

Tito's Yugoslavia and after: Communism, post-Communism, and the war in Croatia

Not only is the Yugoslav reality as twisted as the tunnels that held the Minotaur, but the observer keeps coming face to face with himself, seeing his own image spring out from what he thinks are the events of history, unable to separate projection from observation, fact from reflection, self from other. (E. A. Hammel in *The Yugoslav Labyrinth*)

After the Second World War and the devastation caused by German and Italian invasion, the Yugoslav peoples had the task of rebuilding their society after it had been torn apart by occupation and fratricidal warfare. The legends surrounding Tito's Communist Partisans and their war of liberation are well known, immortalised in such works as Milovan Djilas' *Wartime*, Fitzroy Maclean's *The Heretic*, and Frank Lindsay's *Beacons in the Night*. However, as has been seen in the preceding two chapters, contemporary Serbian and Croatian reinterpretations of this period were often negative. The Croatian myth of Bleiburg maintained that the foundations of Tito's Yugoslavia were constructed on the genocide of Croatian soldiers. For the Serbs, Tito was little more than an ethnic Croat with a grudge against Yugoslavia's largest and most powerful nation. Both sides presented the lifetime of the SFRY as an era when national identity was suppressed under a barrage of Communist propaganda. National symbols were replaced with 'Brotherhood and Unity' and Tito's own cult of personality. In Tito's Yugoslavia, ethnic hatreds seemingly smouldered below the surface, manifesting themselves in bizarre and often contradictory ways.

The first part of this chapter explores Serbian and Croatian nationalist interpretations of the Yugoslav period, during its rise, its decline, and finally, its Fall. The second examines how propagandists succeeded in making direct connections between past eras of persecution and the contemporary wars of the 1990s. For both sides, the past was nothing more than a template for the present and the future. Past patterns of behaviour, values, morals, paradigms, and ideologies directly determined national goals and priorities in the 1990s.

National leaders were seen as little more than the latest exponents of age-old ideologies and national strategies. The theme of the 'universal culprit' was advanced throughout the conflict.

Milošević became a nineteenth-century Greater Serbian politician, with a bit of Adolf Hitler thrown in for good measure. Tudjman was nothing less than the reincarnation of Ante Pavelić. The Second World War was being re-enacted in Serbia and Croatia, and all decisions would be calculated on an analysis of the past, not on a realistic assessment of contemporary events. Propagandists seemingly lived in the past; but this was a past that was cleverly manufactured. Milošević's huge rallies and religious processions, and Tudjman's elaborate uniforms and ubiquitous memorials, turned parts of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina into giant surreal nationalist theme parks.

Set against a conflict of Biblical proportions, participants in the contemporary conflict were presented as actors in a drama, performing according to well-rehearsed nationalist patterns of behaviour. The originality behind such revisionism lay in the fatalism attached to events as they transpired. Everyone saw their actions as responses, rather than as individual initiatives. Leaders claimed that they were responding to historic injustices, rather than actively creating something new. They also portrayed nationalism as a movement to correct the injustices of the past, rather than advancing a utopian project or a grand vision of the future.

The Communist era: 1945–90

In coming to terms with the Communist period, there was certainly much to criticise. Tito's dictatorial rule relied on a corrupt base of power, and a personality cult of messianic proportions. The country was burdened by overcentralisation, massive foreign debt, and a powerful secret police force that cracked down on any internal dissent. Many saw Communism as an artificially imposed Russian system, forced on the people by Tito and Stalin – an attempt to destroy indigenous nationalisms. One might even add that, in the Partisans' expulsion of Yugoslavia's German minorities after 1945, they were promoting the ideals of ethnic cleansing that would become a key facet of nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina five decades later. Banac argues that there were more than 513,000 Germans in the 1921 census, most of whom were descendants of German colonists brought in by the Habsburgs in the eighteenth century. Most of these people were forced out after the Partisans gained control of the country.¹

Despite these detractions, Yugoslavia was arguably the freest country in Eastern Europe, the most open to the West, and certainly one of the richest and most cosmopolitan in the Balkans. While most of the wealth was concen-

trated in Slovenia and Croatia, Yugoslavia's economy did come close to rivalling that of Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. Additionally, Tito was genuinely popular with his people, despite his egomania and corruption (or perhaps in part because of them). In many ways, he held the country together, and was more successful as a leader than his other Balkan counterparts – Nikolai Ceausescu, Todor Zhivkov, and Enver Hoxha.

The positive aspects of Communism in Yugoslavia were obvious – a high standard of living, the freedom to travel and work abroad, and a strong sense of patriotism. Yugoslavia was a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, and played an important geopolitical role as a symbolic bridge between East and West, Capitalism and Communism. When nationalism rose to the forefront in the 1980s, there was little attempt actually to bring about a post-Communist society, such as was marginally achieved in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech and Slovak Republics. The Yugoslav successor states, like their Balkan neighbours, did not fully dismantle Communism as a system of government – many of the authoritarian structures and values remained. Little attempt was made to criticise the legacy of Communism itself, or to attack the rampant corruption, the rising foreign debts, or any of the other stark realities of the system. Both Tudjman and Milošević appreciated the extent of the power a Communist dictator could enjoy, and they were not about to relinquish the many advantages that leadership afforded in the old system.

When Serbian and Croatian nationalists criticised the Titoist era, the national question loomed large, out of proportion with more important issues. Yugoslavia was condemned because it inhibited nationalism, because it allowed 'enemy' national groups to gain power and control events. Tito was not condemned for being dictatorial or corrupt, but rather, for being controlled by either the Serbs or the Croats – for giving away too much of one's own nation's historic possessions to another national group. Communism was seen as a catalyst enabling the enemy nation to gain power and influence. It was not condemned as a failed system, but as an instrument – infinitely subject to manipulation. Thus there was never any real attempt to purge Communism from the country as such: only to correct the national imbalances of the system.

While Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia saw Communism as a crime committed against all citizens, Serbian and Croatian nationalists painted *federal* Communism as the root of their problems, an evil that was selectively deployed against specific national groups, not against the country as a whole. Milošević's solution was to recentralise the SFRY; Tudjman's was to pull Croatia out of it. By separating Communism and Federalism, Serb and Croat leaders managed to retain most aspects of the Communist system intact. While purged of non-nationals, most of the key ministries remained the same. Rigid control over state enterprises, the media and other aspects of life

remained. Both Tudjman and Milošević were keen to carve out their own Tito-esque cults of personality, Milošević as a reincarnation of Prince Lazar, Tudjman with his gold-braided uniforms as a ready-made Tito-for-Croats.

This separation of Communism and Federalism was all-important, as it allowed nationalists to demonise certain aspects of Titoist Yugoslavia, while preserving others. There was no doubt that Tito's Communism had improved the state considerably, and very much brought Yugoslavia, technologically and industrially, into the twentieth century. It was not the generation of wealth or industry that was attacked, but the balance between the different national groups – who got what, and how much. Even when the Communist government was attacked for persecuting the people (the use of police harassment, or imprisonment on the prison island Goli Otok), persecution was not seen as part of the system, but was blamed on nationalists manipulating the system against members of other nations. When Communism was attacked, the variant (not necessarily the structure) was condemned. Serbs were constantly blamed for trying to over-centralise or Stalinise the system. Croats were blamed for wanting decentralisation, while hoarding all the profits of tourism for themselves. Such issues demonstrated the system's failure to restrain nationalism, not the system's failure itself.

Serbian views of Tito's Yugoslavia

Arguably, Serbian writers had generally supported the Communist regime in Yugoslavia. Certainly, the execution of Draža Mihailović, the purges of Četnik sympathisers, the decentralising 1974 constitution, and other anti-Serbian aspects of the regime raised troubling questions about Serbia's place in the SFRY. Nevertheless, while Tito was alive, there seemed to be a high level of support for the regime and its policies. An obvious example of this was the 1969 election, when Serbs were offered the choice between reformers and hard-line candidates. While the rest of the country chose reform-oriented newcomers, Serbs overwhelmingly supported the old guard.²

Nevertheless, by 1986 Serbian writers had turned on the system, as Yugoslavia began to fall apart. Danko Popović's celebrated *Knjiga o Milutinu* (*The Book About Milutin*) became an instant best-seller in 1986, promoting the thesis that Serbs had made a 'fatal error' in liberating their Slavic 'brothers' during the Second World War, and then another in once more engaging in political union with them. Milutin's sayings were printed on placards during nationalist demonstrations; even group recitation during public gatherings was not unknown.³ Dobrica Ćosić's work reflected similar themes: that Tito's Yugoslavia had reduced Serbia to a mere Communist province without history, culture, or national identity. In *The Sinner* and *The Outcast*, Ćosić derided the federal system for suppressing Serbian identity and nationalism.

Moscow and the Comintern, he posited, had installed an 'anti-Serbian' Communist regime in Yugoslavia.⁴ He would later add:

In the course of the four decades of Titoist tyranny, the Serbian people suffered from a veritable de-historification. Serbian identity and historical, spiritual, economic and political integrity were systematically demolished. The symbols and the fruits of the war of liberation belonging to the Serbian people were denigrated and falsified, while confiscating our magnificent Middle Age, shortening our history . . . the entire history of the Serbian people was reduced to the history of the socialist movement, while the history of the communist party itself was reduced to the era of Tito.⁵

Themes of an anti-Serbian Communism would eventually find their way into the 1986 SANU *Memorandum*. Among the Communists' damnable offences was their explicit support of anti-Yugoslav secessionist movements in 1925. The fact that there was no Serbian Communist Party organisation until 1945 was also seen to indicate a consistent anti-Serbian bias.⁶ While one cannot deny the veracity of the events in question, it is clear that Tito's early movement was aimed at destroying a repressive, nationalist monarchy, according to his own Communist beliefs. Any Croatian or Slovenian national convictions were most certainly of secondary importance.

Other Serbian views included the theory that the Serbs had been continuously exploited economically. The *Memorandum* claimed that the Communists had reduced the economic potential of Serbia in favour of Slovenia and Croatia. Serbia was forced to support undeveloped regions, while selling its natural resources at subsidised prices to the developed republics. For the *Memorandum's* authors, this came as no surprise, given that the 'Croat' Tito and the 'Slovene' Kardelj were the key officials behind such economic policies.⁷ Thus, Serbia was seen to have been simultaneously exploited, both by the richer republics of Croatia and Slovenia, and by poorer republics, such as Kosovo and Macedonia. Rather than attack the massive foreign debts, the corruption and the wholesale neglect of the economy by Tito and his Partisan clique, known affectionately at the 'Club of 1941', Serbian writers chose to focus on what they perceived to be the deliberate and conscious impoverishment of Serbia. In reality, Serbia's poverty was an indirect result of much larger problems.

Administrative versus natural borders

As has been discussed in earlier chapters, a key issue during the war in Croatia was the legitimacy of borders. Because the borders of all federal republics were put in place by Tito and the Djilas Commission, Serbian writers argued that these borders were purely artificial, the result of Croatian machinations to reduce the size of historic Serbia. For some of the more powerful Serbian insti-

tutions, like the Serbian Association of University Teachers, Tito's Croatian background was blamed for the supposed increase in Croatia's size after 1945, and Serbia's shrinking. For such associations, Tito had created nothing less than a 'Greater Croatia' during the lifetime of the SFRY.⁸ Others similarly denounced the borders as 'political improvisation', denying that they had any historic basis.⁹

For Serbian writers, the implications were very clear. The Serbs alone were targeted by 'Croat Josip Broz Tito'.¹⁰ While the other nations, such as the Slovenes, Croats, Bosnian Moslems, and Macedonians were granted their own national republics, one-third of Serbs were forced to live outside Serbia. It was Tito's ethnic identity that was all-important for the Serbs. He had purposely weakened them, the largest and most important nation in Yugoslavia, with some 40 per cent of the population. Because of his ethnicity, and the fact that the borders had been created to favour Croatia, Serbian writers argued that there was a serious divergence between the borders of nations and the borders of republics. The result was a clear denial of Croatia's right to leave Yugoslavia with its borders intact. Any secession without negotiations on new borders was considered to be illegal: hence the need for the JNA.

The most common view of the conflict was promoted by various Serbian 'constitutional' and 'federalism' experts, who claimed to be analysing the break-up of Yugoslavia according to the prescriptions of international law. Milošević's contribution to the breakdown of the Federation was always avoided. Rather, a highly legalistic interpretation of developments would conveniently gloss over Serbian politicking. Serbian writers often blamed the war in Croatia on what was termed 'the unilateral and illegal secession' of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia. They further blamed the international community, primarily Germany and the Vatican, for recognising Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, turning their 'administrative' borders into international borders when minority rights were still hanging in the balance. The problem for such writers was that 'almost 3 million Serbs' lived in these newly independent republics, and were now cut off from their fellow Serbs.¹¹

Croatia was therefore accused of several things – of leaving Yugoslavia without consulting the other republics, and of deliberately endangering the lives of Serbian minorities living there. The claim of the supposed 'illegality' of Croatian actions was hypocritical at best, when compared with Milošević's own manipulation of borders and boundaries. Nevertheless, such accusations followed logically from accusations that Tito had deliberately conspired with Croatian and Slovenian Communists to reduce the power of his 'enemy' – Serbia. Because of this situation, the Serbs were now justified, from a purely legalistic viewpoint, in having their own referendum on the independence of the Krajina, 'since their ancestors settled these territories more than 500 years ago'.¹² While the Croats were denounced for not upholding the demo-

cratic will of the Serbs, they were also condemned as hypocrites for expecting the Yugoslav government to honour their own referendum on sovereignty.

As Slobodan Samardžić argued, the 'illegal' secession of Croatia and Slovenia destroyed the basic 'constitutional corpus of "acquired rights"' that had been present in the Federation. Within the SFRY, Croatian Serbs had special rights as a constitutive people, a status that disappeared once Croatia became independent. From a purely legalistic and constitutional standpoint, Samardžić justified the war in Croatia. Serbs, he posited, had to protect themselves against the 'ethnic homogenization' of the country, which was making Croatian Serbs 'minorities against their will'.¹³ This view that Croatian Serbs were being forced to leave Yugoslavia was a key argument in promoting the Krajina referendum. Using a variety of persuasive technical and legal arguments, Samardžić tried to gloss over the reality of what was happening in Croatia at that time. Paramilitary forces and the JNA, both encouraged by Milošević, were in control of one-third of Croatian territory in 1994 when his article was written. Clearly, there was much more at stake than Serbs worried about a change in their 'constitutional status'.

The difference between the borders of federal units and the borders of states was a theme constantly reiterated by Serbian academics. Serbs were quick to argue that 'only nations can secede from Yugoslavia, and not territories of republics'.¹⁴ One Ministry of Information spokesperson thus described Croatia's manipulation of international law, in order to 'seize another nation and another territory and to lend legal force to such an act' – clearly something the Serbs disputed.¹⁵ The main argument was simple – Tito had never intended to allow individual republics to secede. He saw republican borders as administrative only.

Croatian nationalists obviously had a contrary view of the situation. They commonly argued that Croatia's borders were not administrative, but ethnic and cultural. Serbian arguments were refuted by Croatian geographers, who described their borders as 'among the oldest in Europe'. A survey by the geographers Ivan Crkvenčić and Mladen Klemenčić maintained that there had been only a 10 per cent change in Croatia's borders in the twentieth century – a loss of Croatian territory after 1918, owing to the success of 'Greater Serbia'.¹⁶ Other writers traced the historic origin of Croatia's borders, which were defined during war against the Ottomans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and had remained more or less unchanged since that time.¹⁷

Croatian writers also managed to defend the minority issue, since Croatia, with 80 per cent of its people being 'Croat', had the same degree of homogeneity as Spain or Great Britain, allowing these writers to allege that: 'Croatia presents a common European phenomenon'.¹⁸ Still others pointed out that while 24 per cent of Serbs lived outside Serbia, some 22 per cent of Croats lived outside Croatia. Since Croatia 'had never demanded the annexa-

tion of those areas of other republics', the Serbs were obliged to accept their minority status.¹⁹ The problem, of course, was that neither Spain nor Great Britain saw themselves as a homeland for one people only, while both have extended provisions for regional minorities. There were no ethnic nationalist dictators in those countries, preaching intolerance against their minority groups. At the time these books were written, Croatia had not yet attacked Bosnia-Herzegovina, but this too would soon change, as Croatia pledged itself to defending its own people in Bosnia. It would then do exactly what it accused the Serbs of doing – demand the annexation of territory in other republics.

The 1974 constitution and genocide

In 1974, an ailing Tito decided to reform the constitution of Yugoslavia. He wanted to ensure that the Federation continued in some form after his death. However, the new constitution was a highly contentious development. It greatly decentralised the SFRY, granting autonomy to Kosovo and Vojvodina, while reducing many of the administrative and financial functions controlled by the federal government. The constitution also established an unwieldy rotating presidency, with a seven-member presidium. One presidium representative from each republic after another would take a turn at running the country. Croatian nationalist writers, in reviewing the constitution, had little to complain about, as it practically gave each republic the status of a separate state, including such attributes as the inviolability of borders. Thus Croats used this decentralising document to argue that their separation from Yugoslavia was perfectly justified and legal.²⁰

The Serbs, by contrast, saw the constitution as the root of many of their problems. It reduced their control over Kosovo and Vojvodina, while significantly hampering the power of the federal centre to make decisions for the Federation. It also reduced the power of the federal government to guarantee Serbian minority rights in other republics. Without centralised power, Serbs worried that they would suffer discrimination outside Serbia. Kosovo was a particularly important thorn in Serbia's side. Their loss of control here seemed to reflect the age-old Serbian catastrophist maxim: 'Winners in war, losers in peace'. Journalists blamed the constitution for creating Serbian minorities in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo. For many Serbs, the creation of minorities in autonomous republics was the first stage in a campaign of genocide.²¹ With its many lurid photos and graphic descriptions, *The Uprooting*, by Božidar Žečević, was one of many publications that denounced Tito's manipulation of Kosovo to humiliate the Serbs. Rather than contributing to Serbian greatness, Kosovo was used as an instrument to reduce Serbian power. Žečević attacked the 'treacherous' Yugoslav Communists for working with Kosovar Albanian separatists to create a 'Greater Albania' in Kosovo.²²

Encouraging Albanian nationalism was presumably a way of weakening the Serbs – supposedly a central goal of the Communist regime.

Tito was also accused of ethnically cleansing Serbs during his four decades of rule. Examples of this line of argumentation were analysed in Chapter 3. What began as a fear of persecution in Kosovo spread to Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. As the Serbian Unity Congress described the process: 'Tito's favourite method of punishing the Serbs, whom he hated personally and discriminated against officially, was to allow the Croats and Muslims to rid their territories of Serbs by depriving them of their political, cultural, religious, and human rights.' Included here was a list of the number of Serbs 'ethnically cleansed' during Tito's rule: 121,376 from Croatia, and 205,542 from Bosnia-Herzegovina, making a grand total of 326,918.²³ The SUC neglected to explain how these numbers were calculated.

The 1974 constitution was thus at the root of Yugoslavia's many ills. Samardžić noted how it weakened the federal state, devolving power to the increasingly authoritarian republics. Decentralisation, and not Milošević's attempts to over-centralise the country, was blamed for the 'internal disintegration' of Yugoslavia in the 1980s. If anything, Milošević was credited with trying to re-establish 'the integrational link between the federal units', to prevent the 'anarchoid form' that it had taken after 1974.²⁴ Again, blaming Tito's legacy for the breakdown of Yugoslavia deflected criticism away from Milošević's obvious attempts to hijack the federal system.

Genocidal Croats: Croatian nationalism in the SFRY

Structurally, the SFRY seemingly went against Serbian interests. However, Tito was not the only one responsible for Serbia's weakened status. Two Croatian Communist officials were often cited in Serbian literature as enemies of the Serbian nation – Ivan 'Stevo' Krajačić and Andrija Hebrang. Hebrang was often condemned as a Croatian nationalist with influential connections, who tried to manipulate Tito into reducing Serbian power. In reality, Hebrang was one of Tito's most bitter rivals. As one of the most powerful Partisan leaders in Croatia, he tried unsuccessfully to advance Croatian interests at the Federal level, arguing that Croatia's borders had been clipped by the Djilas Commission. He also argued against the unfair exchange rates imposed on Croatia after 1945, while similarly condemning the many show trials set up to punish supposed collaborators. Hebrang was never a serious threat to Serbian interests, since he was demoted several times after 1945, and was eventually placed under house arrest in 1948.²⁵

Krajačić was seemingly a more dangerous and shadowy figure. Krajačić was not a typical Croatian Communist; he was also the main resident representative of the Fourth Soviet Intelligence Service, and was cast as a sinister

puppet-master, with powerful contacts in Moscow. He was supposedly so powerful that even Tito was afraid of him. For Serbian historians, Krajačić was a useful scapegoat for why the system went wrong, for why the Serbs were victims in Yugoslavia. He, and not Tito, was blamed for persecuting Serbs during the bloody Communist purges after the Second World War. He was even blamed for founding the infamous prison camp at Goli Otok, as a means of punishing Serbs and Montenegrins, who constituted 'the overwhelming majority of those detained and carefully watched over'.²⁶

Krajačić was presented as a cynical Croatian nationalist with incredible personal power. He would later be blamed for the fall of the Serbian Communist leader Aleksander Ranković, having supposedly engineered his downfall in order to carry out increased decentralisation, a plan of benefit only to Croatia, since 'the virus of Croatian nationalism kept smouldering in him'.²⁷ His supposed nickname – 'The Conducator of Separatism' – was derived from his advocacy of Croatian separatism, as well as his dictatorial qualities, which made him similar to Romania's own 'Conducator' – Nicolai Ceausescu. Krajačić was also accused of being a supporter of the Ustaša, and a keen advocate of genocide as a means of dealing with the Serbs. He supposedly commented at the opening of the Jasenovac memorial in 1966: 'Here we killed too few of you!', a statement for which he was purportedly forced to resign as President of the Croatian Parliament.²⁸

The Krajačić conspiracy had some rather obvious motives. By the mid-1980s, Serbian historians had begun the process of rehabilitating Ranković, who had been stripped of his powers in 1966. Ranković founded Yugoslavia's secret police – the State Security Administration (the *Uprava Državne Bezbednosti*, or UBDa) – and served as Minister of the Interior during Yugoslavia's most oppressive period after the Second World War. He was often portrayed in Croatian writing as a die-hard Serbian nationalist who abused his powers to advance Serbian interests. It was clear that Ranković was a keen advocate of centralisation, and was seen to be the natural successor to Tito once he died or retired. His fall from grace was therefore a serious blow to Serbian prestige, and to those who cherished the idea that a Serb could have ruled Yugoslavia – if it were not for Croatian back-room dealings.²⁹

A primary reason why Ranković was stripped of his position was his persecution of the Kosovar Albanian population. Police repression in the province, and several staged show trials of supposed 'Albanian spies' at Prizren in 1956, greatly increased the friction between Serbs and Croats. While Ranković was seen as a man who could keep the Kosovars in their place, he also provoked Kosovar anger and desires for separatism. While some Serbs saw him as a hero, whose demise ushered in Albanian nationalism, the reverse was probably true.³⁰ It was also certain that Ranković, and not Krajačić, had established Goli Otok, where Tito sent some 7,000 people.

Rumours that he was bugging Tito's telephones did not help matters either, nor did accusations that he was behind assassination attempts on the Slovene Communist leader Edvard Kardelj in 1959.³¹ Ultimately, the quest for a suitable scapegoat to take the blame for Ranković's activities was never very successful. For one thing, everyone knew who Ranković was, whereas no one had ever heard of Krajačić. Whether he was as all-powerful as some Serbs suggest, or simply another long forgotten Communist official, is still open to dispute.

Croatian perceptions of the SFRY

Like their Serbian counterparts, the Croats presented Yugoslavia as an era of persecution and repression. Their national spirit was choked under the rigours of Titoist Communism, their nationalist leaders were driven into exile, and Croatia's most acclaimed writers and scholars were imprisoned. While earlier Croatian Diaspora accounts often focused on the horrors of Tito's regime, later accounts during the 1990s blamed the Serbs, and not Tito, for destroying the system. Attacks on Communist tyranny were soon replaced with even more vitriolic attacks on Serbian treachery and greed. In an attempt to justify their separation from the SFRY, Croatian nationalists insisted that Serbian dominance remained the central focus in Tito's political project. They argued that since Belgrade was the political, financial, military, judicial, and administrative capital of the SFRY, the Serbs had naturally been privileged. Any form of centralisation – even the Slovenian ideologue Edvard Kardelj's 'Yugoslav consciousness' – was therefore dismissed as an attempt at greater Serbianisation.

Croatian writers often argued that the federal system in the SFRY was identical to that imposed on the Croats in the first Yugoslavia. Yugoslav Communism was described as a 'disguised Greater Serbia'.³² More graphically and colourfully, Communist Yugoslavia metamorphosed into 'a resurrected ghost of the expansionist, hegemonistic, unitaristic and centralist state of the old Yugoslavia type, this time in a more horrible form enabled by the centralised, monolithic political power of the Communist Party'.³³ For this writer, as for many others, the SFRY was simply 'a new artificial Greater Serbian nation concealed under the name of Yugoslavia', entrenched 'behind the facade of pretended socialism'.³⁴ Others argued that the entire government bureaucracy, federal government officials, the army, and the diplomatic corps were completely dominated by Serbs.³⁵ Thus Yugoslavia never truly existed. It was a pseudo-Communist state controlled by Serbian nationalists, who manipulated Tito into reducing Croatian power. In this process of revision, aspects of Communist life that were present in all Communist countries, such as a one-party state and a powerful police force, were blamed on Serbian

domination. Rather than being seen as typically Communist, they were characteristics of Greater Serbia.

For Croatian historians, Serbs were presented as a highly privileged national group in Yugoslav society. Their language, culture, and political customs became the cornerstone of the state, while Serbs similarly maintained numerical dominance in most of the key ministries, the police forces, and the military. Other aspects of control, such as economic exploitation, were often described in terms of a core–periphery relationship. Echoing Nairn’s theories, Croatian writers saw nationalism as a solution to their problems of underdevelopment. Kečmanović’s ‘theme of damage’, with its emphasis on economic, cultural, and social decline – due to decades of Serbian domination – was a theme constantly invoked.³⁶ At every level, Croats argued that the Serbs were in full control of the SFRY. This became a useful justification for why it was time for them to leave, and why the Serbs were clearly the aggressors.

Serbian economic domination

A reason for attacking the federal system was Serbian economic exploitation. While Tito’s government had channelled hundreds of millions of dollars into a world-class tourist industry in Croatia, a portion of this tourist revenue had to be paid to the federal centre. While the tourist industry had been established in order to increase Yugoslavia’s foreign currency reserves, a strategy aimed to help the entire Federation, not just Croatia, Croatian writers painted this as an example of economic exploitation. A typical argument held that for seventy years ‘Croatia was exploited and drained’, and had no control over where her money was going, and why. Croats argued that Croatia and Slovenia funded some 50 per cent of the Yugoslav federal budget – the loss of this income having been a crucial reason for Serbia’s invasion after 1991.³⁷ While a sense of economic exploitation was justified to an extent, the oft-quoted figure of 50 per cent was deliberately misleading. Croatia brought in some 50 per cent of foreign exchange earnings during the 1960s and 1970s, but did not fund 50 per cent of the federal budget. While Croats did contribute considerably to the Yugoslav economy, and certainly paid a disproportionate share of the federal budget relative to their population size, their exploitation was not as high as that alleged during the break-up.³⁸

One of the better-known documents alleging various levels of Serbian exploitation – economic and otherwise – was Miroslav Brandt’s *Antimemorandum*, written five years after the SANU *Memorandum* was leaked to the press. Brandt’s whinging style perfectly mirrored the intent of the SANU original. Brandt echoed several common themes – that the Serbs controlled the military, the political system, and the economy. For too long, Croats had suffered from ‘Greater Serbian centralisation’.³⁹ Independence was the solu-

tion to all Croatia's economic difficulties. Brandt reinterpreted many of the ideas found in Milovan Djilas' *New Class*, wherein Djilas had attacked the massive power of the Communist bureaucracy during the 1950s. He argued that Yugoslavia had become more inegalitarian since the Partisan revolution. As he described it, a 'new class' had been formed, which administered and controlled the economy, distributed everything, and consequently enjoyed the fruits of production.⁴⁰

Predictably, Brandt reasoned that Djilas's 'new class' was dominated by the Serbs – who had milked the system for all it was worth. He argued that the great majority of Yugoslav millionaires were Serbian 'rich profiteers', who benefited from other nations in Yugoslavia by supposedly confiscating other people's property, and then exploiting it for their own gain. For Brandt, the Serbs were the only true 'plutocrats'.⁴¹ By contrast, the Croats constituted an exploited class and nation rolled into one. 'Croatia is,' Brandt asserted, 'a thoroughly oppressed country enslaved, plundered, pauperized, brought down to the verge of existence, forced to massive emigration of its population seeking a way to survive, exposed to national liquidation under a military and police regime or occupation.'⁴² Serbs were described simultaneously as bourgeois overlords, colonial oppressors, Bolshevik dictators, and Fascists.

For many Croats, Communism had been an utter failure – Tito's 'pretended socialism' had done nothing to eliminate the economic exploitation by the Serbian/Bourgeois Class/Nation over the Croatian/Proletarian/Peasant Class/Nation. Concocting his own type of Hegelian dialectic, Brandt managed to merge class and nation to demonstrate how Greater Serbia continued to dominate Croatia in every respect during the Communist era. Brandt represented a typical view of Croatia's exploitation within Yugoslavia. The view that the Serbs controlled everything from Belgrade was common, as was the argument that the Serbian occupation of Croatia was an attempt to regain control of Croatia's economy. Perhaps it attests to the 'reasonableness' of certain Croatian economists that they were willing to see only an economic motive for Serbian aggression, while dismissing the 'irrationality' of nationalism.

The Serbian character explained

Perhaps the most thorough, and at the same time the most insidious examination of the conflict between Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia was the product of three sociologists. As with their analysis of Medjugorje, Meštrović, Letica, and Goreta used a sociological model to come to terms with the 'social character' of the Serbs, something similar to primordial characteristics or acting as a 'substitute for biological instinct'.⁴³ For the authors, being 'Dinaric' in the Cvijić-ian sense implied being both 'predatory' and 'barbaric' – containing the

seeds of 'totalitarianism'.⁴⁴ Much of their work seemed to be little more than a rhetorical window-dressing for a fairly simple thesis: Serbs were warlike and aggressive by nature, lazy and Eastern, while Croats were democratic, peace-loving, and Western. As such, their forced union within Yugoslavia led to Serbian dominance and violence, while the Croats were exploited and victimised. Most of their sociological metaphors and historical studies, while interesting, had little or no bearing on the reality of events in Yugoslavia.

One such example was an examination of Alexis de Tocqueville's study of the American Civil War. The United States became an analogy for Communist Yugoslavia, described as 'the sometimes unhappy union of two distinct and opposing cultures', composed of the 'Southern aristocrat' and the Northerner. The Southerner was described as a 'domestic dictator from infancy . . . a haughty and hasty man, irascible, violent, ardent in his desires, impatient of obstacles . . . fond of grandeur, luxury and renown, of gaiety, pleasure, and above all, of idleness'.⁴⁵ This was in marked contrast to Northerners, who were 'educated, talented, and family-oriented citizens . . . the best elements of order and morality'.⁴⁶ It was not difficult to see where this analogy was going: two opposing cultures, one backwards, lazy and despotic, the other, hard-working, educated, and moral. The combination of these two groups in a single state created a sociological 'clash of civilisations'. For the three authors, the American analogy played out well in Yugoslavia, since the Balkans 'exhibit[s] more extremely the opposition between barbaric and peaceable traits that is found all over the world'.⁴⁷ The disintegration of Yugoslavia was clearly blamed on the Serbs, who, living on a lower level of civilisation, could not help but dominate and abuse the helpless Croats. For example:

[I]t is well known in Yugoslavia that Serbs and Montenegrins adhere to a sort of cult of the warrior. They have continually dominated the police and armed forces. They habitually own guns and engage in hunting as part of a machismo set of values. Within Yugoslavia, they are known for being stubborn, irascible, and emotionally unstable. It is interesting that many of these same traits can still be found ascribed to male residents of the southern United States, in comparison with males in the North.⁴⁸

Meštrović *et al.*'s dubious sociology supported the contention that Serbian actions were a result of a primordial and unchanging social character. The only solution was separation. There was an evident paradox in using this particular study of de Tocqueville. In the case of the American Civil War, the Southerners declared independence and separated, with the support of various outside powers. The North refused to allow the South to leave, waging war rather than having the country split apart. Ironically, the Serbs arguably had more in common with the North than the South, since they too were supposedly fighting a war against separatism, with a federal army to keep

their 'union' intact. While these authors' attempts at analogy were somewhat confused and inaccurate, the suggestion that the Serbs were somehow more warlike, lazy, exploitative and generally inferior, struck a chord with many readers.⁴⁹ Such theories maintained that Communist Yugoslavia was an untenable construction, completely controlled by Serbs, who dominated every aspect of life. Both the break-up of the federation and the war that followed were natural outcomes of a Serbian psychology, which was seemingly fundamentally different to that of the Croats.

Linguistic repression in Yugoslavia

The status of the Croatian language during the lifetime of the SFRY was an extremely important consideration.⁵⁰ Since the time of Ljudevit Gaj and Ante Starčević, a separate Croatian language was one of the key hallmarks of national identity. Tito was roundly condemned for outlawing the use of the 'Croatian' language, imposing instead the Serbo-Croatian language, with Occidental (Croatian) and Oriental (Serbian) variants. A joint language was seen as an important aspect of Tito's 'Brotherhood and Unity', and was central to repressing manifestations of Croatian nationalism. Linguistic reform was a key demand of nationalist politicians during the Maspok movement in the 1970s. The demand for a separate Croatian language was largely responsible for the 1971 'Croat Spring', during which the famed Croatian novelist Miroslav Krleža led a group of 130 leading Croatian academics on a crusade to designate 'Croatian' as a separate language for education and literature. The Serbian Communist Party followed suit with a demand for reciprocal rights to a Serbian language for their people living within Croatia.⁵¹

For Croats, the Serbo-Croatian language was little more than a 'political tool' that had been used throughout the history of Yugoslavia to homogenise different peoples into a single nation. Even when Tito was alive, Croats had rejected the *Novi Sad Agreement* and pushed for their own language. With Tito's death, and the rise of nationalism, the Croatian language once more became a crucial issue in Croatian identity. Moreover, the Serbo-Croatian language became symbolic of Serbian cultural dominance and Croatian weakness. As one historian argued: 'The only reason that "Serbo-Croatian" existed and the only reason it has been forced upon unwilling populations were the politics of an artificial Yugoslavia united by force against the will of the majority of its population.'⁵²

After independence, Croatian writers and linguists were able to reclaim 'Croatian' as their own distinct and unique national language. This was an extremely important 'turning-point', or 'watershed', in Croatian history, when Croats at last had the freedom to re-create a national language. For many Croats, there had once been a linguistic Golden Age in need of rediscov-

ery. At some stage, there was a pure, authentic and unadulterated Croatian language waiting to be dusted off, polished, and shined, after decades of being covered with Serbian and Communist dirt and tarnish. The well-known Croatian writer Slobodan Novak commented on the new 'purity' of Croatia by proclaiming triumphantly:

Croatia is cleansing itself of Yugo-unitarist and Great-Serb rubbish which had been spread all over it for a whole century. Croatia is simply restored to its original form and returning to its true self. If today it has to make painful incisions in its language, history, scholarship and even the names of its towns and streets, that only shows the extent to which it was contaminated and how polluted were all facets of its life and all segments of its corpus.⁵³

For Novak, as for many others, one of the most painful legacies of Communism was the loss of the national language. Once they had their language back, the Croatian soul could once more be found. But what exactly was the language to look like? Various dictionaries soon appeared on the scene. Stjepan Brodnjak's *Razlkovni Rjecnik* (Separate Dictionary) featured 35,000 entries, composed mainly of technical terms and archaisms.

The zeal to 'de-Serbianise' the language led to revisions of distinctly 'Croatian' texts. Jasna Baresić's 1994 Croatian language reader *Dobro Dosli* had to be cleansed of 'Serbianisms' by other Croatian linguists on a daily basis, since new 'impurities' were constantly being identified. Even Miroslav Krleža, the 'martyr' for the Croatian language, had his works translated from 'Serbo-Croat' for new school textbooks. Eager advocates of a pure 'Croatian' introduced a bill before the Croatian *Sabor*, proposing fines and prison terms for those who used words of 'foreign' origin.⁵⁴

In many cases, an entirely new language was being created. While some sort of linguistic Golden Age was the aim of the policy, most of the new words had no historical origin. What seemed to matter more was differentiating 'Croatian' from 'Serbian'. More extreme voices, such as the writers at *NDH* magazine, proposed going even further than Starčević to create a completely different national language. Advocating the 'Croatian "korienski" orthography', one journalist argued that the adoption of a new dialect would be the only way to create an authentic Croatian language. Nevertheless, it was clear that such a language would be neither historically 'pure' nor accurate. This, apparently, was not particularly important. As the author explained: 'Only the renewal and rebirth of the unique character of the Croatian language and "korienski" orthography (because that way Croatian and Serb languages would become mutually unintelligible) can destroy Serb appetite for Croatian lands and free us from fear of violent "unification" of parts of Croatia with Serbia.'⁵⁵ Creating their own Babel would allow Croats to be safe from Serbian attacks:

[T]he loss of mutual intelligibility of Croatian and Serb languages is the best guarantee that Croatia will never again join some Yugo-associations which could lead to the renewal of the common state with the Serbs, because our languages, cultures, and religions would be different. Since [Serbs and Croats belong to] two different civilizations there can be no coexistence for us. Let us work hard, with love, and learn the Croatian language cleansed of all non-Croatian traces which had been imposed by force on it, and renew its Croatian character.⁵⁶

That the 'Croatian character' to which the author referred would be unintelligible to the vast majority of Croats themselves seemed to matter little. What mattered was not how useful the new language might be as a tool for communication, but its separate status. In general, the differences between 'Serbian', 'Croatian', and 'Bosnian' were dialectical, and were matters of regionalism, not nationality. Within Croatia itself, Istrians, Dalmatians, and those living around Zagreb all spoke with different dialects, which could, with little effort, be transformed into other 'national' languages. The linguist Celia Hawksworth, in her language training guide to the now defunct 'Serbo-Croat', taught both the Serbian and Croatian variants of what she certainly saw as a common language. As she wrote somewhat ironically:

This book introduces the version of the language known to its speakers as 'Croatian', but if you learn this version you will be understood by all the other peoples listed above, who call their version of the language 'Bosnian' or 'Serbian' respectively. One way of looking at this complex situation is that it is extraordinarily cost-effective: if you learn one language you will find that you automatically know three or four!⁵⁷

While this process of linguistic revisionism appeared to be revolutionary during the early 1990s, it was clear by 1995 how farcical it truly was. During the Dayton Accord negotiations between the Serbs, the Croats, and the Bosnian Moslems, participants had the choice of simultaneous translation into 'Serbian', 'Croatian', and 'Bosnian'. However, while there were three separate channels from which to select, there was only one translator for all three. In short, the language was identical, and none of the three parties seemed to care. For them it was the principle, not the language, that mattered.⁵⁸

Now certainly many nations have produced their own standardised language, based on one specific variant, and of course not everyone can speak it. In France, on the eve of its Revolution, 50 per cent of the population did not speak French at all, and only 12–13 per cent spoke the Parisian variant that would eventually become the standard form. When Italy began its unification process in 1861, scarcely 2.5 per cent of the population used standard Italian for everyday communication.⁵⁹ Thus, even the *korienski* orthography might be historically defensible. What needs to be addressed in the Croatian case is not simply a nation's right to re-create its language, but the motivations

behind it. Linguistic re-creation in Croatia was a means of creating artificial divisions between Serbs and Croats in the state. It was specifically designed to exclude non-Croats from the national ethos during a time of warfare and violence. Like all examples of linguistic standardisation, the reformulation of Croatian was of necessity exclusivist, a process designed to suppress regional variations and deny people the right to communicate on their own terms with one another.

The rise of Serbian and Croatian nationalism: interpretations

The demonisation of the Communist period was extremely important for both sides, as both were seeking to justify why Yugoslavia had to be abandoned in its former shape and structure. Serbs and Croats used history as a resource, as a tool for explaining events during and after the war in Croatia, while inscribing narratives of victimisation and persecution. While benign theories of economic exploitation and Tito's border machinations were cited by academics, the great bulk of the wartime propaganda focused on the fear of genocide. Ronnie Landau's 'grotesque competition in suffering' had begun. Historical patterns of hatred and genocidal aggression had been identified for almost every historical period. All that remained was to apply the horrors of the past to understanding war in the 1990s.

For Serbian writers, the fear of a renewed genocide, comparable to the Ustaša genocide in the Second World War was a central feature of their propaganda. This became the key justification for the rise of Serbian nationalism in Croatia and the JNA's later invasion of what was recognised as a sovereign country. From the first day of Tudjman's presidency, Croatian Serbs argued that the HDZ was trying to remove all Serbian power in the republic. The HDZ government was purging Serbs from almost every aspect of Croatian life, using what was described as an 'ethnic broom', to remove Serbs from the government bureaucracies, the police, the judiciary, the mass media, and the school system. Even blue-collar workers were supposedly purged.⁶⁰ Serbian historians presented Tudjman's regime as nothing more than the rehabilitation and restoration of the NDH.⁶¹ The first Croatian constitution was often cited as proof that the HDZ was trying to assimilate Croatian Serbs, by denying them their national rights. This seemingly indicated that a new genocide was beginning.⁶²

A common theme among Serbian historians and politicians was that the Serbs had merely reacted to the Croatian threat – they had only defended themselves. The assassination in July 1991 of Osijek's moderate police chief, Josip Reichl-Kir, by Croatian extremists was constantly cited as the first act of aggression in the Croatian conflict. Reichl-Kir had been negotiating with Serbian irregulars at the time, and was seemingly killed for trying to promote

peace instead of war.⁶³ The death of Reichl-Kir certainly demonstrated the duplicity of the Croatian government; but it was not the first act of violence, since by this point the 'log revolution' was well under way. Croatian Serbs had already begun blocking off roads and assaulting Croatian police forces. Nevertheless, Reichl-Kir came to symbolise how the HDZ regime was willing to kill off its own people, should they try to negotiate with Serbs. The Serbian Krajina politician Mile Dakić soon denounced the HDZ for their 'fascist state policy and kalashnikov democracy'.⁶⁴ The view that an independent Croatia was forced on the Serbs at gunpoint was widespread.

A constant level of Croatian aggression against Serbs was a necessary theme in the latter's self-representation as victims of genocide. Dismissing claims that the HDZ administration was democratically elected, Serbian sources argued that a multi-party system did not guarantee democracy. 'Hitler,' according to one historian, was a good example of another populist who manipulated democracy, since he 'came to power in Germany within the framework of a multi-party mechanism but subsequently became a great dictator, aggressor and criminal.'⁶⁵ While the writer was clearly referring to Tudjman, the irony was, of course, that Milošević had risen to power in an identical fashion, and was little different from his Croatian counterpart. Nevertheless, Serbian writers worked tirelessly to debunk the myth of Croatian democracy, and specifically the Western belief at that time that Croatia had become an open, Westernised, post-Communist country.

By the time JNA tanks rolled into Eastern Slavonia in July 1991, it was clear that the Army no longer represented the interests of Yugoslavia, but had become an instrument of Serbian power.⁶⁶ While the JNA was simply trying to enlarge the Serbian state, the Serbs claimed that they were coming as 'peace-keepers', to prevent a genocide of Serbs. Humanitarian arguments would be used throughout the conflict to legitimize the invasion and occupation of Croatia. In justifying military intervention, Serbs often compared Croatian leaders to Nazis and fascist aggressors, re-hoisting Second World War flags while instigating continuous 'pogroms' of the Serbian population.⁶⁷

The Serbian Ministry of Information also portrayed the Tudjman regime as neo-fascistic, making vague allusions to Aaron and Loftus's book *Ratlines*, with its description of the Vatican smuggling networks for Nazi war criminals. This time, however, the 'rat channels' were reversed, and instead of smuggling war criminals out of Europe, war criminals were now being smuggled back in – to Croatia. The strategy of welcoming back these former Ustaša was to be the precursor to a renewed Serbian genocide – a genocide that was to be identical to that of some fifty years before.⁶⁸ Dobrica Ćosić also saw Tudjman's regime as an emerging Nazi dictatorship. He had this to say in a published collection of his wartime essays:

We see in Croatia, many aspects of a Nazi resurrection. This state is governed by a

totalitarian and chauvinistic regime, which has abolished the elementary civil and national rights of the Serbs by simply erasing them from its Constitution. This provoked a Serbian insurrection in Croatia, those who justly fear a new program of extermination, the same as the one during the Second World War to which they fell victim.⁶⁹

Because of their historical victimisation, Ćosić had no difficulty in believing that a second genocide was on the way, necessitating a 'defensive war' against Croatian attacks.⁷⁰ Other Serbian writers urged Croatian Serbs not to surrender any weapons to the Croatian police, since politics there had blossomed into 'mass chauvinist hysteria'.⁷¹ In justifying the 'log revolution', and other memorable moments in Krajina Serb history, links were drawn between the surprise night inspections for weapons carried out by the Ustaša in 1941 and a similar strategy of disarming mixed Serbian and Croatian units, supposedly instigated by the new Ministry of the Interior in 1991. This time, however, the Serbs had learned from their mistakes. Since the Ustaša had slaughtered large numbers of unarmed Serbs after disarming them, Serbs had learned this lesson of the past, and had refused to surrender their weapons.⁷²

These Serbian warnings were sometimes supported by graphic evidence. Always interested in theatrics, the Krajina Serbs organised the exhumation of a Serbian mass grave from the Second World War. Serbian journalists were invited to photograph the bones of those who had been massacred by the Ustaša, providing a strong imagistic appeal to the Serbian nation to defend their 'brothers' against the threat of repeated genocide.⁷³ Dragutin Brčin's glossy and disturbing book of bodies supposedly mutilated at the hands of the Croats in 1991 was another example of a picture saying a thousand words. Brčin's views of the Croats echoed Kečmanović's theory of pseudospeciation. Because the Serbs were seen as a 'lower species', they were being targeted with biological and physical extermination 'for the third time this century – for the second time from the Ustashas in the last 50 years'. Brčin also spread the story of one 'Ustashi war criminal' who wore a necklace made of the fingers of Serbian children.⁷⁴ While this was originally an ancient Hindu myth, it seemed to have travelled far by the 1990s.

There is little doubt that many Serbs thought the threat of annihilation was real. Serbs in Croatia by 1991 began to complain of an 'ethnic tax' that they alone had to pay to the government.⁷⁵ Croatian Serb authorities complained of a 'formal brand' devised by the Croatian government to separate the Serbs from the rest of the population. As one writer reported, each Serb in Croatia was given the number 3 as the eighth figure of his personal identity number. This, as the Serbian Krajina President Goran Hadžić remarked, 'is nothing else for us than the David's star, our race label'.⁷⁶ Included in the general theme of Croatian genocide of Serbs were testimonials of those who had suffered in Croatian 'concentration camps' during the early

part of the war. The journalist Nikola Marinović, searching for the Croatian version of the 1942 Wannsee Conference, traced the Croatian 'Final Solution' to a small cabal of HDZ leaders and representatives from Slavonia. These men supposedly met in early 1991 to form an organisation bent on 'the extermination of Serbs from western Srem and Eastern Slavonija'. According to Marinović, this group of HDZ officials 'started "everything" in all Croatia'. They deliberately planned and executed the genocide of Serbs, through a three-pronged strategy – replacing prominent Serbs, harassing the entire Serbian population, and then liquidating them.⁷⁷

Marinović included a number of quotations from the initial meeting, unfortunately without indicating how he managed to get them. Either this was some form of dramatic licence, or Marinović was perched below the window through which the end of Serbdom was being contemplated. How he could have acquired such information is not explained; but, for some readers, detailed explanations would not have been necessary. Whatever the book's original purpose, it soon became part of a justification for the Serbian military actions that followed. Therefore it came as no surprise that the primary objects of Serbian attacks were the places where the Serbs were supposedly tortured and murdered by the Croats as a result of this key meeting. Thus, Poljane and Marino, villages near Pakrac, were noted as sites of mass atrocities, as were Kip, near Daruvar, and Moscenica and Cesko, near Sisak.⁷⁸ Similar atrocities were recounted for Vukovar, one of the first cities that fell to the Serbs. Here, Marinović described the 'hair-raising savagery' of the manager of the Vukovar Hospital, Vesna Bosanac, who earned the title of the 'Vukovar Mengele' after supposedly threatening one Serbian patient by putting a gun to his head, and then threatening to slit his throat, and then placing a bomb in his bed. Another patient was described as being beaten and then urinated on at a hospital near Pakrac. Other horrors, such as torture, euthanasia, the general denial of medical treatment to Serbian soldiers, and even murder of the wounded were also described here.⁷⁹

Each region was seen as the venue for terrible atrocities committed by the Croatian National Guard, proving that the Serbs had had no choice but to shell the towns where these atrocities were supposedly taking place. Such descriptions instilled the notion that the new Croatian institutions, such as the police and even the medical services, were Serbophobic, and therefore part of a genocidal conspiracy. Certainly some of the testimonials were true. Serbs were beaten and mistreated. But what was significant for this book was why certain regions were selected, and what they signified. According to the Serbs' own accounts, a form of defensive ethnic cleansing had to take place to avoid a repetition of the Second World War.

The Orthodox Church also contributed to the increasing paranoia.

Spiritual Genocide (1994) outlined a continuous desecration of Serbian churches, claiming that more than 400 had been destroyed since 1941, leading the author to describe a 'total spiritual genocide', which continued from the time of the NDH, through the Communist era, to the conflict in the 1990s.⁸⁰ This work featured detailed descriptions of large numbers of bombed out churches, as well as photographs, drawing a link between the Second World War destruction of churches and their destruction in the 1990s. To stress the similarities between events in 1994 and 1941, Second World War photographs were mixed with more recent ones, all in grainy black and white – blurring the distinction between historic and contemporary atrocities.

The purpose behind this onslaught of subjective and emotive propaganda was clear – it buttressed Serbian arguments that the war was forced on the Serbian people. The Serbian Orthodox Church and its parishioners had been brought to the 'verge of annihilation'.⁸¹ That this work appeared in 1994, after countless attacks on the Serbs in the international press for their destruction of Catholic churches and mosques, was no coincidence. Obviously Serbian churches were destroyed; but such one-sided portrayals were mirror images of Croatian publications. This even extended to a contest on a city-by-city basis between Serbian and Croatian propagandists, to see which national group had been the most victimised. Thus Croats published photographs and descriptions of the destruction of Catholic churches in Vukovar and Mostar, and the Serbs responded in kind with Orthodox ruins in the same cities.⁸²

'Operation storm'

One of the most tragic aspects of the war in Croatia was Milošević's cynical handling of the Croatian Serbs after they were no longer useful to him. Seemingly abandoning his dream of creating a Greater Serbia, Milošević repackaged himself as a peacemaker in 1995, bringing the Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table to sign the Dayton Accords. It was also the year that he abandoned the Croatian Serbs in Eastern Slavonia and Knin, and left the playing-field open for a Croatian offensive. With the way clear, the American negotiator Richard Holbrooke encouraged Tudjman to take control of the Serbian Krajina and Serbian-controlled north-western Bosnia.⁸³ In late April 1995, the Croats launched an attack on western Slavonia, and within 36 hours managed to take back the region, which had been violently taken by Serbian forces at the beginning of the conflict.⁸⁴ By the summer, much of the Serbian population in the former Srpska Krajina had fled, leaving towns and villages deserted.

By July, Tudjman had amassed an army of over 200,000 troops, ready to sweep into the Krajina. After calling for the surrender of the Serbian Krajina government and the handover of weapons, Tudjman launched 'Operation

Storm' on 4 August. While the Serbs had 40,000 troops and 400 tanks, they were no match for Croatian forces, who managed to seize Knin after only two days of fighting. The whole region fell in just 84 hours, as Serbs fled for their lives.⁸⁵ While it was clear that Milošević had left the Croatian Serbs to their fate, Serbian propagandists continued to advance the dangers of a Croatian genocide of Serbs. At this stage, the same arguments as before were used to highlight the consequences of Tudjman's conquest. While Milošević had little interest in reoccupying Croatia, the propaganda machine continued to advance the same arguments.

The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts soon reacted to the Croatian offensive, issuing a *Memorandum* to alert the public to the renewed dangers of genocide that lay ahead. SANU urged the Serbian government to mobilise without delay, since the Serbs were facing 'extinction and the obliteration of all traces of their existence in these lands'.⁸⁶ Once again, the spectre of Croatian fascist terror was reiterated, but SANU was at this stage trying to push the Serbian government to act. They claimed that some 300,000 Serbs had already been 'forcibly expelled' from Croatia, even before 'Operation Storm' had begun, and they urged the Serbian government to act against a 'repeated genocide'.⁸⁷ Svetozar Đurđević cited the 'speed at which the inhuman and uncivilized method of Croatization of the Krajina has been carried out' as proof of the 'vandal destruction and annihilation of all the traces and symbols of Serbian life, culture and spirituality in the region'. Franjo Tudjman, he argued, was only pursuing the same fascist policies that the NDH regime had followed some fifty years earlier. Serbs had to be killed, since they continued to be the main obstacle to Croatian expansionism in the Balkans.⁸⁸

The Serbian Ministry of Information joined the fray, describing the offensive as 'the final solution to the Serbian question', while stressing the links between Croatian actions in 1941 and 1995. They too condemned Tudjman for wanting to create 'a pure Croatian state', through 'pure Croatism' in the Balkans. The Americans were also drawn into this 'Blitzkrieg'. Having perfected their killing skills in Desert Storm they were looking for a small 'Balkan Storm'.⁸⁹ The Serbian Unity Congress also played their part, noting:

The current civil and religious war in the former Yugoslavia is but the resumption of the 1941–1945 civil war in which the Croatian Fascists, collaborators of the Nazi regime, and Muslim religious extremists murdered between 600,000 and 1,200,000 Serbs. The issues are the same, the battlefields are the same, even the flags and army insignia are the same.⁹⁰

By 1995–96, this type of imagery was increasingly common. It was almost impossible to find descriptions of the war in Croatia that did not refer explicitly to the links between the 1940s and the 1990s. Serbs were once

again fighting against annihilation. It occurred to few of the participants that this was not a repeat of the past. Rather, it was as if they had actually gone back in time, and were reliving the struggles of their parents and grandparents. The motto 'Never Again' was constantly invoked by the Krajina Serbs, as proof that they were like the Jews during the Holocaust, ready to defend themselves against annihilation.⁹¹ Sadly, however, it was not Tudjman, but Milošević who had sold them out. This time, the Croats were only taking advantage of an opportunity that had been given to them by the Serbian president.

Contemporary fears of the Catholic Church

Accusations of Vatican and Croatian Catholic complicity in genocide were popular in Serbian historical revisions. Their involvement in genocide was traced from the nineteenth century through to the first Yugoslavia, the Second World War, and into the Communist era. Such a pattern of Catholic 'Serbophobia' was also applied to an understanding of the war in Croatia during the 1990s. A popular fear among propagandists was that Serbs were being forcibly converted to Catholicism, as they had been during the 1940s. In 1995, the Serbian Ministry of Information claimed that the Croats had converted 11,000 Serbian children to Catholicism in just two and a half years. Another 14,000 Serbian children, some 90 per cent of the total in Croatia, were supposedly forced to enrol in Catholic schools – by implication they too were in the initial stages of assimilation. This 'plot' was revealed by Orthodox Church sources, who posited that the true intent behind this policy was not simply educational. Rather: 'Once they convert to Catholicism, the former Orthodox people will *automatically* become members of the Croatian nation, because Catholicism and Croatian nationality are equated in Croatia.'⁹²

The overall Croatian plan, as a government official from Novi Sad maintained, aimed at converting 700,000 Serbs in Croatia to Catholicism, making them first 'Croatian Serbs', then 'Orthodox Croats', and then finally 'pure Croats', after their language, alphabet, Church and other symbols of their 'authentic and centuries old Serbian identity' had been destroyed.⁹³ Such writing demonstrated how fragile many officials thought Serbian identity truly was, and how easy it would be for the Catholic Church to destroy the Serbian nation, now that Croatia was independent. Needless to say, such theories were not backed up with the names of any of the schools actually involved, nor was there any type of documentation cited to support such accusations.

There were of course other more direct attacks on the Vatican itself, dealing with specific aspects of the war in Croatia and later in Bosnia. During the 1995 NATO air-strikes on Bosnian Serb military positions, the Vatican,

and not the Germans or the Americans, was accused of genocide. One University of Belgrade professor was clear that the prime culprits behind the attack were the Pope and his followers, as during earlier times:

[E]ncouragement came from Vatican clericalists pursuing the centuries-old goal of establishing the world Catholic multinational empire . . . Pope John Paul II developed the doctrines of 'limited sovereignty', of 'humanitarian military intervention' and of 'disarming the aggressor'. The head of the Catholic Christian Church supported the idea of 'bombs for peace'. The peace that can be brought by bombs is the peace of extermination of Serbs in Croatia and B&H. For those who survive there is conversion to Catholicism or expulsion to the 'Belgrade Pashaluk', the territory that will remain to Serbia after Kosovo-Metohija and Vojvodina are again taken out of its jurisdiction.⁹⁴

The imagery was curious. The Pope himself was charged with trying to exterminate the Bosnian Serbs, as part of an imperial project that could only be compared to the machinations of the old Holy Roman Empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The idea that Serbs would be left with a small territory around Belgrade ('Pashaluk' referring to the old Ottoman regional divisions of Serbia) certainly exaggerated the extent of the bombing campaign, a campaign that never entered Serbia proper. Accusing the Pope of genocide was not overly controversial in Serbian circles, where Vatican plots to destroy the nation had seemingly existed since the Great Schism.

In general, Serbian propaganda disguised the reality of Serbian aggression in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. While the Serbs claimed only to be defending Serbs against annihilation, the Croatian government never advanced any deliberate policies to kill its Serbian population systematically. While the Serbian community was clearly demarcated and singled out in the new state, and while there was discrimination, xenophobia did not lead to genocide.

Croatian views of the war in Croatia

In many ways, Croatian propaganda mirrored that of the Serbs. The war in Croatia was traced to the age-old project of Greater Serbia, and numerous links between past and present were joined together. In understanding Serbian aggression, Croatian writers divided up their understanding of events into three separate categories. The first dealt with the Serbs as Nazis, seeking territorial expansion, or *Lebensraum*. Like the Czechs or the Poles, Croatia was doomed to be colonised, then enslaved. A second argument compared Greater Serbian style empire-building to the Holocaust. In the second argument, the Serbs had no real economic motivations for invading Croatia. Rather, their general hatred of the Croats drove them to round up and kill as many people as possible. The third argument relied on the work

of Croatian psychiatrists. Serbs were analysed as a group, and their pathology was blamed for the war in Croatia. Both mentally and civilisationally inferior to the Croats, Serbian hatred, envy, and resentment towards them for having abandoned Yugoslavia were responsible for the Serb decision to invade.

Such a line of reasoning evolved into predictions of what would happen if the Serbs managed successfully to invade and occupy Croatia. Miroslav Brandt was perhaps the most vocal on what a reassertion of Serbian control would mean. 'Non-Serbian peoples,' he predicted, 'would be slaves, a subjugated mob, expected and doomed to extinction as separate national entities in the future, their land, area for colonisation and a target to exploit, brought to the level of provinces working for the benefit of a new giant, super-wealthy and carefree state centre of Belgrade.'⁹⁵ Brandt was particularly clear on what the Croats were fighting against by defending the Krajina and Eastern Slavonia from Serbian predations:

These regions are simply resisting the annihilation of their particular national cultures, the persistent proven widely organised and continuous decades-long activities of the Greater-Serbian plutocratic oligarchy to primarily deprive the Croatian people of their own language, to impose upon them the Serbian language, to suppress Croatian literature and other forms of Croatian culture, to wipe out the Croatian national awareness, to destroy and prevent Croats from learning their own history and to crush their dignity, to annihilate their faith, to impoverish them, and by a discriminatory economic policy to drive the Croats away from their own millennium-long ethnic homeland and then systematically colonise these regions with Serbian nationals.⁹⁶

Brandt's theme of economic exploitation was common. Bože Ćović also blamed Serbia's economic motives for the conflict. The Serbs were trying to compensate for their underdevelopment by exploiting the riches of Croatia. Since the Serbian economy was inefficient, burdened by losses and debts, and thus unable to 'stimulate its own creative potential', it needed Croatia as a colony to dominate and exploit.⁹⁷ Like Brandt, Ćović similarly argued that both Serbia and Montenegro, starved of resources, were keen to exploit Croatia, to enable the flow of riches from the periphery to the core.⁹⁸ Ćović was evidently no dependency theorist, and this aspect of his analysis soon gave way to analogies between Serbian economic exploitation and Nazi expansionist plans during the 1930s:

Serbia needs new *lebensraum* and new economic resources (on the ethnically cleansed i.e. completely Serbian, territory) given that 'Greater Serbia' with only Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and the amputated parts of Croatia would find itself in the company of complete undeveloped areas . . . It is a question of *lebensraum* and the concept of 'blood and soil' which ensure the new nation-building ambitions of 'Greater Serbia'. The problem of ethnic cleansing should be

stressed here, i.e. firstly forcing Croats and all other ethnic groups to flee, so that only the Serbs remain, and secondly settling Serbian colonists in the emptied areas.⁹⁹

There was little evidence to support the claim that Serbs were trying to colonise all of Croatia, and, as I have argued earlier, they could have pushed further had they so desired, had not both leaders been committed to the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nevertheless, the fears of economic exploitation were justifiable, given the fact that when these documents were written Serbian irregulars had been continually looting Croatian and Bosnian homes. At the same time, the use of the term *Lebensraum* served as a rebuttal to Serbian accusations that Tudjman and his government were composed of neo-Ustaša criminals. Accusing the Serbs of trying to exploit and dominate Croatia also covered up the very real machinations of the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina. While they accused the Serbs of expanding their territory and colonising a region that was not theirs, the Croats were doing the same thing. These themes were extremely common.

The long-awaited evil – Greater Serbia

The second key argument delved much deeper into the past, exposing many long-term Serbian plans for the invasion of Croatia – plans that were purportedly hatched well before Hitler and the Third Reich. In Čović's view, the war in Croatia was 'the bloody finale of the long-prepared Greater Serbian plan of conquest', supposedly the culmination of two hundred years of planning.¹⁰⁰ Hitler's speech to the Reichstag in 1939 was often invoked – one that famously justified the invasion of Poland as a defensive measure to protect Poland's German minority.¹⁰¹ The Serbian conspiracy, according to Čović, consisted of claiming victimhood as a means of justifying territorial expansion:

The notion of victim and victimization is extended to the evaluation of conditions in which the Serbs live in non-Serbian regions and [are] used for political action whenever a privilege is at stake. In recent years this myth has served to justify and promulgate the political thesis that all Serbs must live in one state. It is a screen for military aggression against Croatia and the realization of the Greater Serbia scheme.¹⁰²

Ironically, Čović did exactly what he accused the Serbs of doing themselves – invoking myths of persecution and holocaust in order to legitimate 'self-defensive' measures against the 'enemy'. Čović seems to have been in no doubt that his own side was completely innocent and trustworthy, while the Serbs were evil and expansionist. While the regimes in Serbia and Croatia were surprisingly similar, writers like Čović continued to argue that Serbian

violence in the 1990s far surpassed anything that had happened during the Second World War, a statement that was to an extent correct, but served to mask the reality of this many-sided conflict.¹⁰³

For many Croatian historians, the myth of Greater Serbia was all-consuming. The basis of Serbian national identity was territorial expansionism. Like some form of plague, the bloodlust to create a Greater Serbia could lie dormant for decades, before being unleashed on unsuspecting neighbours. Branko Miletić therefore asked somewhat conspiratorially: 'What drives the docile Serb peasant to rape, butcher and incinerate his peaceful Muslim or Croat neighbor?' The answer was of course: 'The double-edged theory of Greater Serbianism.' Greater Serbianism was supposedly 'double-edged' because it was worse than either fascism or Communism, since it made co-nationals feel 'politically and culturally threatened', and 'emboldened' at the same time.¹⁰⁴ Like Ćović, Miletić saw how Serbian leaders had used the rhetoric of victimisation to mobilise their people for war. In his tally of the costs of this ideology, Miletić concluded:

Greater Serbianism has cost the lives of some 600,000 Croats, 400,000 Muslims, 100,000 Albanians, and countless others this century, not to mention non-conformist Serbs, and even people not from the Balkans. It has ethnically cleansed some five million inhabitants since 1900, wounded, maimed and imprisoned over two million, and caused hundreds of billions of dollars worth of material damage.¹⁰⁵

What Miletić offered was a complete picture of Serbian violence in the twentieth century. Each period of history was seen to be tragically the same; Serbs promoting Greater Serbia while killing hundreds of thousands of people. How exactly the author tallied these figures is not explained, nor would this have been particularly important. What was curious about these analyses of Serbian nationalism was how their assumption of the role of the victim was discussed. This was seen to be a purely Serbian strategy, not something that the Croats would ever have thought to employ.

Serbian Nazis and collective psychosis

It was certainly clear that Croatia was under serious threat by the beginning of 1991. As has been pointed out earlier, one-third of Croatia was occupied by this time, and the future of the country remained uncertain. It was in this climate of fear that mountains of seemingly spontaneous anti-Serbian propaganda began pouring out of Croatia. Certainly much of this was genuine, and there is no reason to doubt that most of these people truly believed, for good reason, that their country was in serious trouble. However, while Croatia was seemingly unable to defend herself against the Serbs, Tudjman and Milošević

were already making plans together to carve up Bosnia-Herzegovina. That Croatia had enough soldiers, equipment and weapons to maintain a defensive war *and* an offensive war indicates that they were doing much better than they publicly admitted. As I pointed out earlier, Tudjman could well have liberated his country, had he not had wanted to push into Bosnia-Herzegovina.

As the war progressed, it became clear that Croatia's position was far stronger than people realised. While a climate of fear was created and certainly existed, it is doubtful that the Serbs could ever have taken all of Croatia. It is also doubtful that they wanted to. Nevertheless, the emphasis during this time was on rallying the people together, to project to the outside world an image of unity in the face of hardship. For this reason, much of what emerged from Croatia used images of the Second World War to make sense of the tragedy. Rather than appearing as the victims of one aggressive war, while simultaneously waging another in Bosnia, Croatian writers, architects, historians, and other academics strove to portray themselves as victims of genocide.

It seems that almost all facets of academic life in Croatia became subordinated to the war effort. Even such seemingly apolitical departments as Art History at Zagreb University contributed to the advancement of a victim position. In a picture book on the destruction of Croatia's ancient buildings and monuments, the editor described the 'culturicide' of the Croatian people, where Serbs were deliberately destroying ancient symbols of the past in order to 'annihilate ... the consciousness of our existence in time and space'.¹⁰⁶ Much of this project aimed to demonstrate that Croatia was part of Europe. This 'European' identity was crucial throughout the war. Croats used it to court Western aid, but also, more importantly, to give some form of hope to the people who were suffering through the war. What was important was that a 'European' country was being destroyed by an Eastern power.

Croatian scientists at the prestigious Ruder Bošković Institute also became embroiled in the conflict, after they realised that 'total destruction' was immanent. Most of this work involved contacting outside scientific agencies through a variety of connections in order to sway world opinion in favour of Croatia. These scientists sent more than 9,000 letters and petitions abroad, and many met with favourable responses.¹⁰⁷ Many scientists expressed a typical Croatian view of the war as a conflict between, 'two different types of people', concluding that, 'Western catholics and Byzantine orthodoxes simply do not belong together'. Everything was reduced to an 'ethnic clash' between the, 'democratically oriented West ... and the bolshevik East'.¹⁰⁸

This was coupled with accusations of Serbian genocidal ambition. American institutions from the Fulbright Commission to the White House were subjected to intense public relations efforts. A vigorous e-mail campaign

was also launched, to counter the 'Goebbelsian campaign of lies', which had 'enslaved the Albanians in Kosovo'. One of the stock e-mails also contained numerous references to 'Great Serbian totalitarianism' and Serb attempts to impose themselves as a 'master race' over other nations in the Balkans.¹⁰⁹ That much of the scientific community was involved in this massive public relations effort demonstrated the extent to which Croats were convinced of the genocidal threat of the Serbs. The whole nation, it seemed, was mobilised for war.

Other groups, such as the Association of Architects of Mostar, contributed their photographs of the 'urban genocide against Mostar'.¹¹⁰ For the authors, Mostar constituted a bridge between East and West, one that was destroyed by the Serbs, for ever sealing the fate of their relations with the Croats. Serbs here were accused of trying to 'exterminate the Croat and Moslem being' by laying waste to a town that figured as a religious and cultural crossroads.¹¹¹ There is no doubt that the Serbs destroyed at least half the major buildings in the town. Certainly there was much barbarity in the attack on Mostar – the Serbs shelled nine out of ten of Mostar's bridges. Nevertheless, the Croats (not the Serbs) destroyed the famous Stari Most, or Old Bridge, which still lies in pieces. Still others combined a variety of formats to develop an image of Serbian aggression. Đorđe Obradović's *Suffering of Dubrovnik* was a strange mixture of historical novel (set during the siege), glossy before-and-after pictures, and children's drawings of the war.¹¹²

A still more interesting aspect of the war was the co-option of the psychiatric profession. Several psychiatrists quickly abandoned their professionalism, along with many of the well-established rules of psychiatry, to defend their country against Serbian genocide. Wartime writing was intended to prove that Serbs had actually internalised their civilisational differences in many psychologically nuanced ways. Trained medical professionals were encouraged to buttress the work of Croatian propagandists with psychiatric jargon. That such theories were published in the prestigious *Croatian Medical Journal* ensured maximum credibility. Breaking perhaps the first and most important rule of psychiatry, trying to understand the individual before making a diagnosis, Eduard Klain, in his article, 'Yugoslavia as a Group', isolated certain Serbian group traits in order come to terms with the war in Croatia. Through the use of psychiatric language, he concluded:

The Serbs are burdened with an inferiority complex compared to the peoples of the western part of Yugoslavia, for they are conscious that they are on a lower level of civilisation. They try to get rid of that feeling by means of various defence mechanisms, such as negation, projections, denial and destruction. The Serbs are inclined to regress to a schizoparanoïd position and exhibit an archaic type of aggression which can explain the torturing of the wounded and massacring dead bodies.¹¹³

How all Serbs could exhibit the same traits was not explained, nor was it clear why and how the Serbs were civilisationally inferior. While Klain's theories may well have been useful for analysing many of the more sadistic Serbian war criminals, he proposed his analysis for all Serbs, not a select group. The psychiatrist Viktor Gruden similarly used the vocabulary of his profession. The Serbs were identified as being in a 'vicious circle of frustration aggression' compounded with a 'collective paranoia'. The Serbian 'disintegrated self' was blamed for their 'their tendency to massacre the Croats', over which they seemingly had no choice. Much of this aggression had to do with the Easternness, and therefore the inferiority, of the Serbs. There was no doubt in Gruden's mind that:

[T]he Serbs envy them [the Croats] and because they [the Serbs] are inferior . . . The Croats are not only a biological being (like the Serbs) but a psychological one as well. The Serbs also feel guilty, therefore their only reaction is a tendency to destroy the source of frustration, hence the source of destruction and the impulse to demolish everything that is related to the Croats.¹¹⁴

In other words, the Croats were more Western, more enlightened, more open, and more democratic – the Serbs were merely trying to destroy what they could never hope to be.

The Serbs were similarly diagnosed (collectively) as suffering from a 'paranoiac collective unconsciousness', and a 'malignant ethnocentrism'. The war in Croatia was thus broken down into a conflict between a 'paranoic political culture' and a 'narcissistic political culture', the former (Serbian) seemingly the result of a demented political mind. The latter (Croatian) was denoted as peaceful and 'on a higher level of civilisation'. Further conclusions that 'Serbs are militant and primitive, a nation of death and necrophilia, wild barbarians, the greatest vultures of political victories, descendants of Turkish bastardism [and] disturbing factors in Croatia', were rounded off with the lamentation: 'unhappy is the nation that has Serbs as its neighbours'.¹¹⁵

Generally, the first rule of psychiatry is to approach each subject as an individual, not as part of a collective. Under standard medical definitions, it is simply impossible to diagnose a 'group' as one would an individual. Only individuals can be defined as having psychiatric disorders under the DSM-III classification system – the standard system for understanding and classifying mental illnesses. While individuals may be influenced by membership in a collective, no two individuals possess an identical psychology. One is only able to comprehend the psychology of an individual after many hours of patient study and interview sessions. To lump a group of diverse individuals into a racial category, treat them as a individual and study them accordingly was truly an entirely pointless endeavour. From a psychiatric perspective it was sloppy and unprofessional. From a political standpoint, however, it made perfect sense. Psychiatrists, like artists, academics, and politicians, were all

seemingly under attack from genocidal Serbs, and therefore had to use all means at their disposal to counter the threat.

Conclusions

Representations of the past proved to be absolutely crucial to understanding and justifying Serbian and Croatian nationalism during the war in Croatia. Each side claimed to be a victim of the other, both during the Communist period, and after, as the Federation disintegrated. While references to earlier periods of history were important, the Second World War provided the most important stock of metaphors and ideas. Of central importance throughout the conflict was the idea that actions during the war were merely a continuation of the past. Both sides were accused of acting or performing as their parents and grandparents had earlier in the twentieth century. Serbian actions were merely a continuation of a desire to create a Greater Serbia, while Croats were simply trying to resurrect the NDH. In both cases, genocide was presented as the inevitable result.

In reviewing the main arguments of both sides, a strong performative aspect was evident. Each side portrayed themselves as victims, and eventually, by manipulating public opinion within their own countries, succeeded in creating an aura of victimhood by constantly reiterating this perceived reality, a process identified by both Weber and Butler.¹¹⁶ Campbell's definition of 'narrativizing' could also be found here. Serbian and Croatian writers both tried to create the types of 'stories' Campbell identified, with an 'ordered plot', a 'cast of characters', 'attributable motivations', and 'lessons for the future'.¹¹⁷ In both cases, a past history of victimisation and genocide was purposefully manufactured and presented to a receptive audience. In both cases, these 'stories' proved to be absolutely essential in creating and supporting war.

NOTES

- 1 Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992) p. 55.
- 2 Branimir Anzulović, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1999) pp. 96–7.
- 3 See Rusmir Mahmutćehanjić, 'The Road to War', in Branka Magaš and Ivo Žanić (eds), *The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1991–1995* (London: Frank Cass, 2001) pp. 136–7.
- 4 As discussed in Veljko Vujčić, 'Serbian Nationalism, Slobodan Milosevic and the Origins of the Yugoslav War', *The Harriman Review*, 8:4 (December 1995) www.suc.org/politics/papers/history/vujacic.html (accessed 5 July 1999).
- 5 Dobrica Ćosić, *L'effondrement de la Yougoslavie: positions d'un résistant* (Paris: L'Age D'Homme, 1994) p. 40. (My translation.)

- 6 Vujačić, 'Serbian Nationalism, Slobodan Milosevic and the Origins of the Yugoslav War'.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Association of University Teachers and Scholars of Serbia, *Information on the New Crime of Genocide Against the Serbian People Within the Administrative Borders of Croatia* (Belgrade: The Association of University Teachers and Scholars of Serbia, 1991) p. 6.
- 9 Ratko Marković, 'What are Yugoslavia's Internal Borders?', in Stanoje Ivanović (ed.), *The Creation and Changes of the Internal Borders of Yugoslavia* (Belgrade: Ministry of Information of the Republic of Yugoslavia, 1992) pp. 9–12. This point is also raised by Kosta Čavoški, 'The Formation of Borders and the Serbian Question', also in Ivanović (ed.), *The Creation and Changes of the Internal Borders of Yugoslavia*, pp. 33–41.
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- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Slobodan Samardžić, 'Yugoslav Federalism – Unsuccessful Model of a Multinational Community' (Belgrade: Institute of European Studies, Belgrade, 1994) www.suc.org/politics/papers/history/samard.html (accessed 5 July 1999).
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- 15 *Ibid.* p. 16.
- 16 Ivan Crkvenčić and Mladen Klemenčić, *Aggression Against Croatia: Geopolitical and Demographic Facts* (Zagreb: Republic of Croatia Central Bureau of Statistics, 1993) p. 9.
- 17 Discussed in Bože Ćović (ed.), *Croatia Between War and Independence* (Zagreb: University of Zagreb/OKC-Zagreb, 1991) pp. 31–3.
- 18 Crkvenčić and Klemenčić, *Aggression Against Croatia*, p. 12.
- 19 Ćosić, *Croatia Between War and Independence*, p. 34.
- 20 *Ibid.* p. 33.
- 21 Michel Roux, *Les Albanais en Yougoslavie minorité nationale, territoire et développement* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1992) p. 443.
- 22 Momčilo Zečević, 'Second Phase 1918–1941', in Božidar Zevčević (ed.), *The Uprooting: A Dossier of the Croatian Genocide Policy Against the Serbs* (Belgrade: Velanto International, 1992) p. 122.
- 23 Serbian Unity Congress, 'Yugoslav Crisis'.
- 24 Samardžić, 'Yugoslav Federalism'.
- 25 See Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997) pp. 181–2.
- 26 Mirko Mirković, 'Fourth Phase: 1945–1990', in Zevčević (ed.), *The Uprooting*, pp. 117–18.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 *Ibid.* p. 38.
- 29 Anzulović, *Heavenly Serbia*, pp. 95–6.
- 30 For a discussion, see Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia 1962–1991* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992) pp. 188–9.
- 31 *Ibid.* pp. 90–1.
- 32 Josip Jurčević, 'The Serbian Armed Aggression Against Croatia From 1990 to 1995', in Aleksander Ravlić (ed.), *Southeastern Europe 1918–1995* (Zagreb: Croatian Heritage Foundation & Croatian Information Centre, 1998), <http://www.hic.hr/books/seeurope/index-e.htm#top> (accessed 5 July 1999); see also Josip Šentija, 'Croatia from

- 1941 to 1991' (Zagreb: University of Zagreb/Matica Hrvatska Iseljenika, 1994) p. 7.
- 33 Radovan Pavić, 'Greater Serbia from 1844 to 1990/91', in Bože Čović (ed.), *Roots of Serbian Aggression Debates, Documents, Cartographic Reviews* (Zagreb: Centar za Strane Jezike/AGM, 1993) p. 238.
- 34 *Ibid.* p. 273.
- 35 Dragutin Pavličević, 'Persecution and Liquidation of Croats on Croatian Territory From 1903 To 1941', in Ravlić (ed.), *Southeastern Europe 1918–1995*.
- 36 Dušan Kečmanović, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism* (New York: Plenum Press, 1996) p. 61.
- 37 Čović, *Croatia Between War and Independence*, pp. 123–5.
- 38 Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia*, pp. 98–9.
- 39 Miroslav Brandt, 'The Antimemorandum', in Čović (ed.), *Roots of Serbian Aggression*, p. 232.
- 40 Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger Publishing, 1957). For a good overview of this theory, see pp. 25–31.
- 41 Brandt, 'The Antimemorandum', p. 269.
- 42 *Ibid.* p. 251.
- 43 Stjepan Meštrović, Miroslav Goreta, and Slaven Leticia: *The Road from Paradise: Prospects for Democracy in Eastern Europe* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993) p. x.
- 44 *Ibid.* p. xii.
- 45 *Ibid.* p. 33.
- 46 *Ibid.* p. 34.
- 47 *Ibid.* p. 59.
- 48 *Ibid.* p. 36.
- 49 Other Croatian writers made similar parallels. One psychiatrist, for example, tried to understand how the Serbs had managed to 'dominate' the Communist system so successfully. His conclusions were similar to those of Meštrović and his colleagues: '[the] Communist ideology based on the political mechanism of splitting, paranoid projection, dual thinking and double standards . . . has struck the deepest roots among the Serbs'. He further concluded that the Serbian culture is inimical to democracy, when he states that, 'Democratic elections in Croatia . . . markedly increased the frustrations and anxiety of the Serbian paranoiac political mind. The fear of something new and of the arrival of democracy, the likelihood of losing unjustly obtained privileges . . . result in aggressive impulses (displacement of frustration by aggression)'. See M. Jakoljević, 'Psychiatric Perspectives of the War in Croatia During 1990–1991: Sociopolitical Perspectives', *Croatian Medical Journal*, War Supplement 2:33 (1991) p. 10.
- 50 Parts of this section first appeared as an article I published in 2001. See 'La Croatie : un exemple d'« épuration langagière »?', *Raisons Politiques*, 2 (May 2001).
- 51 Nouvel Observateur et Raporteurs sans Frontières, *Le Livre Noir de L'ex-Yougoslavie: Purification Ethnique et Crimes de Guerre* (Paris: Publications Arléa, 1993) p. 125. See also Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans Volume II* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p. 396.
- 52 C. Michael McAdams, 'The Demise of "Serbo-Croatian"' (Zagreb: Croatian Information Center Web Page, 1998) www.algonet.se/~bevanda/mceng.htm (accessed 18 June 1998).
- 53 Quoted in Dubravka Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies* (London: Phoenix House, 1998) pp. 64–5.
- 54 For an excellent discussion of linguistic changes in the new Croatia, see Chris Hedges, 'Words Replacing Bullets in Latest Balkan Battle', *The Globe and Mail* (16 May 1996).

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- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 Celia Hawkworth, *Colloquial Serbo-Croat* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. xv.
- 58 Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House, 1998) p. 232.
- 59 Umut Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 2000) p. 220.
- 60 Milan Lučić, *Terror Nad Srbima '91/The Extermination of Serbs '91* (Novi Sad: Pokrajinski sekretarijat za informacije AP Vojvodine, 1991) p. 2.
- 61 Vera Vratusa-Zunjić, 'The Intrinsic Connection Between Endogenous and Exogenous Factors of Social (Dis)integration: A Sketch of the Yugoslav Case', *Dialogue*, 22–23 (June/September 1997) www.bglink.com/business/dialogue/vratusa.html (accessed 18 June 1998).
- 62 *Ibid.*
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 Mile Dakić, *The Serbian Krayina: Historical Roots and Its Rebirth* (Knin: Information Agency of the Republic of Serbian Krayina, 1994) p. 48.
- 65 Jovan Ilić, 'Characteristics and Importance of Some Ethno-National and Political-Geographic Factors Relevant for the Possible Political-Legal Disintegration of Yugoslavia' in Ivanović (ed.), *The Creation and Changes of the Internal Borders of Yugoslavia*, p. 93.
- 66 This unfortunate shift in loyalties is discussed in Laura Silber and Alan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: BBC Books, 1993) pp. 186–8.
- 67 Svetozar Đurđević's views were typical of this type of thinking: 'The unprecedented national-chauvinist euphoria in Croatia has resulted in the renewed hoisting of the chequered banner under which the *Ustashe* in World War II exterminated innocent Serbian civilians, the aged, women and children. The political scene of Croatia has been filled again with ideologists of the *Ustashe* ideology and their progeny.' See Đurđević, *The Continuity of a Crime: The Final Settlement of the Serbian Question in Croatia* (Belgrade: IDEA Publishing House, November 1995).
- 68 The Ministry wrote, 'By opening doors to the escaped and long hidden Ustashi criminals, Tudjman has sufficiently clearly announced a new banishment, extermination or assimilation of the Serbs who remained within his reach.' See: Serbian Ministry of Information, "'Blitz-Krieg" Aggression as a Method of "Ethnic Cleansing" of the Serbs: The Road of Crime "Final Solution to the Serbian Question in Croatia"' (Belgrade: Serbian Ministry of Information, 1995) www.yugoslavia.com/Bulletin/95/9509/950901.htm (accessed 18 June 1998).
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- 70 *Ibid.* p. 78.
- 71 Dušan Vilić and Boško Todorović, *Breaking of Yugoslavia and Armed Secession of Croatia* (Beli Manastir: Cultura Centre 'Vuk Karadžić', 1996) pp. 14–15.
- 72 *Ibid.* p. 16.
- 73 Glenn Bowman, 'Xenophobia, Phantasy and the Nation: The Logic of Ethnic Violence in Former Yugoslavia', in Michael Freeman, Dragomir Pantić, and Dušan Janjić (eds), *Nationalism and Minorities* (Belgrade: Institute of Social Sciences, 1995) pp. 56–7.
- 74 Dragutin Brčin (ed.), *Genocide Once Again: The Ustasha Terror Over Serbs in 1991* (Belgrade: Serbian Ministry of Information, 1991) pp. 3–5.
- 75 Radmila Nakrada, *The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the New World Order* (Belgrade: Institute for European Studies, 1994–5) p. 378.

- 76 Quoted in Zečević, *The Uprooting*, pp. 8: 126.
- 77 Nikola Marinović, *Stories from Hell: Confessions of Serbs, Tortured in the Concentration Camps in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1991 and 1992* (Belgrade: Serbian Ministry of Information, 1993) pp. 12–13.
- 78 *Ibid.* p. 14.
- 79 *Ibid.* pp. 21–2.
- 80 Slobodan Mileusnić, *Spiritual Genocide 1991–1993* (Belgrade: Belgrade Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 1995) p. 7.
- 81 *Ibid.* p. 8.
- 82 Brčin, *Genocide Once Again*, pp. 13–16.
- 83 Holbrooke, *To End a War*, pp. 160–2.
- 84 Tanner, *Croatia*, p. 294.
- 85 Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997) pp. 195–8.
- 86 Serbian Academy of Arts and Science, 'Memorandum on the Ethnic Cleansing of and Genocide Against the Serb People of Croatia and Krajina', *Review of International Affairs*, 46 (15 November, 1995) p. 13.
- 87 *Ibid.* p. 13.
- 88 Đurđević, *The Continuity of a Crime*, p. 7 (italics mine.) This perhaps reflected Slobodan Kljakić's earlier argument that Tujđman's regime was a resurrection of the NDH, and that hence 'The resistance of Serbs in Croatia against such terror, genocidal threats and against actions of Croatian authorities was logical and necessary': see Slobodan Kljakić, *A Conspiracy of Silence: Genocide in the Independent State of Croatia and Concentration Camp Jasenovac* (Belgrade: The Ministry of Information of the Republic of Serbia, 1991) p. 46.
- 89 Serbian Ministry of Information, "'Blitz-Krieg" Aggression as a Method of "Ethnic Cleansing" of the Serbs.'
- 90 Serbian Unity Congress, 'Yugoslav Crisis – One Hundred Irrefutable Facts'.
- 91 *Ibid.*
- 92 Jovan Pokrajac, 'Religious Instruction for New Croats', *Serbia: News, Comments, Documents, Facts, Analysis*, 41 (February 1995) pp. 22–3. (Italics mine.)
- 93 Lučić *Terror Nad Srbima '91* p. 1.
- 94 Vratusa-Zunjic, 'The Intrinsic Connection Between Endogenous and Exogenous Factors of Social (Dis)integration'.
- 95 Brandt, 'The Antimemorandum', p. 245.
- 96 *Ibid.* pp. 247–8. (Italics mine.)
- 97 Čosić, *L'effondrement de la Yougoslavie*, p. 46.
- 98 *Ibid.* p. 68.
- 99 *Ibid.* p. 71. Dusko Topalović, a self-styled 'geopolitician', similarly analyses the 'battle for Serbian Lebensraum' and 'blood and soil', describing the similarities between Serbs and Nazis. See his 'The Territorialization of the "Greater Serbian" Idea', in Ante Beljo and Bozica Erčegovac-Jambrović (eds), *Genocide: Ethnic Cleansing in Northwestern Bosnia* (Zagreb: Croatian Information Center, 1993) p. 11–12. Another contribution in the same book by Vladimir Tonković also described Serbian activities in the light of the Holocaust. See 'In Memoriam to Innocent Victims', p. 101.
- 100 At the same time, Serbian aggression would also be compared with Nazism. Playing the victim, Čović argued, 'what we are faced with is an aggressive and expansionist strategy, identical to the plans and policies pursued by Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin in their time ...': Čović (ed.), *Roots of Serbian Aggression: Debates, Documents, Cartographic Reviews*, p. 89.

- 101 *Ibid.* pp. 89–90.
- 102 *Ibid.* p. 63.
- 103 *Ibid.* p. 90.
- 104 Branko Miletić, 'History: Causes of Serbian Aggression' (Zagreb: Croatian Information Center Web Page, 1998) www.algonet.se/~bevanda/aggression.htm (accessed 18 June 1998).
- 105 *Ibid.*
- 106 Radovan Ivančević (ed.), *Cultural Heritage of Croatia in the War 1991–1992* (Zagreb: Hrvatska Sveučilišna Naklada, 1993), p. 1. For another pictorial account of the war, see Ivo Lajtman (ed.) *War Crimes Against Croatia* (Zagreb: Verčeni list, 1991).
- 107 Greta Pifat-Mrzljak (ed.), *Scientists Against the War in Croatia: World Responses to the Ruder Bošković Institute's Endeavour for Peace in Croatia* (Zagreb: Hrvatska Sveučilišna Naklada, 1992) p. 5.
- 108 See Nikola Cindro's letter, *ibid.* p. 13.
- 109 *Ibid.* pp. 465–6.
- 110 Association of Architects of Mostar, *Mostar 92 Urbicide* (Mostar: Croatian Defence Council, 1992) p. 6.
- 111 *Ibid.* p. 24.
- 112 See Đorđe Obradović, *Suffering of Dubrovnik* (Dubrovnik: Dubrovački Vjesnik, 1993).
- 113 Eduard Klain, 'Yugoslavia as a Group', *Croatian Medical Journal*, 33 (1992) (War Supplement 1) pp. 3–14. I first found this article discussed in Predrag Kaličanin, *Stresses of War* (Belgrade: Institute for Mental Health, 1993), and later verified the quotations for myself against the original.
- 114 *Ibid.* p. 9.
- 115 M. Jakovljević, 'Psychiatric Perspectives of the War against Croatia', *Croatian Medical Journal*, 33 (1992) (War Supplement 2), pp. 10–18. As with Klain's article, I first found this discussed in Kaličanin, *Stresses of War*, and later verified the quotations for myself against the original.
- 116 Cynthia Weber, 'Performative States,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 27: 1 (1998).
- 117 David Campbell, *Politics Without Principle: Sovereignty, Ethics and the Narratives of the Gulf War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993).