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1-1-1991

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### Recommended Citation

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Occasional Paper No. 9109  
October, 1991

**YUGOSLAV SOLDIERS IN POLITICS:  
On The Road to Civil War**

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On The Road To Civil War**

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Revised From A Paper "Yugoslavia: An Army In Search of  
A Party". Presented at the University of Missouri  
INTER-CAMPUS SYMPOSIUM

"New Thinking" About European Security:  
Restructuring Defense Strategies for the 1990s

March 7-9, 1991  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
Columbia, Missouri

Supported by a grant from the University of Missouri Weldon Spring Fund

*Yugoslav Soldiers in Politics: On the Road to Civil War*

In January 1990 the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) gave up its monopoly of political power and acknowledged that the time had passed when any one party had a corner on the truth. With visibly mixed feelings, the party set out on the road to multiparty democracy. The 14th "extraordinary" Party Congress conceded the inevitable: "the first condition of our social reform is to rid the political system of anyone's monopoly, even that of the LCY . . . in a democratic society nobody can be the exponent of exclusive political truth."<sup>1</sup>

Reaction to this concession reflected the same conflicting agendas that dominated the political stage in post-Tito Yugoslavia from the mid-1980s. Slovene reformers considered it too little, too late. In their view, for the LCY to give up its monopoly of power was meaningful only if this was the first step. Hence the Slovenes demanded that the party radically decentralize; replacing the League of Communists with a confederation of independent, republic organizations "freely united" in the LCY. Conversely, for the Serbian party and other more conservative delegates multiparty competition was anything but welcome and certainly as far as they were prepared to go.

Consistently outvoted, the Slovene delegation walked out. Whereupon, notwithstanding Serbian president Slobodan Milošević's demand that the Congress continue with or without the Slovenes, the Congress delegates packed up and



went home. Their departure dashed the hopes of Communists in the Yugoslav Armed Forces (JNA) that the Congress would overcome the ideological and political disunity of the party.<sup>2</sup> Officially, the Congress was 'suspended'.<sup>3</sup> In fact, it was moribund. The "unacceptable," from the perspective of the 9th Conference of the LC-JNA organization,<sup>4</sup> was the reality.

What that reality meant for Yugoslav politicians in uniform must be understood in its historical context, i.e. the Yugoslav indigenous battle for national liberation during World War II and subsequent detour onto the road of socialist self-management and nonalignment.

### **The Partisan Vanguard and Post-Tito Yugoslavia**

In 1941 the Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP) organized the partisan resistance movement that was to become the armed forces of Yugoslavia. The army in turn was the cradle of the postwar party. Predominately peasant soldiers who had carried a rifle and "fought like a hero for eight months" became the rank and file of the party.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the merits of their ten month ideological training on the run, the party that had grown from some 12,000 prewar members to 140,000 at the end of the war followed Tito in the name of partisan solidarity and a promise of a postwar Yugoslavia based on brotherhood and unity.

Precisely because ideology was only skin deep, Stalin was wrong to think he could "shake his little finger" and Tito would fall. Party and army alike stood firm against military pressure, economic blockade, and isolation from the socialist camp

led by Moscow. When Tito died in 1980, the power brokers of the party were still the Club of 41, a generational cohort bonded to the military in a symbiotic relationship, that I have characterized elsewhere as a party-army partnership.<sup>6</sup>

When the chips were down during the Croatian crisis of 1971, Tito accused the party of being 'nationalistically minded,' and reminded wayward republican leaders that the army's job was to defend the revolution internally as well as at the borders.<sup>7</sup> It was the army that Tito trusted to preserve Yugoslavia. Hence the godfather of Yugoslav communism explicitly dealt the army into the post-Tito political game in his attempt to stage manage his own succession via the Constitution of 1974.

There is more than a little irony that in a country --as the joke went in Belgrade--the size of Wyoming with a personality cult the size of China, the idol of that cult should design what may be the most complex, diffused power-sharing political system in the world. But he did, and the JNA was given a constitutional piece of the action. The president of the LC-JNA joined republic/provincial party presidents as ex officio members of the collective party presidency. Fifteen seats on the LCY CC, i.e. representation equal to that of an autonomous province, were reserved for soldiers in politics. Whatever one might think of this solution, the practical result was to guarantee military access to the policy-making process, while setting limits on how many and at what level politicians in uniform would participate. There was a *de facto* interpenetration between party and army.

In my view, Defense Minister Branko Mamula's claim that the army was

"the backbone of the political system"<sup>8</sup> is something of an overstatement. More correctly, I believe we can say that amid growing civilian paralysis--what the former head of the LC-JNA Petar Simić characterized as "anguish at civilian anarchy"<sup>9</sup>--the army had become the backbone of the party. And with the party visibly falling apart that was a problem.

However, despite attempts by the LC-JNA to delay the process of civilian political decay, the outcome of the Congress came as "no surprise". As Simić subsequently reported to the LCY committee in the Army: "over the last 15 years or so (the federal party had) allowed the republics and provinces to develop and consolidate their narrow national interests. In circumstances of economic crisis these penetrated the LCY with negative economic, political and ideological effects."<sup>10</sup> A common denominator of basic concerns and divisions as to how to deal with these negative consequences emerged from the presentations of military delegates to the 14th Congress.

### **The Army at the Congress:**

The army delegation at Congress totalled 68 members; 32 Serbs, 8 Montenegrins, 8 Croats, 10 Yugoslavs, 3 Muslims and 2 Slovenes. Of this group sixteen high ranking military leaders spoke to the congress. Their message was unambiguous support for a federal state in which the Yugoslav military would continue to have a political role in a Yugoslavia capable of making policy and paying for defense.



Stane Brovet speaking on federalism stressed that such a state needs power of foreign policy, defense, security, united market, the tax system, economic relations with foreign countries and a judicial system. He warned that if the Yugoslav federal system was replaced by a confederation this could call into question the unity of the defense system.

Milan Daljević spelled out what he considered the bottom line. Party and army alike must say "No to separatist and nationalist tendencies that want to dismantle Yugoslavia, No to nationalism, no to succession, altering borders, and creating a confederation. Yes to democratic reform." In this context, Daljević envisioned the LCY continuing as a unified Yugoslav communist organization. Conversely, Dimitrije Baucal stressed that the army could adjust to democratic progress in the form of a multiparty system.

Tomislav Perunčić sharply rejected demands for depoliticizing JNA that he saw as demands for "excommunication of our armed forces from social and political life." (refers to some 75,000 members of JNA LC.)

On the issue of tactics, Petar Simić, then president of LC-JNA, supported postponement of congress. In doing so, he noted that "all the blame does not belong to Slovenia alone. Ultimatums, blockades, pressure, and faits accomplis have never resulted in resolution of problems between peoples."<sup>11</sup>

### **Trauma and Transition:**

In the post mortem that followed the suspending of the 14th Party

Congress, the Yugoslav media was divided as to whether the LCY was "definitely dead" (Slobodna Dalmacija, Split), "the departing political party" (Borba, Belgrade) or "the only true Yugoslav-oriented party in Yugoslavia" (Politika, Belgrade).<sup>12</sup> Initially the army ruled out the first possibility and began adjusting to the second.

Whereas in May there was some hope that the Committee charged with preparing an LCY Congress of Democratic and Program Renewal set for September might be able to pull the remnants of the LCY back together, by July even Serbian president Milošević jumped ship. The Serbian LC bluntly announced that the LCY "no longer exists" and merged with the Serbian Socialist Alliance to form the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). In these circumstances, the committee charged with program renewal of the LCY was stranded. The committee announced that documents for the proposed congress could not be adopted because the representatives of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro did not attend the meeting.<sup>13</sup> By August the LCY CC was attempting to solve its financial problems by leasing eight floors of the CC building in New Belgrade to anyone who could pay the bills.<sup>14</sup>

As the party faded from the political scene, the army adopted a go slow approach to its departure. When questioned concerning party cells in the army, JNA spokesman Col. Vuk Obradović made clear that the LCY in army would be dealt with in relation to the new constitutional and legal provisions for a multiparty system and the law on political association. When such measures were enacted the federal defense secretariat "will take the appropriate measures. Until that time

the secretariat will abide by the existing constitution under which LCY organizations are active in army units and headquarters."<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, spokesmen for the armed forces engaged in what might be called revisionism or at least reinterpretation of the army's political position. For example, in May former head of general staff of JNA and member of LCY CC Stevan Mirković, insisted that the army had not been against a multiparty system; only warned against such a system being introduced too fast. Hence, he rejected the idea of removing the LCY from the Army without offering another solution "at least until the situation in the country has improved." On the other hand, Mirkovic attempted to assure those who questioned the army's motives, insisting that "if a stand is taken in society that LCY should leave the army, it will do so." He then added "but the army can not be put back into the barracks so suddenly."<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, when the presidium of the LCY representing party organizations in federal agencies announced that the LCY would end cells in all federal agencies by November 5, 1990, an explicit exception was made for the JNA. The army's political organizations were to be regulated by what was vaguely referred to as a special law.<sup>17</sup> This announcement came some two months after the regulation requiring withdrawal of LCY organizations in the government was adopted, and there was no time frame attached to disbanding LC-JNA organizations.

Nonetheless, the army clearly had been making plans for the day when the ideological/political direction of the LCY is no longer appropriate. The most



concrete sign of willingness to adjust to the collapse of the party came in the form of an announcement of the Federal Secretariat of Defense's new plan for moral education of recruits that emphasized "defence of our common land, Yugoslav patriotism, and the combat traditions of our nations and nationalities."<sup>18</sup>

Baucal's pre-Congress interview in January 1990 captures the army anxieties, noting "past experience with organization of political parties and struggle for power is very bitter. Some parties call for partitioning of Yugoslavia, enmity among the nationalities, bloodshed." However, he also emphasizes the Yugoslav tradition as a popular army, which as Moše Pijade emphasized during partisan days could not live without the people.<sup>19</sup>

"The armed forces is part of this society and directly involved in all social developments and desirous of building joint views. It never has up to now--and accordingly never will in the future--(present) an obstacle to the achievement of everything that is more democratic, freer, and more humane, and is in general along the road toward progress." Baucal went on to accept that political pluralism "is now our reality;" insisting only on the basic rule that "such pluralism not threaten the country's integrity" or "instigate inter-ethnic conflict and enmity."

His fear was that the purpose of depoliticization of the armed forces was "to silence the armed forces, to shut them into garrisons and thereby remove them from sociopolitical life. This is designed to break up Yugoslavia as a federal state and head it in the direction of a confederalist concept. That is why we are against the armed forces being depoliticized in every respect."<sup>20</sup>

Thus it appears that in the issue was not so much the survival of the LC-JNA as an army sanctuary for the party, as concern for the lack of viable national parties; a desire to retain some form of the political mission that has kept Yugoslav soldiers in politics since 1945. In an environment where political parties were proliferating faster than mushrooms, the army had to relate to an increasingly complex political scene. There are socialist, radical, liberal, democratic, regional, nationalist, religious and environmental movements and parties. There was obviously an effort to calculate which of these 90 some parties, alliances or coalitions would have their act together well enough to seriously compete in federal elections.<sup>21</sup> If and when such elections would take place remained an open question that undoubtedly the military and political establishments alike would have dearly loved to answer.

### **The Army's Options on the Road to Multiparty Democracy**

Even before the League of Communists let go of its increasingly fictitious monopoly of political power in January 1990, political parties, associations and movements were openly organizing with or without permission.<sup>22</sup> In April/May multiparty assembly elections in Slovenia and Croatia, center-right coalitions defeated reform communists by substantial margins.<sup>23</sup> The presidency of Slovenia went to the leader of the Slovene communist Party of Democratic Renewal, Milan Kučan. In Croatia the leader of the nationalist Croatian Democratic Community (variously referred to as the Croatian Democratic Union)



68 year-old wartime partisan Dr. Franjo Tudjman became the first non-communist president of a Yugoslav republic. In August Croatian premier Stjepan Mesić was elected to the Yugoslav State Presidency, replacing former LCY president Dr. Stipe Šuvar. Thereby, if the scheduled rotation cycle had been observed in May 1991, Mesić would have become Yugoslavia's first non-communist president.

With the success of his anti-inflation package that had reduced monthly inflation from 65% in December 1989 to virtually zero by late spring 1990, Prime Minister Marković attempted to translate his growing popularity into political capital and announced plans for a coalition of parties in support of the government program.<sup>24</sup> It was announced in July that the government sponsored Alliance of Reform Forces would contest in the coming republic elections. Although the Prime Minister's decision was greeted with enthusiasm abroad, domestic reactions ranged from approval to ambivalence and hostility.<sup>25</sup>

From the perspective of his supporters, Prime Minister Marković had made good on his promise to deliver economic reform with or without the League of Communists. Indeed, by summer Marković appeared to be the most popular Yugoslav politician. He had a record to stand on and a bureaucratic base from which to organize his Alliance of Reform Forces to run in the first post-war multiparty elections.<sup>26</sup> However, there was a strong popular perception of conflict of interest; that it was not appropriate for the head of the government to use his position to create an independent political base.

Among the field of political players, the LCY is a ghost of its former self. In

limbo after the deadlocked 14th Party Congress, the party could not survive the decision of Serbian president Slobodan Milošević to abandon his once staunch opposition to pluralism outside the LCY. Realistically when Milošević became president of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) in July, the chance of the federal party to reconstitute itself disappeared along with the Serbian League of Communists.

When the much disputed Serbian elections took place at the end of the year,<sup>27</sup> President Slobodan Milošević held on to his job with roughly 65 percent of the vote. His party of born again Serbian communists--the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)--took 194 of the possible total 250 seats in the republic parliament. Of the 56 victories that went to his opposition the largest number went to the Serbian Movement of Renewal with 19 seats.

The left-oriented parties also dominated in Montenegro and made a respectable showing in Macedonia. The Communist Party of Montenegro won 83 of the possible 125 assembly seats and its leader, Momir Bulatović took the presidency with some 64 percent of the vote.

In the Macedonian assembly elections, a left-wing coalition had a simple majority but lacked the two-thirds necessary to form a government or elect a president of the republic.<sup>28</sup> Conversely, when the dust settled, ethnically based parties swept the elections for the 240 members of the two house assembly in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These parties, therefore, were in a position to decide who would represent Bosnia-Herzegovina on the Yugoslav State Presidency.

In the meantime, Alija Izetbegović, leader of the Moslem DAP, got the job as president of the republic presidency. A representative of the Serbian Democratic Party took the position of President of the Assembly, while the Croatian Democratic Union filled the post of head of government.<sup>29</sup>

From the army's point of view these Slovene and Croatian center-right parties as well as some of the Serbian opposition parties were unfit partners on two counts. First, they were not committed to Yugoslavia as a going concern. Secondly, demands for subordination of the JNA to republic assemblies or for national armies were flatly unacceptable. Speaking at the weekly press conference of the Federal Secretariat of Defense Colonel Vuk Obradović underlined that the JNA supports "democratization and reform short of subverting the constitutional order, retailoring the internal boundaries or breaking up the country."<sup>30</sup>

Notwithstanding the Serbian dominant officer corps, this agenda put the military establishment considerably closer to Prime Minister Marković's Alliance of Reform Forces than to the Socialist Party of Serbia. Given the visible shortage of viable national, all-Yugoslav parties, his successful anti-inflation program<sup>31</sup> and his determination that Yugoslavia will continue to function with or without the party, the military leadership undoubtedly felt more comfortable with Prime Minister Marković's federal program than with national/ethnic and regional political agendas.

However, Baucal's cautious optimism had been based in his personal belief that the FEC program offers Yugoslavia real hope: a chance to finally cross the



threshold of failure and move into a better future. "He made no bones about the fact that the most important question is what kind of unified support and implementation that program will get."<sup>32</sup> Realistically, the weak showing of the Alliance for Reform Forces in subsequent fall/winter 1990 republic elections did not bode well for the Prime Minister's government party in the promised national, multiparty election.

Even if the Marković party had been a better political bet, there was also the danger that public military support could well backfire in light of increasing tensions between the military leadership and republic politicians in Slovenia and Croatia over issues of republic militias and the demands for the arrest of the Croatian defense minister on charges of plotting armed uprising.

Thus, the army not only had trouble finding an appropriate political partner, but for the most likely choice, there were reasons to avoid any such relationship. As one Marković supporter put it, the army as a political ally would be about as useful as going full steam ahead with IMF prescriptions for economic health. If the 8,608 enterprises that were in serious trouble went bankrupt, putting some 3.2 million Yugoslav workers out of work, that was not seen as an asset for the government party at the polls.

In the meantime, the army attempted its own experiment in party-building. Along with the announcement that LCY cells within the military would be dissolved and official agreement to depoliticization of the army,<sup>33</sup> came the birth announcement of the League of Communists--Movement for Yugoslavia in the form

of a letter to LC members in the army inviting them to join the new party.

Thus, it appears that the issue was not so much the survival of the LC-JNA as an army sanctuary for the party, as a shortage of viable national parties with whom to reestablish a party-army partnership that would allow the JNA to retain in some form the political mission that has kept Yugoslav soldiers in politics since 1945. With political parties proliferating at a dizzying speed, the military leadership consistently positioned itself on the side of cohesion; underlining that until civilian politicians could agree on the legal basis of the emerging multiparty political system, the army's job was to defend the existing constitution.

This automatically brought the military leadership into the whirlwind of ethnic/territorial/bureaucratic conflict over competing confederal/federal constitutional agendas. Moreover, as Serbs in the predominately Serbian city of Knin took up arms to conduct what Croatian authorities viewed as an illegal referendum on Serbian autonomy within the republic,<sup>34</sup> with Kosovo under what many Kosovar Albanians experience as martial law, there were fears that there would be no time to develop political alternatives. The army warned of "the unforeseeable consequences" of Yugoslav disintegration.<sup>35</sup> In and outside of Yugoslavia there was talk of civil war.

### *Will Yugoslavia Survive?*

This is not the first time that serious questions have been raised as to the ability of Yugoslavia to pull together instead of pulling apart. For a good ten years

before Tito died in 1980, the media speculated that without his charismatic authority, the country faced civil war, an army coup, or return to the Soviet bloc.<sup>36</sup> In these days of post-Communist East Central Europe there is no bloc to rejoin. However, ethnic tensions could escalate into armed conflict either in Croatia or Kosovo. Yugoslav soldiers in politics could lose patience with the chaotic process leading to elections and move to protect the existing constitutional order.

Evaluating such worse-case scenarios is particularly difficult due to the Faulknerian quality of post-Tito Yugoslav politics: full of sound and fury. This combination of verbal sectarianism and negotiated solutions makes it extremely hard to tell signal from noise. Are the voices of doom and disaster telling it like it is or crying wolf in the choreography of an on-going political struggle?

I do not want to downplay the pitfalls on the Yugoslav road to multiparty democracy or the legitimate fears of the 600,000 (1981 census) Serbs in Croatia that their rights will be swept away in the euphoria of consolidating Tudjman's center-right government. Given the history of ethnic violence, such fears were virtually inevitable. It would not be reasonable to expect the Serbian minority to avoid the infection of the rising nationalist ferment or not to fear in the face of the contradictory signals in the wake of mid-summer declarations of sovereignty by Slovenia and Kosovo.

As of March 1990, notwithstanding the warning from the armed forces that the Yugoslav military is prepared to defend Yugoslav territorial integrity, the Slovenes suffered few consequences. Conversely, Serbian authorities suspended



the provincial government following the proclamation by the Albanian dominated provincial assembly that Kosovo was an "independent unit in Yugoslavia, equal to other republics".<sup>37</sup> Reportedly thousands of Albanians lost their jobs. There was talk of Albanian uprising, and Serbian police conducted house searches for weapons. With the shape of the future Yugoslav federation or confederation at stake, jockeying for political advantage involves high risk tactics, including threat of force.

On the side of a negotiated solution, we can note that the Slovene leadership stressed that sovereignty for Slovenia did not necessarily equate with withdrawing from Yugoslavia. Those who appeared to dominate the spectrum of policymakers in Ljubljana saw themselves as positioning the republic to take part in a "flexible federation" that would leave Slovenia with an independent legal system, expanded foreign policy powers, and control over units of the Yugoslav army stationed on Slovene territory.<sup>38</sup>

The Kosovo assembly did not vote to separate; it voted to change its status. Whatever one may think of the consequences, it was predictable that the Serbian leadership would draw its own political "line in the sand." In the Serbian view Kosovo will remain part of Serbia no matter what federal relationship is negotiated between Yugoslav republics. In the long run it is unlikely that Serbia will be able to have it both ways. If the JNA intervenes to protect the autonomy of Serbs in Croatia, the absence of a federal presence to protect the 90% Albanian population of Kosovo, the sentences imposed for behavior no more violent than that of Serbs

in Croatia can only foster the stereotype of the JNA as an instrument of Serbian strongman Slobodan Milošević. That is an inconsistency that the army leadership has seemed anxious to avoid. The result has been to balance militant rhetoric with quiet consultations.<sup>39</sup>

Much hangs on the future shape of Yugoslav federalism being debated in the Yugoslav presidency even as I write. The Yugoslav army has made quite clear that it is willing to defend the current constitutional order and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. It is trying to make the transition from a party-army partnership to what the literature on civil-military relations considers a guardian role in which politicians in uniform provide the limits beyond which disintegrative forces can not go. It is a form of internal deterrence; high risk, thankless. But the alternatives may well be worse for the army as well as the country.

In the meantime, to whatever degree there is hope that civilian and military politicians alike can stay on the tightrope between national/ethnic expectations and the hard choices that must be made if Yugoslavia is going to join the road to a united Europe in 1992, that hope requires avoiding dead end confrontations. In this regard, unlike the stereotype of the military mind, the Yugoslav military leadership has been at least and perhaps more flexible than Yugoslav civilian politicians. As the former head of the LC JNA put it, "Ultimatums, blockades, pressure, and faits accomplis have never resulted in resolution of problems between peoples."<sup>40</sup>



**Postscript:****The Road to Civil War:**

On Saturday March 9, 1991, as this paper was delivered in Columbia, Missouri, Serbian police clashed with 80,000 demonstrators representing ten opposition parties demanding replacement of the Director of Belgrade Television and four TV editors for "unobjective reporting which favored only the Socialist Party of Serbia."<sup>41</sup> Army tanks rolled into Belgrade to protect "all important facilities." According to official sources a high school student and a policeman died. Early estimates that some eighty persons were injured went up to two hundred,<sup>42</sup> while many in Belgrade believed the casualty count to be much higher. The tanks pulled back Sunday afternoon. Around midnight, ten thousand students ignored the police ban on demonstrations and marched back into the city center. By Tuesday, 100,000 demonstrators had gathered and the government of Serbia retreated, asking for the resignations of the Milošević men running Belgrade television. Milošević's subsequent stormy session with Belgrade University students revealed the depth of his growing opposition. Shortly after this meeting, Interior Minister Radmilo Bogdanović was sacrificed to appease growing popular outrage.<sup>43</sup> There was euphoria; an expectation that the Serbian president would be forced into further democratic concessions.

It is within this context that one must understand the confusing, tangled events that brought about the collapse of political dialogue into a dead end civil

war. Beyond an estimated 2,500 dead, there are casualties in the thousands; among them the Yugoslavia that the JNA set out to save.

Slobodan Milošević moved to deal with the problem of his opposition within Serbia and simultaneously to position himself in the ongoing struggle over the fate of the future Yugoslavia by pressuring the Collective Presidency to give emergency powers to the Yugoslav army. The Serbian backed resolution failed by one vote; that of the Kosovo representative subsequently replaced by a Milošević "yes man".

There followed a dramatic role reversal in which Dr. Borisav Jović, the Serbian representative and president of the State Presidency--resigned, Milošević refused to recognize the authority of the federal presidency<sup>44</sup> and the self-declared "sovereign" republics of Slovenia and Croatia came to the defense of Yugoslav unity with calls for a meeting to preserve the federation.<sup>45</sup>

The European Community reacted swiftly with financial incentives. According to Yugoslav sources, the European Parliament was ready to back up concern "for Yugoslav unity and integrity" with a 1.1 billion loan on "very favorable" conditions and, most importantly, open negotiations for the possible acceptance of Yugoslavia as an associate member of the European Community.<sup>46</sup>

After ten days of brinkmanship--what appeared to many observers as the prelude to a military takeover or the withdrawal of Serbia from Yugoslavia--the stormy confrontation of republic politicians posturing as ethnic gladiators subsided. During this lull, the High Command of the Yugoslav National Army issued a statement assuring the country and the world that the JNA would stay out of

politics, but would not tolerate armed inter-ethnic conflict or civil war.<sup>47</sup>

On the eve of the summit meeting of the presidents of all Yugoslav republics, Milošević and Croatian president Franjo Tudjman held a secret meeting on the border of Serbia and Croatia at Karadjordjevo "to eliminate options which could pose a threat to the interests of both Serbs and Croats (read euphemism for civil war), with full respect for the historical interests of both nations (to) determine a time frame within which Yugoslavia's pressing problems must be solved."<sup>48</sup>

External incentives for cohesion continued with a visit to Yugoslavia by a delegation of the US Congress CSCE Commission headed by Senator Dennis DeConcini, who held "open talks" in a spirit of "mutual respect and understanding" with Serbian President Milošević<sup>49</sup> and met with the Federal President Jović and Prime Minister Marković as well. The DeConcini message of U.S. concern for Yugoslavia was reinforced by a letter from President Bush to Prime Minister Ante Marković stating bluntly:

it is our wish that the differences among the peoples (of Yugoslavia) be solved within the framework of a united, democratic Yugoslavia, and we will not encourage or reward those striving to disrupt the country.<sup>50</sup>

However, this window of opportunity slammed shut with the subsequent Serbian/Montenegrin move to block Croatian representative to the Collective State Presidency Stjepan Mesić from rotating into the job of president of the presidency in mid-May on schedule. Notwithstanding the Serbian leaderships' continued rhetoric in the name of Yugoslavia, the rejection of Mesić appeared to confirm suspicions that Jović's resignation in March signaled that Milošević had given up



on Yugoslavia (much as he gave up on the LCY when he formed the Socialist Party of Serbia in July 1990) and embarked on a land grab in the name of "Greater Serbia."<sup>51</sup>

Slovenia and Croatia declared "independence" at the end of June. The week before that declaration, the general feeling among knowledgeable Slovene observers that I talked with in Ljubljana was this was yet another step in the jockeying for position. Then, reportedly in violation of a deal cut with the federal government for joint customs presence while negotiations continued, the Slovenes forced out federal customs agents and attempted to move their border with the rest of Yugoslavia to the border with Croatia. Shooting started when the Yugoslav Army went in to reestablish the federal customs presence on Slovene borders. The Slovene defense minister immediately announced that the army had declared war against Slovenia and control over the Slovene political spectrum went into the hands of those policymakers for whom independence equated with separation.

Who gave orders to whom and who was responsible for what remains very unclear. Prime Minister Ante Marković, in a closed session of the government (Federal Executive Council) that leaked within days, has accused the army of acting on its own in Slovenia.<sup>52</sup> The army insists that it was acting in accordance with decisions of the government and the presidency; that politicians must take their share of responsibility.<sup>53</sup> This mutual recrimination worsened relations among the government and the army; further weakening Marković's credibility.

The European Community was able to broker a cease-fire monitored by EC

observers in Slovenia. However, the importance of that cease-fire from the perspective of civil-military relations and expanding violence was less its existence than the manner in which it came about and the way in which the Slovenes took the opportunity to humiliate the army. Even if one takes at face value the army assertion that the Slovenes undoubtedly lied about their losses, the public humiliation of four members of the Slovene Territorial Defense, ten foreigners, and a roughly a hundred members of the JNA,<sup>54</sup> the stripping of young soldiers of clothes as well as possessions before sending them back in pajamas to Belgrade, and public gloating, played a much more important role in the ongoing war between Croatia and the JNA than is generally realized.

Predictably, violence rapidly escalated in the self-proclaimed autonomous region of Krajina. Local Serbian authorities, who had served warning that they would not live in a Croatia outside of Yugoslavia, declared that they were uniting with Bosanka Krajina in Bosnia-Herzegovina to form "a greater Serbian community."

Political dialogue among republic leaders collapsed into polarized confrontation. The Serbian agenda openly shifted to that of a rump Yugoslavia minus Slovenia and Croatia.<sup>55</sup> In the wake of the Slovene humiliation, moderates in the JNA lost ground. Hardliners within the armed forces more and more openly supported Serbian irregulars battling Croatian militia, occupying territory well beyond that with a majority of Serbian population. As one colleague told me as we watched a defensive JNA press conference on Belgrade television, "This is our

most dangerous time. The army is unpredictable; a wounded animal."

In September Macedonia declared that it was unwilling to coexist in any such greater Serbia and held its own independence referendum. Meanwhile, the Croatian leadership blockaded JNA garrisons in Croatia; then attacked them in a desperate attempt to provoke Germany into following through on the threat to recognize Croatia if Serbian insurgents and their JNA supporters continued bombarding Croatian cities.<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, once the UN arms embargo was declared, Croats openly violated the rotating cease-fire in search of weapons. As one Croatian official acknowledged (their forces had captured 60 army garrisons and begun fighting in several others, including one at Varazdin north of Zagreb), " we had some work to finish up."<sup>57</sup> It was a costly miscalculation in which the Croatian government substantially escalated the punishment inflicted on the Croatian cities and civilians in the name of independence.

When the chips were down, Germany decided that Croatia was not worth splitting the European Community. Still more predictably with 25,000 soldiers and their families hostage, the conflict became a war of Croatia against the army. Army leaders warned that it would be an eye for an eye: one structure of vital importance for Croatia destroyed for each army installation.<sup>58</sup>

Amid escalating conflict the federal government essentially vanished. Prime Minister Marković was not reported as a party to the perpetual cease-fire agreements. His demand for the resignation of Kadijevic and other high ranking



military leaders fell on deaf ears. Half of the state presidency under Vice-President Branko Kostić, Montenegrin representative, in alliance with Serbia and the once autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo, has assumed the powers of parliament in a move that President Stjepan Mesić, supported by the representatives of Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina declared to be a coup.<sup>59</sup>

Notwithstanding the virtual lack of international reaction, and perhaps as a result of the somewhat "Alice-in-Wonderland" situation in that all four of these republics have declared their independence,<sup>60</sup> Mesić is right. Academically speaking, Kostić was announcing a civilian coup. The nature and extent of military support for that announcement was unclear. In terms of the military, the process might best be described as "creeping coup."<sup>61</sup>

With the government gone and the presidency split, there is no doubt that the JNA is operating in a vacuum; a corporate entity in a race for its own survival. The armed forces that perceived its mission not to determine the future of Yugoslavia<sup>62</sup> but to act as a buffer between warring ethnic groups has become the accelerator of the civil war. That war has created its own ugly reality in lost lives, crippled economies, and destruction including the militarily senseless attacks on the walled heart of historic Dubrovnik. Surely this was not the "more democratic," "more humane" solution that Yugoslav military leaders had in mind following the collapse of the LCY 14th Congress.

The survival of what appeared to be an emerging Serbian civil-military

coalition government is still too close to call. This is a stressful partnership at best. Tensions flared as the debate about whether and where United Nations' peacekeeping forces should be stationed inches towards agreement. According to Miloš Vasić, military editor of the Belgrade independent Vreme:

both sides have a lot to complain about. Milošević accuses the army of being incompetent and inefficient in military terms. The army accuses Milošević of destroying chances to preserve Yugoslavia.<sup>63</sup>

If the 14th cease-fire negotiated November 23, by special U.N. envoy Cyrus R. Vance in Geneva between Presidents Milošević, Tudjman and federal Defense Minister Kadijević holds, there is the fundamental political problem of who governs not only the newly declared Serb Autonomous Region of Slavonja, Baranja and Western Srem--currently being settled by Serbian refugees--and Krajina, but in Serbia itself during negotiation over the fate of post-civil war Yugoslavia. Can Milošević control and speak for the "Serbian dominated federal army"? Will he become a figurehead of an Army junta behind the scenes? Will there be an open Army takeover in the name of Serbia or Yugoslavia?

All of the above are possible scenarios. And what the outcome of any one of them would mean hinges on still another unknown, i.e. the political agenda of the faction controlling an increasingly divided Army when shooting stops and all sides count their dead and tally the destruction.

Much depends on whether the European Community follows through on the threat of economic sanctions. Much depends on whether the 14th cease-fire is firm enough to allow the U.N. "inkblot" deployment that Cyrus Vance recommends



to pacify the most violent area; on whether the U.N. arms embargo can be stopped from leaking like a sieve. Much depends on containing the war before it engulfs Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Yet still more depends on the Serbian and Croatian people themselves.

Are those Serbs committed to democracy and the market willing to become prisoners along with captive Croats, Muslims, and Albanians of an authoritarian, dictatorial "greater Serbia" masquerading as Yugoslavia? Are Serbs willing to pay the price of a perpetual war economy, lack of international recognition and isolation from Europe 1992 for territorial expansion? Will the majority of the 600,000 Serbian minority in Croatia--only roughly a third of which live in the disputed territories--be safer as a result?

Are Croats willing to accept another Vukovar, and then another? Are those who voted for independence willing to pay the price of a still further mutilated Croatia, of population transfers to achieve recognition and separation? That the Tudjman government has felt it necessary to establish censorship within Croatia suggests growing opposition to the conduct of this war; growing realization that there is no international rescue mission on the horizon.

Meanwhile, the army itself is hemorrhaging with desertions, under attack in Montenegro,<sup>64</sup> accused of treason within Serbia proper,<sup>65</sup> and unable to control

the proliferating undisciplined irregular militias fighting with Serbs and Croats alike.<sup>66</sup> In the end, Ante Marković may well have been prophetic in his judgment that when the federal army started bombing on its own, it meant the end of JNA as well as the end of Yugoslavia.<sup>67</sup>

Columbia, Missouri; December 1, 1991

## Notes

1. Politika, January 24, 1990.
2. Interview with Dr. Dimitrije Baucal, chairman of the Committee of the LC in the Federal Secretariat for National Defense, Narodna armija, January 18, 1990, pp. 10-12; JPRS-EER, May 9, 1990.
3. The 14th Party Congress resumed in May under less than auspicious conditions. Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia boycotted the session. Although members of these party organizations subsequently did attend meetings of the preparatory committee for a September LCY "renewal" Congress as observers, the Communist electoral defeats in Slovenia and Croatia made it unlikely that these regional parties would have much interest in reconstituting the federal League of Communists. Belgrade Tanjug June 5, 1990; FBIS-EE 7 June 1990. By July the preparatory committees draft documents for the renewal Congress could not be adopted due to the absence of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro.
4. Aleksandar Tijanić, "March Step: The Army is Against Federalization of the LCY," NIN, December 3, 1989; FBIS, February 20, 1990.
5. Vladimir Dedijer, With Tito Through the War: Partisan Diary, 1941-1944. (London: A. Hamilton, 1951): 39.
6. Robin Alison Remington, "Civil-Military Relations in Yugoslavia: The Partisan Vanguard," Studies in Comparative Communism, vol. 11, no. 3 (Autumn 1978): 250-264.
7. Borba, December 23, 1971.
8. Narodna armija, April 14, 1983.
9. Quoted by NIN, December 3, 1989.
10. Tanjug, February 14, 1990; FBIS February 16, 1990.
11. Danas, February 6, 1990; FBIS, April 30, 1990. Reportedly at the press conference after the Slovene delegates walked out of the LCY 14th Party Congress, "the Army too agreed that the work of the Congress was illegitimate after the Slovene delegation had walked out." Radio Ljubljana, January 23, 1990; FBIS January 24.
12. Belgrade Tanjug, January 24, 1990.
13. Tanjug, July 26, 1990; FBIS-EEU July 27, 1990.



14. Reported in Pravda (Moscow), August 4, 1990; FBIS-SOV August 6, 1990.
15. Tanjug, March 28, 1990; FBIS-EEU March 29, 1990.
16. Borba interview, May 19-20, 1990; FBIS May 20, 1990.
17. RFE/RL Daily Report, September 24, 1990, p. 3.
18. Tanjug, May 18, 1990; FBIS-EEU, May 21, 1990.
19. Vladimir Dedijer, With Tito Through the War: Partisan Diary, 1941-1944, op. cit., p. 39.
20. Narodna armija, January 18, 1990; JPRS-EER, May 9, 1990.
21. Federal elections were originally scheduled for the end of 1990. However, in the sound and fury that accompanied the remaining republic elections, in November and December, it became clear that there were no agreed upon rules of the electoral game at the federal level.
22. For an expanded analysis see Robin Alison Remington, "The Federal Dilemma in Yugoslavia," Current History, (December 1990): 405.
23. The Slovene opposition coalition Demos received 55 percent of the vote to 17 percent for the renamed Slovene LC. The Croatian Democratic Community took 205 of the 356 seats in the three-chamber Croatian parliament.
24. Borba, May 29, 1990. The New York Times, May 30, 1990.
25. Borba, July 25, 1991; for analysis The Christian Science Monitor July 31, 1991.
26. Marković discussed his plan for a coalition of parties in support of the government program in general terms during the spring, Borba, May 29, 1990. By July he committed the Federal Executive Council to forming an alliance of reform forces. Although the Prime Minister's decision was hailed as a sign of good sense abroad, reactions within Yugoslav ranged from approval to ambivalence and hostility. Christian Science Monitor, July 31, 1990; Borba, July 25, 1990.
27. In June an estimated anti-government 40,000 demonstrators in Belgrade demanded Serbian multiparty elections. Washington Post, June 14, 1990. The Serbian leadership countered with a hastily called July referendum on whether or not Serbia should adopt its new constitution before such elections and rammed through the new Serbian constitution before yielding to opposition pressure to vote before the end of the year. The New York Times, September 12, 1990.

28. Belgrade Tanjug, December 12, 1990; FBIS-EEU, December 13, 1990.
29. Belgrade Tanjug domestic service, December 20, 1990; FBIS-EEU, December 20, 1990.
30. Tanjug, May 9, 1990; FBIS-EEU, May 10, 1990.
31. According to a Borba mid-summer public opinion poll, the Prime Minister received a 72 percent vote of confidence as compared with 21 percent for Milosević and 7 percent for the new Croatian president Franjo Tudjman. The Christian Science Monitor, July 11, 1990.
32. Narodna armija, January 18, 1990, *op. cit.*
33. Statement by the Federal Secretariat of National Defense that all political organizing should be banned from the armed forces, Belgrade Tanjug domestic service December 13; FBIS-EEU, December 14, 1990.
34. Voting took place on successive Sundays. The New York Times, August 20, 1990.
35. Narodna Armija, (Belgrade) July 5, 1990; quoted from Milan Andrejevich, "Serbia Cracks Down on Kosovo," RFE Report on Eastern Europe, 27 July 1990.
36. The Financial Times, (London) April 25, 1971.
37. For analysis, see Milan Andrejevich, "Kosovo and Slovenia Declare Their Sovereignty," RFE Research on Eastern Europe (July 27, 1990).
38. Delo, (Ljubljana) July 3, 1990. Andrejevich, *ibid.*
39. Note reports of a meeting between the Slovene leadership and Defense Secretary Kadijević just prior to the spring elections (Borba, April 19, 1990; FBIS-EEU April 23, 1990) and with the new President of Croatia Franjo Tudjman during the crisis surrounding the Serbian minority in Knin. Tudjman briefed the Croatian presidency on his talks with SFRY presidency. The Croatian presidency specifically welcomed the statement that the "JNA neither has nor will participate in actions directed against the democratic government." Also the Army is taking measures to call to account certain members of the armed forces who arbitrarily took part in the unrest. Tanjug August 22, 1990; FBIS-EEU August 23, 1990.
40. Danas, February 6, 1990; FBIS, April 30, 1990. Reportedly at the press conference after the Slovene delegates walked out of the LCY 14th Party Congress, "the Army too agreed that the work of the Congress was illegitimate after the Slovene delegation had walked out." Radio Ljubljana, January 23, 1990; FBIS January 24.
41. Miroslav Costić, Politika: The International Weekly, (Belgrade), March 16-22, 1991.



42. Tanjug, March 19, 1991.
43. The New York Times, April 11, 1991.
44. English language text of Jovic's March 15 resignation and Milosevic's March 16 speech, Politika: The International Weekly, 23-29 March 1991.
45. Zagreb Domestic Service, 18 March 1991; "Croatian Slovenian Leaders Propose Crisis Talks," FBIS-EEU-91-053, 19 March 1991. For analysis, see David Binder, "Yugoslavia Edges Away . . . ," The New York Times, 21 March 1991.
46. Politika: The International Weekly, 23-29 March 1991, p. 2.
47. Statement by the Armed Forces Supreme Command Headquarters. Belgrade Domestic Service, 19 March 1991; "Armed Forces View Defense Issue," FBIS-EEU-91-053, 19 March 1991, p. 5.
48. Dragan Bujosević "Secret Talks Tudjman-Milošević," Politika: The International Weekly, 30 March-5 April 1991, p. 1. Supporters of Ante Markovic's Alliance of Reform Forces charged that the Tudjman-Milošević meeting was part of a concerted plot by these two republic presidents to "eliminate" the Prime Minister. Borba, March 28, 1991; See also The New York Times, April 20, 1991. Summary of Communique "Interests of Entire Nations . . . ," in ibid.
49. Report of Communique between Milošević and Senator DeConcini. These meetings were cited by Yugoslav sources as evidence that there would be no need for the CSCE Centre for Conflict Resolution scheduled to open in Vienna to "get in on the act" with respect to the differences among Yugoslav nations. Stevan Niksic, "After the Storm," Politika: The International Weekly, 30 March-5 April 1991.
50. Reportedly sent 26 March 1991. Quoted by Milicia Stamatovic, "Future Lies in Democracy," Politika: The International Weekly, 6-12 April 1991, p. 2.
51. Stephen Engelberg "Carving out a Greater Serbia," The New York Times Magazine, September 1, 1991.
52. Vreme, (Belgrade), September 23, 1991, pp. 5-12. During the Slovene crisis in July, the Prime Minister had gone on television and insisted that he had been left out of the decision-making loop by army commanders to no avail. Indeed, in Belgrade the popular reaction was that Markovic was trying to save himself by abandoning the military establishment.
53. Narodna Armija (Belgrade), July 6, 1991. To be sure that those abroad got the point as well as at home, the army weekly produced an English-language monograph, "The Truth About the Armed Conflict in Slovenia," (Belgrade: Narodna Armija Publishing House, 1991).

54. Radio Belgrade, July 6, 1991.
55. Interviews in Belgrade, July 27-July 9, 1991.
56. See German statements in relationship to the EC peace conference, The New York Times, September 6, 1991. Although presumably intended as deterrence directed against Serbian forces within the federal army, the Croatian leadership seemed to assume it was not a threat but a promise.
57. The New York Times, September 19, 1991.
58. Politika: The International Weekly, October 5-11, 1991.
59. The New York Times, October 5, 1991. For analysis, see Dragan Bujosevic, "Yugoslavia--A Country that No Longer Exists: Drawing New Borders," Politika: The International Weekly, October 12-18, 1991.
60. By mid-October Bosnia-Hercegovina had declared its independence in a last ditch effort to avoid being sucked into the whirlpool of civil war. The New York Times, October 16, 1991.
61. Discussions with Dr. Milan Popovic, John Marshall Fellow, University of Missouri-Columbia, October 2, 1991.
62. Restated by Defense Minister Kadijevic in The Hague, The New York Times, October 11, 1991.
63. The New York Times, November 29, 1991.
64. Faced with peace demonstrations at Titograd University and protests by Montenegrin mothers by the end of October, Momir Bulatovic, President of Montenegro, asked the Federal army to permit all Montenegrin reservists to return home. As negotiations with the army continue, so does pressure from his constituents. On November 16, families of 40 Montenegrin soldiers told to report for duty held sit-ins in Bulatovic's office. The New York Times, November 22, 1991.
65. Serbian reservists who left combat positions are "accusing the army of incompetence, meaningless casualties, and treason," raising the possibility that the Serbian people and their leaders "do not feel the same about the Army." Dragan Bujosevic, Politika: The International Weekly, October 5-11, 1991.

66. On the eve of the 14th cease-fire, Dobrosav Paraga, party of the Right, who claims to command a 10,000 man paramilitary force was arrested in Croatia and has called for the overthrow of the Tudjman government. The New York Times, November 24, 1991. This figure is substantially larger than other reports of at least six private armies some as large as 5,000 fighting along side the Federal army or Croatian forces lead by militants "and one by a Belgrade gangster accused of homicides (at home) and abroad." David Binder, The New York Times, November 29, 1991.
67. Vreme (Belgrade), September 23, 1991, p. 12.