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THE COLLAPSE AND RECONSTRUCTION OF LEGITIMACY: AN INTRODUCTORY REMARK

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To be able to answer the question as to whether some historical event was avoidable or was a necessity, we need to reconstruct the process which led to that event. The event we are discussing here, namely the irreversible break-up of Yugoslavia, demands precisely such an approach; *i.e.*, it requires a reconstruction of the genesis of the break-up. Perhaps we should even confine ourselves to such a reconstruction and abandon any attempt to answer the original question. We should, that is to say, be mindful of the sceptic's objection to certain philosophies of history which states: that which has happened, has happened either as a realisation of necessity or as a realisation of one of the possibilities. If it occurred as a necessity, then the practical effect of this event in no way differs from the practical consequences of a non-necessary (or even completely chance) event. Even so, history is not medicine where the diagnosis of a certain terminal outcome of a patient's illness would be a decisive factor in the conviction of an unconscientious doctor. Furthermore, in any attempt at "experimental reconstruction of the past"—*i.e.*, a reconstruction on the basis of a mental experiment along the lines: "What would have happened had it been like this or that?"—we would find ourselves on slippery ground, where arbitrary and unverifiable hypotheses open a wide space for unrestrained mental games. However, such playing with unrealised possibilities and the creation of alternative scenarios of historical development contribute very little to an understanding of what actually happened and why it happened, while projections into the future unnecessarily burden us with a nostalgia for failed possibilities, instead of those projections being firmly anchored on the ground of practical realism. Questions of the type—"How would the more recent history of Europe have looked had Napoleon not invaded Russia?"—may be appealing as a subject for intellectual amusement, but not as a path to reliable knowledge about the past and present and even less as a basis for forming some desirable visions of the future, unless we wish to replace the building of visions of the future with more or less utopian designs of castles in the air.

There is concealed in the introductory question—whether the break-up of Yugoslavia could have been avoided or was a necessity—another trap to which attention should be drawn at the outset: namely, the one concerning regarding the blame for the break-up. If the break-up was not a necessity, then someone (certain individuals, certain social and political forces or ethnic groups) is to blame for the break-up occurring. But, the laying of such blame implies also the idea that Yugoslavia represented something valuable in itself, a metaphysical entity

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corresponding to Platonist ideas of good and justice. If we adopt such an approach, we shall stray into a metaphysical forest which will prevent us from examining the problem of blame on the one appropriate level and will lead us to a relativisation of the sole real guilt. This is the individual guilt of those who instigated, ordered, organised and carried out war crimes and violations of human rights, including the mass killing of civilians and the brutal practice of ethnic cleansing—all of which, as is well known, occurred on a gigantic scale during the break-up of Yugoslavia, and continued unabated thereafter. If we view the break-up of Yugoslavia—considered as an event for which someone must carry the fundamental historical and moral blame (given the axiological essence of Yugoslavia)—as the cause of specific crimes against humanity, which have been committed primarily in the central area of the former state, then those who have organised and directly carried out those crimes are secondarily guilty, compared to those who are to blame for the break-up. We should state here, that although a pertinent analysis would show a high level of correlation (including even personal identity) between the chief primary and chief secondary guilty parties, it is necessary before embarking on an evaluation of the matter at hand to differentiate it from the question of guilt.

The Loss of Legitimacy

Let us proceed then to a reconstruction of the break-up. After the Second World War, Yugoslavia was constituted as a federation. In the first post-war period the federation was organised on a distinctly centralist principle; while later (especially after 1974) elements of confederalism increasingly prevailed. The power of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (later called the League of Communists of Yugoslavia—LCY) was constant in all the periods. The rule of the Communist party was based, from the outset, on a relatively high level of legitimacy. This can be explained primarily by the role of the Communists in the anti-fascist resistance during the Second World War, when the country was occupied; some parts of the country were annexed by the Axis powers, while in others quisling regimes were established, amongst which the most significant was the Ustasha regime in the Independent State of Croatia.

The harsh communist dictatorship was rooted not only in the Bolshevik tradition (which inspired the Yugoslav communists both before and after 1948, when they broke with Stalin and turned partly to the West), but also in the authoritarian-patriarchal mentality of the greater part of the population, which was of immediate rural background. It underwent a series of gradual cosmetic alterations, which, however, did not bring into question the omnipotence of the party nomenklatura. Still, thanks to these cosmetic alterations (beginning with replacement of state-command management of all spheres of the economy and society by the system of so-called workers' and social self-management), Yugoslavia became a relatively liberal country—the most liberal of all the countries under communist rule, one in

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which the nomenklatura retained an absolute monopoly of political power in the narrow sense, while society to a considerable extent opened up towards the West.

The opening up of society coincided with difficulties in the maintenance of living standards for the broader layers of the population in line with the latters' expectations. This and even more importantly, the attempt by the nomenklatura to solve internal conflicts with proponents of liberal ideas and early spokepersons for the transformation of the communist dictatorship into a democratic system through ideological renewal of society (which manifested itself in the mid-1970s in particular), led to an accelerated depletion of the original legitimacy. Fewer and fewer people believed any longer in the myth of a future communist society which would be attained—if not in the lifetime of the present generation of citizens then certainly in that of their grandchildren—thanks to the country's "wise and infallible leadership."

The dominant ideology by which the system and the rule of the communist nomenklatura were legitimised, based itself above all on the idea of social justice. The reception to this idea in the broader layers of the population was characterised essentially by egalitarianism. Elements of economic liberalisation, the partial effect of the market on the distribution of income (including here distribution in the area of individual incomes), as well as the relative transparency of privileges enjoyed by members of the governing nomenklatura led to the collapse of the myth about egalitarianism. This myth was either to transform itself into a demand for the establishment of an identity between ideological proclamations and social practice (which expressed itself to some extent in the student movement of 1968) or to dissolve into a desire for change in the direction of the creation of an open society as in the West. The nomenklatura responded to this with reinforced repression. On the one hand, it squandered its earlier acquired credibility in order to retain the support of the egalitarian and authoritian inclined masses. This, however, in the long term had a counterproductive effect, once the egalitarian sounding promises about social justice were shown to be mere illusions in the face of anti-egalitarian realities. On the other hand, it successfully marginalized all critics of the existing state of affairs, whether it involved critics within its own ranks (there was a series of changes in leaderships of various republics, the most critical, in its long-term effects, being the purge of the so-called Serbian liberals in 1972!), or the embryonic opposition groups (radical, liberal and conservative) which appeared outside the dominant structures of power. The effect of the repression was an illusory consolidation of the system with the simultaneous evaporation of the remnants of legitimacy. The final illusion of the existence of legitimacy was the momentary homogenisation of the greater part of the population at the time of Tito's death in 1980. However, better informed observers were already aware the widespread expressions of grief at the death of the "father of the nation" did not represent an expression of the system's legitimacy, but rather, a manifestation of the authoritarian-patriarchal consciousness of the basically rural majority of the population (in mentality if no longer by

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residence). After all, Tito had, with a firm hand, ensured several decades of security, peace—no-one could remember such a longstanding peace in this region—and relative prosperity.

During Tito's lifetime, the negative selection of cadres (a constant, it seems, of all autocratic regimes) brought, to the top a decidedly inadequate leadership group, whose incompetence was concealed by the formulae of collective leadership and collective responsibility. This group continued the policy of neo-dogmatic consolidation of the system, which included a high level of preventive repression in respect of any sort of attempt to form a democratic alternative. However, this repression had no popular endorsement. Still, it did succeed in one respect: it restricted the embryonic democratic alternative within the bounds of dissident ghettos and prevented the shaping, even in embryonic form, of a democratic culture. Nevertheless, all this failed to rebuild the lost legitimacy.

Milošević's "Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution" in Serbia

That the consolidation of the system was illusory became obvious by March 1981, when the disturbances in Kosovo broke out and the majority Albanian population of that extremely underdeveloped province in southern Serbia came to believe that its problems could be solved by Kosovo becoming a republic, *i.e.*, by gaining independence from Serbia. An analysis of the causes and course of the Kosovo crisis would require much more space than is available here, and would not directly assist in a reconstruction of the genesis of the break-up of Yugoslavia. One should note that it was precisely Kosovo which became the catalyst for the creation of a new legitimacy, firstly in Serbia and then in the other former republics.

The demonstrations in Kosovo were, as is the norm in such countries, suppressed by brutal police force and the repression of Albanian nationalists was increased. However, in contrast to other types of repression in Yugoslavia, which definitely by then no longer had either consensual or significant support in numerical terms, the repression in Kosovo gained popularly expressed support in Serbia (and further afield). Not only did the government's propaganda apparatus participate in the shaping of this support, but a portion of the dissidents as well—namely, those who, irrespective of their conservative, liberal or radical orientation, could participate in the feeling of national peril to the Serbian people, whose legendary cradle—Kosovo—the Albanian separatists had territorially brought into question. In fact, a section of the media, by then partially liberalised, launched into a criticism of the current Yugoslav and Serbian authorities for their insufficient determination in stopping the growth of separatist tendencies in Kosovo and called on them to prevent further (real or imaginary) danger to members of the Serbian minority in Kosovo.

In this newly created climate, conditions ripened for the shaping of a new legitimacy. This legitimacy began to project itself politically with the famous 8th session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, when the

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new leader of the Serbian party organisation, Slobodan Milošević, showing a certain liberal stamp, convincingly defeated his opponents who favoured the domination of the nomenklatura. Until this point he had been known as an exponent of the hardline dogmatic wing of the nomenklatura. It is significant that Milošević won with the open support of the most conservative wing of the military hierarchy, and though at first he formally declared it a victory of the "Titoist" faction of communist dogmatists, he was greeted enthusiastically from the beginning in the circles of the conservative-nationalist intelligentsia gathered around the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences. The explanation for this enthusiasm can be found in the fact that Milošević became well-known to the wider public by his energetic action in Kosovo, where he unequivocally supported the local Serbian nationalist movement (which had emerged in response to the Albanian movement based on the platform "Kosovo—republic!") and which clearly got support—if not also inspiration—from the conservative-nationalist circles of Serbian dissidents.

The so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution followed: a populist movement with a strong nationalist infusion but directed by the Serbian communist leadership which, by means of rallies and organised street disorders, first overturned local leaderships and brought to power exponents of Milošević's new policy, then eventually toppled the inept and corrupt leadership in the northern Serbian province of Voivodina and in like fashion the republican leadership of Montenegro. The "anti-bureaucratic revolution" confirmed Milošević as the unrivalled leader of all Serbs, after which his leadership ambitions were no longer confined exclusively to Serbia and the Serbs in other Yugoslav republics—visible from the then frequently used expression "the new Tito." It also represented a clear manifestation of the new legitimacy: remnants of the communist faithful found a common language at the "truth rallies" with the remaining Serbian quislings from the Second World War; decaying conservatives of the nomenkltura appear together with yesterday's dissidents; military-police forces give the movement logistical support with the help of organised criminal elements mobilised, and incorporated for the occasion into the repressive power structures. The common denominator of all these highly heterogeneous forces—and to which should certainly be added the Serbian Orthodox Church which, having emerged after a long period from its marginalised position, played a very important role in the shaping of the new legitimacy—was Serbdom, the historicist utopia of the medieval Serbian Empire projected into the future through the reconstruction of Yugoslavia as, essentially, Greater Serbia.

It is important to mention that the "anti-bureaucratic revolution" took place from 1986 to 1989, that is during the time when the crisis of legitimacy in the countries under communist dictatorship had reached its peak and when the process of rapid collapse of the Soviet empire had begun. It should be added the legitimacy in many of these countries, had never been established in the true sense of the word, especially in the countries in Eastern Europe, where communist power had been imposed thanks exclusively to the Soviet victory in the Second World War. To that

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extent the populist movement organised by the Serbian communist leadership may be regarded as a preventive mass mobilisation intended to supply the old power structures with a new legitimacy. This mobilization was preventive in the sense that it was meant to thwart the processes of the Czech, East German and Polish type, *i.e.*, the processes of delegitimisation and removal of the hitherto ruling nomenklatura.

New Social Movements in Slovenia

The "anti-bureaucratic revolution" initiated a complex process in the other republics, especially in Slovenia and Croatia, which in a very short time led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and initiated a bloody and devastating war. The process in Slovenia which led to it gaining full independence needs to be examined separately from the process in Croatia; while the latter also needs to be differentiated from the process in Bosnia-Hercegovnia, even though one cannot deny the existence of an organic connection between all these processes (at least in the sense of the physical law which states that in any small volume of space through which a fluid is flowing steadily, the total pressure is constant).

Slovenia always represented, within the framework of Yugoslavia, a distinct milieu. In contrast to all the other republics, Slovenia was an ethnically homogeneous entity with miniscule autochthonous Hungarian and Italian minorities, and economically more developed than the other republics—thanks not only to a higher level of work productivity, but also to the advantages of a common Yugoslav market and relatively cheap raw materials from Yugoslavia's underdeveloped south. The legitimacy of the communist regime—more enlightened and liberal compared to the more repressive and dogmatic patterns of dictatorship in the other republics—was founded on the anti-fascist resistance during the Second World War in which diverse political forces participated. The communists utilised the anti-fascist movement as an instrument for achieving a monopoly of power, though only after its broad scope had facilitated the establishment of some form of national consensus. This legitimacy bore a strong national component, while Slovenia's relationship towards Yugoslavia had very much the mark of vested interest. On the other hand, the authoritian-patriarchal mentality of the rest of Yugoslavia did not correspond with the urban-pragmatic mentality which was unquestionably dominant in Slovenia. This mentality was congruent to the emancipated urban mentality present in the larger centres of the other republics, but not to the dominant Dinaric-Balkan mentality elsewhere in the latter republics, which was characterised by an antagonism towards their own centres of modernity. (To say nothing of alternative cultural and intellectual styles, such as post-modernism and post-avantgardism which existed on the margins of these oases, in as much as this segment had any significant influence on the process we are discussing.)

During the 1980s, separatist tendencies in Slovenia manifested themselves within the framework of two mutually distinguishable groupings. The first, gathered around

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the journal *Nova revija* (New Review), was a grouping of the national-conservative intelligentsia, while the second grouping, whose most prominent expression was the youth magazine *Mladina* (Youth), consisted of members of the younger generation, post-avantgarde-inspired artists and peace and ecological activists who were imbued with ideas of a civil society. These two circles were forming the nuclei of new social movements. The relatively liberal and tolerant atmosphere maintained by the communist leadership in Slovenia allowed these two tendencies—though remaining on the margins of society—to develop unfettered. This atmosphere clearly contrasted with the repressive climate which continued to dominate (and in some aspects was strengthened) in the other Yugoslav republics. When the widening of the "anti-bureaucratic revolution," which had already provoked resistance from the Slovene communist leadership, began to endanger directly Slovenia's specific interests and position, this leadership not only adhered to the idea of Slovenia becoming an independent state, but placed itself at the head of the movement for independence. (The inclination to discipline Slovenia had manifested itself the first time prior to the "anti-bureaucratic revolution" in the trial organised by the Yugoslav army leadership against Janez Janša—then a peace activist but later a decidedly militarist-minded Slovene minister of defence—and three other anti-militarists.) Now a broad national consensus was established, and the then president of the Slovene communist party, Milan Kučan, though devoid of any charismatic qualities, became the undisputed leader of the movement directed at the disengagement of Slovenia from the threatening Balkan quagmire and its closer affiliation with its western neighbours and the European Union as a whole.

National Homogenisation in Croatia

A different situation characterised Croatia. After the collapse of the Croatian Spring of 1971—a broad national movement seeking a greater degree of autonomy for Croatia within the framework of Yugoslavia but in whose ranks there were also clear separatist tendencies—repression in Croatia became widespread, giving birth to a long-standing "Croatian silence." On the one hand the Yugoslav constitution of 1974 recognized the main constitutional and state rights demands of the mainstream tendency of the "Croatian Spring," thereby transforming Yugoslavia in effect into a confederation (the one remaining centralised institution in the federation being the army), and providing the constitutional-legal basis for the republics to become independent. On the other hand, the new communist leadership in Croatia established an atmosphere of repression. This repression was directed primarily against those representing the nationalist option; prominent in this respect were the prosecutions of Dobroslav Paraga, Franjo Tudjman and Vlado Gotovac, who were sentenced to lengthy prison terms in the early 1980s for "verbal offences." However, the repression was not confined to expressions of Croatian nationalism. In more sophisticated and less brutal forms systematically prevented the formation of any

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alternative political grouping, pushed alternative cultural and intellectual activity to the margins of public life and made the societal influence of any non-orthodox tendencies impossible.

A somewhat more liberal climate was prevalent in Croatia after 1986, when changes occurred in the Communist party leadership which weakened the influence of the most dogmatic elements. This changed climate was felt most particularly in the media which established a certain degree of independence from the nomenklatura and began to open up discussion of various hitherto taboo subjects. The new line-up in the Croatian nomenklatura probably harboured the illusion that the liberalised media would function so as to re-establish the regime's lost legitimacy, and it cannot be disputed that in certain sections of the semi-controlled media such signs of a renewed legitimacy on the part of the liberalised communist nomenklatura were clearly visible. However, the restoration of the regime's legitimacy did not occur, except in one area which, in terms of the way the situation was to develop, proved to be decisive, namely its coinciding with the "anti-bureaucratic revolution" in Serbia. The Croatian party leadership maintained a cautious attitude and kept clear of "interference in the internal affairs of Serbia," until the wave of Serbian populism began to endanger the position of the Croatian nomenklatura. This event allowed the Croatian nomenklatura to register, albeit in a restrained way and with a particularly indecisive voice, its critical dissociation from these events. At the same time some of the Croatian media subjected the "anti-bureaucratic revolution" to sharp criticism and gave support to the Croatian political leadership's incipient attempts to forestall any legal-constitutional reshaping of the Yugoslav federation. The legitimacy of the party nomenklatura was restored in Croatia to the extent that it opposed the Greater Serbian idea of transforming Yugoslavia into a "modern federation," *i.e.*, into a union dominated by those political forces brought to power by the Serbian populist movement.

This time, however, processes were at work in Croatia which, to a significant extent marginalised this partial legitimacy of the nomenklatura, and redefined the Croatian political landscape. Namely, towards the end of 1988 and early in 1989, there appeared the beginnings of political (and party) pluralism. Pluralism in Croatia initially came in three shapes: the Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (abbreviated as UJDI in the original), the Croatian Social-Liberal Alliance (later party) and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). The fortunes of these three political projects in decisive measure not only characterised the evolution of political conditions both in Croatia and beyond its borders, but also determined the specific role of Croatia in the process of Yugoslavia's dissolution and the armed conflicts which accompanied the final phase of this process.

UJDI was formed in Croatia, but from the beginning included organised groups in all republics and provinces of former Yugoslavia. It was a civil initiative borne by a wide circle of intellectuals mainly of dissident background and diverse in their political outlook, though there was a marked preponderance of those advocating

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either a social democratic or a liberal option. The project which brought these representatives of differing viewpoints together was the introduction of a multi-party system and the securing of a civil-democratic procedural framework for the transformation of Yugoslavia into a liberal-democratic state or union. Since there co-existed within the scope of UJDI varying democratic political options, UJDI did not define, *a priori*, the future of the Yugoslav union, insisting only on constructing the preconditions in this regard: that the political wishes of the citizens be expressed on the basis of confirmed democratic procedures, so as to forestall the unravelling of the crisis (then already quite evident) through dictatorship or civil war. Though UJDI acquired relatively broad support amongst the intelligentsia in all the Yugoslav republics, it did not succeed in establishing itself as an acceptable alternative with the broader populace, either in Croatia or elsewhere. This was not only because of its elitist connotations and minimal organisation, but first and foremost because the processes of national homogenisation provoked by the "anti-bureautic revolution" had become irreversible.

The other two Croatian political initiatives based themselves precisely on this national homogenisation. The Social Liberals, as a grouping which gathered together the liberal (and to a large extent populist) oriented intelligentsia, represented the expression of that section of the Croatian intelligentsia which saw the process of national homogenisation as an opportunity for transforming Croatia into a liberal-democratic state with a greater degree of autonomy in relation to the Yugoslav union than was the case in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, but not necessarily outside any form of union. In its initial stages, the HDZ also campaigned for the confederal option, but it was evident that this was a tactical measure, concealing an integral program for gaining complete independence for Croatia. The HDZ represented the Croatian answer to the Serbian populist movement: in opposition to the idea of a Greater Serbia was the idea of a "Croatia in its natural and historical borders," *i.e.*, the idea of a Greater Croatia.

Franjo Tudjman—a one-time communist general but later a nationalist dissident, a person of distinct authoritarian character and inclined to megalomania in his historical visions, but in no sense lacking a feel for pragmatic *Realpolitik*—imposed himself at the head of the HDZ. Under Tudjman's leadership the HDZ succeeded in gathering together what appeared to be incompatible elements: the Croatian political emigration, including especially that section which cultivated open nostalgia for the Ustasha-led Independent State of Croatia and was inclined to political terrorism; communist military-police structures which had rejected Milošević's project for the transformation of Yugoslavia into a Greater Serbia; and the conservative-clerical section of the Croatian intelligentsia, which partly explains the support, at least initially, of the Catholic church in Croatia for Tudjman's political project.

The political program of the HDZ was shaped in accordance with these elements as a hybrid of the most varied and mutually incompatible traditions in Croatian politics—from the nationalist-totalitarian, through the various

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democratic, to the communist-stalinist—brought together by the idea of "national reconciliation" and national exclusiveness. The more the HDZ established itself as the dominant force in the emerging multi-party system, so the ideology of Greater Serbia gained greater support amongst the Serb population of Croatia, especially in rural areas. However, a second dimension of this interaction should be kept in mind; the exporting of the "anti-bureaucratic revolution" to Croatia, intensified from the beginning of 1990, directly strengthened the HDZ's influence amongst Croatians, who saw in it—in contrast to the mild and indecisive policy of the League of Communists of Croatia, which, during this time, had transformed itself into the Party of Democratic Change (SDP)—the only solid security against the realisation of the idea of Greater Serbia.

At the beginning of 1990, another event occurred which determined the break-up of Yugoslavia. The attempt by Milošević's grouping to take decisive control of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia resulted in the Slovene and Croatian delegations walking out of the 14th Congress of the LCY in January 1990. This meant the break-up, in effect, of the Communist party organization in Yugoslavia. The federal prime minister at the time, Ante Marković, believed the continued existence of Yugoslavia did not depend on the survival of the Yugoslav Communist party organisation, and that Yugoslavia (even if as a loose confederation) could be preserved on the basis of common economic interests. However, the degree of national homogenisation amongst both the Croats and the Serbs had become so great that pragmatic interests were subordinated to the ideas of Greater Serbia and Greater (or at least ethnically homogenised) Croatia, while, already earlier, a national consensus amongst the Slovenes on the independence of Slovenia had been reached.

The ensuing elections in Slovenia and Croatia, at which the representatives of state independence (in Croatia this meant the HDZ) gained an absolute majority, only confirmed the irreversibility of the process of Yugoslavia's break-up. At the same time, Milošević's grouping succeeded in establishing its control over the army and, thereby, marginalising Marković's government. In Croatia the tension increased and the reciprocal feeling of mistrust between Croats and Serbs intensified.

National Homogenisations in Bosnia-Hercegovina

In autumn 1990 the elections in Macedonia and Bosnia-Hercegovina took place in an atmosphere of threatening war but also with national homogenisation having risen to a maximum level. The elections in Macedonia ended in victory for the reformed Communists and Social Democrats. The result of this was that, in this republic, in which the level of ethnic intolerance had been the highest relative to all the other Yugoslav republics, inter-ethnic or any other type of war was avoided. In Bosnia-Hercegovina, on the other hand, the elections signified the *de facto* end of the Yugoslav union.

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It is said with justification that Bosnia is "Yugoslavia on a smaller scale." Though all the Yugoslav republics except Slovenia were markedly ethnically heterogeneous (but with the majority nation having a significant numerical dominance), Bosnia-Hercegovina was in this respect distinctive in that no nation had an absolute majority of the total population: Muslims (Bosniaks) were somewhat more numerous than the Serbs, while the proportion of Croats could not be overlooked. Hence, Bosnia-Hercegovina was defined as a republic of its three constituent nations. In this republic, the communist nomenklatura was well-known for a marked authoritarianism, but also for showing, at least formally, a strict respect for national equality and for resolute (often repressive) suppression of all forms of nationalism. Also, the idea of Yugoslavism was more prevalent in the broader popular masses in this republic than in any other parts of the Yugoslav federation. At the same time, in some areas of the republic a spirit of national exclusiveness dominated. This particularly applied to western Hercegovina where Croats comprised an absolute majority and where there prevailed amongst the population a feeling of nostalgia for the Ustasha cause; similarily in some rural regions with a majority or with an ethnically homogeneous Serbian population in which the Chetnik ideology was dominant.

While the spirit of national exclusiveness amongst the Croats and Serbs represented a psychological basis, the influence of Tudjman's and Milošević's respective governments in power in adjacent republics provided the political basis for the consolidation of the HDZ and the Serbian Democratic party (SDS) as the leading political forces for the national homogenization of the Croats and Serbs respectively in Bosnia-Hercegovina. In response to these two homogenisations, there emerged a Muslim homogenisation, represented by the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) led by Alija Izetbegović, who had been tried under the previous regime for Islamic fundamentalism. (Incidentally he was the only post-communist leader of a post-Yugoslav state without a communist past or experience in the nomenklatura.) On the eve of the elections in Bosnia-Hercegovina, certain supra-national parties were active which stood for a united Bosnia and saw the republic's best prospects within some future Yugoslav union or association of states, or, if no such union or association was to be established, then in a civil Bosnia-Hercegovina. Amongst these parties special mention should be made of the reformed Communists, Ante Marković's Alliance of Reformist Forces and the Liberal party. (The first two would later transform themselves into social democratic parties, while Tuzla, in which the Reformists were victorious, was the only Bosnian city not to experience interethnic conflict.) Though these three parties recorded solid results at the 1990 elections, the alliance of the three national parties—SDA, SDS and HDZ—obtained an absolute majority. These three parties concluded, for the purpose of preventing a victory by the post-communist and civil forces, what was to all appearances a quite absurd electoral alliance, and afterwards formed a coalition government. Nevertheless, the SDS's aim was the annexation of a large part of Bosnia to a Greater Serbia. The HDZ's objective (in particular that of its extreme Hercegovinian wing) was the joining of

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Bosnia-Hercegovina (or part of the republic) to Croatia. While the SDA was torn between a desire to maintain a united Bosnia and aspirations to the creation of a state with absolute domination by the Muslim population. This explains why "unnatural," but actually quite logical, coalition had no chance of survival, just as Bosnia, with their electoral victory, had no chance of avoiding war and the attempt to divide up the republic. Thereupon, Yugoslavia's fate was irreversibly sealed.

The End of Yugoslavia

And so we return to the original question: Was the break-up of Yugoslavia necessary? Keeping in mind that with the collapse of communist dictatorship the other two multinational unions—the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia—both broke up, it appears the answer to the question could be in the affirmative: the outcome of communist rule over any multinational union is that the collapse of legitimacy necessarily establishes national legitimation as the only possible basis for a democratic reconstruction of the state and society. This results in the break-up of the multinational creation into its component parts. Still, three such instances which serve as the basis for this conclusion represent too small a sample of cases for the inference to be defended as unconditionally valid.

If the above conclusion can be asserted as being a probable, but not a necessarily, valid inference, then there is another conclusion for which one can argue unconditionally. The fact that the break-up of other ex-communist multinational unions (including here also Macedonia's achievement of independence) occurred by peaceful means—and in the case of the separation of the Czech and Slovak republics even in a very civilised way—leads to the conclusion that war and the destruction resulting from war are not necessary concomitants to every dissolution of a multinational union of this type.

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