

THE SLOVENIAN-CROATIAN CONFEDERAL PROPOSAL: A TACTICAL MOVE OR AN ULTIMATE SOLUTION?

◆ Dejan Jović ◆

On October 2, 1990, the political leaderships of both Slovenia and Croatia officially proposed a new confederal agreement to the four other republics of the Yugoslav federation. If it had been accepted, the proposed Yugoslav confederation (or the Union of Yugoslav States that the proposal suggested as an alternative), would have turned Yugoslavia into a loose association of independent states, each of which would be recognized as a sovereign state—both by other members of the confederation and in the sense of international law.

Croatian scholar of international law Vladimir Djuro Degan was the main author of the draft of both the document titled *Model of Yugoslav Confederation* and the actual *Confederal Treaty* that accompanied it.¹ He has noted that the documents were based upon the assumption of contractual mutual recognition of full state sovereignty and international subjectivity of all post-Yugoslav states. The confederation plan called for a “union of states,” not a “state union.” In a structural sense the proposed confederation was to be modelled almost as a copy of the European Community, only marginally adapted to specific post-Yugoslav circumstances. Although the proposal and the contract offered many alternative solutions for practical issues—such as, for example, three options regarding the monetary issues, two on the issue of transport, three on the structure of defence forces, three on coordination of foreign policy, and many more on the structure (and existence) of the institutions of confederation—it offered no alternative to the proposal for statehood. According to the draft confederal agreement, all Yugoslav republics would recognize each other’s right to unrestricted self-determination at any time. Some functions could still be delegated to joint institutions. However, each member-state would have the inalienable right to revoke any authority delegated to the confederation.

The Yugoslav confederation would, therefore, have discontinued the existence of Yugoslavia as sovereign state. A commonwealth of six internationally recognized sovereign states willing to cooperate with each other would have been established in

its place. At least from the Slovenian perspective, the proposed confederation was to be a *la carte*, one that would allow its member-states to chose freely which (if any) elements of their sovereignty they wished to delegate to confederative bodies and which they wished to keep exclusively for themselves. The Croatian political elite viewed the confederation in somewhat more formal and more legally binding terms—with more precise rules and obligations—as long as full sovereignty of all the new states was recognized, including the unlimited right to withdrawal.² In their initial proposal, Slovenia and Croatia suggested that the confederal treaty should be time-limited to either five or ten years, with the possibility remaining open for any republic to leave at any time, even within this limited period.

Two weeks following the formal joint proposal, the Yugoslav state presidency rejected the plan. The representatives of the other four republics, as well as both autonomous provinces of Serbia, were also against. This left Slovenia and Croatia with no official support from any of the federal units.³ While Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia later accepted some elements of this proposal (but not before May 1991), Serbia (and to some degree Montenegro) remained hostile to the very end. At the same time the international community and its main representatives were opposed to the initial proposal because they still favored the formula of a “democratic and united” Yugoslavia and supported the federal government of Ante Marković. It was only later, not before September 1991, that they, too, agreed that the confederal agreement might perhaps be the last chance to save some form of institutionalized cooperation between the Yugoslav republics and (more importantly) to prevent an all-out war between them. However, by then it seemed it was already too late for a compromise. A confederation is, after all, an association of friendly states who are willing to cooperate, not a union of hostile and highly nationalistic states, most of which did not hesitate to use violence to achieve their strategic objectives.

With hindsight, one could indeed conclude that the confederation proposal was a missed opportunity for compromise between two bitterly divided sides: those who insisted on as much sovereignty as possible for all Yugoslav republics and those who preferred a recentralized Yugoslav state. An attempt to create a similar union of independent states on the constitutional ruins of the USSR did, indeed, offer some breathing space to the countries of the former Soviet Union, although it did not survive much beyond the immediate crises. Furthermore, it is one of the paradoxes of the Yugoslav tragedy that certain elements of a confederalist structure appeared in the postwar arrangements in many parts of former Yugoslavia. For example, the Washington agreement concluded in 1994 between Croatia and the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina was based on a promise of a postwar confederation between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The structure of post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina is also rather loose. There, the institutional and constitutional relationship between Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina effectively resembles some of the original Slovenian-Croatian confederal proposal. The relationship between Serbia and Montenegro, the two units of the Serbia-Montenegro state union (as

defined by the Belgrade agreement of 2003) was equally loose. There were two currencies, few joint institutions and clear recognition of the sovereignty (i.e., the right of secession) of both republics. Unfortunately these arrangements were put in place only in the aftermath of several bloody conflicts that the initial confederal proposal had aimed at avoiding.

So, why did the Slovenian and Croatian confederal proposal of October 1990 fail? Was it a viable option at the time, or just a tactical move, an attempt to buy time and to prepare for the war that followed? What were the intentions of the political leaders of the two republics who proposed the confederation? Did they see it as a permanent solution, the one that could prevent violent disintegration—or as a temporary (and basically tactical) arrangement that would help them to achieve full independence for their two countries?

In this chapter I argue that the confederalist proposal was a genuine attempt to achieve first a *de facto* and then a *de jure* independence without violence. The ultimate objective was not a confederation but the international recognition of sovereignty and thus, ultimately, the full state independence of Slovenia and Croatia. The confederation was seen as a vehicle for this objective and as a good initial compromise that might prevent the violence that would inevitably characterize any open conflict with Serbia and/or the Yugoslav federal institutions (primarily, the Yugoslav People's Army, JNA).

This argument is based not only on analysis of political statements and decisions made at the time when the events were unfolding (i.e., during 1990), but also on analysis of recently published memoirs by the main participants in Croatian and Slovenian politics of the 1990s. With no exception, both Croatian and Slovenian politicians involved in decision-making processes in 1990 today admit that these two republics were only half-heartedly promoting their own project. The most explicit is perhaps Mario Nobile, who in the early 1990s was the chief foreign policy advisor to Croatian President Tudjman. In his political memoirs published in 2000, Nobile concludes that the “Croatian-Slovenian confederation project was little more than an attempt to buy time until our government was consolidated, until the issue of state-making was internationalized, thus ultimately—[it was] only an intermediate phase toward the full independence.”⁴ According to Nobile, the main strategy of the Croatian and Slovenian leaderships in the final months of Yugoslavia was “to paralyse federal institutions as much as we could, so that their reaction to the ever widening independence of certain parts of Yugoslavia was weaker and more confused.”⁵ In addition, the confederation proposal was an attempt to convince international factors, that is, other states and international institutions involved in the Yugoslav crisis, that Croatia and Slovenia wanted a peaceful solution and a compromise. It served as an alibi to Slovenian and Croatian elites, who needed to demonstrate clearly that it was Serbia, not they, who destroyed Yugoslavia beyond possible repair. As France Bučar, the chairman of the Slovenian parliament said while the confederal proposal was still being drafted (September 1, 1990), “In no case we should take upon ourselves

a burden of accusation that we [the Slovenes] undermined Yugoslavia from within. Let those who have indeed undermined it take full responsibility.”⁶ Sources presented in this chapter—including statements and articles published by leading Slovenian and Croatian politicians during the events of fall 1990—are largely consistent with Nobile’s later interpretation.

However, one could also conclude that although Slovenia and Croatia did not whole-heartedly believe that the confederal arrangement had a realistic chance of succeeding, they did genuinely hope that it could prevent a war by facilitating a peaceful route to the disintegration of Yugoslavia.⁷ As Nobile points out, the confederal model offered by Slovenia and Croatia was not intended as a blueprint for an ideal (or even desirable) institutional and political framework for post-Yugoslav space. Nevertheless, it did indeed represent “an attempt on the part of the weaker [republics] to avoid conflict, the aggression of the Yugoslav Army, and Serbian domination.”⁸ The driving forces behind the Slovenian and Croatian independence movements would not have sacrificed their ultimate objective—full independence—for peace. However, they did initially endeavour to achieve independence peacefully. It was only as a result of the failure of this attempt that they resorted to violence, which was in their view a form of self-defence and, therefore, a legitimate means of achieving independence.

The failure of the confederal proposal, however, cannot be fully attributed to its tactical character, that is, to the fact that neither the Slovenes nor the Croats seemed to be fully committed to their own concept. There were at least four other equally important factors at work.

Firstly, no other republic in Yugoslavia supported the confederal proposal at the time it was presented. In fact, they became supportive of it only once it was too late, namely after the first serious military conflict had come to a close (the one in Slovenia, June 26–July 7, 1991), and when Croatia faced an all-out attack by the joint forces of Krajina Serbs, the Serbian “volunteers,” and the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) in Summer 1991. Back in October 1990, when discussed by the Yugoslav state presidency, the confederalist proposal was rejected by a majority of 6 votes to 2.⁹

Secondly, although Slovenia and Croatia appeared to be united behind their joint confederalist proposal, there were still significant (and often visible) differences between them, both in terms of tactics (such as the dynamics of political change) and to some extent in terms of the desirable outcome, too. By the time of the first democratic elections in the two republics (in April and May 1990), Slovenia was already much more advanced on its road to full independence. While it cooperated with Croatia in their joint attempt to prevent the recentralisation of Yugoslavia, it also viewed Croatia as an anchor that was slowing down its own progress toward full independence. This was especially the case after August 17, 1990, when Croatia faced a rebellion by the Krajina Serbs within its own borders. Ethnically homogeneous and with no major territorial disputes with its only Yugoslav neighbor, Slovenia was much more impatient to get on with its project of full independence. In order to achieve independence as soon as possible, the Slovenian government (even more

than President Kučan) kept all options open, including one of direct negotiations with the Serbs. A permanent threat of a Slovenian unilateral secession by separate agreement with Serbia made Croatia suspicious of Slovenia's real intentions. At one moment, the Croatian strategic interest was to slow down Slovenia in its road to independence. This was because Slovenia's early achievement of independence would almost certainly leave Croatia in a more unfavorable and isolated position, in an ever more Serb-dominated "rump Yugoslavia." At the same time, Croatian president Tudjman's bilateral meetings with Serbian president Milošević in the last months of 1990 made the Slovenes equally suspicious of Croatia's real intentions, primarily over Bosnia. Although publicly they continued to cooperate, both republics left the doors open for bilateral negotiations with Serbia. The Slovenian-Croatian alliance appeared, in this light, to be a marriage of convenience, where both partners were aware of the existence of a third partner—always present as an alternative, and potentially harmful. This impacted negatively upon the further joint promotion of the confederal agreement.

Thirdly, there were very significant differences on strategic and tactical issues between the major political forces within both republics. In Croatia these differences were confined to fractional struggles between radical secessionists and moderate confederalists within the ruling Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ). In Slovenia they took a more open form of a political conflict between the government (the proindependence *Demos* coalition) and the opposition (the reformed communists, who favored confederation). These differences were also manifest in occasional disputes between the government, led by Christian Democrat Lojze Peterle, and the more proconfederationist Slovenian state presidency, led by Milan Kučan, the former leader of the Slovenian League of Communists. As will be explained later in this chapter, some crucial decisions—including, for example, the hasty organization of a plebiscite in December 1990—were the direct result of internal party competition in Slovenia. The confederalist proposal was never unanimously supported by all major forces, either in Slovenia or in Croatia. Divisions between those who argued for full independence and those who were prepared to compromise through a confederalist proposal disappeared only after national unity in favor of independence had been forged as a result of the wars.

Finally, failure of the confederalist proposal in October 1990 could also be attributed, at least to some extent, to the lack of support from influential international factors. All key international factors that had had a lengthy involvement in the Yugoslav crisis favored the preservation of a democratized Yugoslav state. This policy was best articulated according to the formula of "a democratic and united Yugoslavia" promoted by the U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmermann,¹⁰ and shared by others. When it appeared, the confederalist proposal was an outright challenge to this policy. To international observers it was clear that its authors saw it as only an interim arrangement for Yugoslavia that would eventually serve to facilitate the full independence of its republics. As such the confederalist proposal was in

a sharp contrast with the international support for a united and democratic Yugoslav state. A good example of the difference between the dominant views of the key international factors and those of Slovenian President Kučan is offered in Warren Zimmermann's description of Kučan's meeting with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker on June 21, 1990, in Belgrade:

[For Kučan] the question of secession is not whether, but how. . . . Kučan said it would be prepared to seek a future community of sovereign Yugoslav nations, along the lines of the European Community. I was struck by this reference to the EC; it showed that by "confederation," a term Kučan had used with me just the week before, the Slovenes were thinking about themselves as a fully independent country rather than as part of a Balkan Switzerland.¹¹

The position of the key international players in the Yugoslav crisis altered only in the aftermath of the Slovenian war with the JNA—and only after the Yugoslav state presidency (on July 18, 1991) decided to withdraw the JNA troops from Slovenia. Thus, the international policy with regard to Yugoslav unity changed largely in response to the concept of a united and democratic Yugoslavia's being de facto abandoned by the informal agreement between the Slovenes and Serbs, making a unilateral secession of Slovenia possible. The final attempt to reintroduce the concept of confederation was initiated by Croatia through a "five-point plan" conceptualised by the Croatian minister of foreign affairs, Davorin Rudolf, in direct response to what seemed to be a Slovene-Serb agreement on unilateral secession of Slovenia.¹² But at this moment, it seemed that the international factors were much more interested in the proposal than both Slovenia and (especially) Serbia. In September 1991, a *confederation a la carte* was proposed officially by the International Peace Conference on Yugoslavia (via its chairman, Lord Carrington)—but was refused by Serbian President Slobodan Milošević.¹³ As memoirs of the main participants from the Slovenian and Croatian sides now confirm, Slovenia only reluctantly agreed—perhaps also because it was convinced that Serbia never would. In conclusion, the international community supported the confederal proposal only when it became unrealistic to expect the various Yugoslav participants to agree to it.

In the sections that follow I will describe briefly the historical context in which the proposal for a confederation was made, discussed, and ultimately rejected. This context largely influenced political debates, which were often about the "real meaning" of the concepts, such as "federation" and "confederation." In addition, historical arguments were used by relevant political actors in the confederalist-federalist debate in 1990, which made them an integral part of the debate we follow in this chapter. Consistent with the main argument presented here—that the best (if not the only) chance the confederalist proposal had was before the beginning of the use of weapons in the Yugoslav crisis (thus, before fall 1990)—the chapter will focus on 1990, not 1991 when tensions were already so high that no compromise of this sort seemed to be possible.

Confederation Enters

The de facto end of socialist Yugoslavia was signalled on January 22, 1990, when in protest the Slovenian delegation walked out of the Fourteenth (Extraordinary) Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ). Because socialist Yugoslavia was—especially in its last phase, that is, after its last Constitution was enacted in 1974—built around its specific ideology, such a prominent display of the failure of this ideology meant that the foundations of the Yugoslav state were now badly shaken. The SKJ had been the real locus of sovereignty in Yugoslavia. Without the SKJ and its ideology of socialist self-management, this highly ideocratic state had little chance of surviving.

The question that the Yugoslav political elites now faced was, could Yugoslavia survive as a state under some alternative arrangement? Could it successfully accommodate to a change of ideology? Or would it instead inevitably disintegrate into its constituent parts—six republics, or even further—into many more territories?

The first incentives for a fundamental restructuring of the Yugoslav state had already emerged by the mid-1980s, when political elites in Serbia launched several initiatives for at first smaller but then more substantial amendments to the 1974 Constitution. Under the leadership of Ivan Stambolić (1982–87), Serbia became the leading force of the “reformers of the Constitution.”¹⁴ While the need for smaller reforms was accepted by others in Yugoslavia, the majority resisted any attempts to reject the main principles of the 1974 Constitution, which further decentralized the Yugoslav state and which it described as “neither a federation nor confederation but a new form of socio-political community.”¹⁵ Slovenian and Croatian political elites in the 1980s—together with those of the two provinces of Serbia, Vojvodina, and Kosovo—formed an informal block of “the defenders of the Constitution” and successfully blocked most of Serbia’s reformist initiatives in the political sphere. Serbia soon found itself politically isolated in Yugoslavia. This significantly contributed to the failure of Stambolić’s policy of gradual and institutional reforms of the political system. At the same time, this also contributed to the rise of Slobodan Milošević and his policy of combined institutional and extrainstitutional pressure for constitutional changes. As of 1987, Serbian demands for constitutional and political changes became not only more vocal but also more aggressive. Milošević interpreted the 1974 Constitution as being too confederalist and thus becoming the main generator of the disintegrative trends in Yugoslav politics. The “antibureaucratic revolution” he launched in 1988 demanded a new constitution that would have abandoned all elements of confederalism while promoting unity. In his public discourse, Milošević still used the concept of federalism to describe this new, recentralized, Yugoslavia. At the same time, however, the concept he used more than any other in his speeches between 1984 and 1989 was unity.¹⁶

Other republics, then still largely committed to the rhetoric of Yugoslav socialism (that identified “unitarism” as one of its main political enemies) viewed Milošević as

a unitarist and thus as a serious danger for the fragile compromise of the 1974 political and constitutional arrangement. The political elites of Slovenia, Croatia, Kosovo, and Vojvodina now argued that Milošević's politics meant a return to the old days of statist socialism or even Stalinism. They argued that the "federalism" of Milošević was not really federalism but in fact was a mask for unitarism. On March 28, 1989, Milošević promulgated the new constitution of Serbia. The Slovenian and Croatian elites viewed this as a victory for his unitarist concept because it significantly reduced the autonomy of the two Serbian autonomous provinces—Vojvodina and Kosovo. Furthermore, in April 1989, Milošević made clear that he did not intend to stop at the borders of his own republic; he was prepared to try to "unite" Yugoslavia, too.

Those who expect that now, when she has finally become a Republic, that Serbia would join the defenders of the *status quo* and oppose changes to the 1974 Constitution, are deluding themselves. They will soon have a chance to see how wrong they are. Serbia did not become a state to sleep on the wreath of glory, but—now strong and open towards others—to forcefully initiate democratic changes in order to make Yugoslavia a strong community of equal nations and nationalities. . . . Of course, those who do not care for Yugoslavia claim that our intentions and plans are "unitarist" and "hegemonic." But they should be under no illusion that we would . . . abandon Yugoslavia and socialism.¹⁷

The Slovenian and Croatian political elites in particular understood this as an open threat. In response, they now moved toward one single objective: to defend (and if possible to expand further) the level of autonomy of their republics within Yugoslavia. The arrangements of the 1974 Constitution now became a "bottom line," a line past which the Slovenian and Croatian elites were not prepared to negotiate. Because the 1974 Constitution could only be changed by a consensus of all Yugoslav republics and provinces, the defenders of the constitution had, at least for the time being, the upper hand.

However, Milošević's antibureaucratic revolution in Serbia had already de facto changed the status quo—first through a combination of public protests and intrainstitutional pressure against the "defenders of the constitution" in Vojvodina (in October 1988) and then in Montenegro (in January 1989). In February 1989 the federal state introduced a state of emergency in Kosovo. These acts—as well as the announcement that the antibureaucratic revolution might soon be "exported" to Slovenia and Croatia—were seen by these two northern republics as illegal. This was because they fundamentally sought to undermine the constitutional arrangements for republican and provincial autonomy.

In spring 1989 Serbia announced trade sanctions against Slovenia (in response to Slovenian criticism of Serbia's policy toward Kosovo). The Slovenian political elite concluded that the 1974 Constitution had de facto ceased to exist. Subsequently, the Slovenian elite abandoned the policy of status quo as no longer realistic. The situation in which this happened is described by Janez Drnovšek, who was the first

non-Communist president of Yugoslavia's state presidency, elected by the Slovenian electorate to represent the republic in this body as of May 1989:

The actual situation had already moved forward so much that it was impossible to deal with it within the framework of the existing constitution, as this constitution was now completely lagging behind reality of the day. . . . It now became impossible to respect the law in the strict sense, as the new political and economic realities were now completely different from the self-managed, socialist, party state. At the same time, the argument that no law should be obeyed any more, that nothing was worth preserving, was also unacceptable—as it would lead to a complete chaos and would thus open the floodgate to this or that form of violence.¹⁸

Once Slovenia agreed that the old constitution was no longer viable, the Yugoslav presidency initiated, in January 1990, a debate on the new constitution. As Janez Drnovšek admits in his political memoirs, hopes that the Yugoslav republics would ever agree on a meaningful text of the new constitution were very weak.¹⁹ It was obvious that the Slovenian and Serbian political objectives were worlds apart. Slovenia's main objective was to preserve—and, if possible, to extend—the level of autonomy that had been instituted by the 1974 Constitution. According to the letter of the 1974 Constitution, all republics were recognized as “sovereign states”—but due to the nature of Communist ideology and politics this phrase had little substance. In the new, post-Communist circumstances, the Slovenian elite sought to give substance to the phrase.

Having little hope for an agreement with other republics, the Slovenian politicians were now increasingly looking toward their own republic. The reforms launched within Slovenia included a series of constitutional amendments to the constitution of the republic, all of them aiming to further expand on Slovenian sovereignty.²⁰ Although the concept of sovereignty was not yet defined as full state independence, that is, as creation of a separate Slovenian state outside of Yugoslavia, this option was no longer unthinkable. The right to self-determination—on which Slovenian politicians insisted—clearly meant also the right to secede from Yugoslavia should the Slovenes so wish.

As the Yugoslav constitutional debate wore on, the Slovenes' position was to insist that Yugoslavia would remain acceptable to Slovenia only if further decentralization was carried out. On this basis, Slovenian politicians in 1989–90 objected not only to Milošević's attempt to recentralize Yugoslavia but also to large extent to proposals for political reforms promoted by Ante Marković, the new federal Prime Minister.²¹ Marković (a Bosnian-born Croat representing Croatia) was a Yugoslav federalist and thus more popular in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia and among minorities (for example, Croatian Serbs) than among “sovereignists,” such as Milošević and Kučan. Ljubljana supported Marković's economic reforms but was much more sceptical about his program of political reforms, which included federal-wide elections and thus the creation of a Yugoslav *demos* to supplement (and perhaps supplant)

the republican demos.²² As both Milošević and Marković used the concept of federalism to describe their program of reforms, the Slovenian political establishment now gradually moved away from this concept and introduced confederalism into the debate in order to emphasize the difference.

The introduction of the confederalist concept was a last-minute attempt of Slovenian reformed Communists to endear themselves to the Slovenian electorate. At one of its last sessions (on March 7–8, 1990), only a month before the first democratic elections, the outgoing Slovenian parliament (still controlled by reformed Communists) requested from its executive council (i.e., Slovenian government) to prepare a draft of a confederal treaty that would be offered to other Yugoslav republics instead of a new Yugoslav constitution. By the end of April the draft that emerged as a result of this initiative was discussed at the very last session of the outgoing government. The *Šinigoj proposal*—as the document was named after the outgoing prime minister, Dušan Šinigoj—went almost unnoticed by the general public. Soon after the change of government, the *Šinigoj proposal* was (at least temporarily) placed *ad acta*.²³

Although fairly noncommittal when it came to political solutions, the *Šinigoj proposal* was very useful for its cost-benefit analysis of economic implications of Slovenian eventual secession from Yugoslavia.²⁴ The document prepared by the Slovenian Institute for social planning analyzed the structure of Slovenian trade and discovered that in 1988, 51.9 percent of all goods and services produced in Slovenia were sold within the republic, 30.1 percent in other Yugoslav republics, and 18 percent of total trade was realized through export to the international market. The main area of trade for Slovenian goods in Yugoslavia was Croatia (9.8 percent of the total), followed by Serbia in its territory outside of the two provinces (6.1 percent), and Bosnia-Herzegovina (3.3 percent). The figures on import to Slovenia showed that 57 percent of it originated from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, more than half of Slovenian trade with other Yugoslav republics was with Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Because Slovenia did not expect these two republics to join Serbia in its trade boycott (even in the case of Slovenia's secession), the damage to Slovenian economic interests would be limited.

The estimation presented to the Slovenian government indicated that in the worst case scenario—that is, if all other Yugoslav republics cut off their trade with Slovenia for political reasons—Slovenian GDP would immediately shrink by 37.3 percent. But if Serbia remained the only republic whose market would be lost, the Slovenian GDP would decrease by not more than 15.3 percent of the total. In short, experts offered an analysis that looked less bleak than politicians were led to believe by their own instinct or international warnings. Slovenia's strategic interest was to deter any other republic in Yugoslavia from joining Serbia in its trade boycott. For this reason, Slovenia had to be seen to be doing its best to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the Yugoslav crisis rather than acting in what could be perceived to be an extremist and unilateral manner. If seen as reasonable

and cooperative, Slovenia could perhaps even reverse negative trends by reorienting some other republics from being linked with Serbia to itself in an economic and political sense.²⁵

Analysis prepared for Šinigoj's government predicted that the most difficult aspect of confederalization would be in the sphere of military reforms—not least because of deep animosities developed within the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) for Slovenian political reforms. These animosities began in the mid-1980s when Slovenian liberalized media protested against the JNA policy of treating only Serbo-Croat as its de facto official language—and thus ignoring the constitutional status of the Slovenian (and Macedonian) language as official in Yugoslavia. They further deepened when the Slovenian weekly *Mladina* published articles on corruption within the JNA and criticized the army for its close links with dictatorial regimes in Africa. In 1988 the JNA arrested and tried three Slovenian journalists (including Janez Janša) and one noncommissioned officer in Ljubljana. The relationship with the JNA worsened when in the last months of 1989 Slovenia refused to agree on the federal budget for 1990—of which the JNA was the main beneficiary. In a document submitted to the government by the Slovenian Territorial Defence Headquarters (RŠTO), military experts proposed three alternatives for organization of the defence forces in an eventual confederation. First, the Yugoslav army might remain the only armed force in confederation but must be restructured in such a way that most of its units were territorial, that is, clearly associated with a particular republic. The second option allowed for a combination of a professional (thus, not conscript-based) Yugoslav army and a separate armed forces of the republics. This proposal was in line with the dual structure of the existing Yugoslav defence system, which consisted of the JNA and territorial defence forces. However, in practice the JNA remained overwhelmingly the more important of the two components. In addition, the federal secretary of defence, General Veljko Kadijević, launched an initiative in spring 1990 to abolish territorial defence units, which he saw as potentially too nationalistic and thus dangerous for Yugoslav unity.²⁶ Just before the elections in Slovenia and Croatia, the Yugoslav Army removed much of the weaponry from the depots of territorial defence units and transferred them to the JNA depots—especially in Croatia.²⁷ The reforms proposed by the JNA were in direct conflict with those now considered by the Slovenian government. This was especially the case with the third option of the Šinigoj confederal proposal: that the defence forces of the confederation should consist of separate armies of the republics without the confederal army. In practice, this would have meant the end of the JNA as an institution.

As events would soon demonstrate, the JNA did not forget this proposal—which would, if accepted, have made it “an army without a state,” as the federal secretary of defence, Veljko Kadijević, described it.²⁸ As these options were proposed by the Slovenian Communist government, the JNA became convinced that no political party in Slovenia could be its potential ally. Thus, any attempt to negotiate with the Slovenes would probably be futile. The conflict between the JNA and the Slovenes

continued throughout 1990 and 1991—escalating during the brief but violent “Ten Days War” between the JNA and Slovenia in June and July 1991.

Slovenia after the 1990 elections

Slovenia was the first republic in Yugoslavia to hold democratic, multiparty elections. A decision to open up political competition to non-Communist groups and parties was a direct consequence of five major influences that Slovenian reformed Communists could no longer ignore. First, by January 1990 the SKJ had de facto ceased to exist. Therefore, the Slovenian elite was no longer obliged by the principle of democratic centralism to support policy decisions over which it no longer had any decisive influence. Second, it was now recognized that the Yugoslav constitution was de facto suspended (the Slovenes argued that this was brought on by unilateral changes introduced by Serbia) and that the political system of self-management had come to an end. Third, the Slovenian political elite sought to demonstrate its popular legitimacy, which was contested by Serbia. The “anti-bureaucratic revolutionaries” claimed that—unlike Milošević, who obviously had a large number of active followers willing to organize massive rallies in his support—the Slovenian leaders spoke only for themselves and not for the people. Fourth, by being the first Yugoslav republic to organize multiparty elections, Slovenia hoped it would be seen as the most progressive and most democratic in the eyes of the Western world. This would enable the Slovenes to claim that the conflict in Yugoslavia was primarily fought between the forces of democratization (i.e., Slovenia and Croatia) and the forces of dogmatic antidemocratic neo-Stalinism (in Serbia and perhaps other republics). Slovenia (and Croatia) now portrayed themselves as the “Yugoslav west” and thus the main potential ally of the West.²⁹ Finally, the Slovenian reformed Communists were facing (by 1990) already very strong and growing unofficial opposition in Slovenia.

The first opposition groups in Slovenia emerged in 1986 and were largely organized around two institutions. The former Socialist Youth Organization (ZSMS) offered its institutional protection to various liberal, anarchist, pacifist, and other alternative groups, whereas the Slovenian Writers’ Association and its journal *Nova Revija* became the main institutional locus for anti-Communist intellectuals of different political orientations, from liberals to separatists.³⁰ These two institutions—especially the latter—became vocal critics of Communist policy in the second half of the 1980s, whether it was Yugoslav, Serbian, or Slovenian.

In what is today recognized as a landmark event for Slovenian politics, in January 1987, the editors of *Nova Revija* (Niko Grafenauer and Dimitrij Rupel) published a special issue (No. 57) of this journal titled *Contributions to the Slovene National Program*. In one article after another, the leading anti-Communist intellectuals argued that Yugoslavia had become a burden on weak Slovenian shoulders and that the Slovenes should consider making their own, independent state. “Yugoslavism” and “Yugoslavianism” (the former referring to an attempt to create a Yugoslav ethnic,

the latter to the Yugoslav civil nation) were identified as the main dangers facing the existence of Slovenian national identity.³¹ Most authors in the special issue argued in favor of a fully independent Slovenian state and defined their role as one of convincing the Slovenian public that independence was a viable option and should be the primary aim, ranked higher than either socialism or Yugoslavia. In their subsequent writings, the *Nova Revija* authors became the main promoters of Slovenian independence. By 1989, one of them, Ivan Urbančič, concluded: “Yugoslavia as a state is a historical accident; it is without any indigenous imperative, without any idea of itself. Yugoslavia cannot exist, because she does not have any interior necessity.”³²

Faced with the uncertainties and offered an alternative to the long-standing crisis of Yugoslavia, Slovenian public opinion was now rapidly moving in support of independence. Already in 1987, 53 percent of the respondents in a survey conducted by the University of Ljubljana claimed that outside Yugoslavia, as an independent state, “Slovenia would increase its chances to develop in an economic sense,” whereas only 18.9 percent claimed the contrary. More respondents than ever before (43.2 percent) claimed that Slovenian politics was “not sufficiently independent.”³³ In addition, the LCY was rapidly losing its appeal with the Slovenian electorate. In 1986, only 18 percent of Slovenes agreed that “the LCY needs to exist no longer.” By May 1989, 53.3 percent of the population shared this view. The May 1989 survey discovered that 75.1 percent of the Slovenian population favored multiparty democracy to a single-party state.³⁴

In response to this change, several newly created opposition parties formed in December 1989 a forum-style coalition Demos. At the elections for three chambers of the Slovenian parliament, the parties of the Demos had won 54 percent of the votes, that is, 123 of 240 seats. Lojze Peterle, the leader of the Slovenian Christian Democrats (SKD), became the first non-Communist prime minister, and the editor-in-chief of *Nova Revija*, Dimitrij Rupel became the foreign minister. At the same time, however, the reformed Communists were more successful at the elections for the Slovenian state presidency—the collective head of the state. Milan Kučan was elected its president (having won 58.3 percent of the vote, to 41.7 percent for the Demos representative, Jože Pučnik), while the reformed Communists had two more members—thus a majority of 3 votes to 2. This created grounds for a cohabitation between the reformed Communists and the Demos.

These two main political forces in the new Slovenian politics had, however, very different views on the future of Slovenian relationship with other Yugoslav republics. Milan Kučan was at that time still a confederalist who claimed to be an opponent of Slovenian separatism.³⁵ But he was under heavy pressure from many quarters (public opinion, federal institutions, opposition in Slovenia, the JNA, the Serbian leadership, the international community) at a time when his political world was falling apart. Describing his feelings immediately after he decided to lead the Slovenian Communists out of the Fourteenth SKJ Congress in January 1990, Kučan revealed some of the dilemmas he was facing at the time:

All my life, and especially my youth, was linked with the Party. I have been influenced by these ideas through my family, and even if the Party is now clearly not what it once was, it is still not easy to say goodbye. . . . I can hardly even think about the possibility of Slovenia leaving Yugoslavia. Personally, I have never been for it. I cannot come to terms with this possibility. But, Yugoslavia as it is now is good for no one. If the Helsinki Declaration and the way of thinking in Europe, which is now hostile to any amendments of the borders, change—and I am not sure that Europe will remain committed to this view after all that has happened in Germany and in the countries of the East—then we Slovenian non-separatists would face a very difficult situation. Of course, it all depends on what Yugoslavia would look like.³⁶

From this perspective, the new Slovenian president viewed the confederal proposal primarily as a means of preserving the Yugoslav name in some form—while the new government understood it as the first step toward full independence. These differences caused permanent tensions between Milan Kučan and the government of Lojze Peterle, with Kučan remaining skeptical about the feasibility of the quick and often impatient moves initiated by the majority in the Slovenian parliament. For Kučan, who was to some extent a political offspring of Edvard Kardelj and his vision of an ever more decentralized Yugoslavia, confederation was perhaps also a further step toward this permanent decentralization in new, changed circumstances.³⁷ For the Demos, however, confederation was possible only as a radical turnabout from Communism and various political and social experiments that came with it.

From a distance, primarily from Belgrade, Slovenia looked united behind the nationalist program. To Milošević and the JNA, there seemed to be little difference between Kučan and the Demos. This view was, however, a gross misinterpretation of reality. A new, postelectoral political system in Slovenia was truly pluralistic—to such an extent that it was sometimes very difficult to reconcile differences. Tensions between the government and the president continued over the whole period of transition from Yugoslavia to an independent Slovenian state. These tensions largely determined the dynamics of the key decisions in Slovenian politics in 1990 and 1991. Due to his previous role in the liberalization of Slovenian politics and to his resistance to the forces of centralism in Yugoslavia, President Kučan remained personally popular and influential. However, Slovenia was a parliamentary, not a presidential, democracy, and the Demos had full control over the first democratic parliament. The Demos used this institutional advantage to impose laws and enforce decisions that would lead to full independence. The Slovenian government practically ignored the president's confederalist approach and opted for full independence. In this, the government was supported by circumstances, which made a compromise in Yugoslavia very difficult or, perhaps, completely impossible.

Croatia Following the Elections of April 1990

Yugoslav politics during the late 1980s was characterized by a polarization between the Slovenian and Serbian visions of the future of Yugoslavia. Although more sup-

portive of the Slovenes than of the Serbs, Croatian political leaders tried to promote a compromise rather than to place themselves openly in support of the Slovenes, against the Serbs. The Communist elite was aware that a strong anti-Serb position could result in a worsening of interethnic (Croat-Serb) relations in Croatia. However, such a reserved policy gave the impression of a weakness in Croatian politics. Croatian nationalism grew in response both to this perceived weakness of the Croatian Communists in the 1980s and to the expansionist character of Serbian nationalism. An increasing number of Croats saw the expansionist Serbs as serious and realistic threat. The Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ)—a radical nationalist party lead by Franjo Tuđman—emerged in February 1989 in direct response to the “policy of appeasement with Serbia,” as Tuđman characterized the line taken by the Croatian reformed Communists. In criticizing Croatia’s political elite, Tuđman often pointed out that the Croatian Communists should follow the example of their Slovenian comrades (if not that of the Demos), who strongly resisted attempts to recentralize Yugoslavia.

The Slovenian position on decentralizing Yugoslavia was popular in Croatia. In a series of public opinion surveys that I conducted for the leading Croatian political weekly *Danas* on March 19–21, 1990 (thus only three weeks before the elections), it was revealed that a large number of Croats were in favor of Yugoslavia being transformed into a confederation. The confederation was supported by 52 percent of the respondents in Zagreb, 48 percent in Rijeka, and 47 percent in Split. At the same time, 25 percent of the electorate in Zagreb, 26 percent in Split, and 13 percent in Rijeka favored full independence—with no confederal or any other formal links with other Yugoslav republics. The “reformed federation” (which for the Croats was mostly associated with Ante Marković, not Slobodan Milošević) was supported by 24 percent in Zagreb, 27 percent in Split, and 37 percent in Rijeka. The same survey, however, revealed that 54 percent of the HDZ voters preferred secession to any other option. The HDZ voters preferred to define Croatia in constitutional terms as “the nation-state of the Croats” (61 percent), thus omitting any reference to other ethnic groups. Unlike them, the voters for the centrist political parties preferred confederation to secession, whereas the supporters of the reformed Communists preferred federation (64 percent) to confederation. Therefore, at the moment of the first Croatian multiparty elections in 1990, the HDZ had yet to secure a majority for its preferred option: the full independence of Croatia.

It is within this context that one should understand Tuđman’s hesitation to openly promote secessionist ideas prior to the first Croatian elections. As the project of a confederation had already been a part of the public debate in Slovenia, the Croatian and Yugoslav authorities could not blame the HDZ for being too extreme. The HDZ voters—more radical than the majority of the Croats—accepted the concept of confederation as a “public talk” in a situation in which it was illegal and politically damaging to promote secessionism. But it is fair to say that by confederation they did not understand an attempt to reform or save Yugoslavia in any form but

an important further step on the road to independence. While the reformed Communists opted for “modern federation” as their main political program in 1990, the HDZ was now offering something new, more clearly distinguishable from the Serbs and federal government, and closer to the Slovenes—confederation. The party’s position was expressed succinctly by Tudjman thus: “On the whole, there is no major difference between the program promoted by Slovenian politicians and that which is favored by the HDZ. . . . I am not saying that this is the end of any Yugoslavia. I am only saying that this is the end of Yugoslavism as a form of compulsory *brotherhood*, to which we would no longer be slaves. I am also saying that this is the end of the policy of preservation of Yugoslavia at any cost.”³⁸

The HDZ emerged as the sole winner of the 1990 elections. Although it did not receive more than 42 percent of all votes cast, due to the nature of the Croatian electoral system (“first past the post”), the HDZ received 58 percent of seats in all three chambers of Croatian parliament, the Sabor.³⁹ Unlike Slovenia, there was no cohabitation—the HDZ majority in the Sabor elected Franjo Tudjman president of the Croatian state presidency. In the euphoria that followed the historic (and, to many, the unexpected)⁴⁰ victory of the Croatian nationalists, Tudjman (and even more—members and supporters of his party) now saw the electoral victory as giving them *carte blanche*. They proceeded to exclude all other political groups from decision-making. In a way similar to that of the Slovenian intellectuals in the mid-1980s, the HDZ now wanted to increase public support for independence.

In one of its first foreign-policy steps after the elections, the new Croatian government officially approached the Slovenian government (and President Kučan) in order to coordinate further actions against their common opponent: centralizing forces in Serbia and in Yugoslav federal politics. In his inaugural speech in the Sabor made on May 30, 1990, Franjo Tudjman announced the new policy:

Because of the fact that Croatia is a part of Yugoslavia, which is a recognized member of international order, we are prepared to enter negotiations with representatives of other nations of the SFR Yugoslavia and its federal bodies, in order to draft a new contractual settlement for our mutual relationships. Based on historical experience, we believe that the state sovereignty of Croatia—together with sovereignty of other nations of the current Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia—can be secured only on the basis of confederation as a contractual association of sovereign states.⁴¹

According to Mario Nobile, the Croatian side began working on the confederal proposal on July 20, 1990, only a month and a half into the mandate of the first Croatian post-Communist government, led by Stjepan Mesić. The initial idea was to create a long strategic document on the future of Croatia and its possible links with other republics, as well as the actual confederal contract.⁴² But the Croats soon discovered that there was no time for such a megaproject. The paradox of the new Croatian politics was that at the same time that Croatia began to coordinate its politics with Slovenia it also wanted to slow down Slovenia’s secession from Yugoslavia

because it was aware that Slovenia's unilateral secession would reduce Croatia's chances to achieve independence on its own. Croatia feared that a Slovenian secession would turn the remaining "Yugoslavia" into a Serb-dominated country. Croatia was supportive of Slovenia's independence only if it was the result of the complete disintegration of Yugoslavia, which would then pave the way for Croatia's complete independence. Otherwise, the secession of Slovenia would be a part of the problem, not a solution.⁴³

In addition, the now increasingly nationalistic (anti-Serb) Croatian elite feared that Slovenia would conclude a political pact with Serbia based on mutual recognition of the right to self-determination. This pact would allow Slovenia to leave Yugoslavia but would in turn also recognize the rights of the Serbs in other former Yugoslav republics to remain united with Serbia in one country. In several public speeches, Serbian politicians hinted that they would not object to such a deal. For example, in his inaugural speech on May 15, 1990, Borisav Jović, the new president of Yugoslavia's state presidency, announced his intention to enact the law on secession. As his political diary (published in 1995) testifies, at one of his private discussions with Slobodan Milošević (on June 28, 1990), Milošević proposed to "cut Croatia down the middle," with areas where the ethnic Serbs formed a majority remaining "on our side." Jović was then instructed to come up with developed proposals at the forthcoming sessions of the Yugoslav state presidency—"within a week, at most."⁴⁴ On July 23, 1990, while visiting Slovenia, Jović confirmed that "it would be possible for some republics to secede." In his memoirs, Janez Drnovšek also states that in "informal conversations we had in August 1990, Jović and Milošević said they had absolutely nothing against Slovenian independence—on the contrary, they thought Slovenes should organize a referendum and make a decision."⁴⁵ According to Drnovšek, occasionally even General Kadijević was not entirely hostile to Slovenia's leaving Yugoslavia but "only by agreement with others in Yugoslav federation." "He believed that the federation could survive the secession of Slovenia, but Croatia was a different thing. Independence of Croatia would mean a civil war—because of Serb minorities in Croatia. In that case, Bosnia-Herzegovina would become a problem too. He said that the Yugoslav Army would not allow this to happen."⁴⁶

In later interpretations of the reasons why Slovenia did not accept such a "generous" Serbian offer (at least not prior to July 1991), four possible reasons were stated. First, Slovenia did not trust Milošević and thought his offer was only a tactical manoeuvre that—if accepted—would only reveal the secessionist nature of Slovenian politics. Second, Slovenia was not ready for independence. Not only was public opinion still divided over the issue,⁴⁷ but some Slovenian leaders (for example, Milan Kučan) were still genuinely sentimental about Yugoslavia. Others believed Slovenia was not yet in a position to implement policies leading to full independence.⁴⁸ Third, there was no international support for Slovenian independence at that time. On the contrary, at all official talks the Slovenian leaders had with foreign officials before July 1991, they were warned clearly that no European state would recognize a secessionist

republic.⁴⁹ Finally, by accepting the Serbian offer of unilateral secession, the Slovenes would disturb bilateral relationship with all other Yugoslav republics, including the only ally they had at the time—Croatia. They feared Milošević would use Slovenian secession to consolidate his gains and defeat Croatia—but only to proceed further by trying to force a quasi-independent (but unrecognized) Slovenia into submission.⁵⁰

In addition, the Slovenes did not want to take responsibility for the destruction of Yugoslavia. Through cooperation with Croatia they could successfully reject accusations that it was only they who were dissatisfied with federalism in Yugoslavia. At the same time, the confederalist proposal would portray Slovenia as a constructive and cooperative republic. As Milan Kučan explained in a speech to the Slovenian parliament on July 18, 1990: “If all these democratic attempts for an adequate solution come to nothing, and if we are left with no other option but to secede, then we must justify it in such a clear way that the outside world is completely convinced that we have had no other option.”⁵¹

It was for these—primarily tactical—reasons that Slovenia agreed to the Croatian initiative for a joint confederal proposal. But it is important to note two key factors that subsequently influenced the destiny of the proposal. First, that this acceptance was given hesitantly, and second, that for Slovenia (and to a lesser extent also for Croatia⁵²) there always was an alternative—a separate deal with Serbia. A part of the problem in the relationship between the two partners in this marriage of convenience was the almost incompatible personal characters of two (or possibly, with Lojze Peterle, three) leaders: Milan Kučan and Franjo Tuđman. While Kučan had a long and distinguished career in Slovenian and federal institutions, Tuđman was expelled from the SKJ in 1967 and even sentenced to prison on two occasions in the 1970s and 1980s. Kučan was a pragmatic leader, whereas Tuđman was inclined to “historicise” at official meetings—to the irritation of his visitors.⁵³ More importantly, Tuđman believed that the Serbs and Croats (not the Slovenes) held the key to the solution of the Yugoslav crisis. He criticized the Croatian Communists for allowing an “unnatural” situation in which the main conflict was between Slovenia and Serbia—with Croatia being entirely absent. Once in power, he “did not hide ambitions to become the *leader* of all endangered Yugoslav nations in their joint defence against the Greater-Serbian menace,” as his intentions were described by Peter Potočnik, the chief Zagreb correspondent of the Slovenian daily newspapers, *Delo*:

Dr Franjo Tuđman, who in his book *Wastelands of Historical Reality* criticised Slovenes for their history of *plotting* with Serbs against Croats and for not relying on Croats in Yugoslavia, said a month ago that for the democratic world Croatia was much more important than Slovenia, and that Slovenia lost its leading role in democratization of Yugoslavia after Croatian elections. When they mention a phrase “Croatia and Slovenia,” the Croats assume that Slovenia is only *an appendix* to Croatia . . .⁵⁴

The Slovenes were by now becoming increasingly alarmed by Tudjman's initiatives. They could not agree to become junior partners to the Croats—especially because they had rejected the status of junior partners to Serbs in Yugoslavia. The more Tudjman insisted on his leadership in the confederalist project, the more reserved the Slovenian government was about it.

One more element of Croatian politics alarmed Slovenian politicians: its ambition to change borders—especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Franjo Tudjman opened the issue of Croatia's borders in his main preelection TV interview when he pointed at the map on the wall behind him saying that “as everyone can see,” these borders were “clearly unnatural.” In his interview with *Danas* he went further:

The borders were first contested by those who have led the *anti-bureaucratic revolution*. These people brought the country into the stage of disintegration. It was only then that the HDZ said: gentlemen in the country and in the world, the Croat nation cannot be reduced within such unnatural borders, because these borders had been created in the times of the Turkish expansion, and have remained the same until today, regardless of the fact that all colonial empires in the world have long disappeared. We have, therefore, placed the issue of the borders on the agenda only when we were threatened by the idea of their reshaping in Yugoslavia, and for us this question exists only in this context.⁵⁵

In a later interview with *Der Spiegel* in June 1990, Tudjman linked the confederation proposal with his notion of a need for changed borders. He said that if Yugoslavia was to be transformed into a confederation, Croatia would seek to establish its “natural and historical borders.”⁵⁶ According to a public opinion survey of March 19–21, 1990, the large majority of the Croatian electorate wanted the border of Croatia to remain unchanged: 66 percent of respondents in Split, 69 percent in Zagreb, and 78 percent in Rijeka. In favor of the change of the borders were 15 percent of respondents in Rijeka, 27 percent in Zagreb, and 31 percent in Split. However, the HDZ voters were again much more radical—54 percent of them wanted the borders to be changed so that they would include parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina and possibly Herceg Novi and Boka Kotorska in Montenegro.⁵⁷ In addition, Croats from Herzegovina simply could not imagine a proper state border between them and the Republic of Croatia.⁵⁸ To many of them, confederation was possible only if the borders would change because they would not agree to remain a part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which the Croats were the smallest of three constituent ethnic groups.

Slovenian politicians believed that Tudjman's attempt to open the issue of borders was playing with fire.⁵⁹ Not only did they have no interest in this, but they openly opposed it. Tudjman's nationalism strengthened secessionist forces in Slovenia, who on July 2, 1990, successfully rushed the declaration on sovereignty through the Slovenian parliament. Without any previous announcement the Slovenian parliament withdrew its representatives from Federal Parliament (with 131 votes for, 49

against, and 21 abstentions) and declared that federal laws and directives would be valid in Slovenia only if confirmed by Slovenian institutions.⁶⁰ In response to this, Croatia practically abandoned its original idea of drafting a long strategic document on Croatia's relationship with others, presenting instead on July 20 a shorter, nine-point proposal that in fact stated Croatia's expectations of the confederal agreement. For Croatia to agree to it, a confederal arrangement should include:

- a) recognition of its sovereignty and its borders; b) reciprocal treatment of minorities; c) balanced approach to issue of financial contributions to the costs of confederation; d) republics should give guarantees that they would accept servicing the existing external debt of Yugoslavia; e) fair division of property of federal institutions whose existence would not continue; f) the institutions of confederations should be dispersed throughout the "union of the states"; g) republics should have their own national guards, while recruits should be posted to units in their own republics only. Only elite units of the armed forces should be joint at the level of the union, and NATO structure should be mirrored in terms of joint command over them; h) obligatory financing of under-developed republics and provinces should be stopped; i) the budget for the army should be drastically reduced, and the army should be de-politicized.⁶¹

In addition, Croatian leadership, as Mario Nobile confirms, sent a message to Serbia that Croatia "was ready not to insist on the preservation of the autonomy for Kosovo and Vojvodina, so that it could avoid a reciprocal demand for the same minority rights in Croatia."⁶² Such a proposal, however, had little positive and much negative effect. First of all, its economic side—expressed in points c), d), and e)—meant less solidarity with underdeveloped republics, such as Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro and with the province of Kosovo. As expected, this was not welcomed by these regions—which could be potential allies and partners in Croatian and Slovenian efforts to create a confederation. Second, the proposal for army reforms went against everything the army wanted. Finally, the statement on Kosovo was not received well by Kosovo's Albanians. In a letter sent to Tujman and Kučan on October 13, 1990, "500 Albanian journalists from Kosovo" complained about what they saw as backstabbing: "If in your model of confederal agreement there is no space for the Republic of Kosovo, then the Albanian nation will accept the third possibility, i.e. the full secession from Yugoslavia, based on the same principle you allegedly advocate: right to self-determination. . . . There can be no confederal Yugoslavia without recognition of the Albanian Republic of Kosovo as the second Albanian state in the Balkans. What can happen, however, is disintegration and war."⁶³

Croatia's promise not to interfere in Serbia's internal affairs did not impress Serbian politicians much either. They believed Croatia could not—even if it wanted to—interfere in Serbian politics. In addition, any coalition between Croatia and Kosovo would only help them to galvanize Serbs in their opposition to Croatia. Croatia's nine-points proposal was entirely unacceptable to Serbia in almost all aspects because it ran entirely against Serbia's own proposals for the recentralization of Yugoslavia.

Confederation was the least desirable option, which—as Borisav Jović and Slobodan Milošević concluded even before the Croatian elections—“nobody could impose on Serbia.” Serbia believed that by this proposal Yugoslavia would cease to exist, and Serbs would remain unprotected in other republics, especially in Croatia: “Even if we all accept such a contract, the Serbs would still be outsmarted in other areas—so we have no reason to accept a confederation.”⁶⁴

Instead, Serbian leadership supported a *quid pro quo* policy and now increasingly instrumentalized the Serb ethnic group in Croatia in order to undermine Tujman’s government from within. Any further steps on Croatia’s part toward confederation or secession would now be met with equal steps by Croatian Serbs (primarily those in the Krajina region). As Jovan Rašković, the leader of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) in Croatia explained in his interview for the *New York Times*: “If Croats want their own state, then the Serbs too want to decide for themselves whether they want to stay in Croatia or to separate from it.”⁶⁵

Based on this approach, municipalities with ethnic Serb majorities in Croatia enacted their own declaration of sovereignty and autonomy of the Serbs in Croatia on the same day (July 25, 1990) that the Croatian parliament enacted twelve amendments to the Croatian constitution.⁶⁶ Finally, tensions in Croatia escalated by mid August—in part as a direct consequence of Serbia’s policy of “cutting Croatia down the middle” but also in response to ever more radical Croatian nationalism.⁶⁷ On August 17, the self-declared Krajina region physically separated from the rest of Croatia by setting up roadblocks and barriers and issuing political declarations that the Croats saw as threats and provocations. This was the beginning of what would a year later escalate into a war in Croatia, only to then spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992.

Retrospectively, one may conclude that the events of August 17 and those that followed made any attempts for a workable confederation almost impossible. In part, the Serb rebellion in Krajina was directed against any coalition between Slovenia and Croatia.⁶⁸ And indeed, after August 17, Slovenia found itself exactly in the position that it had most wanted to avoid—by becoming a side in a violent Serb-Croat conflict. Logically, this led many Slovenes to ask themselves: would it not be better to accept Milošević’s offer to secede and leave the Croats behind?

As a consequence, the Demos line, which promoted full independence more openly, was now prevailing in Slovenia. This was also what Serbian nationalists in Belgrade wanted. This line did not exclude the possibility of a confederation, but it did not want to commit Slovenia to only one option either. The argument was most clearly presented by the leading pro-Demos commentator, Janko Lorenci, in his article published by *Delo* only five days after the “events in Knin,” as he called the rebellion in Krajina region of which Knin was the administrative centre:

The chances for a *gentlemen’s agreement* between the republics, for a workable confederation treaty, now seem to be slim. Even if talks on confederation continue, they would still be held under a deep shadow of complete chaos. . . . What does

that mean for Slovenia? More than anything else it means that Slovenia must return to a multiple options strategy, which has been abandoned of late for a policy of one single option—the confederation. This happened for a great many reasons: because of economic weakness, dependence on the Yugoslav market, because of a lack of support from abroad, because of many—not least military—threats and risks that would accompany our road to full independence. However, now—i.e. after the events in Knin—it is clear more than ever that confederation could be, if not entirely impossible, then certainly a much too distant aim. It certainly is so uncertain, that it should not be the only aim we have. To us, Knin should be a shock which would re-introduce the aim of Slovenian full independence to our political life again—not only as an equally desirable, but perhaps as the most desirable alternative to the confederalist tendencies. The politics of “one only option” (confederative) takes us to at least as equally uncertain a future as the politics of full independence . . .⁶⁹

The Road to Independence

By October 2, 1990, when the two republics officially proposed the confederation, Slovenia was only partly interested in the success of this project. Events that followed in the next month—largely in response to the confederalist proposal—saw Slovenia more disengaged with each day that passed. On the same day that the confederalist proposal was agreed upon, the Krajina Serbs declared autonomy from Croatia. The first direct conflict between Croatian police forces and local militias of the “Serb Autonomous Region of Krajina” also happened that same day in the town of Dvor. At the same time, Borisav Jović (then the president of the Yugoslav state presidency) received a delegation of the Krajina Serbs in Belgrade in what was a clear demonstration of support. The next day, the Yugoslav presidency concluded that Yugoslavia was “on the verge of a civil war.”⁷⁰ Subsequently, the presidency authorized the JNA to intervene, with only the Slovenian representative, Janez Drnovšek, voting against.⁷¹ The Serbian opposition leader, Vuk Drašković, called for a general mobilization in Serbia and announced that his armed “volunteers” would be willing to defend Krajina Serbs. Only three days before (September 29, 1990), in an interview with *Delo*, Drašković said:

What the Kingdom of Serbia held when Yugoslavia was created, on 2 December 1918, must be returned. In addition, in the case of the confederalization of Yugoslavia, Serbia must obtain all territories in what is today Herzegovina, Bosnia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, in these parts of Croatia where the Serbs made a majority of the population until 6 April 1941, when the Ustasha genocide against them began. . . . Wherever the Serb blood was shed by the Ustashes’ knives, wherever there are our graves—there are our borders. Tudjman, or whoever else would want to trespass, cannot do that at a negotiating table—but only at the battlefield!⁷²

While issuing an open threat to Croats, Drašković issued a very reconciliatory statement about the Slovenes: “Slovenes have never tried to exterminate the Serbs, so

why would we want now to be an obstacle in [the] Slovenian road to independence, towards full statehood?"

Drašković's radical speeches and open invitations at arms, showed to the Slovenes that confederation would be even less likely if Drašković won the forthcoming Serbian elections. At the same time, however, Drašković seemed to be even more explicit than Milošević in his support for a separate Serb-Slovene deal on Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia.⁷³

In addition, the panicked reaction of the Yugoslav presidency and the JNA to the Slovenian-Croatian confederal proposal further helped to shift Slovenian public opinion toward supporting independence. Once the presidency had concluded that Yugoslavia was on the verge of a civil war, the federal military police occupied the headquarters of the Slovenian Territorial Defence units on October 5, 1990. Slovenes saw this as showing straightforward contempt for the decisions of their democratically elected parliament. A public opinion survey conducted the next day revealed that 88.4 percent of Slovenes believed that the Slovenian political leadership (not the federal presidency) was the legitimate commander of the Slovenian Territorial Defense units. More importantly, when asked, "If confederation proves to be impossible, would you be in favor of Slovenia remaining a part of a Yugoslav federation, or in favor of secession from Yugoslavia?" 79.9 percent of the Slovenes said they wanted secession and only 5.3 percent federation (with 14.8 percent undecided).⁷⁴

This was a signal to Slovene secessionists that a failure of a confederal proposal would play in their favor. In another public opinion survey, published in *Delo* on October 20, 1990, 43.2 percent of Slovenian respondents said they would be prepared to defend Slovenian sovereignty "by taking up weapons, if it was endangered," and a further 36 percent gave a conditionally positive answer to this question ("yes, but only if absolutely necessary").

Thus, by the beginning of November 1990, it had become clear that "in their minds, the Slovenes have already left Yugoslavia behind" as Tudjman's foreign policy advisor, Darko Bekić, said in his interview to *Journal de Geneve*.⁷⁵ Bekić argued that "only the Croats are serious about it, only they want to save Yugoslavia in this moment." And indeed, very soon afterward, on November 9, the Demos coalition officially proposed a plebiscite on Slovenian sovereignty. The initiative for the plebiscite was launched after the meeting between the Demos and the Serbian opposition parties—thus, further deepening the gap between the Slovenian and Croatian politicians. Jože Pučnik explained the motives:

For more than two months already, confederation seems to be an impossible solution for the problems of Yugoslavia. Perhaps we could agree on it with Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina—although, after the events in Knin this became rather impossible too. It is therefore now the case that we will have to act on our own. Our confederal proposal was given as a matter of principle—but it seems that there is no realistic chance for its implementation. Therefore, our support for confederation is more of a tactical nature. The point we are making is that we would be

ready to accept a confederation too, in order to negotiate about the best solution to this problem. But, the others are not ready to accept this offer.⁷⁶

Although he did not explicitly admit it, there was another internal reason for Demos to speed up with independence—and that was the growing unpopularity of Demos among the Slovenian electorate. In a public opinion survey conducted by *Delo* at the beginning of November, Demos was now significantly behind the reformed communists in electoral support—with 36.9 percent to 42.5 percent.⁷⁷ Its leader, Jože Pučnik, was one of the least popular politicians in Slovenia—ranked only sixteenth out of twenty leading Slovenian politicians. For Demos and Pučnik, thus, the plebiscite was a vote-catching initiative too—an attempt to promote Demos as the “most Slovene” of all Slovenian political groups.

Apart from this internal factor, two external factors also helped—although unintentionally—the Slovenian secessionists’ cause. The first one was the unification of Germany, on October 3, 1990 (the day after the confederal proposal was agreed upon). Germany’s unification challenged the Helsinki principle on the status quo of the borders in Europe. In addition, the unification was a result of the implementation of the principle of self-determination, thus of the same principle the Slovenian (and Croatian) secessionists claimed for themselves. This all created “a very difficult situation for us non-separatists in Slovenia,” as admitted by Milan Kučan.⁷⁸

The second unlikely source of support was the European Community. In 1990, the EC was fully supportive of the policy of “unity and democracy”⁷⁹ and in this vein supported the government of Ante Marković. It also warned Slovenia that it would not be recognized if it seceded unilaterally.⁸⁰ In order to demonstrate its full support for the federal government, on November 1, 1990, the EC decided to include Yugoslavia in the PHARE program.⁸¹ Furthermore, the German minister of foreign affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, expressed Germany’s full support for Yugoslavia’s prospective membership in the European Community after his meeting with Yugoslavia’s Foreign Secretary, Budimir Lončar on September 2, 1990.⁸²

The prospect of Yugoslavia (united and democratic) joining the EC made Slovenian and Croatian secessionists nervous. As Darko Bekić said in an interview with the foreign press on November 6, 1990, “Croatia did not want to enter Europe as an anonymous province of Greater Serbia.”⁸³ In his strategic paper presented to Slovenian state presidency, Dimitrij Rupel was even more explicit, saying that “Slovenia must approach the restructuring of Europe as a nation-state, not as a subordinated unit of Yugoslavia.” The EC offer to include Yugoslavia in some of its programs thus had an unintentional consequence: it encouraged the secessionists to speed up. What also encouraged them was a prospect of losing the “democracy argument.” Before the Serbian elections in December 1990, Slovenia and Croatia argued that in its essence the conflict they had with Serbia was a conflict between “democratic western republics” and “unreformed Serbia, led by [the] neo-Stalinist Milošević.” With the elections in Serbia approaching, this argument was no longer valid. With

the elections in all Yugoslav republics nearly completed, secessionists expected more direct pressure for federal elections, which they wanted to avoid because such elections would democratically legitimize Yugoslav state institutions. In order to prevent federal elections, the Slovenian parliament concluded on November 13, 1990, that the Yugoslav state “no longer functioned” and that Slovenia therefore “had no future in Yugoslavia” because “economic and national death awaits us in it.”⁸⁴ A declaration by the Demos representatives in Slovenian parliament stated: “International politics is not inclined or supportive of us, but—no state can be recognized before it becomes a state. Therefore, we first must establish the state, i.e., we must become independent from Yugoslavia. Taking into account that the great powers and European states are not supportive of us, we can expect great resistance and crisis to follow the plebiscite. People should be aware of this when they vote.”⁸⁵

Not everybody in Slovenia—and even less in Croatia—was supportive of this decision. The Slovenian reformed communists argued that the timing was inappropriate and that there was no certainty that independence was favored by a majority.⁸⁶ However, the opinion polls conducted at the time showed that independence was taking roots among the Slovenian electorate. On November 17, 1990, 64 percent of the Slovenes said they would vote for independence, whereas 16.1 percent would be against (and 19.6 percent undecided). People were less optimistic when asked whether Slovenia would be able to survive as an independent state: 49.7 percent said it would, and 15.6 percent said it would not.⁸⁷ But, one can safely assume that the Slovenes were even more pessimistic about Slovenia’s prospects in Yugoslavia, which now increasingly appeared to be sinking into chaos, anarchy, and bloodshed. In this context, uncertainties and fears were still the prevailing sentiments among the Slovenes. During the brief war with the JNA in June and July 1991, these sentiments would be successfully manipulated by political elites and the media with the objective of achieving the unity of the nation faced with a realistic and serious threat.

Once the Demos agreed that the plebiscite question should also include a possibility that a sovereign state of Slovenia might enter into confederalist agreement with other Yugoslav states, a compromise was reached. Under the chairmanship of Milan Kučan, Slovenian political parties agreed on November 14, 1990, to call up a plebiscite for December 23, 1990.⁸⁸

Croatian politicians were not amused by this decision, especially because it looked to them as if the immediate incentive for the rush came from the meeting between the Demos and Serbian opposition parties, which was held in Belgrade on October 24, 1990. President Tudjman made his contempt explicit in his statement to *Delo*: “When it comes to solutions to current problems in Yugoslavia, you in Slovenia are a bit impatient, while we in Croatia have some other problems to solve too. A large number of Croats live beyond the borders of Croatia, and as we all know—the Knin has happened too. . . . Croatia therefore thinks it should not get itself into a position in which it takes steps which cannot bring it any concrete results.”⁸⁹

Behind closed doors, Croatian politicians were even more direct in their criticism of Slovenian “selfishness.” They feared that Slovenia might build up borderposts on its border with Croatia, which might deter some Croats from supporting Croatian independence.⁹⁰ In addition, the Slovenian example encouraged radical secessionists in Croatia (including those within the HDZ) to pressure the moderate confederalists, and—to some extent—Tudjman himself. In November 1990, one of the leading Croatian separatists, Vladimir Veselica, received a standing ovation from the HDZ representatives in the Sabor when he said that “a nation without a state is like a turtle without a shell.”⁹¹ At the same time, Croatian public opinion also moved toward supporting full independence, at least as a feasible option. In a public opinion survey that I conducted for *Danas* in the last days of November 1990, 54 percent of the Croatian electorate said that Croatia, too, should organize a plebiscite if Slovenes decided at their plebiscite to leave Yugoslavia. Against were 31 percent, and 15 percent of respondents were undecided. However, the split between ethnic Croats and ethnic Serbs—as well as between supporters of the HDZ and those who voted for opposition parties—now became almost complete. Among ethnic Croats, support for a plebiscite on independence was as high as 64 percent, whereas among the ethnic Serbs it was as low as 8 percent. In a sign of clear support for a more radical line within the party, the HDZ-voters were overwhelmingly (85 percent) supportive of the idea.⁹²

Tudjman’s chief domestic policy advisor, Slaven Letica, admitted in December that “Kučan’s and Tudjman’s vision of Yugoslavia is now also somewhat outdated.”⁹³ The road to independence was now opened wide. In public discourse of the time, confederation was not yet entirely abandoned. However, neither of its two original promoters now perceived it as a desirable or even a feasible solution to the Yugoslav problem. At best, they thought of it as a tactic by means of which they could buy time. This time would be used to secure an alibi against accusations that they had destroyed Yugoslavia and to prepare new institutions, as well domestic and international public opinion, for a full declaration of independence. In the Croatian case in particular, the time would be used to prepare for a war that now looked almost inevitable in the aftermath of Slovenia’s decision to leave Yugoslavia.

Conclusions

The Slovenian plebiscite on December 23, 1990, confirmed overwhelming (88.2 percent of those who voted, with 93.2 percent turnout) support for Slovenian de facto independence, although the actual question included an option that, once independent, Slovenia could enter into an association of Yugoslav states, should they wish to form a confederation.⁹⁴ By *lex specialis* enacted prior to the plebiscite, the implementation of the plebiscite’s decision should take no longer than six months. In these six months, Slovenia negotiated with others nothing else but the models of becoming independent. To this effect, its leadership engaged in a series of bilateral

meetings with other republics. On January 24, 1991, bilateral talks with Serbian leadership were held in Belgrade—ending in mutual recognition of the right to self-determination. In the next two weeks, meetings with Bosnian, Montenegrin, and Macedonian leaders followed. Between March 27 and April 29, five multilateral meetings of six presidents of Yugoslav republics took place with no positive results. On the negative side, they worsened the general political situation in Yugoslavia because they demonstrated a complete disunity and the scale of the tensions between political leaders. This tended to galvanize the population at large in support of their leaders and against the others. They also offered another good alibi to Slovenia—which claimed that no solution was possible within the existing framework. By May 1991, the Yugoslav federal presidency was blocked, first by a permanent stalemate in voting (with four votes against four) and then by a temporary resignation of its president, Borisav Jović, on March 15, 1991. An attempt by the JNA Headquarters to introduce a state of emergency failed in March 1991. On May 15, 1991, the Serbian and Montenegrin members of the presidency blocked (until July 1, 1991) election of Stjepan Mesić, the Croatian representative, as its next president.

On May 19, 1991, Croatia, which feared that it would be left in a “rump Yugoslavia” once Slovenia formally seceded, held a referendum on its own future. As Vladimir Đuro Degan concludes, the Croatian referendum was formally a choice between a confederation and a federation—but everyone knew it was a “plebiscite on independence.”⁹⁵ Turnout at the referendum was 83.6 percent. The results showed that 93.2 percent were supportive of the proposal “that the Republic of Croatia, as a sovereign and independent state, which guarantees cultural autonomy and all civic rights to Serbs and members of other nationalities in Croatia, can enter into a union of sovereign states with other republics (as proposed by the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia).” The other proposal—“that the Republic of Croatia remains in Yugoslavia as a united federal state, as proposed by the Republic of Serbia and the Socialist Republic of Montenegro”—was supported by 5.4 percent of the electorate. The Serbs from Krajina boycotted this referendum because they had already (on April 1, 1991) declared the Republic of Serb Krajina independent from Croatia.

Despite warnings that no republic would be recognized if it seceded unilaterally,⁹⁶ Slovenia and Croatia declared full state independence on the same day, June 25, 1991.⁹⁷ The next day, a conflict between the units of JNA stationed in Slovenia and the newly created Slovenian army and police began. Once it ended on July 7, Slovenia and Croatia agreed to suspend implementation of their declarations of independence for three months in order to enable negotiations on a peaceful resolution of the Yugoslav crisis. To this end, the EC organized a conference on Yugoslavia chaired by Lord Carrington. The conference proposed a confederal solution to Yugoslavia’s problems. Slovenia and Croatia formally agreed, not out of any enthusiasm for the confederal proposal, but primarily for two other reasons: they needed international support and protection (and thus had to be seen as cooperative with international efforts to resolve the Yugoslav problem), and they correctly assumed that Serbia would

never accept a confederation along the lines proposed by Carrington. The Carrington proposal had many elements of the original Slovenian and Croatian *confederation a la carte*, and it also meant international recognition of independence for all Yugoslav republics who applied for independence. For Serbia this was unacceptable because it meant—as Slobodan Milošević stated on November 5, 1990—“the abolition of Yugoslavia by the stroke of a pen.”

In the meantime, the Yugoslav state presidency agreed (on July 18) to withdraw all JNA troops from Slovenia in a decision supported by Serbian representatives, to the complete surprise of the Yugoslav Army, of international factors, and even of Slovenian and Croatian leadership. The only member of the Yugoslav presidency who voted against this decision was Stjepan Mesić, the Croatian representative. This decision—more than any other—contributed to a change of policy of some key European states (especially Germany) toward the issue of Yugoslavia’s unity. After all, once the Yugoslav state presidency decided to withdraw its own army from Slovenia (not only to barracks, as agreed on by the Brioni Declaration of July 7, 1991), how could one expect other states to insist for much longer on their policy of a democratic and united Yugoslavia? If Serbia agreed to support Slovenian *de facto* independence, how could one expect Germany or Austria to oppose it? With Slovenia becoming *de facto* independent following the withdrawal of the JNA troops in October 1991,⁹⁸ the *de jure* independence was now only a step away. But so was also a combined assault of the Krajina forces, JNA and Serbian “volunteers” first on the units of the Croatia’s National Guard and then in an all-out assault on the civilian population in general. When the war in Croatia intensified in August 1991, for a large majority of the Croats—but also for a growing number of Macedonians and Bosnians—*independence* became the only possible option. The confederation proposal now lay under the ruins of Dubrovnik and Vukovar, which were both attacked in fall 1991. International recognition of Slovenia and Croatia followed on January 15, 1992.

Notes

1. For the full text of these documents see Vladimir Đuro Degan, *Hrvatska država u međunarodnoj zajednici* (Zagreb: Globus, 2002), pp. 281–306.
2. Degan, *ibid.*, p. 229.
3. See Janez Drnovšek, *Moja resnica* (Zagreb: Mladinska knjiga, 2002).
4. Mario Nobile, *Hrvatski Feniks* (Zagreb: Globus, 2000), p. 27.
5. Nobile, *ibid.*, p. 40.
6. France Bučar, interview, *Delo*, September 1, 1990.
7. Nobile, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
8. Nobile, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
9. See Janez Drnovšek, *Moja resnica* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1996).
10. Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe* (New York: Times Books, 1996).
11. Zimmermann, *ibid.*, p. 136.
12. For the full text of Rudolf’s proposal, see Davorin Rudolf, *Rat koji nismo htjeli* (Zagreb: Globus, 1999), pp. 306–321.

13. See Laura Silber and Allan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 209–225.
14. For Stambolić's political program in these years see Ivan Stambolić, *Rasprave o SR Srbiji*, (Zagreb: Globus, 1988) and Ivan Stambolić (1995): "Put u bespuće," Radio B 92, Belgrade.
15. Edvard Kardelj, "Yugoslavia: The Socialist Self-Managing Community of Equal Peoples, 1969," in Edvard Kardelj, *The Nations and Socialism* (Belgrade: STP, 1980), pp. 190–216.
16. For Milošević's political program in 1984–1989 see Slobodan Milošević, *Godine raspleta*, (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1989).
17. *Informativni bilten CK SK Srbije*, No. 4 (1989), pp. 10–11.
18. Drnovšek, op. cit., p. 171.
19. Drnovšek, op. cit., p. 170.
20. The most important amendments were enacted on September 27, 1989—in defiance of warnings issued by federal institutions that they were unconstitutional (from the point of view of the existing Yugoslav Constitution of 1974). For the chronology of these changes see Božo Repe, *Jutri je nov dan* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2002), pp. 177–194.
21. In his diary, Borisav Jović, Serbia's representative in the Yugoslav state presidency wrote on October 31, 1989: "Slovenia attacks Marković even more than we do in Serbia." See Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ* (Belgrade: Politika, 1995), p. 64.
22. A survey conducted in May and June 1990 showed that Marković's program of political reforms was supported by only 26 percent of the Slovenes, which made the Slovenes least supportive of all Yugoslav nations. While in Yugoslavia on the whole Marković's program of reforms was approved by 66 percent, in Slovenia the rate of approval was only 32 percent. *Yugoslav Survey*, No 3 (1990), pp. 3–26.
23. In his book, Slovenian historian Božo Repe writes that on June 18, 2001 (thus, two years since the *Šinigoj* proposal appeared), the then Slovenian foreign minister, Dimitrij Rupel, was not aware of its existence. The first post-Communist prime minister, Lojze Peterle, knew about the proposal but did not pay close attention to it. See Repe, op. cit., p. 55.
24. For the *Šinigoj* proposal see Repe, op. cit. pp. 52–55.
25. The original analysis was titled "Vpetost slovenskega gospodarstva v jugoslovanski trg, strukturna analiza" (May 4, 1990). See Repe, op. cit., pp. 52–53.
26. For General Kadrijević's views see Veljko Kadrijević, *Moje videnje raspada* (Belgrade: Politika, 1993). For an informed insider's view into the JNA thinking in these years, see also Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija* (Podgorica: CID, 2000).
27. For reaction of Slovenian political elite to this action, see Drnovšek, op. cit., pp. 167–175.
28. See the subtitle of his book—Kadrijević, op. cit.
29. This rhetoric was successful and helped Croatia and Slovenia to receive some support from otherwise rather unlikely quarters—for example, from Margaret Thatcher. The most obvious example of this rhetoric is Franjo Tuđman's letter to the U.S. President George H. W. Bush on January 24, 1991. In this letter, Tuđman emphasizes that Western republics are fighting against "the Marxist communist Slobodan Milošević." See *Večernji list*, January 25, 1991.
30. For Slovenian intellectual opposition to the regime, see Jasna Dragović-Soso, *Saviours of the Nation* (London: Hurst & Company, 2002), chapter 4, and Danica Fink-Hafner, *Nova družbena gibanja—subjekti političke inovacije* (Ljubljana: FDV, 1992).
31. See Tine Hribar, "Slovenska državnost," *Nova Revija* 57, pp. 3–29.
32. Ivan Urbančič, "Sedamdeset let Jugoslavije," *Nova Revija* 85/86 (1989), pp. 789–817.
33. Niko Toš (ed.), *Slovensko Javno Mnenje 1987* (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1987), p. 58.

34. Niko Toš (ed.), *Slovensko javno mnenje 1988–1989* (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1989), p. 265.
35. Warren Zimmermann confirms that Kučan had indeed made a transition from an opponent to (by mid-1991) a supporter of independence. See Zimmermann, op. cit., 136.
36. Milan Kučan's interview with *Danas*, January 30, 1990.
37. The link between Kardelj's previous project and the new proposal for confederation was also established by Dušan Bilandžić, Croatian historian who participated in the writing of the 1974 Croatian Constitution and was then (in 1991) one of seven Croatian vice-presidents. At a press conference in Zagreb on September 10, 1990, Bilandžić said that the Croatian confederalist proposal was similar to what Kardelj proposed in 1965 (*Delo*, September 11, 1990).
38. Interview with *Danas*, May 1, 1990.
39. See Nenad Zakošek, "The Croatian Parliament during the Period of Democratic Transition: Constitutional and Policy Aspects," in Atilla Agh (ed.), *The First Steps* (Budapest: Hungarian Centre of Democracy Studies, 1994), p. 89.
40. Among those surprised with Tuđman's victory was Slobodan Milošević, who expected the elections to be won by the moderate nationalists of the National Agreement Coalition (led by Savka Dabčević-Kučar). See Borisav Jović, op. cit., p. 125.
41. Cited in Nobile, op. cit., p. 294.
42. Nobile, op. cit., pp. 59–60.
43. Nobile, op. cit.
44. Borisav Jović, op. cit., p. 161.
45. Drnovšek, op. cit., p. 209.
46. Drnovšek, op. cit., p. 219.
47. According to an opinion poll published in *Delo* on September 22, 1990, 47.8 percent of the Slovenes supported confederation, whereas 34.9 percent were in favor of complete independence. Some political leaders doubted the success of a plebiscite as late as in December 1990. See Janez Janša, *Pomaci* (Zagreb: Mladinska knjiga, 1993), pp. 72–80.
48. Janša, op. cit., p. 74. A similar cautious position was stated by the Slovenian minister of foreign affairs, Dimitrij Rupel, in his statement of October 11, 1990. See *Delo*, October 12, 1990.
49. For this see Janša, op. cit., pp. 82–84.
50. For this argument, see Boris Jež's column in *Delo*, September 15, 1990.
51. *Delo*, July 19, 1990.
52. For example, in direct talks between Tuđman and Milošević over Bosnia-Herzegovina, as attempted on several occasions in 1990 and 1991.
53. See Nobile, op. cit., p. 109.
54. *Delo*, October 12, 1990. For Slovenian fears of Croatian domination in this partnership, see also Marinko Čulić's analysis in *Danas*, October 16, 1990.
55. *Danas*, May 1, 1990.
56. Quoted from *Večernji list*, June 18, 1990.
57. *Danas*, April 3, 1990.
58. For the political importance of the Croat Diaspora and its support for the HDZ, see Paul Hockenok, *Homeland Calling* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004).
59. Some of these disputes between Slovenia and Croatia continued well after the war and are, indeed, still sources of tensions between two states. For example, despite the initial announcement that the two presidents would hold regular meetings twice a year, there were only two official meetings between Milan Kučan and Franjo Tuđman in the whole period of 1992–99.

60. *Delo*, July 2, 1990.
61. Nobile, op. cit., p. 60.
62. Nobile, op. cit., p. 60. This was in line with Tudman's previous statement on Kosovo published in *Danas*, May 1, 1990: "For us, the problem of Kosovo exists only as a human rights issue. But that does not mean that we intend to neglect the real interests of the Croats for the sake of bringing a solution to Kosovo—such as it was, here and there, the case in the past."
63. *Delo*, October 13, 1990.
64. Borisav Jović, op. cit., 131 (entry on March 26, 1990).
65. Cited in *Delo*, August 9, 1990.
66. Degan, op. cit., p. 225.
67. A good example was the rushed change of the flag, which introduced a symbol that reminded many (not only Serbs) of the times of the Ustasha-led Second World War Croatian state. Some of Tudman's public statements and speeches—including the one in Sinj on August 7, 1990, were also seen as inflammatory and provocative.
68. This was recognized by Tudman, who made this point clear at his press conference on August 14, 1990. See *Delo*, August 15, 1990.
69. *Delo*, August 22, 1990.
70. *Delo*, October 2, 1990.
71. Croatia was at that time not represented by its own member in the federal presidency: Stjepan Mesić, who replaced Stipe Šušar as the Croatian representative, was not yet confirmed by the federal assembly.
72. *Delo*, September 29, 1990.
73. This impression was confirmed at the meeting between the *Demos* coalition leaders (Pučnik, Rupel and Tine Hribar) with representatives of Serbian opposition on October 24, 1990, in Belgrade. After this meeting, Pučnik said that he was convinced that "we had to leave Yugoslavia as soon as possible." "Differences between our and their positions are unbridgeable. Serbian opposition would like to resolve a problem of their national minority in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, and would therefore not support a confederation. . . . We also established that they had nothing at all against secession of Slovenia from Yugoslavia. For them, the primary objective is solution of the Serb question in Yugoslavia" (*Delo*, October 25, 2005).
74. *Delo*, October 6, 1990.
75. Quoted from *Delo*, November 6, 1990.
76. *Delo*, July 6, 1990.
77. Quoted in *Danas*, November 20, 1990.
78. *Danas*, January 30, 1990.
79. Milan Kučan stated this as one of the main reasons why it was convenient to use the concept of Yugoslavism within the confederal proposal. "We all went to see the world—Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia; and the world told us that it was interested in Yugoslavia only. . . . Thus, it is politically productive to talk about Yugoslavia, and to present our concepts as pro-Yugoslav" (*Danas*, October 23, 1990).
80. For example, even a year later, on July 3–4, 1991, the Croatian delegation was not allowed to participate in the OSCE meeting in Prague, as explained in Rudolf, op. cit., 233.
81. *Delo*, July 18, 1990, and November 1, 1990. Yugoslavia was to receive US\$47m through this program. Greece was the only country that opposed this decision.
82. *Delo*, September 3, 1990.
83. Interview with *Journal of Geneve*, quoted from *Delo*, November 6, 1990. See also Nobile, op. cit., p. 68.

84. *Delo*, November 14, 1990.
85. *Delo*, November 13, 1990.
86. A leading Slovenian sociologist, Veljko Rus, warned Slovenian public that the plebiscite would be a dangerous gesture, with no real meaning, and that it thus should not have happened. *Delo*, November 24, 1990.
87. *Delo*, November 17, 1990.
88. *Delo*, November 14, 1990.
89. *Delo*, November 18, 1990.
90. Rudolf, op. cit.
91. *Danas*, November 27, 1990.
92. *Danas*, December 4, 1990.
93. *Danas*, December 4, 1990.
94. Repe, op. cit., p. 426.
95. Degan, op. cit., p. 240.
96. These warnings were most explicitly conveyed to Yugoslav leaders on the occasion of James Baker's visit to Belgrade on June 21, 1991. Baker presented his warnings on behalf of the OSCE, not only in his capacity as the U.S. secretary of state—but was largely ignored. See Nobile, op. cit., p. 186.
97. In another display of his leadership ambitions, Tuđman insisted that Croatia should declare its own declaration before Slovenia. Indeed, the Sabor declared independence one hour before the Slovenian parliament.
98. The JNA troops withdrew completely by October 26, 1991.