

Team leader: Dr. Vesna Pešić

Ethnic Mobilization in Serbia Country Specific Report

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1. Definitions of Nation and Ethnic Mobilization

Ideal-typical definitions of an ethnic nation, ethnic mobilization and ethnic politicisation (nationalism) are prerequisite for the purposes of this project. The textbook definitions of these phenomena were nearly absolutely replicated into reality during the wars that raged in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, especially in Serbia. To comprehend the issue of national minorities, one must first understand which national ideas predominated amongst the majority of people, their protagonists and on which nationalist ideologies they founded their states that emerged from the ruins of Yugoslavia. This paper shall focus on the ethnic nationalism that had developed in Serbia.

In the Balkans, a nation is predominantly perceived in terms of ethnicity and the Serbs are no exception. At times of crises and during the ethnic mobilization that began in the mid-1980s, the Serbian nation politicised its ethnic identity to such an extent that it reversed the degrees of modernisation and complexity it had previously achieved. In just a few years (from 1985 to 1991), it turned into an exclusive “us-group” that saw itself as a “natural” i.e. organic whole homogenised by the plebiscitary elected leader (Slobodan Milošević). The structure of its activity resembled the ancient tribal formula: leader-conationals-enemy¹ that was waging a war to salvage and unify the Serbian people and their “ethnic lands”. The politicisation of the Serbian ethnic identity provoked strong feelings of *resentment* towards other people with which they had lived in the same community; at one point, all other people were defined as the enemy threatening to destroy the Serbs. Ethnic integration was ensured by homogenising emotions on Serbian suffering, its sacrifices for and goodness to other people which had not responded in kind. Serbian ethnic mobilization (on which volumes have already been written) reflects all textbook features of politicised ethnic nations, including the strong affective (irrational) component that is easily aroused and mobilized by an authoritarian leader. If these features also comprise war as the most efficient way of *ethnifying* a nation, of drawing ethnic borders and consolidating the power of the leader and his ruling structures, it can safely be said that the wars the Serbs waged had precisely such a role. The cultural elite assumed upon itself the role of awakening the national awareness of the anguish and vulnerability of the Serbian people; it stoked the feeling of fury demanding revenge; it revived the national myths and memories of historical and unhealed traumas (the Kosovo myth about heroism and betrayal, the Serbs’ expulsion from Kosovo, the genocide they suffered in WWII, etc). Irrational fears and aggressiveness were fuelled by nearly all means of public communication, movies and theatre plays and a deluge of new historical interpretations of past events.

¹ More on ethnic structures in Aleksandar Molnar, *Narod, nacija, rasa (People, Nation, Race) in History of the Origin of Nationalism in Europe* (Belgrade Circle and APAKIT, Edition Krug, Belgrade, 1997).

Departing from the example of the Serbian nation, we propose the following definition of ethnic mobilization:

Ethnic mobilization is a *state-building* movement of a people led by an authoritarian leader who had succeeded in assuming control over the state apparatus, the media, the Church and the cultural elite, the involvement of which is prerequisite for achieving the emotional, cultural and political homogenisation of the nation's awareness of the common enemy war should be waged against.

Serbian ethnic mobilization aimed at state-building would not have been possible had the other people/minorities in the then Yugoslavia themselves not engaged in similar (state-building) ethnic mobilization in the same period (1986-1991). They nourished each other by entrenching themselves in polar i.e. extremist positions, whereby each nationalist movement could present the external ethnic threat as a real one. Recent research of the narratives of the Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Albanians shows each of these nations was telling its own *story*, perceiving itself as the victim of the other, accumulating its own fears and aggression, defining the other as the enemy.² It also shows that these nations identified the Serbs as the main threat to the achievement of their own national interests. However, this photograph of enmity was taken at the historical point when all nations had already been mobilized to create their own states. Nonetheless, the "Serbian threat" in the conscience of others was real because it was the *perceived* reality that guided action and, in turn, mobilized the Serbian people, corroborating their thesis of the others' hostility. The keys to under the "Serbian threat" lie in comprehending the complexity of Serbian nationalism and that of other nations at the time when all these nations launched their "state-building projects", the creation of their national states, of *Yugoslavia as a state* and its institutional mechanisms.

Yugoslavia as a *multinational* state (to be distinguished from the multiethnicity of liberal Western states) and its institutional structures, established to accommodate its *six recognised nations* by giving each nation its own state (republic), did not have the same meaning for all its nations. The more Yugoslavia ceded its sovereignty and delegated it to the republics, the greater was the threat to Serbian national interest. Serbs perceived Yugoslavia as the resolution of the Serbian national issue, as it achieved the national programme of unifying all Serbs in the same state. Therefore, Serbs had always held the centralist (and, thus, authoritarian) position and departed from it in their defence of Yugoslavia (i.e. the only way it could be defended as it was not a politically legitimate state), because Yugoslavia had been unstable from its inception due to the national aspirations of specific nations (and minorities, notably the Albanians) to set up their own independent states. This was especially true in the case of Croats and Albanians (as a minority) and later of the Slovenes. Paradoxically, the Serbs themselves contributed to Yugoslavia's

² Sabrina Ramet, *The Dissolution of Yugoslavia: Competing Narratives of Resentment and Blame* (Research team 2: The Dissolution of Yugoslavia, www.sla.purdue.edu/si).

instability precisely because they perceived it “as their own state”, because they “protected” it by advocating centralist and ideological policies that could potentially threaten the national aspirations of other nations to have their own states. Some nations imagined their states within Yugoslavia (Macedonians, Montenegrins, Bosnians) but on the condition that the existing “national balance” had to be preserved (i.e. that all nations stay rallied together to counter the prevalence of Serbs), while others expressed their aspirations to leave the common state, which *per se* undermined the balance established amongst the Yugoslav people.

Yugoslavia’s political order was moving towards greater sovereignty of the republics. Since the seventies, Yugoslavia represented an *ideological concept* conceived by the centralist and monopolistic Communist party. As this text will later elaborate, the Serbian leadership was displeased when, to accommodate the Albanian “nationality” in Kosovo, the autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) were granted (under the 1974 Constitution) the status of states very similar to the one enjoyed by the republics. However, the 1981 rebellion staged by the Albanian national movement under the slogan “Kosovo Republic” and demands that Kosovo should be recognised as a state with the right to self-determination, allowed the rise in nationalism amongst Serbs, who saw themselves as the *losers*. With Tito’s death and the global weakening of the communist system that had given Yugoslavia its identity and ensured some form of integration, the party-ideological centre began crumbling, seriously bringing into question this remaining integrative foothold of Yugoslavia.

In the early eighties, Yugoslavia faced a grave political and economic crisis,³ which could no longer be temporarily relieved as the leaderships of the republics and provinces were unable to agree on political system changes (discussions in the Political System Changes Commission had lasted for years but without result), and the huge debts burdening the country strengthened the individual (republican) plans to overcome the crisis by leaving Yugoslavia (Slovenia was the first to launch such a strategy). Leadership crisis was evident. After Tito died, the country could no longer have a president and the Presidency took over as the collective head of state, with republican and provincial Presidency members taking the chair in turn every year. It was in this context that the 1981 rebellion and the demands for a state of their own opened the Albanian issue, which, in turn, nearly automatically led to the opening of the Serbian issue (Serbia’s disintegration) and initiated the mobilization of the Serbian elite over the exodus of Serbs from Kosovo (“under pressure from Albanian nationalists”). Expression of Serbian nationalism immediately gave rise to other nationalisms, while the existing ones got corroboration of the “Serbian threat”. Moreover, one needs to take into account the situation in Vojvodina, the leadership of which had already begun building the province’s “statehood”. The uncertainty and crisis that enveloped Yugoslavia and the *ethnic crisis* in Serbia led to a turnabout in Serbian national

³ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy. Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (The Brookings Institution, 1995).

policy: the national elite abandoned the role of Yugoslavia's "keeper" and the accordingly defined national interest. Instead of "Yugoslavism", Serbian nationalism under the guidance of its leader (Slobodan Milošević) and the mobilized people launched its own "nation-building" programme to establish an adequate Serbian state, the borders of which did not coincide with those of the Republic of Serbia and would be drawn by war alone.

2. Institutional Crisis in Serbia as a Factor of Ethnic Mobilization

As already indicated, ethnic mobilization unfolded in Serbia in the mid-eighties with the opening of an inter-ethnic conflict between Serbs and Albanians about who would rule Kosovo. The roots of the conflict are deep and need not be elaborated here as the conflict has always taken the same form: two rival ethnic nations aspiring to rule Kosovo by predominating over the other.⁴ Throughout history, whichever of them seized power would resort to force, grave human rights violations, discrimination and expulsion of the other. Relations between Serbs and Albanians were thus built on a series of cycles of oppression and revenge for prior injustices, each of them defining the other as the enemy. Each nation has been guided by the idea that Kosovo had to be "liberated" from the other. Indeed, such attempts were made in both world wars, and more recently, during the NATO air strikes in 1999, when Milošević's regime aimed to expel the majority of Albanians and thus "resolve" the Kosovo issue (the practice of "ethnic cleansing" it resorted to in Bosnia- Herzegovina and the one Tuđman opted for in "addressing" the Serbian issue in Croatia by driving most Serbs out of Croatia during the "Storm" and "Lightning" operations). When the intervention ended with the Albanians' return and takeover of Kosovo (with the help of international military forces), it was now the Serbs' turn to flee, another recurrence of the same pattern of revenge, hostility and force.

When another in the series of conflicts over power over Kosovo erupted in the early eighties, it was initially defined in line with the old ideological key, as "counter-revolution of Albanian separatists". This definition of the situation could not be maintained for long both because ideological phrases had lost their power without the supreme arbiter (Tito and Party) and because Serbia's constitutional crisis to be elaborated below had already opened.⁵

2.1. Constitutional Crisis in Serbia

⁴ Srđa Popović, Dejan Janča and Tanja Petovar (eds.), *Kosovo Knot: Untie or Cut*. (Report by an independent commission on the state of human rights in Kosovo. Authors of texts: Srđa Popović, Ivan Janković, Vesna Pešić, Nataša Kandić, Svetlana Slapšak, Belgrade, 1990). The Commission set the diagnosis that Kosovo has been governed by a model of domination practiced by both ethnic communities.

⁵ Most of this part of the analysis is reproduced from: Vesna Pešić "The War for Ethnic States", pp. 9-50, in Nebojša Popov (ed.), *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis* (CEU Press, Central European University Press, 2000).

As already indicated, the communist party could no longer be considered the eternal guarantor of Yugoslavia. Serbs perceived the disappearance of the “party power”, the foundation of Yugoslav integration, as a threat to Serbian national interests and the “infidelity” of the other nations which had decided to go their separate ways. “In each Serb member of the peoples’ liberation movement there is a conviction that new Yugoslavia is becoming an internationally founded federation in which the ideological principle is primarily national”. This conviction was “testified to in Yugoslavism as a formula of inter-nationalism right up to 1974 (...) with the majority of Serbs as the kernel of national and state consciousness...”.⁶ That uncertainty was enhanced by the existing constitutional arrangement which defined Yugoslavia as an “agreed state” of republics and provinces. Yugoslav sovereignty had been snatched up and dispersed among the republics and provinces.⁷

The established symmetry of the republics and provinces and the centre, which had been divided under the same principle and reduced to party ideology, left no room for maintaining the old balance between the Serb “inter-nationalist” position (which had counted on Serbian paternalism) and the “particularist” position of other ethnic groups/republics/provinces opposing the centre by strengthening republican rule. The weakening of the communist authoritarian rule was leading Yugoslavia towards a confederation (or disintegration) along the existing republican and provincial borders. The Serbian political and cultural elite did not accept such a future, assessing that Serbia would suffer grave damage from “confederal institutional inertia” in the “denouement years” (secession of its provinces that would follow the same principle applied by the other republics) and the transformation of the Serbian people into *minorities* in the future states and thus the collapse of the national idea of all Serbs living together in one state. The justification for mobilization of the Serbian people to change the *status quo* was paradoxically found in the Constitution, under which the peoples and not the republics had the right to self-determination.

However, the immediate source of Serbian dissatisfaction lay in the constitutional difficulties to establish the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia. Although the institutional system established in 1974 prescribed the “nativisation” of all nations within their own territorial (republican) confines, Serbia was frustrated in that endeavour. Under the 1974 Constitution, it was not a “sovereign” negotiating party like all the other republics, as its provinces, too, enjoyed “sovereignty”. In the context of the 1981 Albanian rebellion, this fact became the immediate motive for the gradual growth of an all-Serbian movement for a national state.

The 1974 Constitution gave the provinces almost identical rights and responsibilities as the republics. At the federal level, the provinces had veto

⁶ Dobrica Ćosić, *Velika obmana srpskog naroda* (Major Delusion of the Serbian Nation) (*Politika*, January, 1991).

⁷ Zoran Đinđić, *Jugoslavija kao nedovršena država* (Yugoslavia as an Unfinished State) (Književna zajednica, Novi Sad, 1988), p. 20.

power, equal representation in the collective head of state (SFRY Presidency) and could advocate their own interests without consultation with the Republic of Serbia, which, in practice, they as a rule opposed. If all republics were sovereign states and represented their whole territories, Serbia clearly did not enjoy such a status. In terms of ethnic demography, this meant that Serbia's representatives at the federal level could speak only on behalf of the 42% of Serbs living in Serbia.⁸

Alongside Serbia's weaker position vis-à-vis the other republics, the position of "Serbia Proper" within the Republic was also weaker vis-à-vis the provinces. The provinces could take decisions on "Serbia Proper" in the Serbian Assembly, whereas Serbia Proper could not have a say in provincial decisions. Serbia Proper, which was at the time called "Serbia without the Autonomous Provinces", was not defined in the Constitution as Serbia was not (nor?) federalised in the true sense of the word. The provinces had seized all the attributes of statehood - legislative, judicial and executive powers - even those the Constitution had not afforded (granted?) them.⁹ The provinces amended their Constitutions independently, maintained relations with foreign countries (Kosovo mostly with Albania) and had their own territorial defence; laws were adopted by consensus of all three units. If the provincial parliaments did not endorse the proposed laws, they would apply only in "Serbia Proper". This situation had already been established by the constitutional amendments in 1968.

Very soon after the adoption of the 1974 Constitution, the Serbian leadership demanded that the status of the Republic of Serbia changed. So, why was it not changed immediately, when the anomalies in Serbia's status were evident? Because the other Federation members could not achieve the required unanimity on this issue.¹⁰ In 1976, the Serbian leadership proposed amending Serbia's constitutional status in a way which would integrate the provinces into the republic (but not abolish them), by determining united competence for the whole republic, without which Serbia was unable to function as a state. The document justifying the request for regulating Serbia's status, dubbed "the Blue Book", was not made public until 1990. The authors of the "Blue Book" raised the issue of how the status of the Serbian nation would be established in the Yugoslav Federation as a whole in the context of Serbia's increasing disintegration and whether the Serbian people could exercise their historical right on an equal footing with the other Yugoslav peoples in keeping with the

⁸ Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984), p. 336. Connor believes that the intention of Yugoslavia's Communist party was "to gerrymander the Serbian community" that was constitutionally recognized "within the new Serbian Republic as well". In order to achieve a balance between Croatia and Serbia, provinces were created in Serbia alone. Connor stresses that the Serbian community in Serbia was reduced by one-fifth (i.e. 1,1 million people).

⁹ More in Sabina Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia - 1962-1992* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indianapolis, second edition, 1992), pp. 76-78.

¹⁰ Sabina Ramet is of the view that the provinces were equated with the republics with the wholehearted support of Slovenia and Croatian nationalists, who were in power at the time these amendments were adopted (late sixties). *Ibid.* p. 76.

principle of self-determination enshrined in the Constitution. The document was met “with daggers drawn” by the other republics, especially in the provinces. It was qualified as nationalistic, although it did not have that tone about it.

This situation persisted in the 1980s, but now in the context of growing ethnic tensions in Kosovo. The then pro-reformist Serbian leadership headed by Ivan Stambolić invested great efforts in bringing about a change in the status of Serbia and the provinces with the consent of all Federation members. However, it took a long time to open this discussion; the delay began to be perceived as nationalistic in Serbia, as part of the “anti-Serbian” coalition, opening door to hardliners in the military, police and party circles. In the context of the Kosovo 1981 protests demanding the status of a state and “constituent nation” (i.e. right to self-determination), the issue of Serbia’s status became the pre-eminent political issue, the one on which political careers were made or broken.

3. Processes and Protagonists of Ethnic Mobilization

There were protagonists of Serbian nationalism in all parts of society. Ethnic mobilization may best be described as a *Serbian national revolution*, in which all strata of society participated, converging *en masse* at rallies and demanding amendments to the Serbian Constitution.

The development of Serbian ethnic mobilization can be divided into three stages:

Stage one of ethnic mobilization of the Serbian people was initiated by the precarious status of Serbs in Kosovo, who had been moving out of the Province for decades. These migrations were interpreted as “emigration under pressure” because of the injustices incurred upon Serbs and violations of their rights by the Albanian authorities. The fact that the migrations and the high birth rate amongst the Albanians were altering the demography of Kosovo gave rise to even greater concern. The Serbian nationalist reaction was reflected in the production of negative emotions towards the Albanians, arousing feelings of sorrow, fear and anger because of the persecution of the Serbian population from Kosovo. This campaign was spearheaded by the members of the cultural elite, mostly writers rallied in the Association of Writers of Serbia, and the Serbian Orthodox Church. These two groups contributed the most to the revival of the Kosovo myth as the “spiritual inspiration” of the nationalist movement for the rights of the Serb people in Kosovo threatened by the Albanian majority and driven from hearth and home. Assessments of reasons why Serbs were leaving Kosovo differed. Serbs insisted they were being expelled (“emigration under pressure”), while Albanians were claiming the Serbs were moving out for economic reasons. This mobilization stage in which the main roles were played by intellectuals, ended with the *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (SANU), a national programme document declaring Serbs in Kosovo were subject to genocide paving the way for nation-building

nationalism, conflicts with the other republics and helping politically mobilize the people for the abolition of provinces and the installation of an authoritarian regime in Serbia.

The jeopardy the Serbs were in became the flavour of the day, interpreted through the revival of a deep mythical identity at the core of which lay *Kosovo mythology* of Serbian suffering that has persevered from the Battle of Kosovo (in 1389) to this day. The protagonists, for their part, neglected that the Albanian unrest “reflected the suppressed feeling of frustration, universal amongst Albanians, because their province had not been granted the status of a republic, which was perceived as the South Slavs’ discrimination against them as Albanians”.¹¹ Instead of taking into consideration the complaints of both the Serbs and Albanians and breaking the pattern of mutual domination, Serbian nationalism opted for precisely the opposite: it explicitly decided to address the problem by establishing its “own” ethnic rule over Kosovo. This implied that Albanians should regain the status they had had before they were granted autonomy under the 1974 Constitution, which considerably improved their status both in political and other social structures. The process of Kosovo’s Albanization had to be halted by inversion: instead of the Serbs, the Albanians would again be in jeopardy.

Amongst the numerous Serb complaints, many of which were founded, public focus fell on the emigration of Serbs under pressure from Albanian nationalists, who were allegedly intending to create an *ethnically clean* Kosovo. Statistical data showed that Serbs had been intensively moving out of the province since 1966, i.e. when the Albanians took control of the institutions in Kosovo. In the 1941-1981 period, 105,000 Serbs emigrated from Kosovo, more than half of them in the sixties. Another 26,000 Serbs moved out in the 1982-1988 period, so that the total number of Kosovo Serb *émigrés* accounted for one-third of the initial Serb population in the province.¹² The extent of Serbs’ emigration from Kosovo is even more apparent when one compares their share in Kosovo’s population before and after their intensive migrations: 1948 - 23.6%, 1953 - 23.6% 1961 - 23.5% 1981 - 13.2% and 1991 - 9.9 %.¹³

Research shows that Albanians, too, emigrated from Kosovo. When one takes both facts into account, one finds that migrations of both Serbs and Albanians from Kosovo have been part of the general social and ethnic context in the

¹¹ Jasna Dragović-Soso, “*Spasioci Nacije*”. *Intelektualna opozicija Srbije i oživljavanje nacionalizma* (“Saviours of the Nation”. Intellectual Opposition in Serbia and Revival of Nationalism) (Fabrika knjiga, Belgrade, 2006), p. 177.

¹² Marina Blagojević, “Migrations of Serbs from Kosovo” in Nebojša Popov (ed.), *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis* (CEU Press, Central European University Press, 2000). Blagojević asserts that the Kosovo Albanians’ high birth rate and their weak mobility was the context in which the Serbs migrated. She maintains that the correlation between ethnic domination, the numbers and migrations of both ethnic groups has been corroborated time and again in different historical periods.

¹³ Srđan Bogosavljević, „Statistička slika srpsko-albanskih odnosa”, in *Sukob ili dijalog* (1994), (Statistical Picture of Serbian-Albanian Relations, in the collection *Conflict or Dialogue*), p. 23.

province i.e. “They were only a segment of the migration swings which have characterised the pendulum of Serbian-Albanian relations in the province.”¹⁴

Albanian demonstrations and the Serbs’ migrations from Kosovo created an atmosphere of urgency in Serbia - that something had to be done to salvage the Serbian people. Every day, the newspapers ran stories of Serbian “martyrs” suffering from the terror of the Albanian enemy,¹⁵ which had been driving Serbs out by violence, by committing crimes such as rape,¹⁶ murder and robbery, by desecrating Serbian graves and exerting other various forms of pressure for which it goes unpunished because it is protected by *their own government*. Not even the repression employed against the Albanian rebels, the military occupation of Kosovo or the incarceration of hundreds of Albanians¹⁷ altered the assessment that the Serbs in Kosovo were having an increasingly hard time because their migrations had not halted.

The main role in defining the situation in Kosovo was assumed by a movement of Kosovo Serbs that enjoyed the support of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) and the Serbian intelligentsia. Their “Petition 2016” reeked of extremist nationalism and indicated the general direction Serbia’s policy would take. The petition comprised 15 points. The authors demanded that Serbia should be ensured the same “statehood” as the other republics enjoyed, that the Albanian state symbols no longer be displayed in Kosovo, that Serbo-Croatian be recognised as the official language, that all Albanians who had immigrated from Albania since 1941 are banished, and that all contracts on sale of Serbian real estate to Albanians be declared null and void. They asserted that “part of Yugoslav territory is under the occupation of Fascists ethnically cleansing the territory by genocide”. This assessment was generalised by the following words

¹⁴ Marina Blagojević distinguishes three periods in which Albanians and Serbs alternately dominated over each other in Kosovo: the first period, from 1945 to 1966, during which the Serbs predominated, was characterised by major human rights violations stemming from the communist authorities’ distrust of the Albanians who had rebelled in Kosovo after WWII with the aim of annexing Kosovo to Albania; the second period, from 1966 to the late 1980s, during which the Serbian community was discriminated against, and which ended with the abolition of Kosovo’s autonomy; and, the third period, from the late 1980s until the NATO air strikes, characterised by total Serbian domination. Another, fourth period should be added to the above three, the one that began with the deployment of the international military forces under the Kumanovo Agreement (1999) and was marked by Albanian domination, which coincided with new Serb migrations from Kosovo. *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Not all intellectuals in Serbia embraced these interpretations. Liberal circles in Belgrade defined the problem as one of democracy and human rights of both Albanians and Serbs. This debate had given rise to the Report by an independent commission on the state of human rights Kosovo, published in the publication *Kosovo Knot: Untie or Cut*, discussed in Belgrade together with Albanian representatives in the Human Rights Forum.

¹⁶ My research of rape in Kosovo shows that none of the rapes that occurred since 1987 were „multi-ethnic”, i.e. there were no rapes of Serb women by Albanians, although such cases were mentioned all the time. Under enormous public pressures over the rapes of „Serbian women” a new form of the crime of rape was introduced in criminal law and it was committed if the rapist and the victim were „of different nationalities”. Moreover, incidence of rape had always been lower in Kosovo than in any other Yugoslav republic and most rapes that had occurred in Kosovo were committed within the same ethnic group. See: *Kosovo Knot: Untie or Cut, ibid.*

¹⁷ Ivan Janković, *Kosovo Knot: Untie or Cut, op. cit.* p. 63.

“the jeopardy the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija have found themselves in denotes the absolute jeopardy in which the Serbian people as a whole have found themselves in”.¹⁸ The petition was published by *Književne novine* (December 1985). In April/May 1986, the Association of Writers of Serbia organized nine protest writers’ evenings devoted to Kosovo. In March the same year, after a three-day debate about books about Kosovo and the situation in Kosovo, attended also by representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church, a new coalition was forged between the intelligentsia, the radical SPC officials and some politicians attending these gatherings.¹⁹ These groups presented themselves as the ‘opposition to the regime’, criticising it for not taking rapid and harsher measures to protect Serbs in Kosovo. The Serbian leadership that was against “fast solutions” in Kosovo was soon toppled, in 1987. Extremely conservative forces in the League of Communists of Serbia spearheaded by Slobodan Milošević took over.

Kosovo Serbs came in organized droves to Belgrade to voice their complaints, threatening to move out of Kosovo collectively unless Belgrade took steps and enabled the republican authorities to assume control of the province. The complaints were always directed at bringing about constitutional amendments that would establish a united Serbia, which meant a change in the *ethnic domination* in Kosovo. Indeed, that was how the problem was defined: its cause lay in the fact that “they” were in power in Kosovo and the only way to remedy the “ethnic cleansing of Serbs” was to restore “our” (Serbian) domination in the province. The Kosovo Serbs and the Belgrade intellectual elite no longer tolerated the definition of the situation as “counter-revolution” nor did they accept the symmetry of equal “danger of nationalism” that had prevailed in the socialist Yugoslavia. Serbs were falling victim *because they were Serbs*, Serbs were the victims and the Albanians were to blame.

The role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in homogenising the Serbian people, from Kosovo to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, must not be ignored. In April 1982, twenty one priests signed an “Appeal” addressed to the topmost Serbian and Federation state bodies (and the supreme SPC authority, the Synod), raising their voices to protect the spiritual and biological corps of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija.”²⁰ Ever since, hardly any issue of the SPC heralds *Pravoslavlje* or *Glas crkve* has not focussed on Kosovo. However, already in 1984, their focus moved to genocide, the plight of Serbs in the (WWII Quisling) Independent State of Croatia (NDH) and the Jasenovac concentration camp. In the latter half of the 1980s, these mouthpieces broadened their focus, by publishing articles on the threats Serbian people in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were being exposed to; the SPC also contributed to the

¹⁸ Jasna Dragović-Soso, *Spasioci nacije* (Saviours of the Nation), p. 207.

¹⁹ More in Drinka Gojković, “The Birth of Nationalism from the Spirit of Democracy”, in *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, *op. cit.* pp. 327- 350. See also: Jasna Dragović-Soso, *Spasioci nacije* (Saviours of the Nation), *op.cit.* The whole study is devoted to the role of intellectuals in generating Serbian nationalism with regard to events in Kosovo in the eighties.

²⁰ See Olga Zirojević, „Kosovo in the Collective Memory”, in *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, *op. cit.* pp. 189-211.

homogenisation (rallying round the Serbian flag) by endorsing calls for changing the Serbian Constitution and with its celebration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo.²¹ The SPC played the role of advance party. It would open a new aspect of the “Serbian issue” before it made the agenda of the politicians (e.g. by organizing a procession with the relics of Prince Lazar across Bosnia-Herzegovina as a way of marking the future borders of a Greater Serbia).

The revival of the Kosovo myth included the regeneration of the “Kosovo oath” symbolising revenge for the historical defeat and loss of state. According to the Kosovo myth, revenge derives from two self-perceptions - that of martyrdom and bravery, of the victim and righteous winner. The revival of the Kosovo myth had a strong homogenising effect unifying the people, the Church, the intellectual elite and authoritarian leader. Literary texts on the topic of Kosovo have continuously been present in Serbian literature and arts; as of the eighties, however, when Serbian mobilization began in Kosovo, an unprecedented deluge of texts on the issue ensued. For, the “dismal situation in Kosovo - conceived, nourished and sustained intentionally - caused sorrow and fury in the soul of everyone with a soul, and even more in the soul of a poet who usually has naught but a soul.”²² Poets established a link between Kosovo of the past and Kosovo of the present, a link like no other before it (...). Contemporary poets described past and present migrations as a “single whole, perceiving them in the centre of the endless Serbian tragedy...”.

In 1989, the year when the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo was marked, the Kosovo theme was enriched by the motif of *betrayal*, one of the two key motifs of the Kosovo legend. Battle of Kosovo symbols were brandished at rallies, the “happenings of the people” who were demanding amendments to the Serbian Constitution. One author said that in the “several-month finale of the battle for the Constitution and restoration of the rights and freedoms to the endangered non-Albanian people in Kosovo and Metohija, indicate the very spirit of the Kosovo myth founded on the moral triumph of the victim and non-acceptance of subjugation’ because to the Serbian people, Kosovo is the confirmation and seal of its identity, the key allowing it to understand the message of its history and the link with authentic Serbian statehood (...).”

Over a million people gathered at the site of the Battle of Kosovo at Kosovo Field. They celebrated not only the Battle of Kosovo, but the “unification of Serbia” (abolition of provinces announced by the leader) as well. On the occasion, Slobodan Milošević said that there was discord amongst Serbs once, discord that led to defeat and humiliation. “Now, six centuries later, we are again in battle and facing new battles. They are still not armed battles, but even battles of that kind cannot be ruled out. Regardless of how they are

²¹ More on the role of the Church during all stages of the Serbian ethnic mobilization, Kosovo, the constitutional amendments, to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Radmila Radić, „The Church and the ‘Serbian Question’”, *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, op. cit. pp. 247-274.

²² Olga Zirojević, „Kosovo in the Collective Memory”, *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, op. cit.

fought, however, the battles cannot be won without determination, courage and devotion.”

The announcements of new battles in 1989 “when Serbia became a whole” and its provinces’ autonomy was revoked were forgotten and mobilization for the protection of “the endangered Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina” ensued. Kosovo was ceded to the Serbian administration; Albanians lost their jobs and began creating their own parallel society in all walks of life: education, health, economy and politics. They set up their own parties and elected Ibrahim Rugova their president.

Stage two of ethnic mobilization was political. It began with Slobodan Milošević besting his opponents at the infamous 8th session of the League of Communists of Serbia on 23 September 1987. The main protagonists at the session were the plebiscitarily elected leader of the nation, the mobilized people “happening” at rallies, demanding amendments to the Serbian Constitution and abolition of provincial powers. The people were saying what the leader was thinking and he, in turn, need not say anything as the people were speaking instead of him. At one of these numerous rallies, a well-known writer gave a vivid description of the situation in Serbia, saying that “the people happened to it”. Ardent crowds at the rallies, covertly steered by secret police services, were officially called the “anti-bureaucratic revolution”. Informally, it was perceived as a *national revolution*. Guised as a popular movement, its goal was to topple the Kosovo and Vojvodina authorities by employing non-institutional means. The “anti-bureaucratic revolution”, aiming to put Milošević’s men in the key provincial posts to support the amendments to the Serbian Constitution, began in 1988 and ended with the celebration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo on 28 June 1989. This date can be taken as the beginning of Stage 3 of Serbian nationalism for the unification of all Serbs in one state.

Media, notably the Belgrade daily *Politika*, played the key role in this stage. They turned into the propaganda tool of the national revolution and served to consolidate Slobodan Milošević’s authoritarian regime.²³

At the time, millions of people converged at political rallies spreading “the truth about Kosovo”. Nationalistic euphoria was obvious to the naked eye and every day. The most important day of the “anti-bureaucratic revolution” was the 5th October, when the masses surrounded the Novi Sad headquarters of the League of Communists Provincial Committee, throwing triangular cartons of yoghurt and milk at it until the provincial leadership gave in and resigned. This event is remembered as the ‘yoghurt revolution’.²⁴ The main organizer of the “yoghurt revolution” was Kosovo Serb leader Miroslav Šolević, who, helped by

²³ Much has been written about the role of the media and how they operated at the time, wherefore this text will not elaborate how Milošević took control of the media or on the “media war” waged for a whole decade, practically until Milošević was ousted. See the excellent research by Aleksandar Nenadović, Rade Veljanovski, Snježana Milivojević and Zoran M. Marković in *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, *op. cit.* and Mark Thompson, *Forging War* (Article 19, International Centre Against Censorship, 1994).

²⁴ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (Penguin Books, 1995), p. 60.

his Montenegrin family links and the secret police, led the people to topple the “bureaucratic authorities” in Vojvodina. Such groups from Kosovo were Milošević’s main tools and similar groups sprang up in other parts of Serbia. Montenegro was next. The scenario was the same: people would rally, demanding the resignations of the “bureaucrats”. Milošević’s first attempt to oust the Montenegrin leadership failed; the next large-scale demonstrations he staged in early 1989 against the “bureaucratic” (or, more precisely “anti-Serbian”) authorities in this republic, however, succeeded. Exporting the “revolution” to Montenegro was aimed at changing the balance of forces in the Federation: with two provinces and Montenegro under control, Milošević had four votes in the Federation, whereas he previously had one - that of Serbia Proper (the provinces had, as a rule, voted against Serbia at the federal level). Milošević’s scenario for Kosovo was similar, but encountered many difficulties. The party leadership in Kosovo was ousted in November 1998, and replaced by another that was believed to be willing to follow Milošević’s orders. However, the situation in Kosovo was tense because the Albanians would not relinquish their autonomy. The vast majority of Albanians would respond to each of Milošević’s move by staging large-scale demonstrations. The ouster of Kaćuša Jašari and Azem Vlasi, who were opposed to the abolition of autonomy, sparked massive demonstrations in support of the national leadership and against Belgrade. The police and army dispersed the protests, but those were the last demonstrations that ended without any blood shed. The aim was to have the Kosovo Assembly endorse the constitutional changes, something all Albanians were opposed to; miners staged a strike in the mine of Stari trg. Finally, surrounded by tanks, with JNA’s help, the Kosovo Assembly voted the amendments in, but Yugoslavia was practically dissolved.²⁵

With *en masse* Albanian demonstrations on the streets, miners on strike at Stari trg and Milošević calling for a state of emergency in Kosovo, the Slovene leadership stood up on behalf of the miners and supported the Albanian demands. This led to a dramatic conflict between Serbia and Slovenia (which will not be elaborated in this text). Serbian nationalism spread to the Federal arena to clash with the leaderships of the Yugoslav republics to which Milošević failed to export the “anti-bureaucratic revolution”.

3.1. What had Actually Happened in Serbia?

Amidst the ambiguities regarding the urgent resolution of the Kosovo and Serbian national issues, the conservative ruling apparatus in 1987 organized a *putsch* in the Serbian party, putting it into the hands of the most conservative elements personified by Slobodan Milošević. The military did not conceal their support, with JNA’s most influential official, General Ljubičić, supporting the

²⁵ After Milošević vowed in a speech that the constitutional changes would be adopted legally or illegally, peacefully or by force, Slovene President Milan Kučan said: “Then this is the end of Yugoslavia”.

8th session of the League of Communists of Serbia and Milošević personally.²⁶ It would be hasty to conclude that such a support had nationalistic motives in its background. JNA functioned practically as the military wing of the Communist Party. It was highly politicised and indoctrinated.²⁷ There was a strong and influential Party organization within the Army, and it was only natural that such organization would give its support to the conservative elements under the circumstances of erosion of the communist system and ideology. In addition, JNA preserved its multinational structure even when the conflict already embarked, and the first victims on its side were not Serbian soldiers, but soldiers from other republics (Macedonians and Montenegrins). With the dissolution of the state, and with national homogenization of the Army that emerged from such development, motives of preservation of communist system were replaced with ethnic and national aspirations.

The victory over the moderate wing of the Serbian communists, *which was not nationalist*, was sealed by accusing it that it had betrayed (Tito's) personality cult i.e. national interests. After the 8th session of the LC of Serbia, Milošević (with the ample support of the intellectual elite) did away with his opposition, consolidating his power and getting a *carte blanche* to give the Serbian national issue primacy over all other issues, even over the democratic changes enveloping Eastern Europe.

Contrary to these developments, Serbia saw the merging of two authoritarian tracks: the defence of real socialism and the resolution of the Serbian national issue. A new formula that no longer distinguished between the ideologies of communism and nationalism was forged. Thus, Serbia never saw the toppling of the old regime, as the "moderate" communists were driven out and the new democratic forces did not stand a chance. This formula provided the old ruling apparatus with new sources of energy ensuring its survival, by drawing from the bottomless well of Serbian national frustrations. The Army was the most active in this respect, with its confidential "situation assessments" in which the reformers were perceived as agents of the "New World Order" aiming to prevent "Socialism from correcting its mistakes and demonstrating its strength".²⁸ The West and Europe were qualified as Yugoslavia's enemies because they were behind the collapse of Socialism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the state and military force the military had relied on. By defending Yugoslavia from all the other peoples that lived in it (except the

²⁶ More on Gen. Ljubičić's role in Slavoljub Đukić, *Između slave i anateme - Politička biografija Slobodana Miloševića* (Between Fame and Anathema - Political Biography of Slobodan Milošević) (Filip Višnjić, Belgrade, 1994), p. 35.

²⁷ One of the primal concerns of the Slovenian leadership during the negotiations for reform of the Yugoslav state was depoliticizing the Army, as it was perceived as greatest threat for secessionist aspirations of this republic. Milan Kučan, then president of the Republic of Slovenia, often urged for depolitization of JNA on the meetings of collective Presidency of SFRY. See for instance stenogram of 96th meeting of the Presidency held on 13 February, 1991 (transcript in Momir Bulatović, *ICTY vs. Slobodan Milošević - Neizgovorena odbrana* (ICTY vs. Slobodan Milošević, Unexpressed Defence) (Zograf, ETRA, Niš-Podgorica, 2006), p. 29.

²⁸ Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada - Vojska bez države* (My View of the Break-up - Army without a State) (Politika-izdavačka delatnost, Belgrade, 1993), p. 13.

Serbs) and branding them enemy, the JNA was an important factor that pushed Serbia into an antidemocratic revolution, another name for the war they would wage together. Thus, a powerful and efficient coalition was forged, a coalition between the extremist nationalists in the Serbian Orthodox Church and the intelligentsia, the ideological avant-garde, and the conservatives in the party, secret police and military apparati. The latter latched onto the “nationalist train”, thus surviving the global collapse of communism.

Stage three of ethnic mobilization comprised the preparations for and launch of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and was literally conducted by *television and other media*. The actions were directed toward dehumanization of the “enemy”, recollection of atrocities that occurred to the Serbian people in the past, and justification of the Serbian cause of the “defensive struggle for survival”.

The propaganda machine kept recalling the horrors of earlier wars and atrocities, *inter alia*, by depriving the next-door neighbours of yesterday of their human face, by calling them derogatory names from the past. So, all Croats became “Ustashe”, all Serbs “Chetniks” and all Muslims “Turks” or “Balias”.²⁹

In this vein, even before the war in the territory of the former Yugoslavia broke out, the Serbian media began its panicky messages and harangues, warning of a new awakening of the “Ustasha movement” in Croatia and of a conspiracy to create “an Islamic Republic” in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Historical recollections of the genocide against Serbs in Croatia perpetrated during the Second World War were broadcasted daily on state television³⁰ and on other government controlled media by the and the ruling party.³¹ One of the first actions of the

²⁹ See Omer Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide and Modern Identity* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 140.

³⁰ E.g., during 1991, prime time news at 19.30, together with the “Addition to the news” (*Dnevnikov dodatak*) were lasting up to 150 minutes.

³¹ «Genocide is one of the most inhuman, dishonest and least democratic actions. It was committed in World War II in Croatia (in the then Independent state of Croatia) by Ustasha against Serbs, Jews and Roma. No one can resurrect those who died at Jasenovac, Staro Sajmište, Jadovno and in other extermination camps and prisons, and it will take just a small gesture of goodwill ... to prove once again that the Croatian authorities do not accept the ideology of genocide», Dr Stojan Adašević, *Politika*, 5 March 1990... “The myth of the Ustasha movement is born again. This must worry all Yugoslavs irrespective of their ethnicity, religion or political opinion. Croats must be concerned too, and not just the Serb population of that Republic. Repetition of 1941 is not possible, however, bloodletting is...” Dara Slobotka-Peleš, *Politika*, 22 May 1990. “The Serbs of Serbia know very little what the Ustasha ideology means... Hence, the Serbians do not understand that ideology, the Ustasha one. They should know that it is based on a very simple calculation that a third of Serbs should be killed, a third converted to Catholicism and a third deported...”, said Ilija Petrović of the Serb National Council for Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem speaking on Channel 1 of Radio-Television Belgrade on a special programme called »Croatian Serbs«, ...He who wants to be Turkish, may be Turkish, but everyone (...) who walks this Raška (Serb old heartland) land and holds a Turkish, Albanian or Ustasha banner, any other but the Serb banner, will be left both without the banner and the arm...», Vuk Drašković addressing a rally in Novi Pazar, Evening News at 7.30 p.m., RTS, Channel 1, September 1990. See Lazar Lalić, *Tri TV godine u Srbiji* (Three Television Years in Serbia) (Nezavisni sindikat medija (Independent Media Trade Union), Belgrade, 1995), p. 17. See also Milošević trial (ICTY) expert report of Renaud de la Brosse, *Political Propaganda and*

clique around Slobodan Milošević was to take control of *Politika*, at that time the most prestigious daily newspaper in Serbia. For a long time *Politika* ran a permanent column "Odjeci i reagovanja" (Echoes and Reactions), featuring countless short stories aimed at creating a view that Serbia had been always neglected and the Serbs had been victims since time began. The impact of this column was significant, *inter alia*, because it relied heavily on contributions by writers having highly respected academic qualifications and titles.³² This type of propaganda, which because of its psychological effects in Nazi Germany is remembered under its German name, as *Greuelpropaganda*, is a well known method of mobilizing people for action, both preventive and retaliatory.³³ For, the ethnic enemy is dangerous and incurable; the ethnic enemy should be deterred and his cause irreparably damaged.

The symbolism of the word "Jasenovac" played a role in the events of September 1990. At that time, a new generation of Serbs, half a century after that concentration camp was established, invited people to congregate on the site of the Memorial erected to remember the victims of Jasenovac. Television Belgrade reported the event by saying that the Croatian authorities had done everything possible to prevent it from taking place. Nevertheless, people converged on the other bank of the River Sava, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was there that prominent Serb politicians of that time called the people to prepare to defend themselves.³⁴

the Plan to Create 'A State For All Serbs:' Consequences of using media for ultra-nationalist ends, pp. 34, 35.

³² All contributions to the newspaper column „Među nama" (Between ourselves) have been collected and presented on a compact disc by Aljoša Mimica and Rabina Vučetić, *Vreme kada je narod govorio* (Time when people spoke out) (*Politika - Odjeci i reagovanja*, July 1988- March 1991, Humanitarian Law Center, 2001).

³³ Among the many scholarly and quasi-scholarly publications that saw the light of day then, the most extensive was the four-volume book by Milan Bulajić, *The Ustasha Crimes of Genocide and the Trial of Andrija Artuković I-IV* (Rad, Belgrade, 1988-1989). Andrija Artuković was the Interior Minister of the Pavelić government in the „Independent State of Croatia" and is considered as one of the most notorious criminals among the leading Ustasha. After the war, he managed to emigrate to the United States, where he was sighted and recognized. The then government of the FPR of Yugoslavia requested his extradition in 1951. Artuković successfully argued for a long time that he was wanted allegedly for political reasons. He was finally extradited to the Yugoslav authorities in 1986 under the Serbian-American Extradition Treaty of 1901. Under this old-fashioned Treaty, extradition was allowed only in the cases of criminal acts enumerated in the Treaty, excluding for obvious reasons the crime of genocide. That was why Artuković could only be tried in Zagreb as a common murderer. He was convicted. However, an impression was created in Belgrade that failure to charge him with genocide was the result of an agreement with the Croatian authorities and that it was yet another insult to the persecuted and killed Serbs. Bulajić's book as a whole revolves around that proposition. See Vojin Dimitrijević, "Andrija Artuković's Extradition Case", *Review of International Affairs* (No. 862/1986, Belgrade), pp. 11-13.

³⁴ Radovan Karadžić: »The aim of the Croatian separatist movements is to split the Serbian people. But what they all must know is that to attack the Knin Serbs and the other Serbs in Croatia, will inevitably provoke the reaction of Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbs living in other areas. Croatian politicians claim that Bosnia and Herzegovina belongs in Croatia because the roads are better there. We are aware that roads leading to Serbia have not been built, but now we know the reason why: to make it possible for Croatian politicians to say that

The outbreak of the conflict in Croatia itself on 1 May 1991 was described by RTV Novi Sad as follows: "The beautiful, blue Danube was like this last night. Far from any romantic moments and more like the tragedy of a people who had the misfortune that its remote ancestors had settled and built their homes here... Yesterday was no different from any other previous day with fresh losses and news of the 1941-style Serb hostage-taking. The price of the 1941 experience was too heavy to sacrifice the freedom so easily."³⁵ This way of reporting will be intensified during the war, but will basically retain the pathetic tone of portraying the Serbs as eternal victims, comparing and later even identifying the enemy armies with Ustasha and Turks from the Serbian past.³⁶ The very word "Ustasha" aroused the ancient fears among ordinary Serbs, no matter whether that qualification in each particular case was fairly true or not. Croatian and Muslim media used the word "Chetnik" in the same manner. The media were quite deliberately chosen for a bizarre replay of World War II, and even of the Battle of Kosovo. Of course, had it not been for the massacres of Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina from 1941 to 1945, this propaganda would not have been so effective. It was targeted at the existing and very vivid memories of the past, which brings us to the question of overcoming the traumas of World War II, a question that cannot be dealt with herein.

And, while some expressions were used, on the one hand, to deprive the enemy of his human face, they served to justify the war objectives on the other. According to Serbian media coverage, the war waged by Bosnian Serbs was a

Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina are geographically close and that Bosnia and Serbia are far apart. But Bosnia and Serbia are not far apart...». Brana Crnčević (a prominent SPS figure) says: »The Serbia which traded Serbs from other parts of Yugoslavia is no more. This is a Serbia which takes care of all Serbs living in this country and outside it... It is high time Serbs understood that they *need not do only what is just but also what is useful to them...* No Yugoslavia, federated or confederated, can be made at the expense of the Serbs any longer». (See Lazar Lalić, *op.cit.*, p. 18, emphasis added).

³⁵ See Lazar Lalić, *op.cit.*, pp. 63, 64.

³⁶ RTS's war correspondents in Mostar said in their reports: "Immediately after peace talks were concluded, on the very evening of the Bajram religious festival, the "Severni logor" barracks was blown up. The attack was masterminded by the Ustashe and carried out by the jihad fighters in a ruthless manner so characteristic of these two groups". "It was a comparatively peaceful day on the Mostar front. There were no major armed provocations. Here and there, however, the Ustashe engaged in sporadic attacks, but these were obviously so weak to mount a larger-scale operation. Their specially trained men now largely confine themselves to making incursions into the liberated territory. Of particular concern are reports coming from Raška Gora and Bogodol that three hundred Serbs have been savagely mutilated and massacred while their property was totally destroyed. *The atrocities are very much reminiscent of those perpetrated by the Ustashe in 1944*«. See De la Brosse, *op.cit.*, p. 66, emphasis added). "Twenty-seven members of my immediate family were killed in World War II. My mother grew up in an orphanage in Belgrade. I have become involved in all these things because of the tragedy visited on my forebearers... I feel sorry for the young Ustashe soldiers when we line them up in front of the firing squad... But when I'm on the frontline fighting and seeing the enemies die, I am happy as I know that those who have threatened my people have been eliminated" said Dragoslav Bokan, commander of a paramilitary unit called »Beli orlovi«(White Eagles), *Duga*, 29 March -11 April 1992 (See De la Brosse, *op.cit.*, p. 22).

"liberation" or "defensive" war",³⁷ while Muslims fought a "jihad".³⁸ Serb fighters were portrayed as "unarmed defenders of their ancestral homes" or merely as "defenders" or "liberators" of towns, cities and territories. "Revenge" was not an uncommonly used word, either.³⁹

Besides dehumanizing the opposite side, the state-run media made an effective use of misinformation and selected the news to be broadcast. Disinformation largely concerned the atrocities purported to have been committed by Croatian and Muslim forces.⁴⁰ For instance, RTV Belgrade broadcast on a prime-time news programme the following report: „Muslim extremists have invented the most brutal ways of torturing people. Last night, they threw Serb children to the lions in the cages of the local zoo, say Serb patrols."⁴¹ On the other hand, when the Serb side committed an outrage, news of it was *concealed or discriminately presented*.

The main themes of the Serbian propaganda campaign, especially the propaganda directed towards the Serbs outside Serbia, were the suffering and tribulations of the Serbian people. Much of that propaganda was of a criminal nature and represented a punishable act of incitement of ethnic and religious hatred. However, in Serbia itself and in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia the major state-controlled media never crossed the somewhat vague border line

³⁷ Thus, for example, on page six of *Politika* (10 April 1992), there was a headline "Zvornik liberated" carrying a story that Serb forces had taken control of this town. *Večernje novosti* on the same date had this report: "The liberators played the tune 'Marš na Drinu' (Drina March) over the loudspeakers placed on the mosque's minarets. General Veljko Kadijević called JNA operations in Croatia, including the taking of Vukovar, "liberation", as well. He, too, spoke of the repetition of Ustashe crimes against the Serbs: "Alongside this, provocations against Croatian Serbs multiplied. The World War II Ustashe methods were "enriched" with new inventions... Logically, the entire Serbian nation, particularly Croatian Serbs and JNA soldiers reacted". (Kadijević, *Op. cit.*, pp. 112, 132, 134, 137, 144, 151). Kadijević's successor, Gen. Života Panić, thought that the JNA had to stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina to prevent genocide, against "Serbs in particular, as the most endangered" (*Tanjug* (State news agency), 7 April 1992).

³⁸ "This is the first jihad on European soil", RTS, a wartime report from Mostar (See De la Brosse, *op.cit.*, p. 66). Belgrade's Islam expert Mirosljub Jevtić stands out in this regard: everything Muslims did was referred to as jihad. He did so in many of his statements and articles having very typical headlines like "Allah's Reserve Soldiers" (*Duga*, 9-22 December 1989); "Turks Are After Serbia (Again)" (*Srpska reč*, 19 August 1991); "A Goodbye without Mercy" (*Evropske novosti*, 7 July 1993).

³⁹ »In this war we must take revenge for Jasenovac, Golubnjača and all other mass graves containing Serb victims«, Mirko Jović, *Pogledi (Viewpoints)*, 29 November-13 December 1991.

⁴⁰ Vjekoslav Radović, a Reuters reporter, in his report of 20 November 1991 said that bodies of 41 Serb children were found in a primary school in Borovo Selo. He released the report after he had allegedly heard the story from newspaper photographer Mikić. The public were outraged at the news, but soon thereafter doubts were expressed that the story was really true, as the newspaper photographer had not taken any photographs of the bodies. Finally, Mikić admitted that he had not seen and counted the bodies of the massacred children. The world news agencies, including the JNA press service, published a retraction. However, *Politika* published the retraction on the last page of its edition of 23 November 1991 in the form of a very brief statement whilst the news of the massacre made the headlines on the front page the previous day.

⁴¹ De la Brosse, *op.cit.* pp. 6-8.

between recollecting the Serb misfortunes, implicitly calling to arms (by using such euphemisms as "defence" and "liberation") and openly advocating *extermination* of other peoples.⁴²

The Serbian propaganda was to a large extent a call to arms with the pretext of fighting a defensive or a liberating war.

Para-military organizations appeared in 1990. Even some newly formed opposition parties had such organizations. Extremist national parties set up by the secret police were the most vociferous on the political stage and in the campaign before the first multi-party elections (in December 1990). Milošević used these parties to scare the people into thinking that their victory would lead to war, though he was the one actually preparing for war. His Socialist Party of Serbia was a nationalist one but disguised by its leftist views. Defence of Serbs in Croatia, "who were again facing genocide", became the prevalent public ideology in 1991. Thus, war was waged to achieve the state-building idea by dividing Yugoslavia and creating a Serbian state that will unify all Serbs and "all Serbian lands".

The wars over state borders and for the unification of Serbs was the prelude to the drama of minorities *which were yet to become minorities* with the disintegration of Yugoslavia. This text will now analyse the specific institutional structure of Yugoslavia as a way of resolving the national issue and how such a structure precluded the protection of minorities in the newly-created states.

4. Yugoslavia's National Infrastructure: Nations and Nationalities, Republics and Provinces

I shall depart from the presumption that institutions underlie the conduct of political protagonists and that nationalism as a policy of ethnic collectives was built in the contradictory features of the institutionalised structure of multi-nationality in Yugoslavia. Multi-ethnicity was institutionalised in Yugoslavia by distinguishing between two main statuses of nationality. The first, higher status was enjoyed by "constituent nations" that had "associated in a common state" and had the right to their own "sovereign" states (republics). According to this principle, each recognised nation was conferred a state. The second, lower status enjoyed by protected and recognised national minorities, did not afford the right to a state and self-determination; this status was conferred upon all minorities which had a "homeland" outside Yugoslavia. The term "national minorities" was subsequently replaced by the concept "nationalities", which not only had the right to cultural and linguistic identity but to proportional political representation in government bodies at all levels as well.

The status of "constituent nations" was politically and territorially institutionalised in the six republics in accordance with the principle: each nation - own republic. But the Yugoslav order also preserved the independent

⁴² The state wartime propaganda during the NATO intervention was also wary of racist remarks regarding ethnic Albanians and of calls to destroy them.

concept of “constituent nations” *in abstracto*, although this concept was directly opposed to and could undermine the principle of the territorial and political organization of the nations - bearers of sovereignty. Territorial organization thus also suppressed the “sovereignty” of the *nations* because it could not be operated in the real, effective i.e. nation-building sense. This status was afforded to all the constituent nations both in their own states (republics) and the other republics in which they lived as parts of “constituent nations”. That was the case of Serbs living in Croatia, who made up 12% of the republic’s population. The same rule was applied in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where three nations were granted the status of constituent nation. When the Moslems were recognised as a nation in the early seventies, the question arose whether this nation, too, was a constituent nation in all the other republics in which its members resided, outside their “homeland” of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Such questions were not raised at all while Yugoslavia existed and were opened only once it began to break up.

The multinational structure, thus, recognised nations and nationalities and republics and provinces until wars were launched to establish separate states, on the one hand, and to achieve congruence between the ethnic nations and their ethnic territories, on the other. The division into nations and states as two parallel concepts aimed precisely at addressing the issue of the incongruence of the ethnic nations and their recognised states. The nations and the states did not coincide and this duality served as a compensatory mechanism for constituent nations living outside their “homeland” republics.

This dual track system caused confusion about who actually had the right to self-determination - the nations or the republics - confusion that could and, in reality did prove dangerous in view of the ethnic and territorial incongruence when Yugoslavia disintegrated. Serbian nationalists insisted on the right of nations to self-determination (reckoning that nationalities, notably the Albanians in Kosovo, did not), which was enshrined in the Constitution. However, as such cannot be linked to a bearer without a political organization that can exercise it (nations are not legal persons), it transpired that this right was a constitutional construct of *psychological importance* devised to avoid persons belonging to nations but living in the other republics having the status of a minority. But it was precisely the psychological importance of this right that was used for the rapid political organization of parts of the constituent nations - the Serbs in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina - with the intention of redrawing the borders of the republics and not agreeing that their “own people” be reduced to the *status of a minority*. Constituent nations that formed a minority (in the territories of the other republics) did not enjoy the cultural rights other minorities did. They were considered privileged because they enjoyed the status of a constituent nation.

In the case of Yugoslavia, i.e. its republics, minority status was enjoyed only by the nations of other states, wherefore one may conclude that the greatest problem that arose during the disintegration of Yugoslavia was the creation of *new minorities* that had earlier enjoyed the status of constituent nations. This aspect of the problem was neglected at the beginning of the crisis. The issue of

the status of the new minorities was not opened either during the talks between the republics seceding from Yugoslavia in mid-1991 or later, when the international community became involved in the crisis. It was raised only after the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, which were called upon to adopt laws on minorities. However, it was too late by then as the triadic constellations had already been formed (with the exception of Slovenia, which did not have an “irredentist minority”) between (a) the state that was seceding and *nationalising* itself to the utmost to prove it had the right to be a state, as a rule by discriminating against and intimidating the minorities in the process, (b) the homeland republic that has been pushing its minority into war and victimising it by promising unification with the homeland, and (c) aggressive and nationalist minorities (former constituent nations) mobilizing against the state they were living in and hoping to unite with the homeland.⁴³ The homelands’ strategy included intimidation of their ethno-national kin living in the other republics by recalling the traumas of W.W.II (genocide of Serbs, Roma and Jews in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), *inter alia*, with emphasis on the plight of Serbs). These fears were disregarded by the republics striving for independence (Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina). This was especially true in Croatia where the nationalists in power minimised the number of people who had perished in WWII,⁴⁴ invoking the continuity of their aspiration for independence and the Fascist NDH state in WWII. The “constituent nations” living in the other republics i.e. the future minorities, thus found themselves between two sources of intimidation - of the republic they were living in and of their homelands. However, majority nations also had unpleasant recollections of what these future minorities (constituent nations in their territories) had once done, notably the Serbs, and also bore a grudge because Serbs were over-represented in the army and the police.

The wars ended with the victimisation of the Serb minority in Croatia. With Serbia’s help, the Croatian Serbs initially seized parts of Croatia and proclaimed their own “Serb state”, only to be deserted by the homeland to fend for themselves. In result, Croatia launched offensives and reclaimed sovereignty over this part of its territory; the Serbian minority was cleansed and reduced to 4% of Croatia’s total population. After nearly four years of war in Bosnia in which its Serbian and Croatian constituent nations fought for secession, two ethnic entities and a very weak central government in Sarajevo were established under the Dayton Accords and Bosnia remains rigidly divided along ethnic lines to this day. The ethnic criterion has become the supreme principle in Bosnia-Herzegovina, rendering it extremely unstable and susceptible to political manipulations of the homelands (above all Serbia, as Croatia had given up its aspirations towards Herzegovina when Tuđman died). Although the Dayton Accords envisage the return of the banished population to their pre-war places of residence, only a negligible number of them returned to

⁴³ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996).

⁴⁴ See Srđan Bogosavljević, “The Unresolved Genocide” in *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, *op. cit.* pp. 146-160.

their hometowns in the “other” entity. Entities have thus remained mostly ethnically homogenised.

It seemed that Macedonia, with its large Albanian minority (*circa* 25%), would avoid war, because its leader Kiro Gligorov, an old and seasoned communist with modern views, shunned nationalism and the republic had avoided ethnic mobilization. However, Macedonia, too, experienced a low intensity war between the Macedonian majority and Albanian minority that was ended by the Ohrid Agreement in August 2001. This agreement is specific inasmuch as it did not envisage the resolution of the Albanian minority issue by “ethnic territorialisation”. Rather, it is based on the concepts of decentralization and self-government and prescribes a two-thirds majority vote for any constitutional change that affects the national status of the Albanian ethnic community.

Today, all the states that emerged from the break-up of Yugoslavia are national states and nearly all have achieved the ethnic nation-territory congruence. They have reduced the “irredentist minorities” to negligible percentages; the first was Croatia which expelled the Serbian minority. The situation in Serbia will be similar if Kosovo gains independence. The small Albanian minority in Southern Serbia is the only remaining “irredentist” minority in Serbia aspiring to unite with Kosovo. Bosnia-Herzegovina has failed to create a functional multi-national state. It remains a potential crisis area as its “irredentist” entities continue flirting with their homelands, notably the Serb entity that has enjoyed Serbia’s support. The Macedonian experiment is still in its trial stage. Effects of Kosovo’s possible independence are yet to be seen. Montenegro has also experienced incidents caused by Albanian nationalists, as the recent arrest of a large group of “terrorists” corroborates, although these incidents have not undermined the good inter-ethnic relations in that state.

Minorities in the new states of the former Yugoslavia are mostly tolerated, thanks to the serious pressures frequently exerted by the Council of Europe. Slovenia has problems with the “deleted” (18,000 “southerners” most of whom had moved there from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia) and the “Roma families” living in its territory. The latter remains *the most vulnerable* minority, constantly excluded and discriminated against across Central, East and Southeast Europe.

4.1. National Minorities in Serbia

The much higher ethnic concentration in the new states (that have ethnically homogenised) and lesser share of the minorities in the population has been one of the effects of the wars waged within and between the former Yugoslav republics. In 1991, minorities accounted for 35% of Serbia’s population; now, they account for only 17.12%. This percentage is even lower if the “undeclared”, the “Yugoslavs” and “unknown” are discounted (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: National Composition of Serbia⁴⁵

Serbs	6,212,838	82.82
Hungarians	293,299	3.91
Bosniaks	136,087	1.82
Roma	108,193	1.44
Yugoslavs	80,721	1.08
Croats	70,602	0.94
Montenegrins	69,949	0.92
Albanians	61,647	0.82
Slovaks	59,021	0.79
Vlachs	40,054	0.53
Romanians	34,576	0.46
Macedonians	25,847	0.35
Bulgarians	20,495	0.27
Others	107,723	1.36
Undeclared	107,723	1.44
Unknown	75,483	1.01

There is no official definition of a national minority in Serbia. By reading the Constitution, one arrives at the conclusion that national minorities comprise all groups that differ from the majority population by ethnicity, language or religion and that perceive themselves as separate collectives and communities. Such communities have the right to express and develop their own identity, nurture their own culture and participate in political decision making via their representatives. They also have the right to independently decide on issues related to their culture, education, informing and official use of language and alphabet. Fourteen national minorities have to date been granted the right to set up their national minority councils in Serbia; only the Albanian minority has not established its national council, solely because it has not even submitted a request to establish a council, allegedly because it is deprived of the right to display its flag and use its national symbols.⁴⁶ A large number of Serbia's citizens declaring themselves as a minority do not exercise their collective minority rights and can be subsumed under the concept of "cultural pluralism" rather than the concept of a national minority (notably, Yugoslavs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, those who did not declare their nationality and citizens falling into the category of "Others", including Czechs, Ukrainians, Slovenes, Goranis, Germans, Russians, etc.).

The status of the minorities in Serbia in the nineties reflected the conflicts with their *homeland nations* the Serbs were warring against. Croats and

⁴⁵ Source: *Vreme*, 23 November, 2006, Issue No. 829.

⁴⁶ According to an article in the daily *Danas* on displaying the Albanian flag and symbols in Southern Serbia (three municipalities with an Albanian majority population) on 28 November 2006, the Albanian national holiday.

Bosniaks were exposed to the greatest pressures and discrimination because the Serbs first warred against the Croats and then against the Bosnians. Apart from encouraging the emigration of Croats in the 1991 and 1992 period, when around 30,000 of them moved to Croatia, this minority was also subjected to discrimination at work (a JNA officer could not keep his rank if, say, his wife was Croat), when attempting to purchase their apartments or exercise other administrative rights. This minority had been the target of hate speech almost all the time.

The Bosniaks found themselves in even direr straits. They were expelled from their villages bordering with Bosnia and became “displaced persons” without any rights: serious crimes against Bosniaks were committed twice - in Sjeverin and Štrpci, when Bosniaks were pulled out of trains and buses just because they were Moslems, taken to Bosnian territory and killed there. These crimes were masterminded by the authorities and no one had been held accountable for them until recently. Every Moslem was suspicious, especially the population of Sandžak. Hate speech, discrimination of Moslem job applicants and informal (neighbourhood) harassment were commonplace.

The conflict with the Albanian minority in Southern Serbia (the Bujanovac, Medveđa and Preševo municipalities inhabited mostly by Albanians) needs to be interpreted with respect to the friendship-hostility relationship towards the minority’s homeland or the minority’s aspiration to join the homeland. The conflict erupted when Albanian extremists launched an armed rebellion seeking the annexation of these three Southern Serbian municipalities to Kosovo. The rebellion coincided with the change of regime in Belgrade (autumn 2000) and the new democratic government refrained from using force, thus opening door to negotiating an agreement with the Albanian rebels. This minority has been calling for the replacement of the gendarmerie, i.e. the police deployed from central Serbia, by the local police. This was a condition they set in exchange for running in the Serbian parliamentary elections. Experience shows that the status of this minority will depend on the resolution of Kosovo’s status and Serbian reactions to it.

The Hungarian minority was in a vulnerable position during the wars in the 1990s and subjected to the draft. Allegations that more ethnic Hungarian than other citizens were drafted vis-à-vis their share in the total population have never been proven. The rights they had under the law, i.e. to bilingual names of streets and settlements and the transcriptions of their names in their own languages in personal documents, were disrespected. A number of incidents directed against the Hungarian minority members took place last year but the situation improved considerably after the CoE intervened and the police forces began rapidly identifying and punishing the perpetrators.

According to election legislation, a lower threshold (0.4%) applies to minorities running for seats in the Serbian Assembly; Hungarians, who constitute the largest minority in Serbia, can avail themselves the most of this privilege.

The main problem minority communities in Serbia face lies in its high degree of centralization; centralization lies at the cause of their under-representation at all senior posts in the municipalities and regions in which minorities are

concentrated. Another problem regarding the status of national minorities has recently emerged - Serbia has turned the minorities, especially the larger-sized minorities - the Hungarians and the Bosniaks - into *government clients*. These minorities directly negotiate with the Government, which promises to invest in towns in which the minorities make up the majority population, in exchange for their support to the Government. These minorities have been politically divided in several parties that have been vying against each other, which has precluded them from rallying their forces and exercising their collective rights more effectively.

5. Effects of EU Policies on Ethnic Mobilization in Serbia

The effects of various EU (formerly the European Community, EC)⁴⁷ actions with respect to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia have undoubtedly impinged on the positions of political protagonists, especially the Serbian authorities. Nonetheless, these effects greatly differed from the ones stemming from Serbia's relations with the UN, the USA, Russia and other international actors. The former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was not a member of the EC in 1991. Although the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY, comprising Serbia and Montenegro) was under a total UN embargo and its UN membership was suspended in 1992, the regime in Serbia insisted that the FRY had continued the SFRY's membership in this organization. It, however, employed a totally different strategy vis-à-vis the European integration process personified in the European Union. Notably, after 1991, the regime, the intellectuals who supported it and government-controlled media, minimised the role of the EU as an institutional framework, focussing their rhetoric at specific EU member-states. Germany took the brunt of the attack because of its role in the Yugoslav crisis. The Serbian regime made extensive use of the position of some EU member-states on the disintegration of the SFRY and their recognition of the states that emerged in its territory to fuel the process of ethnic mobilization. The authorities invoked the fact that the EU (like the vast majority of other international actors) accepted the theory of dissolution of SFRY (contrary to the theory of secession advocated by the Serbian authorities) as proof that the Western European countries have chosen to punish Serbia. During their fiercest ethnic mobilization campaigns, the authorities insisted on the thesis that these countries, under the predominant influence of Germany and the Vatican, were conducting an anti-Serbian policy and supporting the obliteration and disappearance of Serbs living in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although the sanctions the EU introduced against Serbia (FRY) were mostly economic in

⁴⁷ The terms EU and EC as used as synonyms throughout this text.

character, the Serbian authorities sidelined this fact and presented the EU's policy on Serbia as the expression of its hostility towards the Serbian people.⁴⁸ To recall, the United States initially did not have a clear stand on the Yugoslav crisis. This is why the Serbian leadership used the moves by the European institutions to finalise ethnic mobilization and justify its policy, especially in the 1991-1992 period. In this project, Milošević's regime made maximum use of the negative and painful memories of WWII, and the role some European countries had played in it. Needless to say, Germany was its main target.⁴⁹ Nearly every move by the EU, including those that did not entail pressures on or punishment of the Serbs, was portrayed as a conspiracy of Croatia's 'allies'. This approach became dominant especially after the European countries decided to recognise the former republics that had opted for independence (in late 1991 and early 1992).⁵⁰

The utter marginalisation of the ideas of Serbia's European future and its integration in the EU was one of the key features of the general perception of EU and its leading members' moves and conduct, amplified by Milošević's party and its satellite political opposition (Vojislav Šešelj's Serbian Radical Party), the regime media and nationalist intellectuals. Until the regime change in October 2000, the ruling political nomenclature had not promoted EU integration as its political goal. On the contrary, it always used the moves by European countries to "elaborate in theory" and, unfortunately, to apply in practice, its policy of self-isolation, of countering European trends and rekindling anti-European feelings amongst Serbia's citizens. Even when the regime and, above all, Milošević personally, made radical political turnabouts and partly succeeded in presenting himself as the factor of peace and stability in the Balkans, Serbia's strictly controlled public did not alter its policy on the EU or its treatment of European protagonists in any significant way. Milošević had portrayed even the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Dayton Accords and Serbia's political future as the result of his personal relationship with the leading non-EU factors, notably the USA.

Lack of understanding of the new relations in Europe. - The Yugoslav crisis coincided with the changes on the political and ideological map of Europe. The SFRY entered the last years of its existence as the only socialist state that had a special Agreement on Co-operation with the then EEC. The disintegration of the socialist bloc and the future of "new Europe" inevitably affected the

⁴⁸ The Serbian regime simultaneously launched the thesis that economic cooperation with the EU was not a priority and that Serbia should foster economic ties with Russia, China and other non-European countries. The echo of such political demagoguery still reverberates amongst extremist right parties in Serbia, notably the Serbian Radical Party.

⁴⁹ "It seems their prime interest is that we no longer exist in any form», Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ - izvodi iz dnevnika* (Last Days of the SFRY - Excerpts from a Diary) (Belgrade, 1995), p. 361.

⁵⁰ Even extremely bizarre elements, like the song sung on Croatian TV and expressing gratitude to Germany for all it had done to support Croatia's independence, were used to fuel such feelings against Western European states and to mobilize the public to support Milošević's war policy.

situation in the former SFRY, the relations between the republics and their positions on the European integration process.

Serbia opted for quite a specific stand in the process. Its leadership ensured the support of the vast majority of the population by various methods to be elaborated later on in this text. For instance, in the campaign leading to the first multi-party elections held in Serbia on 9 and 23 December 1990,⁵¹ Europe and better ties with the future EU did not figure as a topic either for Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), by far the most powerful party at the time, or the vast majority of the newly-formed parties.⁵²

During the Yugoslav crisis, the EC was in the midst of redefining the roles of some of its institutions, expanding the powers of specific bodies and creating new reaction mechanisms. Over the years, nearly all institutions of the then EC were in various ways involved in the management and resolution of the Yugoslav crisis; these included, *inter alia*, the EC (EU) Council of Ministers, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the EC Presidency, the Western European Union (and its Council), the EC Arbitration Commission, the EC Permanent-Standing Committee of High Representatives, the UN and EC Permanent-Standing Committee on Yugoslavia, summits of heads of state or government.

5.1. Missions

EU institutions formally intervened for the first time in the spring of 1991, when the representatives of Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Vojvodina⁵³ in the topmost SFRY body, the Presidency, refused to vote in Stjepan Mesić, the representative of the new Croatian policy (Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ) as the annual Presidency Chairman. This was an important moment in Serbia's ethnic mobilization, marking the republic's attitude towards the Federal leadership. Although Mesić's appointment was to have essentially been a mere formality, it turned into a demonstration of the new balance of forces and a blockade of the topmost SFRY political institution. Presidency members from Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Vojvodina obstinately refused to vote for

⁵¹ National orientation and willingness to preserve the existing political constellation of forces were the main motifs of the campaign; the evident insistence on preserving «the rights of the Serbian nation» in other republics had also significantly impinged on both the folklore and «media packaging» of the first multi-party election campaign in Serbia after fifty years.

⁵² The United Democratic Initiative (UJDI), which had fielded Dr. Ivan Djurić as its presidential candidate in 1990, was practically the only political party that linked the future of Serbia (and the still existing Yugoslavia) to the EU and that took into account the opinions and requirements of European institutions. This political group insisted on the peaceful reorganization of the Yugoslav federation, creation of a functional political and economic community and European integration. Representatives of this option, who were active in various republics, supported the pro-European reforms implemented by the then Chairman of the Federal Executive Council (effectively the Federal Prime Minister) Ante Marković, who was harshly criticised by most republican leaderships (especially those in Serbia and Croatia).

⁵³ The Serbian leadership had in the 1988-1990 period placed under its control all political institutions in Montenegro, Vojvodina and Kosovo, whose representatives in the Federal Presidency always voted as their Serbian counterpart bade them.

Mesić, claiming that he was an opponent of Yugoslavia and advocating its break-up. In late May 1991, an EC delegation headed by Jacques Santer and Jacques Delors visited Belgrade and heard out the views of the different sides, including those of the Serbian leadership. This is how the then Serbian Presidency member Borisav Jović, one of Milošević's closest associates, describes official Belgrade's view of the visit:

"It remains to be seen what conclusions the EC representatives will draw from all these talks. The very fact that they "rushed over" to interfere in our internal affairs over the appointment of the Presidency Chairman, and that they sent their topmost officials testifies of their bias. That is what should trouble us the most. It goes without saying that we cannot trust them to be objective and impartial".⁵⁴

On the eve of the conflict in Slovenia, the EC on 27 June 1991 sent a *Troika* to Yugoslavia to try and persuade the conflicting parties to cease fire and start negotiating a peace agreement. The *Troika* *inter alia* offered the parties economic arrangements simultaneously trying to force the parties into cooperation. The parties accepted the EC's role of mediator, at least officially, guided by the idea that the EC would act as their "catalyst" for the achievement of their goals. However, faced with the constant obstructions and the outbreak of serious armed conflicts in Croatia in the meantime, such EC engagement was replaced by the launching of the Peace Conference in The Hague in the autumn of 1991.

From 1990 until September 1991, Europe's demands on Serbia were limited almost solely to insistence on the peaceful resolution of the problem and the democratisation of the relations within the community, spiced up with offers of the European perspective to all parties to the crisis. The Serbian leadership, however, obviously viewed these steps as an expression of hostility and advocacy of the interests of the other parties (notably Croatia). The Serbian leadership was already priming for confrontation with the EU: "They sided with one side and they are no longer impartial."⁵⁵ Serbia thus entered the period of international conferences on Yugoslavia by fuelling negative feelings about the 12 EC member-states.

5.2. International Conferences

The attempt to provide good services of mediation at the outset of the Yugoslav crisis did not yield results. Thus, the Peace Conference in The Hague opened in the autumn of 1991 with representatives of all six republics taking part in it. During the Conference, European mediators headed by Lord Carrington offered several models for redefining relations in the Yugoslav community. None of the offered proposals were accepted, mostly because the

⁵⁴ Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ - izvodi iz dnevnika* (Last Days of the SFRY - Excerpts from a Diary), Belgrade, 1995, p. 337.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

Serbian authorities rejected them.⁵⁶ In the latter half of 1992, especially after the London Conference (from 26 to 28 August 1992), the EU stopped playing the leading role in the resolution of the Yugoslav crisis, already aggravated by the horrific war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Such efforts continued at the Geneva Conference, at which the US, Russia and Contact Group member-countries were becoming increasingly influential, as they would remain until the end of the war in Bosnia and signing of the peace accords.

Although Belgrade formally agreed to participate in the talks, it at home portrayed the demands set to the warring parties and the proposals tabled in The Hague, London and Geneva as disadvantageous and unfair to the Serbs. Two events underlay this position: the decision to formally recognise Slovenia and Croatia on 15 January 1992 and the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina by all EC member states on 6 April 1992. The Serbian authorities presented these decisions as key evidence of the EC's partiality and called on the Serbian leadership and people to oppose the alleged attempts to annihilate the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵⁷

5.3. Sanctions

The European Community introduced the first sanctions against the then SFRY back in July 1991 when it embargoed arms sales to the SFRY. In early November 1991, the EU imposed an economic embargo on the SFRY. Although this embargo initially applied to the whole state that was breaking up into five independent states, the EU soon started successively lifting the sanctions against some of the states that emerged in the territory of the former SFRY. Namely, the EU called off the Trade Agreement with the SFRY and other special regimes which had afforded the SFRY privileges in its relations with the EU. It, however, simultaneously allowed the republics showing willingness to actively and constructively work on finding a compromise solution to regain these benefits. The main criterion it went by was the conduct of the leaderships of the respective republics during the Peace Conference in The Hague. Hence, the Council of Ministers excluded Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia and Croatia from the economic sanctions introduced on 8 November 1991. The sanctions regime still applied, but only with respect to

⁵⁶ Milan Šahović, *Uloga Evropske unije u jugoslovenskoj krizi i odnos prema SR Jugoslaviji* (The Role of the European Union in the Yugoslav Crisis and its Policy on the FR of Yugoslavia) (Centre for Anti-War Action, Belgrade, 2000), p. 9.

⁵⁷ When it became obvious in December 1991 that the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia was imminent, the Serbian leadership started contemplating the moves it would make once the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognised. Borisav Jović says the following about the agreements he reached with Slobodan Milošević: «Sloba [Slobodan Milošević] thinks we should withdraw all citizens of Serbia and Montenegro from the JNA in Bosnia-Herzegovina on time, and deploy there all citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, to avoid general military chaos of moving the army from one part of the country to another when Bosnia acquires international recognition. This will also enable the Serb leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina to assume control of the Serb part of the JNA, as the Moslems and Croats have already done». *Ibid*, p. 420.

Serbia and Montenegro. After 10 January 1993, when the sanctions against Montenegro were temporarily suspended, they applied only to Serbia.

Before the eruption of the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict, the EU sanctions against Serbia were used as a tool to ensure Serbia's "good behaviour" and thus to avoid war in this former central SFRY republic. Although the possibility to suspend the trade embargo arose on 6 April 1992, when Bosnia's independence was recognised, the outbreak of the war in Bosnia, the obvious role that the Belgrade authorities and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) played in it, and Belgrade's evident control over the Bosnian Serb political institutions, resulted in the reintroduction of the old and imposition of additional sanctions against Serbia and the newly-created FR of Yugoslavia.

The EC Commission on 20 May 1992 submitted a list of sanctions that could be adopted against the FRY. The Council of Ministers imposed a trade embargo on the FRY on 27 May 1992. FRY's trade with the EC was blocked, scientific and technological cooperation was frozen and export credits halted. The Council advocated global sanctions against the FRY and called on the UN to impose a total embargo on the FRY, comprising a ban on exports of petrol to the FRY and freeze of its assets in foreign banks. The Council of Ministers passed a package of measures with common rules for implementing the coordinated and full trade embargo and halting air traffic with the FRY. The issues of credit treatment, blocking accounts, financial transactions and level of diplomatic relations were left at the discretion of the member-states. In early June 1992, the Council of Ministers met in Luxembourg and adopted a set of operational regulations ensuring the full implementation of the trade embargo and the suspension of all flights to the FRY.⁵⁸

6. United Nations and Ethnic Mobilization

The UN policy on Serbia had three elements during the nineties. The first involved a policy of coercion, through sanctions which the UNSC introduced against Serbia (and Montenegro) and lifted on several occasions. The second involved a policy of exclusion, i.e. the non-acceptance of the newly-created Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in its membership and its exclusion from the work of UN bodies. The third form is still being applied and was conceived as an additional pressure on the warring parties to end the violence, and, if that proved impossible, to limit the violence by insistence on the respect of elementary norms of international humanitarian law. This policy of individual punishment for flagrant violations of international humanitarian law has been reflected in the founding and work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

⁵⁸ EU institutions forwarded their initiatives to other international institutions as well. EC Foreign Ministers, for instance, called for the FRY's exclusion from the UN in September 1992.

6.1. *The Policy of Coercion and Ethnic Mobilization*

The UN involved itself in the Yugoslav crisis quite late. Although the first armed conflicts broke out in May 1991, the UN Security Council first discussed the issue in mid-September 1991. It then adopted its first measure to restore peace in the former Yugoslavia, Resolution 713 (1991) by which it imposed an arms embargo on all warring parties in the former SFRY. Although all of the parties to the conflict found the embargo an acceptable solution that could bring the interested parties to the negotiating table, it was clear that only the Serbs (i.e. Serbia and Montenegro) benefited from it. The Serbs were overwhelmingly superior over the other warring parties in military terms⁵⁹ and the embargo helped maintain their advantage. Under UNSC Resolution 724 passed in December 1991, a UN Security Council Committee was set up to monitor the implementation of the embargo. The Committee would later play an important role in coordinating the implementation of the comprehensive economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro, generally considered the most effective sanctions in history.⁶⁰

The embargo initially did prove effective to an extent,⁶¹ but it was wholly unsuitable for restoring peace once Bosnia-Herzegovina got embroiled in the conflict.⁶² This prompted the UNSC to pass Resolution 752 (1992) in mid-May 1992, demanding of the FRY to withdraw the JNA from the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina or subject them to the authority of the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or to disband those units and place their weapons under international monitoring. The Resolution invoked the UN Secretary General's Report of 12 May 1992 (para. 24) mentioning the announcement of the Belgrade authorities of 4 May 1992 that they would withdraw the JNA forces and that those that remained would be deprived of authority.⁶³ As this attempt also

⁵⁹ When Yugoslavia began to break up, Serbia retained effective control of the vast resources of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), which was one of the best equipped armed forces in Europe, even exporting \$2 billion worth of weapons in 1990. David Cortright *et al.*, *The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990's* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), p. 65. See also Reneo Lukić, Allen Lynch, *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union* (New York: SIPRI, Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 295.

⁶⁰ See *Report of the Copenhagen Round Table on United Nations Sanctions in the Case of the Former Yugoslavia*, Copenhagen, 24 September 1996, available at the Global Policy Forum website at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/sanction/sanct96.htm>, accessed on 10 December 2006. See also David Cortright *et al.*, *supra nota* 45, p. 65.

⁶¹ "The culmination was the implementing accord of 2 January 1992, which implemented a previous tentative cease-fire agreement and that effectively ended the war, brought about a cessation of hostilities in Croatia". See transcript of the testimony by Herbert Okun at the Milošević Trial in the ICTY on 26 February 2003, p. 16888.

⁶² A study of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimated that the forces of the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina were outgunned nine-to-one by Serbian units. David Cortright *et al.*, *supra nota* 45, p. 65.

⁶³ JNA declared it was withdrawing from Bosnia-Herzegovina on 17 May 1992. Yugoslav authorities, however, alleged 80% of the troops deployed in Bosnia were citizens of Bosnia and JNA left large quantities of military materiel behind after it withdrew. These forces continued fighting in Bosnia under the name "Army of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina".

failed, the UNSC introduced comprehensive sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro under Resolution 757 adopted on 30 May 1992. They included a ban on import and exports, cultural exchange, flights and maintenance of airplanes, participation in sports events, and lowering the level of diplomatic relations. These sanctions would remain in force until the Dayton/Paris peace agreement was signed in November 1995.⁶⁴ The UN had never again imposed such comprehensive sanctions on Serbia, not even during the Kosovo conflict. This paper will not analyse the effectiveness of the sanctions or whether they helped to convince Milošević's regime to begin negotiating and to ultimately ensure the implementation of peace,⁶⁵ but their effects on ethnic mobilization in Serbia.

Milošević's regime made the most of the sanctions to rally nationalist forces. Several factors played into its hands. First of all, it is highly likely that any foreign intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state will have the effect of unification against "the common enemy", in this case, the international community. Moreover, the lack of independent media in Serbia, especially TV and radio stations, provided the regime with an additional guarantee that only the information it wanted the public to know would actually reach it. Lack of production material and rampant inflation precluded the widespread dissemination of the print media. Therefore, the general public was constantly hearing the "official view" on how the "unjust" sanctions were part of the global conspiracy against Serbia and the Serbian nation.⁶⁶

The Milošević regime used the hardships caused by sanctions to mobilize popular support and generate a rally 'round the flag effect. Sanctions became the convenient justification for every misfortune in Serbian society, a way of deflecting attention from Belgrade's own misguided war policies and economic mismanagement. Everything could be blamed on the Western powers and UN sanctions. Milošević used the sanctions to appeal to the traditional Serbian sense of victimization and to rally support for his government. Hard-line

See the Human Rights Watch 1992 report available at http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/WR93/Hsw-10.htm#P671_238252

⁶⁴ Sanctions were suspended indefinitely by UNSC Resolution 1022 on 22 November 1995, and then terminated in October 1996 by UNSC Resolution 1074. They were modified on several occasions (UNSC Resolutions 787 (1992), 820 (1993) and 943 (1994)).

⁶⁵ Numerous studies speak in favour of the conclusion that the sanctions played a decisive role in bringing peace to Bosnia-Herzegovina, but there are nearly as many holding different views. See for example *Report of the Copenhagen Round Table on United Nations Sanctions in the Case of the Former Yugoslavia*, supra nota 2; David Cortright, George A. Lopez, Linda Gerber, *Sanctions and the Search for Security: Challenges to UN Action* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), p. 98; Ulrich Gottstein, "Peace through Sanctions? Sanctions against Yugoslavia Have Heightened Tensions, Punished Innocent Civilians and Helped Spark the Kosovo Tragedy", *Forum for Applied Research and Public Policy* 14, No. 2, 1999.

⁶⁶ Vojin Dimitrijević, Jelena Pejić, *The Effects of UN Sanctions Against Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro): Theory and Conventional Wisdom in the Current Context* (The Kent Papers in Politics and International Relations, 1993), available on <http://www.kent.ac.uk/politics/research/kentpapers/dimitri.html>

nationalist opponents of Milošević also used the sanctions to stir popular resentment and win support for their more extreme policies.⁶⁷

The manoeuvring space of Milošević's opposition was, however, also restricted by the sanctions. The mostly pro-Western opposition had to stave off constant accusations that it was supporting the "external enemy" which had introduced the sanctions with the purpose of imposing the New World Order, American hegemony and neo-Imperialism on Serbia. It was especially difficult to explain why sanctions were introduced only against Serbia (and Montenegro), although the international factors on a number of occasions highlighted Croatia's major role in stoking and waging the war in Bosnia. Although the opposition invoked the sanctions as proof of Milošević's unsuccessful foreign policy and the deep economic crisis as the main reason why his regime had to be toppled, the results of the early 1992 general elections Milošević was coerced into calling clearly indicate that these arguments had not greatly swayed the electorate. True, Milošević's support fell by some 7% compared to the result he scored at the 1990 presidential elections, but he still reigned supreme and bested his rival, the then Federal PM Milan Panić, in the first round. The dramatically lower number of seats Milošević's SPS won in the Serbian and Federal Assemblies also does not indicate that the sanctions led to the ebbing of nationalism. On the contrary, the excellent results of the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) led by Vojislav Šešelj, which won 73 (out of 250) seats, showed Serbia was making an even sharper turn to the right. The opposition improved their standing in parliament by winning 21 seats more than at the previous election; this success cannot be ascribed to a change in views of the Serbian electorate but to the change in the election system, which benefited the opposition more.⁶⁸ The Serbian parliamentary elections in 1993 also indicate the extremely strong support voters extended to nationalist ideas. Namely, nearly all political parties, save for the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) and the small Civic Alliance of Serbia (GSS), began turning towards militant nationalism, supporting belligerent Serb leaders outside Serbia, expressing mistrust of foreigners and subjecting their political activities to the supreme "Serbian national interest".⁶⁹

As Serbia's agriculture was more or less self-sufficient, Milošević could also count on the sanctions, at least those limited in time, in not producing effects as disastrous as those of the sanctions that would be imposed on Iraq just one year earlier.⁷⁰ This is why the authorities at first frequently highlighted the superiority of Serbian economy and its painless adjustment to the new circumstances.⁷¹ Milošević also had reason to believe that the sanctions would

⁶⁷ David Cortright *et al.*, *supra nota* 45, p. 76.

⁶⁸ The majority system was in the meantime replaced by the proportional election system.

⁶⁹ Vojin Dimitrijević, Jelena Pejić "The Effects of UN Sanctions Against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" in: Milan Šahović, *Međunarodno pravo i jugoslovenska kriza* (International Law and the Yugoslav Crisis) (Belgrade, 1996), p. 262.

⁷⁰ David Cortright *et al.*, *supra nota* 45, p. 74.

⁷¹ As one British journalist reports «In a typical edition on Monday (14 December 1992), 40 minutes were devoted to a speech by Milošević asserting that the Serbian economy was booming thanks to Western sanctions. The boss of one of Serbia's biggest firms endorsed this

not last long, above all because their consistent implementation required major international effort and seriously undermined the economic stability of the other countries in the region. However, it became clear that these assessments were wrong when Sanctions Assistance Missions (SAMs) were set up to help implement the sanctions and when nearly all regional organizations joined in the implementation of the UNSC measures (OSCE, NATO, Danube Commission, the EC (EU)). Surveys conducted at the time indicate the public did not share the regime's optimism about the viability of Serbian economy,⁷² but there are several reasons why it is impossible to establish with certainty to what extent the long-lasting sanctions reduced the public's support to Milošević's nationalist policy. First, Milošević and his regime did not call elections from 1993 until the Dayton Accords were signed. Second, his loss of power in many municipalities at the 1996 local elections cannot be ascribed to the sanctions because they were not in force at the time and the international community had promoted Milošević into a "factor of peace in the Balkans". Rather, it appears that the widespread assessment that the Serbs across the Drina were betrayed and the war was lost had considerably accounted for the fall in the popularity of Milošević's regime. This view is corroborated by the increasing popularity of the Serbian Radical Party at the time, which achieved its best results at the parliamentary elections and crucially influenced the forming of the republican government. Such a balance of forces enabled Milošević to calmly move on to his new post of Federal President as his second and last mandate as President of Serbia expired. It should be borne in mind that Milošević enjoyed astounding popularity even after the Kosovo conflict and NATO air strikes and won nearly 50% of the votes at the federal presidential elections in September 2000.⁷³

The UN did not introduce rigorous sanctions against Serbia like the ones it imposed during the war in Bosnia. True, on 31 March 1998, the UNSC clamped a new embargo on arms sales to Yugoslavia.⁷⁴ UN's activities did not crucially affect the new rise in ethnic mobilization in Serbia during the Kosovo conflict. It was the NATO intervention that contributed the most to the rallying of all strata of Serbian society round the defence of the country. The fact that the intervention was carried out without the approval of the UNSC was exploited to the hilt to prove that the policy of Milošević's regime was the correct one. It seemed, at least during the air strikes, that the regime's legitimacy had increased and that the opposition was declared unlawful both *de facto* and *de jure* because its links with the West could be treated as treason in the circumstances. Milošević amply resorted to the fact that this use of force was

dubious claim for the benefit of the cameras". (M. Tanner "Milosevic Puts his Faith in Media Abuse", *The Guardian*, 16 December 1992, p.11). See in Vojin Dimitrijević, Jelena Pejić, *supra nota* 52.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ If it had not been for the constitutional amendments envisaging direct elections of the Federal President, the balance of forces in the Federal Assembly after the September 2000 elections would have almost definitely ensured Milošević another term in office on that job.

⁷⁴ UNSC Resolution 1160 (1998).

not approved by the UN. When the crisis was brought back into the UN framework by the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1244 that ended the active hostilities regarding Kosovo Milošević had yet another opportunity to present himself as the winner of the war with NATO. True, these arguments seemed ridiculous rather than convincing and the refusal of the extremist right headed by the SRS to accept the Kumanovo Agreement in parliament clearly indicated that the defeated nationalists were ready to embrace even more extremist views and total self-isolation. This period was characterised by strong nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric and every attempt to criticise the authorities was qualified as treason and cooperation with the external enemy.

6.2. Policy of Exclusion

Non-recognition of the FRY as the continuing state of SFRY expressed in UN General Assembly Resolution 47/1 and reasserted in UNSC Resolution 777 practically excluded Serbia's representatives from the work of this world organization. The UN and the regime's international law experts based their arguments on two different viewpoints. Whereas the UN believed Yugoslavia had dissolved and that five new states were created in its territory, Milošević's regime strove to present the break-up of Yugoslavia as secession and the FRY the only continuing state of the former SFRY. And while the UN insisted on FRY applying for membership, the Belgrade regime believed that the FRY had inherited membership in the UN from the SFRY (a founding member of the UN). The FRY's ambiguous status in the UN did not strongly affect national homogenisation in Serbia because the regime used the quite confusing manifestations of the UN's stand on the FRY to create the illusion that the FRY was still participating in the work of the UN.⁷⁵ A rare few local experts opposed the regime's tactics. Only when Milošević's regime was ousted in 2000 did the FRY submit an application for membership.

6.3. Policy of Individual Punishment

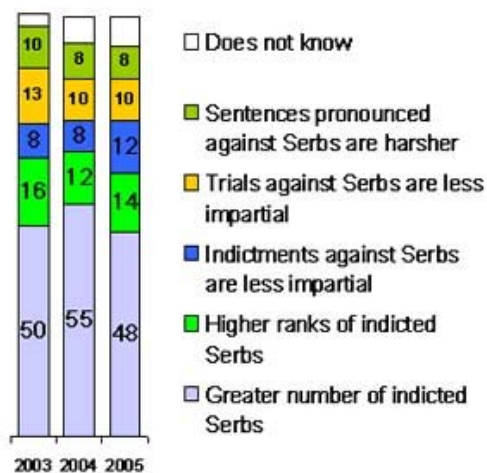
As soon as the ICTY was established in 25 May 1993, the Serbian intellectual elite, notably certain legal experts, did their best to undermine the credibility of this institution. Apart from its legality (because, as most Serbian legal experts interpreted, the UNSC is not empowered to establish international courts), the ICTY's legitimacy and, notably, its impartiality have also been constantly brought into question. These experts have founded their allegations on the fact that the ICTY had indicted more Serbs than Croats or Bosnians and

⁷⁵ The Yugoslav flag was still flown in front of the Geneva, New York and Vienna headquarters, the sign with the country's name was never taken down, the permanent Yugoslav mission kept on working. Moreover, the ICJ did not preclude itself from considering the genocide suit Bosnia-Herzegovina filed against the FRY in 1993, above all because the FRY legal representatives never raised the question of its jurisdiction. More on this problem in Vukasović, "The UN and the Crisis in the Former Yugoslavia" in Milan Šahović, *supra nota* 55, p. 220-222.

claimed that the sentences pronounced against Serbs were much harsher than those handed down to Croats or Bosnians.⁷⁶

It appears that apart from Kosovo, the ICTY is the only spark keeping the nationalist flame from abating. Public opinions on the ICTY well reflect the stories that have accompanied it since its inception. Polls show that over two-thirds of Serbia's population have consistently believed the ICTY trials against Serb indictees are biased, and have based this belief on the fact that more Serbs than Croats or Bosnians have been indicted.⁷⁷

What reflects the ICTY's bias against Serbs over other nationalities the most
Replies of the pollees doubting the impartiality of the ICTY



Trust that the ICTY will try Serb indictees impartially and solely on the basis of established facts



The ICTY trials have hardly affected the views of Serbia's citizens about which nation had suffered the most and who had committed the most crimes during the wars in the 1990s. Finally, only 17% of Serbia's citizens think Serbia should cooperate with the ICTY in the interests of justice, while as many as 19% believe Serbia should not cooperate with it at any cost, even at the cost of new international sanctions; 66% of the citizens are for cooperation, but for utilitarian reasons, such as avoidance of sanctions or furthering EU integration. The ICTY is an important topic in Serbia's society. The so-called "Anti-Hague Lobby" is brought into connection not only with the strong propaganda machinery, ogling with Vojislav Koštunica's Government, but with various

⁷⁶ For a critique of predominant views on the ICTY in Serbian intellectual circles, see Vojin Dimitrijević, *Silaženje s uma* (Abandoning Reason) (Belgrade, 2006), p. 312-319.

⁷⁷ Igor Bandović (ed.), *The Activity of ICTY and National War Crimes Judiciary* (Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Belgrade, 2005), p. 359.

criminal activities as well. The trial of the assassins of Serbian PM Zoran Đinđić (who had extradited Milošević to The Hague) will ultimately confirm or dismiss the widespread belief that he was killed because of his Government's policy on the ICTY.

The negative views of the ICTY seem to have united the Serbs more than anything else and the constant exploitation of "The Hague issue" has probably significantly contributed to the considerable rise in popularity of the ultra-nationalist SRS. It seems that the ruling Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) does not have great sympathy for this institution either, although it remains unclear whether this is because it honestly opposes it or for pragmatic reasons, while the Democratic Party (DS) emphasizes utilitarian reasons in its advocacy of full cooperation with the Tribunal. Cooperation with the ICTY in the interests of justice is advocated merely by minor parties, like the coalition rallied round the Liberal Democratic Party and the Civic Alliance of Serbia.

7. NATO and Ethnic Mobilization

Since the onset of the Yugoslav crisis, and especially since the UN sanctions were introduced in late May 1992, NATO and its members have been perceived as the greatest threat to the Serbian cause. The deep non-comprehension of the new global political situation after the fall of the Berlin Wall helped preserve the perception of NATO as a serious external threat amongst the Serbian political factors in Yugoslavia (who had inclined towards the USSR, which was itself undergoing comprehensive social reforms). This view grew stronger after the NATO fleet took an active part in the naval blockade of the FRY to ensure the implementation of UN sanctions. Air strikes targeting solely Serb positions in Bosnia, coupled with the Serbian authorities' silence on the cause of the intervention, was presented as irrefutable proof of the Western powers' intention to establish the New World Order and demonstrate it via their policy on Serbia "as the last bulwark of free thought in the international community".

NATO's participation in the Yugoslav crisis culminated with the 78-day NATO bombing of Serbia. The regime's abuse of the circumstances (which it had largely brought on itself) to finally clamp down on the political opposition and mobilize the general public to rally round the Milošević regime for the last time is best corroborated by the statements the ruling parties issued at the time. The Yugoslav United Left (JUL) - the party headed by Milošević's wife Mira Marković, generally believed to be the author of the regime rhetoric during Milošević's last years in power - was issuing statements on a daily basis, claiming that "the protagonists of the New World Order are the successors of German Nazi-Fascism; just like then, the Serbian nation is their victim". Air strikes were described as "an act of vandalism, another in a series of the senseless and destructive pogroms the hordes of world evil are conducting against the people of Yugoslavia". JUL clearly indicated its place in the defence of the country: "JUL members will defend Serbia and the FR of

Yugoslavia and stand at the disposal of the state leadership and the Army of Yugoslavia (VJ); those participating in the attack on our country should be aware that they will suffer the consequences". The SRS embraced the rhetoric, emphasising that "the rampant US administration is still deluding itself that the air strikes can break the firm will of the Serbian nation to defend and succeed in defending the greatest sanctities its ancestors have left it - freedom, pride and dignity of the fatherland in which it alone will lead the life it wishes."⁷⁸

With the country under attack, the opposition parties naturally sharply criticised NATO and the international community. Nonetheless, the statements coming from their ranks were much more moderate and some opposition parties highlighted the mistakes Milošević's regime had been making, clearly qualifying him as one of the main culprits.

As already mentioned, the regime strove to present the struggle of the Serbian people as the struggle for the welfare of all mankind. The Serbian fighters were defending not only Serbia, but "all free peoples, civilisation and Europe's heritage" as well. One of the main premises launched by JUL, for instance, was "The whole planet is the target".

The regime used the confusion and the general fear to physically deal with its political opponents. The owner and editor-in-chief of one of the few independent newspapers in Serbia, Slavko Ćuruvija was eliminated during the air strikes, while some opposition leaders, such as Zoran Đinđić, were forced to leave Serbia to escape Milošević's secret services. Assassinations continued after the air strikes. There were two unsuccessful attempts on the life of SPO leader Vuk Drašković, while the former President of the Serbian Presidency Ivan Stambolić was indeed killed. Anyone opposing the authorities in any way was declared a foreign mercenary and terrorist, and the Anti-Terrorism Act, the main purpose of which was to clamp down on political opponents, was submitted to parliament for adoption.⁷⁹ Moreover, the Decree on Special Measures in the Circumstances of NATO's Threats of Military Attacks against our Country⁸⁰ caused a complete media blackout in Serbia and the regime secured itself absolute monopoly on opinion forming.

8. OSCE and Ethnic Mobilization

The reactions of the CSCE (now OSCE) at the outset of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia were extremely restrained and the impression was that it strove to avoid sharp confrontation with the Belgrade authorities. However, these relations worsened with time.

⁷⁸ All quotes have been reproduced from the article "NATO Aggression in Party Statements", *Vreme*, Issue No. 440, 12 June 1999.

⁷⁹ See "Reagovanja srpskih opozicionih stranaka na predlog zakona o terorizmu - Kraj pravne države i početak tiranije" (Serbian Opposition Parties' Reactions to the Draft Anti-Terrorism Act - End of Rule of Law and Beginning of Tyranny), *Vijesti*, 29 June 2000.

⁸⁰ *Sl. glasnik RS*, No. 35/98.

CSCE's reaction was mostly reduced to "expressing concern" over the situation, "calls" on parties to halt violence, "extending support" to ceasefire agreements and similar statements.⁸¹ It did, however, support the measures undertaken by the other organizations, notably the UN and EU. The OSCE rarely took specific measures itself. These entailed establishing and sending missions to Yugoslavia and the neighbouring countries, the most important of which were the Missions of Long Duration in Kosovo, Sandžak and Vojvodina and the Kosovo Verification Mission.⁸²

8.1. Missions of Long Duration in Kosovo, Sandžak and Vojvodina

The decision to establish these missions was adopted on 14 August 1992. The OSCE and the FRY Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding regulating the missions' deployment in the FRY on 28 October 1992.

The missions' mandate was to promote dialogue between the authorities and representatives of the populations and communities in Kosovo, Sandžak and Vojvodina, collect information on human rights violations and promote solutions to such problems, and assist in providing information on relevant legislation on human rights, protection of minorities, free media and democratic elections.⁸³

The FRY government decided in June 1993 against extending its hospitality to the Missions of Long Duration in Kosovo, Sandžak and Vojvodina. Although numerous officials, not only those of the OSCE, had over the following years persistently and repeatedly called on the Yugoslav authorities to reconsider and allow the redeployment of the Missions, the FRY government was conditioning the extension of their mandate by the reinstatement of FRY's membership status in the OSCE and the Missions were unable to continue their mandates.

After the Mission was closed, the OSCE set up a special group to monitor the situation in Yugoslavia. The group met on a weekly basis and, *inter alia*, examined the member-states' reports.

In 1997, the OSCE Chairman appointed Max van der Stoep his personal representative for Kosovo and charged him with examining ways to reduce tensions in Kosovo, but the FRY authorities refused to issue Mr. van der Stoep an entry visa.

⁸¹ The terminology changed and was not always as harsh. However, OSCE's views became less general as of April 1992 and it started directly calling on the FRY to respect its obligations (more in Lj. Aćimović, "KEBS i jugoslovenska kriza" (The CSCE and the Yugoslav Crisis) in M. Šahović, *Međunarodno pravo i jugoslovenska kriza* (International Law and the Yugoslav Crisis) (Belgrade, 1996), pp. 120-166. At its meeting in December 1992, the Ministerial Council explicitly blamed the leaders in Serbia and Montenegro and the Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina the most for the conflicts.

⁸² The OSCE had also deployed missions to the neighbouring countries, Macedonia and Albania, to monitor the borders with Serbia. It also deployed special missions to help the neighbouring countries alleviate the negative effects UN sanctions against the FRY were having on these countries (more on missions in Lj. Aćimović, "KEBS i jugoslovenska kriza", *ibid*).

⁸³ <http://www.osce.org/item/15753.html>

The Missions of Long Duration had decent relations with the FRY authorities while they were deployed and were not perceived negatively by the public, insofar as the general public in Serbia knew of their deployment and activities. The presence of the mission members definitely gave the local communities a feeling of security. Unfortunately, the FRY authorities decided not to extend the MoU on the missions, conditioning their redeployment on the FRY's membership in the OSCE because it alleged Yugoslavia was not treated on an equal footing in the OSCE due to the suspension of its membership. The authorities established the link between these two issues only after the fact, as the Missions were established and began working after the decision on Yugoslavia's suspension had already been reached. The regime obviously wanted to use this in its conflict with the international community as an argument to help it improve the country's international standing.

The Missions could be criticised for formally equating the problems faced by minorities in Kosovo, Sandžak and Vojvodina. Such an approach is questionable in view of the fact that the relations between the authorities and majority population with the e.g. Hungarian minority in Vojvodina, the Moslem minority in Sandžak and the Albanian minority in Kosovo were not equally tense and that the status of minorities in the three regions and their existential problems, especially in the context of the armed clashes in the former SFRY, differed.

8.2. Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM)

The Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) was established on 25 October 1998, in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1199. It was tasked with monitoring the abidance of all parties with the requirements the international community had set with respect to the resolution of the crisis in Kosovo. The OSCE concluded the agreement on the KVM with the then FRY Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Agreement laid out the tasks of the mission: to monitor the compliance by all parties with Resolution 1199 and report thereof to the OSCE Permanent Council, the UN Security Council and other organizations, as well as the FRY authorities, to maintain close contacts with the authorities of the FRY, Serbia and Kosovo, the political parties and other organizations in Kosovo and accredited international and non-governmental organizations, to monitor elections in Kosovo, report to the OSCE Permanent Council, the UNSC and other organizations and make recommendations on issues falling within the framework of UNSC Resolution 1199.⁸⁴

KVM was the most extensive mission the OSCE had ever established and numbered 1,500 staff by February 1999. Due to the increasing deterioration of the security situation in Kosovo, the then Chair of the OSCE, Norwegian Minister Knut Vollebeck withdrew the KVM from Kosovo on 20 March 1999, merely a few days before NATO launched the air strikes.

⁸⁴ See <http://www.osce.org/item/22063.html>, and Annual Report 1998 on OSCE Activities, 2.2.4.

The KVM was not greeted with open arms by the Serbs in Kosovo or by Serbia. Serbs perceived it as an interfering and hostile mission, already supportive of the other side. It can thus be presumed that the KVM had contributed to the homogenisation of the Serbs and aggravation of their relations with the Kosovo Albanians. The Kosovo Serbs perceived the KVM as prejudiced and partial to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Serbian Government stoked these feelings. After bodies were discovered following a Serbian police action in the village of Račak in January 1999 and the KVM representatives accused the Serbs of massacring the civilians, the enmity and distrust of the KVM culminated, which, in turn, resulted in the additional homogenisation of the Serbian population.

8.3. Suspension of Membership

The harshest measure the OSCE took against Yugoslavia was to suspend its membership on 27 June 1992. Yugoslavia was first warned it was facing suspension in April 1992; in May the same year, the OSCE applied the “consensus minus one” rule (in other words, decisions could be passed without Yugoslavia’s consent). In July 1992, the Committee of Senior Officials decided to suspend Yugoslavia’s membership. Only two days later, a declaration was passed within the OSCE on the Yugoslav crisis, accusing the Serbian authorities for the events in Bosnia-Herzegovina and explicitly emphasising that the declaration was directed at the authorities and not the people. The likelihood of this message sparking widespread reactions amongst the Serbian population was as negligible as was the likelihood that the decision on suspending Yugoslavia’s membership would not be perceived as directed against precisely the Serbian people. However, the suspension of OSCE membership did not produce any dramatic consequences, nor did it cause much venom, maybe because the people were generally not as aware of the role of the OSCE as they were of that of the UN.

9. Conclusion

Serbian ethnic nationalism was rooted in two parallel processes. One was the imminent breakdown of the communist system that fuelled the dissolution of Yugoslavia as a multinational federation. From the point of view of the Serbian people, Yugoslavia was the “solution to the Serbian national question,” which allowed all Serbs to live in one state. Along with the disappearance of Yugoslavia and the formation of separate national states, the Serbian intelligentsia and the Serbian Orthodox Church declared that the Serbian national question was again open, announcing this in the notorious 1986 Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences. The second process that had caused ethnic mobilization in Serbia was initiated by the Kosovo Albanian rebellion in the early eighties and demands for a “Kosovo republic” and its secession from Serbia. This was interpreted as an ethnic threat to the

Serbs and reopened the question of the unequal status of the Republic of Serbia within the Yugoslav Federation. The blame for the situation was put on the 1974 Constitution, by which Serbia was divided in three parts, with the two autonomous provinces getting practically equal rights as Serbia within the Federation, while the other republics remained highly centralized. The huge ethno-mobilization in Serbia had a clear goal of changing the Constitution of Serbia and thereby eliminating the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina. However, after the 1989 constitutional changes under which the Serbian provinces lost their autonomy, Serbian authorities continued to fuel ethnic mobilization by raising the issue of the problematic status of the Serbian people in two other republics of Yugoslavia (Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) with a significant Serb population and on their way to independence

The idea of all-Serbian unification prevailed as of the early nineties. Ethnic mobilization was based on historical traumas among the Serbs during World War II and the threats of rising nationalism in Croatia and among the Moslems in Bosnia. Serbian nationalism was used to consolidate the Serbian conservative Communist Party, led by Slobodan Milosevic, who had strengthened his authoritarian rule by defending Yugoslavia and/or by advocating the unification of the Serbian people in a new Serbian state that would embrace Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia. Powerful propaganda launched by the strictly controlled media, the nationalist intellectual elite, the Church and the Army, all significantly contributed to stoking the fear and aggression that led to the outbreak of the bloody wars in the Balkans.

The international community response to the Yugoslav crisis additionally contributed to the spreading of nationalism in Serbia. The government of the isolated country established its absolute control over “truth” and “lies”, “right” and “wrong”. It used the intervention of external factors to deepen Serbian fears of a “conspiracy against the Serbs” and to unify nationalistic forces against a common foreign enemy.