

Affirmation of Statehood and Territorial Integrity of Croatia (1)

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Croatia's tradition of statehood extends back through the medieval period over thirteen centuries, and continued until the establishment by the Versailles Peace Treaty of the entity of the Slovenes-Croatians-Serbs (in essence what came to be the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). The Croatians' experience with Serbia's Karadjordje dynasty during the inter-war period and with Tito in the second Yugoslavia only validated and strengthened traditional yearning of all Croatian to have their own state.

The creation of the Banovina of Croatia in 1939, and even that of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941 under adverse conditions, were expressions of that same desire shared by all Croatians. The affirmation of the golden thread of Croatian statehood continued subsequently during the Communist period, where it was expressed in the decisions taken by the ZAVNOH (State Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Croatia) and in Croatia's constitutions, beginning with that of 1946 and continuing to the last constitution, the 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Croatia. All these initiatives reflected the basic quest for Croatian independence, despite the fact that they were manipulated from the top with the intent, on the one hand, of creating the illusion of legality and of building

legitimacy for Communist Yugoslavia and, on the other, of attracting support from the Croatian population.

This said, it is important to point out that the provisions enshrined in the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Croatia guaranteed the right of nations to self-determination – to include the right to secede – and also guaranteed precisely determined borders among the republics. This was to have a significant impact on Croatia's achieving diplomatic recognition.

In order to understand fully Croatia's situation during this crucial period of 1990-1992 – to which the fate or collapse of the second, Communist, Yugoslavia was also closely connected – it is

necessary to take into consideration the political situation abroad, and especially that in Europe, as well as to assess the political balance within the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) itself.

In the present assessment, I will not deal in great detail with the domestic political situation. Rather, I will focus on the international political context over the last several years, one whose principal actors were not favourably disposed to the disintegration and collapse of even an artificially-created state (or the "Yugoslav tragedy" as it has been called with good reason).

The International Balance

To understand international relations more completely, especially

The article gives a historical overview of the political developments leading to the break-up of Yugoslavia and, subsequently, affirmation of the Croatian state and its territorial integrity. The initial international situation was not in favour of Croatian independence since the international community intended to preserve the common Yugoslav state. After the Croatian (and Slovenian) declaration of independence (1991) the EC and UN began to see the impossibility of a Yugoslav state, a fact soon highlighted by the aggressive Belgrade's military intervention. Further, particular role of Germany and diplomatic recognition of Croatian state are discussed including an overview of the developments concerning the final recognition of Croatian territorial integrity.

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within the European context, would require an analysis in considerable detail of the Congresses of Vienna and Berlin, the Versailles and Rapallo Treaties, and the league of Nations, as well as of the Monroe, Wilson, Truman, Kennedy, Nixon, and Reagan Doctrines. In dealing with these very important principles, we will have to limit ourselves, however, only to those historical sources which have a direct bearing on an understanding of present-day international relations, such as the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the basic documents of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and the 1989 Paris Charter. One is completely justified in viewing these documents as the basis for generally-accepted terms of reference and as the legal basis of the present-day interstate system in Europe, also taking into account, of course, the role of NATO and the European Union.

Here, I will address only one basic principle which was established by the Wilson Doctrine just before the end of World War I, and which even today is, still seen as the keystone of that doctrine, namely "*the right of peoples to self-determination*". This principle, and rightly so, found a prominent place in the principles of the League of Nations and, later, in the United Nations Charter, as well as in CSCE documents.

This principle played determinant role in the new framework after World War I as well as in the international process of decolonization.

However, although the principle of national self-determination was applied when the international community recognized Croatia and Slovenia, today it is no longer the keystone principle, nor is it decisive, in international relations.

Significantly, President Bush's term in office, which coincided with the collapse of the Communist system and the disintegration of the last two neo-colonialist states in Europe – the USSR and the SFRY – introduced and made part of the United States' day-to-day conduct of foreign policy a new doctrine which was diametrically opposed to the Wilson Doctrine. Known as the Bush Doctrine, the latter held that "States may neither be destroyed nor created." That, in fact, meant that those countries which were recognized in late eighties of the present century present cannot be allowed to disappear or to disintegrate, and, by the same token, that one cannot allow new states to be born. All this is in line with the very well known attitude of "the great powers" in favor of preserving the *status quo ante*, which is also the prevailing ethos of international relations, especially as conducted by the great powers of the world. Confirmation of this way of thinking was

evident in the United Nations' behavior, especially when De Cuellar was its Secretary-General. Given this framework, it was not by accident that Budimir Lončar, the Foreign Minister of the SFRY – then already in its death-throes – sought to frighten and threaten the world at the CSCE summit in Berlin on 19 June 1991 by claiming that "The collapse of Yugoslavia would be like a time-bomb in the middle of Europe and could even now spark a chain reaction on the old continent, in which there are already forty-five ethnic conflicts."

De Cuellar's successor as Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros Ghali confirmed his support for the maintenance of the *status quo* during the initial period of his term by his even greater insistence that the United Nations would no longer be able to respect the principle of "national self-determination", since that would confront the international community with massive upheaval, given the fact that would lead to the emergence of more new states than the total of those which exist at present, forcing the United Nations to cope with a situation in which there would be more than four hundred states.

Looking at the international world order at the end of the twentieth century, one can conclude without exaggerating that the Slovenes and Croatians caught one of the last trains of independence, although clearly also relying heavily on the principle of a nation's right to self-defense. At the same time, Croatia must be aware that, now that right has been taken advantage of and used up, the contemporary principles of the world order must take precedence, which in the case of Croatia is eminently pragmatic. The principle of national self-determination must now be treated as a historical category. Croatia must adhere to the concept of the world's great powers to the effect that this principle from the Wilson Doctrine, despite its continuing presence in the United Nations Charter, has undergone a revision.

However, it was not only because of the evolution in the world's understanding of the right of self-determination that Croatia's prospects for achieving the Croatian people's centuries-old desire for an independent Croatia were daunting. There were also other obstacles:

1. Yugoslavia's standing and reputation around the world which it achieved in 1948 as the first "dissident" state by standing up to Stalin and the Cominform and, subsequently, as a leader in the Non-Aligned Movement.

2. The interests of the permanent members of the United Nations' Security Council.

a. Great Britain and France. They were the main patrons of the creation of Yugoslavia – or Greater Serbia – following both world wars, and there was close diplomatic coordination among Belgrade, London and Paris. Of course, there is an additional reason for this sensitivity, for one cannot exclude the possibility of similar movements in Northern Ireland, Wales or, in Scotland and, as far as France is concerned, in Corsica and in its Basque region.

b. The United States, as a result of its experience in Vietnam has consistently followed a policy of avoiding becoming engaged militarily in crises which do not threaten directly its vital interests and in which it cannot guarantee a successful and quick outcome. In the case of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, the United States has taken advantage of its inertia and indecisiveness, delivering the problem first toward the European Community and subsequently steering it toward the United Nations.

c. Following the collapse of the "Eastern bloc" and the voluntary but unavoidable dissolution of the Warsaw Pact – which accompanied the convulsions of the USSR's economic collapse, Russia, using its position on the Security Council to ensure that developments in and the lessons from the Balkans did not spread to its Eurasian landmass, supported Yugoslavia's continued existence. The first Russian ambassador to Croatia, Mr. Kerestezhants, acknowledged that formerly for Russia Belgrade was equivalent to Yugoslavia, as a result of which no attention at all was paid to the other republics and peoples in the former Yugoslavia. This was the case not only in Russia or in the former USSR, but also in most of the rest of the world and even in Europe. In addition, the impact of Russia's also being Orthodox and of its traditional alliance with Serbia should not be underestimated.

d. China was also hesitating because of its ethnic composition and its determination that while accepting the need for changes in its social structure by a gradual adoption of market conditions it would freeze the democratization of its political system. Above all China viewed the example of Croatia and Slovenia as an unwelcome precedent for the future of Tibet and even Taiwan.

3. The end of the Cold War, the withdrawal of the USSR from the world's political stage as a "superpower" the voluntary dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the unsuccessful coup attempt in Moscow in August 1991 – which all occurred without the firing of a single shot – lulled

Europe into thinking that armed conflict would no longer be possible in Europe, and that it was only a painful memory from the past. The Paris Charter, filled as it is with wonderful declarations about order in Europe as the Eastern Bloc was disappearing, is basically: flawed, however, since it does not provide for penalties sanctions and for those who do not respect the Charter's principles and prescriptions. Clearly, Europe underestimated the possibility for tyrants such as Saddam Husayn or Idi Amin to still emerge in Europe.

4. The international community saw the breakdown of the "Extraordinary" Congress of Yugoslavia's League of Communists in January 1990 and the results of the first democratic elections as part of a gradual democratization process within the continuing framework of Yugoslavia and as the result of the meltdown of Communism. Within that context, the fact was ignored that power in Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina had passed newly emerged to genuinely democratic political parties, while in Serbia and Montenegro the same totalitarian Communist parties remained in power, only cynically "Communist" from their name.

5. In January 1991, Europe and the rest of the world were focused on the Gulf War. Only thus can one explain that the ultimatum from the leadership of the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav Army on January 9, ordering the surrender of the Territorial Defense Forces' arms in Croatia and Slovenia, and the "Communiqué" by the Information Directorate of the Federal Secretariat for National Defense on January 24 were completely ignored by governments abroad and even largely passed over by the world media. Even though there was talk at the time of a "quiet" military coup or of a creeping toward military rule, one can take January 24, 1991 as the date when that occurred. It was on that day that the Yugoslav Army announced that it was the leading and the determining force in the former Yugoslavia, and that it was above and outside any official political body in the state, disregarding at this stage a role of Slobodan Milošević his right-hand man Borisav Jović may have played in shaping events.

6. During the first half of 1991, official positions throughout Europe toward the Yugoslav crisis were identical to those of France and Great Britain. For example, at the end of the European Community Summit on 7 April 1991, Jacques Santer announced the European Community's agreed-upon positions.

a. That the European Community has a duty to sup-

port Yugoslavia's unity and territorial integrity.

b. That individual republics, with Slovenia and Croatia specifically mentioned, as integral parts of Yugoslavia, must not foster any illusions about their prospects of joining Europe. That opportunity will be available in the future only to Yugoslavia.

c. That the European Community sees no reason to become involved in the SFRY's sensitive internal matters.

7. The visit by the United States' Secretary of State, James Baker, to Belgrade in June 1991, his terse discussions with the president of each of the republics of the former Yugoslavia, and his statement before he departed, reflected the international community's stand on the Yugoslav crisis, which Belgrade interpreted as a "green light" to use armed force to bring under control the "troublemakers" in Slovenia and Croatia.

8. On June 24, 1991, the European Community announced that it had approved a loan to Yugoslavia – read Belgrade – for 730 million ECUs, which the federal president, Ante Marković, viewed as a triumph for his personal policy. This initiative on the part of the European Community can only be explained as the resolute intention that all the relevant players should get the message that the European Twelve stood behind a "united" Yugoslavia. In formal terms, this was cast as support for the Ante Marković government but in real terms, at the same time this also served as encouragement to Milošević and the military and communist leadership, who were now assured that they could use force and move toward final armed confrontation without any fear of sanctions or responsibility or punishment.

9. The approaching of the Communist system's disintegration in the world made additional initiatives for political involvement of Croatian diaspora, the process of which became especially prominent in the USA and other countries of the New World. It is difficult to mention all the self-sacrificing and devoted actions, or the help Croatian diaspora gave to the "old country". Results of the first multi-party elections marked the newest Croatian revival in the homeland and we can freely say that Croats around the world have also greeted it with great enthusiasm.

Under the influence of such a process, American officials like R. Dole, C. Pell, de Conto D'Amato, and many others, have been pleading for Croatia and using their authority to criticize the official policy

of the United States of America towards Yugoslavia and Croatia. The year 1990 can be considered the year of strong and efficient Croatian lobbying in the USA.

However, the Serbian lobby was also efficient during that period. Regarding direct influence on the course of events in Croatia, in the middle of 1990, we also have to mention the role of Mrs. Helen Delich Bentley.

Kosovo crisis 1989/1990 and Knin barricades

During the year of 1989, due to the repression of Serbian authorities on the prevailing Albanian population in Kosovo, there soon were worldwide appeals to Yugoslav authorities, to stop the use of force. Because of disrespect of human rights, Yugoslavia was condemned from the USA congress and many other parliament institutions in the world.

Helen Delich Bentley, member of the House of Representatives of the State of Maryland, was a well-known lobbyist for the interests of Yugoslavia. At the beginning of August 1990, she visited Belgrade where she met Mr. Jović, President of SFRY, and Mr. Milošević. The basic idea of her advice and warnings to her Belgrade friends was to loosen their policy towards the population of Kosovo, and that if for any reason Serbia was not able to comply with that request, it would certainly be in the interest of Serbia to divert the attention of the world public from Kosovo by generating some other centres of crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

It was understandable that Serbian military leadership, which controlled a tremendously superior military potential, thought the alternative suggestion of Mrs. Delich much more acceptable. Consequently, Jović, met Rašković, Babić, and Opačić, leaders of Serbs in Knin, without the presence of any representative of Croatian government, (which was a deviation from the usual way of communication), especially when it was made public that the meeting took place. On the next day, August 16, JNA troops were put on the highest level of alert, and on August 17, 1990, Serbs from the town of Knin put barricades (beams) on roads in the areas of Knin, Gračac, and Obrovac, This was the beginning of the so-called "beam" revolution of which the role of the leader of the Serbian lobby in the USA, held by Mrs. Delich Bentley, should not be neglected.

The aim of this entire staging was to provoke intervention of Croatian police against local Serbs, who would then be protected by JNA for being "threatened". National groups, in this case Serbs,

being threatened by "Ustasha-like" authorities in Zagreb, was a frequently used delusion. In this way the instrumental of certain categories of the population in those areas was achieved, even though the possibility of some national groups being threatened could not be denied, this being the case in areas where a particular national group was a minority, rather than in areas where Serbs held absolute majority, such as in Knin. Authorities in Knin, on all levels, are under complete control of Serbs.

The fact that the "Knin barricades" – one of whose protagonists was partly Mrs. Delich Bentley, who was obsessed with assessments that Croatia economically could not exist as an independent state – did not offer a pretext for direct military confrontation and did not force a change in the democratically elected government in Croatia, left a military option as the main and the only solution for Milošević.

Of course, in relying on enormous military superiority, Belgrade chose the military solution following indisputable assessments, coming from both Yugoslav Counter Intelligence and Yugoslav diplomacy, that Europe and the world would idly tolerate the use of heavy weapons for the purpose of pacification of those republics which chose parliament democracy as the basic value of political activity. The only topic left open was when and under which excuse the Serbian Army would attack on democratically elected governments in Croatia and Slovenia.

Belgrade's choice – war option

Slovenia was the first one to be attacked, but after the 6-day war the Serbian Army facing defeat, restricted the creation of Serbo-slavia¹ to Yugoslavia, without Slovenia. On July 6, 1991 General Blagoje Adžić paraphrased the adventure in Slovenia in his aggressive speech: "We lost a battle, but not the war". Thorough personnel and other preparations to regain the spoiled reputation of the Yugoslav Army were hastily made.

Milošević – Saddam of the Balkans – for whom the British Guardian already in the Summer of 1991 said that he was "leading Serbian into a paranoia of wilderness" and who was described by The New York Times as a "Butcher of the Balkans" and most certainly of the last communist regime in Europe – adjusted his policy after the, 6-day war to their realistic abilities as seen from the Belgrade perspective. His slogans, "All Serbs in one state", serving the protection of Serbianhood, are actually Nazi. Let us recall Hitler, with his "blunt und boden" theory started with Anschluss (Austria), continued with

Sudetes (the Czech Republic) and Danzig (Poland), after which Great Britain and France, although unprepared, announced war on Hitler's Germany. This is the beginning of World War II.

Disregarding the achievements and traditions of European civilization concerning human rights and rights of minorities and national groups, in agreement with the principles and particular solutions of the Treaty of Paris, Milošević's strategy contains the nationalistic slogan, which was the only means of achieving a more perfidious goal: imposing Belgrade centralistic-unitarian government upon all republics of the former Yugoslavia, except upon Slovenia. Milošević could have never received support in Serbia if he had intended to restrict himself to the territory of Serbia, Montenegro, and those areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia, where Serbs were in majority. Hypocritical Milošević was sure that under the mask of Marković's federal government, politically exploiting his role as "protector of the undivided Yugoslavia" and deluding Serbia and the world, that he represented the same positions as the rest of the world headed by the USA and especially the relevant international institutions he would achieve his goals.

Milošević used demagogy, deceptions, and also force to convince that with the help of JNA and others he would be able to impose his regime upon regions from Gevgelija to Varaždin, Umag and Pula. These were the appetites of those who represented the idea of Great Serbia and unitarian Yugoslavia, as well as of the radicals when they began the conquest, allegedly only to the line of Karlobag-Karlovac-Virovitica.

The United States of America gave Milošević 6 months, from June until December of 1991, to carry out his demonic ambitions. For the sake of historical truth it is also necessary to put before the public that during the period when Milošević had a green light to carry out his Greater Serbian intentions, there were attitudes in relevant places which differed from official policy, then conducted by the EC and the USA. The author of these lines was a witness to those events. In the political department of NATO in Brussels, already in mid-June 1991, a working model titled Europe's Lebanon was made in which it was suggested in a drafted working paper that NATO and the EC jointly should, among other lines, contain the following elements:

- quote
- a) "identification of the aggressor in the Yugoslav conflict and the condemnation of changing borders between republics by force;
 - b) appeal to all democratic forces to oppose

the use of force and to search for a solution to the conflict by means of negotiations on the basis of principles and stipulations of the Helsinki Final Act and Treaty of Paris;

c) **recognition of Slovenia and Croatia**, and any other republic pronouncing independence, provided that it guarantees rights of minorities **within the borders established after World War II**, as well as the fulfilment of obligations from the Helsinki Final Act and Treaty of Paris;

d) beginning a diplomatic campaign for internationalization of the conflict within the UN;

e) possibility of economic embargo on Serbia with a remark put in brackets that it would be counter-productive to impose an arms embargo upon all Yugoslav republics, since Serbian militia and JNA, compared to other forces, were military better equipped."

This initiative within NATO, which was not only one of the most important, but also the only indisputable strong international military institution, was unfortunately blocked by some members of NATO, led by Greece. The explanation was that the political department of NATO was not allowed to take political stands before official political bodies of its members had discussed certain questions, and before certain viewpoints had been accepted at the highest levels of NATO.

In this way a precious and critical period of six to nine months was lost. At that moment, French diplomacy was flirting with WEU, and the USA was passively observing and waiting for things to develop, unfortunately encouraging the aggressor by its inertness.

Having seen that they could not extend the "anti-bureaucratic revolution" to Ljubljana and Zagreb by means of "peace and solidarity rallies" using the masses which had gathered at Gazimestan (Kosovo, in June 1989), the ruling circles in Belgrade – and especially Milošević and the military's top leadership – were convinced that they could make the disobedient Slovenes and Croatians submit through the use of force.

That juncture approached especially after the results of the first democratic Elections in all the republics of the former Yugoslavia (apart from Serbia and Montenegro). It was only a question of when, and using what pretext for the benefit of world, not local, opinion.

In that complex context and, given the balance of military power, the exploitation of the "prečani" Serbs (i.e. those living outside Serbia) became a convenient means, as well as a staged motive.

The Maturing of the European Community

The Declaration of Independence proclaimed unanimously by the Croatian Sabor (Parliament) on June 25, 1991 (on the same day the Slovene Parliament proclaimed Slovenia's independence) is of considerable historical significance and represents the inevitable and resolute, as well as the justified, expression of the will and centuries-old aspirations of the Croatian people.

By so doing, Croatia became a legally-independent actor *sui generis*, notwithstanding the hostile stance of what remained of the federal governing structure – and especially of the military establishment – dominated by Milošević's hypocritical policy of maintaining a unified Yugoslavia, and the activation of the federal government headed by Ante Marković and Budimir Lončar on the international scene with the intent of preserving Yugoslavia.

The arrival of J. Poos, Hans van den Broek, and Gianni De Michelis just three days after Croatia's declaration of independence, the Brijuni Declaration, numerous visits by parliamentary delegations and official representatives of other states and international organizations, the European Community's declaration of August 27, 1991, and the October 1991 UN Security Council Resolution 713 on Yugoslavia were all indications that Croatia had become an independent actor and that it had established its sovereignty.

The first decision taken by the European Community's Arbitration Commission on December, 7 1991 (which was chaired by Robert Badinter, who was the president of France's Constitution response to a request for clarification from Lord Carrington, the President of the Conference on Yugoslavia, and clearly noted the position in section 1 (a) that, in accordance with the intent of international law, "the existence or disappearance of a state is a question of fact, and the effect of recognition by other state is of a declarative nature only".

It is worth quoting here the often-forgotten summary decision by the European Community's Arbitration Commission, which is expressed in three points:

* The SFRY is in the process of disintegrating.

* It is up to the republics to settle the questions of state succession, subject to the principles and rules of international law, especially with regard to respecting human rights and the rights of national groups and minorities.

* Those republics which may wish to do so

may form a new association which would contain democratic institutions of their choice.

To Croatia, the European Community's diplomatic initiatives and other political steps taken around the world appeared to be slow, bureaucratic, and ineffective. This is perhaps not a surprising reaction for a country which lacked everything except self-sacrifice and courage in its struggle to defend its native soil from aggression by a militarily much more powerful foe. Days seemed like weeks, and months like years, to those who experienced the martyrdom of the inhabitants of Vukovar, Osijek, Petrinja, Karlovac, Sunja, Slunj, Kojevo, Škabrnja, Dubrovnik, and Cavtat. This notwithstanding, we must assess objectively the facts, circumstances, and what was possible within the context of the international situation, and acknowledge that Croatia's recognition by the European Twelve on January 15, 1992, as well as by many other states, came more quickly than we could have expected or hoped for in the Summer and Autumn of 1991.

It is important to also assess what factors influenced this chain of events.

The draft of the Hague "Convention on Yugoslavia" contained the accepted and unchallenged option that each republic of the former Yugoslavia, if it wished to, could become independent and that act in and of itself was sufficient for recognition by the European Community and, consequently, by the international community. The third section of this draft also contained a complete plan for the establishment of joint economic and transportation relations which took as their model relations at a somewhat lower level of integration than was the cases among the countries of the European Community prior to Maastricht. A closer examination of the draft was enough to convince anyone that accepting those proposals would not lead to a "Third Yugoslavia".

The British (Lord Carrington), Dutch (van den Broek), and French (Badinter) trio planned, in a pragmatic way, to impose that structure on all the republics of the former Yugoslavia as part of a package of comprehensive solutions, accompanied by automatic diplomatic recognition of the complete sovereignty and independence of all those republics who requested that. However, this was meant to be only upon the conclusion of the conference. The Conference on Yugoslavia, as it was envisioned by the European Community, under the chairmanship of Lord Carrington, *de facto* was the requiem for Yugoslavia.

Belgrade's approach (that is Milošević's approach), however, was based on an assessment that the European Community would respect the "Bush

Doctrine", especially in light of the frequent highlighting by international players of the need to preserve a united Yugoslavia. Belgrade believed that, in the meantime, Croatia's resistance would be broken using military force and that with a "fait accompli" it could create a Greater Serbia. By adding a few cosmetic initiatives on transitioning to a market economy; on the respect of human rights, etc., Milošević believed he could create a "modern federation" according to his vision; which would satisfy Europe while also serving the interests of a Greater Serbia. At the same time, such a Yugoslavia was to be capable of withstanding the alleged "Vatican-Comintern" conspiracy against Yugoslavia and, specifically; against Serbia.

Van den Broek and the other European leaders were convinced that political means backed up by threats of economic sanctions and various promises, especially in the economic arena, would be sufficient to bring about a cease fire. This approach, however, was the main cause for the failure and ineffectiveness of the European Community in dealing with Yugoslavia. At the same time, Serbia's determination to "pacify" all its opponents by using every available means, including brute force, was to lead to a race against time.

The Croatian Sabor, having respected the three-month moratorium on implementing the Declaration of Independence, passed on 8th October 1991 a resolution cutting all its constitutional links to the other republics and autonomous provinces with whom Croatia had established the SFRY.

As soon as Milošević realized that he would not be able to achieve his objectives by using the European Community's Conference on Yugoslavia and that he would not be able to frustrate the European Community's plans for the former Yugoslavia, Serbia began to obstruct any progress by the Conference on Yugoslavia, although Montenegrin president Momir Bulatović on October 18, 1991, announced at the Conference that Montenegro would accept the draft resolution as envisioned by the Conference. Yugoslav diplomacy, in effect Serbia, however, now became active in steering any further negotiations on the Yugoslav crisis toward the United Nations, counting on Russia's favoritism, and the support of some non-aligned nations. The intention all of this was to buy time and to prevent the diplomatic recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, with the aim of rescuing the notion of a third Yugoslavia which was envisioned along hegemonic lines.

During this critical period, many foreign policymakers were erroneous due to serious mistakes in their public statements, most often because of their

lack of understanding of what was happening in this region and, in particular, because they did not grasp what kind of conflict this was. Thus, there were assessments claiming that in Yugoslavia was a "civil war" or a "religious war" and there were declarations along the lines that "any solution which is reached by peaceful means will be accepted." However, Belgrade always interpreted such calls for peace as "let us continue the violence, since there is no solution until the militarily weaker opponent is defeated, which will result in a peace which the world will accept", as had been a true after the Tia-nanmen Square massacre in China.

Declarations by the United States that it had vital interests in Macedonia by default implied that it did not have such interests in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and thereby gave Serbia a clear signal that it would have a free hand in the latter.

Time was a key factor in implementing the plans envisioned by the main players of the European Conference. Due to Serbia's obstruction, the Conference was unable to achieve the results which the member-states expected, while at the same time violence directed by Serbia and the Yugoslav Army escalated into full-scale aggression against Croatia. The first appeals and calls for an end to the violence and for measures to halt Serbia were starting to come from official sources in Austria, Germany, and the Vatican, in no small part thanks to the great efforts by the Croatian diaspora.

Although it is not possible to scrutinize exactly at this stage how events developed day-by-day within the European Community, we do know that the positions of the twelve member-states toward Slovenia's and Croatia's declarations of independence were not all the same. A polarization within the European Twelve was evident very early. On one side stood France, Great Britain, Greece, and Spain, that met Croatia's and Slovenia's desire for freedom and independence with unconcealed disfavor. At first, Italy and the Netherlands also held positions close to these. On the other side, Germany, Belgium, and Denmark and, to a certain extent, Luxembourg, showed considerably more sympathy for Croatia's and Slovenia's sovereignty and independence, while Ireland and Portugal took no stand.

Although European and international public opinion firmly supported the need to maintain the unity of Yugoslavia up to June 1991, the first dissident voice within the official European structure was heard in the first week of June 1991, when, just before a meeting in Dresden, Germany's Martin Bangemann, as Vice-President of the European Parliament, reminded the European Ministers of For-

eign Affairs that Germany's unification too would not have happened if the "European dogma" about the inviolability of borders had been followed to the letter. The right of people to self-determination must also be taken into account and, Bengemann added on that occasion, "As far as the legitimate principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of individual states is concerned, we cannot conclude that a unified Yugoslav state must be preserved at all costs... Likewise, as we evolve our position, the European Community cannot exert its influence from outside only in favor of a unified Yugoslavia".

Germany Comes (Steps) Forward

Even after the very recent unification of the two Germanies, unified Germany as referred by many western politicians remains "an economic giant and a political dwarf". However, Germany's economic power was a significant factor in international politics, particularly in Europe. Germany, in fact, was the fulcrum of the European Community and, along with France, the hub of European integration and of the political direction of the New Europe.

With the escalation of aggression against Croatia and with the seizure of Croatian territory and, particularly, as a reaction to the terror and the attempt to destroy everything in the occupied territories that was Croatian, Germany, together with Austria, was the first to use its diplomacy in a resolute manner to respond to the appeals from the Croatian and Slovene leaders, and was the first to take the initiative to have Croatia and Slovenia recognized as soon as possible.

The German public as well as all relevant political leaders were able to identify the causes of the escalation of violence in former Yugoslavia even earlier, thanks to the following factors:

1. The German community which had lived in former Yugoslavia – especially on the plains – had been subjected in the 1920s to an intensive colonization (predominantly by Serbs) in the towns and villages which they had inhabited and on the fertile lands they had owned for centuries.

2. At the end of World War II, there were about 500,000 ethnic Germans living in Srijem, Banat, Bačka, and Eastern Slavonija. About half of them were forced out, the other half killed. This extermination was part of a Communist terror campaign, the same phenomenon which today is called euphemistically "ethnic cleansing". Most of the expelled ethnic Germans moved to Austria and Germany. These events were not written down nor taught in

the schools and, correctly, this contributed to the reconciliation process on which the New Europe is based. Nevertheless, many Germans remained conscious of what had happened, thanks in particular, to an oral tradition kept alive by relatives, descendants, and friends of those expelled.

3. The German public always looked very negatively at Yugoslavia's Communist system, given the Germans' own direct experience with the tyranny and dictatorship of the East German regime. Even Tito's dissidence toward Moscow in 1948 did not win for Yugoslavia any exoneration in Germany for the undemocratic nature of the Yugoslav system. In the 1970s, there was also the scandal surrounding the Baader-Meinhof terrorist group, some of whose members evaded arrest by seeking asylum in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav police demanded the surrender of five Croatian emigrés who were living and working in Germany as a condition for the extradition back to Germany of these five proven German terrorists. Naturally, such an exchange was not acceptable to Germany, and the Yugoslav authorities facilitated the Baader-Meinhof terrorists' subsequent escape to the Middle East. The considerable publicity which Yugoslavia received in the German media at the time contributed – and justifiably so – even further to Yugoslavia's negative image.

4. Many of the German media's reporters – such as Karl Gustav Strohm, Viktor Meier, Hans-Petar Rullmann, and Johann Reismüller – knew the Slavic languages in use in Yugoslavia. They were thus able to travel the breadth of the former Yugoslavia and to report with greater credibility and with a better grasp of events than their counterparts from Paris, London, and Washington, who sat in Belgrade and who sent back home an image exclusively as seen from their window in Belgrade.

5. It is well-known that the Yugoslav UDBA (secret police), with the help of Yugoslav diplomats and consular representatives abroad, systematically organized dozens of attacks against Croatian emigrés. Most of these attacks occurred in Germany and, in some of these cases, the German legal system correctly and with solid proof was able to discover the motives for the attacks and to implicate official Yugoslav agencies in the assassinations. Moreover, these results were made public in Germany. On the contrary, in the case of the killing of Bruno Bušić in Paris and of Maksim Krstulović in London, the local police knew that they had been carried out by Yugoslav agents, but did not pursue an investigation. In the case of the attempted assassination of Nikola Štedul (in Scotland) by Sindičić,

the Yugoslav secret operative in Great Britain, for example, the latter was apprehended before the motive for the attack had become clear. Sindičić was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, but only for a purely criminal act. Thus, the British public, as that in France in the Bruno Bušić case, was deprived of the full truth or of information about the criminal nature of some of the former Yugoslavia's government institutions.

It is commonplace that interest and power are the basic factors of politics. Although this is undeniable, in this case it is not correct to assume that Germany abandoned the well-established guidelines adopted by the European Community because of its own interests, such as the expansion of its spheres of influence. Alongside the initiative in German diplomacy led by Foreign Minister Hans Dieter Genscher (obviously working together with Chancellor Helmut Kohl), it is important also to stress the following: Without detracting from the ability and devotion of Germany's Foreign Minister and of many other German officials in their efforts to gain diplomatic recognition for Croatia, Germany's diplomacy could not have acted differently, since it was responding to pressure from its entire public opinion.

I believe that it is abundantly evident that public opinion in Germany as well as in Austria, Hungary, and Australia, for different reasons) on the issue of diplomatic recognition for Croatia and Slovenia was radically different from public opinion in Great Britain, France, and the United States, and especially from that in the Soviet Union and in the vast majority of other countries.

The United States had relinquished the initiative on the crisis in the former Yugoslavia completely to the European Community and, in November 1991, senior officials in the Bush Administration informed their German counterparts that the United States was prepared to support any initiative which Germany might undertake, assessing that this would contribute to the development of freedom, peace, and democracy. ■

**Second part of the article
will follow in the next issue.**