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## **A TIME OF TRANSITION FOR RELIGION IN YUGOSLAVIA**

**by Arthur B. Keys, Jr.**

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### **POLITICAL CHANGES**

Yugoslavia teeters on the edge of civil war and at least two out of the six republics plan to secede. The great wave of change that swept over Eastern Europe in the last two years has impacted this multi-national federation in very distinctive ways. Free elections have been held and four of the six republics, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, elected non-Communist governments while Serbia and Montenegro elected former communist parties now called "Socialist." These political cleavages only serve to exasperate the national and religious differences among the various peoples within Yugoslavia as the country slides towards civil war. It is ironic, that the first Communist country to break with Stalin in 1948 and which has enjoyed the most individual freedom and market like economic reforms, is lagging behind other Eastern European countries in its evolution to democratic government. With the collapse of Communism, the very existence of Yugoslavia is in question.

Europeans are acutely aware of the implications of conflict in the Balkans. Yugoslavia is a bridge between western Europe and the Middle East, and it straddles several fault lines of civilization between Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Islam, between the European community and the Soviet Union, between capitalism and socialism, between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries, even between Latin and Cyrillic alphabets and the Julian and Gregorian calendars. Most ominously, the conflict that led to the assassination of the Austro-

Hungarian Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo ignited the first World War. Scars resulting from the German and Italian fascist invasion of April 1941 and the resulting bloody civil war and genocide between partisans, non-communists, and collaborators, are not yet healed.

Yugoslavia, "is a country where anything can happen and generally does." It is unique in many respects: an independent Communist country within Moscow's keep, but beyond its grasp: the only European nation in the Third World movement, which indeed it helped to organize; and a multinational federation engaged in an improbable experiment in nation building. This is how former Washington Post reporter, Duško Doder described the country in his 1975 book, The Yugoslavs.

In 1991, Yugoslavia is no longer a Communist country, the Third World movement is no longer very important to Yugoslavia or anyone else, and the improbable multi-national federation is sagging as the several of the republics try to build sovereign nations. It is still true that anything can happen and probably will.

The life of the churches in Yugoslavia has changed dramatically in the last 12 months as the whole political landscape has shifted abruptly. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that the life of organized religious communities changed more in the last year than they had changed in the last 45 years. The churches in Yugoslavia have been affected by the tidal wave of change that has cascaded throughout eastern Europe in the last five years. There is no doubt that the churches in Yugoslavia feel that they have been invigorated. Slovak Lutheran Bishop Andrej Beredi of Novi Sad, remarked that the churches have had "an Easter, new life, experience. The Empire has passed, God has saved the Church, we have a better, more open situation with wider opportunities ahead."

Alongside this upsurge in religious affiliation and activity are other ominous trends. A delegation from the Appeal of Conscience Foundation in New York recently observed that while more and more citizens (in Yugoslavia) are turning to religion solace and hope in the face of vast economic and political changes, a growing chauvinism combined with strong religious and ethnic rivalries threatens to heighten intercommunal tensions and destabilize the new governments formed since the end of the Communist rule. The delegation found "an alarming absence of any feeling for religious or ethnic pluralism and this bodes ill for the new societies." Rabbi Arthur Schneier said, "At a time of economic hardship and social upheaval, many East Europeans are turning to God--but turning against their neighbors of a different ethnic, religious or national origin."

The Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, President of the National Council of Churches continued, "the conflicts in Yugoslavia have a religious dimension but appear to be ethnic and national in essence. To be a Serb is virtually inseparable from being Orthodox; to be a Croat is to be a Roman Catholic. In the largely-Muslim providence of Kosovo, local tensions parallel the

Christian-Muslim confrontation on a regional scale." Slovenes are predominantly Catholic, Montenegrins and Macedonians predominantly Orthodox and Bosnia-Herzegovina is mixed with Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic populations. The delegation also included Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of the Catholic Archdiocese of Newark and Dr. Viqar Hamdani, advisor to the Muslim World Congress.

As recently as 1990, the annual Human Rights Report, issued by the United States State Department on countries that are recipients of U.S. foreign aid, has a lengthy section on freedom of religion. It notes that religious believers in Yugoslavia are not generally subject to overt persecution, but that open practice of one's faith is normally a disqualification for high positions in government, business, the media, and academia. Usually religion in Yugoslavia has enjoyed more freedom of movement than in many other countries in Eastern Europe. Freedom of worship has usually been the practice, while the Constitution proscribed "abuse" of religion and religious activities for political purposes.

The Report states that "in practice . . . religious freedoms vary from republic to republic depending in part on the political and historical role of the various religions." Yugoslav authorities maintained restrictions in the public activities of religious communities, including limits on religious education, on publishing activity and on the construction of new churches and other facilities, although the application of these rules has been more relaxed in recent years. It is often difficult for religions that are a minority in a particular republic to get permission to build religious buildings. For example, the Serbian Orthodox Church in Split, Croatia, a predominantly Catholic area, is having difficulty in receiving permission to complete its church building and the Islamic communities in Belgrade and Split have had applications pending to build new mosques for many years.

All this has now changed. The 1991 Report states, Freedom of religion has expanded significantly in Yugoslavia in 1990, although the legal underpinning has not caught up with the actual practice. . . . Religious believers have long been free to practice their faith without direct persecution. In 1990 almost all restrictions related to the right to proselytize, publish, or sell religious materials, teach religion to young people, to own property where either eliminated or began to be ignored.

Religious practice is now very open, religious leaders are active in public political debates, new laws on the status of religion are being passed and the restoration of many religious "privileges" are being considered. A front page Zagreb newspaper in July featured a profile on Cardinal Franjo Kuharić under the headline, "And he says he's not a politician?"

In fact, organized religion in Yugoslavia today may be facing very different challenges than when its activity was more restricted. It will need to wrestle with the secularism that is so common to Western church leaders while, at the same time, it struggles with how closely it wants to be identified with political parties, nationality concerns, and specific political issues.

The Human Rights Report documents the beginning of the massive shift in the position of religion when it notes the good relations the Serbian Orthodox Church has enjoyed in Serbia since 1988 and the tolerant attitude displayed toward the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia. The dedication of the new church of Saint Sava was broadcast on television along with Christmas services from Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana. December 25 became an official holiday in Slovenia and All Saints Day, November 1, became an official holiday in Croatia in 1989. These symbolic changes need to be understood in the context of the broader political and social ferment occurring in Yugoslavia.

### **DISSOLUTION OF THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS**

Dramatic political change has occurred in the last year. In December 1989, the ruling League of Communists ended their party congress chaotically as the Slovene delegation walked out after failing to achieve some of their political and economic reform goals. A bitter ideological battle was waged between reformers led by Slovene Party chief, Milan Kučan and Croatian Party leader Stipe Šušteršič, and hard-liners led by Serbian Party leader Slobodan Milošević. This political debate was waged on strong nationality and republican lines between Slovenes and Croats on one hand and Serbs, Macedonians, and Montenegrins on the other, with Bosnia and Herzegovina in between. This battle for control of the party was also waged as a bitter personality duel full of rancor and animosity with little personal respect among delegates or leaders and pretence of party harmony. It was televised nationally for days around the clock as the delegates failed to achieve any workable compromises.

Citizens listened intently as debate droned endlessly. The major political institution of post-war Yugoslavia, the Communist Party, that influenced all sectors of the society, crumbled on national television. The result was a public loss of legitimacy and credibility for the League of Communists and their disintegration as a political party. Each republican Communist party (except the Montenegrin) subsequently changed its name to Socialist and openly positioned themselves to compete for popular support within their respective republics.

Milan Kučan, newly elected President of the Republic of Slovenia, commented in an interview in June 1990, that changes began in Yugoslavia and Slovenia before Gorbachev came to power. The two countries have different histories. Slovenia moved earlier than the Soviet Union for the Communist Party to give up its monopoly and move toward pluralism. But, he added, "without Gorbachev the changes in Eastern Europe would not have come as peacefully, democratically, and civilly."

One can openly debate whether the changes are the result of a natural historical evolution or whether they are a direct outgrowth of the *glasnost* and *perestroika* revolution that

followed Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power in the Soviet Union. In reality, changes have come from several sources: internal changes within Yugoslavia, the influence of western European culture, economics and politics, and the relaxation of "Marxist" pressure from the Soviet Union.

### MULTI-PARTY ELECTIONS

The western republics of Slovenia and Croatia proceeded with freely contested multi-party elections and voted first in April, 1990. They chose strongly nationalistic, non-Communist parties or coalitions. Slovenes voted for what Americans might call a split ticket. The majority of the Slovenian parliament is controlled by the DEMOS (Demokraski Odnos) non-Communist coalition of parties. In a separate election for the more symbolic office of presidency, Kučan, the former Communist party leader who had paved the way for multi-party elections, was elected.

DEMOS platform and the new Slovene government's priorities, according to coalition leader Jože Pučnik, "are sovereignty for Slovenia as a nation, and radical change in the economy to convert to a market economy." He predicts unemployment will rise from 4 to 12 percent this year. Unemployment in other parts of Yugoslavia will rise to about 20 percent in 1991.

The churches were not overtly involved in the political campaign but the Slovene Catholic bishops issued a pastoral letter that was read in all of the churches before the elections. The letter encouraged people of faith to participate in the most important election of a lifetime. This served to underscore church support for democratic change and encouraged believers to vote freely. The Christian Democratic Party, which is indirectly related to the Catholic Church, received the largest percent of votes within the DEMOS coalition (15 percent). Their leader, Lojze Peterle, became Prime Minister and is the most powerful politician in Slovenia today. He is a very devout practicing Catholic.

Dr. Alojzij Šuštar, chair of the Slovene Bishop's Conference, organized a special mass as the new government took office. This was the first time such an event had been held in Slovenia. "For the first time the church and government felt close," Šuštar said. He cautioned that perhaps the church was a little too active in the elections this year. He said they were a little like children. He does not favor one church party like the Christian Democrats. He feels that the church must work with all parties and related that he had breakfast that morning with Dimitri Rupel, Slovene Foreign Minister, and a leader of the Social Union Party.

Kučan interestingly is from the northern Slovene region of Murska Sobota which has a historic Lutheran-Calvinist background. Kučan said, "his family were atheists and Partisans,

but that no doubt he had been influenced by the rationalism and work ethic of the Protestantism of his region."

In the Croatian elections, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) received 44 percent of the vote and a majority of the seats in the Sabor, or Parliament, due to the weighted electoral system. A coalition of other parties and the former Communists finished well behind. HDZ was by far the best organized party and received significant technical assistance and about one million dollars from Croatians abroad.

HDZ is led by Dr. Franjo Tudjman, a former Partisan general and professor who was seen as a strong Croatian nationalist figure to stand up to Serbian leader Milošević. Tudjman's academic research argued that the Croatian *Ustashe* [Nazi inspired Croatian military units during WWII] government had killed significantly fewer Serbs, Jews and Gypsies during World War II than had been alleged. HDZ openly courted the support of Catholics in the elections. Even though he was a former Communist, Tudjman appeared in public with church officials and attended masses. Many priests were prominent in the campaign.

According to Edward Zagar, Executive Secretary of HDZ, the party platform has a Christian and Western orientation. It is strongly anti-Communist and for social freedom. It is nationalist and is for Croatian sovereignty and supports a free enterprise private economy without limits. It wants a new free agreement among the Yugoslav republics to determine the relationships within the federation or confederation. He says there is no symbiosis between the state and church. He feels the church should do its own thing and concentrate on moral issues, although in many areas the relations between HDZ and the Church are close.

A festive mass at historic St. Stephen's Cathedral was celebrated to commemorate the establishment of the new Croatian government. Symbolically, Tudjman reinstated a Austro-Hungarian tradition by inviting the representative of the major faith groups to participate in the opening ceremonies and installation of the new Parliament. Roman Catholic, Muslim, Protestant, and Jewish representatives participated and received massive media coverage. Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan Jovan declined to participate because of the serious Croatian-Serbian tensions. Dean Deutch of the Protestant Evangelical Church did participate and felt it was a mistake for the Orthodox Church not to attend.

Dr. Vjekoslav Bajsić, a noted Roman Catholic theologian from Zagreb, stated that the new government is very sympathetic to the Church. The atmosphere of tension has disappeared and he predicts no more limitations on the work of the church. The church wants its own independence and looks forward to the new laws regarding religion that the new government has proposed. He said that all parties are now friendly with the Church, including the former Communists.

As is common in Yugoslavia, political reality is often expressed in the form of humor. In July, I was asked, "What is the difference between the United States and Yugoslavia today?" The answer, "The U.S. still has a Communist Party!"

Elections have followed in Bosnia in November, 1990. Parties identified with national groups were elected. The new governments were similar to those in Croatia and Slovenia in that Communists were not included. Bosnia is approximately 40 percent Muslim, 35 percent Serbian and 25 percent Croatian. The Muslim Democratic Party received about 40 percent, the Serbian Democratic Party about 30 percent, and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) received about 18 percent. Bosnia, which is more delicately balanced between ethnic groups, formed a coalition government, with a Muslim president Alija Izetbegović, a Serbian President, and a Croatian Jure Peljivan as Prime Minister.

In the Macedonian elections, the non-Communist and pro-Bulgarian VMRO (Interior Party of Macedonia) drew the most support but was forced into coalition with the former Communists and the Reformed Party of Yugoslav Premier Ante Marković. As in Slovenia, a former Communist Kiro Gligorov, was elected President.

In December 1990, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia held their elections. Unlike the trends in the other republics, the Socialist Party (former Communist Party) received the majority of votes in each republic. The voting patterns in these southern republics was in radical contrast to the results in the northern and central republics.

In Serbia, Slobodan Milošević, leader of the Socialists, was elected President of Serbia with 65 percent of the vote. He has given voice to strong Serbian nationalist feelings and taken a hard confrontational stand against Albanian rule in the former autonomous region of Kosovo. In quite a departure from other post-war Communist leaders, Milošević has mobilized a mass, nationalist movement of urban workers and peasants. He has encouraged demonstrations with as many as a million people to seek redress for the neglect of Serbian interests that he feels occurred under Tito's reign.

In Montenegro and Vojvodina, his mass demonstrations forced the resignations of the local Communist Party leaders and the governments. They were replaced with persons loyal to Milošević. Many people feel that he wanted to replace Tito as a new Yugoslav strong man. But his strident promotion of Serbian nationalism has alienated the other republics and nationalities in Yugoslavia and increased political tension to the boiling point.

Milošević has refused to meet with the leaders of the other republics to discuss a confederation and has pushed for a stronger centralized Yugoslav state. He has said that if the system is changed, then he will no longer be bound by the present boundaries of Serbia and press for the inclusion of all Serbs. Bosnia officials responded that enlarging Serbia would mean civil war. It appears he has encouraged the rebellion of Serbs in the Knin region

of Croatia. He is a very skilled politician who knows well how to agitate and capitalize on serious problems.

"The Serbian Orthodox Church has enjoyed normal relations with the state since Milosevic came to power in 1988," said Protodeacon Momir Lecić, the Secretary to the Cabinet of the Patriarch. Permission has been granted to have religious services in old age homes; and religious leaders are very prominent in the media. The June 25, 1990, edition of the Belgrade newspaper, Politika, features a front page picture of Bishop and Metropolitan Jovan and President Milošević marking the 350th anniversary of the migration of the Serbs from Kosovo to Vojvodina. Such a meeting would not have taken place as recently as two years ago, let alone be published on the front page of Politika.

The Serbian Church has had a mutual interest with Milošević in supporting the Serbian minority in Kosovo and publicly they have appeared close. But under the surface, the Serbian Church is strongly anti-Communist and most leaders prefer the nationalist leader Vuk Drašković and his Serbian National Party. Somewhat surprisingly, Drašković did not do well in the elections though they were marked by many charges of vote fraud.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

Dennison Russinow, Professor of East European Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, said recently that he feels that all of the problems of Yugoslavia could potentially be solved, except for Kosovo. Serbian political dominance over Kosovo unites Serbs across the political spectrum. Kosovo was the heart of the medieval Serbian Kingdom, and site of the battle they lost to the Ottoman Turks which lead to 500 years of Turkish dominance. The medieval monastery of Pec in Kosovo was the center of the Orthodox church.

Most Serbs feel the Serbian minority is physically and psychologically persecuted in Kosovo. Foreign Ministry spokesman, Ivo Vajgl, himself a Slovene, said, "that we shouldn't forget that the Serbian population in Kosovo has been under real pressure for many years and has built up a high level of frustration." They feel they are on the front lines of the cultural, and political boundary of Christian civilization and a united, creeping Muslim empire.

Albanians in Kosovo have the highest birthrate and lowest standard of living in Europe. Serbs suspect that they want to eventually secede and unite with Albania proper. Albanians in Kosovo are predominantly Muslim with about 50,000 Catholics. In July, the autonomy of the Serbian province of Kosovo was eliminated and its Parliament closed. The Albanian majority of Kosovo, 85 percent of its two million inhabitants, boycotted the December elections.

Amnesty International 1990 Report stated that,

at least 4,500 people were detained for political reasons in 1989, the great majority of them ethnic Albanians . . . In February there were widespread strikes by ethnic

Albanians Kosovo province in protest against proposed constitutional changes limiting the province's autonomy and giving greater powers to the republic of Serbia, which includes Kosovo. The changes followed complaints by the Serb and Montenegrin minorities in Kosovo that the local authorities failed to protect them from persecution by ethnic Albanians, the majority in the province.

In the past, Helsinki Watch reports

have found much to criticize regarding the treatment of both Serb and Albanians by earlier governments in Kosovo, including governments composed predominantly of ethnic Albanians . . . In October 1990, there is no justification for any claim that the Serbian government's intervention in Kosovo aims more than marginally to protect the Serb minority. Milosevic has stated . . . a matter of Serb pride of control over Kosovo as the ancient birthplace of Serbian culture. The Serbian government has therefore undertaken an ambitious program to resettle Serbs in Kosovo in order, in effect, to retake the province. This resettlement policy has led to severe violations of human rights and the imposition of a military occupation on the civilian population.

Twenty-three persons were killed in demonstrations last two years in clashes with the heavily armed Serbian police force. Some of the other republics support the use of the Albanian language within Kosovo and autonomy or republican political status for Kosovo, although no one wants to pay for the economic development aid or a military or police occupation.

The churches have learned quickly how to promote its interests with the new politicians. And politicians have learned how to use the moral authority of the church and to communicate with the large population of believers. As is often the case in other countries, Milošević, Tudjman, Peterle, and even Kučan have skillfully used the church to advance their political agendas.

Serbs have lived on Croatia for 400 years and make up about 15% of the population. They migrated away from the Turkish invasion and served as soldiers in a border buffer zone for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to the Helsinki Watch, "the election in Croatia of a nationalist Croatian President, Franjo Tudjman, raised great fears among the Serb minority living within Croatia. The Serb minority bears strong memories of atrocities committed against it by the Fascist Croatian regime during World War II." Accordingly, the Serbian Democratic Party headed by Rašković, walked out of the Sabor when the Croatian Constitution specified the rights of Croats rather than citizens. Serbs in the Knin region voted self-determination from Croatia. There have been numerous crises in Dvor na Uni, Knin, Glina, and Petrinje. When the Croatian government attempted to collect weapons from reserve caches on police stations throughout the republic the appearance of all-Croatian special police units has frightened Serbs and opened all wounds.

Franze Bučar, President of the Slovenian Parliament, declared in his opening speech, that the free elections represented "the end of the civil war in Slovenia." Dramatically, the government openly discussed a subject that had been taboo for 45 years.

World War II was an internal civil war between Communists and non-Communists as well as a war against the outside invaders from the fascist governments of Germany, Italy, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria. At the very close of the war, in May 1945, the Slovenian *Domobranci* [Home Guards], who had collaborated with the Nazis and fought against the Partisans, fled to British-occupied Austria. One of the last battles of the war was fought in the Alpine region along the Yugoslav-Austrian border in Slovenia in early May, as the German and Home Guard armies retreated.

Wartime agreements concluded among the British, French, Russia, and United States with their wartime allies the Yugoslav Partisans, under the command of Marshall Tito, stipulated that fleeing soldiers should be returned to their country of origin. The British Army, therefore, returned to Yugoslavia approximately 12,000 soldiers and members of their families who had fled. They disappeared and their fate has been argued among the Yugoslav authorities, relatives and refugee groups abroad for 45 years. After the elections, caves in the sparsely inhabited Kočevski region were opened. Cave explorers entered and discovered the bones of the missing.

Details and pictures were broadcast on television of the killings by the Partisans, which had been long denied. The Home Guards and families had been marched to this area by the victorious Partisans under the command of Milka Planinc, who later became the first woman premier. The Communists feared losing power and utilized violent tactics to secure the authority of their new revolutionary government.

Survivors on both sides spoke openly of their long suppressed memories. In a public act of reconciliation, Archbishop Šuštar celebrated a mass for the dead in July. At the ceremony, President Kučan spoke for the Slovenian government. Subsequently, other incidents are surfacing in other parts of Yugoslavia. Other caves are being discovered and other people's memories awakened.

#### **FEDERATION OR CONFEDERATION? DISSOLUTION OR CIVIL WAR?**

The future role and life of religion in Yugoslavia is dependent on how the future existence of Yugoslavia as a country will be decided in the next year. This fundamental political question permeates all of the society, but it is of special importance to the churches as they have just begun to exercise their newfound freedom, prerogatives, and responsibilities. Strong non-compatible forces are pulling the country in different directions at the same time.

Charles West, writing in OPREE,<sup>1</sup> stated that nationalism is a strong force that provides identity and meaning for many people. He said that we would need to look at how Christians in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are able to give voice to national feelings and also express their faith.

Archbishop Perko said, "that the church has to stay close to its people, both the Catholic and Serbian Church." By staying close to their people, churches will probably contribute to the centrifugal forces that are leading to a separation of republics and national groups. It is very difficult in the current climate for the various Christian traditions to work together to proclaim the Gospel. Cooperation between Christians and Muslims is also difficult. Religious groups do not see injustice and repression with the same eyes.

Serbian leader Milošević has pushed for more centralization and maintenance of the federal form of government. He feels that the largest republic, Serbia, does not have sufficient influence in the current federal system. He wants to maintain a strong army and a state that is based more on a one person, one vote principle rather than on republican autonomy. Serbs are 40 % of the population.

On the other hand, Milan Kučan, President of Slovenia, stated bluntly "that he sees only two possibilities ahead. Either Yugoslavia becomes a confederation or Slovenia will secede. We want something on the order of what Quebec in Canada wants. Something similar to the US before the Civil War."

In the midst of the political chaos and scandals, Ante Marković was chosen Premier of the Yugoslav government in 1989. He is a Croatian businessman that led the government in a radical assault on the astronomical monetary inflation that plagued the country in the late 1980s. He devalued the currency, made it more convertible, and tied its growth to that of the German Mark. Surprisingly, inflation declined dramatically and foreign reserves increased, although prices also have climbed. He has supported the cry, "IDEMO EVROPI" (Let's go into Europe) that has been popular. He has consciously attempted to make economic changes in the Yugoslav system that will make it more easy for Yugoslavia to trade with other European countries or to enter into union with the European Community. Foreign observers see him as competent and most people have been surprised with his success. He has achieved a fair amount of popularity.

However, Marković's reforms are coming to a halt as the republics refuse to agree to any proposals that will allow the Federal government a strong ability to tax. It is uncertain how long his government will continue. Federal elections are scheduled to be held in the Spring, but it is possible that some of the republics will not hold them.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles West. "Josef Hromadka and the Witness of the Church in East and West Today," OPREE. Vol.10, No.3 (March 1990), pp. 13-26.

Little common ground is present in the current political debate. It was frequently stated that "if brothers can't get along within the same household, then perhaps it is better for them to separate and live side by side as neighbors. Or if we can't live together after all these years, then we should try living apart. Each republic's solution is anathema to other republics. And there is little doubt that many Slovene and Croatian leaders openly plan to secede if they feel they can, while the current Serbian leader is committed to forcing changes that he feels will benefit his republic.

The New York Times reported in November 1990 that the CIA had prepared a report that predicted the breakup of Yugoslavia within the next 18 months and there is a lot of evidence to support this conclusion. The national sovereignty claims articulated today are similar to those put forward for generations and need to be taken seriously. The distinguished Yale historian Ivo Banac, who is close to the new Croatian government, was asked in October what he felt was the future of Croatia in Yugoslavia? He responded rhetorically with the question, "And just what is Yugoslavism?"

It is ironic that most of the current support for a unified Yugoslav state comes from foreign governments and institutions. The European Community and the US are trying to catch up with other changes in Eastern Europe and German reunification as Europe moves full speed ahead into 1992. The European Community does not have the time or interest to absorb Yugoslavia at present. It fears that instability in the Balkans will once again lead to violence and draw outsiders in. No one can predict how the Yugoslav army will react or if civil warfare will breakout once again. The hard reality is that the south Slav peoples who live in present day Yugoslavia along with their non-Slavic Italian, Hungarian, Albanian, and others are so intermingled historically that no one can agree or foresee how new political borders could be drawn. Economic life is intertwined as are many families.

The European Economic Community is the major foreign gainer or loser of the outcome of the political turmoil. Yugoslavia is the major Mediterranean trading partner of the EEC after Algeria and now that the EC has achieved superpower status on the European continent, it will no doubt exercise major influence over the ultimate outcome. Since it cannot tolerate the type of ethnic conflict that it has worked for 40 years to overcome in western Europe, it may emerge as the arbitrator of a "solution" to the Yugoslav problem. EEC's self-interest will be to find a way to integrate either a Yugoslavia or several south Slav nations in order to complete the land bridge between its western base in Germany and its southern flank in Greece and Turkey. Tension within Yugoslavia will by necessity speed up this process. Last year, the EEC-Yugoslavia Cooperation Agreement was transformed into an Association Agreement that provided for political dialogue, trade and freedom movement, economic cooperation, cultural cooperation and financial cooperation. Yugoslavia already receives

major financial aid and technical assistance. Many Yugoslavs hope this may be another step on the way to full membership in the EEC.

U.S. policy will likely follow the lead of the EEC. Ambassador Warren Zimmerman in the recent crisis forcefully asserted U.S. support for a united Yugoslavia while at the same time threatening a cut-off of all U.S. aid if military force were used. The United States is not a major trade partner of Yugoslavia nor is Yugoslavia a recipient of much U.S. foreign aid. But the United States is key to Yugoslavia's continued access to multinational lending institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In November, Congress mandated that after May of 1990, no foreign aid funds could be expended to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and that the United States will vote against any assistance from international financial institutions, *unless* all six republics hold democratic elections and the Secretary of State certifies that Yugoslavia is making significant strides toward complying with the obligations of the Helsinki Accords.

Senator Robert Dole has proposed an amendment to the Foreign Assistance bill that would provide direct assistance to democratic governments at the republic level. On February 21, 1991, at a hearing on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, ominously entitled: "Civil War in Yugoslavia: The United States' Response," Assistant Secretary of State stated the Administration's opposition to this amendment because it would tend to undermine the Yugoslav Federal Government. The Administration's position is that the Markovic government has moved in directions supported by U.S. policy and that the human rights abuses are primarily by the Serbian government. They argue that a stable, unified Yugoslavia is important to U.S. security interests. Economic sanctions against Yugoslavia, if imposed in a way that undermines the Yugoslav federal government will inevitably tend to drive Yugoslavia to break up with human rights virtually guaranteed to suffer.

Helsinki Watch compliments the U.S. government exemplary support for human rights, but argues that human rights will be served by punishing the governments responsible. It is unclear who would define human rights and whether any of the individual republics would consistently meet these standards.

At the same hearings, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, Richard Schifter, expressed hope that American religious leaders could help religious leaders in Yugoslavia to speak out for their need to find dialogue and peaceful solutions to the vexing political dilemmas. He spoke publicly in favor of the example of Rabbi Schneier's group. Schneier said that the members of his delegation urged the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish leaders they visited to initiate dialogue and open lines of communication with other religious communities and ethnic groups as a way of constraining conflict. He said that the response was so encouraging from both the religious leaders and political leaders they met with that he is arranging for a delegation of Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, Protestant and Jewish leaders

to visit the United States and observe the pluralistic nature of American religious life. The group met with the Imam of Zagreb, Cardinal Kuharić, Archbishop Perko, the acting President of the Islamic religious community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as Tudjman, Milošević, and the leader of the Party for Democratic Action (Muslim).

Another church-based initiative is a joint World Council of Churches/INTERFAITH IMPACT for Justice and Peace East European exchange program which should begin this summer. The purpose will be to expose Yugoslav church leaders to the way religious groups in the United States advocate in a pluralistic society so they can learn skills that they can use at home. Another purpose will be to send Americans to Yugoslavia to learn more about how churches there operate in their environment.

Russinow feels that some form of Yugoslav state is still a desirable alternative to other proposals. He draws an analogy between Yugoslavia today and the instability of Spain following the restoration of democracy following Franco's death. He says it is necessary for the country to reach the second round of elections. It is necessary for repressed national feelings to be articulated so that people and political leaders can determine if they have a common interest in maintaining or reforming a state. National feelings erupted between ethnic groups in Spain after democracy was restored. But leaders were able to find mutual political interests that have led to a stronger democracy that is drawing closer to the European mainstream.

Political leaders in the various republics seem bent on pushing the political process to the extremes to achieve their narrow national agendas of their republics. Leaders in Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia have heavily armed their "national guard" units and have given financial priority to weapons purchases over human services in a time of economic decline and collapse. A near war was avoided in January, when the Yugoslav army demanded that "paramilitary units" disarm. Croatian President Tudjman maintained that Croatian national units were not paramilitary. Armed conflict between the army and Croatian authorities was avoided at the last minute when Croatian authorities and the Yugoslav army agreed to demobilize their troops.

This controversy had barely subsided when the Yugoslav army televised a clandestine film of Croatian Defense Minister Martin Špegelj purchasing arms in Hungary and discussing plans for war. In response, the Yugoslav army, whose officer corps is 70 percent Serbian, sought Špegelj's arrest. Croatian authorities refused and moved to protect him with armed guards. The result is a tense stand-off as the Army continues to press its case and moved to hold a trial.

Slovenia and Croatia have passed laws in the legislatures indicating that they intend to disunite with Yugoslavia by June if their conditions for a confederation are not met. They

have tried to avoid the term secession because of the negative implications in international law. The European Community and the United States have maintained their support for territorial integrity and continuity of the Yugoslav state. German foreign minister Hans Dietrich Genscher recently said that "the current external and internal borders of Yugoslavia must be maintained," signaling a possible softening of his position against dissolution, if it could be done peacefully and with mutual consent. The leaders of these republics are engaged in much foreign travel to persuade the international community of their position. Tudjman met briefly in September with President Bush and Kučan traveled to Germany.

There have been calls for the dissolution of Yugoslavia as a federal state in favor of a loose confederation of individual ethnic states. These calls have come in recent months from the governments of Slovenia and Croatia, recently elected in contested multi-party elections. They advocate a loose confederal structure in which each republic would control its own police, military and diplomatic relations, while "Yugoslavia" would exercise authority only on limited economic matters. As an alternative to confederation, the governments of Slovenia and Croatia speak of outright secession from federal Yugoslavia. This would be a form of a mini-model of the European Economic Community for southeastern Europe. The irony is that EEC itself is rapidly moving toward political integration from its base of economic integration.

In Serbia, a dramatic turning point in the movement toward democracy occurred in March 1991, when a new wave of democratic demonstrations was led by the opposition parties and students from Belgrade University. They demanded access to the media and the removal of the managing director of Politika, the top editors of the state-owned media, and the resignation of the Interior Minister Radmilo Bogdanović. They were forcibly dispersed by the Serbian police resulting in two deaths and over 100 casualties. Yugoslav army units were summoned by the President of the Presidency Borisav Jović, and the tanks patrolled the street of Belgrade. Opposition leader Drašković was arrested. The new Serbian Patriarch Pavle officiated at the demonstrators funerals. He entered the political fray when he addressed the rallying demonstrators. He was wildly received until he suggested that the demonstrators take their demands to the Milošević-dominated parliament.

Yugoslavia entered its deepest constitutional crisis to date, when Jovic and Milosevic demanded that the martial law be declared by the collective presidency and imposed by the army throughout Yugoslavia. They failed to get support from Stipe Mesić of Croatia, and the Slovene, Bosnian, Macedonian, and Kosovo representatives. Mesić declared that wise heads prevailed in the Presidency. Jović resigned, along with the Vojvodina and Montenegrin representatives and Milošević, the self-proclaimed centrist, declared "Serbia would not recognize any decisions by the Presidency of Yugoslavia." Mesić and others who

avored either secession or a redefined Yugoslavia paradoxically became the defenders of the Yugoslav Presidency.

Protests continued and attracted a broader base of support. The televised sight of the Serbian police beating Serbian young people undercut much of Milošević's previous public support. Demonstrators demands were in large part met; top media editors were replaced and Bogdanovic resigned. Drašković was released and called for new, fair elections to remove the Milošević government. In a drastic and desperate turn around, Milošević asked the Serbian Parliament not to accept Jović's resignation and agreed to meet with the leaders of the other republics and the federal Presidency to seek a peaceful solution to the future of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav army agreed to accept civilian rule and conditionally agreed not to intervene unless ethnic violence erupts. Vasily Turpokovski, the Macedonian member of the presidency, said, "If there is any chance for the reintegration of Yugoslavia, it is what happened in Belgrade." He said he was convinced "some form of dualism could be worked out" between a reduced federal authority and the six republics that would preserve a Yugoslav entity. "The army has always acted under the Constitution and I suppose it will go on doing so."

Few hopeful signs are emerging that may yet avert a violent future. Slovene and Croatian political leaders have proposed a loose confederation of sovereign states, that are able to pass their own laws, veto federal laws they don't agree with, and secede at any time. This proposal has not been a viable compromise vehicle for dialogue or adoption between the different republics but it is a beginning.

Some form of government can conceivably be developed if the military can be restrained from intervening. It remains to be seen if Milošević can continue in power in Serbia or if his ethnic, confrontational, and authoritarian political style will change.

### WHAT CHURCHES CAN DO

The churches have learned quickly how to promote its interests with the new politicians. And politicians have learned how to use the moral authority of the church and to communicate with the large population of believers. As is often the case in other countries, Milošević, Tudjman, Peterle and even Kučan have skillfully used the church to advance their political agendas.

It is certainly difficult to generalize about what church leader in Yugoslavia want, especially when you consider the differences in the composition, numbers, history and theology of each church, their position in their republics, the history and current politics of each republic, and the current status of the Yugoslav federation. But certain common themes are present. Not surprisingly, for the most part to be very traditional interests.

In the field of education, each religious leader I talked with - Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant - clearly stated that a priority for them was to institute religious education in the schools. Almost uniformly, they blame much of society's problems on the atheism they felt was promoted in society and schools by the former Communist system. The new Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Paul emphasized this concern when he declared in his first pastoral letter to the Churches at Christmas that now the church has religious freedom, it must work for religious education in the schools to counteract the years of atheist influence. He stated that the masses of people no longer know the essentials of the faith.

Religious education in the schools will certainly begin in Slovenia and Croatia, and probably will follow in Serbia. It is likely this religious education will recognize the pluralistic nature of Yugoslavia today. Not only is there a greater degree of intermingling of the various religions, but secularism is also a major belief system as well. Dean Deutch says that he will take a wait-and-see attitude to see how the Catholic majority respects smaller religious minorities. But he reported that he was already working closely with Catholic educators to develop a joint religious education curriculum for the state-run school system.

Another concern that is wide-spread is the hope for theological faculties to become an integral part of the universities. This has already happened with the Catholic theological schools in Ljubljana and Zagreb and the Orthodox theological seminary in Belgrade, with little fanfare or controversy. How this will happen with the newer universities and the "sectarian" schools remains to be seen.

Each leader I spoke with also expressed the need and the desire to communicate their church's message through the mass media. Suddenly religion currently receives more media attention in Yugoslavia than in the United States. After virtual exclusion from the media for more than 40 years, religious leaders are becoming well known by the public. They are attractive in forming public opinion and are becoming bold in addressing controversial issues, like Kosovo, as well as speaking out about issues of institutional concern, like the desire for religious education in public schools. They have openly pressed for political dialogue and debate.

Holiday celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter services are regularly broadcast on television. Radio has become available and even Slovak Lutheran Bishop Andrej Beredi has spoken on radio in Novi Sad. It appears that the media will continue to provide more time for local religious broadcasts. But now even foreign commercial religious media, like Christian Broadcasting Network, are making inroads. A number of religious holidays including Christmas and Bajram have become government holidays in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia, but not yet in other republics.

Moslems outside of Kosovo, are increasingly visible and active. A new mosque is prominently visible on the south side of Zagreb. The Imam was prominently interviewed in Vjesnik, the Zagreb daily newspaper on the celebration of Kurban Bajram.

Another major desire of the church leaders is for Christians to be able to have free opportunities to participate in society. They are vocal in their opposition to employment discrimination. There no longer seems to be any jobs that are off limits for believers. Politicians attend religious services and meet openly with church leaders. Lojze Peterle, Prime Minister of Slovenia, said in the May issue of Družina [Family], the newspaper of the Catholic Church in Slovenia, "Christians in politics will shape the new face of European politics." Peterle certainly has that opportunity now as he leads the government from the inside. He is no longer a powerless, outside critic.

"Caritas," the Catholic social service, wants to open church-run homes for the aging again and wants to become more active in providing social services. At present, each Yugoslav republic has a strong welfare state apparatus and most social services are provided publicly. Orthodox priests have begun to hold religious services in hospitals and homes for the aging.

Orthodox and Catholic leaders seem to feel that a formal separation will continue to exist between church and state. No one I talked with expressed the desire for the church to become an established church or for a church to have its own party. This may be somewhat of a fine distinction, since the Christian Democratic Party in Slovenia, sees itself as a Catholic party and promotes issues of strong concern to the Church. It is aligned closely with the Peasant Party and represents a solid 25 percent of the electorate. HDZ in Croatia is a secular party but is "very friendly with the Catholic Church." The largest party in Bosnia is the Muslim Democratic party and the Serbian Church is close to the Serbian Renewal Party.

#### POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS

Church groups all over Yugoslavia are pressing for the restoration of church property that was confiscated by the state authorities after the second World War. Lutheran Bishop Andrej Beredi said that it is important for his church to have land holdings again so that it could lease these assets and have a stable income for religious activity. Some churches lost property because they were accused of sympathizing with one of the enemies of the new Yugoslav, like the Ustashe in Croatia, the Hungarians in Vojvodina or the Jesuits in Slovenia. Other church lands were taken in order to redistribute land to peasants and farmers. Many churches lost power, privileges, and monetary income in these shifts of ownership.

Lands and property will not easily be restored. The magnitude of the problem and the intervening period of 45 years will make it extremely difficult. For instance, the former Jesuit rectory in the old town section of Ljubljana is occupied by residents who hold legal

title to the property. It is unlikely that this property would revert to the church in a country where housing is very scarce and tenant eviction is rare.

Many officials within the churches are opposed to churches becoming large land owners again. Within the Roman Catholic Church, the influence of the Second Vatican Council, leads many to feel that the church is better off, closer to the people and better able to minister to the poor people if it does not have major property assets. Most orders of sisters and brothers have few members and find it difficult to maintain the property they currently have. Monasteries in Slovenia, however, want to be exempt from paying commercial taxes on the products they produce such as wine and art objects.

In Zagreb, the Jewish community petitioned for the restoration of a vacant synagogue that was the pre-war center for the Jewish community. The president of the city council was not sympathetic and announced the city had other plans for the building. The Jewish community publicized their request internationally and appealed directly to the new president. Tudjman personally intervened and the synagogue was given back to the Jewish community. It will now be restored to its previous grandeur. At the same time, Tudjman offended the Jewish and Serbian minorities in Croatia when he renamed the Square of the Victims of Fascism, the Square of the Croatian Giants. This increased the paranoid fears resulting from World War II genocide of Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies conducted by the Ustashe and German fascists.

Also disturbing is the rise of anti-Semitism, rising not from the government or religious sources but out of the frustration and the hunt for scapegoats. Such slogans have appeared in Slovenia. Because religion is so identified with ethnicity, vandalism has been present throughout the country. The Orthodox church in primarily Catholic Slovenia has been painted with graffiti several times, the Orthodox Cathedral in primarily Muslim Sarajevo defaced, Orthodox priests harassed in Zagreb, and Muslim mosques in Belgrade, Novi Sad threatened.

The policy of the Serbian government in Kosovo has generated tension between religious groups. The policy is supported by the Serbian Orthodox Church but Catholic leaders feel that the treatment of Albanians in Kosovo is repressive and racist and therefore they cannot support the Orthodox position. Since this issue divides the Yugoslavs more than any other, it could be expected to divide the religious people as well. Orthodox leaders feel that the Catholic hierarchy has not spoken strongly against the genocide of the Serbs by the Croatian Ustashe government during World War II, nor against the excessive rhetoric of Croatian nationalist political leaders today.

Early in the 1990 election campaigns, Catholics in Slovenia and Croatia proposed to overturn the liberal laws on abortion. Feminists organized and publicly criticized these

proposals. As a result of the controversy that ensued, the Roman Catholic Church ceased pushing for a change in the abortion laws. It is likely that this issue will surface again.

But the biggest impediment of the increased activity and influence of the churches in Yugoslavia today is their lack of personnel and resources. Even without assistance from the Communist Party, Yugoslavia remains a very secular society. Religious vocation is not a profession that has attracted a sufficient number of candidates to adequately staff congregations. The Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia has less than 800 priests and few sisters for a million Slovene Catholics. Catholic Archbishop Francišek Perko in Belgrade said, "the church has more opportunities available to it than it can take advantage of. The church desperately needs more leaders and technical training so that it can properly occupy a prominent position in society.

The pull toward economic integration into western Europe is strong and includes political leaders who want to secede as well as those who want to retain a Yugoslavia. This would lead to more stability and less emphasis on national boundaries and divisions. Recently, a group of Serbian intellectuals in Croatia published a statement of goals they have for living as Serbs in Croatia. This is the type of dialogue that is needed to build a base for future cooperation and understanding.

The churches will be challenged and free in the democratic air of Yugoslavia today to proclaim that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." They will be active participants in the struggle to determine whether brothers and sisters decide to live in the same household or whether they decide to separate and live as neighbors.