Yugoslavs or the 'South Slavs as the word literally means in English have lived in the Balkans for over a thousand years. But during the whole of this long time there have been only two short periods when the Yugoslav state existed. The first Yugoslav state survived for 23 years from the declaration of the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on 4 December 1918 to the German invasion of April 1941. The second existed since the end of the 2nd World War and although it has appeared during most of its life to have been a more durable state than its predecessor, it has inherited some of the divisive elements which bedeviled the life of pre-war kingdom.

ORIGINS: Economic and Political Causes

Yugoslavia had existed as a country much due to the unusual mix of charisma of Tito and unique variant of communist/socialist ideology that he followed in his country and non-alignment with other nations. Tito though was a Croat but had used the members of other nationalities as checkmat-

ing each other. 

But after Tito's death all this edifice gave way and due to lack of second rung of leadership which could sustain Yugoslavia together, soon divided and gave rise to one of the most prolonged ethnic crisis in Europe which is continuing till date an attempt is made in this chapter to examine the causes of the disintegration wherein almost all aspects leading to disintegration has been discussed.

The bloody end of the second Yugoslavia tempts western observers to trace the roots of struggle among Yugoslav peoples and states in the past. But going back into the past makes for bad history. The recent wars of Yugoslav succession and surgical division of Slovenia was comparatively easy but dividing Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina would have costed terrible human and material cost, have surely made it more difficult for the participants themselves to detach their own history from the past decade. Beginning in the late 80's politically manipulative media encouraged Serbs and Croats, the two largest ethnic groups, to think of the other's present intentions as biologically derived by exclusivist 19th century nationalism and their disposition to repeat the crimes of the two world wars. Too many Serbs saw Bosnian Muslims, the former republic's largest ethnic group, as Turks or Slavic turncoats ready to resume the Ottoman empire's exploitation of the Serb peasantry with conversion
to Islam the only escape. Thus, did the respective leaders and media made the others present population into imagined adversaries. They also encouraged foreign observers to resume the revival of the old Albanies. Serbs with Russians, Bosnian Muslims with Turks and Croats with Germans whose historical dimensions all sides have since been widely inflated. The shock of the recent wars and the disruption of everyday life still make the present hard for the survivors to comprehend without falling back on selective historical analogies.  

Unlike the Nazi destruction of 1st Yugoslavia in 1941, the collapse of the 2nd 50 years later came as a shock to the western world. Most observers had given Yugoslavia’s viability the benefit of doubt since Tito’s regime had survived the split with Stalin and Soviet Bloc in 1948. Its widely advertised devolution of economic power to self-managed enterprises and their workers council won further respect. Tito’s diplomacy balanced artfully between East and West a founder and the only European member of the non-aligned movement.

By the 1970’s Tito was an aging Communist leader, who like his counterparts in the Soviet Block kept too much of central government reputation bound up in his own personal authority. Still open borders and perceptibly higher standards of consumption set Yugoslavia apart from the rest of the Soviet Bloc. European and American tourists flocked to the Adriatic coast and over 1 million Yugoslavs, from guest workers to professionals, were employed or studying in the west. Academic exchanges opened many doors. Easy access a dramatic past and an innovative present attracted more western scholars and study than any Communist country except the U.S.S.R. In 1961, Ivo Andric won the Nobel Prize for literature and Miroslav Krbza was also a candidate. Western readers rightly saw Andric’s work as Yugoslav rather than ideologically socialist or ethnically nationalist while Krbza’s credential made him forerunner of the East and more really central European dissidents of the 1980’s.³

Contrary to the expectation of sceptics, no tremors portending disintegration followed Tito’s death in 1980. The successful staging of the 1984 winter Olympics in Sarajevo and the ongoing achievements of Yugoslav athletes, authors and film directors told the outside world that all

was still well. In any case especially for Americans, a federation seemed the appropriate framework, for a multi-ethnic state to address its problems.

By the end of 1980's some very serious portents of disintegration of this multi-ethnic republic started manifesting. Unemployment rose to 15% and inflation accelerated towards 3000% in 1989. Open ethnic disputes exploded in Kosovo and at least surfaced in Bosnia first as the sort of dissent already challenging Soviet Bloc requires spread from Slovenia. Meanwhile Slobodan Milosevic tried to step into the vacuum left in the country's communist leadership by Tito's death, but succeeded outside of his Serbian base only in alienating the non-Serb public and their political elites. When Slovenia's own Communist leadership joined local dissidents in rejecting a crudely recentralized Yugoslavia just as Communist power collapsed across the Soviet Bloc dissolution followed.

What began after Tito's death as rivalry among the republics' Communist parties turned into full blown ethnic politics and struggle by the late 1980's. The coincident collapse of the Soviet Bloc regimes in 1989 also played a part in the turbulence that followed. The dramatic events

cost Yugoslavia more than its strategic importance to the West. They also eliminated the legitimacy of one party rule across Eastern Europe. The League of Communists lost the mandate to maintain its political monopoly or to speak for a single Yugoslavia. Its federal leadership had already failed to face down the accelerating economic crisis before 1989. A more constructive leader, Ante Markovic, now came forward but he could not forge the political consensus needed to sustain support. It was too late simply to restructure the economy. The post-Tito power vacuum at the federal level had already opened the way for new leaders of the republics’ parties to assert themselves. In 1986 two younger men seized this chance Milan Kucan of Slovenia and Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia. The other republics’ leadership remained unchanged and silent, except in Bosnia-Herzegovina where fateful disarray followed decades of tight control under a closed, if multi-ethnic hierarchy. By 1989 Milosevic had marshalled half of the eight votes in the federal Presidency to support his view of how Yugoslavia should restructure itself politically. Kucan opposed this unitary approach, but could not bring the other four votes - Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia and Macedonia plus Slovenia - to agree on a common alternative.
The two communist approaches\(^5\) to restructuring interacted with new ones after 1989 to break Yugoslavia apart over the course of the next two years. Multi-party elections at the republic level provided a seemingly democratic centrepiece. A single league of Communists simply ceased to exist, leaving the Yugoslav People's Army or Yugoslav National Armija (henceforth JNA) and its Serb dominated officer corps as the only guarantor of the federal of work. The disintegration of Yugoslavia followed in a fashion that subverted legitimate interests seeking a powerful parting. Warfare and other disruptions have left the fate of the independent states created by former republic still uncertain. Their leaders can agree on the impossibility of returning to a single political unit.

Both the state and society were vulnerable to the volatile combination of forces that emerged after 1989. An inadequate federal framework and a fractured communist leadership kept the state from addressing fundamental dis-

junctures. The party commissions of the 1980's had wrestled with the obvious need for change in economic structure but could only agree on a stabilization programme that was never really implemented. Forty years of the second Yugoslavia left society to face a series of disparities in living standards, employment and education that migration to cities, other republics, or western Europe could no longer ameliorate. Real incomes shrank with inflation from year to year creating a new wave of uncertainty among soldiers as well as civilians. Further aggravating this accumulation of social strains was a popular culture that presumed the right to a west European standard of living and information. The modern and therefore sensation hungry media of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia exposed social problems and individual abuses of power, but stopped short of confronting their own republic's Communist leadership. They suggested instead that the disadvantages suffered by their republic came at the other's advantage. Intellectuals growing restive over the spreading corruption tended to question the framework of the federation more than its troubled system of social ownership.

SOCIAL STRAINS AND REGIONAL RELATIONS

The spectre of declining real income, down by one quarter from 1983 to 1988 and 1/3rd from 1979, worked its way through a society grown nervous and skeptical. Public opinion polling in 1987 found 79% of the respondents doubting that there was any avenue open to escape the accumulated economic problems. Unemployment in the still predominant social sectors had risen steadily for the period 1981-86 from 13.8 to 16.6% some 60% of the unemployed were now under twenty five years of age and almost that fraction had at least a secondary education. Over one half were women. The growing number of jobless citizens formed a political barrier to the downsizing of inefficiently large enterprises that needed to reverse the decline in labour productivity since 1982. So did the escalating number of "work stoppages, or strikes, which more than doubled between 1982 and 1987 to involve 7% of those employed in the social sector." 7

These aggregate figures, troubling as they were marked the regional or ethnic disparities in population growth, income and employment that posed the greatest political problems. An increasingly sophisticated group of Yugoslav social scientists delineated these regional imbalances during the 1980's. The ethnic features of their findings

7. ibid., no.1, p.365.
preoccupied the popular media and a variety of cultural critics. Such coverage often distorted the data, heightening the political tension in the process. There is no avoiding the fact, however, that the combined Serb and Croat share of Yugoslavia’s population decreased from 65% in 1948 to 56% in 1981.8

Migration, Employment and Education

The multi-ethnic migration that had moved and intermixed with peoples of the Yugoslav lands since the medieval period did not end with the 2nd World War. Country-wide and urban integration made real progress, but remained incomplete. The massive movement away from peasant villages that began in the 1950’s accelerated the non-farm share of the population to 80% by 1981. Some 8 million people moved in the process. A majority of the migrants stayed in their native republics, and many did not move to urban centres. The urban share of 1981 total amounted to just 47%.9

Over 1 million people in a labour force of 9 million had also gone abroad by 1972. Within a decade, some 3,00,000 had returned, mostly to the republic from which


they came. There was, however, a portentous Bosnian exception to this rule for returning workers and for migrants in general. The share of the labour force from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia rose during the 1970's catching up with an initial Croatian predominance. Many of the Serbs and Croats among the Bosnian "guest workers" joined their more trained or educated compatriots from the republic and relocated to Serbia or Croatia, primarily Belgrade or Zagreb, during the 1960's and the 1970's.

The emigration of nearly one of every four Serbs by 1981 reversed the demographic plurality of 1948 in favour of the Bosnian Muslims. The Serbs made up 42% of the population of Bosnia in 1948 and the Muslims 30% giving way to a Muslim predominance over the Serbs of 40% to 32% by 1981, and 44 to 31 by 1991. The republic's share of Yugoslavia's overall population had meanwhile moved up from 16.7% in 1953 to 18.8% by 1988 on the strength of the Bosnian Muslim rate of natural increase (births minus deaths). Bosnia's gross material product (goods without services) per capita had declined as a proportion of Yugoslav average over the same period, more than in Montenegro and Macedonia, if less than in Kosovo.10

10. ibid., no.4.
The dynamics of Bosnian urbanization also increased the Muslim presence. Starting slowly with the lowest urban proportion of any republic after the 2nd World War, Bosnian municipalities jumped from 19% to 36% of the republic's population from 1961 to 1981. Bosnian Muslim migrants accounted for the larger share of this growth, helping Muslims overall to record a more than proportional increase in income; the incomes of Bosnian Serbs and especially Croats declined slightly at this time. The more able or educated young Serbs and Croats were simply leaving the republic for Belgrade or Zagreb but recorded none of the complaints about discrimination or harassment heard from Kosovo. Sarajevo, rather than becoming a more Muslim city, was instead blossoming into the most Yugoslav of all republic capitals nearly one-fifth of the city's population declared itself Yugoslav in the 1981 census, while the country's most fertile secular culture emerged around them.

Mass Media, Western Culture and Religion

The looming socio-economic crisis confronted a popular culture partly integrated by Yugoslav-wide and European

influences, but divided by separate sets of republic or provincial media and by rising religious influence. Spectator sports were probably the leading intra Yugoslav activity. Soccer and basketball leagues covered the country with intercity rivalries, drawing large number of crowds and T.V. coverage that did not identify teams as ethnic representatives. Both sports produced world class athletes whose performance on teams representing Yugoslavia in international competitions drew the population together. Other sports also flourished as well. Yugoslav athletes won Olympic Medals without the centralised apparatus or pervasive political control that set the Soviet bloc programs apart. This background explains the genuine enthusiasm for hosting the 1984 winter Olympics in Sarajevo. Social television coverage sought to meet the standards of Eurovision, the West European network to which Yugoslavia, but not the bloc members, had been linked since the 1960’s.

The Yugoslavian pop-groups such as folk Music team of Bosnian Muslim singer Lepa Brena was highly popular in Serbia in the 1980’s. Pirated copies of the earlier hit albums have now spread across much of the former territory by the mid 1990’s, as perhaps the one widespread evidence of Yugonostalgia.

The relative sophistication and reliability of Yugoslavia’s press, radio and television gave them far greater
influence over public opinion than in any of the Soviet Bloc countries. The circulation of 27 daily newspapers reached over 2 million people by 1983 and some 200 radio stations reached many more. The 175 television sets per 1,000 persons matched the level for Ireland and approached that for Austria. But one of the negative influence of the media was that they soon started playing partisan roles in the ethnic politics which even the Soviet media could not play.

The three major religions - Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim had not received much access to the rising electronic media. The new republic laws on religious rights passed during 1976-78 denied them legal use of radio or Television. Their church publications could continue, but so did the ban on television in the league of communists and on separate religious education for children. The public schools required instruction in atheism made no inroads into the number of believers, but urban, secular culture did. A 1985 survey found that the Catholic proportion of religious believers had fallen below one-third and the orthodox and Bosnian Muslims fractions below one-fifth down by at least one half by 1960. 12

The Catholic hierarchy of Croatia contested the republic's religious law, and its newspaper. Glas Koncila raised repeated objections. Beginning in 1975, the hierarchy undertook annual celebrations of "The Great Novena - Thirteen centuries of Christianity among the Croats". These huge public meetings continued until 1984, attracting as many as 4,00,000 people that year. Meetings always displayed the Croatian National Symbols and singing of national anthems that communist regulations forbade. Otherwise, the principal initiatives for religious unrest among all three clergies came from their lower ranks.

The Franciscans of Bosnia-Herzegovina, by far the largest Catholic order, struggled with diocesan authority from the mid-1970's onwards.

Only the Bosnian Muslim clergy remained silent by the mid-1980's, constrained by the republic's comprehensive communist censorship, but consoled by the new right to offer children separate religious instruction and the recent construction or renovation of some 800 mosques. The hierarchy's very restraint helped to push the lay Muslim scholar Aliza Izetebegovic, and several others to speak out for Islamic values in the face of the mounting socio-economic crisis. Their prompt trial and imprisonment in 1983 on the unsubstantiated charge of advocating a Muslim
government for Bosnia ironically did more to stimulate educated interest in Islam in Sarajevo and other tours than anything the hierarchy had done.¹³

**Party and Army**

Both the League of Communists and the JNA (Jugoslav National Armija or Yugoslav National Army henceforth JNA) were also feeling the consequences of the prolonged socio-economic crisis by the mid 1980’s. The party’s membership peaked in 1982 at 2.2 million up from 1 million in 1972, thanks to successful recruiting drives among managers in the mid 1970’s and among students after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. But industrial workers never exceeded 30% of total party membership, despite special efforts to attract them. After 1985, workers and students began to leave the party particularly in the big cities and the number of members overall started to decline, falling to 1.5 million by 1989. According to a poll taken in the mid 1980’s nearly 30% of all members rated the party’s reputation as poor and half of all young people, up to 88% in Slovenia and 70% in Croatia, said that they did not wish to

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Serbs and Montenegrins continued to make up over half of the membership, although they constituted barely 40% of the total population. Among the other ethnic groups, Croatian and Slovene party members were already declining by 1981, down to one-fifth despite their 30% share of the population. Only the Bosnian Muslims showed a significant increase after 1971 with party membership just surpassing their 7.8% share of population.

The one institution where party membership stayed high throughout the 1980’s regardless of ethnic origin was of course the Yugoslav People’s Army or the JNA. Yet its manpower and budgetary resources faced reductions in the face of economic austerity. By 1984 military spending had fallen by one-third from an already reduced target for 1980-84 and its forces from 2,70,000 to 2,20,000. The army remained the largest component of the military. It boasted a troop strength of 1,80,000, some two-thirds of the draftees serving fifteen month tours that were then reduced to twelve months. Two features distinguished the career officers and non-commissioned officers who made up the other one-third of the army. Almost all were the members of the

League of Communists. And by ethnic origins some 60% were Serbs and 20% Montenegrins leaving only 14% for Croats and 6% or less for any of the others. The sharp decline in applications for these positions from urban centres and Slovenia and particularly beginning in the 1970's, explained much more of the disproportion than did any discrimination against non-Serb.

In any case, this frequently quoted and sometimes exaggerated imbalance proved less important during the 1980's than changes at the top. 15 Serb leverage advanced there significantly. The shift away from strictly applying the "key system" of ethnic balance to the high command began in 1982 when Admiral Branko Mamula, a Croatian Serb who had been army Chief-of-Staff since 1979, became minister of defense. A Serbian general took his place and together they put a number of other Serbs mainly from Croatia or Bosnia, into strategic positions in the high command, while leaving the overall balance largely in place. Mamula had other far-reaching plans to simplify in fact, to tighten the army's central control over its troops and resources. He sought to subordinate the republics Territorial Defense Forces to the JNA and combine the country's defence system into only a few regions. He also promoted new federal investment in arms

production, in order to make Yugoslavia self-sufficient by the end of the decade and, in the meantime, to generate some export earnings for his beleaguered military budget. Each of these initiatives provoked political controversy, particularly in Slovenia.

NEW LEADERSHIP AND ITS POLITICS

The crisis in federal institutions and socio-economic strains on Yugoslavia's population finally opened the political stage to a new cast of characters in 1986. The first to step forward were the new leaders of Serbian and the Slovenian league of Communists Slobodan Milosevic and Milan Kucan. The Kosavar Albanians and JNA became their respective adversaries in the new open practice of ethnic politics. They and other republic leaderships also faced new actors, unconnected with the Communist apparatus who were eager to play speaking parts in what promised to be the most unrestrained political performance seen in Yugoslavia since the 2nd World War.

Kosovo and the Rise of Milosevic

Serbia's League of Communists faced an accumulation of problems by 1986, only one of which was related to the minority position of Serbs in Kosovo. In Belgrade despite an increase in population growth exceeded only by Skopje,
the huge city was showing the effects of long being denied the federal funds for investment in urban infrastructure available to the republic's capitals, on the ground that it was the federal capital. Belgrade's unsuccessful campaign to host the 1992 winter Olympics in the capital revealed how much would have to be done just to repair accumulated deficiencies. The city's rate of unemployment rose throughout the decade, reaching 25% by 1989. Several years earlier, some of the Belgrade party bosses joined in the growing restlessness with the cautions, but market oriented leadership of Ivan Stambolic.

Belgrade's powerful media and academic community could not resist the conclusion that the other republics were somehow using the federation to discriminate against Serbia in other ways as well. The economic crisis tempted all of the republic to similar suspicions about their own troubles. Serbia's party leaders sought to address this immediate crisis only through the lengthy process of further constitutional revision and market reform. Earlier revision in 1974 had left Kosovo, and Vojvodina as well as the separate votes in federal proceedings that reduced Serbia's voice to one in eight.

Ivan Stambolic had become the League's leader at the age of forty four immediately after Tito's death in 1980. The nephew Petar Stambolic, Tito's choice to nurture the
Serbian party in 1972. Ivan could not overcome the inertia that had characterised the republic’s party since then. Nor did he himself generally speak about the hard political choices that now had to be made without resorting to the ambiguous, convoluted rhetoric of federal politics - "Yugo-speak" as some called it. But there were two exceptions Stambolic endorsed market reform and also made clear his opposition to "nationalistic poisoning of the young" and ethnic politics. In 1985 he was targeting the notions heard in and out of the party that Yugoslav communists had come to power through an anti-Serb coalition and that Mihailovic’s Chetniles had been misrepresented as was criminals for opposing this coalition. But by invoking censorship rather than scholarship and by tying his attacks to the myth of an unimpeachable Communist legacy, he failed to persuade enough of the Belgrade intellectuals who should have been his natural allies.

In 1985, Slobodan Milosevic became Belgrade party chief under the direct sponsorship of Stambolic. They had met at Belgrade’s law faculty in the early 1960’s when Milosevic had arrived from his home town and was quick to seek a place on the sort of ideological committee that helped young provincials advance. So did his further ascent from the Belgrade party leadership to head the Serbian Central Commit-
1986. Throughout this early period in 1987, Milosevic followed the unwritten rules of any such client-patron relationship. He supported STambolic on all matters of policy, opposition to the dangers of Serbian nationalism included.16

**Slovenia Versus the Yugoslav Army**

The other half started in Slovenia and spread from there to Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. Still the republic with the highest standard of living and with far less unemployment than the others. Slovenia's rate of economic growth had nonetheless fallen sharply by the mid 1980's. Improving connection with neighbouring Austria, Italy and Hungary seemed a better way to revive that growth than to respond to Belgrade's call for closer economic integration with the rest of Yugoslavia. Paying for one quarter of the federal budget with only 8% of the population already seemed too much integration for some Slovenes. This purely economic issue to make Slovenia the only other republic besides Serbia where the League of Communists turned to new, younger leadership before 1989.

The fateful controversies began around the youth culture which emerged as a social movement. Although communist authorized the Nova Revija and the restructured weekly youth magazine, Mladina, had already spun out of control and began to protest official policy in 1985. They attacked the official media's renewed criticism of the Partisan's best Christian socialist ally during the 2nd World War; Edward Kocbeck, just at the end of his life. The two journals also objected to Defence Minister Mamula's proposal to reorganise the JNA for its subordination of republic defence forces to the federal League of Communists. It would be better to plan, they argued with provocative reference to the Marxist phrase that Edward Kardelj had applied to the state, for the JNA "to wither away".

Student leaders at Ljubljana University seized on the public support implicit in the defeat of a tax referendum in November 1986 to put forward four petitions. All of them challenged the existing federal order. The two that received the greatest attention were demands for an alternative to military service and an end to the "antique ritual" of celebrating Tito's May 25th birthday with a youth rally bearing a torch through all the republics to a final stadium ceremony in Belgrade. The federal presidency aware that the ceremony increasingly focussed attention on its own anonymity, abandoned it in 1988. By then Slovenian students and the
two new independent journals were locked in conflict with the JNA leadership and the Milosevic media in Belgrade. They tagged Defence Minister Mamula a "merchant of death" for the exports of Yugoslav military equipment to the third world that were to offset some of the budgetary cuts imposed on the JNA. They scorned on his plan to reconfigure military regions and tighten political control of the JNA.

Mamula had already retired in some disarray when army intelligence (KOS) arrested several Slovenian journalists, including Janez Jansa (later he became a prominent political figure) in May 1988. They published a list in Mladina of prominent Slovenians whom the JNA would detain under the new plan in the event of a military emergency. Although the list’s authenticity has been questioned, the accused won the sympathy of the Slovenian public because JNA authorities insisted on a closed trial in their own court, conducted in Serbo-Croatian rather than Slovenian. The journalists served their sentences under house arranged by the Slovenian authorities to prevent their incarceration in an army prison. Meanwhile, the spectacle of Milosevic’s mass demonstration and his demands that Kosovo be brought under Serbian control turned the Slovenian T.V. audience against any sort
of easy reconciliation with Belgrade.17

Kucan and the Slovenian member of the federal presidency, Janez Stanovnik, now moved from passive acceptance of these challenges to positive signs of support. The limits on what could be criticized in any of the Slovenian media were formally relaxed, and a number of emigres long critical of Tito's Yugoslavia were allowed to visit. Kucan's leadership curtly rejected the Serbian proposal to hold a November 1988 referendum on the proposed set of constitutional amendments, some of them aimed at restoring rational central controls. The Milosevic regime had confirmed the Slovenian public's suspicion of Belgrade as a center for rational administration. Kucan himself then attended a February 1989 rally organised by Slovenia's Socialist Alliance on behalf of protecting human rights for the Kosovar Albanians. He had already approved the dispatch of Slovenian television to Pristina to cover an unfolding confrontation the Belgrade's media, it was argued, could no longer be trusted to report accurately.

For Slovenian and Croatian public opinion, Kosovo now became a "watershed" as Branka Magas aptly dubbed it, for

their loyalty to the "really existing" Yugoslavia. That November's strike at Trepca mine's protested Milosevic's preparation for ending the province's autonomy and his dismissal of the popular Azem Vllasi as party leader. The miner's subsequent march to Pristina mushroomed into five days of demonstrations that assembled half a million Kosovar Albanians. The miners struck work again in February and forced Milosevic to abandon the former police chief whom he had appointed to succeed Vllasi. But they could not prevent the absorption of Kosovo to Serbia the next month nor Ullasi's long detention on the specious charges, eventually dropped that he had instigated the February strike. The amended Serbian constitution of March 28 formally ended the autonomous rights of both Kosovo and Vojvodina, but did not deprive the Milosevic regime of their two places in the federal Presidency.


The Slovenian and Serbian Party leaderships were at loggerheads by the start of 1989. During the course of the year, their confrontations widened to engage all of the Yugoslav republics and provinces. First Croatia and then Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia were drawn into a loose

coalition with Ijubljana that saw the latter two trying futile at times to play a balancing role. Perhaps the one element uniting them with Slovenia was their ability to marshal four federal votes against the four that Milosevic's Serbia had assembled by handpicking and installing three new Communist leaders, first in Kosovo and Vojvodina late in 1988 and then in Montenegro in 1989.

The political stalemate ironically coincided with the March selection of a new prime minister and the May rotation to the Presidency of two committed market reformers. From mid 1989 to mid 1990, the Croatian technocrat, Ante Markovic and the youthful Slovenian economist, Janez Drnovsek, worked well together as Prime minister and President of the presidency. They ended accelerating hyperinflation and instituted a series of sweeping reforms that finally put in place all the building blocs for a market economy. But they did so without the federal League of Communists; it had ceased to exist after January 1990. Then the stalemate spelled over into the various republic elections of 1990 and left the survival of Yugoslavia to new parties and ethnic politics.

The End of the League of Communists

The previous year, in the same month of February that Milan Kucan and other Slovenian Party leaders attended the
Ljubljana rally for "peace and togetherness" in Kosovo, the more passive Croatian leadership accepted several initiatives to amend their republic's constitution. Among them was the fateful language that permitted the creation of new political parties. The head of the federal league of Communists in 1989, Stepe Suvar, was himself a Croat and ironically a hard line advocate of one party rule under a recentralized regime and, as we have seen, a more ideological system of education. From his location at the league's headquarters in Belgrade, however, he had no way of stopping such an initiative. 19 He was already embroiled in an effort to bring party discipline down on the Milosevic forces for overturning the leadership of the two provinces and Montenegro. In response, Milosevic led an effort albeit unsuccessful Suvar to resign from the League's presidency before his brief term expired in May. That same month in Serbia, however, Milosevic extended his sphere of power outside the party by winning the republic's presidency with the 86% of the votes cast in the referendum he had called.

In June 1989, all other republics' leadership attended the 600th year anniversary of the battle of Kosovo attended by over half a million strong unruly crowd. On this occasion Slobodan Milosevic delivered a highly nationalist and exclusivist speech in favour of supremacy of the Serbs. This

19. See n.10. Wolfgang Hopken.
meeting obviously had a very negative influence on the people who were seeing this celebration over their T.V. sets.

Kucan's Slovenian party stood aside that summer while a number of alternative political movements, not yet legally parties, formed along side the Slovenian Democratic Albanie, the Demos. They had already constituted themselves in January 1989 and were demanding the rights to form a separate political party. By September, a series of amendments to the republic's constitution gave it to them, along with the promise of multi-party elections by early 1990. The fifty four amendments concentrated on rights to nullify unwanted federal legislation but also included, contrary to Article 5 of the 1974 constitution, the right to secede from the federation without the mutual consent of the other republics.

The Milosevic forces tried to counter these developments with the demand that Ljubljana host one of their mass "meetings with truth" to which some 40,000 Serbs and Montenegrins would travel to persuade the Slovenes how wrong they were about Kosovo. Kucan and his colleagues occupied a

far stronger position than had the aging passive nomenclature of the Vojvodina, who had been unable to stop such a meeting or to keep their positions afterwards. Confident of support from the alternative movements and the public, the Slovene leaders rejected Serbia’s demand. In a final exchange the Serbian party’s socialist alliance got official support to boycott Slovenian consumer goods, generally regarded as the best produced in Yugoslavia that had begun a year earlier. Over 300 Serbian firms now cancelled contracts and ended all business relations with Slovenian firms. The Slovenian side cut its contribution to the federal budget by 15 percent and send its contribution to the federal fund for underdeveloped regions directly to Kosovo rather than through Belgrade.

A stormy stage was thus set for the Federal party’s 1990 Congress, moved forward six months to January because of the growing domestic confrontation and the dramatic collapse of one East European Communist regime after another during the previous November and December. The JNA leadership had been urging an extraordinary meeting since 1986 in order to re-establish the authority of the Federal party. Now the meeting was advertised as the "Congress of Salvation" only because it promised the multi-party elections that their former Soviet Bloc neighbours were already scrambling to announce. Croatia’s League of Communists had
finally turned Suvar and his associates in December 1989, naming the forty year old liberal, Ivica Racan, to head the party. The new leadership promptly approved the eight other political parties to exist and to contest the forthcoming elections. The Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) had in fact already established itself in February 1988 without authorization, under the leadership of Franjo Tudzman.

Nonetheless, allowed to travel abroad he had assembled considerable support among the large numbers of publicized Croat emigres by the late 1980’s. During the summer of 1989 extremist followers of the HDZ in Dalmatia mounted enough physical attacks on local Serbs to make the new party’s nationalist rhetoric seem truly threatening. Krajina Serb staged their own confrontations with local Croats and, encouraged by the Milosevic, media, began to demand autonomy within Croatia, cultural if part of Yugoslavia and political if not.

By 1990 the Federal Party had little leverage, outside of the JNA, with which to face these predominantly rural tensions when it assembled in Belgrade that January for the last time. The delegates never had the chance to address the Serb Croat issues. The Slovenian representatives quickly introduced a proposal that would have made their recent constitutional amendments the framework for a still looser confederation that was little more than an economic union.
Neither they nor the Milosevic proposals for lightening the federation could win a majority, the Slovenian delegation promptly walked out of the Congress. Because the four Milosevic votes now outnumbered the three of the remaining republics, Croatian representatives refused to continue without Slovenia. The Slovenian party left the League of Communists two weeks later and renamed itself the Party of Democratic Renewal. At this point, the federal party effectively ceased to exist. Yet the promise of market reform and multi-party elections allowed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to survive for another year and a half.21

Elections and Ethnic Politics

The breakup of the league of Communists by January 1991 prompted the last Prime Minister to predict that Yugoslavia could survive as a state, without the SKJ. He failed to recognize that state still needed a country-wide election or party. With one or the other, some sort of single if confederal entity might have endured even at this late date. Early in this year Markovic’s Federal Executive Council

(SIV) put forward plans for a countrywide referendum scheduled for December 1990, but still the communist leadership of the various republics could not agree on the questions to be posed. By that time a series of elections in all the republics had swept some of the communists aside or left others, led by Slobodan Milosevic who were least suited to negotiate a countrywide compromise or to agree on a countrywide elections.

Ante Markovic belatedly acknowledged the need for a new countrywide party and took the leadership of an alliance of reform forces that he proclaimed before a large Bosnian Crowd on July 29. But it was not large enough. By December the SIV's own polling showed, that the Alliance was attracting just 14% of Bosnian voters and less than 5% in all republics.22 The other new party to speak for Yugoslav unity only frightened away more of the undecided public. This was the reconstituted League of Communists, the movement for Yugoslavia23 that Serb and Montenegrin members of the military's top leadership had established in November. Its small following did not extend much beyond the officers


23. S.K., Pobret za Jugoslaviju.
corps and failed to record any success even in Serbia's elections.

Serbia's elections were among the last of the multiparty campaigns that set Yugoslavia's political stage for the country's disintegration the following year. Some likely party had already declared their intention to participate in various republic elections by early 1990. By the time they were held 235 parties had declared themselves in some fashion. The much analysed elections that drew them forth made a significant contribution to disintegration and the bloody business that started in 1991. Of the six republic elections, Communist adversaries won four, although in every republic except Bosnia-Herzegovina a former Communist won the Presidency. Milosevic's four votes in the still existing Yugoslav Presidency had become two, Montenegro and Serbia that included Kosovo and Vojvodina in this more decisive arena. Here he could never hope to impose his terms for a unified Yugoslavia and he would reject all others. With these elections, what Dennison Rusinow has called an "avoidable catastrophe" had become unavoidable. 24

The Slovenian elections, appropriately, came first in April 1990. Nearly 60% of the public still favoured some sort of Yugoslavia, but fewer than 20% were willing to grant primary powers to any set of federal authorities (compared to the more than 80% in Serbia and Montenegro who would). This confederal, rather than secessionist disposition led many Slovenes to split their votes in parliamentary and Presidential elections. The reconstituted Communist party (ZKS-SPD) won only 14 of 73 seats in the still surviving socio-political chamber, while the Demos Coalition of six opposition parties took 47. But Milan Kucan won the Presidency over the Demos candidate. On the basis of what he had done as a Communist leader since 1986, as well as his party's new "European Union" flag and demands for financial independence from the federation. By the December referendum on whether to remain in the federation on any terms, 95% of the equally large turnout of eligible voters opted for independence.25

Croatian voters could not split their ballots because the new Sabor, or parliament, that replaced the social political chamber was empowered to elect the President. During the first round of April-May elections to the Cham-

ber, the two parties representing the reformed communists (SKH-SDP) and the liberal centrists did much better than their Slovenian counterparts winning 75% of the vote versus 35 percent. But their division allowed the largest single vote getter, the Croatian Democratic alliance (HDZ) to prevail with 42%, favoured by the absence of proportional representation as well as external financial support the HDZ took 54 of 80 seats. Their comparative advantage in the Sabor made the May 30 vote which elected party leader Franjo Tudjman, as President of Croatia, a foregone conclusion. Although the new government did not conduct a referendum proposing independence until May 1991, its media campaign exulted in "a Croatia for Croatians only". This campaign encouraged the excesses of local supporters and returning overseas Croatians.

The spectre of a reincarnated Independent State of Croatia admirably served Slobodan Milosevic's campaign in Serbia to preserve the power of both his party and Presidency. Of all the republic party leaders in 1986, he was the only one to survive with his party still on top. The first step was to convert Serbia's league of Communists into a new party. This he did virtually overnight on July 16. A hastily called league Congress simply voted to change the party's name to the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). His media's coverage obscured the fact that 111 of the 135
members of the new party’s ruling committee came from the old nomenclature. Instead they dutifully trumpeted a slogan attributed to Milosevic’s wife and new party Vice-President Mirjana Markovic, that "the time of the left is ahead of us". SPS fell short of absolute majority of votes in 'First Past the Post' system and got 194 of 240 seats. Milosevic himself won 65% of the votes for the Presidency. One of his first acts as President was to allow the interior ministry to set up the Serbian voluntary guards.

The Macedonian and Montenegrin elections produced results suggesting the Yugoslavia might somehow survive. Over 1,000 candidates from 16 parties and some independents competed in the November elections for the 120 seats in the Macedonian parliament. The six major parties all agreed on the desirability of Preserving Yugoslavia and of preserving with the Markovic’s reforms. His alliance won 19 of the seats and the restructured league 30, more than the 37 captured by the nationalist coalition using the name of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (VMRO) from the Interwar Period.

The Elections in Bosnia

The December elections in Bosnia Herzegovina should have given the Markovic’s reforms and his alliance their strongest endorsement. Instead the alliance won only 13 of
the 240 seats in the first round and none in the second. A reconstituted Communist Party, independent of Milosevic’s forces captured 18 seats. All of the others went to the three ethnic parties or their ethnic rivals. The Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA) under the dissident Alia Izetbegovic released from his 1983 prison sentence in 1988 took 80 seats in the second round with 13 also going to the more secular but emigre Muslim leader, Adil Zulfikarpasic and his MBO party. Herzegovina was largely responsible for giving the Bosnian branch of Tudjman’s HDZ 44 of the 49 seats won by Croat candidates. Finally, the strident nationalist, Radovan Karazdic and his Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) took 72 of the 85 positions won by Serbs. During the campaign, each of the three ethnic leaders had maintained that they would work together as the communists never could do to protect Bosnia-Herzegovina’s separate interests inside Yugoslavia. Once the campaign was over, however, they quickly turned to the separate ethnic programmes which would help them into the wars of Yugoslav succession by 1992. The three parties each immediately restaffed their own people at the local governments of all districts where they had won a majority. They all agreed to begin redividing Sarajevo’s school population along strictly ethnic lines before classes began again in the autumn of 1992. In the absence of almost any other agreement between the three parties, the authority
asserted by the "Muslim Presidency" of Alia Izetbegovic provided the challenge that Karazdic sought in any case.26

Izetbegovic had some brief success in overcoming SDS objections to his government with a proposal for preserving a "Yugoslav State Community of Independent Former Republics" as an asymmetric federation. It promised to keep Bosnia closer to Serbia than to a largely independent Slovenia and Croatia. The proposal endured in some form until early 1992, although its terms were never spelled out.

It was already too late. The previous summer, Slovenia had come through its brief, artfully provoked confrontation with the JNA to win independence. Croatia's war with the JNA and an admixture of Croatian Serb and Serbian militias was under way. The genetically mixed elites of urban Sarajevo and Tuzla nonetheless remained confident that their cities and their celebrated cultural integration would make it impossible for war to spread to Bosnia Herzegovina. Their confidence survived the October decision of Karazdic and the SDS to leave the Parliament in Sarajevo and establish a rival one in the Bosnia's Serb center of Banja Luka. It even survived the SDS led boycott of the January 1992 referendum to proclaim Bosnian independence, as evidenced by the

huge demonstration in Sarajevo for peaceful reconciliation of all differences the day after the election. 27

The city's confidence failed to reckon with the momentum of SDS's propaganda reinforced from Belgrade, and the JNA's longstanding concentration of men and especially equipment in the republic. The SDS would make a fatal connection with the shrinking Serb population of the republic, particularly in the upland areas where the resentment of cosmopolitan Sarajevo was combined with grievances from the 2nd World War against the local Muslims, whom these Serbs still used to call Turks. The SDS leader, the Montenegrin psychiatrist and amateur poet Radovan Karajdic stoked their anxieties with the reckless prediction of Serbs subjected to a fundamentalist Islamic regime if Izetbegovic were to head an independent state. Karazdic seemed at first to welcome the belated effort of the European Community in February 1992 to create a cantonal formula for living together in a single state. Izetbegovic did not, but reluctantly agreed to the plan put forward in Lisbon by the E.C.'s plan later in Brussels to enhance the role of a Bosnian Central government succeeded only in provoking

Karazdic’s rejection of the plan. 28

At the same time, neither Izetbegovic nor the radical Herzegovina wing that took over leadership of the Croats HDZ could face the prospect of continuing in the Yugoslav federation. The departure of Slovenia and Croatia had left a Milosevic majority of Serbia, Kosovo and Vojvodina and Montenegro. The Bosnian declaration of independence on March 3, 1992, virtually guaranteed that the Bosnian Serbs, supported by Milosevic in Serbia and the JNA leadership would follow Karazdic’s inflammatory lead and consolidate a separate, entirely Serbian territory unless the declaration were withdrawn. Neither President Izetbegovic’s decision to mobilize territorial defence units on April 4 nor the much debated European and American recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina on April 6, a date thoughtlessly chosen to coincide with anniversary of the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia and bombing of Belgrade in 1941, should be considered the primary causes of cruel war that began two days later. Rather they gave former JNA units, reconfigured since January to be nearly 90%. Bosnian Serbs, and militias from Serbia as well as Bosnia a final reason to initiate widespread warfare and notorious ethnic cleansing that followed. And that finally

led to one of the worst civil wars in an 'advanced European Family'.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia steadily posed a very complex problem for the Western World. The atavistic passion that the ethnic fighting gave rise to, was unprecedented in the 20th century Europe, and that too where it was presented an ideal test case for the world community to ponder over and this led to, which follows in the next chapter, several brainstorming session proposals, ceasefires, protected areas and what not but ultimately it was only solved with certain hard talks backed, of course, by force.