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THE SECOND STRIFE

Religion as the Catalyst of the Crisis in the 1980s and 1990s

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> Only that which never stops hurting stays in the memory.
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> Friedrich Nietzsche

After Tito's death, ethnic nationalism was simmering in all parts of the country, from Slovenia in the northwest to Kosovo in southeast. The secular politics of the regime's establishment involved factional quarrels, and the activities of secular intellectual elites have been analyzed at length in domestic and foreign literature. The religious scene, where important things occurred, has remained obscure. Yet visible religious symbols and movements were no less telling harbingers of what was to happen in the 1990s.

The Clerical Offensive and the Regime's Last Stand, 1979–1987

In the 1980s, the regime's experts for religious affairs sensed that the dynamic religious institutions' mobilization called for new policies and responses. In 1984, Radovan Samardžić defined official policy as follows: "struggle against abuses of religion, religious activity, and church service for political purposes . . . must be conducted through a free debate, education, instruction, and persuasion, rather than by state repression."[1] This mirrors a continuity of the new religious politics inaugurated in the 1960s, when church-state relations had relatively improved and religious liberties had expanded. After 1966, the secret police abolished departments for "hostile activities" of the clergy founded as early as 1944. Yet, after Tito's crackdown of ethnic nationalism in the republic and autonomous provinces in

the early 1970s, clandestine police control of religious organizations had resumed. Nevertheless, the secret police maintained no reliable and efficient network of agents in the clerical rank and file. According to secretly recorded minutes from sessions of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia that I read in the Croatian republic's office for relations with religious communities at Zagreb, one source agent (presumably a bishop) appears under the same code name from the mid-1970s to late the 1980s, and there was no other significant agent in the Church. The dominant source of information for the police was electronic espionage, that is, eavesdropping using electronic devices. In 1990, a Slovene journalist who was allowed access to police archives in Slovenia found that the SDS relied chiefly on electronic espionage, that is, "bugging," wiretapping, and control of phone and postal communications.[2] This contradicts the Croatian journalist Chris Cviić's argument that the Church was "heavily penetrated" by the communist secret police.[3] As would be revealed in 1999, electronic spying on church leaders continued after the fall of communism and Tito's Yugoslavia in all successor states, including Slovenia.[4]

Since the 1960s, state commissions for religious affairs (renamed after 1974 as commissions for relations with religious communities) were instructed to develop cordial relations with clergy and religious leaders and help them to overcome unnecessary difficulties such as rebuilding of new facilities and places of worship and other problems in church-state relations. These commissions' status and influence in the system was modest. Commissions were defined as advisory committees, and no law was made their establishment obligatory. In the 1980s in Croatia, for example, only a few commissions operated continuously as small offices in several of the largest cities. The situation of other republics was similar—in fact, in Croatia, because of the relative strength of the Catholic Church, these commissions were taken more seriously.[5] According to a 1988 survey conducted by Croatia's "religious commission" chief secretary, Vitomir Unković, in addition to the republic's central commission, headquartered in Zagreb, which maintained a permanent office staffed with six employees, there were two active commissions, in Split and Rijeka. Although 80 municipalities formally established commissions for relations with religious communities, these bodies rarely or never met and had no permanent offices.[6] After 1974, the Federal Commission for Relations with Religious Communities was affiliated with the Federal Executive Council. It had a chairperson appointed by the federal premier and would meet once or at best twice annually for informal consultations among chairs of the similar commissions from the republics and autonomous provinces. For experts interested in the forms of the struggle between church and state under communism, it would be worthwhile to compare the role of "commissions for religious affairs" in the former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.[7]

In consequence, clergy hostile to Tito's system saw their chance in the

1980s and met little regime resistance. According to a 1980 confidential police report, during the illness and death of Josip Broz Tito, many clerics, particularly Serb Orthodox and Catholic, were jubilant, as well as impatient to see the collapse of Tito's country.[8] Many used the pulpit to call for regime change. At the same time, the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia praised the Vatican for its support of the "genuine principles of nonaligned policy" and stressed that the Holy See and Yugoslavia shared the same views on most of the main issues in international relations, although "some domestic clericalists tend to abuse religious freedom for nationalist propaganda and incitement of ethnic hatred."[9]

In the mid-1980s, the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia worried over the growing power of the Catholic Church as carrier of what was apparently an ethnonationalistic mass mobilization. Catholic lay youth organizations revived their activity in big cities and university centers. In 1985, on the occasion of "International Year of the Young," Catholic youth movements organized numerous marches and pilgrimages, and some were banned by authorities because of nationalistic excesses.[10] On 10 June 1985, the Central Committee of the Croatian League of Communists released a new program on religion that only inaugurated a more liberal rhetoric and did not bring about any profound change in the regime's views on religion.[11] Two years later, the Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia, held on 23–24 April 1987, declared the Catholic Church "the most dangerous fountainhead of nationalism" and indicated that Church-state tensions were rising anew.[12]

Party and state authorities in the vulnerable multiethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina were even more concerned. At a 1983 meeting with the city communist organization in Mostar, Herzegovina, the chairman of the Bosnian presidency, Branko Mikulić, said that "nationalists and clericalists from all the three ethnic nations and their respective organized religions have recently raised their voices against the brotherhood and unity of Yugoslavia and equality of its nations."[13] These nationalists in Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to Mikulić, labored to establish ethnically pure villages and city quarters, while the clergy divided people in order to gain more power and privileged status for themselves.[14] In the similar vein, an influential pro-regime columnist called for stern state action against ethnic nationalism championed by clergy:

> If we let the clergy continue their apology for clerical fascists like Stepinac and processions and marches across Yugoslavia, we must fear the repetition of the horrors of the Second World War. The clergy pulled out swords in the name of the people, who never entrusted them with such religion! . . . We communists began to believe that the crimes of the Second World War would never be repeated, especially not in Europe at the end of the 20th century. But I am afraid that we have been wrong. Now we have a

right to demand of our state courts that they halt nationalism and fascism. Clerical robes do not provide immunity from persecution: law must be equal for all.[15]

The regime combined sporadic repression with talks and conferences about reforms. In the 1980s, most political prisoners were ethnic Albanians who took part in the Kosovo secessionist movement.[16] Among the political prisoners listed in the 1985 Amnesty International annual report, a number of persons persecuted as "prisoners of conscience" included seven clerics.[17] In addition, several dozen clerics, most of them Catholic, had been sentenced or fined for minor offenses. It is worth noting that military courts persecuted Jehovah's Witnesses and Nazarenes for refusing to bear arms while in military service. According to official Yugoslav sources, as reported in December 1986, "over the past 15 years . . . 152 Yugoslav citizens have been convicted for refusing to carry weapons for religious reasons during military service."[18]

The repression of radical nationalist clergy was balanced with appeasement of religious leaders. Party officials and commissions for religious affairs made every effort to speed up administrative procedure for the construction of religious facilities.[19] Concurrently, the so-called New Year greetings between religious leaders and state officials were held with a significant media attention.

A Promise of Peaceful Transition: Moderate Religious Policies and the Regime's Belated Democratization, 1988–1990

The Croatian episcopate's policy toward the regime in the 1980s was ambivalent. An account read at the National Eucharistic Congress and published in the jubilee's monograph by the Bishop's Conference of Yugoslavia in 1988 acknowledged that the Church enjoyed relatively more favorable conditions in Yugoslavia in comparison with other communist countries. According to the document,

> in contrast to other socialist countries, here the state does not interfere in the Church's internal affairs: the bishops are nominated without governmental influence; they administer diocesan affairs autonomously; the state imposes no restrictions on the number of candidates for the clerical profession. . . . The Church autonomously trains priests, and no state commissars are placed at the church's offices. In addition, Yugoslavia was the only socialist country that has maintained direct diplomatic relations with the Holy See, except for the period between 1953 and 1970.[20]

Church leaders applied different methods and echoed mutually contesting views. While Archbishop Kuharić stepped up annual commemorations and

the beatification campaign for Cardinal Stepinac, thereby irritating both the regime and the Serbian Church, the archbishop of Split-Makarska, Frane Franić, urged appeasement and dialogue. In his Christmas epistle of 1985, Franić asked believers "to love the concrete plural society in which we live, to identify ourselves with that society."[21] Franić also expressed a positive attitude toward the World War II Partisan struggle and urged the faithful to work together with "our brethren the Orthodox and the Muslims" for stability, the common good, and greater progress for "our multiethnic country."[22]

In 1983 and 1984, the federal government was negotiating with the Holy See a papal visit to Yugoslavia. The Croatian bishops officially invited the pope to the National Eucharistic Congress in September 1984. The Belgrade government was obliged to receive the pope, who had several times been invited by Yugoslav leaders to visit their country. The Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Silvestrini, attended the Tito funeral in 1980, and a Yugoslav invitation to visit Yugoslavia was extended to the pope in 1981 during a meeting between the chairman of the federal presidency, Cvijetin Mijatović, and the pope in Rome. On this occasion the Vatican declared support for the federal-multiethnic, socialist, and nonaligned Yugoslavia.[23] A Croatian government document released in May 1981 recommended that the federal government allow the papal visit because, the document reads, "the papal visit, if properly managed, can produce far-reaching positive political consequences in our country."[24] Pope John Paul II made several appeals for interreligious cooperation and democratic transition in Yugoslavia. The Croatian program of Vatican Radio quoted on 18 March 1983 a papal address to Yugoslav bishops *ad limina apostolorum*. Wojtyla urged Catholic-Orthodox cooperation through an interchurch council for dialogue, extended special papal greetings to Yugoslav Muslims, and told the bishops that he held them responsible for maintaining interfaith harmony in the multiethnic country.[25] According to the Italian state news agency *ANSA*, the pope gave instructions in November 1983 to Michele Checchini, then a papal nuncio to Yugoslavia, to launch formal negotiations with the Belgrade government about the papal visit.[26] The nuncio Checchini, along with Cardinal Archbishop Franz Koenig of Vienna, held talks with federal government officials in Belgrade in January and February 1984. These meetings failed to reach agreement on the interfaith program of the papal visit. According to my interview with Radovan Samardžić, who was then the general secretary of the federal commission for relations with religious communities, the Serbian Orthodox Church indicated that the pope should visit Jasenovac and meet there, as well as in Belgrade, with the patriarch of Serbia. The Croatian episcopate had a number of objections to such an agenda, while demanding that interfaith prayers should commemorate all victims of war. The Serbian Church insisted that the pope mention specifically that most of those murdered at Jasenovac were ethnic Serbs. In consequence, the papal visit was called off. The two parties found a diplomatic formula for the controversy over the papal visit: the pope would come as soon as "circumstances permit" and both parties agree that

the visit would not aggravate ethnic and interconfessional relations in Yugoslavia.[27]

Ethnically homogenous Catholic Slovenia, whose local Church did not seek a beatification of the World War II anticommunist and pro-German bishop Rožman and whose political leaders did not worry about ethnic minorities, rushed to inaugurate religious liberty without restrictions as early as 1987. From 1989 to 1990, in all Yugoslav republics except in Serbia, worship services were broadcast on Television, religious dignitaries read their messages to the faithful, and state officials delivered greetings to citizen believers. Even the Yugoslav military announced in November 1990 that "regulation of religious rights for military personnel is under review."[28] The federal government, under the premier Ante Marković, announced democratization of religious affairs in the context of the constitutional reform initiated in 1987. The Catholic episcopate released two documents concerning the constitutional reform. The bishops promised loyalty to the Yugoslav state provided that it honor religious values and recognize religious institutions as respected and benevolent social institutions.[29] In 1988, the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church also submitted a set of proposals for the ongoing constitutional reform to federal authorities. The Serbian Church demanded that Christmas and Saint Sava's Day become state holidays.

Finally, the first private interfaith associations were formed in 1989. In October 1989, the Belgrade press published a document, entitled "An Inter-Confessional Petition," submitted to the federal government by a human rights group that brought together prominent clerics from various denominations. This interfaith group was led by a Serb Orthodox prelate Ljubodrag Petrović, with assistance from Belgrade Jesuits, some Muslim clerics, and leaders of local Jewish community.[30] The document called for greater religious liberty, advancement of religious culture, and the formation of interfaith advocacy groups.[31]

Ethnoreligious Realignment and the Multiparty Elections

As the first multiparty elections were announced in all Yugoslav federal republics, the question of religious liberty and religious affairs in general became a highly important issue in the preelection campaign. All pretenders vied to gain support from religious institutions. Aware of the Church's strength in Croatia, party leaders decided to start negotiations about power-sharing with the Catholic episcopate. Croatian communist reformers pinned their hopes on the diplomatic skills of Zdenko Svete, a Partisan veteran and former ambassador to the Holy See, who was nominated head of the state delegation for top-level secret church-state negotiations that began in February 1989 in Zagreb.[32] The Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia nominated Bishop Ćiril Kos of Djakovo as the head of the Church delegation, assisted

by the bishop of Šibenik, Antun Tamarut, the auxiliary bishop of Zagreb, Djuro Kokša, and the general secretary of the BKJ, Vjekoslav Milovan. The talks were held in the Croatian government's luxury residence, known as Villa Weiss (in Prekrižje).

According to my interviews with members of the state negotiation team, Svete's authority was rather limited.[33] His job was to buy time and make sure that the Church did not overtly side with ethnic nationalists. The Church, however, was in a hurry. At the first meeting Church representatives demanded unconditionally the lifting of all restrictive laws and policies in the domain of religious affairs. The bishops did not yet pose the issue of the restitution of Church property. The other party was stalling. The Croatian reformers could not simply meet all the Church's demands as the Slovenes had because, among other reasons, the Croatian government also had the task of conducting similar negotiations with the Serbian Orthodox Church. Svete tried to assure the bishops that the Church's possible support of the nationalists would carry a grave risk of interethnic strife. Svete made it clear to the bishops that both the Croatian League of Communists and the Croatian government were determined to resist Slobodan Milošević's great Serbian politics. The bishops applauded this. Svete also announced the beginning of separate talks between the federation and the Holy See about the revision of the "Protocol" of 1966. The chief secretary for relations with religious communities, Radovan Samardžić, told me that the leading reformer in the federation, Prime Minister Ante Marković (a Croatian business leader), urged new regulation in church-state relations emulating the West European model (e.g., Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium).[34] Marković even put pressure on one of the most rigid institutions of the old regime—the Yugoslav People's Army—to begin revising military rules that banned active military personnel from attending worship service in uniform and reading religious publications inside garrisons.[35] However, neither Prime Minister Ante Marković and his "Alliance of Reform Forces" (backed by Western governments) nor any other nonnationalist or prounity party or movement won endorsement from religious authorities. In January 1990, the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia evaluated the course of the church-state talks in Croatia and ordered the delegation to obtain some written concessions to the key Church demands or to withdraw from the talks. The talks were interrupted by the first multiparty elections in April 1990.

In the meantime, the Croatian government faced growing ethnic nationalism and militancy from the apparently conflict-prone Serbian Orthodox Church. As early as the first half of the 1980s, a Croatian government document emphasized that "while interest in religion and the quality of spiritual life in the Orthodox Church has been for a long time now declining at an alarming rate, the Serbian clergy is intensifying nationalist propaganda in order to mobilize people on the platform of ethnic nationalism."[36] The document also pointed out that some clerics tend to magnify minor disputes over land, property, or trivial conflicts between the locals and the authorities

in Serb-populated areas, in order to charge discrimination against the Serbian minority and unequal status for the Serbian Orthodox Church in predominantly Catholic Croatia. Furthermore, the source blames zealots among monks and bishops and the church press, especially the biweekly *Pravoslavlje*, for pressing the issue of World War II Ustaša crimes in order to aggravate interchurch and interethnic relations.[37]

In 1989 the Serbian Orthodox Church released a statement by the Holy Bishops' Sabor in which the bishops demanded from the authorities in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina financial reparations for the loss of human resources and material damage the Serbian Church had suffered at the hands of the Ustašas.[38] The Croatian press noted that the Serbian Church had been for decades the major recipient of governmental subsidies and financial aid.[39] Nevertheless, the Croatian government tried to appease the Orthodox bishops, giving a lavish financial assistance for the celebration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. The Croatian portion of the jubilee was held in northern Dalmatia at the village of Kosovo near Knin. During preparations for the jubilee, the Zagreb government donated 10 billion dinars (approximately 100,000 dollars) for rebuilding the Orthodox seminary at the Krka monastery in the Knin district. The government fully funded the construction of a 4.5-kilometer-long section of road giving access to the same monastery (the costs were equivalent to 1 million U.S. dollars). The government of Croatia also financially assisted the main ceremony of the jubilee of the Kosovo Battle in the village of Kosovo near Knin. Despite the regime's concessions to the Church, a massive nationalist demonstration erupted at the main event of the jubilee.[40] Perpetuating the pressure, Orthodox bishops and clergy (except a few Partisan veterans and members of priestly associations) boycotted the New Year church-state meeting in Zagreb in January 1990.

Between 4 October 1989 and 17 March 1990, the national Catholic bishops' conference released several statements, epistles, and instructions to the clergy and faithful about how to vote and prepare believers for the elections. These statements were tactful and diplomatic. Meanwhile, in Croatia, most of the clergy welcomed the 1989 foundation of the ethnic nationalistic party Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) under the nationalist historian Franjo Tudjman. Tudjman had earlier distinguished himself by denying a Serbian "new historiography" of the World War II (more on this later), although he inclined toward minimizing NDH crimes against Serbs and Jews. Hence Tudjman was at the same time a good and bad choice. Good because he had been a Partisan, not Ustaša, during World War II but bad in that he was a red flag for the raging bull of Serbian nationalism because he used historical scholarship to debunk Serb myths, not in the name of the old Titoist brotherhood and unity but in order to exculpate the NDH and prepare ground for another independent Croatian state. In spite of his communist past, Tudjman was sufficiently nationalistic and ethnocentric to earn the Catholic Church's sympathies. A strong and rigid man and a former general,

Tudjman made the bishops feel less afraid of the Serbian menace. The leading Catholic weekly *Glas koncila* favored Tudjman. Many ordinary clerics agitated for the HDZ and some became party officials. The Franciscan Tomislav Duka, the Bosnian prelate Anto Baković, and the theologians Adalbert Rebić and Juraj Kolarić became members of the Tudjman party. The friar Duka told me in an interview that Pope John Paul II, Michael Gorbachev, and Franjo Tudjman were prophets sent by Jesus Christ to finish off communism and bring eternal happiness to humankind.[41] Baković became president of the "Croatian Population Movement," promising generous rewards for families with more than two children and threatening higher taxes for bachelors and unmarried women under 40. Both the Church and the HDZ promised to the people a national renaissance epitomized in high population growth and prosperity through quick privatization of the socialist economy, quick admission into the European Union, generous investments by rich countries that were friendly to Croatia, notably Germany and Austria, and the return to the homeland of wealthy Croatians from Western countries.

Tudjman conducted fundraising campaigns among exile Croat communities with the assistance of the Croatian Catholic missions. Catholic priests, such as the Franciscans Ljubo Krasić from Canada, Tomislav Duka from Germany, and other Croat clerics from Croatian parishes and missions in the diaspora raised millions in hard currency for Tudjman's electoral campaign.[42] Father Ljubo Krasić, a Herzegovinian Franciscan who served as parish administrator in Sudbury, Ontario (Canada), with his fellow Herzegovinians Gojko Šušak and Ante Beljo from Ottawa and others from the so-called Norwal group, with which Tudjman had collaborated during his American tours between 1987 and 1990, supplied Tudjman with dollars as well as very reliable cadres.[43] Šušak would become Tudjman's defense minister, and Beljo took over as the HDZ propaganda chief. According to a later testimony by General Martin Špegelj, who was Croatia's defense minister in 1990–91 (and was succeeded by Šušak after Špegelj resigned in protest of Tudjman-Milošević secret contacts), the Tudjman regime recruited police, military, and political officials from among a number of ordinary criminals, wanted by Interpol, who took refuge in Croatia as patriots returning to defend the country.[44] The same could be observed in Serbia, where, for example, the internationally wanted criminals Željko Ražnatović Arkan and the mysterious "Captain Dragan" from Australia returned to led paramilitary units "defending" Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. Tudjman's top aide, Gojko Šušak, was designated by Western observers one of persons directly responsible for the outbreak of the Serbo-Croat war in 1991—it was he who launched armed attacks on Serb villages and ordered the assassination of Croats and Serbs who labored for peace.[45] Tudjman would later refer to the war of 1991 as a "war forced upon us" but in reality the HDZ wanted sovereignty and statehood for Croatia at any price and by all means, including war.

In the spring 1990 elections in Croatia, Tudjman's HDZ won a relative

plurality of 43 percent and beat former communists, who gained 34 percent. The Church's support might have been a decisive factor for the election's outcome. The clerical support also had strong impact on the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the moderate Bosnian politician Ivo Komšić, the Bosnian branch of the HDZ was organized and prepared for the 1990 elections through the parish system of the Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[46] Bosnian Catholic bishops and most of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian clergy, contends Komšić, made possible the electoral victory of the HDZ, even though it was obvious that this party's goal was the dismemberment of the republic. All in all, ethnic nationalistic parties, namely, the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the HDZ in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, backed by the largest religious institutions, won the elections by narrow margins of votes.[47]

At the same time in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serbian Orthodox Church provided overt support for the extreme Serb nationalist Radovan Karadžić, while Bosnian Muslim clergy backed the Muslim SDA party. The Muslim leader Izetbegović needed Islam both as the vehicle of popular mobilization and the key component of the newly emerging Bosniak national identity. Besides, the weak Muslim SDA could not organize the election campaign without the local Muslim clergy. Although leaders of the Islamic Community had declared their neutrality in party politics, in reality, imams and other officials of the Islamic Community unequivocally supported the SDA in the first multiparty election in Bosnia-Herzegovina held in November 1990. In the words of an SDA activist from Mostar, Herzegovina, "without the help from our imams and villages, Alija [Izetbegović] would have not become the new president of Bosnia and Herzegovina."[48] According to my interviews with Muslim religious officials and SDA leaders in 1989 and 1990, the ulema took part in the foundation of the SDA and carried out most of the logistics for the election campaign.[49] Among 40 founding members of the SDA, eight were former "Young Muslims" and some two dozen included prominent imams from the Sarajevo theological school and the Zagreb mosque, the mufti of Mostar, and officials of the Community's Sarajevo headquarters. Despite the decision on clerical noninvolvement in politics by the Islamic Community and protests by the liberal Zulfikarpašić and the Reis Selimoski, hundreds of clerics remained associated with the party, backed its fundamentalist wing, and, according to Zulfikarpašić, took part in organizing the party's military wing, the so-called Muslim Patriotic League.[50] Islamic religious symbolism dominated the new party's mass gatherings. The moderate Muslim Zulfikarpašić argued that the display of symbols imported from Arab countries was "unseen in Bosnia, alien to its culture, and harmful for the idea of tolerance."[51] Izetbegović, according to Zulfikarpašić, was pretending to be a mediator between the liberals and zealots, though in reality he backed the latter. The zealots also recruited prominent former communists, who rushed to demonstrate their new religious conversion.[52] Thus, the most

massive SDA convention under the green banners of Islam and Arab inscriptions from the Koran took place in the western Bosnian town of Velika Kladuša, with the sponsorship of the former communist official and local business magnate Fikret Abdić, as a part of his bid for the office of Bosnia's presidium.

Up to the outbreak of the Bosnian war in 1992, the leaders of the Islamic Community remained nonetheless less nationalistic and militant than the Christian Churches. The Reis Selimoski took part in a joint prayer for peace with Pope John Paul II and organized several ecumenical meetings and peace vigils. Yet, after it became clear that Slovenia and Croatia were fighting for secession while Milošević launched a war for Greater Serbia, in October 1991 the Rijasset in Sarajevo released a document in support of an independent and sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina. Muslim leaders established collaboration with the Islamic Conference and urged this organization to watch closely the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina and be prepared even for international recognition of Bosnia as a sovereign state in case Milošević and Tudjman attempted to dismember it.

In contrast to the cases of Croatia and Bosnia, where clerical support had a palpable impact on the elections' outcome, in Serbia and Montenegro, Slobodan Milošević retained power without the Serbian Orthodox Church's help and even in spite of some criticism from the clerical rank and file. At the time of the elections, the Church was without a patriarch. Germanus was on his deathbed, and the new patriarch had not been elected yet. Many clerics in the Serbian Church believed that Milošević was the long-awaited liberator and unifier of all Serbian lands. Although Patriarch Germanus did not explicitly mention Milošević's name, even this cautious Church leader said (in the 1987 interview quoted earlier) that Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox church were waiting for a national leader capable of defending Serbian interests and if necessary, accomplishing partition of the country.[53] Some prelates, especially those aspiring to replace the ailing Germanus at the patriarchal throne, lauded Milošević in interviews with the secular press. Metropolitan Amfilohije said in his 1990 interview with the Belgrade weekly *NIN* that "Milošević and other leading politicians in Serbia should be commended for understanding the vital interests of the Serb people at this moment. . . . If they continue as they have started, the results will be very impressive."[54] According to Bishop Amfilohije's interview with the foreign press, "between 1987 and 1989, as it was so clear during the jubilee of the Kosovo Battle, Serbia has demonstrated a national unity, unseen probably since 1914."[55] Another outspoken Milošević supporter was the acting patriarch, Metropolitan Jovan of Zagreb. Nevertheless, many Church leaders remained suspicious of Milošević because of his communist past and nonattendance of Church services and jubilees, let alone the issue of Church property, which he ignored.

The confused Serb episcopate held the elections for the new patriarch on 6 December 1990, one week before the multiparty elections in Serbia. Milošević tried to secure control over the Church through his favorites for the

patriarchal seat, the incumbent patriarch's deputy, Metropolitan Jovan of Zagreb and the metropolitan of Montenegro, Amfilohije Radović. Yet both proteges of the Serbian strongman suffered a fiasco, not even having been elected to a short list of three candidates. The new patriarch-elect was the bishop of Raška-Prizren (Kosovo), Pavle (Gojko Stojčević), born in 1914. At the same session the bishops' assembly released a preelectoral message to the Serbian people. The message was vehemently anticommunist, with the following relatively easily identifiable anti-Milošević note: "we are convinced that the Serbian people will be capable of recognizing and electing candidates sincerely faithful to God and to the nation, in contrast to those who make big promises behind which they hide their quest for power and selfish interests."[56] The Church, through the preelectoral message, also announced its own expectations for "full freedom of the Church's mission . . . and return of the Church as spiritual mother of the Serbian people in schools, hospitals, the mass media and public life . . . in the new democratic society."[57] Two weeks before the election day in Serbia, the patriarchate's weekly, *Pravoslavlje*, lashed out at Milošević and his communists, renamed "socialists." In the strongest words possible, *Pravoslavlje* called on the people of Serbia to renounce "the new wave of dishonor, dishonesty, brainwashing and media-terror," "neo-Bolshevism," and "neo-Titoism" and vote against "the arrogant, self-appointed Hazyain Milošević."[58] However, following Milošević's 65 percent electoral triumph, on 24 December 1990, the patriarch-elect paid a visit to the president-elect on the patriarch's request. Milošević, who earlier had avoided encounters with the clergy, this time allowed the meeting be televised and praised by the media as evidence of national unity around the new democratically elected leader. Nevertheless, the Church was still upset by the fact that Milošević did not improve the social and financial status of the clergy or recognize the Church as a specific national institution.[59] In spite of the Church's desire for collaboration, President Milošević did not attend the enthronement of patriarch-elect Paul I in the Saborna church, and his government did not grant a day off for Christmas, as the western republics had done two years earlier. Not even Saint Sava's Day was restored as a school feast. The patriarch and the *Provoslavlje* protested not only the Christmas issue but also the "arrogant manipulations with the Church and the patriarch, for the Serbian president's self-promotion and other propaganda purposes, in Milošević's daily *Politika* and state-run TV."[60]

The Serbian Church, however, strongly backed Serb nationalist parties and their leaders in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In Croatia, as I have shown, the Serbian Church turned militant and anti-Croatian even before Tudjman's electoral triumph. Since 1987, the Church press had alleged numerous cases of anti-Serbian discrimination by the new regime.[61] After the regime change in Spring 1990, the Serbian Church overtly designated Tudjman a new Pavelić. On 13 September 1990, a group of Orthodox priests released a message in which they accused the Croatian authorities of "daily cases of terror and intimidation, insults, loss of jobs, demolition of homes,

assaults and even proven cases of murder and rape . . . the major targets of the violence being Orthodox priests, their families, and especially children."[62] The clergy "hold the state responsible for the violence."[63] In January 1991, president-elect Franjo Tudjman officially invited all bishops and other dignitaries of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia to the traditional church-state meetings inherited from the communist era. None of 14 invited Orthodox dignitaries appeared in the Croatian state assembly. A written notice addressed to the president-elect said that the representatives of the Orthodox Church would stay away to protest against assaults on Serbian clergy, people, and church property in Croatia.[64]

The War of the Churches

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Catholic–Orthodox relations, observed at the level of Croat and Serb religious elites, seemed strikingly analogous to the Concordat crisis of the 1930s and the prewar mobilization of the churches from 1937 to 1941. This time, points of conflict included an even larger number of concrete issues, plus a propaganda war over the causes of the current crisis and controversies from the history of World War II. The Kosovo crisis and the Macedonian ecclesiastical schism widened the rift between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the other two major Yugoslav religious institutions. Both the Islamic Community and the Catholic Church came under the Serbian barrage. Orthodox clergy, Belgrade media, and Serb scholars argued that Islamic fundamentalism was the driving force of Albanian separatism.[65] "Islamic fundamentalism has played a great role in the Kosovo drama and tragedy for the Serbian people and the Church," wrote the archimandrite Atanasije Jevtić in his Kosovo chronicle.[66] In 1987 Patriarch Germanus said in an interview that the influence of Islam on the situation in the part of Yugoslavia where Albanians live was "enormous" and blamed Muslim leaders for "doing nothing to keep Albanian separatism under control."[67] In reality, proregime officials of the Islamic Community, urged by the state, labored for years to mitigate tensions in Kosovo. Besides, the influence of Muslim clergy was rather limited. Albanian nationalism was ethnic and tribal, not religious. Albanian riots in 1968, 1971, and 1981 were led by pro-Tirana Marxist students and intellectuals. The mufti of Kosovo told me in an interview that the religious culture of the Kosovo population was poor and the attendance of worship services and religious instruction worryingly low.[68] The Kosovo crisis also affected Catholic–Orthodox relations negatively. The Croatian church press, Radio Vatican, and some Catholic churchmen expressed support for the 1981 Kosovo movement and backed the Albanian quest for greater autonomy in Kosovo. In 1982 Vatican Radio broadcast a series of programs in the Albanian and Croatian languages supportive of the Albanian struggle against the Serbs. One of the Jesuit editors in the Croatian language program lost his position after a

diplomatic note filed by Belgrade to the Vatican. In 1982, Archimandrite Atanasije Jevtić accused the Croatian secular and church press of encouraging the secession of Kosovo while covering up the truth about the Croat genocide of Serbs during World War II.[69] A foreign analyst of Balkan affairs wrote about the Catholic–Orthodox rift over Kosovo as a "detonator of the Serbo-Croat conflict threatening to explode."[70]

The Vatican angered the Serbian Church by maintaining ties with the schismatic Macedonian Orthodox Church. The Macedonian Orthodox Church established annual May commemorations at St. Cyril's tomb in Rome. The pope received Macedonian clergy in a private audience. The papal sympathy for the Macedonians also derived from the tradition of the 1859 ecclesiastical union of Kukuš. The once-expanding Macedonian Kukuš Uniate church was suppressed through a joint Serbo-Bulgarian-Greek effort and abolished after the Balkan wars. However, several parishes survived and a Uniate bishop was installed in Skopje. Yugoslav diplomacy was thankful to the pope for supporting the Macedonians. On 18 June 1982, on the occasion of the consecration of the newly built Catholic cathedral in the Macedonian capital of Skopje, representatives of the Holy See were in attendance with Yugoslav regime officials and the Macedonian clergy. On 22 May 1985, the pope received a delegation of the Macedonian Church accompanied by Yugoslav regime officials. In September 1985, the Macedonian Orthodox Church delegation, despite bitter protests by the Serbian Orthodox Church, took part in the main ceremony of the Year of Saint Methodius at Djakovo, Croatia. In October 1987, a high-ranking delegation of the Catholic Church visited Skopje to participate in the Macedonian Church's jubilee of the twentieth anniversary of the proclamation of autocephaly. The embittered patriarch of Serbia, Germanus, complained (in the 1987 interview cited earlier): "No other Orthodox Church has accepted the forceful separation of one part of the Serbian Orthodox Church from the rest of it. On another side, they (Macedonians) are recognized by the Vatican! Doesn't this one detail alone really tell you enough?!"[71] It is also noteworthy that the Vatican and Catholic press further infuriated the Serbian Orthodox Church by supporting the movement for an autocephalous Orthodox Church in Montenegro. The Montenegrin ecclesiastical movement argued that the oldest church in Montenegro (in the historic Dioklea-Duklja and Zeta provinces) was the Catholic archdiocese of Bar. The same argument emphasizes that the autonomous national Orthodox Church in the Kingdom of Montenegro was abolished and incorporated into the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1920.[72]

The Churches and the World War II Controversy

After Tito's death, the official history of World War II that had constituted the keystone of the civil religion of brotherhood and unity and the six-

republic federation's patriotic myths was questioned by authors, historians, and journalists—nationalists as well as liberal communists.[73] One of keystones of Titoist historiography of World War II, according to which the Croat Ustaša NDH was an aberration in the history of the Croat people and was imposed by fascist Nazi invaders, was challenged in the mid-1980s by intellectual, cultural, and religious circles in Belgrade. A "new Serbian history" was then in the process of being written, concurrent with the unfolding ethnic nationalist mobilization of Serbs aimed at restructuring the Tito federation. This "new history" was influenced by the following fours factors and sources: (1) Serbian ethnic nationalist ideology; (2) nationalism emanating from the Orthodox Church and church historiography; (3) Serb émigré myths and propaganda; and (4) Holocaust and genocide studies (according to which the Serbs identified themselves with the Jews and the crimes against Serbs were perceived as equivalent to the Holocaust). The influence of the fourth factor I have already noted and will further elaborate hereafter, although a proper understanding would presumably require from readers familiarity with Holocaust historiography since the 1960s.[74]

The "new" Serbian historians argued that the NDH was above all a very efficient instrument of genocide against Serbs, conceived in Croatia several centuries before the genocide took place. The NDH genocide, argued Serb historian Vasilije Dj. Krestić, among many others, targeted the Serb people for annihilation, while the idea of genocide is, allegedly, several centuries old, one of the key peculiarities in the history of the Croats, and even a remarkable idiom of Croatian culture, religion, and national character.[75] The new Serbian historiography, to which both Church and secular historians contributed, emphasized the role of religion as the key catalyst of Serbo-Croat hatred, designating the Roman Catholic Church as the chief carrier of hatred and inspirer of the idea of genocide against the Serb people.[76] After inaugurating this new history, the Serbian nationalist movement moved on to argue that, allegedly, another independent state of Croatia was in the process of reemergence in what was then the Socialist Republic of Croatia (then still ruled together by Croat and Serb communists devoted to Tito's ideology of multiethnic "brotherhood and unity"). Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were cautioned to be prepared for a possible repetition of the genocide of 1941.

Croatian historians, nationalists and moderates alike, rebuked the genocide thesis.[77] The nationalist historian Franjo Tudjman was one of the most outspoken defenders of the Croats against the Serb "genocide thesis," but his proclivity to minimize Ustaša crimes and explain them as an overreaction against the long Great Serbian pressure on Croats in Croatia and Bosnia, especially during the interwar monarchy, fueled the anger from Belgrade so that new genocide charges mounted.[78] Tudjman also used his scholarly skills to write an apology for the Catholic Church and Archbishop Stepinac, designated as accomplices in Ustaša crimes.[79] Monsignor Pave Žanić, who was

the bishop of Mostar in the 1980s, told me in an interview that all Croat bishops admired both Tudjman's scholarship and courage.[80]

The churches, of course, began rewriting history and challenging each other earlier through grand jubilees and commemorations of various anniversaries from ethnic past. Regarding the Stepinac controversy, in 1979, the Archbishop of Zagreb, Franjo Kuharić, inaugurated annual mementoes for Cardinal Stepinac, publicly calling for a "new" truth about the allegedly falsely accused cardinal. In 1981, the Zagreb archdiocese submitted Stepinac's candidacy for martyrdom to the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The Curia initiated procedure *de virtutibus*, which includes study of the candidate's life and demeanor, in order to determine whether, as the proposal argued, the candidate lived strictly according to Christian norms, thereby setting an example for others. In 1984, the Stepinac case was elevated to the stage *de martyrio*, focusing on the candidate's struggle against communism and his years in jail. In the meantime, the Catholic Church was completing the nine-year entitled Great Novena "Thirteen Centuries of Christianity in the Croat People." In September 1984, at the final ceremony of the jubilee, Cardinal Kuharić spoke about the Stepinac case. Yet only a week before the National Eucharistic Congress of the Church in the Croat People, the Church of Serbia staged its "countercommemoration" at Jasenovac.

Forgive but Not Forget: Liturgy in the Concentration Camp

Four years after Tito's death, Serbian Orthodox Church leaders dared to undertake what Bishop Nikolaj Velimrović had urged as early as the 1950s: a liturgical commemoration of Jasenovac as a site of martyrdom of the Serb people second in importance to Kosovo. During Tito's life such an act would have been impossible, for two basic reasons. First, Titoism emphasized antifascist Partisans, not ethnic Serbs, as the principal victims of the Jasenovac concentration camp. As noted in chapter 6, Jasenovac became a shrine of the civil religion of brotherhood and unity and a memorial to the Partisan struggle in which all ethnic groups and minorities took part and suffered. At the site where the Ustaša death camp once stood, state authorities established a museum and memorial park with a 140-foot-tall concrete flower-shaped memorial monument.[81] Second, Titoism would have not allowed separate ethnically based commemorations and uses of Jasenovac to imply that "the Serb people" were a victim of a genocide carried out by "the Croat people" as the Serb nationalistic message established in the late 1980s did.

The Serbian Orthodox Church viewed Jasenovac as a latter-day Kosovo, that is, a sacred site of martyrdom and "eternal memory" that would rejuvenate the nation. A new Serbia was emerging, with its secular capital and the patriarchal seat in Belgrade and two spiritual centers in Kosovo and

Jasenovac, plus the web of monasteries and shrines in the region. The connection between the old myth of Kosovo and the new Jasenovac myth was carefully knitted by church leaders. Yet Jasenovac needed "desecularization." In 1988, the church journal *Glas crkve* revealed that Bishop Velimirović had bequeathed funds for the construction of what he envisioned as a "Temple of Atonement" to be built at Jasenovac, "in honor of the victims and as symbol of forgiveness to the executioners for the crimes they committed."[82]

An Orthodox chapel at Jasenovac was rebuilt between 1973 and 1984 with financial aid from the Croatian government and donations from Serbs abroad. After the Tito's 1971 crackdown on the Croat nationalist movement, the new Croatian republic's authorities felt a sense of guilt and sought to appease Croatian Serbs in a number of ways, including providing the permit and money for the chapel. The original parish church at Jasenovac had been destroyed and burned to the ground by the Ustašas in August 1941. In 1983, a replica of the prewar parish church was completed and the new temple was scheduled to be consecrated in the same week that the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia was to hold the final ceremony of the Great Novena—the National Eucharistic Congress.

On 2 September 1984, the Serbian Church convened 20,000 faithful at Jasenovac for the consecration of the new St. John the Baptist parish church. The purpose of the event, according to the Orthodox theologian Mitar Miljanović, was the consecration and inauguration of Jasenovac as "the memorial site of the most horrible suffering of the Serbian people next to Kosovo. Jasenovac is not only a symbol of genocide of the Serbian people—Jasenovac is the specific location in which genocide was committed preeminently against the Serbian people."[83] In the words of the Serb-Orthodox metropolitan of Zagreb-Ljubljana, Jovan Pavlović, the commemoration was the Serbian Orthodox church's response to "attempts to obliterate the traces of Jasenovac, to reduce the total immense number of victims, to deny the crime and forget it! We cannot, and will not, ever forget the sufferings of the innocent children in Jasenovac. . . . A too easy forgetfulness of evil means that it could be repeated."[84] In his homily, the patriarch of Serbia, Germanus, drew parallels between Jasenovac and Jerusalem (Golgotha) and between Jasenovac and the Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz, Mauthausen, and Dachau. The patriarch stressed that those who had committed the crimes at Jasenovac were Christians who killed and tortured other Christians, all in a belief that thereby they were doing a patriotic service to their nation. The head of the Orthodox Church concluded: "Brothers, we have to forgive, because such is the Gospel's commandment—but we cannot forget. Let the great-grandsons of our great-grandsons know that this enormous concrete flower on the field of Jasenovac is the witness of madness, which must never take place again."[85]

After the 1984 commemoration at Jasenovac, the memorial site became the destination of Serb pilgrimages. In search of inspiration, the members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and arts, then working on the "Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts," made pilgrimage

to Jasenovac twice, in 1985 and again in 1989. In the meantime, the Serbian Church continued annual commemorations at Jasenovac (the most massive would be the liturgies held in 1990 and 1991). In August 1990 the Holy Synod published a massive monograph dedicated to Jasenovac. This book argued that the Vatican and Croatian Catholic clergy were liable for the Ustaša genocide against Serbs.[86] Metropolitan Jovan of Zagreb established a local feast in honor of the 1984 consecration of the Jasenovac memorial church. The new local Orthodox bishop, Lukijan Pantelić, was installed in 1985. He inaugurated the Day of the Jasenovac Martyrs, to be commemorated annually on Saint John's Day, 7 July.

The Serbian Church's 1984 liturgy at the World War II concentration camp memorial site rebutted the history symbolically presented by the Croat Catholic Great Novena entitled "Thirteen Centuries of Christianity in the Croat People" and was an assault by the Serbian Church on the civil religion of brotherhood and unity. Many Serb, Croat, Montenegrin, Muslim, Slovene, and other Partisan communists were killed in Jasenovac because they were communists and Partisan. The Serbian Church wanted this to be forgotten. The "new" Jasenovac became a "death camp," a "Yugoslav Auschwitz" for extermination of the Serb people. Serb historians and church leaders borrowed concepts and ideas from Holocaust historiography and applied it to World War II in Yugoslavia. Serbs became equivalent to the Jews and Croats to the Nazi Germans. In the ensuing years, Serb prelates commemorated "genocide against the Serb people" in other memorial sites from World War II where Partisans fought major battles against Germans and Ustašas as well as Serb nationalist Četniks. The Kozara mountain in western Bosnia, Romanija in eastern Bosnia, Užice and Kragujevac in Serbia, Petrova Gora in Croatia, St. Prokhor Pčinjski in Macedonia, and other places of Partisan heroism were converted into memorials to the martyrdom of the Serb people. In 1990, the last federal prime minister, Ante Marković convened some 100,000 supporters at the Kozara mountain in western Bosnia. There, in 1942, Germans and Ustašas (with indirect support from the Serb Četniks, who blocked Partisan reinforcements) surrounded a few Partisan brigades and hundreds of thousands of people, mostly Serbs, and after a massacre of the Partisans sent whole villages and families into concentration camps. Yet, while Ante Marković spoke about reform and brotherhood and unity, thousands in attendance waved Serbia's flags and displayed portraits of the Serb communist-turned-nationalist Slobodan Milošević along with icons of Saint Sava and King Dušan.

A Battle of Myths: The Yugoslav Auschwitz versus the Martyr Cardinal

Estimates of the number of people killed at Jasenovac varied from 28,000 to 40,000, as Croat "minimalists" (notably Franjo Tudjman) alleged, to

700,000 Serbs murdered in Jasenovac alone, with over a million in NDH concentration camps, as Serb nationalists alleged.[87] Moderate analysts, such as Vladimir Žerjavić, estimate the total war losses of the population of prewar Yugoslavia at 1,027,000, out of which 50,000 were killed at the Jasenovac camp.[88] The Milošević regime and Serb historians found it extremely important to win over eminent Yugoslav Jewish organizations and individuals for the idea of the joint Serbo-Jewish martyrdom. In order to accomplish this, Serbia had to falsify history by obscuring the fact that the Serb quislings Milan Nedić and Dimitrije Ljotić had cleansed Serbia of her sizeable Jewish population by deportations of Jews to East European concentration camps or killing them in Serbia.[89]

Nevertheless, some Yugoslav Jews collaborated with the new Serbian historiography. The eminent legal scholar Andrija Gams backed Milošević.[90] Another Belgrade professor of Jewish background, Enriko Josif, was asked by the Holy Synod of the Serbian Church to promote the new church monograph about Jasenovac at Belgrade's Kolarac's University in October 1990. In his address, Josif drew parallels between Jasenovac and Auschwitz, between Jasenovac and Stalin's concentration camps, and between the Holocaust and the Ustaša massacre of Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies in the Independent State of Croatia.[91]

The Serbian Orthodox Church accepted as accurate the figure of 700,000 Serb victims killed in Jasenovac alone.[92] Echoing Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, Archimandrite Jevtić accused Croat Catholic clergy and the Vatican of inciting a genocide against the Serbian people. In Jevtić's words, "countless murders of Serbs had begun in the sacristy and parish offices of the Roman Catholic Church in the Independent State of Croatia."[93] The Serb legal scholar Smilja Avramov wrote in several books that the Vatican's influence on the wartime Zagreb regime was strong enough to halt what she viewed as a genocide.[94] According to Avramov,

> the crime of genocide in the Independent State of Croatia was carried out according to a fixed plan, with the active assistance of the Zagreb Archbishopric. . . . In Croatia, for instance, the Catholic church was the high priest and theoretician of the cult of exterminating the Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies, but this was not the case with the Catholic Church in Slovakia, Poland, etc., as regards to the Jews or any other enemies. . . . There was a similar situation in Denmark and the Netherlands. In contrast, various Croatian Catholic priests and even nuns were directly involved in massacring the Serbs, albeit many Catholic priests attached to the Italian forces of occupation helped organize the escape.[95]

The Serb anti-Catholic campaign also included the issue of the so-called "Croatian Orthodox Church" established by the Ustašas in 1942 and the massive conversions of Serbs to Catholicism under Ustaša rule.[96]

In response to these charges, the Catholic Church of Croatia vociferously

continued the apology of Cardinal Stepinac. Catholic historians underscored Stepinac's resistance to communism but argued that the prelate had also rescued Jews and other persons persecuted by NDH regime and was not on good terms with the Ustaša fuhrer Pavelić.[97] It is noteworthy that exiled Ustašas also joined the dispute defending the Catholic Church.[98]

At the 1979 commemoration of Stepinac's death, Cardinal Kuharić said that "even the history of the church is subject to analyses, scientific messages and assessments" and invited a scientific inquiry into the wartime role of Cardinal Stepinac, provided the research is "honest, fair and objective, devoid of any hatred or biased approaches. . . . We are never afraid of the judgment of history, because we are not afraid of the truth. There exist documents; there exist works; there exist statements."[99] The Church opened secret archives and announced that Stepinac had saved the lives of a number of Serbs, Jews, and Partisans.[100] The editor-in-chief of the *Glas koncila*, Živko Kustić, wrote a weekly column and editorial in which he defended Stepinac and rebuked other Serbian charges, such as exaggerations of the number of victims of Jasenovac and the role of the Catholic Church in the forcible conversions of Serbs to Catholicism (Kustić argued that these conversions were few and that through them the Church allegedly saved lives of Serbs condemned to death by the Ustašas). In defense of Stepinac, Kustić published a monograph, *Stepinac,* written for a wide popular audience.[101] The Serbian church newspaper *Pravoslavlje* called the book "another apotheosis of Cardinal Stepinac, as part of the neo-Ustaša revival in Croatia."[102] Kustić's book," *Pravoslavlje* writes, "encourages and incites young Croats to fight the Serbs because the moment has come to establish another NDH."[103]

The apology of Cardinal Stepinac angered the Serbian Church. Patriarch Germanus said in an interview: "Had it not been for the Serbian holocaust in the Independent State of Croatia, I believe that Stepinac would never have become a saint."[104] Serb clerics advocated that Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović and Archimandrite Justin Popović be made saints of the Serbian Church.

Disputes over Holy Places

Envisioning the possible breakup of the Yugoslav federation, the Serbian Orthodox Church press frequently wrote about the origins of ancient churches and monasteries in ethnically mixed areas. Church leaders held liturgies near long-forgotten ruins where no religious activity had occurred for decades or, in some cases, centuries. For example, in May 1990, Catholic and Orthodox press argued over the historic origins of an ancient church of the Ascension, also called the Holy Savior, located in Croatia's predominantly Serb-populated Krajina region, where Serb militants had already agitated for an armed Serb uprising and secession from Croatia. Secular and church archeologists, historians, and art historians came up with various

hypotheses about the origins of the church, but according to the most credible research and literature, the original church was built in the Western style of sacred architecture by a medieval Catholic ruler. In May 1990 (in the midst the first multiparty elections in Croatia), both Orthodox and Catholic churches announced that worship services would be held at the contested church. At the eleventh hour, the local Franciscan leader in Split decided not to aggravate the crisis and canceled the pilgrimage. On 24 May 1990, the Serb Orthodox Bishop Nikolaj Mrdja officiated before a crowd of two hundred Serbs led by the militant nationalists Jovan Rašković, Vojislav Šešelj, and Željko Ražnatović Arkan. "Even if there was an older church underground, as some people argue these days" the bishop said in his sermon at the Holy Savior, "that underground church must also be Orthodox, because all Christian churches in Dalmatia at the time when that church was built, that is in the ninth or tenth century, were Byzantine churches under the jurisdiction of the patriarch in Constantinople, which means that they are Orthodox, and by succession, should belong to the Serbian Orthodox Church."[105] Similar disputes drew considerable attention from the media. For example, in the coastal city of Split the Serbian Orthodox Church quarreled for years with city authorities over an unfinished Orthodox memorial temple and eventually refused to rebuild the church once the permit was obtained, thus keeping the crisis simmering. In 1986 the Croatian secret police notified the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia that the leaders of the Serbian Church, allied with Serb nationalists in Serbia and Croatia, sought to provoke incidents between local Serbs and authorities of the Republic of Croatia in order to mobilize the Serbs in Croatia for a massive armed uprising.[106]

This police warning proved correct. On 17 August 1990, church bells rang throughout Serb-populated zones in Croatia calling Serbs to arms. A secessionist "Krajina" province was established, backed by Belgrade. In the summer of 1991, Serb insurgents destroyed hundreds of Catholic churches in the areas under their control. Many armed clashes and massacres occurred in the vicinity of previously disputed holy places and historic sites. The Serbs massacred Catholic villagers at Škabrnja, within a province where several ancient churches were disputed. Another large massacre occurred near the parish church at Kusonje in western Slavonia. The village of Kusonje is known as a Partisan base in World War II where the Ustašas locked up Serb men in the parish Orthodox church and set the church ablaze. In 1989, a local Orthodox priest from Kusonje launched a public polemic over the renovation of local church and thus mobilized the villagers, drawing them into a conflict with the Croatian government. And it was near Kusonje, on 8 September 1991, that Serb militants ambushed and killed a Croatian police unit. The Serbian Church also commemorated historic seats of Orthodox dioceses at Dalj in Slavonia and Ston near Dubrovnik in Dalmatia. The town of Dalj is also the site of a Serb martyrdom of World War II, where the Ustašas forced local Serbs (who had earlier converted to Cathol-

icism) to demolish the Orthodox parish church on Orthodox Christmas Day in 1942. In 1991 Serb militants carried out massacres and expulsions of Croats from the Dalj area. Not far from there, in the town of Vukovar on the Danube, a major battle of the Serbo-Croat 1991 war would take place. Needless to say, the villages around the mixed Serbo-Croatian town of Vukovar were during World War II predominately Serb populated and supportive of the communist-led Partisan movement and therefore were "cleansed" by the Ustašas, who massacred a large number of Serbs, converted others to Catholicism, and destroyed all Orthodox churches in the area.[107] Also in 1991, anticipating the Yugoslav army invasion, the Serbian Church held a commemoration at the strategically important Prevlaka peninsula on the border between Montenegro and Croatia in order to reassert church history–based Serbian clams on the territory. The metropolitan of Montenegro, Amfilohije, held a religious ceremony at Prevlaka on 17 February 1991 commemorating the historic church of the Holy Archangel.[108]

Serbian prelates concurrently fought similar symbolic wars in Macedonia and Montenegro.[109] At its emergency session in December 1990, the assembly of bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church demanded immediate eviction of the Macedonian national museum from the Saint Prokhor Pčinjski monastery.[110] On Saint Elijah's Day in 1991, several incidents occurred in and around the monastery. Two groups of demonstrators—the radical Serbian nationalists led by Vojislav Šešelj and Macedonian nationalists confronted each other without casualties. The Serbian Church continued legal and propaganda battles with the Macedonian Church and authorities in Skopje.[111] In Montenegro, in February 1990, Serbian bishops and clergy and pro-Serbian Montengrins made a pilgrimage to the site of Ivanova korita, near the top of the mountain of Lovćen, in order to consecrate the remains of the destroyed Njegos chapel. Meanwhile, Montenegrin proindependence political parties advanced the case for an autocephalous national Orthodox church of Montenegro. Metropolitan Amfilohije attacked what he labeled the "Montenegrin sect" and accused Tito and the communists of inventing the Montenegrin nation in order to weaken Serbia.[112]

The Collapse of the Interfaith Dialogue

In 1989, the Balkan correspondent for the British daily newspaper the *Independent* wrote that "attacks on the pope from the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Belgrade media are as popular as in Protestant Belfast."[113] Even the earlier proregime Association of Orthodox clergy turned nationalistic.[114] The influential theologian Bishop Irenej (Bulović) said in an interview in May 1990 that the pope, if he still wanted to visit Yugoslavia, must come to Jasenovac together with the Catholic episcopate, to perform "an act of re-

pentance, not merely a verbal condemnation of the crimes, and to promise that such a crime will never happen again."[115]

After ignoring several Catholic Church leaders' official and unofficial calls for ecumenical meetings released between 1982 and 1986, the Holy Assembly of Serb Orthodox bishops sent in June 1989 to the Catholic bishops' conference a letter entitled "Preconditions for Ecumenical Dialogue." This letter was, according to a statement by the moderate Slovene archbishop France Perko in an interview with an Austrian daily newspaper, "only another unpleasant move within the Orthodox church's ongoing anti-Catholic campaign full of accusations and ultimate demands."[116] The Serb bishops' epistle expressed a strong resentment both over the past and present. On the World War II controversy, the letter charged a genocide-denial, and regarding the current crisis in Yugoslavia, Serb bishops accused the Catholic Church of backing enemies of the Serbian people. "It is an astounding and horrible fact that (during the Second World War) the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, led by the late Archbishop Stepinac (who was also the military vicar of Pavelić's army), could agree to collaborate with the Ustaša regime," the Serb Church leader wrote, and went on to say: "The Catholic Church also actively collaborated in rebaptism [forcible conversion of Serbs to Catholicism] that took place amid widespread violence and Serbs' fear of a biological extinction."[117] On the current crisis, the letter argued that there is "a tendency toward minimizing the crimes and not telling the truth about the tragic fate of the Serbian Church and people clearly visible in the Catholic weekly *Glas koncila* and the public statements of Catholic prelates, including Cardinal Kuharić. . . . The Serbian Church does not demand penance for someone else's crimes—we only want your restraint from further insults."[118] In the letter, the Serb bishops also complained about the language policies in Croatia, the Vatican's support for the secessionist Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church's support of Albanian separatism in Kosovo, and alleged antiecumenical statements and writings by Monsignor Kolarić, the secretary for ecumenism of the bishops conference.[119] In the letter concluding paragraph, Serb Church leaders implied that some kind of an eleventh-hour rapprochement might be possible. Although they did not specify concrete demands, Serb prelates had probably hoped that the worried Croatian Church leaders, frightened by the aggressive Milošević and looming ethnic war, would release a public apology to the Serbian Church and modify their views on Kosovo, Macedonia, and other issues of the Yugoslav crisis.

The Catholic bishops' conference of Yugoslavia convened at Zagreb on 12 November 1990 to compose an official response to the Serb bishops' letter. The Catholic reply was published in all major newspapers. On behalf of the bishops' conference, Cardinal Kuharić accused the Serbian Church of paying lip service to "certain politics" (i.e., the politics of Serbia's nationalist leader Slobodan Milošević) rather than being concerned about discouraging tendencies in the ecumenical dialogue.[120] Kuharić also delineated the new in-

terpretation of recent church history, according to which the Archbishop Stepinac was an independent church leader who publicly protested against Ustaša crimes and specifically against crimes committed in the Jasenovac concentration camp. As evidence Kuharić quoted Stepinac's wartime homilies delivered in the Zagreb Cathedral and Stepinac's letters to the Croat fuhrer Pavelić.

From an emergency session held early in December 1990, the Holy Assembly of Serb bishops released a statement on ecumenical relations with the Roman Catholic Church in which the bishops:

> having received the Catholic Church's reply to our letter, this Sabor with deep regret declares that the intolerant attitude on the part of some Catholic clerics and Catholic intelligentsia in Yugoslavia toward the Orthodox faith and the Serbian Orthodox Church, has brought ecumenical relations in our country almost into an impasse. Nevertheless, this Sabor remains open for a fraternal dialogue and will do anything it can to improve the climate of interchurch relations.[121]

The post–Vatican II ecumenical movement came to an end in 1990. The traditional interfaculty ecumenical symposia, held every two years since 1974, was terminated in 1990 because of the Croatians' absence in protest of Milošević's coups in the autonomous provinces and threats to the republics. The "Ecumenical Octave for Christian Unity," held in January 1990 in Osijek in northern Croatia, was one of the last interfaith vigils before the outbreak of the Serbo-Croat war in 1991. On 25 January 1991 the participants met at an interfaith worship service, and on that occasion the Serb Orthodox bishop of Srijem, Vasilije Kačavenda, pointed out that "Croats, Serbs, and others, despite the different religions and nationalities in which they were born, want to show that common worship could be the way for mitigating the tensions and difficulties of the moment."[122]

Untimely Commemorations

From June 1990 to August 1991, the Serbian Orthodox Church carried out a series of commemorations in honor of "the beginning of the Second World War and the suffering of the Serbian Church and Serbian people in that war."[123] Those commemorations came as a continuation of the September 1984 consecration of the Saint John the Baptist memorial church at Jasenovac. These religious events coincided with Slobodan Milošević's so-called antibureaucratic revolution, that is, the Serb nationalistic mobilization carried out through street protests and an aggressive media campaign.[124] Concurrently the Serbian Church's commemorations bred popular sentiments of pride and self-pity as well as a lust for revenge.[125]

In June 1990, the Holy Synod published the second landmark monograph

since the 1987 "Debts to God in Kosovo," this time dedicated to Jasenovac. The volume was entitled *Ve čan pomen: Jasenovac: mjesto natopljeno krvlju nevinih 1941/1985/1991—Eternal Memory—Jasenovac—the Place Soaked in the Blood of Innocents, With Summaries in English.*[126] In the monograph, one of the editors, the Metropolitan Jovan Pavlović, concludes the introduction with a quotation from a public statement released early in 1990 by Enriko Josif, a Yugoslav intellectual of Jewish background and a member of the central committee of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia. The statement reads as follows:

> One of the horrible spiritual crimes is the fact that what happened to the Serbs was hushed up in the whole world. This is a postwar continuation of the horrible crime. . . . The worst service to the West, and particularly to the Roman Catholic Church of the Croats, was to hush up the religious and biological crime of genocide committed against the Serbian people during World War II. In the name of Christ and Christian love, the head of the Roman Catholic church should have raised his voice and condemned the eternal sin of Cain. This should be done as soon as possible.[127]

In June 1990, the Holy Synod issued a church calendar dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of World War II in the Balkans, with special emphasis on the Serbian Orthodox Church's casualties during the war in the Independent State of Croatia.[128] The calendar ran on its cover page the previously banned text by Bishop Velimirović, "The Most Horrible Inquisition," written in exile in the 1950s. In this article Nikolaj accused the Catholic Church of inciting numerous crimes, among which Ustaša genocide is perhaps the most horrible.[129] In the Easter 1991 issue of the patriarchate's newspaper *Pravoslavlje*, Patriarch Pavle repeated Germanus' words: "We have to forgive, but we cannot forget," and cited the figure of 700,000 Serbs killed at Jasenovac. The calendar opened year-long commemorations at Jasenovac and other sites of Ustaša massacres and mass graves in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Those commemorations involved excavations and reburial of the Serb victims massacred by the Ustašas during World War II. The church organized reburial and funerals and erected a number of monuments, memorials, and chapels to mark Serbian mass graves.

While the Serbian Church's activities drew broad popular support, a few Serb voices of criticism are worth noting. A group of Serb intellectuals from France wrote in an open letter to Serbian Church leaders that "calling for revenge against the living descendants of those who committed the crimes—cannot be justified. The World War II Ustaša terrorists were a minority among the Croatian people!"[130] In the similar vein, the author Svetislav Basara wrote in May 1991 in the Belgrade weekly *NIN*:

> Maniacs are screaming all around: "Survival of our nation is at stake!" Nonsense! There cannot be endangered nations and races. Only the indi-

vidual can be endangered. They refer to Christian values and tradition. They say "our people" are threatened by some other people! That is sheer hypocrisy! Christianity is basically a-national! To identify religion with nationality is not only nonsensical, but also blasphemous! We all have sinned, we've been punished as we deserved. All the people around us are equally helpless and imperiled. Look around you, your neighbor needs help—please, take your neighbor seriously.[131]

Incompatible Worlds: Serbs Call for Partition

In the year of Milošević's ascent to power, Serbian Church leaders and church press openly proposed the idea of the partition of Yugoslavia between the two largest ethnic nations, Serbs and Croats. In a 1987 interview (published in 1990), the Patriarch Germanus had said that Serbia awaits a leader with "the strength and intelligence to select the right portion of land for the Serbs."[132] The Orthodox Church newspaper *Pravoslavlje* called for partition on 1 October 1987. In an article entitled "A Commentary on a Speech," written by the patriarchate official Svetozar Dušanić, this church newspaper proposed the partition of Yugoslavia into an "Eastern Orthodox-Byzantine sphere of influence" and "western Roman Catholic sphere of influence," because "the two incompatible worlds sharply differ from one another in religion, culture, historical development, ethics, psychology and mentality, and therefore previous conflicts that culminated with massacres in the Second World War could be repeated."[133] The article ridiculed the western republics of Croatia and Slovenia for their rush to join the European Community, calling on the Serbs to form a commonwealth of Orthodox countries.[134] The text concluded by prophetically calling for partition to be accomplished as soon as possible, otherwise, "suicidal and self-destructive wars over borders will break out in the disintegrating Yugoslavia . . . [and] Western Europe will be watching it indifferently."[135]

Orthodox Church leaders voiced the partition idea in sermons and public statements. In an interview for the Serbian-language Kosovo newspaper *Jedinstvo* in June 1990, the metropolitan of Montenegro, Amfilohije, said that "there cannot be a reconciliation over the graves of innocents, there will be no reconciliation until the Croatian people renounce the evil. . . . Today we Serbs are all determined to build a country of our own, and at the same time we must respect the centuries-old desires of our brethren Roman Catholic Croats and Slovenes to establish their national states."[136] In a similar vein, in September 1990, the church-national assembly at Gračanica (Kosovo) urged the defense of the "sovereignty and integrity of Serbian territories and [the] resistance to disintegration of the Serbian ethnic nation."[137] The assembly released a message to the public in which it offered two options for Yugoslavia's future: first, a common state based on "the organic cultural-

historical unity" of the Slavic founders of the country, that is, Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes as constituent nations while the new nationalities, republics, and provinces created in communist Yugoslavia, such as Macedonians, Montenegrins, Muslims and Albanians as the privileged minority; second, the country's partition into communities of Orthodox, Islamic, and Catholic faith.[138]

The Serbian Orthodox Church also intensified its foreign policy activism to obtain the support abroad needed for the restructuring of Yugoslavia. Serbo-Russian friendship was the capstone of this new Church foreign policy agenda. After four summit meetings in the 1970s, the Russian patriarch Pimen again came to Yugoslavia in November 1984, when he visited Kosovo and received a spectacular welcome by a crowd of local Serbs at the historic Gračanica church.[139] Germanus pointed out in the 1987 interview that he and Russian Patriarch Pimen shared same views about the need for a mutual defense of Orthodox peoples against the West and other threats such as Islam and communism.[140]

As the old Uniate issue reappeared with the collapse of communism, Orthodox churches gathered on a conference in Moscow and urged that the Uniate problem be renegotiated between the Orthodox churches and the Vatican.[141] Responding to the appeal of Alexei II, patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, for "fraternal assistance" to all Orthodox churches on the occasion of the occupation of the Cathedral of Saint George in Lviv by Ukrainian Uniates,[142] the Serbian Orthodox Church lobbied through the Geneva-based Conference of European Churches for a pan-Orthodox solidarity in support of the Russian Orthodox Church.[143]

On 10–13 December 1990, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople organized an international symposium of Orthodox churches to discuss conflicts between local Orthodox churches and Uniate communities in the Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Poland. At this conference, the Serbian Orthodox Church delegation urged that "an ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholics under current circumstances is not possible and must be halted until an agreement is reached through negotiations with the Vatican regarding the Uniate problem."[144] The Serbian Church delegation also took part at the First All-Church Sabor of Orthodox Youth, held in Moscow on 25–28 January 1991. In March 1991, Serbian Church representatives again voiced radical views at the pan-Orthodox symposium, called "Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox World," held at the historic monastery of Pachaev, near Kiev, in the Ukraine. The objective of this international meeting was a show of solidarity among Orthodox nations with support for the endangered Orthodox peoples such as the pro-Moscow Orthodox of Ukraine, the Orthodox Serbs in Yugoslavia, and Orthodox minorities elsewhere in ex-communist countries. The conference released messages to the pope, the patriarchates of Moscow and Constantinople, and to Mikhail Gorbachev. In the message to the pope, the participants said: "Your Holiness, the Orthodox peoples will not be intimidated by the alliance between you and the powerful

international forces. Amen."[145] Mikhail Gorbachev was invited to defend the rights of Orthodox countries and Orthodox peoples, in accordance with to the tradition of Russian Orthodox tsars.[146] The conference's resolution said that the anti-Orthodox policies and Uniate crusades instigated by the Vatican generated tragic conflicts, such as the current church strife in western Ukraine and "in another Slavic land of Croatia, where the Catholics slaughtered 700,000 Orthodox Serbs."[147] The document said that "once again in history, Roman Catholicism has become a weapon in the hands of anti-Christian dark forces."[148]

Continuing the dynamic pan-Orthodox campaign, a high delegation of the Serbian Church visited Moscow in May 1991. On that occasion Alexei II gave his apostolic blessing to the newly founded "Society of Russo-Serbian Friendship" and received a joint delegation of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Belgrade government. The *Pravoslavlje* reported on the meeting under the headline "Now It Is Time for All Orthodox Peoples to Join Forces."[149] Further, on 13 December 1991, during the escalation of the Serbo-Croatian war in Croatia, the patriarch of Serbia, Pavle, released a circular letter to all Orthodox churches seeking the protection of Croatian Serbs from "the Croatian neo-fascist regime—the successor of the Ustašas who massacred 700,000 Orthodox Serbs in World War II."[150]

The Serbian Church delegation attended the Orthodox ecclesiastical summit conference convened in Istanbul on 12–15 March 1992. At the conference, 14 Orthodox churches discussed current ecclesiastical and world affairs. In a public statement released by the participants in this historic convention, Orthodox church leaders wrote:

> [A]fter the collapse of the godless communist system that severely persecuted Orthodox Churches, we expected fraternal support or at least understanding for grave difficulties that had befallen us. . . . [I]nstead, Orthodox countries have been targeted by Roman Catholic missionaries and advocates of Uniatism. These came together with Protestant fundamentalists . . . and sects.[151]

The conference issued an appeal for a more respectful and influential role of Orthodox countries in the process of European unification and postcommunist transitions. The Orthodox church summit conference called for peace in the current conflicts in Yugoslavia and in the Middle East but did not include the Serbian Church's proposal to condemn the "Croatian aggression against the Serbian people."[152] After the Istanbul conference, the Serbian Church maintained the same course in foreign policy, though not always overtly, continuously anti-West and seeking closer ties with the churches of Russia and Greece and advancing the idea of the Orthodox commonwealth.[153]

In the meantime on the home front, the Serbian Orthodox Church sought contacts with the Catholic Church in order to negotiate the partition of

Bosnia-Herzegovina and a readjustment of borders between Serbia and Croatia in the north. Two such meetings took place in 1991. The first was held in Srijemski Karlovci on 8 May 1991. The day before, Patriarch Pavle had been at Jasenovac for a commemoration. At Srijemski Karlovci, the two churches released an appeal for a peaceful and political solution of the conflict in Croatia. The second meeting took place at Slavonski Brod on the Sava River on 24 August 1991. That meeting also resulted in a similar, abstract peace appeal but without specific references to the causes of conflict, the warring parties, or feasible solutions. The meetings of church leaders coincided with negotiations conducted by the two secular nationalistic leaders Franjo Tudjman of Croatia and Slobodan Milošević of Serbia. The 8 May church summit meeting, incidentally, came as a follow-up to the Milošević and Tudjman meeting at Karadjordjevo on 25 March, where the two leaders tried to negotiate a peaceful breakup of Yugoslavia that would include the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia and the exchange of territories and population.[154] It is noteworthy that both church summit meetings were initiated by the Catholic bishops of Croatia, who desperately tried to stop the escalation of war. According to Croatian prelate Vinko Puljić's statement on a panel in the United States, during the 1991 meetings between church leaders, the Serbian Church seized the opportunity to put the border issue on the table and the bishops discussed changes of borders in conjunction with the breakup of the communist federation and the formation of its successor states.[155]

An Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth: The Serb Call for Revenge

The Serb historian Milan Bulajić argued that the main cause of the 1991 Serbo-Croat war was the anger and fear of the Serbs and the Serbian Orthodox Church facing the resurgence of Croatian neo-Ustašim.[156] Bulajić also found anti-Serbian attitudes on the part of the Croatian episcopate in the bishops' epistle to the bishops of the world released on 1 February 1991 in the aftermath of the first Serbian armed attacks on Croatian police and the first Croatian casualties. According to the Catholic episcopate's views expressed in this letter (quoted by Bulajić), the main source of the crisis in the country was "the resistance to democratic changes by Serbia," coupled with "the aggressive quest for Serbian domination, and the military solution of the crisis advocated by the leading Serbian politicians, army officers and unfortunately certain leading figures in the Serbian Orthodox Church."[157] The Croatian bishops' letter accused the Serbian Orthodox Church of ruining the ecumenical dialogue and joining Serbian nationalist historians in attacking the Catholic Church for alleged genocide against Serbs during World War II.[158] These accusations are, according to the bishops, false, because the genocide never happened, except for what the bishops described

as occasional minor punitive actions by the Croatian state authorities provoked by the communists and Serb nationalist Četniks who sought to destroy the new Croatian state.

In reality, several years prior to Tudjman's electoral victory, notably since the Jasenovac liturgy of September 1984, Serb nationalists in Croatia had mobilized local Serbs against their neighbors, preparing the ground for the secession and the partition of Yugoslavia. Tudjman's demonstration of Croatian pride, fury, and nationalistic symbols only added fuel to the already rampant fire of Serbian nationalism. As early as July 1990, the policemen of Serbian nationality from the predominantly populated Knin district refused to wear new uniforms, allegedly resembling those of the Ustaša police, thus precipitating the secession of Krajina from Croatia.[159] Speaking before a crowd of 50,000 Serbs gathered around the church of Saint Lazar of Kosovo at the village of Kosovo in southern Croatia on Saint Vitus' Day 1990, Jovan Rašković, the president of the Serbian Democratic Party, said:

> The Serbs were dormant for nearly 50 years. We forgot our name, our faith, our roots. Now, the time for awakening has come. What the Serbs must do first, is to pay tribute to our Serbian Orthodox Church. . . . Our Orthodox Church is our mother. . . . She was a weeping and lonely mother deserted by her children. We must return to its altar, because the Serbian Church is our mother. The Serbian nation was born at the holy altar of our Serbian Orthodox Church in the year of 1219 as the first European political nation.[160]

In a similar vein, the nationalist leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadžić, spoke in a 1990 interview for a Sarajevo newspaper. "The Serbian Orthodox Church is not merely a religious organization," said Karadžić, "it is a cultural institution and part of national leadership; the Church is highly important for all Serbs, and it is irrelevant whether one believes in God or not."[161]

On 13 September 1990, the Orthodox episcopate from Croatia released a statement in which they described the status of local Serbs as a "life under occupation."[162] In March 1991, the patriarchate's newspaper ran a report from Slavonia written by Bishop Lukijan entitled "Anti-Serbian March of the Ustaša State." In the article the bishop described armed attacks by Croatian police on the city of Pakrac, assaults on Serbs, and desecration of Orthodox churches.[163] In April 1991, Bishop Lukijan made his "eye for an eye" statement, often quoted later, calling on the Serbs to retaliate for past crimes and prevent the new Ustaša assault on the Serbian people.[164]

On 15 January 1992, Germany and the Vatican, followed by other western European countries, granted diplomatic recognition to the republics of Slovenia and Croatia, which earlier had declared independence from Belgrade. This provoked an outburst of anger in Serbia. The Belgrade Foreign Ministry

filed a protest note to the papal nuncio, saying that the Vatican would be held responsible for the imminent war in Bosnia. The Serbian historian Milan Bulajić argued that the 1992 diplomatic recognition of Croatia and Slovenia by the Vatican was more evidence of the long historical continuity of the Vatican's anti-Serbian and anti-Yugoslavian policies.[165]

At the time of the 1992 recognition, the Serbian Orthodox Church had finally settled the poignant North American schism. Church leaders were in the midst of preparations for celebration. Ironically, they viewed the war in Croatia as a part of the historic process of reunification of the Serbs. On 16–17 January 1992 the Holy Bishops' Assembly of the Serbian Orthodox Church held an emergency session in the patriarchate and issued a document entitled "Appeal of the Sabor of the Serbian Orthodox Church to the Serbian People and to the International Public." In addition, the Serb bishops dispatched a letter to Pope John Paul II in which they said they "protest[ed] the premature diplomatic recognition of Croatia and Slovenia as independent countries without taking into account the legitimate national and political rights and equality for the Serbian people" and expressed "a deep sorrow" for the pope's "one-sided and un-Christian attitude toward the ethnic, civil, and historic rights and Christian dignity of the Serbian people."[166] The Serb episcopate disapproved of Slobodan Milošević's 1992 agreement to allow a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Croatia. Church leaders wrote that the Church's "trust in the political leadership of Serbia and Yugoslavia and in the command of the Yugoslav Army has been seriously undermined" because "nobody was authorized by the Serbian people to make political deals on behalf of all Serbs, without the people's consent and without the blessing of the Serbian people's spiritual Mother, the Serbian Orthodox Church."[167]

The Vatican's recognition of Croatia and Slovenia was an unexpected move. From 1966 to 1989, the Vatican diplomatically supported unity of the six-republic federation. After the 1990 elections, the Holy See was prepared to support the transformation of Yugoslavia into a confederation, leaving the borders intact while the successor states of Yugoslavia would peacefully negotiate future arrangements. Thus, in November 1990, the bishops' conference of Yugoslavia outlined a new statute that provided for, instead of one unified bishops' conference, three autonomous bishops' conferences linked with a high-ranking church official as a liaison officer without prerogatives in decision-making. This "confederate" model of church organization provided that the Catholic Churches of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina would work together with the so-called central division of the new bishops' conference.[168]

In the spring of 1991, as the Serbo-Croatian war was escalated, the Catholic Church abandoned the confederation idea and began to support Tudjman's visions of an independent Croatia.[169] On 25 May 1991, Pope John Paul II received Tudjman in a private audience, on which occasion Tudjman

appealed for international recognition. The Holy See finally granted it. The pope accepted the explanation of the Yugoslav crisis given by the Croatian episcopate and Croat clergy in the Curia.

In addition, the Vatican's decision was determined by the fact that the pope never trusted the Miloševic regime and eventually lost patience in expecting any moderation from the Serbian Orthodox Church. It is worth noting that as early as 31 May 1991, Pope John Paul II released a "Letter to European Bishops on the Changes in Central and Eastern Europe" in which the Vatican made an attempt to invoke the Council's ecumenical friendship toward Orthodox churches. Furthermore, during the same period, the Holy See successfully worked together with the patriarchate of Moscow on the mitigation of the serious conflict between Catholicism and Orthodoxy in western Ukraine.[170] According to a high official of the Moscow patriarchate, Moscow and the Vatican also made an attempt to mitigate tensions in Yugoslavia, but the success from the Ukraine could not be repeated.[171] Consequently, the pope entrusted management of the Balkan crisis to the Rome-based ecumenical and conflict resolution body called the Community of Saint Egidio. This body worked to arrange papal meetings with Serbian Church leaders and papal visits to Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Macedonia, especially during the papal visits to Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia in 1994 and 1997. According to Belgrade sources, the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church rejected these initiatives for various reasons.[172]