# The Collapse of Yugoslavia

The most disastrous series of events in Eastern Europe after 1989 was the collapse of Yugoslavia. The disintegration of this multiethnic country began with the emergence of Slobodan Milošević in Serbia. Milošević brought old-line communists and military officers together under a banner of militant nationalism. His rallying cry was to regain control of Kosovo. This region was the center of Serbian culture in medieval times, but by the 1980s its population was 90 percent Albanian. After 1945 Kosovo, along with Vojvodina, had become an autonomous region within Serbia. By the Yugoslav constitution of 1974 these autonomous regions had obtained the power to influence federal legislation that was equal to Serbia itself. Milošević rallied millions of Serbs with the demand that Serbia no longer acquiesce to this limitation on its power. He succeeded in reasserting Serbian control over both Kosovo and Vojvodina, but in the process he made the other Yugoslav republics very nervous. In Slovenia, a movement of intellectuals both inside and outside the party began to demand rights for Slovenia, and in Croatia a well-known nationalist dissident from the 1960s formed a political party for a similar purpose.

With the Soviet bloc collapsing, the six Yugoslav republics moved toward their own reforms. All six republics held elections in 1990, and all of them elected leaders with nationalist programs. As each republic began to go its own way, first the League of Yugoslav Communists collapsed, and then the central government itself. Both Milošević and his counterpart in Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, turned to increasingly vitriolic forms of nationalist invective while the Slovenes systematically moved to disengage themselves from the Yugoslav federation.

Despite peace efforts by the leaders of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, when Slovenia declared its independence on June 25, 1991, the Yugoslav army attempted to subdue the Slovenians, but without success. Meanwhile, when Croatia also declared its independence, armed conflict broke out between the Croatian government and its sizable Serbian minority. Soon the Yugoslav National Army, whose officer corps was predominantly Serb, intervened on the side of Serbia. Assisted by semiprivate armed bands, they brutally occupied about one-third of Croatia. The European powers decided to recognize Croatian and Slovenian independence, and the United Nations sent a force (UNPROFOR: United Nations Protection Force) to maintain a separation between the new Serbian Republic of Krajina (in Croatia) and the Croats.

In the spring of 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina also declared its independence, at which point its Serb minority rose up in revolt against the new state. The Bosnian Serbs, with the help of Milošević, occupied about 70 percent of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States and the European Union were not able to find a formula that would stop this war, despite economically blockading Serbia, prohibiting arms shipments to Bosnia, and even threatening air strikes.

*The four documents reprinted here provide material for understanding the feelings of the parties involved. The first is shortened version of a memorandum that was under preparation in the Serbian Academy of Sciences (SANU) in 1986 when it was leaked to the press. It remains a controversial document, but there is little doubt that it represented the position of a significant number of Serbian intellectuals at the time. Since then, the views of most of the persons associated with the SANU memorandum have hardened even more.*

*The second document is an adaptation of an article that appeared in Slovenia shortly after the SANU memorandum. The author, Dimitrij Rupel, contributed the article to a special issue of the journal* Nova Revija *(New review). The editors asked a number of prominent Slovenian writers and scholars to write about the situation of the Slovenian nation. The fact that the journal published these articles at all created a sensation among Slovene intellectuals and was an important milestone in accelerating Slovenia's turn away from communism. Rupel later became the foreign minister of Slovenia.*

*The third document is the preface to the Croatian constitution of 1990. Croatia's first postcommunist election in 1990 brought politicians to power who believed that Croatia should be primarily a Croatian state, not a multiethnic one. This preface to the constitution presents their argument that throughout history, Croatia had always been an autonomous actor. The preface distinguishes between Croats, for whom the state has been established, and others, who are citizens also. Insensitivity to Croatia's large Serbian minority was an important contributing factor, along with Milošević's hectoring, in producing war in Croatia.*

*The final document is a speech by Haris Silajdžić, at the time foreign minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the United Nations conference on human rights held in Vienna in June 1993. Siljadžić's emotional speech goes beyond the dry political programs of the other documents to evoke in a small way the tragedy that the war in Bosnia has become. Ethnic cleansing undertaken by all sides, but primarily by the Serbs, sent hundreds of thousands of people into flight, and massacres killed tens of thousands more. Silajdžić's speech galvanized his audience but had little effect on the willingness or the ability of the international community to undertake the costly measures needed to bring a halt to the fighting.*

# 48

# Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences (SANU)

*Translated by Denison Rusinow*

1986

Many of the misfortunes suffered by the Serb nation originate in circumstances that are common to all the Yugoslav nations. However, other calamities also burden the Serb nation. The long-term lagging-behind in the development of the economy of Serbia, undefined state and legal relations with Yugoslavia and the provinces [Kosovo and Vojvodina], and also genocide in Kosovo have appeared on the political scene with a combined force which have created a tense if not also explosive situation. The crucial nature of these three tortured questions, which derive from a long-term policy toward Serbia, threaten not only the Serb nation but also the stability of Yugoslavia as a whole. They must therefore be given central attention.

Extensive knowledge and data are not required to confirm the longstanding lagging-behind of the Serbian economy. . . . Throughout the postwar period the Serbian economy suffered from lopsided terms of trade. A primary example is the low price for electrical energy, which is supplied in large quantities to other republics. Economic instruments and measures taken in credit and monetary policies, and especially the contribution to the federal fund for the economic development of inadequately developed regions, have lately been the most important factors in its relative retardation. With the addition that the most developed republics, because of Serbia's lack of capital, have penetrated her economy (agriculture, food-processing industry, commerce, and banking) with their capital, the picture is one of a subordinated and neglected economy in the framework of the Yugoslav area.

The economic subordination of Serbia cannot be fully understood without its politically inferior position, which also determined all relations. For the CPY [the Communist party of Yugoslavia] the economic hegemony of the Serbian nation between the wars was not disputable, although the industrialization of Serbia was slower than the Yugoslav average. Thinking and behavior with a dominant influence on later political events and internationality relations were formed on the basis of that ideological platform. Slovenes and Croats created their national Communist parties before the war and achieved decisive influence in the CC [Central Commit-

From *East European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century,* edited by Peter F. Sugar, published by The American University Press, 1995. 

tee] of the CPY. Their political leaders became the arbiters of all political questions during and after the war. These two neighboring republics shared a similar history, had the same religion and desire for ever-greater independence, and, as the most developed, had common economic interests, all of which supplied sufficient reason for permanent coalition in an attempt to realize political domination. This coalition was solidified by the long-lasting cooperation of [Josip Bnoz] Tito and [Edvard] Kardelj [respectively a Croat and a Slovene], the two most prominent personalities of postwar Yugoslavia, who enjoyed unlimited authority in centers of power. A cadre monopoly allowed them essential influence over the composition of the political apex of Yugoslavia and all the republics and provinces. The exceptionally great contribution of Edvard Kardelj in preparing and carrying out the decisions of AVNOJ [Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia] and of all postwar constitutions is well known to all.[1] He was in a position to build his personal views, which could not realistically be opposed, into the foundation of the social order. The determination with which Slovenia and Croatia today oppose any constitutional change shows how much the Constitution of 1974 suits them.[2] Views concerning the social order had no chance of being accepted if they were different from the conceptions of [those] two political authorities, and it was not possible to do anything even after their deaths, given that the Constitution insured against any such change by granting [each republic and autonomous region] the possibility of a veto. In view of all of this, it is indisputable that Slovenia and Croatia established a political and economic domination through which to realize their national programs and economic aspirations.

The attitude toward the economic lagging-behind of Serbia demonstrates that a revanchist policy toward her did not weaken over time. On the contrary, nourished by its own success, it became ever stronger until it finally expressed itself also in genocide. It is a politically unacceptable discrimination that citizens of Serbia, because of equal representation by the republics [and autonomous regions], have less access than others to positions as federal functionaries and delegates to the federal parliament and that the votes of voters from Serbia are worth less than those of any other republic or province. In this light Yugoslavia does not appear as a community of equal citizens or equal nations and nationalities, but as a community of eight equal territories. However, even this equality does not hold for Serbia because of its special legal–political situation, which supports a tendency to keep the Serb nation under constant control. The dominant idea of such a policy has been "a weak Serbia, a strong Yugoslavia," advanced under the influence of the view that if the Serbs, as the most numerous nation, were permitted rapid economic development, that would represent a danger for the other nations.

[1]The Slovene Edvard Kardelj was the main theorist of Yugoslav communism. Serbs generally consider him responsible for the constitutional arrangements to which they objected in Kosovo. Tito created the AVNOJ in 1942 to serve as the broad political front backing the efforts of the communist Partisans to resist the Germans and to seize power in postwar Yugoslavia.

[2]In 1974 Yugoslavia adopted a constitution that gave to two autonomous regions included in the Republic of Serbia, Kosovo and Vojvodina, political rights almost equal to those enjoyed by the rest of the Yugoslav republics, even though they remained within the boundaries of Serbia. It also permitted each republic and autonomous region to veto, or at least significantly delay, any federal legislation to which it objected.

Serbia is in fact divided in three parts by the Constitution of 1974. The autonomous provinces are equivalent to republics in everything except that they are not defined as states and do not have the same number of representatives in some federal organs. They compensate for this deficiency through their ability to intervene in the internal affairs of Narrow Serbia [i.e., Serbia without the two autonomous provinces] through a common republican parliament, while their own parliaments are totally autonomous. The political–legal situation of Narrow Serbia is completely undefined; it is neither a republic nor a province.

Relations between Serbia and the provinces are not only and not primarily a matter of formalistic–legal interpretation. It is primarily a question of the Serb nation and its state. A nation, which after a long and bloody battle again achieved its own state, which itself opted also for bourgeois democracy, and which in the last two wars lost 2.5 million conationals, had an arbitrarily constituted party commission establish that, after four decades in the new Yugoslavia, only it [among the nations of Yugoslavia] does not have its own state. A worse historical defeat in peace cannot be imagined.

The exile of the Serbian people from Kosovo is a spectacular testament to its historic defeat. In the spring of 1981, the Serbian people received a declaration of open and total war [from the Albanians in Kosovo]. This war was waged skillfully with not only passive but even active support from various political centers in the country. This support was even more fatal than that coming from neighboring countries. This unconcealed war, which we have yet to face clearly or call by its true name, has been going on for almost five years. It has thus lasted much longer than this country's entire war of liberation—from April 6, 1941, to May 1945. The rebellion of the Balisti in Kosovo and Metohija at the very end of the war, begun with the help of Nazi units, was militarily crushed between 1944 and 1945, but it was not politically beaten.[3] Its present form, disguised in a new context, has been developing more successfully and has been approaching a victorious outcome. Therefore a true reckoning with neofascist aggression never occurred. All measures taken to date have only hidden it from view and in fact have strengthened its irrevocable goals, which are motivated by racism.

The physical, political, legal, and cultural genocide of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija is the worst defeat in the Serbian-led battles of liberation from Orašac in 1804 to the 1941 uprising.[4] Responsibility for this defeat falls primarily on the Comintern heritage present in the policy of the Communist party of Yugoslavia and the loyalty of the Serbian communists to this policy, on the extremely costly ideological and political delusions, ignorance, immaturity, or already incorrigible opportunism of the generation of Serbian politicians who arose after the war, who are always defensive and always care more about what other people think of them and their timid "postings" of Serbia's status than about the objective facts which determine the future of the people they govern.

[3]"Balisti" refers to the Albanian nationalist organization Bali Kombetar (National front) that collaborated with the Germans during World War II in hopes of creating a large Albanian state in the Balkans. Metohija is the western part of Kosovo. Serbs use the term because it has a historical resonance for them, but Albanians use only the term Kosovo (or *Kosovë* in Albanian) for the entire province.

[4]The first Serbian uprising against Ottoman rule, which began a successful struggle for independence in the nineteenth century, began in the village of Orašac.

The Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija have not only their past, personified in precious cultural–historic monuments, but also living spiritual, cultural, and moral values: They have the motherland of their historic existence. The violence which has, over the centuries, thinned out the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija is—in this, our time—entering its relentless end game. The emigration of Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija in socialist Yugoslavia exceeds in numbers and in character all former phases of this great exile of the Serbian people. Jovan Cvijić in his time estimated that in all migrations, beginning with the great one under Arsenije Čarnojević in 1690 to the first years of our century, more than 500,000 Serbs had been exiled; of that number between 1876 and 1912 about 150,000 Serbs had to leave their hearths under the ruthless terror of the local and privileged Albanian *basibazuks* [irregular Ottoman military forces].[5] In the course of the last war, over 60,000 Serbian colonists and natives were exiled, but after the war this wave of emigration really reached its crest: In the last twenty or so years, 200,000 Serbs left Kosovo and Metohija. The remaining Serbian people are not only leaving their land at an undiminished pace, but being persecuted by oppression and physical, moral, and psychological terror, they are preparing for their final exodus, according to all sources of information. In less than the next ten years, if the situation does not change considerably, there will no longer be any Serbs in Kosovo, and an "ethnically clean" Kosovo—that unequivocably expressed goal of the "Greater-Albanian" racists established in the programs and actions of the "Prizren League" as early as 1878–1881—will be completely fulfilled.

Kosovo is not the only region in which the Serbian people has found itself under the pressures of discrimination. Not only the relative but the absolute decline in the numbers of Serbs in Croatia is evidence enough for the above claim. According to the census of 1948, there were 543,795 Serbs in Croatia, that is, 14.48 percent of the Croatian population. According to the 1981 census, these numbers had diminished to 531,502 which was 11.5 percent of the entire population of Croatia. During the thirty-three years of peace, the number of Serbs in Croatia had declined even in relation to the immediate postwar period, when the first census was carried out and when the consequences of World War II on the number of Serbs were well known.

Lika, Kordun, and Banija have remained the least-developed regions in Croatia, which greatly motivated Croatian Serbs to migrate to Serbia as well as to other regions of Croatia, where Serbs, as a minority group of newcomers and a socially inferior people, were extremely susceptible to assimilation. The Serbian people have been, in general, exposed to a sophisticated and efficient assimilation policy. A consistent part of this policy is a ban of all Serbian societies and cultural institutions in Croatia, which were part of a rich cultural tradition during the reign of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia between the wars. This policy also includes the imposition of an official language, which is named after another people (Croatian), thus signifying national inequality. That language was, through a constitutional act, made obligatory for all Serbs in Croatia. Also, nationalistically inclined Croatian language experts, through systematic and extremely

[5]Jovan Cvijić was Serbia's greatest geographer. His ethnic maps, often skewed by political considerations, played an important role in the Paris Peace Conference after World War I.

well organized action, have been distancing that language from the language spoken in other republics where Serbo-Croatian is the mother tongue, which contributes to the weakening of connections between Serbs in Croatia and other Serbs. In order to achieve this goal, the Croats are ready to sacrifice the continuity of their own language and lose from it international terms necessary for communication with other cultures, especially in the fields of science and technology. Moreover, the Serbian people in Croatia are not only culturally cut off from the mainstream of the Motherland, but the Motherland has no possibility of informing itself—to nearly the extent that other nations who live in Yugoslavia are connected with their fellow peoples—about the Serbian people's economic and cultural position in Croatia. The question of the integrity of the Serbian people and their culture in all of Yugoslavia is a fateful one for their survival and progress.

Except for the period of the existence of the NDH [the Independent State of Croatia], Serbs in Croatia were never so endangered as they are today.[6] The solution of their national position imposes itself as a first priority political question. Unless a solution is found, the consequences can be damaging in many ways, not only for the situation in Croatia, but for all of Yugoslavia.

Under the influence of the ruling ideology, the cultural heritage of the Serbian people is being alienated, usurped, invalidated, neglected, or wasted; their language is being suppressed; and the Cyrillic alphabet is vanishing. The field of literature in this sense serves as a main arena for arbitrariness and lawlessness. No other Yugoslav nation has been so rudely denied its cultural and spiritual integrity as the Serbian people. No literary and artistic heritage has been so routed, pillaged, and plundered as the Serbian one. The political maxims of the ruling ideology are being imposed on Serbian culture as more valuable and stronger than scientific and historic ones. While Slovenian, Croatian, Macedonian, and Montenegrian culture and literature are today being integrated, Serbian culture and literature alone are being systematically disintegrated. It is ideologically legitimate and in the spirit of self-management to freely divide and disperse the Serbian literary heritage and attribute it to authors from Vojvodina, Montenegro, or Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbia's best authors and most significant literary works are being torn from the Serbian literary canon so that new regional literatures can be artificially established.

The Serbian people have a historic and democratic right to establish fully national and cultural integrity independently, regardless of the republic or province in which they live. The acquisition of equality and independent development have a deeper historic meaning for the Serbian people. In less than fifty years, within two consecutive generations, twice exposed to physical annihilation, forceful assimilation, religious conversion, cultural genocide, ideological indoctrination, invalidation, and denunciation of their own tradition under the imposed complex of guilt, intellectually and political disarmed, the Serbian people were exposed to temptations that were too great not to leave deep scars on their spirit. We cannot allow

[6]During World War II, the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) pursued a brutal policy of purifying Croatia—which at that time included Bosnia—of its "unhealthy" elements: Jews, gypsies, Muslims, communists, and Serbs. About one-sixth of the Serbs living in Croatia and Bosnia lost their lives during the war.

ourselves to forget these facts at the end of this century of great technological achievements of the human mind. If the Serbian people see their future in the family of cultured and civilized nations of the world, they must find themselves anew and become a historical subject; they must once again acquire a consciousness of their historic and cultural being; they must put forth a modern societal and national program, which will inspire contemporary and future generations.

# 49

# The Slovene National Question

## *Dimitrij Rupel (translated by Meta von Rabenau and Carole Rogel)*

1987

In the past, it seems, [religious] conversion was a major instrument of Slovene liberation. Conversion means replacing gods, saints, morals, and cultures. It constitutes a social upheaval that overturns values, ideas, rules, and laws. Conversion from one faith to another has been a characteristic of the Slovene nation from the very beginning. It began when the Slovene Prince Borut asked the Bavarians for help during their war against the Avars [and the Bavarians required the Slovenes to convert to Christianity]. This is documented in the first historical account of the Slovenes, *Conversio bagoariorum et carantanorum* [from the ninth century]. [After the baptism of the Slovenes] Prince Inko hosted converted Slovene peasants at his table with gold-plated goblets, leaving unconverted noblemen in the courtyard to eat like dogs. In its retellings, this story of the conversion of the Slovenes from barbarians into Christians acquired a mythical character. The paradigmatic character of this event was confirmed more than a thousand years later when it became a focal point of [Francè] Prešern's only epic poem *Baptism at the Savica.* In 1986 Jan Makarović, in analyzing this poem, wrote that the physical defeat of the Slovenes became "at the same time their spiritual victory."

The next major cultural forward thrust was also related to a religious conversion, this time from Catholicism to Protestantism. In the sixteenth century [Primož] Trubar [who had converted to Protestantism] translated more than twenty religious and literary pieces into Slovene, thus legitimizing Slovene as one of Europe's civilized languages. The next opportunity for a conversion [this time a secular one] came with the creation of the Illyrian Provinces under Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon enriched the Slovene experience linguistically and culturally. During the revolutionary year of 1848 the Slovenes experienced one of their most important cultural–political conversions, this time to liberalism. Even though this happened to be a German concept, and not really suitable for Slovenes considering their subordinate sociopolitical relationship to Germans, it helped Slovene liberal intellectuals to develop many useful and successful political and cultural programs, including the Slovene novel.

The most recent Slovene conversion was to (belligerent) atheism. The protago-

Adapted from Dimitrij Rupel, "Odgovor na slovensko narodno vprašanje," *Nova revija* 57 (1987): 57–73. Published with the permission of the author.

nists of this conversion were liberals, social democrats, and communists, all of whom took part in twentieth-century developments. This conversion reached its climax after 1945. Atheization and, later, bolshevization were mixed blessings for the Slovenes. The international and class emphasis of these concepts, especially the Stalinist version, meant a neglect of the national question. Nevertheless, some common sense lay behind the concepts, which had democratic and even populist features that prevented the creation of a totally unitary or centralized state in postwar Yugoslavia. Without question, the creation of a sovereign Slovene state within its ethnic territory constitutes the most developed form of the Slovene nation thus far, the one closest to an ideal form.

None of the major conversions pushed the Slovenes backward. On the contrary, they permitted survival and progress. On the other hand, living with conversions involves the development of a particular mentality or national spirit. Provisionally, this mentality could be labeled a spirit of adjustment, compromise, and sublimation, as well as of rationality and openness. In politics Slovenes often followed the path of small steps, uneasy alliances, and elasticity, which sometimes earned them harsh and moralistic criticism. This mentality also led to resignation expressed in out-migration and a high level of suicides.

Numerous data dealing with the current Slovene situation show a possible change in this traditional behavioral pattern, that is, a reordering of the Slovene national question:

1. Due to the diminished importance of class identification generally taking place among developed European nations, national–ethnic identification is becoming stronger and more real.
2. In contrast to the situation in the ninth century, Slovenes today are not threatened by any great power that would necessitate seeking help from another great power.
3. Today, Slovenes deal with internationally comparable and analogous nation-states.
4. The knot that tied Slovenes to a nationally liberated and yet revolutionary society after World War II is beginning to unravel.

The opportunity of European nations to establish national states emerged in 1848. We missed our chance then. The opportunity reemerged during World War I, and we made use of it only halfway, which is why we joined the national liberation struggle [during World War II]. At that time, because of all sorts of circumstances, political revolution overshadowed national liberation. Political revolution temporarily legitimized class goals as primary, when they actually are secondary.

The problems of untying the knot are not simple, but I think that the old values built by the history of conversions are declining, while the primary values, such as national belonging, state dignity, and personal integrity, are on the rise. Among the encouraging phenomena are the demands for civil society, the new alternative movements, examples of cultural pride, less restraint in practicing religion and in making public statements, and demands for political pluralism.

Past Slovene conversions abandoned state, political, and religious traditions, but they retained the Slovene character, which was maintained in the language and

numerous national and cultural habits. Conversion was not assimilation. The Slovene language today is probably much less in danger than ever before while at the same time we are aware of alarming assessments about language endangerment even among well established nation-states, such as France. That means that we are dealing with new language problems, in particular with the problem of minority languages and the problem of languages in nationally mixed states.

Relations in Yugoslavia would certainly be ideal if the Slovenes knew Serbo-Croatian, perhaps even Serbian and Croatian as separate languages, and possibly also Macedonian; if the Serbs and Croats knew Slovene and Macedonian; and if the Macedonians knew one or two languages in addition to their own. In practice, the Slovenes do try to maintain such a relationship. For example, Slovene children learn the Serbo-Croatian language in elementary schools as a compulsory subject. Serbs and Croats, however, do not usually learn the Slovene language in elementary school. This means that we unconsciously apply the principle [of language equality] one-sidedly. Slovene is a second-class language in Yugoslavia, a fact that is confirmed by a superficial survey of the situation and about which there are thousands of anecdotes. Serbs and Croats are aware that knowledge of the Slovene language is not a strict necessity for them. Their contacts with Slovenes teach them that Slovenes are willing to speak to them in their own language on most occasions. I imagine that a Croat or Serb presented with the thought that he should learn Slovene asks himself the very logical question: Why should I learn Slovene when I can use this time to learn a language that could be used for something more urgent, which presses on me in daily life, and on which my prosperity and progress depends?

Many Slovenes, especially those working in federal jobs, think that a knowledge of Serbo-Croatian is their moral obligation, in the hope that by their example they will convince other citizens that they should learn Slovene. I think that this view is wrong, and that in the end Slovenes too should ask themselves, as others do: Why should I learn Serbo-Croatian if I could use this time to learn some more important language? Why should not Slovenes learn English, German, or Russian, instead of Serbo-Croatian?

The answer lies in fear, which has been characteristic of Slovenes for a thousand years. Imagine a Slovene abroad in a diplomatic delegation or in the army. Suddenly he finds that he is completely alone before an assembly of Serbo-Croatian–speaking representatives of the country. The only possible conclusion is that he stands before [representatives of] a *Serbo-Croatian–speaking country,* not individual representatives of the Serbian or Croatian nations. The language question becomes a question of patriotism and even ultimately of treason.

To this terrifying fear we must add something else. A Slovene speaks Serbo-Croatian out of fear for his own language. If the state guarantees language rights, Slovenes have to pay this state their highest respect, which is to adapt to its language. To be able to speak Slovene at home, the Slovenes have to speak Serbo-Croatian with the state. Otherwise there is a danger that the state will not understand them, that it will consider them to be even worse citizens than they already are.

And now one of the most important questions arises: How is it possible to speak face to face with the state if you are overwhelmed with fear? Everyone has had such experiences. Before the commander, the governor, the strict teacher—sooner or

later you can only stammer. Slovenes stammer in the Yugoslav language. Only at home can they speak fluently, in the family and in home institutions.

The principle that says people in multinational states become equal if they know two or more languages is thus shown to be disputable. It can be adhered to in a one-sided manner, and even this one-sided respect of the principle is not free from inner contradictions. In saying this, we have also said that *Yugoslavia is not a country of equal nations and languages* and that, considering the practicalities, *it cannot become one.*

The language problems listed [in other parts of the article not reproduced here] do not mean that the Slovene national question starts with the language issue. The fact that we deal with it so intensely suggests just the opposite, that we are more and more sober, deliberate, and professional about our language accomplishments. Our detailed involvement with language problems and dilemmas is witness to our high level of achievement to date. This list of problems is to be used to plan relationships in our multinational society, as long as it still remains the best framework for the realization of Slovene national interests.

At this level of development, one needs to count on the expansion of Slovenization and its impregnation of all sectors of Slovene society. What the Slovenes inherited from history and what remains in spite of all conversions, which were instruments of minimal national preservation, has to be projected into all levels of social life. In the past this task was given up to foreign states, international projects, churches, and ideologies. The Slovene mentality of conversion weakened substantially during the national liberal struggle, but certain elements of limitation can be observed even today. It seems that the time has come when these elements can be removed, when we can say farewell to the conversion strategy and abandon the kind of activity captured in the term *the national question.* From now on our questions will be modernization, international participation on an equal level, efficiency, political life, and [achieving] as high a level of accomplishment and as high a quality of life as possible. With the resolution of the national question, we will assume much more difficult tasks than we have had so far, those that were postponed due to inappropriate priorities. Any new conversion, let us say to an "eastern" mentality, or even to the third world of Islam or Orthodoxy, would mean catastrophe for the Slovenes, since it would be the only backward step in our thousand-year history.

# 51

# Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina

*Haris Silajdžić*

June 15, 1993

Allow me to join those who express their gratitude to the Government of Austria for their warm hospitality. For my part, I thank those who speak on behalf of the victims of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a blooodstain on your TV screens today. Bosnia and Herzegovina is genocide. Bosnia and Herzegovina is everything that human rights are not. I want you to keep in mind the name of one town in eastern Bosnia. The town is called Gorazde and I will come back to that town in a while to make a proposal to this conference.

Twenty thousand people dead, over 1.5 million displaced persons, refugees, 25,000 children dead, now hundreds of thousands in Bosnia at this moment starving to death. Thousands of children maimed, legless, handless, armless, parentless, to remind the international community forever of the international crime in which the international community is an accomplice. Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a natural disaster, it is not a crime. It is a genocide by people, a regime in Belgrade that attacks not only Muslims and Croats in Bosnia, but Croats in Croatia, Albanians in Kosovo, Muslims in Sandzak, Hungarians in Vojvodina, all in broad daylight, in front of all of you, in front of those who were handed the banner of might and justice in the international community. They are not punished. We are punished because we believed in justice, we believed in the international community, and we are guilty because we have resisted for so long. We have become an embarrassment to such a degree that high officials of the United Nations do not even mention Bosnia in their speeches—do not even mention Bosnia.

I will not speak long. I want once more to draw your attention to the town of Gorazde in eastern Bosnia that is now, as we speak, being savagely attacked by the Serbian forces. The Serbian forces from Serbia proper, an attack on Bosnia which is not a place but which, for those who do not know, has been a country, a state, a kingdom for one thousand years. For Bosnia knew about human rights hundreds of years ago when Jews, Hungarians, and other who sought refuge in Bosnia were given refuge and who have lived as first-rate citizens there ever since.

Until when shall we tolerate this? I know, and I am speaking on behalf of those who cannot speak because they have been denied the right to speak, they have been denied the right to eat, they have been denied the right to live for fifteen months with almost no action on the part of the international community. So how can we

Based on a transcript provided by the Embassy of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

talk about human rights? Theoretically we should speak about the mechanisms to implement the human right to punish the tyrants wherever they are. This means Gorazde today: Sixty thousand people are awaiting death, as we speak now—an hour from here by airplane—people are dying in the hospitals, in the schools, in the houses, in the streets. Hundreds lie dead in the streets now as we speak about human rights here and as we go on with the so-called peace process—the process in which not only the regime in Belgrade is accused but also the international community (whatever that means) for allowing genocide to go on shamelessly.

Human rights. Where are the human rights? Where is the political will? And then the question: What can we do? I propose today, and I hope, Mr. President, that I will be listened to, that this conference at least appeals to the Security Council to stop the genocide of the people in Gorazde. At least bear this in mind: Twenty thousand children in Gorazde are going to be killed. There is no doubt about it. So I repeat, let us make an appeal today from this conference to the Security Council; let us demand on behalf of the participants, on behalf of humanity—because this is a crime against humanity—to stop, to take all necessary measures (UN resolutions entitle the Security Council to take such measures) to stop the genocide in at least one town, Gorazde.

This is a test. If this is not done, I don't think that there will be any credibility left for any of us—for the international community or for the United Nations. Those calling from the United Nations for the downtrodden and for the dispossessed would be right. Is this what we want? Why double standards so blatant, so open, so bloody, and so deadly for us? But this is the message of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina: We are going to fight and defend ourselves because it is our inherent right—one of the oldest human rights—to defend ourselves, despite the fact that the international community has tied our hands while we are being killed, while 30,000 women are being raped, while children are being maimed.

I appeal to you again to demand that the Security Council take all necessary measures in Gorazde in order to restore credibility to this conference, to the United Nations and to the international community.

I thank you very much.