

Slobodan Milošević and the construction of Serbophobia

The history of Serbian lands . . . is full of instances of genocide against the Serbs and of exoduses to which they were exposed. Processes of annihilation of the Serbs in the most diverse and brutal ways have been continuous. Throughout their history they have faced the fiercest forms of genocide and exoduses that have jeopardised their existence, yet they have always been self-defenders of their own existence, spirituality, culture, and democratic convictions. (SANU, 'Declaration Against the Genocide of the Serbian People')¹

THIS CHAPTER CHARTS the rise of Serbian nationalism, while examining many of the important myths that evolved as a concomitant to it. The above citation, from a statement by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, encapsulates what became a dominant view of Serbian history after 1986 – a long-suffering, but heroic nation, struggling for centuries against annihilation. I will begin by exploring elements of the Battle of Kosovo, a battle fought between Serbian and Turkish forces on 28 June 1389, which ultimately resulted in Serbian subjugation to five centuries of Ottoman rule. In legend, the Battle was also a Serbian sacrifice, which elevated them to the status of a heavenly and chosen people. This chapter begins by exploring the legacy of this famous myth, and how it has become a template for many Serbian portrayals of history. It is crucial to understand how this myth was generalised and fused with Jewish imagery, in such a way that Kosovo became the 'Serbian Jerusalem'. Myths highlighting the glorious but tragic aspects of Serbian history were of central importance in legitimating the dismantling of the Yugoslav Federation, and the expansionist ambitions of Milošević and his colleagues.

Kosovo, and more general myths of Golden Age and Fall, were instrumentalised first in the case of the Kosovar Albanians, and secondly, and more importantly, in the case of the Croats. As the conflict progressed, writers came to identify a Serbian version of anti-Semitism – 'Serbophobia' – a genocidal and expansionist strategy, supposedly used throughout history by Serbia's

enemies. Using a nationalist teleology, Serbian writers specifically targeted the Croats as the harbingers of Serbophobia, viewing them as a truly Biblical antagonist, which had been operating against the Serbs since the division of the Roman Empire. This chapter reviews the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century manifestations of Croatian 'Serbophobia', laying the basis for an analysis of the Second World War, the SFRY, and the more contemporary conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Contextualising propaganda: the rise of Serbian nationalism

It is accurate to suggest that for most of the lifetime of the SFRY Serbian nationalism was subordinate to Communism, and did not become an important factor until 1980. The Serbian capital Belgrade became the capital of Yugoslavia, and Josip Broz Tito managed to repress most manifestations of Serbian nationalism during his lifetime. A relatively high percentage of Serbs supported Tito's Communist system, even if they were dissatisfied with particular aspects of it. The crucial break came with Tito's death after nearly four decades at the helm of the country. The lack of any strong, articulate non-nationalistic leader with Tito's charisma, capable of exercising the same level of control, created a power vacuum at the federal centre. This vacuum would soon be filled by aspiring nationalists at the level of the constituent republics. Without a Yugoslav-oriented Tito at the helm, power bases within the individual republics became more important, while power at the Federal centre was greatly weakened.²

The rise of Serbian nationalism was largely a reaction to events in the autonomous province of Kosovo, a region that was traditionally seen as the Serbian heartland, but that was also home to an Albanian majority – some 90 per cent of the population. Kosovo was the seat of the early Serbian Orthodox Church, and was the site of some of the most important Orthodox monasteries in Yugoslavia, such as Gračanica – where the remains of the famous Serbian King Milutin (1282–1321) were interred.³ The Plain of Gazimestan at Kosovo Polje (Field of the Blackbirds) was the scene of the Serbs' battle against the Ottoman Empire, making Kosovo the home of their best-loved religious shrines, and the locus of their most famous defeat.

Albanians, not Serbs, were the first to articulate nationalist demands after 1980. Kosovar Albanian students demonstrated at Pristinë University for Albanian autonomy and republic status, provoking riots that led to a large number of injured Kosovars and security forces, and nine deaths.⁴ The Serbian government clamped down the following year with a state of emergency; and over the next eight years almost 600,000 Kosovars, over half the adult population, would face either arrest, interrogation, or police harassment.⁵ In reaction to Albanian secessionism, amid fears of 'Greater Albania',

the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts drew up a *Memorandum* in 1986 – a long list of Serbian grievances against their treatment within the Federation. Much of the document dealt with the ‘genocide’ of Serbs in Kosovo, and articulated the need for Serbs throughout Yugoslavia to assert themselves collectively. The 1974 Constitution, which decentralised power in Yugoslavia and put an end to Serbia’s control over two of its former provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina), was blamed for the loss of Serbian power and prestige. The *Memorandum*’s architects would eventually play a prominent role in spurring Serbian nationalism and in the dismemberment of the Federation.

Attempts by the President of the Serbian Communist Party, Ivan Stambolić, to deal with Kosovo’s civil unrest through constitutional revision and consensus proved to be ineffective, and the friction between Serbs and Albanians escalated.⁶ It was into this breach that an unlikely candidate inserted himself. Slobodan Milošević, a former Belgrade banker and protégé of Stambolić, was in all respects a colourless Communist bureaucrat and a most unlikely nationalist. It was he that Stambolić sent to Kosovo on 24 April 1987, to hear the grievances of the Kosovar Serbs, who claimed that they were being discriminated against by the police and local government. While his mission was to pacify the people, Milošević did exactly the opposite after hearing stories of Albanian police assaulting Serbian demonstrators. Milošević’s simple phrase *Niko ne sme da bije narod* (No one has the right to beat the People) would make him an instant hero for taking on the Albanian leadership, while making the antagonism between Kosovar Albanian and Serb explicit.⁷

Milošević was one of the first to sense Yugoslavia’s changing fortunes, and embraced nationalism with opportunistic fervour, correctly sensing that a ‘turning- point’ was about to begin. While no nationalist himself, Milošević opened the Pandora’s box that for ever changed the nature of Serbian, and by extension Yugoslav, politics. The former American ambassador Warren Zimmermann described Milošević as having made a ‘Faustian pact with nationalism’, although his ‘extraordinary coldness’ and inability to care for anyone, even the Serbs, made his choice surprising.⁸ Milošević soon ousted his long-time mentor, Stambolić, and, with the support of the media, took power in December 1987. He appealed to an emerging sense of Serbian unity, and claimed to speak for Serbs throughout Yugoslavia – a tacit warning to other republican leaders that their boundaries would provide little protection from Serbian intervention. Promising to end the persecution of Serbs in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo, he advocated a strengthening of the Orthodox Church and a privileging of Serbian cultural and social institutions, which he argued had long been repressed under Communism.⁹

If we review Kenneth Minogue’s three-stage process of nationalism, we can see that Milošević clearly articulated the ‘stirrings’ stage of Serbian

nationalism, through the acknowledgement that Serbs were suffering in Kosovo. The 'struggle' stage was soon to follow.¹⁰ Milošević convinced his people that a great turning-point had arrived in Serbian history. He articulated what Dušan Kečmanović has called the myth of 'the right moment',¹¹ or what George Schöpflin described as a 'myth of rebirth and renewal'.¹² Both these types of myth basically advanced the same claim – that it was time for Serbia to reassert itself under a powerful nationalist leader who could protect its interests. Milošević was seemingly the man for the job. While alternative readings of Serbian nationalism existed at this time, and continued to hold sway over some segments of the population, the increasing power of the Kosovo myth, the decline of Communism, and the general sense of loss and marginalisation stirred by the SANU and other organisations soon made it increasingly difficult for other voices to be heard.

Another important aspect of this nationalist platform was the re-Serbianisation of Kosovo and Vojvodina, both of which possessed autonomous status under the 1974 Constitution. The effects of this decentralising constitution were soon reversed. By the beginning of 1988, overt discrimination against the Kosovars began, as Milošević stepped up his anti-Albanian rhetoric, to an increasingly fired-up population. Milošević's nationalism was advanced in terms of an 'Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution' and 'The Happening of the People', two rather banal catchphrases that were used to justify the re-emergence of nationalism and Milošević's cementing of political power.

By February 1989 Milošević had pushed through a series of amendments to the Serbian constitution, eliminating the provinces' authority to pass their own legislation. By organising mass rallies, he was able to force the leadership in Vojvodina to resign. By September 1990 a new constitution had fully subordinated Vojvodina and Kosovo to central Serbian control. These two coups quadrupled Serbia's allotted seats in federal institutions, conferring on the republic effective control over the outcome of all votes at the federal level.¹³ Serb actions against the Albanians in Kosovo demonstrated definitively the collapse of the federal system. The lesson of Kosovo was obvious – the system was no longer strong enough, or was unwilling, to restrain belligerent republics, and was unable to protect basic human and constitutional rights.¹⁴

Milošević's intimidation of other republics in the SFRY soon led to secessionist movements around the country. The first overt move was made by the Slovenian leader Milan Kučan, whose overtures for decentralisation were violently rejected by Milošević – who in turn threatened civil unrest and violence. The machinations of the JNA in Slovenia also set the stage for a showdown. Harassed by the JNA and threatened by Serbia, Slovenians pushed for separation from the Federation. In December 1990 Slovenia declared its

independence, which later led to a short war between Slovenian and JNA troops that eventually resulted in an independent Slovenia.¹⁵

While Milošević was often credited with breaking up Yugoslavia and installing nationalism as the ruling ideology in Serbia, he certainly did not act alone. With him were many new nationalists who proved instrumental in the coming years. While Milošević used nationalism as a tool to gain power, he relied on the support of many 'true believers', who formed a crucial spiritual and intellectual base. Among these, the novelist Dobrica Ćosić was perhaps the most famous. Formerly a Communist believer, Ćosić wholeheartedly embraced nationalism with the decline of Yugoslavia, and became an early supporter of Milošević and his government.

While the Western press would later become obsessed with Milošević as a nationalist demagogue, he should be seen more as a supporter of nationalism than its founder. Milošević's regime provided a climate for the unrestrained articulation of nationalist sentiments, and the wholesale revision of Serbian history. Milošević's overt support of the Serbian Orthodox Church was well known. The Church joined with individual journalists, politicians, novelists, academics and military leaders in contributing to the escalation of militant nationalism. However, their role was more important. By acting as the conscience of Serbia, they providing a greatly needed spiritual underpinning for Milošević's movement. But in order to cement political power, Serbia's future strongman also needed to appeal to non-nationalist parts of the population, and promoted a 'multi-pronged ideological strategy', one that was ultimately successful in uniting a great variety of seemingly mutually incompatible forces. As Veljo Vujačić has argued:

Analyses of the 'Milosevic phenomenon' which insist on only one dimension of his appeal (typically nationalism), are bound to miss the point. On the contrary, it was precisely the combination of simultaneous appeals to different constituencies which helps explain Milosevic's success. Yugoslavia, unity and Titoism for the party orthodox and army officers, Serbia for the nationalists, reform and rehabilitation for the intellectuals, protection for the Kosovo Serbs, social justice for the workers and pensioners – this was the Serbian leader's equivalent of Lenin's 'bread, peace, and land'.¹⁶

Additionally, the Milošević regime soon became adept at centralising and controlling the media. While the media in the SFRY had operated relatively unfettered, compared with other communist countries new legislation limited the scope of independent reporting. New provisions under the Serbian Penal Code, specifically Article 98, made it an offence to criticise the government or cast doubt on the country's leaders. Government ministries of Information and the Interior now had a mandate to censor, delete, or change any aspect of reporting found to be at odds with official government accounts.¹⁷ The

government-controlled Serbian Radio-Television (RTS), soon gained a broadcasting monopoly. The July 1991 Law on Radio and Television transferred parliamentary powers over radio and television directly to the government.¹⁸ The Milošević regime also did its best to limit if not destroy independent print media, by imposing swingeing taxes while cutting supplies of newsprint and fuel. Independent papers such as *Borba*, *Vreme* and *Republika* were forced to pay four times more for newsprint than loyal government-controlled papers, such as *Vecernje novosti*.¹⁹ Powerful conglomerates, such as the *Politika Group* (which owned twenty publications, a radio station and a television channel) were reduced to government appendages by 1987, giving Milošević full power to implement his nationalistic projects.²⁰

While control over the media allowed the regime to determine strictly what people understood about the government and its role in the wars that were to follow, Milošević's key role, once again, was as a catalyst for nationalism. The role of the media was assessed primarily on its ability to maintain support for Milošević's regime, and not necessarily for Serbian nationalism as such. Indeed, Milošević's role in persecuting nationalist opposition leaders was well known, exemplified by his continuous harassment of the nationalist author and politician Vuk Drasković, which included severe beatings and several attempts on his life. Nevertheless, Milošević's legacy was to create a forum where such men were able to stand for election and disseminate their nationalist views to an increasingly receptive audience. His later support of influential warlords (such as Vojislav Šešelj and Željko Ražnatović Arkan) allowed Milošević to carry out much of the dirty work involved in expanding the Serbian state indirectly, without relying on the official armed forces.

The rise of numerous academic institutions and publishing houses dedicated to the promotion of nationalist views proved to be of immense importance. Among the more important promoters of the new Serbian line (although not necessarily linked with the government) were to be found: Velauto International, IDEA, BMG, and SANU (Serbia), the Serbian Unity Congress, and Serbian Heritage Books (USA and Canada). Other publishing houses, such as Minerva Press, The Book Guild, and L'Age D'Homme,²¹ appear to have been wittingly or unwittingly pulled into the emerging propaganda war. Control over the Serbian Ministry of Information also provided an important outlet for nationalist views. Well- and lesser-known nationalists had access to a government-controlled forum for disseminating their nationalist opinions. This key ministry was responsible for the co-ordination and consolidation of Serbian propaganda, and its influence in unifying reinterpretations of Serbian history and current events should not be underestimated. However, it was clear that, even among opposition leaders, there was surprising consistency in Serbian revisionist views and propaganda, as will become

apparent throughout this study. Indeed, other than the non-nationalist opposition media, and curiously, Milošević's wife Mira Marković, there were few dissenting voices within Serbia.²²

The remainder of this chapter explores how Serbian nationalist novelists, politicians, journalists, and military leaders firmly anchored Serbian nationalism in a cyclical teleological framework, which relied heavily on myths of a Golden Age or 'Heavenly Serbia', with Serbs as a chosen people or a *nebeški narod*. Another central theme woven throughout Serbian writing was the image of the Serbs as a long-suffering, persecuted people, often likened to the Jews.

'Kosovo' and the development of Serbian consciousness

Throughout the conflict, the myth of Kosovo was touted as a key shibboleth of Serbian identity. Kosovo figured as the locus of a historic defeat, but also symbolised the awakening of Serbian values and spirituality. The Kosovo Battle was fought in the year 1389 on St Vitus' Day (28 June). The basic story surrounds Prince Lazar, an elected Serbian prince, who in legend was handed an ultimatum, whereby he was either to pay homage to the Turkish Sultan Murad I, relinquishing control of Serbian lands and taxation, or bring his forces on to Kosovo Polje to face the Sultan's army. Lazar was later approached in a dream by a grey hawk (or falcon) flying from Jerusalem, and was offered a choice: an earthly kingdom (implying victory for his forces against the Sultan), or a heavenly kingdom (where the Serbs would be defeated in battle).²³ As one Serbian source paraphrased Lazar's decision:

If I decide to choose the earthly kingdom, the earthly kingdom lasts only for a brief time, but the heavenly kingdom always and for ever. Thus the Serbian Tsar chose the heavenly kingdom rather than the kingdom of this world. Thus the holy Tsar Lazar . . . wisely led these reason-endowed lambs to lay down their lives courageously in Christ, and obtain the crown of suffering (martyrdom), so that they might all become partakers of the glory on high.²⁴

The details of the battle, including the identity of the actual winners and losers, are sketchy at best. While Robert Kaplan and James Marriott both insist that the Serbs lost decisively, Tim Judah advances that the Serbs may have actually won the Battle – based on a variety of contemporary dispatches. Reviewing a wealth of evidence, Noel Malcolm insists that the Battle was a draw – neither side having clinched definitive victory.²⁵ In the Serbian legend of the Battle, however, there was no ambiguity – the Serbs lost, and were thereafter subjected to five centuries of Ottoman rule. What has emerged most prominently, however, was the heroism of the Serbs, dying so that their nation could be elevated as a spiritual entity. Some Serbian Orthodox Church

publications during the conflict would paint the Battle as a moral and spiritual victory for the Serbs, the victory of the divine over the secular, the eternal over the temporal. Like the crucifixion, the martyrdom of Lazar and the Serbian nation raised the Serbian people and made them divine, holy, chosen, special. The following portrayal from North America was in many ways typical:

[T]he Battle of Kosovo was, in the eyes of the world, a disastrous defeat for the Serbs. But in the eyes of heaven and of those who understand the mystery and meaning of the Battle of Kosovo, it was a glorious victory. It marked the day when the Serbian people ceased to trust in the material things of the kingdom of this world, and began to set their hope on the spiritual values of the heavenly kingdom. It marked the day when the Serbs voluntarily had sacrificed their glorious earthly kingdom and even themselves for Christ their God, so that they might be partakers of the incomparably more glorious heavenly kingdom of Christ.²⁶

The Kosovo defeat became nation-defining, allowing the Serbs to transcend mere mortality. As one contemporary historian wrote with disdain, the Kosovo myth seemed like a 'cheat', since its 'merges the contradictory satisfactions of being the winner and the loser'.²⁷ Nevertheless, Kosovo functioned as a typical covenantal myth. There was a Fall, and a promise of Redemption, embodying the 'covenantal culture' described by Akenson.²⁸ It also fulfilled the three aspects of Hebrew nationalism described by Kohn, as it elevated the Serbs to the status of a 'chosen people', gave them a 'consciousness of national history', and created a form of 'national messianism', while similarly democratising nationalism by means of a Covenant between God and all co-nationals.²⁹ Like the Jews, the Serbs could regain their promised land, through constant contemplation and 'wholehearted mourning'. This alone would allow 'the seed of that distant defeat . . . to bloom into something more wonderful than victory'.³⁰

The nineteenth-century development of the myth through the writings of Serbian linguist Vuk Karadžić transformed Lazar into a Christ-like figure – who led the Serbian nation to holy martyrdom so that it would achieve divine status. Furthermore, Lazar's enemies became Judas-like traitors. The Serbian warrior Vuk Branković would be demonised for crossing over to the Turkish side on the eve of the battle, and came to symbolise betrayal from within, the 'Christ killer' who represented Serbian converts to Islam.³¹ This would lay the basis for an obvious example of Kečmanović's theory of 'counteridentification' – with the projection of a variety of negative characteristics on to the Moslems.³²

The fear of traitors would also manifest itself in the Serbian national coat of arms – depicting a cross surrounded by four S's, which were originally fire-lighting flints. As Biljana Vankovska argues, the first interpretation was *Sama Srbija Sebe Spasila* – 'Serbia Alone Delivered Herself', which then changed to *Samo Sloga Srbe Spasava* – 'Only Unity Saves the Serbs', reflecting the fear of

internal enemies.³³ Such symbols of counteridentification would be strengthened through the well-known epic poem 'The Mountain Wreath', written by Petar Petrović-Njegoš, a prince-bishop from Montenegro. This nineteenth-century poem glorified the exploits of one Miloš Obilić, a legendary Serbian hero from the Battle of Kosovo, supposedly responsible for the death of the Turkish Sultan Murad I, who was killed during the battle.³⁴ Obilić exemplified how courage and great deeds could overcome national defeat, epitomising the promise of Redemption for the Serbs, if they held true to their faith in Orthodoxy and Serbdom.

Contemporaneous with Petrović-Njegoš was the geographer Jovan Cvijić, who activated the Kosovo myth as a central component of his 'Dinaric man' – the traditional South Slav inhabitant. As Cvijić explains:

The Dinaric is consumed with a burning desire to avenge Kosovo, where he lost his independence, and to revive the Serbian empire about which he has never ceased to dream even in the most desperate circumstances in which a man of pure reason would have despaired . . . This tenacity, this absolute faith in the national ideal, is the essential fact of his history, he considers himself chosen by destiny to accomplish the national mission . . . To kill lots of Turks is for him not only a way of avenging his ancestors but of assuaging their pain which he shares.³⁵

For Cvijić, as for later interpreters, the Battle contained both positive and negative components – the valiant Serbs against the treacherous Turks. Tens of thousands were rallied for war in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the legend of Kosovo. It gave Serbs the will to fight, even in cases of certain defeat.

Milošević's genius in exploiting Kosovo to his advantage was readily apparent by 1989, when a huge rally was planned to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Battle. As a precursor to the event, the relics of Prince Lazar were paraded around Serbia, with full media coverage, to be finally interred at Ravenica, Lazar's original place of rest.³⁶ On the plain of Gazimestan, a vast crowd of pilgrims officially estimated at between one and two million gathered for the celebrations. This was to be Milošević's shining moment, as Serbs from around the world gathered to commemorate the renewal of Serbian culture, religion and nationalism. It was at this stage that Milošević was able to transform himself into a nationalist demagogue, as he emerged triumphant from a helicopter amid cheering crowds. Orthodox priests held aloft icons of Milošević and Lazar, while thousands of men and women crowded around the podium.³⁷ Arguably, this was Milošević's finest hour. Secretly, however, he admitted that most of this was nothing more than 'bullshit'.³⁸ The spectacle was purely for the benefit of the Serbian people – to cement his growing personal power.

Whatever his personal beliefs, Kosovo secured Milošević's position as both

a political and spiritual leader of the Serbian nationalist movement. Such rallies were designed to quell any opposition to Milošević's rule, by co-opting even the most virulent nationalists. By 1989, Milošević's political control over Serbia and Kosovo was unquestioned, as was the emergence of Serbian nationalism. A sharp division between nationalists and Communists appeared, with Serbs as either loyal supporters of the regime, or potential traitors. Vuk Branković, the Serbian Judas, was seemingly lurking behind every corner.³⁹

Throughout Serbia, Kosovo fever gripped the population. Serbian bookstores filled their shelves with books on Kosovo, while musical artists dedicated their works to Kosovo. Even a new perfume, 'Miss 1389', evoked images of the Battle.⁴⁰ In some respects, Anthony Smith was correct when he noted the aesthetic aspects of Golden Age nationalism. Smith's general description of the use of Golden Age myths easily applied to the Serbs during this time. Serbian leaders were most adept at 'unfold[ing] a glorious past, a golden age of saints and heroes, to give meaning to its promise of restoration and dignity'.⁴¹ Indeed, there was much in Kosovo fever that reflected the 'poetic spaces' described by Smith.

Renewal of the Serbian Orthodox Church

Alongside Kosovo, much of the revision of history involved the glorification of Serbian Orthodoxy as a repository of nationalist expression. Orthodoxy for Serbs had a certain purity, being 'purely spiritual', while 'turned towards Christ and the "Empire of Heaven"'.⁴² The rise of Serbian nationalism and the instrumentalisation of Kosovo also brought to the fore a general feeling of Serbian greatness. Serbia as the 'new Byzantium' and the Serbs as a 'heavenly people' were to become increasingly popular motifs.⁴³ Such imagery stressed the strong Covenant that Serbs supposedly maintained with God, and reinforced the image of the Serbs as a holy, chosen people.

Speaking of his fellow Serbs, Metropolitan Amfilohije Radović of Montenegro preached: 'Our destiny is to carry the cross on this blazing divide between different worlds . . . therefore the Serbian people are also divine . . . Our people preserves in its bosom, in its collective memory, Jerusalem's holiness.'⁴⁴ Nevertheless, he warned that 'an insane wind tries ceaselessly to extinguish this sacred lamp'. These 'insane winds' were to be understood as Catholic and Protestant countries from the West, and Islamic countries from the east. Serbia was seemingly sandwiched in the middle of two expansionist forces, both trying to encroach on its territory.⁴⁵ Generally, the Church promoted Kosovo as the spiritual and cultural heartland of the Serbian people.⁴⁶ The 600th anniversary of the Battle was to become a year of commemoration for the past 500 years of 'suffering' under which the Orthodox Church claimed the Serbs had suffered.⁴⁷

Coupled with the emergence of this religious-nationalist amalgam were a spate of books and articles, propagating a patriotic view of Serbian superiority. One such book, by Olga Luković-Pejanović, was suggestively titled *The Serbs: The Oldest Nation*, and claimed, among other things, that the Biblical Garden of Eden was located in Serbia, that the Cyrillic script was invented by Serbs, and that numerous ancient writers, such as Ovid, composed their works in Serbian. One curious text entitled 'Serbs – Nations Most Numerous', argued that Serbs were the most numerous (and therefore the most cosmopolitan) nation in history, having inhabited India, Mesopotamia, Siberia, and Africa. The author even claimed Alexander the Great as one of the great Serbian heroes of the past.⁴⁸

Similarly, Serbia's minister of culture, focusing on the Serbs' uniqueness, concluded that the Serbs are one of five imperial peoples: 'It is an ancient people and one of the most Christian ones.' According to another minister of the Serbian government: 'Today, many around the world dream about being Serb . . . Be happy you belong to this people. You are eternal.' Likewise, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Velibor Ostojić, President of the Serbian Democratic Party, proclaimed triumphantly: 'Every nook of Serbian land and the Serbs themselves are a heavenly wonder, and an inspiration and example to all other peoples and countries.'⁴⁹

A tradition of religious tolerance and love was to prove extremely important in demonstrating that the Serbs were religiously and culturally unable to be aggressors in any conflict; they could only be the victims. Kosovo allowed for the creation of a coherent nationalist system, where political and religious leaders worked side by side with opposition politicians, academics, and journalists to promote the cause of Serbian renewal. At this stage, such myths were used to re-awaken the people, and could in some ways be described as Smith's Golden Age of nationalism, with myths of origin, descent, and a heroic age. Certainly, Serbian leaders were taking advantage of their 'useable past' to cement their power as the republic transformed itself.⁵⁰

Generalising Kosovo: Serbian and Jewish connections

We have to persevere or else we are lost. It's similar to the problem the Jews had. Kosovo is our Jerusalem. We'd rather defend it as it is, rather than have just one Wailing Wall. Kosovo is a place of Serbian national identity that we cannot give away, just as Israel can't give away Jerusalem. (Writer and musician Aleksander Pavlović in conversation with Florence Levinsohn)

Certainly a key aspect of Serbian propaganda was the belief that the nation had reached a historic turning-point – that Serbia could now relive its glory, while avenging the wrongs of the past. Nevertheless, while Kosovo resonated strongly with the Serbian people, the government also saw the need to

generalise the lessons of Kosovo, to incorporate non-Serbian and contemporary symbolism into the myth, in order to justify the re-emergence of Serbia to the outside world. The lessons had to be universalised, and brought into the late twentieth century. For this reason, a new form of Kosovo interpretation began, bringing Serbia into the comparative genocide debate.

In 1988, a group of eminent Serbian intellectuals formed the Serbian–Jewish Friendship Society, headed by Klara Mandić, in the hope of paralleling the plight of Serbs and Jews. The formation of the Society and its later work proved how important the Serbian notion of ‘performing’ their own victimisation had become. Its primary goal was to strengthen contacts between Serbia and Israel, relations that had obviously soured with the strong anti-Zionist line advanced by Tito at the behest of his Islamic non-aligned colleagues. Activities such as city twinning were popular, with 22 twinned cities between Serbia and Israel, the most important being between Belgrade and Tel Aviv, where mutual activities, from sporting events to commercial transactions, were encouraged. Mandić brought the mayors of fifteen Serbian cities to Israel during the Gulf War, while ironically, Serbia remained a staunch ally of Iraq. Even the Serbian Crown Prince in exile, Aleksander, visited Israel to stress the commonalities between the two cultures.⁵¹ A new museum was also formed, to show the historic ‘Jewishness’ of Serbia. North of Belgrade, in Zemun, the supposed ancestral home of Theodor Herzl was restored and turned into a museum.⁵²

The purpose of the Society was to equate Serbian suffering with that of the Jews, allowing Serbs to enter into the comparative genocide debate. The Society’s role was clearly not to represent Jewish interests, but rather, to court Israeli military support, which Serbia successfully retained until 1999. In reality, the Jewish community in Serbia was relatively small, with only 3,500 Jews in nine local communities affiliated with the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia, a non-nationalist representative of Jewish interests.⁵³ The American journalist Florence Levinsohn was one of the first American Jewish writers to compare the Kosovo Battle to the Jewish legend of Masada, where approximately 1,000 Jewish warriors committed mass suicide, after a losing battle with the attacking Romans some 2,000 years ago.⁵⁴ Echoing Jovan Cvijić, Milan Bulajić, Director of the Museum of Victims of Genocide in Belgrade, ascribed a willingness to fight to Serbian ‘genes’, which made them see themselves as ‘victims by destiny’. He also claimed that ‘they are the chosen people, like the Jews. They have chosen the heavenly kingdom symbolised by Kosovo.’⁵⁵ For nationalists such as Bulajić, what it meant to be a Serb was immutable, and rooted in the ancient past. They seemingly shared much with the Jews, in terms of their willingness to fight heroically in the face of overwhelming odds.

Such views were also evident in clerical circles. As early as 1983, a

petition was drawn up by Serbian Orthodox bishops to protest against the persecution of the Serbs in Kosovo. Once again, the links between Serbian and Jewish suffering were stressed:

The Jewish people, before the menace of their annihilation and by the miracle of the uninterrupted memory, returned to Jerusalem after 2,000 years of suffering, against all logic of history. In a similar manner, the Serbian people have been fighting their battle at Kosovo since 1389, in order to save the memory of its identity, to preserve the meaning of their existence against all odds.⁵⁶

Žarko Korać of Belgrade University also made this link explicit, in his study of the Serbian national revival. Here, he posited that the myth, like a passion play, eventually became primordial, and could not be seen as mere metaphor. The myth became central to the will to fight for a homeland. Thus:

What [Kosovo] tells the Serbs is 'we are going to make a state again'. Just as 'Jesus is coming back' so is Lazar. It means that because we opted for the kingdom of heaven we cannot lose, and that is what people mean when they talk about Serbs as being a 'heavenly people'. In this way the Serbs identify themselves with the Jews. As victims yes, but also with the idea of 'sacred soil'. The Jews say 'Next year in Jerusalem' and after 2000 years they resurrected their state. The message is 'We are victims, but we are going to survive.'⁵⁷

There can be little doubt that Serbian writers saw the merits of drawing overt comparisons between themselves and the Jews. Serbian claims to Kosovo were no different from Zionist claims to Israel, or so the argument went. Serbs were a persecuted nation, as were the Jews, and both *deserved* to have a national homeland. In this example of Serbian myth-making at its finest, the process of inscription, or narrativising, was obvious.

The first targets: myths of persecution and the Kosovar Albanians

The operationalisation of the Kosovo myth was first used against the Kosovar Albanians, as a means of legitimating the reincorporation of this province into an expanded Serbia. Accusations of genocide levelled against the Albanians acted as a precursor to later accusations of genocide levelled against Croats and Bosnian Moslems. For this reason, it is worth reviewing several aspects of these Serbian claims, and how they constituted the first step in a Serbian merger of Kosovo and Jewish imagery in the service of nationalism. From the very beginning, it was clear that accusing the Albanians of genocide was the key to legitimating Serbian territorial claims. By 1986, 60,000 Serbs had signed a petition, along with Serbian Orthodox bishops from New Zealand, Europe, and North America, detailing a 'fascist genocide' being inflicted on Serbs and Montenegrins.⁵⁸

Echoing the Jewish case, anti-Albanian propaganda focused on a long

history of Albanian genocide in Kosovo. Numerous Serbian publications advanced the allegation that Albanians had been killing and forcibly expelling Serbs from the region since the arrival of the Ottoman Turks. Albanians supposedly acted as the 'strong arm of the Ottoman Empire', keeping the weak but proud Serbs in submission from 1389 onward.⁵⁹ Even a relatively impartial historian like Bogdan Denitch would describe how, in the 'intervening centuries', Serbs were forced to flee from Kosovo, while the Turks settled the region with Islamicised Albanians, a process 'which today would be called genocide'.⁶⁰ Forced expulsions in the nineteenth century were similarly claimed to have been severe, approaching a total of 150,000.⁶¹ For many Serbian writers, the Albanians were a violent and treacherous people. Because they had collaborated with the occupying Ottoman armies, and had set themselves up in Kosovo in order to terrorise the Christian Serbs, they had no claim to be a constituent nation in the region – they were 'morally disqualified'.⁶² It was clear that only a chosen nation, like the Serbs, deserved to be in control.

Tito's Yugoslavia would be reinterpreted as a time when Albanian genocide continued with full fury. Dobrica Ćosić was one of the first to reinterpret Kosovar actions during the lifespan of Yugoslavia as an attempt to create 'an ethnically pure Kosovo republic . . . an Albanian state in Yugoslav territory'.⁶³ Kosovars, not Serbs, were blamed for inventing 'ethnic cleansing'. For others, the long history of 'brutal persecution' included such activities as 'rape and pillage . . . the desecration of Serbian religious institutions and cemeteries, arson and exploitation'.⁶⁴ Writers blamed the Albanians for instituting a forty-year policy of ethnic cleansing against the Serbs, in order to create a Republic of Kosovo in the ethnically pure area.⁶⁵ Others would describe an 'open and total war', which was leading inexorably to 'the physical, political and cultural genocide of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohije'.⁶⁶ In a large number of cases, a long and continuous history of genocide was revealed, with the Serbs as the indigenous people of the region constantly under attack from the alien Albanians, brought in either by Ottomans or Communists.

Such a portrayal of Serbian–Albanian relations made Serbian reactions in Kosovo appear as a welcome, though long-delayed, measure, designed to correct centuries of abuse. There was little statistical information to support these Serbian claims of genocide, nor was rape as frequent an occurrence there as the Serbian nationalists alleged it to be. Except for several highly publicised cases, the Kosovo average was far below that of the rest of Serbia before the war, nor were many of the cases of harassment ever proved. What could be proved, however was the large increase in Kosovar Albanian relative to Serbian births (27 per 1,000 for 1981–90 versus the Serb and Croat average of 2.2). This gave rise to another type of genocide accusation, the

notion of a demographic conspiracy to out-birth Serbs and therefore to gain control of the province. While this style of paranoid rhetoric was never used for Croats, nor for Bosnian Moslems, it demonstrates both the perseverance and versatility of Serbian writers when faced with the reality that Serbs had not been victims of genocide in any conventional sense.

Čosić was one of the first to highlight the dangers of a 'demographic explosion' – designed to bring about the separation of Kosovo and its joining with Albania 'by sheer force of numbers'.⁶⁷ Some, like the political cartoonist Milenko Mihajlović, blamed Tito's government for encouraging a high birth-rate. His works depicted throngs of Albanian babies with leering grins, swarming out from behind Marshal Tito – the queen bee.⁶⁸ Reactions of the academic community were difficult to take seriously. Živorad Igić's monograph on what he described as a 'demographic time bomb' denounced the Albanian birth-rate as 'unique to the world', in that their 'reproductive behaviour is quite unsuited to the time and space in which we live'.⁶⁹ A high birth-rate, he reasoned, constituted 'an objective threatening of the rights of the other nationalities'. It became part of a coherent strategy to 'create an *ethnically clean* region', a strategy supposedly pursued by Albanian leaders for national reasons. Poverty and a lack of education were dismissed as irrelevant, while 'tribal leaders' were blamed for forcing women to bear children, in order to take control of Kosovo.⁷⁰

The notion of a gynaecological conspiracy seemed also to be supported by the Serbian Association of Professors and Scientists, who exposed a plot to make Albanian women more fertile, so they could engender a 'demographic explosion never before seen, the most potent in the world'. Claiming that the Albanian population had risen by a factor of 50 (the increase was actually 3.3 times from 1941 to 1981), the Association was clear that a concerted strategy of high Albanian births constituted a form of genocide against the Serbs.⁷¹ This idea was again introduced in a 1995 scientific conference in Pristinë, designed to deal with the 'negative and unacceptable demographic movements' in Kosovo. Their recommendations included the settlement of some 400,000 Serbian refugees from other parts of Yugoslavia, as well as more innocuous provisions, like the 'adoption of a family planning law'.⁷²

That ethnic cleansing was eventually pursued should surprise no one. While the conference advocated 'family planning' as a possible method of reducing the Albanian population, the Serbian government appeared to have made no effort to help them with their birth-control concerns.⁷³ Family planning was advocated solely to reduce the percentage of Albanians relative to Serbs. Had any such coercive measures been implemented, it might potentially have been considered genocide under Article 4 of the United Nations *Genocide Convention* of 1948: 'imposing measures intended to prevent births

within the group'. Even if Serbian propaganda were true, Kosovar Albanians out-birthing Serbs would have been neither an instance of genocide nor a crime against humanity under international law, nor, for that matter, under Serbian law.

While the scientific establishment used veiled threats and 'scientific' studies to advance anti-Albanian policies, several writers were more direct. The SANU academic Vešelin Djuretić, for example, rejected such complicated and long-term projects as family planning, proposing instead the 'repatriation' of Kosovar Albanians to Albania. The solution was to deport everyone who was not a Serb. Serbs would then be moved into Kosovo to fill the empty houses.⁷⁴ Djuretić's plan went to the heart of Serbian political and military objectives in Kosovo. Several convoluted, but by no means universally accepted, definitions of 'genocide' and 'ethnic cleansing' were used to justify the forced removal of Kosovar Albanians from the region, in order to replace them with Serbs.

There was little truth to the claim that a demographic plot was being hatched. An impartial Yugoslav study, conducted in 1988 to assess the situation, revealed that low education levels among females and a high unemployment rate were the crucial contributing factors to a high birth-rate. There was no cynical policy on the part of the Albanian leadership.⁷⁵ At the same time, there were only five inter-ethnic murders in Kosovo between 1981 and 1987. This region had the lowest crime rate in Yugoslavia.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the illusion of danger, and the theme of the 'universal culprit', were common during this time.⁷⁷ Accusations of persecution soon became self-fulfilling prophecies, as the Kosova Liberation Army – largely funded by expatriate Albanian groups – launched a bitter struggle for independence. This only increased the level of Serbian terror in the province. By 1999, over 850,000 Kosovars had been forced to flee their homes, by a mixture of Serbian paramilitary violence and NATO destruction. Some Serb nationalists took their 'self-defensive' activities quite seriously. Given the Albanians' crime of genocide, the Macedonian economist Vladimir Gligorov remarked ironically, 'the punishment seemed appropriate'.⁷⁸

Contextualising Serbian nationalism in Croatia

For the Serbian government, the lessons of Kosovo were obvious. By activating the Kosovo myth, and by linking it with explicitly Jewish metaphors of 'genocide', the government was able to take over the province and rejoin it to Serbia. Few Serbs openly protested against Milošević's heavy-handed approach to Kosovo, which he ran like a military police state. The fact that Serbs had suffered 'genocide' gave him *carte blanche*. The links between an aesthetic of persecution and state terror were not ignored by outside

observers. Shkelsem Maliqi, in his study of Albanian nationalism, drew out the links between Serbs in Kosovo and the Palestinian problem, noting the militaristic capabilities and actions of each:

Israel used all coercive means to 'liberate' and 'redeem' Palestine as a 'sacred land' which had been 'usurped' by the Palestinians. In the same way the dominant state machinery of the 'unitary' republic of Serbia decided to apply all coercive means to the task of bringing Kosova back into the national possession of the Serbs, on the grounds that Kosovo had been historically 'sacred Serbian soil', which had been 'usurped' by the Albanians a couple of centuries ago.⁷⁹

Maliqi posited that Serbian nationalists and militant Zionists had much in common. As he described it: 'the Serbs as a persecuted and historically tragic people, the notion of the historical right to gather all Serbs within one state, the idea of the crusade against (in this case) the Albanians as an alleged vanguard of Islamic fundamentalism, the right to recolonise "sacred soil", the right to impose demographic control over the "usurpers".'⁸⁰ As an Albanian Moslem, Maliqi had clear sympathies with both Kosovars and Palestinians, and his denunciation of both Serbs and Israelis at one stroke is an interesting indication of how far he felt such parallels extended. Clearly, Serbia had entered into the 'comparative genocide debate', and Milošević had successfully managed the takeover of Kosovo by playing on his people's fear and misunderstanding.

But if Serbian nationalists cut their teeth in Kosovo, their main opponents as Yugoslavia disintegrated were the Croats. While there had been little if any Croatian–Serbian antagonism before 1918, history would be revised to reflect a new reality. By 1990, the Croatian leader Franjo Tudjman, following the example of Slovenia, was trying to pull the Republic of Croatia out of the Yugoslav Federation. Milošević had not opposed Slovenian secession, on the grounds that there was no Serbian minority there in need of his 'protection'. While fighting had broken out between Slovenian secessionist forces and the JNA in June 1991, Milošević had secretly assured Slovenian leaders that he would not try to prevent their secession.⁸¹ What Silber and Little have dubbed 'the phoney war' ended quickly by July, after Milošević vetoed the continued use of force by the JNA.⁸² Croatia, however, was different, since its territory contained a sizeable Serbian minority – 13 per cent of Croatia's total population of 4.7 million people.⁸³ Moreover, certain regions of Croatia – Eastern Slavonia and the eastern Krajina – were seen to be historically Serbian. Milošević's legitimacy as a national leader was based on uniting Serbian populations and historic lands, and this made a confrontation with Croatia inevitable, even if he had privately assured Tudjman and other Croatian leaders that he had no interest in Croatian land.⁸⁴ His attitude was made clear at a secret meeting to Serbian regional leaders in March, 1991. Expressing his

conviction that borders were made by the strong at the expense of the weak, he argued:

We simply consider it as a legitimate right and interest of the Serbian nation to live in one state. This is the beginning and the end ... And if we have to fight, by God we are going to fight. I hope that they [the Croats] will not be so crazy as to fight against us. If we do not know how to work properly or run an economy, at least we know how to fight properly.⁸⁵

As in the Kosovo case, myths proving that parts of Croatia were historically Serbian provided much-needed ammunition against Croatian secession. Territorial claims would simultaneously be backed with moral claims to Croatian territory, again in a fusing of Kosovo and Jewish-style myths. Such myths would advance the claim that the Serbs had been the victims of a long and bloody Croatian expansionist programme, aimed at destroying the Serbian nation. In their analysis of this 'anti-Serbian' or 'Serbophobic' programme, the importance of Catholic expansionism was another important ingredient.

The remainder of this chapter will therefore focus on two different aspects of Serbian propaganda: first of all, on the establishment of territorial claims and the beginnings of Serbian nationalism within Croatia. And secondly, it will be important to review some of the primary Serbian myths of persecution, and how Serbs began to reinterpret their earlier historical associations with the Croats. These sections will lay the basis for a comparison between Serbian and Croatian reappraisals of their historical relationship up to the beginning of the Second World War.

Serbian territorial claims in the Krajina and Eastern Slavonia

Certainly, the Serbs had a number of highly compelling and ancient myths that were operationalised in Kosovo to legitimate control of the province. In the case of Croatia, the two regions claimed by Serbs had a far more ambiguous lineage, and while there were arguably towns and villages with a Serbian majority, Krajina and Eastern Slavonia were well inside historic Croatia. The Serbian plan for annexing these two regions was made clear almost from the beginning. Serbia desired to keep these areas within a smaller SFRY, but an amputated 'Croatia' would be free to leave, once Milošević had seized the lion's share of the republic for himself. Had the Serbian plan been successful, Croatia would have been divided in two, somewhat like East and West Pakistan, making Croatia what some ironically called a 'so-called split in half country'.⁸⁶

By 1992, the geographer Jovan Ilić had set forth Serbian territorial ambitions. Serbs would participate in a referendum on their separation from

Croatia. The Republika Srpska Krajina would eventually be annexed to Serbia, while those Serbs remaining in Croatia would be traded reciprocally with Croats in Serbia. Remaining Serbs would be obliged to move to Eastern Slavonia (namely Baranja, Vukovar, and Vinkovci) which would also be annexed to Serbia. 'At any rate,' warned Ilić, 'not many Serbs should remain in independent Croatia.'⁸⁷ In historic Dubrovnik, at that time being ravaged by JNA shelling, Ilić recognised that the population was predominantly Catholic and Croat. While he accepted that 'according to the ethnic principle this area should belong to Croatia', he proposed the establishment of Dubrovnik and the surrounding area as a separate 'political-territorial, autonomous unit'.⁸⁸ Presumably this unit would continue to be a part of the new SFRY, most probably subject to a system of rule similar to that in Kosovo and Vojvodina. While these annexations would unite the Serbians and their supposedly historic territory, the key issue for Ilić was punishing and humiliating the Croats for daring to oppose Serbian nationalism. 'The new borders should primarily be a therapy for the treatment of ethno-psychic disorders', prescribed Ilić, 'primarily among the Croatian population.'⁸⁹

As Ilić maintained, the Krajina, or 'borderland', was historically a Western outpost, controlled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was a border established to keep the Ottoman Empire at bay, and, for this reason, large numbers of Serbs had been settled there as soldiers during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁹⁰ Ilić's claim to the land was based on the fact that Serbs had fought for the 'West' and therefore deserved the region as their reward. He further cited a 1630 charter given to the inhabitants by Ferdinand II of Austria, guaranteeing their autonomy from Croatian control, a reality that persisted until 1881, after which time control was ceded to Croatian administration. Ilić's primary argument was that the Military Frontier as a territorial and political unit had existed outside the boundaries of Croatia for centuries. It was never truly a part of Croatia, and was therefore entitled to exist independently.⁹¹

Claims on the Krajina included south-eastern Dalmatia, western Srem, Dubrovnik, and eastern Slavonia, even though there were few Serbs there during the conflict, as a result of, 'conversion to Catholicism, Uniating, and Croatisation', as well as 'genocidal destruction'. There were even claims that Serbs formed the majority on some of the Adriatic islands, such as Viš – although writers were forced to concede that these also had been 'Catholicized'.⁹² With regard to Eastern Slavonia, there was little historical evidence that the region had been anything but Croatian for many centuries. While there was one claim that Vukovar had been founded by the Serbs, most propaganda directed at this region relied primarily on its proximity to Serbia, and the fact that its people were predominantly Serbian.⁹³

Of course, while critically examining such dubious Serbian claims, one

should also bear in mind that Croatia was hardly as united as later nationalists would argue. Much of Slavonia had been under direct Viennese administration for about three centuries (from 1578 onwards), and was only rejoined with Croatia in 1868. Dalmatia was also joined with Croatia in the same year, after centuries of Venetian, Hungarian, and Austrian control. Indeed, one could argue that this region had never been under Croatian control. This in no way legitimates Serbian claims; but, as I will argue later, Croatian nationalists were as adept at reinterpreting history as their Serbian counterparts.⁹⁴

Moral claims: the myth of 'Serbophobia'

While these historical claims were important as a starting-point, it was clear that the Croats had far more claim to these lands than did the Serbs. These had been part of Croatia for many centuries, and while there were Serbian villages and towns, there were also considerable numbers of Croats in these regions as well. Ilić's boast that 'One cannot be the occupying power of one's own country!' was typical of those used throughout the conflict as an important justification for Serbian violence in Croatia.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, while territorial arguments were useful, the Serbs in Croatia, as in Kosovo, chose to capitalise on myths of genocide and persecution, asserting a moral, as well as a territorial right to these historic lands. As in Kosovo, Schöpflin's 'myths of powerlessness and compensation for the powerless' were used to justify Serbian autonomy. The Serbs had supposedly fought for centuries against the Ottoman Empire on these lands, and therefore earned the right to be free from Croatian control.⁹⁶

Ilić continually asserted such claims, advancing special moral rights for the Serbian nation, 'because it was exposed to genocidal extermination many times'.⁹⁷ His arguments were designed to resemble those of Herzl and other nineteenth-century Zionists, positing that there could be no existence for Serbs outside of Serbia. Of course, the Serbs never truly followed the Zionist approach. Rather than going to their homeland, they preferred to create exclusive ethnic enclaves wherever they lived. A bizarre process developed, of establishing Serbian autonomous pockets throughout the region, which would then be joined by land bridges (or corridors) to Serbia.

An essential precondition and follow-up to Serbian machinations in the Krajina and East Slavonia involved proving the existence of a historic nationalist project aimed against the Serbs. The myth of 'Serbophobia' (a historic fear, hatred, and jealousy of Serbs that Serb nationalists have likened to anti-Semitism) allowed nationalists to trace a continuous legacy of hatred and violence against the Serbs among the Croats. The actions of the JNA and Serbian irregular militias in Croatia could therefore be presented, both at

home and to the outside world, as self-defensive and humanitarian – saving the Krajina Serbs from annihilation. Coupled with a project of demonising Croats was the rehabilitation of Serbian history, to prove that Serbs had never harboured any ill feeling towards Croats, and had always behaved nobly in their dealings with them. This propaganda was designed to highlight the irrationality of the Croatian nationalist project, while casting the Serbs as victims throughout history.

The idea that Serbs were forced into the war, and that Croatia had started the violence, were popular themes – found regularly in the media and in scholarly publications. While great moral strength was to be gained from the myth of Kosovo and their parallel suffering with the Jews, an entire history of Croatian duplicity and evil had now to be constructed. Again, this was very much like Kečmanović's theme of the 'universal culprit', or Schöpflin's 'myths of unjust treatment', where Serbs had been singled out for negative treatment throughout history, and therefore had special moral rights to defend themselves from the threat of attack.⁹⁸

Serbophobia became an anti-Semitism for Serbs, making them victims throughout history. Dobrica Ćosić could thus claim: 'We Serbs feel today as the Jews did in Hitler's day. We are a people who are [considered] guilty . . . Today, Serbophobia in Europe is a concept and an attitude with the same ideological motivation and fury as anti-Semitism had during the Nazi era.'⁹⁹ Ćosić's text also highlighted Serbian and Jewish *Diasporic* conceptions of identity, viewing both nations as having been doomed throughout their history to suffer under persecution, because they lived outside their national borders. Thus Krajina Serbs were likened to Russian and Polish Jews or other *Ashkinazim*.

The nationalist opposition leader and novelist Vuk Drasković also saw the merits of such rhetoric, arguing: 'Israel and the Serbs live in a hellish siege where the sworn goal is to seize and then cover with mosques or Vaticanize the lands of Moses and the people of St. Sava [Serbia's patron saint].'¹⁰⁰ Clearly, many of the most prominent writers and politicians were trying hard to push the connections between Jews and Serbs. Since the Serbian diaspora had suffered in history, the only solution was an expanded state. While Ćosić never operationalised a working definition of 'Serbophobia', its meaning was clearly implied. There were others, however, who did elaborate on the phenomenon. Smilja Avramov (an adviser to Milošević) overtly compared the persecution of Serbs with that of the Jews in history: 'The departure point for the genocide of the Jews was anti-Semitism, and of the Serbs, Serbophobia.'¹⁰¹ Both movements were morally equal, according to Avramov, and each was to be found in a variety of different countries. By Avramov's definition, Serbophobia was closely tied to the Catholic Church, and was operationalised historically through the Vatican and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Croatia

was in many respects a pawn in a much larger Catholic expansionist plan.

For Serbs, the moment that Croats became Catholics was the moment they began to hate the Serbian others and their Orthodox faith. The Catholic hatred of Orthodoxy was thus presented in history as a 'continuity of genocide' against the Serbs, something 'which has been carried out throughout history and is being implemented today'.¹⁰² Like anti-Semitism, Serbophobia could not be taken seriously if it was not ancient and primordial. Therefore, as Avramov asserted, Catholic aggression and expansionism was part of Croatian nationalism from the outset:

For [one] thousand years Croats have been in full political dominance by foreign factors, and have tried through them to achieve their own state. Croatian Catholicism, often militant and opposed to the ecumenical spirit, gradually absorbed all other national compounds and subordinated them to the mighty state of Rome. Numerous Popes, in the last thousand years considered the Orthodox Church heretic, schismatic and cursed, so they brought up Croats as its border guardians towards the East. Rome has planted an idea in the Croatian soul, that their land is 'Bulwark of Christianity' which turned them away from the Orthodox brothers, with the aim to exterminate Serbs on the religious basis.¹⁰³

Seen as nothing more than historical slaves to the Vatican and its expansionist plans, the Croats were accused of being religious executioners, killing Serbs in order to destroy all vestiges of Orthodoxy in the Balkans. Croatian nationalism and the killing of Serbs were inseparably tied together, with hatred of Serbs forming a crucial part of Croatian national identity. 'Croatian national leaders', Avramov commented, 'had no clear idea of national self-determination, unless it was founded on the genocide over Serbs.' Curiously, however, such views did not apply to the equally Catholic Slovenians.¹⁰⁴ For Serbian writers, the existence of Croatian nationalism and the Catholic Church implied *ipso facto* the existence of Serbophobia. The Croats were to be bearers of a nationalism that had no intrinsic worth – except for its hatred of the Serbian other.

Useful as an ahistorical genocidal project was for Serbian historians, 'Serbophobia' had also to be historicised, to be understood as a political phenomenon. Many traced a general form of Serbophobia from the Great Schism in AD 395, when the Roman Empire split into eastern and western halves. Others traced Serbophobia to much later contact with the Croats, when Serbs were brought in to defend the Krajina against Ottoman attacks. Croatian feudal lords and the Catholic clergy were blamed as the later instigators of it, supposedly frustrated by Serbian autonomy in the Krajina, and by the refusal of the Serbs to convert to Catholicism.

This type of religious-based Serbophobia had seemingly metamorphosed by the nineteenth century into a more organised and systematised concept of hatred. The historian Dušan Bataković wrote profusely on the nineteenth-

century development of Croatian and Serbian nationalism during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. A large number of his works were widely circulated on the internet. Bataković used comparisons of political and social systems in Serbian and Croatia to argue in favour of Serbian tolerance and Croatian xenophobia. He privileged Serbian eastern concepts of nationhood, and his writings contain numerous justifications for what would later be called 'Greater Serbia' – the now famous Serbian strategy of empire-building in the nineteenth century. Bataković noted, and rightly, that Serbs advocated a strong unified state in the nineteenth century as a bulwark against Bulgarian, Russian, and Turkish expansion, and dreamed of uniting South Slavs into a common homeland.

Rather than condemning this process, he argued that 'Greater Serbia' was a positive form of fraternal unity between Serbs and Croats, who were seen to be 'but two branches of the same nation, which had become forcibly divided by the foreign domination'.¹⁰⁵ Thus outside interference and colonialism were blamed for keeping these two groups apart. 'Greater Serbia' would be the solution to their problems. It was, as Bataković explained, a model for a unitary and democratic state according to the French model.¹⁰⁶ Serbian nation-building was supposedly a constructive, positive phenomenon.

For Bataković, privileging Serbian history as one of tolerance and democracy was of great importance, particularly in the light of the continuous flow of anti-Serbian writings going from Croatia to the West. These often alluded to Serbia's Ottoman roots and eastern practices of despotic rule and violence. Bataković elevated the '*millet* tradition' of self-rule under the Ottoman empire as a great boon for Orthodox nations in the Balkans, as it 'proved itself to be a solid base for transition to the standard European type of national integration – the nation-state model, based on the experience of the French Revolution'.¹⁰⁷ Thus the Serbian evolution to 'democracy' was based on European ideals, and was therefore consonant with Enlightenment values. By contrast, he drew a sharp distinction between the desirable Serbian forms of nationalism, and the supposedly negative and destructive Croatian forms:

Contrary to the *authentically European model of integration*, in the neighbourhood of the former Ottoman provinces turned into newly established national states . . . within the frontiers of another multinational empire, the Habsburg Monarchy, a Central-European model of national integration arose gradually – a clerical nationalism, mixed with feudal traditions. That model of nationalism was especially apparent in regions where the Roman-Catholic and Orthodox Church coexisted, like Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia, and was coloured by an excessive religious intolerance.¹⁰⁸

Thus could Bataković compare a Serbian 'European' model with its Croatian counterpart, seemingly steeped in religious extremism and intolerance. He called it simply 'a contemporary variant of the *Civitas Dei* – "God's

state”, which continued to rely on anachronistic interpretations of ‘feudal “historical rights” – well into the nineteenth century’.¹⁰⁹ Contrary to Serbian nationalism, this religious-based nationalism was inimical to the ‘modern solutions’ favoured by the Serbs, from romantic nationalism to liberalism. Thus, one is presented with opposing Serbian and Croatian views of state- and nation-building in the nineteenth century. Serbian nationalism was European, democratic, tolerant, cosmopolitan, and enlightened, while Croats were medieval, hierarchical, xenophobic, and backward. Bataković’s theories are an excellent example of Kečmanović’s ‘counteridentification’,¹¹⁰ in which the enemy’s history is seen to be completely opposite to one’s own. Now, certainly one could argue that in retaining some archaic features, like speaking Latin in the Diet, the Croats were indeed backward-looking to some extent. Their national identity, faced with Magyar modernising tendencies, often consisted of retaining traditions that had been abandoned elsewhere, leading to the charge of backwardness. However, within the context of a civil war in which Serbia was the primary aggressor (at least at first) Bataković’s comments do seem to have overtly political dimensions, particularly when you consider that he avoids discussing any positive aspects of Croatian nationalism in the nineteenth century, while similarly avoiding the many negative aspects of Serbian history from this time. Bataković’s selective narrativising of the past was sadly typical.

Within a general analysis of the period was a specific condemnation of Croatian nationalist politicians and activists who were at the vanguard of an anti-Serbian movement. Croatian linguist and nationalist politician Ante Starčević was an obvious target of Serbian writings, as the co-founder of the nationalist ‘Croatian Party of Rights’ (with Eugen Kvaternik). Starčević and Kvaternik were frequently condemned for inciting Croats to commit genocide against the Serbs, being, as one writer recalled: ‘the founders of the idea of genocidal destruction upon Serbs in Croatia’.¹¹¹ Starčević’s politicking was also linked with the rise of right-wing nationalist Josip Frank, whose Frankovci were later to start ‘a systematic anti-Serbian and anti-Orthodox campaign’, which resulted in ‘pogroms, exiles ... and the first attempt of genocide upon the Serbian people’.¹¹² It was clear once again that the rise of Croatian nationalism in the nineteenth century equalled genocide.

Historically, Starčević was known as a Croatian linguistic reformer (albeit a Croatian nationalistic one), who standardised the Croatian language as distinct from the Serbian. For contemporary writers, Starčević’s project was denounced as inherently racist and xenophobic, on the assumption that his workable common culture was intolerant and destructive of Serbian culture. He was accused of destroying South Slavic unity, of inventing ‘an all-together non-existent Croatian language and orthography’ – a language constructed only to erect artificial barriers between Serbs and Croats. For some Serbian

historians, Starčević's programme consisted exclusively of 'denying and exterminating the Serbian people' as a precondition to Croatian self-determination.¹¹³ Again, the idea of denying South Slavic unity, and denying the existence of cultural, linguistic and historic ties between Serbs and Croats, was presented as the first major step in Serbophobia, a step that led inexorably to genocide.

In Starčević Serbian writers also noted the emergence of racial theories similar to those of the Nazi era. As Serbian politician Vasilije Krestić revealed: 'The "Father of the Homeland" had developed such racial theory about the Serbs, that it can only be compared to Hitler's theory about the Jews.'¹¹⁴ Krestić's understanding of Croatian motivations was similar to those of his contemporaries. His reading of Croatian history also included violent and xenophobic plans to destroy the Serbs, in accordance with a Machiavellian desire to take over the Krajina. Paraphrasing the Croatian position, he added that 'all means are permitted for the reaching of this aim, including the genocidal extermination of the Serbs'.¹¹⁵

For Krestić, a key indicator of Starčević's extremism was the vocabulary used for assimilating non-Croats: 'Alpine Croats' (for Slovenes); 'Orthodox Croats' (for Serbs); 'flower of the Croatian people' (for Moslems); followed by 'Turkish Croatia' (for Bosnia); 'Red Croatia' (for Montenegro); 'White Croatia' (for Dalmatia); and 'Carinthian Croatia' (for Slovenia). Krestić thus explained the rationale behind such identifications: 'These names had been carefully nurtured for hundreds of years and rooted in the consciousness of the Croat with the idea of developing in him a conviction of the greatness of Croatia and of the numerical strength of the Croats.'¹¹⁶ Such vocabulary also performed an important role in convincing the Croats that other nations were artificial and therefore did not exist. Denying the existence of the Serbs was seen to be crucial to their extermination.

Contrary to Serbian claims, specifically those of Krestić, Starčević was not a genocidal maniac, although his theories might well have been a justification for 'ethnocide'. This, as Israel Charny has argued, aims at the 'intentional destruction of another people', but crucially '[does] not necessarily include destruction of actual lives'.¹¹⁷ This aside, Starčević's original ideas were assimilationist, not exclusivist. For him everyone was a potential Croat, and the fact that Slovenians were 'mountain Croats', and Serbs 'Orthodox Croats' reflected his assimilatory policies. While he did see 'Serbdom' as an artificial construct, it was not his desire to exterminate Serbs, but rather, to make them into good 'Orthodox Croats'. Starčević was in many ways reacting against the Illyrianism and pro-Serbianism of such Croatian liberal thinkers as Ljudevit Gaj and Juraj Strossmayer, who argued that the great differences between Orthodox and Catholic were artificial and manufactured. Starčević argued that these Croats were giving too much away for the promise of eventual

union with the Serbs, even though he still saw a communal state as the best alternative to the 'Balkanisation' of Europe.¹¹⁸

Certainly, we can observe many parallels between Starčević and his Serbian contemporary Vuk Karadžić, who preached basically the same philosophy from the Serbian point of view. Nevertheless, Starčević's nationalism does seem to have been particularly obnoxious even if it was not genocidal. C. A. Macartney notes in his *Hungary: A Short History*, how 'gross intolerance' to the Serbs of Slavonia drove them into the arms of the new Ban, Count Khuen-Hédervary, in 1883, as they 'sought his protection', enabling the Ban to 'maintain what was essentially a dictatorship ... until the end of the century'.¹¹⁹ The end of Khuen-Hédervary's rule then culminated, according to Krestić, in a number of anti-Serbian riots, particularly from 1899 to 1902, when Serbian homes and shops were destroyed in downtown Zagreb. This violence, he argued, was stirred up by the Catholic Church in Croatia and the Vatican, who dreamed, along with the 'Party of Rights', of creating a 'Greater Croatia' at the expense of the Serbian populations.¹²⁰

The combination of Serbophobic religious, linguistic and political programmes was to culminate in the butchery of Serbs in the First World War, according to many Serbian sources. This period would be consonant with 'elements of anti-Serb genocide', claimed one writer.¹²¹ Croatian Peasant Party leader Stjepan Radić (later shot by a Montenegrin parliamentary deputy) was specifically accused of whipping up anti-Serb hatred, which led to Croatian massacres of Serbs in the First World War.¹²² Other writers described the 'religious warmongering', as well as the 'anti-Serbian demonstrations and pogroms ... plunder and destruction of Serbian property', as proof of the 'holy war' waged against the Serbs during the war.¹²³

Such nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imagery was fascinating, because it described an altogether unending period of Serbophobia, when this was in fact a time when many Croatian academics and politicians looked to Serbia and to the idea of Yugoslavism or Illyrianism as a positive phenomenon. Men like Ljudevit Gaj and Bishop Juraj Strossmayer, who created the Yugoslav Academy in Zagreb, were very much pro-Serbian. They argued that a cultural and spiritual union with the Serbs was the best way to secure a strong South Slavic state – wherein some measure of freedom and equality could come about. Similarly, Ivan Meštrović, the world-famous Croatian sculptor and Yugoslav nationalist, pushed for Yugoslav unity, even creating a 'Kosovo Temple' that he exhibited as part of the Serbian, and not the Austro-Hungarian, contribution to the Rome International Exhibition in 1912. These and many more examples demonstrate the counterfactual nature of many Serbian assertions. For many decades, Croatian intellectuals and writers were at the forefront of Illyrianism, even more eager for union than their Serbian counterparts.¹²⁴

Serbian interpretations of the first Yugoslavia

When the first Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was created in 1918, it was clear at first that all parties found the union acceptable. The Serbs favoured it, as they saw their state expand dramatically westwards. The Croats also favoured the arrangement, as their lands were now protected against Italian predations after the war. Croatia had been part of the losing side as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, there were problems, and the Yugoslav state soon became what Bataković had claimed – an extension of the pre-war Serbian kingdom. While it is clear from many accounts that Serbs dominated Yugoslavia, the official Serbian position maintained that the country was decentralised, federal, and equal. As Bataković claimed, it was ‘an expression of the modern European spirit, manifesting itself as an integrative idea of the liberal bourgeoisie which advocated the unity of Yugoslav views’.¹²⁵ For Bataković and his contemporaries, the Kingdom was as Western as France or Germany, which meant that it conformed to the highest ideals possible.

Further, King Aleksander was credited with favouring the Roman Catholic Church over other religious denominations in Yugoslavia, handing out generous concessions to the Croatian business community, while actively encouraging former Austro-Hungarian army officers to integrate themselves into the Yugoslav army.¹²⁶ That such information was often counterfactual did not matter a great deal. Serbian historians wanted to portray Serbian history as one of tolerance and largesse. From its promising beginnings, writers argued that the Serbian policy of ‘reconciliation and national tolerance’ was soon abused by the Croats, while the generosity of the Serbs ‘soon made it possible for all opponents of the Yugoslav common state to work unhindered’.¹²⁷

Moderate writers have described the Croats’ drive for increased autonomy as the ‘Hungarian complex’, implying that they saw the new kingdom as another Austro-Hungarian-style system, with Serbs and Croats in a potential power-sharing arrangement. Others were not so open-minded.¹²⁸ Bataković, continuing with his cultural critique of Croatia, blamed the Croats almost entirely for the breakdown of the first Yugoslavia. The Croats, he argued, were backward and narrow-minded, simply unable to adapt to life in a more civilised state: ‘The Yugoslav idea could not be implemented in the undeveloped, predominantly agrarian society, impregnated by various feudal traditions, religious intolerance and often a xenophobic mentality’.¹²⁹ Dobrica Ćosić would similarly blame the Croatian ‘hatred for diversity’ as a key reason for the Kingdom’s breakdown.¹³⁰ Both men were clear that the cultural inadequacies of the Croats made the country unworkable, despite the best efforts of Serbian leaders. Furthermore, it soon became apparent that the

Croats never accepted Yugoslavia as a permanent solution. Rather, union was seen as a 'way-station' on the road to the creation of an 'ethnically pure and independent "greater Croatia"'. Once again, the Serbs found themselves in the way of another nation's expansionist plans, and became victims at a time when 'Serbophobia and hatred for the Serbs' was high.¹³¹

Such writings were designed to demonstrate the goodness and perhaps naïveté of the Serbs, who in their kind and trusting manner established a state for all South Slavs, only to be stabbed in the back by Croatian ethnic hatred and chauvinism. No matter how good the Serbs were – Serbian historians argued – interethnic harmony was impossible because of the Croats and their genocidal characteristics. Even the development of King Aleksander's royal dictatorship was justified along these lines. Croatian politicians, instead of recognising that the Yugoslav state provided 'a unique historical opportunity for their own national emancipation', chose instead to 'abuse democratic rights and parliamentary life', exercising an 'extreme primitivism' which led to the dissolution of Parliament and the imposition of a royal dictatorship, 'as in some European countries'.¹³²

Royal dictatorship was often defended by the Serbs as the only solution to a full-scale genocide of Serbs by Croats. Croatia was described as nothing less than the locus of 'darkness and insanity', where 'there reigns hatred incomprehensible to the civilised world'.¹³³ Such hatred, according to Serbian sources, was almost exclusively the product of the Roman Catholic faith, and its general desire to supplant the Orthodox Church. Even in the creation of a dictatorship, in a climate of almost total Serbian control over the population, the Serbs tried to prove that they were in fact the most European and enlightened, while the primitive Croats simply abused democracy and plotted genocide. Serbian writers, owing to their undeniable skill in reinterpreting history, would even make an age of strong Serbian control a time of Serbian victimisation.

Revising Serbian–Croatian antagonisms from the early twentieth century also involved conspiracy theories directed against the Vatican, which was often portrayed as a crucial architect of Balkanisation. By 1989, the well-known Bosnian Serb academic Milorad Ekmečić blamed the Vatican almost exclusively for the destruction of the first Yugoslavia. Ekmečić denounced the 'bureau of archbishops' for destroying all Serbian attempts at Balkan unity, and saw 'Catholic nationalism' as the Serb's worst enemy throughout history.¹³⁴ He went so far as to blame the Catholic Church for encouraging the genocide of Serbs throughout much of the twentieth century, through its supposed desire to create a 'Catholic Central Europe' with its frontier on the River Drina.¹³⁵

While he offered a selection of contentious anecdotes, Ekmečić could give little proof of his assertions. Rather than acknowledging that the Serbian

centralised monarchy was far from perfect, or that the Croats had legitimate grievances within Yugoslavia, it was much easier for Serbian writers to blame the Croats, or their Catholicism, for Yugoslavia's fragmentation. Further, by implicating the Vatican, a much larger conspiracy could be drawn out. Not only the Serbs, but perhaps other Orthodox countries – Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, or Macedonia – could similarly be threatened by a Catholic expansionist project. Such attacks on the Vatican constituted a tacit call for Balkan unity, or at least Orthodox unity. During the early 1990s, this was a top government priority. If the Ottoman Empire had swept through Serbia in the Middle Ages on its way westward, the Vatican was seen as a Western expansionist power, heading east. Sandwiched between the advancing Turks and Catholics were the seemingly helpless Serbs, with only their legends and their faith to sustain them.¹³⁶

Conclusions

What emerges from an understanding of Serbian conceptions of Kosovar and early Croatian history is the centrality of persecution imagery. This involves the instrumentalisation of Kosovo and Jewish imagery to promote themes of Islamic and Catholic expansionist projects. Creating Serbophobia allowed Serbian writers to employ such metaphors as 'liquidation', 'pogroms', 'purges', 'ethnic cleansing' and 'genocide', in order to prove that they were merely resisting expansionist plans that were centuries old. By casting Albanian and later Croatian nationalism in an exclusivist, xenophobic, and destructive light, certain historical patterns emerged, with clear and distinct themes. Serbs were, like the Jews, the victims of ahistorical, dangerous forces, seeking to enslave and destroy them.

Further, through the use of territorial arguments, Serbian writers claimed that, like the Jews, they were being denied their right to a homeland for all of their people. Their lands and their liberty were being taken away from them, and the roots of this were to be found well before the current conflict. The early history of Serbian–Croatian relations proved crucial to the thesis that Serbs were merely protecting themselves from a well-established pattern of Croatian behaviour. Many of the ideas used against the Kosovar Albanians were later instrumentalised against the Croats as well – the concepts of ethnic intolerance, and the use of violence and genocide historically as a means of ridding Serbian regions of their own people. Many of these themes either anticipated, or were in reaction to Croatian propaganda, which obviously advanced opposing contentions. Croats argued that the Serbs were in fact the most genocidal and bloodthirsty nation in the region. This will be the subject of the next chapter, which will allow for some useful comparisons.

NOTES

- 1 Branimir Anzulović, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1999) pp. 123–4.
- 2 Ivo Banac (ed.), *Eastern Europe in Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992) pp. 173–5.
- 3 A concise summary of Kosovo and its early history can be found in: Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997). See pp. 21–2.
- 4 Aleksander Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: Nationalism in a Multi-Ethnic State* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996) p. 78.
- 5 See Jim Seroka and Vukasin Pavlović, *The Tragedy of Yugoslavia* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1992) p. 77; and Mark Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina* (London: Article 19/International Center Against Censorship, 1994) p. 128.
- 6 Bogdan Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) pp. 119–20.
- 7 Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997) p. 214.
- 8 The issue is discussed in: Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Cape, 1999) p. 129.
- 9 Branka Magaš, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracing the Breakup 1980–92* (London: Verso, 1993) p. 110; and Christopher Cviić, ‘Who’s to Blame for the War in Ex-Yugoslavia?’, *World Affairs*, (Fall 1993) p. 73.
- 10 Kenneth R. Minogue, *Nationalism* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1967) pp. 25–8.
- 11 Dušan Kečmanović, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism* (New York: Plenum Press, 1996) p. 62.
- 12 George Schöppflin, ‘The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myth’ in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöppflin (eds), *Myths and Nationhood* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1997) pp. 32–3.
- 13 For a discussion of the emerging state of affairs, see Magaš, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, p. 161; Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia: 1962–1991* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992) p. 78; Tanner, *Croatia*, pp. 215–16; and Anton Bebler, ‘Yugoslavia’s Variety of Communism and Her Demise’, *Communist and Post Communist Studies* (March 1993) pp. 75–6.
- 14 Laura Silber and Alan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: BBC Books, 1995) p. 66.
- 15 Mihailo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama* (Toronto: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993) p. 154.
- 16 Quoted in Biljana Vankovska, ‘Civil–Military Relations in the Third Yugoslavia’, *COPRI Working Papers* (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, 2000) p. 27.
- 17 Thompson, *Forging War*, pp. 59–60.
- 18 *Ibid.* pp. viii–xi.
- 19 *Ibid.* pp. x; 65.
- 20 *Ibid.* p. 73.
- 21 L’Age D’Homme was seemingly so infamous as a propaganda source that Yves Laplace devoted an entire book to denigrating this Swiss publishing house, and its owner Vladimir Dimitrijević, accused by Laplace of being the biggest publishers of Serbian propaganda in Europe. See Yves Laplace, *L’âge d’homme en Bosnie: petit guide d’une nausée suisse* (Lausanne: En bas, 1997).

- 22 See Mira Marković, *Night and Day: A Diary* (London: Minerva Press, 1996) pp. 78–9; and *Answer* (London: Minerva Press, 1996) pp. 58; 60; 82; 109–11. Marković claimed to be a Marxist historian and rigorously condemned both nationalism and nationalists, issuing not only denunciations of opposition leaders but veiled attacks against her husband as well. While her motives were unclear, her largely autobiographical texts presented a rather bizarre schizophrenic view of her own social and political position.
- 23 Brian Hall, *The Impossible Country: A Journey Through the Last Days of Yugoslavia* (Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 1994). See his chapter on Kosovo pp. 235–90.
- 24 Nikolai Velimirovich and Justin Popovich, 'The Mystery and Meaning of the Battle of Kosovo' (Grayslake, IL: The Serbian Orthodox New Gracanica Metropolitanate Diocese of America and Canada, 1996) <http://members.aol.com/gracanica/index.html> (accessed 18 June, 1998).
- 25 See Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993) pp. 35–6; J. A. R. Marriott, *The Eastern Question: An Historical Study in European Diplomacy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925) p. 65; Judah, *The Serbs*, p. 31; and Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (London: MacMillan, 1998) pp. 75–9.
- 26 Velimirovich and Popovich, 'The Mystery and Meaning of the Battle of Kosovo'.
- 27 Thompson, *Forging War*, p. 144
- 28 As discussed in Bruce Cauten, 'The Myth of Divine Election and Afrikaner Ethnogenesis', in Hosking and Schöpfung (eds), *Myths and Nationhood*, p. 113.
- 29 Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945) p. 36.
- 30 Paul Pavlovich adds: 'King Lazar died a martyr's death and to create such a lasting impression of despair upon those who survived the fall, that they would mend their ways, be inspired by the Kosovo sacrifice to regain and then preserve the will to fight for the time when revenge was to be possible.' See Paul Pavlovich, *The Serbians* (Toronto: Serbian Heritage Books, 1988) p. 56.
- 31 See Michael A. Sells, 'Religion, History and Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina', in G. Scott Davis (ed.), *Religion and Justice in the War Over Bosnia* (London: Routledge, 1996) p. 31; and Judah, *The Serbs*, p. 36.
- 32 Kečmanović, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism*, p. 36.
- 33 Vankovska, 'Civil–Military Relations in the Third Yugoslavia', pp. 6–7.
- 34 Judah, *The Serbs*, pp. 62–3.
- 35 Quoted in *ibid.* pp. 65–6.
- 36 Carl Jacobsen, *The New World Order's Defining Crises: The Clash of Promise and Essence* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing, 1996) p. 48.
- 37 Ed Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War* (London: St Martin's Press, 1994) pp. 51–2; also see Misha Glenny's amused and horrified description of the event in his *The Fall of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin, 1993) pp. 33–6.
- 38 Milošević's highly ambivalent relationship with Serbian nationalism is very well discussed in Dusko Doder and Louise Branson, *Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999). See p. 9.
- 39 Michael A. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion And Genocide In Bosnia* (London: University of California Press, 1996) p. 127.
- 40 Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Balkan Babel* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996) p. 28.
- 41 Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1990) pp. 65–6.
- 42 Božidar Zečević (ed.), *The Uprooting: A Dossier of the Croatian Genocide Policy Against the Serbs* (Belgrade: Velauto International, 1992) p. 10.
- 43 Norman Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of 'Ethnic Cleansing'* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1995) p. 73.

- 44 Quoted *ibid.* p. 74.
- 45 Quoted in Nebojša Popov, 'La populisme serbe' (suite), *Les Temps Modernes*, (May 1994) pp. 35–6. (My translation.)
- 46 Anne Yelen, *Kosovo 1389–1989: bataille pour les droits de l'âme* (Lausanne: Editions L'Age D'Homme, 1989) p. 133.
- 47 Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism*, p. 113.
- 48 Both of these works are discussed in Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, p. 73.
- 49 Quoted in *ibid.* p. 74.
- 50 Anthony Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983) p. 153.
- 51 Philip J. Cohen, *Serbia's Secret War: Propaganda and the Deceit of History* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1996) p. 117.
- 52 *Ibid.* p. 199.
- 53 Laslo Sekelj, 'Antisemitism and Jewish Identity in Serbia After the 1991 Collapse of the Yugoslav State', in *Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism, 1997 acta no. 12* (Jerusalem: The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism/ Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997) p. 1.
- 54 Florence Hamish Levinsohn, *Belgrade: Among the Serbs* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1994) p. 16.
- 55 *Ibid.* p. 251.
- 56 Quoted in Yelen, *Kosovo 1389–1989*, pp. 132–3. (My translation.)
- 57 Quoted in Judah, *The Serbs*, p. 37.
- 58 Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed*, p. 58.
- 59 See Michel Roux, *Les Albanais en Yougoslavie: minorité nationale, territoire et développement* (Paris: Editions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 1992) p. 427.
- 60 Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism*, p. 162.
- 61 Bojana Adamović, 'Expulsion of Serbs and Montenegrins From Kosovo and Metohija – The Most Sweeping Ethnic Cleansing in Europe', in Nebojša Jerković (ed.), *Kosovo and Metohija, An Integral Part of the Republic of Serbia and FR of Yugoslavia: Documents and Facts* (Belgrade: Review of International Affairs, 1995) pp. 77–80.
- 62 Yelen, *Kosovo 1389–1989*, p. 52.
- 63 Dobrica Ćosić, *L'effondrement de la Yougoslavie: positions d'un résistant* (Paris: L'Age D'Homme, 1994) p. 45. In their 'unjust struggle' Ćosić further asserts that the Albanians have manipulated the Western powers, in order to promote Greater Albania at the Serbs' expense: 'In the name of protecting human rights, the Albanians are strongly supported in their fight by the American Congress and Senate, the European Parliament, the Islamic centers of power, and the Albanian lobbies, financed by drug dealers and gun runners' (p. 31). (My translation.)
- 64 Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism*, pp. 163–4.
- 65 Dušan T. Bataković, 'Serbia in the 21st Century: the Problem of Kosovo-Metohija' (Belgrade: Serbian Unity Congress Sixth Annual Convention, 1996) www.yugoslavia.com/Society_and_Law/Kosovo/GLAVA13.HTM (accessed 18 June 1998).
- 66 SANU (A group of members of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts on current questions in the Yugoslav society), 'Memorandum', reprinted in Bože Ćosić (ed.), *Roots of Serbian Aggression: Debates/Documents/Cartographic Reviews* (Zagreb: Centar za Strane Jezike/AGM, 1993) pp. 323–4. (Italics mine.)
- 67 Ćosić, *L'effondrement de la Yougoslavie*, p. 43.
- 68 Michael A. Sells, 'Religion, History and Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina', in G. Scott Davis (ed.), *Religion and Justice in the War Over Bosnia* (London: Routledge, 1996) p. 63.
- 69 Zivorad Igić, 'Kosovo-Metohija – A Demographic Time Bomb in Southern Serbia' in

- Jerković (ed.), *Kosovo and Metohija*, pp. 99–100.
- 70 *Ibid.* pp. 101–3.
- 71 Discussed in Nouvel Observateur et Reporteurs Sans Frontières, *Le Livre Noir de L'ex-Yugoslavie: Purification Ethnique et Crimes de Guerre* (Paris: Publications Arléa, 1993) pp. 286–7.
- 72 Serbian Ministry of Information, 'Declaration of Scientific Conference Working Group' (Belgrade: Serbian Ministry of Information, June, 1997) www.yugoslavia.com/Society_and_Law/Kosovo/GLAVA4.HTM (accessed 18 June 1998).
- 73 Igić, 'Kosovo – Metohija', p. 101.
- 74 This theory is discussed in Mirko Grmek, Marc Gjidara, and Neven Simac, *Le nettoyage ethnique: Documents historiques sur une idéologie serbe* (Paris: Fayard, 1993) p. 290.
- 75 Horvat's study is reviewed in Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequence* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1995) pp. 92–3.
- 76 See Doder and Branson, *Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant*, p. 39.
- 77 *Ibid.* p. 63.
- 78 Vladimir Gligorov, *Why Do Countries Break Up? The Case of Yugoslavia* (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University Press, 1994) p. 69.
- 79 Shkelzen Maliqi, 'The Albanian Movement in Kosova', in David A. Dyker and Ivan Vejtdoda (eds), *Yugoslavia and After: A Study in Fragmentation, Despair and Rebirth* (London: Longman, 1996) p. 142. For an Israeli commentary, see Igor Primoratz, 'Israel and the War in the Balkans', www.hr/darko/etf/isr2.html (accessed 23 November 2000). Primoratz argues that the pro-Serbian bias of the Israeli government had much to do with their own policies of expelling the Palestinians in 1948–9. However, he draws the line at saying that Serbian actions and Israeli actions can be compared equally, since: 'The crucial difference, of course, is the fact that "ethnic cleansing" was carried out in part by means of genocide.'
- 80 Maliqi, 'The Albanian Movement in Kosova', p. 142.
- 81 Silber and Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, p. 169.
- 82 *Ibid.* p. 186.
- 83 *Ibid.* p. 92.
- 84 The issue of Milošević and Borislav Jović's broken promises to Tujdman are discussed in Stjepan Mešić, 'The Road to War', in Branka Magaš and Ivo Žanić (eds), *The War in Croatia and Bosnia – Hercegovina 1991–1995* (London: Frank Cass, 2001) p. 8.
- 85 Quoted in Doder and Branson, *Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant*, p. 81.
- 86 Jovan Ilić, 'The Serbs in the Former SR of Croatia', in Dušanka Hadži-Jovančić (ed.), *The Serbian Question in the Balkans: Geographical and Historical Aspects* (Belgrade: University of Belgrade Faculty of Geography, 1995) pp. 308–9.
- 87 Jovan Ilić, 'Possible Borders of New Yugoslavia' in Stanoje Ivanović (ed.), *The Creation and Changes of the Internal Borders of Yugoslavia* (pp. 95–101) (Belgrade: Ministry of Information of the Republic of Serbia, 1992) p. 98.
- 88 *Ibid.* pp. 100–1.
- 89 *Ibid.* p. 98.
- 90 Ilić, 'The Serbs in the Former SR of Croatia', p. 319.
- 91 *Ibid.* pp. 320–1. Others claimed an even longer lineage for the Serbs, having come only 30 years after the Croats (in 822 AD). See Svetozar Đurđević, *The Continuity of a Crime: The Final Settlement of the Serbian Question in Croatia* (Belgrade: IDEA Publishing House, 1995) p. 9.
- 92 Ilić, 'The Balkan Geopolitical Knot and the Serbian Question', pp. 316–18. See also Djordje Janković, 'The Serbs in the Balkans in the Light of Archeological Findings', in Hadži-Jovančić (ed.) *The Serbian Question in the Balkans*, p. 127. Typical works by L'Age

- D'Homme also supported the independence of the Serbian Krajina. Two French writers discussed the 'martyrdom of this heroic little nation'. The authors are clear – Krajina was not 'occupied', 'annexed' or 'conquered', but was rather the land of the Serbs since the ninth century. See Patrick Barriot and Eve Crépin, *On assassine un peuple: Les serbes de Krajina* (Lausanne: L'Age D'Homme, 1995) pp. 9–11.
- 93 See Mile Dakić, *The Serbian Krajina: Historical Roots and Its Rebirth* (Knin: Information Agency of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, 1994). He proclaims the Serbian origins of Vukovar on pp. 11–12.
- 94 See C. A. Macartney: *Hungary: A Short History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1961) pp. 74–5. I am grateful to David Phelps for this point.
- 95 *Ibid.* p. 322.
- 96 *Ibid.* pp. 29–30.
- 97 *Ibid.* p. 31.
- 98 *Ibid.* pp. 29–30.
- 99 Čosić, *L'effondrement de la Yougoslavie*, p. 44. Ironically, the idea of claiming national territory based on past occupation or conquest was originally a Croatian one. Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652–1713) would introduce the concept of 'historical appropriation' to the Balkans, and then use it to expand the geographical size of Croatia. He similarly claimed a wide variety of other nationalities as Croats, a name he adopted as a generic term for the Slavic populations of Europe. See Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992) pp. 73–4.
- 100 Čigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, p. 236.
- 101 Smilja Avramov (ed.), *Genocide Against the Serbs* (Belgrade: Museum of Modern Art, 1992) p. 18.
- 102 Božidar Zečević (ed.), *The Uprooting: A Dossier of the Croatian Genocide Policy Against the Serbs* (Belgrade: Velauto International, 1992) p. 10.
- 103 *Ibid.* pp. 10–11.
- 104 *Ibid.* p. 11. While targeting the Croats for their Catholic evil nature, Zečević is curiously supportive of the Slovenes, in line with official policy: 'the above mentioned does not apply to the Catholic Slovenia; it [left] Yugoslavia on uncertain grounds and used the right moment to become independent; no one has anything against it and let it be' (*ibid.* p. 11). Curiously, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence on the same day, and were recognised on the same day by the Vatican and the following day by Germany.
- 105 Dušan T. Bataković, 'Frustrated Nationalism in Yugoslavia: From Liberal to Communist Solution', *Serbian Studies*, 11:2 (1997) pp. 67–85. www.bglink.com/personal/batakovic/boston.html (accessed 18 June 1998).
- 106 *Ibid.*
- 107 Dušan T. Bataković, 'The National Integration of the Serbs and Croats: A Comparative Analysis', *Dialogue*, 7–8 (September–December, 1994) pp. 5–13. www.bglink.com/personal/batakovic/national.html (accessed 18 June 1998).
- 108 *Ibid.* (Italics mine.)
- 109 *Ibid.*
- 110 Kečmanović, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism*, p. 36.
- 111 Momčilo Zečević, 'Second Phase: 1918–1941', in Božidar Zečević (ed.), *The Uprooting*, p. 39.
- 112 *Ibid.* p. 36.
- 113 *Ibid.* p. 36.
- 114 Vasilije Krestić, 'First Phase: Until 1918', in Zečević (ed.), *The Uprooting*, p. 39.
- 115 Vasilije Krestić, 'Genocide in the Service of the Idea of a Greater Croatia Through

- Genocide to a Greater Croatia' (Belgrade: Bigz – Izdavacko preduzece d.o.o./Serbian Unity Congress, 1997) <http://suc.suc.org/culture/library/genocide/k7.htm> (accessed 5 February 2000).
- 116 *Ibid.*
- 117 See Israel Charny, 'Toward a Generic Definition of Genocide', in George Andreopoulos (ed.), *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) p. 85.
- 118 A good description of these different views and the rivalry between these men can be found in Tanner, *Croatia*, pp. 94–6.
- 119 Macartney, *Hungary: A Short History*, pp. 188–9.
- 120 Krestić, 'First Phase', p. 40. Ilić similarly writes of the continuous 'purgings', and 'large scale physical attacks' which were supposedly a feature for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Ilić, 'The Serbs in the Former SR of Croatia', p. 327.
- 121 *Ibid.* p. 327.
- 122 *Ibid.* p. 45.
- 123 Zečević, 'Second Phase', p. 54.
- 124 Judah, *The Serbs*, pp. 57–8.
- 125 Bataković, 'Frustrated Nationalism in Yugoslavia'.
- 126 Zečević, 'Second Phase', pp. 52–66.
- 127 *Ibid.* p. 53.
- 128 *Ibid.* p. 54.
- 129 Bataković, 'Frustrated Nationalism in Yugoslavia'.
- 130 Quoted in Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993) p. 282.
- 131 Dušan Vilić and Boško Todorović, *Breaking of Yugoslavia and Armed Secession of Croatia* (Beli Manastir: Cultura Centre 'Vuk Karadzic', 1996) pp. 3–4.
- 132 Zečević, 'Second Phase', p. 58.
- 133 *Ibid.* p. 42.
- 134 Quoted in Popov, 'La populisme serbe', pp. 33–4. Ekmečić was one of many academics who 'went national' following the collapse of Yugoslavia. His views had changed substantially from his early days as a 'Yugoslav' intellectual. See for example Vladimir Dedijer, Ivan Božić, Sima Ćirković, and Milorad Ekmečić, *History of Yugoslavia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974). Ekmečić's 'Part Three' (pp. 249–412) is largely devoted to a study of Yugoslav history and identity from a non-nationalist point of view.
- 135 Milorad Ekmečić, (Untitled Commentary) in Avramov (ed.), *Genocide Against the Serbs*, p. 75.
- 136 For several examples of this idea see Avramov, *Genocide Against the Serbs*, p. 18; Radovan Kovačević, 'How Could the Serbs Forgive Vatican', *Serbia: News, Comments, Documents, Facts, Analysis*, 41 (February 1995) p. 46; and Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, p. 77.