

Yugoslavian strife stems from longtime emnity

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Furthermore, charging that Serbian forces have deliberately destroyed dozens of Catholic churches in addition to other Croat cultural landmarks, many Croats in the United States fear the war is nothing less than a prelude to genocide of the Croatian people.

"The Serbian communists want to destroy every trace of Croatian cultural tradition," argued Father Ilija Zivkovic, pastor of the Croatian Catholic Mission in Washington, D.C.

Such claims are absurd in the eyes of Nebojsa Vujovic, press secretary for the Yugoslavian embassy, who dismissed Croatian-American contentions that the war is anything more than civil strife between an aggrieved Serbian minority and a militant Croatian government.

As Vugovic views the situation, Croatia's 13-percent Serbian minority is only fighting for the very same right of self-determination sought by the Croats.

In a telephone interview with the *Courier* he acknowledged that his government's army had aided Serbian rebels in recent months, but he said the blame for such action lay with Croatian militants.

"The Croats attacked the army, and the army responded," he said.

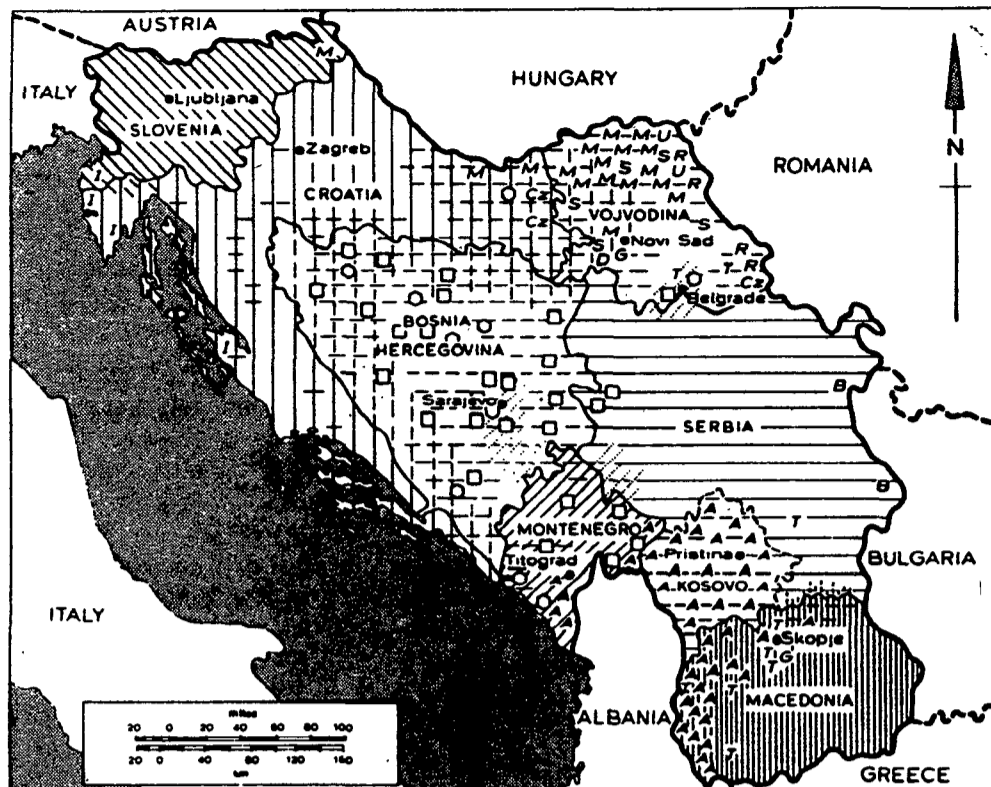
The fighting in Yugoslavia has not garnered much attention from the world's press. But even a casual student of history might find irony in this apparent lack of interest, since present-day Yugoslavia comprises remnants of the empires and kingdoms whose clashes ignited the First World War.

Most of the nation's people are southern Slavs; indeed, Yugoslavia means "Land of the South Slavs." According to Pedro Ramet's 1984 book *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1963-1983*, Serbs constitute more than 36 percent of the population, while Croats make up almost 20 percent. The Yugoslavian population also comprises several other groups in smaller percentages.

Six republics — Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina — make up the country which also contains the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, formerly autonomous until Serbia ended their self-governance in 1989.

For many Catholics, however, the most important part of Yugoslavia is a small village known as Medjugorje. For much of the last decade, visionaries and pilgrims have asserted that the Blessed Virgin Mary has been appearing in Medjugorje, which lies in Croatia.

The reported appearances of the Blessed



KEY		NON-YUGOSLAV GROUPS WITH OVER 10,000 MEMBERS					
[Hatched pattern]	Serbs	S	Slovaks	T	Turks	I	Italians
[Horizontal lines]	Croats	A	Albanians	R	Romanians	Cz	Czechs
[Vertical lines]	Montenegrins	M	Hungarians	B	Bulgarians	U	Ruthenians
[Diagonal lines]	Slovenes	G	Gypsies (Romi)	D	Germans		
[Dotted pattern]	Macedonians						
[Cross-hatch]	Moslems						
[Solid black]	Yugoslavs						

Mother highlight Croatia's Catholic nature. It is a Catholicism that simultaneously unites the Croats with the West and distinguishes them from their southern neighbors the Serbs. Although the two peoples share a similar language, the Serbs are Orthodox and culturally aligned with the East.

The current conflict stems, in part, from the establishment of Yugoslavia in 1918 at the conclusion of World War I. Prior to the war's outbreak in 1914, Croatia was tied to Hungary as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which declared war on the independent Kingdom of Serbia when a pro-Serbian terrorist assassinated Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

Since the previous century, sentiment had existed among some leaders of the Slavic peoples — including the Croats — for the establishment of a nation encompassing all the southern Slavs. With the defeat of Austria-Hungary in World War I, Croatia's leaders decided — without popular approval — to throw their lot in with the newly created "Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes."

But within a year's time, Croatian leaders were clamoring for greater self-determination, and in some circles, even

independence.

"Interwar Yugoslavia, though not a Serbian creation, was in fact dominated by the Serbs, who staffed the new government with the leaders of the old Serbian kingdom," Ramet wrote in *Nationalism and Federalism*. "The Serbs denied the national identity of the Macedonians and Montenegrins, viewed Croats as no more than regional 'tribes' of the Serbian nation ..."

In Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia, non-Serbs — especially the Croats — suffered political repression.

Michael Grasha, a Croatian-American, wrote of such repression in the March 15, 1991, edition of *Our Hope*, a Croatian-American magazine:

"From the very beginning the Croats were oppressed, deprived and exploited. Elections ... when held ... were strictly 'managed.' I was but a child of 7 or 8 during one such exercise in futility when the father of my closest friend was killed because he was outspoken at a polling place. He had just returned from Canada and acquired some free speech consciousness there, which sent him to an early grave back home."

By 1941, World War II was in full gear, and Yugoslavia was ripe for civil war. The German and Italian occupiers killed their fair share of Yugoslavians during the war. But most of the nation's dead were felled by their fellow citizens in a conflict that by war's end saw Marshal Josip Broz Tito's communist partisans emerge as rulers of Yugoslavia.

Uncovering the real history of World War II proves to a murky task for the student of Yugoslavia. Generally, historians have found that a minority fascist movement in Croatia known as the *ustase* collaborated with the German and Italian forces to set up an "independent" state in Croatia. That fascist state reportedly oversaw the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Gypsies and Jews.

Scholars with a pro-Croatian slant argue, however, that most non-fascist Croats originally supported the independent state though they turned against its fascist ruler. Croats have also contended that the number of murders allegedly committed by the Croats were exaggerated so communist Yugoslavia could obtain significant war reparations.

Father Coric shared this view of the war-time atrocities, spelling them out in a statement he and two other Croatian priests drew up for the press:

"Various articles have stated that the number of Serbian victims during World War II as 60,000, 250K, 300K, 700K, 1,000,000 — WHICH IS IT? ... According to Tito's right-hand general and other historians, the number of war victims was exaggerated in order to obtain allied reparation — THIS is the fact."

Nonetheless, Michael Radenkovich, president of the American Serbian Heritage Foundation, holds to the version of history that paints the Croats as perpetrators of genocide. At least in part, he said, the current civil war in Yugoslavia stems from ill will created between Serbia and Croatia during World War II, a period during which Radenkovich lived in Serbia.

"Basically, the problem is the Serbs really don't trust Croats," Radenkovich told the *Catholic Courier* by phone from his office in Santa Monica, Calif. "During World War II, there was definitely genocide on the part of the Croatian *ustase*."

Scholars have also pointed out that after the war Tito killed more than 250,000 partisans and civilians of Croatian, Slovenian and other origins, when the British refused to accept their surrender. The memory of that tragedy has embittered the Croats toward the Yugoslav federal government as deeply as the memory of *ustase* murders against the Serbs has embittered them toward the Croats.

Despite the hatreds engendered by years of conflict, Croats and Serbs, along with Yugoslavia's other ethnic groups, were "united" by Tito's iron hand until the dictator's death in 1980. Communist Yugoslavia treated Catholics as second-rate citizens, partially out of fear of the church's ties to Croatian nationalism.

Karoglan remembered being harassed for practicing his Catholic faith openly in Yugoslavia.

"We were singled out," he said of the Catholics in his elementary school. For attending religious-education classes, "I was spanked in school," he added.

The liberalization that swept communist Eastern Europe in the late 1980s had its parallels in Yugoslavia. But in Serbia, Milosevic reportedly played on Serbs' age-old fears to foster a nationalistic movement that viewed non-Serbs as a threat to Serbian dominance in Yugoslavia.

In a June, 1991 *Foreign Affairs* article analyzing the war plaguing Yugoslavia, V.P. Gagnon Jr., a junior fellow from Columbia University wrote:

"Playing on these fears, and evoking the massacres that occurred under the Nazi-controlled fascist 'Independent State of Croatia' during World War II, (Serb extremists in Croatia) — with Milosevic's support — managed by early 1991 to consolidate power within the Serbian communities of southern and eastern Croatia and to declare a 'Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina.'"

Many observers — both Serbian and Croatian — see Milosevic's policies as a ploy to distract Serbs' attention from their beleaguered economy. Indeed, in the past year, the Serbian government has attempted to repress protests by Serbian citizens who exclaimed that and other contentions.

Whatever side one takes in the conflict, Radenkovich conclusion sums up the frustration that many Serbian- and Croatian-Americans feel about the war in Yugoslavia.

"What's really, really tragic in this whole thing is that the leaders are not getting hurt, but the poor peasants are," he said.

About the cover

The illustration is a montage of file photos and a photograph of the statue "St. Jerome," which sits in front of the Croatian Catholic Mission in Washington, D.C.

Obituaries

Margaret M. Tomasso, 72, active member of Holy Rosary's Rosary Guild, Retreat Group

ROCHESTER — Margaret M. Tomasso, a longtime member of the Rosary Guild and Retreat Group at Holy Rosary Church, died of a heart attack on Oct. 12, 1991, at St. Mary's Hospital. She was 72 years old.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark was the principal celebrant for the Mass of Christian Burial at Holy Rosary Church on Wednesday, Oct. 16.

Born in Rochester on March 14, 1919, the former Margaret Huether graduated from Holy Rosary School and John Marshall High School. She married the late Louis J. Tomasso on Nov. 26, 1942 at Most Precious Blood Church in Rochester.

The couple began attending Holy Rosary Parish soon after they were married. In addition to being an active member of both the Rosary Guild and Retreat Group at Holy Rosary, Mrs. Tomasso was also a member of the Knights of St. John Ladies

Auxiliary #48 and the 26th Legislative District Democratic Club.

Mrs. Tomasso is survived by her children, Brother Louis, SSJ, of New Orleans, La., Richard of Columbus, N.J., Bernard Tomasso of Port Byron, Father Paul Tomasso, Mary, Thomas, Dolores and Joseph Tomasso, all of Rochester; her sisters, Sister Dolores Anne, SSJ, of Nazareth Academy, and Bernadine Gordon; her brothers, James, Leonard and Gerald Huether, all of Rochester, and Eugene Huether of Nutley, N.J.; sisters-in-law Mary D'Agostino of Texas, and Marion DeVincentis; 11 grandchildren; and several nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, friends may offer Masses or make contributions to St. Mary's Hospital, Foundation for the Cardiac Rehab, Unit, 89 Genesee St., 14611.