

## Chapter 2

# Collective Experiences and Collective Memories: Writing the History of Crisis, Wars, and the “Balkanisation of Yugoslavia”

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### Damage Beyond Repair: The Crisis of the 1980s in the Yugoslav Federation

“At first I have to apologise to all of you, comrades, since I haven’t consulted informally with anyone, not even Veselin Djuranovic, who was in a similar situation as I am today. But I did it on purpose; I wanted to take the decision alone. I have decided to resign” (“Stenografske beleške sa sastanka . . .” 1985).<sup>1</sup> These shocking but unpretentious words, spoken by the first female Yugoslav prime minister (the first to become the premier of any socialist country) on 11 April 1985, were dramatic but certainly not unique. As she stated, her predecessor, Montenegrin politician Djuranovic, who was then a member of the Presidency of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY, the collective authority that had succeeded the late president Josip Broz Tito in 1980), had attempted to do the same. The public was not informed about either of these events, although some information was leaked. Milka Planinc, a Croatian politician, was convinced that the strategy being used to stabilise the Yugoslav economy “can not work”.

Yugoslavia lacked a proper development programme. The responsibilities of different federal institutions were unclear. Planinc’s government was unable to fulfil its basic constitutional duties, and she was prepared to make a declaration and to “sign it publicly, [have it printed] in capital letters in newspapers”. However, if the SIV (Savezno izvršno vijeće), the Federal Executive Council (as the government was called), was not fulfilling its duties, then the same could apply to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), the Yugoslav Assembly. For 2 years, Planinc had attempted to explain the problem to the federal government. The meeting of the

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<sup>1</sup> Milka Planinc was president of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia (1972–1982) and president of the Federal Executive Council (1982–1986).

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Presidency of the LCY that occurred on the day before she attempted to resign had finally convinced her that “we cannot even understand each other, let alone agree on something”.

“Milka Planinc may be joking” was the initial, rather innocent reaction of General Nikola Ljubicic, a Serbian representative within the Presidency. She was not joking, although her colleagues in the highest political body of Yugoslavia had managed to persuade her not to go public—not to persist in resigning. In the middle of difficult negotiations with global financial institutions regarding Yugoslavia’s foreign debt, Planinc’s resignation would only have shown how deep the problems in Yugoslavia were, hindered the nation’s attempts to fight inflation, and negatively influenced society as a whole. Therefore, for political reasons, Planinc’s resignation was not accepted. Everyone in the highest political bodies appeared to understand the problems of the Yugoslav Federation. However, change was nearly impossible. When President Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) was alive, he had exercised the authority to coordinate different federal bodies and to rule this complex country, but without him, voluntarism and chaos prevailed.

Josip Vrhovec, a Croatian member of the Yugoslav Presidency and a politician who, despite his many connections with Milka Planinc, was not her best friend, had agreed with his compatriot that “things were not going well”. In his opinion, Planinc’s resignation was simply a sign of the “crisis which lasts”: “We are acting as if we have been paralysed, as if hypnotised by a cobra, not being able to react (. . .) We are in deep crisis of ideas, we have total confusion on the ideological front”, continued Vrhovec.<sup>2</sup> No one is doing anything to prevent this “flood of destruction, flood of bourgeois mentality, flood of anticommunism”.

Milka Planinc remained in office. However, her last year at the highest level of Yugoslav government was even less successful than the previous 2 years. Inflation was again increasing. Although the country’s growth in 1985 was intended to be as high as 4 %, its BDP grew by only 0.5 % (“Izvestaj o ostvarivanju . . .” 1986). Exports were supposed to grow by 10.3 %, but they increased by only 2.6 %. Industrial production grew only 4.7 % in 1986. Exports to western markets fell by 4 % in 1985, and imports rose by 6.3 %. The inflation rate at the end of 1984 was between 52 % (according to Yugoslav sources) and 80 % (according to American sources). The unemployment rate, at 15 %, was the highest in Europe. By all accounts, the Yugoslav economy was in a terrible state (Berend 2001; Colic and Kovac 1985).

The country was undergoing the same process as other communist countries of Eastern Europe. Its structural crisis was deep. Yugoslavia was insolvent, as were Poland and Bulgaria. However, Yugoslavia’s economic issues were more rapidly transforming into (inter)national political issues. Although the International Monetary Fund forced the federal government to reduce the autonomy of the republics in an attempt to improve the nation’s effectiveness, this goal would not be fulfilled (Priestland 2010; Berend 2001). Although Yugoslavia was nominally a federation

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<sup>2</sup> Josip Vrhovec was the editor in chief of the daily *Vjesnik*; the secretary and president of the Central Committee, League of Communists of Croatia; the Federal Secretary of Foreign Relations (1978–1982); and a Croatian member of the Presidency of Yugoslavia (1984–1988).

of six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and Macedonia) and two autonomous regions (Vojvodina and Kosovo), the country was in effect functioning as a confederation in many respects. According to an American analysis conducted in January 1983, the republics were “increasingly protectionist and isolated from each other in pursuing local interests . . . ignoring national economies of scale and ultimate profitability . . .” (NIE 2006).

Only a year after Tito’s death, Albanian students had gone on strike in 1981. They demanded better living conditions, a solution to the problem of unemployment, and the status of an independent republic for Kosovo; some participants even called for unification with Albania. The Socialist Autonomous Province (SAP) of Kosovo soon became the focal point of the Yugoslav crisis. Mahmut Bakalli, who had been the leader of Kosovo for more than a decade, was replaced (along with others from the “Gjakova group”) by Azem Vllasi, a former Yugoslav youth leader. Although Vllasi forcefully quelled the Albanian protests, he was not willing to compromise on the previously settled matter of Kosovo’s independence within Yugoslavia.

Since 1981, Serbian propaganda had accused Albanians of seven sins: counter-revolution, nationalism, separatism, irredentism, secessionism, terrorism, ethnophobia, and Greater Albanian ambitions (Horvat 1988; Malcolm 1998; Pavlovic 2010; Petrovic 1996). Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo were rapidly leaving the poorest region of the country and moving to Serbia proper, either because they were seeking better working conditions or because they felt that they were being pressured to leave (Pavlovic 2010; Petrovic and Blagojevic 1989).<sup>3</sup>

The attempt to redefine the composition of Yugoslavia, especially when it originated from the largest republic, was increasingly threatening the already unstable structure of the federation. Other republics, especially the rather quiet Croatia and Macedonia and much more active Slovenia, opposed these efforts. Bosnia and Herzegovina, with increasing self-assurance, viewed all of this activity as an opportunity to emphasise its own importance. Presenting itself as “Yugoslavia in Small”, with three nations living together in supposed tranquillity, it was evolving from one of the least visible republics to the most important (Andjelic 2003). If Yugoslavia was based on “brotherhood and unity”, then BH, as it was known, was the exemplar of these qualities. The solution to Yugoslavia’s national problems was apparently to strengthen its orthodoxy.<sup>4</sup>

The federal government of Yugoslavia had always been primarily a department of economic affairs. Since Tito’s death, the Federal Secretariat of Foreign Relations and that of the People’s Defence, which was previously connected with the Office of the President, became *de facto* independent. To a considerable extent, the same independence applied to the Federal Secretariat for Internal Affairs. For years, culture and

<sup>3</sup> Between 1981 and 1987, more than 20,000 Serbs and Montenegrins departed from Kosovo. The percentage of the population that was composed of Albanians, which had the highest birth rate in Europe, increased from 69 to 77 % in only 33 years.

<sup>4</sup> Despite popular belief, Bosnia and Herzegovina society was not as mixed as sometimes thought. The percentage of mixed marriages, for example, was 12 %, which is no larger than in other parts of Yugoslavia and is actually smaller than in Vojvodina or certain parts of Croatia (Bugarel 2004).

education were exclusively the responsibility of the federal units. Each republic had its own government, including executive councils for matters that included finances, defence, and even foreign relations. In 1978, for example, Croatia and Slovenia decided to join the Alps-Adriatic Working Community with Bavaria and some Italian, Austrian, and Hungarian provinces. The move was sharply criticised, especially in the late 1980s, as an attempt to resurrect Austria-Hungary, divide Yugoslavia, and, above all, heighten the division between sections of Yugoslavia (Jakovina 2006).

In May 1986, another Croat, Branko Mikulic, the strong man of Bosnia and Herzegovina, became the new first minister of Yugoslavia. Mikulic had gained federal prominence as the chief organiser of the Winter Olympic Games in 1984. The capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the only socialist city ever to host the Olympic Games, with the exception of Moscow in 1980. Stubborn and much more conservative, Mikulic was less inclined to advocate the establishment of a market economy in Yugoslavia or to countenance liberal economic ideals. Therefore, inflation, which was already sharply rising, further increased to 170 % (Duric and Rajic 1988). Mikulic was not the first prime minister who had offered his resignation, but he was the first whose resignation (in March 1989) was actually accepted.

Even if the government wished to halt certain negative trends, the country lacked the authority to implement the necessary policies, and the economic decline that occurred became a catalyst for all of the other negative tendencies in Yugoslav society. However, the lack of central political authority had also generated positive trends. For instance, the media became extremely open. Some journalists became liberal, and some became openly nationalistic, but the change was apparent. Movies and new books addressed issues that were previously considered taboo. The frequent inability of the republics to agree on who should be appointed to the highest political positions had sometimes created opportunity for professionals to be appointed.

The Yugoslav People's Army (Jugoslavenska narodna armija (JNA)) often claimed to be the third largest in Europe. American sources regarded it as "perhaps the only truly integrated national institution in the country", although they were aware of how "many of the non-Serb nationalities" did not have a positive relationship with the military (NIE 2006). In 1985, the JNA officer corps included 57 % Serbs, although Serbs represented only 36.30 % of the overall population of Yugoslavia. Croats in the military were underrepresented by 7.23 %; only 12.51 % of the officers were Croats, although Croats constituted 19.74 % of the population (Marijan 2008). The demographics of the secret police were similar. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, the proportion of Serbian secret agents was almost double the proportion of Serbian citizens in that republic (nearly 67 %). Croats constituted slightly more than 9 % and Muslims less than 24 % (Radelic 2006). National inequality was less visible in the highest echelon of the military. Nevertheless, the JNA was certainly the most politicised of all European armies, including the Red Army of the USSR.

The growing differences between the Yugoslav republics, which had always been present and visible but had sometimes been masked or suppressed by Tito's authority, were beginning to surface. The communist ideology and governmental structures were unable or unwilling to suppress nationalism. Nevertheless, the most open expressions of national hatred remained suppressed (Todorova 2010; Judt 2007). In the

1980s, however, even this limitation would change. “Brotherhood and unity” was one of the major foundations of the country, in addition to its socialist self-management and non-aligned foreign policy. All of these principles had been abandoned by the mid-1980s.

## **Macedonia de frutas<sup>5</sup>: The Division and Politicisation of “Yugoslav” Historiography During the 1980s**

At the meeting of the Yugoslav historians in Skopje in 1982, the participants decided to analyse high school history textbooks from all of the republics and autonomous regions. This research was to be the basis for the next meeting’s debate on “Togetherness on the Yugoslav soil from the early 19th century to 1918” (Roksandic 1986). Each of the Yugoslav federal units had a different school curriculum, different textbook authors, and even different textbook prices. The results of the analysis were astonishing. In high school textbooks covering the period from the early nineteenth century to 1918 in units dealing with the history of the South Slavs, 392 names were identified. Only six names (1.5 % of the total) were mentioned in all eight textbooks (Napoleon Bonaparte, Serbian princes Milos and Mihailo Obrenovic and Karadorde, a Serbian social-democrat named Dimitrije Tucovic and a Slovenian poet named France Preseren).

The situation was similar for high school textbooks that addressed the twentieth century. Of 448 names, only 14 (3.1 %) were mentioned in all eight textbooks (Tito, Hitler, Stalin, Benito Mussolini, Winston Churchill, King Alexander Karadjordjevic, Chetnik leader Draza Mihailovic and politicians Vlado Macek, Ivan Subasic and Dragisa Cvetkovic). In Croatian textbooks, Josip Broz Tito was mentioned 205 times, whereas in Kosovar books, Tito was mentioned only 33 times (Budak 2004). Nearly 80 % of the individuals mentioned were politicians. Even more astonishing, in textbooks covering the “long 19th century”, 264 people (close to 63 %) were mentioned in only one textbook. All of these findings indicated how ethnocentric and republic-oriented the historiography of the Yugoslav federal units was (Roksandic 1986).

Clearly, influential historical controversies existed even when, from an outside perspective, these conflicts did not appear to have caused the divisions in Yugoslavia. The especially important disagreements were related to the twentieth-century historical events and personalities that constituted the contemporary political discourse. Newspapers frequently addressed different historical topics. Beginning in the mid-1980s, especially in Serbia, an entire range of writers, poets, dissidents and sources of “critical intelligence”, as they were known, discussed and reinterpreted issues that had previously been considered taboo. The Cetnik forces from Second World War, which were originally viewed as Nazi collaborators, began to be portrayed as

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<sup>5</sup> The name of a mixed fruit salad in some Latin countries, this term reflects the complex national composition of Ottoman Macedonia. See also Todorova (2006).

royalist antifascists (Jovic 2003). The Goli Otok prison, where Tito shipped his Stalinist opponents after the Yugoslav split with Stalin in 1948, became an increasingly popular subject of novels. The Serbian poet Antonije Isakovic openly called for a “reevaluation of Tito’s role”.

Croatian party circles reacted to this flow of “deviating” ideas by organising series of meetings that culminated in 1984 with the preparation of the “White Book”, an internal document by the Croatian Central Committee Centre for information and propaganda (Jovic 2003; Bijela Knjiga 2010). The “White Book” named nearly 200 intellectuals who had been identified as “ideologically problematic”. Nearly 180 of them were from Serbia, which caused a stir in Belgrade (Cosic 2002). The main question there was whether the Serbian developments were the responsibility of their Croatian comrades. Relations between the two republics did not improve after the publication of this internal document.

The most influential Serbian dissident, the “father of the nation” Dobrica Cosic, described the “White Book” in his diary as a “Stalinist-nationalist” attack that was intended to establish “Bolshevik-Croatian order in culture”. However, Cosic admitted that Serbia was a hotbed of “anti-Titoist and democratic opposition” in Yugoslavia (Cosic 2002). Meanwhile, Croatia was perceived as ideologically rigid in Slovenia. Stipe Suvar, who had organised the entire operation, was perceived as a real “sectarian”, an advocate of views that were similar to those of “Andrej Zhdanov”, “witch hunter”. His actions were described as constituting an “ideological battle in Orwell’s year 1984” by former Slovenian top politician Stane Kavcic. “What is going on in Croatia?” asked Kavcic. Slovene concluded that Croatian politicians were afraid of democratisation (Kavcic 1988). It is true that “Croatians were much more conservative and less visible and vocal after the 1971 Croatian Spring”. However, they were also deeply devoted to the Titoist concept of self-management and the federal constitution of 1974, which extended rights to the republics. Slovenes and Croats wanted to preserve the level of federalisation that had been achieved by the constitution, whereas the Serbs were seeking reform.

In February of 1986, the United States of America extradited war criminal Andrija Artukovic to Yugoslavia. Artukovic was the minister of the interior in the fascist, puppet independent state of Croatia. Completely senile, Artukovic was unaware of the events that occurred during the trial proceedings in the Zagreb District Court. One of his three lawyers was Srda Popovic, who subsequently became a famous Serbian dissident. The lawyer stated that while he was shaving in his hotel one morning, he realised that Artukovic, who was half blind and ill, was likely having trouble understanding the Serbian language. Therefore, the next day, he began his interrogation with the following question: “Excuse me, do you know who I am?” “Of course I do”, Artukovic replied, “you are my prosecutor”. “And where are we now?” continued Popovic. “In Leskovac”, answered Artukovic (Srda Popovic, January 13, 2003, personal communication). Leskovac, a small town in Serbia, was the city where Artukovic had been detained nearly 50 years before his Zagreb trial.

In 1958, during the first unsuccessful campaign to extradite Artukovic to Yugoslavia, the state secretary for foreign relations at the time, a Serbian politician named Koca Popovic, informed George Kennan, the US ambassador in Belgrade,

that the entire issue was “marginal” in his opinion. The famous US diplomat agreed. The last thing that the Yugoslavs needed was their own “Eichmann Case”, he thought (Jakovina 2002). Nearly 25 years later, the trial was organised and had an even more electrifying effect: it contributed to reviving old animosities, opened old wounds, and taught a history lesson to the new generations. The case was not primarily about punishing a war criminal, although Artukovic was eventually condemned to death. Unfortunately, there was little interest in the objective history lesson. For many people, Artukovic was to serve as further “proof” of the genocidal nature of the Croats, which was continually mentioned in various Belgrade circles (Ramet 2002). Therefore, a *Committee for the collection of sources on genocide against Serbs and other nations in the Second World War*<sup>6</sup> was formed (Cosic 2002).

In a country in which the number of victims in Second World War was inflated to cause its sacrifices to appear larger, it was then becoming one more argument that proved the genocidal nature of Yugoslavia’s political enemies, generating new polemics. The supposed number of victims at the Croatian Ustasa Jasenovac concentration camp rose from the original estimate of 46,000 victims in 1946 to 600,000 or 700,000 victims. The latter numbers were repeated in Vladimir Dedijer’s books in the mid-1980s and then continued to rise. Velimir Terzic claimed that there were “more than a million” victims. Dragoljub Zivojinovic similarly referred to “more than a million Orthodox” individuals who had supposedly died in wartime Croatia alone. Finally, in 1990, Radomir Bulatovic claimed that in Jasenovac alone, 1,110,929 people had been killed.<sup>7</sup>

In 1986, the book on the “Case of Milos Zanko” was published in Belgrade with the goal of politically rehabilitating the Croatian politician who had been removed in 1970. Zanko, who was accused of being a centralist, remained in Belgrade after his forced retirement. His possible rehabilitation was viewed as an attack on all Croatian politicians, including both the “national communists” (the leaders of the Croatian Spring) and those who had replaced the liberal politicians in late 1971. Both groups opposed the “unitarist” tendencies (Blecic and Dolenec 1986).

In September of 1986, a draft version of the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences was leaked to Belgrade via the daily *Večernje novosti*. The central Serbian intellectual institution regarded Serbs as prime victims of the communists and Tito, and it described the position of the Serbs in Croatia as the worst in history

<sup>6</sup> Odbor za prikupljanje građe o genocidu nad srpskim i drugim narodima u Drugom svetskom ratu (in Serbian).

<sup>7</sup> In 2005, the number of Jasenovac concentration camp victims who had been fully identified with names and histories, if incomplete, was established at 80,022 people. Overall, the number of Serbs killed in the so-called Independent State of Croatia (approximately the combination of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina) during the war was approximately 330,000 (Goldstein 2008). The overall demographical losses in Yugoslavia during Second World War—including those killed and unborn children—was 1,027 million people. At the time when the inflation spree began, no one was interested in these arguments. There were many taboo subjects in Yugoslav history; however, many topics were politicised, and even when certain issues were addressed using seemingly logical arguments with good intentions, these debates eventually proved to be merely another component of the political strife.

(Lampe 2006; Ramet 2002).<sup>8</sup> The poor economic position of Serbia was attributed to the “coalition between Slovenes and Croats”, which was pure fiction (Kavcic 1988). The constitution of 1974, it was claimed, had weakened Serbia and was a product of two non-Serbs: the Slovenian politician Edvard Kardelj and the omnipotent Croatian Josip Broz Tito. Although the Serbs in Croatia and in Kosovo were a majority in the party and police forces, the intellectual arguments emphasised how Serbs were discriminated against both politically and culturally. While victorious at war, the Serbs were losing their battles during peacetime. Especially problematic, it was argued, was the position of Serbs on Kosovo (Jovic 2003; Grupa autora 2008). The memorandum had an electrifying, negative effect on the entire country. Although the Serbian leadership initially condemned the non-paper, the new communist leader Slobodan Milosevic, who had succeeded Ivan Stambolic on 14 December 1987, shared all of the views expressed by the central national institution (Judt 2007). Serbia was a victim, the truth needed to be proclaimed, and changes were necessary. The other Yugoslav academies (of which there was one in each republican capital city) did not publish anything similar.

In June 1988, the “Committee for the defence of freedom of thought and expression” in Belgrade published a “Proposal for the free and critical evaluation of the historical role of Josip Broz Tito” (“Predlog za slobodno i kriticko ...” 1988).<sup>9</sup> Tito, unlike Mao Zedong, Hitler, or Churchill, they rightly claimed, was still not “put in the objective historical context”. Ideological mythology, the cult of personality, party taboos, bureaucratic subjectivism, primitive rituals and the “ideology of functionaries” continued to inhibit the social sciences. However, “free critical reinterpretation of the historical role” of Tito would be necessary for researchers to understand the problems in Yugoslavia: “Therefore, it would be necessary to see what is the cause and where the beginning of the current social crisis is visible in the catastrophic economical situation, national and social antagonisms, the monopolistic rule of the bureaucratic oligarchy, the lack of any real political democracy and responsibility, frightening ethnic and economical migration, the country’s huge debt, unemployment and inflation, the social misery and hopelessness of huge chunks of society, failed investments and economical crime, ever larger scientific and technological slowdowns” (“Predlog za slobodno i kriticko ...” 1988). Despite decades of de-Stalinisation after 1948, “no democratic, productive and civilised society” was created in Yugoslavia. The topic of Goli Otok, “one of the darkest camps in modern Europe”, remained a taboo. The “proposal” mentioned political repression and the existence of a “permanent civil war”; it criticised the cost of Tito’s travels and his

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<sup>8</sup> For example, individuals such as Radovan Samardzic, Dobrica Cosic, Ljuba Tadic, and Mihajlo Markovic.

<sup>9</sup> The first two signers were Mića Popović and Tanasije Mladenović, but among the 19 co-signers were some of the most prominent intellectual allies of Slobodan Milošević as well as some of his critics and those who regarded him as too weak. For example, Dobrica Ćosić, Vojislav Koštunica, Kosta Čavoški, Matija Bećković, Ljubomir Tadić, Gojko Nikolis, Borislav Mihajlović Mihiz, Mladen Srbinović, Andrija Gams, Zagorka Golubovic, Ivan Janković, Neca Jovanov, Dragoslav Mihailović, and Radovan Samardžić all signed the document.

ambitious foreign policy for Yugoslavia as well as his obsession with Yugoslavia's "world-historical role" ("Predlog za slobodno i kriticko . . ." 1988).

Many of the issues discussed in the document were common sense by that time, repeating what was already visible to the Serbian media and the public. The proposal directly violated the "Tito Law" of 1984, which had regulated the writings about Tito's role in the history of Yugoslavia (Petrovic 2007). What was problematic for the other Yugoslavs, however, was the timing of the document, the people who had generated the idea and its specific emphasis on Serbian issues. Was Tito employing a "weak Serbia—strong Yugoslavia" model? What would be the effects of asymmetrical federalism and of the creation of two autonomous regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina within Serbia? The Serbs believed that Tito's fear of "suppressive unitarianism and centralism" directly led to the "systematic, allowed, undisrupted" policy of Albanisation within Kosovo. To criticise Tito from this perspective amounted to advocating a reduction in republican rights and reemphasising the centre (i.e. the Serbian component of the federation). To criticise Tito was to question Yugoslavia itself: to criticise the organisation of the country with a clear, unitarist sense of how to reorganise the federation. Few non-Serbs approved of this approach. Even if the demands for the historical reinterpretation of the Marshal of Yugoslavia were honest, they were influenced to such a great degree by everyday political problems that no open debate was possible (Bilandzic 2006). The "Proposal for the free and critical evaluation of the historical role of Josip Broz Tito" expressed ideas that were similar to those in the "Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences". This document challenged the interpretation of the history of both World Wars, of socialist Yugoslavia, Serbian democratic traditions, Tito's role, the 1974 Constitution<sup>10</sup> and Yugoslav foreign policy. No part of the foundation on which Yugoslavia rested was spared, and the loss of common symbols thus continued.

Yugoslav historiography was politicised and divided in the same fashion, which often reflected divisions in the political sphere, and it became an excellent tool for intensifying divisions rather than encouraging reconciliation. Historiography also reflected divisions in other spheres of society. Yugoslavia was a federal state, but the key to its survival or dissolution would be the republics, especially the three most important republics. More openness within society created more unsolved issues, and the twentieth-century debates were too great for historiography to resolve. Yugoslavia was at a crossroads, and major trends were being initiated in Belgrade. Events had the potential to either destroy everything or entirely change the old country. The most crucial dilemma was the question of whether a Yugoslavia with a Serbian majority was preferable to dissolution of the federation. Although other republics and the Serbs were fundamentally loyal to Yugoslavia, the old models were no longer working, and no one knew how to form new models that might be acceptable to all.

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<sup>10</sup> The Yugoslav constitution of 1974 (which was the longest constitution in the world at the time) was viewed as the product of an anti-Serb conspiracy in Belgrade circles, but was regarded as a positive guarantee of the national rights of many other republics, especially the most prosperous (Bilandžić 2006).

## **Missed Opportunities and Turning Points (1988–1992): From the Yugoslav Crisis to the Wars of Yugoslav Succession**

Michael Gorbachev's visit to Yugoslavia in March 1988 and the signing of a joint communique that stated unconditional respect for "the principles of equality and non-interference . . . for the independence of parties and socialist countries to define, for themselves, the path of their own development" was a clear signal of major political change in Moscow. What had occurred in Belgrade and on the Brijuni Islands was far more than simply another change or improvement in the relations between the two countries (Kramer 2005). If any exclusive, heretic, peculiar and special Yugoslav position remained within the communist pariah, then that special role was dissipating. Eastern Europe was undergoing dramatic changes.

There were also changes on the other side of the continent. The Yugoslavs were aware of the increasing attempts of the members of the European Economic Community to foster good relations. Members of the Presidency of Yugoslavia were informed in early February 1988 by the Federal Secretary of Foreign Relations, Budimir Loncar, that the development of the common market by the Western countries was generating special challenges for Yugoslav companies. With regard to technological development, Yugoslavia was dangerously behind the West. Therefore, some members of the Presidency believed that it would be desirable for Yugoslavia to join EURECA, for example, as it was unrealistic for Yugoslavia to pursue full EEC membership (Zapisnik sa 202. sednice Predsednistva SFRJ 1988). However, even that opportunity was missed (Kavcic 1988). As in previous cases, Yugoslavia turned its attention to the Third World.

The members of the Movement of the Non-Aligned chose Yugoslavia as the host of the ninth conference and, hence, the presiding member of the movement from 1989 to 1992. This situation was an opportunity for Belgrade to remain in focus and on the international scene for the next 3 years. During that period, the country might have had an impetus to mobilise all of its "positive forces" because of its awareness of Belgrade's responsibilities. However, the plan to use the Non-Aligned to remain visible on the international scene appeared to work only for the diplomats themselves, not for the country as a whole. Budimir Loncar, the last Yugoslav Federal Secretary of Foreign Relations, was the representative of the Non-Aligned and the last statesmen to speak with Saddam Hussein before Desert Storm One (at the end of December 1990). In contrast, the country as a whole did not use this opportunity on the world stage to address its issues. The country's public image was defined by its internal strife, which was intensifying (Jakovina 2007b).

The host of the ninth summit of the Non-Aligned, which was held in Belgrade in early September 1989, was Janez Drnovsek, the head of the Presidency. Drnovsek was a Slovenian politician who had been elected to the highest position in Yugoslavia among several candidates. He was not the "preferred" candidate of the Slovenian League of Communists, which was a clear sign of the rapid changes occurring. By that time, Yugoslavia was already divided in many respects. The communist leaderships in Slovenia and Croatia had already decided to allow free elections (Hudelist

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