

Srebrenica: a 'safe' area

Prologue

The history preceding the conflict:
Yugoslavia up till 1991

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Chapter 1

The era up till 1945

1. Introduction

In January 1991 J. Fietelaars, the Dutch ambassador to Yugoslavia, sent a message from Belgrade to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague that Slovenia was virtually certain to leave the Federation of Yugoslavia.¹ The Dutch diplomat felt this would lead to a political momentum where Croatia would rapidly follow Slovenia's example and the remaining republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro would no longer wish to belong to the remnants of a Yugoslav state that would be dominated by Serbia.

An answer to the question of what would happen if Yugoslavia were to disintegrate came on 16 January from none other than President Milosevic of Serbia during a four-hour lunch in Belgrade with the European Community ambassadors to Yugoslavia. Here, Milosevic indicated 'the ultimate compromise' that Serbia was prepared to make if Yugoslavia were to collapse: 'If this cannot be achieved peacefully, Serbia will have to opt for the power resources that we have at our disposal but they (the remaining republics) do not possess.' According to the coded message that Ambassador Fietelaars sent to The Hague, the Serbian president continued by saying:

'... [B]ut let there be no misunderstanding about this: if a federal Yugoslavia is no longer supported then the Serbian willingness to make sacrifices is rendered superfluous and is robbed of its value. We will then return to our starting point, to our Serbia. But this is not the present administrative department but the Serbs' fatherland, and the Serbs in Yugoslavia who declare themselves in favour of a return to the Serb fatherland have the right to do this and the Serbian people will enforce that right.'²

Milosevic told his diplomatic audience that Serbia had no objection to Slovenia leaving the Yugoslav state structure because hardly any Serbs lived there. In Croatia, where 650,000 Serbs lived, 'the borders will be adjusted and the Serbian enclaves will be secured. This is inevitable and is non-negotiable. Otherwise leaving the federation cannot be accepted and will be opposed by every available means.' As yet the Serbian leader had reached no conclusions about Macedonia's position. But Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina would have to remain a part of Yugoslavia. 'There's no place for concession.'³

Five months later Slovenia and Croatia declared independence on 25 June 1991. During the days that followed, images appeared throughout the world of terrified Yugoslav People's Army conscripts who had found themselves caught up in a real war in Europe. For 45 years Europe had been synonymous with the absence of war. This almost idyllic situation came to an abrupt end in June 1991. For the Europeans, war was no longer something distant.

At first it still seemed like a 'drôle de guerre': an operetta-like war in Slovenia. It was a war that would last for ten days and would claim no more than a few dozen dead and wounded.⁴ By contrast in Croatia, which had also proclaimed its independence, the conflict between Belgrade and the renegade republics rapidly took a sinister turn. Serbs and Croats were fighting a war where the Geneva Convention was repeatedly violated.

The conflict spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992. This occurred shortly after the United Nations had decided to station troops in Croatia that were known as the *United Nations Protection Force*,

¹ Hazewinkel, 'Beleid', pp. 10 and 13.

² ABZ, DDI-DEU/ARA/00408, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Servië, Fietelaars 14, 21/01/91.

³ ABZ, DDI-DEU/ARA/00408, Joegoslavië/Binnenlandse politiek/Servië, Fietelaars 14, 21/01/91.

⁴ Zametina, *Conflict*, p. 15 mentions the Slovenian armed forces sustaining 19 fatalities with the federal army incurring 45.

or UNPROFOR for short. It was under this UNPROFOR flag that the Netherlands soon became involved in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia as ultimately it was also to be in the fall of Srebrenica. This was because UNPROFOR's mandate was rapidly extended to include Bosnia.

The Netherlands contributed to the UNPROFOR peacekeeping force from the very start. At first its contribution included a signals battalion and a transport battalion but this was later extended to the formation of a fighting unit in East Bosnia in March 1994. This meant that the Netherlands had sent 2339 armed soldiers to the former Yugoslavia so that the Dutch were the fourth largest supplier of troops to UNPROFOR (after France, Great Britain and Jordan) and were the eighth worldwide in terms of the 17 United Nations' peace operations that were currently underway.⁵ In addition, approximately 400 men of the Dutch Royal Navy and an additional 400 members of the Dutch Royal Air Force were deployed for the operations in and around the former Yugoslavia. Moreover, with its contingent of 50 unarmed UN observers, the Netherlands also supplied the largest proportion of the 600 *United Nations Military Observers* (UNMOs) in the former Yugoslavia. Most of the unit, or 'Dutchbat' as it was known in UN jargon, was stationed at Srebrenica, a Muslim enclave in East Bosnia. Its role was security, a task for which other countries had shown little enthusiasm.

In July 1995, sixteen months after the deployment of the first Dutch fighting battalion, Bosnian Serb troops overran the United Nation's Safe Area of Srebrenica. The Dutch UN troops who were present were forced to abandon their task and over the following days several thousand Muslims were killed in the forests and at execution sites in this 'safe area's' immediate vicinity.

Many felt that this was proof of the moral bankruptcy of an international community that had worked for three years without finding a political solution to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. This was a bitter blow, certainly when bearing in mind the radical changes to the world stage that had recently occurred. The world order had changed radically since the reformer Mikhail Gorbachev had taken office in Moscow in 1985: Soviet control over Eastern Europe had been dismantled, the Berlin Wall had fallen and, finally, Communism had ceased to be the Soviet Union's governing movement in the summer of 1991. This led around 1990 to a general sense of euphoria about the new world order that had been created by the end of the Cold War which had dominated international relations for more than 40 years. This euphoria became still more intense at the beginning of 1991 when an international force under the leadership of the United States rapidly ended the occupation of Kuwait. American President George Bush declared that his country had entered the war against Iraq because of 'more than one small country; it is a big idea, a new world order'.⁶ This new world order would include new forms of co-operation between countries, a peaceful settling of differences, international solidarity against aggression, arms reduction, arms control and the fair treatment of all peoples. It was received with general acclaim.

However, there was also cause for concern. Now that a suicidal war between East and West was no longer an issue, there was an increasing awareness that there were also fewer restraints on outbursts of violence, particularly in the Balkans.⁷ Indeed, rather than suddenly improving, the international context had simply changed. This does not alter the fact that the violent outbursts in the Balkans in the early 1990s were difficult to understand within this international context.

The violence in the Balkans was also in stark contrast to the solemn tributes at the 1980 funeral of Josip 'Tito' Broz. This event in a still-united Yugoslavia was attended by the largest imaginable collection of heads of state from both East and West along with the Non-Aligned Movement countries. All of them paid their last respects to the man who, for 35 years, had enabled Yugoslavia to gain a unique position and respect in the world.

⁵ Apart from the three countries already mentioned, it came after Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Malaysia. M.A.W. Scheffelaar, 'De blauwe onmacht', *Carré* 1995, no. 11, p. 11; the Information Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Nederlandse militairen in en rond voormalig Joegoslavië. Stand van zaken 1 maart 1994'.

⁶ Quoted in Dore, *Japan*, p.116.

⁷ K. Koch, 'Het nieuwe dreigingsbeeld, Nederlandse defensie tegen een nieuwe achtergrond', p. 11.

What happened in the 11 years between 1980 and 1991 when the country that Tito had forged together was finally to disintegrate? Where are the causes of the dramatic end of the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia? Do these causes exclusively exist in Yugoslavia itself or were there also external ones? Have other nations or the international community either intentionally or unintentionally contributed to the collapse of Yugoslavia's political structure? Would it have been possible to try to prevent this deterioration externally? And what were the outside world's options to end or to limit the conflict once it had started? Which routes were open here and what resources were available? These questions are mainly discussed at the beginning of the preceding history because they are necessary for a good understanding of the events that occurred in and around the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995. What follows reveals an all-too-frequent collision between the reality of international decision-makers and the reality of the developments within the region itself. The consequences were to be fateful.

As was previously stated, a good understanding of the events in Srebrenica can only be achieved by exploring the history of Yugoslavia. This chapter has already referred to President Tito who managed to maintain his country's unity for dozens of years. We must now focus on the period of his regime and on the preceding era so as to be able to understand that the conflict in the early 1990s had an extensive and contiguous history.

2. The death of Tito

On 10 May 1980 the Dutch publisher *Uitgeverij Het Spectrum* had no scruples about literally capitalizing on the death six days earlier of the Yugoslav president and die-hard Communist Josip Broz, or Tito as he was better known. Amongst newspaper advertisements was the headline 'Yugoslavia After Tito'. The advertisement read: 'Which course will Yugoslavia take? East, West or will it once again become Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia, just as before the First World War? Will national interests override the international ones?' If you wanted to discover more 'about this country's wealth of history, art, workers' self-rule, politics and music' the thing to do was to invest in the 25-volume *Grote Spectrum Encyclopedie*.

This commercially astute publisher had played on the interest shown throughout the world over the previous week in the late statesman who was also the oldest major leader since World War Two. Governments from both East and West along with the Non-Aligned Movement, which was partly founded by Tito, sang the praises of this political tight-rope walker who not only managed to control regional differences in his own country but also maintained an independent foreign course between the Communist and the Capitalist powers.

Tito's recognition and importance was demonstrated at his funeral. Apart from half a million Yugoslavs, dignitaries from as many as 129 countries came to pay their last respects to the statesman in Belgrade. They included four kings, six princes, three presidents, ten vice presidents, eleven parliamentary leaders, dozens of premiers, 47 foreign ministers and many Communist Party leaders. The official Dutch delegation was also considerable and consisted of Prince Bernhard, Prince Claus, Premier van Agt and Minister Van der Klaauw of Foreign Affairs.

Many people felt that Yugoslavia would probably never be the same again after the death of its first president and this was illustrated by the Dutch newspapers of the day. To quote the *Algemeen Dagblad* reporter B. van Oosterhout, Tito had taken Yugoslavia from being 'a backwards Balkan province, a ball on the field of influence of international politics' and had turned it into 'a self-aware, independent Socialist country'.⁸ Apart from the hundreds of thousands of mourners, Yugoslavia appeared outwardly unchanged in the days following the death and funeral of the 'old man' - 'Stari' or

⁸ B. van Oosterhout, 'Belgrado loopt uit', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 07/05/80. Also F. Schaling, 'Tito: de successtory van een meedogenloze partizanenleider' & 'Door breuk met Stalin kon Joegoslavië geschiedenis maken', *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/05/80.

'old man' being one of Josip Broz' nicknames. Four months of illness had prepared the country for the death of the last major leader of the Second World War.

The Dutch newspapers focused considerable attention on the main points of Tito's political course during the 35 years after the war: his independent foreign politics, workers' self-rule and his policy concerning Yugoslavia's separate regions. The daily newspapers described him as 'the greatest statesman (...) to come out of the Balkans',⁹ the man who was called the 'only Yugoslav',¹⁰ and – to quote Nehru – the man who had forged Yugoslavia out of 'six republics, two autonomous provinces, five different peoples, four languages, three religions, two alphabets and one political party'.¹¹

The question was whether Tito's legacy would be preserved.¹² According to F. Schaling of the *NRC Handelsblad*, Tito 'had lived too long because his all-but-eternal presence had blocked the solutions to many of the problems of Yugoslavia's future and this had resulted in a general stagnation in the country's leadership.' This stagnation was, for instance, evident in the carefully-formulated rules concerning the collective leadership that was to govern Yugoslavia after Tito's death and which, Schaling argued, 'would automatically have a brief existence.' Stagnation was also demonstrated by the fact that the set of leaders under Tito was generally frighteningly mediocre because Tito distrusted all forms of ambition and quality was not rewarded.¹³

Clearly disturbance within the Yugoslav state system could not be excluded. A crisis could be caused by the leadership of the Soviet Union which had recently invaded Afghanistan: 'The Afghan scenario – an internal power struggle, tensions between national minorities and finally a cry for help to sympathetic Communists in the Kremlin – ultimately was and is the nightmare of many Yugoslavs.'¹⁴ However, Moscow publicly stated that it would leave Tito's country alone. President Carter warned that the United States would tolerate no form of 'terrorism' against Yugoslavia. In diplomatic circles it was understood that here the American president was referring to the causing of internal disorder 'which is regarded as being a much greater danger to Yugoslav independence than any "normal" military invasion'.¹⁵

According to a leader article in the *Volkskrant*, 'one of Tito's greatest virtues is the fact that the formation of the Yugoslav nation seems to be sufficiently rooted so as to be able to survive his passing.'¹⁶ By contrast other Dutch commentators argued that, although the Yugoslavs' sense of national identity had increased under Tito, the Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Montenegrins and Macedonians 'and all those other tribes' were still contaminated by 'the passionate tribal chauvinism that the mixed population of Yugoslavia has suffered from since time immemorial.'¹⁷ 'The strength of the forces that threaten the country's unity both at home and abroad will be revealed now that the old leader is no longer around'¹⁸

⁹ M. Broekmeyer, 'Tito was uitzonderlijk', *Het Parool*, 06/05/80

¹⁰ B. van Oosterhout, 'Belgrado een tranendal', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 09/05/80. Also 'Tito was zijn eigen Marx', *de Volkskrant*, 05/05/80.

¹¹ Nehru quoted in T. Kuijt, 'Tito's leven in het teken van strijd', *Het Parool*, 05/05/80.

¹² 'Joegoslavië zonder Tito', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 05/05/80; B. van Oosterhout, 'Belgrado loopt uit', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 07/05/80.

¹³ F. Schaling, 'Door breuk met Stalin kon Joegoslavië geschiedenis maken', *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/05/80.

¹⁴ T. Kuijt, 'Tito's leven in het teken van strijd', *Het Parool*, 05/05/80. J. den Boef, 'Kan Joegoslavië zonder Tito?', *Trouw*, 05/05/80, 'Tito', *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/05/80; F. Schaling, 'Leiders Joegoslavië hebben eerste vuurproef doorstaan', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/05/80.

¹⁵ A. de la Kromme, 'Supermachten laten Joegoslavië met rust', *de Telegraaf*, 08/05/80. 'De politieke dood van een staatsman', *Het Parool*, 05/05/80; 'Commentaar - Tito's dood', *Trouw*, 05/05/80; 'Russen blijven uit Joegoslavië', *ibidem*, 06/05/80.

¹⁶ 'Ten geleide – Tito', *de Volkskrant*, 05/05/80.

¹⁷ 'Tito was zijn eigen Marx', *de Volkskrant*, 05/05/80. Also J. den Boef, 'Kan Joegoslavië zonder Tito?', *Trouw*, 05/05/80.

¹⁸ 'Joegoslavië zonder Tito', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 05/05/80. 'Tito's naaste adviseurs krijgen de macht', *de Volkskrant*, 07/05/80; 'Tito', *NRC Handelsblad*, 05/05/80; F. Schaling, 'Leiders Joegoslavië hebben eerste vuurproef doorstaan', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/05/80; 'De politieke dood van een staatsman', *Het Parool*, 05/05/80.

Tito's obituaries were illustrations of the developments that had occurred in his country during the 20th century. He was born in 1892 to a Croat father and a Slovenian mother. Before assuming leadership of the Communist Party at the end of the 1930s, Tito had climbed the ranks of the Imperial Army to become a sergeant major during the First World War - Croatia still being a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At first he fought against the Serbs along the Drina, a fact that he later preferred to omit from his biography.¹⁹ After being captured by the Russians, he converted to Communism and initially remained in Russia. When Josip Broz returned to the land of his birth in 1920, Croatia was no longer a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that was later to be called Yugoslavia. This first Yugoslavia took him by chance just as its end took him by surprise in 1941. The second Yugoslavia, which was formed after the Second World War, was largely his creation and survived him by only eleven years.

The events that led to Slovenia and Croatia's proclamations of independence in the summer of 1991 raised the question as to the feasibility of a Yugoslavia that had been created and destroyed on two occasions during the 20th century. Of course, the question was not simply of academic importance but was also relevant for the initial positioning of other countries vis-à-vis the conflict that arose in 1991. Linked to this is the question of whether the collapse of Yugoslavia can be attributed first and foremost to causes within Yugoslavia itself (endogenous explanations) or to external developments and events (exogenous explanations). Some authors place great emphasis on internal factors in terms of the collapse of both Yugoslavias. One of them, Dusan Necak, has written: 'The nations of Yugoslavia have faced a decision on their common destiny on several occasions in history, but the forces of division and disintegration have always been stronger than those of unity and consolidation.'²⁰ Ivo Banac, an authoritative historian who specializes in Yugoslavia and works at the University of Yale, goes one step further. He attributes no credit whatsoever to the Yugoslavs for the creation of their state of Yugoslavia (which literally means South Slavia): 'Every examination of the Yugoslavia project will show that the idea of South Slavic unity and reciprocity was promoted, often unwittingly, by the non-Slavs and was undermined by the southern Slavs themselves.'²¹ We will explore in depth the question of whether this is correct. The answers are important so as to show which centrifugal tendencies were present in both the First and the Second Yugoslavia, which were the mechanisms that had to counter these developments and why these ultimately failed. The reader must be patient here because Bosnia only enters the picture at a late stage. In fact, Bosnia-Herzegovina was not the source of major political problems in Yugoslavia. On the contrary, probably there would have never been a war in Bosnia in the 1990s if Yugoslavia had not already collapsed.²²

3. The events preceding the first Yugoslavia

'Yugoslavia's death had been a long one with the first seeds of its destruction sown before its birth...'²³

Yugoslavia was located on the Balkan Peninsula that throughout history was the victim of alternately too much or too little interference from the major civilizations and great powers. Hence, in many ways, the country was situated on a fault line: it was simultaneously a no man's land, an area of confrontation and a melting pot.

¹⁹ Glenny, *Balkans*, pp. 571-572.

²⁰ Dusan Necak, 'Historical Elements for Understanding the "Yugoslav Question"', Akhavan/Howse (eds.), *Yugoslavia*, p.

14. See also Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 7

²¹ Ivo Banac, 'The Origins and Development of the Concept of Yugoslavia', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.) *Disintegration*, p. 1.

²² Susan L. Woodward, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina: How Not to End Civil War', in: Walter/Snyder (eds.), *Wars*, p. 75.

²³ Owen, 'Breakup', p. 39.

For centuries the line dividing the Western from the Eastern Roman Empire ran through what was later to become Yugoslavia. After the schism between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches in 1054, representatives of both branches of the Christian faith continued for many years to fight together against Islam that appeared to be spreading to the West.

The Serbs had their own kingdom from the beginning of the 13th century; it was supported by its own church that was founded by Saint Sava. He had seized upon a momentary weakness in the Byzantine Orthodox Church so as to set up an independent Serb Orthodox Church with its own liturgy. The Serb Empire achieved its ultimate expansion in the middle of the 14th century under King Stefan Dusan (1331-1355). At that point it covered Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, a large part of Greece and Bulgaria. But it was all downhill from then on: the troops of the Serbian King Lazar were beaten by the Turks at the 'Blackbird Field': the Battle of Kosovo or *Kosovska Bitka*. This event was kept alive with epic songs for centuries to come. The Serbian Empire continued until the middle of the 15th century when it was forced to admit defeat against the Ottomans, the Sultans who ruled the Turkish Empire between approximately 1300 and 1922.

The Slovenes and the Croats came under the domain of the Roman Catholic Church once Byzantium fell to the Turks in 1453. Hence, the Slovenes were subject to Venetian rule and the Croats to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Like the Serbian Empire, the Bosnian Empire, which had existed since the 12th century, was conquered by the Ottomans in the 15th century.

Most Serbs remained loyal to the Orthodox faith under Turkish rule but some of the Serbs in Bosnia and the Albanians in Kosovo converted to Islam. The Ottoman government had a high degree of religious tolerance that was maintained by the *millet* system. This system included a form of sectarianism: religious organizations also governed a part of the people's lives within society. This resulted in a development where faith and ethnicity converged. Through faith, the administration of justice and cultural tradition, the Orthodox priests greatly contributed to the preservation of an individual identity and the development of the Serbs' sense of nation.



Towards the Treaty of Berlin

This development of a Serbian national awareness was not insignificant. Turkish domination resulted in the Serbs emigrating to the north and away from Kosovo that was associated with such important memories. They moved to more peripheral areas such as what was later to become Vojvodina along with the area around Banja Luka in the north-west of Bosnia, Slavonia and the Krajina which bordered on the territory under Turkish rule. In Slavonia and the Krajina, the Serbs were able to live as free peasants under the Austro-Hungarian regime with the right to practise their own religion in exchange for military service in the fight against the Turks.

The Vojna Krajina (literally: military border area) extended like a sickle from Novi Sad and Belgrade to close to Zadar on the coast. This area, which encompassed both Krajina near Knin and

East Slavonia, maintained a separate legal status until 1881 when it was no longer of military importance and became a part of Croatia.

From the end of the 18th century, there was an overt national awareness in the area that was to become Yugoslavia. This awareness was initially based on religion. Serbs, Croats and Muslims could only be distinguished from one another on the basis of their religion, no matter how weak their belief. Croats were Catholic, Serbs were Orthodox and Muslims were Islamic. A Catholic Serb and an Orthodox Croat would be just as absurd as a Jewish Muslim.²⁴ A Serb who changed religion would also change ethnicity. For instance, a Serb who converted to Islam would therefore also become a 'Turk' or 'Muslim'; a Serb who embraced Catholicism would become a Croat.²⁵

The second distinguishing element was the memory of the past where the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians had all had their own empires replete with myths that were communicated and touched up through an oral tradition that passed from generation to generation. These epic poems created a sense of intimacy with eras long past and virtually erased the intervening centuries from human consciousness. Some Serbian ideologists even went so far as to argue that if a Serb converted to Islam, he not only became a 'Turk' but was also tainted with the blood of the Serbs who had been killed four or five hundred years previously during the Ottoman conquests.²⁶

There were only limited linguistic differences between the three Slavic groups that could be compared to the differences between English and American. The Slovenes had a different language during the later Yugoslavia, as did the Albanians in Kosovo and the Macedonians.

In 1815 the Sultan of the now-fading Turkish Empire granted limited self-rule to Serbia and in 1830 he recognized Obrenovic's sovereignty over Serbia, Obrenovic being the forefather of one of the two dynasties that would rule Serbia during the 19th century. Serbia now had the status of a vassal state that encompassed a limited area to the south of the Sava and the Danube, and with Belgrade to the far north.

Between 1815 and 1833 many Serbs moved to Serbia from the surrounding areas while the Turkish citizens and Muslims left the Serbian territory. This was the beginning of a series of expulsions and massacres that left Serbia virtual 'Muslim-free' at the beginning of the 20th century and showed how Serbian nationalism tended to exclude non-Serbs rather than integrate them.

Yet many Serbs still lived outside of the Serbian heartland: in Montenegro, Vojvodina, Krajina, etc. It was not long before pioneering Serbs began to dream of a Greater Serbian Empire that reflected the memory of the medieval Kingdom of Serbia. Once the Turks had abandoned their final bulwark in Serbia in 1867, the Serbs began to work towards a union with the areas outside of Serbia where their ethnic kinsfolk lived.

The Serbs fought the Turks with the help of Russia, and Serbian sovereignty was fully recognized at the Treaty of San Stefano and the Treaty of Berlin (1878). The Treaty of Berlin also recognized the independence of Montenegro, an area where the mountain dwellers and their religious and secular rulers had always managed to maintain a certain autonomy vis-à-vis the major powers.

Towards the First World War

Nonetheless the Serbs were dissatisfied with the results of the Treaty of Berlin because they had failed to achieve a foothold in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This Ottoman area was assigned to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the form of a protectorate. In 1908 the Austro-Hungarian Empire formally annexed this region, much to Serbia's fury.

Along with the ideal of a Greater Serbia, there was an increasing desire following the Treaty of Berlin for the unification of all the southern Slavs (i.e. the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) who were

²⁴ Detrez, *Balkan*, p. 12.

²⁵ Also Raju G.C. Thomas, 'History, Religion and National Identity', Thomas/Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, pp. 26-27.

²⁶ Michael Sells, 'Christoslavism 2. The Five Major Components',

<http://www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/postings/christoslavism2.html> consulted 26/12/00.

located within the borders of the Double Monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This movement was nourished by the fact that there were no major linguistic differences between the various southern Slavs. However, at that time Serbia's political and military ambitions were directed southwards.

During the First Balkan War (1912-1913), Serbia and Montenegro along with Bulgaria and Greece attacked a weakened Turkey that was virtually driven out of Europe. However, Serbia and Montenegro once again felt that they had missed out on the territorial spoils that had been divided up by the major powers.

This dissension led a month later to fresh hostilities, this time between Bulgaria on the one side and Serbia, Greece, Roumania and Turkey on the other: the Second Balkan War had just broken out. Serbia acquired a large part of Macedonia once the peace treaty was signed. The rest of Macedonia was handed over to Greece and Bulgaria.

During the two Balkan Wars, the Serbian territory grew from 48,000 to 87,000 square kilometres. Serbia gained control of areas including Kosovo and Macedonia, both having many Albanian residents. Many Serbs felt that this was historically justified. After returning from the Second Balkan War, Crown Prince Aleksandar was greeted by crowds as the 'avenger of Kosovo'.²⁷

However, Serbia hardly had time to integrate the new areas into the Kingdom. The Austro-Hungarian Empire regarded Serbia's power expansion with displeasure. Vienna felt that there were calls from the elite of Croatia and Slovenia for Serbia to play the same role in achieving a southern Slavic amalgamation as the Prussians had for German unification or Piedmont had for Italy. The Serbian regime was aware of the fact that some circles in Vienna were just waiting for a reason to declare war on Serbia.

On 28 June 1914 the Bosnian Serb Gavrilo Princip murdered the Austrian Archduke and heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo. Princip belonged to a group of Bosnian-Serb nationalists who were supported in semi-official Serbian circles. These circles had refused to accept the annexation of Bosnia by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1908.²⁸ This attack was to trigger the First World War.

Austria, encouraged by Germany, stipulated humiliating conditions for Serbia who, according to Austria, was behind the attack. Serbia, supported by Russia, did not want to give in. After Russian mobilization, which was rapidly followed by the mobilization of other countries, the First World War had become a fact.

4. The first Yugoslavia

'You cannot understand Yugoslavia without having a detailed knowledge of its history even before its official birth in 1918. This is because the reasons for its birth were the same as for its death.'²⁹

The first Yugoslavia consisted of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia- Hercegovina, Montenegro and Vojvodina; it came into being on 1 December 1918.³⁰ The direct reason for the creation of this first Yugoslavia is to be found in the course of the First World War in this area.

During the First World War, the Croats and Slovenes fought in the Habsburg Army (the army of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) against the Serbs. Amongst these fighters was Josip Broz who was

²⁷ Branislav Gligorijevic, 'King Aleksandar I Karadordevic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 143.

²⁸ For more about the complicated relations between Princip, the Unification or Death group (*Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*) (which is better known under its popular name of The Black Hand (*Crna Ruka*) and was responsible for secret operations outside of Serbia) and the official organizations in Belgrade, see David MacKenzie, 'Dragutin Dimitrijevic-Apis', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, and in particular pp. 69-82.

²⁹ Dobrica Cosic, quoted in Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 1.

³⁰ For a survey of the history of the first Yugoslavia see, for instance, Almond, *War*, pp. 112-132; Glenny, *Balkans*, pp. 402-412, 428-436, 473-477; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 99-196; Mønnesland, *Land*, pp. 211-238.

later to become known as Tito. The Croats set up seven concentration camps for Serbs and Bosnians, the most notorious being at Doboj. Ten thousand prisoners were to die here, mostly from illness and neglect.³¹

In the autumn of 1915, with the help of the Bulgarians, the Austrian and German troops managed to drive the Serbian enemy into Albania. The Serbian troops reached Greece through Albania and Montenegro where a Franco-British fleet evacuated the 155,000 men who had survived the appalling journey to Corfu.

In 1915 political exiles from Croatia and Slovenia agreed in London on the formation of a federal Yugoslav state. At first it was impossible to reach conciliation with the supporters of the idea of a centrally-governed Greater Serbia. However, the February Revolution in Russia in 1917 brought both sides closer together: the Serbs no longer had the support of the Russian tsar and feared that the other members of the Entente – France and Great Britain – would recognize an independent Croatia that would still include many Serbs within its borders. On the other hand the Slovenes and Croats, who wanted to separate themselves from the Habsburg Dual Monarchy, now also had their interests in a Greater Serbia. They had read in diplomatic documents exposed by Russian revolutionaries, that two years earlier the allies had promised Italy territory – South Tyrol, Trieste, Istria and parts of the Dalmatian coast – in exchange for it entering the war on their side. These promises of territory would have been at the cost of Slovenia and Croatia who hoped to free themselves of the Double Monarchy.

Due to these foreign threats, in 1917 the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes agreed upon a joint kingdom that would be ruled by the Serbian Karadjordjevic dynasty. During the final year of war, the Serb forces were based in Albania and managed to reconquer the territory that they had had to give up at the end of 1915. At the same time there was a growing sympathy for a southern Slavic state amongst the starving and war-weary peoples of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia because it would mean an end to the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that had plunged the Balkans into catastrophe.³²

Following the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the international climate favoured the implementation of the southern Slavs' federal plans. This enabled King Petar to proclaim the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on 1 December 1918. Macedonia and Montenegro, who were considered to be a part of Serbia, were excluded from this title as were the Muslims in areas such as Bosnia-Herzegovina. Petar abdicated six months later in favour of his son Aleksandar.

Unlike the nation states of Western Europe, Yugoslavia was not therefore a nation in the sense of a political entity that had been grafted onto an ethnic community. It was the result of the fragmentation process of two multi-ethnic states; it occurred at the end of the suffering of Europe's 'sick' Habsburg Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. And it was also the result of the temporary decline of the great states of Germany and Russia during the First World War: the two political entities that had constantly influenced the Balkans during the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Hence, Yugoslavia was created from areas that had extremely diverse political backgrounds. It encompassed the former Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro (which had managed to escape the Ottoman domination), Croatia (which following two centuries of independence from the beginning of the 12th century had, with the maintenance of a certain level of autonomy, become a part of first Hungary and then the Habsburg Empire), Bosnia and Herzegovina, (which were a part of the Ottoman Empire for many centuries but were added to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1878) and Slovenia (which had never existed as an independent state, had spent many centuries under German influence but finally became a part of the Habsburg Empire).

Unlike some Western European states, the Yugoslav State had not begun as the dream of a people who had fought together for their freedom. In the 19th century Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Montenegrins had either argued for Pan-Slavism (which went way beyond Yugoslavia) or had fought

³¹ Johnsen, *Enigma*, p. 39.

³² Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 106.

for a separate Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian or Montenegrin state. Each of these aspirations paled alongside Yugoslavia as a construction.

If there was mention of a southern Slavic state in the nationalist programs of the Slovenes and the Croats, it was mostly for tactical reasons. This was because they would need the Serbs' support so as to be able to free themselves from the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy or alternatively so as to achieve autonomy as a third state that would be the equal of both Austria and Hungary. And when the Serbs spoke of southern Slavic unification, as based on a common language, it was mainly because they were seeking a solution so as to create a new national home for the Serbs who lived outside of Serbia.³³ The lack of synchronization between the various nationalist aspirations made the ideal of a southern Slavic state virtually impossible until the First World War: Croatia and Slovenia were not independent and Serbia was already an autonomous state which would later achieve independence and would not voluntarily allow itself to be confined within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The national awareness in this area, which entered the world community in 1918 under its initial name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, had long been the dream of an elite. This elite consisted of a modest-sized intelligentsia that included a clergy that advised its political leaders against a background of romantic nationalism.³⁴ These elite circles lived in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Sarajevo, cities that had become greatly modernized during the 19th century. Rural areas remained excluded from innovative trends or they actively opposed them.

These elite circles played a role in the region's nationalist sentiments in two separate ways. Firstly representatives of these circles traced the borders on Balkan maps and coloured them in a way that subsequently was to be realized by political and military leaders. The people counted only as foot soldiers and had no voice in these nationalist aspirations. A second way in which the intelligentsia propagated nationalism during the 19th century was to create the ethnic-national myths whose influence was still to be felt at the end of the 20th century. While ignoring the long period of Austrian, Hungarian, Turkish and Venetian domination, the nationalists longed for the eras when the historical empire was at its zenith – either in reality or in the imagination. This meant, for instance, that the historical claims for a Greater Croatia or a Greater Serbia had to overlap. It also meant that the needs of Macedonia, Bosnia and Albania to have their own states were in conflict with each other.

Serb mythology focused on the Battle of Kosovo at the Blackbird Field where King Lazar was given the choice between a place in the Kingdom of Heaven or conquest on Earth: he accepted the first choice. His troops then suffered a defeat that would lead to centuries of Turkish domination. Their Orthodox faith generated the idea amongst the Serbs that they formed a front against Catholicism on the one hand and Islam on the other. This gave them both a sense of pride and a feeling of victimization and xenophobia.

Croatian nationalists regarded their people as being a stronghold of Catholic Rome, the *Antemurale Christianitatis*, against both the Orthodox Church and Islam.³⁵ The nationalist movements of the 19th century generally added extra emphasis to the exclusive elements of their own parties although it was impossible to exclude paradox in an area where so many different groups lived together. For instance, Ante Starcevic, who set up the ultra-nationalist Party of Croatian Rights in 1861 and who is regarded by many Croats as being the founder of anti-Serbian, Croatian nationalism, was also the son of a Serbian Orthodox mother and a Catholic Croatian father. Sometimes other population groups were usurped in an attempt to justify claims to particular areas. Hence, Serbs became 'Orthodox Croats' and Muslims became 'Serbs who have converted to Islam'.

These forms of 19th century nationalism finally led to a compromise that was only made possible by the First World War. However, it in no way solved the tensions between the amalgamated ethnic elements of the first Yugoslavia. On the contrary, these tensions dominated the country's politics

³³ Batakovic, 'Integration?'

³⁴ Also Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 229-230.

³⁵ Some 19th century nationalists contended that the Croats had also protected Western Europe against the Avars and the Mongols, Deschner/Petrovic, *Krieg*, p. 101.

for virtually its entire existence. For that matter, the Serbs and Croats had decided on the formation of a southern Slavic state for entirely different reasons. The Serbs saw it as being the only possibility to realize their dream of combining all the Serbs into a single nation. They effectively regarded the presence of other ethnic groups as being a part of the bargain. The Croats needed Serbia's help to acquire the necessary clout so as to achieve independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Once the new state had become a reality, the vast majority of its inhabitants were Serbs who numbered five million amongst a total population of twelve million. The Serbs tended to dominate the other ethnic groups. The Croats no longer appreciated the Serbs' dominance now that Austro-Hungarian dominance had been thrown aside and the state had been set up. In fact the Croats, who had enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy under Austro-Hungarian rule, even felt that their position in the new Kingdom had deteriorated. The Serbs, on the other hand, had emerged from the war on the winning side and argued that they had made sacrifices during the war for the freedom of the Slovenes and the Croats whom, as they pointed out, had fought against them for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Serbian domination was also the plan of the peace negotiators at Versailles, and this was especially true of the French who felt that the southern Slavic state had to be a bulwark against the restoration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the possibility of new German interests in the Balkans.³⁶

Further consideration of the politics of the first Yugoslavia

The explanation for the creation of the first Yugoslavia can be sought through causes that existed both within Yugoslavia (endogenous factors) and abroad (exogenous factors).

The supporters of the endogenous explanation for the creation of the first Yugoslavia emphasize the fact that the idea for a southern Slavic state was already present in the programs of the 19th century nationalists in the various areas that were later to become the amalgamated parts of Yugoslavia. They argue that this idea had gained considerable support in the ten years preceding the First World War.³⁷

In addition, they refer to the linguistic homogeneity of the southern Slavic area, with the exception that the Serbs generally use the Cyrillic alphabet and the other ethnic groups the Latin version.

The endogenous explanations continue by arguing that, at the end of the First World War, elite circles from Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia regarded a unified southern Slavic area as being the best guarantee against the power of neighbouring countries such as Germany, Hungary, Italy, Rumania and Turkey. Of course, this could also be regarded as an external factor. These authors contend that a condition for southern Slavic unification was the power of the Serbian army.

The supporters of the exogenous explanation consider the significance of the First World War as being all important: 'Yugoslavia is a product of the First World War.'³⁸ The Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman Empires were in decline and had emerged from the war in defeat. Croatia and Slovenia could expect nothing more of these empires after the war. And without the Italian threat at the end of the war, the elite of Ljubljana and Zagreb would have never fled into the arms of their Belgrade counterparts.³⁹ Finally, at the peace conference in Versailles, the major powers forced the Serbs, their wartime ally, to accept the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia.⁴⁰ Hence, they also determined that large Slovenian minorities would remain in Austria while at the same time Italy had been allocated Istria,

³⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 108-109, 151, 161; Van den Heuvel, *Land*, pp. 10 and 34; Tiersky, *Mitterrand*, p. 204; Naarden, *Western Perceptions and Balkan realities*, p. 31.

³⁷ For the arguments mentioned here, see for instance: Dusan Necak, 'Historical Elements for Understanding the 'Yugoslav Question'', Akhavan/Howse (eds.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 16; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 99.

³⁸ Stallaerts, *Afscheid*, p. 74. Also Rogel, *Breakup*, p. 7: 'World War I determined what happened to the Southern Slavs; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 70: 'Only the course of the First World War ... made it possible to form the first Yugoslav state ...'.

³⁹ Weithmann, *Brandbaard*, p. 64.

⁴⁰ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 4.

Zadar and a number of Dalmatian islands. Hungary was forced to surrender Vojvodina and a part of the Banat to the new Kingdom.

The southern Slavic State was founded in 1918 with the international situation playing a vital role. Yet it did not have an easy start. The country was poor. Eighty per cent of the population lived in rural areas where, in both Croatia and Serbia, Habsburg soldiers had requisitioned a great many cattle and goods. Two-thirds of all peasant families lived below subsistence level.⁴¹ Industry was not sufficiently developed to alleviate the widespread hidden unemployment in rural areas in any significant way. Moreover, there was considerable inequality between the various regions. Serbia had suffered terribly in the war. More than a quarter of a Serb population of four-and-a-half million had been killed in the two Balkan Wars and the First World War. As many as 62% of men aged between 15 and 55 had died.⁴² By contrast, the cost in human life was less than ten per cent in the regions of Yugoslavia that had been a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

What applied to people also applied to industry. The slight industrial lead that Slovenia and Croatia originally had over Serbia was subsequently increased by the war itself and by Serbia's reconstruction problems after the war. The retreating Austro-Hungarian troops had focused their scorched earth tactics on Serbia. After the war Croatia benefited from investments from Austria and Hungary whereas Serbia failed to attract foreign investment for several years. The new Kingdom still had virtually no integrated national transport system. Train connections, roads and bank systems were still the same as in the days of the great empires. There had been virtually no trade between the various areas of the Kingdom before the First World War, a situation that was slow to change afterwards. The advantages of a large internal market were rarely exploited.

The political system was particularly unstable. Croat and Slovene political leaders resisted the Belgrade-based centralist state government that had been imposed by the Serbs and was included in the Constitution of 1921. This meant that the imbalance between centralism and federalism was inherent to the first Yugoslavia right from the start and was ultimately to destroy the second Yugoslavia. Even the day on which the constitution was proclaimed revealed Serbian domination: 28 June, Saint Vitus' Day, the day of the battle on the Blackbird Field and also of Gavrilo Princip's attack.

By virtue of its constitution, Yugoslavia had become a parliamentary democracy with the King fulfilling an exceptionally important role. This constitution was passed with only a small majority of the voting delegates. A large number of representatives, including the Croat Peasant Party and the Communists, had abstained.

Non-Serbian groups discovered that the practice of government was no better than the principle. Almost all the prime ministers of the 24 cabinets between 1921 and 1929 were of Serbian origin; only once, for almost six months in 1928, was there a non-Serbian premier: Bishop Anton Korosec of Slovenia. Almost all the army chiefs were Serbian, an ethnic group which otherwise accounted for 40% of the population. There were virtually no Croats in top positions although they formed a quarter of the population. Let alone the eight per cent who were Slovenes along with the Bosnian Muslims (six per cent), the Macedonians (five per cent), the Germans (four per cent) and roughly 15 other smaller ethnic groups who could not recognize themselves in the new Kingdom's title.

In addition, the Serbs were grossly overrepresented in the political world: of the 656 ministers who served between 1921 and 1939, 452 were Serbs, 26 were Croats with party affiliations and 111 were Croats without party affiliations.⁴³ On the eve of the German invasion of Yugoslavia, 161 out of a total of 165 generals were either Serb or Montenegrin; only two were Croats. This situation represented a deterioration for the Croats who, during the Habsburg era, had accounted for 15% of the generals and admirals of the Austro-Hungarian forces.⁴⁴ In 1934, out of a total number of 145 top diplomats,

⁴¹ Almond, *War*, p.119.

⁴² Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p. 25.

⁴³ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 183.

⁴⁴ Cohen, *War*, pp. 8-9.

123 were Serbs and 21 were of Croatian origin.⁴⁵ In addition, the vast majority of provincial prefects were Serbs in every area except Slovenia.

60% of the Yugoslav army were Serbs who also accounted for more than half of all civil servants.⁴⁶ It was only in the justice system that the relation remained in proportion, at least so far as the Serbs and the Croats were concerned. More than half of all judges were Serb and a quarter Croat.

The Slovenes fared the best of all the non-Serb groups in the Kingdom. Their language ensured that they maintained a certain level of government autonomy vis-à-vis Belgrade. And educational opportunities, which had been limited under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, now were greatly increased. But it was a very different story for the inhabitants of Macedonia which was now known as South Serbia and had been subjected to a 'Serbification' program that had demolished their own educational system and religious organizations. Even their Macedonian names had been changed into their Serbian equivalents.⁴⁷

The instability of the first Yugoslavia was demonstrated by the high level of political violence. 24 political death sentences were carried out during the Kingdom's first ten years and approximately 600 political murders were committed. In addition, there were around 30,000 political arrests and 3000 citizens fled the country for political reasons.⁴⁸ The victims were primarily Croats, Macedonians and Albanians.

Following an overly heavy-handed attempt by the Serbs to introduce educational materials that were based on a joint Yugoslav nationality, texts remained in use that took each individual ethnicity and region as their point of departure.

The development of political parties, along with general trade union activity, seemed only to occur along ethnic lines. The Social Democratic, the Communist and the tiny Republican Parties were the exception to this rule. At the 1920 council elections, the Communists gained a majority in 36 towns and villages that included Belgrade and Nis. They also won 12% of the votes at elections held for the constitutional assembly; this made them the third biggest party in the country. However, measures taken against the party's revolutionary nature soon drove it underground.

Despite centralism and their numerical superiority, the Serbs were unable to control the parliament effectively. This was due to the fact that the Serbian parties were rarely able to work together in unity. Consequently virtually no legislation was passed and the various judicial systems of the Kingdom's amalgamated areas continued to exist alongside each other.

The Kingdom's most popular opposition party was the Croatian Peasant Party that was led by Stjepan Radic, a populist lawyer from Zagreb. He ensured that nationalism, which up till then had been an elitist issue, was to reach every Croatian hamlet. Radic resisted the domination of the Orthodox Serbs and Montenegrins right from the start. He fought for an independent republican Croatia that at most would be a part of a Yugoslav confederation, a political construction that would allow for a high degree of independence amongst its member states. By focusing Croatia on Europe, he tried to maintain its distance from the rest of Yugoslavia 'so as not to become dependent upon the Balkans which, whatever one may say, are simply an Asian protuberance. Our duty is to make the Balkans more European rather than to make the Croats and the Slovenes more Balkan...'⁴⁹

Radic's party repeatedly boycotted both the parliament and the elections that were always prone to fraud and were regularly the signal for the Serb-dominated police force to inflict violence on non-Serbs. The Croatian Peasant Party was more of a national movement than a political party. Therefore, in the 1920s and 1930s, its contribution was for promoting ethnic nationalism rather than for creating a sense of 'Yugoslavism'.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Almond, *War*, p. 128.

⁴⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 130.

⁴⁷ Cohen, *War*, p. 11.

⁴⁸ Cohen, *War*, p. 10.

⁴⁹ Radic quoted in Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 15.

⁵⁰ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 16.

One of the low points of the troubled history of the first Yugoslavia came in 1928 with a Montenegrin delegate's assassination in parliament of Radic and two other members of the Croatian Peasant Party. Two of the victims were killed instantly. Radic died some time later from the wounds that he had sustained in the attack.

At the same time, the Empire of King Aleksandar was confronted with territorial claims and other threats from surrounding countries. The danger from abroad and the internal state of deadlock resulted in the King abolishing democracy and introducing a monarchic dictatorship. He also began to suppress every expression of ethnic nationalism. Hence, he replaced his Kingdom's extensive title with a shorter name: from 1920 onwards the country was officially known as South Slavia or Yugoslavia.

Consequently, ten years after the creation of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the country's name was officially changed to 'Yugoslavia'. This Yugoslavia was divided into nine government units. These were arranged in such a way that six of them had a Serbian majority while two had a Croatian majority and one was dominated by the Slovenes. It was a blatant attempt to sweep the ethnic issue under the carpet. At the time, this step was greeted with the remark that children, let alone states, cannot be brought into the world by decree.⁵¹ Political parties were forbidden, press censorship was introduced and judicial independence was swept aside. Croatia and Macedonia were terrorized by a police force that functioned both secretly and openly, officially and unofficially, and which almost always consisted of Serbs.

The 1931 Constitution paved the way for the political parties' return. However, these parties were to play a subordinate role and only 'Yugoslav' parties were permitted. In fact, this new electoral system strongly favoured the Serbs. Extremist parties on both the left and the right had long since been driven underground. These included the VMRO, the Macedonian nationalist organization. Croatian nationalism reached its extreme in 1929 in the form of the Ustashe Croatian Revolutionary Organization or the 'uprisers' movement. It was known as the Ustashe for short and was led by Ante Pavelic. This fascist movement opposed Serbian domination and found support in Italy, Germany and Hungary.

King Aleksandar of Yugoslavia was murdered during a visit to Marseille in 1934. The Ustashe was responsible for the murder and had deployed a VMRO terrorist. It was supported by the Italy of Mussolini who wanted the return of the former Italian areas along the Adriatic coast. Naturally King Aleksandar had opposed this.

Political relations remained difficult but the economy improved from 1934 onwards. This was due to focusing on Germany and on an industrialization program that particularly benefited Serbia and the mining and metallurgic industries of Central Bosnia. Nonetheless, at that time the Yugoslav economy was one of the slowest to develop in the Balkan region.⁵²

The shift in industrial centre was viewed by Croatian politicians as being new evidence that Croatia would not benefit from what they regarded as being Serbian centralism.⁵³ Dr. Vlatko Macek, Radic's successor as the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, argued that Croatia should acquire a higher level of autonomy. He felt that Croatia and Serbia should only be joined by a personal union. Meanwhile Pavle, Yugoslavia's Prince Regent, was confronted by the increasing threat of war in Central and Eastern Europe. An additional danger was the possibility that either Germany or Italy would take over Croatia or would try to turn this area into a puppet state. The Prince Regent took action to deal with this pressure: at his instigation the Serbian Prime Minister Cvetkovic strengthened Yugoslavia's stability in 1939 by compromising with the Croats. In August of that year, Cvetkovic reached an agreement with Macek whereby Croatia acquired an autonomous status with the addition of the area in Bosnia-Herzegovina where the most Croats lived. This expanded Croatia was to have its own parliament and government. Only foreign policy, defence, transport and communication would be dealt

⁵¹ Gojko Boric, 'Kroatien und Jugoslawien – Ein Abriss historischer Erfahrungen', Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)erben*, p. 62.

⁵² Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 57.

⁵³ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 185

with on a national level. Neither the parliament nor the people were consulted about this plan. In fact, this attempt to create more autonomy for Croatia had come too late. The agreement's implementation had virtually no effect because of the approaching war.

Towards the Second World War

On 25 March 1941 Pavle, the Prince Regent, and his government responded to tremendous German pressure by agreeing that Yugoslavia would enter the Axis pact of Germany and Italy. Two days later this step was countered by a successful military putsch. The coup was supported by demonstrations where people chanted slogans such as 'Better dead than a slave' or 'War is better than the pact', slogans that 50 years later would once again emerge from the junk room of history.

However, the true position of the coup's leaders was less principled than the sentiments of these slogans. They were soldiers who had seized the moment to express the army's indignation at the politics of the past few years. Although they talked about resisting the Axis pact, the coup's leaders soon secretly let Germany know that they would adhere to its agreement.

The leaders of the coup then set about reorganizing the government: they replaced a number of ministers from the previous cabinet, they included several fascists in the government and they replaced the Prince Regent with the underage Crown Prince who was proclaimed King Petar II. However, this did not placate Hitler. The Germans bombed Belgrade on 6 April 1941. This signalled the beginning of a campaign that would only last for 12 days.

This was followed by a wave of invasions by different countries – Germany, Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary – each of whom wanted to be bequeathed a part of the territorial assets. These invasions also make it difficult to judge the debate between the supporters of the endogenous and the exogenous explanations for the collapse of the first Yugoslavia. For instance, it can be argued that the actions of the German forces, which were rapidly followed by those of other countries, prevented a possible solution to the Yugoslav question as based on the Cvetkovic-Macek agreement.⁵⁴ One can defend this to the extent that this agreement largely erased all the years of Croatian resentment against Serbian domination; in its place came the Croats' long-time dream of achieving the status of a federation. However, this reasoning does have its flaws. The agreement met with objections from both the Serbs and the Croats because they respectively felt that either too many or too few concessions had been made to Croatia. Weithmann argues that the agreement in no way eased the tension within the country and that it actually increased it still further.⁵⁵

Additionally, there were three other problems. Firstly the definitive border in Bosnia that would separate Croatia from Serbia still had to be established. This was bound to cause problems. Secondly Belgrade was only prepared to consider the Croats' political wishes when faced with the threat of Fascist Italy and National-Socialist Germany. Thirdly other ethnic or regional groups, such as the Albanians, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Slovenes, were not included in this solution or, as in the case of the Bosnian Muslims, they were actually its victims. The agreement also ignored the Serbs in Croatia. In other words: the issue of nationality in the first Yugoslavia was initially reduced to just three groups – the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes – and finally to a matter to be solved by an arrangement between the Serbs and the Croats. There was little or no consideration of the other groups. For instance, in Kosovo, the relations between the Albanians – the most oppressed group in the Kingdom – and the Serbs were so bad that in 1937 political circles in Belgrade argued that the solution would be the Albanians' forced emigration, a policy which followed the example of the treatment of the Jews in Nazi Germany.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Also Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 8, 190, 192-194; V.P. Gagnon, 'Historical Roots of the Yugoslav Conflict', Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 182; Judah, 'Serbs', p. 34.

⁵⁵ Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, pp. 70-71.

⁵⁶ Cohen, *War*, pp. 4-6; Dusan Necak, 'Historical Elements for Understanding the 'Yugoslav Question'', Akhavan/Howse (eds.), *Yugoslavia*, pp. 23-24.

In conclusion, it would seem here that, even if it had not been invaded, the first Yugoslavia would have found it extremely difficult to survive in its existing form. To quote Necak:

‘The Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was supposedly established exclusively to protect the national interests of the constituent nations. Once this fundamental expectation was not fulfilled, the existence of the state defied its *raison d’être*. Social injustices only deepened national antagonism, and became a substantial part of the explosive mix of national and class differences that destroyed the first Yugoslavia.’⁵⁷

5. Yugoslavia in the Second World War

Lampe argues that the Second World War defined the creation of the second Yugoslavia to an even greater extent than the First World War defined the first one. This was because the dismantling of Yugoslavia had destroyed virtually all the existing institutions. Without that influence, says Lampe, the 8000 Communists at the beginning of the war would have never been able to dream about seizing power in 1945 and defying the Soviet Union several years later.⁵⁸



However, before this occurred, various nationalist movements in Yugoslavia would be driven to extremes. Those who sought to escape this ended up in the Partisan movement that was dominated by the Communists and was the only important organization that included a multi-ethnic perspective. By the end of the war, the rest of the population had virtually no alternative to Tito’s Communism. Nationalism had been discredited and the pre-war system that revolved around nationalism was bankrupt.

The Yugoslav army collapsed like a house of cards during the German campaign. Many Slovenian and Croatian officers and soldiers either deserted or simply did not show up for mobilization. The Serbian sections of the army did little better. The Germans captured 100,000 Yugoslav soldiers, most of whom Serbs, while they lost only 166 of their own men. King Petar fled to London with most of his government of eight Serbs, two Croats and a Slovene.

Although the government-in-exile could still maintain a degree of multi-ethnicity, the political structure of the first Yugoslavia had become completely fragmented. Following Yugoslavia’s capitulation, the Yugoslav monarchy was split between the National-Socialist and Fascist powers. Germany took over Central Serbia. The Italians let the Ustashe leader Ante Pavelic form ‘the first Croatian government’ in Croatia and allowed him to incorporate Bosnia-Herzegovina. At first Germany and Italy assumed joint responsibility for Croatia. The country then became an Italian protectorate but,

⁵⁷ Dusan Necak, ‘Historical Elements for Understanding the ‘Yugoslav Question’’, Akhavan/Howse (eds.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 24. Also Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 405; Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 197.

following the Italian capitulation in 1943, the area was completely incorporated into Germany's field of interest.

The Ustashe State during the war

With his Croatia *sve do Drine* (right to the Drina), Pavelic was able to achieve some of the nationalist dreams of the medieval Croatian Kingdom. However, he still found it painful that Italy, who also wanted to restore its lost empire, now occupied almost the entire Dalmatian coast and its islands along with Montenegro whose coast Italy also had its eye on. Slovenia was divided between Italy, Germany, Hungary and Croatia. Hungary took over Vojvodina. Bulgaria occupied Macedonia and southern Serbia. Kosovo was incorporated into Albania.

At first the occupation of Yugoslavia created a reversal in the power relations between the Serbs and the Croats. The Serbs, who had dominated Yugoslavia during its 22-year existence, now found themselves oppressed and even threatened physically. After several months the Germans installed a puppet-government in Belgrade that was led by General Nedic, a Serb and a former Minister of War. Nedic was known for his anti-Communist views and before the war he had argued that the country should join the Axis. The Germans allowed this cross between Pétain and Quisling to raise a small army of 17,000 men that was to help to combat the Partisans' growing resistance. The Germans themselves did not have enough troops for the job. In the course of time, Nedic was also supported by volunteer units who were from Greater Serbia and/or of a Fascist persuasion, an example being the Zbor, the Serbian Fascist party. Nedic was a supporter of a Greater Serbian state that would be based on Serbian peasants who formed 'the perfect Serbian race' because their 'blood [was] not yet mixed with that of other peoples'.⁵⁹

The physical threat to the Serbs came from both the German occupiers and their local enforcers and, more particularly, from Croatian extremists who, before the collapse of the Yugoslav state, had been forced into an existence of illegality or even self-imposed exile.

Before the war, the Ustashe movement had only a few thousand members and an estimated following of not much more than five per cent of the population in Croatia.⁶⁰ However, in what was typical of pre-war relations, the inhabitants of the Croatian capital of Zagreb were greeting the invading German troops as liberators while Belgrade was still burying 2300 of its citizens who had been killed as a result of German bombing.

A triumphant Pavelic entered in the wake of the German troops, a pattern that was repeated when Bulgarian troops marched into Macedonia several days later. Pavelic received the immediate support of the Catholic Church. Archbishop Stepinac of Zagreb sent a charge to his priests with the text: 'Today's events have fulfilled a long-cherished dream of our people.'⁶¹

Once in power, Pavelic's government began to attract more Croats. The Ustashe movement had approximately 28,500 members by 1943. The *Domobrani*, a Ustashe people's militia, consisted of 90,000 men. At its height, in September 1944, it was to consist of as many as 312,000 members. However, their battle readiness and morale were low. There was also another smaller Ustashe militia group that was more dogmatic. It consisted of 70,000 members including Pavelic's Personal Guard. It was mainly this group that applied its own, particularly cruel version of the Final Solution to the Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, and was supported by a section of the Bosnian Muslim community. On 2 May 1941, just a few weeks after Pavelic's government had come to power, the Ustashe Minister Zanic declared:

'This country can only be a Croatian country and there is nothing that we would not resort to so as to make it truly Croatian and to cleanse it of Serbs

⁵⁹ Cohen, *War*, p. 53.

⁶⁰ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 193.

⁶¹ Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 97. See also Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 269.

who have threatened us for centuries and would do it once again if they get the chance.’⁶²

Pavelic reverted to the nationalist ideas of the 19th century. He spoke of the ‘Resurrection’ of the ‘Independent State of Croatia’, ‘by God’s grace, the wish of our allies and the long, sorrowful and ancient struggle of the Croatian people’. This state would ‘be pure Croatian, a bulwark of Western civilization against the Serbs.’⁶³ Pavelic declared that all the Serbs within his state were to be stripped of their civil rights and protection. Just like the Jews and the Gypsies, they were banned from government jobs. Marriage between people of different ethnicities was forbidden. The Ustashe tried to create an ethnically-homogenous state through forced Christianization and large-scale massacres. Pavelic ordered that a third of the almost two million Serbs in the Ustashe state, as he now regarded Croatia, were to be murdered, a third were to be driven out and a third were to be converted. As one of the leading Ustashe figures was to comment after the war: ‘anti-Serbianism was the essence of the Ustashe doctrine, its *raison d’être* and *ceterum censeo* [constantly recurring fundamental attitude, author]’⁶⁴

The Jasenovac camp was the symbol of the regime’s atrocities, and it was here that probably between 60,000 and 80,000 prisoners were killed.⁶⁵ The commandant was Filipovic, a Franciscan priest. Apart from in Jasenovac, the Stara Gradiska death camp and a number of other concentration camps, tens of thousands of Serbs were killed in Pavelic’s state in local massacres and particularly in Serb-dominated cities such as Knin, Glina and Bijeljina.

About a quarter of all Croatian Jews survived the war, a figure that was higher than the less than ten per cent who survived in Serbia. One of the Ustashe government’s alleged reasons for their destruction was that Jewish doctors had committed ‘several hundreds of thousands of abortions’ between the wars so as to keep the Croatian birth rate down.⁶⁶

Franciscans and Catholic priests directed a program of forced conversions in wartime Croatia. When this failed to produce results, Pavelic’s government set up a ‘Croatian Orthodox Church’. Between two and three hundred thousand Serbs were forcibly converted or joined the new church. Hundreds of Orthodox churches, convents and monasteries were destroyed, as were synagogues. It is estimated that more than 200,000 Serbs were forced to migrate to Serbia from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁶⁷

Here, the question was how ‘the first Croatian national government’ of Pavelic and his associates would manage to govern not only Croatia but also a large area of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was for this reason that the Ustashe maintained an ambivalent attitude towards the Muslims. Sometimes they committed atrocities against them and sometimes the Muslims were called ‘the flower of the Croatian nation’ and encouraged to attack the Serbs.

Ustashe, Cetniks and Partisans

Archbishop Stepinac was later to adopt a more reserved attitude towards Pavelic’s government,⁶⁸ but Pavelic could still rely on the support of a considerable section of the clergy.

A large percentage of the population, who cheered at the end of the first Yugoslavia, now felt disillusioned with Pavelic’s government that was responsible for anarchic forms of violence that were also directed against Croats with divergent viewpoints. Many deeds that conflicted with ‘the honour

⁶² Quoted in Johnsen, *Enigma*, p. 122.

⁶³ Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 46.

⁶⁴ Eugen Dido Kvaternik, quoted in I. Banac, ‘The Fearful Asymmetry’, p. 155.

⁶⁵ Higher estimates, which are sometimes as much as ten times as high, are often (incorrectly) quoted, I. Banac, ‘The Fearful Asymmetry’, pp. 154 and 172, n. 30.

⁶⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 207.

⁶⁷ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 206-207.

⁶⁸ Monnesland, *Land*, pp. 269-270; Geert van Dartel, ‘Nationalities and Religion in Yugoslavia’, in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 33.

and the vital interests' of the Ustashe state were considered to be high treason and were punishable by death, an example being a discussion about Croatian borders.

Resistance in Yugoslavia initially came from sections of the defeated Serb army under the leadership of the monarchist Colonel (and later General) Dragoljub (Draza) Mihailovic. Mihailovic was known before the war for his anti-German views and his criticism of the Serbian army's lack of preparation.⁶⁹ He also felt bitter about the Croat officers and men who deserted while he was stationed at Djakovo in April 1941 during the Hungarian invasion.

On 11 April, the day after the proclamation of the 'independent' Ustashe State, Mihailovic and his men fought the Ustashe troops at Brcko in Bosnia. This resulted in Mihailovic being cut off from his headquarters and he subsequently operated on his own initiative. After Belgrade had capitulated on 17 April, he decided to wage a guerrilla war with a group that initially consisted of just a few dozen men. Mihailovic and his officers based themselves on the tradition of the Cetniks: Serbian guerrillas who had fought against the Turks in the 19th century. He set up his headquarters in Ravna Gora, a mountain village in the area of Serbia where Serbian resistance to the Ottoman rulers had started at the beginning of the 19th century.

In the summer of 1941 Mihailovic's troops claimed their first big success against the Germans when they liberated the city of Loznica. The leaders of the Cetnik movement declared their support for a 'homogenous Serbia' that would encompass two-thirds of Yugoslavia. To realize these plans, they estimated that it would be necessary to deport a million Croats and more than one-and-a-half million others. The remaining country would consist of Slovenia, with the addition of Istria, and a mini-Croatia. The Muslims were described as being 'a serious problem'.⁷⁰ The Cetniks were soon attacking the Croats and Muslims in an attempt to create an ethnically-pure Serbia.

Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, a second resistance movement was launched when Tito's Communists engaged in a partisan campaign. The Communist Party had been banned in 1921 because of a series of attacks but had continued to exist illegally. It had less than 500 members in 1932.⁷¹ Although the Party expanded from 1935 during the People's Front period when the Communists sought contact with other parties and the broader masses, by October 1940 it still only consisted of 6600 members and 17,800 young sympathizers.⁷² However, the first two months of Yugoslavia's occupation resulted in the Communist Party expanding by 50%. Its membership subsequently reached a total of 12,000 adults and 30,000 young people after the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

Josip 'Tito' Broz became the leader of the illegal party in 1937. Although the Party had decided in 1935 to retain the state of Yugoslavia, most of its support at the beginning of the war came from the Serbs and particularly from those who were threatened by the Ustashe regime in Croatia. This was soon to change. Unlike the Cetniks Tito, who was of Croatian-Slovenian origin, was not working towards a Greater Serbia. In addition, he had led a party meeting in Zagreb in October 1940 that had opposed the Cvetkovic-Macek agreement and had promised self-rule to Montenegro, Macedonia and a restored Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The preparations for Communist resistance were completed before Operation Barbarossa. Once the Operation was underway, the Yugoslav Communists engaged in a campaign of large-scale sabotage at the instigation of the Comintern, the Communist Party International. Like the Cetniks, the Partisan movement benefited from the fact that the Italian troops were weak and Hitler had sent all his best troops to the Russian front. In fact, there were only three German divisions in Serbia, each of which consisted of two regiments rather than the usual figure of three. Moreover, the units were mainly

⁶⁹ Kosta Nikolic, 'Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, pp. 207-208.

⁷⁰ Cohen, *War*, p. 44; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 202.

⁷¹ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 171.

⁷² Ivo Banac, 'The origins and development of the concept of Yugoslavia (to 1945', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.) *Disintegration*, p. 20.

made up of older conscripts with little combat experience. They were almost exclusively stationed in towns and had poor transport facilities.

In September 1941 Tito established his headquarters in Uzice on the Serbian side of the Drina where the Uzice Republic had existed for three months. At the end of the year Tito's Partisans were driven from there by the first in a series of seven German offensives. Tito then moved his headquarters to Foca in East Bosnia. Once the Partisans had left, there was little resistance in Serbia and it remained relatively peaceful until 1944. There were only 1700 Partisans there by the end of 1943.⁷³

By contrast, tens of thousands of people joined both the Partisan resistance and the Cetniks in Croatia and Bosnia–Hercegovina. Local Serb-dominated militia in these areas had been fighting the Ustashe terror since 1941. Moreover, the resistance had flourished in Bosnia as Pavelic did not have enough troops to govern the area effectively.

Mihailovic's Cetniks and Tito's Partisans operated jointly for some of the autumn of 1941. They had forced a large number of German soldiers to surrender and had set up a prisoner-of-war camp. However, the two organizations soon disagreed over issues such as command, tactics, the division of weapons and the countries' political future. The Cetniks were organized on a loose basis. In fact, many of the Cetnik groups were unclear about whether they accepted Mihailovic's authority or were led by purely local and regional motives. Naturally Mihailovic and the Yugoslav government-in-exile presented a different picture to the Allies. Tito's Partisans had a clear structure and hierarchy that was determined by the Leninist doctrine of democratic centralism. When a group of supporters appeared to have divergent views, as was the case with the leadership of the Croatian section in 1944, they were either replaced or eliminated in some other way.

But there were other differences between the Cetniks and Tito's Partisans. The Cetniks aimed at restoring the monarchy. Tito's Communists regarded the war as being an excellent opportunity to implement political and social revolution. They limited themselves to *hit-and-run* actions but also tried to occupy and govern the areas they conquered. The usual way in which the Cetniks operated was through warlords who led groups of peasants. By contrast, Tito's resistance movement provided both peasants and others with the potential for social mobility and a feeling of self-worth.

The events in Kragujevac in October 1941 proved to be a turning point in the relations between the Cetniks and the Partisans. Ten Germans had been killed and 26 wounded in an ambush; the penises of the dead men had been severed and placed in their mouths. The German reaction was that this mutilation was typical of the Cetniks' conduct⁷⁴. In reprisal, the Germans and their Serbian accomplices executed more than 2300 Serbian citizens on the spot. The Germans announced that, just as elsewhere in occupied Europe, 100 Serbs would be executed for every German who was killed and fifty would be executed for every German casualty. The Cetniks felt that the price was too high. As many Serbs as possible had to survive the war so to be able to create a homogenous Serbia. Therefore, the Cetniks subsequently tried to avoid German reprisals against the civilian population. They wanted to postpone major actions until the military front moved closer.

From then on Mihailovic sought the collaboration of the Italians, the Germans and their Serbian associates whose ideology frequently resembled the Cetniks' own beliefs. Their common enemy was the Partisan movement.⁷⁵ By contrast, the Partisans did not avoid civilian sacrifices and actually regarded them as presenting an opportunity to radicalize the population who would subsequently join their movement.

Fighting also broke out between the Cetniks and the Partisans in the autumn of 1941. The Partisans now regarded the Cetniks as being 'internal traitors, the occupier's servants and Greater Serbian reactionaries'. The Cetniks in turn described the Partisans as being the 'betrayers of the Serbian nation, Ustashe criminals and Communist lunatics'.⁷⁶ At the beginning of 1943, Pavelic remarked to a

⁷³ Cohen, *War*, p. 98.

⁷⁴ Cohen, *War*, p.41

⁷⁵ For striking examples of collaboration and attempted collaboration, see Cohen, *War*, pp. 39-43; 46, 57.

⁷⁶ Kosta Nikolic, 'Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 213.

British colonel that, in order of importance, the Cetniks' enemies were Tito, the Ustase, the Muslims, the Croats and *finally* the Germans and the Italians.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the Partisans waged a war of terror against villages that were suspected of having Cetnik sympathies. Yugoslav Communist historians later glossed over this episode as being a 'left-wing aberration'. This particularly occurred in Montenegro where those who did not support the Communists were convicted by people's tribunals or were simply shot.⁷⁸

At the end of 1941, the Yugoslav government in London and the British government recognized Mihailovic as being the leader of the Yugoslav resistance. Mihailovic was also able to rely on the support of three-quarters of the Orthodox clergy.⁷⁹ Although the Germans were hot on his heels during 1942 and 1943, Mihailovic managed to form separate commando units for the various parts of Yugoslavia. Hence, 68 units with tens of thousands armed men were set up during the course of 1942 and 1943.⁸⁰ These fighters concentrated on attacking German communications and on anticipating an allied landing on the Adriatic coast. At the same time Mihailovic also exhorted the population to civil disobedience. According to German intelligence at the beginning of 1943, Mihailovic had won the sympathy of 80% of the Serbian population.⁸¹

Tito's troops had managed to take over a large part of Bosnia in 1942. At the end of that year, the Partisan army consisted of 150,000 men who were divided into eight divisions. The Partisans came under heavy fire at the beginning of 1943 when they were surrounded in Montenegro by a German offensive that was supported by the Bulgarians, the Ustashe and the Cetniks. However, the Partisans broke through the siege and reached Bosnia although they left at least ten thousand men behind.

The three indigenous groups, the Cetniks, the Ustase and the Partisans, were fighting more amongst themselves than they were with the occupying forces. The Partisans also made agreements with the Germans although less frequently than the Cetniks did.⁸² The mutual warfare between the various Yugoslavs regularly resulted in degrading crimes that shocked even the German and Italian occupiers. They were particularly disgusted by the Ustashe who, for instance, felt no scruples about shutting the Serbs up in their churches and setting fire to them or pushing women and children off mountain tops.

But there was also a calculating attitude along with the genuine abhorrence: the occupiers feared that the Ustashe's extreme actions would strengthen the resistance by driving more and more people into the arms of the Cetniks and the Partisans.⁸³

At first the Cetniks had been able to rely on material support from England because that country hoped that this would hamper the German troops. However, the British government reviewed its policy once the Allies had landed in Italy in 1943. It was now in London's interests that the Germans should be successfully resisted in Yugoslavia. Intercepted German messages had already convinced London that the Partisans were more effective than the Cetniks at countering the Germans. A British mission to the region also came to the same conclusion. Consequently, the British government decided to support the Communists. Moreover, London was offended by the Cetniks' constant reprisals against the Croatian population that were intended to avenge the Ustashe's crimes against the Serbs. In addition, it became clear that the Cetniks' were virtually unable to recruit non-Serbs because they were associated with a pre-war situation that the non-Serbs did not support.

⁷⁷ Cohen, *War*, p. 48.

⁷⁸ For a documented survey of this 'aberration' as seen from the Serbian side, see Vukceвич, *Tito*, passim.

⁷⁹ Cohen, *War*, p. 45.

⁸⁰ For the development of the numerical strength of Tito's partisans, see Gow, *Legitimacy*, pp. 35-37.

⁸¹ Kosta Nikolic, 'Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 216.

⁸² See, for instance, Almond, 'War', pp. 141-142; Peter Radan, 'The Serbs and their History in the Twentieth Century', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, pp. 11-12; Cohen, *War*, p. 90; Neeven, 'Koning', p. 34; Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 183; Vukceвич, *Tito*, p. 267.

⁸³ Almond, *War*, pp. 134 and 136-137; Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 56; Constandse, *Joegoslavië*, p. 70; Deschner/Petrovic, *Krieg*, p. 268; Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 487; Pavlowitch, 'Who is 'Balkanizing' Whom?', p. 215; Van den Heuvel, *Land*, pp. 49-50; Peter Radan, 'The Serbs and their History in the Twentieth Century', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 11; Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, p. 77.

The People's Congress or Saint Sava Congress typified the Cetniks' position and was held at the Serbian village of Ba in January 1944. Here, the Cetniks declared their support for the restoration of the pre-war Yugoslav State and they rejected the Cvetkovic-Macek agreement. Yugoslavia was to be a federation consisting of Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian member states. The future border between Serbia and Croatia was not yet defined but in principle Serbia would encompass all the land 'where Serbian blood was shed and Serbian heads had fallen'.⁸⁴ The Serbs would play a leading role in federal affairs.

The Communists were able to generate support amongst non-Serbs through their *bratstvo i jedinstvo* (brotherhood and unity) ideology and the promise that after the war a federal Yugoslavia would be based on the right to self-rule. In November 1943 Tito held a second meeting of the Anti-Fascist Council for National Liberation in Jajce (Bosnia) that resulted in the creation of a provisional government. This meeting emphasized the equal rights of Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The rights of ethnic minorities were also guaranteed. This represented a fundamental break with the pre-war situation where it was primarily Serbian rights that mattered; these were followed at some distance by those of Slovenia and Croatia.

From the end of 1943 London opted to send arms to the Partisans instead of the Cetniks. The allied leaders also recognized Tito as their ally at the Teheran conference in November 1943. The change in British policy on Yugoslav resistance has been attributed to the activities of Communist agents within the British secret service Special Operations Executive in Cairo.⁸⁵ But even without this situation, it would be difficult to see how the British could have acted in any other way. The Partisans were clearly more effective than the Cetniks and it seems that the British government felt that this was the most important consideration.⁸⁶

An additional consideration, which on a long-term basis was scarcely less important, was the fact that in the long term it was difficult to see how the realization of the Cetniks' future plans as based on their opinions could result in stable relations in South Slavia. Here, the Partisans' outlook was clearly more promising. Tito's supporters had managed to create a stable society in the areas they had conquered. Banac goes so far as to say that, without Communism, there would have been no post-war Yugoslavia.⁸⁷

Moreover, the Partisans succeeded in taking advantage of the Italian troops' withdrawal following Italy's capitulation in the summer of 1943. Tito's troops occupied large areas of the land that was thereby released and took possession of the arms that the Italians had left behind.

The decisive battle for Serbia began on 28 July 1944 when it was invaded by three Partisan divisions. Within a few weeks there was heavy fighting between the Cetniks and the Partisans. The British government put pressure on King Petar II that he should recognize the Partisan movement's position of power. This succeeded and on 12 September the King appealed to all the Serbs, including Mihailovic's Cetniks, to place themselves under the command of Tito and his provisional government. A month earlier Tito had promised an amnesty to all those who chose to support him. 10,000 Cetniks took advantage of this offer including some who had clearly collaborated with the Germans. Tito repeated his offer on a number of occasions up till 15 January 1945.

In addition, Tito flew to Moscow to draw up an agreement with Stalin about the liberation of Yugoslavia. He received an undertaking from the Soviet leader that the Red Army would liberate the country with the Partisans but would subsequently leave. Russian troops entered the Yugoslav territory in October 1944 in support of the Partisans. The Red Army and the Partisans jointly liberated Belgrade on 20 October 1944. Fighting in north-west Yugoslavia was to continue until May 1945. The German

⁸⁴ Kosta Nikolic, 'Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 220.

⁸⁵ For a reference to these statements, see Kosta Nikolic, 'Dragoljub-Draza Mihailovic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, pp. 218-219.

⁸⁶ Almond, *War*, pp. 139-140.

⁸⁷ Ivo Banac, 'The origins and development of the concept of Yugoslavia (to 1945)', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 20.

occupiers finally surrendered to the Partisans on 7 May 1945 with Tito's troops taking Zagreb some two days later.

Yugoslavia at the end of the war

After the liberation of Belgrade, Mihailovic and the troops that had remained loyal to him left for Bosnia-Herzegovina in the hope that there would be a confrontation between the Western Allies and the Soviet troops. In doing this, he had also handed Serbia over to the Partisans. Mihailovic had counted on there being a Serbian uprising against the Communist government but the only support he received was from General Nedic who had led the Germans' puppet government in Serbia. Nedic's troops placed themselves under Mihailovic's command in the autumn of 1944. However, the remaining 25,000 Cetniks had become demoralized as they were without a supply of arms and munitions, and there was too little food. Many soldiers and a number of commanding officers deserted. Even Mihailovic's son and daughter joined the Communists while another son was killed fighting the Partisans.

On 13 May 1945 the Cetniks suffered their final defeat at the Zelengora Mountain in south-east Bosnia. 4000 of them were either killed, wounded or captured. Mihailovic went into hiding. He turned down numerous offers from the American authorities to go to the United States. Deserted by an increasing number of officers, he was finally captured in the night of 12 and 13 March 1946 and brought to Belgrade. The trial against him for treason had already begun. Mihailovic was found guilty on 15 July 1946 and was executed two days later. Many tens of thousands of others had already suffered the same fate: Ustashe, Cetniks, ethnic Germans, Serb Fascists, collaborators and other 'traitors'.⁸⁸ The Tito regime kept the exact number of executions a closely guarded secret.

For a long time the precise number of war victims remained subject to mystification. After the war, the authorities initially put the figure at 1,700,000. This number was primarily intended to 'benefit' Yugoslavia in terms of post-war reparations but it then began to lead a life of its own.⁸⁹ At the beginning of the 1960s, when talks with Germany led to a demand for an exact figure, Belgrade reduced the number to almost a third (600,000), but this figure was then classified as a state secret. Since then serious research has proved on several occasions that the number of dead must have been slightly more than a million out of a total population of sixteen million in 1941.⁹⁰ However, there is a greater variation in the death toll's ethnic division. The number of Serbs varies between 460,000 and 590,000, the Croats between 190,000 and 270,000, the Muslims between 70,000 and 95,000, and the Jews between 60,000 and 70,000.⁹¹ Approximately 80% of the total number of Jews were killed, seven or eight per cent of the Muslims, seven per cent of the Serbs and five per cent of the Croats.

⁸⁸ Almond, *War*, pp. 144-146; Arday, 'Hintergrund', p. 258; Bell-Fialkoff, 'History', p. 117; Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 530; Van den Heuvel, *Land*, pp. 62-63; Johnsen, *Enigma*, p. 43; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 223-224; Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 193; Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 254; Chuck Sudetic, "Srebrenica – The endurance of depravity", IWPR's Tribunal Update no. 228, Part 1, June 2-7, 2001, pp. 4-7; Raju G.C. Thomas, 'History, Religion and National Identity', Thomas/Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 23; Vukceovich, *Tito*, pp. 273-277; Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, p. 78.

⁸⁹ Cohen, *War*, p. 108.

⁹⁰ This refers to research by the U.S. Bureau of Census (1954), the Serbian academic Bogoljub Kocovic (1985), the Croatian academic Vladimir Zerjavic (1991) and a 1995 estimate by Srdan Bogosavljevic, the former director of the Federal Institute for Statistics in Belgrade, who had had access to the most statistical of the sources for estimates, Cohen, *War*, pp. 109-111; Srdan Bogosavljevic, 'Drugi Svetski Rat – Zrtve u Jugoslaviji', *Republika*, 01-05/06/95, quoted in Hayden, 'Fate', pp. 746 and 748.

⁹¹ For the number of Jewish dead, see in particular Cohen, *War*, pp. 93 and 107; Raju G.C. Thomas, 'History, Religion and National Identity', Thomas/Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 24.

Bosnia-Herzegovina was the hardest hit in terms of the number of victims per republic. It lost 10.3 % of its population. Croatia had the next highest figure of 7.3% and was followed by Serbia with 4.2%.⁹²

There have been repeated attempts by the Serbs to suggest they were the ones who resisted Fascism and National Socialism and that, after the Jews, they were the main victims of the Second World War. Terms such as ‘the Serb Holocaust’⁹³ equate the fate of the Serbs with that of the Jews. Conversely, from the Serbian point of view, it was the Croats who were responsible for the crimes. Tito’s government was accused of brushing these ‘facts’ under the carpet. It was an image that was widely accepted abroad and has even appeared in recent academic publications.⁹⁴

The figures mentioned above indicate that this version of events cannot be justified either numerically or in terms of Yugoslavia as a whole. However, it is true that, apart from the Jews, the Serbs in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia were the hardest hit of all the groups with, respectively, 12% and 17% of their total population killed. This is equal to one in eight Serbs in Bosnia and one in six Serbs in Croatia.⁹⁵

Apart from the concrete number of victims, the following should be borne in mind: the deeds of the Ustashe government should not be blamed on the Croatian people as a whole. Pavelic and his associates were only able to assume power with the support of Italy and Germany; they never would have succeeded on their own. During the Second World War, there were no more than 30,000 Ustashe who only controlled a section of the Croatian territory. Italy occupied the coastal area. Despite a brief, initial period of enthusiasm, a large part of the Croatian population distanced itself from the Pavelic government.

The number of Partisans in Croatia outstripped the number in Serbia until the liberation of Belgrade. Only a part of Tito’s troops consisted of Serbs in Croatia. His troops also included many Croats, for instance the young Franjo Tudjman.⁹⁶

The Serbians who entered the Partisan movement as liberation already dawned ‘September Knights’ included those who collaborated but who also benefited from Tito’s amnesty. This amnesty was partly responsible for the fact that a large number of collaborators were able to acquire or retain prominent positions in Serbia after the war.⁹⁷ Moreover, various Serbian groups and organizations participated during the Second World War in the persecution of the Jews both in Serbia and elsewhere. They included Nedic’s Nazi-supported regime and various state security services, the Zbor Serbian Fascist movement and the Cetniks. The leading collaborators in Serbia had mostly been involved with the main pre-war movements.

By contrast, the Ustashe were a marginal movement in Croatia before the war. The leadership of the major political movement, the Croatian Peasants’ Party, refused to collaborate, despite repeated pressure from the Germans. Macek was even imprisoned for five months in Jasenovac and spent the rest of the war under house arrest because he refused to co-operate politically. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the Cetnik resistance, which appealed to so many nationalist Serbs, was deeply involved with collaborating with the German National Socialists, the Italian Fascists and even the Ustashe.

Hence, it can be concluded that the occupation of Yugoslavia was also a period of civil war where the wounds would be slow to heal.⁹⁸

⁹² Ivo Banac, ‘The origins and development of the concept of Yugoslavia (to 1945)’, Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 18; Ludwig Steindorff, ‘Die Vorgeschichte – Von der Zeit vor der Staatsbildung Jugoslawiens bis zur Krise der achtziger Jahre’, Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)Erben*, p. 26.

⁹³ Deschner/Petrovic, *Krieg*, pp. 264 and 269

⁹⁴ See, for instance, Raju G.C. Thomas, ‘History, Religion and National Identity’, Thomas/Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, p. 25

⁹⁵ Ludwig Steindorff, ‘Die Vorgeschichte – Von der Zeit vor der Staatsbildung Jugoslawiens bis zur Krise der achtziger Jahre’, Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)Erben*, p. 26.

⁹⁶ Almond, *War*, pp. 135-136; Cohen, *War*, p. 96; Also Vinko Prizmic, ‘Het volgzame Nederland. Kanttekeningen bij de lessen van “voormalig Joegoslavië”’, *Idee*, September 1996, p. 32.

⁹⁷ Cohen, *War*, passim, and particularly pp. 102-106 and 137-152.

⁹⁸ For part of this reasoning, see also Michel, *Nations*, p. 220.

Subsequently, the second Yugoslavia was set up in 1945 and would exist for 46 years. On an external level, the second Yugoslavia was made possible by the Fascist and National-Socialist occupation that eliminated many of the pre-war structures and discredited the nationalist ideologies. On an internal level, Tito and his associates contributed by the fact that Yugoslavia could largely be restored after the war on its own conditions. Up till that time, the debate about Yugoslavia had mainly been a pointless discussion between nationalist ideologies. Tito and his government succeeded in transforming this discussion into a political struggle about how the state was to be organized and where the succession of post-war constitutions were to play an important role.

Chapter 2

Tito's Yugoslavia

1. Introduction

The Partisans' role in liberating Yugoslavia meant that the Communist Party had gained greater prestige there than in other Eastern European countries. A similar status had been achieved by the Yugoslav People's Army, the *Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija* (or JNA), which was set up after the liberation on the basis of the Partisan movement. Moreover, the Communist Party assumed power more rapidly in Yugoslavia than in the rest of Eastern Europe where considerable support from the Soviet Union was needed before it was able to make a definitive break-through several years later.

Hence, the second Yugoslavia involved the population as a whole in a way that the first Yugoslavia had not since it was a state created by an elite. Although Communism in Yugoslavia had a higher level of grass roots support than elsewhere in Eastern Europe and had not been imposed upon the country from abroad, it was nonetheless only able to establish itself through terror. The first years of Tito's government can quite simply be described as Stalinist.

A government was formed in March 1945 where 23 of its 28 members were either Partisans or former Partisans. Tito became both its Premier and the Minister of Defence. He managed to counter the opposition with the help of his friend A. Rankovic who was the director of the secret police. The secret police was initially known as the *Odsek za zastitu naroda*, or OZNA for short, which literally meant the 'Department for the People's Security'. This was later changed to *Uprava državne bezbednosti*, or UDBa for short, which in turn meant the 'Office for State Security'.

The secret police had far-reaching powers. Just like its Russian example, the KGB, it was allowed to make arrests and to execute people without trial. In fact, the executions and revenge actions against collaborators at the end of the war were to continue and those who opposed the new regime were either executed or persecuted. Under Rankovic's leadership, tens of thousands of people who opposed the regime were to be executed during the first years after the war. It has been estimated that 200,000 people were killed between 1945 and 1953 as a result of the regime's barbarism.⁹⁹ Hundreds of thousands of others were interned.¹⁰⁰

The Communists won 90% of the votes of the first post-war elections in November 1945. However, this was partly due to the disenfranchisement of countless opponents of the Communists, which resulted in Yugoslavia becoming a one-party state where changes to the constitution could now be made.

2. The founding of the second Yugoslavia

As based on the constitution that was introduced on 31 January 1946, the new Yugoslavia was both a republic and a federation of six equal republics: Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Hercogovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. This was closely modelled on the example of the Soviet Union's 1936 constitution. The Slovenian ideologist E. Kardelj, who was a close friend of Tito, was mainly responsible for all the constitutions of the second Yugoslavia. Kardelj's reason for copying the Russians was that the Soviet Federation [was] 'the most positive example of the solution to the issue of the relations between peoples in the history of mankind.'¹⁰¹

Just like its Soviet predecessor, the new Yugoslav constitution included the republics' formal right to secede. However, for the next few years the government's interpretation was that the republics

⁹⁹ Van den Heuvel, *Mythen*, p. 373.

¹⁰⁰ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 234.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Hondius, *Community*, p. 137.

had forfeited the right to secede by joining the federation in the first place.¹⁰² This right was subsequently dropped from the 1953 Constitution.

In practice, the republics' power was still limited. Instead a strict centralism had been chosen that would operate from Belgrade which was once again to become the capital. In terms of the country's territorial divisions, Tito tried to alleviate the ethnic tensions that had existed both before and during the Second World War. He was also aware of the problem that the Serbs could potentially dominate the other ethnic groups as they accounted for one third of the total population. Tito and his advisors partly tried to solve this through defining the borders between the various republics and provinces. A small committee of Communist Party leaders had already established these borders although it had not devoted much time to this task because the Yugoslav leadership expected that the borders would lose their significance with the advance of Socialism. For that reason, the committee opted primarily for the pre-1914 borders as its point of departure but its decisions were also based on ethnic and economic considerations.¹⁰³

The significance of the new constitution for the Serbs

The decision to return to the pre-1914 situation, which had already been taken during the war, meant that the Macedonians and Montenegrins now had separate nationalities. During the first Yugoslavia, the Serbs still regarded them as being Serbian. Moreover, Serbia was confronted with the fact that its territory would now include two autonomous districts: the 'Autonomous Province of Vojvodina' and the 'Autonomous District of Kosovo and Metohija'. (See map of 'The Yugoslav Republics').

The problem for Serbia was not the ethnically-mixed Vojvodina that had become a part of Serbia while also retaining its autonomy. In fact, the area had not previously belonged to Serbia and had suffered relatively heavy losses during the war with a total of 80,000 dead.¹⁰⁴ The Hungarian Arrow Cross Fascists had caused widespread destruction and after the liberation the Serbs had killed approximately 40,000 Hungarians in revenge.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the number of ethnic Germans, many of whom had lived in Vojvodina, had been diminished by several hundred thousand at the end of the war through flight, deportation and extermination. These demographic changes meant that most of the Vojvodina population was Serbian so that Serbia could rely on the region's support and co-operation.

However, the real problem for Serbia was the 'loss' of Kosovo where the roots of Serbian national awareness were based. 11,000 Serbian colonists had settled there during the first Yugoslavia. Most of Kosovo along with Albania had been governed by Italy during the war, and Albanians had moved to Kosovo while 100,000 Serbs had left the area. Tito had encountered strong anti-Communist resistance there from the end of 1944, which he was only able to quell in the summer of 1945. He therefore created a special regime for Kosovo so as to reconcile the Albanians with Yugoslavia and where – unlike the example of Vojvodina – the Serbs were not allowed to settle even if they had fled from there during the war and wanted to return to their homes. A particularly repressive regime of Serbian and Albanian Communists was set up to govern the area.

An additional disappointment for Serbia was the fact that these losses were not to be compensated by the addition to Serbia of the Serbian areas in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The borders now meant that approximately 30% of Serbs were living outside of their 'own' republic of Serbia, as was also the case for 20% of Croats. This created the situation that constitutionally Serbia consisted of one people: the Serbs. By contrast, Croatia consisted of two peoples: the Croats and the Serbs. And Bosnia-Herzegovina consisted of three peoples: the Muslims, the Serbs and the Croats.

¹⁰² Hondius, *Community*, pp. 140-144.

¹⁰³ Cohen, Bonds, p. 24; Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 260; Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, pp. 48-51; Ludwig Steindorff, 'Die Vorgeschichte – Von der Zeit vor der Staatsbildung Jugoslawiens bis zur Krise der achtziger Jahre', in: Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)erben*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁰⁴ Cohen, *War*, p.111.

¹⁰⁵ Van den Heuvel, *Hongaren*, pp. 66-67.

Only in Slovenia was the population virtually ethnically homogenous. There was a dominant group in all the other republics with the exception of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In Tito's Yugoslavia, various legal – and often sensitive – concepts would continue to exist alongside each other: the citizenship of the state of Yugoslavia; the inhabitants of a republic; and the membership of an ethnic group.

An ethnic group could take three legal forms: a nation with the right to its own republic (*narod*), a nationality (*narodnost*) or a national minority (*nacionalna manjina*). The nations consisted of the people who were mentioned in the constitution: the Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians, Montenegrins and - from 1974 - the Muslims. An ethnic group did not qualify as a nation if its fatherland was located outside of Yugoslavia. In this case, it was considered to be a nationality. Here, examples include the Hungarians, Italians and Romanians. The Albanians were another example who did not have the status of a nation although they constituted the fourth largest ethnic group in the country after the Serbs, Croats and Muslims.

Finally, various groups constituted either a national or an ethnic minority such as the Ruthenians, Vlachs and Gypsies. Tito's government was initially optimistic about the problem of ethnic nationalities. Kardelj had already written in a 1938 statement that a Yugoslav consciousness would originate and surpass that of the various ethnic groups, when economic relations and society were exposed to the beneficial affects of Communism.¹⁰⁶ The Communist leadership remained convinced of this, even when the party was in power.

The party leaders were just as optimistic about the painful memories of the Second World War: they would be forgotten. After the war and the settling of accounts that followed, the government imposed a taboo on discussing ethnic differences in general and the confrontations that occurred during the years 1941 to 1945 in particular. During Tito's regime, many of the victims of the civil conflict during the Second World War were described as being the victims of Fascism. The existence of other victims was simply hushed up. The leadership in Belgrade hoped that time would heal the wounds. Meanwhile, the ideology of 'brotherhood and unity' (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*) was used to try to foster a Yugoslav consciousness.

It was partly through these measures that Tito gained a reputation on an international level of being the great organizer of stability in the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia. However, this suggests too much of a stable situation : the equilibrium that Tito created was actually very fragile. Here, Cohen writes: 'Throughout the existence of the Yugoslav state from 1918 to 1991, survival against the odds was its quintessential feature.'¹⁰⁷ Tito was a tightrope walker who functioned through constant tactical swerves as the exclusive and most important arbiter between the ethnic groups. However, he was unable to create a lasting solution so that his legacy was ultimately troublesome.

The significance of the new constitution for the Croats

At first Croatia had as little reason as Serbia to be satisfied with Tito's political solutions. In 1944 he had already replaced the Croat Communist Party leaders because they demanded more autonomy for Croatia and a certain accommodating of the traditional powers there. Pavelic and Macek managed to escape the vengeance of the Communists by fleeing abroad.

By contrast, the Catholic Church and its servants were to remain there, and in the years following the war there were to be many clashes between the Communist authorities and the Roman Catholic organizations in Croatia. Several hundred priests were killed because they had supposedly collaborated. Cardinal Stepinac was condemned to a prison sentence of 16 years in a show trial in 1946. In fact, he was released in 1951 but would remain under a form of house arrest until his death in 1960.

¹⁰⁶ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 22. The prominent Communist M. Djilas, who became a dissident in the 1950s, also shared these ideas, *ibidem*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁷ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 1.

The fact that Serbs accounted for half of the Partisan movement in Croatia meant that there was a relatively high number of Serbian Communist officials there after the war. This in turn meant that the party was less readily accepted.¹⁰⁸

The Croats also felt that they had been harmed by a number of territorial regulations. For instance, the Croats had lost the part of Bosnia-Herzegovina that had been gained through the Cvetkovic - Macek agreement of 1939. They had also been deprived of the area around Kotor in the south, which was given to Montenegro, and Srem, which had been added to Vojvodina. On the other hand, the Croats were pleased that Tito had managed to augment Yugoslavia with Zadar and a large part of Istria. Only Trieste would remain a part of Italy despite Yugoslavia's demands and years of bickering.



The causes of ethnic tension in the second Yugoslavia

There had never been many Communists in Slovenia. Many Slovenes did not support the Communist state but they became reconciled to it when Tito succeeded in augmenting the country with a large part of the Slovenian areas of Italy and Austria.

Macedonia was known as South Serbia before the war. Here, the Macedonian Communist Party had only opted to become a part of Yugoslavia rather than Bulgaria at a late stage of the war. After 1945, Tito's Communist rule was resisted for many years in this republic. As a concession, Belgrade recognized Macedonian as being a separate language.

By recognizing a number of republics and minorities, Tito would appear to have made Yugoslavia considerably more difficult to rule than it was between the two world wars when there were only three official groups: Serbs, Slovenes and Croats. On the other hand, the principle of equality between the republics and the many minorities made the all-encompassing Yugoslav state more palatable to both the elite and the general population. And the increased number of pawns on the political chessboard provided Tito with more room for manoeuvre than had existed during the Serb-Croat differences between the two world wars. Moreover, he created a one-party state so that he had none of the problems of the political instability that had plagued the parliament of the 1920s.

Just like the first Yugoslavia, where the Serbs had been victors in the First World War and thought that they could rule the roost, Tito's state was also burdened with the Greater Serbian issue. Serbia had survived the Second World War relatively unscathed when compared to the other parts of Yugoslavia. In addition, it was liberated six months earlier than the rest of the country: at the end of 1944. This created a flaw in the construction of the Communist Party that was never repaired. Up till then, the Party only had several tens of thousands of members but from the autumn of 1944 to May 1945, its ranks were swelled with a few hundred thousand Serbs. Moreover, as previously mentioned, many of these newcomers were *Cetnik* defectors. Hence, the Serbs had entered the Party with their superior numbers and Greater Serbian philosophy, and this was to remain the source of constant

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 49.

turmoil.¹⁰⁹ Even in 1981, when the Serbs constituted 36.3% of the population, they still accounted for 47.1% of the party membership.¹¹⁰

Moreover, Serbia again had the advantage that the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade was located in its territory. Apart from at the very top, Serbs occupied a relatively high number of positions both in the army and in the civil service.¹¹¹ By approximately 1990, it was estimated that 90% of the civil servants who were working for federal organizations were Serbian.¹¹² Roughly 60% of both the commissioned and the non-commissioned officers of the Yugoslav National Army (the JNA) was either Serbian or Montenegrin. However, the Croat and Slovenian numbers remained in proportion. By contrast, all the other ethnic groups were under-represented amongst the JNA officer class.¹¹³ Rankovic's secret service was also dominated by Serbs.¹¹⁴ What's more, the fact that Belgrade was the capital of both Yugoslavia and Serbia could easily create the impression that an unwelcome measure from the federal capital was actually a *ukase* from the federal capital of Serbia.

A new source of ethnic tension in Yugoslavia was the over-representation of Serbs in leading social positions; this occurred despite the egalitarian and multi-ethnic promises of Tito's regime. Apart from the historical accidents of the war years, this over-representation was based on a conscious political choice. On the one hand, Tito appointed many Serbs because he aimed at eliminating the Serbian dissatisfaction with Yugoslavia's territorial division. On the other hand, by appointing them to posts in other republics, he wanted to counter any individual developments in these areas. Tito hoped in vain that his compatriots would eventually regard these Serbian officials as Communists and Yugoslavs and not primarily as Serbs.

3. Yugoslavia's foreign relations after the Second World War

The Cold War, which was at its height at the end of the 1940s, was mainly 'a war by proxies', a war that was waged not by the major powers themselves but through the agency of allied states. By being the 'proxy' of neither the Soviet Union nor the United States, Yugoslavia remained an attractive 'bride' for both parties in the global conflict. Yugoslavia was to be seduced, not taken.

Relations with the Soviet Union

Tito had had arguments with Stalin on several occasions during the war. For instance, for opportunist reasons the Soviet leader had opposed the fact that Tito's Partisans had emphatically presented themselves as Communists. Moreover, Tito had formed a provisional government without first consulting Moscow. After the war, the Yugoslav leader clearly had no objection to Stalinism but he did not want to let himself be ordered about by his great example. He resisted both direct instructions from Moscow and the interference of Russian agents and advisors in Yugoslavia. Moreover, Tito did not want to subject the Yugoslav economy to the interests of the Soviet Union. Conversely, Moscow was seriously concerned about Tito's headstrong actions concerning the Greek Civil War and his ambitions for a Balkan federation that would include Albania, Bulgaria and possibly northern Greece.

Stalin could not accept that there was an alternative Communist power. This resulted in Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform, the Moscow-led command centre of the Communist Party. It was no coincidence that this occurred on 28 June 1948: Saint Vitus Day, a day full of significance in the history of Yugoslavia. The Cominform passed a resolution on that day that accused

¹⁰⁹ See also Zulfikarpasic, *Bosniak*, p. 93.

¹¹⁰ Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 300.

¹¹¹ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 258.

¹¹² Tromp-Vrkic, '*Burgeroorlog*', note 5.

¹¹³ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 250.

¹¹⁴ Dusan T. Batakovic, 'Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from The former Yugoslavia', Baehr/Baudet/Werdmöller (eds.), *Tights*, p. 62.

the Yugoslav party leadership of Trotskyism, nationalism and deviating from Communist principles. Stalin hoped that this denunciation would cause the Moscow-oriented Communists in Yugoslavia to join battle with Tito. He supported this plan with an economic embargo against Yugoslavia and the threat of its military invasion by the troops of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites. This invasion never occurred despite the massing of troops on Yugoslavia's borders.

It is unclear to what extent Stalin had felt constrained by a wartime agreement with the British Prime-Minister Winston Churchill where the division of Yugoslavia would result in one half being under Anglo-American control and the other half being under Soviet control. Stalin must have realized that a Soviet invasion of Yugoslavia, which borders on Italy, would have been unacceptable to the West as it would have allowed for the Russian domination of the Adriatic Sea.

The Soviet threat from the summer of 1948 onwards did not spell the end of Tito's regime but it did curtail his foreign adventures in the Balkans such as the dream of a Balkan federation and his interference with the civil war in Greece. From then on, to quote a Yugoslav pun, the country was encircled by *brigama*. This was not only an acronym made up of the first letters of the seven countries that surrounded Yugoslavia¹¹⁵, but also the Serbo-Croat word for 'worries' as expressed in the instrumental plural case.

Yugoslavia's expansionist tendencies vanished in 1948, with the initial exception of Trieste. Henceforth, the emphasis was to be on the established nature of Yugoslavia's external borders.

Relations between Moscow and Belgrade were to thaw to some extent for two reasons in the second half of the 1950s and the early 1960s. The first reason was that Stalin's successor, Krushchev, was less vehemently opposed to Yugoslavia's alternative Communism. Relations were also improved by the moral support that Tito gave to the Soviet Union at the time of the Hungarian Uprising in 1956 and during the conflict between the Soviet Union and China from the end of the 1950s onwards.

Relations with the West

Its Stalinist attitude and the widespread nationalization of banks and businesses in the early post-war years did not suggest that Yugoslavia was ultimately to be the country out of all the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe that was to have the best relations with the West. At that time, the West was irritated by the Belgrade government's support of the Communists in the Greek Civil War and it instigated considerable conflict about the possession of Trieste. However, all that was soon to change.

Once the Soviet Union had stopped its credit loan to Yugoslavia and trade with Eastern Europe had come to a virtual standstill, Belgrade launched an urgent appeal in 1950 to the United States and Western Europe for food-aid because otherwise the country would be threatened with famine. Because of Yugoslavia's strategic position on the Adriatic Sea, the United States offered the country six hundred million dollars of economic help between 1950 and 1955, of which only fifty-five million dollars were in form of a loan.¹¹⁶ This money was not quite enough to cover the deficit in Yugoslavia's balance of payments. In economic terms, Yugoslavia had become an artificial state where its chances of survival depended on the Western infusion.¹¹⁷ Along with its economic help, the United States provided another six hundred million dollars in military aid during the first half of the 1950s¹¹⁸. In exchange, the West received an assurance that Yugoslavia would resist if the Soviet troops decided to invade northern Italy from Hungary.¹¹⁹ Although there was relatively less American aid after the mid-1950s, the United States still took care of 60% of the deficit of Yugoslavia's balance of payments during the years 1950 to

¹¹⁵ Here, the letter M stands for *Madjarska*, the Serbo-Croat word for Hungary.

¹¹⁶ Pasvkovic, *Fragmentation*, pp. 54-55; Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 107; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 254-255.

¹¹⁷ Weithmann, *Brandhaard*, p. 110; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 255-256; Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 25.

¹¹⁸ Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p.55.

¹¹⁹ Gervasi, '*Germany*', p. 43; Pedrag Simic, '*Civil war in Yugoslavia. The roots of disintegration*', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), p. 77.

1964. Moreover, the American Export-Import Bank and the World Bank provided loans from 1960 until 1990 that would amount to a total of, respectively, one and four billion dollars.¹²⁰

4. Internal consequences of Yugoslavia's foreign policy

The fact that both the East and the West knew that Yugoslavia was to be seduced rather than taken, was also to have consequences for the country itself. Hence, Western markets were opened up to Yugoslav products, particularly in Germany and Italy. However, Yugoslavia's extensive foreign aid meant that there was little impetus to focus on exports.

Moreover, the country's need to stand on its own two feet between the two major powers caused it to concentrate on the production of investment goods so as to meet its internal demand. Of all the Eastern European Communist countries, only Romania and Albania achieved a lower level of foreign trade per capita during the years 1950 to 1965.¹²¹

Trade relations between Yugoslavia and the Eastern bloc improved again after 1955. However, the threat of the Soviet invasion of Yugoslavia never completely vanished, despite the restored economic and diplomatic relations. There were periodic moments of fear such as in 1959 when tensions led to the inclusion of 126 Partisan brigades as territorial militia in the Yugoslav National Army (the JNA). And when the Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, a system of territorial defence was introduced that in principle allowed for the involvement of all Yugoslavs in a Partisan war.

Even after the 1950s, Tito's Western connections regarded him as being a considerable irritant so far as the Communists were concerned. Just as he had ultimately been their best ally in the struggle against Hitler's Germany during the Second World War, Tito was now the Communist darling of the West because his attitude deviated from the Soviet point of view. The West's economic aid to Yugoslavia was partly intended to show other Eastern European countries that taking a more independent stance vis-à-vis Moscow would have its rewards. Thanks to this support, Yugoslavia lived above its means both economically and in terms of international politics, and this helped Tito to control the tensions between the different population groups.

The West had every interest in maintaining the stability of Tito's multi-ethnic state. Therefore, the United States did not try to destabilize the regime despite its attempts to undermine the other Eastern European countries (with the exception of Albania).¹²²

In ideological terms, Yugoslavia's central position in the Cold War was based on its participation in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries that came out of a 1955 gathering of former Asian and African colonies in Bandung, Indonesia. The Movement's first meeting took place in Belgrade in 1961 where it was immediately apparent that Yugoslavia had assumed a central position as a European power. Tito had many contacts with foreign heads of state on behalf of the Movement and, conversely, this greatly increased his authority at home.

The break with the Cominform in 1948 was to affect Yugoslavia both in the short term and the long term. The regime hardened in the short term. Stalin had hoped that his rejection of Tito's policy would result in serious opposition to Tito within his own party. However, the Yugoslav helmsman managed to retain the support of the vast majority of Communists. This was partly due to his heavy-handed suppression of any opposition within the party: Communists who were not on Tito's side were prosecuted as 'Stalinists'. Approximately 50,000 of them were arrested, of whom between 10 and 20,000 were imprisoned on Goli Otok Island, the Naked Island, a reef to the south of Rijeka where the summers were too hot and the winters were too cold. Although this Yugoslav equivalent of the Gulag

¹²⁰ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 270-271.

¹²¹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 74.

¹²² Gervasi, 'Germany', p. 43; interview Boris Stanojevic, 26/10/00. Also Kadrijevic, *Viem*, pp. 13-14. In addition, there were no Radio Free Europe or Radio Liberty broadcasts to either Yugoslavia or Albania.

Archipelago was to be closed down several years later, its existence had to be hushed up until after Tito's death.

Another short-term effect of the break with the Cominform involved agriculture. The widespread collectivization of agriculture had begun in 1949 and was applied particularly strictly partly because the Communist Party leadership wanted to prove its doctrinal correctness after the break with Moscow. However, this policy of collectivization was also to be dropped several years later.

The long-term effects of the Cominform's rejection were that Tito and his associates realized that they had to organize a higher level of internal support. The country would not be able to survive the constant Soviet threat if heavy-handed repression resulted in too much internal resistance. Therefore, there were no more political death sentences after the beginning of the 1950s. Political opposition was punished with lengthy prison sentences or dismissal. The political system was transformed into what the Serbian writer Cosic described as a pragmatic tyranny.¹²³

The transformation into a pragmatic tyranny

The measures taken by Tito's regime to organize internal support included a higher level of openness than in other Eastern bloc countries. After the first few years, Yugoslav Communism became less rigid in a number of respects than the Communism of other Eastern European countries. When Yugoslavia was hit by an economic crisis at the beginning of the 1960s, its reaction was to open its borders. Many thousands of Yugoslavs seized the opportunity to become migrant workers in Northern and Western Europe. From the late 1950s onwards, hoards of tourists visited the country each year and they provided a major source of foreign currency.

However, Yugoslavia's academic and artistic freedom was still limited. Books and films could be banned. Nonetheless, from the beginning of the 1950s, there was a higher level of cultural freedom than elsewhere in Eastern Europe.¹²⁴ 'Western' consumer goods became common in large areas of Yugoslavia at the end of the 1960s. Hence, Tito's Yugoslavia was relatively open and liberal which also created a good impression of the country abroad.

Moreover, the country's economy appeared to be in good shape. The Communists' economic policy was helped by the fact that the consequences of the Second World War had been less disastrous for Yugoslavia's economy than the First.¹²⁵ For instance, the Germans had managed to increase the productivity of both mining and the metal industry through capital investment. Hence, Yugoslavia recovered rapidly after this war and was partly helped by more than four hundred million dollars of United Nations aid for reconstruction and rehabilitation. This was the program's largest donation to any single country.¹²⁶ The aid consisted not only of food and coal but also, to an important extent, of investment goods. Expropriation of the possessions of ethnic Germans and collaborators facilitated the Communists' nationalization and redivision programs.

From having been a mainly agrarian nation before the Second World War, Tito's Yugoslavia was transformed into a more industrialized state that also managed to develop tourism along its coastal areas. Between 1945 and 1971, the percentage of the population that lived from agriculture decreased from more than 73% to more than 38% of the total work force.¹²⁷ Yugoslavia was one of the fastest growing economies in the world with an average annual growth in national income of 5.3% between the years 1953 and 1989.¹²⁸

¹²³ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 32.

¹²⁴ Also Ugresic, *Cultuur*, pp. 46-51.

¹²⁵ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 63.

¹²⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 235.

¹²⁷ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 126 and 136.

¹²⁸ V. Bojicic, 'The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: Causes and Consequences of Dynamic Inefficiency in Semi-Command Economies', Dyker/Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia*, p. 29. Also Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 31.

But the peasants were less successful despite the fact that they had played such a strong role in the Partisan movement.¹²⁹ The agricultural sector clearly failed to develop as much as the economy as a whole. The collectivization program had been reversed because it had led to a dramatic decrease in agricultural produce and to a number of local revolts. However, depending on the region, land ownership remained limited to a maximum of ten or twenty hectares per farmer. Moreover, a radical price policy for agricultural produce remained in force that meant that the rural areas had to finance the development of industry and the cities.

The Communist leadership regarded small-scale private farming as a money spinner. Nonetheless, despite the abandoning of collectivization, farmers were also viewed for many years as being modest capitalists who had no place in the Communist system. Because they operated outside of the public sector, they had no right to either welfare provisions or representation at the higher levels of workers' self-rule. When companies had to lay off workers, those with a rural background were often the first to go. The idea behind this was that they would still be looked after by their families in the countryside. This contributed to a serious aggravation of the economic relations between the cities and the rural areas that were increasingly marginalized.¹³⁰

Worker' self-rule and its consequences

The attempt to legitimize Yugoslavia's individual interpretation Socialism led to the introduction of workers' self-rule in 1950. According to this system, the employees of each company elected a workers' council. The company's management consisted of the director and a daily committee that the council provided. In practice, these workers' councils were to be dominated by the Communist Party. Ultimately, this variation on the centralist Communist planned economy was 'one great utopia, which was really needed as an alibi for the absence of political democracy'.¹³¹

The reason behind the fiasco of workers' self-rule was that under this system, employees tended to give priority to employment and wages rather than to other economic factors, a situation that was helped by the fact that companies could not go bankrupt. Well-established foreign observers assessed this experiment as being 'uneconomical, socially unproductive and to a great extent unsuccessful'.¹³² Tito was never particularly interested in economic issues but other Yugoslav party leaders began to endorse this criticism from the 1970s onwards.¹³³ However, by contrast, workers' self-rule contributed for many years to the idea abroad that Yugoslav Communism was a milder version of Moscow Communism.

The system of workers' self-rule also went hand in hand with the fact that the economy's decision-making process was decentralized to the level of the opština (councils) and the control over virtually every federal company was transferred to the republics. This resulted in the mixing of politics with economics at a regional level, and the regulation of labour relations became largely the councils' responsibility. This not only countered the development of a real market economy, it also resulted in the councils becoming inward looking. The development was by Western standards anti-modern and is one of the examples of how, between 1945 and 1991, Yugoslavia embodied 'a deep contradiction between the imperatives of modernization and the fundamentally anti-modern features of the "Yugoslav road to socialism"'.¹³⁴

Along with an economic dimension in 1952, political decentralisation was also reflected in the Communist Party's transformation into the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (*Savez Komunista*

¹²⁹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 183; Deschner/Petrovic, *Krieg*, pp. 299-300.

¹³⁰ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 126 and 135.

¹³¹ Josip Zupanov, quoted in Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 36.

¹³² FBIS commentary dating from 16/10/89 and quoted in Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 43. See also Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 138.

¹³³ Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 87.

¹³⁴ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 7-8. See also Ludwig Steindorff, 'Die Vorgeschichte – Von der Zeit vor der Staatsbildung Jugoslawiens bis zur Krise der achtziger Jahre', Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)Erben*, pp. 31-32.

Jugoslavije or SKJ). This change made it clear that there was no single Communist Party, but that the League consisted of parties that were primarily organized by each republic or autonomous area and were only connected at a national level. These forms of decentralization were typical of the Tito government at the beginning of the 1950s. Each political crisis was followed by a 'solution' that led to the decentralizing of both politics and the economy.

There were two reasons for this decentralization. First and foremost, Tito refused to consider a multi-party system. Therefore, in his view, decentralization was the only acceptable alternative. Secondly, there was such a taboo on nationalism that it could only be debated in the coded form of discussions about economic centralization or economic decentralization. New political crises were partly caused by the adverse effects of economic measures that had followed previous political crises. This situation could be described as a vicious circle had it not involved a downward spiral that would ultimately land Yugoslavia in the depths of misery in approximately 1990.

Milovan Djilas, who was one of Tito's closest confidants along with Kardelj and Rankovic, was to discover the extent to which the discussion of the Communist Party's monopoly was forbidden. As an extension of economic self-rule, he suggested that there should be a greater decentralization of political authority so as to counter the Party's bureaucratization. He supported a multi-party state and argued that the UDBa (the secret police) should be held responsible for its deeds. Djilas was expelled from the Party after a special meeting of the Central Party Committee in January 1954. In 1956 he was sent to prison for his constant criticism where he was ultimately to remain for nine years.

5. The promotion of 'the' Yugoslav culture

Djilas had actually made an important effort to create a Yugoslav national awareness. From 1952 onwards, the Yugoslav regime addressed its citizens as the 'working people' (*radni narod*) of Yugoslavia so as to communicate the idea that the individual was first and foremost a producer. Nonetheless, Tito's government failed to create a sense of socio-economic awareness amongst large sections of the people that went beyond the usual ethnic boundaries. During the first half of the 1950s, the Communist Party abandoned the idea that an enforced industrialization and a tightly-planned economy would create a new person who would no longer be susceptible to ethnic nationalism. Subsequently, it mainly tried to foster Yugoslav patriotism through a process of political socialization and education. Here, the central elements were the Partisans' struggle during the Second World War and the break with Stalin in 1948.

Tito was the nation's binding force and a virtual cult began to develop around his personality. Cities and streets were named after him. Portraits of the bronzed statesman in his marshall's uniform hung not only in public buildings but also in homes and shops. On Tito's official birthday, youth relay races were held throughout the country that ended in a Belgrade stadium. Religious education, which had been tolerated till then, was banned in 1952. It was replaced by lessons that were intended to educate children as Socialist citizens, and Yugoslav culture was also promoted. The Seventh Party Congress in 1958 was completely dominated by this Socialist Yugoslavism.

However, it was never completely clear whether the Yugoslav culture that the government tried to promote was a reservoir of separate national cultures or an all-encompassing culture. 'Brotherhood and unity' meant that a Yugoslav patriot could regard himself as being a Croat, a Serb or a Macedonian (etc.) but that at the same time he was a Yugoslav who was prepared to sacrifice his life for Yugoslavia.

The media – newspapers, radio and later television – were mainly organized per republic. The exceptions were the *Borba* daily newspaper, the *Tanjug* press agency, which reflected the federal leadership's opinions, and the *Danas*, *NIN*, *Politika* and *Vjesnik* magazines. In addition, the second Yugoslavia never used national school books.

The ideology of Yugoslavism had an obvious attraction but one that certainly did not affect everyone. It particularly flourished amongst intellectuals and sections of young people who were

neither Catholic nor Muslim and who mainly lived in the cities.¹³⁵ Yugoslavism also appealed to the Serbs more than to other ethnic groups who regarded it as being a veiled attempt to create a Serbian hegemony.¹³⁶

Census results revealed that only a limited percentage of the population had registered as Yugoslav. The highest percentage in Yugoslavia as a whole was reached in 1991 with 6.6%, a modest achievement when one considers that 13% of the population was the result of ethnic intermarriage¹³⁷ and that the regime had had 45 years to propagate a Yugoslav ideology with the help of a party monopoly. The Yugoslav optants primarily consisted of professional servicemen and civil servants.

Religious organizations were now the sole competition in terms of the promoting of values but they only had a limited influence. There was a certain relaxation of legislation and regulations during the 1960s and '70s, but the Communist regime kept a tight rein on the various religious denominations because it regarded them as being the bulwarks of ethnic nationalism. Whether that was sensible, considering the Communists' aims, remains to be seen. By suppressing religious expression, the government of brotherhood and unity was in fact thwarting an ecumenical movement that in turn established religion as a sign of ethnicity.¹³⁸

The Communists also failed to eliminate the differences in economic development between the areas in the north of the country and those in the south, a situation that had already existed before the Second World War. A federal investment fund was set up in 1956 to bridge that gap. This fund was replaced in 1965 by a development fund for the disadvantaged south that was financed by a tax of 1.85% on all government services. In spite of this policy, this state of inequality continued to grow dramatically. In 1947 the Slovenes earned 175% of the average income per capita of the Yugoslav population while the residents of Kosovo earned just 53%. In 1979 these figures were, respectively, 195% and 29%. In other words: on average, the Slovenes earned at least three times as much as the Kosovans in 1947 and a good 30 years later they earned more than six times as much.¹³⁹

Education and literacy levels also varied greatly from region to region. Although the illiteracy rate for those above the age of ten was 20% for the whole of Yugoslavia in 1961, this consisted of just 2% in Slovenia, 12% in Croatia, 33% in Bosnia-Herzegovina and 41% in Kosovo.¹⁴⁰ These figures had fallen 20 years later but the regional differences remained the same: the illiteracy rate for the whole of Yugoslavia was 9.5%; for Slovenia it was less than 1%, for Bosnia-Herzegovina it was 14.5% and for Kosovo it was 17.6%.¹⁴¹

There were different reasons for the republics' varying levels of development. The north had been more industrialized while agriculture and cattle breeding continued to play a greater role in the south. So far as industry existed in the south, it was mainly the result of the industrialization program that the government had set up shortly after World War Two. This primarily involved mining that was capital intensive and provided relatively little employment. Partly because of the economic differences, the birth rates in the south were considerably higher than those in the north so that any growth had to be divided amongst a higher number of people.

The fiasco of the government policy to divide economic affluence equally became a source of irritation. There was a feeling in the south that the government was not doing enough and that, for

¹³⁵ Cohen, *Bonds*, pp. 32 and 49; Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 285; Vesna Petic, 'The War for Ethnic States', Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 20; Naarden, *Western Perceptions and Balkan realities* [Annex to NIOD *Srebrenica Report*].

¹³⁶ Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p. 62; Peter Radan, 'The Serbs and their History in the Twentieth Century', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 14; Williams, *Legitimacy*, p. 62. Even the Serbian writer Dobrica Cosic warned about this in 1961, Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 29; Hondius, *Community*, pp. 242 and 315-316.

¹³⁷ Nikolai Botev, "Seeing Past the Barricades. Ethnic Intermarriage in The former Yugoslavia, 1962-1989", Halpern/Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors*, p. 225.

¹³⁸ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 299; Geert van Dartel, 'Nationalities and Religion in Yugoslavia', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 25-28.

¹³⁹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 196. For more figures see, for instance, *ibidem*, pp. 83-84; Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 35.

¹⁴⁰ Hondius, *Community*, p. 25.

¹⁴¹ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 333.

instance, Croatia with its coastal tourism could afford to spare more. However, the north felt that the money that it gave was not being used effectively and would therefore be better invested in its own region.

Economic recession – ethnic consequences

Ethnic nationalism began to stir again at the end of the 1950s and it indeed included issues of division. For that reason the Serbian writer Dobrica Cosic branded it as ‘dinar nationalism’.¹⁴² There was also industrial unrest at that time because the working population was demanding a greater share in the country’s economic success. This was soon followed by a recession. Up till 1960, the economy had grown faster than almost any other in the world. In the 1950s, the average annual increase in the gross national product was 6.7%,¹⁴³ and this was mainly due to an expanding industry that was growing by more than 11% per year.¹⁴⁴ However, around 1960, this growth seemed to have reached a limit. The central investment fund was partly responsible for this and had levelled this growth by siphoning capital off to the disadvantaged areas. The party leaders failed in their attempts to reform the economy and to increase the market orientation and cost awareness of the largely politically-appointed management teams of the major factories.

Industrial production dropped in 1961 and 1962. Unemployment figures reached a level of, respectively, 6% and 7.3%.¹⁴⁵ The dinar was devalued to 40% of its old value. The cost of living rose by 30% between 1959 and 1962 although wages remained frozen. The Communist Party was confronted with the question of whether to opt for more decentralization or simply to return to centralization so as to get the economy back on course.

6. The 1960s: centralization versus decentralization

Rankovic, who was the head of the UDBa secret police until 1964, was the strongest opponent of the decentralization of political and economic power. His intelligence agency was also partly decentralized in 1964 which led to the UDBa’s name being changed into the State Security Service, the *Služba Državne Bezbednosti* (or SDB). Yet Rankovic’s power seemed to remain unaffected. He was even appointed Vice-President of the Federation as a result of the 1963 Constitution; this made him the second most important man in Yugoslavia after Tito.

However, an enquiry was launched in 1966 into the heavy-handed actions of the secret police in Kosovo. Rankovic’s mainly Serbian security force had tried to crush every attempt at decentralization, particularly in Kosovo. Tito also failed to solve the tensions there between the Serbs and the Albanians, and this repeatedly led to violence. The activities of the secret police in Kosovo had resulted in a series of deaths and serious injuries.

The enquiry revealed that Rankovic had bugged the phones of countless leading politicians who included, according to unconfirmed rumours, Tito himself. To make things worse, Tito had assigned this enquiry to the KOS (*Kontraobavestajna Služba*), the military counter-intelligence service that mainly consisted of Croats. Rankovic was sacked and expelled from the Party along with many of his police. This blow to the regime was regarded by many Serbs as an attack on their position within the state. It was greeted in the other republics with relief.¹⁴⁶

Even in the 1950s, there was a struggle within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia between the supporters of the original centralism and those who favoured decentralization. The supporters of centralism could rely on the help of Rankovic while the other side was backed by Kardelj,

¹⁴² Hondius, *Community*, pp. 241-242.

¹⁴³ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 275.

¹⁴⁴ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 272.

¹⁴⁵ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 273, 277.

¹⁴⁶ I. Banac, ‘*Asymmetry*’, pp. 147-148; Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 94.

the Slovenian Communist Party ideologist whose friendship with Tito gave him plenty of influence. The supporters of decentralization argued that the existing emphasis on Yugoslav unity was simply a masquerade for Serbian domination.

This political issue confronted Tito with a difficult decision. He had strongly encouraged Yugoslavism in around 1960 and the population census of 1961 had for the first time included the possibility of registering as a Yugoslav. However, only 317,000 people opted for that choice. All the others selected an ethnic nationality. The precise role that this signal played is unknown but Tito increasingly distanced himself from Yugoslavism from 1962 onwards. In March of that year he confronted a secret meeting of the party leadership with the following question: 'Is our country really in a state to continue to survive or will it collapse? Is this society viable or not?'¹⁴⁷ Six months later Tito declared that 'Socialist social relations' were to be the binding factor between Yugoslavs. He felt that an all-encompassing Yugoslav culture was unnecessary. There was no need for a Yugoslav layer to come between the republics' culture and global culture.¹⁴⁸ Apparently Tito felt that his two main political objectives - the State of Yugoslavia and the rule of its Communist Party - would benefit the most by abandoning Yugoslavism and allowing for a tendency towards decentralization. Kardelj declared: '[O]ur Federation is not a framework for creating some new Yugoslav nation or an outline for the kind of national integration that the supporters of hegemonism or denationalizing terror have been daydreaming about.'¹⁴⁹

Tito's decision in 1962 to abandon Yugoslavism was described by the future Minister of Defence General Kadijevic as being 'beyond any doubt the worst and the most fateful in the entire existence of the second Yugoslavia'.¹⁵⁰ A new constitution was introduced in 1963 that had been drawn up by Kardelj. It was a triumph for the decentralists. Numerous powers were transferred to the republics. The new Constitution transformed the Federation into being primarily the guardian of both the country's unity and integrity, and the unity of its financial and economic policy. The Federation's main responsibilities were to be foreign policy, defence and trade. However, the republics also had a need to assert their influence in these areas. This was mainly accommodated by striving towards a proportional representation of civil servants from the republics in federal posts. As based on this Constitution, over the next few years a growing number of federal posts were rotated between representatives of both the republics and the autonomous provinces. All posts could be held for a maximum of two terms with the exception of the presidency. The right to secession was once again included in the Constitution and was now granted to the different peoples: the ethnic groups.

During the Eighth Congress of the Communist League of Yugoslavia in 1964, Yugoslavism, which had been the positive theme of the previous congress six years earlier, was to suffer a defeat from which it would never recover.¹⁵¹ Tito condemned Yugoslavism at this conference as being a form of 'assimilation and bureaucratic centralism, unitarianism and [Greater Serbian] hegemony'.¹⁵² Kardelj readily followed in his footsteps by describing the Yugoslav nation as a creation made from 'the remnants of Greater Serbian nationalism'. There was also no mention of Yugoslavism or a common Yugoslav culture in the 1964 party program.¹⁵³ At the end of 1965, Kardelj declared at a meeting of 80 leaders from both the Federation and the republics that the idea that ethnic distinctions would automatically diminish had proved to be incorrect. He argued that they had actually become stronger.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Stallaerts, *Afscheid*, p. 94. Also Dusan Bilandzic, 'Termination and Aftermath of the War in Croatia', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 86; Vukcevic, *Tito*, p. 277.

¹⁴⁸ Hondius, *Community*, p. 243.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Hondius, *Community*, p. 242.

¹⁵⁰ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 64.

¹⁵¹ Vesna Pesic, 'The War for Ethnic States', Popov (ed.), *Road*, p. 20.

¹⁵² Tito quoted in Dusan T. Batakovic, 'Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from The former Yugoslavia', Baehr/Baudet/Werdmöller (eds.), *Tights*, p. 63.

¹⁵³ Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p. 63.

In his opinion, the only way to avoid Yugoslavia's collapse was to set up a confederation that allowed the republics a high level of autonomy.¹⁵⁴

The order had been reversed between the regional congresses and the Central Party Congress before the Eighth Congress in 1964. Binding decisions were previously taken by the Central Congress that were subsequently implemented by the regional congresses. But there was a radical break with this tradition in 1963: the congresses in the republics and autonomous areas were subsequently to precede the Central Congress. Thereafter, the Central Congress was to become more and more of a market place for horse trading between the representatives of the regional congresses.

The 1963 Constitution and the 1964 Party Congress were followed by major economic reform in 1965. This change of policy led to a reorganization of banking which up till then had mainly been organized on the level of the opstina or councils. Here, the idea was that the new trade and investment banks would be responsible for transactions throughout Yugoslavia. However, in practise, they mainly functioned on the level of the republics and were strongly over-represented in Belgrade. These banks, rather than the central government, were mostly responsible for the investment policy. The government no longer had control over the production of money so that there was an inherent risk of inflation. The banks began to grant favoured companies loans that had extremely favourable and effectively negative interest rates. This problem was increased even more by the fact that companies that encountered problems because of the limitations of the available banking transactions between the republics would simply circumvent the banks altogether by borrowing money from other companies in their own republics. This led to an increase in the amount of money in circulation. In 1970, the sum of the companies' outstanding bills amounted to a quarter of the gross national product.¹⁵⁵ Inflation would remain at an annual average of 18% between 1970 and 1979; this was almost twice as high as the global average.¹⁵⁶

The Ninth Party Congress in 1969 decided that key posts in all the important party committees were to be divided along ethnic lines. Moreover, there was to be a greater emphasis on the Party's organization per republic. Therefore, a Yugoslav identity was clearly a handicap for Party officials. Each federal post would only be held on a temporary basis. Politicians' grass roots support was undeniably to be found in their republics.

'Yugoslavia as a goal in itself' is put to rest

Other parts of Yugoslav society were also permeated by the formula of ethnic division. Yugoslavia was the common manger from which everyone was to receive his share. Here, it seems that for large sections of the population, Yugoslavia was increasingly becoming a means rather than a goal in itself.¹⁵⁷

Jobs in companies in ethnically-mixed areas were also given out according to the formula of ethnic division, a policy that even extended, for instance, to company holiday homes. Although it was intended as a way of eliminating tension between ethnic groups, the ethnic division formula actually contributed to a fixation on mutual relations. Everyone was constantly on guard that his group was not being disadvantaged.¹⁵⁸ And when this did occur, the other group would have to suffer the same fate. This was also demonstrated by the consequences of Rankovic's dismissal from his post as the head of the secret police.

The 1963 Constitution and the attack on Rankovic resulted in an important reversal in the relationship between the secret service and the Communist Party as organized per republic. Unlike its

¹⁵⁴ Dusan Bilandzic, 'Termination and Aftermath of the War in Croatia', Magas/Zanic (eds.), *War*, p. 87.

¹⁵⁵ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 309.

¹⁵⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 309

¹⁵⁷ Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: a reassessment', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 62.

¹⁵⁸ Also Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: a reassessment', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 61-62; Slapsak, *Joegoslavië*, p. 69; interview R. Dukic, 14/06/00.

predecessor the UDBa, the SDB did not have control over party appointments in the republics. In fact, the political leaders of each republic had now acquired control over their republic's secret service. The secret service's permission was no longer needed for a passport which greatly contributed to the mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers to Western Europe. In the late 1960s, this in turn appeared to have solved Yugoslavia's unemployment problem in one fell swoop.

In many ways, Rankovic's fall had a liberating effect on Yugoslav society. Voices of dissent now found an outlet in the newspapers and magazines. Tito had expected that Rankovic's dismissal would cause unrest in Serbia but it remained calm, and liberals even took over the Serbian Party. They were in fact prepared to undertake measures such as far-reaching decentralization so as to eliminate non-Serb fears of Serbian domination.¹⁵⁹ Yugoslavia experienced a spring that resembled the Prague Spring of Dubcek's Czechoslovakia and which occurred at virtually the same time. Moreover, the economy recovered in 1968. Yugoslavia developed into a consumer society and compared favourably with other Eastern European countries with their famous queues for bread and meat.

Just as elsewhere in Europe, there were student demonstrations in Belgrade in 1968 that focused on issues such as the affluence of party officials. The students were also demanding reforms and a higher level of Socialist idealism instead of a slide towards a market economy. Tito parried the students' demands with a mixture of flattery and violence. He announced that his economic reforms would benefit those on the lowest incomes. At the same time, his response to the student demonstrators was heavy-handed. It became clear that the individual freedom to have a divergent opinion was permitted to a certain extent. Students could subject themselves to the 'sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll' of their Western counterparts and could also write critical articles, but any form of organized opposition remained absolutely forbidden.¹⁶⁰ Hence, the Communist government prevented the development of all forms of organization that would have existed between the agencies of the Communist State and the individual. When opposition was allowed, it could only occur within the party and the state agencies.

7. Ethnic problems: Kosovo, Slovenia, Croatia versus Serbia in around 1970

Ethnic problems became apparent during the emergence of nationality issues and especially when economic problems rapidly recurred and the question of the division of wealth was once again on the agenda. Signs of nationalism were most evident in Kosovo and Croatia.

But the economy was not the only problem in Kosovo. A major grievance of the Albanians concerned the fact that the Kosovan Serbs and Montenegrins occupied more than half of the province's government posts including jobs at the police and the SDB. In the autumn of 1968, Albanians demonstrated in Kosovo for a higher level of autonomy under the rallying-cry of 'Kosovo Republic'. This caused great irritation amongst the Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo. They felt threatened by the province's Albanians and by the shifts in demographic relations. These were caused by the increasing number of Serbs who were leaving the province and also by the Albanian birth rate that had an annual increase of 3.2% in the 1970s and was the highest in Europe.¹⁶¹

The introduction of the 1963 Constitution meant that conferring the status of a republic also entailed the possibility of secession. Non-Albanians felt that behind the call for the status of a republic was a secret desire for independence or assimilation with Albania.

Just like the student demonstrations, Belgrade responded to the problem with a mixture of violence and promises. Demonstrations were ruthlessly broken up and their organizers were sentenced to years of prison. On the other hand, Albanians were made eligible for a wide range of government posts and for the first time they acquired a real place in the representing structures of both the

¹⁵⁹ Vesna Pesic, "The War for Ethnic States", Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁶⁰ Also Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 274-275.

¹⁶¹ Detrez, *Balkan*, p. 98.

Federation and Serbia. School books from Albania were introduced on a massive scale and the capital of Pristina acquired its own university. The Serbs soon began to leave Kosovo in far greater numbers than ever before. It was difficult for them to find work and they no longer felt at home there. This exodus was a bone of contention for the Serbs and particularly for those who chose not to leave. Hence, Kosovo was rapidly becoming the powder keg of Yugoslavia.

Following Kosovo, there was also tension between Slovenia and Belgrade in 1969. This was caused by the fact that Slovenia had missed out on its share of the money that was provided by the World Bank for modernizing the roads. The heated emotions about economic handicaps were demonstrated by the fact that there were calls in Ljubljana for Slovenia's cession. The Slovenes were kept in check by a combination of heavy pressure from Tito and the promise that Slovenia would be given priority in future projects, but they did not forget this experience. Moreover, this conflict had caused differences between Slovenia on the one side and Croatia and Macedonia on the other so that these three republics no longer operated at a national level as a closely-knit liberal bloc.

The greatest outburst of nationalism took place in Croatia and was ignited by a 1967 conflict about language. There had been an agreement in 1954 to design a joint Serbo-Croat dictionary. However, when the first two volumes were published in 1967, it appeared that many Croat words had been left out or had been included with the words 'local dialect'. In each case where there were two possible spellings, the Serbian version had been selected as the correct one. Indignant Croat intellectuals published a statement where they demanded that Croatian should henceforth be recognized as a separate language alongside Serbian, Slovenian and Macedonian. This cultural movement was becoming increasingly political.

Moreover, there were numerous complaints in Croatia that, although this republic earned a great deal of money through exports, migrant workers and tourism, its profits were largely appropriated by the state and companies in Belgrade to support objectives such as developing the southern regions. The northern republics' complaints about the failed attempts to divide affluence equally across the country at their expense would frequently be heard over the next two decades. A further annoyance was the fact that the Croats only had to threaten to step out of line for them to be immediately associated with the *Ustashe* terror.¹⁶² The Croatian Communist Party's sympathetic attitude towards this criticism led to remarks of a 'Croatian Spring' as based on the analogy of the Prague Spring of 1968. Just as in Czechoslovakia, the Croatian Communist leadership tried to relax the political and economic command structure. The people's support for this new approach overwhelmed even the party leaders in Zagreb who nonetheless did not feel that it was necessary to reverse their policy despite the problems that they could expect from the national party organization in Belgrade.

There were massive demonstrations. 30,000 students and school children went on strike to add weight to the demands for a higher level of autonomy and even independence. This movement, which was initially liberal, began to become more overtly nationalist. The party leadership in Croatia was surpassed by the *Matica Hrvatska*. This Croatian cultural movement had supported Croatian self-awareness since the middle of the 19th century but had virtually led a clandestine existence during the first decades of the Communist government. Tens of thousands of new members signed up. Difficult questions were asked such as why almost 60% of the Zagreb police were Serbian although they only accounted for 15% of the city's residents.¹⁶³ There were also calls to exercise the right to an army, an individual currency and membership of the United Nations, and territorial claims were made on parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In August 1971, the Croatian Student Union unveiled a commemorative plaque in honour of Radic who had been described by Tito as a *kulak* or big peasant. It was located on the front of the house where he had lived in Zagreb. A statue of him was even erected in Metkovic.

Eventually the Serbs also began to rebel in Croatia. Their mildest demand was that the rights of the Serbian minority should be included in the Croatian Constitution. But some Serbs went further and

¹⁶² For Croatia's depiction as the 'genocide nation' see, for instance, Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 281.

¹⁶³ Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 591.

began to arm themselves. They demanded the right to secede their area so that it could be linked to Serbia. Once this point had been reached, there was a very real risk of Croatia's secession or even a civil war. Therefore, conservative Communists, including those from Croatia, tried to persuade Tito to deploy the army in Croatia. However, the 80-year-old leader realized that he could opt for a less violent response because at that moment Croatia's position in Yugoslavia was somewhat isolated.

Hence, at the end of 1971 and the beginning of 1972, Tito decided to purge the Croatian League of Communists of its 'Fascist totalitarian tendencies'. Tens of thousands of people were forced to leave the Party. The *Matica Hrvatska* was banned. Universities and the media were also subjected to the same 'spring cleaning'. Several thousand people, particularly intellectuals, were imprisoned for some months without trial. After the 1972 purge, the new leaders of the Communist League of Croatia remained tainted by the crushing of the Croatian Spring and by the impression that, when it came down to it, they would always be at Belgrade's beck and call. The brief Croatian Spring was followed by 17 years of the Croatian Silence (1972-1989). Those arrested included Franjo Tuđman, the Director of the Zagreb Institute for the History of the Labour Movement, along with Stipe Mešić and various others whose names would emerge at the centre of Croatian politics in 1990.

Both this intervention and the equating of the Croatian desire for reform with the *Ustashe* past resulted in bad blood in Croatia, particularly against the Serbs. The fact that Tito allowed Croatia to keep half of its income from the tourist industry and a quarter of the republic's foreign exchange was a pleasant but insufficient form of compensation. In a sense, this concession actually aggravated Yugoslavia's economic and political problems because it was the cause of increasing complaints from the south about the unequal division of the nation's wealth. And in the north it strengthened the idea that economic progress had to be fought for through ethnic nationalism at the expense of Communism. The Croatian Serbs were also left with a bitter experience. As a Serb in Kordun told the American-Serbian journalist Dusko Doder in 1974: '[We] will never let ourselves be surprised again. At least now there's an axe behind every door.'¹⁶⁴

The nationalist powers suppressed

It was obvious that Tito had completely failed to defuse the issue of nationality. This particularly applied to the most serious aspect of this issue that had already dominated the first Yugoslavia and where the Serbs' goal was centralism while the Croats' most basic desire was for autonomy. Rather than cultivating a system of mutual tolerance between the various ethnic groups, Tito had acted like a new Habsburg sovereign with his divide and rule politics of playing the groups off against each other. The status of a particular group was increased or decreased according to what Tito felt was necessary for the country's internal stability. Often a government action against one group would be followed by another against a different group. This created a pattern of expectation amongst the population whereby a blow to one section of the people had to be followed by the adverse treatment of another group.

The 1970s also started in this way. In an attempt to restore the ethnic balance, most of the other republican and provincial Communist leagues were purged in the months that followed the suppression of the Croatian Spring. Those affected included the Reformist Serbian leaders and 6,000 of their supporters.

These purges dealt a fatal blow to the possibility of reforms coming from within the Communist Party itself and it is difficult to overestimate the consequences that this would have for the further history of Yugoslavia. The Communist League had been stripped of its reforming powers. The liberal opposition that had embraced nationalism now largely abandoned its liberalism in favour of pure nationalism. However, this development would only become overt at the end of the 1980s. As yet, the

¹⁶⁴ Doder, *Yugoslavia*, p. 13.

only sign was the fact that the Communist Party was becoming increasingly rigid and unsound. The Party had been stripped of its ideals forever and it attracted fewer young people.¹⁶⁵

As a substitute for liberal reform, Tito and Kardelj decided to further their policy of shifting power towards the regions. They wanted to create a strong basis for regionalism in a new constitution. Tito had already established in April 1970 that:

‘today there is not only an increasing desire for greater autonomy, the republics want actual independence, they want to separate themselves politically from the Federation... If someone were to ask me about it right now, I would find it difficult to say that we have a real federation. It already seems to be a confederation ...’¹⁶⁶

Tito stressed the need for a new constitution in a letter to the federal parliament that was dated 9 December 1970. It stated that greater autonomy at the level of the republics would deal with the tensions that had been created by the differing economic developments. The next day the parliament decided to set up a committee that would be responsible for drawing up a new constitution. Kardelj would be its chairman and its members would be the speakers of the parliaments of the various republics and autonomous areas. It was not difficult to guess the direction that the new constitution would take.

The 1974 Constitution: Kosovo and Vojvodina are autonomous and not independent

The new constitution had been completed in 1974. With 406 articles and more 350 pages, it was the largest in the world and included complicated stipulations about the relations between the federation and the republics that would repeatedly lead to quibbles.

The essence of this constitution was that government authority had been decentralized to such an extent that it had become difficult to rule the country on a federal level. Along with the six republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia, the constitution also included the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina that were located within Serbia. These two provinces had now acquired the same status as the other republics although they also remained a part of Serbia, an incongruity that was to have major consequences.

There was one important exception to this process of equalization. Each of the republics was supposedly based on the people’s sovereignty that in turn implied a right to secession. However, this right was withheld from the two autonomous provinces as a concession to Serbia.

To prevent the country’s disintegration, the new constitution stipulated that any alterations to it would need the approval of all six republics and the two autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. This decision would have to be made by the collective state presidium that was set up by the constitution. This body would ultimately consist of eight members: one for each republic and autonomous province. The chairmanship would change each year according to an order that had been established in advance. The same principle was applied to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Finally, there was the Committee for the Protection of the Constitutional Order that was set up in 1975 and included the Ministers of Home Affairs and Defence. Using a system of checks and balances, these three bodies had to safeguard the continuity of the Yugoslav State and Communist society after Tito’s death.

Only foreign policy, defence and foreign trade policy continued to operate on a mainly national level. Decisions concerning economic affairs required unanimity within the presidium. A majority was enough for most other matters but the representatives of each republic or autonomous province could

¹⁶⁵ Cohen, *Bonds*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁶⁶ Tito quoted in Dusan T. Batakovic, ‘Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from The former Yugoslavia’, Baehr/Baudet/Werdmöller (eds.), *Rights*, p. 65.

also opt to veto federal decisions. Kosovo and Vojvodina could therefore block the decisions of Serbia of which they themselves were also a part. Even making a treaty required the approval of all the republics. From then on, the republics were able to maintain foreign contacts through the co-ordination committees for foreign relations that began to develop from the republics' Chambers of Commerce from 1970 onwards.

Economic problems were increased by the fact that the new constitution included the Croatian demand that the banking system, that was still concentrated in Belgrade, would now be completely decentralized. The immediate consequence of this was that the financial flow between the separate republics diminished to a level of between one and two percent of Yugoslavia's entire capital.¹⁶⁷

Although the 1974 Constitution was intended as a step forwards after the Croatian Spring, it was actually a step into the dark. It provided a recipe for difficult decisions and compromises at the lowest possible level, and would ultimately arrive at a complete impasse. The situation was saved for the time being by the charismatic Tito who had been appointed president for life by the constitution. After his death, the collective state presidium would operate on the basis of a constitution that had in principle transformed Yugoslavia into being a 'semi-confederation of semi-sovereign republics'.¹⁶⁸

Was there another possible arbiter between the republics apart from Tito and the state presidium? There were two other important centres of power: the Communist Party and the army. It was no coincidence that the Party's leading role was once again emphasized after the acceptance of the 1974 Constitution. The Party had to be the binding factor in a state where the republics and the autonomous provinces dealt with each other on a basis of virtual equality and were not constrained by the federal bodies. The principle of democratic centralism was once again introduced so that the Yugoslav expert Allcock had no qualms about describing the apparent liberalization that followed the 1974 Constitution as being effectively a Stalinist reform.¹⁶⁹ Others use the term 'polycentric étatism' to define the post-1974 situation.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, the Party had acquired the power to elect candidates for government posts. This completely changed the composition of Yugoslavia's elite in the years following 1974. The technocrats, whose presence was based on workers' self-rule, were now supplanted by professional politicians. These politicians mainly fulfilled the role of exegetes of the extremely complicated paper regulations that were the result of the world's largest constitution. The party's new and weighty role, which left little space for other organizations, again prevented liberal alternatives from developing in Yugoslav society that would have been able to oppose the rise of nationalism in the 1980s.¹⁷¹

However, it would have been difficult for the Communist Party to fulfil a binding role because, for instance, of its over-representation of Serbs and Montenegrins. At the same time, decentralization even affected the Communist League of Yugoslavia. For instance, the members of the Central Committee were elected at the regional congresses. The combination of position appointments and regionalism resulted in the creation of government empires in every republic and province that refused to obey the national authorities. Regional governors no longer had to feel responsible for the level above them. They were supported in their quest for self-sufficiency by the heads of local and regional businesses who sought protection against competition from other parts of the country. Incestuous relations developed between political governors and the directors of state companies. The consequence of all this was an end to political decency and the rise of a mass desire for personal gain amongst party officials who effectively operated as feudal lords. The Communist Party became less of a political body and more of a career channel that also helped the unscrupulous. From the 1970s onwards, all this

¹⁶⁷ Ilija Ika Todorovic, 'Regional Economic Nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia', in: Thomas/Friman (eds.), *Conflict*, pp. 174-175.

¹⁶⁸ Pavkovic, *Fragmentation*, p. 70. See also interview S. Stojanovic, 03/08/01.

¹⁶⁹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 92. Also Djilas, *Profile*, p. 85.

¹⁷⁰ Pedrag Simic 'Civil war in Yugoslavia. The roots of disintegration', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 83 and 85.

¹⁷¹ Also Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 77.

meant that corruption flourished in Yugoslavia, as was occasionally revealed in much talked-about scandals.¹⁷²

Apart from Tito and the state presidium, there was just one other institution that could be described as existing on a national level: the Yugoslav Peoples' Army or JNA. The question now was how it would react once Tito was dead and there was no other arbiter.

¹⁷² Also Meier, *Jugoslavien*, pp. 77-78; Michielsen, *'Joegoslavië'*, p. 224.

Chapter 3

The era after Tito

‘In the wake of the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation (...) the attempt to provide an explanation has dwelt quite disproportionately upon the factor of ethnic diversity. Nevertheless, I contend that no explanation which does not place at its heart economic factors deserves to be taken seriously.’¹⁷³

1. Introduction

Tito died at the respectable age of nearly 88. This is a considerable achievement for a person but for the country that he led, it is difficult to decide whether his death came too early or too late. On the one hand, in terms of merits and charisma, Tito was the only politician in Yugoslavia to go beyond the ethnic and republican level. On the other hand, his leadership had blocked fundamental political and economic solutions for far too long. The slogan “*Posle Tita – Tito!*” (After Tito – Tito!) bore witness to the sense of destitution that followed his death. Like almost every dictator, Tito had failed to leave a crown prince.

Shortly before his death in 1980, Tito spoke to W. Averell Harriman, the former American Undersecretary of State: ‘When I came to power as the leader of the Partisans, I had the whole country behind me. That will never happen again. I was able to exert this level of power because of the war. It is completely impossible for me to select a single successor. Ultimately there is no way to protect this country against its own disunity.’¹⁷⁴

After Tito, there was only the collective presidium of the Yugoslav Federation with its rotating chairmanship, but it had none of Tito’s charisma. The members of the presidium were just anonymous figures in Tito’s shadow. They became the laughing-stock of cinema newsreels where their appearance was greeted by a noisy audience trying to guess which shadowy figure was now stalking across the screen. Moreover, establishing the Yugoslav leadership, as demonstrated by the cult around Tito, had been strongly based on the experiences of the 1940s: the Partisans’ struggle and the break with Stalin. These experiences were becoming less relevant to the younger generations. The fact that the Communist regime in Yugoslavia was initially stronger than elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe and that it was so strongly based on Tito’s charismatic leadership had now become a major stumbling block for the central authority’s continued existence.¹⁷⁵

Tito’s successors were similarly unsuccessful at creating structural solutions to the issues that arose during the final years of his life such as economic problems and the difficulties created by the 1974 Constitution. The future Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic described the situation as follows: ‘The system wasn’t working even before he died – it was Tito who functioned. After his death, nothing worked and no one even seemed capable of agreeing about anything.’¹⁷⁶

Perhaps that was also too much to expect of a party where the Reformist leaders had been removed and any form of creativity had vanished after the re-introduction of democratic centralism and the appointment systems. The party was losing its attraction for young people and was increasingly the symbol for impasse, stagnation and eventually deterioration. Only the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had led to an increase in student members so that the Party reached its zenith in 1982 with a

¹⁷³ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 89.

¹⁷⁴ Tito’s words as remembered by Mrs. Pamela Harriman and quoted in Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 108.

¹⁷⁵ Also Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 421.

¹⁷⁶ Cohen, *Bonds*, p. 53.

membership of 2200,000. This figure had fallen to 1500,000 by 1989. Half of all young people in the mid-1980s did not want to join. In Croatia that figure was 70% and in Slovenia it was as high as 88%.¹⁷⁷

Even abroad Tito's government had already lost its allure before his death. Yugoslavia's international position in the Non-Aligned Movement had been seriously eroded during the 1970s because the organization had inclined towards the Communist camp under Cuba's leadership. China had already initiated a détente with the West at the beginning of the 1970s and even Republican President Ronald Reagan's blustering rhetoric about the Evil Empire could not hide the major improvement in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. This improvement was of major significance for Yugoslavia's internal relations. Just as the first Yugoslavia had been partly created and maintained by the fear of the territorial claims of countries such as Italy (in particular) and subsequently Germany, so the threat of a Soviet invasion had helped to suppress the internal tensions of the second Yugoslavia. An important reason for Tito's intervention in the Croatian Spring was that the Russian leader Leonid Brezhnev had offered the Soviet Union's (not entirely disinterested) assistance in solving this issue. In a speech after the crisis, Tito warned workers in Zagreb that if the Yugoslavs were unable to keep their own house in order, then 'someone else' would do it for them.¹⁷⁸ There was no need for Tito to explain to the Zagreb workers who he meant by this.

There were two reasons why the country did not immediately disintegrate after Tito's death, as many had predicted. Firstly the threat of a Soviet invasion had not entirely subsided.¹⁷⁹ Shortly before Tito died, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had demonstrated that Moscow still did not hesitate at teaching Communist regimes a lesson by force of arms. But Afghanistan was also to be the Soviet Union's Vietnam: it revealed the Soviet forces' short-comings in a guerrilla war. The experience of Afghanistan forced the leaders in Moscow to re-consider the system in their own country. However, the outcome of the war in Afghanistan would also affect Yugoslavia because the risk of action being taken against Yugoslavia was becoming progressively more unlikely. The second reason why Yugoslavia did not immediately disintegrate was that the country was still kept afloat by capital from the West. However, this economic help strongly depended on the first factor: the degree to which the Soviet Union was seen to be a threat.

There was no immediate opposition in Yugoslavia after Tito's death. As has been previously demonstrated, the Yugoslav Communist system had allowed very little space for the development of organizations that could lead to opposition. Even if there were more organizations in the 1980s, these were mostly regional and not national although this may not have been the original intention. For instance, it was typical that at the beginning of the 1980s, the Belgrade Committee for the Freedom of Ideas and Speech was unable to attract members outside of Serbia.¹⁸⁰

Moreover, the Communist government's instruments of power were still intact: the Party, which maintained a strict discipline, the SDB secret service and the JNA federal army. These factors kept Yugoslavia going at the beginning of the 1980s, but the question now was for how long?

2. New ethnic tensions in Kosovo

The consequences of the 1974 Constitution virtually destroyed the possibility of federal government by the collective state presidium. This particularly applied after May 1980 when the presidium had to continue without Tito as an arbiter. Each republic was now looking for the maximum of room for manoeuvre.

Serbia found it difficult to accept that it had almost no power in its autonomous provinces. This was especially true of Kosovo where Albanians accounted for 78% of its population in 1981 and 90%

¹⁷⁷ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 336-337.

¹⁷⁸ Magas, *Destruction*, p. 81.

¹⁷⁹ Also Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: a reassessment', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 55-56.

¹⁸⁰ Magas, *Destruction*, p. 70.

some ten years later. The rest of its people mainly comprised of Serbs. The Albanians in Kosovo regarded the 1974 Constitution as the first step towards an ethnically-pure state.¹⁸¹

In 1981 the Serbian authorities in Kosovo with the support of the Albanian Communists had already deployed a 30,000-strong special police force against the Albanians who were initially protesting against the dire economic situation. There were approximately ten deaths according to official sources (which did not always agree with each other). The Albanians put these figures at hundreds or even more than a thousand victims. The party leaders in Kosovo were purged; teachers and students from the university in the capital Pristina were removed. Over the next few years, this confrontation would lead to increasing turmoil in Kosovo where the Albanians found it difficult to forget this repression. This was also because a total of 6400 of the demonstrations' instigators and participants were convicted on the basis of false allegations, a process that was to continue for five years. Almost 600,000 Albanians were either arrested or interrogated between 1981 and 1989 so that as many as half of the adult population was directly involved.¹⁸² Despite the Albanians' harsh treatment, the Serbs continued to leave Kosovo: 100,000 left between 1980 and 1987. Their departure was mainly for economic reasons and was also to avoid Albanian harassment that included puncturing tyres and setting property on fire.

Serbs, both in Kosovo and beyond, were angered by the Albanians' arrogance so that the heated emotions of the Kosovan Serbs were to spread to other republics. There, non-Serbs regarded the Serbian repression in Kosovo as the writing on the wall. And indeed an increasing number of Serbian politicians, intellectuals and journalists watched the advancing decentralization of the State of Yugoslavia with regret because it was made at the expense of approximately three million Serbs who lived outside of the Republic of Serbia. Rankovic, the former head of the secret police, had advocated a powerful Yugoslav unity and a tough approach to the Kosovan Albanians. His death in 1983 prompted opposition to decentralization and an estimated 100,000 Serbs attended his funeral.

3. It's the economy, stupid

Meanwhile a decline in the Yugoslav economy was undermining political relations. As shown in the previous chapter, an important part of Yugoslavia's post-war economic affluence depended on financial support from the West that wanted Yugoslavia to maintain its position as a relatively independent state vis-à-vis the Communist bloc.

Tourism to the hospitable and relatively open Yugoslavia ensured an influx of currency. The number of foreign tourists who visited Yugoslavia between 1959 and 1967 had risen from 500,000 to 3600,000 with the resulting foreign currency growing from four-and-a-half million dollars to 133 million dollars.¹⁸³ Yugoslav migrant workers in Western Europe were subsequently responsible for an additional flow of money from abroad. There were as many as 800,000 of them in around 1970, a number that accounted for more than 10% of the home work force.¹⁸⁴ In 1971, these migrant workers sent 852 million dollars back home, a sum that was equal to 59% of the balance of trade's deficit of 1438 million dollars.¹⁸⁵

However, after the 1973 international oil crisis, there were wide-spread lay-offs of Yugoslav migrant workers, some of whom returned to Yugoslavia. The liquidity problem that this caused in Yugoslavia forced companies to repeatedly send employees home for long periods of time while the cost of living continued to rise. In addition, Yugoslavia was hit by the 1973 oil crisis in other ways. Although the country produced much of its energy through hydropower, 40% of its intensive deployment of energy still depended on foreign sources that mainly involved oil. The reaction to this

¹⁸¹ Dusan T. Batakovic, 'Collective and Human Rights: Opposing Views from Former Yugoslavia', Baehr/Baudet/Werdmöller (eds.), *Tights*, pp. 67 and 69.

¹⁸² Thompson, *House*, p. 128.

¹⁸³ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 82.

¹⁸⁴ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 165; Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 589; Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 329.

¹⁸⁵ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 94.

first energy crisis consisted of taking out more foreign loans. This financial support from abroad camouflaged a number of fundamental defects in the Yugoslav economy. These comprised of a lack of efficiency and the inability to adapt, a lack of technological innovation, low productivity, large-scale unemployment and major foreign debts. Unemployment had already reached 13.6% in 1978.¹⁸⁶ Although the gross national product increased by an average of 5.1% between 1970 and 1979, this growth was mainly due to foreign capital. During the same period, the country's debts were increasing by 20% each year.¹⁸⁷ The Yugoslav national debt amounted to 15 billion dollars in 1980, and a quarter of all foreign income was used to pay the interest on that debt.

The second oil crisis in 1979 threw the Yugoslav economy completely off balance. Although migrant workers sent some 1902 million dollars to their country, which was more than twice as much as ten years earlier, that sum was now equal to just 31% of the balance of trade deficit that had grown to 6086 million dollars.¹⁸⁸ The national debt would rapidly increase to 20 billion dollars and the value of the dinar would be decimated between 1979 and 1985. Food subsidies were cancelled in 1982 and a year later the prices of fuel, food and transport were to rise by a third. The import of all goods that were not necessary for home production was halted.

The republics were becoming increasingly self-sufficient within Yugoslavia through the 1974 Constitution's decentralization of political and economic power. The republics' leaders were able to take a great many independent fiscal and monetary measures. The fact that the republics' Communist leadership depended on the population's support meant that companies that were not economically viable were often bailed out even when more efficient equivalents existed elsewhere in Yugoslavia. Hence, employment opportunities were kept artificially high.

The separate republics, which were able to create and borrow money, had contributed to the country's growing debt because they did not feel responsible for national development. This debt was aggravated by Yugoslav society's low internal savings quota. This was the price that the country paid for its high level of consumption in comparison with other Eastern European countries. The republics' independent stance in terms of acquiring foreign loans had reached such an extreme in 1981 that the federal government found it necessary to ask foreign organizations to establish the extent of Yugoslavia's total foreign debt.

Yugoslavia encountered major difficulties when capital interest rates rose rapidly at the end of the 1970s. By 1982, the country was no longer able to fulfil its foreign financial obligations and the International Monetary Fund (the IMF), the World Bank and the Bank for International Settlements had to come to its aid. This restored the equilibrium in the balance of payments. However, the IMF had only agreed to help after the American Deputy Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, had found a consortium of private banks called 'the Friends of Yugoslavia' that was prepared to lend the country two billion dollars. At that point, Yugoslavia was still able to count on special treatment from the United States.

Economic growth continued to decline despite the IMF's rescue plan. Although Yugoslavia was once one of the most rapidly-developing countries in the world, in the 1980s the average growth of its national income was just 0.5%, the lowest percentage in the whole of Europe.¹⁸⁹ The standard of living fell drastically. The average income in 1988 was just 70% of what it had been in 1978.¹⁹⁰ Unemployment rose dramatically. It stood at 8% in relatively prosperous Slovenia in 1990, yet it was double that figure in Serbia in 1991 and had reached almost 40% in Kosovo. Social security provisions

¹⁸⁶ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 311.

¹⁸⁷ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 315.

¹⁸⁸ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 94.

¹⁸⁹ V. Bojicic, 'The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: Causes and Consequences of Dynamic Inefficiency in Semi-command Economics', Dyker/Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia*, p. 34.

¹⁹⁰ D.A. Dyker, 'The Degeneration of the Yugoslav Communist Party as a Managing Elite - a Familiar East European Story?', Dyker/Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia*, p. 57. Also Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 317.

had never been good and they now suffered from the high level of inflation.¹⁹¹ The number of people living below the poverty line grew between 1978 and 1989 from 3.4 million to 5.4 million, in other words: from 17.2% to 23.6% of the population.¹⁹² There was also spiralling inflation that had reached an annual level of as much as 2500% by December 1989.

Meanwhile there was a widening economic gap between the northern and the southern republics, and the cities and countryside. Economic reform was desperately needed but there was no effective mechanism at the federal level. Not only the constitutional stipulations but also the difference between the disadvantaged and the more affluent regions made it difficult to develop a common economic policy. The more advanced economies, such as Slovenia's, supported decentralization and the free market; the disadvantaged economies of Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina wanted centralization and a redistribution of incomes. The unwillingness to continue sending income to the less developed regions of Yugoslavia would ultimately be one of the reasons for the secession of Slovenia and Croatia at the beginning of the 1990s.

Moreover, right or wrongly, all the republics with the exception of Serbia would have immediately regarded any increase of federal power as involving the danger of Greater Serbian claims. Yugoslavism had failed for this very reason at the beginning of the 1960s and the developments of the 1980s in no way prompted a change of mind.

4. Consequences of the end of the Cold War

The shaky balance that arose in Yugoslavia in the 1980s was placed under extra pressure by the end of the Cold War during the decade's final years.

Back in the spring of 1984, American President Ronald Reagan had sent out a National Security Decision Directive stating that it was vital to the West that Yugoslavia should be independent, strong and stable in both economic and military terms. This directive also described Yugoslavia as being an important obstacle to the Soviet Union's expansion and hegemony, and that it could be held up as an example to other Eastern European countries in terms of the advantages that could be gained by having a more independent stance towards Moscow and closer links with the West.¹⁹³ However, after 1985 and the advent of Mikhail Gorbachov, the West lost much of its previous interest in Yugoslavia because of the improved relations between East and West. This meant that the supply of money to Yugoslavia was decreased. The West shifted its interests – and its money – to Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, countries that seemed to be more successful at making the transition to a free market economy and a democratic system.

Yugoslavia, which had always been more open than the other Eastern European Communist countries, now began to experience the dialectics of progress. There was a certain smugness amongst much of Yugoslavia's elite and its general population concerning the regime's relative humanness, the degree to which the economy had diverged from the standard Communist solutions and the scale of relations with the West.¹⁹⁴ In addition, the opposition was disadvantaged when compared with its equivalents in other Communist countries that increasingly came to the forefront and ultimately took over power.

Despite his tolerance, Tito had made it impossible for the opposition to organize itself.¹⁹⁵ This meant that the social alternative that existed at a level between the state and its citizens was far less developed than elsewhere in Europe. The exception here was Kosovo, which had also been subjected to the most extreme repression. The relatively high degree of national acceptance of Communism

¹⁹¹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 192 and 194.

¹⁹² S. Radosevic, 'The Collapse of Yugoslavia - Between Chance and Necessity', Dyker/Vejvoda (ed.), *Yugoslavia*, p. 72.

¹⁹³ National Security Decision Directive 133, 14/03/84, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/23-2222t.gif> consulted 08/01/2001.

¹⁹⁴ Also Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 227.

¹⁹⁵ Also Levinsohn, *Belgrade*, pp. 42, 101.

would prevent Yugoslavia from changing. Moreover, in the second half of the 1980s, Yugoslavia had the additional handicap that the necessary economic reforms would have to be carried out by the existing Communist regime. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, these changes were implemented by the governments that succeeded the Communists and where their people's initial trust enabled them to introduce unpopular economic measures.

The changing international constellation once again affected the West's readiness to support Yugoslavia both financially and economically. Up till the mid-1980s, Yugoslavia's non-aligned position meant that the West had been sparing with its criticism of the country's human rights violations.¹⁹⁶ The fear now was that too much criticism would drive Yugoslavia into Moscow's arms. Moreover, Tito had kept the ethnic groups under control and, in order to prevent Yugoslavia from seeking support from Moscow, the West did not want to be too judgmental about the methods that had been used. But Yugoslavia's human rights record was to play a considerable role after the mid-1980s, and the United States was to be particularly critical of the Serbs' harsh treatment of the Kosovan Albanians.

5. The rise of the 'ethnic entrepreneurs'

In an attempt to deflect attention away from their own problems or to justify claims in terms of other republics, the party elite in the various republics began to appeal increasingly to the ethnic awareness of their republic's majority. The more the security of Tito's welfare state disintegrated, the more ethnic nationalism seemed to be *the* solution for the many individuals who were not used to contributing independently to democratic decisions. Not only did it provide a form of safety, it could also act as a model of explanation so that adversity could be blamed on other ethnic groups or republics. The ratios between the ethnic groups in companies completely obsessed leaders at all levels in the different republics¹⁹⁷. This created a 'culture of paranoia'.¹⁹⁸

Data from sociological research indicates that the rural population had begun to define social issues in terms of ethnic antitheses even before the major economic problems of the 1970s and '80s. Whereas in the 1970s an overtly liberal pattern of values can be detected in the cities particularly amongst the intelligentsia, it is clear that traditional norms and values were still strongly represented amongst the peasants, agricultural workers and uneducated workers.¹⁹⁹ Here, there seems to have been a revival of traditional norms and values amongst sections of the Serbian population and this included a rediscovery of their own culture and history. This affected not only the rural population but also the city dwellers of rural origins. Rapid urbanization meant that a large proportion of the people living in the cities were just one generation away from their rural roots. These new city dwellers often lived in groups on the edges of the city where they maintained their rural way of living which is therefore defined as 'rurbanization'. They often encountered discrimination on the jobs market in terms of their background because their rural mentality had accompanied them to the city: 'Instead of the provinces becoming citified, the cities became countrified'.²⁰⁰ From the 1960s onwards, the rural population and the underlying city groups were involved in a reorientation towards traditional values and the history of their own ethnic group. This in turn created a breeding ground for nationalist ideologies that particular politicians and the Serbian intelligentsia only began to propagate in the 1980s.²⁰¹ Ethnic nationalism from the bottom upwards, which Tito had long kept under control, then encountered a nationalism

¹⁹⁶ Also Russell, *Prejudice*, p. 143; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 104.

¹⁹⁷ See, for instance, Carol J. Williams, 'Croatia's "Raving Nationalist" Now Seeks to Contain the Flames', *Los Angeles Times*, 30/10/90.

¹⁹⁸ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 97.

¹⁹⁹ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, pp.204-205; Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 84.

²⁰⁰ Job, 'Furies', p. 67. See also Dimitrios Kyriakou, 'Civil Society and Civil War in Bosnia', in: Danopoulos/Zirker (eds.), *Relations*, pp. 243-245.

²⁰¹ Also supplement Naarden 2001, p. 80.

from the top downwards: ‘nomenclature nationalism’.²⁰² Research, which was carried out at the beginning of 1983 on behalf of Radio Free Europe, appears to confirm this and shows how some Communists warned the Party’s Central Committee about nationalist trends, particularly in Serbia where the Party was doing too little to counter them. The author added his own conclusion:

‘...[I]t is certainly true that large segments of the Serbian population are now undergoing a kind of nationalist feeling. It is also true that this new wave of nationalism is mainly concentrated on and emanates from the Serbian cultural scene: theaters, books, papers, periodicals and the provincial press. It should also be noted that the Serbian Orthodox Church, with its historically deep ties with the national idea, is playing an ever greater role in the latest development. Very recently, however, sparks of Serbian nationalism have begun to inflame broader strata of the population, youth in particular. Religious services and celebrations of religious events are being held more frequently and are better attended, books on national themes or about Serbian history are best sellers, young people are demonstrating en masse their Serbian national feelings in songs and national symbols.’²⁰³

It was illustrative that, according to the same research, rumours suggested that the author Dobrica Cosic, who was the cultural leader of Serbian nationalism, was the protégé of a number of Serbian Communist leaders who tried to revive Serbian nationalism for politically- opportune reasons.²⁰⁴ The embrace between ethnic nationalism from below and nomenclature nationalism was made all the stronger because politicians, thanks to their access to government money and their company links, could just keep on dividing the pie no matter how meagre the portions. Moreover, if they wanted, they could opt to favour their own ethnic group. In other words: they became ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’.²⁰⁵

²⁰² D.A. Dyker, ‘Introduction’, Dyker/Vejvoda, *Yugoslavia*, p. 3.

²⁰³ Antic, *Danger*, p. 3.

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 5

²⁰⁵ The term is used in connection with Yugoslavia by Jill A. Irvine, ‘Introduction: State-Society Relations in Yugoslavia, 1945-1992’, in: Bokovoy/Irvine/Lilly (eds.), *Relations*, p. 13. There is a further description of the role played by the ethnic entrepreneurs in ethnic conflicts in Milton J. Esman/Shibley Telhami, ‘Introduction’, in: Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, p. 10: ‘Perceived slights or threats from outsiders can generate powerful collective reactions, which can be mobilized and politicized by ethnic entrepreneurs who are motivated partly by genuine concern for their people and partly by a desire to build a constituency in pursuit of personal political ambitions. Ethnic entrepreneurs precipitate conflict by politicizing collective identity, that is, by dramatizing grievances or threats to common interests or by pointing out opportunities to promote and further such interests by organized action. These competitive interests may run the gamut from control of territory to eligibility for citizenship and the exercise of political rights, from official recognition of language to the status of religion, from access to education to opportunities for employment, landownership, business enterprise, and the distribution of government investments and public services.’

Chapter 4

Yugoslavia during the Serbian presidency of Slobodan Milosevic

‘If there was a single cause of the war, it was the expansionist nationalism Milosevic employed to propel himself up the greasy pole of Serbian politics.’²⁰⁶

‘I have no doubt that if Milosevic’s parents had committed suicide before his birth rather than after, I would not be writing a cable about the death of Yugoslavia.’²⁰⁷

Much to their frustration, the Serbs in Kosovo realized that the level of autonomy granted to their province by the 1974 Constitution made it virtually impossible to protect their rights. The Republic of Serbia, of which Kosovo was a part, could not ensure these rights and the federal authority was unable to intervene. The constant ‘emigration’ of Serbs from Kosovo caused great concern amongst the Serbian party leadership in Belgrade. From 1981 onwards, there was so much press coverage of the fate of the Kosovan Serbs that even such a well-informed author as Paul Shoup was surprised that the Serbian leadership had only adopted a truly nationalist course with the advent of Slobodan Milosevic.

Yugoslavia was the only state where all the Serbs were able to live together. As the disintegration of Yugoslavia took hold and the Serbian nation wished to remain united, there were just three options from their perspective: a radical about-turn from the path of disintegration through democratic reform and the guaranteed protection of minority rights; an about-turn from the path of disintegration by means of violence; or the creation of a Greater Serbia to which parts of other republics with a Serbian majority would be added.

In terms of the first option, it is never easy to make concessions that adversely affect your position of power and, as we have already seen, there was clearly no tradition of this in Communist Yugoslavia. Moreover, at that time all the leaders of the Eastern European Communist Parties realized that democratic reform, as implemented by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, not only greatly damaged the Communist Party’s power but also set off centrifugal forces. That meant that there were only two alternatives left.

1. Intellectuals play the nationalist card

Serbian intellectuals assumed their responsibility in this situation.²⁰⁸ They were no longer asking for democratic freedom but appeared to opt for a combination of the second and third alternatives, in other words: they cherished Greater Serbian aspirations and these would have to be achieved through violence. More punitive actions needed to be taken against groups that they felt formed an obstacle to Serbian ambitions. A stream of publications was brought out about the threat that the Kosovar Albanians constituted for the Serbs, whose rights were the most ancient because Kosovo, with its monasteries and the Battle of Kosovo, was the cradle of Serbian civilization. Writers did not baulk at

²⁰⁶ Major, *Autobiography*, p. 534. Italics as in the original text.

²⁰⁷ Zimmerman, *Origins*, p. 251.

²⁰⁸ For a justification of the Serbian intellectuals’ lifesaver attitude, see: Mihailovic/Krestic, Memorandum, pp. 19-20. For a discussion of what he feels to be the Serbian intellectuals’ traditional pattern of expectation, i.e. the justifying of historical, territorial claims, see: Willem Vermeer, ‘Albanians and Serbs in Yugoslavia’, Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 103-105. For the veneration of intellectuals by less developed sections of the Serbian population, see: Job, *Furies*, pp. 67-68

the task at hand. Serbian literature had a long tradition that combined the heroism and the victimization of both the people and its leaders. In this nationalist genre, the individual was subsumed into his ethnic-national identity: the individual was primarily, for instance, a Serb or Croat, or a 'Turk' as nationalist Serbs used to refer to Muslims.

On 21 January 1986, 212 prominent Serbian intellectuals, orthodox priests and former army officers set the tone of the political debate of the following years with the publication of a petition called 'Against the Persecution of the Serbs in Kosovo'.²⁰⁹ The signatories demanded an end to the 'genocide' of Serbs which referred to the Albanian harassment and the exodus of Serbs from Kosovo. Old women and nuns had allegedly been raped and children had been beaten up in the name of an 'ethnically-pure Kosovo'. The extent of the Albanians' crimes against the Serbs would be proved by the Djordje Martinovic Case. On 1 May 1985, Martinovic, a Serbian peasant, was found more dead than alive in his field in Kosovo with a beer bottle in his hand. Some people swore that it was the work of the Kosovan Albanians. Research would later prove that the man had most probably fallen on the bottle on purpose. Nonetheless, the Martinovic Case would obsess the Serbian press and public for months and even years. Some people argued that the man had a sexual aberration but the case was mostly presented as 'proof' of the perversities that the Albanians inflicted on the Serbs. The successful publicity of this case spawned the feeling amongst the Serbian press that, after years of Communist manipulation, it could now ply the people with nationalism. The petition's signatories were outraged by this case. They argued that it was difficult to imagine a more heinous crime. They felt that the fact that the Communist regime appeared not to take the case seriously should have confused international public opinion that appeared to be more concerned about the genocide of the persecutors (the Albanians) than about the fate of the persecuted (the Serbs). The drift of the nationalist reporting was that the autonomy of Kosovo and also Vojvodina should be immediately abolished and that even more radical changes would be subsequently needed throughout Yugoslavia.

These statements about the genocide and rape of Serbs were widely circulated over the next few years and were used by the Serbian elite to launch a psychological war so as to create the idea amongst the Serbian population that their continued existence was at stake and that repressive actions against the Albanians were justified.²¹⁰ No one took any notice of the information that there was no question of Albanians committing ethnically-motivated murders and rapes against Serbs, and that the percentage of rapes in Serbia, excluding the autonomous areas of Kosovo and Vojvodina, was in fact higher than in Kosovo.²¹¹ A few months after the petition's publication, the Serbian government stipulated that ordinary crimes would henceforth be treated as crimes against the state whenever the perpetrator came from a different ethnic background than the victim. This legislation was particularly aimed at Kosovo.²¹²

Back in 1985, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts had set up a committee that was to prepare a memorandum about both the political, social, economic and moral crisis in Yugoslavia and Serbia's political status. The Memorandum was published on 24 and 25 September 1986 in the Belgrade daily newspaper *Vecernje Novosti*. Up till that point it had been an unofficial and incomplete document that had only been distributed within limited circles.²¹³ The manifesto combined what in some ways was a correct analysis of the problems with a solution that would only increase them. The Memorandum blamed the economic stagnation on the economic policy's subordination to the disintegrating regional power monopolies of the republican and provincial leaders instead of blaming it either on the central

²⁰⁹ Magas, *Destruction*, pp. 49-52.

²¹⁰ Also Ugresic, *Cultura*, pp. 101-102.

²¹¹ Magas, *Destruction*, pp. 61-62.

²¹² Magas, *Destruction*, pp. 55 and 62.

²¹³ On 1 February 1989, the memorandum was published in *Nase teme*, no. 33, pp. 182-263; in June 1989, it appeared as a special publication of the Belgrade magazine *Duga* in Belgrade. Finally it was formally published on 23 April 1993. For an official English-language version, see: Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*.

plan or on market forces or on workers' self-rule.²¹⁴ The Memorandum also argued that the trend towards a confederation no longer suited the present circumstances. This trend was the consequence of the much-criticized 1974 Constitution that had created a constant political impasse due to the requirement of a consensus decision-making process. This same demand made it impossible to alter the constitution.

The Memorandum emphasized that, following the Comintern, Tito and Kardelj had attached too much value to the national issue of non-Serbs.²¹⁵ It argued that it was no coincidence that these two pivotal figures were of Croatian and Slovenian origins. After the Second World War, they had constantly treated Serbia and the Serbs in an adverse way in accordance with the motto that a weak Serbia meant a strong Yugoslavia. Serbia was the victim of an anti-Serbian coalition of the other republics that even allowed a 'physical, political, legal and cultural genocide'²¹⁶ to be committed against the Serbs by the Albanians whose goal was an 'ethnically-pure' Kosovo.²¹⁷ The Serbs had never been so threatened in Croatia, apart from during Pavelic's Fascist state.²¹⁸ Moreover, the Serbs' cultural heritage was kicked around more than that of any other ethnic group in Yugoslavia.²¹⁹

The Memorandum argued for the following measures: Yugoslavia's recentralization; political transparency and participation at all levels of the decision-making process; an open, democratic decision-making process and freedom of speech.²²⁰ The principles that the Memorandum presented sounded lofty: 'Any form of political repression or discrimination on ethnic grounds in modern, civilized society is unacceptable.'²²¹ However, these principles mainly involved the Serbs as victims. According to the Memorandum's authors, they were disadvantaged when compared with Yugoslavia's other ethnic groups because less money was being invested in Serbia, the Serbs did not have their own state ('it is impossible to imagine a worse defeat in peace time')²²² and they were being seriously oppressed outside of Serbia.²²³ By contrast, Slovenia and Croatia had benefited from Tito's economic policy.

Therefore, the Memorandum stated that Serbia would be justified in no longer contributing to the federal funds for underdeveloped areas of Yugoslavia, and it condemned the Serbian leaders who had agreed to these payments by not even exercising their right to veto: 'the Serbian leaders were not ready for the historical task that was facing them as a consequence of the extremely adverse internal relations within the state of Yugoslavia'. The time to say 'no' to Serbia's humiliation had come.²²⁴

The Memorandum argued that Kosovo and Vojvodina had to be integrated once again into the Republic of Serbia. Here too, the Serbian leaders had been overly defensive and timid.²²⁵ The issue of the Serbs in Croatia also had to be solved because otherwise 'the consequences will be disastrous not only for Croatia but for the whole of Yugoslavia.'²²⁶

The Memorandum remained vague about the political future apart from the two provinces' reintegration into the Republic of Serbia. Its point of departure was that: 'the establishing of the complete national and cultural integrity of the Serbian people is their historical and democratic right, no matter which republic or province they may live in.'²²⁷ It appeared that the Memorandum did not

²¹⁴ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 102-103.

²¹⁵ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 106-107.

²¹⁶ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 128.

²¹⁷ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 129 and 130.

²¹⁸ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 133.

²¹⁹ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 134-135.

²²⁰ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 106-110, 117.

²²¹ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 117.

²²² Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 127.

²²³ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, pp. 118-119.

²²⁴ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 125.

²²⁵ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 128.

²²⁶ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 133.

²²⁷ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 138.

exclude a federal solution. But Serbia would clearly have to emphasize its national interests in the preparations for a revision to the 1974 Constitution. It should not hold back this time. The Republic of Yugoslavia would be endangered if Serbia and the Serbs did not achieve their goal of a status that was equal to that of the other republics and ethnic groups.²²⁸ Hence, this document meant that the Belgrade intelligentsia had rejected a federal Yugoslavia as being the best solution for the Serbs; the other republics would just have to guess at what this would mean for them. In no uncertain terms, the manifesto confronted the official ideology of Yugoslavia as being in all respects superior to the rest of the world with its wretched reality.²²⁹

The Serbian Communist Party reacted by trying to push the nationalist genie back into the bottle. It let it be known that there was no need for forces other than itself to indicate the social situation and, moreover, to teach its leaders a lesson. Hence, the Memorandum was endangering the Party's ideological hegemony while the leaders of the other republics could accuse the Serbian leaders of 'not having their own house in order' by having failed to thwart such expressions of nationalism. Probably the other republics would have reacted to the Memorandum by opposing the call for constitutional reform that threatened their autonomy. For that reason, the Serbian Communist Party immediately condemned the Memorandum but it was clearly an omen that the manifesto was extremely popular amongst other Serbs.

The Memorandum and similar writings meant that the Serbian intelligentsia had assumed a heavy responsibility. 'The original call to upgrade Serbian power within the Yugoslav federation, which would irrevocably lead to war, came not from the leaders, not from the people but from the thinkers', writes Frank Westerman.²³⁰ 'As the vanguard and the conscience of the people, illustrious writers and scholars had cried *'en garde!'*²³¹ Even if, as we have already seen, the intelligentsia was in fact the interpreter of feelings that existed amongst wider levels of the population rather than their inventor, the Memorandum succeeded in creating a platform and a legitimization of Serbian nationalist ideas.

2. The rise of Slobodan Milosevic

In fact, the Memorandum constituted the ideological starting point for Slobodan Milosevic, who shortly before its publication had become the chairman of the Central Committee of the Serbian Communist Party. Up till then, Milosevic had been an intelligent if colourless party bureaucrat who did not seem destined for a major political future. He was born on 29 August 1941 in Pozarevac, a Serbian provincial city some 100 kilometres to the south-east of Belgrade. His mother Stanislava was a teacher and a dedicated member of the Communist Party. His father Svetozar, an Orthodox priest from Montenegro, taught Russian and Serbo-Croat literature and language at the local secondary school. Slobodan's parents divorced in 1950 after which he and his elder brother were brought up by their mother. What the parents had in common was depression. His father finally committed suicide when Milosevic was 21; his mother followed suit some 12 years later. Slobodan was an exemplary pupil at school but did not become involved in, for instance, sports. Milosevic's youth must have been an unhappy one and many have looked there for the roots of his subsequent chilly political conduct and

²²⁸ Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 140.

²²⁹ See, in particular: Mihailovic/Krestic, *Memorandum*, p. 116.

²³⁰ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 118.

²³¹ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 129. Also Karahasan, Sarajevo, p. 76: '... the leaders of the Serbian nationalist parties who have destroyed Yugoslavia and plunged the country into war, are almost without exception writers and professors of literature.' Compare 'Intellektuelle Väter der serbischen Expansion', FAZ, 13/09/92; Blagojevic/Demirovic, *Bloedverwanten*, pp. 11, 23 and 65; Slapsak, *Joegoslavië*, pp. 69 and 73.

his lack of empathy.²³² His fellow students nicknamed him Little Lenin because of his emotionless behaviour.²³³

Milosevic seems never to have had friends apart from his self-assured wife Mirjana (Mira) Markovic, with whom the introverted Slobodan began a close friendship during the fourth year of the Pozarevac secondary school.²³⁴ Their relationship was both inward looking and deeply involved. Both were members of the Communist Party. Mirjana, who was the child of Communist Party aristocracy and had a reputation as an ideological quibbler, constantly pushed her Slobo up the social ladder and into the Party.

Mirjana Markovic was helped in designing her husband's career by Ivan Stambolic, who was five years older and had met Slobodan Milosevic as a student. Ivan Stambolic, who was the nephew of one of Yugoslavia's most important Communists, Petar Stambolic, acted as Milosevic's older brother and political mentor. He continued to fulfil this role after Slobodan had graduated in law from the University of Belgrade in 1964. Each time Stambolic left a particular post, he would bequeath the vacancy to Milosevic. Hence, after several lowly jobs at Belgrade City Council, Milosevic worked at the *Tehnogas* power company between 1970 and 1978, first as an assistant director and later as the director. When Stambolic became the chairman of the Belgrade Chamber of Commerce in 1978, he ensured that Milosevic become the director of *Udružena Beogradska Banka*. Stambolic's pupil then learned English and frequently visited the United States with which he developed a love-hate relationship.²³⁵ At that time Milosevic was known as an economic liberal.²³⁶ In 1982, Stambolic arranged for Milosevic to be included in the Serbian Communist Party presidium.

When Stambolic became the head of the Communist Party in Serbia in 1984, Milosevic followed him as the chief of the Communist Party in Belgrade. In this capacity, Milosevic distinguished himself with his fierce attacks on dissident intellectuals along with his opposition to any form of liberalization and his tough actions against expressions of Serbian nationalism. Two years later, in 1986, Milosevic again followed Stambolic and now became the chairman of the Serbian Communist Party after Stambolic had recommended him as a man who 'can organize and take action but can't make long speeches'.²³⁷ Stambolic had now become President of Serbia.

In June 1987, Milosevic still condemned the Serbian Academy's Memorandum as being 'the purest kind of nationalism. It means the liquidation of the Socialist system, in other words: our country's complete collapse.'²³⁸ However, there was a noticeable difference between the hard criticism of the Memorandum that Milosevic expressed behind closed doors, and the wishy-washy way in which he rejected it in public.²³⁹ Shortly afterwards, the Memorandum was to become the ideological basis, if not the grand design of Milosevic's politics.

Milosevic's conversion to Serbian nationalism: 'no one may beat this people'

Milosevic's political about-turn had already begun in the spring of 1987 during a visit to Kosovo Polje, where the illustrious Battle of Kosovo had taken place. He had been sent there by Stambolic who had warned him of the extreme nationalism that he would confront there. Indeed, Stambolic was aware of a growing Serbian nationalism, particularly in relation to Kosovo. However, he continued to argue for a

²³² See, for instance: Westerman, *Brug*, p. 105; Yael Vinckx, 'Emotieloze "Kleine Lenin"', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/10/00; Zimmermann, 'Ambassador', p. 5; idem, *Origins*, p. 24.

²³³ Yael Vinckx, 'Emotieloze "Kleine Lenin"', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/10/00. According to Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 56 Milosevic acquired this nickname when he was the party chief of Belgrade.

²³⁴ For information about Mirjana Markovic see, for instance: Bart Rijs, 'De vrouw achter president Milosevic', *HP/De Tijd*, 30/04/93, pp. 14-15.

²³⁵ See, for instance: the interview by Carl Bildt, 13/12/00; Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 50.

²³⁶ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 106; Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 50.

²³⁷ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 72-73.

²³⁸ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 108.

²³⁹ Lenard J. Cohen, 'Slobodan Milosevic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, pp. 237-238.

‘constantly militant position towards the nationalist poisoning of youth’.²⁴⁰ During a visit to Kosovo Polje in April 1986, he himself had taken a powerful stand against the Serbian ‘paranoia’ and ‘disinformation’ vis-à-vis the Albanians.²⁴¹ Hence, Milosevic seemed to be following the line that his master had set out for him.

When Milosevic arrived by train at Kosovo Polje on 24 April 1987, there was a demonstration of 15,000 Serbs who were protesting against the behaviour of the ethnic Albanians. While Milosevic consulted the Communist leaders in the local house of culture, the Serbs threatened to storm the building. The police, who mainly consisted of Albanians, dealt with the crowd harshly. When Milosevic went outside to try to calm the crowd, a number of demonstrators complained to him about the actions of the police. Then Milosevic uttered the sentence of which he was soon to understand the enchantment: ‘*Ovaj narod niko ne sme da bije* – No one may beat this people.’ He then invited a delegation of demonstrators for discussions at the house of culture that were to last for 12 hours and produced a list of complaints about the Serbs’ position in Kosovo.

It seemed to be a spontaneous event but appearances can be deceptive. Few people realized that Milosevic had already been in Kosovo Polje four days earlier when there was a much smaller demonstration of 2000 Serbs. Here, Milosevic was told that the Serbs were no longer interested in the Communist leaders’ monologues which they were all too familiar with. Milosevic allowed himself to be persuaded to return several days later for talks. The major demonstration for 24 April was orchestrated in the days between the two visits.²⁴² This initial experience of the organization of a demonstration to support his politics was much to Milosevic’s liking. His political comrades at the state television station ensured that, through constant repetition, his words were soon known throughout Serbia.²⁴³ Other Serbian media also reacted enthusiastically.

With this one small sentence, Milosevic had broken the taboo that had existed since 1945 against any public expression of nationalism and ethnic antitheses. Ethnic nationalism had replaced the ideology of brotherhood and unity. Milosevic ‘went to Kosovo Polje as a Communist and came back as a Serb’ was how his biographer Slavoljub Djukic described these events which he witnessed in person.²⁴⁴ At the beginning of the Communist government shortly after the Second World War, it was believed that nationalism would automatically disappear, yet one of its top men was to embrace nationalism in its most extreme form at what was to be the end of both Yugoslavia and its government.

Yet the transition from Communism to nationalism was not such a big one for Milosevic who was a power-hungry tactician with no ideals apart from his own interests. Like so many others, he had not embraced Communism primarily as an ideology but as a means of obtaining and retaining power. It was true of both Milosevic and his followers within the Communist Party that: ‘the opportunism that made them Communists in the Tito era led them to embrace ethnic nationalism thereafter.’²⁴⁵ This about-turn was not only an act of opportunism but also of ‘political cannibalism’ where the opponent, Serbian nationalism, was devoured, but its spirit was later to take possession of the eater.²⁴⁶

Moreover, since the 1974 Constitution, all the leaders of the Yugoslav republics had become nationalist to some degree even if initially it was primarily in an economic sense. Once it had become obvious that Communism had lost both its vitality and its capacity to solve the problems of Yugoslavia’s political organization and economy, those searching for an answer for the present would have to look either to the future or to the past. The past was the only way open to the Communists

²⁴⁰ Quoted in Lenard J. Cohen, ‘Slobodan Milosevic’, in: Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 235. For his powerful position against nationalism, see also: Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 339.

²⁴¹ Lenard J. Cohen, ‘Slobodan Milosevic’, in: Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 236; idem, *Serpent*, p. 57.

²⁴² For this version of events, see: Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 39; Cohen, *Serpent*, p. 62; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 23-26 and pp. 33-34.

²⁴³ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 39.

²⁴⁴ Djukic, quoted in Westerman, *Brug*, p. 110.

²⁴⁵ Newland, *Conflict*, p. 95.

²⁴⁶ Djilas, *Profile*, p. 87.

who refused to implement the reforms that the West would have liked to have seen. Up till then, Communism's legitimacy was based on the past of the Second World War. If one broke with this, it would be necessary to look further back in time. Those who were familiar with Yugoslavia's history knew that the nationalism of the previous two centuries was the only ideological force apart from Communism that had succeeded in mobilizing the masses.

As a top Serbian politician, Milosevic set the tone with his blatant transition to nationalism. The Communist system with its power over the media and the police had created a situation where just one man could make such a difference. The system, which was so strongly based on collectivism, actually provided a great deal of space for the individual's will and objectives. Tito knew it and Milosevic had begun to understand it. Milosevic, the man who was never known to have friends or advisors, who never discussed strategy or tactics (except with his own wife²⁴⁷), who had always been a loner right since his youth and was a poor speaker, had suddenly discovered the electrifying effect of the contact between him, the leader, and the Serbian people.²⁴⁸

3. The end of the 1980s: precursors of a new ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia

In essence, ethnic conflict is based on the following four conditions:

- a serious economic crisis combined with mutual changes for the various ethnic groups in the access to the sources of wealth;
- a disintegration of the state combined with an altered and unequal access to power;
- a collapse of the common culture;
- the exploitation of mutual fear.²⁴⁹

The meaning of the words 'no one may beat this people' partly implied that Milosevic had placed the Serbs in Yugoslavia above the law. Hence, Milosevic had added the third ingredient for ethnic conflict, a collapse of the common culture that had been based on a fragile balance of ethnic pluralism. The first two conditions had already been fulfilled in Yugoslavia.

All that was left was the fourth condition: the conscious and large-scale exploitation of mutual ethnic tensions. As demonstrated, the nationalists included in their number both the authors of the Memorandum and a section of the intelligentsia along with those living in the countryside and city migrants. Milosevic had to travel from Belgrade to Kosovo Polje to discover the extent of the nationalist breeding ground. Now he had to make sure that the nationalist vision of both the past and the present would be able to press ahead against other possible views.

The fact that there were people who could be used, who were not allies or partners but instruments that could be thrown away at will, appealed to Milosevic's cynicism because he was a man without qualities, vision and policy apart from a hunger for power. He was in fact 'the amoeba in power'.²⁵⁰ A section of the people that was not schooled in the subtleties of democracy but was brought up with a Communism that was constantly searching for front positions found it easy to make the transition to nationalism. One collectivist ideology was simply exchanged for another.

Milosevic was happy to exploit the fact that Yugoslav Communism had always had enemies not only abroad but also at home. His political language was drenched with such terms as 'counter-revolutionary', 'Stalinists', 'Cominform supporters', '*koelaks*', 'bourgeois liberals', 'Greater Serbian hegemonists', 'anarcho-liberalists', 'anti-Communist reactionaries' and 'techno-managers'. As late as

²⁴⁷ Also Westerman, *Brug*, p. 130.

²⁴⁸ Also Ramet, *Milosevic*, p. 95.

²⁴⁹ Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, 'Ethnic Conflicts and Human Rights: Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Perspectives', Baehr/Baudet/Werdmöller (eds.), *Rights*, pp. 15 and 17; Joost Herman, 'Intergovernmental Organisations and Ethnic Conflicts', *ibidem*, pp. 27-29.

²⁵⁰ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 117. See also: Djukic quoted in Gutman, *Witness*, p. 18; Olaf Tempelman, 'Milosevic' succes wordt nu zijn ondergang', *De Volkskrant* 27/09/00; Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 24-25.

1984, party chairman Stipe Suvar had drawn up a white list of enemies that was so long that any self-respecting intellectual felt insulted if he was left out.²⁵¹ This old image of enemies was easy to replace with the new one.²⁵² The new enemy was called Albanian, Croat or Muslim and could be the man or the woman next door. Milosevic now set his sights on again subjecting the autonomous republics of Kosovo and Vojvodina to direct Serbian government. But the constitution stipulated that this required the other republics' unanimous agreement.

But before Milosevic could press ahead on a national level, he first had to strengthen his power position within his own party. At that point there were two groups within the Serbian Communist Party: a reform movement under Stambolic's leadership that was prepared to resign if elections changed the regime, and the group led by Milosevic that had no qualms about diverting attention away from the political debate about reform by exaggerating anti-Serbian ethnic nationalist threats and by provoking ethnic conflict. In this way, Milosevic's group hoped to counter the loss of power that would be the consequence of free elections.

Hence, as an ethnic nationalist, Milosevic was now opposing his master Stambolic who had allowed space for reformers. Stambolic tried in vain to control his sorcerer's apprentice. He realized that his pupil, who had followed him for so many years, now wanted to stab him the back.²⁵³ Nonetheless he seemed to be virtually paralysed by these events and incapable of defending himself against the crude methods that Milosevic used to commit political patricide. In the past, Stambolic had consistently refused to listen to warnings about Milosevic's ambitious nature. He was not unaware of Milosevic's unpleasant side and shortcomings, but he felt that his positive qualities were the decisive factor.²⁵⁴ It was from a paternalist magnanimity that he provided Milosevic with the space to develop.²⁵⁵ He had quarrelled with him in the past about Milosevic's appointment of people whom he found disagreeable, but for a long time he had believed that these decisions were the result of political inexperience.²⁵⁶ It was already too late when Stambolic finally realized that Milosevic was after his position. For a quarter of a century, Stambolic had praised Milosevic to everyone who would listen. To admit that Milosevic was the wrong man would be at the cost of Stambolic's own credibility. Having promoted Milosevic for many years, he now realized that he had become the victim of his own patronage.²⁵⁷ During the eighth session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia in September 1987, Milosevic and his supporters with their nationalist program defeated Stambolic's more liberal faction which they blamed for not fighting hard enough for Serbia's interests within the Yugoslav federation. Some months later, in December 1987, Milosevic replaced Stambolic as the chairman of the presidium of the Serbian Communist Party.

The leaders of the other republics immediately drew their own conclusions about this political patricide. 'It was an obvious sign to us that this could happen to anyone who worked with Milosevic in the future ...', remarked Milan Kucan, who led the Slovenian Communist Party from 1986 and often encountered Milosevic in that capacity.²⁵⁸ For that matter, working with Milosevic was already an unappealing prospect for leaders from other areas.

With Stambolic out of the running, Milosevic undertook the next phase of his program. He attempted to oust the current Communist leadership in several areas by means of an 'anti-bureaucratic revolution'. To achieve this, he set up a number of mass organizations such as the Committee for the Protection of the Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo. Large-scale 'solidarity gatherings' and 'truth

²⁵¹ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 77.

²⁵² Also Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: A reassessment', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 61.

²⁵³ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 45.

²⁵⁴ Stambolic, *Put*, p. 101, 135 and 139.

²⁵⁵ Stambolic, *Put*, p. 140 and 159.

²⁵⁶ Stambolic, *Put*, p. 158 and 160.

²⁵⁷ Stambolic, *Put*, p. 160-162.

²⁵⁸ Stephen Engelberg, 'Carving Out a Greater Serbia', *The New York Times*, 01/09/91.

meetings' of Serbs attempted to pressurize the party executives of Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro into resigning. The aim of this was to subordinate these areas to Serbian interests and to shore up Milosevic's long-term power position. These gatherings mobilized hundreds of thousands of Serbs who, through Milosevic's organization of politics by means of the street, felt that finally here was a Communist who, in their eyes, did not represent the arrogant, urban elite that had refused to listen to them for so many years. For them, his populist nationalism was a new and welcome form of political participation at a time full of economic uncertainties. In 1988, an estimated four million demonstrators took to the streets in a country where not so long ago expressions of protest resulted in the certain intervention of the feared secret police.²⁵⁹

At the same time, Milosevic responded to the Memorandum's call for recentralization through his actions against the regional bureaucracies. On 6 October 1988, Milosevic succeeded in getting 100,000 people out onto the streets of Novi Sad, the capital of Vojvodina, so that the province's party leadership was forced to resign. He subsequently installed his own people. In January 1989, he achieved the same result through a mass meeting in Titograd which was the current name of the Montenegrin capital of Podgorica. This was a signal to the other republics that Milosevic was not content simply with the restoration of Serbia's power over its autonomous republics and that his desire would continue to expand.²⁶⁰

The federal leadership wanted Milosevic to withdraw his actions but did not have the power to force him. The Yugoslav People's Army, the JNA, also did not intervene. An action in March 1989 resulted in an official death toll of 22 Albanians and two police; this followed months of Serbian pressure to place the Kosovan government under Milosevic's control and was supported by both the police and the army. Threatened with the deployment of military government, the Kosovan Parliament no longer resisted the constitutional changes that would abolish the province's autonomy. Shortly afterwards, on 28 March 1989, the Serbian parliament accepted a new Serbian constitution that largely reversed the high level of autonomy that had been granted to both Vojvodina and Kosovo in 1974. The two areas did retain a separate seat in the collective state presidium. However, from then on it was clear that they could only voice the same opinions as the representative of Serbia.

This take-over meant that the Serbian party leader Slobodan Milosevic now had control over four of the eight votes in the federal presidium: those of Serbia, Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro. Hence, the fragile balance that Tito had tried to maintain by granting equal status to the six republics and two provinces had been destroyed forever. Votes of four against four were now inevitable. Moreover, the four other republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia were also threatened by mass demonstrations of Serbs within their own territory that were not only protests against bureaucracy but were also displays of Serbian nationalism.

Resistance against Serbian nationalism in Slovenia

Milosevic also wanted to organize a 'truth meeting' where Serbs would denounce what had happened to their brothers in Kosovo.

Slovenia had occupied a special place in Yugoslavia for quite some time. Only a very small number of Serbs lived there. It was also the most economically successful area in Eastern Europe but it did not escape the general Yugoslav malaise of the 1980s. In 1978, the average purchasing power of wages in Slovenia still amounted to 80% of those in Austria; ten years later, in 1988, this had fallen to just 45%.²⁶¹ Consequently, Slovenia became progressively less willing to let itself be dragged along by Yugoslavia. Opinion polls at the beginning of the 1970s revealed that nationalism was a stronger force in Slovenia than in the other republics. Polls in the 1980s also showed that there was a more developed

²⁵⁹ Cohen, *Bonds*, pp. 45-46.

²⁶⁰ Also Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 155.

²⁶¹ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 130.

belief in democracy amongst Slovenes than elsewhere in Yugoslavia.²⁶² Nonetheless, after many years, Slovenia still retained a dogmatic party leadership. It was only in April 1986 that the Communist Party was taken over by the liberal wing under the command of Milan Kucan so that the conservatives were finally pushed into the background. This take-over was influenced by the increasing irritation concerning the Serbian actions in Kosovo, although elements of snobbery and gloating over the Serbs certainly played a role in the Slovenian attitude to Kosovo.²⁶³ There are even indications that Slovenian nationalists were using the Kosovo issue for their own ends.²⁶⁴

A liberal climate developed under the leadership of party chairman Milan Kucan. This resulted in an increasing number of political taboos being broken by the independent station Radio Student and the Communist youth organization's publication *Mladina*. In February 1987, the Slovenian magazine *Nova revija* published a special issue that was devoted to the 'Slovenian national program' and included complaints about the neglect of the Slovenian language and demands for still more autonomy. The existence of Yugoslavia was not discussed as such. However, more space had to be created for the development of democratic relations and the extending of Slovenia's 'European' sides. This program was regarded as being the Slovenian answer to the Serbian Memorandum. Significantly, whereas at that point the Serbian leadership still distanced itself from the Memorandum, the same was not true of Kucan's relation with the nationalist program in Slovenia.²⁶⁵ Indeed, it was a sign that a nationalist trend was accepted earlier amongst the Slovenian elite than in Serbia. There was an increasing number of articles in *Mladina* that found fault with the JNA although the constitution forbade any criticism of the army.²⁶⁶ There was also a growing number of rumours that the JNA wanted to resort to violence in order to counter the liberal climate in Slovenia.²⁶⁷

At the beginning of 1988, *Mladina* published an article that was based on a number of secret documents that included the names of prominent Slovenians who were to be arrested in the event of a state of emergency. Consequently, the federal army detained the editor-in-chief, two journalists and the person who had provided the documents. The Slovenian public was outraged, particularly when the military court decided that, although the sessions took place in Slovenia, they would be held in Serbo-Croat. The JNA's attempt to force Slovenia back into the old framework had the effect of a boomerang. This case greatly influenced the continuing development of nationalist awareness in Slovenia. A demonstration of 40,000 people took place in Ljubljana on 22 June 1988; it was the biggest in Slovenia since World War Two. The hastily-established Committee for the Protection of Human Rights (*Odbor*) soon collected a petition of 100,000 signatures on behalf of the four detainees. The Slovenes then opted *en masse* for the path of democracy. Suddenly, new political parties were set up in the wake of *Odbor* that were soon demanding a Western-style constitution. According to an opinion poll in July 1988, 63% of the Slovenian population supported a form of independence.²⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the four accused were condemned to relatively mild prison sentences that varied between five months and four years. From then on, the JNA was jeeringly referred to in Slovenia as the 'occupying army'.

The role of the JNA in Slovenia

The JNA deeply regretted Yugoslavia's disintegration, a situation that was the most advanced in Slovenia. It was not easy for the federal army to define its position in this increasing political chaos.

²⁶² Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: a reassessment', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 63-64.

²⁶³ Paul Shoup, 'Titoism and the national question in Yugoslavia: a reassessment', Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 62 and 64-65.

²⁶⁴ Dimtrij Rupel, who became the Minister of Foreign Affairs in April 1990, admitted at a conference in Berlin in March 1992 that the Slovenian nationalists had indeed done this, Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 440, n. 32.

²⁶⁵ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 112.

²⁶⁶ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 117.

²⁶⁷ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 118-123.

²⁶⁸ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 128-129.

Moreover, through its structure, the JNA was automatically involved in the looming ethnic conflict and would also play an active part in it.

The JNA had come out of Tito's Partisan army during World War Two and was extremely prestigious for many years. In an ideological sense, it was shaped by Tito's Communism and was based on 'brotherhood and unity'. The armed forces were the guardians not only of Yugoslavia's unity but also of its Socialist social order and were therefore a conservative power in Yugoslavia. In addition, the histories of the JNA and the Communist Parties were closely interwoven. Until January 1996, 96% of all officers were members of the League of Communists.²⁶⁹ Along with the six republics and two autonomous provinces, the JNA had an official seat in the Central Committee of the League of Yugoslav Communists. For that reason, the armed forces were known as being Yugoslavia's ninth Communist Party.

The JNA was one of Europe's larger armies. In around 1990, it consisted of 150,000 men and 510,000 reservists. Moreover, a system of territorial defence had been introduced after the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact countries that meant that virtually every Yugoslav could be called up. Apart from the fact that the territorial defence system clearly reflected the Partisan tradition, Kardelj also regarded it as being a part of the prominent ideology of self-rule. The territorial defence system consisted of reservists who had been trained by the JNA. This meant that one-and-a-half million people could be mobilized in the event of war. They were under the command of both the JNA and the local authorities: the republics, districts and city councils. It was, to quote General Veljko Kadijevic who later became Minister of Defence: 'an excellent basis for paralysing the command structure or for something even worse'.²⁷⁰ The JNA had already neutralized the territorial defence system in Kosovo in the 1980s so as to counter the sabotaging of this organization, which could appeal to the local authorities' commands.

The JNA's position was further complicated by the fact that it was the keeper of social and constitutional order yet it remained under the supreme command of the state presidium that was ruled by the republics and autonomous areas. The weak, federal leadership created the impression amongst military leaders that the JNA was in fact an army without a state.²⁷¹ In terms of finance, the JNA depended on the federal agencies whereas the funding of the territorial defence system was a matter for the republics, districts, city councils and state companies. Yugoslavia's further disintegration threatened the JNA with financial cutbacks while the territorial defence system, which could always count on a higher level of sympathy at a local level, remained relatively unscathed.

The army had already suffered cutbacks in the 1980s as a result of the poor economic situation so that its share of the national income was officially reduced from 6.1% to 3.9%. However, the real reduction was even more drastic.²⁷² So as to maintain the republics' support at budget discussions, the JNA increasingly had to allow officers to serve in their own republics although it had always been the JNA's policy that officers should serve outside of their republics as much as possible.

The ethnic imbalance in the officer class also played a role in some republics' unco-operative attitude towards the financing of the JNA. At the end of the 1980s, 60% of all officers were Serbian although the Serbs only accounted for 36% of the population. Some of the other ethnic groups were represented as followed: Montenegrins 6.2% of all officers (2.6% of the population); Macedonians 6.3% (6.0%), Croats 12.6% (19.8%); Slovenes 2.8% (7.8%); Muslims 2.4% (8.9%) and Albanians 0.6% (7.7%).²⁷³ Just as in the civil service, a code of proportional ethnic representation was applied to the top military posts. Here too, the Serbs were dissatisfied with the ethnic relations within the army because relatively few Serbian officers were able to occupy the highest posts.

²⁶⁹ Sanz, *Army*.

²⁷⁰ Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 75.

²⁷¹ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 3, 78.

²⁷² Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 76. Also Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 131.

²⁷³ Gow, 'Deconstruction', p. 302; Djilas, 'Profile', p. 91. Comparable figures in Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 305; Zametica, *Conflict*, p. 41. See also: Gow, *Legitimacy*, pp. 54-55 and 142.

The JNA became even more involved with the ethnic conflict when Admiral Branko Mamula became Minister of Defence in 1982. This job was always given to one of the JNA's top men and was combined with the post of Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command at the state presidium. Mamula took a number of measures that made the federal armed forces look more like a Serbian army. For instance, he abandoned the system of proportionally dividing the top military jobs along ethnic lines. In addition, he tried to subordinate the territorial defence system to the JNA. Slovenia particularly criticized these measures.

Slovenia was also critical of the fact that, since 1982, the JNA increasingly regarded the West as its greatest enemy because of the weakness that it had detected in the Warsaw Pact. This development intensified after 1985 when there was détente between East and West. At that point, NATO was seeking contact with the Warsaw Pact countries. Yugoslavia's chosen isolation vis-à-vis the two military blocs now began to be regarded in JNA circles as an imposed isolation with an implied threat that was mainly due to the more powerful West.²⁷⁴

This Slovenian criticism pushed the federal army leadership towards Milosevic. At first, the relationship between the JNA and the Serbian president seemed to be an uncomfortable one. Milosevic had little affinity with the armed forces and conversely the JNA officers felt that Milosevic had a poor understanding of military affairs.²⁷⁵ During the first years of his government, Milosevic was uncertain as to whether the Yugoslav army would attempt a coup d'état, if necessary by pushing the Serbian leadership aside. For that reason, he created an alternative power resource through the police that developed into a kind of Praetorian Guard of 60,000 men who were both well equipped and well paid. However, the JNA officers appreciated Milosevic's military turn of phrase that he used when speaking in measured tones of mobilization, combat and war.²⁷⁶ Perhaps the most important element at that moment was the fact that the Milosevic-controlled media protected the JNA against the attacks of the Slovenian and Croatian media. Moreover, the officers approved of Milosevic because he resisted the abolition of the Communist organizations for far longer than the other Communist leaders in Eastern Europe.

However, the Slovenian Communists were noticeably less pleased with Milosevic's resistance to the Communist organizations' abolition. This led to clashes, particularly during the February 1989 session of the Central Committee of the League of Yugoslav Communists. Here, the Slovenian party leader Milan Kucan made it clear that Slovenia would only accept a democratic, pluralist, Europe-oriented Yugoslavia. Without democracy Yugoslavia would simply cease to exist.²⁷⁷ This position led to a sharp exchange with Milosevic, who wanted to have nothing to do with pluralism. Milosevic's reactions strengthened the impression in Slovenia that Yugoslavia was heading in exactly the wrong direction so far as the Slovenes were concerned and that this was partly due to the Serbian action in Kosovo.²⁷⁸

Mounting tensions between Slovenia and Serbia

On 27 February 1989, when army and police actions had aimed at deposing the government leadership in Kosovo, an event occurred in Ljubljana that would inflame Slovenian-Serbian relations. The Slovenian Communist Party leadership demonstratively attended a meeting for the protection of human rights in Kosovo that also supported the Albanian miners who had locked themselves in the Trepca mines as a protest against Serbia's constant pressure. Here, Kucan commented, 'the situation in Kosovo shows that people are no longer living together and are increasingly in conflict. Politics must be kept off the streets and away from anywhere where lives are at stake.'

²⁷⁴ Also Meier, *Jugoslawien*, pp. 129-130; Woodward, *Tragedy*, pp. 150-151.

²⁷⁵ Interview Carl Bildt, 13/12/00.

²⁷⁶ Djilas, 'Profile', pp. 81 and 91.

²⁷⁷ Mønnesland, *Land*, p. 326.

²⁷⁸ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 31.

The Slovenian party chairman argued that Yugoslavia was being subjected to an insidious coup. It was not hard to guess who Kucan was referring to.²⁷⁹ Shortly beforehand, Kucan had sent Slovenian television teams to Kosovo because he felt that the Serbian reporting there was no longer reliable. Serbian television understood the historical importance of the meeting in Ljubljana and aired it in its entirety. These images resulted in outrage in Serbia. Hundreds of thousands headed to the federal parliament building in protest and to demand that action should be taken against the Albanian leaders of Kosovo.

In September 1989, the Slovenian parliament adopted a constitution that emphasized Slovenian sovereignty and determined that only the representatives of the Slovenian people could declare a state of siege in Slovenia or could allow JNA troops to enter Slovenian territory. In contrast to the 1974 Constitution, the new Slovenian constitution stipulated that the area could separate itself *without* the other republics' permission. This constitution was accepted despite extreme pressure from both Serbia and the JNA. It was then rejected by the Constitutional Court and the federal parliament but Slovenia held its ground partly because it received support from within the Central Committee of the Yugoslav party.²⁸⁰ For the first time in this exploding conflict, the Croatian party had emphatically rallied on the side of its Ljubljana comrades.

When Serbian politicians announced that a truth demonstration would be held in Ljubljana on 29 November, the Slovenian authorities posted police along its borders to hold back the Serbian demonstrators. Once again they were supported by Croatia which the Serbian demonstrators would first have to cross but found themselves obstructed by the Croatian authorities. Milosevic experienced the failure of this march on Ljubljana as a slap in the face. He hit back by calling on Serbian companies to break all business ties with Slovenia and to boycott Slovenian products. Slovenian property in Serbia was confiscated and import duty was imposed on products from Slovenia. A month later, economic transactions between Serbia and Slovenia had come to a virtual standstill.

The Serbian boycott also meant that Slovenian papers were no longer available in Belgrade. It was becoming increasingly difficult for the Serbian capital to follow Ljubljana's train of thought.²⁸¹ The authorities in Ljubljana reacted by taking things into their own hands and reducing the federal budget by 15% and replacing their contribution to the fund for underdeveloped areas with a direct donation to Kosovo. The Slovenian people took their own measures. From then on, anyone with a car with Serbian number plates could expect to be refused service at Slovenian petrol stations.²⁸² Because of these events, the American ambassador to Belgrade, Warren Zimmermann, reported to Washington that the unimaginable in Yugoslavia had now become imaginable, that the country would split up.²⁸³ Ever sensitive to the rapid democratic developments in Eastern Europe in 1989, the Slovenian parliament introduced changes on 27 December 1989 that allowed for political parties other than the Communist Party and proposed the prospect of free elections.

The 14th Party Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia took place in January 1990. This occurred at the instigation of the JNA and others who felt that the federal party had to call a halt to the process of disintegration that was affecting Yugoslavia. The Slovenian party chairman Milan Kucan warned the Congress that the country was on the brink of civil war. The Slovenian party leadership proposed the introduction of a multi-party system, freedom of the press and other civil rights. It wanted a political solution that would make it possible to join the West and would also include an acceptable regulating of the situation in Kosovo.²⁸⁴ One by one, the Slovenian proposals were voted down. When it became clear that the Serbian party would continue to focus on the problem of the Serbs in Kosovo and that the Slovenian suggestions were considered unacceptable, the Slovenian

²⁷⁹ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 66.

²⁸⁰ See also Part I.

²⁸¹ Slapsak, *Joegoslavië*, p. 101; also *ibidem*, p. 65.

²⁸² Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 34.

²⁸³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 53.

²⁸⁴ See also: Hans Smits, 'De Joegoslavische waarheid kent vele staten', *Vrij Nederland*, 18/01/92.

deputation left the hall and was followed by the Croatian delegation. Both parties left the Communist League shortly afterwards. Milosevic tried to carry on with the meeting but was confronted with objections from the other parties. This signalled the end of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the country's connective tissue as Tito had once called it.²⁸⁵ The only remaining mainstay of Yugoslav unity was the army: the JNA.

Several days after the Congress, the state presidium assigned the army to intervene in Kosovo where there had been demonstrations in various cities that, according to the presidium, threatened to turn into civil war. The army's actions on 1 and 2 February resulted in 28 deaths and 79 injuries. On 4 February 1990, Slovenia decided to withdraw its units from the federal police troops that were stationed in Kosovo. Croatia once again followed Slovenia's example.

The Slovenian and Croatian parties' resignation from the League had seriously upset Milosevic's plans. After Slovenia had first halted his attempt to trigger a revolution in Slovenia through his call to take to the streets, he had now been robbed of the chance to impose Serbia's will on the rest of the country by creating a majority within the Communist Party and through the diktat of democratic centralism. Moreover, Milosevic was shocked by the fact that Croatia had followed the Slovenian example.²⁸⁶ From that moment onwards, Milosevic felt that a Greater Serbia would be the best solution for the Serbian people.²⁸⁷ Conversely, the thoughts of Slovenia and Croatia were increasingly of a confederation or even independence.

4. The strengthening of Milosevic's position as Serbian leader

Because of these developments, Milosevic was increasingly supported by a large section of the Serbian intelligentsia. Some of them viewed him as being the first Communist since Rankovic who was prepared to stand up for Serbian interests. Others regarded him as someone who had placed himself in the tradition of the 19th century Serbian leaders.²⁸⁸ Not so long ago Milosevic had condemned this intelligentsia for its nationalism, but it had now become extremely important to him for airing his policy views to the media.

Meanwhile, Milosevic realized that Serbia could not be the only area in Eastern Europe to evade elections. Hence, he began to transform the Serbian Communist Party into the Serbian Socialist Party that was finally set up on 12 July 1990. His less-than-fastidious methods earned him the nicknames 'Tito the Second' and the 'Baby Face Killer'. His wife, Mirjana Markovic, remained loyal to Communism. Ultimately, she was also to set up her own party but before that, as a Communist Party member and a Belgrade University sociology professor, she created a bridge on her husband's behalf with both the neo-Marxist intellectuals and the Communist-oriented officers of the JNA. As journalists at the Belgrade-based publication *Vreme* remarked: Milosevic 'managed to trick both the Communists and the nationalists; the Communists thought that he was only pretending to be nationalist, and the nationalists thought that he was pretending to be Communist'.²⁸⁹

Milosevic also created the opportunity for a major development of the Orthodox Church.²⁹⁰ This religious revival, which had already begun immediately after Tito's death,²⁹¹ was also significant in terms of his objectives. Xenophobia was an important element in the dominant Serbian Orthodox theology of the 20th century that had constantly referred to the danger that the Albanians in Kosovo constituted for the Serbian heartland. This theology was also extremely defensive vis-à-vis Islam and Catholicism, both of which were regarded as being a threat not only to the Orthodox Church but also

²⁸⁵ Thompson, *House*, p. 226.

²⁸⁶ Obrad Kesic, 'Defeating 'Greater Serbia'', Building Greater Milosevic', Danopoulos/Messas (eds.), *Crises*, p. 55.

²⁸⁷ Also Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 82 and 87.

²⁸⁸ Lenard J. Cohen, 'Slobodan Milosevic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, pp. 248-249.

²⁸⁹ Quoted in Lenard J. Cohen, 'Slobodan Milosevic', Radan/Pavkovic (eds.), *Serbs*, p. 252.

²⁹⁰ Tomanic, *Crkva*, pp. 21-29 and 33.

²⁹¹ Radmila Radic, 'The Church and the "Serbian Question"', Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 247-249; Tomanic, *Crkva*, pp. 10-15.

to Serbian ethnicity. From the end of the 1980s, it stirred up the Serbian aversion to the Croats and Muslims with its services and reburials for the victims of the World War Two genocide.²⁹² Serbian Orthodox priests and theologians greatly contributed to the defining of discrimination against Serbs by non-Serbs as genocide, and the equating of the Serbs' suffering with Golgotha, the suffering of Christ, or with that of the Jews during the Third Reich.²⁹³

In 1989, the Orthodox Church and the Serbian state under Milosevic's leadership jointly celebrated the 600th anniversary of the battle at Kosovo Polje with great pomp. On 28 June, Milosevic and his followers managed to gather one million Serbs for this Golgotha where the Serbian people were supposedly crucified in order to protect the West from the advance of the Muslim 'Turks'. At this event, Milosevic admitted for the first time that 'armed combat' could not be excluded.²⁹⁴ In any case, it was obvious that the return of Kosovo to the Serbian bosom had failed to satisfy Milosevic's political ambitions.

The call to protect the Serbs both in Kosovo and elsewhere spread fear amongst the non-Serbs. This strengthened the other republics' resolve to keep their Serbian minorities on a short rein. Little else could be expected here. The description by even the Serbian intellectuals of the Albanian harassment of Serbs in Kosovo as constituting genocide, the aggression of the Serbian demonstrators calling for protection, the memories of the pre-war Serbian hegemony and the post-war actions of Rankovic and his kind combined to create the impression amongst non-Serbs that the Serbs saw little difference between defence and attack. There was the threat on the Serbian side of what the Serbian writer Svetlana Slapsak called 'preventative revenge'.²⁹⁵

The role of the media in the strengthening of Milosevic's position

The media were chosen to play a vital role in the campaigns to strengthen Milosevic's power and to promote ethnic nationalist views.²⁹⁶ Milosevic had purged the most important media immediately after he had come to power. Thereafter, the media provided the public with the enemy. Here, the residents of other republics and provinces, and the members of other ethnic groups were maligned whereas the Serbian side was portrayed as the victim. It was now possible to fall back on ethnic and national values that had been suppressed during Tito's government.

The population, that was subject to great existential uncertainty once the old collective values of Communism were gone and had been suffering the effects of a serious economic crisis since the beginning of the 1980s, became convinced within a relatively short time of this new gamut of ethnic values. Family memories of World War Two atrocities, which were committed for ethnic reasons, encouraged this conviction. Large sections of the population were no longer interested in 'factual' reporting about others, but in confirming the 'opponent's' demonic image as created by ultra-nationalist leaders, power-hungry manipulators and the media.

'Old' nationalists, who were from the opposition, and new nationalists, whose origins were the Communist nomenclature, looked for the differences between the ethnic groups and exaggerated them.²⁹⁷ They generated and orchestrated fear by exposing the long-suppressed memories of mass murder during the Second World War that were committed by 'them' against 'us': by Cetniks against

²⁹² Radmila Radic, 'The Church and the "Serbian Question"', Popov (ed.), *Road*, pp. 257-260; Tomanic, *Crkva*, pp. 42-43.

²⁹³ Geert van Dartel, 'Nationalities and Religion in Yugoslavia', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, pp. 37-40 and 45-46; idem, *Kerk*, p. 42; Van den Heuvel, *Land*, pp. 92 and 100; idem, *Mythen*, p. 374; Westerman, *Brug*, p. 167. For the growth of nationalism in the 1980s amongst the younger clergy of the Orthodox Church, see: Cohen, *Serpent*, pp. 151-152.

²⁹⁴ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 173; Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 72.

²⁹⁵ Svetlana Slapsak, 'Serbische Alternativen', Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)erben*, p. 174.

²⁹⁶ See, for instance: Pejic, 'Medien'.

²⁹⁷ For a description of this mechanism see, for instance: Ugresic, *Cultuur*, pp. 51-53.

(allegedly) Ustashe, by Ustashe against (allegedly) Cetniks et cetera.²⁹⁸ But the previous centuries of Turkish domination and medieval glory were also added for good measure.

It has been said that at that time Yugoslavia was a country with ‘too much history’,²⁹⁹ but it would be equally valid to say that Yugoslavia had no sense of history at all. The historical vision that was imposed on the people was a cut-out history, a caricature, where sometimes whole centuries were ignored so as to concentrate overly on periods of greatness and periods of struggle and victimization. The terror of remembering was the counterpart of the terror of forgetting.³⁰⁰ It was as if the equally one-sided historical landscape of the Communist era had been turned upside down. Highpoints became low points and vice versa. Where brotherhood and unity had once been emphasized, the focus was now on moments of mutual strife. The media were increasingly using the term ‘ethnically pure’. Here, cards were published with coloured areas that denoted either actual ethnic division or ethnic ambitions. They contributed to a climate where the fear of the ‘ethnically impure’ prevailed. Fear was followed by hate. This turned neighbours and acquaintances into ‘imagined adversaries’.³⁰¹

Television and radio played the main role in the spreading of ethnic fear and hate because the influence of the written press in Yugoslavia was mainly limited to the better-educated middle class.³⁰² Private television and radio stations did not exist until B92, an independent radio station, was set up in Belgrade in May 1989. The state stations were primarily organized per republic and appointments had always been controlled by the party. In the 1980s, the Republican parties switched to the policy that their own stations should limit broadcasts from other republics as much as possible. The stations in Zagreb and Ljubljana began to apply strict language norms so that programs from elsewhere were refused. Following the purging of staff at Belgrade Television in 1987, the station’s most important subject was Kosovo followed by broadcasts about the Ustashe crimes and Slovenia’s alleged ingratitude and German sympathies.

The media also played a similar role in Slovenia and Croatia, and the Slovenian and Croatian stations began to emphasize the Serbs’ Christian-Orthodox and Communist aspects as compared with their own regions’ supposed European and democratic traditions. What the Slovenian and Croatian stations had in common was the much-emphasized idea that the various ethnic groups could no longer co-exist in Yugoslavia: Yugoslavia was ‘Serboslavia’. They attacked what remained of the federal organizations, with the JNA as their main target which they viewed as being the most important obstacle to independence.

Conspiracies supposedly planned by other republics were a favourite subject of both radio and TV. Hence, the Serbian stations believed that plots engineered by Germany and the Vatican were behind Slovenian and Croatian nationalism; they also felt that ‘Muslim fundamentalists’ were preparing a holy war against the Serbs in Bosnia and Kosovo with the help of their fellow believers abroad. Negative stereotypes of other groups were frequently emphasized: the Serbian media argued that the Croats had a genocidal predisposition and, according to the Ljubljana press, non-Slovenes were lazy. Real media events were created when all sides began to dig up the remains of the opponent’s victims from previous conflicts so as to rebury them in consecrated ground.

Media and journalists who refused to be involved with this nationalist rhetoric found that their work was obstructed in every possible way, for instance: by refusing them access to state printers or distribution channels, or by cutting off their phone or telex lines.

Meanwhile, a sense of powerlessness prevailed amongst those who had grown up with Tito’s saying that one ‘must protect unity and brotherhood as the apple of my eye’ or reader sentences such as ‘no mountain is too high when brotherly hearts unite’.³⁰³ They had believed in a Yugoslavism that was

²⁹⁸ Also Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 103.

²⁹⁹ Also Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 19.

³⁰⁰ Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 113. Also Ugresic, *Nationaliteit*, pp. 56-57.

³⁰¹ The term ‘imagined adversaries’ can be found in Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, p. 2.

³⁰² Simic, *Yugoslavia*, p. 41.

³⁰³ Ugresic, *Cultuur*, pp. 9, 21, 98.

based on ‘a false or a real brotherhood and unity that resulted in a joint Yugoslav cultural area’.³⁰⁴ And they were both right and wrong. Yugoslavia was a joint cultural area that primarily embraced the urban, upper echelons rather than the countryside. But they were wrong because they believed that their reality and future could no longer be overtaken by the memories and exploitation of the past because it would incite nationalist sentiments. However, behind Yugoslavism’s veneer of propaganda and idealism, ethnic-national antitheses had continued to play a role in the decades following the Second World War. But they remained invisible to the public at large, the subject of veiled allusions by the Communist elite. Unaware of the subtleties of the nationalist problems and the chosen solutions, the people were susceptible to the nationalist manipulators who could easily suggest that their population group’s interests had been constantly blocked.³⁰⁵ In other words: ‘the future occurred because – in a very particular way – the past reoccurred.’³⁰⁶

The first real declaration of independence: Kosovo

In the second half of 1990, there was to be a dramatic sequel to the chain of actions and reactions in Kosovo, which had previously contributed so much to the escalation of relations between Serbia and Slovenia. Although Kosovo had been incorporated into Serbia a year previously, on 2 July 1990 a majority of more than two-thirds of the Albanian people’s representatives voted in the Kosovan capital of Pristina that Kosovo would be a part of either a Yugoslav federation or confederation, but only as a republic.

Milosevic’s answer was to dissolve both the parliament and the government of Kosovo and to order the representatives’ arrest. The Serbian parliament then accepted the ‘program for the realization of peace, equality, democracy and prosperity in the Kosovo region’. This meant that public life in that area was to be purged of everything Albanian. Political parties and trade unions were forbidden, broadcasting networks and newspapers were closed, education was to follow a Serbian program and tens of thousands of Albanians were sacked from government service. The Albanian members of parliament who had been sent home declared Kosovo’s independence on 13 September 1990. Shortly afterwards, the federal government annulled Kosovo’s autonomy. On 28 September, the Serbian government adopted a new constitution that abolished Kosovo’s autonomy. The preamble mentioned ‘the Serbian people’s centuries of struggle’ and their resolve ‘to create a democratic state of the Serbian people’.³⁰⁷ The constitution’s 136 articles no longer mentioned the agencies of the Yugoslav federation. Article 135 briefly mentions that Serbia was a part of Yugoslavia but only in a negative sense: ‘when laws of the federal government or other republics are contrary to the federal constitution and damage Serbia’s interests, then the Serbian government must protect those interests’. This reference to the federation could hardly be taken seriously and did not disguise the fact that Serbia was actually the first republic to withdraw from the Yugoslav federation even though the West was barely aware of this. Milosevic had already discussed this legislation in an interview with the magazine *Politika* at the end of June 1990. Because of the strong trend towards disintegration, he remarked that it would be irresponsible if he and his party were to provide only one solution for the Yugoslav crisis. He felt that this was why the drafted constitution offered the possibility of ‘Serbia as an independent state’.³⁰⁸ Therefore, this constitution revealed the first clear evidence that Milosevic had altered his course from the preservation of Yugoslavia to the realization of a Greater Serbia.³⁰⁹ Back in March, Milosevic and

³⁰⁴ Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 10.

³⁰⁵ Paul Shoup, ‘Titoism and the national question: a reassessment’, in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 60.

³⁰⁶ Ugresic, *Cultuur*, p. 14.

³⁰⁷ Hayden, ‘Nationalism’, p. 660.

³⁰⁸ Almond, *War*, p. 185.

³⁰⁹ Detrez, *Balkan*, p. 129, Ramet, ‘Road’, p. 873. On 19 August, the day on which the Serbs in Krajina voted on autonomy, the Montenegrin newspaper *Dnevnik* published a letter from Milosevic to the state presidium where the Serbian president wrote that the federal presidium must rapidly adopt legislation that would enable a peaceful separation from Yugoslavia for those peoples who wanted it, Milosevic, p. 98.

his confidant Borisav Jovic had concluded behind closed doors that their power-retaining politics would be easier to achieve without the presence of Slovenia and Croatia. However, they felt that it was not yet advisable to admit this publicly.³¹⁰ Nonetheless, Serbian party officials were already roused to support a course whereby the Serbian Communist Party would fight for Yugoslavia's preservation while also preparing for a Greater Serbia that would consist of Serbia, Montenegro, a part of Bosnia-Herzegovina and possibly Macedonia.³¹¹

At the end of June 1990, Milosevic and Jovic, who had now become president of the state presidium, wanted to speed up the departure of Croatia and Slovenia because they regarded these republics as holding back the advance of their party domination regarding the elections that were soon to be held throughout Yugoslavia. However, there were two problems for which they had no suitable solution: the position of the Serbs in Croatia and the attitude of the JNA. They would have liked the JNA to have ensured a *fait accompli* in the areas with many Serbian residents. Nonetheless, Kadijevic had grave doubts about whether the JNA should separate from Yugoslavia and also about whether he was prepared to deploy the JNA without the presidium's permission.³¹²

Borisav Jovic was becoming increasingly agitated about Kadijevic's indecisiveness. On 3 October, Jovic wrote in his diary: 'The generals remain constantly obsessed by Yugoslavia's unity but it has already disintegrated and has no future.' He also wrote: 'Slobodan Milosevic maintains that he must simply let Slovenia go and will only have to intercede in Croatia in those areas where the Serbs live.'³¹³ Another of Milosevic's confidants, Mihalj Kertes, who was a member of the Serbian presidium, wrote at a slightly later date about this constitution that: 'the federal constitution only exists on paper. What the Slovenes can do, we can do as well.'³¹⁴

5. The economic consequences of Yugoslavia's disintegration

The progressive rejection of Yugoslavia by the federation's republics had major consequences for the program of economic reforms that were supposed to save Yugoslavia from its downwards political and economic spiral. At the 13th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in June 1986, it was decided that all questions concerning the policy's 'Socialist contents' would be shelved until the economic crisis had been solved. It was no wonder that the attempts to get the economy back on course were doomed to failure. The combination of mass unemployment, pay cuts and price rises led to major industrial unrest in the mid-1980s.³¹⁵

In May 1986, Branko Mikulic became chairman of the Federal Executive Council, which the National Assembly had elected to serve as the cabinet for the next four years. His task as Yugoslavia's premier was to reform the country economically after it had been saved from financial ruin by foreign loans in the first half of the 1980s. Significantly, the appointment of Mikulic, who was a Bosnian Croat, was partly due to the fact that the National Assembly refused to accept a Serb as premier. When he took office, Mikulic was confronted with 90% inflation and 16.6% unemployment (with 60% of the unemployed being under the age of 25). In addition, a quarter of all Yugoslavs lived in poverty. Mikulic did not succeed in reducing inflation. Inflation for the whole of 1987 stood at 419% and it had reached 1232% by 1988.³¹⁶ The British economist Harold Lydall remarked in 1989 that the fall in the standard of living had been so great that that it was difficult not to imagine any other country reacting to this without either radical political change or even revolution.³¹⁷

³¹⁰ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 125-128.

³¹¹ Jovic, *Dani*, p. 131.

³¹² Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 160-163.

³¹³ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 103.

³¹⁴ Quoted in Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 48.

³¹⁵ Magas, *Destruction*, p. 53.

³¹⁶ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 96.

³¹⁷ Quoted in Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 105.

Only 10% of the population still trusted the Federal Executive Council by the middle of 1987. 79% felt that it was no longer possible to escape these economic difficulties.³¹⁸ For the first time since the Second World War, there were articles in the press that called for the resignation of both the premier and his cabinet. There was a general awareness by the end of 1987 that the entire Yugoslav political system was not in favour of any real economic reforms.³¹⁹ Meanwhile, Mikulic found that the republics had forced him to make the implementation of his economic reforms depend upon the acceptance of amendments to the constitution. Moreover, accepting these amendments proved to be a time-consuming business. Similarly, the Western financiers threatened to make future credit loans depend upon the centralization of monetary policy but Mikulic did not succeed in breaking the republics' opposition to this. In fact, the federal government was no longer positioned above the republics' governments; they were now on a par. Mikulic and his federal cabinet were forced to resign in December 1988, a unique event in Communist Yugoslavia.

Mikulic was succeeded in March 1989 by the economist Ante Markovic (who was not related to Milosevic's wife). This former electro-engineer launched a program that was supposed to result in a free market economy, drastic cutbacks in government expenditure, an end to inflation and the potential to convert the dinar. Markovic was a Bosnian Croat but he regarded himself as being a Yugoslav and was also a reformist Communist.³²⁰ Yet he was also an incorrigible optimist who, despite his better judgement, kept hoping that he would be able to push his program through.

His optimism seemed justified at first. For instance, Markovic managed to curb inflation in December 1989 by linking the dinar with the Deutschmark so that inflation was reduced to less than 20%. He also managed to increase the amount of foreign currency and to break particular monopolies. He announced in the middle of 1989 that Yugoslavia now hoped to become both a member of the European Free Trade Association and an associate member of the EC.

Markovic introduced economic shock therapy in January 1990. This entailed measures such as the reduction of government subsidies on essential goods and the creation of the option of bankruptcy. However, this approach was thwarted by its social consequences and by the collapse of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The industrial production of the first few months of 1990 dipped by 10% in comparison to the previous year, the retail trade turnover decreased by 23.8% and the standard of living fell by 28.1%. After an initial decrease, inflation began to rise once again. Payment difficulties were encountered by more than 8600 companies employing in excess of three million workers, i.e. more than half of the working population.³²¹ When Slovenia and Croatia stopped paying taxes and import duty to Belgrade in 1990, these republics experienced a run on foreign currency that resulted in the federal government imposing a ban on its supply so that the dinar became *de facto* unconvertible. Moreover, savers lost all confidence in the banking system that had apparently more or less confiscated their deposits.

The different opinions concerning the republics' future economic policy had become irreconcilable. Slovenia and Croatia wanted to introduce market mechanisms, Serbia and Montenegro preferred the deployment of state control and Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia supported an economic middle way. Moreover, Slovenia and Croatia found that Markovic had become an obstacle to their increasing desire for independence.³²² Yet the Serbs felt that he was too liberal and Western. Borisav Jovic, the Serbian chairman of the state presidium, even called him an American spy.³²³

At first Markovic tried to concentrate as much as possible on the required economic reforms and to steer clear of the current political situation that involved increasing human rights abuses in

³¹⁸ Lampe, *Yugoslavia*, pp. 322 and 326.

³¹⁹ Meier, *Jugoslavien*, p. 80.

³²⁰ For a personal description see, for instance: Theo Engelen, 'Ante Markovic. Alleen nog vertrouwd in het Westen', *NRC Handelsblad*, 29/06/91; Nicole Lucas, 'Ante Markovic. Een schietschijf voor iedereen', *Trouw*, 14/12/91.

³²¹ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 129.

³²² Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 112-113.

³²³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 112.

Serbia and Kosovo. But this was an untenable position. The federation needed to function again for the economy's sake, and this could not occur without extensive political reforms. Serbia's aggressive actions stopped the other republics from working towards recentralization just as they also dissuaded the United States from providing economic support.³²⁴

Yet Markovic was extremely popular. According to an opinion poll, 79% of the population endorsed his policy in the spring of 1990.³²⁵ This probably encouraged Markovic who had also jettisoned the idea that political reforms could be separated from economic reforms. In the middle of 1990, he set up his own party: the Alliance of Yugoslav Reformist Powers.

6. Elections in Slovenia and Croatia

Meanwhile two of the six republics, Slovenia and Croatia, had already held elections. But instead of this leading to more stable and democratic relations, the election results in the republics generally created an increase in ethnic tensions.³²⁶

These were the first free elections since the 1930s. There had been little experience between the two World Wars of representative democracy. Parties had largely been organized on an ethnic basis. Political leaders had mainly pursued populism, and were elected for their charisma and their ethnic leadership rather than for the contents of their policies. So the 1990 elections could hardly be regarded as a renewed experience of a Western-style democracy following Communism's interruption. Instead, they resulted in a restoration of populist and collectivist traditions.³²⁷

The first free, post-war elections in Yugoslavia were held in Slovenia and Croatia in April and May 1990. The non-Communist parties won both elections. The Slovenian elections were won by the Democratic United Opposition of Slovenia (DEMOS), a party that was a somewhat broadly-based coalition of Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, liberals, democrats, Greens and the Peasants Alliance. Their only common interest was a desire for greater independence.

In Croatia, the Croatian Spring, which was suppressed in 1972, was followed by 17 years of silence that was imposed by the secret police and by other forms of repression. There had been virtually no dissident voices in Croatia. But in 1989, the Communist leadership in Zagreb had failed to evade the increasing pressure for pluralism. In this, they followed the example of a series of Communist governments throughout Eastern Europe that had given way to this pressure. The conservative Communist government of Croatia was replaced by a more liberal regime in December 1989. The new leadership promptly proclaimed the other political parties' right to exist. A month before the free elections, the JNA leadership warned the Croatian leaders that the 'Ustashe' would gain power but the politicians in Croatia took little notice of this.³²⁸

The elections in Croatia were won by Franjo Tudjman's conservative and nationalist Croatian Democratic Party (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* or HDZ) that supported Croatia's future independence and closer ties with Western Europe. Tudjman's campaign was largely financed by donations from Croatian exiles; he had also benefited from an electoral system that had been designed by the Communists and where a minority of the votes could still achieve a parliamentary majority. Hence, with 40% of the votes, the HDZ was able to gain 205 of the 365 seats. Tudjman became president.

In Slovenia, although DEMOS triumphed in the parliamentary elections, the presidential elections were won by the current Slovenian leader Milan Kucan, who was the candidate for the Democratic Renewal Party that had grown out of the old Communist Party. Kucan's election was due to his credibility as a reformer.

³²⁴ Also Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 47, 51 and 59.

³²⁵ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 129; Hayden, *Blueprints*, p. 28.

³²⁶ Also Pejic, *Medien*, p. 57.

³²⁷ Allcock, *Yugoslavia*, p. 275.

³²⁸ Kadijevic, *Viem*, p. 96 n. 4.

Slovenia's new parliament approved a draft constitution on 2 July that established its right to self-determination. The country also retained the right to block federal decisions. The Slovenian leaders described a request by the federal government to negotiate this constitution as being 'totally baseless and absurd'.³²⁹ In its government policy statement, the Slovenian cabinet under the leadership of the Christian-Democrat premier Lozje Peterle declared that Yugoslavia would become a confederation in the future. If negotiations about this did not lead to a satisfactory result, Slovenia would then opt to become an independent state. It would acquire its own army along with an intelligence service and a secret service. Ljubljana would also cease making payments to the federal fund for underdeveloped regions. Shortly afterwards, the Slovenian government took over the responsibility for its area's territorial defence from the federal authorities. These developments were unmistakably gaining momentum. On 5 July, the Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel told the Italian press that Yugoslavia no longer existed.³³⁰ Slovenia was now determining the steps to independence and Croatia followed.

Non-Communist parties had also come to power in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia by the end of 1990. The only exceptions now were Serbia and Montenegro. Free elections were held there in December. Following the power upheaval in Eastern Europe, Serbia was slower at organizing free elections than any other country apart from Albania. Along with the Serbian Socialist Party (the SDS), which Milosevic had created out of the Communist Party, Vuk Draskovic's Serbian Renewal Party and Vojislav Seselj's Serbian Radical Party were the most important. Moreover, these leaders were just as nationalist as Milosevic. The SDS won 48% of the votes. The 'winner-takes-all' district system meant that the party had acquired 194 of the 250 parliamentary seats. Milosevic won 65% of the votes in the first round of the Serbian presidential election. While Communists were losing power throughout the rest of Europe, they still ruled Serbia, albeit under the cloak of nationalism.

The Yugoslav premier Ante Markovic participated in the elections of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. However, this resulted in the worst of both worlds: he lost his reputation for impartiality while his party's weak campaign was partly responsible for the fact that he won virtually no votes and failed to achieve the power base that he had apparently hoped for. During the election campaign in Serbia, he was opposed with unprecedented ferocity by the SDS and Milosevic who viewed him as a potential rival. Moreover, it proved impossible to organize federal elections. This was mainly because of the resistance of Slovenia that feared being voted away in the national elections through a system of 'one man, one vote'. The fact that elections were held in the republics but not at a federal level meant that Markovic lost still more legitimacy. He also experienced the embarrassment that no television station was prepared to broadcast his 'speech from the throne'. A subsequent attempt to deploy YUTEL, his own television station, ultimately failed. Hence, he ended up being caught between the desired economic policy for recentralization on the one hand, and the continuing process of decentralization on the other.

Markovic's program was seriously torpedoed when Serbia introduced a boycott of Slovenian goods in November 1989 after the failure of the march on Ljubljana.³³¹ On 24 October 1990, Serbia decided to take over the federal government's role concerning economic and financial areas. This meant that Serbia now dealt with the taxes that had been previously collected by the federal government. Here, the Serbian government's argument concerned the federal government's backlog. But this measure was really intended to punish Slovenia and Croatia for their desire for increasing autonomy by imposing taxes on products from these areas. It also undermined Markovic's economic reform program. Moreover, the Slovenian and Croatian governments now realized beyond a shadow of a doubt that the collective presidency was merely 'a branch of the Serbian government'.³³² This measure was to have few practical advantages for Serbia.

³²⁹ ABZ, IDB-rapport 5125/RC/90, 'Centrifugale tendenzen in Joegoslavië versterken zich', 30/07/90.

³³⁰ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 120.

³³¹ Also Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 115.

³³² ABZ, Joegoslavië, 911.31, deel IV. IDB-rapport 8099/RC/90, 'Joegoslavië drijft verder uiteen', 12/11/90.

A consequence of this Serbian fiscal measure was that Ljubljana now refused to hand over import duties. This resulted in the central government announcing an import ban on all Slovenian goods on 13 June 1991. Slovenia was to declare independence less than two weeks later. The final blow to Markovic's program came in December 1990 when Milosevic, who had an eye on the up-coming elections, withdrew 18.3 billion new dinars from the National Bank of Yugoslavia so as to be able to pay off salary and pension arrears. This was the equivalent of more than 1.7 billion dollars or more than half of the total issue of money in 1991 for all six republics put together. Kucan concluded that if Serbia could get away with dipping into the federal purse, the federation had clearly lost its right to exist.

7. The rise of Franjo Tudjman

Franjo Tudjman, who had come to power in Croatia after an election campaign where he had promised to end the republic's domination by Belgrade, also felt that the federation of Yugoslavia had lost its right to exist.

Tudjman, who was born in 1922, had been a part of the Partisan movement during World War Two. He had become the JNA's youngest general at the age of 39. During the 1960s, he became increasingly converted to Croatian nationalism, and he also advocated autonomy and the Croatian language. As an historian, he wrote books where he played down the seriousness of the Ustashe actions. Tudjman was expelled from the Communist Party in 1967 because of his nationalist views. The former JNA general was one of the leaders of the Croatian Spring and was imprisoned from 1972 to 1974 for his 'propaganda against the state'. Once he was released, he was banned from publishing in Yugoslavia. When he circumvented this by providing a German journalist with figures about the Serbian over-representation in both the Croatian Communist Party and the police, he was condemned to three years imprisonment in 1981.³³³ On 30 May 1990, the vast majority of the newly-elected Croatian parliament voted for Tudjman as their president. His fellow party member Stipe Mesic became premier.

Whereas Milosevic's nationalism was based on opportunism, Tudjman's was a matter of conviction. On the morning after his party's election triumph, the next Croatian president repeated to US Ambassador Warren Zimmermann what he had stated throughout his campaign, that Bosnia-Herzegovina traditionally belonged to Croatia. If the Serbs applied 'pressure', then Croatia would deem it necessary to claim its 'historic rights'.³³⁴

The Croatian Serbs, who numbered almost 600,000 and constituted 12% of the population, reacted to Tudjman's 1990 election triumph in an extreme way. Emotions were running high even before he was elected. The HDZ had been set up at the beginning of 1989 before any other non-Communist parties were permitted in Serbia. Party extremists had already carried out a series of attacks on Serbs in Dalmatia in the summer of 1989. Just a few weeks before the collapse of the Communist League and a fortnight before the first congress of Tudjman's HDZ, a Serb from the Knin region was quoted in the Serbian weekly *Nin* as saying: 'We sleep here with guns in our hands. Go to any village you like and try to find a house where the gun is not already loaded.'³³⁵ The axes of 1974 had apparently been replaced some 15 years later with guns.

Two months before the elections in March 1990, Jovan Opacic, a prominent Serb from the Knin region, had already stated that the republics' borders would have to be discussed if Yugoslavia became a confederation because 'the creation of small, separate states would result in the politics of genocide'.³³⁶ Tudjman was portrayed as a future mass murderer. For several years, there had been a

³³³ In 1980, the Serbs accounted for 14% of the population as a whole, 24% of party members and more than half of the police, Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 107.

³³⁴ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 74.

³³⁵ Quoted in Vermeer, *Joegoslavië*, p. 68.

³³⁶ Slobodna Dalmacija, 26/03/90, quoted in Vermeer, *Joegoslavië*, p. 69.

movement in Serbia that attempted to label the Ustashe's genocidal tendencies as being a genetic defect of the Croatian people.³³⁷ Verbal attacks on the Catholic Church, which was strongly identified with Croatia, were nothing unusual in Belgrade at the end of the 1980s.

Conversely, Tudjman, the author of a book that considers genocide to be a normal part of human history and where multi-ethnic states are described as an anomaly,³³⁸ did little to remove the fear of Croatian domination that affected the Serbian minority who constituted 12% of Croatia's population. Following his election, Tudjman set up a Ministry of Emigration with aims that included raising funds amongst Croats abroad, a source that the Serbs viewed with suspicion. Extreme forms of Croatian nationalism were active within the extensive diaspora of Croats in, for instance, the United States and Australia that had been created through two waves of emigration after the Second World War and the Croatian Spring. Moreover, the Serbs particularly regretted the fact that Tudjman had acquired the support of the Catholic Church by abolishing the limitations imposed on religious expression.

In the flurry of triumphalism, little importance was attached to minority rights. Croatia's new constitution no longer mentioned a co-ordination of Croats and Serbs, rather the regional republic of Croatia was now described as a state of the Croatian people and of other nationalities such as Serbs, Italians and Hungarians. Although in theory the constitution provided the same rights to non-Croatian nationalities, the Serbs still felt that they had been relegated to the position of second-class citizens.³³⁹ Tudjman did not appoint a single non-Croat to the republic's political leadership. In fact, Serbs were fired from top positions because it was alleged that they were over-represented. This particularly affected the police and journalists. Serbs, who wanted to keep their jobs or to be able to vote, were forced to sign declarations of loyalty. Tudjman had rubbed extra salt into the wounds by publicly stating during his election campaign that he was fortunate that his wife was neither Jewish nor Serbian.³⁴⁰ The red-and-white checkerboard flag flew in many places in Croatia after the HDZ's triumph. This coat of arms had existed in Croatia since the Middle Ages and was also in use in the Communist era. It was, for instance, included in the 1974 Constitution. Nonetheless, many could easily be offended by the omnipresent flags with their coat of arms that had also adorned the government of Ante Pavelic, the Croatian Ustashe leader both before and during the Second World War. Serbs complained that the Jews never had to live with swastika flags whereas they had to put up with the flag in whose name genocide had been committed against them some 50 years previously.³⁴¹

Tudjman's statement during the election campaign that Croatia was claiming Bosnia-Herzegovina also evoked memories of the 'independent' Ustashe state during the Second World War. The slogan 'a Croatia exclusively for Croatians' had a similar effect. Croats wore badges bearing Pavelic's portrait. Tudjman also made an unfortunate attempt to eradicate the religious distinction between Croats and Serbs by once more setting up a Croatian Orthodox Church that brought back bitter memories for the Serbs of the Ustashe government's program of forced conversion to Catholicism. A section of the Croatian population began to crow increasingly loudly about their sense of superiority over the Serbs. These Croats regarded themselves as being a part of the developed Occident whereas the Serbs belonged to the turbulent, dark and inferior Balkans. This provoked a reaction amongst the Serbs to emphasize their military and political past along with their military superiority, an attitude that had once enticed the Croat writer Miroslav Krleža to remark: 'May God

³³⁷ I. Banac, 'The Fearful Asymmetry', pp. 155-157; idem, 'Historiography', p. 1101.

³³⁸ F. Tudjman, *Bespuca Povijesne Zbiljnosti: Rasprava o povijesti i filozofiji zločinja*, Zagreb 1990. See also the quotation from this book in: Hayden, *Nationalism*, p. 671.

³³⁹ Also Hayden, *Nationalism*, pp. 657-658.

³⁴⁰ Hayden, 'Fate', p. 745; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 73.

³⁴¹ Helen A. Pavelich, 'Foreword', in: Vukcevič, *Titó*, unnumbered page.

protect us from Croatian culture and Serbian heroics.³⁴² Hence, there was reason enough for a sense of turmoil amongst the almost 600,000 Serbs in Croatia, of which approximately one third lived in Slavonia and Krajina, the two extremities of the republic that encircled Bosnia-Herzegovina like a boomerang. Unlike Slovenia, Croatia was a breeding ground for mutual fear and hate that harked back to the time of the Cetniks and the Ustashe.

8. Serbian reactions to Tudjman's election as president

Meanwhile Milosevic was sharpening the knives. On 13 February, he told his confidant Jovic that there would be war with the Croats.³⁴³

Several days later, Milosevic's agents helped to organize a Serbian political party in Krajina. In June 1990, the Belgrade secret services began to supply arms and to infiltrate agents into the Serbian communities in Croatia. They set up the basis for political control and paramilitary formations. Belgrade's agents and members of the Serbian Democratic Party (the SDS) launched a campaign of intimidation in those places in Krajina where Serbian political leaders were still prepared to negotiate with Zagreb. The SDS wanted Krajina, where Serbs accounted for 70% of the population, to become a part of Serbia.

On 25 June 1990, Milosevic declared in the Serbian parliament that the republics' borders would need to be discussed if Yugoslavia were to become a confederation. He pointed out that the constitution stipulated that it was the ethnic peoples rather than the republics who had the right to self-determination. In other words: so far as he was concerned, a Greater Serbia was the only alternative to a federal Yugoslavia.³⁴⁴

There were skirmishes in Croatia between Croats and Serbs in August 1990. Serbs in Krajina stole guns from police stations, set up barricades on the roads, blocked the railway between Zagreb and Split and closed off the area. Then Serbian paramilitary units began to patrol 'their' areas of Croatia. A Serbian referendum on autonomy was held in Krajina on 19 August. According to the official result, it was opposed by just 172 people.³⁴⁵ However, the Croatian and official authorities were not prepared to recognize the referendum. Nonetheless, the government in Zagreb was powerless although this was not true of the Yugoslav Army, the JNA. This federal army officially occupied the area and divided the parties, but in fact it consolidated the situation in favour of the Serbs. When Zagreb wanted to send a number of police helicopters to the area, the JNA obstructed their arrival. Hence, Zagreb was well aware of the side that the JNA supported in this conflict.

The Serbs in Krajina issued a declaration of the Autonomous District of Krajina at the beginning of October. At the same time, Milosevic brought the crowds out onto the streets of Belgrade with slogans such as 'We want guns' and 'Off to Croatia'. The National Serbian Council, which consisted of mayors from places with a Serbian majority and the representatives of Serbian parties in Croatia, declared itself to be 'the highest authority' for Serbs in Croatia. This council immediately called on the Croatian Serbs 'to resist Croatian state terror with every available means'. They also appealed to the federal government to protect the Serbs in Croatia. A National Serbian Council was also set up in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On 15 May 1988, the Croatian Serb Veljko Kadijevic succeeded Admiral Mamula as the Minister of Defence of the Yugoslav federation and the Chief-Of-Staff of the Supreme Command of the JNA. Kadijevic represented the increasing mistrust of foreign countries amongst Belgrade officials who repeatedly blocked communication with the West. It seemed as if the country's political and

³⁴² Quoted in Gojko Boric, 'Kroatien und Jugoslawien – Ein Abriss historischer Erfahrungen', Bremer (Hg.), *(Sch)erben*, p. 58. Compare the views of the Croatian politician and sociologist Stipe Suvar in 1972, almost 20 years before Tudjman's election as president, about the nature and aims of Serbian and Croatian nationalism, quoted in Oschlies, *Ursachen*, p. 6.

³⁴³ Noted by Jovic, quoted in Doder/Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 75.

³⁴⁴ Van den Heuvel, *Land*, p. 109.

³⁴⁵ Ramet, *Milosevic*, p. 102.

military leadership was unable to free itself of the siege mentality that had dominated the ideas of the Yugoslav elite during the Cold War. It had become effectively impossible to make the mental switch from large-scale conflict, where the JNA fought one or two foreign enemies, to a situation of internal conflict. Sections of the elite were behaving as if they were actors in the film *Underground* that was made by the Yugoslav director Emil Kusturica. The characters in this film spend many years underground in a state of war because someone above ground has assured them that the Second World War had not yet ended.

It is striking that Kadijevic pays far more attention to foreign enemies than to internal factors in his later explanation for the collapse of Yugoslavia. This completely reflects the evaluation of the General Staff of the Supreme Command at the end of 1989, who stated that foreign countries were the most important factor for the developments in Yugoslavia.³⁴⁶ Kadijevic was completely convinced that the American and German governments were determined to destroy Yugoslavia's unity and viewed civil war as being the most suitable means of achieving this. He argued that these governments' ultimate goal was to gain supremacy in the Balkans³⁴⁷ and that official American agencies were actively involved. Secret agents and straw men from Germany were active at the highest political levels in Croatia and Slovenia.³⁴⁸

According to Warren Zimmermann, America's ambassador to Belgrade, Kadijevic felt that there was no difference between Helmut Kohl's Germany and the Third Reich.³⁴⁹ In his view, Austria and Italy acted as the accomplices of, respectively, Germany and the United States.³⁵⁰ He also argued that the Vatican was providing the financial backing for all anti-Yugoslav activities by, for instance, having made it possible for Croatia to buy arms.³⁵¹ Finally, there was a fifth column in Yugoslavia that was ready to undermine the country.³⁵² The power with which these ideas took hold of Kadijevic and others was partly determined by the tendency to think exclusively in mechanistic and functionalistic terms. Unpleasant developments – such as the collapse of Yugoslavia – were explained as reflecting the West's bad intentions. Kadijevic rejected every suggestion of mistakes and errors: there were only masterplans.³⁵³

Against this background, it comes as no surprise that Kadijevic and the JNA leadership vehemently opposed every form of international mediation or interference with Yugoslavia.³⁵⁴ This attitude was the result of a lack of allied contacts over the preceding decades and the West's tendency to avoid meddling with the country's internal state of affairs during the Cold War.

Kadijevic was unimpressed with Croatia's new leadership. He viewed the former JNA General Franjo Tudjman as being a disaffected Communist, and it was also a bitter pill that Janez Jansa, who had been condemned for the publication of the JNA document in *Mladina*, had now become the Slovenian Minister of Defence. The JNA was unequivocal in its views about the Croatian leadership and constantly referred Tudjman as the 'so-called president'.³⁵⁵ Kadijevic might have been able to endorse the advancement of a pluralist, democratic society but only if it had been implemented from above.³⁵⁶ It had apparently slipped his notice that everything that was implemented in Yugoslavia from above was *per se* suspect for the republics of Slovenia and Croatia. Kadijevic personally contributed to that suspicion because he increasingly adopted a Serbian point of view.³⁵⁷

³⁴⁶ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 36.

³⁴⁷ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 5, 14-15, 18, 25-26, 87. See also: Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 90

³⁴⁸ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 25, 88, 111, 117 and 123-124.

³⁴⁹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 89.

³⁵⁰ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 34-35.

³⁵¹ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 34.

³⁵² Kadijevic, *View*, p. 29.

³⁵³ See, for instance: Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 5, 28.

³⁵⁴ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 37 and 115.

³⁵⁵ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 96.

³⁵⁶ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 18, 53-54.

³⁵⁷ See, for instance: Kadijevic, *View*, p. 38.

Kadijevic's remarks that the 1974 Constitution had turned the JNA into an army without a state, were lacking in candour because he also rejected the federal authority whenever it suited him. For instance, he had little sympathy for Markovic whom he regarded as being too much of an implementer of the American-backed policy of economic liberalization. He also expected that Markovic would reduce the JNA budget.³⁵⁸ According to Kadijevic, in the summer of 1991 the JNA had made it 'drastically' clear to Mesic, the Croatian chairman of the state presidium, that he could in no way influence the JNA: 'there were orders that he gave to the army via the media, that we ignored at the General Staff of the Supreme Command, as if they simply didn't exist.'³⁵⁹

The army under Kadijevic initially supported the federation but only as a 'real' one that actually worked. In 1988, the JNA proposed a number of amendments to the constitution so as to re-establish a functioning federation. This gained the army little sympathy. Many felt that it was only concerned with solutions that would restore a powerful Yugoslav unity.³⁶⁰ It had become unclear which constitutional and social order the JNA was still supposed to defend now that the army was confronted with what it judged to be a failing constitution along with republics that had little or no respect for the federal laws and a political system where the party monopoly had been replaced by pluriformity. The JNA leadership increasingly spoke of a constitutional order that would contravene the 1974 Constitution. This led to statements such as: 'the armed forces were manoeuvred into a situation where they had to act in an unconstitutional way if they were to protect the constitutional order (...). Which constitutional order was supposed to be protected: the one that led to the country's disintegration or another one? In this case, which one was it?'³⁶¹ 'Were the armed forces supposed to carry out their duties within the existing judicial system that would inevitably lead to the countries disintegration? Or should they oppose that system?'³⁶²

There were frequent rumours of a JNA *coup*, but that would have been harder to achieve than many people realized. Seizing power would have been particularly difficult because of the existence of the republics' territorial defence system.³⁶³ This system would have enabled large sections of the population to turn against the JNA. Moreover, the army would have been unable to control the situation after a *coup* for any length of time because it would have had to deal with the desertion of non-Serbian soldiers. It would have also been difficult to motivate some of the Serbs to fight outside of Serbia after a coup. This would have provoked foreign sanctions and the army leadership even felt that the possibility of foreign military interventions could not be excluded.³⁶⁴

Kadijevic wanted to prevent circumstances where, by intervening, the JNA would be lumbered with all of Yugoslavia's failings. He preferred a situation where the JNA could be portrayed as a victim of the 1974 Constitution and a Little Yugoslavia would ultimately be created.³⁶⁵ Moreover, Kadijevic attached considerable importance to the constitutionally-required legitimization of the JNA's actions by the federal presidium. This repeatedly led to conflict between him and Blagoje Adzic, the JNA Chief-of-Staff. Adzic was prepared, if necessary without the state presidium's agreement, to declare a state of national emergency so as to oppose the consequences of Yugoslavia's disintegration.³⁶⁶ Adzic, a Bosnian Serb, belonged to the generation that came to power in around 1990 but still had grim memories of World War Two. The *Ustashe* had killed most of his family when he was ten years old. He

³⁵⁸ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 15 and 116-117; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 90.

³⁵⁹ Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 38.

³⁶⁰ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 66-67.

³⁶¹ Kadijevic, *Vien*, p. 87.

³⁶² Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 90-91.

³⁶³ Gow, *Deconstructing*, p. 299.

³⁶⁴ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 122-123.

³⁶⁵ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 91 and 123.

³⁶⁶ Gow, *Deconstruction*, p. 301.

rarely missed an opportunity to talk about these events.³⁶⁷ Some of what he said was extreme and was greeted with little sympathy abroad: 'And what does it matter if a few thousand heads roll? The world will make a fuss for about a week or so and then will forget all about it.'³⁶⁸

Under Kadijevic and the extremely anti-Croatian Adzic, the JNA leadership became increasingly convinced that what was good for the Serbs, was also good for Yugoslavia.³⁶⁹ This meant that here the difference with Milosevic's Greater Serbian views was only a matter of degree. Moreover, Kadijevic respected Milosevic. He had tried in vain to urge the Serbian president to succeed Mikulic as the federal premier so as to apply 'his political authority and proven competence, and particularly his ability to find simple solutions to the complex problems that the Yugoslavian system constantly produced.'³⁷⁰ In addition, a new Communist Party was set up in November 1990, the League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia, which was supported by Kadijevic and many prominent generals. Milosevic's wife, Mirjana Markovic, was its vice-chairman.

Kadijevic was much less enthusiastic about the federal authorities. He thought that the federal agencies contained three categories of politicians: the real Yugoslavs, those who supported separation and opportunists. The JNA leadership felt that it could no longer present its evaluations and plans to the state presidium and the Federal Executive Council because this would entail turning this information over to 'the enemy'.³⁷¹

Since the end of 1990, 'the enemy', according to the JNA leadership, was first and foremost Slovenia, which was continuing its preparations for separation. It was closely followed by Croatia. On 4 October 1990, a joint working party of the presidia of Croatia and Slovenia drew up a proposal for a Yugoslav confederation. The member states would remain sovereign. They would each acquire their own currency, army and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The military and foreign policy would be coordinated at the level of the confederation. In short, Yugoslavia would have to be organized 'in the style of the European Community'.³⁷²

Slovenia had repeatedly urged that the Slovenes' military service should be limited to their own territory and that their Slovenian officers should exclusively command JNA units. The JNA leadership opposed this vehemently because it would effectively lead to a Slovenian army.³⁷³ So as to prevent this, in October 1990 the JNA began to confiscate weapons that were intended for the territorial defence systems of Slovenia and Croatia. In December 1990, Kadijevic announced that the idea of the peoples' defence system was finished. The JNA subsequently confiscated the arms of the territorial defence systems in all the republics except Serbia. In Slovenia, the JNA only managed to acquire 40% of the territorial defence system's materials although this included almost the entire stock of heavy artillery. However, it managed to confiscate virtually all the Croatian weapons. These differing results were to affect the development of combat forces in both republics. Slovenia created an army out of the remains of its territorial defence system that resulted in a corps of 10,000 professional soldiers and 50,000 conscripts. Slovenian conscripts ceased entering the JNA in March 1991. Instead, the Slovenian parliament introduced a scheme where the seven months of military service would be spent with its own forces. All Slovenian citizens were withdrawn from the JNA in June 1991.

Robbed of its military defence system, Croatia began to transform its police force into an army at the end of 1990. This was no easy task because in mid-1990 the police in Croatia mainly consisted of Serbs.³⁷⁴ However, they were largely sacked in the aftermath of the HDZ election victory.

³⁶⁷ Caroline de Gruyter, 'Onze Kacin is beter dan Goebbels', *Elsevier*, 13/07/91, p. 36; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 100. For descriptions of Adzic see, for instance: 'Blagoje Adzic. Eenheid tot elke prijs', *NRC Handelsblad*, 04/07/91; Ian Traynor, 'Spook uit jaren veertig achtervolgt stafchef', *De Volkskrant*, 05/07/91.

³⁶⁸ Sanz, *Army*.

³⁶⁹ Also Kadijevic, *View*, p. 109.

³⁷⁰ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 112.

³⁷¹ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 95.

³⁷² The model of a confederation in Yugoslavia, quoted in Zametica, *Conflict*, p. 14.

³⁷³ Kadijevic, *View*, pp. 105-106.

³⁷⁴ Lendvia, *Yugoslavia*, p. 255 n. 6.

Approximately 50,000 reservists were called up so that the republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which included the police, now grew from 25,000 to 75,000 men. The police troops were lightly armed and had no real armoured cars.

The conduct of the JNA and the development of armies in both Slovenia and Croatia led to a war of nerves between both parties from the end of 1990 onwards. Once the Serbs in Krajina had made the district virtually autonomous with the help of the JNA, the federal army began to grow in other 'Serbian' areas in Croatia and in cities such as Dubrovnik.

9. The Slovenian and Croatian preparations for separation

Over the next few years, in many respects General Tudjman was to prove to be a better strategist than his opposite numbers in Belgrade. He had a clearer understanding than Milosevic of the opinions abroad.³⁷⁵ In October 1990, he warned a nationalist crowd in the Croatian capital of Zagreb against impulsiveness. He declared that public opinion elsewhere in the world would turn against the side that fired the first shot in an ethnic war.³⁷⁶ In December 1990, he opposed a plan drawn up by his own Minister of Defence Martin Spigelj that consisted of immediately encircling the JNA barracks and of disarming the federal troops. Tudjman later commented: 'Had we accepted that plan we would have been condemned by the world as outlaw secessionists who wanted to overthrow the constitutional system. If we had carried out that plan, the world would have condemned us as an illegal movement for separation that wanted to overthrow the constitutional system.'³⁷⁷

Military preparations

Meanwhile, the JNA was also confronted with the issue of timing. If the army were to intervene too quickly against the nationalist developments in Slovenia and Croatia, it would be blamed as a Greater Serbian military power that had pursued aggression against the republics' democratically-elected governments. If the army were to wait too long, these governments would have enough time to organize their armed defence.³⁷⁸ And Slovenia and Croatia had indeed started to purchase arms abroad in reaction to the disarming of their territorial defence systems.³⁷⁹ In December 1990, Slovenian television showed footage of the republic's troops destroying a tank with Amhurst rockets that had been bought abroad and could be fired from the shoulder.

However, Croatia made the most famous purchase by buying several tens of thousands of Kalashnikovs in Hungary.³⁸⁰ Under great pressure from the JNA³⁸¹, the presidium and the federal government attempted to oppose the formation of Croatian paramilitary units in January 1991 by warning of the JNA's intervention. The Bosnian Serb Bogic Bogicevic resisted the Serbian pressure in the state presidium to authorize the JNA for this kind of intervention.³⁸² But this did not mean that Croatia was no longer under threat. The JNA still argued that action should be taken against the Croatian authorities.³⁸³ Despite Belgrade's threats, Croatia continued to arm its police and Zagreb ensured that the armed forces were in a state of readiness. On 25 January, a film was shown on various Yugoslav television stations. It was made by the KOS, the JNA's secret service, and showed deliveries of arms from Hungary to Croatia. It also showed how the Croatian Minister of Defence Martin Spigelj

³⁷⁵ Zimmermann, 'Ambassador', p. 8; idem, *Origins*, p. 77.

³⁷⁶ Carol J. Williams, 'Croatia's "Raving Nationalist" Now Seeks to Contain the Flames', *Los Angeles Times*, 30/10/90.

³⁷⁷ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 109.

³⁷⁸ Kadijevec, *View*, pp. 89-90.

³⁷⁹ Silber/Little, *Death*, pp. 106-109.

³⁸⁰ See, for instance: Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 149.

³⁸¹ Kadijevec, *View*, pp. 118-119; Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, p. 10; idem, *Origins*, p. 98.

³⁸² Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 99.

³⁸³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 100. For a description of the atmosphere in Zagreb at that time, see: Drakulic, *Communism*, pp. 169-178.

tried to persuade a Croatian JNA officer to leave the federal army with the words: 'We are at war with the JNA.' A few days later, the Yugoslav army demanded that Spegelj should be arrested on the suspicion of preparing a civil war. The Croatian authorities refused to co-operate. Instead they declared that they would welcome foreign help in the event of a federal attack. In a sense, that help had already been offered by the American ambassador Warren Zimmermann who informed the authorities in Belgrade on 17 January that the West would not accept an armed intervention by the JNA in Croatia.³⁸⁴ The British government followed suit.³⁸⁵

But the most extraordinary offer of help to Croatia came from Milosevic himself. He had been aware of the existence of the KOS film since the middle of October but had apparently not acted on that knowledge.³⁸⁶ Shortly before the broadcasting of the incriminating footage on 25 January, he had already mentioned to his loyal follower Borisav Jovic that Serbia would not resist a Croatian secession. The JNA would have to withdraw from a large part of Croatia and to move to those areas where the Serbs formed a majority. At almost the same time, on the evening of 24 January, Milosevic informed the Slovenian President Kucan that Slovenia could separate from Yugoslavia so far as he was concerned.³⁸⁷ Some two months earlier, Jovic, the Serbian member of the federal presidium, had told his Slovenian colleague Janez Drnovsek that the Serbian leadership would not oppose Slovenian secession.³⁸⁸ This information tallied with a speech that Milosevic gave to the European Community ambassadors on 16 January (see the introduction to this preview) and with the announcements that Milosevic had made to the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gianni de Michelis at the beginning of 1991.³⁸⁹

However, the JNA had not yet gone as far as Milosevic. The army still had the official duty of defending Yugoslavia's unity.³⁹⁰ The army leadership continued to hesitate between occupying Krajina, as supported by Milosevic and Jovic, and preserving Yugoslavia.³⁹¹ Meanwhile, the political problems were mounting and had now begun to affect the federal republic of Macedonia. On 25 January, the day of the broadcasting of the KOS footage, the Macedonian parliament had accepted a declaration of independence and a plan to discuss its secession from Yugoslavia.

Politics in Slovenia and Croatia head towards secession; turmoil in Serbia

On 23 December 1990, 88.5% of all Slovenes who were eligible to vote had supported a referendum for independence. Two months later, on 20 February 1991, the Slovenian parliament accepted an amendment that declared that the Federal Yugoslav government was no longer authorized to govern the republic. Slovenia became a 'autonomous, sovereign and independent country', that would only continue to remain a part of the Yugoslav federation for six months at the very most. This was followed by far-reaching preparations for separation: the country stopped payments to Belgrade, it set up a form of diplomatic representation abroad and introduced its own currency. The day after the Slovenian parliament's actions, the Croatian house of representatives also decided that the laws of its own republic should prevail over federal legislation. Moreover, the Croatian government received the go-ahead to start preparing for separation.

In March 1991, Serbia seemed to be experiencing a transformation that had been unleashed by the masses and had already occurred in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Roumania. For several days from 9 March onwards, hundreds of thousands of people, under the command of student leaders and

³⁸⁴ Kadijevic, *View*, p. 119; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 99; Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 112.

³⁸⁵ Eyal, *Europe*, p. 2.

³⁸⁶ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 117.

³⁸⁷ Silber/Little, p. 113. Also Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 145; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 111.

³⁸⁸ Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 110.

³⁸⁹ Doder/Branson, *Milosevic*, p. 77.

³⁹⁰ Silber/Little, *Death*, pp. 114-115.

³⁹¹ Silber/Little, *Death*, pp. 114-115; Jovic, *Dani*, pp. 255-257 and 259.

the opposition leaders Vuk Draskovic and Zoran Djindjic, took to the streets of Belgrade to challenge the results of the December election and Milosevic's grip on the media. Expressions of support to the demonstrators occurred in a number of major Serbian cities. Milosevic's government appeared to be undermined. However, he managed to remove the movement's sting by consenting to some of the students' demands and by using the media to point out the dangers of Serbian disunity at a time of sharp ethnic contrasts. For the rest, the JNA's tanks and armoured cars did the work that the police appeared – either intentionally or unintentionally – incapable of doing: dispersing the demonstrators. Tanks rolled through the streets of Belgrade for the first time since 1944. A student was shot after a policeman had been stoned to death by demonstrators. Apparently this people could be beaten. Later the media received a tape where Adzic could be heard urging the police to beat the demonstrators until their officers were exhausted.³⁹²

Moreover, the JNA had acted at the request of Jovic, Milosevic's paladin in the state presidium.³⁹³ The writing was on the wall. The demonstrations meant that the fates of both Milosevic and the army were now bound together. At the same time, the JNA had suffered a sensitive defeat in the presidium. Jovic had called a meeting of the federal state presidium for 12 March. Rather than tackling the subject of the demonstrations, this meeting was to discuss the January proposal concerning the disarming of the paramilitary units in Croatia. Once it had gathered, the entire presidium was transported by military bus to Topcider, the presidium's emergency seat in times of war. The highlights of this meeting were later broadcast on television. Jovic gave a sombre picture of the country's situation. All the enemies from World War Two had returned to the Yugoslav stage and included the Ustashe, the Cetniks and the Albanians. On behalf of the Supreme Command, Kadijevic proposed declaring a state of national emergency so as to allow for general mobilization. All the republics' paramilitary units had to be abolished; military service must once again be served in the normal way. However, the state presidium rejected these proposals.

On 13 March 1991, Kadijevic, the federal Minister of Defence, flew to Moscow to ask the Russian Minister of Defence Dmitrii Yazov for support if a JNA *coup* were to be followed by a Western intervention. His actions were undertaken with the permission of Jovic, the chairman of the federal presidium, but without the rest of the presidium's knowledge. Several months earlier the JNA had also gauged international reactions to the possibility of a *coup* by sending Mamula to London, Adzic to Paris and Admiral Stane Brovet to Moscow. They were given to understand that London and Paris would not oppose the *coup* and Moscow would even support it although the Russian government would not admit this publicly. There was no point in Kadijevic asking for Washington's views on this subject.³⁹⁴ While Kadijevic was visiting Moscow on 13 March, Warren Zimmermann made it clear in Belgrade that the American government would halt all economic aid to Yugoslavia if the JNA were to resort to violence.³⁹⁵

The Russians informed Kadijevic that the West had no plans for military intervention in Yugoslavia. However, his hosts avoided the question of support. But Kadijevic had seen enough; the Russians had offered him not so much as a drink, not even mineral water. On the way back, he commented to his assistant Colonel Vuk Obradovic that the Russians were 'in a dreadful state'. But his subsequent conclusions completely reflected the situation in Yugoslavia. He thought that Gorbachev's days were numbered, that it would not be long before the 'real' Communists would attempt to seize power in Russia. And that is exactly what happened later that year. When Kadijevic returned to Belgrade, he told Jovic: 'We're going for the *coup*.'³⁹⁶

On 14 and 15 March, the presidium continued its meeting with the JNA leadership. Jovic was still unable to convince a majority of the state presidium to support the declaration of a state of

³⁹² Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 108.

³⁹³ Zametica, *Conflict*, p. 42.

³⁹⁴ Silber/Little *Death*, p. 126. Also Zametica, *Conflict*, p.42.

³⁹⁵ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 458, n. 27.

³⁹⁶ Svarm, 'Kill', Based on Jovic's published diary notes; Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 127.

national emergency. At Milosevic's command, Jovic resigned as chairman of the state presidium on 15 March. Milosevic also ordered the resignation of the members representing Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro who were under his control. His aim was to do away with the state presidium. In a television speech on 16 March, Milosevic said that Yugoslavia was finished and that Serbia could no longer respect the federal authority.³⁹⁷ He declared that he had ordered the mobilization of special reservists and the immediate creation of extra Serbian paramilitary units.³⁹⁸ Milosevic appeared to be creating the maximum of space for the JNA to act on its own authority.

On the next day, 16 March, Milosevic called the 200 mayors of Serbia to a closed strategy meeting in Belgrade. Speaking to them, he set the tone for the violent xenophobia of the next few years with the following slogans: Serbia was in great danger; the West hated the Serbs; a united Germany would attempt to extend its control over the Balkans; Slovenia and Croatia were Germany's puppets; if the Serbs were unable to work, they could still fight. Serbia would no longer accept the federal government's decisions. Milosevic argued that Yugoslavia was in 'the terminal phase of its death throes'.³⁹⁹

Milosevic also made it clear that the Slovenes and Croats could leave Yugoslavia, but not the Muslims. All the Serbs had to be united in a single state. A few days later he repeated his resolutions almost literally at a meeting with two hundred students.⁴⁰⁰

However, Milosevic was mistaken if he thought that he could kill off the state presidium by withdrawing four members. With Markovic's support, the four remaining members met and declared that they would continue to function as the state presidium. This completely upset the plans of the JNA's *coup* leaders. Moreover, there was probably still a level of mutual mistrust between Milosevic and the JNA. Milosevic feared that a JNA *coup* would undermine his political position in favour of the armed forces. Conversely, the JNA was afraid that Milosevic would push the army aside as soon as he had achieved his goal of uniting all the Serbs in a single state. The *coup* did not take place.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Command of the JNA had taken it upon itself to change its task concerning Greater Serbia. It would no longer try to preserve Yugoslavia's unity; rather it would protect the rights of the ethnic groups that wanted to remain a part of Yugoslavia. These were primarily Serbs and Montenegrins. What Kadijevic later described as a 'peaceful separation' would be sought for the other groups that no longer wished to remain a part of Yugoslavia.⁴⁰¹ In other words: in terms of its tasks, the JNA was in the process of becoming a Serbian army. The objectives of Milosevic and the 'federal' army were increasingly one and the same but the federal army leadership still found it extremely difficult to abandon Yugoslavia. The army leadership had informed the Serbian leaders on 25 February that from then on they would work with the SDS in Croatia so as to keep Tudjman's HDZ under control.⁴⁰² On 19 March, the JNA publicly announced its new task: the army would fight ethnic unrest, protect the borders and prevent republics from leaving the federation against the other republics' wishes.⁴⁰³

The next day, the Serbian National Assembly corrected Milosevic's mistake by refusing to accept Jovic's dismissal as the state presidium's chairman. Jovic returned to the presidium along with the representatives of the three other areas who had resigned their seats a few days previously.

³⁹⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 102-103.

³⁹⁸ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 128.

³⁹⁹ Rick Kuethé, 'Grimmige logica in Belgrado', *Elsevier*, 23/03/91, p. 40; Stephen Engelberg, 'Carving Out a Greater Serbia', *The New York Times*, 01/09/91.

⁴⁰⁰ Silber/Little, *Death*, pp. 129 and 131.

⁴⁰¹ Kadijevic, *Vien*, pp. 117 and 121.

⁴⁰² Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 116.

⁴⁰³ See also: Libal, *Limits*, p. 25.

10. How should Yugoslavia proceed?

The republics' presidents met several times over the following months so as to discuss a new political structure for Yugoslavia.

Slovenia and Croatia proposed a confederation. By contrast, Serbia and Montenegro suggested a stronger concentration of power at a federal level. The presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, Alija Izetbegovic and Kiro Gligorov, tried to mediate with a proposal for an asymmetrical confederation. This was to be constructed around Serbia and Macedonia, with a slightly more loosely-associated Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, and with Croatia and Slovenia retaining as much sovereignty as possible. Izetbegovic had his reasons for attempting to mediate: he believed that Bosnia would not survive the death of Yugoslavia.⁴⁰⁴ He had no positive expectations of either Milosevic or Tudjman. As he said himself, choosing between them was like choosing between leukaemia and a brain tumour.⁴⁰⁵

He had every reason to say this. On 25 March, a meeting had taken place between Milosevic and Tudjman at Tito's former hunting lodge in Karadjordjevo. Despite their different opinions, both presidents had a symbiotic relationship⁴⁰⁶ because of their strongly-nationalist politics, a relationship that was rarely more clearly defined than on that day. During a four-hour discussion, they agreed to work together for two more months so as to prevent Yugoslavia's disintegration. Moreover, they spoke of a possible exchange of territory where Tudjman would agree to give up the Serbian areas of Croatia (which were mainly in Krajina) in return for the Croatian parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It went without saying that Serbia could do what it liked with the rest of Bosnia. This proposal also allowed for the possibility that the Muslims would retain a small area.⁴⁰⁷

Tudjman had already suggested this division of Bosnia-Herzegovina to Milosevic in 1990. Here, he was harking back to the 1939 agreement between Cvetkovic and Macek. The Croats who were involved felt that Milosevic reacted to the proposal in a positive way. According to the Croatian presidium member Stipe Mesic, Milosevic said that personally he was not particularly concerned about Croatia and the Croatian Serbs; his objective was to incorporate two-thirds of Bosnia into Serbia.⁴⁰⁸ On 12 June 1991, this proposal for a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia would also be presented to the Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic (for further information, see Part I). However, the Karadjordjevo Agreement had no real influence on events in Krajina.

After the Serbian National Council of the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina had proclaimed a declaration of independence on 28 February, skirmishes between the Serbian militias and the Croatian police were to continue there throughout the month of March. At the end of the month, members of the Serbian Krajina militia tried to occupy the Plitvice National Park, a tourist attraction in the overwhelmingly Serbian region of Lika. The attempts by the Croatian police to prevent this resulted in the first two deaths in Croatia's ethnic tensions: a Croatian police officer and a Serbian militiaman. The 29 Serbs who were arrested included eight members of special units from Serbia. On 1 April, the Serbian activists in Krajina, Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem (see the map on page #) took the unilateral decision to announce that they, as the Serbian Autonomous Region, had been annexed by Serbia. Krajina's Serbian National Council decided that henceforth its territory would only be governed by the laws of Serbia and Yugoslavia.

⁴⁰⁴ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 115.

⁴⁰⁵ Thompson, *House*, p. 95.

⁴⁰⁶ Also Hirs/Hellinga, *Zeit*, p. 174.

⁴⁰⁷ Also Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 117; Patrick Moore, 'A Bizarre Media Campaign in Croatia', RFE/RL Newline vol. 1 no. 34 (20/05/97), part II; Bodansky, *Offensive*, pp. 48-49; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, pp. 127-131; Ed Vulliamy, 'Bosnia: The Secret War. Croats Who Supped with the Devil', *The Guardian*, 18/03/96.

⁴⁰⁸ Davor Butkovic, 'Mesic. I drugi su Hrvatski politickari svjedocili pred istraziteljima Suda u Haagu!', *Globus*, 16/05/97, pp. 14-15; Hartmann, *Milosevic*, p. 126.

Serbian paramilitary units began to form not only around Knin but also in Western and Eastern Slavonia, where the population was more ethnically mixed than in Krajina. They were regularly provoked by extremists from Tudjman's party, the HDZ. On 2 May 1991, Croatian police were ambushed by Serbian paramilitaries in the village of Borovo Selo near Vukovar. Twelve of them were killed along with three citizens. The Serbian ultra-nationalist Vojislav Seselj proudly declared on TV Belgrade that his Cetniks had been involved in this incident. Radmilo Bogdanovic, who had been Serbia's Minister of Internal Affairs from 1987 to March 1991 and was subsequently a shadowy figure in the Serbian secret service, later said that the Serbian authorities had provided the weapons for Borovo Selo.⁴⁰⁹ The JNA encircled the village after this incident.

It was not just the Croats and the Serbs who were killing each other. In the first six months of 1991, there were many victims amongst the Croatian Serbs who still tried to reach a settlement between both parties and were killed by their militant fellow residents.⁴¹⁰ Moderate Serbs were frequently threatened, abused or even murdered – usually by paramilitary agents – if they did not seem prepared to take a stand or at least to keep their mouths shut.⁴¹¹ 'What's most important for a people is to know who its enemies are', said the Serbian paramilitary leader Arkan who was soon to make a name for himself.⁴¹² The Serbian areas of Croatia demonstrated what so often precedes a radical conflict: that the moderate forces in the middle became the first victims.

In reaction to the events in Borovo Selo, demonstrations of Croats were held the next day in the Croatian towns of Zadar and Sibenik, during which the household goods of Serbs were smashed. On 6 May, Croats attacked Yugoslav troops who were guarding the navy base in Split. Kadijevic, the federal Minister of Defence, subsequently declared the country to be entering a civil war and proclaimed a state of national emergency. The JNA received the presidium's approval, which had been previously withheld, so as to disarm the paramilitary units in the insurgent republics. Jovic gave the army permission to intervene in situations of ethnic unrest, and the presidium decided that the army should be used to protect the Serbs in Krajina.⁴¹³ In addition, the JNA began to arm the Serbs there.⁴¹⁴ JNA Chief-of Staff Blagoje Adzic took advantage of Kadijevic's absence in hospital to deploy JNA units not only in one-third of Croatia's territory but also in the 'Serbian' parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The JNA's actions had immediate consequences for the troops' ethnic make-up. Soldiers from Slovenia, Croatia and Kosovo failed to show up for mobilization. Macedonia would only permit its conscripts to serve in its own territory and therefore made no direct contribution to the JNA's new combat plan. So the federal army increasingly depended on Serbian reservists. The result of this was that the JNA abandoned the final remnants of Yugoslavism and began to create ethnically-homogenous units.

Jovic's permission for the JNA's new course of action came several days before the annual rotation of the presidium's chairmanship. He was to be succeeded by the Croat Stipe Mesic on 15 May 1991. Although Mesic was a HDZ member, he was a moderate one. He was married to a Serb and the Ustashe had wiped out virtually his entire family during the Second World War. Nonetheless, Milosevic and the army found his appointment unacceptable. If Mesic were to take office, he would probably distance himself from his predecessor's decision to allow the JNA to act *de facto* as the protector of the Serbs in Krajina. Therefore, Mesic's appointment was obstructed by the Serbian bloc in the state presidium. Consequently, the Federation of Yugoslavia no longer had a president and the federal agencies were paralysed. The exception was the JNA that felt that it now had *carte blanche*.

Events followed each other in rapid succession. Four days after Mesic should have been appointed, a referendum about independence was held in Croatia just as it had been some five months

⁴⁰⁹ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 142.

⁴¹⁰ Caroline de Gruyter, 'Wie niet meedoet legt het loodje', *Elsevier* 19/10/91, pp. 44-49.

⁴¹¹ See, for instance: Williams/Cigar, *War Crimes*, n. 171.

⁴¹² Haviv, *Blood*, p. 70.

⁴¹³ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 145.

⁴¹⁴ Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 145.

earlier in Slovenia. With a turn-out of 84%, 93% supported independence. This meant that an important section of the urban Serbs must have voted for independence.

For a moment it seemed as if the impending catastrophe might still be averted. During a series of discussions between the presidents of the separate republics, an agreement was reached in principle on 6 June about a confederation of sovereign republics that was proposed by Izetbegovic and Gligorov on behalf of Bosnia and Macedonia. However, after the meeting, the Serbian authorities denied ever having agreed with the agreement in principle.

On 11 June 1991 the Slovenian government declared that the country would proclaim its independence on 26 June. Slovenia would then take over the federal authority's responsibility for the checkpoints on the borders with Italy, Austria and Hungary. In addition, all Slovenes would be withdrawn from the federal agencies. The Yugoslav army would also have to withdraw from Slovenian territory. Slovenia would eventually introduce its own currency.

Croatia's government, which had previously announced that 30 June would be its independence date, now decided to opt for Slovenia's choice because it did not want to remain in the federation without its Slovenian ally, not even for just four days.⁴¹⁵

In fact, both Slovenia and Croatia declared independence on 25 June 1991.

⁴¹⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042. DEU/berichtgeving d.m.v. coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Fietelaars 151 aan het Luxemburgse EG-voorzitterschap, 31/05/91.

Chapter 5

The West and Yugoslavia before the crisis

‘It is a tragic paradox that though no one in Europe wishes to see Yugoslavia collapse, no one knows how to control the destructive forces that are at work within it.’⁴¹⁶

In a sense, Yugoslavia was fiction so far as the West was concerned until the beginning of the 1990s. It had been misunderstood; the country’s independent status during the Cold War had been exaggerated; the decentralization of power had been mistaken for a form of democracy; and workers’ self-rule was wrongly viewed as a liberalization of the economy. When, from 1989 onwards, the realities of this country became increasingly obvious to those both at home and abroad, they were simply too complicated to be easily understood. Moreover, the Western media and policy-makers were involved with other issues such as the virtually-silent revolutions that ended the Communist regimes elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union’s simultaneous liberalization and dismantling, and the Gulf War.⁴¹⁷ Here, the question is whether the ultimate outcome would have been different if the West had paid greater attention to Yugoslavia’s internal developments.

1. The Dutch relation with Yugoslavia until 1990

Just like the other Western countries, Yugoslavia’s special status during the Cold War was a constant factor in Dutch foreign politics that was to have far-reaching consequences.⁴¹⁸ The Netherlands did not have an articulate Eastern European policy until the end of the 1980s.⁴¹⁹ The government did not have this kind of policy and the parliament did not request it. The Netherlands had kept its distance during the Cold War and, when required, had simply followed the policy of NATO or the EC.⁴²⁰ At the Dutch parliament’s request, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van den Broek, finally produced a memorandum in 1988 called *Dutch Policy Concerning Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and Albania*. However, it contained virtually no policy proposals. Little attention was paid to Yugoslavia and that also applied to the subsequent written and verbal consultations between the government and the parliament.⁴²¹ The memorandum stated that the Netherlands had ‘always greatly appreciated the way in which Yugoslavia had given shape and content to its independent position in a positive way.’ The memorandum emphasized the country’s economic problems. Minister Van den Broek felt that Yugoslavia was ‘well aware’ that only its continued orientation towards the West would provide the necessary solace.⁴²²

In October 1970, Tito was the first president of a Communist country to pay an official state visit to the Netherlands. He was warmly received. The relations between the Netherlands and Yugoslavia remained cordial after his death in 1980, and there were regular meetings between the various ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence. When the Yugoslav presidium member Lazar Kolisevski visited the Netherlands in mid-December 1981, he described the relations between the two countries as being friendly and without problems. In April 1984, Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers visited President Mika Spiljak who informed him of the Yugoslav authorities’ concern about their country’s

⁴¹⁶ Lendvai, *Yugoslavia*, p. 261.

⁴¹⁷ Also Callahan, *Wars*, pp. 75 and 97.

⁴¹⁸ The following description for the period 1975-1989 is primarily based on Baudet, *Aandacht*, pp. 213-251.

⁴¹⁹ Unlike the usual views, Baudet concludes that the Dutch governments during the period 1972-1989 did in fact have an Eastern European policy where human rights in the form of roll-back strategy played an important role; *Aandacht*, pp. 253 and 257

⁴²⁰ Van den Heuvel, *Leven*, pp. 8, 158 and 166; Boussard/Van Ham, *Continuïteit*, passim.

⁴²¹ TK 1987-1988, 20564, nos. 3 - 7.

⁴²² TK 1987-1988, 20564, nos. 1-2.

growing nationalism. This did not prevent Van den Broek from announcing during the same visit that Dutch arms supplies would be subsequently permitted because the Dutch government believed that Yugoslavia was adopting an increasingly-independent stance regarding the Eastern bloc.⁴²³

There was also close contact between delegations of Dutch MPs and members of the federal Yugoslav house of representatives. Moreover, the Netherlands had a special relation with Yugoslavia in terms of foreign aid. Here, Yugoslavia was the only Western country with which the Netherlands maintained permanent co-operation. The ministers responsible held talks about this virtually every year.⁴²⁴ For instance, the Netherlands financed agricultural courses for Third World students that were held in Yugoslavia. In addition, the Netherlands was part of the same electoral group in the International Monetary Fund so that the finance ministers of both countries maintained frequent contact. Here, the Netherlands helped to arrange loans for Yugoslavia in the second half of the 1980s.⁴²⁵

The Hague was aware of human rights violations in Yugoslavia,⁴²⁶ but for a long time these were less serious than in other Eastern European countries and – more importantly – criticism could have alienated the Belgrade government. The Dutch parliament was also less critical of Yugoslavia than it was of other Eastern European countries. During the period 1975-1989, only one question about Yugoslav human rights violations was asked in parliament; it was posed by the pacifist-socialist (PSP) MP Fred van der Spek in 1984.

In the 1980s, the Kosovan Albanians' efforts to achieve a higher level of autonomy met with as little sympathy from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as they did in other countries. At first, this reticence remained unchanged until the mid-1980s when Yugoslavia's edge over other Eastern European countries concerning human rights issues, was reversed. An Amnesty International campaign in the spring of 1985 focused attention on the 2200 people in Yugoslavia who had been condemned on political grounds over the previous three years. However, this did not lead to the Dutch government taking the measures in Belgrade that Amnesty had hoped for. Apart from the Dutch Helsinki Committee, Amnesty International was the only non-official group in the Netherlands to focus on the human rights situation in Yugoslavia. In 1988, when Minister Van den Broek was asked about his views concerning Serbian nationalism and its consequences for Yugoslavia as a whole, he argued that the success of the planned constitutional and economic reforms would determine the extent to which Yugoslavia would be able to overcome its 'national problems'.⁴²⁷

From the mid-1980s onwards, the combination of Yugoslavia's declining importance in international relations and the country's internal tensions led to increased criticism in the West. The first sign of a change in the Dutch position could be detected when Van den Broek visited Belgrade on 10 November 1987, some months after the eighth session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia when Milosevic had seized power from Stambolic.

During lunch, various representatives of Yugoslav human rights organizations pointed out to the Dutch minister that it would be impossible to achieve the country's required economic changes without first implementing political reforms. These political reforms would not occur while the Communist Party was in power. They argued that the republics' growing alienation would only be increased by the Communist divide-and-rule policy that stirred up nationalist sentiments, and that the republics could not secede because of Yugoslavia's position in the international power constellation. An

⁴²³ G. van de Kreeke, 'Nieuwe benadering betekent doorbraak. Nederland mag wapens leveren aan Joegoslavië' [New Approach Means Breakthrough. The Netherlands Can Supply Weapons to Yugoslavia], *de Telegraaf*, 26/04/84. See also: 'Planinc Holds Talks with Netherlands' Lubbers', *Tanjug*, 24/04/84, 1753 and 'Spiljak Receives Netherlands Premier Lubbers', *Tanjug*, 25/04/84, 1336.

⁴²⁴ Interview J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

⁴²⁵ TK 1987-1988, 20564, nos. 1-2, p. 17; interview W. Kok, 08/05/00.

⁴²⁶ See also: TK 1987-1988, 20564, nos. 1-2, p. 17.

⁴²⁷ TK 1988-1989, 20564, nos. 3 and 4, question 41 plus answer.

answer was not forthcoming when Minister van den Broek asked about what was still keeping the country together.

Van den Broek told Premier Mikulic that it was partly due to Dutch pressure that a recent European Investment Bank loan to Yugoslavia had been increased from 380 to 550 million ecu. However, he wondered whether the money would vanish into a bottomless pit if there was no political reform.

The European Community had signed a preferential co-operation agreement with Yugoslavia in 1980.⁴²⁸ Nonetheless, by the end of the 1980s, it began to be confronted with a dilemma where a higher level of financial aid to the republics would simply strengthen their resolve for increased autonomy. This would not benefit the Yugoslav economy as a whole. It was doubtful whether donations of money to Belgrade would actually end up in the right hands, particularly as the Belgrade government had an increasingly bad reputation for human rights.

The EC policy concerning Eastern Europe was strongly influenced by economic considerations such as the presence of market-oriented ideas, a structure of tax legislation that protected private property relations, infrastructure, modernizing production machinery and the issue of foreign debt. Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia were granted a form of association with the EC because they had made the most rapid and far-reaching advances concerning these points; Yugoslavia fell by the wayside.

Like other Western diplomats in Belgrade and, for instance, Minister of Defence Kadijevic⁴²⁹, the Dutch ambassador to Yugoslavia A.J.A.M. Nooij initially felt that the energetic Milosevic was the man who could possibly reverse Yugoslavia's process of disintegration. An additional factor here was that Milosevic passed as being liberal in economic terms. However, Nooij soon had to abandon all hope when it became obvious to him that Milosevic was definitely not the 'consensus figure' who could preserve the country from further misfortune. In April 1989 following the authorities' heavy-handed actions against the Albanians in Kosovo, Van den Broek informed Kovic, the Yugoslav ambassador to The Hague, that the West would increasingly take the side of the Kosovan Albanians if Belgrade were to pursue this course. Nonetheless, the governments of both the Netherlands and other Western countries did everything they could to avoid the impression that they sympathized with the people in Yugoslavia who were put on trial for criticizing Belgrade's dominant position.

However the Belgrade government made it increasingly difficult for the West to hide its criticism. On 28 March 1989, the Dutch ambassador did not attend the festivities in the Serbian parliament to mark the ending of an autonomous Kosovo where 22 people had just been killed. The Dutch diplomat stated that this was 'an objectionable spectacle'. On 28 June 1989, he and most of his colleagues also failed to appear at the commemoration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo.⁴³⁰ Nonetheless, at the same time, Yugoslavia along with Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union were granted guest status at the Council of Europe.⁴³¹ However, in the same year Yugoslavia was informed that there was no question of entry to the European Community or the Council of Europe while European diplomats were still denied access to the country's political processes.

From the summer of 1989 onwards, Ambassador Nooij repeatedly hinted at Yugoslavia's disintegration. On 23 June 1989, five days before the commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo, he wrote to The Hague: '*Rien mais vraiment rien ne va plus entre Serbie et la Slovénie*' ('Nothing but nothing still works between Serbia and Slovenia'). 'The alienation of these two republics has now assumed such forms at every level and area of society that a return of a consensus policy no longer seems possible.' He observed separatist trends in both Slovenia and Serbia.⁴³² On the same day, he stated that relations between the republics and provinces had 'degenerated to such a point that one must fear for the

⁴²⁸ A non-preferential trade agreement had been previously signed in 1970.

⁴²⁹ Meier, *Jugoslawien*, p. 77.

⁴³⁰ Also Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 19.

⁴³¹ R. Sieckman, *Sovjet-Unie in Raad van Europa?* ('Soviet Union in Council of Europe?'), *Trouw*, 24/06/89.

⁴³² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00408, Nooij 76, 23/06/89.

federation's continued existence'.⁴³³ The sense of alienation between Serbia and Slovenia (and later Croatia) as caused by the Kosovo issue, and disagreement about the economic policy were frequently mentioned in the dispatches that he and Fietelaars, who succeeded him at the end of 1990, were sending to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴³⁴

2. Prophets on the sideline

At the beginning of the 1990s, the entire Western world was waiting for Croatia and Slovenia's declarations of independence. However, in Western Europe this was often based on the unjustified hope that it would not necessarily lead to a catastrophe and that the predicted crisis might just blow over.⁴³⁵ By contrast, there were numerous articles in, for instance, *The New York Times* about the Yugoslav federation's potential disintegration.⁴³⁶ In May, the former German chancellor Willy Brandt argued in vain for the formation of a European intervention force so as to secure peace in Yugoslavia.⁴³⁷

Prophesying the conflict: Dutch politics

The outbreak of conflict in Yugoslavia had also been predicted by a wide political spectrum in the Netherlands.⁴³⁸ 'You hardly needed to be a prophet to be able to prophecy a civil war in Yugoslavia', remarked Eimert van Middelkoop, a MP representing a Protestant party called the *Gereformeerde Politiek Verbond* (GPV). His comments came at a meeting on 11 July 1991 of the Parliamentary Commission for Foreign Affairs that was to discuss the events that followed Croatia and Slovenia's declarations of independence.⁴³⁹ At the beginning of the 1980s, when he was working as A.J. Verburg's parliamentary assistant, Van Middelkoop had been detained for an hour at Skopje railway station after trying to make photographs of Kosovo from a train.⁴⁴⁰

Theo Kralt, the foreign secretary of the CDA Christian Democrat party, had spoken with the Slovenian Christian Democrat premier Lozje Peterle when he had visited as a member of a CDA delegation of foreign specialists in February 1991. Kralt warned in the March 1991 edition of *CD/Actueel* that Yugoslavia would have to abandon its present political form. The country had to become a confederation or else it would disintegrate. He felt that the minorities' position in the republics that were gaining independence was such that the Council of Europe would need to supervise the implementation of human rights. The EC would also have to contribute so that the process of political reform would occur peacefully.⁴⁴¹ 'If there ever was an armed conflict and crisis that could have been predicted after the Second World War, then it's the one in present-day Yugoslavia', wrote Olaf van Boetzelaer in the *CD/Actueel* party publication of the autumn of 1991. Van Boetzelaer was a member of the CDA Central and Eastern Europe working party and was also the head of the Analysis

⁴³³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00408, Nooij 75, 23/06/89.

⁴³⁴ See, for instance: ABZ, DDI-DEU/ARA/00408, Nooij 143, 13/12/89; Nooij 38, 28/02/90; Nooij 109, 20/07/90; Fietelaars 198, 19/12/90.

⁴³⁵ See, for instance: Maarten Lak, 'The Involvement of the European Community in the Yugoslav Crisis During 1991', in: Van den Heuvel/Siccama (eds.), *Disintegration*, p. 176; Libal, *Limits*, p. 11; 'Yugoslavia Is On the Brink of a Ruinous Internal Ethnic Struggle', *Nieuwsweek*, 15/01/90; Maren Köster-Hetzendorf, 'Auf Tito schießen, um Jugoslawien zu töten', *Die Presse*, 21/06/89.

⁴³⁶ See, for instance: 'A Single Yugoslavia, Pluralized', *The New York Times*, 29/12/89; *One Yugoslavia or Six?*, *ibidem*, 31/01/90; Chuck Sudetic, *As Croatia Goes, Will All Yugoslavia?*, *ibidem*, 05/05/90; *ibidem*, *Ethnic Revolutions Push Yugoslavia to Edge*, *ibidem*, 14/10/90; *Why Keep Yugoslavia One Country?* *ibidem*, 10/11/90.

⁴³⁷ Eyal, *Europe*, p. 10.

⁴³⁸ Westerman, *Brug*, p. 100.

⁴³⁹ TK 1990-1991, 22181, no. 2, p. 8.

⁴⁴⁰ Interview E. van Middelkoop, 08/10/99.

⁴⁴¹ Theo Kralt, 'Joegoslavië. Voortzetting federatie niet haalbaar, maar ook confederatie problematisch' [Yugoslavia. Continuation Federation not Feasible, but Confederation also Problematic], *CD/Actueel*, 30/03/91, pp. 8-9.

Department of the Dutch Foreign Intelligence Service. He continued, ‘however, it has to be admitted that the majority of political authorities in the West – and the Dutch political authorities are no exception here – have created the impression of being insufficiently prepared for the outbreak of this crisis.’⁴⁴²

‘Rarely has conflict been so repeatedly predicted and in such detail as the war in the former Yugoslavia’, was how the liberal democrat D66 MP Bob van den Bos later described this situation in 1997.⁴⁴³

The Socialist PvdA MP Gerrit Valk published an article in his party’s magazine *Voorwaarts* following a visit to the PvdA’s sister organization in Slovenia in April 1990. This article was called ‘Yugoslavia Does Not Exist’ and it had been drastically cut by the editors because of its gloomy tone.⁴⁴⁴ But the gloominess still pervades even the abbreviated version:

‘The adjective ‘Yugoslav’ resounds like a curse in the ears of all true Slovenians. Chairman Pucnik of our sister organization *Socialdemokratska Zveza Slovenije* even declared recently that Yugoslavia no longer exists. While borders are disappearing in Western Europe, there is an increasing call for Slovenia to opt for secession. Hence, Yugoslavia seems to be returning to the state structure that preceded the two World Wars. During discussions in the corridors at the SDZS’s founding congress, it seemed to me that the Social Democrats regard a confederation as simply being a tactical move towards an independent Republic of Slovenia (...). Yet the foundation of a new, independent state that is half the size of the Netherlands and has a population of two million is less alluring for the rest of Europe. And that’s not to mention the creation of the independent republics of Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia along with the additional possibility of Kosovo and Vojvodina. So what will the future hold for the Balkans?’⁴⁴⁵

Valk’s colleagues also found his article too morbid and asked if he had eaten something that had disagreed with him.⁴⁴⁶ Shortly afterwards, in mid-May 1990, he attended the London conference for young parliamentarians. Here, he discussed his fears concerning Yugoslavia’s disintegration with President Vasil Tupurkovski of Macedonia who also dismissed his concerns out of hand.⁴⁴⁷

However, Valk was not alone. For instance, a month earlier, Sir Michael Howard, the chairman of the distinguished *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, had asked in a lecture about how much longer the amalgam of the former Habsburg and Christian-Orthodox areas of Yugoslavia would be able to survive.⁴⁴⁸ The Amsterdam historian M.C. Brands wrote in the autumn of 1990 that Yugoslavia was already in a state of ‘semi-permanent civil war’.⁴⁴⁹ Valk was also not the only one to be disbelieved. When the journalist Misha Glenny wrote in a February 1991 report for the BBC that the leaders of Yugoslavia ‘were stirring a cauldron of blood that would soon boil over’, he was reprimanded by his superiors because his piece was too ‘alarmist’. Unlike at the beginning of the 20th century, they felt that there were to be no more Balkan wars at its end.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴² Olaf van Boetzelaer, ‘EG-politiek in Joegoslavië baseerde zich op onvoldragen analyse’ [EC Politics in Yugoslavia Based on Premature Analysis], *CD/Actueel*, 23/11/91, p. 20. Similar descriptions in: Olaf van Boetzelaer, ‘Bosnië’ [Bosnia], *CD/Actueel*, 14/11/92, p. 14.

⁴⁴³ Bob van den Bos, ‘Aanval op de oorlog’ [Attack on the War], *Idee*, June 1997, p. 29.

⁴⁴⁴ G. Valk to the NIOD, 31/05/00.

⁴⁴⁵ G. Valk, ‘Joegoslavië bestaat niet’ [Yugoslavia does not exist], *Voorwaarts*, 15/04/90, p. 25.

⁴⁴⁶ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview G. Valk, 15/10/99; G. Valk to the NIOD, 31/05/00.

⁴⁴⁸ Howard, *Remaking*, p. 102.

⁴⁴⁹ M.C. Brands, *Een conservatieve beschouwing over Europese veiligheid, Nederlandse defensie tegen een nieuwe achtergrond*, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁵⁰ Glenny, *Balkans*, p. 634.

Finally, the Protestant SGP party magazine *De Banier* warned shortly afterwards that Yugoslavia was on the point of disintegration and that the time for discussion was over. Civil war would automatically follow if Serbia's Communist leadership did not adopt a more constructive approach. The same also applied if the Serbian opposition failed to tone down its nationalism and if the Croatian government resorted to violence against the Serbian minority in Croatia.⁴⁵¹

Prophesying the conflict: the Foreign Intelligence Service

In the Netherlands, the Foreign Intelligence Service (IDB) wrote in July 1990 that Tito's Yugoslavia 'was finished' after the elections in Slovenia and Croatia, and the Albanian MPs' declaration of independence. The Dutch Intelligence Service argued that Slovenia and Croatia's desire for at least a confederation and possibly even independence was incompatible with the Serbian demand for a more efficient federation. With considerable foresight, the secret service did not exclude the chance that Serbia would also leave the state but that it would then impose demands concerning the Serbian areas outside of Serbia. Both political 'solutions' involved the prospect of war: either a civil war or a war of separation. The IDB felt that Bosnia-Herzegovina risked being divided up between Croatia and Serbia. However, Yugoslavia's internal conflict would entail little danger at an international level now that the Cold War was over.⁴⁵²

Three-and-a-half months later, the service observed that the federal perspective was farther away than ever. Greater Serbian objectives now had to be taken into account that could lead to the borders being altered. Bearing in mind Yugoslavia's history, this development could result in bloodshed. The IDB considered the election in Bosnia-Herzegovina on 18 November 1990 to be of great importance. If this 'Little Yugoslavia' remained harmonious after this election, then there was still hope for Yugoslavia as a whole.⁴⁵³

More than a week before Croatia and Slovenia's declarations of independence, the IDB stated that there was a 'real' risk of armed combat between Slovenian and Yugoslav forces following the conflict around the import of Slovenian goods into Serbia. If Slovenia and Croatia were to proclaim independence, then there was a likelihood of 'large-scale violence', and Italy and Austria would probably have to deal with an extensive stream of refugees. Moreover, irregularities could follow in Kosovo and Macedonia that – in the case of Macedonia – could also affect Bulgaria and Greece. Finally, the service detected a 'growing pressure for independence' amongst the Muslim population of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁵⁴

In fact, the Dutch authorities and politicians were not the only ones who were aware of the coming conflict. Before Croatia and Slovenia's declarations of independence, the number of reservations for holidays in Yugoslavia for the summer of 1991 had already fallen by 80 to 85% in comparison with the previous year.⁴⁵⁵

3. The summer of 1990 to the summer of 1991: a wretched idleness

'The war is here. I recognize it now. It tricked me – it tricked all of us.
It's in our waiting for it to begin.'⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵¹ H. Lenselink, *Buiten onze grenzen* ('Beyond Our Borders'), *De Banier*, 30/05/91, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁵² ABZ, 911.31 Yugoslavia, Part IV, IDB-rapport 5125/RC/90, Centrifugale tendenzen in Joegoslavië versterken zich, 30/07/90.

⁴⁵³ ABZ, 911.31, Yugoslavia Part IV, IDB-rapport 8099/RC/90, Joegoslavië drijft verder uiteen, 12/11/90.

⁴⁵⁴ ABZ, 911.31, Yugoslavia, Part IV, IDB-rapport 4610/RC/91, Slovenië en Croatië aan de vooravond van de afscheiding, 17/06/91.

⁴⁵⁵ 'Toeristen krijgen advies Joegoslavië te mijden' [Tourists Advised to Avoid Yugoslavia], *de Volkskrant*, 29/06/91. See also: Nicolas Lucas, 'De zon schijnt hier tevergeefs' [The Sun Shines here in vain], *Trouw*, 03/07/91.

⁴⁵⁶ Drakulic, *Communism*, p. 178.

During the previous months, the Dutch government and parliament had repeatedly discussed the new structures of a European security policy and the nature of the possible risks to security. Here, the nationalist aspirations in Yugoslavia were constantly mentioned as prototypes of possible conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe. The Western governments, including the Dutch government, could not be blamed for failing to spot the dramatic developments in Yugoslavia that would lead to conflict between Serbia and the republics that were working towards separation.⁴⁵⁷

In the summer of 1990, Ambassador Nooij wrote to the Dutch Foreign Affairs department as he was leaving Belgrade that the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia was on the point of disintegrating.⁴⁵⁸ There was open discussion of the possibility of a confederation of Slovenia, Croatia and potentially a part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, along with a Greater Serbia that would also encompass Montenegro, Kosovo and Vojvodina. The Dutch diplomat argued that the possibility that this revolution would involve violence could not be excluded because the Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic had already announced that the borders would have to be revised so that every Serb would be able to live in Serbia without having to give up his current abode in Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina. Similarly, on the basis of *mutatis mutandis*, Tudjman would also accept nothing less on behalf of the Croats.⁴⁵⁹ The Eastern Europe department of the Europe Directorate of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed with this assessment. Violence would be the result of the federation's disintegration but, conversely, it seemed that violence was all that could keep the federation together.⁴⁶⁰

A meeting of NATO's Political Committee on 31 July 1990 revealed that this observation was shared by most other Western countries.⁴⁶¹ There was no question of there being any real choice here so it was also impossible to draw up a policy. Only the United States supported greater activism.

The American view of Yugoslavia from 1990 to 1991: unity and democracy

The USA was the country that had been confronted with Yugoslavia's economic problems for the longest period of time. In the 'National Security Decision Directive 133' of 14 March 1984, President Reagan observed that Yugoslavia's financial situation endangered the country's stability so that that it had been weakened in terms of the Warsaw Pact. He therefore announced that the United States along with other Western countries would strengthen economic relations with Yugoslavia and would help to stimulate a free market economy within the country.⁴⁶² But this was to no avail. When the President of Slovenia, Janez Stanovnik, visited the United States in October 1988, he stated at a Washington press conference that his country was on the brink of civil war.⁴⁶³

Less than half a year later, in March 1989, the US State Department decided to fundamentally alter its policy concerning Yugoslavia. So far as America was concerned, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger had established that Yugoslavia had by now lost its geo-political importance of the Cold War period. The Polish and Hungarian economies were more open than Yugoslavia's. Moreover, Yugoslavia had a poor record in terms of human rights. The new American ambassador to Belgrade, Warren Zimmermann, who had been previously made responsible for human rights issues at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), was asked to convey that message when presenting his credentials to President Raif Dizdarevic of Yugoslavia and his Minister of Foreign

⁴⁵⁷ Also Both, *Indifference*, p. 71.

⁴⁵⁸ Unless otherwise stated, the following information about the official Western reactions to the developments in Yugoslavia between the summers of 1990 and 1991 is based on the internal Foreign Affairs memorandum by H. Hazewinkel, 'Het beleid t.a.v. Joegoslavië, 1990-1993', 11/03/93, which the author has placed at the disposal of this report, and Both, *Indifference*, pp. 72-98, which is based on the same piece.

⁴⁵⁹ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁰ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 1.

⁴⁶¹ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 3.

⁴⁶² National Security Decision Directive 133, 14/03/84, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/23-2222t.gif>, consulted 08/01/2001; Gervasi, *Germany*, p. 42.

⁴⁶³ Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 443, n. 51.

Affairs, Budimir Loncar. He was able to add that Washington still greatly appreciated Yugoslavia's unity, independence and territorial integrity, but that its unity could only be supported on the basis of democracy.⁴⁶⁴ At almost the same time, Eagleburger told the American senate that Milosevic had created a dangerous situation in Yugoslavia: 'I don't yet say it's come to the point of a real likelihood of shooting. But it is far the worst situation with regard to the nationality question that we've seen since the close of the war.'⁴⁶⁵ Zimmermann's diplomatic intervention met with little success. Loncar informed him that neither the federal government nor the army could restrain Milosevic's Kosovo politics. And, according to Loncar, Milosevic was not remotely interested in the West's opinion about this.⁴⁶⁶ Indeed, the Serbian president, who already suspected what Zimmermann would want to tell him, waited for ten months before receiving the American ambassador. In addition, Zimmermann soon discovered once he arrived in Belgrade that Milosevic's Kosovo policy was immensely popular with the Serbs.⁴⁶⁷

In October 1989, President George Bush received Premier Markovic who was respected in the West for his attempts to implement economic reforms that would promote a free market economy.⁴⁶⁸ Markovic was expecting aid from the West. He was hoping that the American government would provide a billion dollars so as to bail out the Yugoslav banking system and that the World Bank would lend an additional three billion dollars. However, he could offer no guarantee of Yugoslavia's successful future. In fact, he warned that it would be difficult for him to continue his political reforms against the Communist hard-liners. Moreover, his reform policy could create a drastic increase in unemployment that in turn could lead to serious ethnic tensions within the six republics and the two autonomous provinces.⁴⁶⁹ Washington rejected Markovic's request for aid on the basis of the human rights violations in Kosovo and because the American Treasury, which determined the financial and economic aid policy, was only willing to help those countries in Eastern Europe that were prepared to leave all traces of Communism behind them.⁴⁷⁰

Shortly after this visit, the American diplomats in Belgrade outlined a worst case scenario where aggressive nationalism would result in Yugoslavia's disintegration. Such a development would be accompanied by extreme violence and probably war. However, Zimmermann's frightening message met with little response at a meeting in Brussels of the American ambassadors to Europe, which was also attended by Secretary of State James Baker.⁴⁷¹

Meanwhile, Washington's policy towards Yugoslavia maintained a combination of unity and democracy. The State Department felt that these two concepts were intrinsically linked. Slovenia's secession, which would possibly be followed by Croatia, could result in intervention from Serbia and the JNA. This would mean the end of democracy. On the other hand, unity without democracy was not feasible because the longing for democracy was also the driving force behind Slovenia and Croatia's desire for separation.⁴⁷²

The State Department maintained a largely non-active approach to Yugoslavia for almost a year after its policy was changed. The reason for this was that the ultra-conservative Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina was criticizing Lawrence Eagleburger for the financial interests that he had had in Serbian and Slovenian companies at a time when he was out of office.⁴⁷³ In addition, as he stated during

⁴⁶⁴ Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, pp. 2-3; idem, *Origins*, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁶⁵ Quoted in Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁶ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 16.

⁴⁶⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 17.

⁴⁶⁸ See, for instance: Meier, *Jugoslanien*, p. 173; Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 28 and 42.

⁴⁶⁹ Gervasi, *Germany*, p. 44; Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 46-47.

⁴⁷⁰ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 51.

⁴⁷¹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 41.

⁴⁷² Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 41.

⁴⁷³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 58. In the 1980s, Eagleburger had helped to set up two Yugoslav companies in the United States: the LSB Bank, a branch of the Ljubljanska Banka, and Global Motors/Yugo of America, a branch of the Yugoslav

a speech in Berlin in 1989, Baker felt that the promoting of political and economic reforms in Eastern Europe was first and foremost a task for the European Community.⁴⁷⁴

At the beginning of 1990, Eagleburger ceased avoiding the subject of Yugoslavia and visited Belgrade on 25 February 1990. President Stanovnik of Slovenia impressed upon him that his republic was moving towards secession and that Yugoslavia was on the point of following the unfortunate example of the Lebanon, a country that had been ruined by civil war. Peter Jambreč of the Slovenian DEMOS party showed how relentlessly the Slovenians were striving for independence. Slovenia would not be dissuaded from achieving its objective by the threat that this could be accompanied by bloodshed. This was something that could happen in the rest of Yugoslavia but not in Slovenia. It was for this reason that politicians in Ljubljana felt that they did not need to take this into account. The Croat Vladimir Seks, who was a member of Tudjman's HDZ party, informed Eagleburger that his party would adopt a Greater Croatian stance if Yugoslavia's internal borders were tinkered with.⁴⁷⁵

At this time, David Gompert was Senior Director for Europe and Eurasia and Senior Deputy to the National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft. After Eagleburger's visit, Gompert sent instructions to all American embassies in Europe to communicate to their respective governments America's concerns regarding Yugoslavia and to ask them to support the American policy of unity and democracy. Washington also referred to the elections that were soon to be held in the republics and that could result in forces coming to power that advocated Yugoslavia's dissolution. This was met with little reaction on the European governments' part.⁴⁷⁶

Meanwhile, Washington remained somewhat powerless. During his discussions in Belgrade, Eagleburger had made it clear that there was no question of the United States resorting to any form of violence to oppose secession, a message that was later reiterated by Zimmermann.⁴⁷⁷ On the other hand, Washington turned down a Croatian request for 'technical help to improve the police' in December 1990.⁴⁷⁸

From the spring of 1990 onwards, the American government ensured that its opinion concerning the developments in Yugoslavia would not be misunderstood. In June 1990, when the Serbian parliament declared a state of emergency in Kosovo and the Kosovan members of the house of representatives were sent home, the American government induced the European Community to join it in implementing the first phase of the CSCE's 'human dimension' mechanism against Yugoslavia. This concerned the country in question providing information about its human rights situation and its willingness to discuss this within the context of the CSCE.⁴⁷⁹ The US also informed Belgrade that any future aid from America would depend on Yugoslavia's political developments.⁴⁸⁰ Washington cancelled Secretary of State Dick Cheney's visit to Belgrade, which had been planned for the first week of July 1990.

Both the European Community and NATO's Political Committee were frankly disappointed by the Belgrade federal authorities' answer to the CSCE procedure. It showed that the federal Yugoslav authorities were unable to distance themselves from Serbia's position of intolerance.⁴⁸¹ Like Washington, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague had established in October and November 1990 that Yugoslavia was only being kept together for negative reasons.⁴⁸² Nonetheless, the extra European Council of government leaders from the European Community member states met in Rome

arms manufacturer Zavodi Crvena Zastava and an importer of 'Yugo' cars, 'Lawrence of Serbia', *The New Republic*, 24/02/92; David Binder, 'Eagleburger Anguishes Over Yugoslav Upheaval', *The New York Times*, 19/06/92.

⁴⁷⁴ Quoted in: Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, *Lessons*.

⁴⁷⁵ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 58-59.

⁴⁷⁶ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁷⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 62 and 73.

⁴⁷⁸ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 95; Laura Silber, 'The Terrifying Logic of War', *Financial Times*, 02/09/95.

⁴⁷⁹ Callahan, *Wars*, p. 116. Austria also participated in this diplomatic action, Mock (hg.), *Balkan-Dossier*, pp. 68-69.

⁴⁸⁰ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 4.

⁴⁸¹ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁸² Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, pp. 6-7.

on 27 and 28 October. Apparently without discussion, it expressed the wish ‘that the current process of democratic evolution in Yugoslavia will succeed in developing respect for human rights and maintaining the country’s unity and territorial integrity’.⁴⁸³ Here, Washington and Europe were on the same wavelength: unity and democracy. At that point, there was a strong desire both in the EC and the United States not to support the ‘centrifugal’ forces in Yugoslavia.

The European view of Yugoslavia 1990-1991: democracy before unity?

Once a particular policy had been established by the European Community, there was not much willingness to change it. This position was partly determined by the fact that the French and German governments had reached agreement after the fall of the Berlin Wall concerning the idea that German reunification had to be embedded in the process of European integration that also needed to be developed in greater detail. The provisional result of this would have to be the acceptance of a monetary and political union in 1991. During this stage, the consensus within the European Community (EC) needed to be maintained as much as possible. The Dutch Minister Hans van den Broek also supported this approach.⁴⁸⁴ A similar desire to avoid cracks in the fortress prevailed at NATO that had been strongly involved in discussions after the end of the Cold War about the legitimacy of its continued existence. This organization came into being in 1949 with the aim of defending member states’ territory. ‘Out of area’ operations were not in principle a part of its objective although they were not completely excluded by the Washington treaty that had set up NATO.

This did not mean that there were no divergent opinions within the Western community. On 6 November, NATO’s German political advisor underlined his country’s somewhat extraordinary position with the remark: ‘if a choice has to be made between Yugoslavia’s stability and unity on the one hand, and democracy and human rights on the other, then priority must be given to the latter concern’.⁴⁸⁵ The German political director repeated this comment more than a week later at the European Community’s *Comité Politique* (CoPo), whose meetings were attended by the political directors of the EC member states’ Ministries of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁸⁶

The Europe Directorate of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs then added the following: ‘According to the current situation, the greatest supporters of Yugoslavia’s unity are not the greatest supporters of its democracy.’⁴⁸⁷ Although the dilemma was obvious, the policy remained unclear. Federal Premier Markovic, who supported economic reform but had no power base, was the only person who could enable the West to ignore the problem for the time being.

Yugoslavia was not particularly high on the priority list of the American foreign policy for 1990 and the first half of 1991. Much of the White House’s attention was taken up with Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait, the creation of an international coalition and armed forces along with the short-lived Gulf War. In addition, Washington’s foreign policy establishment was preoccupied with events in the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia’s possible division could not be detached from the potential dissolution of the Soviet empire or of other Eastern European nations. Opinions concerning the relevant policy differed between the State Department and the Pentagon. The State Department opposed any form of dissolution in Yugoslavia because it did not want the Soviet Union to follow this example.⁴⁸⁸ By contrast, the Pentagon hoped that a peaceful separation of Yugoslavia’s component parts could serve as a positive example to the Soviet Union. However, the State Department won the argument in Washington and its position met with much approval in the European capitals including The Hague.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸³ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 7; Both, *Indifference*, p. 90.

⁴⁸⁴ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 81 and 85.

⁴⁸⁵ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁶ Both, *Indifference*, p. 90.

⁴⁸⁷ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 8. Also Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 70.

⁴⁸⁸ Gutman, *Witness*, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 79-80 and 84-85.

In April 1991, the American intelligence service, the CIA, warned that the Balkans would be particularly susceptible to ethnic differences after the end of Communism. The agency felt that this situation was the most dangerous in Roumania and Yugoslavia. Civil wars and even widespread wars could break out there.⁴⁹⁰ In November 1990, the CIA presented the National Intelligence Estimate, an evaluation of Yugoslavia, to President Bush. It detailed the Serbian striving for hegemony within Yugoslavia alongside the other republics' desire for a higher level of autonomy or even secession. It felt that there was a high chance of bloodshed as a result of these conflicting developments and predicted revolts amongst the Albanians in Kosovo and the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. A civil war was clearly on the cards but would probably not happen within the next two years. The US and Europe would be unable to preserve the country's unity. The CIA proposed that the American government's policy should focus on maintaining Yugoslavia's external borders.⁴⁹¹

Curtis Kamman, the State Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Eastern European, Yugoslav and Soviet Affairs, admitted to J.H. Meesman, the Dutch ambassador to the United States, that the West could do little or nothing to prevent the outbreak of violence in Yugoslavia.⁴⁹²

The American Congress paid less attention to the developments in Croatia and Slovenia than it did to the abominable human rights situation in Kosovo that had been strongly criticized in 1990 by the State Department's annual report on Yugoslavia's human rights.⁴⁹³ Senator Bob Dole of Kansas and Representative Tom Lantos of California argued for an improvement here especially after Dole and two other senators had visited Kosovo in the summer of 1990 and had witnessed the Serbian police using tear gas and clubs against the 10,000 Albanians who had waited for the Americans' arrival.⁴⁹⁴ This visit also had consequences in terms of the support that Yugoslavia could henceforth expect from the United States.

No unity means Yugoslavia's excommunication

The US Congress accepted the 1991 Foreign Operations Appropriations Law 101-513 on 5 November 1990. This act presented the prospect of financial aid to Eastern European countries that demonstrated their willingness to introduce a free market economy. It also included a number of economic measures that were directed at regimes that were hostile to Washington: Angola, Cambodia, Cuba, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, North Korea and Vietnam.

The Republican Senator Don Nickles of Oklahoma, who had visited Kosovo with Dole in the summer of 1990, managed to add an amendment to this law so that Yugoslavia was added to this list of 'pariah' countries, an inclusion that was against the Bush administration's wishes.⁴⁹⁵ This meant that the law stipulated that within six months the United States would cut off all forms of financial aid, loans and credit loans to Yugoslavia and would freeze trade relations with the country if the human rights situation in Kosovo was not improved. Financial and economic relations would also be severed with the six republics until free elections were held there. In addition, the law stated that in the future oppositional 'democratic forces' would be supported financially. Americans working at international

⁴⁹⁰ Director of Central Intelligence, *Future*, pp. 181-183.

⁴⁹¹ Michael Putzel, 'Intelligence Report Predicts Collapse of Yugoslav Federation', *The Associated Press*, 28/11/90; David Binder, 'Yugoslavia Seen Breaking Up Soon', *The New York Times*, 28/11/90; Stephen S. Rosenfeld, 'A Timely Warning: The CIA Predicts a Blowup in Yugoslavia', *The Washington Post*, 30/11/90; K. Royce and P.J. Sloyan, 'The U.S. Waited. Back in June, CIA Told Bush of Atrocities', *Newsday*, 14/08/92; Gutman, *Witness*, p. xxiv; Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 84.

⁴⁹² Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 9.

⁴⁹³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 126-127; Callahan, *Wars*, pp. 72 and 116; Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, pp. 21-25. For the human rights report on Yugoslavia, see: the United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strife*, pp. 3-15. Kosovo features prominently in the rest of this hearing's report. See also the limited attention that was generally paid to Yugoslavia in: United States House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Policy*.

⁴⁹⁴ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 127-130.

⁴⁹⁵ For the history of Nickles' amendment, see: Paulsen, *Jugoslawienpolitik*, pp. 30-33.

organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were expected to implement this policy within these agencies. The amendment affected a sum that was less than five million dollars. The measures became effective on 6 May 1991 but were suspended by Baker some two weeks later because he did not support the idea that the whole of Yugoslavia would be made to suffer for Serbia's behaviour.

Meanwhile, the amendment had an extremely adverse effect on American-Yugoslav relations, and especially on those with Serbia.⁴⁹⁶ The Nickles amendment was later copied to some extent in Europe. A Council of Europe delegation stated on 6 February 1991 that Yugoslavia would not be admitted to the Council of Europe until federal elections had been held there. There was even the threat of economic measures if these failed to occur over a longer period of time.

On 21 February 1991, the Sub-Committee on European Affairs of the American Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations held a special hearing about Yugoslavia, an event that had not occurred in a long time. The reasons behind this meeting were the awareness that Yugoslavia had become dramatically less important in geo-political terms and the fact that the country now appeared to be on the brink of civil war.⁴⁹⁷ Senator Joseph R. Biden, who chaired the hearing, stated that Yugoslavia's altered strategic importance meant that criticism of its government could no longer be withheld.

He also criticized the government's position that was based on the twin points of unity and democracy. For him, it was not a given that these points should continue to exist alongside each other in contemporary Yugoslavia, and he was supported in this opinion by Bob Dole.⁴⁹⁸ Nonetheless, Serbia was still championed on Capitol Hill by the Democratic Senator Jim Moody of Wisconsin and his Republican colleague Helen Delich Bentley of Maryland.

It was particularly Bentley, whose ancestors had emigrated from Serbia to the United States 'long before it was part of Yugoslavia' who had, as she admitted herself, 'strong feelings on the subject'.⁴⁹⁹ She objected to the hearing's title ('Civil War in Yugoslavia: The United States Response') and pointed out that Yugoslavia had not yet reached that situation. As an alternative, she suggested 'Preventing Yugoslavia's Internal Strife: An Accommodation Must be Found'. The sub-committee wanted to go no further than replacing the word 'war' in the title with 'strife'.⁵⁰⁰

The EC European Council, which had no solution to Yugoslavia's seemingly inevitable bloody separation process other than that of the USA, could do little else than advise against the use of violence and 'express the hope that the dialogue between the republics and the Federal authorities would lead to a new Yugoslavia that would be based on freedom and democracy'.⁵⁰¹ It was along these lines that the ambassadors representing the troika of the EC's past, present and future chairmen took direct steps at the federation and wrote to the republics' authorities in Yugoslavia.⁵⁰²

Following the deliberations of the political directors of the member states' Ministries of Foreign Affairs on 6 and 7 February 1991, it was decided that the Yugoslav republics' representatives should not be received by members of the Twelve so as to emphasize the preference for Yugoslavia's unity.⁵⁰³

However, Prime Minister Lubbers circumvented this agreement several days later by receiving Premier Lozje Peterle of Slovenia who was also chairman of his country's Christian Democrats. Peterle was visiting the Netherlands and their meeting was held under the pretext that it concerned contact

⁴⁹⁶ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 131.

⁴⁹⁷ United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strife*, p. 1.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 2 and 37.

⁴⁹⁹ United States Senate, Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strife*, p. 48.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰¹ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 15.

⁵⁰² ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Van den Broek to the Belgrade embassy, 04/02/91, celer 5; *ibidem*, Coreu message from the Luxembourg EC chairmanship, 08/02/91, cpe/pres/lux 150.

⁵⁰³ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Schoen 14 to Van den Broek, 07/02/91.

between two politicians from the Christian Democrat European People's Party.⁵⁰⁴ Peterle assured Lubbers that Slovenia's separation could be implemented without violence. However, Croatia's separation would involve violence, but this would not deter Slovenia from declaring independence.⁵⁰⁵

In fact, Lubbers was not alone in breaking the EC agreement. For instance, on 20 March the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher received the Slovenian President Milan Kucan and Minister Rupelj of Foreign Affairs. Genscher urged them not to take any hasty or biased steps.⁵⁰⁶

However, Van den Broek wanted to keep the EC agreement during Peterle's visit so he was replaced by Peter van Walsum, his Director General of Political Affairs. The Slovenian president convinced Van Walsum, a senior civil servant, that a Western policy that still focused on the maintenance of Yugoslavia's territorial integrity was unlikely to influence the governments of either Slovenia or (most probably) Croatia.⁵⁰⁷ Nonetheless, in terms of both Europe and discussions with American government representatives, Van Walsum realized that there was no possibility of altering the Western point of view so as to provide a higher level of support to the republics from which, he felt, more democratic awareness could be expected than from the Belgrade leadership.⁵⁰⁸

In February 1991, Washington informed the EC countries that it had already undertaken so many initiatives in Belgrade that it now expected a higher level of action on the part of Europe.⁵⁰⁹ Moreover, despite the fact that the Americans strongly supported Yugoslavia's unity, both the Serbian and JNA leaderships constantly suspected that they were actually undermining it.⁵¹⁰ The participants of the CoPo discussions agreed on 4 March that:

‘ultimately respect for territorial integrity must carry the greatest weight in those cases where the arguments both for and against the conservation of a country threatened with disintegration are more-or-less keeping each other in check. Agreement was reached that a life-threatening situation would be created in Central and Eastern Europe if those politicians who are confronted with ethnic problems begin to view the founding of a new state as an ‘easy way out’. This situation would be effectively a recipe for violence that would result in human rights abuses which would be considerably worse than those that are currently occurring in Kosovo.’⁵¹¹

The next day, the European Council repeated its statement of 4 February and confirmed its support for Yugoslavia's unity and territorial integrity.

However, it remained unclear just how actively the EC should implement its point of view. Fietelaars had succeeded Nooij as ambassador in Belgrade on 3 October 1990. Following his initial optimism, he soon changed his mind about the developments in Yugoslavia⁵¹² and strongly opposed the dispatching of European mediators to Belgrade: ‘There is no way that an outsider would return

⁵⁰⁴ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 16.

⁵⁰⁵ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁰⁶ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 931.

⁵⁰⁷ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 82-83; ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Van den Broek circ. 152 to the Washington and Belgrade embassies, 28/02/91.

⁵⁰⁸ Both, *Indifference*, pp. 83-84.

⁵⁰⁹ See, for instance: ABZ, DEUARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Van den Broek circ. 152 to the Washington and Belgrade embassies, 28/02/91; *ibidem*, Van den Broek to the Luxembourg embassy, 05/03/91, celer 21.

⁵¹⁰ Zimmermann, *Origins*, pp. 101 and 123.

⁵¹¹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Van den Broek 152 to the Luxembourg embassy, 05/03/91, celer 21; Both, *Indifference*, p. 91.

⁵¹² Both, *Indifference*, pp. 73-74.

from the hornets' nest of Yugoslavia in one piece.'⁵¹³ America's proposals also met with luke-warm reactions elsewhere in the EC.

Following the demonstrations on 9 March in Belgrade, J.D. Blaauw, a member of parliament for the Conservative Liberalist VVD party, presented questions that discussed the situation in Yugoslavia. He urged that the European Community troika should be sent to inform the Yugoslav government that any future aid would depend on compliance with human rights and respect for a pluriform democracy. In addition, Blaauw remarked that he feared for 'an extremely explosive situation' if the democratization process was not completed in Yugoslavia. Action by the EC that would involve both the federal government and the republics would have to be taken so as to prevent military conflict.

Prime Minister Lubbers commented that this proposed mission was already the subject of discussion amongst the 12 member states. When asked about the Dutch contribution here, he replied that the government in The Hague was investigating how the 'Twelve could turn this step 'into concrete action'.⁵¹⁴

Looking back in 1998, Fietelaars wrote about how, as the Dutch ambassador, he had observed the Luxembourg chairmanship in Belgrade. He also stated that the catastrophic forces that were operating between the Croats and Serbs in Krajina had become obvious by the Easter weekend of 24 and 25 March 1991. The dramatic events of mid-March were apparently realized in Belgrade by that time. From then on, it also became clear that only Bosnia-Herzegovina was still prepared to support the federal structure.⁵¹⁵ Therefore, on 28 March the troika of EC ambassadors presented a statement to Loncar, the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs, that once again emphasized the need for a peaceful solution to the problems along with respect for human rights. A united and democratic Yugoslavia would have the best chance of being integrated into the new Europe⁵¹⁶. This was also primarily intended as a signal to Slovenia and Croatia that if they separated, they could not automatically count on rapid economic and political help from the EC.

On the same day, Ambassador Zimmermann of the United States presented Premier Markovic with a similar message from President Bush that placed an even greater emphasis on Yugoslavia's continued unity.⁵¹⁷ President Bush also phoned the Yugoslav premier in person.⁵¹⁸ Moreover, on 11 April Zimmermann urged Kadijevic that the JNA should not resort to the use of violence.⁵¹⁹ The NATO's North Atlantic Council of 27 March considered the situation in Yugoslavia to be extremely serious although tensions seemed to have decreased to some extent since the middle of March 1991. Despite its concern, the North Atlantic Council did not want to issue any public statements for fear that the Serbs in particular would conclude that dark forces from the West would facilitate separation. The Council left it up to the EC and the separate member states to voice their concern and to urge mutual dialogue instead violence along with democracy, respect for human rights and minorities, and the maintenance of Yugoslavia's unity and territorial integrity. Only the representative of a small member state expressed a somewhat divergent opinion by stating that Yugoslavia's unity could result in greater instability than would be created by the separation of Croatia and Slovenia.⁵²⁰ Austria received no support from the other countries when it proposed the implementation of the second phase of the CSCE mechanism on 28 March following the Serbian actions in Kosovo. Yet Serbia's reaction to

⁵¹³ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 18.

⁵¹⁴ TK 1990-1991, *Handelingen*, p. 3375, 12/03/91.

⁵¹⁵ ABZ, 109, 1998. Fietelaars 18 to Van Mierlo, 28/01/98.

⁵¹⁶ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 24; Confidential Information (187).

⁵¹⁷ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 24. See also: ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042. DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Van den Broek 084 to the Washington embassy, 25/03/91; Confidential Information (188).

⁵¹⁸ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 122.

⁵¹⁹ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 123.

⁵²⁰ Confidential information (175)

Austria's 13-point complaint was clearly alarming. The Serbian government stated that its human rights violations were understandable in the light of the 'separatist tendencies' in Kosovo.⁵²¹

The EC troika of Gianni de Michelis, Jacques Poos and Hans van den Broek then visited the Yugoslav leaders President Jovic, Premier Markovic and Minister Loncar of Foreign Affairs.⁵²² The aim of this visit was to emphasize to the country's leadership that Yugoslavia's disintegration would hamper closer co-operation with the EC because of its destabilizing effects on the Balkans. Moreover, the troika stressed that violence was not the solution and that federal elections also needed to be organized.

In the report of his visit which he presented during the Council of Ministers on 5 April 1991, Van den Broek made it clear that there was a very real chance that civil war would break out in Yugoslavia if Slovenia and Croatia decided to separate from the federation because this in turn would provoke an extreme reaction from the Serbs. During his discussions, Van den Broek became aware of the fact that nationalist sentiment in Yugoslavia was so powerful that the EC would be virtually unable to exert any form of influence.

These impressions were backed up by President Kucan of Slovenia who told EC government leaders at the beginning of April that Slovenia was now virtually certain to separate.⁵²³ Bearing in mind the Netherlands' upcoming EC chairmanship, Ambassador Fietelaars notified the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 19 April 1991 that Greece was already treating Milosevic as a head of state and that Italy and Germany also seemed to be reconsidering their positions in terms of Belgrade. This message was partly prompted by a conversation between J.L. Werner, the embassy's Undersecretary, and Drago Bekic who was a Croatian and Tudjman's personal advisor. Bekic was extremely critical of the discussions between the Troika and Premier Markovic of Yugoslavia. He argued that the federal agencies were being increasingly excluded and that the republics' presidents now constituted the only real power, a claim that Fietelaars described as a 'premise that is becoming difficult to dismiss'.

Although Bekic believed that it would still be difficult to discuss a confederation, he nonetheless felt that foreign mediation was needed because otherwise Serbia, with the JNA in the background, would exert a disproportionate influence on these discussions. Bekic blamed Western Europe for following America's example and emphasizing multi-party democracy and a market economy. He argued that it was insufficiently aware of the nationalities issue and the problems' historical roots. The West had to understand that the conflict between Croatia and Serbia was dominated by the fundamental antithesis between the 'European West' and the 'Eastern South' where Serbia stood for despotism, orthodoxy and nationalism. Bekic told the Dutch diplomat that Croatian troops would take action 'in the near future'.⁵²⁴ Werner was also informed that 26 June would be crucial for the area's independence. This date came six months after the referendum where the Slovenes had supported separation from the Yugoslav political structure.⁵²⁵

These developments again prompted the Eastern Europe department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enquire about the feasibility of the EC position of maintaining Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and unity. The moment was 'probably nigh (...) that the only possibility is to guide Yugoslavia's disintegration in such a way that bloodshed can be avoided and that a part of the federal structure may still be retained'.⁵²⁶ The German government seemed to have reached the same conclusion but the EC as a whole had not yet progressed this far.⁵²⁷

⁵²¹ Mock (Hg.), *Balkan-Dossier*, pp. 69-71.

⁵²² Reports in: ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Coreu message from the Luxembourg EC chairmanship, 06/04/91, cpe/pres/lux 316; *ibidem*, Van den Broek 23 to Belgrade, 07/04/91.

⁵²³ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 29.

⁵²⁴ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00405, Memorandum, CdP/Belgrade to DEU/OE, no. 1455, 19/04/91.

⁵²⁵ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 29.

⁵²⁶ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 31.

⁵²⁷ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 32; Both, *Indifference*, pp. 91-92.

It's not good but you can no longer be sure that it's really bad'

The Netherlands maintained an attitude of 'wait and see' in terms of the position of both the EC and NATO. Yet it remained unclear about what could be done to protect Yugoslavia from disintegration and civil war. There was also a lack of consensus at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry's civil servants felt that both Fietelaars and the Europe Directorate were being overly alarmist.⁵²⁸ There was even the suggestion of 'crying wolf' because since Tito's death the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been constantly informed that Yugoslavia was on the brink of disintegration. The usual NATO scenario was that Yugoslavia would collapse and then be invaded by the Soviet Union.⁵²⁹ The American diplomat Ron Neitzke later remarked, 'During the Cold War, for forty-five years, we were obsessed about Yugoslavia. It was one of the top three potential tinderboxes for World War III. The resources focused on that country were enormous.'⁵³⁰

The Dutch attitude in general was illustrated by the book *Joegoslavië in crisis* ('Yugoslavia In Crisis') which Marius Broekmeier wrote for the Clingendael Institute in 1985 and where he demonstrated that Yugoslavia's collapse had already passed the point of no return. Only three hundred copies of this book were sold.⁵³¹ Warnings from Belgrade and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' regional policy department were virtually ignored by the rest of the Ministry.⁵³² There, the attitude towards Yugoslavia was one of 'it's not good but you can no longer be sure that it's really bad.'⁵³³ Elsewhere, the fact that Yugoslavia still existed ten years after Tito's death was viewed as an indication that there was still hope for the country.⁵³⁴

However, the Dutch Ministry of Defence and the armed forces closely followed the developments in Yugoslavia during the spring of 1991. On 27 February, the Defence Chief-of-Staff General P. Graaff commented at the Defence Council that the situation was giving cause for concern. Now that Croatia and Slovenia were heading towards independence, he felt that it was no longer possible to create a compromise between the federal government and the republics. Similarly, he argued that there was an increasing likelihood of a JNA intervention so as to retain Communism and the federal political structure.⁵³⁵ After the Dutch defence authorities had initially thought that there would be a return to stabilization,⁵³⁶ the Defence Chief-of-Staff confirmed at the Defence Council of 22 May that, along with the problems concerning the federal agencies, 'the conditions for further unrest are clearly present'. At this point, B.J. van Eenennaam was the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Atlantic Co-operation and Security Directorate. Although he tended to be less pessimistic, Van Eenennaam warned at the same meeting that the West had few resources at its disposal that were capable of influencing the situation in Yugoslavia. He felt that the only means of providing some respite would be an association agreement with the EC to maintain the country's integrity.⁵³⁷

At the beginning of May, the Military Intelligence Service detected an escalation of relations in Krajina. This was partly because of the events in Borovo Selo where the Croatian police had been ambushed by the Serbian paramilitary (see: Chapter four). The Service did not exclude a JNA coup

⁵²⁸ Both, *Indifference*, p. 77; interview A.M. van der Togt, 04/05/00.

⁵²⁹ Interviews H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00, H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00 and P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99; Both, *Indifference*, p. 80. Also Sanz, *Army and Woodward, Tragedy*, p. 72. In his book *The Third World War: a Future History* Sir John Hackett had described in 1978 how a build-up of tension between East and West would lead to conflict between NATO and Warsaw pact troops in Slovenia.

⁵³⁰ Quoted in Cohen, *Hearts*, p. 173.

⁵³¹ J.G. Siccamo, 'Nogmaals: ex-Joegoslavië' [Once again Ex-Yugoslavia], *Armex*, July/August 1993, p. 5.

⁵³² Both, *Indifference*, p. 80.

⁵³³ Interview H.A. Schaper, 10/04/00.

⁵³⁴ Van Walsum, *Nederland*, p. 69; interview A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00.

⁵³⁵ KAB, report of a Defence Council meeting, 27/02/91.

⁵³⁶ *Ibidem*, report of a Defence Council meeting, 27/03/91.

⁵³⁷ *Ibidem*, report of a Defence Council meeting, 22/05/91.

d'état. The consequence of all this would be the disintegration of Yugoslavia's armed forces along ethnic lines, which in turn increased the prospect of civil war.⁵³⁸

The Hague cancelled a spring visit by State Secretary Van Rooy of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. It was announced that she would be pleased to travel to Yugoslavia in the autumn once the situation had become clearer.⁵³⁹ Nonetheless, Vice-Premier Kok visited Belgrade on 27 May where he spoke with a number of people including Premier Markovic of Yugoslavia.

In an interview on 4 May, A. Mock, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Austria (which was yet an EC member) argued that the European Community should provide a mission of peace-keeping troops. He felt that it was too late for calls to reject violence and that rapid action was needed; otherwise a civil war would break out that would have consequences for the whole of Europe.⁵⁴⁰ Two days later, he replaced this proposal with a suggestion for a commission of three or four wise men who would stimulate Yugoslavia's internal dialogue. This idea was acclaimed by the leaders of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, Budimir Loncar, Yugoslavia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, rejected it because it involved meddling with the country's internal matters.⁵⁴¹

On 29 May, Premier Jacques Santer of Luxembourg visited Belgrade as the chairman of the EC along with Jacques Delors who was the chairman of the European Commission.⁵⁴² The previous day, Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President François Mitterrand had sent a joint letter to the Yugoslav state presidium and the presidents of all the republics in which they pushed for a peaceful solution and for dialogue concerning Yugoslavia's future political structure.⁵⁴³ Santer and Delors emphasized the importance of maintaining territorial integrity, the undesirability of altering the country's internal borders, the implementation of a market economy, respect for human rights and complete democracy.⁵⁴⁴ If Yugoslavia was able to find a peaceful and democratic answer to its political problems, the EC would then be prepared to put in a good word at the IMF and other agencies that could subsequently benefit from the stabilization of the Yugoslav economy. Moreover, although it was mostly on his own authority, Delors promised that the EC was willing to begin immediate discussions concerning Yugoslavia's associate membership and it would be able to count on the EC's considerable financial support (of up to five billion ecu).⁵⁴⁵ Yet even this financial carrot could not deter the leading figures in Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb from a course that would inevitably lead to confrontation.⁵⁴⁶

On the advice of an extremely-concerned Jacques Delors, the CoPo (the political directors of the member states' Ministries of Foreign Affairs) were asked to prepare a worst case scenario.⁵⁴⁷ However, the Eastern Europe working party of the EC's European Political Co-operation section decided to abandon this once it became known that it could create the impression of accepting the republics' declarations of independence.

⁵³⁸ ABZ, Chief-of-Staff Intelligence Department, S.W. Schouten, Colonel of the Cavalry, to head of IDB, head of BVC and Foreign Affairs for the attention of AMAD, 03/05/92, DIS/91/095/2253, with the supplement of the memorandum 'Joegoslavië: verscherping militair/politieke situatie'.

⁵³⁹ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 38.

⁵⁴⁰ Mock (Hg.), *Balkan-Dossier*, p. 72.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 72-73.

⁵⁴² Reports in: ABZ, DEU/ARA/00042. DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, 1990-1991, Fietelaars 150 & 151 to the Luxembourg EC chairmanship, 31/05/91; *ibidem* Coreu message from the Luxembourg EC chairmanship, 31/05/91, cpe/pres/lux 496.

⁵⁴³ Libal, *Limits*, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁴ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 40.

⁵⁴⁵ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081, DEU/berichtgeving dmv COREUS inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, June-September 1991, celer circ 339 from Van den Broek to the Athens embassy, etc., 04/06/91. See also: Isakovic, *Democratisation*, p. 4.

⁵⁴⁶ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, pp. 40-42.

⁵⁴⁷ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081. DEU/berichtgeving dmv COREUS inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, June-September 1991, Lux. COREU message, 04/06/91, cpe/pres/lux 507; celer circ 339 from Van den Broek to the Athens embassy, etc., 04/06/91.

The only possibility was to wait and see.⁵⁴⁸ Ultimately, it was not easy to anticipate the form that the independence declarations would take: they would either be rhetorical or definitive. The European capitals tended to view the militant rhetoric of Ljubljana and Zagreb as simply the means of acquiring a good starting position for negotiating Yugoslavia's political future.⁵⁴⁹ Moreover, the Eastern Europe department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs hoped that the compromise that the presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia had proposed to their colleagues on 6 June would be successful. The department felt that 'it would be sensible to allow the Yugoslavs the time to develop the agreement that has been reached so that consequently they can find a solution to their problems'.⁵⁵⁰

Nonetheless, at the same time State Secretary Van Voorst tot Voorst of Defence had asked D.J. Barth, the director of the department's General Policy Matters, to draw up a memorandum about the security consequences for the Netherlands if the tensions in Yugoslavia were to escalate. In his memorandum, Barth stated that the Netherlands had no direct interests that would be affected by a conflict in Yugoslavia but that it did have general interests in terms of Europe's stability. The EC, which was to adopt a Dutch chairman in the second half of 1991, would provide the proper framework for action. This was because political and economic tools would be initially deployed so as to influence the crisis. The CSCE involved many limitations including the unanimity rule. Nevertheless, it seemed sensible to use it as much as possible so as to test Europe's new security arrangement (which had been championed by the Dutch government) and, if necessary, to expand it still further. Potentially, the UN Security Council would also have to be involved. Barth argued that the use of military resources should be regarded as the final option because they would probably lead to a further escalation. Apparently, to some extent Barth was still thinking in Cold War terms because he particularly recommended that attention should be paid to the positions of the two super-powers and he did not exclude the possibility that both parties would be supported in the conflict.⁵⁵¹

On 19 June, the CSCE Council of Ministers in Berlin appealed for a peaceful solution to Yugoslavia's differences. It declared its support for the country's territorial integrity and simultaneously endorsed the republics' democratic developments whereby it also explicitly requested that attention should be paid to human rights including minority rights.⁵⁵²

James Baker, who had also attended the conference, flew to Belgrade on 21 June 1991 to explain the American policy on Yugoslavia to Markovic, Loncar, the presidents of the six republics and the Albanian leaders of Kosovo. The American Secretary of State indicated that Washington wanted the country's unity to be maintained. He warned Slovenia and Croatia against one-sided initiatives and that America would not recognize their independence. He lectured Milosevic in no uncertain terms. Baker argued that the Serbian leader was the main cause of turmoil and was responsible for the civil war that the country was heading for. In his opinion, Milosevic had scuppered Markovic's program and blocked the appointment of the Croat Stipe Mesic. 'We reject any claims by Serbia to territory beyond its borders. If you persist, Serbia will be made an outcast, a pariah.'⁵⁵³

But Baker was unable to threaten Milosevic with anything more than Serbia's isolation from the international community; America would not resort to violence. To quote Zimmermann, with his emphasis on maintaining Yugoslavia's unity Baker did not, as has often been suggested, give the go-ahead to the JNA's use of violence yet he also failed to call a halt through the threat of American measures if violence were to be deployed.⁵⁵⁴ He urged Markovic not to resort to violence because in

⁵⁴⁸ Hazewinkel, *Beleid*, p. 44.

⁵⁴⁹ Libal, *Limits*, p. 4.

⁵⁵⁰ ABZ, DEU/ARA/0 0081, DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, June-September 1991, memorandum DEU/OE, 'Joegoslavië, for the ministerial EPS, Luxembourg, 17/06/91, 13/06/91.

⁵⁵¹ CRST, 245, D.J. Barth to Politiek Beraad, 12/06/91, D91/284 with the supplement 'Notitie over de veiligheidsconsequenties voor Nederland van een eventuele escalatie van de spanningen in Joegoslavië'.

⁵⁵² See also: 'CVSE roept Joegoslavië op tot eenheid' [CSCE Calls For Yugoslav Unity] *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/06/91; *Joegoslavië* ('Yugoslavia'), *ibidem*, 21/06/91.

⁵⁵³ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 134.

⁵⁵⁴ Zimmermann, *Ambassador*, pp. 11-12.

that case the United States would have to choose for the side of ‘democracy’.⁵⁵⁵ Tudjman was completely unconvinced by Baker’s argument that the JNA would be deployed against Croatia if it declared independence.⁵⁵⁶ He was also impervious to pressure that he should adopt a conciliatory attitude towards the Serbs in Croatia. Baker was able to confirm that the various parts of Yugoslavia were on a collision course.⁵⁵⁷ Hence, it was too late for persuasion but too early for military intervention.

On 24 June, both the EC and the CSCE declared their support for Yugoslavia’s territorial integrity. However, they would not support Croatia and Slovenia’s independence. On the same day, Bonn used the EC’s Coreu communication system to send a message to all the member states’ capitals that urged the maintenance of a minimum of unity within Yugoslavia but also proposed caution in condemning Slovenia and Croatia’s expected declarations of independence.

According to Bonn, the desire for a Greater Serbia had caused the Slovenian and Croatian pursuit of independence. In fact, Ljubljana and Zagreb would probably have taken little notice of any condemnation because they were hoping that sections of Western European public opinion would take their side. Moreover, such condemnation would simply play into the hands of the Serbian forces that wanted to counter separatism with violence. The best approach was simply to ignore the declarations of independence as much as possible and to emphasize Yugoslavia’s internal dialogue that had to lead to new political relations. This would preferably occur on the basis of the Bosnian-Macedonian compromise proposal of 6 June.⁵⁵⁸ The Netherlands supported this German position.⁵⁵⁹ The next day, both Croatia and Slovenia declared independence.

4. Conclusion: is there a link between the end of Yugoslavia and the Western position?

Here, a basic question involves locating the main causes of Yugoslavia’s disintegration. The relevant literature contains two interpretations. Many authors consider Yugoslavia’s increasing ethnic tensions to be the main cause of its disintegration.⁵⁶⁰ Other authors feel that Yugoslavia could have continued to exist if Milosevic and his associates had not disturbed the fragile balance between the ethnic groups.⁵⁶¹ It is certain that both internal and external causes played a role in the historical process that led to this disintegration. The relation between these causes requires some discussion.

Causes from the inside

A problem that was fundamental to the Yugoslav state was the Serbs’ numerical domination. So long as Yugoslavia’s population continued to think primarily in ethnic terms, this domination would consistently create losers, both Serbs and non-Serbs, in every political and economic issue of division.

⁵⁵⁵ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 137.

⁵⁵⁶ He also refused to believe the news brought to him a day later by his followers concerning intelligence from Belgrade about a JNA attack. At that point, he said that this did not correspond with the agreements that he had made with Kadijevic and Milosevic, Silber/Little, *Death*, p. 152. See also: Glenny, *Fall*, p. 38.

⁵⁵⁷ Zimmermann, *Origins*, p. 133. For a report of Baker’s discussions, see also: ABZ, 911.31 Joegoslavië. Politieke verhoudingen en partijen, Message to Minister of Foreign Affairs Van den Broek from Secretary of State Baker, supplement concerning C.H. Wilkins Jr. to Van den Broek, 22/06/91; ‘US Secretary of State in Yugoslavia’, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 27/06/91.

⁵⁵⁸ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081. Berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, June-September 1991, Bonn COREU message, 24/06/91, cpe’bon 294.

⁵⁵⁹ ABZ, DEU/ARA/00081. DEU/berichtgeving dmv coreus inzake de standpunten van de EPS over Joegoslavië, June-September 1991, Foreign Affairs to cpe/pres/lux, 25/06/91.

⁵⁶⁰ ‘Andreas Zumach Responds to Phillips’, *Covert Action Quarterly*, no. 55, Winter 1995-1996, p. 55.

⁵⁶¹ See, for instance: Ludwig Steindorff, ‘Die Vorgeschichte – Von der Zeit vor der Staatsbildung Jugoslawiens bis zur Krise der achtziger Jahre’, Bremer (Hg.), (*Sch)Erben*, pp. 35-36.

Tito and his Communist Party failed to solve this problem, a fact that is most clearly illustrated by their decision in the first half of the 1960s to abandon Yugoslavism.

Serbia's ruthless attitude to Kosovo played a particularly important role in the dramatic developments that preceded the conflict between the nationalities. This was because its attitude was viewed in the other republics as a sign of what could be in store for them as well. The leadership of the Serbian Communist Party was partly responsible for this and had opted for this front line. They did this because many of their people were not willing to hand over power without putting up a fight; they would not allow a velvet revolution to take place as it had in other former Communist states at around this time.

The position of Tudjman *cum suis* can also be added to these endogenous factors. His extremely thoughtless attitude towards the Croatian Serbs and his claims on Bosnia-Herzegovina certainly contributed to igniting the conflict. In addition, the Yugoslav media were similarly responsible by helping to dredge up memories of a violent past and by spreading ethnic hate. The JNA also played a negative role in the conflict. Its social and political conservatism meant that it could not maintain a neutral position in terms of developments such as decentralization and the creation of a pluriform society. Ultimately, the army opted for a Greater Serbian program and therefore became allied with Milosevic. As subsequent events reveal, its role in forming and arming paramilitary groups that had begun before the conflict had even broken out, also contributed to its occurrence.

Causes from the outside

However, there are also authors who felt that the causes of Yugoslavia's disintegration were located in the West. They were critical of the West's attitude of 'wait and see' in terms of the developments in Yugoslavia that preceded the declarations of independence. Could the West have prevented Yugoslavia's disintegration? The supporters of the exogenous explanations have pointed to Yugoslavia's loss of international status at the end of the Cold War,⁵⁶² and the destabilizing consequences of the Western requirement of economic reform.⁵⁶³

It has, however, been suggested that Yugoslavia could have been saved by a larger number of credit loans from the West.⁵⁶⁴ The question is whether this is true. Yugoslavia's political elite had shown for far too long that credit loans simply meant that they postponed essential reform rather than implementing it.⁵⁶⁵ A form of recentralization was needed for achieving real economic reform; no republic was prepared to do this apart from Serbia and then only on its own terms. From the 1950s onwards, the Communist system had relied far too heavily on deploying decentralization as a safety valve. The 1974 Constitution had made that process irreversible.

In addition, there is criticism of the IMF's strict requirements because they resulted in social upheaval.⁵⁶⁶ But it should not be forgotten that during the 1980s the IMF was prepared to compromise on a number of occasions. However, the IMF did insist on its main requirement of recentralizing economic policy.

It has also been suggested that the EC could have saved Yugoslavia in 1989 if it had wanted to 'help to improve mutual relations so as to enable a united Yugoslavia to become a member of the EC'.⁵⁶⁷ The European Union has always opted to export stability rather than to import instability, and it would have certainly imported instability if it had admitted the Yugoslavia of 1989. If requirements

⁵⁶² Jason McQuinn, *The West Destroyed Yugoslavia*, *Covert Action Quarterly*, pp. 60-61.

⁵⁶³ Gervasi, *Germany, passim*; Jason McQuinn, 'The West Destroyed Yugoslavia', *Covert Action Quarterly*, pp. 60-61; S.L. Woodward, 'Redrawing Borders in a Period of Systemic Transition', Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, pp. 198-234.

⁵⁶⁴ Milo Anstadt, 'We moeten de mythe van de Servische schuld doorprikken' [We Have to Puncture the Myth of Serbian Guilt], *NRC Handelsblad*, 20/12/94.

⁵⁶⁵ See also: Michielsen, *Joegoslavië*, p. 225; Tromp, *Conflict*, pp. 33-34.

⁵⁶⁶ See, for instance. Woodward, *Tragedy*, p. 383; *ibidem*, 'Redrawing Borders in a Period of Systemic Transition', Esman/Telhami (eds.), *Organizations*, pp. 198-234.

⁵⁶⁷ Anstadt, *Servië*, p. 123.

concerning political and economic stability and human rights had been omitted in Yugoslavia's case, the floodgates would have then been opened to other countries that the Community was still excluding, such as Turkey. Moreover, this position would have deprived Brussels of the possibility of imposing entry requirements that probably would have been difficult to implement at a later point in time. The issue of whether the European Community should be prepared to import a certain degree of instability so as to prevent a more serious situation will remain a question that is certain to be frequently discussed in the future. At that point, it involved the antithesis between European Community stability and European security; it had become an issue following the fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

There is also Norbert Both's criticism that the West had supported the concept of territorial integrity '*ad absurdum*'.⁵⁶⁸ The question is whether there was any other possibility. Just as the West could not physically intervene in a sovereign nation so as to prevent civil war, it was also unable to promote the secession of republics within what was still a sovereign nation. For instance, at the beginning of June 1991 Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar had rejected the idea of sending UN observers to Slovenia with the argument that this area was not an independent member of the United Nations.⁵⁶⁹ The West's recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina under dramatically-altered circumstances certainly did not prevent the Serbs and Croats' use of violence.

This argument can be opposed by the rationale of David Gompert who was at that time closely involved with policy as the second highest official of the American National Security Council. He wrote: "Those who criticize the Bush administration for contributing to the conflict by favoring unity have yet to explain how favoring disunity would have prevented the conflict."⁵⁷⁰ Conversely, nothing was achieved by the Western insistence on emphasizing Yugoslavia's unity and striving for a confederal solution. Here, the question is whether more diplomacy would have helped the republics' leaders to reach agreement. '[C]ompromise wasn't in their lexicon', wrote the American ambassador Warren Zimmermann. The fact that Milosevic kept him waiting for ten months before receiving him was indicative of the prevailing attitude. In the summer of 1990, the Serbian president also refused to receive a delegation of seven American senators under the leadership of the Republican Bob Dole. The federal authorities admitted that they could no longer control Milosevic and his Kosovo policy. The fact that Milosevic was not susceptible to money and reason is demonstrated by a speech that he gave in November 1988:

"This is not a time for sorrow, it is a time for fighting. Serbia has become convinced of this over the last summer. This awareness has increased and has become a force that will stop the terror in Kosovo and will unite Serbia. No opposing force can halt this process; it is a process where all fear is weakness. The people are even prepared to live in poverty (...). We will win the battle for Kosovo no matter what obstacles we encounter either at home or abroad..."⁵⁷¹

The view that money could have succeeded here would be under-estimating the power of nationalism from the end of the 1980s. Nationalism's supporters prefer their own hell to someone else's heaven. Many Serbian leaders considered foreign governments and agencies to be their enemies. These included both the German government and the International Monetary Fund. The question here is whether they would have still knuckled under for loans, credit loans and donations to be given under certain conditions.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁸ Both, *Indifference*, p. 86.

⁵⁶⁹ Jakobsen, *Multilateralism*, p. 371.

⁵⁷⁰ Gompert, *Serbia*, p. 34.

⁵⁷¹ Ramet, *Milosevic*, p. 96. Quoted in Van den Heuvel, *Land*, pp. 100-101.

⁵⁷² Also Patricia Clough, 'Europe the Key To Yugoslavian Future', *The Independent*, 22/03/91.

The greatest problem in Yugoslavia was the sense of fear that accompanied the growing ethnic tension that was the result of economic decline. Many people felt unsafe. The Slovenes could still believe that they would be unaffected by the violence. But there was fear between the Croats and the Serbs, and the Bosnian Muslims were afraid of both groups.

Only a large-scale preventative deployment of troops could have probably ensured the desired security but that was still too much to ask of the world community in 1990 and 1991. It had more on its mind than Yugoslavia and also had strong views about national sovereignty.

Bearing all the arguments in mind, it is nonetheless possible to regret that in 1990 the international community did not have more resources at its disposal so as to remove the sting from the Yugoslav conflict. However, credit loans to guide the economic reform program did not help and there were no peace-keeping troops to prevent the outbreak of predictable crises.

But even if the international community's failings are accepted as a factor, the Yugoslav leadership must still bear a heavy responsibility. It starts with Tito's government that sacrificed so much for party monopoly and went on to such irresponsible projects as the 1974 Constitution along with uneconomic solutions that included the extensive decentralization of monetary policy and social politics. It continues with the leaders who failed to come up with more creative solutions to the economic and political problems in the years that followed Tito's death. And it concludes with the nationalist leaders, headed by Milosevic and Tadjman, who increased and exploited the ethnic tensions in an irresponsible way. Their number also includes the Slovenian leadership that found it all too easy to think: 'Après nous le déluge.'

Therefore, the West simply waited for Slovenia and Croatia to declare independence. The outside world would then have to come up with an *ad hoc* solution for the almost irreconcilable values of respecting territorial integrity on the one hand and sympathizing with the more democratic republics' right to self-rule on the other.