidence of treason.

elections. His Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) party was forced to share power after parliamentary elections in 2001.

The ethnic pattern of division that the Serbs had managed to impose since the outbreak of crisis—a pattern that was accepted by others—had a boomerang effect on Serbia Proper. The republican and federal governments were united in their resolve to crush the Albanian rebellion in southern Serbia, which had been provoked by the failure to solve Kosovo’s status. Belgrade tried to deal with the rebellion by applying a common recipe: ethnic cleansing of Albanians from three border municipalities (Bujanovac, Medveđa, and Preševo). However, defeated and militarily weakened, Serbia was forced to allow the international community and NATO (who acted swiftly and resolutely) to restore law and order. Cooperation with the international community (i.e., NATO) was of key importance for the suppression of the rebellion and the adoption of solutions for South Serbia. “Our interest,” said Nebojša Čović, the deputy prime minister in Đinđić’s government,

lies in cooperation with KFOR and UNMIK and in making sure that Resolution 1244 is respected, that it should remain in force as long as possible while a long-term solution for Kosovo and Metohija is being prepared. War which would break out upon the departure of the international forces would not be waged only on the territory of Yugoslavia. It would surely spread to Macedonia, and one wonders how it would affect the problems in Montenegro and whether it would not set ablaze Sandžak and Bosnia and spread to places where old wounds are yet to heal.⁴⁴⁴

The NATO intervention did not immediately bring down Milošević despite the political vacuum that emerged in its aftermath, mostly because the opposition sided with Milošević during the

444 Nin, an interview with Nebojša Čović “How to deal with the Albanians” by Stevan Nikšić (Kako sa Albancima), p. 18–20. March 3, 2001.

intervention. It took almost a year to organize and unite the Serbian opposition, civic society, media, and students before any serious strategy for toppling Milošević could be developed. However, the ICTY indictment against Milošević issued in May 1999 did play a part in persuading Milošević's own circles to eventually remove him because he had become an impediment to building ties between the FRY and the European Union and the United States.⁴⁴⁵

THE IDEA OF PARTITION PERSISTS

The intervention consolidated the regime, if only briefly, because the opposition could not capitalize on the political vacuum created after the signing of the Kumanovo agreement and Resolution 1244. The opposition was unable to dissociate itself from the military and police offensive in Kosovo. On the contrary, the opposition viewed the offensive as a prelude to the ultimate partition of Kosovo. NATO intervention and the entry of NATO troops (KFOR) into Kosovo put the Serbian partition plan into jeopardy; Resolution 1244 put an end to Serbian jurisdiction over Kosovo.

In the new circumstances, the strategy of the Belgrade regime—of not only Milošević but of also his successor, Koštunica—proceeded along two tracks: negating and undermining the international mission and preparing to partition Kosovo. The purpose of the campaign, first against Bernard Kouchner, special representative of the secretary-general and the head of UNMIK, and then against his successors (Hans Haekkerup, Søren Jessen-Petersen, and Joachim Ricker), was to discredit the proposed legal framework for Kosovo (in spite of the fact that it envisaged maximum rights for Serbs and other minorities) on the grounds that it did not take Serbian rights into sufficient account and to prove that partition would be the best solution. The Serbian campaign benefited from the behavior of some

445 Milošević and four other top officials were indicted on 340 counts of murder, stemming from seven separate massacres, and 740,000 forced deportations from the embattled Serbian province since the beginning of 1999.

Albanians, who confirmed the negative stereotypes held of them in many Western countries by expelling, kidnapping, and murdering Serbs and other non-Albanians.⁴⁴⁶ Neither Milošević nor Koštunica seemed willing to work with the Albanians in order to create conditions under which the two sides could find a *modus vivendi*.

The Kosovar Serbs, especially those in the north, continued to be manipulated by the Belgrade regime and used to destabilize Kosovo. The SPC, however, took a stand against all terror, including that against Albanians. Father Sava, for instance, took a group of Albanians into the Dečani Monastery to protect them from Serbian forces. As the Belgrade regime became increasingly isolated, Bishop Artemije and Father Sava worked to protect local Serbs and stop their expulsion while constantly arguing in favor of cantonization.

The cantonization plan would have left Kosovo in a state Dobrica Ćosić very much wanted to see. For years he had been espousing the benefits of partition: “I see the permanent solution to Kosmet in the division of Kosovo and Metohija and in a territorial delimitation between Serbia and Albania.”⁴⁴⁷ The “delimitation between Serbia and Albania” Ćosić advocated, rather than between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, fits into his definition of the Yugoslav wars as serving the purpose of “recomposing the Balkans.” Ćosić believed that Serbia should settle for a “third of Kosovo.”⁴⁴⁸ In

446 A report by Human Rights Watch, “Harassment and Violence against Serbs and Roma in Kosovo,” August 1999, Volume 11, No. 10, by Fred Abrahams, <http://www.hrw.org/> claims that one thousand Serbs and Roma were killed or missing after May 12, 1999. The same report claims that, according to KFOR, in the five months from KFOR’s arrival in Kosovo in June 1999 until 1 November 1999, 370 murders were committed; of the victims, 135 were Serbs. Between January 30, 2001, and May 27, 2001, KFOR reported 95 murders, of which 26 victims were Serbs, 7 were Roma, 2 were Bosniaks, 52 were Albanians, and 8 were of unidentified ethnicity. The FRY government published a book, *The Heroes of the Motherland*, which lists 1,002 soldiers and policemen killed between 1998 and the NATO intervention.

447 Slavoljub Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, Belgrade, 2001.

448 In 1981, Ćosić wrote in his diary, “If we are not ready to liberate Kosovo again—which we certainly are not—then it ought to be divided between ourselves and the Albanians. We ought to take our parts and monasteries and leave the Albanians that which is theirs. Otherwise we shall be sucked into a permanent war with the Albanians which

1990, he had insisted in meetings with members of the new Serbian regime that “Kosovo cannot be kept” and that it was a historical fact that “Serbs are moving north, they are vacating the south.” He had argued that the Serbs should “leave the south but keep control only over the coal and some holy shrines in Kosovo such as Gračanica Monastery and Gazimestan,” and suggested that a plan to partition Kosovo and Metohija ought to be “worked out in secret and then activated at an opportune time.”⁴⁴⁹

Discussing the future of Kosovo, Ćosić told a meeting of the Holy Synod in November 1998 that “Kosovo as territory is lost. We ought to fight to preserve the Christian monuments and the remaining Serbian enclaves there.” He believed that the “outlying municipalities containing the Serb population ought to be attached to the mother country where they once were” and that the purpose of the wars fought in the previous decade was to create a new Serbian state spreading to the northwest:

*A period of territorial-ethnic recomposition and consolidation of Balkan space is upon us, a period of forced adaptation we shall have to accept as a fact of life. The epochal changes being wrought have led the Serb people into a position where they will have to press together on a territory where they can live, which they can cover with their civilization, and where they will pose no threat to anyone. Even a calamity like this is beginning to bear something useful, i.e. the settling down of these regions in ethnic terms. The Serb people are integrating (hopefully just that) and homogenizing; they are consolidating and rounding off their living space within emerging ethnic borders. This change is dictated by the establishment of a nation state whose territory can be disputed only by aggressors. In other words, we are forced to create a state commensurate with our own size and strength.*⁴⁵⁰

we cannot win.” As quoted in Slavoljub Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, Belgrade, 2001.

449 Ćosić as quoted in Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ (The Last Days of the SFRY)*, p. 194.

450 Slavoljub Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, Belgrade, 2001. p. 252.

Thus, the Serbian nationalists, particularly those grouped around the SPS and Čosić, pursued a policy whose ultimate object was the partition of Kosovo. The withdrawal of Serbs from the southern to the northern parts of Kosovo was a significant step in this direction—indeed, it may well have been planned. As Dušan Bataković put it:

In a very short time Kosovo was spontaneously cantonized in a manner which largely conformed to the cantonization project maps approved by the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serb Resistance Movement in Kosovo long before the commencement of war operations. Of the five cantons it envisages, four remain. The largest and most significant concentration of Serbs in the north of Kosovo encompasses the largest Serb enclave spreading from Kosovska Mitrovica and Zvečan to Leposavić and Zubin Potok. Thanks above all to the French troops of KFOR, there has been no “reunification of Kosovska Mitrovica.”⁴⁵¹

Before the arrival of the international troops, the Serbs had withdrawn from Prizren and other parts that had been reserved as Albanian cantons on instructions issued by the Army and Interior Ministry commands from Suva Reka.⁴⁵² Bataković said that after the entry of KFOR, the cantonization plan envisaging the preservation of special connections between the Serbian zones in Kosovo and the Serbian state was propounded to the Kosovo Serbs amid “thundering cheers.” The cantonization project was also endorsed by the majority of opposition parties.

The question of the Albanians in southern Serbia became acute after Kosovo was put under international control. Albanians are a majority in Preševo and Bujanovac and form a sizeable minority in Medveđa.⁴⁵³ They had been subjected to decades of institutionalised

451 *Srpska politička misao*, Vol. VI, 1999, No. 3–4.

452 From a conversation with a SPC priest, Prizren, 1999.

453 According to the 2002 census Medveđa, has only about 10,000 residents. Prior to the

discrimination, which was then stepped up by Milošević in the late 1980s. After Serbian military forces withdrew from Kosovo in June 1999, they were located along the Kosovo border in the vicinity of the three municipalities. Under the pressure of this intimidating Serbian military presence, Albanians began to emigrate to Kosovo—for instance, only 5 percent of Albanians who had resided in Medveđa before the intervention remained in the town by 2001. NATO, the United States, and the European Union pressed Belgrade to relocate its troops further from the border, and Belgrade did so, resulting in a cessation of Albanian emigration. In return, the government in Belgrade received support and financial credit from the West. Nebojša Čović, who skilfully negotiated with the United States and European Union, proposed a plan in 2001 to split Kosovo into two entities: a Serbian entity comprising most Serbian historical and cultural monuments and an Albanian one in which the majority of Albanians would live. The Serbian entity would be under the protection of the Yugoslav Army and police, whereas the Albanian entity, which would have the highest level of autonomy, would be protected by international forces. Yugoslav and KFOR border troops would ensure that no attacks were launched by one entity on the other. This plan, Čović said, presupposed the “relinquishment of maximum demands, i.e. both the Albanian and Serb side ought to rid themselves of the illusion that the whole of Kosovo belongs to either.”⁴⁵⁴ The crisis that had meanwhile erupted in Macedonia in 2001 reinforced the thesis in Belgrade that the Balkans should be recomposed along ethnic lines. Such ideas and proposals were supported by major Serbian institutions, including the Institute of Modern History. Nikola Popović, the director of the institute, said that “there will be no peace on the

conflict, some 70 percent were Serbs, the remainder Albanians. Almost all the Albanians fled, and only some 800 have returned. Preševo is almost 90 percent Albanian. Bujanovac, approximately 55 percent Albanian, 34 percent Serbian and 9 percent Roma. See the Republic of Serbia, “Zavod za statistiku ‘Saopštenje CH31’”, Br. 295, god.LII, 24 December 2002.

454 *Danas*, May 21, 2001.

Balkan peninsula until states are established within national frameworks” and that a “multiethnic society ought not to be imposed in the Balkans by force.”⁴⁵⁵ The pro-government Skopje newspaper *Nova Makedonija* provoked a fierce debate by publishing a proposal by a group of Macedonian academics for a territorial swap with Albania entailing a shifting of borders in Kosovo and announcing that the proposal was partly supported by state leaders in Belgrade.

Westerners, too, contemplated redrawing borders. In March 2001, to take a notable example, the former British foreign secretary Lord David Owen, a former British foreign secretary and the EU’s mediator in Bosnia, suggested, “What is needed today is a Balkans-wide solution, a present-day equivalent to the 1878 Congress of Berlin. With a pre-arranged boundary endorsed by the major powers.”⁴⁵⁶ Owen’s proposal was preceded on February 26–27, 2001, by a U.S. Army War College seminar on the future of the U.S. presence in the Balkans.⁴⁵⁷ One participant reported that “scholars and U.S. military officers attending the two-day seminar appeared to be in almost unanimous agreement that current state boundaries in the Balkans should be redrawn to create ‘smaller, more stable mono-ethnic states.’” Former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger had anticipated Owen’s “geo-racism”⁴⁵⁸ in an article in the *Washington Post* in 1996 in which he argued that ethnic cleansing in the Balkans could not be reversed, so it should be accepted as a stabilizing factor, claiming that “with extensive ethnic cleansing in Bosnia only the most insignificant remnants of other groups are left in each area.”⁴⁵⁹

By postponing a decision on their future status, the West allowed the situation in Kosovo and Macedonia to deteriorate, thus playing

455 *Politika*, May., 2001

456 “To Secure Balkan Peace, Redraw Map,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 13, 2001.

457 As reported by Umberto Pascali in *Executive Intelligence Review*, June 22, 2001.

458 A term used by Umberto Pascali in an article “British ‘New Berlin Congress’ Behind the Macedonian Civil War” that appeared in *Executive Intelligence Review*, June 22, 2001.

459 *Washington Post*, September 18, 1996.

into the hands of ethnic radicals. Meanwhile, the partition of Kosovo was incorporated into the state policy of the FRY. Goran Svilanović, the Yugoslav foreign minister, initiated a conference in 2001 on the immutability of Balkan borders in hopes—paradoxically—of being able to engineer a territorial swap that would see the part of Kosovo given to Albanians exchanged for the part of Bosnia (Republika Srpska) being given to Serbia. Russia supported this idea and continued to play the role of a broker looking after Serbian interests in the hope of establishing itself as an unavoidable factor in the Balkans.

Svilanović recognized that he was unlikely to win support for the idea of an international conference except from Russia, but he was not greatly perturbed. Serbia's real but unstated strategy was to maintain the territorial status quo *for the moment* only so that, with the passage of time, the international community would have no option but to acknowledge that Belgrade controlled only the north of Kosovo and the Bosnian government controlled only part of Bosnia, and that therefore the south of the province should be joined with Albania and Republika Srpska should be joined with Serbia. At the same time, the Belgrade regime insisted that Montenegrin independence would cause a domino effect resulting in a union of Serbia and Republika Srpska.

A variety of proposals for partition played into the hands of all nationalists. Proceeding from the fundamentally irreconcilable positions of the two sides and the brutal Serbian repression of the Albanians, the Independent International Commission on Kosovo—initiated by the Swedish prime minister Göran Persson, endorsed by the United Nations, and tasked with providing independent analysis of a range of issues related to Kosovo before, during, and after the NATO intervention—concluded in a 2001 report that the best available option for the future of Kosovo would be “conditional independence”—expanding the autonomy and self-government promised by Resolution 1244 in order to make Kosovo self-governing outside the

FRY but within an international framework.⁴⁶⁰ This report advised that the international community take responsibility for an initial security guarantee and for overseeing the protection of minority rights to integrate Kosovo into an effective Stability Pact—an EU initiative to develop a comprehensive and long-term conflict prevention mechanism for southeastern Europe.

The report also indicated that the status of conditional independence would have to be reached through an “internal agreement” between representatives of the international community in Kosovo and the Kosovo majority as well as representatives of ethnic minorities, and in an “external agreement” negotiated with Kosovo’s neighbors. The external agreement would eventually include the Serbian government; in the meantime, a refusal by the Serbian government to engage in dialogues would not constitute a veto on the process.

THE CHANGE IN THE WESTERN APPROACH

Due to the Serbs’ unwillingness to participate in Kosovo’s development, no major progress was made in integrating Serbs into Kosovar institutions. The Albanian population grew ever more frustrated. After eleven Albanians and six Serbs were killed and thousands were displaced from their homes in a few days of rioting in March 2004, the international community was forced to rethink its approach toward Kosovo. Aware of the situation’s complexity, the international community refrained from black-and-white analyses. Its decision to accelerate the resolution of the Kosovo issue derived from the realization that the *status quo*—which the Serbs had advocated—was unsustainable, and from concern that radicals on both sides would otherwise attempt to resolve the issue by violence.

460 Independent International Commission on Kosovo: *Kosovo Report*, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 9–10.

UN secretary-general Kofi Anan stated that “the ethnically motivated unrest dealt a serious blow to [the] building of democratic, multiethnic and stable Kosovo.”⁴⁶¹ The Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution on the situation in Kosovo, assessing the March events as “a tragic regression of the process of reconciliation ... for which the international community is partly responsible.”

As a result of the March violence, the Contact Group was reactivated and soon came up with a statement that indicated a new line of thinking. This new approach coincided with the belief that the Dayton Accords had fulfilled their role of bringing peace to the region but had failed in being an instrument of reintegration in Bosnia. The new insight was that the ethnic principle, which Milošević had imposed as the basis for resolving the Balkan borders, was too costly and destabilizing for the region.

Belgrade used the March riots to strengthen its argument that cohabitation was impossible and that a multiethnic Kosovo was unviable. SPC-led delegations toured Europe’s capitals in attempts to convince the West that Albanians were incapable of governing a state of their own and that the partition of Kosovo was unavoidable. To secure the domestic public’s support for partition, Dobrica Ćosić had compiled a book entitled *Kosovo* in 2004 in which he had proposed that Albanians and Serbs be separated on the grounds of a compromise between historical and ethnic rights; the separation would be guided by demographic statistics that preceded the Albanians’ secessionist rebellion and NATO’s intervention and by full respect for human and minority rights; and the Peć Patriarchal See and Dečani and Dević monasteries would be autonomous in keeping with the model of the Mount Athos independent monastic community. The media promoted these concepts.

The international community attempted to buy time to resolve the issue by imposing a “standards before status” policy by which

461 Belgrade-based agency *BETA*, May 5, 2004.

Kosovo would need to make progress on eight standards before its final status could be addressed. However, when Serbs refused to participate in the Kosovo elections in 2004—signifying Belgrade’s lack of interest in constructive dialogue—the international community began to understand that its approach needed to change.⁴⁶²

Having sought but failed to persuade Belgrade to engage in talks about Kosovo’s final status, the international community decided to discuss the subject without Belgrade. A message to this effect, delivered in 2005 via the International Crisis Group’s (ICG) report on Kosovo’s final status, raised a great hue and cry on the Serbian political scene.⁴⁶³ The ICG explicitly opposed the partition of Kosovo and concluded that the international community should convene an international conference on Kosovo by fall 2005 to decide whether Kosovo should be granted suspended independence regardless of whether or not Belgrade participated in the conference and accepted its outcome. Secretary-General Annan suggested that “the Serbs’ unwillingness to get engaged in a dialogue and support the implementation of standards has hindered progress” and that government institutions in Belgrade had not provided support for Kosovar Serbs’ participation in provisional institutions.⁴⁶⁴ The UN representative in Kosovo, Søren Jessen Petersen, advised, “It would be in the Serbs’ best interest to be present in provisional institutions, for this is how they could most efficiently stand for their interests,” adding that Kosovar Serbs should stop the practice to “always wait for Belgrade’s decisions.”⁴⁶⁵ Belgrade reacted promptly by securing itself a place at the negotiating table.

462 Kosovo held municipal elections in 2000 and 2003 and Kosovo-wide elections in 2001 (Serbs participated in these legislative elections but were later pressed by Belgrade to leave the Assembly), 2004, and 2007.

463 ICG *Kosovo: Towards Final Status* (January 2004).

464 http://www.unmikonline.org/archives/news11_06full.htm.

465 Jessen Petersen speech at the UN Security Council in New York, October 24, 2005

Kosovar Serbs faced the biggest problem of all—from the very beginning they had been nothing but instruments in the hands of Belgrade, which ignored their real interests. Their participation in the elections had been obstructed by Belgrade, yet some Kosovar Serbs were aware that their survival in Kosovo depended upon their integration into Kosovar institutions. The question was whether they could withstand pressure from Belgrade. If not, they could face a scenario similar to that experienced by Serbs in Croatia, whose exodus from Croatia in 1995 was organized by Belgrade; this departure was welcomed by Zagreb because the insurgent Serbs and those who supported them had shown themselves unwilling to integrate themselves into the new Croatian state. By killing 600 old people and burning some 20,000 houses Tuđman cemented the return of Serbs.

Belgrade continued to pretend that Kosovo was an integral part of Serbia. The Serbian Assembly adopted a new resolution that insisted that Kosovo was an inseparable part of Serbia, rejected the plan of the UN secretary-general's special envoy, and called for new talks on Kosovo's status. The Serbian Radical Party delivered a threatening speech calling for unity. Only a few MPs (among them, Nataša Mičić from the Civic Alliance and Žarko Korać from the SDU) dared to denounce the farce. Serbian efforts to link the status of Kosovo with that of Republika Srpska (on the grounds of the right to self-determination) had become futile in the light of international efforts to change the Dayton Accords in order to enable Bosnia to become a functional state.

The Serbian political elite was pressed to adopt a uniform stand on a proposal floated by the president of Serbia, Boris Tadić. According to that proposal, the Serbian entity would encompass the current and future Serb-majority municipalities, and part of the Serbian entity would be the seat of the Orthodox faith institutions and monasteries in Kosovo. "That applies to the patriachate of Peć, Visoki Dečani, Bogorodica Ljeviška, Arhandeli and Devič, with 'safe

haven or protection zones' around them, as mentioned by the Eide report."⁴⁶⁶ The proposal also envisaged restitution of Serbian Orthodox property that had been confiscated in the post–World War II nationalization.

The Kosovo Assembly adopted a resolution heralding its position in negotiations. The most prominent representatives of Kosovar Albanians insisted on independence. Albanians were trying to accommodate the demands of the international community by working on decentralization, but not in the ethnic sense on which the Serbs insisted. Although the international community had renounced the “standards before status” policy, it reiterated its ambition to insist on standards during status-related negotiations.

Martti Ahtisaari, the UN special envoy for resolution of the future status of Kosovo, began his tenure in 2005 with a tour of regional countries interested in an imminent settlement of Kosovo's status. In an interview he remarked, “To achieve progress in implementation of standards we need both the readiness of Albanians in Kosovo and cooperation of the minority groups, including Serbs.” He also made it clear that the international community would remain in Kosovo regardless of the final status and quoted numerous reasons to do so, notably, to ensure multiethnicity, the establishment of mechanisms for the protection of human rights and the repatriation of displaced persons and refugees. He added that once the issue of Kosovo was resolved, the EU would continue to play a major role in the region, because of which a “representative of Brussels should be a member of my team.”⁴⁶⁷

466 Kai Aage Eide Report on a comprehensive view of the situation in Kosovo, October 7, 2005.

467 <http://kosovonewsandviews.blogspot.com/2005>

SERBIA'S LAST ATTEMPTS AT PARTITION

In the wake of NATO intervention, the Serbian opposition perceived Milošević as a loser who had failed to resolve the Kosovo issue, and he resigned following disputed elections in September 2000. The prime mover of the new Kosovo policy was the Democratic Party of Serbia in the form of Vojislav Koštunica. Koštunica fervently embraced the social-political ideals of the nineteenth century—especially the ideal of an ethnic state. But that ideal was not attainable in the international context.

The post-Milošević period was characterized by a confrontation between the two visions of Serbia, which for years delayed acceptance of a new constitution mapping out Serbia as a modern state. By earmarking Kosovo as an integral and inalienable part of Serbia (“Kosovo belongs to us and forever shall”),⁴⁶⁸ Koštunica announced Serbia’s refusal to partake in the search for a compromise.

After the NATO intervention, Belgrade systematically widened the gap between the Serbian and Albanian communities in Kosovo. It did everything possible to undermine Resolution 1244: It did not recognize the international administration in Kosovo (passports, driving licenses, and other official documents were issued by UNMIK) and it installed and financed parallel institutions in North Kosovo. It seized all archives and registries of Kosovo’s former administration—the police, the judiciary, and the educational system—and relocated them to cities in Serbia such as Nis.⁴⁶⁹ It obstructed the Serbs’ return to Kosovo, forbade them to partake in Kosovo institutions, and fueled their grudges. It refused to pay out pensions to more than 100,000 Albanians and never paid back their foreign currency savings. Belgrade clearly was never interested in a dialogue with Pristina.

468 Koštunica repeated this on several occasions, including at the rally on February 21, 2008, after Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia, http://www6.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=17&nav_category=640&nav_id=285213

469 The are all dislocated to Niš, Kraljevo and Kruševac

Belgrade offered no option but the partition of Kosovo, a partition closely connected with Republika Srpska claiming its right to unite with Serbia. From the time the status of Kosovo was placed on its agenda, Belgrade obstructed Bosnia-Herzegovina's efforts to become a functional state and used Bosnia-Herzegovina as leverage in an attempt to accomplish its initial plan: a rearrangement of national borders in the Balkans. This plan implied a Serbian resettling from enclaves in Kosovo, which would be ceded to the Albanians.

The Montenegrin independence referendum in 2006 accelerated resolution of the status of Kosovo, which Belgrade realized was entering its final stage. The conservative option, embodied by Koštunica, emerged triumphant from the confrontation over the future of Kosovo. The 2006 Serbian Constitution, passed to create a basis for rejecting Kosovo's independence, was a key component in Koštunica's strategy.

By treating Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia, the 2006 Constitution canonized the Serbian ethic and confronted the international community and its intervention in Kosovo. Serbia's top decision makers invoked Serbia's rightful ownership of Kosovo but never bothered to address the Albanian majority. They insisted on a loose autonomy for Kosovo, but did nothing to bring the two ethnic communities closer. The 2006 Constitution affirms that Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia, but it does not put the Albanians on the electoral rolls. The political elite of Serbia (barring a few exceptions, notably the Liberal Democratic Party) formed a unified front for the defense of Kosovo. Because the constitution binds the state, and consequently the Serbian elite, to ensure a continued existence of Kosovo in Serbia by force, the possibility of the introduction of a state of emergency was frequently mentioned.

In 2007, Ahtisaari put forward a UN proposal for "supervised independence" for the province that would ensure protection for

Kosovo's non-Albanian populations. Lengthy negotiations between Belgrade and Priština on the future status of Kosovo based on this proposal were promoted by the EU, the United States, and Russia but failed. Both Belgrade and Kosovo rejected this attempted compromise. Belgrade's various proposals, including giving Kosovo the same status as that of the Åland Islands in Finland, not only came late but also revealed that Belgrade, satisfied with the status quo,⁴⁷⁰ never seriously considered a compromise.⁴⁷¹

The UN Security Council discussed the report on the results of a further round of talks between Belgrade and Priština submitted by international mediators, the so-called Troika. When further talks between Belgrade and Priština mediated by the Troika reached no compromise, the Security Council returned to Ahtisaari's plan for the settlement of Kosovo status. Because Russia exercised its right to veto, a new Security Council resolution was not adopted.

With no progress on negotiations in sight, the Kosovars unilaterally proclaimed the Republic of Kosova, obligating themselves to follow the Ahtisaari plan's provisions in full. On February 17, 2008, an act of the Provisional Institutions of the Self-Government Assembly of Kosovo declared Kosovo to be independent from Serbia. The United States and the European Union decided to recognize Kosovo's independence.

470 Vojislav Koštunica, prime minister at the time, firmly believed that time was on the Serbian side in solving the Kosovo issue: "I believe that in a year, three or five, for instance, we will gain much more than we could gain now." *daily Press*, February 17, 2008

471 The Åland Islands, situated in the Baltic Sea, belonged to Sweden for centuries but—after more than a century of Russian rule, had become a part of the sovereign state of Finland in 1917. The Swedish population demanded reunification, the Finnish authorities resisted, and the international community helped forge an agreement that gave the islands very considerable autonomy, including Åland citizenship, and helped to preserve the local language, culture, and traditions. See *Documents on Autonomy and Minority Rights*, ed. Hurst Hannum (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1993); and Human Rights Project Group, *Åland Islands: Model for Territorial Autonomy*, report sponsored by the International Foundation for the Survival and Development of Humanity (New York, 1991).

Belgrade's reaction to Kosovo's declaration of independence was as expected after Koštunica's intensive campaign against independence. A protest rally against the declaration of "the phony state" of Kosovo was the manifestation of nationalistic frustration and a rejection of reality. Old stereotypes about Albanians being thugs and criminals and incapable of governing their own state were quickly revived.⁴⁷² The attacks launched immediately after the rally on foreign embassies, most notably the U.S. embassy, were planned well in advance.⁴⁷³

Koštunica called Kosovo "a fundamental state and national issue" in a bid to cover up his political defeat and to prevent Democratic Party and Serbian president Boris Tadić from gaining ascendancy over him in the so-called democratic camp. In a speech to a rally in February 2008, Koštunica claimed that "as long as the Serbian people exist, Kosovo remains Serbia" and that "the president of the U.S., who is responsible for this violence, and his European followers, will be written with black letters in Serbian history books." He accused the United States of

putting violence over the principles of international law, the U.S. used blind force and humiliated and forced the EU to break the principles that the very EU is based on. America forced Europe to follow it in unprecedented violence demonstrated against Serbia. Europe has bent

472 For instance, Momo Kapor, a radical Serbian nationalist who had played an important role in propaganda before and during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, interpreted Kosovo's independence thus: "That declaration of independence and secession is in fact a conflict with semi-wild tribes who don't own a single proof of their civilization and culture, a single proof of their historic monuments, temples, old manuscripts, old frescoes. Their mosques were built from stones taken from ruins of the palace of our wonderful emperors. From those stones they only carved holes for ropes for their asses. Those are their only historical sculptures. They don't have a single writer, a single painter whose name resonates in the world." *NIN*, March 6, 2008.

473 Foreign embassies, that of the United States in particular, were not protected by the police in spite of fears that demonstrators might attack them. The police reacted only following interventions by the U.S. ambassador in Belgrade and by Nicholas Burns, U.S. under-secretary of state for political affairs, who telephoned Koštunica directly. The situation outside the embassies was covered live by several Belgrade TV stations.

*its head today and that is why it will be responsible for the far-reaching consequences that this violence will have on the European and world order. This act has above all humiliated the EU, not Serbia. Serbia refused to be humiliated, respecting firmly the law and refusing to bow to force.*⁴⁷⁴

Koštunica tried to declare the January presidential elections results null and void. However, the March 2008 rally did not accomplish what he hoped. The majority of Belgrade's citizens stayed at home and the rally created no impetus for further large-scale protests and street violence. Koštunica's effort to provoke protests and incidents did not succeed. The behind-the-scenes political drama led to the resignation of Koštunica and the scheduling of early parliamentary elections in May 2008. Backed by almost all the media, Koštunica made Serbia's right to Kosovo a central plank of his campaign, expecting thereby to mobilize popular support. But he miscalculated. The Kosovo myth had finally lost its mobilizing potential; people were tired of violence, and most of the citizens of Serbia voted for the "Coalition for Europe," a group of parties including Tadić's Democratic Party and the Socialist Party in favor of Serbia's accession to the EU, a move that many Serbian voters believed might help the country overcome its economic woes.⁴⁷⁵

Independence was expected by everyone, and the elite's response to it was predictable. Koštunica acted like Milošević, like a man divorced from reality and disinclined to look for political compromise. At play was his intention to "extort" the partition of Kosovo. In the face of Kosovo's independence, many Serbian analysts continued to insist on the resumption of negotiations. A kind of rectification of

474 http://www6.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=17&nav_category=640&nav_id=285213

475 The Coalition for Europe consists of The Democratic Party (Tadić), G17 plus (Dinkić), Democratic Party of Sandžak (Ugljanin), Party of Democratic Action Sandžak (Ljajić), Serbian Renewal Movement (Drašković) and League of Vojvodina Social Democrats (Čanak)

the situation on the ground was promoted, whereby Kosovo would be divided into two zones; Serbia would lose 12 percent of its territory by letting Kosovo secede, while an independent Kosovo would also lose 12 percent by allowing the secession of five municipalities in the north.⁴⁷⁶ Čosić urged a diplomatic and political struggle for the revision of the decision on Kosovo's independence, which, he claimed, is "unjust and entrenches Serb-Albanian enmity."⁴⁷⁷

Serbia's strategy in the aftermath of Kosovo's independence was to undermine Kosovo's statehood by strengthening parallel institutions in Kosovo Serbian areas and by inciting Kosovo Albanians to react violently and thus damage the international standing of their state-building project. Among other things, Serbia conducted a vigorous diplomatic campaign against Kosovo's recognition by other states (by the end of 2009 Kosovo was recognized by only sixty-two countries, with five EU member states deciding not to recognize it). In October 2008, Serbia (with support not only from Russia but also countries such as Spain with secessionist movements and countries with large ethnic minorities such as Slovakia) succeeded in ensuring passage of a UN resolution instructing the International Court of Justice at The Hague to pronounce on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence.

The situation has been made more complicated by Russia's continued support of Serbia, its efforts to discourage recognition of Kosovo, and its insistence on UNMIK's presence in Kosovo. Russia sees in its alliance with Serbia an opportunity to reassert its influence in the Balkans arena after a long absence. President Vladimir Putin's

476 Slobodan Marković, Izlazna strategija Srbije na Kosovu i Metohiji, *Hereticus*, Vol.V (2007), No. 3–4; see also in the same volume articles by Jovan Trkulja, Jovo Bakić, Slaviša Orlović, Neven Cvetičanin.

A flood of books, articles and analysis on Kosovo appeared in the wake of Kosovo declaring its independence. For instance, Milovan Radovanović, *Kosovo and Metohija: The Anthropogeographic and Demographic Foundations* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2008), argues that "Kosovo is lost, because Serbs in the year 1912 allowed Albanians to remain in Kosovo instead of removing them and thus lastingly resolve the Albanian issue."

477 *Večernje Novosti*, March 22, 2008.

February 2007 address at the Munich Conference on Security Policy heralded a new Russian energy policy that implied a new approach toward the Balkans as well.⁴⁷⁸ Russia's policy under Yeltsin was compatible with the West's in spite of their previous confrontation over the Balkans during the life of the USSR. Putin, however, promised Serbian politicians that he would veto any new Kosovo-related UN Security Council resolution. That promise strengthened the conviction of Serbian politicians that Kosovo's partition was feasible. Koštunica openly advocated that Serbia declare itself neutral (like the neutrality embraced in the past by countries such as Austria and Sweden) but rely strongly on Russia. Russia's tactics in the UN Security Council over the final status of Kosovo were motivated not by concerns about Serbia's sovereignty over Kosovo but rather by raising Russia's stature as a major international player in competition with the United States. In this context, as Janusz Bugajski puts it, Serbia is manipulated by Russia as a valuable bridgehead within southeast Europe to further its economic and political designs. Serbia has evolved into a strategic experiment for Moscow in the heart of the Balkans to challenge Western encroachment and increase Russia's leverage in the region.⁴⁷⁹

Bilateral relations with Russia are considered by the Serbian elite to be their country's most important relationship. According to Vuk Jeremić, foreign minister of Serbia, those relations "have lasted for centuries and are exceptionally close, partnerlike and brotherly" and have a "spiritual dimension."⁴⁸⁰ Koštunica as prime minister favored becoming part of the EU's Stabilization and Association Agreement

478 Putin said that "One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies it imposes on other nations." Putin's speech at Munich Security Conference, 10 February 2007. see full text of the speech at http://www.securityconference.de/archive/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2007=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&id=179&

479 Janusz Bugajski, *Expanding Eurasia – Russia's European Ambitions*, CSIS, Washington, 2008, p. 155.

480 *NIN*, 18 December 2008

(SAA)—an agreement to enhance trade and political links with the EU and to clear the way for Serbia to eventually be considered for membership in the European Union—until Putin’s speech in Munich in March 2007, after which Koštunica did a U-turn and rejected the SAA.

Wolfgang Petritsch, the European Union’s former ambassador to Serbia and the High Representative in Bosnia, has criticized the West not only for its procrastination over Kosovo, which delayed a determination of its final status, but also for its insensitive handling of Russia in the post-Cold War period, which has encouraged Russian assertiveness over the Balkans.⁴⁸¹ Other observers, however, see Russia’s engagement in the Balkans in a different light. Dimitrije Trenjin, a foreign relations expert from the Carnegie Foundation in Moscow, thinks that Russia is staging its comeback in the Balkans and the Black Sea region without “territorial ambitions” but by “hoisting its banner high over oil and gas pipelines.”⁴⁸² According to Trenjin, Russian interest in building oil and gas pipelines across the Balkans is connected to the prospect of the Balkan countries becoming members of the European Union, which is not contrary to Russian claims that the EU membership for the Balkan states is welcome, but always had a problem with NATO expansion. Serbia is the only country that is still resisting NATO membership and responding positively to Russia’s efforts to strengthen its presence in the region.⁴⁸³

The United States and Western Europe bear some responsibility for the political power accrued by Koštunica, especially after 2003. After Đinđić’s assassination, the government he had headed was brought down amid charges of corruption and criminality. EU and U.S. representatives in Belgrade accepted these charges as true, thereby strengthening the position of Koštunica, who went on to become the next prime minister. In general, after Milošević’s removal in 2000 there was agreement in the West to consider Serbia a newly minted democracy

481 Wolfgang Petritsch, Russia, Kosovo and Europe, *Sudosteuropa Mitteilungen*, January 2008

482 *Monitor*, 29. February 2008.

483 *Ibid.*

that should be rapidly readmitted into the community of nations with full access to international financial institutions and governing bodies. And Koštunica was perceived as a true democrat.⁴⁸⁴ Having misinterpreted Milošević's downfall as a rejection of his policy by the entire Serbian nation, and hopeful that Serbia might soon realize its putative democratic potential as a member of the European Union and NATO, Washington and Brussels turned a blind eye to the fact that Serbia was transitioning not to a democratic state, but to a gangster state. However, Serbia's elites proved incapable of identifying modern values (such as democracy and the rule of law) as national interests, and instead continued to seek territorial expansion. Washington and Brussels stood by while Belgrade worked to destabilize Kosovo and Bosnia, to illegally partition northern Kosovo, and to vilify Albanians in the international press as the only source of violence in the Balkans.

By doggedly pursuing the Greater Serbia project, Serbia's elites have brought the country to the brink of socioeconomic collapse. Since Kosovo's declaration of independence, the state of Serbia has been actually giving up Kosovo step by step while disguising that process with rhetoric to the contrary. The global financial crisis, which diminished the flow of foreign aid to a bankrupt Serbia, has laid bare the reality that Serbia does not have the capacity to manage Kosovo. Its aspirations for partition are also becoming less and less realistic. It is obvious that on its way to EU membership Serbia will have to recognize regional realities, which includes an independent Kosovo. Serbia's top officials did not strongly campaign against Kosovar Serbs' participation in local elections in Kosovo in November 2009 and a considerable number of Serbs in Central Kosovo went to the polls and thus became a constituent part of Kosovo's sociopolitical reality. However, Kosovo will still play a role in the consciousness of Serbia as a part of its grievances over lost territories. The amputation of Kosovo is not the problem in itself; it is more that compensation in Bosnia was not achieved.

484 Koštunica was on *Time* magazine's 2001 short list for Statesman of the Year.

Serbia: Between Europe and Backwardness

This chapter discusses how the Serbian elites' pursuit of territorial expansion over the past thirty years ended in military defeat and in the demoralization and general criminalization of Serbian society. It also explains why, despite the heavy loss of life, including on the Serbian side, the devastation of the region as a whole and the political departure (and subsequent death) of Milošević, these elites still hanker after some form of Greater Serbia.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Serbian nationalism took on an even more conservative form, pushing Serbia ever further away from modern trends and values. The brutal removal of the first democratic premier, Zoran Đinđić, shows how deep the resistance to modernization runs.

The legacy of crime, genocide, and waging war on four fronts will burden Serbia and its relations in the region for a long time unless it comes to terms with the new reality and faces the catastrophic consequences of Milošević's policy honestly. Serbia continues to pursue a policy of consolidating an ethnic state while relying on the SPC and the Army and, to a large extent, Russia. Regardless of her aspirations in the Balkans, Russia has not been able to fulfill the expectations of the Serbian elites.

Much of the blame for Serbia's failure to abandon its dreams of a Greater Serbia rests with the international community, which expected to see democratic changes in Serbia almost overnight when

Milošević fell from power, and which failed to quickly appreciate the real direction in which Serbia was heading. Notably, it failed to understand that the election of Vojislav Koštunica in 2000 meant a continuation of the old policy; instead, it welcomed Koštunica as a democratic president who had won the world's unqualified support. Not until 2008, when it accepted Kosovo's declaration of independence, did the international community permit the final break-up of Yugoslavia, thus creating a framework for the consolidation of the region.

Post-October 2000 Serbia was focused on preserving its military gains (Republika Srpska especially) while dealing with Milošević's legacy of a corrupt state, a tottering economy, and devastated institutions. It also struggled to end its ten-year isolation from the international community, as well as the self-imposed isolation that had kept it away from the regional networks and processes of European integration. Internal differences within the Democratic Coalition that came to power after Milošević began to deepen, especially over cooperation with The Hague Tribunal and strategies for the country's future. From the very beginning, Premier Zoran Đinđić was clearly pushing a pro-European strategy, whereas FRY President Vojislav Koštunica was doing all in his power to safeguard Milošević's cronies and the old structures in the police, the army, and the judiciary.

Confrontation between these two diametrically opposed options obstructed the postwar transition and left Serbia lagging behind the rest of the region (especially after the assassination of Đinđić). It became increasingly evident that, without substantial assistance from the EU, Serbia would be unable to distance itself economically, politically, and morally from its recent past.

DEFEAT OF THE TERRITORIAL PRETENSIONS

During the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY, or Hague Tribunal) at The Hague indicted Slobodan Milošević on charges of crimes against humanity and genocide. The indictment was later enlarged to include crimes committed in Croatia and Bosnia. He was extradited to The Hague by a reformist Serbian government in June 2001 and his trial began in February 2002. Just over four years later, he died, still in the tribunal's custody.

Milošević died before the tribunal could pass judgment on him. His demise came as a blessing to Serbian nationalists because they could claim that he died an innocent man, a martyr to the Serbian cause. The public in Serbia, however, is largely unaware of the tribunal's decision of June 16, 2004, in which it dismissed a motion for acquittal, explaining: "The Trial Chamber holds that there is sufficient evidence that there existed a joint criminal enterprise, which included members of the Bosnian Serbian leadership, the aim and intention of which was to destroy a part of the Bosnian Muslims as a group, and that its participants committed genocide in Brčko, Prijedor, Sanski Most, Srebrenica, Bijeljina, Ključ and Bosanski Novi."⁴⁸⁵ Milošević's complicity in war crimes was further indicated by the ICTY's verdict of February 26, 2009, when it found five former high-ranking Yugoslav and Serbian political, military, and police officials guilty of crimes against humanity committed in Kosovo in 1999. This judgment establishes responsibility for the joint criminal enterprise that was to have made possible the creation of a Greater Serbia. One of the men found guilty, Nikola Šainović, was described in the judgment as "one of the closest and most trusted associates of Milošević" and a "key participant in the joint [criminal] enterprise."

485 "Miloševiću dokazan genocid u Bosni" (Genocide Proved in Milošević's Trial), Međupresuda Haškog tribunala od 16. juna 2004, Sarajevo, 2007. (Amici Curiae asked for Judgment of Acquittal (3 March 2004), Prosecution response to the Amici Curiae Motion for Judgment of Acquittal Pursuant to Rule 98 bis (3 May 2004)

The trials of Radovan Karadžić, Bosnian Serb leader, Jovica Stanišić, former head of the Serbian secret police, and Momčilo Perišić, former chief of the General Staff of the Army of Yugoslavia—still in progress at the time of writing this (winter 2009–2010)—are likely to yield further evidence of the criminal nature of the Greater Serbia project spearheaded by Milošević.

However, the removal of Milošević did not mean the end of the Greater-State project. The election of Vojislav Koštunica was a guarantee that the Serbian elites would try to satisfy their territorial appetites by other (diplomatic) means, above all in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Time has shown that Milošević was not the inventor or sole director of the belligerent nationalism that gripped Serbia toward the end of the twentieth century. He was merely a person well chosen to mobilize Serbs throughout the former Yugoslavia to fight for a project that had been defined long before he came to power.

Serbia's elites long regarded both the first and the second Yugoslavias as extended Serbian states whose populations included mere tenants with national aspirations for emancipation. At the same time, from the point of view of many Serbian nationalists, Yugoslavia was an ideal arrangement for solving the Serbian national question because all Serbs would be under the umbrella of one state framework, which was the main goal of the Serbian elite. Now that Yugoslavia has been consigned to history, these elites lament the decision to form Yugoslavia in 1918. Dobrica Ćosić, the chief advocate of a unitary Yugoslavia and the principal champion of the Serbian national program during the 1990s, spoke out on the matter:

If there is among the Serbs today anything of more general import on which they agree, then that is the belief that of all the European peoples who struggled to liberate themselves during the twentieth century, we made the greatest sacrifices for freedom, national unification, and

social advancement. And it was precisely that same century that ended in [our] gravest and longest-lasting defeats as a nation, in the loss of everything we regarded as our victories in the First and Second World Wars. In spite of all our suffering as a nation and human beings, we're appearing before the world as a nation of war criminals on trial for "criminal complicity with the object of creating a Greater Serbia"—something we didn't fight for either in the great world wars or in the Yugoslav civil wars.

We paid in over two million lives to create and preserve Yugoslavia; its destruction cost us nearly one-quarter of our territory; hundreds of thousands of people were driven out of their centuries-old dwellings; hundreds of thousands of highly educated young Serb men and women have been scattered all over the world; once a "nation of heroes," we have become a "nation of oldsters" veering towards demographic catastrophe.⁴⁸⁶

Such rueful analyses do not—or should not—obscure the fact that Serbia itself was the main cause of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Preparations to refashion Yugoslavia according to Serbia's wishes had been long and elaborate—and the struggle has even now not been abandoned. One can identify four phases in the campaign to create a new Serbian state:

Phase 1: Determining the objectives and strategy of Serbia's destruction of the AVNOJ foundations of Tito's Yugoslavia, a period lasting from the fall of Ranković in 1966 to the constitutional reforms of 1976.

Phase 2: Preparing the project, an undertaking involving Serbia's intellectual, clerical, and political elites. The strike against Yugoslavia was prepared systematically, especially after Tito's death in 1980.

486 "Nijedan Srbin uzalud da ne pogine," („Not one Serb should be killed in vain") *Večernje novosti*, 1–2 January 2009.

Phase 3: Executing the project, which started in 1989 with the onslaught on Vojvodina, the legalization of the populist movement, and the announcement, at a rally in Kosovo, of a war to reestablish hegemony over Yugoslavia in a crusade for a Greater Serbia.

Phase 4: Persevering with the process—in spite of the defeats sustained in the 1990s—by seeking to incorporate Republika Srpska (RS) into Serbia. Efforts to realize this ambition will continue until the international community helps Bosnia to become a functional state, which necessitates a revision of the Dayton Accords and the elimination of the ethnic principle as the key principle for building the Bosnian state.

Serbia's warlike project had the backing of the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) and the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ministartstvo unutrašnjih poslova, MUP); the secret services in both the YPA and the MUP played a crucial role in preparations for war. Yet for all its military superiority, Serbia failed to crush the resistance of the other Yugoslav peoples, who proved to be more resolute opponents than Serbia had anticipated and whose commitment to the cause of their independence and liberation from Serbian aspirations earned them international sympathy. Because the international community was reluctant to see Yugoslavia dissolve, Serbia succeeded for a time in being seen as the country's defender. As evidence of Serbia's culpability in the break-up of Yugoslavia grew stronger, so did Serbian efforts to hold the secessionist republics of Slovenia and Croatia responsible for Yugoslavia's fate. At the same time, Serbs also grew yet more convinced that they were the victims of a worldwide conspiracy against Serbia.

The project itself and the ideology behind it is still firmly rooted in Serbia's elites. The Hague Tribunal has not concerned itself with the role of academics, the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC), the writers' and journalists' associations, or the cultural elites. Because their actions have not been condemned on moral grounds, either in Serbia

or abroad, these groups are able to continue their activities in the post-Milošević period. Their continuing influence on the country's cultural norms and moral values is the main obstacle to establishing a moral framework indispensable to the recovery of Serbian society.

SERBIAN NATIONALISM AND A POLICY OF WAR

The Collapse of Communism and the Rise of Radical Nationalism

All the complex socialist federations (Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) disintegrated after the collapse of Communism because they lacked the democratic potential needed for their survival and transformation into democratic societies. Yugoslavia faced an additional existential problem in that the country had always sought to preserve cohesion by constantly playing upon the alleged aggressive designs of foreign powers and by glorifying the accomplishments of its socialist system. When the Cold War drew to a close, however, international players promptly relinquished Yugoslavia as a geostrategic priority and Yugoslav claims (made by the YPA in the first place) of foreign threats became patently false claims. At the same time, few in Europe seemed to mourn the disappearance of the Soviet ideological system. Thus the appeal of “socialist accomplishments” rang very hollow both inside and outside Yugoslavia.

Perhaps Yugoslavia might have made the transformation nonetheless, because at least some of the preconditions for such a change existed: The Yugoslav economy was already partly a market economy and the country's ties with the West were significant (it was on the verge of entering into an association agreement with the European Community, being granted observer status in the Council of Europe and establishing special ties with NATO). Political elites in the socialist Yugoslavia missed the historical opportunity, however, and failed to live up to and to build upon the promising parts of the

socialist legacy. Serbia especially was not ready to embark on Yugoslavia's transformation, and Serbia's alliance with parts of Yugoslavia's conservative and dogmatic governing apparatus (the YPA and secret services) ensured that Yugoslavia would not have a peaceful transformation.

The collapse of Communism in Yugoslavia created an ideological vacuum into which nationalism stepped. In some parts of the Soviet bloc, nationalism played a constructive role in the transition to democratization; in some cases, however, it triggered conflict. In Yugoslavia, multiple nationalisms found themselves confronting one another. Some sought greater autonomy from Belgrade and the opportunity to develop democratic societies; Serbia, though, saw such moves as threats to itself. The policy of war was Serbia's response to the unstoppable process of Yugoslavia's decentralization and democratization in the face of the other republics' increasing autonomy.

In 1990, while historian Eric Hobsbawm⁴⁸⁷ was predicting a resurgence of nationalism as a reaction to the liberalization of former socialist societies, Serbian nationalists concluded that the time was ripe to implement their ambitions for a nation state (i.e., an ethnic state). The ensuing surge of Serbian nationalism, skilfully whipped up by the media, mobilized the Serbian people throughout Yugoslavia, from Croatia to Bosnia to Kosovo. The fact that events succeeded each other so rapidly that other republics had little time to organize and respond adequately indicates that the scene was set for the Serbs to tear Yugoslavia apart. Serbian Communism met its tragic end in radical Serbian nationalism—which left a bloody trail throughout Yugoslavia.⁴⁸⁸

487 Eric Hobsbawm, *Nation and Nationalism since 1780: Program, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

488 Some analysts argue that it was populists (*narodnjaci*), rather than nationalists, who propelled the wave of secessionist sentiment. These populists proclaimed themselves to be “nationalists,” but in reality their ambitions had more to do with creating a mass

The wars in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo ended only with international intervention. Croatia was recognized as a state only after Vukovar, Dubrovnik, and other Croatian towns had been devastated, and the so-called Serbian Republic of Krajina had been established. The war in Bosnia ended after the largest massacre in Europe since World War II, the slaughter of about eight thousand civilians in Srebrenica. The Dayton Accords acknowledged the ethnic division resulting from the genocidal policy against the Bosniak people. NATO intervention halted Milošević's attempt to create a similar situation in Kosovo, which would have undermined the stability of the Balkans as a whole.

Serbia's policy of war produced staggering consequences throughout the region. The outcome of the "all Serbs in one state" agenda was devastating, not only for others in the region but also for Serbs themselves. Although the loss in human life may never be accurately established, there is general agreement that about 100,000 casualties is the minimal figure, while some estimates put the number of dead at more than 215,000. The numbers of refugees and displaced persons in Croatia in 1991 totaled more than 500,000; in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995 the comparable number was almost 2.5 million. In Serbia, many people belonging to national minorities were driven out of the country: some 60,000 Croats, 50,000 Hungarians, and 300,000 Albanians. They were joined by 300,000 other Serbian citizens, mostly young people, who emigrated either for economic reasons or to avoid being called up to active duty. Although most of the 800,000 Albanians expelled from Kosovo during the NATO intervention returned, many stayed abroad. Some 4.4 million people, or 20 percent of the population of the former Yugoslavia, were resettled by war. The indirect economic damage inflicted on the region as a whole

base of support for themselves than with forming a nation-state. Toni Kuzmančić "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and Succession: Populism, Rather Than Nationalism," collection of papers "The Violent Break-up of Yugoslavia: Causes, Dynamics and Consequences," edited by Miroslav Hadžić, Center for Civil-Military Relations, Belgrade, 2004.

has been estimated at \$125 billion.⁴⁸⁹ In addition, the war witnessed an explosion of organized crime that still plagues a region that has become a byword for trafficking in humans, narcotics, and arms.

A Historical Aversion to a Confederal Yugoslavia

The transformation of Yugoslavia into a loose federation or a confederation was not acceptable to the Serbian nationalists. To them, “Yugoslavia was only a means of solving the Serb question,” and thus they accepted only a centralist and unitary Yugoslavia.⁴⁹⁰ But such a Yugoslavia was never what other peoples wanted. Since the creation of the first Yugoslavia in 1918, Serbs have been adamantly opposed to any federal arrangement and to the principle of consultation to reach agreement among the republics and provinces. True, Serbs were later content with the federalization of socialist Yugoslavia, but only insofar as it guaranteed Serbian domination. Once such a Yugoslavia was challenged, in 1966, at the Brioni Plenum, Serbian nationalists began increasingly to look to a historical alternative, namely the idea of a Greater Serbia.

The creation of a Greater Serbia necessitated expansion in a northwesterly direction to incorporate one-third of the territory of Croatia and two-thirds of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The idea, hatched by Dobrica Ćosić and his clique, was widely embraced by the Serbian elite in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Without their support, Milošević would not have stood a chance of persuading the Serbian people to support a belligerent policy of building a Greater Serbia.

Although the Serbian national agenda triggered the wars in Yugoslavia, the Serbian nationalists insisted that the 1974 Constitution was primarily to blame because it confederalized Yugoslavia and thereby called into question the legitimacy of the republics’

489 Žarko Papić, *Bosna i Balkan, Mogućnosti i uslovi oporavka* (Bosnia and the Balkans, Prospects and Conditions for Recovery), Sarajevo, Bosna Forum 17/02, pp. 43–45.

490 Almost the entire Serb nation was encompassed in the former SFRY. Europe, and especially the Balkans, knew of no such precedent.

borders. In retrospect, however, the 1974 Constitution was an avant-garde instrument: It foresaw the development of complex communities such as the European Union. As Kalypso Nicolaidis, director of the European Studies Center at Oxford University, has commented, a constitution such as that of the European Union “appeals to a political philosophy of its own—transnational pluralism—rather than to some extended notion of the nation-states.”⁴⁹¹ To understand the EU as a democracy, one must depart from mainstream constitutional thinking and make three conceptual shifts: such a democracy seeks the mutual recognition of all the members’ identities rather than a common identity; it promotes a community of projects, not a community of identity; and it shares governance horizontally, among states, rather than vertically, between states and the union.⁴⁹²

The Serbian nationalists were not prepared to make the effort required to create and maintain so complex a community. In 1991, the EU-sponsored Hague Conference proposed the reorganization of Yugoslavia as a loose federation of states in which civil rights for minorities would be guaranteed. Serbia did not accept this last-ditch effort to preserve the state framework of Yugoslavia.

Instead of seeking a solution through negotiation and consensus, Serbia spent the last decade of the twentieth century waging war to restructure the Balkans—to wrest control of the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Serbs believed that by reverting to pre-Communist, antidemocratic traditions, they could turn the clock back and refashion Yugoslavia on the self-image of a historically victorious power. Serbia continued to pursue this agenda in the early twenty-first century—though admittedly by more peaceful and diplomatic means, such as the activities of the SPC, which operates as a para-political organization; administrative measures designed to prevent the

491 Kalypso Nicolaidis, “We, the Peoples of Europe...”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. Nov-Dec 2004, p. 97–110

492 According to Kalypso Nicolaidis, the EU is neither a union of democracies nor a union as democracy; it is a union of states and peoples—a “democracy” in the making. *Foreign Affairs*, vol. Nov/Dec 2004, “We, the Peoples of Europe.”

return of refugees and enhance the marginalization of minorities by excluding them from political decision making; and cultural and educational policies that exclude minorities from Serbia's political and economic systems. The Serbian strategy today is essentially one of waiting for a more propitious international climate in which the Serbian question will be treated in a manner more sensitive to and consistent with Serbian interests.

In Pursuit of an Ethnic State

That there was a deliberate Serbian policy to create an ethnic state was confirmed at Slobodan Milošević's trial before the Hague Tribunal, which helped establish a detailed chronicle of the war. Milan Babić, the former president of the Republic of Serb Krajina (RSK) who had helped implement the Serbian agenda in Croatia, testified that the program had been prepared in detail by institutions such as the Army, the police, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU), and the media. The Hague Tribunal proceedings brought to the forefront the fact that ethnic cleansing was the object of the war, not its byproduct. According to Jovan Jovičić, law professor, this expedient was used to "rally all Serbs in one state"; the plan was for Republika Srpska (RS) and the RSK to unite with Serbia and Montenegro into the "United Serb Lands." Asked by Prosecutor Geoffrey Nice what the name of this state would be, witness Čedomir Popov, historian and a member of the Academy, replied that it would be called Serbia.⁴⁹³

To understand why Serbia tried to create a Serbian ethnic state, a project that could never have been accomplished without war and

493 During Milošević's trial, the media tried to devalue the admissions made by Hague Tribunal indictees, notably by Biljana Plavšić, a top Bosnian Serb leader, with the object of presenting them as the outcome of pressure from and deals with the Tribunal. Many witnesses have faced pressure to change their testimonies. In the Šešelj trial e.g. two prosecution witnesses Jovan Glamočanin and Aleksandar Stefanović changed sides and became witness for the defense. A protected witness in the Milošević case who identified Brana Crnčević as a person who armed Serbs from Krajina (Croatia) was killed in a car accident.

ethnic cleansing, one must bear in mind the unique legacy of Serbian military traditions. The Army's active role in political affairs is a constant factor in the modern history of Serbia and Yugoslavia and one of the nation's most prominent features throughout the twentieth century. The history of Serbian militarism is inseparable from the history of Serbian authoritarianism. During the last three decades of the twentieth century, the Army distinguished itself as guardian of the regime and the state ideology (i.e., Socialism), a role that suited the interests of the Serbian national elite. However, during this period, the Army often operated as an autonomous political actor in formulating national political goals.⁴⁹⁴ Had it not been for their reliance on the Army, the Serbian nationalists would not have been so thoroughly convinced that they would triumph.

Collaboration with the Serbian Orthodox Church

Milošević's advent to power marked the comeback of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC), which put its shoulder firmly behind the Serbian national program. The Serbian nation was built not upon the state framework within which the Serbian people lived, but by identification with the church to which the Serbs belonged. In other words, the Serbian nation came into being as an ethno-confessional rather than a civil community. Thus, the Serbian identity cannot be separated from the Serbian church. The SPC directly supported Slobodan Milošević by giving its blessing to his military campaigns and redrawing of borders. For his part, Milošević found a new source of legitimacy in the ethno-nationalist ideology of the SPC. In that sense, the SPC played a prominent part in rousing the ethno-nationalist and Greater Serbia fervor of the masses. At the same time, its unrestrained support of Milošević helped mobilize certain anti-Communist

494 Olga Popović-Obradović, *Vojna elita i civilna vlast u Srbiji 1903–1914. godine* (The Military Elite and Civil Government in Serbia in 1903–1914), 'Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. i 20. veka, Uloga elita' (Serbia in the 19th and 20th Century Modernization Processes, the Role of Elites), collected papers, Belgrade 2003.

segments of society. Yet, Milošević did not permit the institutionalization of the SPC's public role because his Socialist outlook inclined him to give the church no formal part in the state.

The SPC played a particularly active part during the war in Bosnia, being an important part of Republika Srpska's power structure and criticizing Milošević whenever he backed away from his war aims and sought to accommodate the international community, as for instance during the Dayton talks. Dissatisfied with the concessions Milošević made in Dayton, the SPC withdrew its "authorization" (which it had earlier given in the form of a signed memo) for Milošević to act for all Serbs during the talks.

When Milošević suffered defeat, the amalgam of communism and nationalism fell apart and was replaced by a right-wing ethno-nationalism, with the SPC playing the leading role. Koštunica gave the SPC a dominant public role as he hastily abandoned secular principles in the spheres of public life and matters of state. The SPC was entrusted with shaping the identity of the nation and the culture of the young. In a ruined society suffering from a crisis of identity, the SPC wielded great influence despite the fact that the values the SPC promotes—archaism, collectivism, anti-Westernism, and xenophobia, along with extreme intolerance of people with different views—are contrary to the principles of modern society.

The Role of Russia

Throughout its history, Serbia has looked to Russia and the wider Orthodox world for support. The 1990s were no exception to this pattern. Indeed, Serbian nationalists not only expected Russia (whether incarnated as the Soviet Union or as the Russian Federation) to lend its support to their cause before and during the wars of the 1990s, but also have continued to see Russia as their champion in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Milošević tried to return Yugoslavia to the centralist model that had been in operation until 1966 and expected that Russia would support this course out of ideological and strategic considerations. Indeed, Milošević even expected that Russia would back the Serbian cause militarily, if necessary.

After Milošević left Belgrade for The Hague, many political leaders continued to embrace a pro-Russian, anti-Western position. Koštunica's attitude toward Russia was of considerable importance in his selection (by the old centers of power such as the military, the Academy, and the SPC) as a candidate for the presidency. Both as FRY president and as Serbian prime minister, Koštunica pursued a pro-Russian policy, which came to full expression in 2006 when he instituted a policy in which Serbia proclaimed it was neutral but would at the same time rely on Russia.⁴⁹⁵ Koštunica abandoned the strategy of Serbia's rapprochement with the EU and, in December 2007, turned down a stabilization and association agreement with the EU due to the EU's insistence on Serbia's full cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. His move coincided with Russia's return to the international stage as a major energy power.

Trust in the illusion that Russia would act in defense of Serbian territorial interests influenced the perceptions of the Serbian nationalists and their preparations for war. Serbian nationalists believed that it was only Russia's loss of world-power status which had prevented it from committing itself in the 1990s in the Balkans on a large scale. A segment of the Russian elite fueled hopes in Serbia that Russia would return to the international stage as a world power in its own right and encouraged Serbia to persevere in its resistance to the

495 The National Assembly of Serbia adopted a Resolution on neutrality on 16 December 2007. It stated that "due to the overall role of NATO, from the illegal bombing of Serbia in 1999 without Security Council resolution until annex 11 of the rejected Ahtisaari plan stipulating that NATO should be the 'final authority' in the 'independent state of Kosovo', National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia decided to declare armed neutrality in relation to the existing military alliances until an eventual referendum when the final decision on that issue would be passed"

international community. With Putin and Koštunica in power in the early twenty-first century, the Russian-Serbian connection was strong.

In consolidating Russia as a global power, Putin made skilful use of the unfinished process of the break-up of Yugoslavia. Interestingly, in spite of declaring that the preservation of the FRY was in its interests, Russia quickly recognized an independent Montenegro and urged Koštunica to follow suit. In the case of Kosovo, Russia sought to manipulate the situation there with a view to controlling similar situations closer to home. In June 2008, Russia blocked a Security Council resolution designed to replace Resolution 1244; the new resolution would have accorded Kosovo full recognition as an independent state, with membership in the United Nations. The move gave rise to hopes in Serbia that Russia would play the role of Serbia's diplomatic protector, especially with regard to the partition of Kosovo and Bosnia. These hopes have been stoked by Russian arguments that Republika Srpska has the right to follow the precedent set by Kosovo and secede.

Russia's motives in the Balkans are economic and strategic. Economically, it wants to develop closer ties with the Balkans, especially in the energy field. Strategically, it seeks to assert its continuing relevance as an actor in the region (for instance, it challenges the Europe Union to demonstrate that it has the mechanisms to maintain order in the Balkans), even though it refrains from engaging wholeheartedly there.

Financing the War

Yugoslavia's armaments industry—a hypertrophied sector of the economy for a country with a relatively small population—was a top earner of foreign exchange. Its factories, controlled by the YPA and located mainly in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, made infantry and other light weapons and modern tanks, guns, and electronic

equipment. The military industry continued to operate at a profit through the early 1980s while the rest of the Yugoslav economy was in recession. Large arms exports—including exports to rogue states⁴⁹⁶—continued under Milošević following the break-up of the country because several crucial plants, such as aircraft and tank production facilities, were moved from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Serbia so that their earnings could continue to fund the regime in Belgrade.⁴⁹⁷

The hyperinflation of 1992–94, a major source of cash for Milošević and his coterie, exemplified the plunderous nature of both the war and the Milošević regime. It was set into motion primarily by the theft of state foreign exchange reserves to finance the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to support the RS and the RSK. A crucial link in the financing of the war was the Federal Customs Office (SUC) under Mihalj Kertes, a loyal friend of Milošević. From 1994 until 2000, the financial arrangements for keeping the Army and the Serbian MUP supplied with equipment were worked out by Milošević and senior Serbian officials Nikola Šainović, Milan Milutinović, and Mihalj Kertes. Large sums were stashed away in off-shore hideouts with the full cooperation of the Secret Service.⁴⁹⁸

In addition to hitting hardest the weakest party to the conflict (i.e., the Bosniaks), international sanctions and the UN arms embargo (imposed in September 1991 under UN Resolution 713) created a huge black market and hitherto undreamed-of possibilities for individuals, especially those close to the regime, to amass fabulous wealth. Many wanted the war to last as long as possible because it was a source of enormous profit. The corrupt financial practices

496 Serbia's and RS's arms exports to Iraq and other rogue countries are dealt with exhaustively by the International Crisis Group in its 2002 report on the Orao affair; see <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1247&l=1>

497 For instance, the Military-Technical Institute at Potoci near Mostar was transferred completely to the Milan Blagojević plant at Lučani in western Serbia in 1992.

498 Financial expert Morten Torkildsen prepared an exhaustive report on this for the Hague Tribunal, see www.un.org/icty, see also "Milošević vs Yugoslavia", ed. Sonja Biserko, Helsinki Committee, Belgrade 2004, p. 211–253.

of Milošević, his cronies, and the Secret Service and their efforts to redistribute the country's wealth were major factors in the Balkan wars. (The scale of the corruption can be gauged from the fact that at the time of the break-up of Yugoslavia, the state foreign exchange reserves amounted to nearly \$10 billion. By the end of 1997, these reserves, kept at the central bank in Belgrade, had dwindled to \$300 million. Most of the money ended up in Yugoslav banks in Cyprus as part of a global money laundering scheme.)⁴⁹⁹

The legacy of war profiteering continues to hinder postwar reconstruction in the region.⁵⁰⁰ The new financial elite that came to power after Milošević, including some of Milošević's close friends, has persistently obstructed a fundamental transformation of the Serbian economy. Its opposition to institutional changes and legislation sustains a lucrative "grey economy." The wars gave an enormous boost to illegal practices such as trafficking in narcotics, humans, arms, untaxed goods (cigarettes and alcohol), and migrant labor. And the businessmen who grew rich in illegal trading during the 1990s continue to wield great power. In the 2000s, crime has shifted from the domain of war to the domain of politics—and is the number-one problem of postwar reconstruction.

499 Part of the money remained in Cyprus to finance Belgrade companies, various businesses connected with Milošević, and secret financial and intelligence operations. The rest was apparently successfully laundered and transferred to lawful accounts in banks in western Europe, the Middle East, and eastern Asia. Borka Vučić, one of Yugoslavia's foremost bankers and expert in large financial transactions, was the mastermind managing Milošević's illegal banking empire in Cyprus. Born in 1927, she became a top Yugoslav financial expert in the 1960s and was Milošević's personal banker. Milošević vs Yugoslavia, (Expert Report by Morten Torkildsen) ed. Sonja Biserko, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Belgrade 2003, p. 214 – 260.

500 See, for instance, a special issue of *Problems of Post-Communism* on transnational crime and conflict in the Balkans, especially Peter Andreas, "Criminalized Legacies of War: The Clandestine Political Economy of the Western Balkans," *Problems of Post-Communism* 51, no.3 (May-June 2004): 39.

**PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MEME CHOSE:
THE ALLIANCE OF ELITES AND THE FALL OF MILOŠEVIĆ**

The West's illusions about Serbia's democratic potential and Serbia's capacity to play a constructive leading role in the Balkans in the wake of the ouster of Milošević in October 2000 were shattered by the assassination of prime minister Zoran Đinđić in March 2003. Any attempt to understand Serbia in the early twenty-first century must proceed from an understanding of the period between October 5, 2000, when hundreds of thousands of disenchanted and frustrated Serbs converged on Belgrade to demand that Milošević step down from the presidency, and 2008, when Vojislav Koštunica finally stepped down.

In spite of the international community's keen desire to bring Serbia back into its fold after Milošević's downfall, the Serbs continued to misunderstand the new international order; in turn, the rest of the world continued to misjudge Serbia. No other country was offered such favorable Council of Europe accession terms as was Serbia. The EU unrolled a red carpet for the new democratic government in the hope that it would make a clean break with the Milošević regime. But the international community may have been overly impressed by the enormous hopeful energy generated by October 5 and unable to make a strategic distinction between the protagonists, especially two key ones: Vojislav Koštunica, who took over as president, and Zoran Đinđić, who assumed the role of prime minister. The international community failed to throw its weight behind the reformist political forces spearheaded by Đinđić and mistakenly believed that Koštunica was a democratically-minded leader.

Milošević's resignation as president two days after the demonstrations in Belgrade was the result not only of those mass protests, but also of deals struck between Milošević's staunchest allies (the Army, the police, and his closest associates) and the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (the DOS—a coalition of anti-Milošević forces,

including the Democratic Party headed by Đinđić and the Democratic Party of Serbia headed by Koštunica). These deals—lubricated with Western political and financial support—created an “alliance of elites” who orchestrated the nonviolent replacement of Milošević. The choice of Koštunica as presidential candidate, supported by SANU, (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Art or Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti), the SPC, and the Yugoslav Army, was calculated to prevent post-October 5 Serbia from abandoning Milošević’s national policy. The manner in which presidential power was transferred in the wake of October 5 allowed the newly reconfigured elite to build upon Milošević’s policies, especially in terms of perpetuating the nationalist agenda, and consequently to maintain criminal and repressive state and parastatal structures.

Serbia’s society can never be truly integrated into the wider European community until it distances itself from the crimes committed by the Milošević régime. This is the only way to affirm the rule of law and make a moral break with the past. Yet the reconfigured political elite lacked the moral credibility to inspire and lead such a bold step. The same conservative circles that had created and then—in league with the mafia, a force that by 2000 permeated Serbian society—removed Milošević resisted the new era’s trends. They strongly opposed change, arguing that by embracing new values—democracy and pluralism—Serbs would destroy their traditional solidarity and the country would be sold to foreigners for the benefit of international financial circles. At the same time, the elite either denied the existence of a Greater Serbia agenda or blamed the “inferior” status of Serbia in Yugoslavia, as well as war crimes, on the former Communist regime.⁵⁰¹

501 In a guest appearance on TV Studio B in January 2003, Faculty of Law Professor Radoslav Stojanović said he had nothing against the Hague Tribunal because “the Communist crimes are being tried there for the first time.” He regarded the Milošević regime as the successor of the Communist regime, ignoring the fact that Milošević received plebiscitary support—that is, from both Communists and non-Communists—to carry out the Serb national program.

The political and economic system that developed during the thirteen years of Milošević's rule, which could be described as nationalistic and oligarchic, remained dominant. This symbiosis of state, societal, and private interests was reflected in the existence of three kinds of property (state, social, and private). Cases of government ministers doubling as company directors abounded. Arbitrary economic legislation led to rampant corruption, and monetary and banking policy in particular were fine-tuned to serve specific state and private interests.

For several months after the departure of Milošević, Serbia lived in a state of political suspension characterized by stop-gap measures. The oligarchy tolerated the new government while opposing internal political and economic reform.

The ambitious government of prime minister Đinđić enjoyed no real support because a new constitution and institutional reforms would upset the closely interwoven network of interests and forces in Serbia. Attempts to reform the security and judiciary sectors stood little chance of success for the same reason.⁵⁰²

International hopes that Koštunica's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2001, would expose the truth about Serbian responsibility for the war endured for far too long. Alex Boraine, who had played an important role in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (and who founded the International Center for Transitional Justice in New York), was named a counselor to the Commission but he soon became aware that its strategy was not to deal with Serbia's recent past but to relativize the responsibility of all sides in the conflict. Thus, for instance, the Commission looked at events within a very broad historical context, reaching back to World War I in an attempt to justify the wars of the 1990s.

502 Vladimir Gligorov, "Reforme u Srbiji i Crnoj Gori: Stanje i perspective" (Reforms in Serbia and Montenegro: The State of Affairs and Prospects). The study is discussed in a special supplement of the weekly *Ekonomist* under the title "Kako dalje—reforme u Srbiji" (Serbian Reforms—What Next?), 2004.

Koštunica never condemned Milošević's policy of war and never made a positive statement about the Hague Tribunal. He opposed extraditing Milošević to the Hague Tribunal because he regarded it as a political rather than as a legal institution, as an American tribunal rather than an international court. While serving as prime minister, he construed cooperation with the Hague Tribunal as "voluntary surrender."⁵⁰³ Far from distancing himself from the Greater Serbia agenda, Koštunica he availed himself of every opportunity to refer to the RS as a Serbian state temporarily separated from Serbia. His first visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina as president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was preceded by the statements "it is not normal that Serb towns should be abroad"⁵⁰⁴ and "the Drina is the backbone of the Serb people."⁵⁰⁵

Prime minister Đinđić and his government did try to harness the energy generated by October 5. The results were impressive in view of the tenacity with which the champions of continuity blocked attempts at reform. Đinđić played a singular role in formulating pro-reform policies, and sought to distance his government from the policy of war and war crimes. The government took some concrete action toward fundamentally transforming the country, as well as toward ending its isolation from the international community. The greatest progress was made in the economic and educational spheres, and the Đinđić government was praised by the West for its liberal approach. Unfortunately, Koštunica found it easy to halt this progress after Đinđić's death because Đinđić's government lacked strong political backing.

The assassination of Đinđić on March 12, 2003, was followed by an involution, a throwback to the policy of ethno-nationalism, and a rejection of any genuine confrontation with the past and cooperation

503 *www.b92.net*, 5 September 2004

504 Borba, 3 October 2000

505 *Ibid.*

with the Hague Tribunal. The restoration of nationalism was legitimized by the 2003 elections; this time the oligarchy appeared to be internationally legitimized. The process of Serbia's democratic transition was halted.

In December 2003, a new minority government was formed and Koštunica was eventually named prime minister in March 2004. The new government offered no strategy for breaking away from ethno-nationalism; on the contrary, ethno-nationalism was again established as a political ideology dominating society and the state. None of the key points of Milošević's national program were disavowed or abandoned. The Serbian government's insistence on a partition of Kosovo reflected a historical victory of ethno-national ideology within Serbian society, while the government's attitude toward Montenegro, Vojvodina, Kosovo, and Republika Srpska nurtured the idea of pan-Serb unification. Despite the fact that Montenegro became independent in 2006, Belgrade has continued to hope that this status proves only temporary; as of 2009, Montenegro and Macedonia were still not considered foreign countries.⁵⁰⁶ The notion of ethnic boundaries has survived intact in the minds of the Serbian elite.

THE MAFIA-LIKE SECURITY SERVICES AND THE UNTOUCHABLE ARMY

Milošević corrupted nearly everybody to ensure his survival in power. Most citizens, for instance, made their living in the black economy and did not pay taxes—a situation which the state tolerated. Corruption became particularly prevalent in the state security apparatus, which was closely involved with organized crime. The involvement of the MUP and, especially, the DB (Državna bezbednost or State Security) in all kinds of criminal activities came to

506 Some Serb nationalists still regard Macedonia as southern Serbia. Their plans to partition Kosovo include designs to dismember Macedonia.

light soon after October 5.⁵⁰⁷ When Đinđić tried to confront the Red Berets—a special anti-terrorist unit created in 1991—over the unit’s links to war crimes and organized crime, the attempt cost him his life. The mastermind of his murder, Miodrag Legija Ulemek, had been groomed by Milošević into a powerful figure, his unit having been assigned an important part in dodging sanctions, generating war profits, and carrying out ethnic cleansing. The Red Berets had agreed in 2002 to do nothing to try to save Milošević, but Legija and his comrades were ready to assassinate the prime minister in an attempt to save themselves.

Just as the state’s internal security services have been able to maintain their privileged position despite Milošević’s ouster from power, so too has the Army. Closely associated with Milošević, the Army avoided a purge of its senior officers by finding patrons in the government that replaced him, notably, the newly elected federal president, Koštunica. The fact that General Nebojša Pavković, chief of the General Staff and Milošević’s crony, remained in office for several months, as did the chiefs of the Army counterintelligence and intelligence services (KOS and VOS), was proof that the Army could not be touched, especially by the inexperienced DOS politicians. The Army’s policy regarding war crimes was to sacrifice junior officers in order to protect the chief culprits. Another policy was for the Army publicly to distance itself from the secret police and the various paramilitary formations.

Only after joining NATO’s Partnership for Peace in 2006 did Serbs make a breakthrough in reforming the army by retiring all the officers who had taken part in recent wars. Although Serbia had not met all the preconditions for joining the security association, NATO member-states concluded that from a regional security standpoint, it

507 In March 2001, authorities discovered 623 kg of heroin (valued at \$300 million) in the vaults of the Belgrade branch of Komercijalna banka, a DB collaborator. It was clear that narcotics were a source of finance keeping the Milošević regime in existence.

would be better to “suck Serbia into” the system of collective security than to let it vacillate between the wishes of the conservative and the pro-reform camps. The conservatives continued to obstruct “silent” reform in the army. General Zdravko Ponoš, who was the standard-bearer of reforms, was removed in 2008 under pressure from the conservatives—who oppose any signs of the Europeanization of Serbia’s military—and probably from Russia, too—which was eager that Serbia not become a NATO member. Yet although reform was not comprehensive, preparations for transforming the Army were made. Substantial transformation, however, is not possible without the support of NATO.

The privileged position within Serbia that the Army and other elements of the security apparatus enjoy has been maintained in part by close ties to the new financial elite and in part through a skillful propaganda campaign conducted through the security services’ media outlets, which continue to shape public opinion by manufacturing lies (such as alleged CIA-orchestrated conspiracies against the Serbian people) and scandals, all of which has distorted society to a point where it is no longer capable of feeling any responsibility. Thanks to their status and position, the security services are helping to shape society—a society whose culture in turns celebrates their achievements.

A CULTURE THAT GLORIFIES WAR

Hopes that the fall of Milošević would produce major changes in the political and cultural spheres have failed to materialize. Politics and culture remain locked in a symbiotic relationship that fuels a refusal to reevaluate the past. Indeed, far from renouncing symbols of the country’s bloody, brutal, and ultra-nationalistic past—symbols such as the Chetnik movement of World War II and the men accused by the Hague Tribunal of war crimes in the 1990s—many Serbs are glorifying them.

Serbia is the only country in the region to renounce its anti-fascist past, having adopted a policy since 2000 of marginalizing the role played by the Communist partisans in World War II while declaring the Chetniks to have been a right-wing anti-fascist movement. This new nationalistic drive is accompanied by an energetic propaganda campaign in the media and in the field of publishing. Serbian nationalists are increasingly turning for ideological inspiration to such twentieth-century champions of conservative thought as Nikola Velimirović, Justin Popović, Dimitrije Ljotić, and Milan Nedić, who was prime minister of a Nazi-backed collaborationist regime in Serbia in World War II. The SPC plays a singularly important role as authoritative promoter of such values. The synthesis of Orthodox clericalism and an “organic” concept of society that was the distinguishing mark of Dimitrije Ljotić and his 1930s’ movement Zbor, has been revived by many political parties, especially Koštunica’s.

The systematic refusal to discuss Serbian accountability for the war and war crimes encourages the continual glorification of Hague Tribunal indictees as national heroes. Educational authorities are partly to blame for this trend: Serbian textbooks treat war crimes as natural and ordinary. Political parties with indictees nominally heading their election lists score heavily at the polls. Serbia’s intellectuals have condemned the West’s demands on Serbia, especially to cooperate with the Hague Tribunal, as a “specific kind of colonization”;⁵⁰⁸ they have argued that the West is enforcing a “colonial democracy,”⁵⁰⁹ an artificial social system that “is not a result of the country’s natural evolution” or “its internal conditions and laws.” The thesis that “Europe put Yugoslavia together and is now taking it apart”⁵¹⁰ is being disseminated to obscure Serbia’s responsibility for its own destruction.

508 *Ogledalo*, 2 February 2005

509 *Ibid.*

510 Dobrica Ćosić, *Večernje novosti*, 25 November 2008

Glorification of war and its protagonists, for example, Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić, is a regular occurrence at cultural events in the country. At the state-sponsored international book fair in October 2004, a novel by Karadžić became a hit overnight. All copies were snapped up in a matter of days; the book's promoter and publisher made daily guest appearances on television. Kosta Čavoški, an influential professor and president of the Radovan Karadžić Defense Committee, spoke at promotional events.⁵¹¹

When Karadžić was arrested in July 2008 in Belgrade, where he had been hiding under the name Dr. Dragan David Dabić, the patriotic circles became hysterical because Karadžić had been celebrated as a symbol of Serbdom and heroism. He was glorified as a man capable of standing up to the West, a man who was going to expose in The Hague the Western powers' primary responsibility for the break-up of Yugoslavia. „Patriotic Serbia“ took the arrest as an act of treason and evidence of Serbia's weakness and loss of identity and dignity. The government was accused in particular of hastening to comply with the Tribunal's request for his extradition to The Hague; had it waited a few months more, the argument ran, Karadžić would have been tried in Serbia instead of in The Hague.⁵¹² Momo Kapor, a writer and Karadžić's close friend, said „This is going to be the trial of the century, in comparison to which the notorious Dreyfus affair, of which Zola wrote, will look like appearing before a magistrate in connection with a parking offense.“⁵¹³ Kapor was referring

511 Another example of this celebration of men regarded as war criminals outside Serbia was the publication in 2004 of the novel *Gvozdeni rov* (The Iron Trench), allegedly written by Milorad Legija Ulemek, who has been sentenced to forty years' imprisonment for his role in the murder of former Yugoslav president Ivan Stambolić and forty years for organizing the assassination of prime minister Zoran Đinđić. He was a member of the paramilitary police unit JSO. Seventy thousand copies of *Gvozdeni rov* were sold in a few days when it first appeared. The novel offers a simplistic explanation of the Serb defeat, attributing it to a "conspiracy on the part of the Great Powers, who swooped down on Orthodoxy and especially on the Serbs, who after the First World War were the mother of the Balkans."

512 *Pečat*, 25 July, 2008

513 *Standard* (a weekly newspaper published in Belgrade), August 1, 2008

to Karadžić's intention to name in the courtroom the Western actors with whom he had been negotiating. Indeed, he spent almost a year trying to base his defense on the fact that he had an agreement with Richard Holbroke, the U.S. special envoy, to be amnestied from any ICTY indictment.

As most significant for shaping young people's minds, textbooks are used as a major instrument for interpreting historical events and developments, particularly those related to the recent past. According to Dubravka Stojanović, a historian, the need to redefine the whole past—the wars of the 1990s, Socialist Yugoslavia, World War II, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the emergence of Yugoslavia, World War I, “the golden age” of Serbian democracy in 1903–1914, the nineteenth century, the Turkish domination, the state of the Nemanjići—indicates that “playing with history” and “non-resolution of any salient issue” poses a great threat to a society, which has been stripped of all directions. Such a stance “leaves room for the imposition of an ideology which is at the same time both far right—and far left-wing, and which is in all respects contrary to things and values on which the successful part of the contemporary world rests.”⁵¹⁴

A COLLECTIVE DENIAL OF GENOCIDE

In June 2005, during Milošević's trial, the prosecution screened a documentary on the killing of six Muslim youngsters. Broadcast not only throughout the world but also by the Serbian media, it caused a short-lived but veritable shock and was the first attempt to face the reality of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide. The film explores ties between the MUP and the Srebrenica massacre, as well as the SPC's support of the Scorpio unit, which committed the genocide. The video shows Father Gavriilo, head of Privina Glava Monastery, blessing members of the unit on the eve of their action by uttering the following words: “Brothers, Turks have raised their ugly heads once again. They are

514 Dubravka Stojanović, *Defeated Future*, *Helsinki Charter*, issue May-June 2005

bent on destroying Serbian sacred and holy institutions and monuments. Let God help his faithful army by providing it with the courage to prevail over a hostile people.”⁵¹⁵

The reaction to the documentary compelled Serbian authorities to make an admission of guilt, though they denied any ties between the state of Serbia and the Scorpio unit. Finally, the Serbian elite realized that at least some war crimes could not be denied. The elite’s main concern was how to avoid the implication that the state of Serbia was involved in those crimes—that the crimes were committed in the pursuit of its goal of the liberation and unification of Serbs into one state.

The Scorpio case illustrates how the Serbian elite doctors the memory of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Serbs officially asserted that “crimes were committed by all warring factions and sides in the civil war” and “it is a well-known fact that civil wars were always impassioned in a pathological way, for hatreds at close quarters are horrible.”⁵¹⁶ The Srebrenica massacre was attributed to “independent” criminals who were arrested and put on trial after the screening of the video. The Serbs’ attempts to morph the Srebrenica genocide into an ordinary war crime were enhanced by the erection of a monument to the Serbian victims in Bratunac, close to Srebrenica, on July 13, 2005, the day after the anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre.⁵¹⁷

In 2005, on the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, Belgrade’s largest-circulation newspaper ran a special supplement listing the names of all Serbs who allegedly had perished during the Bosnian war. The front page of the supplement declared: “They were

515 *Danas*, “Priest Gavriilo does not repent for blessing the Scorpio unit,” June 9, 2005.

516 Danko Popović, writer, *Ogledalo*, right-wing magazine published in Belgrade, November 14, 2007.

517 At the 1993 Christian Orthodox Christmas, the Serb village of Kravice, near Bratunac, was attacked by the Bosnian army in retaliation for the killing of 70 Muslim civilians. The toll was 35 villagers killed (of whom 11 were civilians) and 36 wounded. (Data from the Sarajevo-based Research Documentary Center.)

killed by the same hand. Let them sleep their eternal sleep. Their graves are a symbol of a major historical tragedy and a lasting warning to our offspring. They are sacrifices for the homeland, faith and freedom. Their sacrifices constitute the foundation of Republika Srpska.”⁵¹⁸

The Serbian elite’s efforts to distance the Serbian state from responsibility for war crimes received help from an unexpected quarter, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. On February 26, 2007, the ICJ declared that there was not sufficient evidence to prove that the Serbian state was responsible for genocide during the Bosnian war.⁵¹⁹ The ICJ found that although Serbia had failed to fulfill its obligation to stop, and punish the perpetrators of, the July 1995 genocide in Srebrenica, there was not enough evidence that Serbia had assisted or financed the acts of genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the conflicts of the 1990s. Serbia was not found guilty of responsibility for genocide when the genocide took place; there was no clear evidence that the government in Belgrade was aware that such a crime was being committed.

The ICJ, however, refused the Bosnian applicants’ request to order Serbia to disclose an edited version of the minutes of the Serbian Supreme Defense Council, the body in charge of the Yugoslav army. Judges in the Milošević case had those minutes at their disposal when they found that there *was* enough evidence to convict Milošević on genocide charges in Bosnia—not only in Srebrenica in 1995, but in relation to events that had begun in 1992.

The ICJ also said that because it had not been shown that the genocide would have been averted if the FRY had tried to prevent it, “financial compensation for the failure to prevent the genocide at Srebrenica is not the appropriate form of reparation.” However, the

518 *Vecernje novosti*, June 30, 2005.

519 See, for instance, the report by Jeremy Bransten, “ICJ Bosnia Ruling Sets Important Precedents,” February 27, 2007, Radio France Europe/Radio Liberty, reproduced at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/163-general/28681.html>.

ICJ held that the Genocide Convention required Serbia to surrender criminal suspects such as Radovan Karadžić and General Ratko Mladić who were wanted by the ICTY. The ICJ also “considers that the most appropriate form of satisfaction would be a declaration in the operative clause of the Judgment that the Respondent has failed to comply with the obligation to prevent the crime of genocide.”⁵²⁰

The ICJ’s ruling certainly hardly presents Serbia as above suspicion of involvement in genocide in Bosnia. As Philip Grant, head of the Swiss-based human rights organization Track Impunity Always, noted when the judgment was made public:

*The ruling, if you read it correctly, doesn’t mean that genocide wasn’t committed. ... It was indeed committed. It doesn’t mean that Serbia was not complicit to genocide. It just says it wasn’t proven that Serbia was complicit to genocide. And that’s sufficient to lose the case. But if you read between the lines, I think it’s more a question of burden of proof than about what happened.*⁵²¹

The Serbian elite, of course, has avoided acknowledging such legal niceties. It has also shown no remorse for the victims of the Bosnian genocide. When, in January 2009, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the EU commission to observe July 11 as a day of remembrance of the Srebrenica genocide and calling on all Western Balkan states to comply, the Serbian Assembly refused to adopt a resolution to that effect. A group of Serbian NGOs insisted that the Serbian government and the public take responsibility for the crimes committed in the past and thus manifest their determination to build a democratic state based on the rule of law and respect for human rights.⁵²² Such appeals, however, fell on deaf ears. The

520 <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=21672&Cr=ICJ&Cr1>

521 Quoted in Bransten, “ICJ Bosnia Ruling Sets Important Precedents.”

522 These NGOs include the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, YUCOM, Helsinki Committee, Humanitarian Law Fund, Civic Initiatives, Women in Black, Center for Cultural Decontamination, and the Belgrade Circle.

collective memory of this tragedy has been successfully manipulated by Serbia's elites (including the political elite), which treat Srebrenica as a war crime, not as genocide. The Serbian public is effectively in collective denial about the fate of Srebrenica's Muslims.⁵²³

MILOŠEVIĆ'S DEATH

Once Milošević's defense strategy of underrating and discrediting the ICTY failed, it seemed as if he wanted to place the burden of responsibility for the war on the international community. Many observers believe he tried to do this by precipitating his own death before he could be sentenced. Based on numerous reports published after his death, he and his closest associates "provoked cardiovascular complications, disseminated obviously false information about malpractice, and stirred the feelings of both progressive and reactionary publics"; Milošević, "fearing retaliation, kept playing until he overplayed his hand and lost the game."⁵²⁴ William Montgomery, former American ambassador to Serbia-Montenegro, says, "I strongly believe that for Milošević the worst alternative was a trial ending in an unavoidable life sentence, far from home and far from [the] public eye. His widow Mira Marković actually predicted his death at a meeting in my Belgrade residence in 2003."⁵²⁵ Metropolitan Amfilohije Radović begged Milošević to commit suicide. Both radical and more moderate Serbian nationalists invoked his death in the name of national interests.

After Milošević's death on March 11, 2006, the media portrayed him as a statesman; there were few reminders of the victims of his policies. He was referred to as a hero, a man of great competence,

523 Some scholars argue, the denial of atrocities is part of the broader pattern of committing atrocities. See, for instance, J.G. Bass, *Stay the Hand of Vengeance: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals*, (Princeton, N.J., and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 302.

524 Jurij Bogolomov, "Playing and Overplaying," *Danas*, March 16, 2006 (a reprint of the story carried by *Russian News*).

525 William Montgomery, "My Last Recollection of Slobodan Milošević," *Danas*, March 18–19, 2006.

and a historic figure. At the same time, the fact that his death preceded a sentence took a load off his supporters' minds. The manner in which the Serbian elite reacted to his death demonstrates how close to their political and ideological heart Milošević's regime had been.

According to the masterminds behind Milošević's policies—some of whom took the stand in his defense—the international community is to blame for Milošević's death. Mihajlo Marković, academic and chief ideologist of the Socialist Party of Serbia, declared that Milošević's death “testified once again that the Hague Tribunal was political, rather than a legal institution.”⁵²⁶ Smilja Avramov, an advocate of conspiracy theories as well as a professor at the Belgrade Law School, said, “That's not a tribunal, that's a morgue! That's the place for killing Serbs! Milošević is the sixth Serb in a row who met his death in that court.”⁵²⁷ Academic Čedomir Popov grieved over Milošević, mourning that “a major historic figure has met an undignified death he did not deserve. ... History and the part of the Serbian people that is fully aware of national interests and the meaning of dignity will identify those who are responsible for Milošević's death.”⁵²⁸

Reactions to Milošević's death also brought to the fore genuine devotion to the program that had been given plebiscitary support. Serbs said goodbye to the man they adored—but also hated because they had expected the impossible from him. Milošević and his regime were blamed for all their dashed hopes. By denying their own responsibility for the failures that were attributed exclusively to their former leader, Serbian individuals and groups embraced collective denial on a grand scale.

526 *Vecernje Novosti*, March 12, 2006.

527 *Kurir*, March 13, 2006.

528 *Večernje Novosti*, March 13, 2006.

THE NEW CONSTITUTION SECURES CONTINUITY FOR THE LEGAL SYSTEM

In October 2005, a new constitution was approved by fraud. The constitutional referendum could have been an opportunity to define Serbia as a decentralized, modern country adjusted to European standards in terms of respecting international law. The constitution of 2006, however, is backward – rather than forward-looking. It is a reflection of the 1990 constitution, written so as to legalize Milošević's political and social practices and cements the centralized concept of the state, thus preventing any kind of pluralization in Serbian society. It is burdened by an authoritarian tradition and condenses archaic and xenophobic policies. The constitution's preamble, affirming Kosovo as Serbia's inalienable part, cements Serbia's refusal to recognize the new reality in Kosovo. The European Commission for Democracy through Law (usually known as the Venice Commission and established by the Council of Europe in 1990 to offer advice on constitutional issues) has found that many segments of the constitution do not conform to European constitutional standards.⁵²⁹

Regarding the internal organization of Serbia, the questions of Vojvodina, southern Serbia, and Sandžak are important aspects of the minority issue. The pattern of the disintegration of Yugoslavia is clearly visible within Serbia itself. As long as this pattern is in effect, there can be no change in Serbia. In fact, the 2006 constitution denies the idea of the complex state that is the precondition of democratization. Any effort to decentralize is perceived as secessionism, irredentism, or subversion.

529 The Venice Commission criticized the constitution for, among other things, being "extremely rigid" and "nearly impossible to amend" in many parts; for its unclear and complicated rules on restrictions on fundamental rights, and for its complicated rules on territorial organization. http://www.b92.net/eng/news/in_focus.php?id=123&nav_id=40680&start=0

A DEEP-ROOTED RESISTANCE TO MODERNIZATION

Without a proactive policy on the part of the EU, Serbia's chances of becoming a modern democratic state are nil, given its small democratic potential and worn-out condition. Almost the entire national elite participated in a national project that ended in debacle. Only after the EU realized—in 2003, after Đinđić's assassination—that its assessment of Serbian ambitions and Yugoslavian dynamics was mistaken did it begin to develop a clearer strategy, essentially accepting the idea of the dissolution of Yugoslavia as a condition for consolidating the region. This strategy led to an independent Kosovo and an independent Montenegro. Constitutional reforms in Bosnia-Herzegovina are also part of a new understanding of the Yugoslav dissolution. To stimulate positive energy in the Balkans, the EU stepped up integrative processes in the region; left to its own devices, the region could easily slide back into Balkanization. After adopting the decision at the 2003 Salonika EU meeting to open an avenue for the Balkan states to become members, the EU signed accession agreements with Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro. Croatia is well on its way to becoming a member in 2013, while Slovenia has already become a member, as have Bulgaria and Romania.

Lack of domestic support for change and deep-rooted resistance to modernization are Serbia's disadvantages. The resistance to all things Western—a constant in Serbian history—continues despite circumstances favoring a pro-European orientation. The wars of the 1990s showed the readiness of states and peoples in the Balkans to resort to violence to address their political problems, a tendency that has deep historical roots and is closely associated with the region's abiding authoritarianism. The region's political culture does not prize the patience required to resolve conflicts through dialogue and mediation.

The wars fought during the last decade of the last century in the territory of the former Yugoslavia left a deep imprint on Serbian

society with still incalculable consequences. Several generations of young people grew up on a model of violence perpetrated with impunity. The cultural model evolved out of radical ethno-nationalism and of the exclusion of others on ethnic, religious, and political grounds. The youngsters who were fed state propaganda on prime-time news, lived among the “tough guys” who ruled the streets and witnessed hunger and desperation during the 1990s are putting their lessons into practice on a massive scale. Violence in schools and streets, at sporting events, and against minorities and dissidents is the order of the day.

In spite of its formally multiparty system, Serbia is not a pluralist country. Impoverished, frustrated, and demoralized, its leaders are unable to strike an internal balance by turning Serbia into a modern state that respects the human rights of its citizens. The issue of minorities, for instance, continues to reveal Serbia’s reluctance to make a break with the ethno-national agenda of the early 1990s. Despite the fact that Serbia passed a minorities law in 2001 (above all to meet a Council of Europe membership requirements), the lack of a proactive minorities policy indicates that Serbian nationalists continue to opt for a program that will effect ethnic consolidation. Efforts to consolidate the state on ethnic grounds further exclude minorities from political decision making. The deterioration of ethnic relations, especially in Vojvodina, and the subsequent attention paid to ethnic minorities by the EU and the Council of Europe, have not been enough for the government to address the minority issue in earnest.⁵³⁰

Serbia has yet to make a start on a democratic transition, which requires a transformation of its political, economic, and cultural

530 A state built on ethnic principles cannot solve the question of its minorities democratically because it regards minorities as an anomaly and a threat. The minorities, who are thus denied their “share of the state,” do not identify themselves with an order that puts a premium on ethnic values and the interests of the majority nation. They, therefore, seek a solution in autonomy and special status and, by doing so, raise others’ doubts as to their loyalty.

structures. Because Serbia rejects liberal transition and insists on its own specific development, liberal policies can be introduced only gradually through thorough education and with EU assistance. The political violence rooted in Serbian traditions is evidenced by the stream of political assassinations. The murders of former Serbian president Stambolić in 2000⁵³¹ and of Đinđić three years later were reckonings with liberal-minded politicians.

The potential of the Democratic Party was significantly reduced by a thorough purge of Đinđić's closest associates after his assassination. By collaborating with Koštunica's Democratic Party of Serbia, Boris Tadić, the Democratic Party president and—since July 2004—the president of Serbia, moved toward Koštunica's vision. In past years the Democratic Party has shown limited reformist and pro-European identity because the national project is still on the agenda. Yet, the Democratic Party is the pillar of political life in Serbia and without its thorough change Serbia cannot move forward.

As a result of the wars, the ideology based on putative national uniqueness and myth that preceded, the universal socialist idea is popular again in Serbia. Serbia originally embraced radical nationalism under conditions of relative affluence. By the time of the anti-bureaucratic revolution of 1989, Serbia had destroyed the legacy of reforms created during the second Yugoslavia to demonstrate that Serbia was and remains its most conservative element. Yugoslavia was Serbia's first experience of living in European complexity, pluralism, compromise, and consensus. There is no rational explanation for what went on in Serbia during the twentieth century—no explanation except, perhaps, the fact that the Enlightenment and the appetite for rationalism it encouraged in the rest of Europe bypassed Serbia. The past two decades of radical nationalism have destroyed

531 Milorad Ulemek – Legija has been sentenced to 40 years for his role in the murder of former Yugoslav president Ivan Stambolić and 40 years for organizing the assassination of prime minister Zoran Đinđić. He was a member of the paramilitary police unit JSO.

the fledgling civil society that existed in the country. Destructiveness and primitivism are the main characteristic of Serbian society today. Serbian society must face its criminal past and deconstruct Milošević's legacy at all levels, from personal to programmatic. Raising the issue of moral responsibility is the only way to break with the barbarous practices of the previous decade to construct a new Serbian identity. As the political scientist Nenad Dimitrijević has remarked, "we must make a clean break with the humiliating past in order to be able to make room for a new beginning."⁵³²

Serbia has no strength left to wage war; as such, Serbia is no threat to its neighbors but still can undermine the consolidation of Bosnia and Kosovo by encouraging the Serbs there to reject any notions of accommodation, reconciliation, and cooperation. The fact that all of Serbia's neighbors wish to join or have already become members of the EU can have a positive impact on Serbia. However, the EU's expectation that, given time, Serbia will integrate into Europe may be overly optimistic because, given Serbia's conservative traditions and social forces, it cannot be a political and economic partner in the region without significant and sustained support from pro-European forces outside the country. Serbia's democratic transition is possible only if the international community lends a helping hand and takes charge of Serbia's institutions—especially the Army, police, judiciary, and education—while providing extensive economic support. Nationalism is the only identity of the Serbian elite at present—and the reason why Serbia's future in Europe is unclear.

The May 2008 elections brought to light Serbia's dilemmas regarding its future. The so-called pro-European government (the coalition of the Democratic Party and Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia) that was established after the elections was the most

532 Nenad Dimitrijević, *Moralna odgovornost za kolektivni zločin*, Beogradski krug, Zajednica sećanja, no. 1–4/ 2006. Dimitrijević is from Novi Sad and was a professor at the local law school before being purged and moving to Hungary.

forward-looking government that Serbia could be expected to produce under present circumstances. President Tadić went so far as to sign an agreement with the EU in May 2008 and even more importantly submitted an application for Serbian candidacy for EU membership to the EU in December 2009. However, as long as wars, war crimes, and crime in general still weigh heavily on the society, Serbia can hardly be expected to enthusiastically embrace adopt democracy, the rule of law, and tolerance as fundamental values. Resistance to closer ties with the EU is certain to manifest itself publicly in the shape of political rallies and less visibly in the form of bureaucratic obstruction within Serbia's corrupt institutions.

Since the advent of the modern Serbian state, elites have focused their energies on territorial expansion, neglecting internal state and social developments. This tendency has been in evidence in every form the Serbian state has taken: the Principality of Serbia, the Kingdom of Serbia, the first, second, and third Yugoslavia, and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, and now the Republic of Serbia. Liberals have almost always been consigned to the margins—and thus Serbia's elites rejected the formula put forward by liberals as the only *modus vivendi* for a joint state: Yugoslavia can be viable as a rational state community only with an institutionalized compact that takes care of the shared interests of the republics.

The fatal consequences of rejecting this approach and instead adopting as a national program the Memorandum offered two choices: either a federation that would suit Serbia and the Serbs, or Serbia as a nation-state incorporating territories populated by Serbs, are felt today throughout the region. Serbia's major challenges include accepting the borders within which it is recognized by the international community, restoring severed relations with the neighbors it made war against, and cultivating a critical self-reflection on its recent past.

Lessons for Peacemakers

What can the Yugoslav crisis of the 1990s tell us about the practice of conflict management? One might assume that what the international community did—or did not do—to restore peace in so complex and idiosyncratic a part of the world at so unusual a historic moment can teach us little about how to make peace elsewhere. In fact, however, it is in part precisely because of its complexity that the Yugoslav crisis offers useful lessons for peacemakers in very different parts of the world. In part, too, the case of Yugoslavia in the 1990s underscores that certain principles of effective conflict management apply even in otherwise historically unique circumstances.

This concluding chapter offers a variety of lessons that can be drawn from the events analyzed in the preceding chapters. Several of these lessons are interrelated. For instance, when the international community seeks to address a complex conflict, it needs first to assess the causes of the conflict accurately and objectively, then to build a consensus for action around that assessment, and then to act consistently. The international community must also resist the siren call of hasty solutions and instead commit itself to long-term involvement, involvement that includes explaining to the publics in the affected areas why the international community is acting as it is. The failure to abide by some of these guidelines helps explain why—as discussed at the end of this chapter—lasting peace in the Balkans depends upon a continuing international commitment to encourage Serbia to acknowledge its responsibility for much of the violence that shook the region in the 1990s, to relinquish its enduring hopes of building a

Greater Serbia, and to embrace modern values of democracy, decentralization, and respect for minorities and human rights.

**IN COMPLEX CONFLICTS, A PRECISE DEFINITION OF
CRISIS CAUSES AND AN ACCURATE ASSESSMENT OF
THE ROLES OF THE MAJOR ACTORS ARE CRUCIAL**

One of the most valuable lessons of the international community's efforts to defuse the Yugoslav crisis is the crucial importance of precisely assessing and defining the causes of a crisis and the roles played by the major actors. The lack of a clear and objective analysis and understanding of the long-standing policies and ideological patterns that triggered the collapse of Yugoslavia seriously affected international efforts to prevent the violence and contribute to an earlier resolution of the crisis. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany all had different interpretations of Serbian motives and actions in the early 1990s, interpretations that were not only colored by each country's own national interests, but that were also all off the mark.

This fundamental flaw in the approach to the Yugoslav crisis also affected attitudes toward developments in Kosovo, which were too often seen outside of the Yugoslav context and only in the light of events since the NATO intervention. The international community took so long to decide how to resolve the issue of Kosovo's final status that it contributed to cementing the territorial division between the north and south of Kosovo. Meanwhile, Belgrade did all it could to prevent Serbs in the south from integrating themselves in Kosovar institutions, generating an exodus of young Serbs from the south and contributing to the slow death of the Serb community in the south.

To some extent, the international community was guilty of wishful thinking. For example, Milošević was for a long time treated as part of the solution to the problem instead of as a major part of the problem itself. Many in the international community accepted all

too credulously Milošević's assertions in the early 1990s that he was struggling to maintain the unity and integrity of Yugoslavia—a goal that resonated emotionally with some Europeans, who since the late 1960s had come to see Yugoslavia, which was embracing elements of a market economy and distancing itself from the Soviet Union, as a model of socialism with a human face.

At the same time, the West expected that the post-communist societies would automatically embrace and implement democratic values and standards, and that the issue of democratization was only a question of time. Eventually, it became evident how different those societies were—in spite of their external uniformity—and how much the process of democratization would depend on the level of socio-economic development, cultural and societal traditions, and particular mind-sets. But in the first half of the 1990s, the West had yet to learn that a long-standing dearth of real democracy cannot be remedied overnight, especially not amid the institutional collapse and disarray that accompanied the collapse of Yugoslavia and of communism generally. The assumption that regional nationalists would turn into moderates proved unrealistic—and the consequences of international policies based on that assumption are still felt in Serbia.

A CLEAR CONSENSUS WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS A PRECONDITION FOR EFFECTIVE, CONSISTENT ACTION

Members of the international community not only failed to accurately interpret the causes and dynamics of the unfolding Yugoslav conflict; they also failed for many years to reach agreement on how to respond. This lack of consensus reflected in part the divergent interests of leading players within Europe, in particular the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. These differences quickly came to the fore as Yugoslavia unraveled, preventing the adoption of a consistent approach. Britain and France effectively appeased

Serbia—which had been an ally of theirs in World War I and which they tended to see as having the right to dominate Yugoslavia—until the NATO intervention was launched in 1999.⁵³³ The EU did not reach consensus until the Thessalonica Summit in 2003, when the decision was taken to offer all the Balkan countries EU membership.

The lack of a common interpretation of the Yugoslav crisis influenced the nature of concrete international involvement in the crisis. Instead of pressing for a peace enforcement mission, Western Europe and the United States supported UN missions with mandates so limited that they almost became observer missions, especially in Bosnia until the Srebrenica massacre in 1995. This amounted to a policy of appeasement toward Serbia; instead of Belgrade's aggression being confronted head on, it was allowed to continue.

Inconsistency was also fueled by a dearth of political will to incur the costs of intervening effectively. For instance, the EC was happy to tell the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina how to prepare for independence, but the EC promptly walked away from the scene once the Serb forces (the YPA and paramilitaries from Serbia and Montenegro) attacked the newly recognized country. In spite of ample evidence of violations of human rights and war crimes, the international community did not try to stop the genocide in Bosnia, which started as early as 1992 but which some states opted to describe as “ethnic cleansing” rather than “genocide” so that they would not be obliged by the terms of the Geneva Convention to intervene to halt the bloodletting. Although globally respected activists such as Simon Wiesenthal were characterizing Serbian actions as “genocide,” such statements prompted no reaction from the U.S.

533 See Carole Hodges, *Britain and Balkans, 1991 until Present*, (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006); Brendan Simms, *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction in Bosnia* (London: Allen Lane, 2001); Jane Sharp, *Honest Broker or Pefidious Albion? British Policy in Former Yugoslavia*, Institute of Public Policy Research, London, 1997; James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*, (London: C.Hurst, 1997); Norman Cigar, “Croatia's War of Independence: The Parameters of War Termination” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 10, no. 2, (June 1997): 34–70.

and EU governments.⁵³⁴ Nor did Western intelligence agencies use the resources at their disposal to detect and expose what many human rights NGOs have characterized as the most blatant abuses of human rights in Europe after World War II. Many intelligence reports in the period April–June 1992 have been kept in the drawers of different ministries and UN offices. The first story describing the horrors of detention camps, massive ethnic cleansing, and gang rapes in Bosnia was written by Roy Guttman and published in *Newsday* in August 1992, three years before the West finally intervened in the aftermath of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre.⁵³⁵ The Western failure to respond could be explained in both political and strategic terms, but is still not morally justifiable.

The May 30, 1995, report of the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Ghali, clearly illustrates the reluctance of the international community to bear the costs of effective intervention in the Balkans. The report underlined that the UN force sent to Bosnia, UNPROFOR, was saddled with a mandate it could not fulfill and that the boundary between peacekeeping and peace enforcement was blurred. Ghali stressed that “some confusion has arisen as a result of references to Chapter VII in some Security Council resolutions.”⁵³⁶ He also criticized members of the Security Council for not providing the necessary means for UNPROFOR to carry out the tasks it had been set. Ghali, who had already expressed an unwillingness to become so broadly engaged in the Balkans, argued that the mission could only be successful if it acted clearly as a peacekeeping operation and enjoyed the consent of the parties to the conflict. He had been convinced from the outset that “recourse to air power could lead to serious consequences for UNPROFOR as a whole.”⁵³⁷ His report showed clearly

534 <http://www.gfbv.de/pressemit.php?id=1369&highlight=wiesenthal>

535 Roy Guttman, “Bosnia’s Camps of Death,” *Newsday*, August 2, 1992.

536 <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/4501372.html>

537 <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/4501372.html>

the discrepancy between Western rhetoric and the West's resolve to achieve something on the ground. Every resolution passed was ambiguous in that it gave UNPROFOR no clear mandate to use force as and when necessary. The restrictions, which undermined the efficiency of the troops on the ground, were so numerous that the security of their troops on the ground became the primary concern of all the governments involved. For example, the mandate to ensure the security of Sarajevo airport made no reference to Chapter VII. The deployment of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo was in consequence, the report underlined, conducted in accordance with regular peacekeeping rules. Without the cooperation of the parties involved, UNPROFOR was unable to provide for their security. Another illustrative example concerns a Security Council resolution, which established safe-heaven areas although the UNPROFOR mandate did not include any provision for their enforcement. Given a choice between 34,000 additional troops to effect deterrence through muscle and a "light option" to deploy some 7,600 troops, the Security Council opted for the latter.

Instead of supporting the newly emerging states, the EU sanctioned the survival of the new mock "states" imposed by Belgrade first in Croatia (Republika Srpska Krajina in 1991) and then in Bosnia (Republika Srpska in 1992). The fact that the Yugoslav Army attacked Slovenia and Croatia in June 1991 just three days after the departure of U.S. secretary of state James Baker from Slovenia showed that Milošević was confident that the U.S. threat to use military force was not likely to be carried out. In 1995, the Dayton Accords actually legitimized Republika Srpska. Serbia's continuing policy of treating Republika Srpska as a Belgrade proxy has made it impossible so far to establish Bosnia and Herzegovina as a viable democratic state.

The Yugoslav crisis revealed Europe's "military incapacity and political disarray." Moreover, the Kosovo conflict exposed a transatlantic gap in military technology and the ability to wage modern

warfare. The most the Europeans did was to provide peacekeeping forces in the Balkans, while the United States carried out the decisive phases of military mission and stabilized the situation. Freed from the requirement of creating any military deterrence, internal or external, the Europeans developed a set of ideals and principles regarding the utility and morality of power that differed from those the Americans held.⁵³⁸

**THE ABSENCE OF AN INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM
FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT ENCOURAGES
SHORT-TERM, HASTILY CONCEIVED, AND
COUNTERPRODUCTIVE POLITICAL MEASURES**

The violence accompanying the collapse of Yugoslavia took place amid monumental historical changes in the world in the early 1990s. The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc took the United States and the European Union by surprise. Many of the ensuing decisions relating to the former Yugoslavia were hasty, ill-conceived, and often purely palliative. Measures were taken and mechanisms were established without a proper assessment of evolving developments, often in an excessively self-assured, overly optimistic way.

Had the EU and/or NATO possessed effective early warning systems and conflict-prevention mechanisms, and had it employed those systems and strategies throughout crumbling Yugoslavia, the West might have been able to formulate a proactive, comprehensive strategy to deter aggressive actions and reward a readiness to negotiate and to respect human rights. Lacking such mechanisms, however, the West was obliged to take a reactive, piecemeal approach and to expend its energy on recurrent intra-Western disputes about how to deal with each crisis once it erupted. Western powers came up with a series of peace plans, each with its own formula for preserving

538 Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness", *Policy Review*, No.113.

multiethnic communities, but the content of each of those plans reflected the reluctance of the United States and the EU to use military force to uphold principles and goals they had declared in documents such as the 1990 Paris Charter, which outlined a vision of a pluralistic, democratic Europe in which conflicts would be handled by political, not military, means.

At the time, it seemed to many observers that the absence of an institutional framework for action might be compensated for by the prevailing enthusiasm about a genuine integration of Europe. This enthusiasm was, however, directed chiefly toward the former member-states of the Warsaw Pact, leaving the developments in the Yugoslav successor states practically neglected.

In those critical moments for Yugoslavia, the international community paid lip service to Yugoslavia's survival without considering tougher measures on Milošević's and Serbia's obvious designs. Neither was the YPA pressured to stay neutral.

Throughout the Yugoslav crisis, and particularly in its early stages, the EU used the Yugoslav crisis as a test for its own concept of a common foreign policy. Its mediating role was confirmed at the summit of the G-7 by the CSCE and especially by the United States. At the time, the Slovenian war was over and the EC (it did not become the EU until November 1993) was insisting on "stopping the bloodshed and turning to dialogue." Guidelines for resolving the crisis were stated in the EC Declaration from The Hague of August 6, 1991, and later reconfirmed at the foreign ministers' meeting on August 20. The guidelines were twofold: the establishment of a lasting cease-fire under international monitoring; and negotiations based on two principles—the inviolability of internal and external borders and respect for human and minority rights.

Despite the attempt to reach a common and coordinated approach, differences soon surfaced among EC members, not only because of various historical, geographic, and ideological factors

but also because of different approaches to the principles of territorial integrity and self-determination, which reflected each country's own internal considerations. These differences became more evident as the situation in Yugoslavia deteriorated.

The missions that were launched in the Balkans were pioneering in character and had to operate in an environment where the institutions of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had become delegitimized and paralyzed while the legitimization of international mechanisms was in its embryonic stage. In such circumstances, the Milošević regime with its brutality managed to present the major international actors with a series of faits accomplis—among them, the establishment of the Republika Srpska Krajina, the Republika Srpska, and the north of Kosovo as quasi-independent entities. Milošević showed an impressive mastery of diplomatic and propaganda skills, which helped him to successfully manipulate the international community by playing on its divisions, in particular in the EU at the outbreak of the crisis.

**COMPLEX CONFLICTS REQUIRE A LONG-TERM
INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE AND A SERIOUS AND SUSTAINED
PEACEBUILDING AND STATE-BUILDING EFFORT.**

After its missteps in the 1990s and early 2000s, the West has managed to establish a three-tier mechanism for normalizing and stabilizing the Balkans: membership in the Council of Europe, adoption of the EU Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), and accession to the Partnership for Peace with NATO. The SAA has been especially instrumental in helping to stabilize the Balkan states by providing political guidance and technical and financial support for democratic institution-building and the adoption of political and economic reforms. Co-operation with the Hague Tribunal has also become instrumental in channeling developments in individual countries toward the rule of law, respect for human and minority

rights, national and regional reconciliation, and regional and international cooperation.

The West's approach has by no means been unblemished—as witnessed by its efforts to delay the divorce between Serbia and Montenegro and the slow process of determining the final status of Kosovo—but it now has a much better understanding of the diversity and complexity of the Balkans. A clear division of labor between the EU and NATO since 2003 has greatly benefited developments in the region. While the EU has been focused on police reform and internal security, NATO efforts have been aimed at the transformation of the military via the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, which was extended to Serbia at the end of 2006. Despite strong resistance from conservatives who still insist that Serbia should be the military leader in the region, the decision to offer Serbia the PfP program has brought about some significant changes in the nature of the Serbian military, such as the retirement of old cadres and the beginning of training under NATO's umbrella.

Undoubtedly, the international community's solidarity and active involvement and presence in the region has been essential in securing democratic consolidation in several of its states, but the achievement of a peaceful and democratic future for the region as a whole depends on the further engagement of the West in general and of the EU in particular.

The international community must reach out to the wider public in the conflict area and explain its perspective and actions.

Serbia's imperial policies backed by the Yugoslav Army and Serbia's regional puppet groups were defeated in Croatia in 1995, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, and in Kosovo in 1999—but that fact has never been fully explained to the public in Serbia. Of course, one can hardly expect the Serb elites to broadcast its defeats to the Serb public. The international community, however, certainly could have done more to spell out clearly to the public the nature of the

war. Not until 1999, as NATO brought to a close its military campaign against Serbian forces in Kosovo, did an American president explicitly articulate the West's opinion of who was to blame for the violence of the 1990s. "We should remember," said President Clinton, "that the violence we responded to in Kosovo was the culmination of a ten-year campaign by Slobodan Milošević, the leader of Serbia, to exploit ethnic and religious differences in order to impose his will on the lands of the former Yugoslavia. That's what he tried to do in Croatia and Bosnia, and now in Kosovo. When our diplomatic efforts to avert this horror were rebuffed and the violence mounted, we and our allies chose to act. Nineteen democracies came together and stayed together through the stiffest military challenge posed to NATO in its 50-year history. Finally, we have averted the wider war this conflict may well have sparked."⁵³⁹ Javier Solana, NATO's secretary general, justified the intervention by saying that "we must stop an authoritarian regime from oppressing its own people in Europe."⁵⁴⁰

The failure to communicate to the public also characterized the activity of the International Tribunal, leading to its demonization in Serbia as an instrument designed to slander Serbia and prosecute its leaders unjustly. The ICTY has entered the last stage of its life. During its fifteen-year long existence it has produced an immense investigation and court record. To date, it has concluded proceedings against 120 persons out of a total of 161 indicted, leaving behind millions of pages of trial transcripts; tens, or probably hundreds, of thousands of documents used as evidence; a monumental library of written pre-trial and trial motions and Trial Chamber and Appeals Chamber decisions on very many legal issues; a record of the judgements for all the cases in which the guilt or innocence of the accused individuals have been tested to conclusion, all according to high international

539 www.softmakers.com/fry/docs/Mclaughin.

540 http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/jan-june99/solana_3-23.html

legal standards. There is no mechanism that obliges the government to disclose that material to the wider public.

The West's approach to transitional justice in the territories of the former Yugoslavia has been flawed. It supports initiatives that deal with justice exclusively from the perspective of victims, and does not pay enough attention to presenting a narrative that explains not only what happened, but also who was responsible for it. Dialogic truth: Public hearings, inherent to all truth commissions and included in the regional program for the region,⁵⁴¹ imply that victims must tell stories. After fifteen years of ICTY work, this kind of activity is surely superfluous: war crimes researchers agree that victims are tired of telling their stories over and over again without any visible results. Dialogic truth should be attained through interaction and it precedes restorative truth. Republika Srpska was built on genocide and no dialogue can smooth over that fact.

For many victims, the truth is even more important than justice and punishment. Offering Serbian society a regional dialogue before it has confronted its own past could lead to "dissolutive" truth rather than to dialogic truth. Therefore, the regional approach may be yet another step toward boosting the forces that deny and relativize the fact that Serbia waged four wars in the 1990s.

**FULL NORMALIZATION AND LASTING PEACE IN THE REGION
ARE CONDITIONAL ON POLITICAL AND PUBLIC RECOGNITION
OF THE TRUE NATURE OF THE CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT**

Clearly identifying causes and responsibilities is essential if Serbia is to recognize the consequences of its imperial ambitions. The political and moral recovery of Serbia cannot be achieved without international assistance. Serbia must become a member both of NATO

541 The existing effort for reconciliation of the region is being supported by the International Organization for Transitional Justice through three local organizations. They have not achieved progress mostly because their concept of working primarily from the victims' angle has not been widely accepted.

and the EU because those organizations have the ability to provide a framework for stability and peace, as they did in Europe after World War II. Equally, the political and moral revival of the region can occur only if a bold political vision is coupled with genuine respect for human and national rights. The sooner this happens, the better for Serbia and the region.

THE SERBIAN POLITICAL ELITE HAVE NOT RELINQUISHED THE IDEA OF A GREATER SERBIA; THAT AMBITION WILL DISAPPEAR ONLY WHEN—WITH THE WEST’S HELP—A NEW, LIBERAL-MINDED SERBIA EMERGES

The dissolution of both the SFRY and the FRY was a precondition for the democratization of new countries and their integration into the EU. Unfortunately, unlike the elites in other Balkan states, the Serb political elites have not been eager to embrace the EU option. This reluctance is not shared by all Serbs; indeed, in polls conducted in recent years, including 2009,⁵⁴² 70 percent of the population favored closer ties with the EU. However, since the assassination of Zoran Đinđić and the subsequent electoral victory of Koštunica, those who hold power in Belgrade have shown no genuine interest in European integration and instead advocate a “neutral” Serbia, somewhere between the East and West, with close ties to Russia. Indeed, integration into the EU would put an end to Serbia’s imperial aspirations in the region, and the nationalists who still hold the reins of power have not relinquished such hopes. Serbia’s political class remains suspicious of the modernity that the EU represents, and stays wedded to traditional, patriarchal, conservative, Christian Orthodox values.

The archaism of the Serbian elite and its inability to shed delusions about itself and the contemporary world continue to hinder a decisive political shift that would see Serbia relinquish its strident nationalism and embrace democratic values in its place. The

⁵⁴² <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/serbia-enlarge.2af/>

International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgment issued on February 7, 2007, that there was insufficient evidence to prove Serbia's responsibility for war and for genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not help. On the contrary, the court's decision (although it did not exonerate Serbia) strengthened the policy of denial promoted by the Serbian elite.

The Constitution adopted in 2006, which describes Kosovo as an inalienable part of Serbia, betrays this continuing attachment to the dream of Greater Serbia. Outside its borders, Serbia has continuously obstructed the consolidation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and is doing the same in the case of Kosovo. Within Serbia, the unwillingness to relinquish the idea of a Greater Serbia has delayed democratic transition in Serbia; indeed, that development has been subordinated to territorial enlargement. Belgrade remains particularly resistant to moves to decentralize power and to include minorities in the wider political and economic community. The return of refugees has not proceeded as planned mainly because refugees were systematically resettled in specific areas in order to change the local demographic composition. In Serbia, they were settled mostly in Vojvodina; now Serbs are the majority in previously predominantly Croatian and Hungarian areas. In Kosovo, the Serb elites discourage Serbs from returning beyond the imagined line of division. It is not yet clear whether Belgrade will encourage Serbs to stay in the Kosovo enclaves or not.

The arrest of Radovan Karadžić in July 2008 and his extradition to The Netherlands to face trial at the ICTY suggested that Serbia might be adopting a new policy of greater cooperation with the international community. However, Serb nationalism lives on in elementary and high schools, in universities, in the media, and the culture in general. Radical nationalism will not disappear by itself, for the illusion persists that a change in circumstances may permit the realization of imperialistic goals. For example, in a meeting in

Banja Luka in December 2009, organized to reaffirm Republika Srpska's existence and oppose the international community's efforts to make Bosnia and Herzegovina a functional state, participants were adamant that it has "to survive and therefore has to be defended by all legal and legitimate means."⁵⁴³ Svetozar Stojanović, a close ally of Dobrica Ćosić, emphasized that in the changed international context "it is not possible to impose solutions and they have to be sought through the dialogue and cooperation of two entities and three nations of Bosnia."⁵⁴⁴

Given the strength of nationalist sentiment and power, hopes for Serbia's democratic transition depend on an active and broad-ranging international presence as well as a major influx of foreign capital. To be sure, Serbia needs external help in battling the problems of rampant crime and corruption, which it shares with all states in the region. Above all, however, it needs a determined international effort to help it revise its system of political values and ethics and to finally put an end to its destructive political instincts and activities.

Some steps are already being undertaken with this goal in mind. The SAA agreement with the EU requires each participating state to meet certain criteria and abide by certain norms. For example, Serbia had to undertake several steps in combating organized crime and corruption before obtaining access to the EU's Schengen visa system in December 2009. The EU's decision to speed up the process of integrating Serbia has created new space for similar steps. But it was possible only once Serbia realized that there was no other alternative, a realization spurred by the global economic crisis, which has badly affected the whole region.

True change can come only from within Serbian society itself. But the agents of change need external assistance if they are to triumph over an entrenched political class that since the 1980s, if not

543 *Politika*, 14 december 2009

544 *Ibid.*

before, has engineered a mass scepticism toward so-called foreign values such as political pluralism and respect for human rights. Concerted efforts must be made by the EU to help Serbia's not-so-numerous democratic forces open up and broaden the space for Europeanization and democratization. EU support must be carefully devised, continuous, extensive, and channeled primarily toward liberal forces: not only political groups but also liberal elements within the civil society, independent media, trade unions, student and youth organizations, and the educational and cultural arenas. Only the creation of a new intellectual and cultural elite may in turn create conditions for genuine democratic change.

* * *

The Serbian government's decision to apply for EU candidacy December 2009 would not have been possible without a concerted initiative by and the firm resolve of both the United States and the European Union. After decade or more of hesitancy, they have finally learnt that without integrating the Western Balkans into the Euro-Atlantic processes as soon as possible, the region cannot be stabilized. All existing tensions between Serbia and its neighbors can be solved only through its accession to the EU (one of the conditions of which is indeed a resolution of such tensions). The push was given by the new U.S. administration which has rather early demonstrated its intentions by sending Joseph Biden to the Balkan region in spring 2009.

The Serbian government's decision in December 2009 to apply for EU candidacy announces the country's new strategic orientation and its embrace of the European option. After three decades of wondering which way to go—whether to stay on a narrow, ultra-nationalistic, anti-Western path or to take a new road in the direction of modernity and democracy—Serbia's political elite has finally made a historical breakthrough, opening the door to a brighter future.

Cvetković's government, it seems, has opted for a democratic transformation and modern European values: the rule of law, elimination of corruption and organized crime, and a different value system. Considering the strong resistance from the conservative bloc, this government's brave decision will be a test of the readiness of all Serbia's political actors and institutions, and of society as a whole, to embrace radical domestic changes.

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“Serbs cannot live peacefully in a state where non-Serbs form the majority. Serbia can never live peacefully with her hostile neighboring states. We will never join the European Union. We will never acknowledge Srebrenica as a crime. We will never give up Kosovo and Metohija.” There has been, and still is, a lot of “nevers” in Serbian political discourse. However, by the end of 2012 the country is on the path to EU-membership. Politicians from nearly all quarters claim to have the best strategic approach to EU-membership, despite having to deal with

demands that would not long ago have been laughed at as utterly unrealistic. What happened to the aggressive nationalism that not long ago would have crushed all attempts to challenge such “nevers”?

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee has worked in Serbia since the early nineties; monitoring and reporting on the human right situation, following the political development and supporting human right defenders. We have chosen to publish this book written by Sonja Biserko, President of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, in an attempt to direct attention to exactly how indispensable human rights activists are right now, and how vitally important they are for the time to come.

For two decades, Biserko has persistently and courageously protested against war, nationalism and human rights abuse. Her analysis represents a perspective on Serbian politics that is very much needed among the optimism of all the problems that can seemingly be solved by an EU-membership.

As Biserko argues in this book – addressing the destructive forces of nationalism is a pre-requisite for real change and lasting peace in Serbia. Where nationalism went? Nowhere. It has taken on new forms, but it still shapes the mainstream understanding of the past and maintains perception of values in the Serbian society.

Those most in need of tolerance suffer the consequences.

This is not a history book; it is a book debating history, with the ambition of challenging what Serbia is and may become.

