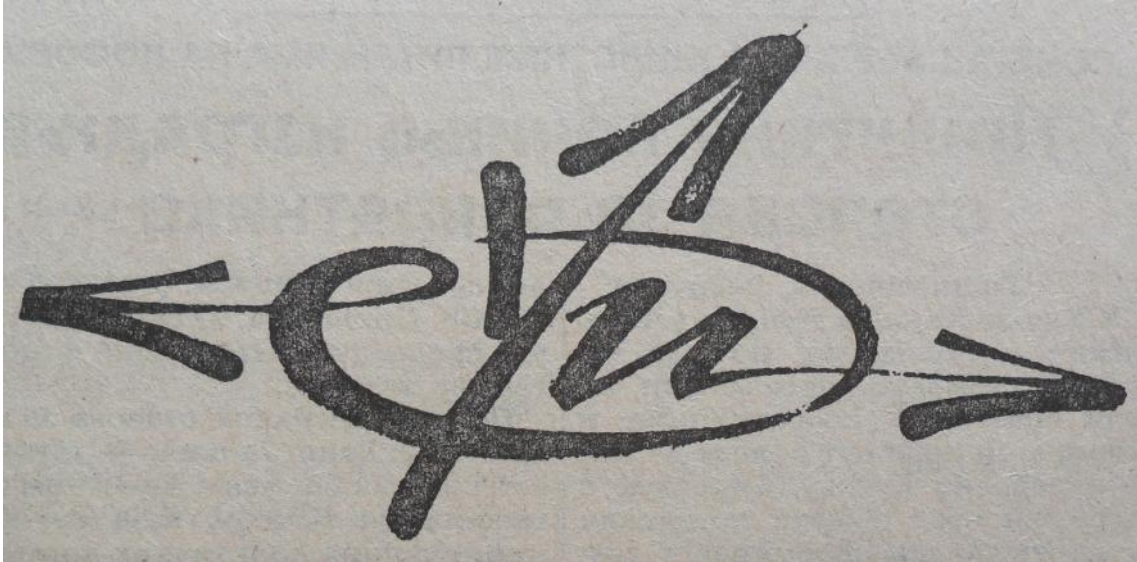


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“JUST A FEW YEARS LEFT FOR US”.
NON-NATIONALIST POLITICAL ACTORS
IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA (1989-1991)



Tesi doctoral presentada per
ALFREDO SASSO
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Ai miei nonni, Angelina e Aldo

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*Prijatelj i ja sedimo na klupi
gledamo zvezde
slušamo vesti što su upravo stigle
kažu da imamo
još samo par godina za nas
Imali smo igra ke i živeli smo sve
sve one igre na sre u
one igre za ljude
što je smislio neko
pre samo par godina za nas*

My friend and I sit on a bench
we watch the stars
we listen to the news just arrived
they say that we have
just a few years for us
We had toys and we lived all
all those games of chance
those games for people
that someone invented
only a few years ago for us

Ekatarina Velika, "Par godina za nas".
Song from the album *Samo par godina za nas*, Belgrade: PGP-RTB, 1989

*Moja prva i najveća želja
bi bila da se probudim
i da ustanovim da je 1990. godina
da kažem: "Ja sam nešto ružno sanjao"*

My first and biggest wish
would be to wake up
and establish that we are in the year 1990
and say: "I had a bad dream"

Milan Mladenović, singer of Ekatarina Velika
TV interview by *RTS*, Belgrade, February 1994.

*Kako vjetar puše mjenjaju se dresovi
bile su petokrake
sad moderni su fesovi
Kratak je put od druga do gospodina
traje dok se nije uhljebila rodbina
Hej, brate dragi, vidi šta se radi
Reklamne kampanje za neko novo sranje
neku novu kremu što otklanja dilemu
Teško je odlučiti kad je širok asortiman
dal' je bolje biti Srbin, Hrvat il' Musliman?
Hej, brate dragi, vidi šta se radi
Tranzicija svima prija
[...]
Tranzicija uspjela
pacijent je podleg'o
ostao je izjeban ko god nije pobjeg'o
Stari sistem nije valj'o došao je novisamo
ne kapitalizam, ve feudalizam*

As wind blows people change allegiances
There used to be five-pointed stars
Now fezzes are in vogue
It's a short way from Comrade to Sir
It lasts until you provide for your relatives
Hey, dear bro, look what they are doing
Advertising campaigns for some new crap
for a new cream that removes dilemma
Hard to decide when the assortment is wide
Is it better to be Serb, Croat or Muslim?
Hey, dear bro, look what they are doing
Transition pleases everybody
[...]
Transition has succeeded
patient has succumbed
Whoever did not escape remained screwed
The old system was not OK, a new came
But it's not capitalism, it is feudalism

Dubioza Kolektiv, "Tranzicija". Song from the album *Apsurdistan*, Sarajevo: DK, 2013.

Table of Contents

List of acronyms	13
INTRODUCTION	15
PART I - TRANSITION	23
1. THE BOSNIAN COMMUNISTS AND THE YUGOSLAV CRISIS	25
1.1. Inter-ethnic relations and decline of the regime.....	36
1.2. The first national mobilizations	41
1.3. National or institutional conflicts? Sarajevo vs. Belgrade via Srebrenica	48
2. THE FINAL CONGRESSES	57
2.1. The 10 th Congress of the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina.....	57
2.2. The ZAVNOBiH Initiative: a “Partisan” and democratic way out?	62
2.3. Yugoslav framework, national question and political reforms: tacit (dis)agreements	65
2.4. The 14 th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.....	72
2.5. “The doors are open”: the failure of the Bosnian Initiative	76
2.6. Conclusions	80
3. THE BOSNIAN COMMUNISTS BETWEEN PLURALISM AND REFORM ...	83
3.1. The slow separation from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia	83
3.2. The uncertain path to a multi-party system and the postponement of the elections.....	94
3.3. The Bosnian Communists before the electoral campaign: strengths and weaknesses	104
4. THE CONSTITUTIONAL DILEMMAS OF POLITICAL TRANSITION	115
4.1 The constitutional definition of Bosnia-Herzegovina	116
4.2 The ban on ethnic parties	119
4.3. Institutional structure and electoral engineering	127

4.4 Conclusions	130
PART II - ALTERNATIVES	133
5. THE GENESIS OF NATIONAL OPTIONS.....	135
5.1. Mobilizations in Herzegovina. Explosion of the “Croat question”	135
5.2. From mobilization to political organization: the HDZ in Bosnia-Herzegovina	139
5.3. The Bosnian Muslims renaissance and the creation of the SDA	147
5.4. The (late) articulation of Serb nationalism into a political party	152
5.5. From “rumours” to mobilization: national tensions in Eastern Bosnia.....	159
5.6. Cohesive identities? The debate on “Bosnian” and “Bosniak” identities	164
6. THE IMPOSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES? CIVIC AND NON-COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS	173
6.1. The alternative within the regime: the Socialist Democratic Alliance (SSRN- DSS)	173
6.2. Youth activism and liberal democracy: the SSO BiH.....	180
6.3. “A third way, there is no other”. The UJDI in Bosnia-Herzegovina	192
7. “SAINT ANTE WILL SAVE YUGOSLAVIA”. ANTE MARKOVI AND THE REFORMIST OPTION	207
7.1. “Markovi ’s times”: From economic solutions to institutional deadlocks	216
7.2. Markovi and the “Third Yugoslavia” in the international environment.....	223
7.3. The political capital of Ante Markovi	228
7.4. Conclusions	237
8. CREATION AND SETBACKS OF A GOVERNMENT PARTY. THE ALLIANCE OF REFORMIST FORCES OF YUGOSLAVIA (SRSJ)	239
8.1. Government Party: foundation and reactions.....	239
8.2. A flexible organisation for a fragmented (non-)multiparty system: The SRSJ in the Yugoslav republics	249
8.3. Great expectations. The SRSJ in Bosnia-Herzegovina	255

8.4. Political stances of the Bosnian SRSJ	264
8.5. Conclusions	269
PART III - CHANGE	271
9. THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN	273
9.1. Parties and cleavages.....	273
9.2. Party building, élites and leaderships.....	283
9.3. The campaign. Narratives and structures of non-national parties.....	296
9.4. The ethnification of the campaign: national parties, between mutual radicalisation and tacit convergence	316
10. AFTER THE ELECTIONS: NATIONAL POWER-SPLITTING	335
10.1. The results	335
10.2. National power splitting and the strategy of non-national parties	354
10.3. Sovereignty, regionalisation, security	363
10.4. Conclusions	374
CONCLUSIONS	375
SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	391
ANNEX	417

List of acronyms

AVNOJ	Antifascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia <i>Antifašisti ko Vije e Narodnog Oslobo enja Jugoslavije</i>
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina - <i>Bosna i Hercegovina</i>
Communists	Members of SKBiH
CK	Central Committee (of the League of Communists) - <i>Centralni Komitet</i>
DSS BiH	Democratic Socialist Alliance of BiH <i>Demokratski Socijalisti ki Savez Bosne i Hercegovine</i>
DPV	Socio-political Chamber - <i>Društveno Politi ko Vije e</i>
EEC	European Economic Community
HDS	Croat Democratic Party - <i>Hrvatska Demokratska Stranka</i>
HDZ	Croat Democratic Community - <i>Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica</i>
IVZ	Islamic Religious Community - <i>Islamska Vjerska Zajednica</i>
JMO	Yugoslav Muslim Organization <i>Jugoslavenska Muslimanska Organizacija</i>
JNA	Yugoslav People's Army - <i>Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija</i>
Liberals	Members of LS BiH
LS BiH	Liberal Party of BiH - <i>Liberalna Stranka Bosne i Hercegovine</i>
MBO	Muslim Bosniak Organization <i>Muslimanska Bošnjaka Organizacija</i>
Reformists	Members of SRSJ
RIV	Republican Executive Council (i.e. Republican Government) <i>Republi ko Izvršno Vije e</i>
SDA	Party of Democratic Action - <i>Stranka Demokratske Akcije</i>
SDB	State Security Service - <i>Služba Državne Bezbjednosti</i>
SDP BiH	Socialist Democratic Party BiH - <i>Socijalisti ka Demokratska Partija BiH</i>
SDS	Serb Democratic Party - <i>Srpska Demokratska Stranka</i>
SFRJ	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia <i>Socijalisti ka Federativna Republika Jugoslavija</i>
SIV	Federal Executive Council (i.e. Federal Government) <i>Savezno Izvršno Vije e</i>

SK	League of Communists - <i>Savez Komunista</i>
SKBiH	League of Communists of BiH - <i>Savez Komunista Bosne i Hercegovine</i>
SKH	League of Communists of Croatia - <i>Savez Komunista Hrvatske</i>
SKJ	League of Communists of Yugoslavia - <i>Savez Komunista Jugoslavije</i>
SKM	League of Communists of Macedonia - <i>Savez Komunista Makedonije</i>
SK-PJ	League of Communists-Movement for Yugoslavia <i>Savez Komunista-Pokret za Jugoslaviju</i>
SNO	Serb National Renewal - <i>Srpska Narodna Obnova</i>
SNV	Serb National Council - <i>Srpsko Nacionalno Vijeće</i>
Social-democrats: members of SK-SDP, SDP	
SPO	Serbian Renewal Movement - <i>Srpski pokret obnove</i>
SSO BiH	Alliance of Socialist Youth BiH - <i>Savez Socijalističke omladine BiH</i>
SSO-DS	Alliance of Socialist Youth - Democratic Alliance <i>Savez Socijalističke omladine – Demokratski Savez</i>
SR	Socialist Republic – <i>Socijalistička Republika</i>
SR BiH	Socialist Republic of BiH <i>Socijalistička Republika Bosne i Hercegovine</i>
SRSJ	Alliance of Reformist Forces of Yugoslavia <i>Savez Reformskih Snaga Jugoslavije</i>
SSRN	Socialist Alliance of Working People <i>Socijalistički Savez Radnog Naroda</i>
SUBNOR	Alliance of Associations of Fighters of the National Liberation War <i>Savez Udruženja Boraca Narodnooslobodilačkog Rata</i>
UJDI	Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative <i>Udruženje za Jugoslovensku Demokratsku Inicijativu</i>
ZAVNOBiH	State Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of BiH <i>Zemaljsko Antifašističko Vijeće i Narodnog Oslobođenja BiH</i>
ZSMS	Socialist Youth Union of Slovenia <i>Zveza socialistične mladine Slovenije</i>
VO	Chamber of Municipalities - <i>Vijeće Opština</i>
VUR	Chamber of the Associated Labour - <i>Vijeće Udruženog Rada</i>

INTRODUCTION

“The central problem of the tragic transition in Bosnia-Herzegovina [was] the weakness of a supra-national, social democrat, liberal option that could have assumed the role of a serious alternative to nationalist parties”.¹ This assumption is the point of departure of this thesis: to analyse the role of non-nationalist political actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the period between 1989 and 1991, which coincides with the crucial phase of the multi-party transition in the republic and in the whole of Yugoslavia. The research aims, on the one hand, to examine the discourses, practices, and mutual interconnections of the non-nationalist actors; on the other hand, to explain the factors that led these actors to suffer such a heavy defeat in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian transition, in terms of political strategy, of popular support and, definitely, of votes: the elections held in November-December 1990 are, indeed, the turning point of the whole process. The defeat of these actors implied the ultimate de-legitimisation of a non-ethnic option for the institutional framework of Bosnia-Herzegovina.²

The term “*nationalist*” defines those parties which claimed to exclusively represent the cultural, political and economic interests of their own national group. The three main nationalist parties, the Muslim SDA, the Serb SDS and the Croat HDZ, began to organize in early 1990, although their full legalisation would take place only in June of the same year. They obtained an unexpectedly large triumph at the first multi-party elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, securing around 70% of the vote and 84% of seats in Parliament, as well as all seven seats of the Presidency. The process of “ethnification” of the political and social sphere that began in the electoral campaign and, ultimately, the failure of power-sharing agreements between the nationalist parties after the vote, is one of the leading factors that led to the BiH war within the context of the Yugoslav dissolution.

¹ Tatjana Sekuli , *Violenza etnica. I Balcani tra etnonazionalismo e democrazia*, Roma: Carocci, 2002, 107.

² The full and official name was “Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina” (*Socijalisti ka Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*, SRBiH). In this study, I will mostly use the term “Bosnia-Herzegovina”, occasionally abbreviated as “BiH” or “Bosnia”.

“Non-nationalist” here refers to those parties and movements which claimed to have members and votes, and represent the interests of the citizens, regardless of their national belonging, and which defended a culturally plural, secular and non-exclusivist concept for Bosnia-Herzegovina. The non-nationalist camp corresponded to a relatively heterogeneous range of actors; this work will dedicate special attention to their two principal forces. The first was the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina, (SKBiH-SDP). The ruling party since 1945, in 1990 it shifted to social-democracy and directed the transition to a multi-party system. The SKBiH still had a considerable organisational structure and many observers believed that it would count on a certain social consensus, despite all the negative factors that affected it (the ideological decline of Communism, the breakup of the SKJ, the economic crisis, the intra-elite scandals...). The second main non-national force was the Alliance of Reformist Forces of Yugoslavia (SRSJ), created in mid-1990 by the federal prime minister, Ante Markovi , in that moment credited with a broad popular consensus throughout Yugoslavia and, particularly, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for his charisma as the “saviour of the country”. Various political analysts, media observers and surveys estimated that both the SKBiH and the SRSJ could secure a victory in the 1990 elections or, at least, that they could have a decisive role in the post-electoral transition. There were also other minor forces which will be analysed in the research: the Socialist Alliance (SSRN-DSS), the official umbrella-front of the civic organizations during the communist era that became a moderate social-democratic party; The Alliance of Socialist Youth (SSO-DS), the Communists’ youth branch, that since the late 1980s gradually converted into an independent liberal movement. The Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI) was created outside the official framework and was mainly composed of progressive intellectuals.

Such plurality of actors and their apparently high potential in the republic commonly depicted as “little Yugoslavia” (where positive assessments of inter-ethnic relations and support for the unity, beyond the commonplaces, were revealed by social studies and polls) calls for a re-examination of the course of the 1989-91 events in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This thesis aims to offer a fresh perspective on those themes by employing a variety of sources which until now have been either unused or overlooked. How did the Bosnian Communists tackle the 1989-90 wave of global and state-wide events, and the

consequent dilemmas of democratisation? How did the “reformist option” embodied by Marković operated in the Bosnian scenario? What is the role of the civic, non-regime alternatives and what kind of relationship did they establish with the Communists? What solutions for the Yugoslav crisis, in its various stages, did the non-nationalist actors envision? Did some alleged “polarisation along ethnic lines” occur in Bosnian society and, if so, did it affect the decline of non-nationalist actors, or was it rather the opposite? To what extent did the events and the actors out of Bosnia-Herzegovina influence the path of the transition in the republic? These are some key questions that this research raises.

The time frame established by the research starts from the “crucial 1989”, in order to retrace the internal debate of the Bosnian Communists on political pluralism and the Yugoslav crisis, as well as the emerging of the first civic-alternative options. The end-point is established in late 1991, when the Second Yugoslavia was irreversibly dissolved, the institutional breakup of BiH is beginning (following the secessionist policy of the SDS) and politics in Bosnia shift towards issues of security, armed interventions and international negotiations. All these elements definitely mark a new phase in terms of options, actors and analytical frameworks, whose exam would have gone far beyond the scope and means of this research.

In the very extensive literature about the dissolution of Yugoslavia, both local (from Bosnia-Herzegovina and the ex-Yugoslav republics) and international, there is no complete and specific study about the above mentioned actors. Here there are two main gaps that must be addressed. First, unlike the blatant overexposure offered by the post-1992, the whole pre-1992 political and social context in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been understudied: the focus has been usually placed on the general background of Yugoslavia or on the bigger and more influential republics. Neven Andjeli, the author of *Bosnia-Herzegovina. The end of a legacy*, the pioneer and invaluable important work about the history of late- and post-Communist BiH published in 2003, acknowledged that “it is common to omit independent developments in Bosnian politics and society, as authors tend to concentrate on the major players: Serbia and Croatia”.³ Therefore, the Bosnian context of the 1980s and early 1990s is generally presented as a mere sub-product of the external events or as the object of generalisations or stereotypes (“Bosnia was already

³ Neven Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina. The end of a legacy*, London: Frank Cass, 2003, 203.

divided along ethnic lines”; “Bosnia was a dark province [lit. *tamni vilajet*]”) that are not grounded in a solid historical perspective. Only in recent years have some well-documented and innovative works appeared. The PhD thesis of Virtuts Sambró, presented in 2009 in the same Department where the present research has come into being, has been the first attempt to systematise and contextualise the data about the 1990 republican elections since the pioneer work of Sead Arnautovi in 1996.⁴ A special section of the journal *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* issued in 2014 dedicated to the 1990 Bosnian elections has offered further insights based on new data and interpretations about the vote system, the societal perceptions and reactions that influenced the results.⁵ The recent inspiring works of a group of researchers from the Institute for History in Sarajevo shed light on some peculiar aspects of 1980s Bosnia-Herzegovina, such as the homogenisation of national and religious communities or the causes of the destabilisation of the republican institutions.⁶ Still, there are many issues which remain unexplored and deserve attention.

The second large gap in the literature on the break-up of Yugoslavia is about the alternatives to nationalism. As Bojan Bili recalled, the academic research focused on the “grand narratives” of ethnic-based transformation and of the broad geopolitical changes after 1989, leading to ignore or overlook the *civic*, *non-nationalist* (and, since 1991, *anti-nationalist* and *anti-war*) initiatives displayed throughout the Yugoslav federation.⁷ Besides the “paradigm of ethnic conflict” propelled by Western media and scholars, also “the efforts of the nationally delimited social sciences across the Yugoslav space to legitimise the new reality as a recovered historical ‘normality’”⁸ have significantly contributed to this tendency. In recent years, some fresh interest for exploring, from a

⁴ Virtuts Sambró i Melero, “Contextualització i anàlisi de les eleccions del 18 de novembre de 1990 a la R.S. de Bòsnia i Hercegovina”, PhD diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2009; Suad Arnautovi, *Izbori u Bosni i Hercegovini '90: analiza izbornog procesa*, Sarajevo: Promocult, 1996.

⁵ *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 14, n. 4, 2014. The authors of this special section are Florian Bieber (introduction), Damir Kapidži, Nenad Stojanovi and Boriša Mraovi.

⁶ I refer to the works of Husnija Kamberovi, Admir Mulaosmanovi, Edin Omerić, Dženita Šarac-Rujanac and Sabina Veladžić. The recent works (from a Croatian perspective) of Ivica Lučić, researcher of the Institute for History in Zagreb, also deserve attention. See the bibliography for full references.

⁷ Bojan Bili, *We were gasping for air: [Post-]Yugoslav Anti-War activism and its legacy*, Baden Baden: Nomos, 2012, 20; for similar approaches see also Ljubica Spaskovska, “Landscapes of Resistance, Hope and Loss: Yugoslav Supra-Nationalism and Anti-Nationalism”, in Bojan Bili and Vesna Janković, (eds.), *Resisting the Evil: (Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Contention*, Baden Baden: Nomos, 2012, 37-38; Jasna Dragović-Soso, “Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate? An Overview of Contending Explanations”, in Lenard J. Cohen and Jasna Dragović-Soso (eds.), *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia's Disintegration*, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008, 28.

⁸ Bili, *We were gasping for air*, 43.

social and historical perspective, the “civic” alternatives to nationalist narratives and policies has arisen.⁹ However, these works mainly focus their attention on grassroots, anti-war and pacifist activism, or to other republics of Yugoslavia.

The thesis draws on various types of local sources. The first is a wide range of press reports coming from Bosnia-Herzegovina and the rest of Yugoslavia, mostly from *Oslobo enje* (Sarajevo), the main Bosnian daily newspaper at that time. During the political transition, *Oslobo enje*, still an organ of the official Communist organizations, gradually shifted from a pro-regime discourse to a pluralist tendency and to an attitude of respect of journalistic independence standards. Until the first months of 1990, *Oslobo enje* was in a process of emancipation from the SKBiH, but there were still some signs of compliance to the ruling party and its leadership. Therefore, this organ is a valuable source for analysing the intra-regime dynamics for that period, but must be handled cautiously when dealing with the opposition actors. Since early 1990 and definitely during the electoral campaign, *Oslobo enje* offered instead a balanced and extended coverage of press conferences, public acts and rallies, transcripts of public speeches made by all the different parties (both nationalist and non-nationalist) throughout the Bosnian territory; it also published frequent and long interviews with their representatives. Finally, *Oslobo enje* hosted columns from a wide range of intellectuals, writers, academics, etc., from different ideological, social, national-regional perspectives; these articles offer a wide spectre of insightful viewpoints on a transitional period in which public narratives, social styles and models were intensely and abruptly changing.

Among the other press organs widely used for this research there are *Borba* (Belgrade), *Glas* (Banja Luka), *Ve ernje Novine* (Sarajevo), the weekly *Naši Dani* (Sarajevo) and the fortnightly *Valter* (Sarajevo), plus other nationwide and regional organs which are all listed in the “Sources and bibliography” section. This wide variety of sources offers access to a broad coverage of socio-political events, statements, interviews, etc., as well as a plurality of qualitative points of view, enhancing a globally critical handling of the documentation. The youth magazines *Naši Dani* and *Valter*, for example, acted both as a vehicle of mobilisation for youth social movements (sometimes

⁹ In particular, I refer to the abovementioned works of Bojan Bilić, as well as those of Ljubica Spaskovska, Mila Orlić, Paul Stubbs, and the pioneer researches of Ana Dević and Stef Jansen in previous years. See the bibliography for full references.

displaying a certain acrimony towards the official Communist policy), and as a practice of pluralist attitude and professional accuracy. *Glas*, a daily from Banja Luka close to the conservative-oriented local section of the SKBiH, offers a not-Sarajevo-centred perspective, whereas the liberal-oriented daily *Borba*, based in Belgrade and the only truly pan-Yugoslav daily (i.e., not subjected to the control of republican governments) offered a useful not-Bosnia-centred viewpoint. The official gazette of Bosnia-Herzegovina, *Službeni List SRBiH*, has been also thoroughly examined, particularly in relation to the norms establishing the multi-party system and the other constitutional reforms in the course of 1990.

The second major source of information is a range of original documents issued by the non-nationalist actors. The majority of them are related to the League of Communists (sessions' and congress' transcripts, programmatic documents, statements, official organs) and comes from the uncatalogued and non-public archive of the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is located at the party headquarters in Sarajevo and has remained almost completely unused by scholars until now. The documents related to the other organizations (programmatic documents, statements, official organs of SRSJ, SSRN-DSS, SSO, UJDI...) come from public libraries in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, as well as from personal contacts with former members. All these documents contribute to retrace the internal debate and the public positioning of these organizations, which would have been overlooked or misrepresented through an exclusive use of press sources. Given that the documents from the 1989-1991 period are still classified in almost all the public archives in Bosnia-Herzegovina (as well as in Serbia, where the documents of the federal institutions are located, and in the other ex-Yugoslav republics), the use of public archival collection has been almost completely excluded from this research. Another problem is the destruction or disappearance of a considerable part of the press, political and institutional documentation concerning the examined period, following the immense damages of the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina that inevitably restricts the range of available sources.

The third major type of source is a set of about fifty selected interviews, most of them with former representatives of the organisations constituting the subject of the study, as well as with some actors and "privileged observers" of that context (members of nationalist parties, intellectuals, academics, journalists). These interviews contribute to

retrace concrete information and useful insights on the strategies, perceptions and interpretations of both individual and collective actors. Many of the former activists admitted that it was either the very first time, or it was extremely rare, that someone asked them to go back on their political engagement in 1989-91.¹⁰ The heavy burden of what came immediately next, the relegation to political and media marginality, and some implicit filters in both the intimate and social sphere of memory, confined these experiences to obscurity. This research hopes to re-open that live space of memories, experiences, ideas and reflections.

With regard to online sources, a mention must be made for: the ICTY Online Archive, where all the transcripts of the Court Records, primary documentation provided as exhibits at the trials, valuable secondary sources produced by experts, etc., are all available (<http://icr.icty.org/>); and the Mediacentar in Sarajevo, which provides an extended digital archive of press publications from BiH since the beginning of the 20th century (although unfortunately, at the time when this research has been carried out, the only organ available from the examined period was *Naši Dani*). (<http://www.infobiro.ba/>).

All the aforementioned sources, that is, the interviews and approximately 30,000 photo scans from individual press articles and documents' pages entirely realised by the author, and the larger part of the bibliography, have been collected during various research stays in Sarajevo (autumn 2011, spring-summer 2012, spring-summer 2014) and Belgrade (spring 2013) and short stays in Ljubljana and Zagreb (June 2013). All the translations from the texts and interview transcriptions in Serbo-Croatian-Bosnian (as well as from those in Italian, Spanish, Catalan and French) are by the author.

¹⁰ I must acknowledge that especially the former members of the SRSJ expressed this sensation. This seems understandable, if one considers the particularly ephemeral and frustrating experience of this movement, turning from high collective expectation to a humiliating debacle in very few months.

PART I - TRANSITION

1. THE BOSNIAN COMMUNISTS AND THE YUGOSLAV CRISIS

*“It is evident that a positive Bosnian-Herzegovinian program does not exist. In any case, it should not be national, but primarily economic and political. In the Yugoslav space, the ‘Bosnian silence’ [lit. Bosanska šutnja] gradually converts itself into an intolerable wait-and-see policy, [waiting for] how the events unfold in the other republics”.*¹¹

During 1989, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ) experienced the final stage of its most severe crisis after almost forty-five years of power monopoly. While tumultuous changes were overthrowing socialist rule in Central and Eastern Europe, the controversies within the party became unsolvable, in the context of a sharp economic crisis which reached its peak during that year. Within the peculiar federalised structure of the SKJ, the republican branches, almost completely autonomous, displayed a chaotic “regional pluralism” which lacked any mediating actor. Discrepancies in contents and attitudes between the republican branches of the SKJ had considerably increased since Tito’s death, but a tacit agreement to avoid public disputes was still observed until early 1988. Afterwards, the political clash within the party became public. The sessions of the SKJ’s organs, especially the Central Committee, turned into a scene of confrontation on various issues related to political pluralism and the economic system.¹²

The main source of disputes was the “quasi-confederal” structure of the Yugoslav state established by the Constitution of 1974. While various proposals and attempts at constitutional reform had failed, two conflicting visions emerged. The League of Communists of Slovenia demanded to strengthen the autonomy of the republics and to open the system to multiparty system, while the League of Communists of Serbia called for a re-centralization through the reinforcement of federal institutions and a defence of political monism. These opposite positions concerned both the fate of the Party and the

¹¹ Rasim Kadi , reported in “Umjesto prednosti, sporenja”, *Nedjelja*, September 10, 1989.

¹² Vladimir Goati, “La vida política, 1989-1992”, in Josep Palau e Radha Kumar (eds.), *Ex-Yugoslavia. De la Guerra a la paz*, Valencia: Asamblea de Ciudadanos por Helsinki, 1992, 245; Ivan Šiber, “Istraživanja političkog ponašanja i društvene promjene – jesu li se mogla predvidjeti zbivanja 1990. godine?”, *Politički misao*, 37, 1, 2000, 105.

State, polarizing the debate within the SKJ. In sum, at the end of the 1980s at least three dimensions of political conflict arose within the SKJ:

- Centralism and unionism *versus* autonomism, secessionism, both of Party and State organizations;
- Political monism, hegemonism, *versus* pluralism, multi-party system;
- Administrative, self-managing system *versus* liberalism, market economy.¹³

Serbian unitarianism and Slovenian autonomism clearly represented the two opposite poles in the first two dimensions, which concerned the political system and the role of the SKJ. The differentiation in the third spectrum (the economic system) was also present, but less evident.¹⁴ The positions of the other SKJ branches in that debate had been fluid and mobile in the course of the decade, at least until the so-called “anti-bureaucratic revolutions” forced the replacement of the old political leaderships in Montenegro and Vojvodina. When new élites favourable to Slobodan Miloševi ’s line took power in Titograd and Novi Sad, a properly unitarian bloc took shape. Still, it was unclear who could endorse the Slovene position. The League of Communists of Croatia had somewhat backed Ljubljana’s requests for further economic autonomism, but it was not until the second half of 1989 that it actively supported political pluralism. The Leagues of Communists of Macedonia and, as it will be detailed below, Bosnia-Herzegovina, maintained a wavering position until the 14th Congress of the SKJ.

The Serbian-Slovene conflict escalated over the course of the year 1989. In March, Serbia amended its republican Constitution, rescinding the autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo. In September, the Slovenian Parliament passed a constitutional

¹³ Various authors consider this divide the “pivotal axis” in the Yugoslav politics of late 1980s, e.g. Ivan Šiber (“Istraživanja političkog ponašanja”, 108) and Sabrina P. Ramet (*Balkan Babel. The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the death of Tito to the fall of Milošević*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1996, 44). Ramet also refers to a fourth issue, the so-called “Breakdown of the Sense of community”, which includes the worsening of interethnic relations.

¹⁴ The Serbian League of Communists under Milošević ’s rule, albeit presenting itself as the most tenacious advocate of self-managing socialism, also promoted market-oriented reforms. In 1988, as Lenard Cohen explained, Milošević created a group of experts (officially named as “Commission for Questions of Economic Reform”) that envisioned a “pluralism of property ownership”, namely a mix of private and public property. Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1995, 55-59. On the other side, the Slovenian government kept a degree of hostility to a process of massive privatizations, which was maintained even by the centre-right majority that took power in 1990. See Catherine Samary, *Yugoslavia dismembered*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995, 51-67; Francisco Veiga, *La fábrica de las fronteras. Guerras de secesión yugoslavas, 1991-2001*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2011, 74-79.

amendment that established the absolute sovereignty of the republican institutions over the federal ones, including the right to secede from Yugoslavia. Ljubljana also called for free multi-party elections before any other republic, thus making a move towards further “asymmetric confederalization”.¹⁵ As the intensity of the conflict increased, the Vojvodinian branch of the party requested and obtained the summoning of an extraordinary Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which would be finally held in January 1990. This congress was to be preceded by Congresses of the republican branches, as the standard procedure required.¹⁶ The League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina (SKBiH) had not taken sides in the Serbian-Slovenian clash. Its official line was still to firmly defend both the unity of Federal Yugoslavia and the autonomy of the republics as defined by the 1974 Constitution. Therefore, the SKBiH position was somewhere between both extremes: Slovenian confederalism and Serbian unitarianism. There were two deep structural reasons for this position.

The first was the peculiar national mix within Bosnia-Herzegovina. This made having to choose one side in the Serbian-Slovenian dispute an extremely delicate matter. National heterogeneity had become manifest within the League of Communists of BiH. During the 1980s, the Serbs lost the absolute majority in party membership (which had been quite constant so far) falling from 53.5% in 1971 to 40.7% in 1985; on the contrary, the Muslim representation grew from 27.8% to 34.7%.¹⁷ The national representation within the SKBiH realigned to reflect the national mix of the republic. This was so for two reasons. First, the formal recognition of the Muslim nationality by the SKBiH in 1968 had encouraged more of them to define themselves as such, making it easier for them to join the ranks of the party. Another reason can be found in overall demographic factors, such as the combination of the higher birth rates of the Bosnian Muslims and the higher

¹⁵ Laura Silber, Allan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin Books, 1996, 77- 78.

¹⁶ Davor Paukovi , “Posljednji kongres Saveza Komunisti Jugoslavije. Uzroci, tijek i posljedice raspada”, in *Suvremene teme*, 1, 1, 2008, 24.

¹⁷ The membership rate of Croats did not change (11.3%). Taking into account the figures of the Bosnian population as per the 1981 census (39.5% Muslims, 32% Serbs, 18.4% Croats), Serb over-representation and Muslim under-representation in the party base was considerably reduced, while Croat under-representation remained unchanged in relative terms (Andjeli observed that the number of Croats had risen to three times their original number, from 142,313 to 415,808). Sources: Neven Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina. The end of a legacy*, London: Frank Cass, 2003, 37; Kasim Trnka, “Opredjeljenja konsolidaciju vlasti radni ke klase, razvijanje nacionalne ravnopravnosti i reafirmaciju vode e uloge Saveza Komunisti (1971-1984)”, in VV.AA., *Istorija Saveza Komunisti Bosne i Hercegovine. Knjiga 2*, Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 1990, 215; Mirsad D. Abazovi , *Kadrovski rat za BiH (1945-1991)*, Sarajevo: Savez logoraša BiH, 1999, 227.

emigration rates of the Bosnian Serbs and Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina to the republics of Serbia or Croatia. These changes increased the relative weight of the Muslims within the party, as well as in the overall population of the Republic.¹⁸ Concerning SKBiH high-ranking officials and republican institutions, the application of the “national key” principle was carefully observed during the 1980s, though not necessarily imposed by an automatic turnover or redistribution mechanism. (See tables below).

Table 1.1. Bosnia-Herzegovina population census, 1971-1991.¹⁹

	Muslims	%	Serbs	%	Croats	%	Yugoslavs	%	Other	%	Total
1971	1,482,430	39,6	1,393,148	37,2	772,491	20,6	43,796	1,2	54,246	1,4	3,746,111
1981	1,630,033	39,5	1,320,738	32,0	758,140	18,4	326,316	7,9	89,029	2,1	4,124,256
1991	1,902,956	43,5	1,366,104	31,2	760,852	17,4	242,682	5,6	104,439	2,4	4,377,033

Table 1.2. National structure of the SKBiH membership, 1971-1985.²⁰

	% Muslims	% Serbs	% Croats	% Others
1971	28.3	53.5	11.1	7.1
1973	31.1	52.1	10.9	5.9
1978	34.6	46.1	12.2	7.1
1981	35.0	44.0	12.3	8.7
1985	34.7	40.7	11.4	13.2

¹⁸ Xavier Bougarel, “Bosnie-Herzégovine. Anatomie d’une poudrière”, *Hérodote*, 67, 4e trimestre, 1992, 92-100.

¹⁹ Source: FZS – Institute for Statistics of FBiH, “Stanovništvo prema nacionalnoj pripadnosti, po popisima 1961 – 1991”. Accessed August 22, 2015. <http://www.fzs.ba/Dem/Popis/NacStanB.htm> .

²⁰ Source: Abazovi , *Kadrovski rat za BiH*, 226-227.

Table 1.3. National structure of the Presidents of the highest organs in the Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1982-1989.²¹

	SKBiH (Party)	SSRN (Socialist Alliance)	VSS BiH (Trade Unions)	SUBNOR (Partisans' Association)	SSO (Party's youth branch)	Republican Presidency	Parliament	RIV (Government)	Chamber of Commerce
1982	Muslim	Serb	Croat	Croat	Serb	Croat	Serb	Muslim	Muslim
1983	Muslim	Serb	Muslim	Croat	Serb	Serb	Croat	Muslim	Muslim
1984	Croat	Serb	Croat	Muslim	Muslim	Serb	Muslim	Serb	Muslim
1985	Croat	Croat	Serb	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Serb	Muslim
1986	Serb	Croat	Muslim	Croat	Serb	Muslim	Serb	Croat	Muslim
1987	Serb	Muslim	Muslim	Croat	Montenegrin	Croat	Serb	Croat	Croat
1988	Muslim	Yugoslav	Croat	Serb	Serb	Croat	Muslim	Serb	Serb
1989	Muslim	Yugoslav	Croat	Muslim	Muslim	Serb	Muslim	Serb	Serb

²¹ Source: "Predsjedništvo RK SSRNBiH. Zakon skida neustavne ograde", *Oslobo enje*, December 27, 1989.

The second structural reason for the neutrality of the Bosnian Communists was their traditionally strict adherence to the dogmas and routines of the political system under socialist rule. This loyalty had been consolidated for decades, especially after the 1969-1971 wave of repression against the national or liberal movements in Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. The orthodox SKBiH had become a useful “buffer” between the Croatian and Serbian branches of the Communist party, playing the role of “Guardian of Titoism”. This was an important source of legitimization for Bosnian Communists’ top ranks, both inside and outside the republic.²²

This continuity was maintained even after the abrupt change in the political élite of Bosnia-Herzegovina which occurred between 1987 and 1989, especially following the crucial “Agrokomerc” and “Neum” scandals, which require here special attention. The former case stems from the collapse of one of the biggest food companies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, due to a massive issuance of uncovered promissory notes which was made public in ending summer 1987. The general manager of Agrokomerc, Fikret Abdi , was closely tied to the Bosnian Communists’ leadership and a protégé of Hamdija Pozderac, one of the most prominent politicians in 1970s/1980s Bosnia and Yugoslavia.²³ The scandal forced Pozderac to resign from his post at the collective Federal Presidency and to end his political career, while the “once quiet, closed system of patronage” in the Bosnian institutions suddenly became an “open ‘free for all’ system”, causing generalized requests for investigations and dismissals and leading various high-level politicians to a

²² Goati, “La vida política, 1989-1992”, 244.

²³ The Agrokomerc company was located in Velika Kladuša (in Cazinska Krajina, north-western Bosnia). It employed about 13.500 people in a traditionally underdeveloped region that, following the positive trends of the company, was experiencing an impressive socio-economic growth. Its general manager, Fikret Abdi (1939), was a “local lord” for the immense power and charisma that enjoyed in the region. He had strict connections with the Pozderac brothers, Hamdija and Hakija, two of the most influential politicians in Bosnia-Herzegovina and overall Yugoslavia. The Pozderac, and the same Abdi , were native from Cazinska Krajina. Hamdija Pozderac, in particular, was one of the three “Bosnians at the top of the political pyramid” in the 1970s/1980s, in the words of Neven Andjeli (*Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 37-38). The two other were Branko Mikuli , at that time Federal Prime Minister, and Milanko Renovica, then member of the Presidency of the SKJ. Hamdija Pozderac was a member of the Federal collective Presidency and destined to become its leading cadre (hence, the President of Yugoslavia) in 1988.

Since the early 1987, investigations from republican authorities began to discover that Agrokomerc had issued for years uncovered promissory notes, to dozens of banks from all Yugoslavia, corresponding to a loss of about 200 million dollars. The scandal was made public in august 1987 and immediately led to Abdi ’s imprisonment and Hamdija Pozderac’s resignation. This led, in turn, to a turning point for the Bosnia-Herzegovina’s political system. The financial bankruptcy of Agrokomerc had catastrophic consequences for the economic structure of north-western Bosnia and affected the whole republic. (Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 56-75; Virtuts Sambró i Melero, “Contextualització i anàlisi de les eleccions del 18 de novembre de 1990 a la R.S. de Bòsnia i Hercegovina”, PhD diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2009, 120-125).

defensive position or to leave their posts.²⁴ The context of broad socio-economic crisis (which was further exacerbated by the same effects of the scandal) and the wide coverage by the Yugoslav media amplified public anger against the misconduct and clientelism of the political class, putting more pressure on it.²⁵ Some months later, in 1988 a new scandal emerged, this time about the summer villas in Neum, the only town of the republic on the Adriatic coast. Several dozens of leading party officers had allegedly built those houses thanks to tax breaks and favourable credit terms. Here, public outrage was even stronger than after the Agrokomerc's affair: Neum was seen as an abuse of power to obtain personal wealth and privileges,²⁶ strengthening the perception of a generalized clientelism in the Bosnian political class, while common citizens were left facing skyrocketing inflation and unemployment in everyday life. The press coverage in the republic, even by the official daily *Oslobo enje*, increased in accuracy and also began to analyse other "simil-Neum" cases of embezzlement and privilege. In 1988-1989, almost

²⁴ Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 64.

²⁵ The circumstances of how the scandal was investigated and made public, remain not entirely clear and raise doubts about possible latent interests behind it. Although it seems undisputable that irregularities in Agrokomerc had effectively taken place, some analysts have noticed that the use of uncovered notes was a very common practice in the Yugoslav system and that the excesses were usually kept away from public knowledge. In the case of Agrokomerc, this could not have happened because of the alleged interest from some Belgrade centres of power (hence, the Serbian rule and the Yugoslav Army), in order to discredit and weaken the Bosnian leadership and to force the dismissal of Hamdija Pozderac, who was then President of the constitutional commission and destined to become, in 1988, the President of Yugoslavia; according to these interpretations (which are widespread in "pro-Bosnian" environments), Pozderac's policy on constitutional reforms was not in line with the interests of Serbia.

To summarize, there are two main interpretations in the existing literature about the subject, represented by the two scholars who have examined the case with the highest detail. According to Neven Andjeli , Agrokomerc was a simple case of "personal mismanagement and incompetence", unprecedented and too huge ("Nobody had ever dared to go so far") to be ignored; therefore, the large attention by the press and the fall-out in the political leadership of BiH were not only inevitable consequences but, in some way, a step to democratization and to the formation of a public opinion in Bosnian society. Andjeli explains that the Serbia's or the Army's direct involvement in the affair cannot be proved, among other things, because the same Milošević seized the control of the League of Communists of Serbia only after the scandal's break-up. (Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 19; 54-72).

On the other side, Admir Mulaosmanović claims instead that the political interests of the Serbian power (to dismiss Pozderac and subjugate the Bosnian leadership, a useful tool in the framework of the intra-Yugoslav tensions) and of the JNA (for his logistic-strategic interests in the Cazinska Krajina's region) were evident and crucial in the whole scandal, which would be based on a big amount of press and institutional manipulation, thanks to the complicity with Belgrade of some journalists, politicians and of the chief of the republic's police, Duško Zgonjanin. (Admir Mulaosmanović , "O političkom kontekstu 'Afere Agrokomerc'", *Historijska traganja*, 1, 2008, 181-211).

The paradox of the Agrokomerc affair is that, while it is decisive in triggering the internal crisis of the Bosnian Communists and in sparking the social dissatisfaction against them, it also generated a profitable "martyrdom effect" to the benefit of his highest responsible, Fikret Abdić . He was finally acquitted from charges in 1989 and effectively built himself a profile as an enterprising, liberal market-oriented man who had become a "victim of the system". Thanks to this public image, he even increased his popularity and would become, as we will see in further chapters, a key figure in the Bosnian transition.

²⁶ Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 66.

an entire generation of prominent leaders from the old guard was dismissed or forced to withdraw for their implication in the case.²⁷

While in the majority of the other republics a replacement of political leadership would have implied a relevant fluctuation, in Bosnia-Herzegovina such a change did not affect an environment deeply marked by ideological and political orthodoxy.²⁸ However, the Yugoslav political context in the late 1980s was radically changing, since new actors and languages were emerging. The centre of power increasingly switched from the federal institutions to the most powerful republics (Serbia, Slovenia, and Croatia), so the role of SKBiH became marginal and anachronistic. Moreover, the various “scandals” that affected the Bosnian political life in the 1980s reinforced certain negative clichés and stigmas depicting that republic as a place for authoritarianism and neo-Stalinism, chronically contaminated by corruption and nepotism. These stereotypes, which had been already common in the 1960s, were then revitalized. This factor also contributed to the further marginalization of the Bosnian Communists at the Yugoslav level.²⁹

While the SKBiH’s position within the Yugoslav dilemma (confederalism vs. unitarianism) did not stop defending the statements of the 1974 Constitution, by 1989 its position on political issues such as the multi-party system and free elections was somewhat wavering. As mentioned above, the League of Communists of Slovenia was the first branch of SKJ to call for free elections and to open the political system to parties acting independently from official organizations. The League of Communists of Croatia, despite still having an influential conservative wing within its lines, was the first to follow the Slovenian move. Zagreb accepted a *de facto* legalization of a multi-party system in July 1989, as several parties had already been set up and tolerated by the Zagreb

²⁷ Ivica Lučić, *Uzroci rata. Bosna i Hercegovina od 1980. do 1992. godine*, Zagreb: Hrvatski Institut za povijest, 2013, 211-212. On the other minor “affairs” which affected the political and social life in Bosnia-Herzegovina, see Sambró, “Contextualització i anàlisi”, 91-129 (chapter 5, “La via política dels afers”).

²⁸ Goati, “La vida política, 1989-1992”, 244.

²⁹ Kasim Trnka, “Samoupravni razvoj i demokratizacija društvenih odnosa (1964-1971)” in VV.AA., *Istorija Saveza Komunističke Bosne i Hercegovine. Knjiga 2*, Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju u Sarajevu, 1990, 184; Sabina Veladžić, “Destabilizacija Bosne i Hercegovine krajem osamdesetih godina 20. stoljeća”, *Historijska traganja*, 7: 2011, 212; José-Miguel Palacios, “Democratización y estatalidad en la Unión Soviética y en Yugoslavia”, PhD diss., Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2000, 412-413.

authorities. Therefore, a pluralist framework was basically in place, despite of the SKJ's formal monopoly of power.³⁰

The SKBiH, however, firmly rejected any ideas of multi-party systems until the last months of the year. In March 1989, a document of the Central Committee stated that the party, "...regarding the circumstance of the creation of political parties in SR Slovenia and SR Croatia, expresses a clear statement on the unacceptability and absurdity of the attempts to institute a restoration of the multi-party system in Yugoslavia".³¹ The Central Committee of the SKBiH reasserted their traditional position of "*pluralism without parties*" within the socialist self-managing system, under the umbrella of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People (SSRN), according to the canonical formula "*Neither mono-party, nor multi-party system*".³² The ideological motivation was reinforced by another (and apparently more crucial) factor: the fear that national parties would inevitably appear and arouse inter-ethnic tensions. In order to strengthen this position, the Central Committee mentioned the antecedent of the Yugoslav Interwar period (1919-1939), when a political system based on open competition had been dominated by national parties (this system was particularly evident in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina), before culminating in a "fratricidal war". This historical juxtaposition would often be employed again in order to justify a firm opposition to a multi-party system. The constant narrative against nationalism was a crucial factor of continuity, since it had been a decisive factor for the homogenization of both the Bosnian political élite and the Communist party since the very foundation of the socialist regime. The picture of "nationalist peril" was a pretext for keeping away eventual demands for reforming or re-discussing the political system.³³

While the official line was kept on these lines, some prominent members of the Central Committee started to publicly voice their doubts. Bogi Bogi evi and Ivan

³⁰ Dejan Jović, *Jugoslavija, država koja je odumrla. Uspon, kriza i pad četvrte Jugoslavije, 1974-1990*, Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003, 456.

³¹ Centralni Komitet SKBiH, *Za šta se zalaže Savez Komunisti Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo: SKBiH, 1989, 20.

³² "We are all for political pluralism, which means struggle for ideas, pluralism of ideas, freedom of organizations within the framework of the Socialist Alliance. We remain convinced that the content of our socialist self-management system does not correspond neither to the classic mono-party, nor to the multi-party system. The foundation and the essence of democracy which we agree for, lays on socialist self-management, not in the struggle for power of political parties". SKBiH, *Za šta se zalaže*, 20.

³³ I am grateful to prof. Husnija Kamberovi for this insight.

Cvitkovi questioned the premises of the SKBiH's stance on pluralism: observing that something should be done with the already existing organizations which were not recognized by the regime, they implicitly suggested that some sort of legalization should be taken into consideration for them.³⁴ The most direct challenge to the official line came from Zdravko Grebo, a relatively young politician and a newcomer at the Central Committee of the SKBiH, who was the most critical voice within the Bosnian leadership. He explicitly called for an abandonment of the monopoly of power and expressed sharp criticisms against the conservative higher ranks of the party.³⁵ Grebo became quite popular in the urban and intellectual circles and gained the role of "main dissident" within party lines. He finally resigned from the Central Committee of the SKJ in July 1989 arguing that the League of Communists, as the only allowed form of political action, had become an incubator of all possible conflicts, from class to generational and national. The Federal Central Committee had become the scene of a "free for all" scenario, acting as "the basic disintegrating factor in the country".³⁶ Despite leaving the party at federal level, he remained an active member of the SKBiH where, as will be mentioned later, he would head other "dissident" initiatives.

However, Zdravko Grebo did not find many allies in the party, even among the new and younger top-ranks, except for the youth organization, the Alliance of Socialist Youth (SSO BiH).³⁷ Its leader, Rasim Kadić, was known for his vehement rhetoric against the alleged conservatism of the top ranks, and one of the first politicians in Bosnia-Herzegovina to advocate a civic, rather than national or classist, conception of citizenship. In September, the SSO BiH fuelled the controversy by holding the party responsible for the so-called "Bosnian silence" ("*Bosanska šutnja*"):³⁸ according to the Socialist Youth,

³⁴ "Presjedništvo CK SKBiH o političkom pluralizmu. Više dilema nego odgovora", *Oslobođenje*, July 7, 1989. Bogi Bogićević had been elected in May 1989 as the Bosnian member of the State's Federal Presidency.

³⁵ Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 66-67. Zdravko Grebo, a Law Professor at the University of Sarajevo, was born in Mostar in 1947. He became a member of the SKBiH's Central Committee in late 1987. One year later, he was appointed as a member of SKJ's Central Committee.

³⁶ After his resignation, Grebo said: "The central question on which this Central Committee must assume a clear and unambiguous position is: Who is really, today, our political opponent? In a time when a verbally ideological and political war takes place between republican and provincial branches of the League of Communists [...] it seems that in many confrontations the political enemy, or political opponent, becomes the person who seats at your side and stays in this Central Committee". "U borbu s partijskim drugovima, a ne partijskim rođacima", *Oslobođenje*, September 13, 1989. See also: "Zdravko Grebo: Jako ili nikako!", *Oslobođenje*, July 10, 1989; Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 114.

³⁷ *Savez Socijalističke Omladine Bosne i Hercegovine*.

³⁸ The "Bosnian silence" was a very meaningful expression. It echoed the definition of "Croatian silence" (lit. *Hrvatska šutnja*), mainly used by non-communists opponents to define the alleged passivity of the

Bosnian Communists had an exceedingly passive attitude, as they were wasting time and potential in order to affirm their own position within Yugoslavia and rejecting constitutional reforms in Bosnia.³⁹ The influence of the SSO BiH had grown since 1988, when youth movements under the umbrella of the SSO began to open a space for public discussion and criticism about the regime through political and media activism. Nevertheless, the SSO BiH, being concentrated basically in the biggest urban centres, was too marginal inside the official system in order to oppose the conservatives and was not so unanimous in support of the critical line led by Kadić.⁴⁰

Another of the few members of the élite who explicitly expressed support for the multi-party system was Desimir Međović.⁴¹ His main argument was the necessary connection between economic reforms and political pluralism: the opening to free market and private property, which was already ongoing in Federal Yugoslavia under the government of Ante Marković, would naturally lead towards a multi-party political system in order to allow for the representation of plural interests. According to Međović, the SKBiH should open a transparent debate on the subject between their different lines; otherwise, the course of events would end up overwhelming the party.⁴² But the regime's main representatives rejected such a connection: market reforms had to be implemented, but denied the need to adopt a multi-party system.⁴³ In other words, the official orientation of the SKBiH remained along the following line: "*Economic reforms, yes. Political reforms, no*".

Although the claims for political changes came from a relatively marginal sector, they gained force in the last months of 1989, more for external than internal reasons: first, the wave of events in the Eastern Bloc countries raised the expectations for political innovation; second, the increasing political turmoil at the top of the SKJ weakened the

Croatian communist government towards the supposedly authoritarian and assimilationist policy in Yugoslavia after the suppression of the "Croatian Spring" of the early 1970s.

³⁹ "Umjesto prednosti, sporenja", *Nedjelja*, September 10, 1989.

⁴⁰ For an in-depth analysis of the SSO BiH, see chapter 6.2.

⁴¹ Desimir Međović, born in 1956, was then a professor at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Sarajevo. He had formerly been a leader of the SSO BiH. He had been one of the first member in the SKBiH's Central Committee to support the introduction of a market economy, since early 1989 (see "Iz uvodnog izlaganja Desimira Međovića: Tržište najbolji mehanizam uređivanja ekonomije", *Oslobođenje*, February 17, 1989).

⁴² "SK ne želi monopol", *Oslobođenje*, September 9, 1989.

⁴³ See the speech of the then president of the Bosnian Parliament, Zlatan Karavdić: "Nema demokratije bez reda", in *Oslobođenje*, 26 June 1989.

ideological premises of the Bosnian communists; third, the consolidation of a *de-facto* multi-party system in Slovenia and Croatia undermined the confidence of the Bosnian leaders at being able to conserve the monopoly of power without implementing any changes to the political system.

Thus, in the autumn of 1989, the SKBiH official line on pluralism became more cautious. Talking about political reform in party debates ceased to be a taboo, and even some hard-line representatives expressed a certain degree of openness. A few days before the Congress, the president Nijaz Durakovi argued that the SKBiH should “distance himself from the [monopolistic] exercise of power” and that a multi-party system should be put in place, if the majority favoured it. The only condition was to “fully democratic rule” which translated, according to Durakovi, into a ban on nationalist parties. “Otherwise even the *Ustaša*, *Cetnici* and *Balisti* will create their own party”.⁴⁴ This “half-way” tendency culminated at the end of 1989, when the intent was no longer to impose a strict *status quo*, but rather to adapt to the new circumstances, as determined by the final Congresses.

1.1. Inter-ethnic relations and decline of the regime

One of the issues that blocked political reforms, namely the adherence to ideological orthodoxy, seemed about to disappear due to external reasons. Another major obstacle to political reform was the fear of inter-ethnic tensions inside Bosnia-Herzegovina. While no serious incidents or divisions on national grounds had happened before 1989,⁴⁵ a negative shift seemed to appear throughout the year. The first signs of friction came from the political élite, rather than from the lower ranks. Under the influence of Slobodan Miloševi, the political line of Serbia became increasingly aggressive in Yugoslavia, as shown by the “anti-bureaucratic revolutions” in Vojvodina and Montenegro, which had a strong effect in Bosnia-Herzegovina: many people, both inside and outside of that republic, saw Bosnia as a possible next stage of an “anti-

⁴⁴ “Nijaz Durakovi na tribini GK SSRN Sarajevo: nema demokratije bez reda”, *Oslobo enje*, December 1, 1989. The “*Balisti*” were the members of the ‘*Balli Kombetar*’, an Albanian nationalist and anti-communist organization operating in Albania and Yugoslavia during the Second World War.

⁴⁵ Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 67.

bureaucratic” plot, carried out by pro-Milošević mass demonstrations or an intra-élite conspiracy carried out by cadres loyal to Belgrade. An attempt had been supposedly carried out in September 1988, when an “anti-bureaucratic” meeting was scheduled in Jajce, in central Bosnia. The protest was organized by Miroslav Šolević, leader of the Kosovo Serbian Committee and coordinator of the earlier anti-bureaucratic meetings. The Jajce protest did not happen because the leaders of the Bosnian and Serbian SK struck a deal: the Bosnian Communists would guarantee support to the Serbian policy within the presidency of the SKJ, and the meeting in Jajce was cancelled.⁴⁶ We must also take into account that the succession of resignations and dismissals which followed the “Agrokomerc” and “Neum” scandals, had introduced a feeling of uncertainty and vulnerability among the Bosnian leadership.

Given these premises, it is not surprising that in early 1989 the official line of Sarajevo on the politics of Serbia was very prudent, when not yielding, in some issues. On the Kosovo issue, for example, the official position of the SKBiH looked essentially the same that to Serbia’s. In March, the SKBiH issued an official document that attributed the responsibility of the tension in Kosovo to the “Albanian counterrevolution” and emphasized the suffering of the “Serbs and Montenegrins forced to leave their homes”.⁴⁷ The Bosnian Communists also renewed their support for the amendment of the Serbian constitution, which were aimed at reducing the autonomy of the two provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina.⁴⁸ This document was issued in a moment of strong polarization both at

⁴⁶ The account of Šolević is reported in V.P. Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006, 75-76.

The circumstance is confirmed also in the memories of Raif Dizdarević, then the Bosnian member of the Yugoslav presidency. Dizdarević asserts that the meeting was scheduled for September 10 in Jajce, in solidarity with the Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins, and that the local Association of Partisan War Veterans (SUBNOR) would promote it. Dizdarević even claimed that the security services had discovered a plan to launch a hand grenade into the crowd in order to create a terroristic plot. Still, he did not mention any “exchange pact” between Bosnian and Serbian leaders, simply arguing that “the meeting was banned thanks to the determination of the leadership of Bosnia-Herzegovina”. Raif Dizdarević, *La morte di Tito, la morte della Jugoslavia*, Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2000, 255.

⁴⁷ “In Bosnia it did never lack a direct and concrete support to Serbs, Montenegrins and members of all the other peoples and populations of Kosovo, who found themselves under the threat of the Albanian nationalism, separatism and irredentism”. While calling for a “common front” of all the people regardless of their nationality, the document recommended to resolve, “first of all, [the problems] of Serbs and Montenegrins who are under intense pressure of the Albanian nationalism and separatism forced to leave their homes, as well as the members of the other nations and nationalities”. SKBiH, *Za šta se zalaže SKBiH*, 8-10.

⁴⁸ “[...] about the changes in the Constitution of the SR Serbia, they are supported since the beginning, as they are significant for the unity in SR Serbia and in the Yugoslav community. [...] We consider these changes to the Constitution of the SR Serbia also extraordinarily significant to strengthen our front in the struggle against the counterrevolution in Kosovo”. SKBiH, *Za šta se zalaže SKBiH*, 13.

the Kosovo question and in the Yugoslav debate: a few weeks before Milan Kučan, leader of the Slovene Communists, pronounced his famous statement “Yugoslavia is being defended in the Trepča mine”,⁴⁹ thus emphasizing Ljubljana’s strong condemnation of Belgrade’s policy in Kosovo, and marking a negative turning point in Serbian-Slovene relations.

Under the surface of the SKBiH’s unity, some differences began to appear within the party’s leadership. Two prominent members of the Central Committee, Fuad Muhić and Muhamed Abadžić, were the first to speak critically against the Serbian policy in Yugoslavia, denouncing the use of “mass meetings” for political manipulation purposes. They expressed their doubts on the line of SKBiH, implicitly accused of being too pro-Belgrade.⁵⁰ These statements had repercussions among the party’s base, since about 20 local committees demanded it to be clarified.⁵¹ Still, during the year 1989, Muhić and Abadžić reaffirmed their criticisms on further occasions, arguing that the aggressive and paternalistic policy of Milošević in Yugoslavia was leading to national homogenization in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵² This case provoked some disputes within the party leadership and implications in the press. In the following weeks, the newspaper *Oslobodjenje* published in its “Tribune” column a series of letters concerning the Muhić - Abadžić case. Some of these letters, generally written by Muslims, strongly supported the so-called “anti-Serb” position; others, written by Serbs, bitterly attacked them and backed Milošević’s policy. Until then, the official diary of the regime used to reject the

⁴⁹ The phrase was a reference to the dramatic hunger strike of miners in Trepča, which lasted from 20 to 27 February. Miners occupied the pits demanding the resignation of Kosovar Communist leaders appointed by Milošević. The day after, a rally in solidarity with Trepča’s miners was held in Ljubljana, joined by the entire Slovene political leadership. During that event, Kučan pronounced that phrase. It must be recalled that Kučan’s solidarity with Kosovo can be seen as instrumental in order to feed anti-Belgrade dissatisfaction and to serve the autonomist, if not secessionist, purposes of Ljubljana. Slovenia traditionally protested against the massive destination of federal funds to less-developed regions, with precisely Kosovo at the top of the list. This is the reason why Slovenia did not oppose openly the constitutional amendments in Serbia, as the reconsidering of Kosovo’s autonomy. See Silber and Little, *The death of Yugoslavia*, 64-69; Veiga, *La trampa balcánica. Una crisis europea de fines del siglo XX*, Barcelona: Grijalbo Mondadori, 2002, 317-18.

⁵⁰ Both Muhić and Abadžić were Muslims; still, we must remember that other Muslims in the Central Committee endorsed the official pro-Serb position, as the then President Abdulah Mutapčić or Nijaz Duraković, who would succeed to Mutapčić from June 1989. Duraković said: “Every Serb from Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also every Muslim, Croat or member of other nations and nationalities [...] must feel worried and embittered for this Golgotha of the Serb and Montenegrin people in Kosovo, this national drama that lasts from too long”. “Jesmo za okupljanje – za Jugoslaviju”, *Oslobodjenje*, March 2, 1989.

⁵¹ Andželić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 102.

⁵² Veladžić, “Destabilizacija Bosne i Hercegovine”, 216-217; “Bosni i Hercegovini dušebrižnici ne trebaju”, *Oslobodjenje*, July 31, 1989;

publication of such kind of letters. *Oslobo enje* was gradually abandoning a censoring attitude and seeking more autonomy from the party. The editorial staff gave the green light to publish those letters, but this provoked the outrage of the SKBiH's president, Abdulah Mutap i , who wanted to keep critics under silence.⁵³ A few weeks later, a similar case took place when a top-rank member of the Bosnian war-veterans organization (SUBNOR) criticized the Belgrade daily *Politika* for its alleged nationalist contents. The episode caused a wave of protests of old partisans from Banja Luka, mainly Serbs, evidencing that a division along political-national lines had taken place within the local SUBNOR.⁵⁴

These facts are revealing. First, within the official organizations, the policy of Serbia and the figure of Slobodan Miloševi became a central issue of political discord, still solely on political terms, but showing signs of potential conversion into an ethno-national conflict. Second, the relations between Sarajevo and Belgrade, which had improved temporarily in 1988, after the post-Jajce agreement, were obviously affected. Third, the press began to play a key role, as it started to bring to light the differences within the Communist élite and to directly report the existence of national feelings “from above”. This new factor, obviously, could be employed as a measure for a more realistic assessment of the present situation, or as a tool to deepen national and political differences.

Significant local mobilizations in a decidedly nationalist vein had not appeared yet, but things seemed to change in the summer of 1989. June 28 was a notorious turning point in the breakup of Yugoslavia. That day, the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo was celebrated at Gazimestan with a meeting attended by about a million people. This was the culmination of Miloševi 's consolidation into power through the simultaneous recuperation of Orthodox religious imagery and Serb national(ist) symbology.⁵⁵ A few weeks later, the representatives of the Orthodox clergy in Bosnia

⁵³ Kemal Kurspahi , the then editor-in-chief of *Oslobo enje*, relates in his memories that Mutap i called a meeting in order to reproach the diary's managing staff. He said: “I think that the publishing of these letters was an editorial mistake. The letters have nothing but Serbs attacking and Muslims defending Muhi and Abadžić”. Kurspahi then replied: “That is not an editorial mistake, but quite possibly a realistic picture of the situation and you ought to be grateful for the fact that, by publishing those letters, we are showing how seriously nationalism has taken hold”. Kemal Kurspahi , *As long as Sarajevo exists*, Connecticut: The Pamphleteer's Press, 1997, 52-53.

⁵⁴ Andjelić , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 102.

⁵⁵ Silber and Little, *The death of Yugoslavia*, 80-82.

convened another celebration for the 600th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo in the village of Knezina, near Mount Romanija.⁵⁶ Shortly before the event was going to take place, a certain concern spread among the Bosnian institutions and the official press about the potential use of nationalist iconography and ideas (something that had not taken place yet within the boundaries of Bosnia-Herzegovina) as well as its eventual spreading to the rest of the territory.⁵⁷ Finally, the regime opted for a low profile towards the event, not presenting any obstacles to its implementation by not sending representatives to the meeting,⁵⁸ which took place on August 13th. It was attended by about 100,000 people who displayed a highly mixed and somewhat chaotic set of symbols, from Communist to Chetnik symbols, from royalist to pro-Milošević messages.⁵⁹

It must be noted that, according to a detailed poll conducted in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1988, the religious observance of the Bosnian Serbs was very low, both in absolute terms and when compared with the other two main national groups. However, the correlation between the religious and the national affiliation was very strong among the Orthodox Serbs.⁶⁰ The massive demonstration in Knezina illustrated that even in Bosnia-Herzegovina the clergy was able to obtain bigger space for public visibility and influence, even in presence of an almost unchanged trend of secularization in everyday life.⁶¹

⁵⁶ The first announcement came from the Orthodox Bishop of the Tuzla-Zvornik, Vasilije. Knezina is located in the municipality of Sokolac near Mount Romanija, about 50 km northeast of Sarajevo.

⁵⁷“Crkvi crkveno, drzavi drzavno”, in *Oslobo enje*, July 14, 1989; “Medjunacionalni odnosi danas. Nacionalno religijska euforija”, *Oslobo enje*, July 24, 1989.

⁵⁸ The only exception was represented by Velibor Ostojić, a member of the Federal Presidency of the SSRN, who sent a message of support to the meeting. For this action, Ostojić attracted sharp critics from the leader of the Bosnian youth wing Rasim Kadić. Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 108.

⁵⁹ Besides serving as the Bosnian celebration for the 600-th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, the event was also the occasion to canonize the Monastir of Knezina in the same village. “Knezina ’89: simbioza simbola”, *Naši Dani*, August 18, 1989; Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols. Religion and nationalism in Yugoslav states*, New York: Oxford University press, 2002, 128.

⁶⁰ The poll was conducted in 1988 by the Bosnian Institute for the Study of National Relations, involving 3.120 respondents from 37 municipalities in the republic. Only the 18,6% of Bosnian Serbs declared itself as “religious” (cf. 37,32% of Muslims and 55,78% of Croats. Only Yugoslavs, with 2.28%, had a lower figure). When Serbs were asked how much going to Church, 50.16% answered “never”, 18.24% “rarely”, 17.51% “occasionally” and 14,09% “regularly”. Still, 60.22% of them recognized the religious affiliation as a “designation for national affiliation” (cf. 57.63% Croats, 56.86% Muslims) and 66,18% defined religious communities as “representatives of their nations” (cf. 63,83% Croats, 59,91% Muslims). This brings Mitija Velikonja to define religion as a “surrogate” for national affiliation in late-1980s Bosnia-Herzegovina. Mitja Velikonja, *Religious separation and political intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, College Station: Texas University Press, 2003, 229-234 (quoting the study of Ibrahim Baki, *Nacija i Religija*, Sarajevo: Bosna Public, 1994).

⁶¹ Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 132.

Some signs of religious revival came also from the Islamic clergy. In the late 1980s, and particularly since November 1988, a movement emerged within the Islamic Community, known as “*Pokret imama*” (Movement of the Imams), calling for more self-administration of the Islamic Community and for stricter application of religious practices. They criticized the ‘officialist’ line of the ruling Islamic Community leaders, for their excessive complacency towards the Bosnian Communists’ rule. Throughout 1989, the *Pokret imama* was a clergy-only movement that did not acquire a massive dimension. However, their sole existence raised fears of Muslim radicalization among Serbian nationalist circles and within the Bosnian institutions.⁶² The government of Sarajevo was aware of the increasing politicization of the religious communities. Through their own press organs and the rallies they were organizing with growing frequency, they were engaging in controversies about the events of the past and their respective national questions.⁶³ Religious circles were doing their best in order to compensate for the advanced secularization in social life and to take advantage of the decline of communism.

1.2. The first national mobilizations

Signs of territorial mobilizations along national lines emerged in the summer of 1989, although not primarily on a religious basis. On July 21, 5,000 people attended a meeting in the town of Nevesinje, in eastern Herzegovina, not far from the Montenegro border. According to official statistics, Nevesinje had a mainly rural economy, having the fourth lowest per-capita income out of the 109 municipalities forming Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁶⁴ The meeting called for the dismissal of almost all the officials in the municipality, as they were the (alleged) culprits for the chronic mismanagement of the

⁶² Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 114-117; Dženita Sara -Rujanac, *Odnos vjerskog i nacionalnog u identitetu bošnjaka od 1980 do 1990. godine*, Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 2010, 165-174. In 1989 the Islamic celebration of 'Mevlud' attended 15,000 people in Blagaj (Mostar), but the huge mass celebrations occurred only in summer 1990, first with the reinstatement of the pilgrimage to Ajatovica (16-17 June 1990, around 100,000 people gathered), then with the evident connections between the Islamic clergy and the electoral campaign of the SDA.

⁶³ Sara -Rujanac, *Odnos vjerskog i nacionalnog*, 170.

⁶⁴ Republi ki Zavod za statistiku, *Statisticki godišnjak SR Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo: SRBiH, 1990, 335. Nevesinje was also the fifth municipality in Bosnia-Herzegovina for employed in agriculture, 43.6% (*ibidem*, 310). According to press reports, about 20% of the villages within the municipality of Nevesinje did not had electricity.

town since the 1960s, causing its extreme backwardness.⁶⁵ The protestors' main complaints were the alleged mismanagement of the credits for development and that of the solidarity funds granted to the local institutions after the 1979 earthquake. An enquiry on the earthquake funds' case had been raised in 1982, but came to the conclusion that it was non-prosecutable because all the concerned cadres had been acquitted from charges.⁶⁶ The protesters also demanded the reopening of the enquiries, both at the legal and political levels. The Parliament of the republic, however, would finally reject their demands.⁶⁷

According to the news reports, the Nevesinje rallies, although not completely mono-national,⁶⁸ were overwhelmingly Serb. However, many Serbs and Montenegrins who attended traveled from their respective republics.⁶⁹ The slogans and contents were manifestly inspired by the Serb "anti-bureaucratic frame" observed in Vojvodina and Montenegro in 1988-1989,⁷⁰ mixing anti-establishment phrases ("Meeting of freedom and truth", "Down with the thieves!", "Resign!") with traditional socialist slogans ("Long life to brotherhood and unity!", "Long life to Yugoslavia!", and displaying posters of Slobodan Milošević alongside idols of the Serb-Montenegrin nationalism such as Njegoš. The protest ceased in Nevesinje four days later, after the resignation of all the main

⁶⁵ The leaders of the organizing committee asked for the dismissal of all officials assuming leading functions in the local organizations – including the MPs from the town -, with the exception of the President of the municipality and the President of the SUBNOR. "Zemljotres bio, potresi ostali", *Oslobo enje*, July 22, 1989.

⁶⁶ "Istinu na vidjelo", *Oslobo enje*, 19 January 1989. The same diary confirmed that a disproportion in funds spending had occurred. On the total amount of 66 million dinars received from national and international donors, only 9.6 were allocated to damaged populations, and 46 were used for "indirect expenses", several of which not related with the earthquake and used for ordinary administration. "Solidarnost za razglas", *Oslobo enje*, December 13, 1989.

⁶⁷ "Nevesinjska previranja. Konacno dogovor", *Oslobo enje*, October 5, 1989; "Skupština opštine Nevesinje. Po ko zna koji put – ništa?!", *Oslobo enje*, December 22, 1989. However, on 20 December, *Oslobo enje* published for the first time the complete list of all the 35 suspects, directly and indirectly under enquiry, for mismanagement in 1979-1982. Among them there were higher municipal officials, the judges who had acquitted them in 1982 and even four eminent Bosnia-Herzegovina leaders at that time. This evidences that also in this case *Oslobo enje* adopted a quite pluralist line. In the first days it published an article harshly criticizing the protests, but the following were balanced or, in some cases, even sympathetic with the protests.

⁶⁸ One of the protesters, Veljko Dželetović, claimed from the stage: "Let this meeting be the meeting of brotherhood and unity, of all the Serb, Muslims and Croats living in Nevesinje. Our common goal is to free ourselves from the Nevesinje's bureaucracy" ("Zemljotres bio, potresi ostali", *Oslobo enje*, July 22, 1989).

⁶⁹ It is interesting to observe that Oliver Žeraji, credited as "one of the leaders" of the protest, would become the following year the president of the local Serb Democrat Party (SDS).

⁷⁰ About the model of "anti-bureaucratic frame" see Nebojša Vladisavljević, *Serbia's Antibureaucratic Revolution. Milošević, the fall of Communism and Nationalist Mobilization*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, 171-177.

institutional leaders of the municipality.⁷¹ However, three weeks later, a counter-protest took place, mainly attended by Muslims, which can be deduced by examining the names of protest coordinators and by the fact that it took place in Pridvorci, one of the few villages of the Nevesinje municipality with a strong Muslim majority.⁷² Its promoters were angered by the ‘mono-national’ character of the July demonstrations and their nationalist messages, and criticising the municipal Socialist Alliance (that had defined the protest as “transversal and multi-ethnic”) for minimizing the importance of the event. On October 2, the “anti-bureaucrat” protestors, who had set a semi-structured “Committee for the Organization of Meetings”, mobilized themselves again and requested the resignation of 14 officials who had not quit last summer, threatening non-stop mobilizations if their demands were not met.⁷³ The Committee kept on pressing the local institutions and implementing a “low intensity” mobilization, which caused a *de facto* paralysis of the local government. This scenario of meeting and contra-meetings was a prologue for the inter-ethnic tensions which occurred during the following year. In early 1990, two national Serb parties were set up in Nevesinje before anywhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina: the Party for Democracy and Rule of Law,⁷⁴ which would merge into the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) on the eve of the elections and claimed to be the direct expression of the 1989 mobilizations, and the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO),⁷⁵ which was the Bosnian branch of the same, ultra-nationalist party led by Vuk Drašković in Serbia.⁷⁶ Minor inter-ethnic tensions occurred between Serb and Muslim communities in Nevesinje during the electoral campaign in the autumn of 1990.⁷⁷

In the summer of 1989, Gacko, another town in Eastern Herzegovina, experienced some inter-ethnic instability under even more nebulous circumstances than Nevesinje. In

⁷¹ A wave of massive resignations happened on July 25, after a group of protestors managed to enter the municipal assembly where the debate on the situation in the town was being carried. Among the dismissals, the mayor, the president of the town assembly, the chief of the local police and the leaders of the political organizations. “Nevesinjska previrana. Poslje mitinga, demonstracije!”, *Oslobo enje*, July 26, 1989.

⁷² “Nevesinjske podjele. Zebnje i sumnje”, *Oslobo enje*, August 19, 1989. According to figures of 1991 census, in Pridvorci (1.387 inhabitants) Muslims were 73.6% and Serbs 21.2%. In the whole municipality of Nevesinje (14.448 inhabitants) the proportion was almost identically reversed: Serbs 74.1%, Muslims 22.9%. In the town of Nevesinje (5679 inhabitants), Serbs’ majority was even more evident (84.3%), while Muslims were 11.1%. Croats were 1.4% in the municipality and 1.6% in the town.

⁷³ “Deset godina potresanja”, *Oslobo enje*, October 3, 1989. The pretext for the demonstration was the 10th anniversary of the 1979 earthquake.

⁷⁴ Acronym for *Stranka za demokratiju i pravnu državu*.

⁷⁵ *Srpski pokret obnove*.

⁷⁶ “Politicki preokret u Nevesinju. Od mitinga do stranke”, *Oslobo enje*, April 21, 1990.

⁷⁷ “Politicko-besbjedosa situacija u Nevesinju. Oglasili I komunisti”, *Oslobo enje*, September 6, 1990.

August, rumours circulated about the existence of a blacklist containing the names of the most 180 prominent Serbs of the town who should be “liquidated”. The list would have been written up allegedly by some Muslims gathering in the mosque of the village of Gračanica. The same rumours attributed the leading role of this initiative to Zejnil Krvavac, a man who had been just imprisoned for saying, while being in state of drunkenness at a *kafana* that “the time for a showdown with the Serbs has come again”. The blacklist story soon proved to be a hoax, but attracted the attention of the Yugoslav press and negatively affected the inter-ethnic relations in the community.⁷⁸ A group of workers from Kula, a homogeneously Muslim village in the Gacko municipality, boycotted the bus line because the driver had displayed a picture of Milošević and sang nationalist slogans.⁷⁹ As Neven Andjelić recalls, displaying a picture of Slobodan Milošević in buses and public places became a sort of “part of the local folklore” of Serb residents in Eastern Bosnia.⁸⁰

These signs of inter-ethnic polarization overlapped some municipal and territorial rivalries which had already developed in the late 1980s, within the context of economic collapse and uncertainty about the allocation of investments and job places. A good example is provided by the 1989 mobilizations in the Serb-dominated town of Šipovo (central-western Bosnia), whose citizens and officials protested after a dispute with the “neighbour” town of Jajce over the bauxite and bentonite mines. The mine, located in Šipovo’s municipality, was owned and exploited by a public firm from Jajce. Šipovo’s officials claimed that an agreement had been previously reached to build a factory (hiring about 500 workers) in their town for processing the raw materials extracted from the mines. Nonetheless, the factory had not been built yet and rumours spread that it would be set up in Jajce, not in Šipovo. A wave of indignation for the alleged marginalization of Šipovo for the benefit of the so-called “strong bureaucracy from Jajce” erupted in local meetings in July and August 1989. These protests initially lacked an evident national

⁷⁸ “Gatačke političke kontroverze. Oziljci klanovskog doba”, *Oslobođenje*, August 9, 1989; Husnija Kamberović, *Hod po trnju. Iz bosanskohercegovačke historije 20. stoljeća*, Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 2011, 276-77; Veladžić, “Destabilizacija Bosne i Hercegovine”, 222-223.

The list was commonly known as “*Zejinilov spisak*”, i.e. “Zejinil’s list”, due to his alleged promoter. Gacko municipality had 10.788 inhabitants in 1991, whose 61,7% Serbs and 35,7% Muslims.

⁷⁹ Kamberović, *Hod po trnju*, 277. According to the 1991 census, inhabitants of Kula were 905, whose 904 Muslims.

⁸⁰ Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 108.

character,⁸¹ but created a fertile ground for resentment on ethnic issues, and in late 1989 became an evident cause of Serb mobilizations. In December, some meetings in Šipovo were celebrated in solidarity with the pro-Serb and pro-Milošević demonstration that had been banned in Ljubljana, attracting hundreds of “anti-bureaucrats” from the entire region. The protests also called for the resignation of some Šipovo officials because of their alleged “negative attitude” towards the Serb national question.⁸² It is worth observing that Šipovo, Gacko and Nevesinje were among the long-time “massive emigration” municipalities in Bosnia.⁸³ These three municipalities shared similar national structures, since they belonged to the “majority-binational” municipalities, according to the categorization proposed by Xavier Bougarel.⁸⁴ They all had a Serb majority, a quite consistent Muslim minority and mainly homogeneous villages: thus, a national mobilization meant to defend, and even strengthen, the relations of force deriving from the demographic conditions.

Similar instances of territorial clashes were observable in the area around Srebrenica, in Eastern Bosnia. The major case had happened in 1988 in Milići, a town belonging to the municipality of Vlasenica. Milići was the location of numerous mining enterprises that had transformed it into one of the most prosperous places in an extremely underdeveloped region. By consequence, since years earlier, the Serb leaders in Milići had proposed to create their own municipality, an idea rejected by the Muslim leaders of Vlasenica who accused the Milići leaders of wanting to keep for themselves the mining revenues. Between 1988 and 1989, the director of the mining firm, Rajko Đukić, was

⁸¹ On August 16, about 2,000 people gathered in a meeting, led by the main officials from the local institution and the party (in majority, but not exclusively, Serbs). According to press reports, no national symbols or slogans were exhibited. The town's leaders committed themselves to block the mines' exploitation by the Jajce's firm and to set up an autonomous and unilateral plan to build a factory in Šipovo. “Previranja u Šipovu. Miting za svoje sirovine”, *Oslobođenje*, August 17, 1989. According to the 1991 census, the municipality of Šipovo had 15,579 inhabitants (79.1% Serbs and 19.9% Muslims). The only town had 8,957 inhabitants (76.0% Serbs, 21.3% Muslims). On the opposite, Jajce had 45,007 inhabitants with a more heterogeneous composition: 38.6% were Muslims, 35.1% Croats and 19.2% Serbs.

⁸² As it will be detailed later, pro-Milošević meetings took place in Šipovo in early December 1989.

⁸³ The three municipalities in question were all among the 10 Bosnian municipalities where the relative decline or population (proportionally to the republic's total population) had been around or more than 30% between 1963 and 1981 (Joko Sparavalo, “Deagrarizacija. Osnov socijalne i prostorne pokretljivosti stanovništva BiH u period poslije drugog svjetskog rata”, in VV.AA., *Migracije i Bosna i Hercegovina*, Sarajevo: Institut za proučavanje nacionalnih odnosa, 1990, 380). An emigration trend was observable also between 1981 and 1991.

⁸⁴ According to the Bougarel's criteria, the “majority-binational” municipalities are those where the biggest group represents between 60% and 80% of the population, whereas the second group is more than double than the third. Bougarel, “Anatomie d'une poudrière”, 101.

targeted by many Muslims for financial fraud, embezzlement and even the unequal treatment of workers on national grounds.⁸⁵ Duki entered into conflict also with the municipality of Srebrenica whose mayor, Salih Sehomerovi, threatened the spring of 1989 with banning the exploitation of a mine located in the territory of the Srebrenica municipality. The mayor argued that his town was paying a high environmental price while all the workplaces and benefits originating from mining activity were kept in Milići. A demonstration supporting the ban took place at the village closest to the mine.⁸⁶ Duki and the Serb leaders, in their turn, accused that Muslim politicians from Srebrenica and Vlasenica intended to seize the control of the firm. Duki enjoyed an immense popularity among Serbs in the area, so many of them perceived the attacks against him as if they were aimed at the community at large.⁸⁷

It must be recalled that the social context in Srebrenica region looked different from that of the three previously mentioned “emigration municipalities”. Between 1963 and 1991, Srebrenica and Vlasenica had a different immigration trend due to their concentration of economic activities (especially mines and light industries),⁸⁸ which made them more prosperous than the average in Eastern Bosnia, and turned them into a workforce attraction. Simultaneously, a shift in the national structure occurred: from 1971 to 1991, both Srebrenica and Vlasenica became municipalities with a solid Muslim majority following a drop of the Serb population in relative terms, which also implied a national redistribution of cadres.⁸⁹ While the Serb national mobilization in Nevesinje was taking place to reinforce their long-lasting hegemony by removing the alleged “corrupted” cadres, in the Srebrenica’s area a Serb-Muslim confrontation broke out to

⁸⁵ Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD), *Srebrenica: a ‘safe area’*. Appendix IV. *History and Reminders in East Bosnia*, Amsterdam: NIOD, 2002, 61-62. Duki later became one of the leading members of SDS in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁸⁶ Curiously Sehomerovi, a Muslim, openly related its case with the above mentioned Šipovo-Jajce dispute, taking the side of the first (dominantly Serb), rather than the second (mainly Muslim-Croat). “Šipovo is right for not leaving the mine to Jajce”, he commented. “Vlaseni ko-srebreni ki spor oko boksita. ‘Neka idu iz naše opštine!’”, *Oslobođenje*, April 24, 1989.

⁸⁷ Some sources mention the Duki-Sehomerovi clash as the main reason why Sehomerovi was arrested and murdered at the beginning of the war. NIOD, *Srebrenica*, 62.

⁸⁸ Republiki Zavod za statistiku, *Statistički godišnjak*, 293.

⁸⁹ Between 1971 and 1991, in Srebrenica Muslim population raised from 63% to 75%, while Serb dropped from 36% to 23%; in Vlasenica, Muslims raised from 48% to 55%, Serbs dropped from 50% to 42%. Similar changes occurred also in the neighbouring municipality of Bratunac, where Muslims were 51% in 1971 and 64% in 1991, while Serbs were 48% in 1971 and 34% in 1991. Following the Bougarel’s categories, both Srebrenica and Bratunac converted themselves from “balanced-binational” to “majority-binational” municipalities. NIOD, *Srebrenica*, 54.

renegotiate the distribution of positions and resources following the recent demographic changes.

All these cases produced quite serious concern among party circles. Despite the respective peculiarities, both the *intra*-territorial tensions (cases of Nevesinje and Gacko), and the *inter*-territorial disputes (cases of Šipovo vs. Jajce, Mili i vs. Vlasenica vs. Srebrenica) show various elements of continuity:

- 1) A generic anger/disappointment anger against mismanagement, corruption and bureaucracy which initially focused on the local level, with few or no direct reference to the republican élites. The targets were the so-called “lobbies” who had led the municipalities during the last 15-20 years;
- 2) An undeniable influence from the recent events in Serbia and the consequent polarization of Miloševi ’s policy, which attracted many Bosnian Serbs and frightened many non-Serbs (and, in some cases, bringing a direct presence of protestors from the neighbour republics of Serbia and Montenegro);
- 3) A focus, sometimes quite obsessive, on the notion of “controlling and protecting our own resources”, namely economic assets, management of firms, jobs and public services; this message was very effective, as it was amplified by economic crisis, political uncertainty and the declining confidence in central institutions;
- 4) The weight of the “*glasine*”, i.e. the “rumours” related to episodes of alleged inter-ethnic tensions or clashes (some were documented, others were unproved, exaggerated or completely false). This was also related to the evolving role of the press;
- 5) The dramatic incapability of the SKBiH to act as a mediator of the disputes, which further encouraged people to search for other forms of representation outside of the party. When such territorial disputes had occurred in earlier times, someone from the Central Committee was sent on the ground to host a meeting and settle differences, while some native who was embedded within the republican élite in Sarajevo used to “plead” in order to obtain guarantees and protections. Indeed, after the huge turnover that happened in the late 1980s, especially after the Agrokomerc scandal, the respective regional or municipal “lobbies” either had been removed, or had lost influence in top republican circles. But

now, when officials from Sarajevo came into towns involved in local mobilizations, they were received with hostility by local cadres or even publicly rejected.

1.3. National or institutional conflicts? Sarajevo vs. Belgrade via Srebrenica

All these elements were creating particular concern within the SKBiH's higher ranks, not only because of their immediate repercussions: even if they could be interpreted as relatively isolated and limited cases (as, in some cases, they actually were) the problem was their potential reproducibility in other areas. The new president of the party, Nijaz Duraković, expressed his growing concern for an increasing "national-religious euphoria" among both Muslims and Serbs, which was becoming an all-encompassing identification.⁹⁰ However, Duraković began by concentrating his concerns on the Serb nationalism. On July 15, he commented: "In recent times, increasingly offensive theories are heard about the fact that the Serb people in Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to organize itself institutionally, arguing that 'Why it is bad if we have our cultural-education and distinct society'. This kind of organization would, literally, mean the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina [...] and also the division of Yugoslavia".⁹¹ This statement could not go unnoticed for two reasons. First, there was the unwritten rule that a Bosnian communist official should always blame first the nationalism of "his own" community: now it was the first time that the party leader broke it (although other representatives had not fully respected the norm in the late 1980s). Second, these words were uttered two weeks after an official meeting between the delegations of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, so it hinted that there were issues between the two republics that were far from being solved.

In fact, that meeting had been carried out in a somewhat tense atmosphere. Serbia's representatives urged for a more Yugoslav orientation and complained of the alleged criticisms, mixed with pro-Albanian declarations, coming from some Bosnian leaders (referring to the abovementioned Muhić and Abadžić case). On the other hand, the delegation from Sarajevo observed that calls for an "institutionalization of national differences" were taking force within Bosnia's territory, implicitly suggesting that

⁹⁰ "Nacionalno-religijska euforija", *Oslobođenje*, July 24, 1989.

⁹¹ "Nema kompromisa za djelateljima Jugoslavije", *Oslobođenje*, July 15, 1989.

Belgrade was igniting them. Both delegations reproached each other for the hostile attitude of their respective media organs: while Serbia noticed that *Oslobo enje* had published tendentious opinions against Serbia's policy (especially in regard to the Kosovo question), the Bosnian delegation reported a malevolent inclination of the daily newspaper *Politika* towards them.⁹² The Serbian leaders were increasing their pressure on their Bosnian counterparts to support their views in their dispute with the Slovenes. The Bosnians, on the other side, were concerned by the defence of their own autonomy and keeping the stability of their own élites.

The above-described territorial clashes obviously did not help to defrost the icy relation between Sarajevo and Belgrade. However, they had not reached their coldest point, which came with the so-called "SDB case". In September 1989, the Bosnian higher authorities were informed that the Security Services (SDB) of Serbia had carried out some operations in Srebrenica and Bratunac, two Bosnia-Herzegovina towns close to the border with Serbia, in order to investigate some alleged cases of ethno-national discrimination against the Serbs living in the region. The final (and strictly confidential) report of the investigations had been issued on August 24th, but it became known in SKBiH circles one month later and revealed publicly in October 15th through an article published by the Croatian weekly *Danas* which was the first to make public some excerpts.⁹³

The report stated, among other things, that: "Muslim fundamentalists" were subjecting Serbs to "strong pressure" to leave the region by means of nepotism, economic exclusivism and a general "anti-Serb campaign"; some local Serb leaders criticized Belgrade's policy only to maintain their appointments and adapt themselves to the Islamophilic trend (Miloje Simi, then president of the SKBiH in Srebrenica, was mentioned as an example); in Serb-inhabited villages, infrastructure projects such as road paving and telephone connection, were much less developed than in Muslim villages; a leading role in town was played by some "Beg" families of Ottoman descent, in close relation to the Islamic community; an overall expansion of Islamist fundamentalism was taking place through the building of mosques, mainly through the role of Ahmet

⁹² "BiH nije ježi ak na vagi podjela", *Oslobo enje*, July 18, 1989.

⁹³ The report was initially reserved to the six highest officials in Serbia, including the then member of Federal Presidency Borisav Jovi who delivered it to his Bosnian homologue Bogi Bogi evi, who was then the first official from Sarajevo to be informed of the (already ended) operation. Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 110; NIOD, *Srebrenica*, 64.

Smajlović, a former prominent member of the Bosnian Islamic Community, native from a village near Srebrenica.⁹⁴

Two major political issues originated from the case: first, the entire investigation was a violation of the normal inter-republican procedures, since the Bosnian authorities had not been asked for authorization, nor warned before the operation. Second, some arguments were clearly exaggerated or manipulated. For example, the report did not mention that Ahmet Smajlović, the man accused of being a “fundamentalist leader”, had died in 1988, three years after leaving his position of President of the Bosnian Islamic Community. A Srebrenica official, Boban Vasić (himself a Serb), provided evidence that Serb directors controlled about 5,000 workers in the town (whose total workforce was 7,000), which contradicted the idea that Serbs were the target of economic discrimination.⁹⁵ The acting Bosnian president, Obrad Piljak, asked for clarification with a letter sent in late September to his Serbian counterpart Slobodan Milošević. The latter did not answer officially, although Piljak later claimed that the Serbian President verbally denied to him any involvement in the affair.⁹⁶

Besides the Sarajevo-Belgrade trouble, the case opened a short dispute within the leadership of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ivan Cvitković, the secretary of the Presidency, denounced publicly the “illegal attack” on the Bosnian sovereignty and the “political evaluations” of the operation, that should not have been included in a security report.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, another member of the republican Presidency, Branko Ekert, claimed that the investigations of the SDB were correct.⁹⁸ A compromise was finally reached within the Central Committee: the party formally blamed the Serbian SDB’s operation as unconstitutional and incorrect, but at the same time, in order to not fuel the

⁹⁴ “Strogo kontrolirana Republika”, *Danas*, October 15, 1989.

⁹⁵ The communist officials from Srebrenica blamed the SDB report. They argued that they had not been contacted to verify the contents of the investigation. They also related the migration of Serbs to socio-economic factors. NIOD, *Srebrenica*, 67.

⁹⁶ According to this version (which was reported by Duraković during a session of the SKBiH presidency), Milošević himself was also astonished and outraged by the affair. The Serbian president claimed that it had been an arbitrary play of the chief of the local Security Services in the Serbian town of Užice. Nijaz Duraković in “Magnetofonski snimak sa 171. sjednice Predsjedništva SKBiH 19.10.1989”, SDP Archive, 8.

⁹⁷ “Ivan Cvitković u titluku: na djelu igre oko BiH”, *Oslobođenje*, October 18, 1989.

⁹⁸ “Atak na suverenitet BiH”, *Oslobođenje*, October 20, 1989.

dispute, they refused to raise the issue at federal level, among its own party wings, or against Serbia.⁹⁹

Apart from preventing a split along national lines, the Central Committee opted to cool off the controversy because of its two potential adverse effects. The first was that Bosnia-Herzegovina could appear as the object of a police state where security forces (albeit, in this case, coming from outside the republic) played a decisive political role. This would cast a dark shadow on the attempts at “staging a break” with the “scandals phase” of 1987-1989. Second, the SDB case provided evidence that the Bosnian communists were losing the control of some local apparatus, especially in the Eastern Bosnia region. It seemed highly unlikely that the Serbian services had not contacted any political or security officials from the region. It soon emerged that the local authorities from Srebrenica had fluid and collaborative relations with the Bosnian government, whereas those from Bratunac showed hostility, attributing to Sarajevo’s neglect the low socio-economic performance of the municipality (especially in comparative terms with neighbouring Srebrenica and Vlasenica). As some members of the Central Committee acknowledged, the fact that parts of the Bratunac territory were *de facto* more integrated in Serbia than in Bosnia, due to geographic reasons, generated still more resentment.¹⁰⁰ Within this context, there was the suspicion that some officers from Bratunac were refusing to cooperate with the Sarajevo authorities and had possibly cooperated with the operation of the Serbian security services, together with some openly pro-Milošević Bosnian cadres.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ “Kome treba precutkivanje”, *Oslobo enje*, October 28, 1989.

¹⁰⁰ In a Central committee session, Dževad Taši stated that “Bratunac is in a somewhat conflict with the leadership of Bosnia-Herzegovina since a long time, mainly due to development issues; [...] but this conflict was reinforced by the fact that a part of this municipality is practically deeply integrated in the territory of SR Serbia [...], there are villages which are 40, 50 or more kilometres far away from the municipality centre which, for example, cannot achieve their health care in Serbia which is, how to say, just nearby home. These conflicts, what we are talking about, have a totally different repercussion in such an atmosphere”.

In the same session, very similar allegations were made by Desimir Me ovi , who also explained that Srebrenica cadres were much more likely to cooperate with Sarajevo than their Bratunac homologues. As detailed earlier, officials from Srebrenica (even the Serb ones) blamed the SDB investigations. Dževad Taši in “Magnetofonski snimak sa 174. sjednice Presjedništva SKBiH 01.11.1989”, SDP Archive, 27/2; Me ovi , *ibidem*, 25/3.

¹⁰¹ One of the pro-Belgrade cadres in Sarajevo was Marko Ostoji , a member of the SSRN republican presidency. In May (few time before the operation of Serbian SDB), Ostoji made a tour in eastern Bosnia to rally support on the Belgrade’s policy in Kosovo. As seen before, he was the only Bosnian politician to support the Knežina meeting in solidarity to Kosovo Serbs. On May 26, 1989, Ostoji made an unannounced visit to the communist officials in Srebrenica. They later claimed that Ostoji was only

The SKBiH leaders did not find it convenient to bring to the public light this ensemble of frustrations and disloyalties, and finally managed to preserve a certain degree of cohesion among the party elite, albeit more for self-conservation reasons rather than to reach common points of view. At the same time, the statements of the SKBiH's president Durakovi on Serb nationalism and its "anti-bureaucratic attempts to destabilize the republic" became more frequent and intense.¹⁰² In late October 1989, Durakovi said in an interview: "Without retreating from the position that all nationalisms are equally dangerous, however, when one realistically examines the situation today, he must objectively accept that today Serbian nationalism is on the offensive against Bosnia-Herzegovina. [...] It has advanced, obviously well-organized, above all toward the 'Serbian districts' in Bosnia-Herzegovina, attempting to spread half-truths or false options, in particular striving to put to bad use the thesis of the Serbs being threatened in Bosnia-Herzegovina, of their alleged decade-long inequality, the alleged manifestation of which is that, according to them, the development policy of SR Bosnia-Herzegovina has intentionally neglected those districts, and the Serbian people has not been allowed ethnic or even cultural affirmation in the environment of community life in Bosnia-Herzegovina" Durakovi also denied that the leadership of Bosnia-Herzegovina was protecting an "Islamization of Marxism" which, he claimed, was "the line of argument of the strategic aspirations of Serb nationalism and its effort to create collective neurosis and a sense of insecurity in the Serb population".

The radicalizing Serbian-Slovene dispute, on the eve of the 14th congress of the Yugoslav Communists, had also a crucial impact on national mobilizations. Neven Andjeli recalls that the first violent incidents "based on ethnic feelings or attitudes" occurred in Sarajevo in mid-October, when some offices of Slovenian and Serbian companies in the very centre of the city were attacked at night and some shots were fired at their property.¹⁰³ In early December, just a few days before the Congress of the SKBiH, protests took place in Šipovo and Titov Drvar, two Serb-majority municipalities in the region of Bosanska Krajina. These demonstrations, which were directed against the Slovenian pro-autonomy policy, were exacerbated by the ban that Ljubljana had imposed

interested for names and personal details, as if the only reason was to get information for the Serbia's secret services. NIOD, *Srebrenica*, 63.

¹⁰² Nijaz Durakovi in "The Congress signifies suicide of LCY", *Nedeljna Dalmacija*, October 22, 1989, translated and reported in *JPRS Report Eastern Europe*, January 31, 1990, 13-14.

¹⁰³ Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 110.

on the “Meeting on the truth”, the demonstration that “anti-bureaucrats” pro-Miloševi supporters from all Yugoslavia (including the same protests’ leaders in Šipovo and Drvar) wanted to rally in the Slovenian capital. However, the protesters in Šipovo also took a stand against the Bosnian Communists for their alleged passiveness towards Slovene autonomism, as well as their “negative approach” towards the Serb mobilizations, including Ljubljana’s ban on the “Meeting on the truth”.¹⁰⁴ It was the first time that a rally openly criticized the SKBiH, since the protests of the summer-autumn of 1989 had been targeted against local Communist officials, but never against the central-republican cadres.

Discord on the Serbian-Slovenian conflict also arose within the local authorities throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, albeit not yet to the point of putting in danger the party’s unity. For example, the Doboj branch supported the Serbian “unitarian” position and condemned the attempts to “confederalize the party and the state” coming from Slovenia.¹⁰⁵ On the opposite side, the SSRN in Posušje complained that “mono-ethnic manifestations” (making implicit, although evident, reference to the pro-Serb meetings) would only add a further threat to inter-ethnic relations.¹⁰⁶ While these cases represented the extreme views, the dominant reaction was still the one exemplified by the SKBiH branch of Travnik, which simply blamed the Bosnian leadership for not “taking a clear stance on the issue”.¹⁰⁷ Many local sections simply awaited decisions from the top: this was the obvious result of a political culture based on democratic centralism. A widespread hesitation dominated the party’s base. A poll research conducted by the Croatian sociologist Ivan Šiber in November 1989 showed an almost symmetric division within the SKBiH’s membership on the decisive topics inflaming the political debate. When asked to choose between the consensual (advocated by the Slovenes) and the majority (advocated by the Serbs) principle in the League of Communists, 52% of Bosnian Communist supported the majority, whereas 51% supported that the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo should be represented by Serbia in the federal organs, not

¹⁰⁴ Meetings in Šipovo took place on December 2 and 4, the last was attended by approx. 2,000 people, coming from the entire region, mainly displaying posters of Miloševi and cheering slogans in his support. In Drvar the protests happened on December 4 and 5 against Slovenia’s closure of borders and claiming for a “United Yugoslavia”. “Miting u Šipovu: opštinar i ekaju svoje mišljenje”, *Oslobo enje*, December 5, 1989.

¹⁰⁵ “Poruka dobojskih komunista: niko nema mandat za sva enje”, *Oslobo enje*, December 9, 1989.

¹⁰⁶ “SSRN Posušja: apel za otvoreni i javni dijalog”, *Oslobo enje*, December 9, 1989.

¹⁰⁷ “Zahtijev travni kih komunista: rukovodstva moraju prigovoriti”, *Oslobo enje*, December 6, 1989.

separately (which coincided with Belgrade's intention to suppress their autonomy).¹⁰⁸ However, when the question was to choose between the Serb and the Slovene program, 24.5% opted for Ljubljana and 18.7% for Belgrade, with 70% not supporting any of them.¹⁰⁹

Also in the party élite there were very distant positions on the issue, but not so as to cause a split. Fuad Muhić, already well-known for his criticisms of Serbia's policy, recognized some kind of legitimacy to the Slovenian amendments, whereas the actively pro-Milošević Mirko Ostojić recommended to the SKBiH more severity towards the Ljubljana proposals of asymmetric federation, arguing that the party's response was too inconsistent.¹¹⁰ But the majority of the elite seemed more inclined to follow a prudent and a "wait and see" attitude.

In order to understand the perception and the shifts beyond the SKBiH's borders on the two main issues (national question and political change), a research poll conducted throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina in October 1989 revealed very insightful data. 58.4% of those who answered the survey considered that in that year inter-ethnic relations had worsened, and almost the same percentage (58.55%) feared the possibility of a civil war in Yugoslavia.¹¹¹ Still, 90% of those surveyed defined as "good" the inter-ethnic relations in the place they lived in, and 80.7% considered "positive" the inter-ethnic relations in their workplace.¹¹² This apparent contradiction suggested that the concern was related to the overall context in Yugoslavia, more so than to the events in Bosnia-Herzegovina or in their local environment. The fact that 66.3% considered that the inter-ethnic relations in the republic were better than in the rest of the federation would confirm this

¹⁰⁸ In both cases, the SKBiH's membership was the most balanced among the various SKJ branches; on the first question, 67% of Communists from Slovenia supported consensus, while 73% of Serbians, 66% of Montenegrins, 65% of Vojvodinians and 57% of Macedonians supported the majority principle. On the second question, 71% of Kosovars, 67% of Slovenes and 48% of Croatians from SKJ supported to maintain the direct representation of provinces in the federal organs (lasting from the 1974 Constitution), while 88% of Serbians, 76% of Montenegrins, 74% of Vojvodinians and 68% of Macedonians favoured its removal. Dejan Jović, *Jugoslavija*, 459-460.

¹⁰⁹ More in detail, the Slovene program had a slight advantage on the economical (37% versus 24%) and the political reforms (22% versus 14%), while the Serb program got more support on the party unity (18% versus 14%). Jović, *ibidem*, 463.

¹¹⁰ "Ko ugrožava BiH", *Oslobo enje*, September 30, 1989; "Da li se CK SKJ ogriješio o slovena ke amandmane?", *Oslobo enje*, October 14, 1989.

¹¹¹ Ibrahim Bakić, "O naciji, religiji i drugim društvenim pitanjima", in Ibrahim Bakić and Ratko Dunđević, *Građani Bosne i Hercegovine o meunarodnim odnosima*, Sarajevo: Institut za proučavanje nacionalnih odnosa, 1990, 25-27. On the last question, a 21,36% answered that did not fear an eventual civil war, while 20,75% were "reflecting on that".

¹¹² Bakić, *ibidem*, 25, 32.

assessment.¹¹³ In other words, a negative perception of the national question did start to spread, but was connected to the “global plan” of the political struggles rather than to personal experience or everyday life of individuals. This is what Ibrahim Baki and Xavier Bougarel defined as the distinction between a “global/political” and a “natural/immediate” level of national conscience.¹¹⁴

This conception of the inter-ethnic shift seems coherent with another figure: when respondents were asked to indicate which was the social group “with the most nationalists inside”, a 39.44% voted for “members of the SKJ’s Central Committee”. This was the second most voted category, only preceded by “intellectuals” (41.5%) and far above the third place occupied by “believers” (24.15%). By contrast, the ordinary members of SKJ (12.01%) and the members of the SKBiH’s Central Committee (11.77%) had much lower figures: therefore, people perceived the *Yugoslav* communist leadership to be much more contaminated by nationalism (and thus more responsible for the worsening of inter-ethnic relations) than the *Bosnian* communist leaders, much more than any other social group except intellectuals.

In the above-mentioned poll, the orientation on the future of Yugoslavia and its model appeared more incline to unionism than to further decentralization, although with quite different degrees depending on the issue at stake, and with a variable – but relatively high – number of undecided. With regard to the relationship between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia, 64.81% backed a “stronger integration” into the federation, 22.45% favoured the “status quo”, and only 10.29% opted for a stronger autonomy of the republics.¹¹⁵ 94.54% linked the existence and the progress of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the progress of the whole of Yugoslavia.¹¹⁶ As Baki concluded, the Bosnian public opinion “does not see any chance for the existence of a Bosnia-Herzegovina identity or state

¹¹³ Baki, *ibidem*, 33.

¹¹⁴ Baki, *ibidem*, 31-32; Bougarel, “Anatomie d’une poudrière”, 120.

¹¹⁵ Baki, 45. It must be observed that the figures of the same poll considerably varied according to national belonging. A “reinforcement of federal spheres of competence” was supported by 76% of Serbs, 73,94% of Yugoslavs, 62,6% of Muslims and only 48,17% of Croats. “Status quo” was chosen by 27,93% Muslims, 22,56% Croats, 20,44% Serbs and 19,68 Yugoslavs, while 29,27% Croats, 9,46% Muslims, 6,38% Yugoslavs and 3,56% Serbs opted for stronger autonomy of the republics. In sum, a preference for unionism appeared as very explicit among Yugoslavs, Bosnian Serbs and even among Bosnian Muslims, albeit with a lesser extent. The orientation among the Bosnian Croats was more balanced since the pro-unionist, though with relative majority, were lower than the sum of pro-autonomists and pro-status quo. Baki, *ibidem*, 77.

¹¹⁶ 81.07% “totally agrees” with this assumption, 13.47 “generally agrees” and 4.49 “does not agree”.

without Yugoslavia”.¹¹⁷ An inclination towards unionism also emerged when asked about the constitutional reforms, albeit less intense than in previous questions: according to 47.25% of respondents, they should start reforming the Yugoslav Constitution, and only later the republican ones. 21.61% argued the opposite (first republican reform, then federal), while the undecided reached a high percentage: 29.3%. To summarize: the poll indicated a perception that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was the main “incubator” of national tensions, and a very strong commitment to Yugoslav unity, with a more intense inclination for unionism than confederalism. These results looked clearer than the ones observed within the League of Communists, and surely less ambiguous than the political positions of the party élites.

¹¹⁷ Baki , *ibidem*, 46.

2. THE FINAL CONGRESSES

2.1. The 10th Congress of the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina

The 10th Congress of the SKBiH, scheduled for 7-9 December 1989, was to be the prologue of the 14th Congress of the SKJ. It took place in a context of increasing uncertainty about the general framework of Yugoslavia: the conflict between the Serbian and Slovenian élites had reached its climax after each had called for an economic boycott of the other Republic. The situation brought many observers to consider the split within the SKJ as a serious possibility and not a taboo anymore.

The President of the SKBiH, Nijaz Durakovi , strongly opposed summoning an extraordinary Congress in such circumstances, arguing that it was “inappropriate” and that it should have been postponed, since he logically feared that the political turmoil could destabilize the Bosnian Communists. In an interview to *Slobodna Dalmacija*, he stated: “In an environment of unprecedented social tensions and general ideological confusion, with all these right-wing assaults which are growing into anti-communist hysteria; with the push for ethnic programs within the communist movement; within the environment of general discord, of division into supporters and opponents, and of suspicion, powerlessness, and disgrace even within the highest bodies of the SKJ, to go to a Congress that, in great suspense, we have called ‘extraordinary’, means nothing but easing our suicide in many respects. [...] I have been in favour of postponing the Congress, waiting for better times, or if it is still possible, to seek and find points in common”.¹¹⁸

As Neven Andjeli pointed out, the previous Congresses of the SKBiH were traditionally the occasion to show the strength and the unity of the movement, rather than to prepare for real political confrontation. The major event of the Congress was the opening speech of the Party’s President (the “*Referat*”, which took stock of the situation and established a set of rigid guide lines.¹¹⁹ However, in the 1989 Congress the context was completely different. Some crucial points, such as the opening to pluralism in

¹¹⁸ Nijaz Durakovi , interviewed in “The Congress signifies suicide of LCY”, *Nedeljna Dalmacija*, October 22, 1989, translated and reported in *JPRS Report Eastern Europe*, January 31, 1990.

¹¹⁹ Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 112.

Slovenia and Croatia, the polarization of Milošević's policy and the appearance of national mobilizations at local level, would likely be sources for debate, especially bearing in mind the prevailing "Fall-of-the-wall atmosphere" which was easily perceivable during late 1989.

Hence, it is not surprising that Duraković's *Referat* was a supreme exercise of verbal and conceptual prudence, sometimes reaching an ill-concealed duplicity, with the aim of keeping all the opposing tendencies within the party. On the issue of political reforms, Duraković openly argued that the SKBiH should give up its monopoly, but without specifying at all how and when this should be done.¹²⁰ He explained that political pluralism should not necessarily coincide with a multi-party system and that it should first of all be developed within the context of the Socialist Alliance (SSRN), that is, within the already existing framework (this was a canonical formula of the official discourse of self-management).¹²¹ The only concrete action they suggested was the reform of the Socialist Alliance, which should become the "real space for the ongoing competition of ideas, but always within socialism-oriented political programmes".¹²² The idea of "democratizing" and opening to pluralism was verbally dominant throughout the entire document, but there was no direct reference to the establishment of fully competitive elections.

The speech was also very vague about the model of organization of the SKJ. Duraković recommended that the party maintain the principle of "democratic centralism", since "there is no rational reason to abandon it".¹²³ However, a few lines later, he called for a "complete redefinition", since the decision-making within the SKJ should include a combination of majority rule and consensus, the latter being exclusively maintained for questions of fundamental interest.¹²⁴ Moreover, it was stated that the "game rules" of the pluralistically reformed system should be established by the Federal Constitution.¹²⁵ It is remarkable that the Bosnian Constitution was not even mentioned at this point. Later, the

¹²⁰ Nijaz Duraković, "Savez Komunističke partije i izazovi novog vremena. Referat na 10. Kongresu SKBiH, Sarajevo 7. Decembra 1989", SDP Archive, 17.

¹²¹ Duraković, "Referat", 17.

¹²² Duraković, *ibidem*, 18.

¹²³ As Donia and Fine correctly explained, the concept of "democratic centralism" in the 1980s was, beyond its literal definition, a "codeword for top-down party discipline" within the League of Communists. Robert Donia and John V.A. Fine, *Bosnia-Herzegovina. A tradition betrayed*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 206.

¹²⁴ Duraković, "Referat", 27.

¹²⁵ Duraković, "Referat", 18.

Referat affirmed that the SKBiH set the limits of their internal changes within that of the SKJ program. These were admissions that Bosnia-Herzegovina was not ready yet to take a unilateral step towards political pluralism, as Slovenian Communists had made and as Croatian Communists were about to. For the SKBiH a pro-Yugoslav and SKJ-loyalist position was a priority over all, even over internal democratization.

In the economic domain, Durakovi 's speech first emphasized the urgent need of reforms such as the institution of plural forms of propriety, in the same direction as the program of the Federal Government carried out by Ante Markovi .¹²⁶ Yet, at the same time, the “struggle for socialist self-management” was still recognized as an economic and political goal in order to “put a limit to bureaucracy and technocracy” in order to drive towards a true social integration; this was, again, a canonical formula of the self-management traditional rule.¹²⁷

On the national question, Durakovi rejected any political program based on national particularism, as well as any eventual demand for “autonomous provinces” inside the Republic, as a consequence of homogeneization on national grounds in some specific regions. The *Referat* also mentioned the so-called “stereotypes” and “appetites” coming from outside. These were implicit references to the recent institutional conflicts with Serbia, related to the management of the security services during the SDB case, and the attacks coming from the Belgrade press, especially from *Politika*, against the Bosnian leadership. At the same time, Durakovi declined any “supra-national” identity concept in Bosnia-Herzegovina and backed the emancipation of each of the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina. “Our republic is not, nor can be, a supra-national [lit. *nadnacionalna*] community. But it is neither, nor can be, a mechanical sum of closed or mutually opposed national entities. [...] Our overall post-war development shows how it is possible to achieve a national, cultural, universally human emancipation only through relationships of equality and life in common”.¹²⁸

Furthermore, the concept of “*Bošnjaštvo*” (“Bosniakness”, or “Bosnianism”) was criticised. The term was in itself ambiguous, because it was interpreted in two ways. The first was as a “neutral”, supra-national and all-encompassing concept that referred to all

¹²⁶ Durakovi , *ibidem*, 12.

¹²⁷ Durakovi , *ibidem*, 14-17.

¹²⁸ Durakovi , *ibidem*, 22.

Bosnian-Herzegovinians, and which corresponded to the notion of “*Bošnjastvo*” promoted under Austro-Hungarian rule, under the leadership of Benjámín von Kállay (1882-1903), to encourage a non-ethnic patriotism and to discourage nationalism.¹²⁹ The second interpretation attributed instead the *Bošnjastvo* exclusively to the Bosnian Muslims in order to emancipate them from a purely religious attribution. In 1989-90, some non-Communist intellectuals were advocating the *Bošnjastvo*, in both of the aforementioned senses, in the debates about identity policies in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹³⁰ However, Durakovi explicitly rejected both the options.¹³¹ It must be remembered that shortly before the Congress, Durakovi had also made critical observations about the supra-national concept of “Yugoslavness” (*Jugoslavenstvo*). In October 1989, he had stated that “Yugoslavness as a national or supra-national category within the framework of socialist self-management does not have neither scientific-theoretic, nor practical-empirical bases, so that every defence of it represents a great danger for national individuality”. According to Durakovi, only a “patriotic” Yugoslav sentiment was acceptable and coherent, as a “dialectic union”, with the emancipation of the individual peoples and populations.¹³² In other words, the Bosnian Communists were strongly reaffirming the traditional “pluri-national” approach, still solidly based on the principle of “national key” (*nacionalni klju*) which implied the proportional repartition of posts in political and professional domains according to national identity.

The ambivalence of most of the *Referat*'s contents evidenced that a huge space for debate would be left for the Congress starting on December 7, 1989, which was attended by 547 delegates representing the 380,026 members of the SKBiH.¹³³ The crucial issues of the debate can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Political transition (including multi-party system, separation between party and state, internal democratization);
- 2) The Yugoslav crisis with particular reference to the Serbian-Slovenian conflict;
- 3) The SKBiH scandals and “affaires” of the period 1987-1989;

¹²⁹ Donia and Fine, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 96-101.

¹³⁰ See chapter 5.6.

¹³¹ Durakovi, “Referat”, 23.

¹³² “I ja sam boljševik”, *Valter*, October 20, 1989.

¹³³ Analiti ko-informativni centar X Kongresa, “Informator n. 2”, December 8, 1989, 4, SDP Archive.

4) The economic reforms.

The eventual introduction of a multi-party system was the major source of discord. Many delegates still rejected it openly, arguing that national parties would automatically appear and take profit of the current situation, and taking for granted that a significant part of the SKBiH's base would be against a multi-party transition.¹³⁴ This was a sensitive argument: even a moderately reformist cadre such as Krstan Malešević admitted that “the ideology of the members of the party is still today largely dogmatic, ideological and conservative, what is undoubtedly the biggest obstacle to a quick reform”. While for the conservatives this attitude within the party base justified their opposition to changes, the reformists interpreted it as a proof of the apathy and paralysis the party was trapped in, and that this was, in their view, a further reason to overcome it. Pro-reform delegates argued that the ongoing events at the socialist countries in Eastern Europe should inspire a political innovation, whereas conservatives still advocated the “Yugoslav specificity”, namely believing that the self-management model would contain the instruments to achieve full democratization and to prevent anti-authoritarian forms of mobilization. As a continuist delegate from Mostar said, “We are not Hungary, nor Czechoslovakia, nor Poland. We have our own fundamental principles and from these fundamentals we are ready to eliminate bureaucracy from power, so that we may continue acting”.¹³⁵ The “Yugoslav specificity” was advocated, in very similar terms, by Slobodan Milošević and the Army in that period.¹³⁶ Some dogmatist delegates even suggested a return to the Yugoslav Communist Party (KPJ), namely the pre-1945 unitarian party framework, without republican branches.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Jovo Radić in “Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa Saveza Komunističke Bosne i Hercegovine, 7., 8. i 9. decembar 1989. godine”, SDP Archive, 228/3, 228/4; Muhamed Patak, *ibidem*, 232/3.

¹³⁵ Muhamed Patak, *ibidem*, 232/2, 3.

¹³⁶ In early January 1990, Milošević commented: “There is no reason to equate the events in Yugoslavia with those in other socialist countries. [...] They are now creating the kind of world we initiated in 1948”. Reported in Cohen, *Broken bonds*, 82.

The party branch of the Yugoslav Army (SK-JNA), shortly before the 14th Congress of the SKJ “refused to accept any link between the end of socialism in Eastern Europe and the future of socialism in Yugoslavia”. Florian Bieber, “The role of the Yugoslav People’s Army in the dissolution of Yugoslavia”, in Lenard Cohen and Jasna Dragović Soso (eds.), *State collapse in South-Eastern Europe. New perspectives on Yugoslavia’s disintegration*, Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008, 317.

¹³⁷ See Vujo Mihajlović in “Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa”, 110/5; Albert Musafića, *ibidem*, 217/3.

2.2. The ZAVNOBiH Initiative: a “Partisan” and democratic way out?

During the Congress, one of the most visible initiatives was taken by a group of fourteen liberal and reformist-oriented delegates who submitted to the Congress a short and simple petition. It was a mere half-page calling for the introduction of the “constitutional and legal conditions for the exercise of freedoms and rights of political association and organization”, as well as “the legal conditions to set the next elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina as free elections by secret ballot”, based on a “general, universal and direct right to vote”.¹³⁸ Apart from its literal content, the most relevant aspect of the petition was that it was grounded on the principles contained in the “ZAVNOBiH Declaration”. The ZAVNOBiH had been the highest ruling organ of the Partisan anti-fascist movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1943 and 1945, during the Second World War and the main source of republican statehood. In the 2nd Session, held on 1 July 1944 in Sanski Most, the ZAVNOBiH issued the “Declaration on the Citizens’ Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina”.¹³⁹ The petition of those fourteen delegates included the complete text of the 1944 Declaration, demanding its immediate and integral application.

Such a reference provided a strong historical-symbolical legitimation (Neven Andjeli called it a “powerful attack on the communist power”¹⁴⁰), evidencing that the monopolistic praxis had distorted or suspended the original principles of the antifascist resistance and that the new circumstances should lead to its restoration. Moreover, due to the peculiar value of the ZAVNOBiH proclamation of the historical and legal statehood of Bosnia-Herzegovina, this initiative implicitly aimed to enhance the sovereignty of the Republic versus that of the Federation. It was a considerable step beyond the speech guidelines of Durakovi : while the President of the SKBiH had claimed that the rules of

¹³⁸ “Desetom Kongresu SKBiH: inicijativa”, (Original document of the “ZAVNOBiH Initiative” included in the Congress’ documentation, SDP Archive).

¹³⁹ ZAVNOBiH is the acronym for “State Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina”. It had been formed in November 25, 1943 in the town of Mrkonji Grad. The first resolution of ZAVNOBiH affirmed the historical and political character of Bosnia-Herzegovina within the framework of a Yugoslav federation. Moreover, it included the popular formulation of Bosnia-Herzegovina as “neither Serbian, nor Croat, nor Muslim, but rather Serbian, and Croat, and Muslim”. (See chapter 5.6).

The ZAVNOBiH held two other sessions, on 1-2 July 1944 in Sanski Most and 26-28 April 1945 in Sarajevo. In the former, The “ZAVNOBiH Declaration” was issued, including the principles of the right for free and secret elections, the freedom of association, and the freedom of private economic enterprise.

¹⁴⁰ Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 93.

the system should be established first at the Yugoslav level, the supporters of the petition claimed that they could be changed or even established unilaterally, irrespective of what is decided within SKJ and Yugoslav institutions.

The petition, also known as “ZAVNOBiH Initiative”, had been drafted shortly before the Congress by a group of five intellectuals, Zdravko Grebo, Tarik Haveri , Ivan Lovrenovi , Desimir Me ovi i Miodrag Živanovi .¹⁴¹ Grebo and Me ovi were also members of the highest SKBiH organs and, as seen before, had led several reformist initiatives during the months prior that had converted them into the visible faces of party’s liberal-progressive sector. They decided to submit the petition to the SKBiH Congress, together with twelve other delegates, who composed an informal and non-structured group.¹⁴² Significantly, four of them (Stijepo Andriji , Desimir Me ovi , Vjeko Domljan, Osman Pirija) were economists, particularly sensitive to the idea of transforming the economic structure through radical political reforms. When called to present the petition, Desimir Me ovi urged the SKBiH to assume an active role in the political transition, pointing out that the post-war regime had achieved only some of the founding principles contained in the original declaration of ZAVNOBiH, such as the national, religious and gender equality, but not other, such as the freedom of association, press and private economic enterprise.¹⁴³ Another of its promoters, Dragan Kragulj, underlined that the proposal would be the only path to definitively complete the separation between state and party, which had been proclaimed in documents many times, but had never been fully implemented.¹⁴⁴

It is remarkable that the submitted document did not mention the possible introduction of a ban on ethno-national parties, nor did the fourteen promoters of the “ZAVNOBiH Initiative” take a definite stance about it. Momo Ševarika recommended implicitly the legalisation of national parties by observing that they would soon appear anyway, like it or not, so that an eventual ban would provoke an escalation of repression.¹⁴⁵ Dragan Kragulj argued instead that the creation of national political forces

¹⁴¹ Miodrag Živanovi , “Ostvarivanje prava i sloboda. O jednom otvorenom pismu”, in *Prelom*, 9, December 1989, 8.

¹⁴² The 14 signatories were Stijepo Andriji , Mihajlo Baki , Vjeko Domljan, Zdravko Grebo, Hidajeta Hamurovi , Dragan Kragulj, Juraj Martinovi , Desimir Me ovi , Mladenko Niki , Stojko Peji , Osman Pirija, Esad Salihbasi , Momo Ševarika, Ratko Vujovi .

¹⁴³ Desimir Me ovi in “Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa”, 234/3.

¹⁴⁴ Dragan Kragulj in “Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa”, 91/2.

¹⁴⁵ Momo Ševarika, *ibidem*, 231/4.

should be constitutionally prohibited even in a multi-party and de-monopolized scenario.¹⁴⁶ Hence, even among the most reformist-oriented representatives there was no complete agreement on this issue. This proves how thorny was the issue of the automatic connection between political pluralism and nationalism, so deeply entrenched in the Bosnian Communists' ethos after 45 years of "Brotherhood and unity" narrative. On the other hand, the belief in the ban attests that many party members still believed in the ability of the Bosnian institutions and apparatus to make this ban effective. The events of early 1990, however, would soon prove that their belief was wrong.

The ZAVNOBiH Initiative remained a marginal one. Aside from Desimir Me ovi , the then mayor of Sarajevo Juraj Martinovi and Zdravko Grebo (who was surely the most charismatic and publicly known among the group, but had lost further influence in the party after resigning from the Central Committee of the SKJ that summer) the other delegates were almost unknown for the rest of the Congress' members. The group had too few connections with both the élites and the territorial bases, where diffidence towards political change was still dominant. The fact that some ultra-conservative delegates suggested arresting the petition's promoters reveals the unchanged extent of such suspicions and fears.¹⁴⁷ One of the few endorsements of the initiative came from the SSO BiH, the youth wing of the party. Its leader Rasim Kadi observed that "everybody formally agrees with quitting the monopoly of power, but no one is willing to take the first step to make it effective"; he also attacked the monopolistic pretension of the SKBiH which "only counts on 10% of the total population", therefore lacking legitimacy to decide on behalf of the entire citizenry.¹⁴⁸

In the end, the Congress formally approved the initiative as a generic "appeal to the Socialist Alliance and to the Parliament", but was neither a binding measure, nor did it envisage concrete terms and conditions for its formal adoption.¹⁴⁹ The Congress expressed a vague commitment for political pluralism, but without clearly advocating a well defined, competitive multi-party system, something that would be fully formalized only six months later. When the Parliament examined the ZAVNOBiH Initiative, all it did was to set up an ineffective "working group" to find out why some principles of the

¹⁴⁶ Dragan Kragulj, *ibidem*, 91/3.

¹⁴⁷ Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 93.

¹⁴⁸ Rasim Kadi in "Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa", 233/2, 3.

¹⁴⁹ Ivan Cvitkovi , *ibidem*, 237.

1944 Declaration had not been accomplished.¹⁵⁰ A first, partial and incomplete law on political association was issued on February 21, 1990, but it was immediately suspended and submitted to revision due to the party's hesitations. The definitive law establishing the conditions for the multi-party system was ratified as late as July 1990. The ZAVNOBiH initiative also failed at its broader purpose of calming the atmosphere of suspicion and open-endedness and opening an internal debate among the Bosnian Communists on the issue of political transformation.

2.3. Yugoslav framework, national question and political reforms.

Tacit (dis)agreements

A very frequent theme of discussion during the Congressional debate was obviously the institutional framework in Yugoslavia, with specific reference to the Serbian-Slovenian conflict. However, while almost every delegate made some mention to it, almost no one made public her/his own orientation towards either Belgrade or Ljubljana. Almost all the interventions expressed a generic support to Yugoslav unity and recommended the necessity of mediation between Serbia and Slovenia. An appearance of compromise was still felt as a “hegemonic obligation” in the public discourse of the SKBiH members at the republican scale. Moreover, very few direct references to the national question in Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were heard at the Congress' debate, with the remarkable exception of the then 79-year old Osman Karabegovi , then a controversial figure within the SKBiH.¹⁵¹ Karabegovi enjoyed high level of popularity among the party's base because he was seen as a sort of “watchman of original Titoism”, having been a former dissident against the Bosnian élite but who never disavowed the fundamental principles of Yugoslav socialism. Karabegovi argued that growing instability was spreading among the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina because of the alleged propaganda coming from some Bosnian and Croatian newspapers (*Vjesnik* and

¹⁵⁰ Miodrag Živanovic (one of the first 5 intellectuals promoters of the initiative) reported this anecdote in “Poruke ZAVNOBiH-a: Vratimo dostojanstvo”, *Al Jazeera Balkans*, November 25, 2011. Accessed July 30, 2013. <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/poruke-zavnobih-vratimo-dostojanstvo>.

¹⁵¹ A member of Communist Party since 1932, then Partisan leader and prominent high-ranking member of the Yugoslav regime, he had been fired from the SKBiH in 1972, together with three other relevant party leaders, for denouncing a lack of democracy in Bosnian regime. They were fully rehabilitated in 1988. Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 46.

Danas from Zagreb; *As*, *Oslobo enje* and *Naši Dani* from Sarajevo) that created suspicion and hatred against the Serbs of Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁵² Karabegovi urged the Bosnian leaders to intervene against this negative campaign: bearing in mind that the institutions of Sarajevo had in turn claimed to be the target of frequent attacks from the Serbian press, notably *Politika*, Karabegovi's stance could not pass unnoticed. Above all, he was expressing an unconditional support to Serbia's policy, in the following terms: "So, let us clarify to the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina that in the Republic of Serbia it is acting a great democratic movement, led by communists, and that this democratic movement cannot be anti-Muslim or anti-Croat".¹⁵³ It must be recalled that Karabegovi was a Muslim by nation,¹⁵⁴ so that his position had a political, not ethno-national, motivation. He sincerely believed that the Serbian unitarian vision carried out by Milošević was Yugoslavist and anti-nationalist, and deemed it as a necessary turn to keep the country united and the only solution to bring order to the regime's foundations. While such a position was not very common among non-Serbs, he was not alone, among the aged and dogmatic cadres of Muslim, Croat and other non-Serbs who endorsed some kind of recentralizing attempt. Karabegovi concluded his speech with a sort of warning to fellow members of his nation: "The historic option for Muslims is Yugoslavia", while reminding the equality of nations in it as well as in the "indivisible" Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁵⁵ A large round of applause followed Karabegovi's speech, which was partly due to his emotive references and, for at least a part of the audience, manifest approval to his political line.

Nonetheless, sharp attacks came shortly thereafter. Some interpreted the speech as a revival of the old authoritarianism and, most of all, as too compliant towards

¹⁵² In his speech, Karabegovi quoted the names of some journalists who allegedly had "brutally attacked" him and other former Partisans: they were Manojlo Tomić (*Naši Dani*), Senad Avdić (*Oslobo enje*) and Mustafa Mujagić (*Vjesnik*). This circumstance could suggest that the acrimony he had for the press was reinforced by personal feelings. Osman Karabegovi in "Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa", 190/2, 3.

¹⁵³ Osman Karabegovi, *ibidem*, 191/BP.

¹⁵⁴ Osman Karabegovi was born in 1911 in Banja Luka in a Muslim family. In the first post-1945 period, he identified himself as a Yugoslav, as several other high-level Communist leaders of Muslim descent. Until 1971, Muslims could identify themselves only as "undeclared" in the census. Then, most of the Muslim communist leaders identified themselves as Serbs (as Avdo Humo, Hajro Kapetanović, Šefket Maglajlić and Hakija Pozderac) or Yugoslavs (as Džemal Bijedić, Pašaga Mandžić, and the same Karabegovi). Some opted for the Serb identity since it was then the dominant group in Bosnian élite. Ivo Banac, "The Bosnian Muslims", in Mark Pinson (ed.), *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, Harvard: CMES, 1996, 144-45.

¹⁵⁵ Osman Karabegovi in "Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa", 192/2.

Belgrade.¹⁵⁶ As an ideal counterbalance to Karabegović, the delegate from Mostar, Filip Ujević, markedly stressed the leading role of Serbia in igniting the various forms of nationalism in the country. He detailed various stages of affirmation and institutionalization of Belgrade's chauvinism, from the influences on the media to the use of mass-protests.¹⁵⁷ It is remarkable that Ujević was the first in the Congress not only to speak openly against "Serbian nationalism", but also to simply cite Slobodan Milošević's name, something that until then had been a sort of taboo in party debate. Karabegović's and Ujević's speeches represented the two extreme positions on the Serbian policy and ignited a short controversy. While Nijaz Skenderagić blamed Karabegović for pointing "authoritarian attacks" against the Bosnian press, but without mentioning the pressure of the Belgrade newspapers on the institutions of Sarajevo, Momir Kragulj firmly criticized Ujević's discourse for his baseless anti-Serb tone. "Has Serbia occupied anybody? Whom can Serbia occupy today, in this Titoist Yugoslavia?"¹⁵⁸

The heated controversy seemed to open the "Pandora's box" of the underground conflict going on within the SKBiH, thus dismantling its narrative of compromise. Nonetheless, the party's self-preservation instinct again prevailed, and prevented an open split. Direct references to the national question disappeared from the debate; there were only sporadic mentions by delegates coming from areas where inter-ethnic relations were particularly delicate or had worsened recently.¹⁵⁹ One of these was Munira Hadžić, delegate from Srebrenica. After recalling the "SDB case" which had occurred months before in its municipality, she dramatically denounced that divisions had risen from then on and "national census" were carried out, albeit she failed to specify who were responsible for that. "*They* [italics are mine] wanted to count and divide us", she said. Her

¹⁵⁶ Shortly after the congress, the Sarajevo weekly *Valter*, a magazine of liberal-oriented youth organizations, dedicated to Karabegović a harsh editorial comment written by Jasmin Duraković. "Karabegović is the typical product of the first, post-war generation of Bosnian politicians, one among those who have been for long time untouchable authorities because of their war carriers, [...] until his fall in 1972 he had been one of the most prominent advocates of the 'firm politic hand' [lit. *vrsta politika ruka*]". "Negativac broja: Osman Karabegović. Odbrana i posljednji dani", *Valter*, 15 December 1989.

¹⁵⁷ Filip Ujević, a Herzegovinian Croat from Mostar, enumerated, as key-elements of "institutionalization" of Serbian nationalism: "Milošević's shady discourses", then "savagely media war led by *Politika*, *Duga*, *Intervju* and TV Beograd"; the "iconography of primitivism in meetings", a "new-made shameful symbolmania for the glorious Serb history", and the "open effusions of Chetnik, greater-Serb, anti-Muslim, anti-Croat and anti-Slovene comments" by Serbian intellectuals. Filip Ujević in "Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa", 194/4.

¹⁵⁸ Momir Kragulj, *ibidem*, 206/3.

¹⁵⁹ For example, see Mirsad Djugum, delegate from Duvno, in "Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa", 179/3; Vinko Jurić, delegate from Titluk, *ibidem*, 115/3 (1465)

desperate plea hinted that the local institutions in Srebrenica hardly controlled the situation.¹⁶⁰ In any case, the plea of Munira Hadži did not inspire further debate on the first signs of national mobilizations occurring in Eastern Bosnia.

During the Congressional debate, a recurring theme was the request to resolve the cases of mismanagement and bribery that had affected the SKBiH in the late 1980s, particularly the “Neum” scandal, which was the most recent and flagrant case of power abuse, given that it involved a network of directly privileged or accomplice officials. This case was so big that the anger not only addressed at against singular cadres, but against the whole Bosnian political class. The dissatisfaction was amplified by accurate press coverage and by the tangible effects of the economic crisis, which obviously stirred up the outrage against public officials’ corruption. Some official investigations had already been made, and these had caused the resignations of prominent SKBiH leaders.¹⁶¹ However, party’s base demanded more action on the issue. Hence, a working group in Congress was created to examine the “individual responsibility” of the involved cadres. Many delegates reported the disappointment prevailing in their local sections, justifying the decline in memberships and poor participation with the negative perception of the scandal.

Although there was unanimous consensus about requesting further enquiries and reflexion, the political evaluations of the case differed. Some conservative members asked for a “return to the origin”, namely to return to the true values of socialism against corruption and personal privilege.¹⁶² The most incisive of them requested an “anti-bureaucratic struggle” and some demanded not only the destitution of involved cadres, but also a huge, if not complete, renovation of the leadership of the SKBiH.¹⁶³ On the

¹⁶⁰ “Someone has started to count us [...], who rules where, not only in the enterprises but also in shops and stores, if a Serb or a Muslim, as if it’s the most important thing in the world. Workplaces are counted irrespective of whether the person holds the proper title for his job. For someone it’s more important to be Serb or Muslim. Someone has counted our phone books and placed according the names, if they are Serbs or Muslims. It was also controlled if we do have or do not have a green stair handrail, as if it was an important thing in this moment, and as if these buildings with green handrails were not ours since 30 or 50 years”. Munira Hadži , *ibidem*, 198/1-3.

¹⁶¹ Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 65-66, 71.

¹⁶² This position was well-exposed in the intervention by Osman Karabegovi in “Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa”, 44/3.

¹⁶³ Robert Fazekaš, *ibidem*, 33/3; Slobodan Bili , *ibidem*, 126/4.

Given the political climate in late 1980s Yugoslavia, these positions could obviously recall the tones of the pro-Miloševi “anti-bureaucrat” revolutions that took place in Vojvodina and Montenegro in 1988-89. However, this does not automatically mean that those delegates were directly supporting Miloševi or that they had in mind for Bosnia-Herzegovina the same “leadership overthrowing plot” that occurred in

other side, various reform-oriented delegates asserted that the “Neum case” epitomized a systemic crisis of the regime that had been caused by the perverse effects of the monopoly of power. They argued that the solution would reside not only on further investigation, but also on a complete transformation of the party and the state, implying democratization and strict respect of rule of law. Finally, despite the apparently belligerent intentions of some speeches, the Congress did not take any extraordinary or unprecedented decisions about the case. It simply ratified the expulsion from the party of some prominent former leaders of the SKBiH.¹⁶⁴

While the political issues were a priority, the economic reform remained secondary. No one differed from the general “solomonic” guidelines of the president Durakovi which vaguely opened to market reforms without renouncing the social guarantees of self-management. The only complaints came about the supposed regional imbalances existing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, something that echoed the localist mobilizations which had occurred in previous months. A few delegates asked for a more equal allocation of the investments from the republican government,¹⁶⁵ reporting their alleged marginalization¹⁶⁶ or demanding compensations for the use of their natural resources.¹⁶⁷ They were insisting on “getting their piece of cake”, rather than advocating a broader change of the economic pattern. Beyond structural issues, several criticisms were also made against party practices. A few delegates complained about the dry and inaccessible language used in the internal documents, urging for a “linguistic ecology”.¹⁶⁸ Many also reported an atmosphere of disillusion and distancing from the party at the local

Vojvodina and Montenegro. In any case, the requests for mass dismissals did not get support and were quickly discarded by the Congress. We should bear in mind that many SKBiH high ranking cadres in charge at that moment, among them the President Durakovi, had spent very little time in office. In those conditions another traumatic reset, so close to the 1987-1989 turnover, looked counter-productive even to the most hard-line delegates.

¹⁶⁴ The expelled were Mato Andrić, Milanko Renovica, Hrvoje Ištuk and Nikola Stojanović. Ante Kasapović, *ibidem*, 271/2 KS.

¹⁶⁵ As an example, the delegate from Banja Luka Rajko Vasić criticized the party decision about the future construction of the Bosanski Brod – Kardeljevo (today Ploče) highway, which would be the first in the Republic (due to the outbreak of the war in 1992, it would not be built). Vasić claimed that the geographical choice would be inappropriate, as the region of the Bosnian Krajina (allegedly the region with the most underdeveloped municipalities in BiH) would be entirely excluded and marginalized from the project's layout. Rajko Vasić in “Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa”, 172/3 – 173/2.

¹⁶⁶ Other delegates denounced the alleged exclusion of their own municipalities from the development plans and investments of the republican government, as a perfect example of “territorial jealousy”. See Diko Stepanović, delegate from Sekovići, *ibidem*, 163/4 – 164/4; Mirsad Djugum, delegate from Duvno, *ibidem*, 179-181 (2193).

¹⁶⁷ See Fatima Mujkić, delegate from Ugljevik, *ibidem*, 164/3, 4; Božidar Djokić, *ibidem*, 25/5.

¹⁶⁸ Rada Božić, *ibidem*, 18/3-4; Mirko Lučić, *ibidem*, 39/2; Stijepan Galić, *ibidem*, 121/1.

scale, what was particularly visible in rural contexts and in some social categories such as youth, farmers and direct manufacturers.¹⁶⁹

Finally, the conclusions of the Congress consisted of a compromising stance in all aspects. As a delegate wisely commented, “the SKBiH is now in a phase of observation and waiting, rather than resolution”. Others, more sarcastically, defined this positioning as “pacifist”. The party’s leadership achieved its goal, which was to “gain time” at least until the close of the Congress of the Yugoslav Communists, without taking any concrete initiative in order to prevent the schism. While a radically liberal-reformist wing had appeared around the “ZAVNOBiH Initiative” led by Grebo and Me ovi , the conservative-continuist area was more fluid, not relying on specific declarations or leaders. Both areas were nationally heterogeneous, albeit a certain predominance of Serbs was observable among the conservatives, especially from the usually small municipalities from the north and east. However, this does not allow one to affirm with certainty that the party was splitting along ethnic lines. A large part of the delegates and all the republican leaders still placed themselves in between both positions, albeit a subtle difference could be observed within the élite, with moderate-conservatives (Darinka uraskovi , Miomira Taušan, Raif Dizdarevi) and moderate-reformists (Zlatko Lagumdžija, Krstan Maleševi). Durakovi admitted, in his closing speech, that the party presented a “double conscience” on the political reforms and that the misgivings were still widely extended and well-established. He insisted that the Bosnian Communists should “free themselves from the old dogmas and from the fear of the future”.¹⁷⁰

Some figures about the composition of the leading organs give us a clearer picture of the kind of party that emerged from the congress. Regarding national composition, Serbs maintained their relative majority in the new elected Central Committee, the main executive organ of the party, with 32 of the 81 members (39.5%), with 26 Muslims (32.1%).¹⁷¹ What did change in the SKBiH was the age structure of its leadership. 59.3%

¹⁶⁹ Darinka Krneti , *ibidem*, 71/1-2; Kurtovi , *ibidem*, 105/1.

¹⁷⁰ Nijaz Durakovi in “Magnetofonski snimak desetog Kongresa”, 279/LS.

¹⁷¹ Yugoslavs and Croats both had 11 (13.6%), others 1 (1.2%). The predominance of Serbs was also confirmed in the 20 elected members for the SKJ Central Committee: (of the 20 total, 7 were Serbs, 5 Muslims, 4 Croats, 3 Yugoslavs and 1 Montenegrin) and in other commissions. An exception was provided by the elected delegates for the 14th Congress of the SKJ, where Serbs and Muslims were balanced (20 each of 60, so 33 each), 11 were Yugoslavs (18.3%), 8 Croats (13.3%) and 1 Montenegrin (1.7%). Nevertheless, the total number of Bosnian delegates for the SKJ Congress were 248, since the rest was appointed by

of the members elected in the Central Committee were younger than 40.¹⁷² This profound rejuvenation of the élites was inversely proportional to what had happened in the party base, where youth membership was constantly falling.¹⁷³ Most of the newly elected members of the Central Committee had received their first mandate, were relatively new and unexperienced in such levels of power, and were unknown to the general public. As the Sarajevo magazine *Valter* sarcastically observed, “[they] are not known for the ‘affairs’, nor for anything else”.¹⁷⁴ These figures confirm that a process of élite change did occur in the late 1980s, and that the 10th Congress was probably its supreme – and final – circumstance. The primary factor of this turnover was the “era of the scandals” of 1987-1989 (Agrokomerc, Neum, etc.) which removed the top leaders from power, as well as their circles and many medium cadres. This turnover was also an attempt to renew the image of the party, as the only way to restrain the loss of legitimation and the internal critics.

The new generation of Bosnian leaders was perfectly embodied by his president, 40 year old Nijaz Durakovi , who was confirmed in office.¹⁷⁵ Being moderately open to reforms, he had everything needed to combine continuity and change: a heavy theoretical-ideological baggage, a pompous and sometimes wavering rhetoric, a career spent aside the leaders but never touched by scandals, an impeccable commitment to Yugoslavian values evidenced also by his private life (he, a Muslim, had married a Serb woman). Durakovi personified the compromise policy that the party was trying to get ready, with a few concerns, for the 14th Extraordinary Congress of the SKJ.

municipalities. “Rezultati glasanja za izbor lanova CK SKBiH”, 1989, Documents of the 10th Congress of the SKBiH, SDP Archive, 1-16.

¹⁷² Of the 81 elected in the Central Committee, 48 were younger than 40 and 76 (93.8%) younger than 50 (source: *ibidem*, 3). Similar figures could be observed also in the party commissions elected in the same congress (*ibidem*, 4-14).

¹⁷³ Between 1980 and 1989, the participation of young people in the membership of the SKBiH dropped from 41.2% to 17.8%. A similar tendency was observable in the other branches of the Yugoslav Communists (from 33.1% in 1980 to 15.8% in 1989). Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 48.

¹⁷⁴ “Partijo, ljubimo zemlju po kojoj hodaš”, *Valter*, December 15, 1989.

¹⁷⁵ Durakovi easily defeated the other candidate Džemal Sokolovi , obtaining 57 of the total 75 votes expressed by the Central Committee. Durakovi and Sokolovi had some characteristics in common (they were both university professors and sociologists, they had almost the same age - 40 and 42 years – and they apparently advocated the same program of reforms). Still, Sokolovi was perceived by the party’s bases as a more radical left-wing than Durakovi . A few weeks after the congress, Sokolovi left the SKBiH. In summer 1990, he would be a founder and the vice-president of the Alliance of Reformist Forces (the party of Ante Markovi) in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

2.4. The 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia

The Extraordinary Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was to be held at the Sava Centar in Belgrade on 20-23 January 1990. At the respective preparatory Congresses, the positions of the various branches of the SKBiH had become even more conflicting. The League of Communists of Slovenia had ratified its commitment to political pluralism and the confederalization of Yugoslavia, under the label of “asymmetrical federation”; similarly, the Communists of Croatia announced their intention to hold multi-party elections and define a “Yugoslav synthesis” based on the foundational basis of the 1974 Constitution, namely republican sovereignty and the principle of consensus. However, the Croatian Communists were much less homogeneous than the Slovenes: although the liberal wing of the new SKH leader, Ivica Račan, imposed a change forward, the conservative wing was still very influential. On the opposite side, the League of Communists of Serbia defended the principle of “one man, one vote” (*jedan ovjek, jedan glas*) for both the party and the State, implying the supremacy of the majority principle over the consensus criteria (which, in turn, could eventually provide more power to Serbia due to its larger demographical weight). The Serbs also rejected the principle of republican sovereignty and the observance of “non-party pluralism”. The Leagues of Communists of Montenegro, Vojvodina and Kosovo supported the Serbian position. The conclusions of the Macedonian League of Communists were somehow more neutral and closer to the Bosnian ones, advocating a federal framework, with vague opening to multi-party system, although considering it as only one of the possible ways of pluralism.¹⁷⁶

The Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia seemed the only exceptions in this context of sharp polarization between Slovenes and Serbs, which was also embodied in the personal clash between their respective leaders, Milan Kučan and Slobodan Milošević. Aside from them, no “third options”, or “third leaders” were available on the eve of the 14th Congress. Background figures that could potentially play that role had either been already marginalized (Stipe Šušvar), or had decided to wait for better times before entering the political arena (Ante Marković), or had simply accepted to play that role but exclusively within the borders of their republics (Ivica Račan, Nijaz

¹⁷⁶ Pauković, “Posljednji kongres”, 23-24.

Durakovi).¹⁷⁷ There was a very tense atmosphere since the beginning, for the clash between the Slovene and Serb delegates in the first preparatory meetings had deepened further their differences. The split between opposite conceptions of the Party and the State organization was evident in all the plenary sessions' debates as well as in the internal commissions.

The definitive break occurred, as it is well known, during the plenary session of January 22nd, when all the amendments presented by the Slovenian League of Communists were rejected. However, there was a significant turning point which has been overlooked by the general literature on the dissolution of Yugoslavia: not only the Serbians, but a huge majority of both non-Slovenians and “non-Serbian” delegates rejected the most crucial amendment coming from Ljubljana, namely the one which envisaged the confederalization of the SKJ (i.e. its transformation into a “League of Leagues”, with each one keeping the role of an independent and freely associated party). The amendment received only 169 favourable votes and 1,156 votes against. If we consider that the Slovenian delegation was composed of 114 members who unanimously supported the proposal, this means that only 55 non-Slovenian members voted for confederalization. This indicates that the majority of the 248 delegates from Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as those from Croatia and Macedonia (besides, logically, those of Serbia and Montenegro) also voted against the Slovenian project of confederalization of the SKJ.¹⁷⁸ This confirms that the great majority of the SKBiH's delegates still supported the unity of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

¹⁷⁷ Dejan Jovi , *Jugoslavija*, 466-67; Šiber, “Istraživanja političkog ponašanja”, 13.

¹⁷⁸ The congress membership was composed of 1,457 elected delegates coming from the republics and 198 coming from party organs. The representation was proportional to the number of party members from the respective wings. 564 of them (38.7%) came from the Republic of Serbia (333 from Serbia properly, 137 from Vojvodina, 94 from Kosovo). 248 (17.0%) came from Bosnia-Herzegovina, 216 from Croatia, 141 from Macedonia, 114 from Slovenia, 99 from Montenegro, 68 from the Army branch (JNA), 7 from other organs. The ethnic structure was as follows: 545 Serbs, 195 Croats, 137 Macedonians, 128 Yugoslavs, 122 Montenegrins, 114 Slovenians, 95 Muslims, 63 Albanians and 21 Hungarians.

Therefore, the figures clearly indicate that the majority of non-Serbs (including the ones from BiH) rejected overwhelmingly the confederalist proposal of the Slovenes. As Dejan Jovi recalls, the Slovene amendments did not receive the same range of support or rejection. The proposals concerning the confederalization of the party received the least support, while the ones concerning the further decentralization of the State received wider support – even if no one obtained majority to be approved. For example, an amendment affirming that “people associated in Yugoslavia exercise their sovereignty within the republics” coming from Slovenian delegation received 526 votes. This means that although it was far from the majority, it received about 350 non-Slovene votes more than the amendments containing the confederalization of the party. On the other side, almost all the Serbian amendments were approved with

The Slovenian delegation abandoned the Congress in protest at the rejection of their amendments. Immediately after this dramatic exit (some of the Slovene delegates left the hall with tears in their eyes, while many others, primarily Serbians and Montenegrins, provocatively applauded and cheered them), which is, still today, well-remembered in former Yugoslav countries as a turning point in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The leader of the Montenegrin Communists and acting president of the session, Momir Bulatovi , tried to continue the activities of the Congress as if nothing had happened. This was exactly what Miloševi wanted: until that moment, the Congress looked a fiasco for the Slovene option and a triumph for the Serbian-Montenegrin axis which, apparently, still enjoyed the tacit support of the other republics. Miloševi looked closer than ever to his ultimate objective of imposing a reform of the party, thanks to having by his side the majority of the delegates. According to Dejan Jovi , at the Congress the Serbian Communists wanted to achieve two primary goals. The first was to change the Statute of the SKJ, following the principle of “one man, one vote” which would guarantee an advantage to the Serbian side (as Serbs had the relative majority in party membership). The second was that the President of the eventual new and centralized SKJ would be the ninth member of the federal collective Presidency, what could confer to Miloševi a fifth vote (he already counted on 4: the Serbian, the Montenegrin, the Vojvodinian and the Kosovar representatives were all pro-Belgrade) which meant having the majority and the chance to veto hostile decisions coming from the most supreme body within the Yugoslav political system. These were the reasons why the 14th Congress was so strategically important for the Serbian Communists.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, the situation changed abruptly after the Slovenes’ exit. Ivica Ra an, president of the Croatian League of Communists, rejected Bulatovi ’s proposal and immediately called for cancelling the Congress and opening an internal consultation, claiming that it was unacceptable to continue the party activities without an entire republican delegation.

This situation was extremely delicate for the Bosnian Communists. They did not expect such a sudden move from the Slovenian delegation, who took the initiative spontaneously and did not share their own points of view with any of the other delegations, not even the Croatians. A few moments after Ra an’s intervention, the

very large majority (gathering also non-Serb votes). Dejan Jovi , *Jugoslavija*, 470; Paukovi , “Posljednji kongres”, 27; “Nema povratka na stari sistem”, *Borba*, January 23, 1990.

¹⁷⁹ Dejan Jovi , *Jugoslavija*, 458.

Bosnian delegates gathered in a separate meeting. After a long discussion that lasted until 02:30 am, they also decided to demand the Congress' closure, in agreement with the delegations of Croatia, Macedonia and the Army. This outcome of the discussion was not predictable at all, because the Serbs still maintained the relative majority within both the SKBiH membership and the executive organs; moreover, the Bosnian Congress had made clear that theirs was not at all a homogenous stance, for they still had a considerable percentage of conservatives. In a personal account released in 2008, Nijaz Duraković said that he was quite surprised by the decision of the party he led. "I cannot, not even today, explain how could this happen. In our delegation there were various staunch Serbian nationalists, like Darinka Čurašković. There were also ordinary bolsheviks like Milo Carević, or statesmen like Raif Dizdarević".¹⁸⁰ However, we must take into account that even among Milošević's supporters there was not a complete consensus about the strategy of proceeding with the Congress as if nothing had happened. For some of them, a most prudent approach was desirable. The most surprising move came undoubtedly from the delegates of the party branch of the Army, the SK-JNA. They were firm supporters of the regime's continuism and of a centralist model, firmly opposing multi-party system and the dismantling of socialism.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, they voted in favour of the interruption and postponing of the Congress. This shift was probably due to the influence of its President, Admiral Petar Šimić. Unlike many others Army representatives, Šimić adopted a conciliatory position, commenting that "it would be superficial and reckless to lay all the blame for this step on the League of Communists of Slovenia alone. The reasons are complicated and are primarily explained by the conceptual differences in the realization of social reforms and in the transformation of the SKJ".¹⁸²

The unexpected bloc aligning Croatians, Bosnians and the Army completely subverted the plans of the allies of Milošević, which counted on the Army as the advance guard for the supposedly "loyal Yugoslavists" from the other republics. Borisav Jović, the Serbian representative at the Yugoslav presidency and one of the closest collaborators

¹⁸⁰ "Milošević je bio rigidni boljševik operiran od nacionalizma", *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, February 27, 2008. Accessed September 30, 2013. <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/article/1045343.html>.

¹⁸¹ Bieber, "The role of the Yugoslav People's Army", 316-317.

¹⁸² "Top Army Leaders on Federalism, SKJ, pluralism", *Danas*, February 6, 1990, translated and reported in *JPRS Report Eastern Europe*, April 30, 1990, 22.

Petar Šimić was a Croat from Bosnia-Herzegovina, born in Bihać in 1932. As will be seen in Chapter 3.2, he maintained a moderate profile within the Army even after the Congress. He opposed the hardline orientation of the Army leader, General Veljko Kadijević, until his premature death in April 1990.

of Milošević, related in his memories the contents of a meeting held on January 10th (twelve days before the Slovenes' exit) attended by Milošević and his closest collaborators: "The main battle must be fought at the 14th Congress to maintain the integrity of the SKJ and democratic centralism, at least statutorily (formally). The goal is to isolate the Slovenes, preventing Croatia, Macedonia, and eventually Bosnia-Herzegovina from joining them. The representatives of JNA will carry the flag, and we will support them without being the head, because this could distance us from Croatians and Macedonians. The Army accepts this role".¹⁸³ It was a highly mistaken assessment.

2.5. "The doors are open". The failure of the Bosnian Initiative

While all the attention of the media (and, retrospectively, of scholars) was focused on the Slovenian-Serbian conflict, an unexpected (and, to this day, unexplored by literature) event had important consequences for the political history of Bosnia-Herzegovina. On January 21st, a document began to circulate among the Congress' delegates, calling for a drastic solution to the Yugoslav crisis through a voluntary split of the SKJ into two parties: a "Communist Party of Yugoslavia", with an orthodox and dogmatic orientation, and a "Socialist Party of Yugoslavia", with a social-democrat and reformist orientation. The document claimed that the crucial differentiation within the SKJ was not national or cultural (although these factors were noticeable too), but ideological. Since the forced unity was the primary cause of the tensions within the regime, the recommended solution consisted in a "legalization of the political difference" in order to prevent the otherwise unavoidable schism along republican and/or national lines. Moreover, the creation of two separate parties would automatically create a multi-party system, thus bringing about a democratic transformation of Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁴

The original idea for this reform emerged during an informal meeting gathering a small group of liberal-leaning delegates coming from different republics, the majority of them from Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁸⁵ At the very last moment, the

¹⁸³ Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ. Izvori iz dnevnika*, Beograd: Politika, 1996, 88.

¹⁸⁴ The text of the initiative was reported in "Amandman grupe delegata: jednu podeliti – na dve", *Borba*, January 23, 1990.

¹⁸⁵ Zdravko Grebo claims that the then young Montenegrins (and future prominent politicians) Ljubiša Stanković and Srđan Darmanović played a leading role among the original supporters. According to Grebo,

Montenegrin delegates refused to sign the proposal, probably because of pressure received by their pro-Milošević leaders,¹⁸⁶ while a group of liberal-wing Croats headed by the influential economist Branko Horvat converged on a very similar amendment proposal.¹⁸⁷ Since the five remaining promoters were all from Bosnia-Herzegovina (Zdravko Grebo, Desimir Međović, Miloš Jelić, Dejan Mastilović and Zoran Perković) the proposal was quickly labelled, in the Congress' and in the press circles, as the "Bosnian Initiative" (*Bosanska Inicijativa*).

It must be recalled that there was continuity between the "Bosnian Initiative" and the "ZAVNOBiH initiative" presented at the SKBiH Congress one month before: both were promoted by the reform-oriented Zdravko Grebo and Desimir Međović and contained an analogue aspiration for radical political innovation. However, the contents were different: the ZAVNOBiH was only concerned with Bosnia-Herzegovina, calling for immediate multi-party transition but without advocating any ideological split, whereas the "Bosnian Initiative" represented a significant step forward, explicitly advocating a party schism on a Yugoslav scale.

However, the "Bosnian Initiative" failed too. On January 22nd, the petition received only 58 votes in support, barely 3.5% of 1,655 delegates. Međović's speech addressing the petition to the Congress was interrupted by boos and whistles coming especially from conservative delegates who did not approve the intent to divide the party.¹⁸⁸ Yet, the most vehement and shocking reaction was that of the president of the SKBiH Nijaz Duraković who, immediately after Međović's intervention, said: "For those who want to leave the League of Communists, the doors are open and it would be more fair for everyone who is, maybe rightly, so drastically dissatisfied with this League of Communists, to display their own ambitions and their own political programmes out of

the fact that the first version of the document was written in 'ekavian' would be a further proof of the Montenegrins' influence in the group. "Podjela prava na legitimitet", *Oslobođenje*, January 31, 1990; Zdravko Grebo, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 11, 2012.

¹⁸⁶ Zdravko Grebo, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 11, 2012.

¹⁸⁷ The Horvat motion also proposed the SKJ's split into a hard-line and a reformist wing. It was even more radical, recommending implementing the division instantly, whilst the "Bosnian Initiative" suggested a transition period of six months in which the two parties should elaborate their programs and celebrate their founding congresses. However, the Horvat motion had even less support, receiving only 16 votes in favour. "Nema povratka na stari sistem", *Borba*, January 23, 1990.

¹⁸⁸ "Nema povratka na stari sistem", *Borba*, January 23, 1990.

our organization, and especially out of this Congress. Please, don't look for help from this Congress [...] We must look out for these foreign Danaans who only bring us discord".¹⁸⁹

At first, these words sounded ambiguous: as the Belgrade-Ljubljana dispute involved the entire Congress, the sentence "The doors are open" could be easily thought to be addressed to the Slovene delegates who were about to leave the party. In other words, these words could be misinterpreted for support for Milošević's policy. Some even speculated that Duraković's aggressive outburst was the result of direct pressure from Milošević and the Serbian higher ranks, pointing out the loud applause that Duraković's speech received from the Serbian and Montenegrin bloc. Nevertheless, it must be recalled that Duraković directed the SKBiH to reject (together with the party delegations from Croatia, Macedonia and the Army) Milošević's attempt to enforce the Congress' continuation. This is proof that he was far from being subjugated by the Serbian leaders. Duraković later convincingly clarified that his speech targeted the promoters of the "Bosnian Initiative" and not the Slovene delegates.¹⁹⁰ Rather than obedience to Milošević, the cause of Duraković's outburst was sincere devotion to the party's dogmas and discipline. Duraković and Grebo's stances were irreconcilable conceptions of political representation and, at the same time, two opposite forms of Yugoslavism. Duraković remained loyal to some sort of democratic centralism and wanted to impose respect to the republican discipline and to seek an agreement within the existing consociational structures. He was troubled by the fact that the initiative could be misinterpreted as *the* position of *all* the Bosnian Communists, and wanted the entire SKBiH to play a mediating, low-profile role. On the other side, Grebo and his fellows argued that every individual should have had the right to submit proposal without previous debate or authorizations, and that a Federal Yugoslavia should be rebuilt on a completely new basis.

¹⁸⁹ "Odbijen Savez Saveza", *Oslobo enje*, January 23, 1990. This was a metaphorical reference to the Latin phrase taken from Virgil's Aeneid "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*" ("Beware of Greeks bearing gifts").

¹⁹⁰ "Opštejugoslavenski karakter SKBiH", *Oslobo enje*, Sarajevo, January 26, 1990.

Several observers at first misinterpreted Duraković's words. Fuad Muhić, former member of SKBiH who had been one of the first critics of Milošević's policy, attacked his "former friend" Duraković for "showing a menacing forefinger to the Slovenes". "Fuad Muhić napao Nijazu Durakovića", *Politika*, January 26, 1990. Grebo, instead, claims that Duraković received pressures from the Serbian leader. "Milošević ordered Duraković to offend us, and offend us he did. He said that we were traitors, rascals". Zdravko Grebo, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 11, 2012.

In the end, the supporters of the “Bosnian Initiative” became the target of a hostile press campaign that further contributed to their political isolation. Some articles published in *Oslobo enje* reproached the initiative: in those days the main Sarajevo daily newspaper still professed allegiance to the Bosnian Communists’ official line, even though the latter had previously begun a gradual emancipation from the regime. Negative assessments came also from Belgrade, from the pro-Miloševi daily *Politika*. As exceptions, the Serbian daily *Borba* and the Croatian weekly *Danas* paid more attention to the “Bosnian Initiative”, publishing the text of the motion and extensive interviews with their representatives.

Finally, the “Bosnian Initiative” was more provocative than realistic. The alternative milieu behind the petition was not able to develop a convincing strategy to gain more influence. Even Desimir Me ovi recognized that the amendment was “too radical, surprising and unusual”, although it could be justified as an attempt to provoke a radical shock within the League of Communists, that was, in his words, “the centre of the Yugoslav chaos”.¹⁹¹ First, Grebo and Me ovi miscalculated the potential support from other delegations and, in particular, they hoped to gain support primarily from the Slovenes, in order to prevent their exit-together with the Slovenes, they could form some sort of liberal-reformist platform that could confront Miloševi ’s bloc. However, the delegates from Ljubljana showed absolutely no interest in the initiative, as they had already decided to leave the party and to advocate for the further confederalization of Yugoslavia. Moreover, the Bosnian reformists had failed to see that the creation of two separate parties, a hard-line conservative one and a hard-line liberal one, could have only caused further instability and polarization. Creating a hard-line communist party just when Socialist systems were falling apart in Eastern Europe, would be highly counter-productive, both for its conservative members, who could hardly consider such a “ghettoization” a favourable and well-timed move¹⁹², as well as for their opponents, who would see in the continuists’ “Indian reservation” a danger for stability and democratization. Many reformists still found more desirable to promote modernization

¹⁹¹ “Strah od otvorenih vrata”, *Danas*, February 6, 1990.

¹⁹² The few attempts to set up far-left communist parties in the former Yugoslav republics in the 1990s (the League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, in 1990; the Yugoslav Left in Serbia, in 1994; the Socialists’ Workers Party in Croatia, in 1997) would not be successful at all, which confirms the inadequacy of such a continuist approach in that context.

and changes as a minority within the existing SKJ rather than assuming the responsibility of promoting a split within the party.¹⁹³

2.6. Conclusions

Neven Andjeli has properly defined the submission of the Bosnian Initiative as a “proof of the consolidation of civil society in Bosnia-Herzegovina”.¹⁹⁴ Both the ZAVNOBiH and the Bosnian initiatives can be read as the culmination of a “reformist path” which had been previously extended through the role of the SKBiH’s liberal area, youth activism and some independent intellectuals during 1989. But on the other hand, the disastrous outcome of both initiatives evidenced the supreme marginalization and defeat of this “reformist milieu”. This marginalization even deepened during the post-Congress phase. Durakovi’s sharp reaction did not bring outright sanctions or expulsions,¹⁹⁵ but rather brought a general self-exclusion of liberal-oriented representatives.¹⁹⁶ They interpreted Durakovi’s rejections as the ultimate proof that innovating from inside the party was not possible, as it was seen as too dogmatic and conformist. Obviously, the SKJ breakdown and the general “fall-of-the-wall” atmosphere also contributed to this sense of distrust.

¹⁹³ Zlatko Lagumdžija, then one of the most influential representatives of the reformist wing of the SKBiH, explained its disagreement with the “Bosnian initiative” claiming that “instead of dividing the SKJ and the SKBiH between an orthodox communist party and a modern one with a socialist orientation [...] we should act in order to transform the SKJ into the second option. Only in such way, I may conceive a radical reform of the League of Communists. [...] Those who do not like the idea of the SKJ and SKBiH being transformed into a modern party fighting for democratic socialism in a multi-party system, let them go out and form some orthodox Communist Party or some civil-liberal party. I don’t see anything wrong in that. By the way, I also would join this second option in the case that the League of Communists become a sort of orthodox communist party, which would represent a real anachronism in today’s Europe”. “Postoji bolje rješenje”, *Valter*, February 9, 1990.

¹⁹⁴ Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 115-116.

¹⁹⁵ Zoran Perkovi, one of the five subscribers of the Bosnian Initiative, would remain in the party leadership. In autumn 1990, he would be one of the SKBiH’s candidate for the collective presidency.

¹⁹⁶ Zdravko Grebo and Desimir Meović immediately retired from the party and left active politics. They both came back to their academic professions at the University of Sarajevo. Grebo, a professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Sarajevo, would later join and lead several NGOs or civil society initiatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Meović fled from Sarajevo to Belgrade at the beginning of the Bosnian war (1992). He began dealing with private business and then moved to Moscow, where he currently lives as building contractor. Rasim Kadić, the reform-oriented leader of the youth wing of the Bosnian Communists (SSO BiH), resigned from the party one week after the end of the SKJ Congress. Kadić would remain as a leader of the SSO, which would distance itself from the League of Communists (see chapter 6.2). “Prvi BH. omladinac više nije komunista. Politički presedan”, *Oslobođenje*, January 30, 1990.

Nijaz Duraković stated, on the eve of the 14th Congress, that “the worst solution for the League of Communists of Yugoslavia would be to maintain the *status quo*”.¹⁹⁷ Retrospectively, this statement sounds paradoxical. In the two last Congresses, the leadership of the SKBiH still played the role of the supreme guardian of the *status quo*. Their equidistant position between re-centralizing and confederalising options would not become a *third option*. They limited themselves to a mild defence of the 1974 Constitution, which was precisely the target of both Slovenes and Serbs. On the issue of pluralism, the Bosnian Communists attempted to “gain time”, until the arrival of a final decision coming from the top (that is, from the Yugoslav authorities). They only displayed some timid reforms and relied on the *status quo*, which was still coherent with unaltered commitment to Yugoslavism. In doing so, the élites strived to self-protect themselves from a series of vulnerable points (inexperience, loss of legitimacy due to scandals and territorial protests, increasing risk of fragmentation along ideological or national lines). In this way, the SKBiH succeeded at preventing an open internal secession from above. However, the dissolution of the SKJ confronted them with the burning issues which they had been postponing so far.

¹⁹⁷ “Najgore je status kvo”, *Borba*, January 20, 1990.

3. THE BOSNIAN COMMUNISTS BETWEEN PLURALISM AND REFORM

3.1. The slow separation from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia

*“I consider that this is an internal issue of the League of Communists. [...] Regardless of whether the League of Communists will remain united or [will split into] more organizations, the State [of Yugoslavia] must, and will, keep functioning”.*¹⁹⁸

These words uttered by the then Federal Prime Minister Ante Markovič one day after the Slovenes' walkout from the 14th Congress, have been among the most optimistic (and, retrospectively, perhaps the most unfortunate) about the fate of Yugoslavia. In fact, almost all observers agreed that the split of the SKJ would have dire consequences for the unity of the Federation. Alongside the Army and the Government, the party was one of the only three fully federal entities. It broke up before the setting up of any “rules of play” for a political and institutional reform of the Yugoslav Federation, so it further strengthened the focus of the political élites on building and reinforcing the republican sub-state statehoods, instead of finding solutions for a workable federal framework. The point here is that policies of national homogenization aiming at the creation of monolithic republics used by the elites to remain in power, was not a practicable strategy for Bosnia-Herzegovina due to its mixed composition and the absence of a “titular nation”, unlike in the other republics.

However, an element that has been rarely mentioned in the existing literature is that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia did not formally cease to exist in January, following the results of the 14th Congress: it survived, instead, until the end of May 1990. The Central Committee of the SKJ remained officially active after the Congress; meetings were still carried out among the branches which had not left the party (Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Army). Only the Slovenes, who

¹⁹⁸ “Rasplet – stvar SKJ”, *Borba*, January 24, 1990.

soon thereafter were imitated by the Croatians, never came back to the party. What is essential here is that the prolongation of a “rump League of Communists of Yugoslavia” reveals some crucial elements of the situation of the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina: tireless loyalty to Yugoslavism and *status quo*, fragility and internal divisions within its élite, some signs of territorial fragmentation, and pressures coming from the Serbian Communists.

The immediate reaction of the SKBiH after the 14th Congress was very cautious. The first statement of the party affirmed that “We do not consider the interruption of the congress as a failure, and much less a breakdown of the party. Rather, we deem it an attempt to find a solution under new circumstances, to resolve the differences that exist between the League of Communists of Yugoslavia”.¹⁹⁹ The SKBiH was still committed to a “radical transformation of the SKJ into a modern, democratic political organization”, although on the condition that the autonomy of the republican branches should be respected, and the Slovenes readmitted.²⁰⁰

This “go-between” attitude was the result of the different views within the Central Committee of the SKBiH. Some of their members were favourable to the Congress’ continuation even without the Slovenes, thus supporting the party’s centralization. Dragan Kalini argued that the SKJ should “keep empty the seats of the comrades from Slovenia until the conditions [for their return] are fulfilled”.²⁰¹ Conservative cadres such as Uglejša Danilovi and Gojko Panti made similar assessments.²⁰² On the opposite side, there were those who recommended accepting the model of “League of Leagues”, namely the confederalization of the party formerly advocated by the Slovene Communists. Ivan Brigi, Juraj Martinovi and Emina Keo supported this option, as the only way to “surrender to the reality” of their unsolvable differences, and to properly face the consequences of a multi-party transition. After some bilateral meetings held between the respective republican branches, the first joint session of the SKJ Central Committee was scheduled for March 30. Nonetheless, there was absolutely no chance for the comeback

¹⁹⁹ “Stavovi Predsjedništva CK SK BiH povodom prekida 14. Kongresa SKJ. Prekid nije neuspeh”, *Borba*, January 25, 1990.

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

²⁰¹ Dragan Kalini in “Magnetofonski snimak sa sjednice Centralnog Komiteta SKBiH, etrvrta, 15.02.1990”, SDP Archive, 11/2.

²⁰² “Žestoko oko Bosanske Inicijative”, *Borba*, February 6, 1990; Gojko Panti in “Magnetofonski snimak”, 30/2 – 4.

of the Leagues of Slovenia and Croatia, which had already categorically stated that they would not attend any more sessions and that their exit was irreversible. Moreover, the Slovenian and Croatian (former) Communists were already competing in their respective electoral campaigns and were not willing to expose themselves to the predictable criticisms from their pro-sovereignist political opponents if they returned to the fold of the pan-yugoslavist League of Communists.

Therefore, now it was definitively clear that the conditional position of the SKBiH's president, Duraković, namely the idea that the Central Committee could only work when all branches of the party (including Croatians and Slovenes), were present, was more principle-based than realistic. Hence, this stance attracted again critics from the unionism-conservatives, among which the party branch in Banja Luka began to assume the leading position.²⁰³ The last-minute absence of the Macedonian delegates at the March 30 session added further discontent and pressure among the SKBiH cadres.²⁰⁴ Until then, the Macedonians and Bosnians had shared common views, both seeking to represent a third option between the Slovenian-Croatian and the Serbian-Montenegrin blocs. Therefore, the *forfeit* from Skopje left the Bosnians in a position of sharp minority *vis-à-vis* all the pro-Belgrade branches. The atmosphere became even tenser since the very opening session, with a dispute on a merely formal issue that actually hid a blatantly political controversy. The secretary in charge, the Serbian Petar Skundrić, defined the session as “ordinary”, arguing that the principle of consensus was not applicable anymore, since the absent branches had voluntarily left the party. Hence, following Skundrić's argument, the rump SKJ would be legitimated to act following normal procedures. The Bosnian interpretation was diametrically opposite, as they considered the session to be “working-consultative”, until the absent branches would come back to the party. Moreover, Duraković denounced Skundrić's speech as an attempt to take control of the

²⁰³ “OK SK Banja Luka: rukovodstvo zbunuje lanstvo”, *Oslobo enje*, March 24, 1990.

²⁰⁴ Only 3 or the 20 Macedonian members of the SKJ Central Committee attended the session (one of those merely acted as a representative of the delegation). The President of the SKM, Petar Gošev, was also supporting the “conditionality” of the presence of the Slovene and Croatian delegates to respect the statutory conditions and the political legitimation of the SKJ. He also insisted on the resetting of all the SKJ's top ranks and blamed the other branches (meaning the Serbian and Montenegrin) for outvoting by majority the petitions from Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. “Zašto nema Makedonaca na sednici CK SKJ: Ni da nastave, ni da se sastave”, *Borba*, March 31 - April 1, 1990. It must be remembered that Gošev had been recently elected as President of the SKM, as the opponent of Milan Pan evski who led the dogmatic wing. Pan evski, as the acting President of the SKJ and close to the Serbian position, was one of the three who attended the session.

SKJ by applying the principle of majority. Finally, all the twelve Bosnian members of the Yugoslav Central Committee abandoned the session before the end, in protest against Skundrić's move.²⁰⁵

This episode easily looked like a Bosnian repeat of the Slovenes' walkout, which created a sharp controversy within the SKBiH. Several local branches, once again led by Banja Luka, protested against the republican delegation, claiming that it did not have a mandate from the party's bases to make such a unilateral move.²⁰⁶ Various party sections from Banja Luka and Prijedor called for the dismissal of the entire leadership of the SKBiH.²⁰⁷ Belgrade's newspaper *Politika*, which supported Milošević's lines and was widely distributed in Serb population areas, gave ample coverage to these protests. Besides Duraković, *Politika* put the spotlight on Ivan Brigić and Dragutin Kosovac, the delegates who spoke in favour of leaving the Congress.²⁰⁸ In that situation, the party looked on the edge of a split, as admitted by the same Duraković, who came to the point of offering his resignation.²⁰⁹ Nonetheless, the highest ranks of the party still backed him,

²⁰⁵ "31. Sjednica CK SKJ: Plenum kao kongres", *Oslobojenje*, March 31, 1990; "Nema dijaloga neravnopravnih", *Borba*, April 2, 1990.

²⁰⁶ Five days after the exit, a meeting was arranged between the presidents of the municipal branches and the republican top ranks of the SKBiH. The leaders from Banja Luka, Glamoč, Šekovići, Kupres and Trebinje, supported the strong unity of the SKJ and expressed sharp critics against the Duraković's line. The delegates from Novo Sarajevo, Vitez and Posušje gave support to the Bosnian leadership. The fact that all the pro-unity delegates came from towns that were Serbs by majority (but not necessarily their party leaders: see, once again, the case of the Croat Zvonko Nikolić in Banja Luka) could suggest an increasing polarization along national lines, that is, that Serbs were much more inclined for unionism, Muslims and Croats for autonomy. On the other side, there were still exceptions, as the case of Nijaz Mehmedbašić from Mostar, a Muslim who supported party unitarianism and criticized the walkout since it would be perceived as a too "biased" move. "Predsjednici opštinskih komiteta u CK SKBiH: Nagovještaj raškola u SKBiH?", *Oslobojenje*, April 5, 1990; "Neo ekivano burna sednica u Sarajevu. Lanstvo optužuje Nijaza Durakovića", *Politika*, April 5, 1990.

²⁰⁷ "Komunisti banjalu ke MZ Bulevar Revolucije traže ostavku predsjedništva CK SKBiH. Odlazak – ranije smišljen", *Glas*, April 7, 1990; "Pismo komunista '16. Maja' iz Prijedora. Ne priznaju CK SKBiH", *Oslobojenje*, April 7, 1990; "Podrška CK SKJ iz banjalučkih organizacija", *Politika*, April 5, 1990.

²⁰⁸ See, for example: "Banjaluci ki podržavaju pismo CK SKJ. Lanstvo ne da SKJ", *Politika*, April 6, 1990; "Sednica CK SKBiH. 'Javni' sastanci bez znanja lanstva", *Politika*, April 7, 1990.

It is remarkable that, in the same days as the anti-Duraković protests in Banja Luka, a similar pattern emerged in Macedonia. The SKM's branch in Kumanovo, the third city in the republic, was mobilized around the request for the dismissal of Petar Gošev, the leader of the Macedonian Communists who had embraced a pro-reformist and pro-autonomous line. The Belgrade daily *Politika* gave widespread coverage to the campaign of the Kumanovo Communists who gathered all the 'dogmatists' from the Republic, just like the Banja Luka's communists were doing in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, the pressing mobilization from Kumanovo did not succeed to provoke the dismissal of Gošev. See "Otkud pravo CK SKM da zauzima stav o pismu upu emon lanstvu", *Politika*, April 10, 1990; "Zatražena ostavka Petra Goševa i Predsjedništva CK SKM", *Politika*, April 10, 1990; "Za Goševa je nastavak 14. Kongresa razbijanje SKJ", *Politika*, April 9, 1990.

²⁰⁹ "Predsjednici opštinskih komiteta u CK SKBiH: Nagovještaj raškola u SKBiH?", *Oslobojenje*, April 5, 1990.

as testified by the fact that the entire delegation of the SKBiH's Central Committee followed him when he left the Belgrade Congress. Hence, Durakovi 's resignation did not take place. In those circumstances, the élite of the Bosnian Communists still appeared to be united, regardless of their nationality. Unlike its territorial branches, the SKBiH's leadership was still committed to defend its own autonomy from the attempts by Belgrade to tighten up the control on the peripheral parties.

Another matter of controversy soon arose with the so-called "SKJ referendum". In March, the Army branch of the party (SK-JNA) proposed to carry out a referendum, asking the members of all the branches of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (including Croatia and Slovenia) whether they would agree or not with the continuation of the 14th Congress and, therefore, with keeping the SKJ alive. After the Central Committee approved the Army's proposal, a letter was published in the main newspapers and sent to all the members, inviting them to send their opinions and proposals and, finally, to reply "yes" or "no" to the call for the continuation of the 14th Congress.²¹⁰ The "SKJ referendum" was an extreme attempt of the ultra-conservative sector within the Yugoslav Army to mobilize the party base along strictly ideological grounds. The Serbian leadership and its close allies apparently supported the initiative, but without strong conviction, because Miloševi apparently started to perceive that recent events had turned the SKJ into an absolute tool for his political objectives. However, Belgrade considered the referendum as an extreme attempt to verify to what extent the SKJ could still be a useful tool and to measure the loyalty of the branches from Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the other side, the leadership in Skopje and Sarajevo, who stood by Gošev and Durakovi , considered that this referendum was an illegitimate move that would bring further divisions between all the Yugoslav Communists.²¹¹

The issue of the referendum started, once again, a heated debate within the SKBiH's Central Committee, provoking divisions along political, territorial, and national lines. Some members, all of Serb origin and coming mostly from peripheral towns, expressed their full support of the SKJ letter and again attacked Durakovi 's exit, calling

²¹⁰ The referendum ballot appeared also in some newspapers, such as *Oslobo enje* on April 6, 1990 and *Politika* on April 2, 1990.

²¹¹ See the negative comments of Dragan Kragulj, the SKBiH's secretary, in "Rije Dragana Kragulja o pismu CK SKJ. Gest koji podsti e rascjep", in *Oslobo enje*, April 8, 1990.

for his resignation.²¹² On the other side, the defenders of the current leadership discarded the SKJ initiative as illegitimate, sometimes with harsh tones. Nijaz Skenderagi said that the letter “resembled something written by Stalin or Molotov” and argued that the SKBiH should have already left the SKJ. This belief was evidently gaining force among non-unitarians, most of whom desired a more reactive position than the one displayed by Durakovi .²¹³ High-level party cadres such as Ivo Komši , Ivan Brigi and Skenderagi himself became all the more insistent in requesting the SKBiH to break ties with Belgrade’s central committee and to follow their own path.

Once again, the Central Committee of the the SKBiH managed to reach a compromise between these positions-in other words, they chose not to choose. The party did not adopt any official stance, neither about the referendum nor about joining future reunions of the SKJ’s Central Committee: these decisions were left to the individual criteria of each member.²¹⁴ The SKBiH turned down the prolongation of the 14th Congress and moved on to advocate the summoning of a “15th Congress” or even a “Founding 1st Congress” of a new League of Communists of Yugoslavia with updated terms. The difference was not entirely negligible: continuing the 14th Congress would give to pro-Miloševi Serbians and Montenegrins a comfortable majority, whereas a “brand new congress” would reset the existing leadership and establish new initial conditions. Nonetheless, in early 1990, talking of a “brand new Congress”, while simultaneously insisting on having Croats and Slovenians in it, was completely anachronistic and utopian. This stance simply indicates that Durakovi and the leadership were not willing to definitively break ties with the SKJ. They did not dare to take on responsibility for that, recognizing that important sectors in the party base were still strongly committed to the unity of the SKJ as the permanent historical and symbolical bond with Yugoslavia. The leadership was still primarily concerned about preventing any kind of internal split at any price. Although they were already conscious that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was no longer a real source of decision-making, they insisted on such unrealistic positions in order to camouflage the hope that the circumstances alone would

²¹² Pro-unionist members were Božo Jovi i (Glamo), Jovan Sara (Pale), Zdravko Radmanovi (Bosanski Novi), Slavko Kopuz (Mrkonji Grad). “O `pozivu svim lanovima SK’, iz CK SK: pismo je stvar li ne odluke”, *Oslobo enje*, April 8, 1990.

²¹³ Pro-autonomy were Kasim urtovi (Biha), Dragutin Kosovac, Nikola Stojanovi , Filip Vukovi and Muhidin Hamamdži (Sarajevo), Jadranko Hadžisejdi (Bosanski Brod). Some delegates adopted a halfway stance, as Radenko Popi (Novo Sarajevo) and Bozo Marendi (Tuzla). *Ibidem*.

²¹⁴ “Zakljuci centralnog Komiteta: Naš odgovor je platforma”, *Oslobo enje*, April 8, 1990.

disintegrate the remains of the SKJ and, simultaneously, keep the SKBiH alive, without having to take direct initiatives.

Although there was a polarization around opposite views on the future of the SKJ on ideological, territorial and (in part) national grounds, the breakup of the SKBiH did not happen in the spring of 1990. This was so for two reasons. First, the political context in Bosnia-Herzegovina was still *de facto* monopolistic. The “rules of play” of political pluralism had not been established yet and very few political parties existed outside of the official organizations.²¹⁵ The laws regulating the key issues (freedom of association, free press, and eventual suppression of the ban on national parties) had not been yet debated and approved. Therefore, forcing the breakup of the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina in those conditions would be a leap into the unknown. It was still preferable to “stay within the lines” at least until these laws were passed, in order to better explore the most favourable political opportunities which would originate within the new framework.

The second reason is that the balance of power between the élite and the base of the SKBiH prevented its rupture. While the narrow leadership almost unanimously (and regardless of national belonging) favoured a certain degree of autonomism from Belgrade, the unionists were well-established in middle and lower level cadres, local leaders and party base. The Bosnian Serbs, more incline to unionism, had a relative majority in membership and maintained a hegemonic control of party structures in some areas of the country such as the Bosanska Krajina, around Banja Luka, or in Eastern Herzegovina. In this context of general uncertainty, it was still recommended for everyone (élites, middle cadres and party bases) to keep a prudent attitude, despite of their growingly distant positions.

Moreover, the outcome of the “SKJ referendum” did not meet the expectations of the more dogmatic unitarians. On April 12th, the SKJ’s Central Committee in Belgrade reported to have received from all Yugoslavia around 8,000 letters supporting the prolongation of the Congress.²¹⁶ Keeping in mind that by June 1989 the SKJ’s total

²¹⁵ In April 1990, only five non-official parties existed in Bosnia-Herzegovina: the non-national Greens, the Democrat Party and the Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI); the national HDZ (Croat) and SPO (Serb).

²¹⁶ Source: “Pisma i poruke članstva i delegate prekinutog kongresa SKJ: veština za moderan SKJ”, *Borba*, April 12, 1990.

membership were about two millions,²¹⁷ the result was very far from mass consensus that the ultra-conservative Army officials had hoped to achieve. The vote results expressed by the delegates who had attended the 14th Congress deserves special commentary (See table below).

Table 3.1. Turnout and results of the referendum about the SKJ's Congress continuation among Congress delegates (April 1990).²¹⁸

SKJ Branches	Delegates in the 14 th Congress (January 1990)	Answered to referendum call (April 1990)	Did not answer to referendum call	% Turnout	Should Congress continue? - Yes	Should Congress continue? - No	Blank	% Yes
Slovenia	114	9	105	7.9	0	9	0	0
Croatia	216	44	172	20.4	9	32	3	21.9
Bosnia-H.	248	94	154	37.9	44	47	3	48.4
Serbia	333	322	11	96.7	321	1	0	99.7
Vojvodina	137	134	3	97.8	134	0	0	100
Kosovo	94	74	20	78.7	72	2	0	97.3
Montenegro	99	85	14	85.9	85	0	0	100
Macedonia	141	25	116	17.7	16	7	2	69.5
JNA (Army)	68	45	23	66.2	38	6	1	86.3
Total SKJ	1457 ²¹⁹	845	810	58.7	735	101	9	87.9

These figures revealed, once for all, that outside Serbia and Montenegro (the only delegations where turnout exceeded 50%) few delegates were concerned anymore by survival of the SKJ. In Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia the turnout was extremely low. Within that polarised situation, however, the Bosnia-Herzegovina figures represented,

²¹⁷ Source: “lanstvo partije u predve erje vanrednog kongresa SKJ. Osušeni karanfil na reveru”, *Borba*, January 16, 1990.

²¹⁸ Source: “Pisma i poruke lanstva i delegate prekinutog kongresa SKJ: ve ina za moderan SKJ”, *Borba*, April 12, 1990.

²¹⁹ The total of delegates who attended the Congress was actually 1,655, since there were also 198 of them from SKJ's central organs that do not appear in statistics about republican sections and were not covered by *Borba's* quoted source about the April referendum.

instead, a remarkable exception: their participation rate (37.9%) was low, but it was also by far the highest outside of the Serbian-Montenegrinian borders. Moreover, the Bosnian was the only party branch where a significant number of Congress delegates voted *against* the continuation, unlike the sections from the Serbian bloc (where the consensus for “yes” was almost unanimous) or the ones from Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia, where opposition was mainly expressed through a non-vote. In other words, this proved that, although a clear majority of the SKBiH cadres opposed the revival of the SKJ, a certain loyalty to party principles and routines was still observable.

Apart from the referendum’s failure, there were other factors contributing to the definitive disintegration of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The first multi-party elections in Slovenia (April 8) and Croatia (April 22) marked a serious defeat for the ex-communist heirs of the League, and a triumph for centre-right pro-secession parties. The cadres from the rest of Yugoslavia, even some of the most hard-line unionist, became aware that political competition within the republican borders would become the primary concern, and that rescuing the SKJ was worthless in such conditions. However, even after these events, a last-ditch attempt was made to revive the SKJ: the continuation of the 14th Congress was finally convened for May 26, four months and three days after its dramatic interruption following the “Slovene walkout”. Since the delegations from Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia, as expected, massively deserted the Congress, only 65% of the invited delegates attended it.²²⁰ However, it must be recalled that the Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina participated with an almost complete delegation, including the president Duraković, who was even elected as a representative in new central organs of the party.²²¹

²²⁰ The sum of delegates who attended the 14th Congress on May 26, 1990 was 989 (882 from the republican branches, 107 from the SKJ organs). Keeping in mind that they were 1,655 in the original composition seen in January 1990, there had been almost 700 desertions. None of the 114 Slovene delegates came to Belgrade, while 22 of 216 (10.1%) from Croatia did come (they were mainly Croatian Serbs; the most prominent were Marko Atlagić and Borislav Mikelić, both future cadres of the Serb Republic of Krajina), and 18 of 141 (12.7%) from Macedonia (according to *Borba*, they were almost all from the Kumanovo branch, the stronghold of Macedonian dogmatists). “Završen 14. vanredni kongres SKJ. Kraj starog, po etak neizvesnog”, *Borba*, May 28, 1990.

²²¹ By contrast with the other republics not aligned with pro-Milošević forces, the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina participated with 205 delegates, thus the 82.6% of the original delegation (248) seen in January. According to the available sources, apart the group from Kosovo (79 of 94, 84%), the other delegations outnumbered the respective quotas registered in January (Serbians raised from 333 in January to 339 in May; Vojvodinians from 134 to 143; the Army from 68 to 79; the Montenegrinians from 99 to 103). This suggests that quotas of the main pro-Milošević branches had been “adjusted” – albeit slightly –

Once again, the SKBiH was the exception out of the Serbian-Montenegrin bloc, persisting in displaying a certain loyalty to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, its symbols, rituals and narratives, despite the evident controversies. Besides the traditional reasons (principles of Yugoslavism, genuine orthodoxy, compromise with hard-line unionist sectors in order to prevent fractures), there is probably a more immediate explanation for that. There was, among the Bosnian leadership, a growing concern about the increasing influence of national movements in the republic, especially the Bosnian branch of the Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*, hereafter HDZ). The electoral victory of Franjo Tuđman in Croatia and the inflammatory statements by some HDZ's cadres who claimed that Bosnia-Herzegovina was an integral part of the Croatian geo-political space, created alarm in Sarajevo. As relations with Zagreb were getting colder, the SKBiH's leading ranks were willing to maintain a prudent attitude towards Serbia, in order to avoid complete isolation. Not by chance, Duraković highlighted in his speech the aspiration to “demonstrate to any kind of right [-wing parties] that we are able to unify ourselves and that, in a new democratic atmosphere, we have real chances of political action”.²²² His speech was quite conciliatory, though he did not mask the traditional dilemmas that the SKBiH had to face for defending its “third-party” position, nor did he give up his usual claims for the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the inevitability of a multi-party democratization. He stated: “The presence of our delegates in this meeting is interpreted in different ways: for someone, we are true orthodox; for others, [we are] low-cost ‘compromise people’; others, instead, think that this meeting is only a big mistake, the last ditch effort of a powerless and compromised communist organization. Probably there is space for a certain type of objections, but we came here, first of all, convinced that we need a pan-Yugoslav internationalist organization, obviously, democratically and socialistically oriented”.²²³

The option of remaining in the SKJ, though, did not encounter a unanimous favour among the highest cadres of the SKBiH. Ivo Komšić, one of the most influential leaders of the reformist wing, related in his memoirs: “All the time, I had been against going to Belgrade [to the Congress], I was against any further engagement with the SKJ, as this

to increase their weight. The delegates from the SKJ organs were 107 (vs. 198 in January 1990). “Završen 14. vanredni kongres SKJ. Kraj starog, po etak neizvesnog”, *Borba*, May 28, 1990.

²²² “Završen 14. vanredni kongres SKJ. Za demokratski socijalizam i federativnu Jugoslaviju”, *Politika*, May 27, 1990.

²²³ *Ibidem*.

organization had already fallen apart. [...] Nonetheless, Durakovi and our delegates acted out of the agreement on the continuation [of the congress]. We had firmly decided that we would not agree with any session or congress before the end of the year, until our elections are held. Still, they have accepted to schedule a date (end of September) for a so-called 'congress of renewal', and they even proposed some members for the coordinating council. All that was made in a way so that our [delegates] could ingratiate themselves with the comrades from Serbia, who have now left them in the lurch".²²⁴

Despite pompous discourses, the congress of the SKJ in May did not go beyond a symbolic and testimonial gesture. The final decision taken was to call for a session of the SKJ organs for September 29, 1990, that would set the "new programmatic and democratic basis".²²⁵ Yet, everybody was aware that this could hardly happen. The definitive absence of three branches (Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia), the ongoing republicanization of politics and the atmosphere of tough de-ideologization converted that "rump" 14th Congress into an irrelevant event which marked the definitive sunset of 45 years of history. The mere presence of the SKBiH in that scenario, however, is in itself a remarkable fact which proves the still strong commitment of the Bosnian Communists to traditions and Yugoslavism. The SKBiH's elite sought to wait until the SKJ would extinguish itself but without ever formally quitting it, in order to keep the conservatives within the party. The outcome of the "rump" Congress of the SKJ in May also reveals that the Serbian Communists still tried (and, in part, they managed) to exercise a certain amount of influence and pressure on their Bosnian counterparts. It is remarkable that only two weeks after the announcement of the "rump Congress", the League of Communists of Serbia would merge with the Socialist Alliance, thus forming the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) which would be formally set the date of July 16, 1990, for their founding congress. This confirms that Miloševi was no longer interested in keeping the SKJ alive and changed his political agenda, using the League as a mere instrument to control the other branches while aiming to hegemonize the political spectrum within Serbia under an illusion of continuity of the basic principles of Yugoslav socialism. Ironically, after the metamorphosis of the Serbian Communists, the League of Communists of Bosnia-

²²⁴ Ivo Komši, *Preživljena zemlja*, Zagreb: Prometej, 2006, 49.

²²⁵ The Bosnians Nijaz Durakovi, Ivan Brigi and Dževad Taši were elected for the "Board for the preparation of the Congress for the democratic and programmatic renewal", totally composed by 15 people. The future Congress was scheduled for September 29, 1990. Still, it would never take place. "Okrnjen odbor", in *Borba*, May 28, 1990.

Herzegovina ended up being the last branch (together with the Macedonian) to abandon the political heritage and the name of the SKJ.

3.2. The uncertain path to a multi-party system and the postponement of the elections

The League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina entered 1990 without a clear position on the multi-party system. At least three tendencies were observable:

- 1) The hard-line continuists supported a “pluralism without parties”, which was also advocated by Slobodan Milošević in Serbia;
- 2) The moderate continuists advocated for a “pluralism without *national* parties”, accepting a liberalization of the political spectrum but keeping a ban on political forces “on national basis” (“*na nacionalnoj osnovi*”), i.e. composed of only one national group;
- 3) The radical reformists and liberals backed an integral pluralism, which could also include national parties.

Over the course of 1989, the leadership of the SKBiH had gradually shifted from the first to the second option, but had still failed to openly accept a multi-party system. There were two main reasons for that: first, the hard-line continuists were still influential and managed to prevent it; second, due to its loyalty to a top-down centralist model, the SKBiH expected the SKJ to take the final decision on political reforms.

On the other side, it must be recalled that by early 1990 there were only five non-regime political organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, one of the lowest figures in all Yugoslavia.²²⁶ Three of them were non-nationalist, namely the Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI), the Movement of the Greens (*Zeleni*) and the

²²⁶ At the end of March 1990, according to *Politika's* statistics, 15 parties were active in Slovenia, 20 in Croatia, 17 in Serbia proper, 10 in Kosovo, 8 in Vojvodina, 5 in Macedonia and 6 in Bosnia-Herzegovina (the official SKBiH, SSRN and SSO; and the non-official Greens, Democrat Party, UJDI; the HDZ, the Croat national party that was already de facto active in Bosnia-Herzegovina since January 1990, was not computed yet). “Li na karta jugoslovenskog političkog pluralizma. Najviše nacionalnih stranaka u Srbiji”, *Politika*, March 25, 1990.

Democratic Party;²²⁷ they were not mass movements at all, and in fact they didn't aspire to become that. However, there were two national parties, the HDZ and the SPO (respectively, the Bosnian branches of the Croatian and Serbian right-wing parties led by Franjo Tuđman and Vuk Drašković). Since January 1990, they had begun to actively develop their structures, mainly in nationally homogeneous areas in Herzegovina and Eastern Bosnia, close to the borders with the Republics of Croatia and Serbia. At that stage, national parties still faced a tough control from state organs; non-national parties enjoyed a certain degree of tolerance, but they also had several obstacles to displaying their activity.

Why was the non-nationalist opposition in Bosnia-Herzegovina still so weak? One possible answer could be the delay that the ruling party imposed in setting the conditions for a multi-party system (legalization, electoral reform, etc). This was surely one of the factors. On the other side, one could also say that the lack of organized competitors misled the Bosnian Communists, making them think that they could stay in power for longer. This slowed down the political transition and, in turn, contributed to prevent the development of political alternatives.

A more articulated explanation is that the non-national opposition seemed to be “sandwiched” by the peculiar character of communist rule in Bosnia-Herzegovina. While most of the other republican branches of the SKJ were (or were about to) incorporate some nationalist elements in their discourse in order to replace the declining value of communist ideology and counter the right-wing forces, the SKBiH was a necessary exception: lacking a “titular nation”, it could not play any “ethnic card” and still insisted on anti-nationalism as a cohesive force. While tightly contrasting the eventual appearance of movements on a national basis, the Bosnian Communists had, for a long time, been able to co-opt within their lines many intellectuals, youth leaders, alternative press and anyone coming from potentially dissident and anti-regime backgrounds. For them, it was still preferable struggling inside the party rather than facing the effects of official propaganda, and the negative stigmas of being political “enemies”, more or less direct intimidations and threats of repression. As Saša Mrduljaš recalled, a traditional Yugoslavist and Titoist political conception “[...] did not have a relevant significance at

²²⁷ For an in-depth analysis of the UJDI, see chapter 6.3.

the level of the state but succeeded, by means of the corresponding propaganda, to maintain relatively peaceful conditions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Indeed, within the Bosnian society, it was not all that simple to come out against the already archaic conception of the 'Titoist Yugoslavia'. [...] Although after the collapse of the SKJ and the beginning of the multi-party system it was quite clear that supporting these conceptions was already senseless at the level of Yugoslavia, yet the SKBiH maintained some propaganda element which could still be appropriate in the framework of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society".²²⁸

The disastrous outcome of the 14th Congress had made it completely clear that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia could not be the agent for political change. Hence, the SKBiH searched for some way to reform the ruling system and accelerate the process of quitting the monopoly of power. There were also other reasons for that, such as the evolution of the political context in Central-Eastern Europe, where several (soon-to-be former Communist) countries were calling for free elections. In particular, the events in Romania received wide coverage in the Yugoslav and Bosnian media. Expressions like "the last Ceausescu" were then commonly employed, not only in accusations coming from critics with a liberal bent, but also used by high-ranking officials who feared suffering a similar fate. Obviously, the echo of the events in Croatia, where the first elections were scheduled for April 1990 under the new leadership of the young reformist leader Ivica Račan, casted a further shadow of anachronism over the reluctant Bosnian stance. The typical justifications that Bosnian Communists alleged for eluding demands of change, such as the "Yugoslav exception" ("Yugoslavia democratized itself in 1948") and the "Bosnian exception" ("Any multi-party model is unsuitable for Bosnia-Herzegovina due to its multi-ethnic characteristics") lost considerable ground.

Some sort of pluralist shift was inevitable. Hence, as early as January 1990, the party proudly announced its opening to multi-party elections, which were initially scheduled for March 25-27, 1990. Nonetheless, a completely free competition was still bypassed in two ways. First, it was reaffirmed that a legal ban should be maintained on any "nation-based" parties.²²⁹ Second, the Bosnian regime had not yet undertaken any

²²⁸ Saša Mrduljaš, "Doprinos vladajućih bosansko-hercegovačkih stranaka", in *Suvremene Teme*, 2011, 4, 1, 47-48.

²²⁹ "CK SK Bosne i Hercegovine: SK ide u izbornu utakmicu", in *Borba*, January 9, 1990.

political reform to legalize parties and associations. The opposition was simply “tolerated” since candidacies outside the official organizations were formally allowed, but without a legal framework establishing all the “rules of play” (lit. *pravila igre*) of the multi-party system. Neither an institutional, nor an electoral reform, were introduced. Hence, the Bosnian citizens would vote for exactly the same bodies of the Parliament and the same electoral system provided by the 1974 Constitution, namely the indirect system of representation through delegates.²³⁰

This limbo would obviously led to an easy victory for the Communists. Their opponents would likely be limited to the other official organizations, namely the Socialist Alliance (SSRN) and the Alliance of Socialist Youth (SSO) that would be converted into political parties. Moreover, the “tolerated” non-national opposition was highly disorganized and weak at that moment. Both the Greens and the UJDI announced that they would not be able to participate in the elections, the Greens because of their lack of the basic structures required for electoral competition,²³¹ whereas the UJDI claimed that the conditions for such a vote would be undemocratic and that the only legitimate elections they would join at would be for an eventual “Constitutional Assembly”.²³²

This stratagem of “continuist elections” would permit the SKBiH to retain power and legitimate itself while offering nothing more than the appearance of reforms. This element was reinforced by the fact that the date of the vote would almost coincide with the date of the elections in Slovenia and Croatia, which were openly conceived as multi-party and fully competitive. The stratagem was also perfectly compatible with the “wait and see” attitude of the Bosnian Communists regarding the fate of the SKJ which was still, as we have already seen, a major source of concern.

This “hybrid” model, merging the traditional non-party pluralism with some concessions to opposition, did not convince at all the more radical reformists, outside and inside the regime. They criticized the party leadership for being allegedly concerned to

²³⁰ The elections were formally called in the official journal of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, *Službeni list RS Bosne i Hercegovine*, in January 26, 1990 and scheduled for March 25-27.

²³¹ As explained by the leader of the Greens, Muba Dizdarevi -Peleš, “I guess it is too early. We exist since three months ago, but this aim requires time. I have the impression that some panic overcame us to go all to the electoral race. The ecological questions are scary, and solving them requires a cool head. We will support all those who will defend our positions and requests inside the institutions”. [...] The Greens were then estimated to have approximately 400 members. “Uo i narednih izbora. Partija bez opozicije”, *Oslobo enje*, February 8, 1990.

²³² “Uo i narednih izbora. Partija bez opozicije”, *Oslobo enje*, February 8, 1990.

stay in power, but not with the formal legalization of free political associations and with the acceptance and establishment of all the “rules of play”.²³³ The Youth Socialist Alliance (SSO BiH, the youth branch of the party) entered into many arguments with the leadership of the SKBiH, requesting a more decided advance towards a legally established multi-party system. Rasim Kadić, the president of the SSO BiH, repeatedly accused the Communists for still having a paternalistic attitude towards society, self-assuming the roles of the “protectors of the people” and guardians of *status quo*.²³⁴ The SSO BiH insisted to postpone the elections in order to create effective conditions for pluralism. The same request came by the UJDI, the Democratic Party and other movements belonging to the opposition.²³⁵ The SKBiH, apparently, did not pay too much attention to these requests. Five weeks before the scheduled date, it even issued its own electoral program in view of the imminent vote. Ironically, one main point was precisely “the freedom of political organization for general, free and secret elections”, whereas the ban on any kind of “national programs” was renewed.²³⁶

The only legal move towards political pluralism was the approval of the first Law on Political Association, which was issued on February 21st, when the campaign for the March elections had already (at least formally) begun. The law officially regulated and allowed political organizations outside the regime, for the first time in the history of socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, it generated still more anger among the opposition who considered some requirements unachievable or unacceptable, such as the need to collect 150,000 signatures or the commitment to respect socialist self-

²³³ See the dispute between Duraković and Rasim Kadić, (the leader of the SSO, which would soon leave the Communist party for his radical reformist stance), in “CK SK Bosne i Hercegovine: SK ide u izbornu utakmicu”, in *Borba*, January 9, 1990.

²³⁴ Rasim Kadić well explained these critics in an interview: “The party can be blamed for all sort of things, but in Bosnia-Herzegovina especially since it is building a conscience which has some minimal stronghold, whose zealous application brings more damage than advantage. This is the so-called conscience that the party has a specific role, virtually as guarantor of the *status quo* of a situation implying that a shift would be impossible, especially if national. In this context, the party attributes to itself the role of guardian of the people [lit. *uvar naroda*], as a sort of good soul [lit. *dobar duh*] willing to drive the people on the good way, as a party that tries [as if it was the] only to reflect and to serve. Unfortunately, it always serves, but by the very often closed session, and by means of the most different statements”. Rasim Kadić, interviewed in “Ovo je hrkljuš zemlja”, *Valter*, February 9, 1990.

²³⁵ “Pokušajmo ponovo, demokratijom”, *Oslobo enje*, February 15, 1990.

²³⁶ The other main points of the program excerpt included: the defence of the AVNOJ and ZAVNOBiH principles - namely, the existing institutional-territorial framework for both Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina -; the unity of the Yugoslav Army (JNA); the removing of the death penalty and the crime of opinion. “Izborni program SKBiH. Šesnaest ‘za’”, *Oslobo enje*, February 20, 1990.

management as pre-conditions for submitting the candidacies.²³⁷ The law also established a ban on any kind of ethno-national parties. As stated in article 4, “the association on the grounds of national and religious belonging is forbidden, except [when] in conformity with the laws where the legal role of the religious community is accomplished”.²³⁸ The measure shows the extent to which the Bosnian Communist regime was still committed to use not just political tools, but also any formal-legal tools to avoid the recognition of mono-national parties as legitimate opponents. This norm would become immediately the object of intense debate as it was harshly disputed not only by the ethnic movements which were directly affected by the decision, but also by the liberal-democrat opposition and even by some sceptical communist cadres. We must keep in mind that national parties were already operating in the Bosnian territory, and had been legalized (or were about to) in the other Yugoslav republics.

However, a drastic change of plans occurred a few weeks before the scheduled date of the elections. On March 5, the delegates of the Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina voted for prolonging their own mandate until the end of 1990, hence cancelling the date of 25-27 March without scheduling a new date: the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina were generically postponed until “the end of 1990”.²³⁹ The reason of this change remains, still today, not entirely clear. During the Assembly debates, the majority of delegates used the same arguments as the reformists and the opposition, namely that the conditions for an authentic pluralism should be set with new reforms in order to guarantee full equality for all political competitors. Yet, beyond these principled reasons, doubts arose about the strategic convenience of such a “blitz”. As the press analysts observed then, some leaders of the SKBiH became convinced that they would more easily stay in power through fully democratic elections than through the “hybrid” method of vote.²⁴⁰ The party, indeed, was increasingly losing membership and confidence in their effective control over the state apparatus. Although the March vote would assure a comfortable advantage over their competition, it would also imply the risk of a very low turnout, not only due to the

²³⁷ “Primjedbe mostarskih demokrata. Zahtjev za odga nje izbora”, *Oslobo enje*, February 27, 1990.

The article 4 of the Law affirmed: “The freedom of association cannot be intended to destroy the bases of the socialist self-management democratic order as established in the Constitution”. “Zakon o udruživanju građana”, in *Službeni list SRBiH*, February 21, 1990.

²³⁸ Article 4 of the Law on political association, in *Službeni list SRBiH*, February 21, 1990.

²³⁹ “Skupština BiH do kraja godine odložila izbore. Mart ‘preseljen’ u januar”, *Borba*, March 6, 1990; “Skupština SRBiH. Odgo eni izbori”, *Oslobo enje*, March 6, 1990.

²⁴⁰ “Iskušenja bh. socijalizma. Predizborni kroki”, *Naši Dani*, March 2, 1990.

opposition's threats to boycott the elections but, most likely, because of indifference and apathy. Such an eventuality would be highly counterproductive for the Bosnian Communists.

Nonetheless, an account by a then high level SKBiH cadre provides an alternative explanation for those facts. Ivo Komši , a member of the SKBiH Presidency since December 1989, related in his memories, and confirmed in further occasions, that the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina were postponed due to pressures on the Bosnian-Herzegovinian leadership coming from the highest ranks of the JNA, the Yugoslav Army.²⁴¹ According to Komši , on March 8 a delegation of the JNA, led by Admiral Petar Šimić and Generals Stane Brovet and Simeon Bunjić, came to Sarajevo to visit SKBiH representatives Komši , Zlatko Lagumdžija and Nijaz Duraković. The Army officials came there to announce that they were planning a *coup d'état* to “save Yugoslavia” and asked the Bosnian leaders to collaborate, namely to seize power on behalf of the JNA. Then, the officials claimed that the elections should be postponed at least until autumn, as an earlier vote would obstruct their plan and would surely result in a triumph of the national parties, as would also happen in Slovenia and Croatia (and this is what happened historically). “They came to tell us that they were going to take power in all of Yugoslavia. They said openly that they were planning a coup, but were confronted with a problem: to whom they were going to hand over power after the coup? They asked us: ‘Would you be able to take power in Bosnia-Herzegovina following our coup? Would you, leaders of the SKBiH, be willing to take over the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina after the military coup? We wish to hand power to you, because we want to preserve Yugoslavia.’ ”²⁴² Komši and Lagumdžija allegedly tried to discourage the officials, assuring them that the SKBiH would be able to win the elections alone, regardless of the support of the Army. However, the officials insisted on their plan. Komši claims that the Army and the Bosnian higher ranks held various meetings to work the details of the whole

²⁴¹ Ivo Komši , *Preživljena zemlja*, 47-48. The account was first made public by Komši in a round table held in Zagreb on February 14, 2003, organized by the Croatian magazine *Gordogan*, which was joined by Dušan Bilandžić , Mile Bjelajac, Denis Kuljiš, Martin Špegelj and the same Komši . An excerpt of the round table contents was issued in “Okrugli stol: mi moramo kazati ono što znamo!”, *Gordogan*, 45, 2003, 137-155 (a shorter and edited English version was issued in Dušan Bilandžić et. al., “Debate on the wars in Croatia and Bosnia” (parts I, II), in *Bosnia Report*, 43-44, Jan-Apr 2005. Accessed March 25, 2014. http://www.bosnia.org.uk/bosrep/report_format.cfm?articleID=2966&reportid=167. Ivo Komši confirmed the same version of facts in an interview released to the author (Sarajevo, July 13, 2012).

²⁴² Komši , “Debate on the wars in Croatia and Bosnia”.

plan.²⁴³ The leadership of the SKBiH, feeling unexperienced and vulnerable in front of the pressures of the officials, would finally decide to “gain time” and agreed to postpone the elections from spring to autumn.

However, the two explanations for the postponing the elections, namely the “official” (the Bosnian Parliament autonomously voted to postpone the elections) and the “offstage” (the Yugoslav Army decisively influenced this decision by strong pressures on the Bosnian leadership) versions, are not entirely compatible because of some incongruences in dates. Komši argues that the meetings took place at the beginning of March, recalling particularly the one held in Sarajevo on March 8. Yet, the Parliament voted for postponement on March 5, as a consequence of the proposal of the Commission for the Constitutional Questions which was submitted on February 27.²⁴⁴ This fueled doubts about a direct connection between the JNA’s pressures on Bosnia-Herzegovina and the vote of the Parliament. If we consider reliable Komši’s account²⁴⁵ and that he did not forgot the exact dates,²⁴⁶ we should then deduce that the SKBiH’s leaders and the

²⁴³ Komši did not personally attend those meetings held in Belgrade among the Bosnian and the Yugoslav Army’s highest ranks. It was Nijaz Durakovi who reported him the contents. “Nijaz Durakovi went several times and wished me to accompany him, but I refused, so he went without me. Ivan Brigi went once with him, Krstan Maleševi at another time. [...] The talks were held in a bunker in Belgrade, where the idea of the military coup was explained, how it was to be done. Nijaz Durakovi, who reported back to us, said that a colonel kept guard at the door of the bunker while some twenty generals sat inside, together with the civilians who, according to Durakovi, were supposed to form the new Yugoslav government after the coup. The generals did not count on Ante Markovi, whom they considered an enemy: he was on the list of those to be arrested. But Raif Dizdarevi was there, whom they had chosen instead to head the future Yugoslav government. Durakovi said that there was no one from Slovenia and Croatia at these sessions. But there was a group of civilians who took part in the negotiations, including Durakovi himself, although he went along only because he was scared. They would send a military plane to bring him, and he would go in order to buy us time: the idea was to play along until after the elections in Slovenia and Croatia, after which it would be too late”. *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁴ “Skupština SRBiH, Komisija za ustavna pitanja. Proljeće bez izbora?”, *Oslobođenje*, February 28, 1990.

²⁴⁵ Nijaz Durakovi confirms some points of the Komši’s version in his book (co-written with Muhamed Filipovi) *Tragedija Bosne*, albeit with less detail. He reports the strong pressures that a group of dogmatic Army generals in office (Veljko Kadrijevi, Stane Brovet) or retired (Branko Mamula) made on the Bosnian Communists. “From my personal experience of more than ten talks that I had with the highest Army ranks, [...] they proposed me to ‘transfer’ the entire SKBiH to the SK-PJ [the “League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia”, namely the new party the hardline generals wanted to setup] and that through it we carry out some kind of putsch in Bosnia-Herzegovina”. (Muhamed Filipovi and Nijaz Durakovi, *Tragedija Bosne*, Sarajevo: Valter, 2002, 147, 167).

Apart from Durakovi and Komši, none of the participants in the meetings has ever directly spoken about these events.

²⁴⁶ One could also suppose that Komši was simply inaccurate with the dates, and that the meetings JNA-SKBiH took place some days earlier, effectively conditioning the vote of the Constitutional Commission and the Parliament. Still, this would appear implausible as Komši made an explicit reference to the 8 March meeting in Sarajevo both in the round table and in his memoirs. In both occasions, he added a noticeable (and grotesque) anecdote: in the middle of the meeting, initially held only by himself and Lagumdžija for the SKBiH’s delegation, all of a sudden the president Nijaz Durakovi broke in, “visibly

Assembly had different orientations and acted quite independently from each other. The intention of the party leadership was, presumably, to hold elections soon, in any case no later than the summer of 1990, regardless of the decisions coming from the Assembly. On the eve of the vote in Parliament, Duraković insisted that the path to democratization had been almost completed (“by two thirds”, he said) and that a potential postponing should not extend the process for too long.²⁴⁷ The SKBiH reaffirmed in a statement that, although guaranteeing the respect for the Parliament’s decision, “the party is ready for the elections”, which looked like a way to put more pressure on the Assembly.²⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the vote in favour of the one-year-long delay was almost unanimous. The simultaneous pressure from the Army definitely discouraged the SKBiH from any attempt to carry out their “hybrid” elections.

However, Komšić’s version is interesting for at least three reasons: 1) it provides some elements to understand the postponing of the elections in Bosnia which were, needless to say, a decisive event in the Bosnian political transition. Had the vote taken place in the spring of 1990, the result and the consequences would have been likely different and more uncertain than the ones which occurred in autumn. The national right-wing parties would have been forced to organize themselves in haste and to face a still effective ban on ethnic movements. Instead, the postponement gave them precious time to set up a political structure throughout the country and articulate their discourse; 2) it shows the extent of the pressures of Army plans on the leadership of Bosnia-Herzegovina who, feeling inexperienced and vulnerable, finally yielded to them; 3) it helps to explain the evolution of the JNA’s position in the whole process of Yugoslav dissolution. Komšić confirms the evidence that the Army’s top was not homogeneous about its own policy and that its agenda did not necessarily coincide with that of Slobodan Milošević. “[The JNA’s plan] was clearly different from that of Milošević and the SDS. And Tuđman too had a plan, which agreed with Milošević’s: to create an independent and ethnically homogeneous Croatian state”.²⁴⁹ Komšić argues that Petar Šimić, the admiral who was

drunk, as he celebrated March 8 [the Women’s day] somewhere. He repeated what we had already said; he hardly associated thoughts, so that no dialogue was possible anymore”. Komšić, *Preživljena zemlja*, 48.

²⁴⁷ “Odgoditi, a ne ponoviti”, *Oslobođenje*, March 1, 1990.

²⁴⁸ “Presjedništvo CK SKBiH: eka se odluka Skupštine”, *Oslobođenje*, March 1, 1990.

²⁴⁹ Komšić in “Debate on the wars in Croatia and Bosnia”; the same thesis (extensively quoting the Komšić’s account) is also contained in Mile Bjelajac, “Pokušaj rešavanja jugoslovenske krize vojnim udarom”, in H. Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac (eds.), *Dijalog povjesni ara – istori ara 9*, Zagreb: Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, 2005, 443-445.

then the President of the JNA's party branch (SK-JNA), and a member of the delegation who visited Sarajevo, did not favour the plan of *coup d'état* and explicitly come out against it at the end of the meetings.²⁵⁰ This is coherent with other displays of disagreement with the most hard-line officials that Šimi gave in that period, shortly before his sudden and unexpected death.²⁵¹ We must take into account that Šimi himself was a conservative unitarian like his Army colleagues, but having different views and strategies about how to preserve Yugoslavia, the Communist party and ideological continuity.

Finally, the whole interpretation presents us with a paradoxical fact: the ultra-conservative Army and the ultra-reformist civic opposition shared, albeit for opposite reasons and long-time objectives, the same immediate purpose, namely the postponement of the elections, and they obtained it. Still, both failed to achieve their own supreme goals. On the one hand, the Army never managed to carry out its *coup d'état* and, least of all, to save Yugoslavia. On the other hand, the Bosnian civic opposition did not benefit at all of the delay of the vote. On the contrary, the appearance of national parties, and the declining capacity of the regime to confront them, would make the "alternatives" lose even that residual political space that they occupied during that short preliminary transition.

Florian Bieber also offers a deep analysis of the JNA-Serbia relations in the 1989-1992, prudently concluding that the Army was "a complex institution that rarely spoke in one voice or was driven by exclusively one interest" and that alignment with Milošević was neither immediate, nor automatic or foregone. Florian Bieber, "The role of the Yugoslav People's Army", 301-332.

²⁵⁰ Komšić in "Debate on the wars in Croatia and Bosnia".

²⁵¹ Petar Šimić (a Bosnian Croat, born in Bihać in 1932) led the SK-JNA delegation in the 14th Congress, which, quite unexpectedly, voted against the Serbians and along Croats and Bosnians in favour of the Congress' interruption. Šimić, due to his conciliatory positions on the Yugoslav crisis, entered into conflict with the chief of JNA Veljko Kadijević. Šimić was still committed to an authentically Yugoslav and unitarian conception of the SKJ which sought to embrace all the republics and which would pass through some reforms; Kadijević, instead, aimed to create an autonomous hard-line party of the Army, more inclined to the Serbian option (the SK-PJ, League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia).

According to Anton Tus (then head of the Yugoslav Air Force, close friend of Šimić and later chief of the Croatian Army), Ante Šimić was invited by Blagoje Adžić (then Army Chief of Staff) to discuss about the creation of the SK-PJ, what Šimić fiercely opposed. During the meeting, Šimić toppled down. He was diagnosed with a cerebral stroke and died on April 11, 1990. His sudden death would become later, and it is still today, the object of unproved suspicions and speculations, particularly in non-Serb circles, about a possible homicide by poisoning, connected with his opposition to the plans of the Army top. See Anton Tus in "General Kadijević je s maršalom Jazovim dogovarao pučku SSSR-u i Jugoslaviji", *Jutarnji List*, November 4, 2007. Accessed January 8, 2014. www.jutarnji.hr/template/article/article-print.jsp?id=274885

3.3. The Bosnian Communists before the electoral campaign: strengths and weaknesses

On May 25, 1990 a historical breaking-point in the political transition of Bosnia-Herzegovina occurred. On that day, the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina scheduled a demonstration in front of the Eternal Flame (*Vije na Vatra*) at the Tito Street (*Titova Ulica*) in the very centre of Sarajevo. This rally marked the SKBiH's *de facto* transition between the Socialist era and the beginning of the electoral campaign for the first multi-party elections. The date was not fortuitous, since May 25 was Tito's "official birthday" and formerly a holiday in Yugoslavia, celebrated as the Youth Day. The motto of the rally was "Bosnia says NO" [*Bosna kaže ne*], meaning "no" to the splitting of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its division along ethno-national lines. While the first concern referred to territorial claims from outside of Bosnia-Herzegovina (mainly from Croatia and Serbia) who claimed a possible subdivision on national criteria, the second was a warning against mono-national mobilizations that were growing in some regions of the republic.

The demonstration ended up as a relative success for the Bosnian Communists, as thousands of people (from 20,000 to 100,000 according to different press sources)²⁵² joined the meeting; many of them coming from outside Sarajevo (buses were organized in all the main Bosnian towns), showing the party's still considerable organizational structure and ability to mobilize their bases.²⁵³ The Bosnian Communists aimed to verify, and to display, their real popular support while marking a clear continuity with the past, in a time when their homologue parties from the other Yugoslav republics (not to mention those from Central and Eastern Europe) were generally trying to erase that legacy as fast as possible. As pictures from the event show, a giant poster of Tito was placed above the Eternal Flame, while Nijaz Duraković opened his speech by quoting a long passage of the Tito's address in that same place on November 1945. Posters showing the former president of Yugoslavia were also carried by the crowd. Some of the cheered slogans

²⁵² "Hiljade puta 'ne'", *Vecernje Novine*, May 26-27, 1990.

²⁵³ Andjelić also points out the relative solidity of the Communists' organization in that phase, fittingly observing the misinterpretations of some scholars, namely Noel Malcolm, who in his popular book *Bosnia: a short history* wrongly claimed that the League had disintegrated in Bosnia since the early 1990. Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 152.

were openly pro-Tito (“We are Tito’s, Tito is ours!”, “Tito goes through Romanija”, “Tito – our pride”, “Down with the attacks on comrade Tito”), some referred to a patriotic Yugoslav-Bosnian feeling (“This is Bosnia and Yugoslavia”, “We give our life, we don’t give Bosnia-Herzegovina”, “Eight offensives, two AVNOJ, one Bosnia, one Yugoslavia”, “Let Serbia and Croatia hear, our Bosnia is a common brother”, “No one has the right to cut the borders of Yugoslavia”, “Death to nationalism, “Hands off from Bosnia”, “*No pasaran*”, “Nationality – Yugoslav”, “I love you, Bosnia”).²⁵⁴

The aesthetics, language and slogans were still strongly committed to socialist tradition and insisted on the absolute inseparability between Titoism and Yugoslavism. In other words, the implicit idea that Yugoslavia could survive *only* as a socialist and titoist entity was reaffirmed. The only variation observable in the traditional discourse of the SKBiH was a stronger emphasis on the uniqueness of Bosnia-Herzegovina, including some very unusual (if not unprecedented) mentions to the pre-communist common historical identity of the country. The official discourse of the SKBiH had, so far, strictly connected the statehood of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Partisan-socialist experience, usually not mentioning the pre-communist historical and cultural centuries-old continuity of a singular Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁵⁵ This focus on Bosnia-Herzegovina was a logical consequence of the “republicanized” political transition (the party would be soon seeking the votes of the republican base); however, this did not correspond at all to an emergence

²⁵⁴ “Transparenti i parole”, *Oslobo enje*, May 26, 1990; “Hiljade puta ‘ne’ ”, *Ve ernje Novine*, May 26-27, 1990; “Neka nova gospoda ponovo dižu glavu”, *Borba*, May 27, 1990.

²⁵⁵ On his speech at the 25 May demonstration, transcribed in the newspaper *Oslobo enje*, the SKBiH president Nijaz Durakovi broke this taboo mentioning the “thousand-year tradition and culture” and recalling his main protagonists: the Ban (Bosnia’s ruler) Kulin in the XII century, the role of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Franciscans, who “cultivated the tolerance, the mutual understanding and protected the cultural goods”, the Ottoman governor Gazi-Huzrev Beg, “builder and emancipator of Bosnia”, the cultural importance of the Sephardi Jews and the Orthodox Missionaries. Durakovi even recovered the Bogomils as a founding element of identity, saying: “Bosnia and Herzegovina does not exist since yesterday, it has always been specific, it has been one thing from those ancient bogomil times when Bosnia and Herzegovina resisted to these or those aspirations”. However, these references were rare. The SKBiH’s discourse during the campaign would generally maintain the connection between the Bosnian statehood and the partisan-socialist rule. “Iz govora Nijaza Durakovi a. Bosna ne e tutora”, *Oslobo enje*, May 26, 1990.

It must be remembered that the association of the manichean-heretic sect of the Bogomils with the schismatic Bosnian Church in the Middle Ages has been frequently exploited, in the XIX and XX centuries, either by “assimilationist”, ethno-centric Serb, Muslim or Croat authors, either by “integrationist” supporters claiming to demonstrate an authentically Bosnian distinct identity (as in the case of the Durakovi’s quotation, as well that of the Austro-Hungarian administration in the 1878-1908 period). Many authoritative scholars have questioned the effective presence of Bogomils labelling it as an ‘historical myth’ or, anyway, as a dubious topic (Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, London: Macmillan, 1994, 27-42; Tatjana Sekuli, *Violenza etnica. I Balcani tra etnonazionalismo e democrazia*, Roma: Carocci, 2002, 90; Donia, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 24; Velikonja, *Religious separation*, 28-32).

of an eventual Bosnian “integrationist” national feeling or to a breach for autonomism or, least of all, secessionism. The SKBiH’s positioning was still clearly pro-federal and pro-Yugoslav.

However, the organization somewhat softened the solemnity of the event by leaving the stage not only to the highest politicians and trade-unionists, but also to folk singers, artists and actors who echoed the patriotic Yugoslavist rhetoric and the “We will live together” discourse.²⁵⁶ The SKBiH used the mobilization of large crowds and traditional symbols in order to strengthen itself before going through two imminent and decisive crossroads: 1) the institutional reform and, especially, the decision about admitting or banishing national parties; and 2) the relations with the Yugoslav communists, particularly with Belgrade and Milošević’s rule. However, the mobilization of May 25th could not resolve the three weak points which were hindering the SKBiH from within: 1) the ideological tensions with the civic-liberals, 2) some limited, yet significant, signs of territorial-organizational disbandment, 3) the relation with the press.

First, this firm adherence to the symbols and traditions of Titoism caused further criticism and desertions from the liberal non-nationalist groups. The Socialist Youth (SSO BiH) refused to attend the demonstration in Sarajevo,²⁵⁷ although the symbolical significance of the date was still high after being celebrated for decades through the Youth’s Relay Race.²⁵⁸ This absence made clear that the rift between the SKBiH and its youth branch was definitive. The sharpest criticisms came also from the influential magazine *Naši Dani*. The writer Miljenko Jergović compared the demonstration in Sarajevo to the pro-Milošević “Truth rallies” of 1988-1989, arguing that the Bosnian Communists were similarly using the protest to conserve their power through demagogic

²⁵⁶ Among the special guests were the singers Kemal Monteno and Davorin Popović, the theatre actress Vesna Masić and the then 15-years old actor Moreno De Bartoli, who was very popular throughout all Yugoslavia for acting as the main character in the Kusturica’s movie “When father was away on business” (*Otac na službenom putu*). When on the stage, De Bartoli commented: “I am confused, I don’t know what to say, there is a big crowd. I only want to watch TV in peace and to see that Yugoslavia wins in football”, alluding to the forthcoming football World Cup. Davorin Popović, was the frontman of Indeksi (one of the most prominent Yugoslav rock group since the 1960s, which had been highly sympathetic to the Titoist regime; see Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 130-131). Popović recalled: “I am here because I feel Yugoslav and Bosnian”. “Poslje mitinga: sta kažu poznati. I radost, i protest”, *Veernje Novine*, May 26, 1990; “Neka pobijedi Jugoslavija”, *Oslobodjenje*, May 26, 1990.

²⁵⁷ “Privately, whoever wants to go to the meeting, let them go, but as the organization we won’t go. By the way, we will not be in Sarajevo. Good luck to them”, said Kasim Residović, a member of the SSO’s leadership. “SSO-DS: mnogo buke, malo para. Jesen je naša”, *Veernje Novine*, June 1, 1990.

²⁵⁸ Gordana Božić, “Conversations with Bosnian Youth: From the Youth Relay Race to the Successor Generation Initiative”, in *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 35:4, 2007, 747.

and authoritarian means, although, while Milošević had “nationalized” the Serbs, Duraković was “de-nationalizing” the Bosnian-Herzegovinians. Jergović wrote: “Now, the ways in which the Bosnian communists or those who persistently insist that they are, are trying to remain at the power, are really comic. Twelve months ago, they argued that the political questions cannot be resolved in the street and on that occasion they defined the protesters from Serbia and Bosnia as a 'mob', of course mono-national. But now, in the very centre of Sarajevo, they hold a meeting that outranks in vulgarity, ranging from Kim Il Sung to Nazif Gljiva [*a known folk musician who attended the meeting, Author's note*], everything that Milošević did with his street mobs”. Jergović argued that, while Milošević's mobilization was “national”, Duraković's was in some way “a-national” or even “anti-national, since on behalf of some imaginary Yugoslavness and a newly composed Bosnianness, he completely degraded the national feeling of the local people, especially the one of the Serbs to whom it finally went worse than to the Communists, [since the Communists made the Serbs appear like] more stupid, more immature and more obtuse, since holding meetings was not allowed to them [...] The Bosnian Communists, through their magnificent popular meeting, realized that the power can be better kept while banning all those who aspire to it. [Labelling them] as enemies, of course”.²⁵⁹ The popular and influential Sarajevo musician Goran Bregović, too, recalled the same arguments: “[The 25 May demonstration] is one of the worst things I have seen. Bosnia declared itself against the meetings in Serbia, but now they [the Bosnian Communists] acted like Shakespeare. This was awful. They looked like the vassals of Kim Il Sung. If some has ever wanted to destroy the idea of Bosnia, now it is them who destroyed it. This Communists' absence of style reveals all their other defaults. Behind us lie a thousand years of horror and fifty years in which the Communists made this horror complete. Now they needed some breath”.²⁶⁰

Secondly, the SKBiH promoted similar “anti-nationalist” and pro-Yugoslav demonstrations also in small centres, trying to relaunch the party mobilization in the territory,²⁶¹ but they had little effect in containing the membership drain, which was

²⁵⁹ Miljenko Jergović, “Kad komunisti pitaju narod. Sloboda na referendumu”, *Naši Dani*, June 22, 1990.

²⁶⁰ Goran Bregović, interviewed in “Glasa u za muslimansku stranku”, *Nedjelja*, June 3, 1990.

²⁶¹ In that period, pro-Yugoslav and anti-nationalist meetings were held in Tuzla (“Zabeleženo na mitingu sloge u Tuzli. Hoćemo da živimo zajedno”, *Borba*, May 28, 1990), Gračanica (“Poruke sa protestnog skupa u Gračanici. Ne igrajte se vatrom”, *Oslobođenje*, June 2, 1990), Derventa (“O BiH odlučuju njeni narodni”, *Oslobođenje*, June 3, 1990), Prijedor (“Zbor naroda i komunista u Prijedoru”, *Oslobođenje*, June 29, 1990), Olovo (“Glas protiv nacionalizma”, *Oslobođenje*, July 7, 1990).

constant and proportional to the apparently growing enthusiasm for national parties. Between June 1989 and June 1990, the SKBiH lost 20,000 members.²⁶² The Central Committee was concerned by the cases of party disbandment, or desertions from local leaders due to their personal disengagements or to their move to national parties, which were happening in different municipalities from various regions and backgrounds. The members of the Central Committee, while expressing their concern for the situation of the party throughout the republic, directly mentioned the cases of Grahovo (Western Bosnia), Glamo (North Herzegovina), Tešanj (Northern Bosnia) and Kalesija (Eastern Bosnia), where members of the local SKBiH leaderships had joined nationalist parties, and those of Šipovo (Southern Krajina) and Neum (Southern Herzegovina) which were on the edge of dissolution.²⁶³ The two most symptomatic cases were those of Posušje and Velika Kladuša. The first was a Herzegovinian municipality at the very border of Croatia where, since February 1990, the municipal section of the League had suddenly decided to dissolve itself and had broken all ties with Sarajevo. According to the reports of the Central Committee, the local Posušje leaders indicated as causes for their disengagement a widespread lack of interest for politics, a disagreement with the party policy, and even the fear for possible reprisals coming from nationalist elements excited by the ongoing rule change in Croatia. The critical situation of the party in Posušje, as well as in Herzegovina and the rest of Bosnia-Herzegovina, was the object of a troubled debate in the Central Committee of the SKBiH, on July 17, 1990. At one point, Durakovi said dramatically: “The situation is highly serious: [...] the organization is totally disbanded in Posušje, we don't have anyone there [...] we cannot tolerate to not have absolutely nobody in Posušje”.²⁶⁴ The initiative of the Central Committee of the SKBiH, which decided to set up a sort of “compulsory administration” in Posušje in July 1990, was politically weak and came too late, as the HDZ had already succeeded in organizing public initiatives and establishing its own local committees.²⁶⁵ Moreover, the SKBiH was experiencing similar crisis also in the other neighbour municipalities in Western Herzegovina.²⁶⁶

²⁶² Source: “Prijedlog broja delegata za 11. Kongres SKBiH-SDP iz opštinskih organizacija SK”, Documents from the 11. Congress of the SK-SDP, 1991, SDP Archive, 1-5.

²⁶³ Kerim Dizdar and Krstan Maleševi, in “Magnetofonski snimak sa 31. sjednice Predsjedništva CK SKBiH održane 17.07.1990”, SDP Archive, 2; 13.

²⁶⁴ Nijaz Durakovi, Meho Basi and Krsto Stjepanovi, *ibidem*, 12, 13.

²⁶⁵ “HDZ u Bosni i Hercegovini. Povezivanje sa središtem”, *Oslobo enje*, April 24, 1990. On the HDZ's organization in Herzegovina, see chapter 5.1.

²⁶⁶ See chapter 5.1.

Another hotbed of crisis was Velika Kladuša, in Western Krajina, where the local party branch was disbanded solely as the consequence of power struggles and socio-economic, job-related issues, without any ethno-national implication (which, indeed, was visible in Posušje). Velika Kladuša had suffered tremendous social costs from the Agrokomerc affair: the company was headquartered there, with thousands of employees in the town and surroundings before the 1987 financial-political meltdown which caused many of them to lose their jobs, while the recovery measures envisaged by the Bosnian government were either ineffective or were never implemented. Meanwhile, Fikret Abdić, former general manager of Agrokomerc and “local overlord” of Western Krajina, who had been sacked from the SKBiH and imprisoned in 1987 when the scandal was made public, was still hugely popular and influent in the region. Abdić had always remained poised to try and regain control of the firm after he would be released and acquitted of the charges, but he had to confront the local élite of the SKBiH, which he perceived to be hostile to his return. A so-called “Coordinating Committee”, predominantly composed of close collaborators and supporters of Abdić, capitalized on the enormous dissent against the Communists, organizing protests and mobilizations that practically paralyzed the activity not only of the local party branch, but also of the local institutions in Velika Kladuša in the course of 1990. The Committee, led by Sead Kajtezović (Abdić brother-in-law) managed to organize demonstrations in front of the state institutions and ministers in Belgrade and Sarajevo, as well as gaining influence within the management of Agrokomerc and organizing protests at the local level. According to press reports, in the first half of 1990 the municipal council of Velika Kladuša was constantly blocked due to the obstruction and pressures of the pro-Abdić supporters, who also led to the resignation of some Communist officials and brought the media to reveal the existence of a “parallel government” in the municipality. The Bosnian Minister of Internal Affairs, Muhamed Bešlić, defined the situation in the area as “very serious” for the public security of the country and sent a reinforcement of about 80 police officers to Velika Kladuša, but rumour spread in town that the figure was up to ten times higher and that arms were circulating among the population. The peak of the tensions in Western Krajina was reached when, on July 20, the pro-Abdić Committee impeded a speech by Nijaz Duraković in Velika Kladuša, being the first time in the history of

Socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina that the leader of the party was the object of such angry public protest.²⁶⁷

It is important to recall that those demonstrations in Velika Kladusa did not carry any claim, message or symbol along ethno-national or religious basis, despite the fact that the Western Krajina had the strongest Muslim hegemony in national structure among all the regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that the SDA was considerably active in the area since May 1990. Some news reports by the newspaper *Oslobo enje* (whose editorial line was very critical against Abdi) and from the local officials even speculated that the pro-Abdi supporters were connected with the SDA²⁶⁸ or the HDZ,²⁶⁹ but the available information does not provide enough evidence for this claim. Moreover, it must be recalled that Fikret Abdi , at that time, had not decided yet which party to join; he would proclaim his candidature for the SDA only two months later, after being repeatedly approached by the same Communists.²⁷⁰ Yet, those tensions between the pro-Abdi committee and the local leadership made impossible a reconciliation of the former Agrokomerc manager with the SKBiH, driving him to seek an agreement with a political force which would give him “carte blanche” to regain the complete control of the firm without obstacles. Therefore, the events around the SKBiH in Velika Kladuša would be decisive not only for the decline of the Communists in the whole Western Krajina region (including Biha and Cazin), but also because they represented the springboard for the future engagement between Fikret Abdi and the SDA which, as we will see, would be a crucial turning point in the Bosnian political transition.

²⁶⁷ “Velikokladuška traumati na svakodnevnicu. Progon neistomišljenika”, *Oslobo enje*, May 6, 1990; “Situacija u Velikoj Kladuši sve se više komplikuje. Užarene fotelje”, *Ve ernje Novine*, May 7, 1990; “Velika istka pameti”, *Oslobo enje*, May 12, 1990; “Koga uva milicija u Velikoj Kladuši. Slobodan, a ugrožen”, *Ve ernje Novine*, May 14, 1990; “O stanju u Velikoj Kladuši. Abdi eve igre”, *Ve ernje Novine*, May 19, 1990; “U Velikoj Kladuši onemogu en nastup predsjednika CK SKBiH. Pu na tribini”, *Oslobo enje*, July 21, 1990.

²⁶⁸ In a letter issued in *Oslobo enje* Hasib Hodži , the president of the Velika Kladusa branch of the SKBiH, claimed that the SDA was the only party allowed to carry out political activities within the firm Agrokomerc. “Dahije iz Kladuše”, *Oslobo enje*, August 2, 1990.

²⁶⁹ Some articles in *Oslobo enje* alleged that Hrvoje Šoši , a Croatian lawyer and close friend of Fikret Abdi (whom had defended at the time of the trial), was operating in favour of the HDZ in Western Krajina, gathering up to 2.000 new members, the majority of them Muslims, acting as a “transmission belt” between Abdi and Franjo Tudjman. “Ofansiva Tudjmanovih mešetara”, *Oslobo enje*, May 8, 1990; “Velikokladuška politika iskušenja. Zastvanjivanje stranaka”, *Oslobo enje*, May 14, 1990. Yet, such information remains questionable, as at that time *Oslobo enje* had a strongly anti-Abdi line, issuing articles that made the best to discredit him to the public, by exaggerating reports or quoting unverified claims circulating in the town.

²⁷⁰ See chapter 9.2.

The third element of hindrance for the League of Communists of BiH in the mid-1990s was the increasing difficulty with its public discourse and its relations with the media. This argument could sound paradoxical, if one keeps in mind that the party, through its official organizations, still formally controlled, directly or indirectly, the main republican-wide media (TV and Radio Sarajevo, the main newspaper *Oslobo enje*) as well as the local press disseminated through the Bosnian territory. Yet, in the course of the first half of 1990, spaces for criticisms grew within these media, to which the relatively young leadership of the SKBiH, lacking the experience and the prestige of their predecessors, answered with either irritation or indecisiveness. A prominent case occurred in March 1990 when the Central Committee publicly denounced the informations of TV Sarajevo and *Oslobo enje*, whose journalists had expressed critical assessments on the SKBiH's policy, as hostile and even "unprofessional".²⁷¹ This event led to sharp reactions from the concerned media and, of course, excited further acrimony in the print media which had already adopted more distanced positions.

²⁷¹ The case started after that Mladen Paunović, a journalist from TV Sarajevo, had expressed some critical assessment on the policy of the Bosnian Communists during the newscast on March 17, commenting that their position about the Kosovo issue and the 14th Congress was 'unclear'. As a consequence of that, a few days later the SKBiH held a press conference, directed by Emina Keo, Ivo Komšić and Adil Kulenović (the first two were prominent members of the Central Committee's presidency; Kulenović was the director of the party department for information). The conference was announced, using the speakers' words, as a "new, democratic form of communication" of the party, trying to avoid the old practice of "calls to the director" [*nazivanje urednika*] which was common in the socialist, monopolistic period; yet, the conference had the opposite effect, since the speakers alluded to the "not uniformly professional criteria of the journalists from TV Sarajevo and *Oslobo enje*", who were allegedly 'protecting' the other parties and treating unequally the Communists.

These comments enraged not only Paunović (who was present at the conference and angrily answered by declaring his withdraw from the SKBiH, whose had been a member since 1957), but also the rest of the journalists. The attempts from the officials to minimize the remarks, pointing them to the single journalists and not to the entire media body, only generated more anxiety, making them appear as personal "trials". An editorial from A. Sarac on *Oslobo enje* commented that "the leadership of the Bosnian SK marked another own goal. Stronger and worse than many others". See: "Konferencija za štampu u CK SKBiH. Staro u novom pakovanju", *Oslobo enje*, March 21, 1990. "Nakon jedne konferencije za štampu u CK SKBiH. Avtogol", *Oslobo enje*, March 24, 1990. See also the Keo and Komšić's letter, "Dijalog nije su enje", *Oslobo enje*, April 5, 1990.

The case apparently did not have any ethno-national element, although there were minor rumours about the alleged "pro-Greater Serb orientation" of Mladen Paunović and the whole TV Sarajevo. Ironically, a few days after the mentioned press conference, a protest in front of the TV building was held by another media, namely the youth and pro-Muslim magazine *Vox*, funded by the Muslim politician Adil Zulfikarpašić. Such claims appear unproved, provided that the role of Television Sarajevo in the course of 1990 is generally assessed as balanced (Suad Arnautović, *Izbori u Bosni i Hercegovini '90: analiza izbornog procesa*, Sarajevo: Promocult, 1996, 68-69) and that the Paunović's path in later years speaks for itself (he, a Serb, joined the pro-unity and anti-nationalist mobilizations in April 1992, before remaining in Sarajevo during the entire siege, still working as a journalist for TV Sarajevo and *Oslobo enje*). See: "Deset godina od smrti Mladena Paunovića: Reporter istine", *Oslobo enje*, August 26, 2009. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.osloboenje.ba/index.php?id=3087>

Moreover, in early June 1990, the newspaper *Oslobo enje* took a further a step in its process of emancipation from Communist rule. The editorial staff unilaterally renounced its connection with the Socialist Alliance and issued a document proclaiming itself an “independent, non-party newspaper”, committed to “objectivity, professionalism and impartiality in reporting”, “more open to different opinions and ideas, [...] the stage of a social dialogue”. The document also defended “the interests of the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina and their most vital interest in the individual, national, religious and religious rights, freedom and equalities”, as well as “the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina and their equal role in the Yugoslav community of peoples and nationalities”.²⁷² These commitments would be generally respected, and during the forthcoming campaign, different parties and views would be granted an equal treatment and coverage. It is remarkable that this initiative occurred five months ahead of the elections and, most of all, before setting in place the conditions for pluralism and before the formation of most of the new, non-Communist political parties. Instead of waiting for these conditions, the editorial staff made its moves independently from the decisions of a political power which was appearing increasingly fragile and impotent. In the words of one of its prominent members, “we had achieved our sense of independence in the conditions of a weakened and tired government, but it was unknown how long this state of affairs would last”.²⁷³ Kemal Kurspahi , the then editor-in-chief of *Oslobo enje*, explains: “It was extremely important that we had stipulated our position towards the multiparty system in Bosnia-Herzegovina well before the newly developing parties were able to stipulate it to us”.²⁷⁴

The growing political activity of the national parties and, consequently, the attention they received from the press, contributed to exert pressure on the SKBiH’s higher ranks. In July 1990, in an internal session of the Central Committee, the director of the Information Service Adil Kulenovi emphasized that the League’s public discourse was too “on the defensive”, since it was being affected by three main issues that were having echo in the media: the first was the idea that the Communists’ national policy had

²⁷² “Redakcijski sastanak u ‘Oslobodjenju’. ‘Oslobo enje u višestrana ju”, *Oslobo enje*, June 8, 1990. The genesis of the initiative is also well reported in the memories of Kemal Kurspahi , the then editor-in chief (*As Long as Sarajevo exists*, 52-55).

²⁷³ Ljubiša Jakši , president of the managing board in the *Oslobo enje*'s editorial staff, reported by Kurspahi (*As Long as Sarajevo exists*, 55).

²⁷⁴ Kurspahi , *ibidem*, 55.

allegedly “jeopardised each nation” in the prior decades by causing discrimination and forced migrations. For instance, ethnic parties were insisting a lot on this issue, which was gaining visibility in the public discourse.²⁷⁵ Secondly, the SKBiH was attacked for the slowness and vagueness of their political reforms, particularly the stance about the multi-party system and whether allowing or forbidding of the national parties; Kulenovi encouraged a “concretization” of the party’s position on these issues. “They say time and again that, even beyond our statement which did not pass through the media, that we forbade the national parties, and that we wanted to impose the electoral law”, he said.²⁷⁶ Thirdly, the SKBiH was plagued by the high consideration the media dedicated to the former prominent members who had left the party very recently (they were called “*konvertiti*”, namely “converted” in jargon) who were now expressing sharp and influential criticisms against the Communist movement. As some of them had left the party very recently, there was concern for their influence on the public sphere and for the authority that they still could exercise on the internal structures of state or party apparatus.²⁷⁷ Kulenovi and other prominent members called for a more “decided” presence of the SKBiH in the media and public sphere.

Nonetheless, apart from internal factors, the negative evolution in the federal political context and the constant pressure from the economic crisis could only further weaken the political discourse of the Bosnian Communists, who were not able to find a synthesis between, on one hand, the continuity with socialist and Yugoslavist principles and, on the other hand, the demand for innovation and for response to the “immediate” requests of socio-economic and “existential” security of the people.

²⁷⁵ Adil Kulenovi , “Magnetofonski snimak sa 31. sjednice Predsjedništva CK SKBiH održane 17.07.1990”, SDP Archive, 1/3. Here Kulenovi , while referring to the frequent claims from Croat nationalists about the alleged forced emigration of Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina, observed that the figures about Serbs and Muslims also indicated an emigration trend, implicitly suggesting that the SKBiH should explain to the public the more complex origins of such phenomena, not originating from national discrimination.

As Bougarel analysed, the emigration flux of Croats and Serbs (and, in minor extent, of Muslims) from Bosnia-Herzegovina was essentially due to socio-economic factors (the majority of emigrants belonging to a rural context and moving to the northern and more developed regions of Yugoslavia, or abroad, in areas where they have “facility to integrate themselves economically and socially – through familiar and ethnic networks”) and not to “direct pressures” for leaving. Bougarel, “Anatomie d’une poudrière”, 92-100.

²⁷⁶ Adil Kulenovi , “Magnetofonski snimak sa 31. sjednice”, 2.

²⁷⁷ Kulenovi made reference to the cases of Fuad Muhi (who was in charge as President of the Ideological Commission of the SKBiH until the first months of 1990; he created in July 1990 the “Republican Party”, with pro-secession and pro-Croat position), Muhamed “Tunjo” Filipovi (the academic who, after founding the Committee for the Defence of the Muslims, would join the SDA and later the MBO), Hrvoje Istuk (whose positions approached the Croat HDZ).

4. THE CONSTITUTIONAL DILEMMAS OF POLITICAL TRANSITION

Because of the continuous postponements and indecisions of its political leaders, Bosnia-Herzegovina began the summer of 1990 not only without a date scheduled for the elections, but also still lacking a complete constitutional reform that would specify the pre-conditions for multi-party competition. On the table there were at least four mutually entangled key issues. All of them, and particularly the first two, raised the issue of the relationship between political and national pluralism and would have deep consequences in the event that they were implemented:

- 1) The constitutional definition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with particular reference to the main holders of sovereignty: were they the *citizens* and/or the *nations*?
- 2) The ban on national parties: keeping it or lifting it?
- 3) The structure of the Parliament (*unicameral* vs. *bicameral*, representation on *geographical* and/or *national* grounds) and the Presidency;
- 4) The electoral law (*proportional representation* vs. *first-past-the-post*).

4.1 The constitutional definition of Bosnia-Herzegovina

The first issue dealt with the definition contained in the article 1 of the Constitution whose reform process was ongoing. There were two kinds of proposals: one would simply define the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a “country of *equal citizens* living in it”;²⁷⁸ whereas another considered it “a country of *citizens, nations* - Muslims, Serbs and Croats - *and nationalities* living in it”.²⁷⁹ The first proposal would assume an *integrative* interpretation, with individual citizens being the only sovereign subjects; in other terms, Bosnia-Herzegovina would be a unique political community composed of single citizens, never taking into account their ethnicity or nationality. The second definition, in contrast, mentioned the existence of different nations and attributed to them a specific sovereignty on their own. This would open the possibility, and perhaps endorse, applying a principle of ethno-national representation for Muslims, Serbs and Croats, based either on proportional or equality criteria. In other words, this version would set the conditions for the fulfilment of the “national key” (*nacionalni klju*), i.e. ethnic quotas for each national community. During the Communist era, the “national key” was implemented, although informally (that is, without a specific institutional regulation) as criteria for the distribution of cadres in the political system and public institutions.²⁸⁰

The issue generated a debate within the Bosnian Parliament, for this body had to take the final decision. The initial draft, as formulated by the Commission for constitutional issues, included some elements of the “integrative” definition and did not mention nations as actors of sovereignty. Nonetheless, this solution was far from being favoured by the entire Parliament: some MPs who supported the “civic” option stressed that the notion should explicitly encompass all individual citizens, especially those who considered themselves Yugoslavs, the “others” (namely the members of the other minorities) and all those who did not identify themselves with any of the three main

²⁷⁸ Italic mine. The literal definition in Serbo-croatian was “*SRBiH je država ravnopravnih građana koji u njoj žive*”. “Nacrt amandmana na ustav SRBiH. Ja anje pozicije građana”, *Oslobo enje*, May 21, 1990.

²⁷⁹ Italic mine. Literally, “*SRBiH je zajednica i država ravnopravnih građana, naroda BiH (Muslimana, Srba i Hrvata) i pripadnika drugih naroda i narodnosti koji u njoj žive*”. “Sta sadrži Republi ki paket ustavnih promjena: Parlament po klju u”. *Oslobo enje*, May 23, 1990.

²⁸⁰ Sevan Pearson, “The national key in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a historical perspective”, *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 43, 2, 2015, 213-232.

nations;²⁸¹ on the other side, those MPs who supported the “multi-national” definition argued that it would best fit the reality of Bosnia-Herzegovina, whilst a citizens-only definition would be premature and even counter-productive, given the current political and social situation.²⁸²

The “pluri-national” notion ultimately prevailed over the “integrative” one among the parliamentary delegates, and the notion of “peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Muslims, Serbs, Croats and other nations and nationalities)” was reintroduced in the final version of the amended article 1, which was definitively approved by the Parliament at the beginning of June of 1990. Bosnia-Herzegovina was defined as a “democratic and sovereign country formed by equal citizens, the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Muslims, Serbs and Croats and by the members of other peoples and nationalities living in it”.²⁸³ This would implicitly presuppose a mechanism of proportional representation corresponding to the distribution of nationalities, for all the legislative, executive and judicial organs of the Republic (Parliament, Government, Presidency, and Constitutional Tribunal) and for all local institutions.²⁸⁴ This would mean a full continuity with the policy of “national key” (*nacionalni ključ*) applied during the Communist era.

Some figures who supported the integrative model of citizenship publicly criticized the Parliament’s choice to emphasize the nationality in the constitutional definition, for they considered that it limited the democratic will of the electors. Zdravko Grebo²⁸⁵ claimed that the proportional national representation was an “anti-democratic nonsense” that would lead to the formation of mutually exclusive electoral bodies, with each one most likely voting for their own national candidates. This sort of “compartmentalisation”, according to Grebo, would limit the individual interests of the

²⁸¹ See the interventions of Razija Lagumdžija, Nada Skelo and Vladimir Popov in “Rasprava o nacrtu amandmana na Ustav SRBiH. BiH – država građana”, *Oslobojenje*, May 24, 1990. These are the same arguments employed by those who, still today in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, claim an integrative concept of the country.

²⁸² See the conclusions of the Social-political Chamber (one of the three branches of the Bosnian Parliament) in “Rasprava o nacrtu amandmana na Ustav SRBiH. BiH – država građana”, *Oslobojenje*, May 24, 1990. See also the interventions of Edina Rešidović and Mirko Čerani in “Nacrt amandmana na ustav SRBiH. Jačanje pozicije građana”, *Oslobojenje*, May 21, 1990.

²⁸³ “Nacionalne stranke po volji naroda”, *Borba*, June 6, 1990. For the definitive version of the amended article 1, see the Amendment LX in *Službeni List SRBiH*, July 30, 1990, 1.

²⁸⁴ “Sta sadrži republički paket ustavnih promjena. Parlament po ključu”, *Oslobojenje*, May 23, 1990.

²⁸⁵ As explained in chapter 2, Grebo had been a former leader of the “dissident”-reformist wing among the Bosnian Communists, which he had left shortly after the 14th Congress. He was also a respected professor at the Law Faculty in Sarajevo and still a quite influential figure in public life, especially in intellectual and liberal circles.

single citizens and create the conditions for inter-ethnic conflicts. Citing as an example the Bosnian Croat community, who represented about 18% of the electoral body, Grebo explained: “[they] would rely on the 18% in Bosnian parliament for the fulfilment of their own national and individual interests. No one will mention the necessary consequence of that principle: namely that the whole other 82% will be against them. Hence, insistence on national representation implies also the following consequence: if I insist on my 18%, I must also accept that I lose the 82%, unless I do not accept that, as a Bosnian citizen, I will make alliances and coalitions in concrete issues, social, regional, gender, confessional etc. with persons who share the same interests with me as a person with his own name and surname, desires, fears, the ensemble of my personality... Only then, one will get a real chance to promote a (in this case, valid and respectable) national interest”.²⁸⁶ The Youth Socialist Alliance (SSO BiH), which traditionally endorsed an integrative approach, also raised doubts about the explicit recognition of national sovereignty, emphasizing that a proportional representation on national grounds would be hardly compatible with free political competition.²⁸⁷

Despite these controversies and their symbolic, legal and political significance, the debate on the integrative vs. national sovereignty remained relatively quiet, both in the intra-institutional and in public domains. The final decision was widely supported by the Parliament, for it was the logical consequence of the defensive approach that the Bosnian Communists still predominantly had towards the “national key”, seen as an indispensable instrument to ensure equality and balance. However, this step was also a lost opportunity to move towards a “de-nationalisation” of citizenship. *National* pluralism and *political* pluralism were not only made compatible, but were intertwined, as if the ideas, values and interests of the individual would automatically coincide with the expression of ideas, values and interests of their national communities. The mechanical application of the national key to a multi-party framework would create in the average citizen the perception that, whichever party or candidate he or she prefers, and whatever the final result of the elections is, those who will represent her/his own interests are *only* the members of its own ethnic group.

²⁸⁶ Zdravko Grebo, “Zveckanje teškim rije ima”, *Oslobo enje*, June 4, 1990.

²⁸⁷ “Inicijativni odbor SSO – DS BiH. O kandidatima iza zatvorenih vrata”, *Oslobo enje*, June 19, 1990.

4.2 The ban on ethnic parties

This issue of the ban on national parties attracted far more attention for the political and public debate, as their implications were understood as immediate and tangible. It concerned the article 4 of the Law on Political Association, which banned any party based on “national and religious principles”. The highest authorities of the Republic and SKBiH kept this ban in place until June of 1990. Their strategy was to gain time and maintain the previous *status quo*, staying in power while awaiting the outcome of external events such as the final conclusions arrived at by the 14th SKJ Congress (the SKBiH was still formally participating in it) or the results and consequences of the elections in Slovenia and Croatia. Those who endorsed the ban claimed that the support for this restriction was solid, both from the party base and from the entire Bosnian-Herzegovinian society. Indeed, according to a poll conducted in May 1990 by the Croatian magazine *Danas* in three main Bosnian cities, more than two thirds still favoured a legal ban of national parties. Support ranged from 66% in Mostar to 81% in Banja Luka, while in Sarajevo the percentage was 72%.²⁸⁸ In all three cities, the founding of the national parties was seen as the most dangerous factor for the stability in Bosnia-Herzegovina (39% in Mostar; 37% in Banja Luka; 31% in Sarajevo), scoring a similar or higher rate than nationalism itself.²⁸⁹

Other polls and studies confirmed that political homogenization on national grounds was a source of high concern in the Bosnian society. As Ibrahim Baki showed in his solid study of inter-ethnic relations, there was a widespread tendency to associate automatically the multi-party system with national homogenization, and that would bring essentially negative consequences. When asked about the consequences of multi-party system on national relations, 45,02% answered they would be negative, since it would

²⁸⁸ “Strah od vlastitih nacija”, *Oslobo enje*, May 25, 1990. In a similar poll carried out in Zenica, 82% negatively argued the foundation of national parties. The poll was realized by local newspaper *Naša Rije* in late May 1990. *Ve ernje Novine*, May 26-27, 1990.

²⁸⁹ In Mostar and in Banja Luka, national parties were actually seen as the biggest danger. Other significant dangers were economic crisis (33% in Mostar; 16% in Banja Luka) and “all the nationalisms” (17% in Mostar; 35% in Banja Luka). In Sarajevo, “all nationalisms” was slightly the highest factor of instability (33%), then national parties and economic crisis (31%).

The other dangers were sensibly low: multi-party system (4% in Mostar and Sarajevo, 5% in Banja Luka), Croat nationalism (4% in Sarajevo and Banja Luka, 1% in Mostar), Serb nationalism (3% in Sarajevo and Mostar, 1% in Banja Luka), 1% Muslim nationalism (1% in all the three cities).

Source: “Strah od vlastitih nacija”, *Oslobo enje*, May 25, 1990.

lead to political organizations on national basis; only 18,08% said that consequences would be positive, since the new system would bring to concurrency of ideas and programs. This does not mean that there was not consensus at all for political pluralism, since a 80.68% agreed the opportunity to accept the free association of citizens as an elementary civil right.²⁹⁰ These polls, although must be taken with caution,²⁹¹ suggest that a certain pro-ban orientation did undoubtedly exist even beyond the circles of the Communist party. This might seem a surprise if one considers that only a few months later, national parties would quickly attract a large number of voters and obtain a major victory in the elections.

However, at least two decisive factors decreased this support and set the conditions for the removal of the ban of ethnic parties:

1) the “*fait accompli*”: at least two national parties (the Muslim SDA and the Croat HDZ) were already and *de facto* active in the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The HDZ relied on territorial strongholds in Herzegovina, while the SDA was endorsed by influential intellectual, cultural and clerical circles.²⁹² Under such conditions, keeping the ban would necessarily and urgently require that the Communist government apply precise, direct measures, probably requiring repressive and forceful action. This solution was very complicated both for practical, legal and ideological-political reasons. In the middle of a drastic turn towards multi-party democracy in Yugoslavia and Central-Eastern Europe, such a policy could likely be counter-productive for the legitimacy of the Bosnian leadership. If national parties were seen as a source of major concern by the broader society, a potentially repressive and authoritarian move of the regime would be perceived as even more serious. Furthermore, the strict application of the ban would require full cooperation and loyalty from the state apparatus, local authorities and security organs, the same that until then had turned a blind eye on the activities of the nationalist parties. Finally, the Bosnian Communists had a major dilemma: how could they make this ban

²⁹⁰ Baki , “O naciji, religiji”, 42-44. It must recall that the Bakic’s poll was conducted in late 1989, hence before the breakup of the League of Communists, which was a turning point in perception of inter-ethnic relations and expectations about political change.

²⁹¹ Polls in transitional periods should be interpreted very carefully, due to various factors: still existing fears among polled people for pressures in case of “not politically correct” answers; imbalances in sample, mostly overrating educated and pro-communist population; or, simply, political pressures from above.

²⁹² For an in-depth analysis on the structuring of national parties in early 1990, see chapter 5.

effective in their own republic, when in the neighbour republics these kinds of parties were already in operation, legally (Croatia) or *de facto* (Serbia).

2) The second factor, which would definitely change the course of the events, was the intervention of the judicial power against the ban. On March 29, 1990, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina started “on its own initiative” a constitutional review of the norm. The Court questioned that the ban would limit the principles of freedom of political association, freedom of thinking and freedom of expression.²⁹³ This procedure created further confusion in the transition to a multi-party system, since the reforms discussed in Parliament were then stopped, until the Court dictated their final verdict, scheduled for early June.

A split arose between the judicial, executive and legislative powers. The institutions outside the Court were apparently still loyal to the SKBiH, which was officially supporting the ban. Some of these organs publicly challenged the Court’s arguments: the Republican Government²⁹⁴ openly defended the ban as the only way to fulfil the rights of the citizen as “the primary holder of sovereignty, [...] regardless of the nation and religion she or he belongs to”,²⁹⁵ and dared to submit a new draft of the Law on political association where the text banning the national parties was kept intact, so as to manifestly ignore the Court’s ongoing review;²⁹⁶ the Legislative Commission of the Parliament also opposed the Court’s interpretation, with even more emphatic (and more political than legal) arguments. According to the Commission, authorising national parties would lay the basis for “the exercise of an organized pressure on Bosnia-Herzegovina in a way that would be, essentially, nationalistic, and would lead to the destabilization of the Republic and of the inter-ethnic relations”. The Commission also assessed that “it would be a very bad solution if the numerous weaknesses of the one-party system were now to be replaced with another exclusiveness for political organization – the national [criteria], since it would inevitably slip to nationalistic; [...]

²⁹³ “Ustavni sud SRBiH o spornim članovima zakona o udruživanju građana. Zakon na ustavnoj kušnji”, *Oslobo enje*, June 6, 1990.

²⁹⁴ Literally “Republican Executive Council” [*Republika Izvršno Vijeće*] or RIV. It was the executive organ in Bosnia’s socialist order.

²⁹⁵ “Sudbina spornih odredbi zakona o udruživanju građana. Vlada u klin, Ustavni sud u plou”, *Oslobo enje*, May 19, 1990.

²⁹⁶ “Izvršno vijeće skupštine SRBiH o udruživanju građana. Zabrana u nacrtu”, *Oslobo enje*, June 8, 1990. However, this new draft never came to be examined by the Parliament, which decided to wait for the Court’s final response.

the struggle for the majority in Parliament, in conditions of political organization on national basis, gives a chance for a move to ‘majoritarianism’ [the domination of the largest national groups over the others]”.²⁹⁷

On the other hand, the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina proposed to hold a referendum on the issue, in which the citizens would be asked, simply and directly, whether to allow or prohibit the national parties.²⁹⁸ Some members of the regime’s organizations, the SKBiH and the SSRN, had already suggested that same idea.²⁹⁹ The proposal to call for a referendum had several motivations: 1) it would circumvent the verdict of the Constitutional Court, which was widely expected to definitely lift the ban; 2) it would put pressure on the Parliament, which was called to take the final decision and was, in turn, divided about the issue. 3) It was expected to appeal to the common sentiment that, as polls and researches showed, still favoured a legal prohibition against national organizations in Bosnian society; 4) as a consequence of its expected popularity, the referendum would be an opportunity for a popular relaunch of the Bosnian League of Communists, by means of a “grassroots” mobilization on such a sensitive issue, charged with symbolic values.³⁰⁰

On June 12, 1990, the Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional the ban on national parties, as expected. The verdict required the Parliament to modify the law within the next six months. The Court’s decision, which was unanimous,³⁰¹ rested on three basic arguments: 1) the rights to freedom of thought and political association, as well as that of “expression of national culture and use of their own language and alphabet”;³⁰² 2) the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina [Muslims, Serbs and Croats] have “their own subjectivity

²⁹⁷ “Argumenti protiv”, *Oslobo enje*, June 13, 1990; *Službeni list SRBiH*, June 20, 1990, 481-482.

²⁹⁸ “Predsjedništvo SRBiH. Novo ime Republike”, *Oslobo enje*, June 12, 1990.

²⁹⁹ “Predsjedništvo RK SSRNBiH. O nacionalnom organizovanju – referendumom”, *Oslobo enje*, May 23, 1990.

³⁰⁰ Interestingly, an example of a similar referendum on constitutional issues (though not on national parties) in a pre-multiparty phase was taking place exactly in the same period in Serbia. Belgrade had called a referendum on adopting a new Constitution, scheduled for July 2. It resulted in an overwhelming success for the Serbian acting regime, led by Slobodan Milošević. Turnout was about 76%, while “yes” were 97%. Milošević used the occasion to mobilize the party base, testify the electorate and, through the consensus gathered, enact a constitutional reform before the first multi-party elections, without the consent of any opposition party. (Vladimir Goati, *Elections in FRY from 1990 to 1998*, Belgrade: CeSID, 2000, 47). It is plausible that some pro-conservative Bosnian Communists took inspiration in the Milošević’s move.

³⁰¹ “Odluka Ustavnog suda BiH. Nacionalne stranke – ustavne”, *Oslobo enje*, June 13, 1990. The members of the Court were: Drago Bago, Hasan Bakalovi, Ismet Dautbašić, Pero Kirijan, Alija Latić, Mirza Čolaković, Milan Škoro i Kasim Trnka (President). Radomir Nešković, *Nedovršena država: politički sistem Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo: Fondacija Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 2013, 122.

³⁰² *Službeni list SRBiH*, June 20, 1990, 479-480.

and sovereignty; they are one of the founding elements of the state and social community, and therefore the nation [*narod*] is a constitutional, legal and political category, what implies its right to different kinds of association”,³⁰³ 3) the ban on national-religious parties had not been issued in any other republic in Yugoslavia except Bosnia-Herzegovina: for this reason, the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina “should not be brought to an unequal position” vis-à-vis those of the rest of the Federation.³⁰⁴

The Court’s verdict did not dissuade some communist cadres from supporting the ban. Far from that, they still put pressure to carry out the referendum, which could potentially reverse the decision, and even scheduled a date for it: July 8.³⁰⁵ Supporters of the ban blamed the president of the Constitutional Court Kasim Trnka, for his alleged personal interests related to his political ambition, which would be behind the Court’s initiative.³⁰⁶ On the other hand, Trnka vehemently protested the Parliament’s ignoring of

³⁰³ “Odluka ustavnog suda BiH. Neustavan član 4.”, *Oslobo enje*, June 13, 1990.

This was how the Court interpreted the article 1 of the Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina. As previously explained, the recently amended article 1 mentioned both the nations and citizens as the holders of sovereignty, after a short dispute between a “pro-civic” and a “pro-nation” vision. However, even after the amending of the article, an open conflict of interpretation on this point took place between the Constitutional Court and the Legislative Commission of the Parliament. The Court gave prominence to the national dimension (thus interpreting national parties as a *consequent and inalienable right* of the respective groups), whereas the Commission insisted that the ban should be kept as a protection for the right of the individual citizens as the *primary holder of sovereignty*. Hence, this case confirms how the issue about the article 1 decisively influenced the political transition in 1990 Bosnia-Herzegovina.

³⁰⁴ “Odluka ustavnog suda BiH. Neustavan član 4.”, *Oslobo enje*, June 13, 1990.

³⁰⁵ “Danas zasjeda Skupština SRBiH. Odluka o referendumu”, *Oslobo enje*, June 19, 1990.

³⁰⁶ “Strana ko organizovanje na nacionalnoj osnovi. Okršaj prava i politike”, *Oslobo enje*, June 14, 1990. In that period, Kasim Trnka frequently illustrated the Court’s interpretation in TV programmes. At that time, Trnka’s detractors argued that his appearances were an unusual procedure, particularly when he allegedly expressed political views exceeding his judicial authority. Trnka justified himself on the grounds of public transparency in times of a democratic transition. Some have even speculated that Trnka was already flirting with some national parties, particularly with the SDA, what would decisively influence the Court’s action.

The idea that the ban could have been kept is still present today in some academic or political circles in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The scholar Nenad Stojanović concludes his brilliant article on the 1990 Bosnian elections explicitly asking: “Wouldn’t it have been wiser to ban the creation of ethnic parties in BiH rather than to allow full political pluralism? As we have seen, the Communist party did try to ban the formation of ethnic parties – by invoking even the very prospect of conflict – but the Constitutional Court of BiH declared such a decision anti-constitutional. This said, the ban of ethno-nationalist parties need not have been imposed from above. A pre-electoral referendum with the question ‘Do you agree to ban the creation of political parties along ethnic lines?’ could have been a very elegant and democratic way to prevent Hobbesian dilemmas. In that case, voters need not have been trapped in the prisoner’s dilemma and their rational individual choice could have led to a rational collective outcome”. Nenad Stojanović, “When non-nationalist voters support ethno-nationalist parties: the 1990 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a prisoner’s dilemma game”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 14, 4, 2014, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2014.974379>

Another matter of controversy which has lasted in our days, is whether the Court acted under the interference of external pressures, personal interests and connections with national parties. The role of the Court’s president Kasim Trnka is disputed. A then high cadre of the SKBiH told me in an interview: “Then

the Court ruling and of the standard procedures.³⁰⁷ These reactions exacerbated the conflict between the powers, in a time when the stance on the issue of the Parliament still looked very uncertain. The debates preceding the verdict had shown that a “pro-ban” orientation was prevailing in two of the three chambers of the Assembly, the Chamber of the Municipalities (VO) and the Socio-political Chamber (DPV), while the “anti-ban” dominated the Chamber of the Associated Labour (VUR).³⁰⁸

Yet, the situation had quickly changed since then. The support for keeping the ban, even by means of a referendum, lost considerable strength after the Court’s decision. The perception that national parties were already a permanent and inevitable presence in the Bosnian (and Yugoslav) reality grew. Many members of the SKBiH were not ready to make crusades on this issue anymore, either because they considered that this move would be politically worthless, either because they began to speculate about their personal political future and were not willing to make enemies on the eve of an eventual regime change. In addition, the deepening of an intra-institutional fracture was seen as a highly counterproductive move for the party.

This issue was also fuelling the conflict against the opposition, which was also damaging the party’s public image and cohesion. Obviously, the national parties (SDA and HDZ) which were directly involved in the issue, vigorously attacked the Communists

the constitutional Court lifted the ban on national parties. When i asked [to Kasim Trnka] why they are making a show of all that, after the Court had taken the decision in front of cameras, in order to film and make evident who is against, and who is for the lifting of the ban ... well, he [Trnka] replied me that the time of closed sessions was over, that every next session of the Court would be filmed by TV cameras. Yet, none of the coming sessions would be filmed. None!” (Name kept secret by the author. Interview released in Sarajevo, 2014).

The American scholars Steven Burg and Paul Shoup suggest a connection between the Court’s verdict and the orientation of Trnka who, they claim, “would later become an active SDA member”. (Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina: ethnic conflict and international intervention*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 46). However, such explicit allegations are unproved, since Kasim Trnka never entered directly into politics and, to my knowledge, there is no public evidence about his commitment with SDA. What is true, though, is that in the 1990s Trnka became ambassador and was charged as advisor for the most relevant institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, ruled by the SDA. His detractors claim that those posts were obtained thanks to the ‘good offices’ he had formerly guaranteed to the SDA. Kasim Trnka is now a Full Professor of Law at the University of Zenica. He declined the request be interviewed for the scope of this research.

³⁰⁷ As a protest against the attempt to call the referendum, Trnka resigned from the Parliament’s Commission for Constitutional Questions, an organ whose majority endorsed the ban. Trnka commented that the Commission’s argument “not only do not comply with the Constitution of Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also they lack any base in constitutional theory, democratic tradition and achievement”. “Sve rade naopako”, *Ve ernje Novine*, June 21, 1990; “Pismo Kasima Trnke Skupštini SRBiH. Ostavka iz protesta”, *Oslobo enje*, June 19, 1990.

³⁰⁸ “Rasprava o nacrtu amandmana na ustav SRBiH. BiH – država građana”, *Oslobo enje*, May 24, 1990; “Ustav iz naroda”, *Ve ernje Novine*, May 24, 1990.

and threatened to carry out mobilizations. In addition to all that, other non-ethnic, civic and liberal circles protested loudly, vehemently attacked the stubbornness of the regime. The Democratic Forum, who gathered the main non-ethnic forces (UJDI, SSO, and other minor parties)³⁰⁹ considered the referendum on the ban as a “trick that insults the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina and brings them to a rather elementary level of civilization, as it proposes to answer 'yes' or 'no' to a referendum that puts in question inalienable basic rights of the citizens of all democratic countries. These rights, like the right to live or the freedom of expression, cannot be subjected to a referendum, anywhere. [...] No majority of citizens can decide on those [questions]. This referendum is totally unnecessary! Something else is necessary: to immediately create all the constitutional and legal preconditions for free and democratic elections in BiH”.³¹⁰ Harsh criticism came also from the influential pro-liberal magazine *Naši Dani* that affirmed that the referendum was the last-resort move of the regime to keep the power through undemocratic and illegitimate means.³¹¹

The point is that those civic forces, although strongly opposing the national parties on the grounds of their civic and cosmopolitan principles, were also coherent with their liberal ideals, invoking that no political organization should be forbidden or limited by normative principles. In other words, they claimed that ethnic parties should not be challenged through legal means, but through political action. Besides the matters of principle, there were also pragmatic assessments. As Miljenko Jergovi observed, keeping the ban would hardly change the situation. “The dance will simply go on in different ways: the Croat party will become some kind of Christian-Democrat party, the Serb party will become a Yugoslavian party, and the Muslim will be called Bosniak party. Or something different. In any case, these three parties will surely win, as the national interest will become primary after their prohibition. Then, together they will form a coalition that will be much stronger than Demos.”³¹² This will create the possibility of a new terror in the name of a new movement: the people will decide through referendum whether the League of Communists should be prohibited, as a party with dangerous purposes. [...] To prevent this, Communists inside and outside the Parliament would

³⁰⁹ See chapters 6.2 and 6.3.

³¹⁰ “To je smicalica”, *Ve ernje Novine*, June 15, 1990.

³¹¹ Fahrudin apo, “Iskušnja BH. socijalizma. Raspiriva i bratsva i jedinstva”, *Naši Dani*, June 22, 1990; Zlatko Hadžidedi, “Van pameti. Referendum do apsurd”, *Naši Dani*, June 22, 1990.

³¹² The alliance of center-right parties who had triumphed in the elections in Slovenia, held in April 1990.

better give up these talks about banning or allowing national parties, as it is detrimental for their own party, both for the debate – provided that they don't consider employing the force of arms – and for their own program".³¹³

In the end, the Bosnian Communists quickly went on the defensive about this issue, since they increasingly feared being accused of authoritarianism, an accusation that not only came from the opposition, but also from within its own lines. On June 17, the SKBiH branch in Sarajevo affirmed that the idea of the prohibition of national parties "did not belong to the Communist ideology" and that they did not support it anymore. The Sarajevo Communists also declared that they regarded freedom of national organization as an "inalienable right".³¹⁴ The party leadership, that in prior months had developed a pro-ban discourse, now abstained from taking a precise stance on the referendum's issue. The final decision was left to the Parliament, which on June 19 did not pass the referendum proposal, because of a lack of quorum in two of the three chambers (the Socio-political Chamber and the Chamber of the Associated Labour), while in the Chamber of the Municipalities it did not obtain the required qualified majority.³¹⁵ A second attempt was made a week later, but the Socio-political Chamber failed to get the majority.³¹⁶ Since the referendum option had been definitely set aside, national parties became not only a political, but a legal reality. This was a turning point that opened a new stage in the Bosnian transition and forced the Communists to quickly adapt its traditional discourse to the new circumstances.

³¹³ Miljenko Jergovi, "Kad komunisti pitaju narod. Sloboda na referendumu", *Naši Dani*, June 22, 1990.

³¹⁴ "Gradski komitet SK. BiH je nedjeljiva", *Veernje Novine*, June 18, 1990. This stance could sound somewhat bizarre at that moment, as it clashed with the solid endorsement that the republican SKBiH had given to the ban on national parties until then. Still, the pro-ban line was far from being unanimous within the SKBiH, especially in local sections. Some branches from Herzegovina (Duvno and Ljubuški) had already asked for the removing of the ban. Communist officials from those areas were seriously affected by the HDZ's intense mobilization in the region, what had practically reset the attendance to the League and to the other official organizations. Hence, they found full legalization as the only measure to regain some political ground (or possibly, for some of them, to have a personal chance for repositioning themselves within the same HDZ). "Politi ka razlednica Ljubuškog. HDZ ulazi u sela", *Osloboenje*, May 31, 1990; "Politi ko-privredni trenutak duvanjske opine. Popravni ispit s obešte enjem", *Osloboenje*, June 2, 1990.

³¹⁵ "Skupština SR Bosne i Hercegovine. Ni kvorumu, ni referendum", *Osloboenje*, June 20, 1990.

³¹⁶ "Iz skupštine SRBiH. Delegati odbili referendum", *Osloboenje*, June 26, 1990. Out of 80 members of the Chamber, only 48 took part to the vote. 27 for the referendum, 10 against, 11 abstained.

4.3. Institutional structure and electoral engineering

Once the issue on the ban of ethnic parties was resolved, the structure of the Parliament and the Presidency had yet to be defined. This was not a merely formal issue, because it was closely connected to how should the national question be reflected in the Constitution and how should the institutional organs regulate it subsequently. Regarding the parliamentary system, the Communist representatives were called to choose between a unicameral and a bicameral legislature. Supporters of *unicameralism* proposed the formation of a “Chamber of Citizens” (*Vije e Gra ana*), without specific territorial or national criteria of representation, but always committed to the national proportionality, that is, that it should coincide with the ethnic structure of the Republic. Supporters of *bicameralism* considered two options: the first would set the upper house as a “Chamber of Peoples” (*Vije e Naroda*), where each of the three constituent peoples of BiH (Muslims, Serbs and Croats) would express their particular interests through separated delegations;³¹⁷ the second option consisted instead of a “Chamber of Municipalities” (*Vije e Opština*), where each of the 109 municipalities would have one representative, regardless of the population; this meant that the most populated municipality, Banja Luka – 183,618 inhabitants – and the least populated, Neum, with 4,030 inhabitants, would have one representative each.³¹⁸ In both cases, a “Chamber of Citizens” (*Vije e Gra ana*) would be set as the lower house.

These various options corresponded, more or less directly and consciously, to the different conceptions of who should be the primary holder of sovereignty in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A *unicameral* Parliament would reinforce a unitary, integrative model, while lessening the role of the national communities and local-territorial representation. On the contrary, a *bicameralist system with a “Chamber of Peoples”* would be a further firm step towards a (con)-federalization of Bosnia-Herzegovina on national grounds, where ethnic communities, having their own exclusive representation, would have their

³¹⁷ “Ocjenjivanje ustavnosti zakona o udruživanju gra ana. Nacionalno politi ko ruho”, *Oslobo enje*, May 17, 1990; “Država ravnopravnih gra ana i naroda”, *Oslobo enje*, June 28, 1990.

³¹⁸ The only partial exception in this scheme was Sarajevo, which was already divided administratively into ten municipalities, and would have an extra seat for the whole city (hence, the total members of the Chamber would be 110). A reasonable alternative had been also briefly taken into consideration for the Chamber of Municipalities. It suggested a grouping of several municipalities into one single electoral district, in order to reduce the gap of representation between biggest and smallest ones. Yet, this proposal was promptly discarded. “Amandmani u pat-poziciji”, *Oslobo enje*, July 1, 1990.

primary source of sovereignty.³¹⁹ The third solution, a *bicameralism with an upper “Chamber of Municipalities”*, would be based on a local-territorial rather than on a national principle, becoming an intermediate solution between the “civic-individual” and the “federalized-national”.

In July 1990, the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina finally opted for this last bicameral model: a Chamber of Citizens, with 130 members, and a Chamber of Municipalities, with 110 members.³²⁰ A balance was also found for the electoral system, combining a *proportional* system for the Chamber of Citizens, based on seven electoral districts, and a *majority* system, with a two-round runoff for the Chamber of Municipalities, based on each of the 110 municipalities. Such an upper House structure blatantly over-represented the rural small towns from the provinces. This would later prove a self-damaging choice for the League of Communists and for the other non-ethnic parties, for their performance would be particularly bad in non-urban areas obtaining merely half of the seats in proportion to the votes obtained at the Chamber of Municipalities.³²¹ Communist lawmakers simply did not realize the extent of their decision. They did not envision that national parties would benefit from mobilization and consensus in rural and conservative environments thanks to their links with the clergy. It is also possible that they mistakenly expected a high result of SKBiH in rural areas, mistrusting in the supposed firm control of the local apparatus and assuming that the rural “conservatism” would shift into a support for “continuist” Titoism instead of support for new-born right-wing and pro-clerical movements.

It must be recalled that, according to the amended Constitution, the Parliament and all the highest organs had to respect the “proportional representation of the nations and nationalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina”.³²² The Parliament’s initial will was that each chamber should exactly match the so-called “ethnic profile” of the 1981 census, that is, it should be 39% Muslim, 32% Serb, 18% Croat and so on (or, in case of local elections,

³¹⁹ Interestingly, a proposal for an upper “Chamber of Peoples” would be soon raised again by the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) during the campaign for the 1990 elections. This option was then discarded, but would be selected for the post-war institutional order: the actual Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina, adopted after the Dayton Agreements in 1995, established an upper House of Peoples with three separated national clubs corresponding to the three founding peoples, each one with veto power.

³²⁰ Amendment LXX in *Službeni list SRBiH*, July 31, 1990.

³²¹ See chapter 10.1; see also Bourq and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 49-51.

³²² Amendment LXI in *Službeni list SRBiH*, July 31, 1990.

the “ethnic profile” of the corresponding electoral district).³²³ This intricate scheme would impose several practical problems, provided that the free expression of the electoral body in a competitive multi-party system would, in theory, hardly coincide with the national pattern required to comply with those rules.³²⁴ And that was not everything. According to some interpretations, even the lists of candidates submitted by *every single party* to the elections, should match the national composition of the electoral district. In other words, each party should be obliged to submit a candidates’ list composed by 39% of Muslims, 32% of Serbs and 18% of Croats, and, if they won seats, these should be distributed following the same percentage.³²⁵ It is probably no coincidence that these requests for national key *within* the parties’ lists emerged after the full legalization of the national movements: forcing national parties to submit ethnically mixed lists could work as a last resort tool with which to restrict them by legal means. Nonetheless, it became clear that such an intricate solution had almost no chance of success. After the conclusion of the dispute between the Court and the Parliament, few lawmakers were ready to reopen the issue again. Moreover, such a model would entail only further practical problems, making almost impossible to complete it.

After the proposal for *nacionalni klju* within parties was finally dropped out, a more flexible criterion was established for applying the same principle to the Parliament. The national structure of each of two elected Chambers had to match the results of the 1981 census, but with a maximum margin of 15% for each nation.³²⁶ A proportionality principle was to be applied to the republican Presidency, a collective body composed of seven members distributed by nationality. The initial proposal was to set out a “3+2+1+1” model: three Muslims, two Serbs, one Croat, one “Other” (either a Yugoslav, or a member of other nationalities and minorities, or a not declared). Such a composition would most closely match the 1981 national structure of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but was soon criticized

³²³ *Ibidem*.

³²⁴ Ironically, the final results of the 1990 elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina would closely coincide with the national census, even without the need to apply this realignment to national key.

³²⁵ “Uo i izbora u BiH - Kako emo birati? Zamršena izborna matematika”, *Oslobo enje*, July 4, 1990.

³²⁶ The rule of the 15% margin was issued on *Službeni List SRBiH*, November 16, 1990, titled as “authentic interpretation” of the amendments issued on July 31. This first version had barely affirmed that a “proportional representation” would be assured, but without specifying any criteria. Anyway, even the “authentic interpretation” issued in November lacked to articulate clearly how the principle of 15% margin would be concretely applied in case of need. For example, it did not clarify who would replace the elected of the nation “in excess” in the case there is not an arithmetically correspondent case of nation “in shortage” (and viceversa). Moreover, it was not specified how this system would fit with different and asymmetrical electoral districts.

for allegedly granting Muslims an overrepresentation and even a potential absolute majority,³²⁷ while others, particularly the Croats, would be relegated to marginality. It is not coincidental that it was the Croatian party, the HDZ, that protested most vehemently against this option. There was an alternative plan, consisting in an equal representation following a 2+2+2+1 composition (two Muslims, two Serbs, two Croat, and one “Other”). This scheme was finally adopted, thanks to a decisive initiative of the Democratic Socialist Alliance (DSS)³²⁸ that submitted the proposal in Parliament, acting in this case as a sort of mediator between nationalists and institutions.³²⁹

4.4. Conclusions

The whole institutional and electoral engineering process saw a predominance of the *consociational* over the *integrative* conception. The criterion of “national key” from the Communist era was fully inherited and institutionalized, after adapting it to the new circumstances of multi-party democracy. As Suad Arnautovi recalled, the electoral law and the institutional reforms encouraged “a completely new (old) political profile, that is, the ethnic affiliation was the basis of political representation and political legitimacy. Through this [electoral] law, national affiliation was to be the basis of the electoral procedures (proposal, candidacy, representation, election, appointment) for all the organs and the representative bodies of the Republic”.³³⁰ Not by chance, the Democratic Forum, which included the most liberal-oriented movements (UJDI, SSO BiH) and advocated an integrative model of citizenship for Bosnia-Herzegovina, claimed that the constitutional reform, although was a step toward the establishment of a parliamentary democracy, created the conditions for a “*national democracy*, but much less for a *democracy of*

³²⁷ One of the critics’ arguments was that the Muslim side could get 4 of 7 votes, in the case that an openly pro-Muslim, or a Muslim “disguised” as a self-declared Yugoslav, would succeed to be elected at the “Others” place while taking advantage of the Muslims’ demographic superiority. In fact, this is what was going to happen in the November 1990 elections, since it was the candidate for the SDA, Ejup Gani , who won the race for the Others’ representant in Presidency by means of a merely tactical move (Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 183). However, the Presidency’s structure had already changed from 3+2+1+1 to the 2+2+2+1 model (see *infra*), thus Muslims from the SDA would control 3 of 7 seats.

³²⁸ The party was the heir of the SSRN, the Communist regime’s organization including the civil associations. The DSS was then closely allied with the SKBiH. See chapter 6.1.

³²⁹ “Danas zasjeda Skupština SRBiH. Paritetno ili kao dosad?”, *Oslobo enje*, September 20, 1990; Mirko Pejanovi , *Through Bosnian eyes. The political memoir of a Bosnian Serb*, Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2004, 20.

³³⁰ Arnautovi , *Izbori u Bosni*, 12.

sovereign citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina as individuals”. [Italics are mine]. The definition of the republic as a country of citizens and nations, according to the Forum, showed that “lawmakers have only flirted with democracy” and that nationality was becoming “prominent” for the political leanings and identity of citizens. The Forum also criticized the national proportionality, arguing that the voters should have been provided with a tool with which to freely express their will through the principle one person-one vote, regardless of his/her nationality.³³¹

Furthermore, the way in which the reforms were debated and moved forward had negative effects on the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina in terms of internal cohesion, political legitimacy and power relationships. After trying to impose in an authoritarian fashion certain terms for the multi-party transition (as, for example, the ban on national parties or the attempt to advance the date of the elections), the SKBiH was constantly questioned and forced to renegotiate them, either because of hesitations or objections coming from inside the SKBiH itself, or because of external pressures (the Army, the Yugoslav - Serbian - Communists, the national parties...), or because the overall context was relentlessly changing. Many of the proposals coming from the SKBiH simply appeared unsuitable or anachronistic and had to be rescheduled on the run. Moreover, the final solutions were not perceived as the outcome of innovative processes, but rather as a symptom of the weakness of the party. People outside of the SKBiH generally looked at these solutions as rigid and authoritarian concessions from above; vice versa, many SKBiH members saw them as a weakening of the party’s initiative vis-à-vis their opponents.

³³¹ “Demokratski Forum BiH o predstoje im izborima u BiH. Za godinu novi izbori”, *Oslobo enje*, September 12, 1990.

PART II - ALTERNATIVES

5. THE GENESIS OF NATIONAL OPTIONS

5.1. Mobilizations in Herzegovina. Explosion of the “Croat question”

In the beginning of 1990, the “official” political debate was still focused on the fate of the League of Communists, while national parties were still formally prohibited. Meanwhile, new signs of ethnic homogenization appeared in the territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Local ethnic mobilizations against the institutions, which in 1989 had already been observed mainly in Eastern Bosnia and Bosanska Krajina, now extended to other regions. Several external factors, such as the political instability in Yugoslavia, the decline of Communism and the dramatic consequences of hyperinflation and economic crisis, obviously fuelled discontent.

The first stage towards more structured protests was the Duvno events. Duvno is a small town in the south of the Republic.³³² The *casus belli* was the forthcoming construction of a particle accelerator carried out by the Sarajevo-based firm Energoinvest, one of the biggest technology engineering companies in Yugoslavia. The project caused fears for the allegedly high impact of this infrastructure on public health and environment; there were even unconfirmed rumours about the risk of radioactive emissions from the accelerator,³³³ making a deep impression on the local population, also given the popular

³³² Some sources consider Duvno as part of Western Herzegovina, although this definition is disputed. On strictly geographical terms, the town does not belong to Herzegovina; yet, due to its strong socio-economic connections with the neighbouring municipalities in Western Herzegovina, it is sometimes roughly assimilated to that region. Moreover Duvno, alike the municipality from Western Herzegovina, had a homogeneous Croat-led national structure (in 1991, among the 30.009 inhabitants, 86,56% were Croats; 10,49% Muslims; 1,92% Serbs; 0,36% Yugoslavs). In the territorial administration of the Catholic Church, which was very influential in this process of national re-identification during the late 1980s and 1990s, Duvno was included in the Western Herzegovina diocese, namely the diocese of Mostar-Duvno. As it will be detailed later, Duvno was renamed ‘Tomislavgrad’ in spring 1990 in tribute to the Medieval king Tomislav of Croatia.

³³³ Ivica Lučić, “Duvno kao žarište hrvatskog nacionalizma i katoličkog klerikalizma’ u zadnjem desetljeću komunističke vlasti”, *časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 44, 3, December 2012, 584.

In his well-documented article, which seems to be the only retrospective work about the 1990 protests in Duvno, Ivica Lučić does not report data or sources which justified the alarm for the construction of the accelerator, apart from the “rumour that the accelerator is radioactive and, because of radiation, harmful for the environment and the health”. Lučić claims that “This information was followed by the remark that ‘if it was not harmful, it would be not built in Duvno’. This seemed logical, keeping in mind that the communist Yugoslav power had so poorly invested in that region until then”. Lučić, actually a researcher at the Institute of History in Zagreb, is a Bosnian Croat native from Herzegovina, in the 1990s a cadre of HDZ BiH and

shock and the consequent anti-nuclear feelings that the Chernobyl disaster had produced in Yugoslavia and in Europe as a whole at that time.

In the very first days of 1990 there were several demonstrations, numbering up to 5,000 people, demanding the immediate cancellation of the project, including the destruction of the concrete bunker which had already been built. The pattern of the mobilization was similar to the one observed in Nevesinje or Šipovo in 1989: although the protests were initially more or less spontaneous, they later created their own “organizing committee”, that was in the end endorsed by the local Socialist Alliance, apparently out of sincere commitment of their cadres, rather than merely seeking to control the protest. Like in earlier protests, the demands immediately shifted from the circumstantial protest to wide open dissatisfaction against local authorities and on a clearly mono-ethnic base: this time the movement was Croat, whereas in Šipovo and Nevesinje it was Serb. Typical anti-establishment slogans were mixed with nationalist songs and phrases. The common slogans used were “We want resignations”, “Why are you lying to us”, “Communists, thieves!”, “We don’t want Cyrillic”, “this is not Kosovo”, “we did not come to make war”, “this is not Serbia”, “this is Croatia”. The protestors used to sing “*Lijepa naša*” (the anthem of Croatia) and other national songs such as “*Ustani bane*” and “*Marjane, Marjane*”.³³⁴ The difference, however, is that in Duvno the mobilization very quickly degenerated into violent actions and clashes: just a few days after the beginning of the protests, the concrete bunker that was to have contained the accelerator was destroyed with the consent of the Duvno authorities, while the protestors threw stones and then burst into the building of the official organizations.³³⁵ Moreover, there were further demands for changes in educational programs: the demonstrators demanded the cancellation of Cyrillic instruction in the first grade of elementary schools,

official of the Bosnian Croat Army (HVO). In his work, he openly sympathizes for the Duvno protest, as well as for the Croat national cause, with a strong anti-communist commitment.

On the other hand *Oslobo enje*, which was still close to the Communists, widely reported the official version of Energoinvest, claiming that there was no danger for environment and health, and that a similar accelerator was operating since 10 years in Stup (a Sarajevo suburb) with no negative consequences. “Ne postoji radioaktivni otpad”, *Oslobo enje*, January 5, 1990; “Reagiranje iz Energoinvesta. Država je dužna da nas štiti”, *Oslobo enje*, January 7, 1990.

³³⁴ “Kablovi potpalili nacionalizam”, *Oslobo enje*, January 6, 1990; Lu i , “Duvno kao žarište”, 590.

³³⁵ The local government promptly appointed a team of workers from the bauxite mine in Posušje to demolish the concrete bunker which would have to contain the accelerator. The demolition started on January 6. As a consequence, the protests stopped. The fact that the local authorities took the initiative indicates the degree of commitment with protests (or, at least, the amount of pressure that they received and that they were not to deal with). “Nakon protesta u Duvnu. Osuda rušila kog pohoda”, *Oslobo enje*, January 7, 1990.

as well as the replacement of Russian with German or English as second language; these demands were also accepted by the local government.³³⁶

The protests found fertile ground in the poverty of Duvno, a poor area that in since the 1970s had lost a large percentage of its population due to emigration.³³⁷ Not by chance, the demonstrations were joined by many so-called “*gastarbajteri*”, emigrant workers living mainly in Germany and Austria, many of whom had come back home for the Christmas holidays.³³⁸ Many of them harboured particular resentments against the communist regime, whom they blamed for purposely avoiding investing in infrastructures and economic activities the region, due to a supposed anti-Croat orientation, thus forcing them to emigrate.³³⁹ It must be recalled that in the 1980s, Duvno was one of the main stages in the confrontation between the Communist authorities and the Catholic organizations that had particularly escalated after the Međugorje events in 1981, particularly in Croat-populated areas in Herzegovina and Southern Bosnia.³⁴⁰ Throughout all the 1980s, the Security services of Bosnia-Herzegovina had actively investigated and sentenced dozens of people responsible for alleged “clerical-nationalism” in Duvno, some of them related to opposition networks abroad.³⁴¹ On the other hand, the communist structure was barely present in the town. The party had 706 members in 1990, that is, only 2.3% of the total 1991 census.³⁴² Throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, the party members / population ratio was more than three times higher (8.22%). Duvno had the lowest figure even when

³³⁶ “Dogovor u SSRN Duvna. Ograde od nacionalističkih ispada”, *Oslobođenje*, January 10, 1990; “Duvno, bez mitinga za Uskrs”, *Oslobođenje*, April 12, 1990.

³³⁷ The population in Duvno declined from 33.135 in 1971 to 30.666 in 1981 (-7,4%) and to 30.006 in 1991 (-2,1%). According to press sources, from 7.000 to 8.000 citizens from Duvno lived abroad at that time, mainly in Germany or Austria. The remittances were the main source of wealth for the local community. Huge donations from emigrants also significantly contributed to the local Churches for rebuilding or financing activities (Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 41).

³³⁸ The timing of the protests is actually noticeable, since they started on January 1 and practically ended up on January 6, just coinciding with the end of Christmas holidays.

³³⁹ Even *Oslobođenje* acknowledged the extent of the economic collapse in Duvno due to the lack of investments. The last five-year plan had not set up a single productive activity in Duvno; only one fifth of the planned workplaces had been effectively created. “Opštinski komitet SK Duvna. I dalje bez potpune istine”, *Oslobođenje*, February 21, 1990.

³⁴⁰ Jozo Zovko (the Franciscan friar serving at Međugorje at the time of the alleged miracle, who became an heroic symbol in anti-communist circles and even Western media after being jailed for ‘hostile propaganda’ by Yugoslav authorities: see Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 112) after serving the term was assigned to a village in the Duvno municipality. Zovko engaged in youth activities and in organizing trips to Međugorje, what created further concern in local Communist authorities. Lučić, “Duvno kao žarište”, 574-575; Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 110-112.

³⁴¹ Lučić, “Duvno kao žarište”, 572-584.

³⁴² Source: “Prijedlog broja delegata za 11. Kongres SKBiH-SDP iz opštinskih organizacija SK”, Documents from the 11. Congress of the SK-SDP, 1991, SDP Archive, 1-5.

compared with other Herzegovinian and Southern Bosnian municipalities with very relatively low figures such as Livno (6.0%), itluk (4.9%), Posušje (3.3%), Ljubuški (3.4%), Lištica (3.3%), Grude (4.4%), or Neum (7.7%).³⁴³ In many villages of the municipality, the SKBiH had no local organizations, whereas the Catholic Church and the Franciscans were regaining considerable influence in social life, especially among the youth.³⁴⁴

The events in Duvno caused deep concern in the republican government and in the SKBiH leaders who, besides the immediate demands and the visible features, feared two elements of these protests: first, that this could be imitated by other neighbouring Croat-populated towns, especially in Western Herzegovina, which endured similar social unrest factors (a high degree of underdevelopment, poor services and infrastructure), all in an ethnically homogenous and deeply anti-Communist environment. Western Herzegovina had been a stronghold for militant Catholicism since the early XX century, committed to sectarian conservatism that was reinforced by selective memories of what happened during World War II.³⁴⁵ According to local reports, people from all of Herzegovina (as well as from Central Bosnia and Croatian Dalmatia) attended the protests in Duvno.³⁴⁶

The second large source of troubles for the Communists was the behaviour of the local institutions, as some of their representatives either joined or justified the protests. The calls for destroying the bunker, stopping works and changing the school curriculum were quickly satisfied. In a tense meeting held in Sarajevo, the Bosnian Minister of Internal Affairs Muhamed Bešli said that the Socialist Alliance in Duvno was minimizing the incidents and the nationalist exhibitions in the town, which were allegedly the

³⁴³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴⁴ Lu i , “Duvno kao žarište”, 572.

³⁴⁵ As Perica recalls, Western Herzegovina was a site of ecclesiastical tensions in the 1930s and bitter battles between Ustaša and nazi forces against the partisans in the II world war. The Ustaša were responsible for the extermination of thousands of Serbs; at the end of the war, the Partisans, as a retaliation, sentenced to death dozens of clerics, especially the ones belonging to the Franciscan order (most of them had been Ustaša allies). Explaining the context of the Medjugorje’s apparitions, Perica claims: “Of course, there is no reason to doubt the visionaries’ special talents and devotion. They grew up in a sectarian community permeated by devout Catholicism, excessive ethnicism, and memories of World War II Croatian martyrdom (the children did not know about Serb mass graves).” Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 112. See also 108-111.

³⁴⁶ Blaž Pranji , the President of the SSRN in Duvno who endorsed the protests, acknowledged that the protests were joined by people from Split, Sinj, Imotski (Dalmatia, Croatia), Mostar, Posušje, Prozor, Lištica (Herzegovina, BiH), Bugojno, Kupres, Livno (Central-western Bosnia). “O doga anjima u Duvnu. Ko je izmanipulisao Duvnjake”, *Oslobo enje*, January 13, 1990.

deliberate product of a “manipulation” action. The SSRN’s president in Duvno, Blaž Pranji , replied promptly and vehemently that the Minister’s allegations were completely unfounded, claiming that extreme underdevelopment and the poor state of public services were the only reasons for dissent. Pranji asked about the millions sent by the migrants during the last 30 years: “Where did they go?” implicitly hinting at mismanagement by the central government. Pranji also complained of the severe assessment of the SKBiH’s president Duraković and the whole leadership in Sarajevo, who agreed with Bešlić. The Socialist Alliance criticized the coverage of the major Bosnian and Yugoslav media, accusing them of disinformation.³⁴⁷ The case revealed that some forms of “local insubordinations” within the same regime could be expected to appear in ethnically homogeneous towns in Southern Bosnia and Western Herzegovina.

5.2. From mobilization to political organization. The HDZ in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Local dissatisfaction due to socio-economic reasons, the activism of the clerical (Roman Catholic and Franciscan) networks and the quick growth of the Franjo Tuđman’s HDZ in neighbouring Dalmatia on the eve of the Croatian elections, were the crucial factors leading to an increase in the Croat nationalistic mobilization in Southern Bosnia and, especially, in Western Herzegovina. On January 6th, 1990, the same day in which the anti-communist protests ended in Duvno, the HDZ set up its first branch in the republic of Croatia, in Split.³⁴⁸ The event caused a stir in the Yugoslav media, being one of the first public acts of a fully legalized nationalist party following the definitive opening to multi-party system in Croatia. Moreover, that day coincided with the foundation of the Serb Renewal Movement (SNO) in Serbia, what caused further alarm in Sarajevo for their potential implications for the Bosnian territory.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ “O događanjima u Duvnu. Ko je izmanipulisao Duvnjake”, *Oslobođenje*, January 13, 1990.

³⁴⁸ The HDZ had been created on June 1989 in Zagreb and was already de facto operating throughout Croatia; however, it was the definitive opening of multi-party system established by the Croatian Communists in its Congress held in December that allowed the Tuđman’s party to officially set up branches. HDZ’s president Franjo Tuđman and all the party leadership attended the event in Split, which took place at the Marjan Hotel.

³⁴⁹ The SNO was created on January 6 in Nova Pazova, not far from Belgrade. Their main leaders were Vojislav Šešelj, Vuk Drasković and Mirko Jović.

In fact, some popular enthusiasm for the HDZ began to spread in the Croat-led towns of Western Herzegovina. Some committees of the HDZ were set up there, although not officially yet, because ethnically-based political associations were still strictly prohibited in Bosnia-Herzegovina. On April 1st, 1990, there was one of the first public events of the party in the town of Lištica. It was attended by some 3,000 people. The organizers themselves immediately interrupted the meeting, as they were not yet ready to challenge the warning coming from the local security services, but they proved to have a good capacity of mobilization, and transformed the press conference into a *de facto* rally, as their discourse was directed primarily at the public itself rather than to the journalists.³⁵⁰ The HDZ representatives in Lištica accused the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina of being a “totalitarian [...] last bastion of bolshevism in Europe”. It is remarkable, though, that they maintained a relatively moderate discourse on the national question and the internal organization of Bosnia-Herzegovina, still avoiding advocating for radical solutions. They presented their cause as a truly *authentic* and *democratic* representation of interests not only for the Croats, but also for the other founding peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This hinted that only when each national community would have its own representative party (hence, each one legitimating and reinforcing the other communities), would democratic principles would be fully achieved. One of the founders of the HDZ in Lištica, Ivo Zovko, said: “We are seeking democracy for the Croat people, but also for the Serbs and the Muslims living in this place. Talking of secession of Herzegovina from BiH is a mistake. We know that there are no border changes in Europe”.³⁵¹ A cadre from itluk, Milan Lovri , commented: “There is a chance to express, through the HDZ, the authentic interest of our people. In the same way, Muslims and Serbs would need to express their sincere opinion in the place they belong to. I think that this is a need. Those who, until now, represented the Muslims, the Serbs and the Croats in the Parliament of SR Bosnia and Herzegovina, were not surely legitimated by their own people. Neither did those who represented us here. [...] I think that the formation of national and religious parties shall be allowed here. Only in this way can the authenticity of each people be expressed. This has been suppressed for a long time, but

³⁵⁰ “Odgo ena tribina HDZ u Lištici. Štnjom protiv zabrana”, *Oslobo enje*, April 2, 1990. The police was present in force but did not intervene to disperse the crowd. The meeting was held by Perica Juri and fra Tomislav Duka. Juri was a native from Duvno but lived in Croatia, while fra Duka was from Split. Both of them were members of the central board of the Croatian HDZ. About the setting up of the HDZ in Lištica/Široki Brijeg, see also Zdenko oši , *Rat je po eo prije*, Široki Brijeg: Matica Hrvatska, 46-47.

³⁵¹ “HDZ u BiH. Ukazanje Tu mana”, *Naši Dani*, April 13, 1990.

now it is necessary to draw a line and deal with it. Only then can the Serb, Croat and Muslim peoples sit together and agree upon how they will further live together, of course, with legitimately elected representatives”.³⁵²

Lištica, like Duvno, was a notable example of the economic marginalization of the region, being among the ten lowest municipalities in average personal income,³⁵³ with a very high unemployment rate. About 10% of the total population was reported to live abroad. As a local journalist observed, the town relied primarily on “non-productive retail shops”, and on the very few small-medium industries that had survived the crisis of the 1980s.³⁵⁴ The official statistics also showed that Lištica had one of the highest rates of individual proprietorship employment in the entire republic (interestingly, it shared these rates mainly with other towns from Western Herzegovina).³⁵⁵ These private initiatives were usually carried out by former *gastarbajteri* who had come back to their place of origin and invested what they had earned abroad, or who were sending foreign remittances reinvested by their relatives.³⁵⁶ This context of socio-economic depression and private initiative further deepened the strong anti-communist stance that the clerical-nationalist networks had been fuelling for years.

Another key factor was that the *de facto* population of Western Herzegovina followed the media actors from Croatia rather than those of Bosnia-Herzegovina, massively watching TV Zagreb, listening to Radio Split, and reading the newspapers *Slobodna Dalmacija* or *Vijesnik*.³⁵⁷ Thus, the Herzegovinians were well informed about the electoral campaign in Croatia and the growing role of HDZ in the spring of 1990,

³⁵² Milan Lovrić in “Dan za pobjede”, *Oslobo enje*, May 12, 1990.

³⁵³ SRBiH – Republi ki zavod za statistiku, *Statisti ki godišnjak SR Bosne i Hercegovine 1990*, Sarajevo, 335.

³⁵⁴ “HDZ u BiH. Ukazanje Tu mana”, *Naši Dani*, April 13, 1990.

³⁵⁵ According to the official statistics about 1989, there were only 7 of 109 municipalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina where sector of “individual proprietorships” employed more than 10% of total workers. Four of them were in Western Herzegovina: Pošusje (19.8%), Grude (17.4%), itluk (13.2%), Listica (11.4%). Duvno, with 9.6, was very close. The other three were Kreševo (Central Bosnia, 13.7%), Laktaši (Bosnian Krajina, 10.6%) and Tešanj (Northern Bosnia, 10.1%) The Bosnia average was 2.25%. *Statisti ki godišnjak SRBiH 1990*, 323.

³⁵⁶ According to John Allcock, Lištica come to conquer a slight comparative advantage in the region, since they had some more commercial and industrial activities than their neighbour municipalities. As a partial explanation, Allcock alleges that Lištica has arisen as the centre of the “euphemistically called ‘import-export’” (implicitly suggesting smuggling and other illegal economic activities), although he is not sure whether this status emerged before or, rather, after the war. John B. Allcock, “Rural-urban differences and the break-up of Yugoslavia”, *Balkanologie*, VI (1-2), December 2002, 121.

³⁵⁷ “HDZ u BiH. Ukazanje Tadjmana”, *Naši Dani*, April 13, 1990; “Posuški komunisti u vakuumu. Zašto je predsjednik otišao”, *Oslobo enje*, March 31, 1990; Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 137-138.

which still attracted more interest and participation. The definitive opening of Croatia to a multi-party system not only made possible the development and consolidation of an ethnically-based political organization, but it also turned Herzegovina into a “vanguard” place for that wave of ethno-political pluralism.

The SKBiH was profoundly affected by the rise of the HDZ in Herzegovina; local branches in that region were, not by chance, the ones which most urged for de-ideologization moves, such as the detachment from workplaces, the opening to religious believers and the cancellation of the ban on national parties. A group of members of the SKBiH in *itluk*, probably influenced by the messianic atmosphere of the Medjugorije pilgrimage, even suggested to rename the SKBiH as the “Democratic Pacific Alliance”.³⁵⁸ At the same time, those party sections, which had already low membership numbers, suffered further withdrawals of local cadres and members.³⁵⁹

After the elections in Croatia, which ended up with the victory of the HDZ, its Bosnian branch extended its organization into the northern and central areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina having Croatian population³⁶⁰ and provided itself with a proper republican structure. On June 2, the newly formed Coordinating Council of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian HDZ, held in Duvno, appointed the Sarajevan doctor Davor Perinovi as their President.³⁶¹ This process reveals the extent of the influence of both the clergy and the Croatian branch of the HDZ. As Perinovi himself claimed in several occasions, it was Ante Jelić, an influential catholic priest in Sarajevo with very close connections with the Croatian HDZ, who persuaded him to join the HDZ. Perinovi travelled personally to Zagreb in order to be introduced to Franjo Tuđman and the other party leaders; he then worked together with Jelić and a network of catholic priests in order to coordinate the organizational structure in the capital and in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to collect funds. Perinovi was initially appointed as the first leader of the Bosnian HDZ because, as a respected doctor from the capital city, he could collect more support in the urban strata, where the party had attracted a very low membership until then. Perinovi recalls the atmosphere of control that still reigned in Sarajevo, since the HDZ was still officially

³⁵⁸ “Previranja me u *itlu* kim komunista. Želja ja a od snage”, *Oslobo enje*, March 17, 1990.

³⁵⁹ *Ibidem*; “Posuški komunisti u vakuumu. Zašto je predsjednik otišao”, *Oslobo enje*, March 31, 1990.

³⁶⁰ “HDZ i u Bugojnu”, *Oslobo enje*, June 11, 1990; “Formiran prvi ogranak HDZ u Sjevernoj Bosni. Kao u Tomislavjevo vrijeme”, *Oslobo enje*, June 26, 1990; “HDZ u Bosanskoj Posavini. Ista meta, ve e odstojanje”, *Oslobo enje*, July 28, 1990.

³⁶¹ “Neko muti me unacionalne odnose?”, *Oslobo enje*, June 18, 1990.

illegal: “The meetings were normally held in the evening hours, though from the windows you could always see a police officer in civilian clothes sitting in front of our house. It was clear that our house was under surveillance, so we carried out the meeting in the garret. My wife prepared and coordinated the meetings. I knew that the telephone was tapped, so we had to use coded messages, which sometimes were funny. We rarely met during the day. There were some harassment at work, or through anonymous phone calls, et cetera. This was the predominant atmosphere until the party convention in Skenderija”.³⁶²

However, the HDZ’s infrastructure in Sarajevo and in the rest of the country remained weak and marginal, at least until its full legalization and its first public republican assembly, which took place on August 18th in Sarajevo, at the Zetra hall. The effective policy-making of the party always came from Zagreb, while the southern region of the republic remained a hotbed of active national mobilization, which the HDZ in Herzegovina kept alive through a wide repertoire of actions mixing cultural-symbolical and socio-economic claims. The party issued a petition for the “return of the Croat language” to the institutions and the media and for the (exclusive) use of Latin alphabet in the schools, claiming to have collected almost 11,000 signatures in Lištica alone.³⁶³ In the same town, the HDZ led a protest against a massive military manoeuvre carried out by the Yugoslav Army (JNA) in the town territory.³⁶⁴ In Lištica there was a widespread anti-JNA resentment for deeply historical reasons, for this was the seat of the main Franciscan monastery in the area, and a stronghold of militant Catholicism since the early 20th century, as well as a bastion of the Ustaša forces in the Second World War and the scene of a massacre committed by the Partisans in 1945.³⁶⁵ The exercise had taken place

³⁶² Davor Perinovi , interviewed in “Rodio sam se u Zagrebu, u sobi u kojoj je bio prvi ured dr. Tu mana”, *Ve ernji.hr*, October 2, 2010. Accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.vecernji.ba/rodio-sam-se-u-zagrebu-u-sobi-u-kojoj-je-bio-prvi-ured-dr-tudjmana-198519>. See also: Davor Perinovi , interviewed in “Sve moje zablude”, *Dani*, February 11, 2000. Accessed October 12, 2012. <http://www.bhdani.com/arhiva/141/t418a.htm>; “Srbin koji je osnovao HDZ”, *Nin*, September 24-October 1, 1993, quoted in Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 138-139.

³⁶³ “Inicijativa lišti kog odbora HDZ. Povratak latinici i hrvatskom jeziku”, *Oslobo enje*, June 23, 1990.

³⁶⁴ “Nakon protesta HDZ Široki Brijeg protiv JNA. Samo vježba, zlu ne trebalo”, *Oslobo enje*, June 26, 1990; “Poslije protesta sa Širokog Brijega. Armiji ne treba strana ka dozvola”, *Oslobo enje*, June 28, 1990.

³⁶⁵ It was in Lištica (then named Široki Brijeg) where a bitter battle took place in February 1945 between Ustaša-Nazi forces entrenched in a Franciscan monastery and the Partisan forces, who after experiencing high losses executed about 70 clerics, priests, monks and relatives of Ustaša and sentenced others to decades in prison. Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 110.

Those events, in turn, would strongly mark the individual and social-political conscience of the people living in Široki Brijeg. Communist authorities did not certainly hide the stigma of extremism attributed to that place. They came to change the name from Široki Brijeg to Lištica (which is the name of the river

on June 21-22, just three days before the massive celebration of the apparitions' anniversary in Međugorje (just few kilometres far from Lištica), so the HDZ thought that both events were related, and that the deployment of armed forces in the areas was an intimidating move against the local population.³⁶⁶ As proof of the HDZ's social legitimacy in Lištica, its party representatives also joined the official meetings with the workers of bankrupted firms, something that until then was normally reserved for institutional cadres and Communist members.³⁶⁷ The HDZ also set the conditions for the celebration of a referendum in Duvno asking to restore the old city name from 1925 to 1945, "Tomislavgrad", as a tribute to the first king of the medieval Kingdom of Croatia, thus representing a symbolical reaffirmation that this area belonged to the "Croatian geopolitical and historical space", as the party's local leaders used to state in public meetings.³⁶⁸ The referendum, accepted by the local authorities, was finally held on August

flowing through the town), in the early 1950s, in order to sweep any identity-making element; in turn, the popular contempt against Communism was made explicit through a disengagement from the Communist structures.

Zdenko Čosić, an Herzegovinian Croat publicist and then a cadre of the HDZ in Široki Brijeg, wrote: "The tanks of the JNA, to the eyes of the Herzegovinian Croats, were the symbol of all the troubles and tragedies of this people in the past, but, even more, they were recognizable as a threat for the Croat future. With reason, the Herzegovinian Croats did not believe in the repeated assertion of the highest cadres of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian rule, that the Yugoslav Army will protect the citizens, prevent conflicts and guarantee the security. On the contrary!". Čosić, *Rat je po eo prije*, 64.

³⁶⁶ The JNA's officials promptly replied that the training in Lištica had always been routine and had not brought any consequence until then. The HDZ's cadres, instead, did their best to dramatize the situation, asking in their statement whether "the intention is to convert Lištica to a terminal situation, as Beirut. Are those shots only symbolically fired up or are they fired towards us? Who and how legally gave the order to shot? Or, is the need for order suspended when it concerns the 'Ustaša' Lištica?". "Nakon protesta HDZ Široki Brijeg protiv JNA. Samo vježba, zlu ne trebalo", *Oslobođenje*, June 26, 1990; "Poslije protesta sa Širokog Brijega. Armiji ne treba strana ka dozvola", *Oslobođenje*, June 28, 1990.

The 1990 anti-JNA protest is very significant also because it was a prelude for a wide mass mobilization which took place one year later, in May 1991, in the territory of Široki Brijeg. Hundreds of people set up barricades and roadblocks in order to stop a column of JNA's vehicles and tanks directed from the Mostar barracks to the southern Croatia. At that point, the context in overall Yugoslavia had significantly changed, as the confrontation between Slovenia-Croatia and Serbia was at a point of no return and the reciprocal military manoeuvres were revealing the possibility of a conflict. The blockade lasted three days; the fact that Bosnian Croats advocated their mobilization not only as to defend themselves, but also the Croats from Croatia, showed and reinforced the identification with their so-called motherland [lit. *mati na država*]. On the 1991 events in Široki Brijeg from a pro-Croat point of view, see Zdenko Čosić, *Rat je po eo prije*.

³⁶⁷ "Protest radnika 'Metalca' i 'Montaže' u Lištici. Rukovodstvo u hladovini", *Oslobođenje*, August 18, 1990.

³⁶⁸ "Duvanjski pluralisti ki odjeci. Kraljevo ime i privredne teškoće", *Oslobođenje*, August 10, 1990. Tomislav, the Duke of Croatia from 910, was crowned as king in 925. In 1925, to celebrate the 1000. anniversary, the king of Yugoslavia Alexander I was the first to rename Duvno into Tomislavgrad. After the II war, the Communist rule restored the name of Duvno.

13 and reached a turnout of 81.07%, with 98.58 favouring the name change. This event constituted another remarkable success of the HDZ's mobilization.³⁶⁹

The growing mobilization of the HDZ in Herzegovina did not yet bring seriously violent incidents along an ethnic vein; the majority of those towns had a quasi-homogeneous Croat population, so the chance for inter-ethnic clashes was limited. Nonetheless, a somewhat troubling confrontation occurred on July 2, when a column of Yugoslav football team supporters' cars from *apljina* drove through Ljubuški;³⁷⁰ there, according to the *Oslobo enje*'s press reports, the Yugoslav supporters were assaulted, and one of them injured by some hundreds of Croat nationalists who also stole from him, and burned, a Yugoslav flag.³⁷¹ According to Neven Andjeli , this was a response to the column of cars with Croat national symbols that the members of the Ljubuški HDZ had organized two weeks before in the streets of *apljina*.³⁷² Both towns were relatively small,³⁷³ but *apljina* was (except Mostar) the only town in Herzegovina with a relative heterogeneous population (Croats 53.69%, Muslims 27.52%, Serbs 13.46%), and there pro-Yugoslav feelings were somewhat stronger, whereas Ljubuški was an homogenous Croat-led municipality (92.19%) and one of the very first places where the HDZ had successfully established itself. The event created a sensation on the public sphere, attracting media coverage and urging some politicians from Sarajevo to intervene in defence of the pro-Yugoslav supporters.³⁷⁴ On the other hand, the municipal government of Ljubuški (which, at least formally, was still under the control of Communist officers)

³⁶⁹ "Glasali za Tomislavgrad", *Ve ernje Novine*, August 14, 1990; "Referendum u Duvnu. Za Tomislavgrad", *Oslobo enje*, August 14, 1990.

Croats formed 86.56% of the Duvno population in 1991, cfr. 10.49% Muslims and 1.92% Serbs; one can deduce, then, that the referendum succeeded in bringing almost all the Croat population to vote, assuming that Muslims and Serbs were not interested in the issue; according to press reports, there were even rumours of boycott from the non-Croat population. In 1991, another name change submitted through a referendum vote would be realized in Lištica, renamed as Široki Brijeg.

³⁷⁰ To be precise, the column of cars moved immediately after the end of the World Cup's quarter-final match against Argentina. Yugoslavia lost the match after the penalties and was eliminated; however, the overall positive performance of the team led many supporters to celebrate in any case with columns of cars and demonstrations. In Sarajevo, hundreds took the streets showing Yugoslav flags and even Tito's pictures. ("Mondijal, opet, izvukao Sarajlije na ulice. I u porazu je pobijedila Jugoslavija", *Oslobo enje*, July 2, 1990); besides the sporting value, these manifestations can be seen as a display of unity, common life and "resistance against ethnic divisions" (Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 168).

³⁷¹ "Poslje incidenta u Ljubuškom. Spaljena jugoslovenska zastava", *Oslobo enje*, July 3, 1990; "Reagovanja nakon incidenta u Ljubuškom. Vandalizam hadezeovaca", *Oslobo enje*, July 4, 1990.

³⁷² Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 167.

³⁷³ According to the 1991 census, they almost had the same figures, both with around 28.000 inhabitants in the municipality and around 7.000 in the respective urban centers.

³⁷⁴ See Krstan Maleševi , prominent cadre of the SKBiH, reported in "Nasilje zbog druga ijj mišljenja", *Oslobo enje*, July 4, 1990.

stood in defence of the Croat nationalists, arguing that the column of pro-Yugoslav cars was a masked “anti-bureaucratic” (hence, pro-Miloševi and pro-Serbian) demonstration.³⁷⁵ This stance shows the degree of pressure, or rather complete penetration, achieved by the HDZ into many local institutions of Western Herzegovina well before the November elections.

In this context, the ban on ethnic parties, still enforced by the Bosnian communist government, seemed to have had a counterproductive effect. It encouraged these “vanguards of national interest” to seek further support from outside the republic to elude the ban and to establish a relation of dependence from the “external homeland”, instead of granting political initiatives which could have allowed for compromises, such as autonomism or regionalism, within the framework of Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the other hand, the government itself showed a more and more patent reluctance to effectively apply the ban, despite the pompous announcements coming from the institutions and the media still close to the regime. Obviously, the victory of HDZ in the Croatian elections in May decisively excited such mobilization and provided further material resources to the movement, boosting the request for relieving the ban on national parties, which appeared even more inapplicable.

³⁷⁵ In response to the municipality’s stance, some of the *apljina* supporters of Yugoslavia promptly wrote a letter to *Oslobo enje*, explaining that there were Muslims, Croats, Serbs and Yugoslavs of all belongings among them. For instance, the injured supporter, Mirza Kudra, was a Muslim. “Izmišljotinama protiv istine”, *Oslobo enje*, July 13, 1990.

5.3. The Bosnian Muslims renaissance and the creation of the SDA

Between late 1989 and early 1990, a political homogenization of the Bosnian Muslims also began to take shape in Bosnia-Herzegovina, within the context of the fall of the Communists' monopoly. While the Croat activism, mainly focused on territorial and non-urban activism, was mostly concentrated in Western Herzegovina,³⁷⁶ the genesis of the Muslim mobilization originated mainly in intellectual and urban circles, generally with close links to the Muslim clergy. This was due, first of all, to structural reasons, since the Muslims were more dispersed along the territory, and thus less tied to a specific territorial stronghold. They were traditionally the most urban of the three communities.³⁷⁷ There were political causes: the perspective of a democratic opening was seen as the opportunity to revive the debate on the identity and the status of the Bosnian Muslims which, even after the official recognition of the "Muslim nation" in 1968-1971, was far from being resolved. In the 1970s and 1980s, figures as Salim Ćerić and Mustafa Imamović asked for a further institutionalisation of the Muslim culture, notably by promoting its own specific literary, linguistic and historical tradition through education and institutional culture. This claim relied on the assumption that the Bosnian Muslims did not have their own cultural institutions such as Science Academies (the Sciences Academy of BiH – ANUBiH -, created in 1968, was shared by all nationalities), while the Bosnian Serbs and Croats could rely on the institutions from Belgrade or Zagreb. Others, as Muhamed Filipović and Mak Dizdar, suggested the recognition of a separate, supra-national Bosnian identity, in which the Muslims should include themselves.³⁷⁸ The debate, held within small party circles or academic environments, resulted in some traumatic circumstances, such as conflicts, expulsions, self-segregations and emigrations, which concerned several Bosnian intellectuals from all the traditions, orientations and national groups.³⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the radical wing, both within and around the official

³⁷⁶ Ivica Lučić, himself a HDZ BiH cadre in 1990, acknowledges that his party did not have almost a single "leading intellectual" within his ranks, with the only exception of writer Vitomir Lukić. This marked a relevant difference towards the foundation processes of the HDZ's homologues, namely the Muslim SDA and the Serb SDS, which had a few prominent intellectuals among their leaders. Ivica Lučić, "Evolution and Condition of the Elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A Personal View", *National security and the future*, 3-4(6), 2005, 161.

³⁷⁷ Bougarel, "Anatomie d'une poudrière", 91-94, 105.

³⁷⁸ Saif Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika u XX. stoljeću*, Sarajevo: Sejtarija, 1998.

³⁷⁹ As Filandra acknowledges, some Croat, Serb and even Muslim intellectuals moved to Serbia or Croatia as they perceived "attacks" from the Muslim cultural-political environment following the recognition.

Islamic Community, became increasingly active in the late 1980s. The Young Muslims' circle (*Mladi Muslimani*) led by Alija Izetbegović, who had been jailed in 1983 and later sentenced to serve a long term in prison, benefited from a sort of "martyrdom effect" when he was released in 1988, coinciding with the beginning of the communists' decline.³⁸⁰ On the same year, the Movement of the Imams (*Pokret imama*) within the Islamic Community displayed the vividness of some radical sectors of the clergy, demanding complete autonomy from the regime and a stricter application of Muslim norms.³⁸¹

In this context, as Sabina Veladžić properly categorized, two different kinds of actors became dominant in the Bosnian Muslim milieu:³⁸² a *scientific-cultural intelligentsia*, formed by intellectuals such as Alija Isaković, who were previously integrated into the Communist cultural-institutional system, and a *religious-clerical intelligentsia*, led by the Young Muslims' circle, which was concerned about the return to active Islamic practice as the core of the Bosnian Muslims' identity and had a deeply anti-communist stance. The first Bosnian Muslim organization, the "Forum of the Muslims" created in March 1990, was born out of the "scientific-cultural" group. Their leader, Muhamed Filipović, was well-known for the authorship of "*Bosanski duh*" which theorized the existence of a distinct Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural identity. Filipović presented the Forum as a "non-political organization which does not pretend to gain any political representation", based on "civil" and "cultural-historical rights". According to Filipović, there were two main reasons behind the Muslims' mobilization: first, the obstacle to the full recognition of the Muslim national identity in cultural-historical terms, despite the formal acceptance for individuals; second, a negative stance of some Yugoslav territories (mainly Serbia, but also Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia) against Islam,

Probably the most known case concerns Meša Selimović, a Bosnian Muslim writer who left for Belgrade in 1971. Filandra, *Bošnjak ka politika*, 252.

³⁸⁰ Xavier Bougarel, "L'islam bosniaque, entre identité culturelle et idéologie politique", in: Xavier Bougarel, Nathalie Clayer (eds.), *Le nouvel islam balkanique. Les musulmans, acteurs du post-communisme* (1990-2000), Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2001, 85.

³⁸¹ Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 82-85.

³⁸² Sabina Veladžić, "Homogenizacija Bošnjaka kroz *Preporod* 1990.", in *Rasprave o nacionalnom identitetu Bošnjaka. Zbornik radova*, Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 2009, 190.

stigmatized as fundamentalist, antidemocratic etc., which was stronger than the traditional hostility displayed by Communist regime.³⁸³

Although Filipovi insisted that this initiative had no “political ambitions” and that any articulation along ethnic basis “would be counterproductive” for the Muslims’ interests, it was undeniable that the Forum of the Muslims was a symptom, and at the same time the incubator, for an association with political goals. Alija Izetbegovi, the founder of the SDA, related in his memoirs: “When I reflected about the foundation of a political party, I’ve always thought that I would start with Prof. Muhamed Filipovi, the most known intellectual back then. I told myself: if you have Filipovi and a hundred intellectuals, then half of the work will be done. Nonetheless, things went otherwise. I spoke to Filipovi, who had then created the Forum [...], but he politely rejected, explaining that ‘it is not time for that yet’.”³⁸⁴ As Izetbegovi acknowledged, the prudence of Filipovi proved to be correct: at that stage, free political associations were not allowed yet (even less ethnically-based parties, which was still strictly forbidden). The danger of repression was still perceived as high, especially keeping in mind the individual experience that each of the Young Muslims’ circle had lived through during the 1980s.

Regarding himself, Izetbegovi claimed that he began to be politically active (although not publically) in November 1989, when he joined a meeting of prominent Muslims belonging to the “religious-clerical intelligentsia” held near the Zagreb Mosque. They agreed to create a party “of Muslim cultural circles” throughout all Yugoslavia, thus not limiting itself to the Bosnian Muslims.³⁸⁵ The intention was made public in a conference press at the Sarajevo “Holiday Inn” on March 27, 1990. The sixteen founding principles of the Party of Democratic Action that were announced that day reveal two crucial aspects: firstly, that the SDA initially presented itself as a “pan-Yugoslav”, and not as a “national Bosnian Muslim” party, both in its sphere of action (the purpose was to spread the organization to all the republics) and in its stance towards the political

³⁸³ “Prof. Dr. Muhamed Filipovi, clan ANUBiH. misle i musliman”, *Naši Dani*, February 2, 1990; “Muhamed Filipovi o pokretanju Muslimanskog Foruma: Bez političkih ambicija”, *Oslobođenje*, March 22, 1990.

³⁸⁴ Alija Izetbegovi, *Sje anja: Autobiografski zapis*, Sarajevo: TKD Sahinpasic, 2001, 77.

³⁸⁵ Izetbegovi, *Sje anja*, 78; Medina Delalić and Suzana Šačić, *Balkan bluz. Bosanska hronika 1975. - 1995*, Sarajevo: authors’ edition, 2007, 33. According to Xavier Bougarel, the Zagreb mosque had become, in late 1980s, the main place for the Islamic militant wing in Yugoslavia. The mosque had been inaugurated in 1987 after being funded mainly by Saudi and Libyan capital; it was inspired by the architectural model of the Islamic centres. Bougarel, “L’islam bosniaque”, 85.

organization of Yugoslavia.³⁸⁶ Secondly, their founding principles gave more emphasis and consistency to the religious issues (autonomy of the religious communities, revision of urban plans in order to liberalize new religious buildings, celebration of Muslim holidays, compliance with dietary norms, etc.) rather than to the socio-economic themes.³⁸⁷ Two months later, on May 26, the official foundation of the Party of the Democratic Action (SDA) was announced. It is well-known that the intention of the Izetbegovi 's circle was to name the party "Yugoslav Muslim Organization" (*Jugoslavenska Muslimanska Organizacija*, JMO), exactly the same name that the political party that in the 1919-1939 period, under the rule of Mehmed Spaho, had joined various Yugoslav governments. Nonetheless, the still-extant ban on national parties persuaded the founders to circumvent the prohibition and choose a more neutral name.³⁸⁸ After the foundation of the SDA, the separate paths of the "religious-clerical" and the "scientific-cultural" wing converged together into the same organization. Cadres such as Muhamed Filipovi and Adil Zulfikarpaši, who were committed to a far more liberal and secular interpretation of the religion, and more interested in the recognition of the separate identity of *Bosniaks* (the national name they proposed to replace Bosnian Muslims), officially joined the party.

Another relevant expressions and vehicle of the calls for re-homogenization along religious veins was *Preporod*, the magazine of the Islamic Community which took firm positions about the situation of the Muslims in Yugoslavia. There were held a number of

³⁸⁶ "The Party of Democratic Action is a political union of the citizens of Yugoslavia belonging to the Muslim cultural-historical circle, as well as of the other citizens of Yugoslavia who accept the program and the aims of the party. [...] We advocate maintaining Yugoslavia as a free community of people, as a union of states [*saveza država*] within the current republican borders. In this sense, we support the slogan 'Helsinki for Yugoslavia' [referring to the principle of inviolability of borders stated in the CSCE's Helsinki Declaration in 1975, author's note]." Articles 1 and 6, Press release from the March 27 Conference of the SDA, quoted in Izetbegovi, *Sje anja*, 79. The majority of the 30 members of the founding council were either members of the Young Muslims' circles, either officials of the Islamic Community.

³⁸⁷ Article 10, *ibidem*. In the socio-economic domain, only a generic support for the plan of economic reform held by the Ante Markovi 's government was expressed, wishing a further "de-nationalization" of properties; at the same time, article 12 stated that the positive function of the welfare state "must be defended and elevated".

This passage shows that the SDA's initial discourse was very vague and cautious about social issues, apparently avoiding an openly pro-market and anti-socialist undertone. Such prudence can be explained through two reasons; firstly, at that stage, still there was fear for possible repression by Communist authorities; secondly, that even national and non-socialist, at the beginning, hesitated to blame to a big extent the achievements of the socialist system which, despite the huge economic crisis, were still (wrongly) believed as highly popular in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

³⁸⁸ This made the SDA the first national party to be formally constituted in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yet, the primacy in *de facto* existence should be attributed to the HDZ, which was territorially active in Herzegovina since the very beginning of 1990.

round tables and public meetings to discuss these issues, which proved the increasing mobilization capacity of these currents in the public sphere, despite the still-extant monopoly of power. The proof that these elite-driven initiatives were enjoying huge support in society was the massive, enthusiastic public participation at two public events: the first concert of Islamic chants held outside the allowed places for worship, the “*Ve er ilahija i kasida*”, held in the Zetra Olympic Hall on 17-18 March 1990, which gathered some 20,000 people;³⁸⁹ and, most of all, the Ajvatovica pilgrimage, on 16-17 June 1990, which was attended, according to the press reports, by some 100,000 people who came from all of Bosnia-Herzegovina.³⁹⁰ Ajvatovica, located in Western Bosnia, had been a pilgrimage shrine for Bosnian Muslims’ from 1463 until the prohibition by the Communist authorities in 1947. The legend was that Ottoman religious instructors came to that area to convert members of the Bogumil “Bosnian Church” to Islam.³⁹¹ Therefore, the symbolic importance of Ajvatovica relied not only on the religious ritual itself, but also in the significance of that place as the source of the authentic, specific identity of the Bosnian Muslims.³⁹² Obviously, the political entrepreneurs of their national awakening were one of the largest groups in attendance at the pilgrimage and emphasized the “liberation” significance of the event, symbolically linking the spiritual dimension with the context of political changes throughout Yugoslavia and Europe, and presenting the expression of the religious feeling as a “sign of normality” in conformity with European culture standards.³⁹³ Although the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina repeatedly declared its neutrality with respect to the political situation, many Islamic officials, and particularly the local clergy, overtly supported the formation of the party.

³⁸⁹ Veladžić, “Homogenizacija Bošnjaka”, 201. A record of the concert is available on Youtube (accessed December 8, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzB4VDzZtc8>).

³⁹⁰ “Hodoas e u Ajvatovici. Sve je bilo kao nekada”, *Oslobođenje*, June 19, 1990; “Ajvatovica ki zapis. Prusac – velika musafirhana”, *Oslobođenje*, June 23, 1990; “Hodoas e na Ajvatovcu. Ajvaz-Dedo ponovo na konju”, *Naši Dani*, June 22, 1990.

³⁹¹ Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 86.

³⁹² Veladžić, “Homogenizacija Bošnjaka”, 204.

³⁹³ Muhamed Ćengić, a leading figure of the SDA, commented at the ceremony: “The events of today and this mood of the people is the best proof of how much freedom our people needs. [...] I am happy that it shows the power and the strength of how much is normal in other parts of Europe, and that Europe comes to Bosnia-Herzegovina, and not that people must go to Europe. This is, at the same time, also the proof that we do not need to be afraid nor of the religious, nor of the national feelings of our people, because our people surely knows and can employ its religious and national feelings for the good of our people and our generations”. Muhamed Filipović also attended the ceremony. A long documentary about the 1990 Ajvatovica is available on Youtube (Accessed on December 8, 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gzJJzrT3mE>).

5.4. The (late) articulation of Serb nationalism into a political party

Similarly to the Bosnian Muslims, a homogenization based on cultural-historical, elite-driven factors was taking place among the Bosnian Serbs, who would be the last of the three national communities to articulate a political platform. The first public act took place in March 1990, when an appeal circulated to revive the cultural association of Bosnian Serbs *Prosvjeta*, founded in 1902 and banned in 1949 by the Communist authorities. *Prosvjeta* aimed to recuperate the “cultural, educational and economic activity” of the Serb people, considering “Bosnia-Herzegovina, as our homeland [*našeg zavi ajaj*]” and “Yugoslavia as our common motherland [*zajedni ke otadžbine*]”. The main signatories were academics and intellectuals, some of whom would later form the core of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Vojislav Maksimović, Aleksa Buha and Vladimir Srebrov.³⁹⁴ *Prosvjeta* was solemnly re-established on June 28 (the choice of the date of St. Vitus - *Vidovdan* - was, of course, symbolically intentional) at the National Library (*Vije nica*) of Sarajevo. Although *Prosvjeta* claimed to be a non-party and apolitical organization, it logically acted as a platform gathering the most influential personalities of the Bosnian Serb nationalist-oriented *milieu*, who would later opt for a political engagement. *Prosvjeta* also claimed a consociational and tolerant approach towards the homologue cultural organizations of the other national groups, stating that “it will encourage the activity of the autonomous Croat and Muslim institutions in BiH”.³⁹⁵

Instead, the foundations for a political party had been built behind the scenes since January 1990 following the initiative of Dobrica Ćosić, the prominent Belgrade intellectual and a well-known key figure of Serbian revivalist nationalism. Ćosić intended to promote a Serb party both in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, advocating the principle of a unitarian Yugoslavia where *nations*, and not *republics*, should be the founding element of sovereignty. In Croatia, Ćosić appointed his old friend Jovan

³⁹⁴ “Prosvjeta”, in *Naši Dani*, April 13, 1990; “Za prosvjetu”, *Oslobo enje*, March 17, 1990. The appeal, published on *Oslobo enje*, was signed by fifteen Bosnian Serb intellectuals: besides the aforementioned, they were Miloš Slijepčević, Drago Lizdek, Vladimir Nastić, Goran Sladoje, Goran Petković, Milutin Brković, Stevo Ćosić, Gordije Tadić, Cvjetko Vitković, Mihailo Jeremić, Miloš Lazović, Vukosav Cicmil.

Prosvjeta would be formally founded and presented to the public in June 28, 1990, two weeks before the launch of the SDS.

³⁹⁵ Aleksa Buha in “Danas u sarajevskoj Vije nici. Obnavlja se ‘Prosvjeta’”, *Oslobo enje*, June 28, 1990.

Rašković as a leader of a party to be named “Serb Democratic Party” (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka*, SDS). In Bosnia, he established contacts with academic circles from the University of Sarajevo, some of them coming from the *Prosvjeta* circles, and some from others, among them the psychiatrist Radovan Karadžić, a close friend of Milošević and Rašković but then still an anonymous outsider in the world of Serb intellectualism.³⁹⁶ However, the SDS in Croatia achieved a disappointing result in the April-May parliamentary elections, getting only 1.6% of the vote and 5 of 351 seats; the party blatantly lost the struggle to attract the majority of Serb electorate against the reformed Communists of the SKH-SDP and, except in the area of Knin, they failed to set up a solid territorial organization.³⁹⁷

This poor performance can be one of the factors explaining why the setting up of the SDS in Bosnia-Herzegovina took so long when compared with the other national parties, the HDZ and the SDA, whose activity was public in early 1990. It seems that the low results encouraged both the Serb national-oriented circles in Bosnia-Herzegovina and their “inspirational” political-cultural elites in Serbia to follow a more cautious approach. It must be taken into account that the Serbs were still the most represented nationality in the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina, both in the highest organs and in the social base. Not by chance, Milošević and the Serbian Communists still attempted to co-opt the SKBiH to endorse their political stance, at least until the continuation of the 14th Congress of the SKJ held in late May.³⁹⁸ These elements brought us to conclude that the main interest of the Belgrade circles of power, until mid-1990, was to domesticate the Bosnian Communists’ leadership; or, as an alternative, to force an “anti-bureaucratic” manoeuvre and impose a loyal leadership, following the example of the Montenegrin and Vojvodinian experiences of 1988-89, but not (yet) to support a party with an explicit national matrix like the SDS model.³⁹⁹ One could notice that the territorial mobilizations with nationalist Serb demands and symbology that had occurred in 1989 in Nevesinje,

³⁹⁶ Delalić and Šabić, *Balkan Blues*, 55-58; Gerard Toal and Adis Maksić, “‘Serbs, you are allowed to be Serbs!’ Radovan Karadžić and the 1990 Election Campaign in Bosnia-Herzegovina”, *Ethnopolitics*, 2013. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2013.860305>, 5.

³⁹⁷ Nina Caspersen, “Ethnic parties and conflict escalation. Ethnification of political competition in pre-war Croatia and Bosnia and its effect on the radicalisation of politics”, Paper presented at the 55th Political Studies Association Annual Conference, University of Leeds, 4-7 April 2005, 3-4.

³⁹⁸ This had been thoroughly explained in Chapter 3.1.

³⁹⁹ Andjelić (*Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 188) also suggests this explanation.

Drvar, Šipovo, etc., had not adopted an openly anti-communist character.⁴⁰⁰ Furthermore, in Bosnian Krajina, the SKBiH was undoubtedly conserving a considerable large party infrastructure and membership. For instance, the branches of the official organizations from the Bosnian Krajina kept a firm position against the legalization of national parties.

Hence, all these elements contributed to the delay in the organization of a Serb political party in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which took shape through two separate paths, one in Bosnian Krajina, the other in Sarajevo. The Krajina branch was directly created under the initiative of Raškovi and the Croatian SDS, and was originally set up in Drvar, where the first public events of the party in the Bosnian territory were held. The same Raškovi, though, recommended to its members that they had best find a leader from Sarajevo or Eastern Bosnia, where Serbs lived “mixed with Muslims”, rather than from the same Krajina, where Serbs were generally a majority.⁴⁰¹ In other words, Raškovi believed that the Krajina's Serbs could be mobilized easily in any case, thanks to the echo of events in nearby Croatia (namely, the rise of the HDZ and the tensions with Croatian Serbs) and to the stronger influence that in that region the memory of 1941-1945 Croat Ustasha's crimes against Serbs exerted in the collective memory.

The intellectual milieu around *Prosvjeta* and the Belgrade circles of power were primarily concerned about first finding a suitable leader for the party before establishing the necessary infrastructure. Dobrica Ćosić offered the leadership to several prominent professors from the University of Sarajevo (Milorad Ekmečić, Aleksa Buha and Nikola Koljević), all of whom would become high cadres of the Bosnian SDS, but they all refused to take on the presidency of the party.⁴⁰² Another Sarajevo professor at the top of the list of optimal candidates, Nenad Kecmanović, rejected the proposal because he personally favoured a civic, non-national option (indeed, he would later join Marković's Alliance of Reformist Forces).

All these refusals converted Vladimir Srebrov into the favourite candidate, although he had been, until then, a secondary figure. Srebrov was an eccentric writer who

⁴⁰⁰ See chapters 1.2 and 1.3.

⁴⁰¹ Delalić and Saiki, *Balkan Bluz*, 59-60; “SDS u Bosanskoj Krajini. Formiran regionalni odbor”, *Glas*, June 15, 1990; “SDS bojkotuje izbore?”, *Oslobođenje*, June 23, 1990; “Osnivački skup SDS u Titovom Drvaru. Rašković promovisao stranku”, *Oslobođenje*, July 6, 1990; “Veliki skup u Titovom Drvaru. Srbi nikad nisu prosipali mržnju”, *Politika*, July 4, 1990.

⁴⁰² Delalić and Saiki, *Balkan Bluz*, 57.

worked as the chief librarian of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Sarajevo, which was then the epicentre of the Bosnian Serbs' cultural re-mobilization. This circumstance had allowed Srebrov to build contacts and to actively promote himself within that cultural milieu.⁴⁰³ In that period, Srebrov was also attracting attention for his statements, sometimes provocative and aggressive, about the supposed marginalization of Serbs in Bosnia and the role of Albanian nationalism in the capital city. In an interview with *Naši Dani* in October 1989, he stated that “In Bosnia-Herzegovina the Serbs' human rights are threatened to such a point that this republic can be compared to South Africa. [...] By the completion of the period of construction of Yugoslavia, they [the Serbs] have been subject to a spiritual, mental and moral castration, whereby the gradual suspension of the Cyrillic alphabet in the public life of the Republic was one of the most bitter forms of castration. The Croats have their own Virgin Mary in Medjugorije, the Muslims are opening dozens of mosques just in Sarajevo, whilst the Orthodox only have some medieval mines and few recently opened churches around which so much noise had been made”.⁴⁰⁴

When the election of Srebrov seemed inevitable, suddenly emerged another anonymous and obscure candidate for the post. His name was Radovan Karadžić, a psychiatrist by profession; he was mainly known for working for, among others, the FK Sarajevo Football Team. Coming from a family of Montenegrin Serbs and son of a Chetnik militant, in the early 1980s he was found guilty of taking bribes, and later worked as an informer of the Security Services of the state. Karadžić was, then, the paradigmatic example of those liberal professionals who were working on the margins of the social security system and had been operating in the “grey area” of black market activities and obscure relations with the secret services.⁴⁰⁵ Before getting close to Serb-oriented circles,

⁴⁰³ *Ibidem*, 56-57.

⁴⁰⁴ Vladimir Srebrov, interviewed in “Ugrožen sam kao Srbin i kao čovek”, *Naši Dani*, October 27, 1989. In a column issued in *Valter Express* in April 1990, Srebrov harshly blamed the arguments of the main Muslim leaders (Filipović, Izetbegović, Zulfikarpašić) grounding on the “historical autochthonicity” of the Muslim people in Bosnia-Herzegovina as “national-revanchist” and counterfeited. (Vladimir Srebrov, “Kuda to vodi”, in *Valter Express*, April 9, 1990; see also Delalić and Šabić, *Balkan Bluz*, 56-57.

The whole biography of Srebrov, indeed, is somewhat intriguing and surprising. He was born as Milan Nikolić in 1954 in Požarevac (Serbia; by coincidence, the same birth city as Milošević), as the son of a Bosnian Serb military officer. He graduated in Philosophy in Sarajevo and then made post-graduate studies in the Soviet Union. Moved by a pan-Slavic idealistic enthusiasm, he then turned his name into the Russian-sounding Vladimir Srebrov. After enthusiastically joining the process of foundation of the SDS, he would be quickly excluded from the leadership and forced to leave the party, leading him to switch to pro-civic stances, highly critical against nationalism (see chapter 9.2).

⁴⁰⁵ Veiga, *La fábrica de las fronteras*, 113.

Karadži had joined the activities of the non-national and environmentalist movement of the Greens. Ilić and the Sarajevo intellectuals deemed him as a more balanced and reliable candidate than Srebrov, arguing that his profile and background could seize the vote of the rural electorate, a significant part of the Bosnian Serb community, more easily than the eccentric librarian from the University of Sarajevo.

The Bosnian SDS was formally founded and publicly presented on July 12, 1990 at Sarajevo's Skenderija centre, in a meeting attended by some 3,000 people. Radovan Karadži was elected as president while Vladimir Srebrov was awarded a sort of consolation prize: leader of the youth-cultural branch of the party, significantly called Young Bosnia (*Mlada Bosna*), which marked it as the ideological descendant of Gavrilo Princip's movement of the early 20th century. It is remarkable that, on that occasion, Karadži displayed a relatively moderate public discourse, explicitly proclaiming a self-identification with left-wing, social-democratic ideals.⁴⁰⁶ These elements are symptomatic of the tactical caution of the SDS in approaching the Bosnian political system. Defying the unshakable principles of "Brotherhood and unity", i. e., inter-ethnic solidarity and socialism, still (or, at least, it was believed to be) receiving the support of a large percentage of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, could be too imprudent for a party whose aims were to steal voters and militants from the Bosnian Communists. The Serbs were notoriously the national community which had been traditionally the most committed to the League, and the SDS did not want to stigmatize or irritate them. The same Karadži acknowledged, in a later interview, that "The relation with the Communists is very flexible. The party is not anti-Communist, nor it will entertain any kind of anticommunism and revanchism".⁴⁰⁷ For instance, there was another logical argument: a purely anti-communist approach would be contradictory with the decisive support that the Bosnian SDS was receiving from Milošević's (nominally) socialist rule in Serbia.

Above all, the SDS was very cautious in how to deal with its homologue national parties, namely the SDA and the HDZ, which were already developing a territorial

⁴⁰⁶ Radovan Karadži, reported in "Jučer u Sarajevu osnovana Srpska demokratska stranka BiH. Demokratski odgovor srpskog naroda", *Oslobođenje*, July 13, 1990; see also "Političko organizovanje Srba u BiH. Ne ćemo dotvoliti srpska geta", *Oslobođenje*, July 6, 1990; "Osnovana Srpska Demokratska Stranka Bosne i Hercegovine. Kraj iseljavanja Srba", *Politika*, July 13, 1990.

⁴⁰⁷ Radovan Karadži interviewed in "Srbi se najsporije bude", *Borba*, July 25, 1990.

organization and which could have possibly considered a mutual collaboration, while leaving aside the SDS. Although tensions were rising in Croatia between the central branches of the SDS and HDZ around the status of the Serbian community in Krajina, in the first phase Karadžić did not express contempt towards the Bosnian Croats and rarely mentioned the events in Croatia. The iconic symbol of this cautious approach vis-à-vis the homologue national parties is undoubtedly the invitation extended to SDA leaders Alija Izetbegović and Muhamed Filipović, who were called not only to attend the founding meeting of the SDS, but also to address themselves to the public. They both warmly welcomed the appearance of the Serb national party. In Izetbegović's words: "We were waiting for you, since this Bosnia-Herzegovina needs you. The people have stopped believing in big words, but will never stop believing in love, *komšiluk* and life in common".⁴⁰⁸ These words could sound out of place when one reflects on the post-election and war events, but in that moment they were completely logical and coherent with the national parties' strategy to mutually legitimate themselves in the eyes of the public as a reliable force able to guarantee, at the same time, a *stable* and *alternative* transition, as opposed to the post-communist and liberal-reformist options. Gerard Toal reminds that there was also a common personal understanding between Karadžić and Izetbegović: both of them had served time in jail during the socialist rule (although times, causes, circumstances and lengths were highly different in the two cases) and for a long time they had considered themselves "dissident intellectuals in Tito's Yugoslavia".⁴⁰⁹ At the beginning, Karadžić and Izetbegović even made the public believe that they supported (albeit very vaguely) a "reasonable federation", i.e., a new Yugoslav framework in which the republics would maintain some sovereignty.⁴¹⁰

Although the early narrative of the SDS contained moderate elements, these were also combined with evidently ethno-centric, and sometimes extreme nationalist, concepts that frequently recalled the crimes committed against the Serbs during the Second World War

⁴⁰⁸ Alija Izetbegović, reported in "Ju e u Sarajevu osnovana Srpska Demokratska Stranka BiH. Demokratski odgovor srpskog naroda", *Oslobo enje*, July 13, 1990.

⁴⁰⁹ Toal and Maksić, "Serbs, you are allowed to be Serbs", 10.

⁴¹⁰ See "Intervju: Dr. Radovan Karadžić. Bez krvi do etvrte Jugoslavije", *Oslobo enje – 7 Dana*, July 22, 1990.

However, the framework of Yugoslavia would early become a matter of conflict between the three national parties. The SDS's pro-federal stance was, in fact, a support for the Milošević's hegemonic, Serb-centric vision rather than for a balanced structure of federal units. The SDA, instead, frequently interchanged pro-federal and pro-confederal stances during the campaign, finally turning to the latter; the HDZ always stood behind the confederal option. See chapter 9.1.

and the supposed “cultural repression” and the “biological danger” that the Serb people would have been suffering under the Yugoslav rule. At the founding meeting, Karadži recalled: “The genocide committed by our enemies against us, we have carried on doing it [against ourselves], destroying our own cultural identity. Due to the false and illusory peace at home, we sacrificed our biggest resource, our popular culture tradition; we neglected our church and abandoned it to an unbalanced fight to survive. Everywhere, but especially here in BiH, we have been loyal to a system which has been established for the sake of our national breakup”.⁴¹¹

Moreover, the SDS immediately tended to produce a relatively conciliatory narrative (as did too the SDA and the HDZ in the course of the campaign) at prominent, republican-wide events, such as meetings, TV and press conferences, etc., normally held in Sarajevo or the urban centres, in order to appear as a reliable political actor vis-à-vis the broader public and their opponents, whereas a harsher rhetoric was used at a local stage in small centres in order to mobilize the social base and electorate around radicalized positions. A notable example was the first territorial meeting of the SDS in the village of Petrovo, near Gračanica, in late July. The speeches made there were far less conciliatory than the ones made in the Skenderija center at Sarajevo, just two weeks before: in Petrovo, Radovan Karadži for the first time talked openly about a change of the institutional order in Bosnia-Herzegovina, hinting at the “establishment of new municipalities in the republics” and suggesting that the SDS could soon switch to an extra-parliamentary strategy (“The Serb people will seek democracy at the Parliament of the SR BiH, but if this is not possible, it will seek it wherever it will be”).⁴¹² At the same meeting, writer

⁴¹¹ Radovan Karadži reported in “Ju e u Sarajevu osnovana Srpska Demokratska Stranka BiH. Demokratski odgovor srpskog naroda”, *Oslobo enje*, July 13, 1990.

⁴¹² Although Karadži did not openly mention it, the hint to “new municipalities” logically referred to new administrative units drawn on ethnic-national criteria. The history of Petrovo (at that time, officially, “Bosansko Petrovo Selo”) is paradigmatic for that subtle relation between municipal localism and ethnic nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Petrovo was a town with 2919 inhabitants, whose Serbs were 92,32% (census 1991) and had its own municipality until 1962, when it was dismembered; the main part of its territory merged with Gračanica and a smaller one went under Lukavac. Both Gračanica and Lukavac were average-populated municipalities (about 60.000 inhabitants each in 1991) with a predominantly Muslim population structure (72% in Gračanica, 66% in Lukavac).

The SDS claimed that such administrative change had led to serious social consequences for the Serbs in the past decades, and demanded to restore the municipality of Petrovo. Actually, it will be re-established in October 12, 1991, during the “administrative offensive” of the SDS in order to establish autonomous regions in various parts of the Bosnian territory. (“Osnovana srpska demokratska stranka u Bosanskom Petrovom Selu. Ozrenici ho e opštinu”, *Oslobo enje*, July 30, 1990; “Petrovo – Najviše priznanje predsjedniku srpske”, *RTRS*, October 11, 2011. Accessed on May 13, 2015. <http://www.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=47685>).

Tomislav Šipovac commented that the Muslims “are of Serb origin, but they are ashamed of that”⁴¹³, while Vladimir Srebrov announced that his *Mlada Bosnia* would act as “the Iron Guard of the SDS”.

In conclusion, the SDS focused its discourse on the association between the ongoing transition to democracy and the public expression of the national difference, which would be “institutionalized” in both cultural and political life, as if this structural issue would automatically guarantee a better solution for other issues (socio-economic problems, the framework of Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, etc.). The fact that such a deterministic vision was fully shared with the SDA and the HDZ, and the tactical need to be accepted in the political spectrum (the SDS was one of the most belated options to appear on the scene), led the Serb party to combine moderate and nationalist narratives.

5.5. From “rumours” to mobilization. National tensions in Eastern Bosnia

It is remarkable that the élites of the three upcoming Bosnian national political parties had developed themselves within a *Yugoslav* political framework, namely not confined to the Bosnian borders. Indeed, the HDZ’s stronghold in Herzegovina was a direct dependent of the party’s organization in Zagreb. The primary core of the SDA, formed by Izetbegović and his close collaborators (which included Muslims from Croatia and Serbia as well) was based, too, in Zagreb and aimed at the re-traditionalization of Muslims throughout the federation. The Bosnian Serb intellectuals around *Prosvjeta*

⁴¹³ For instance, such pseudo-historical arguments echoed those from some Croatian HDZ representatives who in the course of 1990 claimed that the Bosnian Muslims were former Croats who converted themselves to Islam at the time of the Ottoman Empire. Attempts to “biologically assimilate” the Bosnian Muslims came, indeed, from the first age of multi-party system in Bosnia-Herzegovina, still under the Austro-Hungarian rule (1910-1914), when Serb and Croat national parties identically insisted that the Bosnian Muslims were a part of its own nation, in order to claim to a demographic majority. (Donia and Fine, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 104).

The same authors, instead, point out that changing religion in XV and XVI century was a gradual, large-scale and multi-directional process (though the conversions to Islam were the high majority, there were also conversions from the disappearing Bosnian Church to Orthodoxy and Catholicism) and that “acceptance is a better word than conversion to describe what occurred in Bosnia” (*Ibidem*, 40-41, 44). The process of “nationalization” of religious difference would start only after the 1878 Austro-Hungarian occupation, when “it was not possible to determine with any accuracy, for example, if a modern Orthodox Christian was descended from a medieval Orthodox believer, a medieval Catholic, or a Bosnian Churchman”. (*Ibidem*, 73).

relied on the network established by Dobrica Ćosić in Belgrade, and on the SDS party architecture established in Croatia. However, although the élite had important connections with non-Bosnian circles, some processes of national homogenization originated from inside Bosnia-Herzegovina, as demonstrated by the Croat mobilizations in Western Herzegovina and Southern Bosnia (Duvno, Lištica), as well as by the Serb “anti-bureaucrat” and pro-Milošević mobilizations in Eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina (Nevesinje, Srebrenica) or Southern Krajina (Šipovo, Drvar).⁴¹⁴ We should add to these cases the inter-ethnic confrontations between Serbs and Muslims in some areas of Eastern Bosnia, mainly around Srebrenica and Foča. Since in early 1990 such tensions became permanent and entailed deep repercussions for the whole political transition in the country, they require further analysis.

In April 1990, a petition signed by dozens of Muslim citizens of Skelani (a town in the municipality of Srebrenica) denounced the supposed abuses committed by Serb nationalists against them. A letter signed by 72 inhabitants of Skelani alleged various episodes of abuses, such as open threats and aggressions in the *kafanas*, buses and shops committed by Serb individuals while chanting nationalist songs or slogans. Due to its geographical position but also to the lack of investment in roads and infrastructures, Skelani, like other villages in the area, had better land communications with Bajna Bašta (a town in the Republic of Serbia) than to the Bosnian towns of Bratunac and Srebrenica, to whom it belonged.⁴¹⁵ Whether real or not, these allegations contributed to create an atmosphere of insecurity in the area. Some distrust spread also inside the local institutions. The president of the SKBiH section in Srebrenica was Miloje Šimić, a Serb who was very critical against nationalist abuses; he publicly attacked two institutional representatives in Skelani for endorsing Serb nationalist positions.⁴¹⁶ Meanwhile, contradictory rumours circulated about the supposed discrimination of one national group by the other in employment at the local firms, schools and administration. Investigations by local officials apparently showed that these rumours were either completely baseless or due to

⁴¹⁴ See chapter 1.2.

⁴¹⁵ “Nova bura u Skelanima kod Srebrenice. Pismom po komšijama”, *Oslobođenje*, April 3, 1990; “Srebreničke priče i stvarnost. Komšija je komšiji drug”, *Oslobođenje*, April 6, 1990.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

other factors, certainly not linked with discrimination, but this did not calm down the situation.⁴¹⁷

Foča, a town in South-Eastern Bosnia, was the site of the most acrimonious example of these claims of national imbalance in workplace. Since March 2, Foča attracted a huge amount of interest from the Bosnian and Yugoslav press, which would continue throughout 1990. On that day, a group of workers from the local transport company “Foča Trans”, which employed about 300 people, began a strike, demanding the dismissal of the firm’s director, Murid Čulimani, for his alleged mismanagement of the firm. Obviously, these mobilizations often took place in a context of extreme economic crisis, firms’ bankruptcies, low or suspended salaries, etc. However, for the first time, the tensions turned almost immediately into an inter-ethnic confrontation. The strikers accused Čulimani, a Muslim, of carrying out a “mono-national personnel policy”, i.e. hiring almost exclusively Muslim staff. At his turn, Čulimani used his nationality as a defence, arguing that he was being targeted for his Muslim origin.⁴¹⁸ The firm’s workers immediately split between Čulimani’s supporters, overwhelmingly Muslims, and his detractors, almost all of them Serbs.

The press soon reported other factors, not directly related with national criteria, but rather with personal rivalries, ambition and mismanagement. It turned out that Čulimani, who owned a private lumber firm while being the manager of the public “Foča Trans”, was accused for misusing his position and co-opting some of their collaborators for his own business, and this would be the cause of the bad results of “Foča Trans”. On the other side, the deputy-director, Miloš Dragojević, a Serb, was blamed by Čulimani’s supporters of trying to take the director’s post by inciting the rebellion against him.⁴¹⁹ In an account published in 2009, a former employee of Foča Trans Suljo Hajrić confirms that the source of the unrest was not ethno-national at all (some of Čulimani’s closest collaborators were Serbs), rather arguing that a complex web of

⁴¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹⁸ “U Foču atransu. Referendum o štrajku”, *Oslobođenje*, March 6, 1990; “Dešava se u Foču atransu. Radnici štrajkuju, direktor prodaje balvane”, *Oslobođenje*, March 7, 1990.

Some analysts, for example Neven Andželić, date the beginning of the Foča Trans issue in June, but the *Oslobođenje* correspondent precisely reported the beginning of the strike on March 2, already then signalling about the appearance of national homogenization. This proves that national division in Foča preceded both the establishment of the electoral campaign and the foundation of the national parties.

⁴¹⁹ “Nastavljen štrajk u Foču atransu. Opština prijeti prinudnom upravom”, *Oslobođenje*, April 20, 1990; “Foča Trans. Da li je BiH dobila Kosovo?”, *Naši Dani*, August 3, 1990.

resentments and envies against uliman's policy of management and debts of the company revealed by public inspections (arising fears about the stability of the firm and, therefore, of workplaces) led to the first troubles and strikes.⁴²⁰

Tensions kept rising in April, with the consolidation of two opposed assemblies and committees and the circulation of the inevitable unproved rumours attesting the involvement of the local clergies (both Orthodox and Islamic) and even the existence of armed organizations.⁴²¹ The situation further escalated in June, when about a hundred workers of the anti- uliman, and mainly Serb, faction held a non-stop strike and occupied the buses of the company. The Fo atrans' operations were completely paralysed, and the strikers even threatened to create a new and separate firm if the director was not dismissed.⁴²² The media began to use the concept of "Kosovization"⁴²³ and covered the events with deep concern, sometimes with a certain degree of sensationalism. The Serb strikers, too, employed the fear-causing image of a "Kosovo-like drama" in their demonstrations.⁴²⁴

Communist institutions showed themselves unable to face the instability in Fo a. The local organs intervened rather late and hesitantly, lacking authority to impose a suitable solution or to establish order. When the municipality of Fo a tried to intervene by imposing a caretaker administration, it only stirred up the anger of pro- uliman and

⁴²⁰ Suljo Hajri , interviewed in "Fo atrans, 20 godina poslije", in *Sevko.blogg.se* (blog of Sevko Kadri), august 2009. Accessed on July 20, 2015.

<http://sevko.blogg.se/2009/august/focatrans-20-godina-poslije.html> .

Suljo Hajri was the head of the section of passenger traffic of Fo atrans at the time of the events. In 2009, he spoke for the first time about those events in an interview with the prominent journalist and writer Sevko Kadri , who issued the article in his blog.

⁴²¹ "Nakon podvajanja u 'Fo atransu'. Mržnja nas ne okuplja", *Oslobo enje*, April 26, 1990.

⁴²² According to the *Oslobo enje's* correspondent Šemso Tu akovi , this new firm would have been mono-national (hence Serb). In a letter addressed to the same *Oslobo enje*, the Serb-led assembly of the workers in strike claimed instead that there were also Muslims and Yugoslavs among them, and that the protest was not "mono-national" at all, providing that they also asked for the dismissal not only of uliman, but also of the deputy director Miloš Dragi evi (himself a Serb). "Manipulisanje injenicama", *Oslobo enje*, June 21, 1990.

However, as instability was growing, the idea of two separate companies soon became one of the options on the table, as acknowledged by the same mayor of Fo a (albeit he insisted that he did not approve the idea at all). "Enver elik, predsjednik skupštine opštine Fo a. Nismo htjeli Žutu gredu!", *Oslobo enje*, August 11, 1990; "Posle dve burne no i miran vikend u Fo i. Politi ko zatišije", *Borba*, September 11, 1990.

A *Borba's* reportage claimed that the strikers of the mainly Serb faction grew to 132, whose 7, for instance, were Muslims; "Dosije 'Fo atrans: po elo je štrajkom, a kako e se završiti ne znamo. Svako u svoj klin", *Borba*, September 4, 1990.

⁴²³ "Štrajk u 'Fo atransu'. Ucenjivanje autobusima i šleperima", *Oslobo enje*, June 18, 1990.

⁴²⁴ "Miting u Fo i. Poziv na razum i dobrosusjedstvo", *Oslobo enje*, August 9, 1990.

predominantly Muslim workers, who proclaimed their own strike and demanded the resignation of the mayor Enver Ćelić (who was a Muslim).⁴²⁵ Moreover, in August the Bosnian government and the Court of Associated Labour came to overturn the decision of the municipality; this was a further serious blow to the authority of Foča's institutions, and practically gave the control of Foča's affairs back to Ćulimanić, who promptly announced that he would fire all the strikers of the Serb-led committee, who then renewed their protests.⁴²⁶ On the other hand, the involvement of the republican institutions was simply too belated and inconsistent.⁴²⁷ SDA and SDS could not be the direct causes of the confrontations: they did not even exist when the unrest began. However, once their local branches were established, they immediately offered their support to the respective workers' committees.⁴²⁸ This contributed to the further radicalization of tensions in the course of the electoral campaign, which would have a considerable effect in all Eastern Bosnia and throughout all the republic.

The tensions in Foča, as well as in the Srebrenica and Vlasenica, proved that the principle of *nacionalni ključ* was becoming a blackmail tool in the workplaces, used by ambitious managers and also by frustrated workers as an instrument of social mobilization. In other words, the inter-ethnic tensions emerged in a context of uncertain economic change from socialist self-management into a free market economy, and of an imminent redefinition of ownership relationships. There was a "grey area" that had appeared out of the preliminary economic reforms towards individual property, where managers moved in between public services and private business, enjoying the spaces of action provided by the decentralized self-management system, frequently having more power than local governments and party cadres.

These cases of national homogenization "from the ground up", such as Duvno, Srebrenica and Foča, were still concentrated in limited areas, relatively distant from Sarajevo and the bigger cities. Nonetheless, the public got increasingly familiar with them; the media from Bosnia-Herzegovina and all Yugoslavia gave wide coverage to those events, as they were influenced by two different processes: democratization and

⁴²⁵ "Zaoštrava se situacija u Fočansku. I milicija ima posla", *Oslobođenje*, July 18, 1990; "Smijenjeno opštinsko rukovodstvo", *Oslobođenje*, August 3, 1990.

⁴²⁶ "Sud ukinuo prinudnu upravu", *Oslobođenje*, August 24, 1990.

⁴²⁷ "Progovorila i milicija", *Oslobođenje*, August 8, 1990.

⁴²⁸ "Nastavljena nacionalna podjela", *Oslobođenje*, August 11, 1990.

emancipation from the regime's control, according to some authors or medias; subjugation to national discourse, according to others. The rising national elites began to capitalize on these episodes, arguing that the existing regime was not able to regulate the *social* and the *ethnic* balance of power anymore.

5.6. Cohesive identities?

The debate on “Bosnian” and “Bosniak” identities

Besides the re-emergence of the singular national identities, both in the cultural and in the political sphere, a debate also emerged on an integrative “Bosnian identity”, having a non-ethnic and non-religious character. Some representatives from the intellectual field, as well as from the media, political activism and youth circles who were emancipated from the Communists, endorsed the idea that Bosnia-Herzegovina should retrieve its own peculiar identity, while strongly defending, if not strengthening, its political and territorial autonomy. One of the leading supporters of this “pro-Bosnian” option was the *Naši Dani* journal, the organ of the youth organizations in Sarajevo. In the early 1990, *Naši Dani* published a number of editorials and articles urging the institutions to change their national-cultural policies, which should be inspired by the century-old historical continuity of Bosnia itself, as well as a more firm position in the Yugoslav scenario, especially outside of Serbia and Croatia.⁴²⁹ Some authors, such as the historian Nedim Sara or the writer Miljenko Jergovi, criticized the lack of an institutional promotion of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian identity and history by the authorities, (that ignored its autonomous political and cultural development during the Medieval, Ottoman and post-Ottoman age), in schools, cultural bodies, etc. An editorial of Nedim Sara questioned: “Why certain subjects as the Bosnian medieval state, or the fight of Bosniak aristocracy for the autonomy in the Ottoman Era, are not taught in schools? How many children know who were Husein-kapetan Gradašcevi or fra Ivan Frano Juki? Someone must answer to this question, because in the new circumstances, as Yugoslavia is

⁴²⁹ The main supporters of this position in the editorial staff were, among others, Fahrudin apo, Tihomir Loza, and Nerzuk urak. See, for example: Tihomir Loza, “Pred politi ke tlapnje ispod sutle. Bosna, ni srpska, ni hrvatska”, *Naši Dani*, May 11, 1990; Fahrudin apo, “Bosna kao Svi arska”, *Naši Dani*, May 11, 1990.

redefined, whether we like it or not, after Bosnian statehood has been negated and denied, there are only two possibilities: that Bosnia-Herzegovina will be a state, or it will not”.⁴³⁰

These ideas emerged in a context of intellectual activity where a few round tables, conferences and publications in magazines and newspapers came to answer a basic initial question: “*To whom does Bosnia-Herzegovina belong?*“ (lit. “*ija je Bosna i Hercegovina?*“). This activity raised some interest from the public. One of the main supporters for the rediscovering of an integrative identity was Ivan Lovrenovi , who by then was one of the main scholars in the Bosnian cultural history. He stressed the need to relinquish the “collectivist matrix” in order to allow the full expression of the historical-cultural Bosnian common ground, through the recognition of the individual citizen as the holder of political and social subjectivity.⁴³¹ At the same time, Lovrenovi ’s “integrative“ pro-Bosnian approach did not oppose the full recognition of the three cultural-national spheres, Muslim, Serb and Croat: the legalization of their specific and separate cultural institutions could potentially have a emancipatory and progressive value in itself, but only if a complete de-ideologization of the state through completely “civic“ transition was achieved.⁴³² According to Lovrenovi , the Communist regime was accountable for not changing its traditionally obsessive approach towards these issues, being unable to tell the differences between the *national* and the *nationalist* dimensions.⁴³³ Lovrenovi also warned against a purely normative approach to the national question, that is, limited to changing names and definitions.⁴³⁴

⁴³⁰ Nedin Sara , “Jugoslavija kao sudbina! I Bosna može da se otcepi!”, *Naši Dani*, March 30, 1990. See also Sabina Veladžić , “Destabilizacija Bosne i Hercegovine”, 202-203.

⁴³¹ Lovrenovi ’s analysis and interpretation of the “Bosnian common ground” is well articulated in his extended bibliography. See in particular *Unutarnja zemlja. Kratki pregled kulturne povijesti Bosne i Hercegovine*. Zagreb: Durieux, 1998, 253-259.

⁴³² “For me, the right question is not whether we need national institutions or not in Bosnia-Herzegovina but, rather: how and when will be the monopoly of the institutions over the life of the citizens and the nations **really** [*bold in the text*] be abolished, and [when we will] start to live **as citizens** [*bold in the text: literally, gra anski*]. Then, the national reality will easily and naturally find himself the best shapes of expression and organization, and they will not bother each other”. Ivan Lovrenovi , “Kolektivizam i ‘viši ciljevi’ ”, in “Nacionalne institucije u BiH. Ogor eni proboj stvar”, *Nedjelja*, March 11, 1990.

⁴³³ “SSRNBiH o me unacionalnim odnosima. Zajedni ki, a ne jedni pored drugih”, *Oslobo enje*, September 27, 1989; Lovrenovi , *Unutarnja zemlja*, 267.

⁴³⁴ “We are still contaminated by an ideological conscience. Thinking that renaming things means bring them to life or excluding them, this is a metaphysical magic. In a broadcast of the Zagreb TV they asked me in which language do I speak. I answered ‘Bosnian’. [However] this is not a request for renaming the language, it refers to the following. Bosnia is a linguistic and cultural space from where the codification of the SH [Serbo-Croatian] language originated. The medieval Bosnian redaction of the Old Church Slavonic language, the work of the Bosnian friars were laboratories from where all the modern ideas about the

These contributions show that the “pro-Bosnian” tendency was emerging not only to distance itself from the mobilizations on ethnic grounds, but also, and probably more significantly, to break with the canonical discourse of the Bosnian Communists. The SKBiH was still strongly committed to the idea that Bosnia-Herzegovina was “not Muslim, nor Serb, nor Croat, but rather Muslim and Serb and Croat” (also abbreviated as the “nor-nor-nor, and-and-and” approach [lit. *ni-ni-ni, i-i-i*]) as formulated in the ZAVNOBIH declaration in 1943. The public discourse of the SKBiH still lacked (with rare exceptions) any reference to the historical-cultural continuity of Bosnia-Herzegovina before the formation of the Socialist Republic.⁴³⁵ The Bosnian Communists strived firmly for the territorial unity and indivisibility of the Republic, but rarely mentioned an integrative Bosnian cultural-national identity. Moreover, the Bosnian Communists went on defending the *status quo* with regard to the federal structure of Yugoslavia, rejecting any confederal option and, therefore, any claim for further autonomy. The concept that “there is no Bosnia without Yugoslavia” was all-present in the SKBiH’s official discourse.⁴³⁶ Actually, a tendency within the party, mostly composed of “outsiders”, young liberals such as Ivo Komši , Nijaz Skenderagi , and Zlatko Lagumdžija, began to question this point, urging the Republic to reinforce its own sovereignty. Their influence within the SKBiH grew, but not yet to the point of conditioning the party’s orientation, which remained stably pro-federal and pro-Yugoslav during all the electoral campaign.

This kind of pro-Bosnian approach was interpreted by their supporters as markedly non-aconfessional and non-ethnic. One of its most influential advocates, Ivan Lovrenovi , explicitly interpreted the *Bošnjaštvo* (“Bosniakness”) as the potential attribute of an integrative, “neutral” Bosnian identity.⁴³⁷ This vision was coherent with

codification of our language will be extracted”. Ivan Lovrenovi in “Tribina. Bosna je bosanska”, *Valter*, April 1, 1990.

⁴³⁵ The traditional and official SKBiH’s discourse connected the statehood of Bosnia-Herzegovina exclusively to the Partisan experiences of the ZAVNOBiH and the AVNOJ, while restraining its centuries-old continuity from the Middle-age kingdom through the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Province. According to some authors, this “reductionism” contributed to a perception of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an artificial entity, a “republican construction”, what was the premise for its dismemberment into the three separate national projects. Veladžić , “Destabilizacija BiH”, 203.

On the other hand, Neven Andjeli suggested implicitly an opposite view, arguing that the Bosnian regime “did not prepare its own trap by trying to impose a common Bosnian or Herzegovinian nation over the three, clearly distinctive, ethnic groups” and allowed the national self-expression, managing to guarantee equality and cohesion. Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 35.

⁴³⁶ Andjeli , *ibidem*, 125.

⁴³⁷ In a round table held in July 1, 1990, Ivan Lovrenovi said: “With respect to the problem of the Bosniakhood, I see the problem a bit differently – as a problem of Bosnia, regardless if some individual national groups called themselves. In other words, I think that it is most important in the cultural, every-

the fact that the notion of Bosniakhood had been promoted in the Austro-Hungarian rule, under the leadership of Benjamin von Kállay, to encourage a patriotic loyalty to Bosnia as an alternative to the ethnic Croatian, Serbian and Muslim allegiance.⁴³⁸ Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that the Bosniakhood was inherently destined to gain more popularity among Bosnian Muslims, who did not have any other republican allegiance out of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and were logically the most receptive group to this integrative-autonomous approach. Bosnian Serbs and Croats were instead seen as generally attracted by the cultural, political and socio-economic “poles” of the republics of Serbia and Croatia, tangible in many aspects of the public and personal life, from tendencies in political and cultural elite circles to the individual choices of common people such as which medias to follow, where to send the children to university, etc.

The two paradoxes, namely the lack of institutionalization for a specifically *Bosnian (non-ethnic)* identity and the late revival of the national conscience of the *Bosnian Muslims*, were intrinsically connected with each other.⁴³⁹ In this context, some Muslim authors retrieved the concept of “*Bošnjaštvo*” (Bosniakhood) as an attribute which should be reserved to define the separate identity of the Bosnian Muslims. This would be a chance for emancipation from a purely religious attribution (overcoming the ambiguity between the “capital M”, and “lower m” use for muslims, whether it dealt with the national or confessional meaning) and, at the same time, recognizing their deep bond with Bosnia-Herzegovina. This is the reason why, there were also Muslim-oriented intellectuals among the main supporters of Bosniakness, such as Muhamed Filipovi , the leading representative of the “scientific-cultural“ Bosnian Muslim élite, and Adil

day life, and of course also political meaning, to give a substantial answer to the question, ‘what is Bosnia’. Is it only the numerical sum of their people and their cultural tradition, or is it achieved, in its triplicity, some form of uniqueness?”. Ivan Lovrenovi in “Govore u esnici simpozija ‘Bosna i Bosnjaštvo’. Traženje korijenja”, *Ve ernje Novine*, July 2, 1990.

⁴³⁸ Also Zulfikarpaši , though he was then a supporter of the Bosniak as an equivalent of the Muslim identity, substantiating the religious into a national, as late as 1994 still opened to an eventually neutral interpretation of the notion. “[...] the Bosniak ethnic identity must be accessible to the Catholic and Orthodox, just as in the past. My library contains many books from the Austria-Hungary period, published outside Bosnia, where the non-Muslim population of Bosnia is called Bosniak. [...] You see, there are Croats and Serbs who have stayed in Sarajevo, who have survived these troubles and who openly say that they feel they are Bosniaks.” Adil Zulfikarpaši , with Milovan Djilas and Nadežda Ga e, *The Bosniak*, London: Hurst and co., 1998, 96-97.

On the Kállay’s *Bošnjaštvo* see Donia and Fine, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 96-101.

⁴³⁹ Tatjana Sekuli , *Violenza etnica*, 89.

Zulfikarpaši , an influential political emigré who was about to come back to the country after almost 44 years living abroad.

This ambiguity in the use of the concept of *Bošnjaštvo* attracted some critics, both by national and non-national environments. The Bosnian Communists forcibly rejected any theory based on the Bosniakhood, either relying on an integrative identity, either as a new attribute for the Muslim nation. Both of them were seen as challenges against the traditional pluri-national approach and the pro-Yugoslav patriotism the SKBiH were still committed to. In the first half of 1990, the Bosnian Communists were still too bound to a prudent, status-quo maintaining policy, so they would never accept to rethink their orientation towards the national question.⁴⁴⁰

Doubts arouse also among many intellectuals outside the SKBiH. Zdravko Grebo, who was a reference point for liberal-oriented minds, said that the Bosniakhood concept was “unclear” to him; he would rather hope for a Bosnia-Herzegovina set on political, territorial and patriotic grounds, regardless of any national characterization.⁴⁴¹ Grebo highlighted that this was the only way for Bosnia-Herzegovina to prevent the principle of ethno-national majority, namely the majority nation as the main holder of citizenship, a concept which was 'imported' from the other Yugoslav republics, where it already constituted the basic factor in the political spectrum.⁴⁴² Critical views on the Bosniakhood

⁴⁴⁰ “Dr. Nijaz Duraković na tribini u Banjoj Luci: BiH nije na prodaju”, *Glas*, May 10, 1990. The same concepts had been proclaimed firmly in the 10th Congress' documents (see chapter 2.1).

⁴⁴¹ “[...] Something that I guess and I wish as a possibility, although not in the very close future, is that BiH, and the people who live in it, and even the people organized in the given national and other collectives, recognize in BiH some sort of “state-building entity” (lit.: *državotvorni entitet*) which probably does not have a national characteristic, but which, by means of patriotic feeling of belonging to a political community, to a territory which is called BiH, can eventually – at least in the actual debates – turn up to be a substitute for all this together. [...] Zdravko Grebo, “Zveckanje teškim rije ima”, *Oslobo enje*, June 4, 1990.

After the war, this principle of “constitutional patriotism”, associated to the popular Habermas' concept, was also indicated by the sociologue Ivan Cvitković as the desirable path in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in contrast with the creation of a Bosnian super-national identity. Ivan Cvitković, *Hrvatski identitet u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Zagreb: Synopsis, 2006, 130.

⁴⁴² “BiH is possible only as a state of citizens that live in it. I see that this principle in the last times has less and less supporters, but this does not discourage me in the conviction that it is true and right. The principle of the citizen and of the individual, of course, does not exclude all the other possible identifications of the citizens, from national, regional, at the end, why not, also confessional; still, the sovereignty derives from the autonomous will of each person, each individual.

Only in that option, it seems to me, BiH as autonomous [lit. *samostalna*] and sovereign, (federal-confederal) unit is incontestably possible. Other second options (which I comprehend but in this moment, as long as better arguments are not provided, I do not mean to defend) are defensive and forced, and in last instance do not resolve the primary problem. The principle of the sovereign citizen, who recognizes its own interest first in that place and territorial community where s/he primary lives, brings a chance for resolving all the problems I speak about”. Zdravko Grebo, “Zveckanje teškim rije ima”, *Oslobo enje*, June 4, 1990.

also came from Nenad Kecmanovi , the Rector of the University of Sarajevo, another prominent reference for civic-oriented, reformist circles at that time.⁴⁴³ Kecmanovi argued that a supra-national identity inspired by Bosniakhood would hardly manage to affirm itself, finding similar problems that the “Yugoslavness” (*jugoslavenstvo*) had suffered in earlier decades. According to Kecmanovi , all three groups, including the Muslims, would probably reject such an assimilation. Moreover, Serbs and Croats would easily fear a hegemony of the biggest community (the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbs in Yugoslavia). He also claimed that many Herzegovinians would not accept this definition, as it would be alien to their own regional and supra-national allegiance. Kecmanovi considered inappropriate the claims for more sovereignty for Bosnia-Herzegovina, since he viewed that the fulfilment of its inter-ethnic character was only possible within a stable Yugoslav context.⁴⁴⁴

Similar arguments against Bosniakhood, although with major emphasis, were used by active pro-Serb intellectuals as Vladimir Srebrov and Nikola Poplašen, who labelled this concept as an aggressive and forced attempt of the Muslim circles to proclaim themselves as the titular nation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This, in their view, was a threat for the Serbs' interests.⁴⁴⁵ These positions entailed a bitter reply from the pro-Bosnian magazine *Naši Dani*, who defined Srebrov as a paranoid “Bosnio-phobic”, and questioned also Kecmanovi 's vision for “orientalising“ the concept of Bosniakhood, namely oversizing the role of Islam in it.⁴⁴⁶

Despite a certain level of intellectual interest, a neutral and integrative “pro-Bosnian orientation” did not finally manage to become a tangible political option. At the same time, it was contested by the Communists and eroded by the mobilization of the Muslim circles, as well as by the ones who believed that this concept masked Muslim hegemonic ideas. Some population surveys showed that the Bosniakhood, in all its variants, was, short and simple, scarcely popular among the majority of the Bosnian population. A poll carried out by the Institute for the Study of Inter-Ethnic Relations in

⁴⁴³ Kecmanovi would become the leader of the Bosnian Reformists at the electoral campaign in August 1990 (see chapter 8).

⁴⁴⁴ “Whether Bosnia-Herzegovina remains a ‘small Yugoslavia’, a Yugoslavia a ‘big Bosnia-Herzegovina’, it is difficult to say. But it is totally certain that Bosnia-Herzegovina very hard without Yugoslavia, as well as the last without the latter”. Nenad Kecmanovi , “BH. Sindrom”, *Oslobo enje*, April 19, 1990.

⁴⁴⁵ Vladimir Srebrov, “Kuda to vodi?”, *Valter Express*, April 9, 1990; “Interview: dr. Nikola Poplašen. (B)litvanski banket Jugoslavije”, *Valter*, May 22, 1990.

⁴⁴⁶ “ ‘Naši dani’ i Bošnjastvo”, *Naši Dani*, April 27, 1990.

Sarajevo showed that only 1.82% favoured the adoption of “Bosniakhood”, interpreted as the national definition for the Bosnian Muslims, whereas 16.99% supported Bosniakhood, interpreted as an integrative national concept for the Bosnians and Herzegovinians from all the national groups, and 65.05% backed the existing ethnic *status quo*.⁴⁴⁷ The report concluded that people massively opposed the so-called “artificial identification and the modification of identities”, though it did not examine the underlying reasons for such a scarce support. One can assume that the Bosniakhood was either considered politically inappropriate, or emotionally unattractive, or historically groundless; or, simply, a concept poorly known by the man-in-the-street. It is remarkable, though, that these results do not correspond to a *tout court* acceptance of the current, ethnic-based, situation: surprisingly, when the same sample was asked about “what to do with nations”, 38.22% supported their abolition, whereas 41.39% was against it, which proves a much more nuanced opinion about the *status quo*.⁴⁴⁸ In other words, almost one half of those surveyed showed a negative conception of the national differences, since they saw their same objective existence as the primary cause for inter-ethnic tensions, due to their implications in the global-political (and not so much in the daily) dimension.⁴⁴⁹ Still, they did not see an integrative Bosniakhood, let alone a change in the Muslims' definition, as a desirable solution.

On the other hand, the survey found that Yugoslavhood as an integrative identity still had some support (higher than the Bosniakhood) among the population. 23.18% of those surveyed declared themselves “Yugoslav” when asked about its nationality, despite the fact that the percentage of “official” Yugoslavs in the sample was 12.49%.⁴⁵⁰ According to the survey's author, Ibrahim Baki , the commitment to Yugoslavism proved the relevance of the *individual-subjective consciences and feelings* towards national belonging and identification, alongside the so-called “objective specially-historic and cultural agents”. Yugoslavs' identity was self-constructed by individual citizens. This

⁴⁴⁷ Ibrahim Baki , “O naciji, religiji”, 30. (The remaining 15.05% was undecided). Provided that the Bosnian Muslims composed the 34.96% of the polled sample (*ibidem*, 7), if we assume the most ‘extreme’ scenario, namely that *none* of the non-Muslims had voted in favour of the two Bosniak options (what is hard to confirm), the Muslims supporting an exclusive declination of Bosniakhood would be a clear minority, whereas those supporting an integrative Bosniakhood would be barely a half of them.

⁴⁴⁸ Baki , “O naciji, religiji”, 27.

⁴⁴⁹ On the predominance of the political-global over the everyday dimension in the perception of inter-ethnic relations, see chapter 1.3.

⁴⁵⁰ Baki , “O naciji, religiji”, 29.

panoply of individual Yugoslav identities came about because Yugoslavs existed in an environment in which pluralism was important with respect to cultural, political and national identities. Therefore, each of them developed a distinct socio-cultural profile that could not correspond to the “monolithic” ethno-national archetypes: this process of formation of Yugoslav identity “starts from the individual, therefore, from below, and not from the previously assumed collective identity, ideologically and politically shaped, which finally becomes a fiction”.⁴⁵¹ Baki found in this pro-Yugoslav commitment a democratic alternative to the reinforcement of “nationalist cores” and their corresponding political options. “Yugoslavism, even in times of crisis, is confirmed as a significant component of the connection between democratic processes and the strength of all ethnic groups, and as a significant element for the common life and the creation of communities of equal people and nations [lit. *ljudi i naroda*] where the identification of the person with the nation, or with the values beyond it, will be a natural process and a *private personal thing* [italic mine]”.⁴⁵²

Although Baki envisaged a further evolution of Yugoslavism through political democratization and the growing role of the individual sphere, the peculiar development of the political transition in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the negative perception of the events throughout the Federation would undermine that pro-Yugoslav option. Like “Bosniakhood” and its derivations, Yugoslavism would be immediately challenged by national parties, accusing it of being an artificial construction of the socialist period (which, for instance, was also suitable and in line with the strongly anti-communist orientation of those groups) or stigmatized by some of them as a “masked hegemony” on ethnic grounds, this time basically Serb.⁴⁵³ The civic and liberal-oriented movements which will be discussed in the next chapter, instead, tried to overcome this marginalization by seeking a new basis for an inclusive identity, precisely relying on the individual citizen as its constitutive element.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵² *Ibidem*, 29-30.

⁴⁵³ Veladžić, “Homogenizacija Bošnjaka”, 186.

6. THE IMPOSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES? CIVIC AND NON-COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS

6.1. The alternative within the regime.

The Socialist Democratic Alliance (SSRN-DSS)

In the first half of 1990, the League of Communists was not the only official organisation active in the politics of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Indeed, the Titoist political system relied on five pillars: 1) the Party, 2) The Socialist Alliance of the Working People (SSRN BiH), 3) the Alliance of Socialist Youth (SSO BiH), 4) the Alliance of Trade Unions (SS BiH), and 5) the Association of Veterans of the People's Liberation War (SUBNOR). While the Trade Unions and the SUBNOR would play a marginal role in the political transition,⁴⁵⁴ both the SSRN and the SSO would gain autonomy from the ruling party (though in very different degrees and outcomes), transforming themselves into political parties with a civic, non-nationalist and progressive orientation.

Within the general decentralization stemming from the Constitution of 1974, the SSRN had been the cornerstone of the “pluralism without parties” principle advocated by the Yugoslav regime. The SSRN was an umbrella-front encompassing civic organisations in every field of public life (cultural, religious, public and social services, sporting,

⁴⁵⁴ In socialist Yugoslavia, the trade unions had a mere role of coordinating (without actively taking part in) the collective negotiations among the State, the entity and the municipalities. As Tatjana Sekuli recalls, “Trade unions mostly dealt with politically irrelevant questions related with daily life losing their function of mediator between work and ownership. The party took on the role of absolute defender of the interests of the working class” (Tatjana Sekuli, *Violenza etnica*, 58). This “corporatist” function, and the fact that the Trade Unions were closely connected with the republican centres of powers, contributed to a depoliticisation of Trade Union mobilisations. As Carlos González Villa observes, these factors made impossible the emerging of an alternative movement of workers with political ambitions such as the case of Solidarnosc in Poland. Carlos González Villa, “Un nuevo estado para un nuevo orden mundial: una(re)lectura del proceso soberanista esloveno”, PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2014, 175.

The SUBNOR had generally benefit high respect and reputation during Titoism, but its influence was declining since the 1980s. (Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 43). Besides mere age factors (the most authoritative veterans had either passed away or were already publicly inactive), the reason is that the SUBNOR was inherently too rigid and committed to the traditions of the regime, in order to adapt itself to the new context, especially in times of high de-ideologisation. It must recall that local branches and the leadership of the Bosnian SUBNOR were concerned by some internal disputes about national and political issues (notably the divergent stances on the Milošević's policy) in the course of 1989.

leisure...), as well as independent social activists involved in social life who were not necessarily members of the League of Communists. The local branches of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian SSRN, set throughout the territory of the republic, were especially involved in the building or maintenance of infrastructure, healthcare and education services.⁴⁵⁵ This relatively autonomous feature, both in organisational and ideological terms, explains why the SSRN BiH had been, during 1989, the vehicle of initiatives and mobilisations which showed the demand for political changes. It was within the framework of the SSRN BiH that the first direct and multi-candidate elections in the history of socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina (namely the vote for the Bosnian representative in the Yugoslav collective Presidency of Yugoslavia), were held in June 1989.⁴⁵⁶ On the other hand, in the towns which experienced mono-national social mobilisations (such as the pro-Serb protests in Nevesinje or the pro-Croat protests in Duvno), the local sections of the SSRN justified, sympathized with or even endorsed these initiatives.⁴⁵⁷ This double effect showed clearly the contradiction inside the Bosnian SSRN: on the one side, the republican leadership looked generally moderate and more committed to political reforms than the League of Communists itself, even though they still remained highly loyal to the basic principles of a dying regime (defence of the existing constitutional framework – integrity of Bosnia within Yugoslavia, socialist principles, etc.). On the other hand, the political base of the SSRN, which was much less ideologically extreme and less militant than the SKBiH base, looked more “fluid” and vulnerable to the changes that were occurring in society, including the first nationalist mobilisations.

When in early 1990 the path to a multi-party system was effectively put in place, the SSRN faced a dilemma about its own fate, having to choose between transforming itself into a political party, merging with the Communists or remaining as a social organisation. In March 1990, the organisation had to vote for its new President from among three main candidates. Mirko Pejanovi , a professor in political science at the University of Sarajevo, was elected after prevailing over Liljana Staniši and Novo

⁴⁵⁵ Pejanovi , *Through Bosnian eyes*, 13. As it will be explained later, Pejanovi was the last President of the Bosnian SSRN in 1990.

⁴⁵⁶ Besides Bosnia-Herzegovina, multi-candidate primary elections in 1989 were held in Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro. This procedure was accepted due to growing requests for political liberalization; it would represent the prelude for multi-party elections.

⁴⁵⁷ See chapters 1.2 and 5.1 of this work.

Kecman.⁴⁵⁸ Although the differences among the opponents were not so sharp, Pejanovi looked slightly more inclined to political reforms and placed particular emphasis on the autonomy of the SSRN versus the League of Communists, all without bringing into question the cooperation with the ruling party.⁴⁵⁹

These aspirations for autonomy fuelled some misunderstanding between the SSRN and the SKBiH, especially concerning the theme of the “double membership” (*dvojno lanstvo*). Until then, people had been always allowed, and even implicitly encouraged, to be members of both organisations. According to some estimates, about 90% of the members of the SSRN (and practically all its most important leaders) were also members of the SKBiH.⁴⁶⁰ Yet, since the Socialist Alliance had expressed its will to transform itself to a separate party, there were requests from representatives of both sides (with the Communists being more insistent) to remove this option. The situation grew tense, and a bit embarrassing, when it was made public that the SKBiH’s Central Committee had sent a telex to all its local sections, urging each party member not to take part in the activities of the SSRN as long as they don’t clarify their own political intentions.⁴⁶¹ The debate on the “double membership” went on for months; finally, the two organisations agreed to a “transitional period” during which every member of the Socialist Alliance would opt either for the SSRN or for the SKBiH.⁴⁶²

Ironically, this confrontation was taking place in a moment when the SSRN and the SKBiH were at the same time, the closest allies and the closest competitors in the existing political spectrum. Within the context of limited and uncertain pluralism that Bosnia-Herzegovina experienced in the first months of 1990, both were the only active political organisations officially operating, together with the Alliance of Socialist Youth

⁴⁵⁸ All the three candidates were Serbs, because the principle of *national key* established that it would be the turn of a Serb. Pejanovi obtained 72 of 128 votes in the Republican Committee of the SSRN; Novo Kecman got 30 votes, Staniši 18. “Republika konferencija SSRNBiH. Mirko Pejanovi – novi predsjednik Konferencije”, *Oslobo enje*, March 3, 1990.

⁴⁵⁹ “Ram za sliku budu eg presjednika SSRN. Front iz tri ugla”, *Oslobo enje*, March 1, 1990.

⁴⁶⁰ “Epilog nesporazuma na relaciji SK-SSRN BiH. Teleks pomirenja”, *Oslobo enje*, April 6, 1990.

⁴⁶¹ “Strana ko nadmudrivanje u BiH. Spoticanje o dvojno lanstvo”, *Oslobo enje*, March 31, 1990. Nijaz Durakovi, the SKBiH’s president, later justified the measure as a response to the alleged attempt made by SSRN leaders to involve the SKBiH’s local sections in their new political movement; this would have been the case, according to Durakovi, in about 40 municipalities. Pejanovi sharply denied the existence of this plan. “Epilog nesporazuma na relaciji SK-SSRN BiH. Teleks pomirenja”, *Oslobo enje*, April 6, 1990; “Predsjedništvo RK SSRNBiH o problemima dvojnog lanstva. Cilj iznad nesporazuma”, *Oslobo enje*, June 14, 1990.

⁴⁶² “Razgovor sa novinarima u SKBiH. Svijet se ne gradi iz kabineta”, *Oslobo enje*, June 16, 1990.

(SSO) and the very few unofficial civic movements such as the UJDI or the Greens, given that national parties were still forbidden. In those circumstances, the paradox is that the autonomous role of the SSRN and the SSO was appropriate for the Bosnian Communists, since it gave the appearance that multiple options existed within the framework of an ostensibly new multi-party system (even though they were all heirs of the older political regime), therefore justifying the “officialist” claim that a democratic innovation was being carried out in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In other words, SKBiH needed the Socialist Alliance to be a separate entity, in order to confirm the existence of political pluralism, but at the same time, the Communists still tried to impose a certain control on the SSRN by threatening to break its ties with it, in order to defend their political hegemony.

In late June 1990, the Congress of the SSRN finally opted to transform itself into a political party, under the new name of “Democratic Socialist Alliance” (*Demokratski Socijalisti ki Savez Bosne i Hercegovine*, DSS).⁴⁶³ The opening speech of the president Pejanovi introduced some elements of novelty in regard to the traditional discourse of official organisations. After a few words claiming continuity with some of the historical merits of the SSRN during the communist era,⁴⁶⁴ he did not hesitate to express open (and still relatively uncommon among the regime members) self-criticism by admitting the negative role that the same SSRN had played in the social system, contributing to political monism and economic inefficiency.⁴⁶⁵ He addressed himself to the individual citizen as “the founding subject of the political life”, making clear that the SSRN would cease to be a sum of social organisations and would definitely break with a collective, class-centred

⁴⁶³ Before the congress, the SSRN had been provisionally renamed “Socialist Democratic Alliance”, whose initials were ‘SDS’. This acronym was commonly used in the press, but coincided with the one used for the Serb Democratic Party, which had been created in early 1990 in Croatia and, albeit unofficially (national parties were fully legalized only in June-July 1990) was already acting and going to be formally set out in Bosnia-Herzegovina under the leadership of Radovan Karadžić. The name of the Socialist Democratic Alliance was then inverted, probably to avoid confusions with the “other” SDS.

⁴⁶⁴ “Many villages, settlements and municipalities in the Republic would not have had such a developed infrastructure, education and health services, if there was no activity from the Socialist Alliance in the associations of citizens, their solidarity and self-abnegation”. Mirko Pejanovi, “Referat o osnivanju zadacima Demokratskog Socijalisti kog Saveza BiH”, in *Bilten Skupštine DSS BiH*, DSS, Sarajevo, July 1990, 1-3.

⁴⁶⁵ “Mentioning the positive political heritage coming from the SSRN also implies all those negative elements that the SSRN manifested in its development. We shall remember only some of them: the initiatives of the citizens outside the local communities did not have a significant decision-making power about the social development, nor especially about the politics of development or the selection of cadres in the municipal and republican level; bounded to the single-party monopoly the Socialist Alliance has not had its own autonomy and has remained on the margins of the social trends”. *Ibidem*, 3.

discourse.⁴⁶⁶ Even the language style that Pejanovi employed in the opening speech sounded simpler and closer to common people than the ordinary, arid, ideological and hardly accessible discourse that many leaders of the Bosnian official organisations used to employ in public.⁴⁶⁷ The DSS openly called for privatisations of public enterprises and attracting foreign investments, giving firm support to the reforms of Prime Minister Ante Markovi . They also appealed for the “active integration” of Yugoslavia into the European Community, an issue on which Pejanovi would frequently insist later on during the campaign.⁴⁶⁸ In ideological terms, the DSS’s manifesto was evidently inspired by social-democratic principles, in a moment (mid-1990) when the SKBiH had not yet completely ratified its self-reform and some its leaders still flirted with continuity solutions. Hence, the DSS acted as a sort of “reformist vanguard” of the League of Communists, aiming to attract memberships (and later votes) from those citizens who, for ideological, political or personal reasons were not willing to join the Communists.⁴⁶⁹

However, the DSS also kept some elements from its canonical discourse, especially on the crucial issues of the future of Yugoslavia and the national question of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The DSS, like the SKBiH, still firmly supported the constitutional framework of the Constitution of 1974, namely a united and federal Yugoslavia composed of autonomous, indivisible and sovereign republics. They insisted upon the sovereignty and indivisibility of Bosnia-Herzegovina, still relying on the traditional arguments, both economic, political, historical and national. The DSS claimed that Sarajevo should take on its own development policy in order to break with the so-called “dependence” model (namely that Bosnia had experienced during Communism a specialisation on raw and energy extraction, basically externally driven, which would have negatively affected its socio-economic performance).⁴⁷⁰ Political sovereignty was solemnly and constantly proclaimed, including the right to exercise self-determination

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 4.

⁴⁶⁷ As an example, Pejanovi concluded his opening speech with a reference to the supporters of the Yugoslav football selection, who used to cheer the slogan “*Jugo, volimo te*” (“Yugo[slavia], we love you”). He quoted it as an example of the “patriotic disposition” (lit. *patriotsko raspoloženje*) of young and citizens. The Congress coincided with the football World Cup in Italy, where Yugoslavia qualified for the quarter-finals. Thousands of people celebrated the result in Sarajevo and other cities of Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Ibidem*, 6.

⁴⁶⁸ “Programski ciljevi Demokratskog Socijalisti kog Saveza BiH”, in *ibidem*, 8.

⁴⁶⁹ Nijaz Skenderagi , interview by author. Sarajevo, May 10, 2014.

⁴⁷⁰ This “anti-dependence” discourse was quite common among the SKBiH’s higher officials as well (see Chapter 2.1).

(“We will struggle so that the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina may choose sovereignly, independently and democratically, on their own life and relationship with Yugoslavia”).⁴⁷¹ However, the statehood of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in historical terms, was still strongly tied with the anti-fascist struggle of the Second World War. Almost no reference was made to the pre-Communist, centuries-old, political entity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Their program read: “Bosnia-Herzegovina has not been created after a deal signed in the palaces of Belgrade or Zagreb. It has been created through the armed struggle and revolution of the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia in the battlefields of Kozara, Sutjeska, Neretva and Romanija. No arrangement can threaten its statehood and territorial integrity.”⁴⁷² Finally, the DSS’s approach to the national question was, like that of the Communists, inclined toward consociationalism in cultural and political terms. Citizenship was always defined in terms of “peoples” or “nations”, but not as individual “Bosnians and Herzegovinians”. Protection for each one of the three separate cultural spaces was explicitly recommended.⁴⁷³

Despite the widespread organisational network inherited from the SSRN and the attempts to make a synthesis between political innovation and tradition, the DSS attracted little interest from the public. The numbers of subscribers, signatures and people attending the meetings were quite low at all levels, from the central organs to the municipal branches. According to press reports, various local founding meetings of DSS were attended by a few dozen and collected almost no signatures or active support.⁴⁷⁴ On the other hand, the DSS still had a high and considerable involvement in official celebrations,

⁴⁷¹ *Ibidem*, 6.

⁴⁷² *Ibidem*, 6.

⁴⁷³ “The religious, cultural, national and political tolerance which has been built throughout the centuries has established the VALUE OF THE COMMON LIFE OF THE MUSLIMS, CROATS, SERBS AND OTHER NATIONS LIVING IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA [capital in the text, author’s note], from the *komšiluk* to common institutions in culture, economy, social and state structure. [...] the commitment of the DSS in the sphere of the national relations envisage the following aims: the national identity and the autonomy of the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina; the national equality of Serbs, Croats, Muslims and other peoples in Bosnia-Herzegovina; the development and the affirmation of the value of the common life in terms of synthesis of the particular in the institutions; the statehood and the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina established on the principles of ZAVNOBiH; the sovereignty, autonomy and equality of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the question of the common interests in the federation; the federal arrangement of a socialist Yugoslavia as a guarantee of equality of nations and nationalities and inclusion in the European integration process”. *Ibidem*, 5.

⁴⁷⁴ “Nevesinje: SDS okupio 20 ljudi. Otišli bez potpisa”, *Ve ernje Novine*, June 1, 1990; “Osniva ki skupovi SDS u komunama donjeg podrinja. Prorame prihvataju, pristupnica nema”, *Oslobo enje*, June 5, 1990; “Trebinjski politi ki marketing. SDS nezanimljiv”, *Oslobo enje*, June 18, 1990; “Biha : SDS. Slab odziv”, *Ve ernje Novine*, June 20, 1990.

In that period, the organization still displayed the provisional name of “SDS”.

especially those related to the Partisan struggle, which still raised strong feelings in large parts of the Bosnian population. In his memoirs, the then President Pejanovi remembers a public rally in Milica-Gaj near Bosanska Dubica, which was held on July 27, 1990 to celebrate Uprising Day. “I vividly remember [...] how large the crowd was and how enthusiastic was their response to every word from the Alliance’s speakers”. This kind of popular allegiance made the DSS’s leadership misinterpret the real support that the party could receive. As Pejanovi explains “This party, it must be said, consisted chiefly of a tight inner circle composed of the Alliance's current activists. Its members were, by and large, mostly of the older generation, and the party relied heavily on the likelihood that rural areas would lend their support, as they had always done in the past”.⁴⁷⁵

The SSRN’s transformation into a party could not in any way reverse the disengagement trend observable since the late 1980s. The “double membership” issue with Communists undoubtedly had an important effect in discouraging membership. Nonetheless, reasons were more structural than circumstantial. The SSRN was still strongly viewed by the general population as the instrument of the now visibly declining communist rule, especially in terms of mobilizing civic initiatives, volunteering actions, building communal infrastructures, etc., whose influence of such everyday activities had declined in Bosnian society, due to the combined effect of the decline of Titoist ideology and the economic crisis of the 1980s. The popular involvement with the SSRN was considerably lower than expected by their leaders, especially in rural areas where the party practically failed to set out a political structure or disappeared very soon. It was also a simple matter of political positioning: those who still felt involved with socialist and left-wing values generally preferred to align themselves with the League of Communists. Those who did not, looked to other alternatives, particularly to nationalist movements, supported by clerical networks which were regaining considerable public influence. After all, the different clergies, while promoting recreational activities, volunteer initiatives and social mobilisations at the local scale, were filling the empty space offered by the depoliticisation that was causing the decline of the SSRN.

⁴⁷⁵ Pejanovi, *Through Bosnian eyes*, 14.

6.2. Youth activism and liberal democracy. The SSO BiH

In the late 1980s, economic crisis and unemployment severely affected the youth of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia, fuelling a certain disillusion from the values and traditions of the socialist system. Susan Woodward explained: “The discrimination against women and youth in hiring and firing was accepted because the ‘family’ (the cash earnings of the employed member) would take care of them, redistributing what it had to ensure the survival of all members. Unemployed urban youth remained in parental homes while they waited for public-sector jobs. Urban and rural families relied on networks of kin and ritual kin for private exchange of agricultural produce and connections with urban schooling and jobs”.⁴⁷⁶ Alternative spaces for sociocultural and artistic production (such as punk, rock and new wave groups, artistic performances, youth centres) were established in all the main cities in Yugoslavia in the early 1980s, involving especially a middle-class urban youth frustrated by the lack of future social prospects. Sarajevo, in particular, had a vibrant youth scene, ranging from the more conventional “New Partisan” rock to a more subversive and counter-cultural milieu (best represented by the “New Primitives” cultural movement) which openly criticized the ruling ideology and social reality.⁴⁷⁷ However, detachment from the socialist tradition did not mean a detachment from Yugoslavism; on the contrary, many of these cultural expressions meant to reanimate, re-elaborate and advocate the foundational values of Yugoslav unity.⁴⁷⁸

Until late in the decade this scene did not politically articulate itself within the Bosnian public space, due to a still firm grasp of the Communist structures, which employed either soft co-optation or hard control of student activists. The first significant protests took place at the University of Sarajevo in the autumn of 1987, but were limited

⁴⁷⁶ Susan L. Woodward, *Socialist unemployment. The political economy of Yugoslavia, 1945-1990*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995, 313-14.

⁴⁷⁷ For some in-depth analysis of the youth artistic scene in 1980s Bosnia and Yugoslavia see in particular Dalibor Mišina, “‘Spit and Sing, My Yugoslavia’: New Partisans, social critique and Bosnian poetics of the patriotic”, *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 38, 2, 2010, 265-289; Sabina Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 126-148; Claudia Muresu, “Subversive Art as a Movement or Performance in Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina: Subversion of What?”, MA diss., Università di Bologna, 2012.

⁴⁷⁸ Sarajevo, Belgrade and Zagreb were the most florid centres of what Mišina calls the punk-rock “committed music” with a pro-Yugoslav message (Mišina, “New Partisans”, 266). The Ljubljana scene was different, as its elements of radical breakup with the system, though without a direct political confrontation against the regime, placed it closer to the autonomist and then secessionist project, sometimes resulting in anti-Yugoslav positions. On the Slovene social and cultural movements in the 1980s, see González Villa, “Un nuevo estado”, 114-126.

to concrete demands such as the relaxation of exam norms or better conditions at the students' canteens. Protesters did not submit to the ruling Bosnian government demands on educational policies, let alone about broader socio-political changes. Several Bosnian youth organisations feared the potential accusations from the Communist structures which, at that time, still tagged any opposition movement as hostile or even as "nationalist", even in absence of any ethnic-related content.⁴⁷⁹

However, the Sarajevo mobilisations of 1987 led to the creation of new student organisations and networks under the umbrella of the Alliance of Socialist Youth (hereafter SSO BiH or SSO), the youth wing of the ruling party. Besides social activism, youth organisations from Bosnia-Herzegovina got primarily involved in the media space. Their magazines *Naši Dani* and *Valter* became one of the publications with the widest circulation and biggest political influence in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁸⁰ They combined a plural editorial line, in-depth political analysis and reports (sometimes publishing

⁴⁷⁹ Neven Andjeli, "L'émergence de la société civile dans la Bosnie-Herzégovine de d'avant-guerre", *Balkanologie*, 4, 1, September 2000. Accessed April 17, 2012. <http://balkanologie.revues.org/index770.html>, 1.

Nerzuk urak, speaking about a small protest of the university students in Sarajevo which he joined between 1985 and 1986 (probably the antecedent of the 1987 bigger protests), explains: "We asked someone from the top of the party to come and speak with us. They send us Hamdija Pozderac [the most prominent figure of the SKBiH until 1987, author's note]. [...] He was extremely pleasant man. He really knew to speak as a popular leader he spoke the language that the people understands. We were at the students' canteen, which was crowded we had a meeting with him. There were, believe me, maybe 1500 people. And he gave a speech. He spoke in the typical Titoist way: 'Students, you are right. But...' he spoke and gradually succeeded to bring people on his side. If some 'forum-like' communist had come, speaking boringly, in a bureaucratic language... instead, he spoke a popular language, he also started to tell jokes, he even spoke about sex!". Nerzuk urak, interview by author. Sarajevo, June 11, 2012.

On the other side, traditional methods of control and intimidation (such as the wide use of tapping, infiltrators, individual political dossiers, etc., by security service to intimidate students) were still employed until at least 1987, and then progressively reduced. About the mobilizations in 1987, the historian Husnija Kamberovi, then a student at the University of Sarajevo, comments: "That students' movement was not an opposition movement, [...] because it would have been quickly labelled as hostile and nationalist. I think that such fear for potential pressures and accusations from the regime was a limiting factor for [the mobilization of] young people. In Slovenia, it was totally different, but in Bosnia, when they immediately said 'nationalist!', and when they labelled a student as Muslim, Serb or Croat nationalist, then his/her career would be over. [...] I would say that, in nationally homogeneous regions, it was easier for an opposition movement to set up, rather than in nationally heterogeneous regions, where the ruling government could always label the opposition as nationalist". Husnija Kamberovi, interview by author. Sarajevo, June 28, 2012.

⁴⁸⁰ According to Nerzuk urak, then a member of the *Naši Dani*'s editors' committee, in the 1987-1990 period the circulation of both *Naši Dani* and *Valter* ranged among 25.000 and 60.000 copies (Nerzuk urak, interview by author, Sarajevo, June 11, 2012). Andjeli claims instead that the average circulation of both was 50.000, although *Naši Dani* achieved 100,000 in 1989 (*Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 80, 94).

The two main (and official) newspapers in Sarajevo, *Veernje Novine* and *Osloboenje*, respectively had a circulation of 66,911 and 47,690 copies in 1990 (source: Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 41).

Other youth magazines with critical attitudes also emerged in the rest of the country, such as *Prelom* in Banja Luka or *Lom* in Mostar, but they had much less public impact.

contributions of respected academics and intellectuals), interviews with high-ranking politicians from all sides of the political spectrum (Communist officials, nationalist leaders and civic activists), highly satirical columns, provocative titles, comic strips, images and photomontages usually mocking the political elite and the iconography of socialism. Another successful experience was the “Youth program” (*Omladinski Program*) broadcasted by the second channel of Radio Sarajevo. The program gave voice to social-political critique and satire, gaining an increasing degree of autonomy from the control of the League of Communists.⁴⁸¹ Those media, in the words of Nerzuk urak, became the first “oasis of pioneering elements of civil society” in late-socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁸² Due to their full coverage of the all-Yugoslav events, their interconnections with homologue youth medias and associations from the whole Federation, and their interest in the main global trends in politics, social engagement and culture, these media can be considered as a notable example of what Ana Devi defined “Yugo-cosmopolitan habitus” of Yugoslav youngsters in late 1980s.⁴⁸³

Since 1987, the Bosnian Communists were experiencing a severe crisis of legitimacy after the wave of intra-élite resignations and replacements following the “Agrokomerc” and “Neum” affaires. This context allowed a broader space for public debates and criticism against the corruption and inefficiency of the political power. In 1988, the SSO BiH vetoed the re-election of Mato Andri , then a very prominent cadre from the SKBiH’s old guard, for the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Because of that, Andri immediately gave up his candidacy to an outsider. It was the first time in history that the SSO denied support for the official candidate of the party.⁴⁸⁴ Then, the SSO also withdrew its approval for candidates seeking the office of Prime Minister.⁴⁸⁵ The youth

⁴⁸¹ According to official figures, the *Omladinski Program* had about 800.000 daily listeners in 1988 (“Jugoslovenski omladinski radio”, *Valter*, April 7, 1989).

On the role of the program throughout the 1980s, see Neven Andjeli , “The evolution of civil society in pre-war Bosnia-Herzegovina”, in Stefano Bianchini and George Schöplin (eds.), *State building in the Balkans. Dilemmas on the eve of the 21st century*, Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1998, 299-303; Muresu, “Subversive Art”, 60-63.

⁴⁸² Nerzuk urak, interview by author, Sarajevo, June 11, 2012. See also chapter 3 in Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 76-95. The argument that youth social movements were the main agents of civil society in Bosnia-Herzegovina is one of the founding thesis of Andjelic's works.

⁴⁸³ Ana Devi , “Anti-War Initiatives and the Un-Making of Civic Identities in the Former Yugoslav Republics”, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 10:2, 1997, 150.

⁴⁸⁴ Rasim Kadi , interview by author. Sarajevo, May 23, 2012; Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 70-71. Andri ’s candidacy was replaced by Nikola Filipovi , a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Sarajevo who did not belong to party ranks.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

organisation, acting under the umbrella of the SSO, was also decisive in the so-called “Kecmanovi scandal”, occurring in April 1989. Nenad Kecmanovi was a candidate (and actually the main favourite) in the elections for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian representative at the Yugoslav collective presidency. Kecmanovi, who did not come from high party ranks, was gaining support among liberal-oriented circles and those who called for political changes in the party. Kecmanovi was suddenly and secretly forced to withdraw his candidacy after being accused by the secret police of being a spy. At that point, the youth press and the students’ organisations at the University had a crucial role in revealing to the uninformed public the details of the case, which represented a perfect example of the “dark plots” occurring within the regime. The case showed that the ruling system could not elude demands for more transparency, whereas media and civic organisations were not afraid to set up independent enquiries and protests. As in the aforementioned cases, the SSO contributed to block the electing procedure at the Parliament.⁴⁸⁶

Since 1989, the new leadership of the SSO BiH, consisting of president Rasim Kadi (a very ambitious and polemic character whose views were liberal and pro-individual rights) and his close collaborators Borivoje Latinovi and Martin Raguž, made a turning point in the policy of the organisation. They sought to gradually transform the organisation from a youth-centred movement into a proper political party with a liberal-democratic stance for all ages, reducing the ties with the Yugoslav-wide coordination of the Alliances of Socialist Youth (SSOJ) and with the SKBiH.⁴⁸⁷ In 1989, the SSO BiH’s discourse became more aggressive against the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina, denouncing the so-called “Bosnian silence” (“*Bosanska šutnja*”, namely the passive attitude of Sarajevo’s leadership towards the crisis in Yugoslavia), as well as its slowness and reticence towards the democratizing process. The SSO began to play a double role: on one side, being still formally affiliated with the SKBiH for the first half of 1990 and taking part in the last Congresses of the League, it represented the internal, pro-liberal opposition *inside* the Communist rule. On the other side, the SSO acted as a

⁴⁸⁶ Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 89-90; Andjelić, “The evolution of civil society”, 303.

Andjelić recalls that on the eve of May 1, 1989, the Sarajevo Public Attorney banned the distribution of the issue of *Naši Dani* which was dedicated to the affair Kecmanovi. Nevertheless, since it was the May Day holiday, the police did not manage to confiscate all the issues in the Bosnian territory; moreover, Radio Sarajevo broadcast the banned articles in order to spread their contents. This was the last ban of a newspaper in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁴⁸⁷ “Pred Kongres Omladine BiH. Biti ili ne biti”, *Oslobodjenje*, July 25, 1989.

cornerstone for civic initiatives *outside* the regime. Together with the UJDI, the SSO created the Democratic Forum, which was the first “civic platform” ever created in Socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina, calling for a “third way” alternative to both socialism and nationalism. The Bosnian Communists, who were still oscillating between conservatism and reformism and had been weakened by the loss in self-confidence and elite cohesion after the domestic scandals and the tension with Belgrade, did not take any action against their youth wing. “The reaction of the SKBiH was negative, but they did not have enough strength to prevent it. For what I know, they took no action against me, to prevent me from doing my job”, recalled Rasim Kadić, who left the SKBiH in January 1990, shortly after the 14th Congress.⁴⁸⁸

The SSO’s basic agenda included a civic and non-national concept of citizenship, multi-party pluralism, the “de-politicisation” of the State, a market economy and the abolition of the death penalty. All these principles were included in the “Political Manifesto” that the SSO issued in October 1989.⁴⁸⁹ It was the first time ever that an official organisation demanded such major changes in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The SSO’s support for a non-ethnic concept of citizenship mirrored not only the pro-civic stance of its leadership, but also the dominant orientation among Bosnian youth. According to a survey carried out in October 1989 by the Institute for the Study of Inter-ethnic relations, people under 27 years of age were the most inclined to abandon the “national key” (*nacionalni ključ*) as the criteria for selecting cadres at the administrative and political organs (72.45%, versus 51.28% in the 43-51 years’ range and 45% in the 52+ years’ range). Nevertheless, youngsters were generally the most skeptical about the actual state of inter-ethnic relations in Yugoslavia. Among the under-27, those who agreed that all the nations “have equal conditions for social promotion in education, hiring, and status” were 44%, whilst those older than 27 years ranged from 57% to 60%. Therefore, the survey’s authors assumed that youth, as the most affected by the socio-economic situation, tended to project their discomfort onto the national question, even if national difference in itself did not concern them significantly. They seemed thus inclined to

⁴⁸⁸ Rasim Kadić, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 23, 2012; “Prvi bh. Omladinac nije više član SK. Politički predsjednik”, *Oslobođenje*, January 30, 1990.

⁴⁸⁹ “Rasim Kadić na sjednici GK SSO. Nek’ dođi da i mene uhapse”, *Valter*, November 17, 1989.

see the “national key” as an obstacle, rather than an asset, for their social ambitions.⁴⁹⁰
(see tables below).

Table 6.1. Is it still necessary, in order to select cadres for administrative and decision-making organs, to take into account the nationality?⁴⁹¹

	under 27	28-34	35-42	43-51	52 +
It is good to take into account, but it is not necessary	13,75	16,67	17,96	17,09	23,13
It is necessary	13,75	12,07	17,48	31,62	31,88
There should not be need to take it into account	72,50	71,26	64,56	51,28	45,00
	100	100	100	100	100

Table 6.2. To which extent is [national] equality achieved?⁴⁹²

	under 27	28-34	35-42	43-51	52+
In our country the equality of all the peoples and nationalities is fully achieved	13,16	12,05	21,88	31,19	30,50
In principle, there is equality, but in practice some problems occur	60,53	67,47	64,06	55,96	58,87
Between our peoples there are unequal relations	26,32	20,48	14,06	12,84	10,64
	100	100	100	100	100

A focal point in the SSO’s discourse about transition was the full legalisation of the national parties. Apparently, this position contradicted the anti-nationalist stance of the organisation. Nevertheless, it was also consistent with the liberal views of the

⁴⁹⁰ Ratko Dun erovi , “Faktorska distribucija stavova javnog mnijenja o medjunacionalnim odnosima”, in Ibrahim Baki and Ratko Dun erovi , *Gra ani Bosne i Hercegovine o me unacionalnim odnosima*, Sarajevo: Institut za prou avanje nacionalnih odnosa, 1990, 104-105. For a similar interpretation, see also Bougarel, “Anatomie d’une poudrière”, 122.

⁴⁹¹ Source: Dun erovi , “Faktorska distribucija”, 103-105.

⁴⁹² *Ibidem*, 103-105.

leadership and, above all, with their criticism of the Communists' policy, interpreted as a mere tool to retain power. Rasim Kadić comments that, because of this stance, he has been the object of harassment and attacks: “[They said that] I am a Slovene, that I am an anti-communist, all the worst. But I overlooked that because I was really convinced that the society must be liberalized. In that moment, I underestimated the nationalist forces in Bosnia, and I admit it. I believed that nationalists would not be so strong and that we could organize ourselves politically. I believed that we could, as the so-called left-of-centre, be the most stable part of Bosnia; still, the elections demonstrated that we were the weakest”.⁴⁹³

However, the “new course” imposed by Kadić did not meet unanimous support within the organisation. A conservative-minded opposition came mainly from the Banja Luka section and from the Bosnian Krajina and Eastern Bosnia regions. In the autumn of 1989, some students' organisations from the second largest Bosnian city asked for the resignation of Kadić and some of his close collaborators, claiming that the leaders paid no interest to the students of the so-called “province” (here meaning non-Sarajevan) who were mobilizing themselves to improve the average standards of education and services.⁴⁹⁴ One of the major opponents was a leading figure of the Banja Luka's branch, Igor Radojić, who argued that the Bosnian SSO was “bureaucratising” itself and denounced the hegemonic role of its narrow leadership.⁴⁹⁵ Rasim Kadić recalls that he

⁴⁹³ Rasim Kadić, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 23, 2012. See also Gordana Božić, “Conversations with Bosnian Youth”, 743-772.

In her brilliant article, Božić assumes that the SSO BiH saw nationalism “as a benign force” and that Bosnian youth in general were “increasingly inclined to interpret nationalism as a positive force that promotes the ‘authenticity’ and confidence of each ethnic group” (*ibidem*, 749). Such interpretation, though, seems excessive for that context. Bakić's abovementioned researches and polls actually lead one to assume, instead, that Bosnian youth was more inclined to see *national key* [i.e. expression of national differences in the working and institutional places] as an obstacle instead than as a resource. Provided that the voting behaviour of the Bosnian youth in the 1990 elections probably favoured national parties (though we lack specific studies about the extent, especially compared with other age segments), it should be interpreted more as a “*vote against*” the ‘old system’ parties, rather than as a strong commitment to what Božić defines “the authenticity and confidence of each ethnic group”.

Concerning the SSO BiH's stance on the national parties, I would say that the Socialist Youth interpreted national parties as *inevitable* (thus, whose illegalisation would only be counterproductive) rather than *positive* in itself. Political documents from the SSO BiH and the Democratic Front contained serious concerns and sharp criticisms toward the national parties; the Democratic Front blamed, in the same Kadić's words, the “narrow-national [parties] based on the commitment of citizens for ‘their own’ nations and religions”. (“Mjesto pod suncem pluralizma”, *Oslobo enje*, May 14, 1990).

⁴⁹⁴ “Nakon zborovanja banjalukih studenata. ‘Ovo je ludnica’”, *Prelom*, 8, November 1989. Significantly, the author of the article, who blatantly defended the “official” Kadić's position, labelled these students as “anti-bureaucrats”, thus implicitly associating them to the pro-Milošević and pro-Serb mobilisations.

⁴⁹⁵ “Seminar o budućoj organizovanosti omladine BiH. Strah od burokratizacije”, *Oslobo enje*, December 24, 1989.

received a lot of criticism from the local branches of the SSO, especially from the Bosnian Krajina (the Banja Luka region) and Eastern Bosnia, mainly Serb-populated municipalities.⁴⁹⁶ Neven Andjeli , who was then a cadre in the Sarajevo SSO, mentioned as well some national divisions arising inside the Banja Luka branch that negatively affected the organisation throughout the republic.⁴⁹⁷ Since those areas were mainly Serb-populated, this presence could be interpreted as a symptom of national divisions caused by conflicting assessments about the politics in Yugoslavia. Although this was surely a leading reason, reducing these tensions *exclusively* to ethno-nationalism would be misleading. Other factors were also relevant, such as a standard competition for leadership (having a top post at the republican level of the organisation granted attractive salaries and benefits) or a centre-periphery resentment between the “capital” Sarajevo and the “provincial” Banja Luka (this was, for instance, a quite common cleavage in the official organisations and institutions about the control of policies, investments, etc.). Moreover, the weight of pressures coming from highest “senior” political circles differed in the two cities: while in Sarajevo the SSO had succeeded in emancipating itself from the influence of the SKBiH, the Banja Luka branch (as well as in other middle sized cities such as Tuzla or Mostar) was subject to stronger pressures from the highest ranks of the party.⁴⁹⁸

For instance, the opposition to Kadi did not only come from hard-line conservatives. Some pro-liberal activists from the SSO in Sarajevo provocatively argued that the organisation, being useless for young people, should be dissolved and reconstructed on a voluntary, youth-centred, non-political basis.⁴⁹⁹ Such a rejection of the clique of salaried politicians and officers, and the search for new forms of social-political engagement claims, were consistent with the context of the 1989 “transition euphoria”. This stance was diametrically opposite to the major strategic interest of the Kadi ’s leadership, who wanted to retain control over the huge infrastructure that a forty-five-

⁴⁹⁶ Rasim Kadi , interview by author. Sarajevo, May 23, 2012.

⁴⁹⁷ Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 102.

⁴⁹⁸ Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 88. As explained in chapters 1 and 2, the SKBiH branch of Banja Luka was strongly conservative-oriented.

⁴⁹⁹ A supporter of this “anti-party faction” was Neven Andjeli , who in 1989 ran as a candidate for the Presidency of the SSO in Sarajevo. In 1990, he left the organisation and joined the SRSJ. Neven Andjeli , interview by author. Sarajevo, June 21, 2014.

years long status of “official organisation” could guarantee (local sections, access to public funds, properties and human resources) in view of the electoral campaign.

The 12th Congress of the SSO BiH scheduled for April 19 and 20, 1990, was expected to be a turning point for the organisation. Kadi ’s leadership planned it as a stage for the definitive transition into a liberal-democrat political party and presented an opening document envisaging a “radical reconstruction” of the Yugoslav economic system focused on the principle of efficiency, through an integrated market of capitals, labour and goods. The withdrawal from the socialist model was emphasized in a paragraph, significantly titled as “End of the utopia” (lit. *Kraj Utopije*), stating: “The problem of the Yugoslav self-management model of socialism lies in the fact that it appeared and developed itself primarily as anti-capitalist project, wherein it was more important to block all the process that where ideologically considered as capitalist, rather than to build elements of a modern socialist society. The socialist self-management model did not respond to the needs of the time, on the ground of the economic efficiency and the material security of people, as well as on the ground of the political democracy and human rights. In the world, the renowned models of socialism are evidently ended their historical mission as they had begun, as utopia”.⁵⁰⁰

The document also proposed a complete constitutional reform of Yugoslavia as a federal, parliamentary, multi-party democracy, thus ratifying the SSO’s pro-Yugoslav stance). The proposal argued that Yugoslavia would be a federal and parliamentary democracy, based on the “citizen as the founding element of the political system” and provided with “jurisdictions on its whole territory, as well as instruments for their implementation, but must also be the guarantor for the autonomy [*samobitnost*] of the republics”. The parliamentary system would be bicameral, composed of an upper house, the Chamber of the Republics, with an equal representation of each republic; and a lower house, the Chamber of Citizens, based on the “one person-one vote” principle; instead, the republican parliaments would be unicameral, only based on regional (not ethno-national) representation. The Presidency would remain a collective organ composed by six members. Each republic shall suggest two or more candidates for its own seat and

⁵⁰⁰ Republicka Konferencija SSO BiH, *Prijedlog – Politi ki manifest SSO BiH*, Sarajevo, March 1990, 4; 8; 12.

they shall be submitted to the vote of the whole Parliament. The elected members of the Presidency shall not be affiliated to any political party.⁵⁰¹

The document called for the complete de-politicisation of all institutions (Army, justice, education, administration, etc.), explicitly accusing the League of Communists of preventing or delaying the political change: “It is evident that the self-inauguration of the SKJ as the only legitimate representative, representing the working-class, in the absence of the political concurrency, only corresponds to a further usurpation of power”.⁵⁰² Finally, the document proudly asserted the cultural, historical and symbolic ties between Yugoslavia and Europe, demanding a quick integration into the European Community. The paragraph concerned to this issue, significantly titled “We are Europe” [lit. *Mi smo Evropa*], affirmed: “Yugoslavia is geographically, historically, traditionally, genealogically, and culturally in Europe. It is only economically and politically ‘outside’ Europe. [...] The movement of non-aligned faces the need to redefine itself and to change its founding philosophy. The non-alignment shall not be an obstacle to the Yugoslavia’s turning towards the processes of European integration. [...] Yugoslavia needs a long-term economical, technological, market, financial cooperation and connection with the developed world, first of all with the Western Europe. In this course, the SSO BiH will support the inclusion of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the ‘Alpe-Adria’ Community and the inclusion of Yugoslavia in the EFTA and the European Community”.⁵⁰³

Yet, the Congress never approved this document, as it failed to be ratified by a full majority of the delegates.⁵⁰⁴ The clash between the leadership and the conservatives inside the SSO, who still counted on the considerable support of the territorial representatives, led to the rejection of all the amendments that could have marked a radical break with the Communist symbolic universe, such as the request to remove the attribute “Socialist” from the official name of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or the

⁵⁰¹ *Ibidem*, 6. This plan for constitutional reform was very similar to the one presented by the UJDI in earlier months (see chapter 6.3; Mila Orli , “Od postkomunizma do postjugoslavenstva. Udruženje za jugoslavensku demokratsku inicijativu”, *Politi ka misao*, 48, 4, 2011, 107.

⁵⁰² SSO BiH, *Prijedlog – Politi ki manifest SSO BiH*, 8.

⁵⁰³ *Ibidem*, 11. In the 1980s, progressive intellectuals such as Danilo Kiš and Predrag Matvejevi had already emphasized the “European roots” of the Balkan peoples, which was also one of the founding principles of the UJDI. On this point, see Orli , “Od postkomunizma do postjugoslavenstva”, 99-100.

⁵⁰⁴ Only 158 of the 367 convened delegates supported the document. Two other motions (respectively supported by 72 and 37 votes) requested to reformulate the agenda of the Congress. “Ju e u Sarajevu po eo Kongres SSO BiH”, *Glas*, April 20, 1990.

demand to revise the relations within the Yugoslav Socialist Youth (SSOJ).⁵⁰⁵ Surprisingly, the Congress did not approve the request to abolish the death penalty, traditionally a key point in the SSO's discourse, nor the proposal to modify the name of the organisation to "Social Democratic Alliance" (*Socijaldemokratski savez*). A mere compromise was reached by adding the more neutral title "Democratic Alliance" (*Demokratski Savez*, DS) to the existing name (hereafter SSO-DS).⁵⁰⁶

There were at least two reasons for these internal resistances. The first was a widespread skepticism towards the personal ambitions of Kadić and the members of the leadership, and the second a generally widespread inertia that seemed to be better explained by the adherence to routine or manifest individual interests for maintaining the status quo and the ensuing privileges, rather than by true allegiance to socialist principles. A harsh article from the youth magazine *Naši Dani* commented: "We venture to say that students, young political officials in municipalities and professional activists are the most conservative stratum in the Yugoslav society who, in order to keep their social status and privileges, would defend egalitarianism in every possible way, including national-socialism if needed".⁵⁰⁷

After the Congress, the leadership managed, albeit with difficulty, to avoid an open breakup of the organisation; its major interest was to keep control over the infrastructure and resources of the SSO-DS in view of the electoral campaign. This goal would be partially achieved: the SSO-DS ran in the November 1990 elections as a *de facto* political party, for shortly thereafter, they ratified their definitive conversion into the Liberal Party. Nonetheless, the internal conflict that emerged within the Congress would compromise that process. Rasim Kadić's leadership was severely questioned and came close to an end only one month later; the circumstantial reason was that he had personally attended the founding meeting of the SDA.⁵⁰⁸ This move ignited criticisms

⁵⁰⁵ "Novo ime Demokratski Savez", *Oslobo enje*, April 21, 1990; "Bio je kongres omladine. Rasprava o nov anim strastima", *Naši Dani*, April 27, 1990.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰⁷ Nerzurić, "Bio je kongres omladine. Rasprava o nov anim strastima", *Naši Dani*, Sarajevo, April 27, 1990. These allegations referred to both the Kadić's leading group and its opposition. At that time *Naši Dani*, despite being a youth organ close to SSO BiH, did not abstain from critics to the leadership of the organisation.

⁵⁰⁸ One could notice that this kind of reciprocal invitations would be a common practice in recent multi-party environments, either for a practice of "good offices", either because political actors need to explore to get familiar and explore opportunities; nonetheless, in that exact times (mid-June 1990), national parties were not yet fully legalized and they still represented a quite unsurmountable political taboo among official

within the SSO-DS, inciting not only suspicions that Kadić was serving his own political career at the expense of the organisation, but also suggesting his alleged nationalist feelings.⁵⁰⁹ A split occurred within the Sarajevan section, where a group created a separate, and almost identically named, “SSO – Liberal Party” to distance themselves from the allegedly “autocratic” rule of Kadić. In smaller cities, the reform of the SSO into a political party in local territories proceeded slowly and had relevant desertions.

In conclusion, the Bosnian SSO-DS was one of the (ex-)Communist youth branches of Yugoslavia which did not completely disappear from the public space. It radically cut ties with the socialist model and adopted openly liberal platforms for socio-economic issues, with a strong emphasis on civil rights and ethical themes. As Carlos González Villa appropriately observed about the case of the Slovene Socialist Youth (ZSMS), such a model of party was close to what Slavoj Žižek critically defined as “technocratic-liberal, multi-cultural and tolerant” party, engaged in the “post-political dimension”.⁵¹⁰ Yet, the Slovenian ZSMS remained solidly united around a political discourse calling for the secession from Yugoslavia: this narrative of “rupture” with the system allowed them to capitalize on youth discontentment.⁵¹¹ By contrast, the SSO-DS finally succeeded to run for the elections in November 1990 and later turned itself into the Liberal Party of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yet, the SSO-DS entered the electoral campaign fragmented and incapable of taking advantage of the small amount of “political capital” that the Bosnian youth social movements had accumulated in the late 1980s.

organisations; the SSO was not an exception, despite having actively supported the abolition of the ban on ethnic parties. During the entire electoral campaign, visits from representatives of former regime parties (SKBiH, DSS, SSO) to national parties’ rallies or events, or vice versa, were one of a kind, whereas reciprocal visits between the various national parties were very frequent. “Šta se dešava u SSO-DS BiH? Kadić ‘na svoju ruku’”, *Oslobo enje*, June 5, 1990; “Orgaivanja ili razilaženja u SSO-DS BiH. Ni smijena, ni ostavka”, *Oslobo enje*, June 7, 1990.

⁵⁰⁹ Kadić finally remained at his place, despite several requests for resignation coming from his party fellows, including some of his closest collaborators. It must recall that Rasim Kadić, Muslim by nationality, had had some confrontations with Serb members of the SSO during 1989 on political-national issues (different assessments on pro-Serb mobilisations). He later revealed that in early 1990, prior to these events, he had met twice Alija Izetbegović on the latter’s request. Izetbegović allegedly wanted to involve Kadić in the SDA (what finally never happened, since Kadić remained loyal to the SSO). Rasim Kadić, “The strength of his weakness”, *Bosnia Report*, 37-38, January - March 2004. Accessed on October 29, 2014. http://www.bosnia.org.uk/bosrep/report_format.cfm?articleid=1063&reportid=163

⁵¹⁰ González Villa, “Un nuevo estado”, 182. See also, from the same author: “Slovenian 1989: Elite Construction of a National Democracy”, *asopis za povijest Zapadne Hrvatske*, 9, 2014, 57-80.

⁵¹¹ The ZSMS converted itself to the Liberal Party of Slovenia and obtained 16,25% of seats in the elections for the Slovenian Parliament. To this day, the party still exists and plays a relevant role in the Slovenian political system. The SSO BiH obtained less than 2% of votes and only two of 240 seats at the Bosnian legislative elections held in November 1990.

Although the SSO had distanced itself from the Communists on ideological grounds, it was perceived as a part of the traditional political system and, especially, of the traditional political culture.⁵¹² As Kadi later acknowledged, the youth in Bosnia-Herzegovina, dissatisfied with the poor socio-economic performance of the state, accused the SSO of being partially responsible for that situation for having “ceased to represent the interest of youth as a social group”.⁵¹³ This helps one to understand why, while many youngsters from non-urban environments simply perceived the SSO BiH as something alien from their own material experience, even a considerable section of the urban and skilled youth did not believe in the bureaucratic structure of the organisation.

6.3. “A third way, there is no other”. The UJDI in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The UJDI (Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative, lit. *Udruženje za Jugoslovensku Demokratsku Inicijativu*) is widely considered the first and most important independent, non-regime and all-Yugoslav movement in the pre-multiparty Yugoslav environment.⁵¹⁴ Its first initiative came from a huge group of intellectuals from all over the Federation, mostly academics, who gathered on February 2, 1989 in a crowded hall of the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. Many of them came from the circles of humanist left-wing opposition to Titoism in the 1960s and 1970s, such as the review *Praxis* and the

⁵¹² Boži , “Conversations with Bosnian Youth”, 749.

⁵¹³ Rasim Kadi , interviewed in Boži , *ibidem*, 750.

⁵¹⁴ The focus is here placed, after a brief introduction, on the UJDI’s initiatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina and its interaction with the League of Communists (mainly conflictive) and the opposition (both cooperative and conflictive).

On the UJDI’s ideological premises, Yugoslav-wide political actions and consequences, see: Mila Orli , “Od postkomunizma do postjugoslavenstva”; Ljubica Spaskovska, “Vavilonski košmar. Jugoslovenstvo, antinacionalizam, alternative 1989-1991”, *Republika*, 532-535, 2012. Accessed December 12, 2014. <http://www.republika.co.rs/532-535/20.html>; Ljubica Spaskovska, “Landscapes of Resistance, Hope and Loss: Yugoslav Supra-Nationalism and Anti-Nationalism”, in Bojan Bili and Vesna Jankovi , (eds.), *Resisting the Evil: (Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Contentions*, Baden Baden: Nomos, 2012, 37-61; Marco Abram, “L’UJDI. Un’esperienza alternativa nell’89 jugoslavo”, *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea*, 1, 2009. Accessed November 29, 2014. http://www.studistorici.com/2009/10/19/abram_ujdi; Edin Omer i , “Alternativna politička scena u Bosni i Hercegovini (Udruženje za Jugoslavensku Demokratsku Inicijativu, Pretparlament Jugoslavije, Forum za etničke odnose)”, *Historijska traganja*, 7, 2011, 231-239; Paul Stubbs, “Flex Actors and Philanthropy in (Post-)Conflict Arenas: Soros’ Open Society Foundations in the Post-Yugoslav Space”, *Croatian Political Science Review*, 50, 5, 2013, 114-138.

so-called “School of Korula”, and had joined democratic-reformist initiatives in the 1980s.⁵¹⁵

The UJDI was based on two basic principles. The first was the transformation of the state through a struggle for the *elementary preconditions of democratisation* which, in the words of Nebojša Popov were the following: 1) freedom of thought and expression, 2) freedom of political activity, 3) free multi-party elections.⁵¹⁶ The second was the *maintenance of Yugoslavia* as a united, federal State, rejecting both centralist and separatist tendencies and denouncing not only the lack of democratic *legitimacy*, but also the absence of democratic *organisation* of the Yugoslav state, which were seen as mutually interconnected. The UJDI’s manifesto affirmed that the federal system “can hardly function” because the political decision-making passed through the republics, which acted as separate nation-states, to the detriment of individual citizens. The Manifesto stated that “[...] there are important aspects of the everyday life of all Yugoslav citizens which can be rationally governed at the level of Yugoslavia as a whole”, thus implicitly wishing for a complete reorganisation of the state structure (by transferring back some jurisdiction to the central government).⁵¹⁷ The UJDI affirmed that “the most fundamental reason for its establishment is the fact that in present-day Yugoslavia there is no political initiative that is both Yugoslav and democratic.”⁵¹⁸ UJDI’s founders interpreted also that the League of Communists was a non-Yugoslav option, since it had completely lost its integrative function, so that the purpose was precisely to fill that vacuum.

However, the UJDI, from its very beginning, firmly rejected to be a proper political party. In the “introductory note” which defined their programmatic principles, Branko Horvat explained that: “Every political party is an organisation of the likeminded, whose aim is to take power. We are not interested in power, nor do we all think the same.

⁵¹⁵ Orli , “Od postkomunizma do postjugoslavenstva”, 101; Spaskovska, “Landscapes of Resistance”, 49; Abram, “L’UJDI”, 5.

The members’ list encompassed all the six republics, besides different arts and academic disciplines: among them, Predrag Matvejevi , Abdulah Sidran, Karlo Štajner, Dubravka Ugreši , Bogdan Bogdanovi , Vesna Peši , Nebojša Popov, Gajo Sekuli , Žarko Puhovski, Rudi Šupek, Rastko Mo nik, Tibor Varadi, Skelzen Maliqi, Ljubomir Cuculovski.

⁵¹⁶ Nebojša Popov, interview by author. Zrenjanin, May 22, 2013.

⁵¹⁷ “Manifest za Jugoslavensku Demokratsku Inicijativu”, *Republika*, 1, 1, March 1989, quoted in Dejan Djoki (ed.), *Yugoslavism. Histories of a failed idea, 1918-1992*, London: Hurst & Company, 2003, 300-301.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 300.

[...]We do not wish to be a political party, because our aim is more fundamental: [it is] the development of a movement for the democratic transformation of Yugoslavia. Therefore, we are not interested in power, but in creating conditions that would make possible such a [democratic] transformation”.⁵¹⁹ The Association also declined to take the form of a social movement: “We are not a militant or - to use the old jargon - a revolutionary organisation. We do not wish to bring the regime down by creating chaos, nor by organizing street protests and solidarity meetings. Instead of destruction and public disorder, we propose reconstruction and rebuilding [of the society] through democratic means”. The UJDI’s explicit refusal of social mobilisations and street protests can be explained by the repercussions of the “anti-bureaucrat” protests. According to Horvat’s assessment, they had originated from an understandable complaint against the government, but had been manipulated by new and young leaderships, which was a direct reference to the role of Slobodan Milošević in Serbia. Horvat wrote: “Discontent in Montenegro and even Vojvodina is understandable and I myself wondered how it did not break out earlier there and in other parts of the country. Because of the lack of democratic institutions, the people who came out onto the streets, are now, as usually happens, being used by political demagogues whose sole interest is power. We campaign for a democratic initiative; we want to prevent future problems by solving them in time and by democratic means.”⁵²⁰ These assumptions materialized into a proposal for the constitutional reform of Yugoslavia as a multi-party parliamentary republic with the typical bicameral structure of federal states. A lower chamber should represent the Yugoslav citizens and an upper chamber would represent the Republics, on an equal footing. Both chambers would be elected through the “one citizen, one vote” (*jedan gra anin – jedan glas*) principle.⁵²¹ This proposal well illustrated the UJDI’s attempt at setting a balance between the “indisputable rights of the individuals” – which would be the primary holder of political sovereignty and the retention of a decentralized model, in order to respect the rights of the minority and achieve an efficient government of the whole Federation.

During the course of 1989, the UJDI managed to establish branches all over the Federation, despite the hostility of the communist authorities. The Association was denied formal registration both in Zagreb and Belgrade, since its alleged political purposes did

⁵¹⁹ Branko Horvat, “Uvodna rije ”, *Republika*, 1, 1, March 1989, in Djoki , *Yugoslavism*, 299.

⁵²⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵²¹ Orli , “Od postkomunizma do postjugoslavenstva”, 108.

not fit within the types of social organisation accepted by the regime. The central branch was granted formal recognition only on December 29th, 1989 in Titograd (today Podgorica), Montenegro, after it had been denied both in Zagreb and Belgrade.⁵²² In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the UJDI had similar problems with the authorities. The first Bosnian sections were established in Mostar on May 27 and in Sarajevo on June 21, 1989, but neither of them were officially accepted, hence they technically acted illegally, albeit in the framework of a sort of *de facto* tolerance.⁵²³ During the first year, the Bosnian UJDI operated under constant fear of being repressed by the state. Borislav Grahovac, one of the leaders of the Mostar branch, issued in 2009 an emphatic account of his experience: “We knew that for our activism we were putting our lives at risk, but we did not know then to what extent. I later found out that we were included in a secret list for arrest or eventual execution. The communist government in Bosnia-Herzegovina was fully aware of our activity. Spies were everywhere. The government of the ‘*dark vilayet*’ went so far as to draft a list of thirty intellectuals who were identified as dangerous, because they had democratic orientation and, in case of state of emergency, would need to be liquidated”.⁵²⁴

The Bosnian official press mainly neglected the activity of the UJDI. In 1989, the daily *Oslobo enje* was still focused on institutional discourse and intra-party debate about (the lack of) reforms.⁵²⁵ The split of the League of Communists after the 14th Congress, bringing the prospect of a more rapid regime change, would barely open some space for the political opposition. Abdulah Sidran, the well-known Bosnian writer and then a member of the Sarajevan UJDI, sharply denounced (paradoxically, in the pages of the same *Oslobo enje*, where he used to write a column about culture) the media blockade and the authoritarian response of the government towards the opposition as decisive factors for the inexistence of a political pluralism in Bosnia-Herzegovina. “This Bosnian

⁵²² Abram, “L’UJDI”, 4. In January 1990, the UJDI had 1.002 registered members from 13 branches throughout the six republics. In Bosnia-Herzegovina 3 local branches were formed, with 149 members (88 in Mostar, 26 in Sarajevo, 17 in Konjic, 18 from the rest of SRBiH territory). “Sastav prve redovne skupštine UJDI”, *Republika*, January 1990.

⁵²³ The branches followed two different procedures. The Mostar’s UJDI applied for subscribing within the umbrella of the Socialist Alliance (SSRN), whereas the Sarajevo branch refused the “patronage” of the SSRN and asked recognition from the Bosnian Ministry of Interior. However, neither of the two were finally processed. “UJDI. Bez partijskih ambicija”, *Oslobo enje*, December 21, 1989; “Jugoslavenski savez I bosanski sitni vez”, *Oslobo enje*, March 11, 1990.

⁵²⁴ Grahovac’s account of his experience in the UJDI was published as a *feuilleton* in the Sarajevo diary *Oslobo enje*. “UJDI u Mostaru. Balkansko ogledalo (1). Odbacivanje komunizma”, *Oslobo enje*, April 1, 2009.

⁵²⁵ As Edin Omerić recalls, the press followed the “cosmetic changes in the then ruling party”. Omerić, “Alternativna politička scena”, 232.

small embroidery [lit. *Bosanski sitni vez*], whose core is the fear for the unknown, anachronism, inertia and routine, is the major plague of our current political leadership. Those who only can dance to a recognizable tune cannot develop a musical listening at all; in the same way, those who do not recognize the spirit of times do not have a political talent. The spectre of Europe is haunting Communism!⁵²⁶ [...] Nonetheless, our political leadership ‘opened the doors wide open’,⁵²⁷ sweeping away all that is not old air. [...] Here, there is no salvation, nor help’.⁵²⁸ Interestingly, Sidran’s animosity towards the Bosnian Communists echoed (though from a different perspective) the typical labels of “dark province” (lit. “*tamni vilajet*”), dogmatism, conformism, etc., traditionally attributed to the SKBiH in previous years by different actors, including non-party intellectuals or political leaders from the other republics.

The confrontation between the UJDI and SKBiH became even more intense in early 1990, since the ruling party initially called for elections (scheduled for March 25-27, 1990) without approving a new law on political association, and then passed a law that still kept restrictions on opposition parties. The Bosnian UJDI interpreted these moves as a convenient way to neutralize the opposition and demanded to postpone the vote, in order to duly allow the consolidation and the organisation of new parties.⁵²⁹ Even when ethno-nationalist mobilisation was already on the rise, the Bosnian UJDI focused its criticisms on the Communist rule as the primary responsible for the “institutionalized nationalism” and the ethnic homogenization that led to the formation of national forces as its logical consequence.⁵³⁰ For this reason, the UJDI, coherent with its liberal concept, did not support the SKBiH’s decision to maintain the ban on national parties.⁵³¹

Due to its democracy-first and anti-authoritarian approach, the UJDI did not take into consideration an eventual cooperation with the Bosnian Communists based on their common stance, namely a non-nationalist and pro-Yugoslav orientation. The UJDI’s

⁵²⁶ This phrase, obviously a gig on the well-known preamble of Marx’s Manifesto, was a quote from the Zagreb writer Josip Sever (1938-1989) who was friend of Sidran.

⁵²⁷ This is a reference to the famous phrase pronounced by Duraković during the 14th Congress against the supporters of the Bosnian Initiative (see chapt. 2.5).

⁵²⁸ Abdulah Sidran, “Jugoslavenski savez i bosanski sitni vez”, *Oslobo enje*, March 11, 1990.

⁵²⁹ Željko Rebac, reported in “Prolongiranje izbora. Odgo en start trke za vlast”, *Oslobo enje*, March 1, 1990.

⁵³⁰ Željko Rebac, “Nacionalizam ne treba da udi”, *Oslobo enje*, March 14, 1990

⁵³¹ “Tribina UJDI-ja u Mostaru. BiH nije ni iji trofej”, *Oslobo enje*, April 14, 1990; Gajo Sekuli , interview by author. Sarajevo, May 15, 2014.

leaders, who still resented the hostility of the state, simply did not believe in the Communists' self-reform. As Gajo Sekuli affirmed, "with them [the Communists] there was no chance to cooperate. [...] We had created a third way between nationalists and old communists. This is a liberal-democratic way, there is no other. A civic way confronting this huge amount of ruined people who could not change".⁵³² Moreover, the UJDI's absolute priority always remained the election of a Constitutional Assembly, both at the federal and republican level: in Nebojša Popov's words, the Association sought a proper "constitutional revolution", the only way which would directly bring to a stable social system based on consensus and plurality through the formation of a political community. According to Popov, any other process lacking a democratic constitution as the main goal would result into a "circular revolution", an uninterrupted and cyclical social process that inevitably leads to an authoritarian turn.⁵³³

The sharply critical stance on the Communist rule does not imply that the UJDI embraced a radical anti-communist line, a label that, for instance, its members generally rejected, as they did not want to be associated with the emerging nationalist movements who were exploiting anti-socialism to reinforce their discourse.⁵³⁴ Moreover, most of the prominent members of the UJDI had a left-wing background and individually identified themselves with progressive socialist or social-democratic ideas. On the other hand, the Association avoided taking positions on socio-economic issues, not only to safeguard its internal heterogeneity, but also to respect the deliberate choice of focusing on the pre-conditions of democracy as the central goal of the organisation. The choice of leaving the socio-economic issues out of their platform had been supported widely, though not unanimously, within the Yugoslav branch. The Slovene Rastko Mo nik recalls: "I had a discussion with Nebojša [Popov]. He was reluctant, he did not want to enter the social question, and the social question at that time was, you know... the 1980s were crisis! He

⁵³² Gajo Sekuli , interview by author, Sarajevo, May 15, 2014.

⁵³³ The concept was borrowed from the philosopher Alexander Molnar. Examples of "circular revolution" according to Popov, are not only the nazi-fascist and the Stalinist regimes, but also the post-communist incomplete democratisations in the former Yugoslav republics, particularly the case of Serbia in the 2000s. Nebojša Popov, interview by author. Zrenjanin, May 22, 2013; Nebojša Popov, "Ima li levice u Srbiji?", *Republika*, 564-565, January 2014. Accessed June 23, 2014. <http://www.republika.co.rs/564-565/13.html>; Nebojša Popov, interviewed in "Rešenje je novi ustav", *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, September 6, 2005. Accessed June 23, 2014. <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/article/857466.html>; Marco Abram, "L'89 jugoslavo", *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, June 29, 2009. Accessed June 23, 2014. <http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Serbia/L-89-jugoslavo-46153>.

⁵³⁴ Abdulah Kova evi , "Proizvo a antikomunizma", *Naši Dani*, April 27, 1990. Kova evi was a member of the UJDI branch in Bijeljina.

said ‘Well, one of course cannot betray his old youth beliefs’, but then he avoided the question. He was basically saying, ‘It’s not time yet’, ‘Democracy first’, and I personally was very sceptical about parliamentary party democracy, ‘bourgeois’ democracy. [But] I was in the minority”.⁵³⁵

A cornerstone of the Bosnian UJDI, particularly over the course of 1990, when political polarization along national lines was on the rise, was the defence of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s integrity and autonomy. The Association denounced the “paternalistic” interferences of some nationalist movements from other Yugoslav republics, particularly from Croatia and Serbia, which were constantly making groundless references to the alleged discrimination that either Croats, Serbs or Muslims were suffering in Bosnia-Herzegovina. “We affirm that the Bosnian-Herzegovinian citizens, in the ways that they can elaborate and establish by themselves, are able to carry out all the tasks that the adoption of parliamentary democracy has assigned them in this republic and in Yugoslavia”, said a statement of the Bosnian UJDI issued on May 20, 1990. Its far-sighted assessment was that such claims from nationalist movements were driven by domestic political opportunism and represented an unacceptable justification for territorial claims that, besides violating the democratizing process in the republic, could contribute to the break-up of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of the whole country.⁵³⁶

Although the Yugoslav UJDI had, initially, firmly rejected to become a political party, there was a constant internal debate about taking part in the electoral competition or not.⁵³⁷ At one point, the Bosnian UJDI even announced its intention to run for elections,⁵³⁸ but finally withdrew and directed its efforts at inspiring and coordinating a united, democratic and non-national opposition, together with movements and

⁵³⁵ Rastko Mo nik, interview by author. Ljubljana, June 7, 2013.

⁵³⁶ The statement was reported in “Protest UJDI-a – Zajednica podružnica BiH. Protiv pokli a ‘o inških stratega’”, *Borba*, May 21, 1990. It specifically alluded to some statements from the Croatian HDZ, the League of Communists of Serbia and the SNO (Serbian National Renewal, the far-right movement founded by Vuk Drašković and Vojislav Šešelj) which had called into question the autonomy and integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In that period, outrage among non-national Bosnian political circles was spreading after a comment of Šime odan, a prominent member of the Croatian HDZ, claiming that Bosnia-Herzegovina was “Croatian from ancient times” and that the Croatian flag would fly on the top of Mount Romanija (i.e. over Sarajevo) within a few years. Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 165.

⁵³⁷ One of the most influential and staunch supporters of the electoral option was Nebojša Popov from the Serbian UJDI. Indeed, only in Serbia would the UJDI run for the republican elections in 1990, whilst in the other five republics it rejected to do so (excepting some isolated cases in a handful of municipalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina).

⁵³⁸ “UJDI ide na izbore”, *Borba*, June 26, 1990.

personalities from the cultural and intellectual world.⁵³⁹ The result was the creation of the Democratic Forum (*Demokratski Forum*), composed by the UJDI, the Alliance of Socialist Youth (SSO BiH) and two minor forces, the Democratic Party (DP), and the Socialdemocrat Alliance (SS).⁵⁴⁰

The Forum's principles coincided with those promoted by the UJDI, namely the foundation of an "authentic democracy", where the sovereignty would stem from the individual citizens of the Republics and the Federation. Those concepts, as it was stated in the presentation, "imply security, freedom and all the rights of the Serbs in Croatia, of the Croats in Vojvodina, of the Muslims in Serbia, of the Montenegrins in Slovenia etc. Since our peoples are so interspersed and mixed, a totalitarian concept of narrow-mindedness and self-sufficiency, wherever it is applied, cannot be a democratic solution for the existence, the prosperity and the happiness of the citizens of Yugoslavia as a whole". The Forum stated its opposition to the "ruling doctrine of the sovereignty of the peoples and the nation", rejecting any "ideological and political totalitarianism", which also included the emerging ethno-national movements. The Forum promoted a third-way, a "democratic-alternative" option, equally distant from both the "bolshevik" and the "strictly national" movements.⁵⁴¹ However, the Forum failed almost immediately to become an aggregating factor, due to its lack of material and financial resources, the enormous difficulties to gain public because of the very unstable conditions for political pluralism in Bosnia, and some internal discrepancies. For all intents and purposes, the Forum ceased to exist soon and each of its founding movements continued to act separately.

Besides setting the pre-conditions for political pluralism, another main issue on which the UJDI, and particularly its Bosnian branch, focused its attention was the conflict in Kosovo. It was the Mostar branch, under the decisive initiative of its leader Željko

⁵³⁹ Gajo Sekuli , interview by author. Sarajevo, May 15, 2014. Sekuli claims that, among others, the famous film director Emir Kusturica attended the project in its first phase, but he abandoned it for individual conflicts and lack of interest. Kusturica later joined the Alliance of Reformist Forces of Yugoslavia (SRSJ; see chapter 8).

⁵⁴⁰ The two leaders of DP (lit. *Demokratska Partija*) and SS (lit. *Socijaldemokratski Savez*) were respectively Petar Mili and Borislav Grahovac, also leading members of the UJDI branch in Mostar. Both these parties would be completely marginal in the Bosnian political spectrum, being active practically only in Mostar, relying on a low number of members. On the eve of the November's elections, the DP declared to have about 500 members, the SS 100. (Source: *Stranke u Jugoslaviji*, Beograd: Tanjug, 1990, 56; 60).

⁵⁴¹ "Nakon formiranja Demokratskog Foruma BiH. Mjesto pod suncem pluralizma", *Oslobo enje*, May 14, 1990.

Rebac, who organized and hosted some of the round tables (attended by representatives from all the sides involved in the conflict: delegates from Pristina and Belgrade official organisations, Kosovar-Albanian and Kosovar-Serb activists having different political orientations, etc.),⁵⁴² in order to set the stage for dialogue. It was one of the rare (if not the very first) initiatives of such kind, given that the polarization of Kosovo during the late 1980s had interrupted almost every space of cooperation and dialogue even within cultural and academic circles in the province.⁵⁴³

These initiatives reveal the strong pro-Yugoslav commitment of the UJDI, which recognized the Kosovo issue as the trigger of the social-political crisis in the whole Federation, suggesting that no democratic progress in Yugoslavia, or in each of the individual republics, would have been achieved without reaching a solution for that province. In the UJDI's view, a "domination-type" of inter-ethnic relations was being legitimated in the Kosovo by political elites and imposed through force of arms (as it was becoming the case in the province after the radicalization of the Albanian opposition, the recurring intervention of the Yugoslav Army through "extraordinary measures", the nationalist pro-Serb turn of the Belgrade and Pristina circles). This would inevitably destabilize the entire Yugoslavia and prevent any kind of democratic transition.

Once more, the promoters attracted the attention of the security services and had some clashes with the press. Gajo Sekuli, reminding one of these meetings in Priština, explained that "there were about 40 among NGOs, parties, representatives... [for each of them] there were at least two security men, secret policy... My room in Pristina was always, as soon I arrived, raided. All the rooms, not only mine".⁵⁴⁴ The Sarajevo daily *Oslobo enje* gave little visibility to the events and covered them with varying degrees of criticism. Some articles were balanced, others undermined the UJDI's activism labelling

⁵⁴² The round table in Mostar was attended by: the Democratic Alliance of Kosovo (DSK), the Council for the Truth on the Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins, the Social Democratic party of Kosovo, the Youth Parliament in Kosovo, the Democrat Party of Yugoslavia, the Helsinki Committee, the Mostar SSRN, the Yugoslav Forum for the Human Rights, the Croat Peasants Liberal Party (HSLs), and the UJDI.

⁵⁴³ However, the severing of cultural relations was dramatically emerging also at the federal level. The most known example is the Yugoslav writers' Union, which broke up in early 1989 due to deep divergences among their sections (particularly the Slovenian and the Serbian) about the national question. Jasna Dragovič-Soso, "Intellectuals and the collapse of Yugoslavia: the end of the Yugoslav writers' union" in Djokić, *Yugoslavism*, 276-285.

⁵⁴⁴ Gajo Sekuli, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 15, 2014.

it as biased, “pretentious” and allegedly favouring the Albanian side.⁵⁴⁵ Other newspapers were even sharper. The Belgrade-based *Veernje Novosti*, close to the Milošević’s rule, called the initiative a “farce of democracy” and accused the association of supporting Kosovo’s secession from Serbia and Yugoslavia, although the UJDI firmly opposed any changes in the existing borders. Such coverage was the cause of a public controversy between Željko Rebac (the leader of the Mostar UJDI) and Radivoje Gut (the *Veernje Novosti*’s correspondent from Mostar), through letters issued in the daily *Osloboenje*. Rebac said that Gut was a “coffee-talk informer” [*denuncijant kafanskog tipa*] and a “local regime slave”.⁵⁴⁶

Despite these obstacles, and although some inevitable arguments arose during the meetings, the UJDI succeeded to complete the cycle of round tables and to attract a certain interest from the public. The initiative also led to the publication of a report titled *The Kosovo Knot. Untie or cut?* (lit. *Kosovski cvor. Drešiti ili se i?*), based on solid quantitative and qualitative research aimed at refuting the typical propagandistic arguments of the respective nationalist sides on the Kosovo question.⁵⁴⁷ These events showed a potential for civic-led initiatives and for further dialogue and debate by building an openly democratic public sphere.

Nevertheless, such efforts mostly remained a dead end, as they did not encourage a further engagement from other organisations, let alone by the official institutions.

⁵⁴⁵ See, for example, “UJDI-ev skup o Kosovu: novi korak i stari raskolarci”, *Osloboenje*, March 2, 1990; “UJDIeva tribina o Kosovu pred Mostarcima. Dijalog potvrdio nepomirljivost”, *Osloboenje*, March 3, 1990.

⁵⁴⁶ “UJDI-Olimp and novinar-vratar”, *Osloboenje*, March 19, 1990; Željko Rebac, “Reagovanja. Vodi u prošlost”, *Osloboenje*, March 23, 1990.

⁵⁴⁷ Srdja Popović et al., *Izvjestaj nezavisne komisije. Kosovski cvor: drešiti ili se i?*, Titograd: Hronos, 1990; the book is available on the *Pešanik* site (Accessed September 10, 2015).

<http://pescanik.net/wp-content/PDF/Srdja/kosovskicvordresitiiliseci.pdf>.

The report started from three basic questions: 1) the causes for the high emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo; 2) the chances for political will; 3) the perspectives for dialogue. It was showed that the Serb-Montenegrin migration had been primarily caused by long-term socio-economic factors (rather than 'forced' by violence and social-national pressures). At the same time, the low geographic mobility of Kosovar Albanians and the social status of the Albanian women, much less inclined to move and to seek occupation, influenced the birth rate and the national balance. Furthermore, the report stated that the inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo had been traditionally set on a “domination” model of one group over the other. According to the report, the ruling communist (pro-Serb) authorities and the Albanian nationalist mobilisations for independence from 1981 followed the same pattern.

Finally, the report did not provide for concrete proposals, except proclaiming the respect of individually civil rights and the existing borders, and recommending a “tolerant dialogue” within institutions. It also admitted quite pessimistically that progress towards the dialogue was very slow and that the opposition was too weak or, in the case of Serbia, not enough committed to a solution enfranchised from the rhetoric of the “national interest”.

Moreover, the fact that the electoral competition was to be played at the republican level, rather than at the Yugoslav one, implied that domestic issues in each federal unit would be primarily relevant in the campaign, besides the influence of socio-economic effects or the perception of inter-ethnic relations in workplaces and in the everyday life of citizens.

On the other hand, the UJDI's hopes for the intervention of some "third-party" institutional actors on Kosovo, particularly the Federal Government, were in vain. Around mid-1990, a UJDI delegation met with the Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Marković and his deputy Zivko Pregl, urging to take action about the Kosovo conflict, seen as a turning point in the democratic stabilization of the whole state. The ministers replied that they would not be involved in that, since their absolute priority was to foment economic recovery as the tool to appease social and national tensions. The Federal Government also wanted to avoid open controversies with the JNA, which was directly involved in extraordinary measures and supported a firm hand against the Albanian separatism.⁵⁴⁸ Rastko Mošnik, who attended that meeting, recalled: "[The Federal Government's] line was that the key was to stop inflation. This was the priority. So, the other problems [were marginal]. Pregl saw they did not know what the Army thinks and what it wants to do. I said, 'Well, there are two problems you really have to tackle. One is Kosovo. The other is the Army'. The Federal Government was not active; it should be active on that. Maybe it was already beyond the possibility of a solution, but still... The army was something like a sleeping dragon that you don't know what it will do. But [Marković] did not react, he did not answer. We told him our views, but Marković was taking his economic line and privatisation. [...] Pregl was an economist. He systematically underestimated the political questions. He said 'Well, if we bring Kosovo up, if the standards start rising, the tensions would decrease'. He had a simple economist mind, in some aspects he was right, but in Yugoslavia... [he was not]". For instance, the different assessments about Kosovo were one of the several key points of discord between Ante Marković and the UJDI. The Association generally reproached the Prime Minister for having an overly restrained attitude about political reforms, though it generally backed the other programmes and measures of the federal government.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁸ Rastko Mošnik, interview by author. Ljubljana, June 7, 2013.

⁵⁴⁹ Ljubica Spaskovska also mentions the contacts between Marković and the UJDI. Quoting an interview with Ljubomir Cuculovski (then a member of the Macedonian UJDI), she argues that the lack of vision about Kosovo was actually the crucial remark that came from the Association to the Prime Minister. This

As is typical of “intellectual-centred” movements, the UJDI was mainly based in urban centres, although this does not mean (as it sometimes implied when referring to Bosnia-Herzegovina) that it was limited to the borders of its capital Sarajevo. Branches of the Association were set also in middle and small sized cities such as Mostar, Tuzla, Konjic, Bijeljina, Živinice and Brčko. Among all the UJDI republican sections in Yugoslavia, the Bosnian was the most territorially widespread. It is particularly noteworthy the case of Mostar, which in early 1990 was defined in the press and common political discourse as the “capital city” of the alternative political scene in Bosnia-Herzegovina, especially thanks to the intense activity of the local UJDI. Some elements of the role of Mostar can be probably found in its social-national structure and the historical tradition, which made it one of the most “Yugoslav” cities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The national composition of the three mayor groups was extremely balanced,⁵⁵⁰ while the rate of mixed marriages was one of the highest in all Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵⁵¹ Since the early 20th century, Mostar had been the stronghold for non-national, progressive and pro-Yugoslav movements such as trade unions and left-wing parties.⁵⁵² These characters could have set the conditions for the development of that

would be a decisive reason why the UJDI not only failed to join, but also denied an active support to the Marković's movement, the Alliance of Reformist Forces (SRSJ), in almost all the republics except Serbia. See Spaskovska, “Vavilonski košmar”, note 29.

⁵⁵⁰ According to the 1991 census, in no other municipality of Bosnia-Herzegovina the most numerous community (in this case Muslims, 34,63%) had such a low figure. The Croats were 33,99%, the Serbs 18,63%, Yugoslavs 10,08%. (FZS – Institute for Statistics of FBiH, “Stanovništvo prema izjašnjenju o nacionalnoj pripadnosti po opštinama popis 1991”.

http://www.fzs.ba/popis.htm#_POPIS_STANOVNIŠTVA_1991_I_STARIJI .

⁵⁵¹ Various sources quote Mostar as the city with the most mixed marriages in all Yugoslavia, jointly with Sarajevo and Vukovar. Sreten Vujović, “An uneasy view of the city. In the service of militant nationalism”, in Nebojša Popov (ed.), *The road to war in Serbia. Trauma and catharsis*, Budapest: CEU Press, 2000, 136; Dario Terzi, “Da Mostar a Mostar”, *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, January 19, 2004. Accessed July 7, 2014. <http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Bosnia-Erzegovina/Da-Mostar-a-Mostar-25096>.

Mostar had also a very high percentage of “Yugoslavs by nationality”. According to the 1991 census, in Mostar's municipality the 10,08% declared themselves as Yugoslavs, what was almost the double than the rate in overall Bosnia-Herzegovina (5,53%). In 1981, the figures were much higher, as Yugoslavs were the 15,5% in the Mostar's municipality and 23,2% in the urban centre (cfr., respectively, the 8,4% and 18,6% in overall Bosnia). However, these rates were similar to the ones of the other biggest cities (FZS, “Stanovništvo”; “Nacionalni sastav stanovništva SFR Jugoslavije”, 47, available on <http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/G1981/Pdf/G19814001.pdf> . Accessed September 10, 2015. On the connection between urban immigration, social cohesion and the peculiar Mostar-Yugoslav identity, see Giovanni d'Alessio, “Divided and Contested Cities in Modern European History. The Example of Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina”, in Sabine Rutar (ed.), *Beyond the Balkans. Toward an Inclusive History of Southeastern Europe*, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2014, 461-462.

⁵⁵² Mostar was commonly known as “red city” (lit. *crveni grad*) in the Titoist era, and even as “little Moscow” before 1945, as the cells of the then persecuted Communist Party of Yugoslavia were very active. Terzi, “Da Mostar a Mostar”; “Pluralistička scena. Hrabrost u kratkim pantalonama”, *Oslobođenje*, May 14, 1990.

committed *milieu*. Another key factor could also be the geographic and cultural proximity with the Croatian region of Dalmatia, which transmitted a louder echo of changing rule, due to the more advanced Croatian path to multi-party system. However, despite its intense activism, even the Mostar's UJDI did not manage to extend itself much beyond of intellectual and the founders' circles.⁵⁵³ Moreover, political differentiations and national rivalries soon emerged at the top of the Mostar branch, hindering its development.

In conclusion, the UJDI in Bosnia-Herzegovina did not achieve the goal of fomenting the pre-conditions of pluralism. Indeed, the (slow) progress of Bosnian transition was determined more by factors occurring outside Bosnia-Herzegovina itself and inside the narrow élite of the republican rule, rather than by civic impulses from below. The Bosnian Communists remained indifferent to the UJDI's demands. Their first source of concern always remained the emergence of national parties, while the democratic alternatives were seen as too weak to be considered either a counterpart or a serious opponent. The UJDI did not manage to expand its influence on the public sphere for various reasons: 1) its own deliberate choice to remain a cultural-intellectual organisation, with a vanguard" political content that opposed having party structures, would have needed more time to consolidate itself; 2) the UJDI focused all its attention on democratisation, consciously leaving aside the socio-economic and the national question as a sub-product of the political impasse. These aspects limited the UJDI's sphere of action and the potential interest of wider segments of the population. This was particularly true in the Bosnian context, upset by strikes and unrest stemming from the economic crisis, besides mutual fears of resurging national mobilisations; 3) the movement had to face strong obstacles from the Bosnian communist rule, such as official registration denied by the authorities or ostracisation by the media. The Association strived persistently to elude them through the publication of their own journal, *Republika*,⁵⁵⁴ or through sending letters to the main newspapers and magazines in order

Significantly, the other city known as "red" and progressive before the 1990s war, Tuzla, also had a quite active UJDI branch. Instead, in other big cities such as Banja Luka and Zenica, the movement failed to form a branch.

⁵⁵³ Neven Andjeli , "L'émérgence de la société civile", 9.

⁵⁵⁴ *Republika* was created in March 1989 as the official magazine of the Yugoslav UJDI. It started as a monthly publication, but almost immediately encountered financial problems, so the issuing was not constant. In early 1990 the price of *Republika* was raised to 10 dinars. To have a comparison, the then *Oslobo enje*'s price was 4 dinars. In a context of economic crisis, people hardly bought more than one

to establish contacts with the public.⁵⁵⁵ Yet, these efforts to open “alternative” communicative spaces had only limited effects; 4) the main defeat for the UJDI occurred at the Yugoslav level. Their supreme aim, namely the calling of a federal constitutional assembly after an all-Yugoslav voting process, remained a dead end. The fact that the first elections were held in the republics (not in the whole Federation) reinforced the weight of national narratives, being suitable for the formation of new statehoods, while undermining the efforts for a complete constitutional reform.⁵⁵⁶ In other words, the UJDI’s efforts to contribute to the preconditions of democracy were impotent also because they remained “imprisoned” in the sub-state, republican borders of the Yugoslav transition.

newspaper, especially if they did not belong to intellectual or academic circles. That proves another difficulty for accessing the UJDI’s contents. In October 1990, the Belgrade UJDI’s circles created *Vreme*, a political weekly with manifest pro-liberal and pro-Yugoslav orientation, but with a less specialist target. Both *Vreme* and *Republika*, today a weekly and a bimonthly magazine, are still published nowadays.

⁵⁵⁵ In the first months of 1990, the UJDI’s members from all Bosnia-Herzegovina sent dozens of letters to the main newspapers and magazines, including those which had been generally hostile with them, as *Oslobo enje*. The Sarajevo diary published many of these letters that sometimes accused the media for allegedly insufficient or biased covering, sometimes simply propagated their activities and stances.

⁵⁵⁶ Orli , “Od postkomunizma do postjugoslavenstva”, 107.

7. “SAINT ANTE WILL SAVE YUGOSLAVIA”.

ANTE MARKOVI AND THE REFORMIST OPTION

“Thank you for showing that I have been quite active in this period [1989-1991].

*My extensive activity in this period does not mean
that I had actual power in whatever I was doing.*

You characterised my own work as being of a negotiating character.

*Using my own methods, I was looking for a solution,
trying to avoid a conflict and dissolution of Yugoslavia,
and to that end I committed all the forces at my disposal.”⁵⁵⁷*

Exploring the non-national option in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1990 requires a careful analysis of the contextual antecedents and of the political performance that led Ante Markovi , then Prime Minister of Federal Yugoslavia, to create his own political platform, the Alliance of Reformist Forces (SRSJ). Paradoxically, given its strongly civic character, the SRSJ was a genuine “President’s party”, with a strong identification with its founder and undisputed leader.

Ante Markovi was born in Konjic (Bosnia-Herzegovina) in 1924, but his family soon moved to Dubrovnik, where he grew up and attended school. When Yugoslavia entered the Second World War in 1941, Markovi joined the National Liberation Army. After the war he became actively involved in politics, and his experience as a partisan fighter gave him the image of a genuine Yugoslav patriot, a genuine anti-fascist who had never been directly associated with the high party ranks nor its institutions during most of his career.⁵⁵⁸ After graduating from the Technical Faculty of the University of Zagreb

⁵⁵⁷ Ante Markovi replying to Slobodan Miloševi , in ICTY Court Records, Transcripts, *Prosecutor vs. Miloševi* , IT-02-54, January 15, 2004, 30865. Accessed April 25, 2013.

http://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/trans/en/040115ED.htm .

⁵⁵⁸ However, although Markovi ’s participation in the Partisans’ struggle was commonly mentioned, there is little information about his precise participation. Josip Pejakovi , a famous movie actor in the Yugoslav region, a very close friend of Ante Markovi and a former cadre of the SRSJ as well, gave me some, to these days, publicly unknown accounts: “The Gestapo arrested him and imprisoned him in the infamous ‘Belebija’, [a special prison controlled by Nazi forces in front of the *Vije nica*, during the occupation of Sarajevo, author’s note]. There, he spent six months enduring heavy torture. He never wanted to speak about this. I wanted to make a TV program about this, but he did not want. And no one knows this. When all ended, when the war was over, they [the Communists] offered him everything. [They proposed him] to

in 1954, Markovi was hired as a junior engineer by the Zagreb-based electro-technical company “Rade Kon ar”. He would spend his entire professional career there, being appointed as general director in 1961, a position he kept until 1984. Under his management, “Rade Kon ar” became one of the leading firms in the Yugoslav electro-technical sector, being present in four of the six republics with about 25,000 workers and 4,500 engineers, who were known as “Markovi’s janissaries”.⁵⁵⁹ Although Markovi stayed away from active politics, his leading managerial role granted him a highly prominent role in the design of the economic policy and in the *de facto* decision-making in Croatia and all over Yugoslavia, also thanks to his close relations with Tito’s small entourage.⁵⁶⁰ Markovi had a prominent role in the foundation of the Yugoslav Bank for International Economic Cooperation (JUBMES), created in 1979 to promote and finance the export activities of Yugoslav companies and one of the main vehicles of the economic liberalisation of the 1980s. Markovi was personally proud of that experience. In 2003 he recalled: “I insisted greatly on organizing businessmen to set up the JUBMES Bank [...] and this proved to be an excellent idea”.⁵⁶¹ Until the early 1990s, JUBMES was the first and only national export credit agency in Central-Eastern Europe.⁵⁶²

Thanks to his successful experience as a manager, Ante Markovi obtained his first institutional post in 1980, when he became the Prime Minister of the Croatian government. In 1986, he was elected President of Croatia. His career turned him into one of the potential candidates for the post of Yugoslav Prime Minister, after the resignation of Branko Mikuli on December 30, 1988.⁵⁶³ Mikuli, in charge since 1986, had initially

be a political commissar. He replied ‘I don’t want. I want to complete my electro-technical studies, be an engineer and work at Kon ar’”. Josip Pejakovi, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 5, 2014.

⁵⁵⁹ Josip Pejakovi, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 5, 2014; Milan Gavrovi, “Ante Markovi, simbol svega što je Jugoslaviji trebalo”, *Nezavisne.com*, December 6, 2011. Accessed May 6, 2013.

<http://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/ex-yu/Ante-Markovic-simbol-svega-sto-je-Jugoslaviji-trebalo/118163>.

⁵⁶⁰ Josip Pejakovi, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 5, 2014. Pejakovi observes that Markovi’s role in Croatia was similar to that of Emerik Blum (1911-1984) in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Blum was, for decades, the director of Energoinvest, one of the biggest engineering companies in Yugoslavia and the biggest in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁵⁶¹ Ante Markovi replying to Slobodan Milošević, in ICTY Court Records, Transcripts, *Prosecutor vs. Milošević*, IT-02-54, October 23, 2003, 28020. Accessed April 25, 2013.

http://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/trans/en/031023ED.htm.

⁵⁶² “Background”, *Jubmes Banka A.D.* Accessed January 17, 2015.

<http://www.jubmes.rs/code/navigate.asp?Id=115>.

⁵⁶³ Branko Mikuli, born in 1928 near Bugojno (central-western Bosnia) from a Bosnian Croat family. He was arguably the most prominent politician in 1970s and early 1980s, Bosnia-Herzegovina, ahead of Hamdija Pozderac (Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 38). He was in charge of Prime Minister of BiH between 1967 and 1969, and President between 1982 and 1984, ruling with a firm hand. He earned considerable political prestige for successfully heading the Organizing Committee of the Sarajevo 1984 Winter Olympic

sought to contain the economic crisis through a program of gradual reforms, combining a policy of moderate stabilisation with efforts to revive growth, in order to prevent social unrest and to secure support from the less-developed republics. Far from that, inflation skyrocketed (reaching an annual rate of 160% by early 1988) and the trade deficit increased. Mikulić, who had initially rejected the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order to avoid austerity measures, was forced to reopen negotiations for a new debt agreement with the IMF. Between late 1987 and late 1988, the federal government enacted hard stabilisation measures such as the liberalisation of prices and imports, a devaluation of dinar, restriction of salaries, an opening to full foreign ownership rights and a dismantling of some key elements of self-management, such as the system of basic labour organisations.⁵⁶⁴ However, these changes had no immediate effect, although they were setting the legal bases for the more radical reforms which would be introduced by the Marković's cabinet in future years. On the contrary, the socio-economic situation worsened, as spiral inflation grew further and living standards fell throughout the country. Branko Mikulić was also unable to promote a political reform of the Yugoslav Federation. Despite some attempts of the Constitutional Commission to implement some changes, the structure established by the 1974 Constitution, with huge sovereignty domains and veto powers for the republics, practically remained the same.⁵⁶⁵ Moreover, the enormously negative public perception of the Agrokomerc and Neum scandals undermined Mikulić's profile; being the most influential representative of the Bosnian Communists' elite in the last decades, he was associated with those corruption cases, although his direct involvement was not directly proved. The combination of this failure scenario with the increasingly competing political agendas, namely the confrontation between the Slovenian-Croatian and the Serbian-Montenegrin axis, led to an irreconcilable opposition against the Mikulić's government. While the two northern republics accused Mikulić of centralism and of not being open enough to economic

Games. After resigning, he retired from political life, although he still conceded, until 1990, some sporadic interviews with the press. He died in 1994 at Sarajevo.

⁵⁶⁴ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy. Chaos and dissolution after the Cold War*, Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1995, 81-84; Woodward, *Socialist unemployment*, 256; Viktor Meier, *Yugoslavia. A history of its demise*, London: Routledge, 1999, 96-99; Robert M. Hayden, "Constitutional events in Yugoslavia, 1988-90: From federation to confederation and paralysis?", Final report to the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, University of Pittsburgh, 1990, 1.

⁵⁶⁵ The political reform was, for instance, a new request from IMF, which conditioned new credits on constitutional changes consisting of a certain re-centralisation of the Federation (mainly the reinforcement of the federal sovereignty and a change in the voting rules of the central bank from consensus to majority). Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 82.

liberalisation,⁵⁶⁶ Serbia and Montenegro accused that reforms were going too far.⁵⁶⁷ The prime minister, who felt attacked even by the traditionally loyal leadership of Bosnia-Herzegovina, finally resigned on December 30, 1988, after the government' budget proposal for 1989 was rejected by Slovenia and Croatia.⁵⁶⁸

After the fall of Mikulić, the collective presidency of the State began to search for a suitable successor with “state-wide support” and a “market oriented”, able to “introduce technical, scientific and economic skills into the government”.⁵⁶⁹ The two main candidates were Ante Marković and Borisav Jović, a politician from Serbia with an economist background and very close to Milošević. Among the members of the presidency, it was considered the possibility of proposing as candidates the Serbian president Slobodan Milošević or the Slovenian president Milan Kučan, in order to undermine their role on the inter-republican confrontation.⁵⁷⁰ The Commander-in-chief of the Army, Veljko Kadijević, also endorsed Milošević, but the Serbian president declined the offer arguing that he would better “reinforce the unity of Serbia” and “contribute to the stability of Yugoslavia” while remaining at the helm of the Serbian institutions.⁵⁷¹ Moreover, Borisav Jović reacted as a “reluctant candidate”, as if he had been forced by his party branch fellows from the other republic; the Serbian leadership did not insist at all to promote his name. These circumstances show that either Serbia was simply uninterested in taking a post which was considered to be useless to influence the overall balance of powers, or that it was adopting a prudent, low profile line after that

⁵⁶⁶ Dizdarević, *La morte di Tito*, 371-373; Woodward, *Balkan tragedy*, 82-84.

⁵⁶⁷ Predrag Tašić, *Kako sam branio Antu Markovića*, Skopje: NIP, 12.

⁵⁶⁸ Dizdarević, *La morte di Tito*, 375-376.

⁵⁶⁹ Dizdarević, *ibidem*, 378. Dizdarević was then the Bosnian representative of the Yugoslav collective presidency.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibidem*. Among the supporters for the Milošević's candidacy there was the prominent Croatian leader Stipe Šušteršič and Dizdarević himself, as he admits in his memories.

⁵⁷¹ Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenije raspada. Vojska bez države*, Beograd: Politika, 1993, 83. In that moment, Milošević was the president of the League of Communists of Serbia. He would become the President of Serbia some months later, in May 1989.

In these memories, published in 1993, Kadijević still complained for Milošević's refusal, arguing that, had he accepted the proposal, he would be enough able and authoritative to resolve both the economic and the political crisis in Yugoslavia. “If Milošević, from the cadre of prime minister, had succeeded to reinforce Yugoslavia for a half of what Ante Marković did to break it up [*sic*], then it would have been much better”. The illusion of Kadijević evidently persisting in his retrospective memories (and of many sincerely pro-Yugoslav officials in the army) blatantly overlooked the Milošević's hegemonic and republican-centred strategy aimed to weaken the common federal institution, rather than to reinforce them.

recent “anti-bureaucratic”, pro-Milošević protests and intra-élite conflicts in Vojvodina and Montenegro had raised tensions and concerns in the other Yugoslav republics.⁵⁷²

All these factors contributed to the election of Ante Marković, which was ratified by the Yugoslav parliament on March 16, 1989. In that moment, the inflation was close to a 1000% annual rate, while social unrests and inter-institutional conflicts between the republics were igniting instability in the country. When Marković accepted the post, he reportedly said to the Yugoslav president Dizdarević: “The risk is at least ten times higher than the chance of success”.⁵⁷³ The process of formation of the government reflected Marković’s pragmatism. He insisted that the choice of the ministers should not be conditioned by the Party leadership or by the Presidency, reducing the government members to 19 (there were 29 under Mikulić) and leaving aside the criterion of national-republican “parity” (*paritet*) which had been traditionally applied by his predecessors, arguing that “quality” should prevail in his choices.⁵⁷⁴ Marković’s cabinet is the culminating example of what Geoffroy Géraud defined as the “ascent of groups composed by specialists and agents involved in networks of global expertise” in the 1980s post-Titoist Yugoslavia:⁵⁷⁵ few of the ministers were professional politicians, while the majority came from managerial, technical or diplomat backgrounds. (See the table of the government members hereafter).

⁵⁷² Dizdarević, *La morte di Tito*, 379-80; Meier, *Yugoslavia*, 102-103. Serbia would have had, instead, a strong argument for claiming the post. The last Serbian premier had been 22 years before (Peter Stambolić in 1963-1967); since then Croatia had already had two representatives.

⁵⁷³ Ante Marković, reported in Dizdarević, *La morte di Tito*, 380.

⁵⁷⁴ “Marković sastavio SIV”, *Oslobojenje*, March 16, 1989; Dušan Pilić, “Un governo a Belgrado. Marković dimezza il numero dei ministri”, *La Repubblica*, March 16, 1989. See the final composition in table 7.1.

⁵⁷⁵ Geoffroy Géraud, “Un point aveugle de la transition yougoslave: le ‘programme Marković’”, in Wladimir Andreff (ed.), *La transition vers le marché et la démocratie*, Paris: La Découverte Recherches, 2006, 212.

Table 7.1. The composition of the Markovi 's government, March 1989.⁵⁷⁶

Name	Ministry	Republic	Biographical notes
Ante Markovi	Prime Minister	Croatia	(1924-2011)
Aleksandar Mitrovi	Deputy Prime Minister	Serbia	(1933-2012) Member of the leadership of the League of Communists of Serbia
Živko Pregl	Deputy Prime Minister	Slovenia	(1946-2011) Economist
Budimir Lončar	Foreign Affairs	Croatia	(1924) Diplomat by career since 1950
Veljko Kadijević	Defence	Serbia-Croatia (Army)	(1924-2014) General and Commander-in-chief of the Army (JNA)
Petar Gračanin	Interior	Serbia	(1923-2004) Retired Army general, president of SR Serbia
Branko Zekan	Finances	Croatia	(1933), General director of the Insurance company "Croatia" in Zagreb
Stevan Santo	Energetics and Industry	Serbia (Vojvodina)	(1946), General director / manager of the "Severa" company in Subotica
Jože Slokar	Transport	Slovenia	(1934), Director of the "ZG" company in Ljubljana
Franc Horvat	Foreign trade	Slovenia	(1941), Manager of industrial and financial companies
Nazim Mustafa	Internal trade	Serbia (Kosovo)	(1941), Prime Minister of SAP Kosovo
Stevo Mirjani	Agriculture	Bosnia-H.	(1945), University professor of Agricultural Sciences

⁵⁷⁶ Sources: My elaboration from "Markovi sastavio SIV", *Oslobođenje*, March 16, 1989; "Biografije", *Oslobođenje*, March 16, 1989; Tašić, *Kako sam branio Antu Markovića*, 16.

There were seven managers of industrial or financial companies (Marković, Pregl, Zekan, Santo, Slokar, Horvat, Goševski), six coming from professional offices (diplomats, journalists, administrative cadres, university professors: Lončar, Mirjani, Marenić, Marin, Mujezinović, Misković), six came from political or institutional offices (Mitrović, Mustafa, Kambovski, Gašić, Gračanin, Pajković) and one from the Army (Kadijević).

The cabinet's national-republican composition was: 5 from Croatia, 4 from Slovenia, 4 from Serbia proper (including Kadijević, who formally represented the Army branch of the SKJ and came from a Serb-Croat family, but was de facto close to Serbian government), 2 from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, 1 from Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro.

This structure would later attract some criticisms from Serbian cadres who complained about the over-representation of the 'northern' republics, and from some Muslim politicians from BiH, who denounced the absence of Muslims and the alleged marginalisation of their republic within the government. This argument would be systematically employed by the SDA during the 1990 electoral campaign in order to discredit Marković.

What was completely unbalanced was the gender representation, since all the members were men.

Vlado Kambovski	Justice and administration	Macedonia	(1958) Vice-president of the Assembly of SR Macedonia
Božo Marendi	Development	Croatia	(1939) Director of the Republican Council for social planning of Croatia
Radiša Ga i	Social policies and health	Serbia	(1938) Leader of the Serbian SK; one of the few politician cadres in the govt. close to Miloševi
Darko Marin	Information	Slovenia	(1938), editor of TV Ljubljana
Dževad Mujezinovi	Member without portfolio	Bosnia-H.	(1934-1992) Diplomat by career since 1969; in 1990 became the last Yugoslav Ambassador to U.S. and was replaced by Sabrija Pojski
Branimir Pajkovi	Member without portfolio	Montenegro	(1949) Secretary of Finances in the Montenegrin government
Nikola Goševski	Member without portfolio	Macedonia	(1933) Director of the “Zletovo” company in Veles
Zoran Miškovi	General secretary	Croatia	(-) Confirmed in office

The only, and yet very significant, pressure received by Markovi came from Slobodan Miloševi, who insisted that the Minister of the Interior must be from Serbia. While Markovi was firm in his idea to appoint Janez Zemljari, a prestigious party member from Slovenia, the Serbians threatened that they could withdraw all the other candidacies in the government, should they not obtain the post of interior minister. They suggested various names, such as their minister of police, Radmilo Bogdanovi, or a secondary member of the Presidency, Ljubiša Igi, but all of them were rejected as “unsuitable” by the future premier.⁵⁷⁷ Then, the Serbians proposed Petar Gra anin, acting President of Serbia, a former partisan and Army general during the Titoist era. As the same Markovi later admitted, Gra anin was a very high-profile candidate; it was practically impossible to discard him as “nationalist-oriented”. Markovi claims that he offered everything to the Serbians in order to make them change their mind, including the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, but they remained inflexible, finally forcing Markovi to name Gra anin.⁵⁷⁸ The obsession of Miloševi with having “his own man” at the

⁵⁷⁷ Dizdarevi, *La morte di Tito*, 382; Ante Markovi in ICTY Court Records, October 23, 2003, 28002.

⁵⁷⁸ Ante Markovi, interviewed by Goran Mali in “Moja istina o smrti Jugoslavije”, *Danas*, November 13-28, 2003. Accessed March 9, 2013. www.cpi.hr/download/links/hr/7917.doc, 4; 10.

Ministry and, at the same time, keeping away the one indicated by Slovenia, was aimed to keep control on the Federal security and intelligence services. The Serbian leadership's interest in supervising public order was consistent with their involvement in the "anti-bureaucratic" mass protests and their persistent demands for declaring the state of emergency in the autonomous region of Kosovo.⁵⁷⁹

In his first speeches as Prime Minister, Marković pointed out that he would definitely distance himself from socialist self-management, and shift into a completely new programme, whose basic points were economic efficiency, integrated market and political democracy as the main pillars of society, promoting incentives to individual interest and a strong welfare policy, placing the individual human being at the centre regardless of his/her class and nationality. This was the core of the "New socialism" (*Novi socijalizam*), a doctrine which would inspire the whole Marković's agenda in 1989-1991, relying upon the traditionally social-democratic assumption of establishing a market economy without (descending into) a market society. The essence of the "New socialism" is expressed in this speech released on January 28, in front of the SSRNJ:

"It is quite obvious that all socialisms we know about are in crisis. There is no one which is not in a crisis. Not a single one succeeded in solving the problem of efficiency and the problem of political democracy. Tell me just one? There are none! All of them are now looking for a way out. It is obvious that the identification of socialism with planning, [...] with state regulations, with the power of the party, does not work. This is obvious. It is obvious that this is not just a temporary crisis; it is a general crisis of socialism. A deep analysis would show, well, it should not be so deep to show, that there are more elements of socialism in the Kingdom of Sweden than in a socialist neighbouring country. Socialism is not something you can just proclaim, you just say, you are a socialist country, socialism must be formed! It is not only Yugoslavia, the whole world will have to look for a new socialism, centred around people, around the rights of people, socialism which will motivate, which will develop a rich and modern society, which would not be isolated, which would not prove its advantages by closing the borders, but by opening them, which

⁵⁷⁹ Some scholars have shown the firmly pro-Milošević orientation of Gračanin (see, for example: Silber and Little, *The death of Yugoslavia*, 60-68; Meier, *Yugoslavia*, 103; 163). Ante Marković has claimed instead that Gračanin remained loyal to the federal government, at least in until the end of the year 1990; the prime minister also acknowledges that, since every republic had its own Ministry of the Interior, intelligence and counterintelligence services, the role of the Federal minister of interior was not so relevant. Ante Marković, ICTY Court Records, October 23, 2003, 28003.

will develop itself on the basis of maximum democracy, of liberty, on the right of expression of such liberties, on the expression of pluralism of interests, on political pluralism as well". Therefore [...] we must create, in our society, the right to these ideas, projects, programmes, the rights for the initiators of such ideas, for their competition in the society as a whole, and in the League of Communists as well. [...] Every individual should feel a member of this society. For the Yugoslav society is not a society of ours, of a restricted number of people. This country belongs to 23 million people, not to one million or two. This is what we have to achieve. This is the new socialism we have to develop".⁵⁸⁰

Although the broader goals of the "new socialism" included both *economic* and *political* reforms, from the very beginning Markovi made it clear that the former would be a priority over the later. Throughout 1989, his discourse constantly entered into precise detail in the economic restructuring measures, focused on a further liberalisation of the consumption goods, capital and labour market (through a liberalisation of prices), combined with a rigorous monetary policy ruled by an autonomous and reconstituted National Bank of Yugoslavia, and the setting up of a banking system operating on market principles. He insisted that his programme should be accomplished within a five-year period. On the other hand, Markovi only made sporadic references to political issues such as the establishment of a multi-party system and to the need to reform the institutional structures of Yugoslavia, as well as to the reinforcement of the central government's policies (particularly in the fiscal and development domains). Markovi did not mention any precise step for implementing these aims. There are at least three explanations for this economy-first stance. The first was Ante Markovi's personal character and career background, for he preferred to tackle the precise issues imposed by socio-economic contingencies with a sort of technocratic approach, while avoiding speculations and conjectures with the political actors. In a 2003 interview, the first he released after the war in Yugoslavia, Markovi explained: "I have always been a pragmatic person. In the party, I was known as a liberal, and the ideologues constantly attacked me. I was always at war with them".⁵⁸¹ Second, the Federal Government (namely

⁵⁸⁰ This speech was released to the Presidency of the SSRNJ (Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia) on January 28, 1989, when Markovi was still mandatory for Prime Minister. "Outlines of the programme", in Federal Executive Council – Secretariat for information, *Yugoslav changes. Address and statements by Ante Markovi*, Beograd: Jugoslovenski Pregled, 1990, 29.

⁵⁸¹ Ante Markovi interviewed in "Moja istina o smrti Jugoslavije", 4.

Federal Executive Council - *Savezno Izvršno Vijeće*, SIV) had a limited power within the institutional system. Its competencies in the sensitive domains of Defence, Foreign and International Affairs practically were either shared with, or subordinated to, the collective Presidency.⁵⁸² Regarding the economic policy, the SIV was responsible for the common market (monetary and trade policy) but not for productive assets, which were controlled by republics.⁵⁸³ This unfavourable balance forced Marković to moderate the range of intervention in order to prevent institutional conflicts and vetoes. The third was the negative experience of his predecessor, Branko Mikulić, whose fiasco at launching a constitutional reform had definitely undermined his chances in government, besides his flagrant inability to contain inflation.

7.1. “Marković’s times”: From economic solutions to institutional deadlocks

While throughout 1989 the government focuses its activity on elaborate, specific measures and to modify the normative basis for reform, on January 1st, 1990, a “shock-therapy” stabilisation pack was adopted. It is well known that Jeffrey Sachs, the young economist from Harvard who had been the main adviser of the 'shock-therapy' policies in Bolivia and Poland, played a key role in its design. The pack made possible two impressive and interconnected achievements which gave Marković enormous popularity and apparently the political capital that, still today, remains symbolically associated to his performance. The first was the “spectacular” curbing of the inflation, from an annual rate of about 2,700% in December 1989 to nil in May 1990.⁵⁸⁴ The second was the establishment of the convertible dinar, which would correspond to 10.000 “old” dinars and would be pegged to the German mark, with an exchange rate of 7 dinars for 1 mark, at least until June. The effectiveness of these measures temporarily restored a confidence towards the national economy among wide social sectors, especially among an urban middle class who suddenly recovered their purchasing power and that now could find more widely available goods in the stores. A proof for that new trust was that foreign

⁵⁸² Meier, *Yugoslavia*, 9.

⁵⁸³ Woodward, *Balkan tragedy*, 39.

⁵⁸⁴ Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 190; Woodward, *Balkan tragedy*, 129.

exchange reserves, increased from 2 billion dollars in early 1989 to 10 billion dollars in August 1990.⁵⁸⁵

In order to understand the immediate perception of the measures among the middle class, it is useful to examine the users' comments in *Sezam*, a BBS system forum active since 1989 in Yugoslavia.⁵⁸⁶ *Sezam* was attended by "some sort of national elite (youth, educated, communication and computer-literate, open to the Western world)", as explained in the document that recollects the forum' discussions.⁵⁸⁷ When the measures were presented on December, several users expressed general astonishment and enthusiasm about the direct implications of convertibility in their daily life and standards of living, but also suspicion about the real chances of the government to implement them. "I think that the SIV has taken an excellent step, but I fear that the republics (especially Serbia and Slovenia) will hardly accept it, everyone for their own crazy reasons. [...] Really, to buy marks from the bank... well, this sounds incredible!" said user 'Ilja' on December 19. On March 6, user 'Djolle' commented: "Unbelievable, but true: even two months later, the state has foreign exchange reserves, people buy reserves normally, not needing to queue in two or three different banks. [...] They argue that it will be the same also after June, unlike what it has normally happened so far. I believe in them. And you?"⁵⁸⁸ In June 1990, the influential pro-reformist journalist Goran Mili wrote in his column: "The convertibility of the dinar and the adoption of a mentality of consumer society gradually transform the Yugoslavs into normal people [as those] who can go to a shopping centre in the West and in the Far East [...] The chance that, 200 metres from home, you can buy a *Mozartkugeln*, a Japanese TV, or a bottle of whisky at the same price that you would have in a Parisian shop, is shattering that illusion that we have done a great thing when we bring home, to our office or to our friends in the *kafana*, some gadget that here we don't have [lit. *nema kod nas*]. Now that we have almost all, people start to be able to tell the difference between good and poor quality".⁵⁸⁹ The "Markovi times" (lit. *Markovi evo vrijeme*) was, and is still today in the collective memory of some

⁵⁸⁵ Taši , *Kako sam branio Antu Markovi a*, 20.

⁵⁸⁶ BBS ("Bulletin Board System") allowed computer users connected through phone line to exchange messages in public forums, chats, private messages, upload and download software and data; it was, then, a precursor to the modern form of Internet.

⁵⁸⁷ José Maria Palacios (ed.), *Sezamove sveske 1. Vreme zabluda*, Author's edition, 2012, 1-5.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Palacios for providing me with this insightful document.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁸⁹ Goran Mili , "Mi to možemo", *Oslobo enje*, June 10, 1990.

Yugoslavs, a period of relative wealth, consumerism and hope. This shift was also visible in the press sources, as the pages of newspapers and magazines began to publish many advertisements from private firms, shops and commercial activities reproducing a standard business-oriented aesthetic and lifestyle. The advertisement of esko-Promex, one of the first fashion firms established in Sarajevo, associated the big pictures of the models promoting the factory's dress with the slogan "The breath of Markovi 's times" [lit. *Dah Markovi evog vremena*].⁵⁹⁰

On the other hand, as an effect of the wages freezing, of other anti-inflationary measures, besides real economic factors (such as positive interest rates, the burden of taxes, the elimination of state subsidies and the beginning of the privatisation process) many workers experienced consistent delays or reductions of salaries and had reasons to fear losing their jobs.⁵⁹¹ Ante Markovi himself admitted that 20% of the Yugoslav workforce was "redundant" but also said that the new market conditions would gradually absorb that workforce surplus.⁵⁹² He hoped for the establishment of small enterprises as the basis of the new development policy. In this model, the Yugoslav citizens working abroad should play an important role because their foreign currency earnings, that were predominantly circulating, in the words of the same Markovi, in the "grey market", should now be encouraged to emerge in regular market channels.⁵⁹³ In regard to medium to large firms, Markovi aimed instead at their revitalisation either through canonical

⁵⁹⁰ From *Valter Express*, March 19, 1990.

Neven Andjeli recalls an anecdote about *Lepa sela lepo gore*, a well-known 1996 Serbian movie, in which a drug addict says that he got hooked "during 'Markovi 's Year', when heroin was cheap". Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 133-134.

⁵⁹¹ Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 145; John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as history. Twice there was a country*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 349.

⁵⁹² *Yugoslav changes*, 77-78; Ante Markovi, interviewed by Mirjana Tomić in "Ante Markovic: 'Necesito cinco años para realizar la reforma económica'", *El País*, March 3, 1990. Predrag Taši recalls that, while in 1989 about 1,500 new firms were established in 1989, they were 32,500 in 1990 and 46,500 in 1991. Taši, *Kako sam branio Antu Markovića*, 20.

⁵⁹³ *Yugoslav changes*, 43. To regain the confidence of the Yugoslav emigré community was in fact a very ambitious argument, both in socio-economic and political terms. Since the 1970s, Yugoslavia's policy, oriented to organize a "planned return and reintegration" of temporary migrant workers, had been mostly unsuccessful, since the importance of informal relationships and the influence of local bureaucracies had obstructed the reinsertion of returnees. (Carl-Ulrik Schierup, "Former Yugoslavia: Long waves of international migration", in Robin Cohen (ed.), *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*, Cambridge: University Press, 1995, 285-288).

Moreover, the stigma of the so-called "political emigration", allegedly connected to militant nationalist and anti-communist circles, had long time been widespread in the socialist authorities. The social unrest in Duvno (Western Herzegovina) in early 1990, with a leading role of emigrants, exemplified the frustration and mistrust of emigrants towards the institutions (see chapter 5.1 of this work).

privatisation, attempting to attract foreign capitals, or through distributing of its shares between managers and workers. That was the so-called “privatisation from below”.⁵⁹⁴

The stabilisation plan encountered the hostility of the republican leaderships, particularly those from Slovenia and Serbia, which had immediately identified Markovi as a common strategic and ideological opponent to their reciprocally opposed aims. For Ljubljana, the implicit recentralisation envisaged by the federal government was the major obstacle for its confederal project.⁵⁹⁵ For Belgrade, the austerity measures were allegedly favouring the north-western developed republics to the detriment of the Serbian economy.⁵⁹⁶ Concurrently, both Slovenia and Serbia wanted to keep control on the medium-large enterprises, in order to manage by themselves the process of privatisations and the transformation of the property system.⁵⁹⁷ Markovi went on keeping himself away from inter-republican disputes in order to preserve an arbitrating, super-partes role. Such a cautious approach guaranteed him popularity and prestige across the country, but also put in evidence his political marginality and exposed him to unpleasant situations. Markovi’s attendance to the proclamation of the new Constitution of Serbia (which removed the autonomies of Kosovo and Vojvodina) on March 24th, 1989 in Belgrade was badly received in other republics and did not contribute at all to ease his relations with the Serbian leadership, who constantly blamed his economic programme. The Prime Minister remained silent when the Ljubljana-Belgrade tension came to the most severe point in the autumn of 1989, when the Slovene amendment proposals were approved and immediately followed by a Serbian boycott against Slovene goods, which in turn delayed (and undermined) the efforts for economic stabilisation.

Although it is true that Markovi gave priority to the economic domain (out of strategic reasons), it would be misleading to assume that he did not have a political agenda at all, as it is sometimes suggested in the literature. On the contrary, the Prime Minister

⁵⁹⁴ “Fabrike radnicima, drugi put”, *Borba*, June 30 – July 1, 1990; Woodward, *Balkan tragedy*, 128; Taši , *Kako sam branio*, 21.

Taši claims that “the basic error of Markovi’s model was that he treated in the same way the small enterprises, especially in the spheres of services and trade, from which a profitable firm could be established in the short time, and the so-called industrial giants, which were the real disabled originated by socialist megalomania. He did not have a real solution for these giants with feet of clay [*gigante na staklenim nogama*] which were dominant in Yugoslav economic structure”. *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹⁵ González Villa, “Un nuevo estado”, 216.

⁵⁹⁶ Borisav Jovi , *Poslednji dani SFRJ*, 21-22.

⁵⁹⁷ Woodward, *Balkan tragedy*, 128; Taši , *Kako sam branio Antu Markovi a*, 21.

did elaborate plans for political reforms and even tried to move some of them forward, yet he kept on waiting for more favourable, well-timed circumstances (that, in the end, never occurred) in order to actively promote them, after the socio-economic situation had been stabilised. In January 1990, after the adoption of stabilisation measures, the government tried to implement a group of amendments to the Yugoslav constitution.⁵⁹⁸ These reforms would define a new institutional balance between the republics and the federation, extending the jurisdiction of the latter, particularly in the domain of fiscal and macroeconomic policies, in order to setup a “modern” and “efficient” state.⁵⁹⁹ Moreover, the amendments would set the stage for the regulation of free political association and for the adoption of a federal-level electoral law. In other words, such reform would create the pre-conditions for political pluralism in the whole Yugoslavia, a process that until then, was only taking place within the borders of the republics.

Markovič's initial intention was to have the amendments passed in April in order to call for federal elections in July 1990, then the newly elected Parliament would approve a new Constitution.⁶⁰⁰ But the reform was blocked, so the hypothetical elections were postponed until December.⁶⁰¹ Meanwhile, Markovič assigned to his close collaborators the task of designing the drafts for the complementary steps for the introduction of a multi-party system in Federal Yugoslavia, such as the law for the registration of political parties⁶⁰² and the electoral law that, as decided by Markovič, should follow the proportional model.⁶⁰³ The amendments were initially approved by the Constitutional

⁵⁹⁸ “Konferencija za štampu u SIV-u. Bez promena Ustava nema sprovođenja reforme”, *Politika*, January 24, 1990; “Konferencija za štampu predsednika SIV. Vlada kao menadžer”, *Borba*, January 24, 1990.

⁵⁹⁹ “Komisija za ustavna pitanja se saglasila. Otklonjena blokada promeni Ustava SFRJ”, *Borba*, March 14, 1990.

As a symbolic, preliminary step for this adjustment, Markovič also wanted to change the name of the Yugoslav government, from the bureaucratic “Federal Executive Council” (*Savezno Izvršno Vijeće*) to the “Federal Government” (*Savezna Vlada*). However, this change was never implemented.

⁶⁰⁰ He explained so when addressing his plan to the Constitutional Commission of the Parliament in March 13. “Komisija za ustavna pitanja se saglasila. Otklonjena blokada promeni Ustava SFRJ”, *Borba*, March 14, 1990.

⁶⁰¹ “Markovič osniva stranku”, *Oslobođenje*, May 27, 1990.

⁶⁰² “Dr. Vlado Kambovski o predlogu zakona o političkim strankama”, *Borba*, April 16, 1990.

⁶⁰³ Rodoljub Šabi, interview by author. Belgrade, May 10, 2013.

Šabi, then the undersecretary for legislative affairs in the Markovič's cabinet, was a part of the staff in charge of preparing the electoral law for the first multi-party Yugoslav elections. Šabi claims that the staff was generally inclined to a majority, first-past-the-post system, which would allegedly enhance Markovič's widespread popularity in all the Yugoslavian territory, should he run in the elections with his own party. The prime minister asked them instead to work on a proportional system, following the D'Hondt model. In Šabi's opinion, this circumstance proves that Markovič was not very optimistic about his own chances in the political arena. Another hypothesis that I could suggest, however, is that Markovič chose the proportional system because it would be considered as more appropriate for a multi-national country,

Commission of the Yugoslav Parliament, but were constantly blocked by the Slovene and Serbian delegates to the assembly. Moreover, the Parliament of Ljubljana vetoed it, stating that the federal jurisdiction shall be reduced, rather than extended.⁶⁰⁴ Actually, any change to the Constitution should have been ratified by the Parliaments of each of the eight republics and autonomous regions, as established by articles 398, 402 and 403 of the 1974 Charter.

In an attempt to resolve the deadlock and accelerate the procedure, in April the government changed its strategy, seeking to first promote the laws for multi-party system and then the constitutional reforms, claiming that there was a “minimum base” permitting to adopt those measures before, and regardless, any possible amendment. The government’s argument was that article 281 of the Constitution, concerning the federal jurisdiction, would intrinsically authorize the legislative initiative.⁶⁰⁵ Yet, the Parliament kept on blocking the process, again due to the staunch opposition of the Slovene and Serbian delegates which used all the procedural means at their disposal in order to stop the reform.⁶⁰⁶ It was a perverse paradox: Serbia and Slovenia were allied in demanding the scrupulous observance of the Constitution against Markovič’s reformism, although they were, each from opposite positions, reciprocally committed to break the constitutional framework established by the 1974 Charter. For both Serbia and Slovenia, setting up a Yugoslav multi-party framework and elections would be inopportune as it would imply the bypassing of the republican centrality, providing the federal sphere with a democratic legitimacy which would go against their interests, for Markovič, who then enjoyed a widespread popularity, would obtain a mass support in a hypothetical all-Yugoslav vote.

Moreover, the early 1990 attempts for political reform temporarily coincided with the electoral campaign in Slovenia, scheduled for April. The representatives of Ljubljana at the Parliament needed to show themselves as inflexibly pro-sovereignty, to avoid

guaranteeing a more equal representation for every single federal unity; therefore, it could possibly meet the favour of the republican delegations more easily than a majority one.

⁶⁰⁴ “Promene ustava ponovo u skupštini SFRJ. SIV ne može da iznudi saglasnost”, *Politika*, March 9, 1990.

⁶⁰⁵ The Article stated: “[The Federation, through the federal organs], rules and ensures the organisation, jurisdiction and action mechanisms of the federal organs, the material and other relations of the federal organs, *the elections for the federal organs*” [italic mine].

⁶⁰⁶ “Skupštinske nedoumice. Zazor od YU stranaka”, *Oslobo enje*, June 21, 1990; “Ponovo odloženo usvajanje zakona o jugoslovenskim političkim strankama. Protiv – Srbija i Slovenija”, *Borba*, June 29, 1990.

losing popular support at home.⁶⁰⁷ Actually, the vote in Slovenia brought to power centre-right, pro-sovereign and pro-confederal (soon turning to openly secessionist) parties, which were even more hostile to the political “re-federalizing” reform than the former Communists. One month later, in May, a similar outcome occurred in Croatia. The victory of the right-wing, pro-independence HDZ transformed Zagreb into another black spot onto the path of reform of the federal government.⁶⁰⁸ Although by mid-1990 Markovič’s discourse finally gave some more emphasis to political reforms, shifting from the economics-only narrative of his first year,⁶⁰⁹ this attempt to open a “second phase” in his mandate had practically no tangible effect. The constant blockage implied that the federal elections were first announced for July, then for the end of the year, and finally cancelled.

Another serious blow to Markovič’s plan was the dissolution of the League of Communists after the 14th Congress, one of the few truly federal entities which should have been in charge of promoting constitutional changes at the Yugoslav level and should have created the pre-condition for the federal elections. Markovič famously claimed that this event was “an internal affair of the SKJ” and that Yugoslavia, as a state, would not be concerned at all by the dissolution of the ruling party.⁶¹⁰ In the literature, such assessment has been usually considered as a merely out of place optimism or as a pro forma institutional declaration. Yet, there could be a hidden reason for that: Markovič possibly thought that the breakup of the League could be a real opportunity for himself.

⁶⁰⁷ The electoral campaign had conditioned the Slovene Communists’ approach to Yugoslav organs since the famous 14th Congress in January, when some leaders commented that “for each minute we spend here, we lose more votes at home”, as González Villa explains (“Un nuevo estado”, 204). Extremely strong pressures were then set on Slovene representatives in Belgrade from public opinion and party structures in Ljubljana.

⁶⁰⁸ It must be recalled that Markovič, at least until May 1990, was still a formally a member of the League of Communists (he himself acknowledged it, as reported in “Ante Markovič o ideji za formiranje stranke. Koalicija – na vladinom programu”, *Borba*, May 29, 1990). Although he did not actively campaign for the League of Communists of Croatia, the Prime Minister still declared his support for the party just prior to the vote, stating that the SKH-SDP, as a democratic, socialist, Yugoslav and progressive force, “will always have my support and I will consider myself as a member of it”. “Ante Markovič: ‘Uvoljen’, pa dobrovoljno ‘priveden’”, *Borba*, March 13, 1990.

⁶⁰⁹ See, for example, the speech to the Yugoslav Parliament, reported in “Ante Markovič u skupštini Jugoslavije o novoj fazi reforme. Drugi korak u budućnost”, *Borba*, June 30-July 1, 1990. There, the Prime Minister envisaged a political system grounded in “the citizen as a political subject and [having a] dominant influence in the process of decision-making, where freedom, the direct and secret vote and the right for free political association”. See also the interview to TV Skopje in late July, when Markovič complained that “the SIV has long since been proposing the adoption of a law on political association. Nevertheless, some republics employed any procedural trick to prevent their adoption. It seems that some party fear the competition with Yugoslav parties”. Ante Markovič reported in “Ante Markovič, predsednik SIV, na ‘Otvorenom Ekranu’. Jugoslavija želi republiku”, *Borba*, July 26, 1990.

⁶¹⁰ “Rasplet – stvar SKJ”, *Borba*, January 24, 1990.

The empty space left in the political-institutional system could be filled by his own political project (rumours about the foundation of a reformist Yugoslav party led by Marković had already begun to spread) and, at the same time, could reinforce the arbiter, integrative role of the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, this assessment proved dramatically wrong: the disappearance of the ruling party strengthened the centrifugal forces and considerably weakened the federal structures.

7.2. Ante Marković and the “Third Yugoslavia” in the international environment

*“In Europe, there is only one place for us.
And it is not reserved for Milan Kučan or for Slobodan Milošević.
Ante Marković is the only personality, after Josip Broz Tito,
who can preserve and lead Yugoslavia through the right path.
Europe does not want those who evoke the past.
Europe wants results and a reliable view towards the future”.*⁶¹¹

Besides the economic programme, Ante Marković's other major efforts were focused in maintaining good relations with the western actors and stakeholders, not only in order to obtain immediate diplomatic and financial support for his project, but also to gain political capital which he could invest in the internal Yugoslav scenario. At the end of 1989, it was clear that he had managed to earn high prestige in the international environment, but not enough to reverse the unfavourable balance of powers, both within the Yugoslav institutional system and the changing international context. Marković had excellent contacts with the U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, so he asked him to organize a visit to Washington with the American president George Bush in order to seek support. In his memoirs, Zimmermann praises Marković's role, although admitting his political weakness and his late appearance. “In the seething cauldron of ethnic rivalries, Yugoslavia needed a leader who could deal with the growing economic crisis and at the same time appeal to Yugoslavs to stay together and build a democratic

⁶¹¹ Nenad Kecmanović, president of the Alliance of Reformist Forces (SRSJ, the Ante Marković's party) reported in “Konvencija SRSJ za sjeveroistoku Bosnu. Revolucija s mnogo znoja”, *Oslobođenje*, October 23, 1990.

society. Amazingly, a man who represented all these qualities could be found in March 1989 in the new prime minister of Yugoslavia. Ante Marković, a politician of great ability and determination, had been voted into office by the Yugoslav parliament. [...] Marković was impossible to dislike. A good-looking silver-haired man in his mid-sixties, he radiated good humour and ebullience. He laughed easily, not a trait of Slavic officials and certainly not of Yugoslav Communists. He had a can-do attitude and an unbounded conviction that he could overcome what was now universally called ‘the Yugoslav crisis’.”⁶¹²

The visit to Washington finally took place in October 1989 but, beyond the generic declarations welcoming the ongoing reforms, did not bring the financial and political help that the prime minister was awaiting, namely a 4 billion dollars credit with which to give a push to his reform program: the request was rejected.⁶¹³ Bush’s coldness was motivated by two interconnected factors: first, the U.S. priority was then focused on actively supporting countries like Poland and Hungary, which were strategically decisive in order to penetrate the Eastern Bloc and where, unlike the Yugoslav case, reforms were carried out without the destructive pressures of national-republican interests.⁶¹⁴ Second, in Washington there was little trust in the Marković’s real authoritative capacity to contain the separatist tendencies of the republican elites.⁶¹⁵

While the existing literature has widely covered the relations between the Marković government and Washington, those with the European Community (EEC),

⁶¹² Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a catastrophe. Yugoslavia and its destroyers*, New York: Times Books, 1999, 42-44. In another text, Zimmermann argued that “Marković should have come immediately after Tito’s death”. *Slobodna Bosna*, 22 January 1998, 11, quoted in Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 134.

⁶¹³ Zimmermann, *Origins of a catastrophe*, 46-47.

Robert Rackmales, then Deputy Chief of Mission at the American Embassy in Belgrade, recalls: “We never really went forward with any concrete aid. That infuriated Marković because he kept saying, what good is your rhetorical support if you can’t come forward with hard cash. But it’s very hard to justify in a situation where the IMF and other international institutions, and our own analyses, were that the federal government was impotent. [...] Marković’s only trip to the U.S. in October 1989 was disappointing for him because he didn’t get much in the way of concrete indication of U.S. help, which showed that Yugoslavia was not very high on our list of priorities. But he got some expression of goodwill and he had a meeting with the President, and he got photo ops. We in the embassy were supportive of Marković, despite his faults. We believed that if he failed he was probably the last chance, and things looked mighty dark after that because we didn’t see any other Yugoslav leader who could keep the country together”. Robert Rackmales, interviewed on May 11, 1995 by Charles Stuart Kennedy, in “The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Foreign Affairs Oral History Project”, ADST, 1995. Accessed February 3, 2015. <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Rackmales,%20Robert.toc.pdf>.

⁶¹⁴ Veiga, *La fábrica de las fronteras*, 78.

⁶¹⁵ Predrag Simić, interview by author. Belgrade, April 10, 2013.

particularly during the first phase of his term have remained practically unexplored so far. Yugoslavia had already signed a Trade agreement with the EEC in 1970 and a Cooperation agreement in 1980, which, although mainly focused on trade and financial aid, set the conditions to expand mutual relations.⁶¹⁶ The Marković government was strongly committed to obtain the status of “associate member”, seen as an intermediate and preparatory and necessary (though not sufficient) step towards a future complete membership, in the medium-long term. The status of associate, which was then enjoyed by Turkey, Malta and Cyprus, would imply the establishment of a customs union between Yugoslavia and the EEC. The request for the associate status was formally submitted by the Foreign Minister Budimir Lončar on November 27, 1989. Following this initiative, on February 1990 the Federal Parliament adopted a “European Declaration” establishing that the integration into the EEC was a “milestone” of the Yugoslav foreign policy and diplomacy.⁶¹⁷ Marković was well aware that the path towards full membership would be long and difficult and he did not restrain from saying so in public. Such prudence, in turn, evidenced his own role as a long-term actor in the transition: in other words, it was useful in order to present him as the “man of destiny”, able to bring stability to the process. In March 1990, he commented: “If someone would offer us to be members of the EC tomorrow, we would not be in condition to accept it, because we need first to adapt and prepare ourselves. [...] To be included into Europe, and more specifically within the European Community, we have first to fulfil some premises. We have already submitted the needed legislative proposals: economic democratisation, a new role of the State, democratisation of political life. Then, we need technical adjustments. We have already accomplished the currency convertibility. A compatible fiscal system is needed, and it must be still elaborated. We need five years for that. Then, a new policy for standards and patents is needed. There is still much to be done”.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁶ The 1980 Agreement reduced custom duties and restrictions on a number of industrial and agricultural goods, granting a better access to the Community market for Yugoslav products; it also provided financial loans for infrastructural programmes, and covered the fields of science and technology, energy, transport, environment and tourism. See European Commission - Press Release Database, “Memo-88-161”, 1988. Accessed on February 6, 2015. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-88-161_en.htm.

⁶¹⁷ Mirko Klarin, “Nema besplatnog rucka. Jugoslavija i Evropska zajednica”, *Borba*, April 7-8, 1990; Mihailo Crnobrnja, *Le drame yougoslave*, Rennes: Apogée, 1992, 119. Crnobrnja was then the Head of the Mission of Yugoslavia to the EC.

⁶¹⁸ Ante Marković, interviewed by Mirjana Tomić in “Ante Marković: Necesito cinco años para realizar la reforma económica”, *El País*, March 3, 1990.

The response of the EEC, however, was similar to the one of United States: apart from a declarative support, its position wavered between prudence and scepticism. The reasons were similar: Brussels too had its doubts about the slow progress of political reform and the lack of a re-centralizing reorganisation of the institutions which, in turn, could undermine the economic stabilisation. The EEC's primary focus on its own internal reform (to culminate in the signature of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992) and the privileging interest for approaching the countries of central-eastern Europe, also moved Yugoslavia out of the front stage.

The loss of interest by Brussels is evident if we compare various declarations from two of the highest European officers involved in the integration of Yugoslavia. In September 1989, the deputy chief of the EEC delegation in Belgrade declared to the Croatian newspaper *Vijesnik* a moderate (and, reading it retrospectively, stunningly optimistic) belief about the Yugoslavia's chances for full integration and the advantages it had over Central-Eastern European countries, once the fundamental requirements (free-trade zone, legal system, signature of the Human Rights' declaration and political pluralism) would be met: "Of course I do not exclude [full membership], because to me it is a natural step, something almost inevitable after the progress in economic cooperation made in the last few years. [...] The Community is expanding, and it is merely a matter of time until Yugoslavia becomes a member of it, if it satisfies the preconditions. [...] The EC has formal and institutional links with Yugoslavia that are at a much higher level than those with any other Eastern European country. I think it highly unlikely that Poland and Hungary, for example, could join the Community ahead of Yugoslavia, because they are only now opening their doors. Not until last year did they appoint ambassadors to the EC, and only in the last few months have they expressed sympathy for the West. Nor should we forget that these countries still belong to the Warsaw Pact and CEMA and that from the geopolitical viewpoint they still belong to the East, not the West. Yugoslavia does not belong to either side".⁶¹⁹

Such enthusiasm had apparently disappeared only few months later. In December 1989, the head of the Department for Mediterranean countries, Eberhard Rein, told

⁶¹⁹ Aldo Cricchio, interviewed by Ljubomir Cucic in "Possibility of EC Membership for Yugoslavia viewed", *Vjesnik*, September 24, 1989, translated and reported in *JPRS Report Eastern Europe*, December 4, 1989.

Belgrade diary *NIN* that, although the economic situation in Yugoslavia was, except inflation, “considerably better than Poland and, in many respect, than Hungary as well”, the perspectives for full membership were still scarce: “We would beg you to understand that at this point we are too preoccupied with our internal problems as we prepare for establishment of a true federal structure, and you Yugoslavs certainly know what that means, since you, to the best of my knowledge, also have been having problems establishing that kind of structure in your country. Therefore, please be patient, since for a certain time, over the next several years, we do not intend to integrate new members”.⁶²⁰

The Commissar for Mediterranean Policy, Abel Matutes, then the highest officer competent in Yugoslavia-EEC relations, was even more drastic, arguing that the association agreement was an “outdated model of relation which in essence is not anything essentially new over what we have had up to now”, i.e. the model of relations with the Mediterranean area’s countries. Thus, the associate status would not give Belgrade any advantage for a future full-fledged membership. And it could be signed, at the earliest, until 1991 or 1992. While appreciating Markovi ’s stabilisation program, Matutes underscored the political issues of the Yugoslav transition: “We are rather afraid that Yugoslavia’s present problems are not exclusively economic in nature and that they cannot be resolved solely by economic means. [...] Without a centralized macroeconomic policy and without centralized monetary policy in your country, it is very difficult to ensure the objectives of your stabilisation program. And these are not exclusively economic issues; this requires a reform of your political structure. That is in fact the most important reason for our concern and fear in this case”.⁶²¹

Such reluctance was apparently deployed during Markovi ’s visit to Brussels in early March 1990: despite the formal praises for the positive economic results, the EEC took a “no commitment” approach about the requests from the prime minister to urge a new status for Yugoslavia and to sign a new financial protocol.⁶²² As Crnobrnija noticed, such western support expressed through merely “good words” put Markovi in an uncomfortable position in the internal political arena. His bold announces that the U.S.

⁶²⁰ Eberhard Rein, interviewed in “Similarities, differences noted”, *NIN*, December 10, 1989, translated and reported in *JPRS Report Eastern Europe*, March 5, 1990.

⁶²¹ Abel Matutes, interviewed in “Conditions for Yugoslav membership”, *NIN*, December 10, 1989, translated and reported in *JPRS Report Eastern Europe*, March 5, 1990.

⁶²² “El primer ministro yugoslavo pide ayuda a la CE para apuntalar las reformas en su país”, *El País*, March 9, 1990.

and the EEC were supporting the Yugoslav government sounded like a bluff. When Serbian leaders pressured him to reveal the details, Markovi was forced to admit that they were only verbal and conditional promises; according to Crnobrnja, this was the first, serious blow to his prestige.⁶²³

7.3. The political capital of Ante Markovi

Ante Markovi managed to earn an impressive popularity among the Yugoslav public, thanks to his immediate and tangible results in the socio-economic field and, secondarily, to his international prestige and his symbolic role as a unifying figure, providing him with an apparently huge (though not equally spread) political capital among different social sectors and geographical regions. In a research poll carried out throughout Yugoslavia in mid-1990 by the Consortium for the Study of Public Opinion,⁶²⁴ 49% of respondents “fully agreed” with the stance of the federal prime minister, 36% agreed “partially”, 3% did not agree. Confidence for the federal government (SIV) reached 79%. When asked how their opinion had changed on the prime minister during his mandate, 38% said positively, only 9% negatively and 39% remained unchanged. The pool expressed not only a good assessment for Markovi’s measures and initial outcomes, but also a certain confidence in its future perspective. 65% of respondents believed that the dinar would remain convertible even after the initial limit of June 30. About the inflation measures, the 28% believed in a full curbing down and the 32% in a partial reduction; 45% trusted that the foreign debt would be reduced consistently, and 30% that it would be reduced partially. (See tables).

⁶²³ Crnobrnja, *Le drame yougoslave*, 119.

⁶²⁴ The Consortium was composed by institutes from the six republics’ capital cities. This survey had been conducted precisely for the scope of the federal government’s Secretary of information. The results were published in the volume by Ljiljana Ba evi et al. (eds.), *Jugoslavija na kriznoj prekretnici*, Beograd: Univerzitet u Beogradu, 1991. The total respondents were 4230, who were polled between May 26 and June 26 (*ibidem*, 35).

Table 7.2. Agreement – disagreement with stances of the president of the SIV. ⁶²⁵

	Fully agree	Partially agree	Don't agree	Cannot evaluate
Bosnia-H.	72	22	1	5
Montenegro	64	26	0	10
Croatia	51	38	3	8
Macedonia	70	21	0	9
Slovenia	16	54	7	23
Serbia proper	44	41	1	14
Kosovo	13	53	15	19
Vojvodina	54	35	1	11
Yugoslavia	49	36	3	12

Table 7.3. Opinion changes about the president of the SIV. ⁶²⁶

	Improved	Worsened	Unchanged	No opinion
Bosnia-H.	45	3	46	6
Montenegro	50	2	37	11
Croatia	24	8	58	10
Macedonia	43	13	41	13
Slovenia	8	19	46	27
Serbia proper	56	3	26	15
Kosovo	17	40	21	22
Vojvodina	53	2	34	11
Yugoslavia	38	9	39	14

⁶²⁵ Source: Stojmen Mihajlovski, "Javno mnenje o Saveznom Izvršnom Ve u i programu reformi", in Ba evi et al., *Jugoslavija na kriznoj prekretnici*, 59.

⁶²⁶ Source: Mihajlovski, "Javno mnenje", 60.

Table 7.4. Confidence in the president of SIV. ⁶²⁷

	Confidence
Bosnia-H.	93
Montenegro	86
Croatia	83
Macedonia	89
Slovenia	59
Serbia proper	81
Kosovo	42
Vojvodina	87
Yugoslavia	79

Table 7.5. Expectations about inflation. ⁶²⁸

	Complete reduction	Partial reduction	Reduction only until June 30	No reduction	Don't know
Bosnia-H.	42	33	5	0	11
Montenegro	39	32	5	10	14
Croatia	29	36	5	18	13
Macedonia	35	29	4	13	19
Slovenia	5	25	12	39	20
Serbia proper	25	36	8	17	15
Kosovo	15	22	7	35	21
Vojvodina	30	39	6	11	15
Yugoslavia	28	32	18	6	15

⁶²⁷ Source: *ibidem*, 62.

⁶²⁸ Source: Štefica Bahtijarević, Goran Milas, "Reakcija javnosti na mjere i politiku SIV-a", in Bahtijarević et al., *Jugoslavija na kriznoj prekretnici*, 72.

Table 7.6. Stances on the convertibility of the dinar after June 30, 1990. ⁶²⁹

	It will remain convertible	Won't be convertible	Don't know
Bosnia-H.	77	5	18
Montenegro	69	10	21
Croatia	70	10	20
Macedonia	67	7	27
Slovenia	44	26	30
Serbia proper	64	8	28
Kosovo	45	20	35
Vojvodina	71	6	23
Yugoslavia	65	11	25

Markovič's solid popularity in first half of 1990 was confirmed also by other journalistic surveys, in which the prime minister impressively stood out in comparison with other politicians. According to an opinion poll conducted by the Belgrade's daily newspaper "*Borba*" in May 1990, 72% of Yugoslav citizens considered Markovič as the most favourable personality in Yugoslavia, largely ahead of Slobodan Milošević (21%) and Janez Drnovsek (11%). The highest positive consideration for Markovič was located, once again, in Bosnia-Herzegovina (92%), ahead of Macedonia (84%), Montenegro and Croatia (70%), whilst the lowest was in Serbia (61%) and Slovenia (53%). (See table).⁶³⁰

⁶²⁹ Source: *ibidem*, 73.

⁶³⁰ "Borbin' barometar. Ante vodi za tri koplja", *Borba*, May 21, 1990. According to a summary realized by the Croatian weekly *Danas*, in early 1990 Markovič was the most popular politician in surveys conducted by newspapers *Delo* (Ljubljana), *Nedeljna Dalmacija* (Split), *Oslobojenje* (Sarajevo), *Polet* (Zagreb) and the second only in *Osmica's* survey (Belgrade). In the *Slobodna Dalmacija's* poll, which included every kind of public figure, Markovič was ahead of sportsmen, actors, showpersons and journalists and only behind the tennis champion Monica Seles. "Lideri ograničena suvereniteta", *Danas*, January 9, 1990.

Table 7.7. Which personality in this period will pull Yugoslavia ahead? ⁶³¹

	Yugoslavia	Slovenia	Croatia	Bosnia-H.	Mont.	Serbia	Macedonia
Ante Markovi	72	53	70	92	70	61	84
Slobodan Miloševi	21	NA	NA	10	55	50	13
Janez Drnovšek	11	30	18	7	NA	NA	11
Milan Ku an	10	49	7	4	NA	NA	NA
Franjo Tu man	7	13	23	3	NA	NA	NA
Ivica Ra an	4	9	15	NA	NA	NA	NA
Others	13	27	0	4	23	26	11
There isn't; I don't know	17	21	13	8	24	20	13

In almost all questions, Bosnia-Herzegovina stood out as one of the republics where Markovi enjoyed most support and, in many cases it was at the lead, ahead of Macedonia and Montenegro. There are various explanations for that: first, these were the least developed republics, so confidence in a potential economic upturn was surely a key factor in this perception; second, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia (but not so much Montenegro, whose élite was definitely close to Miloševi) offered more favourable conditions for a pro-federal orientation as they were outside of the “Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian dominant political axis”⁶³²; also, they had not developed, until then, a strong local political élite who would compete in political visibility with Markovi or with other widely known politicians from the biggest republics as was happening in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia; third, in the Bosnia-Herzegovina case, the positive perception of Markovi as a reliable and charismatic *super-partes* leader was motivated by the awareness that inter-ethnic and inter-republican (real or potential) tensions were a highly sensitive issue because of the peculiar national structure of BiH. Support in Vojvodina and Serbia was close to the average figure for all Yugoslavia: the strongly hostile attitude

⁶³¹ “Borbin’ barometar. Ante vodi za tri koplja”, *Borba*, May 21, 1990. Interestingly, the survey also included a symmetrically negative question (“Who pulls back Yugoslavia?”), where Markovi did not appear in any of the republic. The politicians arousing the highest rejection were Franjo Tudjman (60% throughout Yugoslavia, with a stunning 84% in BiH), Slobodan Miloševi (38%, 33% in BiH), Vuk Draškovi (20%, 27% in BiH).

⁶³² Spaskovska, “Landscapes of resistance”, 38.

from Miloševi 's entourage, which had a strong repercussion in media, compensated the sympathy for all-Yugoslav values embodied by the prime minister. Croatia, too, showed a balanced support, as pro-confederal enthusiasm, testified by the HDZ's victory in the spring elections, was rising. In exchange, Slovenia and Kosovo showed the lowest levels of support and, in some questions, open dissatisfaction. This can be explained by a combination of two factors: first, a general detachment of the respective public opinions from an institution strongly identified with Yugoslav unity; second, a specific refusal against Markovi 's line, since he had been criticised for his lack of involvement in the issues of the Kosovo province,⁶³³ while Slovenia manifested the lowest degree of confidence in the economic reforms.

While the popularity of government widely varied depending on the republic that those surveyed belonged to, there appeared to be little difference among social sectors. Consortium's survey showed a slightly higher assessment among pensioners and high-skilled employed (respectively a 86% and a 85% confidence), average to low among private workers, (78%), less-qualified workers, (74%), farmers (73%) and housewives (72%), and the lowest among students and teachers (70%).⁶³⁴ The higher support from high-skilled workers seems logical, since they belonged to a (mostly urban) middle-class that was intrinsically more confident in economic reforms. They were also those who, with relatively higher salaries, were most benefiting from stabilisation measures; similarly, pensioners were also appreciating decrease in the inflation rate and recovering purchasing power. The satisfaction of those employed in the private sector appears quite moderate and, instead, apparently clashed with Markovi 's effort in fostering private investments; one possible explanation is that, exactly because of the government's declarations and intentions, this social sector had high expectations in reforms which were still contradicted by social reality and complex proceeding of reforms. The lower support among farmers could be related to the Markovi 's little intervention in the agricultural policy and in cuts of subsidies and credits for farmers. These arguments were frequently exploited by the Serbian leaders, who relied on peasants as an important element of the

⁶³³ Such criticisms for Markovi 's alleged indifference towards the Kosovo problem came not only from (both Albanian and Serb) Kosovars, but also outside the province. As I explained above, Markovi 's presence at the ceremony for the new Serbian constitution in March 1989 that was cancelling the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina, sparked negative reactions all over Yugoslavia. Non-national opposition circles also blamed the Markovi 's too soft attitude towards Kosovo (see, for example, the UJDI's stance in chapter 6.3 of this work).

⁶³⁴ Mihajlovski, "Javno mnjenje", 61-62.

social base.⁶³⁵ The lowest confidence among teachers could be explained by a high resistance, among this social sector, against budgetary cuts.⁶³⁶ However, apart from these rational hypotheses, it is remarkable that each social category expressed a confidence greater than 70% and that differences among them were not so huge; these results would suggest that there were not significant social cleavages in the support for Ante Marković at that stage.

The Consortium survey, however, pointed out a far more sceptical view on Marković's precise intervention on the political reforms and in settling the tensions among republics and nations. When asked to evaluate the action of the federal government in defending the unity of Yugoslavia, the negative answers were higher than the positive (46% versus 40%); only Croatia, Macedonia and (with slighter margin) Bosnia-Herzegovina presented a majority of satisfactory assessments. When asked about the government's action on "new forms of political organisation", i.e. on political pluralism, again there was a relative majority of negative answers (39% vs. 33% positive); this time, in Bosnia-Herzegovina the negative assessments prevailed on the positive. As respondents were called to pinpoint the main factor jeopardizing the reforms, they largely pointed at "inter-ethnic or inter-republican tensions" (69%), ahead of "social tensions" (9%), thus reiterating that the main weak point of Marković was perceived to be his lack of authority in the Yugoslav scenario, rather than the program in itself or critical socio-economic issues. Sure enough, when the question was whether a stronger authority of the federal government would help to a quick and efficacious accomplishment of the reforms, 58% of respondents replied "yes", 21% "no" and 20% did not answer. Bosnia-Herzegovina, in this occasion, had the highest rate of those who favoured an extension of the powers of the federal government (72%). (See the tables below).

⁶³⁵ Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ*, 82; "Srbija nije protiv programa SIV-a u celini", *Politika*, January 11, 1990; "Marković i 'selja ko pitanje'", *Borba*, August 15, 1990.

⁶³⁶ Another poll carried out by the Zagreb magazine *Danas* also found a lower satisfaction about workers in education, as well as in other social services (health, culture). However, this poll was limited to cities of Zagreb and Titograd and had been realized earlier (on November 1989). The aggregate results also found a higher satisfaction among pensioners and lower among farmers, though with considerable variations between the two cities (61% in Zagreb vs. 26% in Titograd). Sources: Dejan Jović, "Titograd Polls on Marković's Policies. How Much Do We Believe Marković?" *Danas*, November 21, 1989, translated and reported in *JPRS Report Eastern Europe*, February 20, 1990.

**Table 7.8. Evaluation of the action of the SIV
in establishing new forms of political organisation.⁶³⁷**

	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Don't know
Bosnia-H.	33	42	25
Montenegro	30	38	32
Croatia	44	32	25
Macedonia	40	26	34
Slovenia	32	34	35
Serbia proper	29	37	34
Kosovo	21	69	11
Vojvodina	28	40	33
Yugoslavia	33	39	29

Table 7.9. Evaluation of the action of the SIV in preserving the unity of Yugoslavia.⁶³⁸

	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Don't know
Bosnia-H.	46	41	13
Montenegro	42	51	8
Croatia	51	36	13
Macedonia	45	31	24
Slovenia	24	53	23
Serbia proper	37	49	13
Kosovo	29	60	12
Vojvodina	35	55	10
Yugoslavia	46	40	14

⁶³⁷ Source: Bahtijarevi and Milas, "Reakcija javnosti", 78.

⁶³⁸ Source: *ibidem*, 79.

Table 7.10. What is the biggest threat against the success of reforms?⁶³⁹

	The SIV's program is not good	Inter-ethnic tensions	Social tensions	International situation	Other	Nothing	Don't know
Bosnia-H.	2	72	8	1	1	11	5
Montenegro	1	59	14	2	0	14	9
Croatia	3	69	7	2	4	7	9
Macedonia	2	66	10	2	1	6	13
Slovenia	5	57	14	2	2	2	18
Serbia proper	1	74	8	2	3	3	10
Kosovo	3	64	11	4	6	2	10
Vojvodina	1	81	5	1	1	3	8
Yugoslavia	2	69	9	2	2	6	10

These figures seem to confirm the hypothesis that the majority of Yugoslavs, especially in the republics where pro-Yugoslav feelings were higher, were conscious (and, to some extent, dissatisfied) of the limited powers of the Federal Government, as well as of Markovi 's hesitant, or ineffective, intervention in political issues. Such a tendency looks particularly visible in Bosnia-Herzegovina, once more, due to the sensitivity towards inter-ethnic issues and their potential repercussions, what fed further criticism to the poor involvement of the government in the political-institutional arena. Moreover, the Bosnians' high discontent on the weak contribution to political pluralism can be explained while keeping into account the long delay occurred to establish the norms for the first multi-party elections in the republic, and with the Markovi 's inability to accelerate the constitutional amendments and to call for pan-Yugoslav elections. The authors of the survey also warned about other elements that could represent a potential

⁶³⁹ Source: Bahtijarevi and Milas, "Reakcija javnosti", 67.

obstacle to consensus for Markovi . According to the public opinion, which is an extremely dynamic social-psychological phenomenon within a context of deep economic and political changes, the assessments can change very quickly. Structural reforms set by themselves completely new conditions within a short amount of time, while the possible non-fulfilment of the proclaimed goals can instantly undermine popular confidence.⁶⁴⁰ Actually, this is what happened in part in the second half of 1990, when the public perception of the Yugoslav government was affected by some negative effects of economic measures, as well as by the intensely hostile campaign by the republican-controlled media in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia.⁶⁴¹

7.4. Conclusions

The political capital earned by Ante Markovi presented a strongly economic characterisation, but also a symbolical implication as a neo-Yugoslavist option. Markovi was the only leader in the State who was not identified with republican-national interests. His rational and calm look, with a steady reassuring voice and an always smiling face, contributed to create the character of an (anti-)leader diametrically opposed to rhetorical excesses of the nationalist politicians. The combination of a “new socialist” (i.e. a social-democratic orientation) with a pro-market and pro-modernisation discourses apparently gathered a wide consensus among different social sectors.

Pro-liberal press sectors actually glorified him and predicted a large popular success, should he directly engage in the political spectrum. In January, a columnist of the Zagreb paper *Danas* commented: “The eyes of Yugoslavs, it is obvious, are turned toward the enterprising, rational and persistent chairman of the Federal Executive Council. As there is an increasingly perceptible awareness that the fate of the country will largely depend upon his fate. Markovi is undoubtedly the embodiment of the desire for change, a fighter for a new socialism that would give the last deathblow to the Dogma. That dragon is strong like a devil, and Markovi is not Saint George. But many people believe that he is Saint Anthony [*Sveti Ante*]”.⁶⁴² The well-known journalist Goran Mili

⁶⁴⁰ Bahtijarevi and Milas, “Reakcija javnosti”, 65.

⁶⁴¹ Mihajlovski, “Javno mnenje”, 63.

⁶⁴² Milan Jajinovi, “Lideri ograničena suvereniteta”, *Danas*, January 9, 1990.

wrote in his *Oslobo enje* weekly column: “Not by chance, in this moment, perhaps, the majority of votes (in western-type elections) would go to the ‘party’ of Ante Markovi ,⁶⁴³ which acts competently, relatively efficaciously, pretty Yugoslav-oriented, non-ideologically, without euphoric unrealizable promises, without evident hate towards opponents, with smile, gently calming... Most of Markovi ’s supporters would give their vote believing that the economic program of the prime minister is good and feasible. But I am convinced that many would support Markovi for the simple reason that the head of government leaves an impression as a nice daddy [*dobrog tate*] and that we can peacefully sleep next to him. Let him think instead of us”.⁶⁴⁴ In a later article, Mili added: “Alongside Markovi there are leading Yugoslav (and foreign) economists, successful businessmen who do not fear the challenge of competition, pensioners who are bored of learning maths at old age, private owners, hard workers expecting a fair wage for a fair job – a wage which will not be halved by the day 15 of the month, an old generation who is ready to overcome the initial torments of the reform to live the next 40 years in the real world. Also, those who love most the present and the future than the glorious history of their nation, believe in him”.⁶⁴⁵

Of course, such well articulated pro-reform narrative was far from being homogeneous in the Yugoslav media. Criticisms regularly came, particularly from Belgrade-based media such as the daily *Politika*, the voice of the Miloševi ’s regime, the weekly *Duga*, an unaligned and controversial magazine with some nationalist excesses, grounding in economic arguments, and the state-controlled radio-TV stations in Serbia.⁶⁴⁶ However, the popular consensus and prestige that Markovi apparently enjoyed in the entire country, prompted him to actively engage in the political spectrum.

⁶⁴³ Mili here refers to the federal government and to Markovi ’s close collaborators and sympathizers as the potential members of a hypothetical party. At that time, the SRSJ did not exist yet.

⁶⁴⁴ Goran Mili , “Bi emo punoljetni”, *Oslobo enje*, February 18, 1990.

⁶⁴⁵ Goran Mili , “Istorija kao alibi”, *Oslobo enje*, February 25, 1990.

⁶⁴⁶ About *Duga* see for example “Ante Markovi : revolucionarni skok unazad. Principijelno driblovanje”, *Duga*, July 6-20, 1990; for a wider analysis of the magazine's attitude throughout the Yugoslav crisis, see Zoran Markovi , “The nation: victim and vengeance”, in Popov (ed.), *The road to war in Serbia*, 587-607. Regarding *Politika*, see: Zvonko Logar, “Šta posle 1. jula”, *Politika*, April 1, 1990. Logar, a top economic columnist, frequently criticized the federal government throughout 1990; see also Taši , *Kako sam branio Antu Markovi a*, 39-40.

8. CREATION AND SETBACKS OF A GOVERNMENT PARTY. THE ALLIANCE OF REFORMIST FORCES OF YUGOSLAVIA (SRSJ)

*“This is the time for change. Join us!”*⁶⁴⁷

8.1. Government Party: foundation and reactions

Speculations about “Ante Marković’s party” began to spread in the beginning of 1990 and became stronger after the dissolution of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which had evidently left an enormous political vacuum.⁶⁴⁸ The first time that Marković publicly hinted at the formation of a reformist movement was in mid-April, during a meeting with Croatian businesspersons.⁶⁴⁹ In the same period, the Federal Government launched a massive media campaign in media, through TV spots and press announcements, under the slogan “This is the time for changes. Join us!” [lit. “*Ovo je vrijeme promjena. Pridružite nam se!*”]. Two of the most prominent Yugoslav artists, musician Goran Bregović and director Ademir Kenović, were hired to film the TV spot. The slogan displayed in the TV spot was: “Even the dinar has become money”, “Support from the whole world has been obtained”, “This is the time to come out of the crisis”.⁶⁵⁰ The press announcement went more into detail, enumerating concrete economic figures (8 billion dollars of foreign exchange reserves, 88% of import liberalized, 21% in export growth, 590 new mixed firms, 125 new foreign enterprises, and so on). Significantly, one of the mentioned results was that “We are becoming a democratic country with a multi-

⁶⁴⁷ [Lit. “*Ovo je vrijeme promjena. Pridružite nam se!*”].

This was the main slogan of the Federal Government and, then, of the Alliance of the Reformist Forces (SRSJ) in the second half of 1990.

⁶⁴⁸ Božidar Andrejić, “Rubikon za stranku A.M.”, *Borba*, April 21-22, 1990.

⁶⁴⁹ Marković’s word reported in press were: “Now we are opening the process of reform of the Yugoslav constitution, in order to form a Yugoslav parliament. We are ready to enter the struggle for that Parliament together with all the progressive forces, shall they be constituted alone or as a coalition. In the period coming ahead of us, we will be committed to carry out its corresponding part of the job”. “Šta je Ante Marković rekao privrednicima u Zagrebu i Osijeku. Sad ste vi na potezu”, *Borba*, April 17, 1990. These declarations remained, then, surprisingly unnoticed in the Yugoslav press.

⁶⁵⁰ “Spotovi o reformi na TV ve od narednog ponedjeljka. I dinar je postao novac”, *Borba*, April 21-22, 1990; “Kre u vladini spotovi”, *Oslobo enje*, April 21, 1990.

party system". In addition, there were quotations of some appreciations on reforms coming from foreign newspapers (*New York Times*, *Il Sole 24 ore*, *La Repubblica*). The final phrase was: "Europe and the world have given us a strong support, now it's time that we support ourselves. Join us!".⁶⁵¹ The government also provided a new institutional logo, a stylized 'Yu' surrounded by a circle with three arrows graphically symbolized modernisation, dynamism and internationalisation. The same choice for the 'YU' from the English 'Yugoslavia', instead of the 'JU' from the Serbo-Croatian '*Jugoslavija*', suggests the emphasis on the international projection of Markovi's project, which was, at the same time, a tool to obtain further visibility from foreign investors and diplomats, and an attempt to strengthen domestic support by displaying himself as a reputed leader. The overall operation easily evoked a political aspiration, as if it was designed for a party rather than for an institution. Growing media exposure was completed through the realisation of a TV program called "Ask the government" ("*Pitajte SIV*"), where the prime minister or some cabinet member would answer questions from spectators; the program started on March 2, 1990 and was broadcast every other Friday, being hosted in rotation by the network of state-republican channels.⁶⁵²

It was in late May, however, that Ante Markovi openly disclosed his intention to form a political party. In an interview released jointly to the Reuters and BBC's journalists, the prime minister explained that "he and his government" were willing to form a pan-Yugoslav party, with a reformist platform, which would run for the elections to the federal Parliament expected to take place by the end of the year.⁶⁵³ The circumstances of this interview suggest two key elements of Markovi's broader plan. Firstly, the choice of a foreign media as the recipient of the announcement suggests the high concern of the prime minister with sending messages to the international community and getting support from it. Secondly, Markovi's emphasis on the eventual "federal elections" discloses the strong connection between his political engagement and the progress of the institutional reforms towards the creation of a pan-Yugoslav multi-party framework: in other words, the project of a reformist, Yugoslavist party was designed to compete in federal elections, not in the republican-limited political arenas. As the process for the adoption of pan-Yugoslav electoral and political parties' laws was still in place,

⁶⁵¹ See the announcement in *Borba*, April 20, 1990, 6.

⁶⁵² *Oslobo enje*, March 2, 1990.

⁶⁵³ "Markovi osniva stranku", *Oslobo enje*, May 27, 1990.

Marković was doing his best in order to synchronize the two parallel processes (reformist pro-Yugoslav party + pan-federal elections) and to get ready once the institutional reform would be possibly unlocked (which, indeed, would never happen).

Marković's comments raised a balanced mixture of expectation, approval and criticism. The survey of the Yugoslav Consortium pointed out that 41% of those polled supported the idea that the government sets up its own party, while 28% were against and 29% undecided, suggesting that acceptance among society of a "Government's party" was somewhat good, but far from the one expressed for the government itself. Once more, the highest approval came from Bosnia-Herzegovina (65%) and Macedonia (53%), while the lowest support came from Montenegro (42% against, +26% undecided), Serbia (37% against, +31% undecided) and Slovenia (32% against, 44% undecided).⁶⁵⁴ Reform-oriented forces already operating in the political sphere were cautious towards Marković's intentions. Some backed the initiative, ranging from the "enthusiasm" expressed by the Socialist Alliance in Bosnia-Herzegovina (SSRN), to moderate and critical approval coming from the Social Democratic Party in Croatia (SKH-SDP) and the Democratic Party in Serbia (DS).⁶⁵⁵ The UJDI officially valued the "sovereignty of citizens", and the "democratic reconstruction of Yugoslavia" as strongholds of Marković's political project, but avoided clarifying whether they would join it, or not.⁶⁵⁶ Actually, within the same UJDI there were quite different assessments. While Željko Rebać from the Mostar UJDI enthusiastically expressed his acceptance of Marković's party as an integrative force within the overall Yugoslav plan, professor Žarko Puhovski from the Zagreb UJDI criticized the "uncommon" procedure of a prime minister forming his own party, since "in civilized countries" it happens the other way around. Puhovski stated that Marković could be supported only if he fulfilled three conditions: commitment for a democratic federation, an acknowledgement of the possibility to lose the elections and consequently the government, a clear stance on the crucial problems of Yugoslavia such as the status of Kosovo and the role of the Army. Puhovski warned that, otherwise, this initiative would be "condemned to political failure".⁶⁵⁷ Such discrepancies are indicative of the not

⁶⁵⁴ Bahtijarević and Milas, "Reakcija javnosti", 76.

⁶⁵⁵ See the comments of Ivica Račan (SDP) in "Po obijavu, opet različitosti", *Borba*, 2-3 June 1990; Zoran Đinđić (DS) in "Kao 'prirodni' saveznik", in *Borba*, June 2-3, 1990; Mirko Pejanović (SSRN) in "Za sve vrste saradnje", *Oslobodjenje*, May 29, 1990.

⁶⁵⁶ "Optimistički kapetan tonula", *Borba*, June 2-3, 1990.

⁶⁵⁷ "Žarko Puhovski: tri uslova", in "Šta kažu stranački prvaci", *Oslobodjenje*, May 29, 1990.

unanimously favourable opinion on Markovi even among pro-reformist and pro-Yugoslav supporters. Some of them, despite acknowledging that the Markovi's programme was sincerely committed with democratic Yugoslavism, questioned his excessively personalist, "top-bottom" approach in promoting its political project,⁶⁵⁸ as well as his weak intervention on the sensitive issues regarding the status of Yugoslavia.⁶⁵⁹

On the other side, the bitterest reproaches logically came from the Slovenian and the Serbian pro-nationalist actors, who had already identified Markovi as a political opponent and now openly pointed to him as the enemy. Until then, their arguments had been mainly based on the negative effects of economic reforms; now they shifted towards the alleged abuse of his institutional position for personal gain and on the supposed threat that Markovi would represent to the interests of "their own" people. A representative of the Slovenian ruling party DEMOS stated that "No supra-national [lit. *nadnacionalna*] party can count on sympathizers or support from Slovenia."⁶⁶⁰ Negative comments came from the prominent newspapers *Delo* from Ljubljana and *Večer* from Maribor.⁶⁶¹ Borisav Jovi, then the Serbian representative in the Presidency of Yugoslavia and a very close ally of Miloševi, wrote in his memoirs on May 25: "I draw his [Markovi's] attention to the fact that, as president of the SIV, I do not agree with the formation of a separate political party. Both things are not compatible. If he wants to do that, then he must resign, but that would not be good. He did not agree with that. If he undertakes that, I am afraid that we will clash".⁶⁶² The pro-Miloševi diary *Politika* published a series of articles and columns sharply criticizing Markovi's intentions, insisting that the political initiative of a prime minister was an uncommon and unfair procedure in multi-party democracy.⁶⁶³ Vuk Draškovi, from the Serbian ultra-nationalist opposition party SPO, said that Markovi aimed to "capture a part of the Serbian electoral body, playing on the sentimental virus of Yugoslavism which has been killed everywhere excepting among the

⁶⁵⁸ Gajo Sekuli, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 15, 2012.

⁶⁵⁹ Rastko Mošnik, interview by author. Ljubljana, June 7, 2013.

⁶⁶⁰ Hubert Požarnik (DEMOS), reported in "Antisrpska avantura", *Borba*, June 2-3, 1990.

⁶⁶¹ "Markovi eva stranka. Reagovanja jugoslovenske štampe. Lukavi Ante", *Veernje Novine*, May 30, 1990.

⁶⁶² Borisav Jovi, *Poslednji dani SFRJ*, 148-149.

⁶⁶³ "Neobičajna najava Ante Markovića", *Politika*, May 27, 1990; "Vlada ne može da bude stranka", *Politika*, May 27, 1990; see also various anti-Markovi articles and letters sent to the known column "Odjeci i reagovanja" ("Echos and reactions"), collected in "Feljton: Odjeci i reagovanja (6), Ne emo kapitalizam Ante Markovića!", in *E-Novine*, May 2, 2009. Accessed February 18, 2013. <http://www.e-novine.com/srbija/srbija-tema/25632-Neemo-kapitalizam-Ante-Markovicia.html>

Serb people”.⁶⁶⁴ Moreover, the speculations about Markovič’s project ignited further obstruction from Slovenian and Serbian delegates to the federal political reform, which would potentially favour the “government’s party” and go against their own republican-centred interests.

This stagnation, in turn, apparently forced Markovič to delay his active political engagement. Once again, he postponed the formation of the party and remained focused on his institutional activity as Prime Minister. During the last days of June he announced to the Yugoslav Parliament new measures for economic stabilisation and, especially, presented a more detailed proposal for giving shareholding of firms to their workers at a discounted and more favourable conditions, in order to carry out a privatisation and a recapitalisation “from below”, also defined as “ownership democracy” [*vlasni ka demokracija*].⁶⁶⁵ Shareholding was the opening move of the second phase of the economic programme that the government was seeking to move forward, grounded on development and redistribution policies rather than on mere austerity and deregulation measures. The other stronghold of the second phase was the creation of welfare and social policies implemented directly by the federal government, something that was, at the time, an exclusive domain of republics and provinces and would need, in turn, a harmonisation of the fiscal policy in order to be funded.⁶⁶⁶

Apparently, it was during this phase that Markovič, through his stronger media presence and his renewed commitment to his institutional duties, made a last attempt to inspire a spontaneous mobilisation of reform-oriented social forces, as well as to get support from progressive sectors of the dissolved SKJ and from liberal-reformist movements, in order to move forward his program. Nevertheless, none of these actors clearly stood out backing him, while his reforms were crashing against the staunch obstruction of the republics, whose governments, as owners of the main large and medium enterprises, were not willing to give up such strategically sensitive political control. The republics limited the extent of the “privatisation from below”, besides preventing any

⁶⁶⁴ Vuk Draković (SPO), reported in “Antisrpska avantura”, *Borba*, June 2-3, 1990.

⁶⁶⁵ “Iz ekspozicija Ante Markoviča u Skupštini SFRJ. Krupan korak ka Evropi”, *Oslobodjenje*, June 30, 1990. “Fabrike radnicima, drugi put”, *Borba*, July 1, 1990.

⁶⁶⁶ *Yugoslav changes*, 105.

reform of welfare policy which was obviously a crucial tool in order to obtain electoral consensus.

Given this stalemate, Marković felt forced to intervene in the political field. On July 29, 1990, he announced the creation of the “Alliance of Reformist Forces of Yugoslavia” (*Savez Reformskih Snaga Jugoslavije*, SRSJ), with these words: “I have to say that we, as citizens working for the Federal Government and their organs, have decided to form the Alliance of Reformist Forces and run for the Yugoslavia elections. Of course, our program is already known, and all our citizens know and support it. There is no need to explain it”.⁶⁶⁷ Marković chose a highly symbolic and emotive circumstance for that, namely the ceremony remembering the battle of Kozara, in northwest Bosnia, fought by the Partisans in World War Two. The ceremony was attended by about 100,000 people, according to media reports.⁶⁶⁸ The speech released on that day reveals the somewhat heterodox profile of Marković’s ideal, symbolical and historical fundaments. On one hand, he still made references to various principles of the Titoist era, such as anti-fascism, anti-stalinism and non-alignment, defining them as unquestionable achievements and pillars of Yugoslav unity. Political pluralism and reforms were introduced as elements of continuity and evolution, rather than as a rupture with the Titoist past. Marković claimed that such historical-political legacy, combined with the

⁶⁶⁷ “Ante Marković na velikom narodnom zboru na Kozari. Reformski savez – za izbornu pobjedu”, *Oslobo enje*, July 30, 1990.

⁶⁶⁸ The battle of Kozara (lit. *Bitka na Kozari*) took place from early June to late July 1942. Nazi Germany and Croatian Ustasha forces launched an offensive against a Yugoslav Partisans’ stronghold on Mount Kozara, near the city of Prijedor. Despite largely outnumbering the Partisans in men (31,000 against 3,500, according to historian Enver Redžić) and equipment, they needed a relatively long time (more than a month and a half) to win the battle and experienced significant losses that undermined their plan of a complete pacification of the area. However, Partisan fighters and, especially, civilians paid a high price; Redžić estimates that 68,000 inhabitants of the Kozara region were sent to the Jasenovac and Gradina camps, from which about 25,000 never returned (Enver Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*, London: Frank Cass, 2005, 26-27; 227-228).

This association with heroism and sacrifice of the surrounded Partisans and supportive civil population made Kozara one of the most glorified war episodes, and memorial sites, in post-war socialist Yugoslavia. The solemn ceremony was held every year and presented by high institutional cadres from Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Although it is generally acknowledged that most of the victims in the Kozara offensive were Serbs, there is no exact and reliable data about that. While during the socialist era official discourse on Kozara was focused on brotherhood and unity and did not take into account the national affiliation, the regime change in 1990-92 brought forth revisionist reinterpretations. Serb nationalists considered the Kozara’s events and memorial site as if it was exclusively related with their own threatened national identity. (Dženan Sahović and Dino Zulumović, “A case study of the Kozara monument and memorial complex”, in Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and Dacia Viejo-Rose (eds.), *War and Cultural Heritage: Biographies of place*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 208-223).

Signs of this reinterpretation were already visible after the Marković’s visit on July 1990; he was blamed by Serb nationalists for allegedly “usurping” the site of Kozara for his personal purposes.

reformist efforts of his cabinet, offered more favourable prospects for Yugoslavia than for the countries of Central-Eastern Europe which were looking for a way out from Communism. Furthermore, the speech was released in front of a huge crowd displaying posters with Josip Broz's face and socialist symbols, cheering the canonical "*Jugoslavija, Jugoslavija*" and "Brotherhood and Unity" ("*Bratstvo i jedinstvo*") and even "Tito, Ante", a scenario that evoked a still strong allegiance to official and classical Yugoslavism. He said:

"Of course, there are many forces wishing to divide us, that want to exploit our differences to gain power. But, by building this country on the principles of AVNOJ, on the revolution led by Tito, we have opened paths and perspectives for the development of our country during years, not only of our peoples and nationalities, but also of the other socialist countries, considering that through violence, dictatorship, monolithic ideas and diktats, it is not possible to develop freedom, democracy and humanism, and to move forward the progress of the people and humanity. For these reasons, Yugoslavia entered into conflict with Stalinism in 1948 and came out as a winner. For these reasons, Yugoslavia founded the Non-Aligned movement, as opposed to the blocs which aimed to divide the world, in order to act peacefully, in order to ease tensions and to allow people to live free, without fear of a bloodbath which could destroy the whole humanity. [...] But, unfortunately, there was not enough consistency in creating a new model of management, after the struggle of the most creative and capable forces of this country against Stalinism. [...] Therefore, we have encountered difficulties and entered a crisis which is today evident in the country. In contrast with what is happening in our countries, in the other socialist countries which are now always more 'former', where they had a global crisis of their systems, which broke down and could not be replaced with something else. Unlike them, we are, at least, striving with all our forces and capacities, we have good prospects for the future".⁶⁶⁹

But on the other hand, at Kozara the prime minister did not lose the opportunity to emphasize the tangible results of his economic reforms, displayed both as the necessary base for social cohesion and efficiency, and as a pre-condition for political stability and balancing federal organisations. Markovi extensively mentioned the main economic

⁶⁶⁹ Ante Markovi , reported in "Veli anstveni narodni zbor na Kozari. Glas za reforme, glas za budu nost", *Oslobo enje*, July 30, 1990. (This article was the transcription of the entire discourse).

reforms (anti-inflationary, dinar convertibility, shareholding, openness to foreign exchange and investments) and went into detail quoting the amount of foreign exchange reserves stocked until then (9.15 billions dollars).⁶⁷⁰ This was a quite unusual praxis in the context of a ceremony usually marked by emotive and historical references. Such attitude demonstrates the strongly technocratic approach of Ante Markovi , even in front of huge crowds. The intention of the government of setting up a multi-party system in the federation was also mentioned.⁶⁷¹ Kozara can be seen, therefore, as the ultimate emergence of a re-elaborated Yugoslavism through a post-communist and liberal-democratic way. While in the immediate post-war and early Titoist period the socialist economic transformation had been the key to the creation of an “all-Yugoslav consciousness”,⁶⁷² the transition to a market economy was introduced by Markovi as a necessary base for recovering a minimum common ground of values, identities and aspirations in a new country framework.

One day after Kozara, the SRSJ’s main organ, the Initiative Board, was established in Belgrade to coordinate its structuration throughout the country, as to demonstrate that its supreme ambition was to become the first truly all-Yugoslav party after the collapse of the League of Communists (all others were republican-based) and to compete in the federal multi-party elections.⁶⁷³ Nonetheless, the imminence of the elections in four of the six republican entities (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro) and the different features of each political system immediately forced the SRSJ to set up a completely decentralized model of organisation and strategy. The federal Initiative Committee in Belgrade, led by Markovi himself and formed by some prominent members of his cabinet such as Živko Pregl and Aleksandar Mitrovi , never came to carry out a practical function and only set out the general guidelines of the movement, focused on five main points: political pluralism, market economy, social justice, openness to the world, and human rights. The SRSJ introduced itself as social-democrat and announced its ambition to establish a partnership with the European members of the Socialist International.⁶⁷⁴ Actually, Markovi called the Reformist sympathizers to launch a broad bottom-up mobilisation, asking them to self-organize

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁷¹ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁷² Lenard Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 28.

⁶⁷³ “Formiran inicijativni odbor Saveza Reformskih Snaga Jugoslavije. Upis odmah”, *Borba*, July 31, 1990.

⁶⁷⁴ “Uz rame sa evrolevicom”, *YU Reform Press*, November 1, 1990.

themselves. He trusted in this spontaneous process to such an extent that, at the beginning, he did not appoint any leading or coordinating roles for the republican branches.⁶⁷⁵ An essential vehicle for the organisation was the Belgrade-based daily *Borba*, one of the few openly pro-Markovi media.⁶⁷⁶ This daily published the registration form and all the useful information for members and sympathizers, besides giving a constant and detailed account of the process throughout the country. Three weeks after Kozara, according to the *Borba*'s reports, 224 local Initiative boards of the SRSJ were established in Yugoslavia. (See table below). Almost one half of them, 104, were setup in Bosnia-Herzegovina, what confirmed the extent of euphoric support for both Markovi and Yugoslavism in that republic and, in turn, reinforced the perception of the Bosnian elections as the major strategic goal for the reformist movement. Sarajevo alone hosted 38 boards, being, by far, the most pro-SRSJ urban centre in overall Yugoslavia. The second republic was Serbia (38), but the majority of them were located in the autonomous region of Vojvodina (21), while there was a relatively low mobilisation in Serbia proper (16) and practically absent in Kosovo (1). A notable and territorially widespread mobilisation was observable also in Macedonia, coherently with Markovi's vast popularity and strong pro-Yugoslav feelings, and in Montenegro. A not-negligible interest was to be found even in Croatia, where 29 boards were created, which belies the common claim that the SRSJ practically did never come into existence in that republic. Actually, it was in Slovenia where the SRSJ barely managed to settle itself, coherently with the rise of pro-sovereign feelings and the scepticism toward Markovi's Yugoslavist point of view.

⁶⁷⁵ "Pismo inženjera Ante Markovića, predsjednika inicijativnog odbora članovima SRSJ. Sami odlučite o budućnosti", *Borba*, August 11-12, 1990.

⁶⁷⁶ The pro-reformist and pro-Markovi attitude of *Borba* can be explained through three factors. The first is that, whereas during the whole socialist era it had always had a reputation as a tedious officialist sheet, after the change of the editorial staff in 1987 *Borba* became a pluralist, reform-oriented newspaper, particularly critical of the Milošević's power in Serbia (which, in turn, showed a great hostility towards *Borba*).

Secondly, *Borba* conserved the feature of being practically the only "federal newspaper", as it had been owned for decades by the Yugoslav Socialist Alliance (SSRNJ) and therefore, unlike the other main newspapers in the state, it was not bound to subject to the control of any republican government.

Thirdly, Markovi's economic reforms in 1989 made *Borba* a privileged candidate for privatisation; hence the ownership was multiple, with a relevant presence of the Federal Government itself, which bought 17% of shares – the main shareholder, ahead of banks, employees and businesspeople – besides covering the 80% of difference between cost price and sales price. Sources: Mark Thompson, *Forging war: the media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, London: University of Luton Press, 1999, 31-32; "Unfair treatment of *Borba* in Serbia claimed", in *Polet*, October 27, 1989, translated and reported in *JPRS Report Eastern Europe*, March 16, 1990.

Table 8.1. SRSJ's initiative boards established in each republic by August 20, 1990.⁶⁷⁷

	N. boards	Leader
Bosnia-H.	104	Džemal Sokolovi , Nenad Kecmanovi
Montenegro	18	Ljubiša Stankovi
Croatia	29	Božidar Salijevi
Macedonia	31	Stojan Andov
Slovenia	4	Živko Pregl
Serbia proper	16	Vojin Dimitrijevi , Ivan uri
Kosovo	1	-
Vojvodina	21	Dragoslav Petrovi
Yugoslavia	224	Ante Markovi

Table 8.2. Cities with most SRSJ initiative boards.⁶⁷⁸

Sarajevo	BiH	38
Beograd	Serbia	6
Skopje	Macedonia	6
Split	Croatia	4
Novi Sad	Vojvodina	4
Titograd	Montenegro	4
Tuzla	BiH	4
Zagreb	Croatia	4

⁶⁷⁷ Source: my elaboration from complete list in "Inicijativni odbori", *Borba*, August 20 and 21, 1990.

⁶⁷⁸ Source: *ibidem*.

8.2. A flexible organisation for a fragmented (non-)multiparty system.

The SRSJ in the Yugoslav republics

“Who was against us? Well, almost all of them” (laughs).⁶⁷⁹

At the beginning, the SRSJ did not clarify whether it was constituted as a *coalition* opened to collective affiliation of non-national and reform-oriented organisations, as the name “Alliance of Reformist Forces” suggested, or as a single autonomous *party* reserved to individual membership, as Markovi apparently hinted in some of his speeches. The different political contexts and social acceptance within each republic finally led the SRSJ to adopt a flexible frame of organisation and strategy. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, as will be detailed below, the Reformists finally opted to organize an autonomous party running alone at the elections. In Macedonia, they also set up a separate organisation, but remained close to the reformed League of Communists and after the vote joined them in a progressive and non-national post-electoral coalition, in order to relegate to the opposition the nationalist VMRO party.⁶⁸⁰

Instead, the SRSJ, both in Serbia and Montenegro, cooperated with the other opposition forces to face the ruling (post)-communist power held by Slobodan Milošević in Belgrade and his loyal ally Momir Bulatović in Podgorica. However, the setting up in the two republics differed. The Serbian SRSJ did not evolve from a club of anti-regime intellectuals coming from the Liberal Forum and the UJDI.⁶⁸¹ In Serbia proper, the Reformists immediately faced a strongly unfavourable treatment by the government-controlled media and open hostility in the public sphere. *Politika*'s harsh campaign against Markovi gained strength after the Kozara announcement, while ignoring completely the activities of the SRSJ. Borisav Jović, then Serbian representative in the federal presidency, candidly wrote in his memoirs, that, on August 2, 1990 “I wrote a series of three articles, ‘The truth about Ante Markovič’, and sent them to Slobodan [Milošević]. He sent them to *Politika* to have them published. They would appear on

⁶⁷⁹ Nada Ler Sofroni, interview by author. Sarajevo, June 28, 2012.

⁶⁸⁰ Meier, *Yugoslavia*, 176; 187; “Reformisti u najvrućoj republici. Makedonija ne želi sama”, in *Reforma. Valter Express Special*, November 12, 1990; “Makedonska politika pred kulminacijom. Ko je s kim i ko je koga”, *Borba*, September 12, 1990.

⁶⁸¹ “Liberali kod Markoviča”, *Borba*, September 5, 1990.

August 5, 6 and 7 under a pseudonym. We must expose him, because the people are seriously mistaken about who he is, and what he is. Many see in him a sort of saviour, but he is a true imposter and an enemy of the Serbian people”.⁶⁸² As the Belgrade SRSJ’s prominent activist Vesna Peši recalled, “In Belgrade we barely existed. Everything that was pro-Yugoslav and pro-democratic was [perceived] as a betrayal, because it was not Serb. Milošević was too strong and popular, and nothing pro-Yugoslav could have a chance”.⁶⁸³ The Serbian SRSJ only came to consolidate itself in the region of Vojvodina, where the presence of national minorities and a more prosperous economy based on small and medium sized enterprises, besides a less strong pro-Milošević mobilized base, aroused more interest for liberal Yugoslavism.

Montenegro was the only republic in which the SRSJ itself was constituted as a proper umbrella-coalition, composed of social-democrat, liberal or national minorities’ parties, gathering almost all the forces that were challenging the ruling pro-Milošević League of Communists of Montenegro.⁶⁸⁴ The Montenegrin reformists, too, denounced the government-controlled media for carrying out an aggressive campaign against Ante Marković and his organisation, which was accused of illegal funding and representing a threat for the country’s security.⁶⁸⁵ The anti-regime stance of the Montenegrin SRSJ, against the use of the so-called “political police”, the “political dossiers” and “wiretapping” and for the respect of a democratic rule of law, was widely deployed in its programme, unlike in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, where the SRSJ’s discourse towards the legacy of Communist structures was much more prudent as the option of a convergence with the reformed Leagues was kept alive.⁶⁸⁶ At a certain point in October, the Montenegrin SRSJ took into account the boycott of the elections in order to protest against the “information monopoly of the League of Communists”,⁶⁸⁷ although it finally discarded this option.

⁶⁸² Borisav Jović, *Posljednji dani SFRJ*, 173. The articles were effectively published in those days under the pseudonym “S.L.”.

⁶⁸³ Vesna Peši, interview by author. Belgrade, May 13, 2013.

⁶⁸⁴ “Savez Reformskih Snaga Crne Gore. Najprivla niji strana ki kišobran”, *Reforma. Valter Express Special*, November 12, 1990.

⁶⁸⁵ “Da li SIV potpla uje dr. Ljubišu Stanković a? Udjurma aršijske politike”, *Borba*, September 4, 1990; “Savez Reformskih Snaga Crne Gore. Najprivla niji strana ki kišobran”, *Reforma. Valter Express Special*, November 12, 1990.

⁶⁸⁶ “Program rada Saveza Reformskih Snaga Jugoslavije za Crnu Goru”, SRSJ Crna Gora, 1990, 5.

⁶⁸⁷ “Konferencija za novinare u SRSJ za Crnu Goru. Opozicija e bojkotovati izbore?”, *Oslobo enje*, October 5, 1990.

In Croatia, the SRSJ succeeded to establish a basic, but not negligible, infrastructure. By early October 1990, it had about 40 local committees in the whole territory, covering all major urban centres as well as minor towns in the province.⁶⁸⁸ Their presence was stronger in the Istria region and in the town of Rijeka, whose local branch claimed to have enrolled about 20,000 members.⁶⁸⁹ The fact that elections in Croatia and Slovenia had already been held months before certainly undermined the efforts of SRSJ's activists in those republics, although they naively claimed that a snap vote would occur there following the constitutional reforms of their respective reforms.⁶⁹⁰ However, this was not the only element explaining the poor performance of the SRSJ in Croatia. There are at least two other factors which have been so far overlooked.

First, it was exactly in August 1990 (the month following the Kozara announcement, therefore crucial for the Reformists' expected mobilisation) when national tensions dramatically escalated in Croatia. It was in August 17, after some weeks of turmoil, that the first violent confrontation took place between the Croatian Serbs mobilized by the SDS leader Milan Babić, who had called a referendum on Krajina's autonomy, and the Croatian government, who had declared the vote as illegal and deployed security forces to prevent it.⁶⁹¹ The scenes of log barricades (hence the name of "Log revolution" [*balvan-revolucija*]) by Croatian Serb nationalists, the weapons and armoured vehicles deployed in Krajina shocked public opinion throughout Yugoslavia and created a sense of deep insecurity in Croatia. The public attention was forcedly moved from the rational, mainly economic-centred domain privileged by Reformists to the emotional, security-centred framework raised, and in turn exploited, by national-oriented forces. About fifty SRSJ local coordinators in Croatia and in Serbia rejected to have their name published in *Borba's* list of committees, fearing personal pressures and repercussions.⁶⁹² In addition, the authority of Ante Marković as federal Prime Minister in

⁶⁸⁸ See the full list in "SRSJ – Inicijativni Odbori" in *Borba*, October 4, 1990.

⁶⁸⁹ "Savez Reformskih Snaga Jugoslavije. Gužva u Rijeci", *Borba*, September 11, 1990; "Osniva ka skupština Rijeke regije. Kritičari reforme produbljuju krizu", *YU Reform Press*, November 1, 1990.

⁶⁹⁰ The Reformist leaders frequently argued in vain that snap elections would be called in Slovenia and Croatia after a constitutional reform would be approved, evidently misinterpreting the intentions of the republican élites. See, for example, Ante Marković in "Ante Marković. Intervju", in *Dar*, November 6, 1990; Živko Pregl in "Uz rame sa Eurolevicom", in *YU Reform Press*, November 1, 1990; Mirko Klarin in "Igramo na duži rok", *Borba*, September 4, 1990.

⁶⁹¹ Silber and Little, *The death of Yugoslavia*, 99-103.

⁶⁹² Mirjana Popović, coordinator of the SRSJ's central organizing commission, reported in "Do kraja septembra u Beogradu osniva ka skupština SRSJ. Bez robovanja šablonima", *Borba*, September 11, 1990.

that crisis (as well as in all the crisis that involved inter-institutional, inter-ethnic and security matters in 1989-91 as, for instance, the case of Kosovo) was perceived as weak or completely ineffective. This marginalisation further prejudiced the social acceptance of his political movement.

The second crucial hindrance to the SRSJ in Croatia was the lack of interest, let alone support, coming from other moderate and non-ethnic parties. They saw in the SRSJ an intrusion in the (narrow) political space they were already occupying, rather than an opportunity to bring back together and reinforce the opposition to the HDZ.⁶⁹³ Even the Social-Democrat Party (SDP), heir of the League of Communists of Croatia (where Ante Marković had been a member until the eve of the Kozara announcement) took no steps towards cooperation, despite the merely declarative support provided by his leader Ivica Račan.⁶⁹⁴

It was only in Slovenia where the SRSJ did not practically come to existence, setting up only a handful of territorial branches. The political spectrum was uniformly committed to the secession process, as proved by the Declaration of Sovereignty approved almost unanimously by the Parliament in July 1990, and the consequent preparations for the referendum of independence that would take place in December. Marković's vision was, then, seen as intrusive and centralistic. Moreover, the economic programme of the federal government was hardly criticized by local political actors and, as showed by the polls examined in the previous chapter, it met in Slovenia with the least popular support in the state. The words of Lev Kreft, who in 1990 was a Slovenian MP, are a remarkable example of how even progressive and formerly Yugoslavist representatives saw Marković and the Reformists:⁶⁹⁵ "Marković's programme aimed to centralize Yugoslavia in every possible way. It never offered any political reform of the Federation. He was simply a much better figure than Milošević. His party was presented in the political market through the premise that one is more satisfied with more money, irrespective of whether the process of reforms be slower and with a completely centralized

⁶⁹³ Dražen Budiša, a representative of the Croatian Social-Liberal Party (HSLP, a member of the liberal-oriented "Coalition of the people's agreement" ranging a 10% in the election) said that "there is no need for another party relying on the idea of liberal economy. In Croatia, Marković's SRS will not get so much support". "Reagiranje dijela strana kih prvaka u Hrvatskoj na osnivanje SRSJ", *Borba*, August 2, 1990.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹⁵ Kreft was a former member of the Slovenian UJDI, which was notoriously pro-federal, but he quickly switched to pro-independence stances.

government”.⁶⁹⁶ The circumstance that Živko Pregl, a Slovene, was the right-hand person of Ante Marković both in the federal cabinet and in the SRSJ’s organisation, did not much help the Reformists’ cause. Similarly to Marković, Pregl had a strongly technocratic approach and was extremely busy with government matters, being far more inclined to negotiate institutionally and to not irritate the local actors, rather than to actively participate in the political arena.

The SRSJ faced an increasing hostility in the media throughout Yugoslavia. Besides the abovementioned attacks from the Serbian media, also the press and TV from Croatia and Slovenia marginalized Marković and the Reformists, or displayed a blatantly negative attitude towards them. The peak of hostility was probably reached on November 15th, 1990, when TV Beograd and TV Zagreb refused to broadcast live the annual speech of the Prime Minister to the Federal Parliament, for the first time in history.⁶⁹⁷ Aware that this blockade was affecting his political project, Marković developed his own strategy to intervene in the media space. Besides maintaining a share in *Borba*,⁶⁹⁸ the Federal Government was planning to set up a Yugoslav-wide TV channel since the early 1990. Until then, all the channels were owned by the republics and served for the aggressive propaganda of the local élites with growing excesses and manipulations. The federal channel, which was going to be called “Yutel”, envisaged instead high professional and pluralist standards. Yutel would have been a cornerstone in Marković’s prospects of restoring a pan-Yugoslav conscience. A staff of influential personalities was involved in the project: the former diplomat and publisher Bato Tomašević was appointed as director, and joined by the journalists Goran Milić from TV Belgrade as editor-in-chief and Silvija Luks from TV Zagreb, as well as by the historian Ivan Jurić.

However, the plan suffered serious setbacks. The Army, which should have provided the frequencies and equipment and which was initially keen to collaborate,

⁶⁹⁶ Lev Kreft, interviewed in González Villa, “Un nuevo estado”, 286.

⁶⁹⁷ TV Belgrade explained that the speech would be uninteresting for the audience; TV Zagreb claimed instead that it did not want to interfere with the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which would take place three days later. (Nevertheless, the official “electoral silence” would only begin the day after). This and more episodes of latent boycott against Ante Marković are reported in the memories of Predrag Tašić, then head of Public Relations’ Department at the Federal Government (*Kako sam branio Antu Markovića*, 38-43).

For instance, the same day of the Bosnian elections, the Serbian daily *Politika* published in its front page an interview with the SDS’ leader Radovan Karadžić calling for the Bosnian Serbs to vote for the SDS.

⁶⁹⁸ See chapter 8.1.

quickly retired its support; the Serbian authorities denied the license for broadcasting and prevented Yutel from installing its studio in Belgrade. The station was forced to move to Sarajevo and began broadcasting only on October 23rd, 1990, just before to the republican elections, for one hour daily. Furthermore, Yutel was obliged to negotiate its re-broadcast with each republican station. The programme promptly achieved a notable popularity in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, where it was broadcasted live (at around 21:00) but remained marginal in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, where it was retransmitted at late night, even at 02.00 or 03:00 am. Therefore, Yutel was simply too late and too marginal as to counterbalance the nationalist-led media narratives.⁶⁹⁹

Because of such intricate pattern, the SRSJ met the paradoxical fate of being a “government party” which, as the same Ante Markovi acknowledged, “is in the opposition, is treated as an opposition and has all the problems of the opposition”.⁷⁰⁰ At least, this was the case in four of the six Yugoslav republics. The Reformists found a not deliberately hostile reception by authorities only in Macedonia and, as it will be analysed hereafter, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which were still outside of the “dominant Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian axis” and hosted a still solid and widespread commitment for supra-national Yugoslavism.⁷⁰¹ The federal framework was seen in huge sectors of the Macedonian and Bosnian society as a source of preferred economic, political and inter-ethnic stability vis-à-vis the circumstance of national homogenisations and secession. In turn, Markovi’s expectance for a higher electoral result in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia transformed these two scenarios into a crucial stage for his potential relaunch of the whole transition plan towards a “Third Yugoslavia”.

⁶⁹⁹ Goran Milić, interview by author. Sarajevo, October 3, 2011; Bato Tomašević, *Montenegro. Attraverso una saga familiare, la nascita e la scomparsa della Jugoslavia*, Trieste: Linz Editoriale, 2007, pp. 503-544; Thompson, *Forging war*, 38-50; Spaskovska, “Landscapes of Resistance”, 56-57.

Among other things, Yutel has remained in the collective memory of many Bosnians for organizing the concert-event “Yutel for Peace” (*Yutel za Mir*) held in July 28th, 1991. Prominent artists, musicians and public personalities from all Yugoslavia participated in the event, in a moment at which war was spreading in Croatia. The rally gathered between 50.000 and 100.000 people coming from all Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to press sources (and despite the heavy rain), many of whom carried Yugoslav flags and chanted pro-unity and anti-nationalist slogans. (“Dobro ve e, Jugoslavijo. I probudi se!”, *Oslobo enje*, July 29, 1991; “Neka ljubav procvijeta!”, *Oslobo enje*, July 29, 1991).

This event illustrates the high popularity of Yutel in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as the considerable potential for mobilization that a certain “emotional Yugoslavism” still had in the republic and that remained without an outlet of political representation. Yutel ended its broadcasts in May 1992, one month after the beginning of the siege of Sarajevo.

⁷⁰⁰ Ante Marković in “Ante Marković. Intervju”, in *Dar*, November 6, 1990.

⁷⁰¹ Spaskovska, “Landscapes of Resistance”, 38.

8.3. Great expectations. The SRSJ in Bosnia-Herzegovina

*“Markovi ’s Reformist Party had a Dream Team. It was like the Barcelona FC in today’s football. But at the end, they failed”.*⁷⁰²

Bosnia-Herzegovina immediately stood out as the republic where there was the most widespread enthusiasm for the SRSJ. However, precisely for this reason, it was also the place where the lexical and conceptual vagueness about whether the SRSJ was a party or a coalition, a spontaneous movement or an expression of pre-existing structures, immediately led to the most negative consequences. In the first weeks of the activity of the SRSJ in Bosnia-Herzegovina, social euphoria quickly turned into disorganisation and confusion that seriously jeopardized its organisational development and damaged the relations with their potential allies. The Democratic Socialist Alliance (DSS) and the Yugoslavs’ Party (SJ) immediately expressed their wish to join the movement and offered to the SRSJ their own local infrastructure.⁷⁰³ The Alliance of Socialist Youth (SSO), too, was willing to join the platform, in case that collective affiliation was allowed.⁷⁰⁴ However, the most resounding case was the case of the Bosnian Communists. On July 31, just two days after Kozara, the member of the SKBiH presidency Ivo Komši asked the leaders of the municipal branches of the SKBiH to “support and actively join” the formation of the SRSJ, alleging a shared commitment for economic reforms, and the need to jointly oppose the growing convergence among the national parties HDZ and SDA.⁷⁰⁵ The president of the SKBiH Durakovi estimated that Markovi deserved support because “he had authority among the citizens and his government was an integrative factor for the country”.⁷⁰⁶ In the aftermath, around 70 municipal branches of the Communists were involved in the formation of the Reformists’ local initiative boards.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰² Zdravko Grebo, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 11, 2012.

⁷⁰³ “Ujedinjeni oko dinara”, *Borba*, August 3, 1990; Mirko Pejanovi, “Povodom najave formiranja SRS. Tri razloga ‘za’”, *Oslobo enje*, July 31, 1990; “Šta smo rekli Markovi u”, *Oslobo enje*, August 17, 1990. On the DSS, see chapter 6.1.

⁷⁰⁴ “Omladinci BiH traže. Neka Ante objasni”, *Oslobo enje*, August 12, 1990.

⁷⁰⁵ “Konferencija za štampu u CK SKBiH. Koalicija SDA-HDZ?”, *Oslobo enje*, August 1, 1990. Nijaz Durakovi, interviewed by Aleksandar Tijani in “Ravno do dna – Normalan ovjek danas može biti samo komunista”, *Oslobo enje*, October 5, 1990.

⁷⁰⁶ Nijaz Durakovi, interviewed by Aleksandar Tijani in “Ravno do dna – Normalan ovjek danas može biti samo komunista”, *Oslobo enje*, October 5, 1990.

⁷⁰⁷ Nijaz Durakovi interviewed in Aleksandar Tijani, *ibidem*.

On August 8, Durakovi and Markovi had a talk in Belgrade where, according to Durakovi's account, a verbal agreement for SKBiH-SRSJ cooperation was reached. "What has happened since then was a true somersault", he recalled.⁷⁰⁸

Sure enough, the situation of the structuring of the SRSJ in Bosnia-Herzegovina soon became chaotic and troubled, as some towns or even small villages hosted two or more local branches which were self-organized and self-proclaimed themselves as the only legitimate representative.⁷⁰⁹ On the one side, there were Communist-driven branches, established in the old party's offices and infrastructures, seeking a strategic convergence; on the other side there were the branches hastily established in workplaces or public places, founded by "outsiders", namely people with few or no previous political engagement, or cadres formerly excluded from the ranks of the SKBiH, who were hostile to the alliance with former Communists and were rather attracted by the "regenerating" role of the movement. A member of an "outsiders" branch in Sarajevo significantly pointed out: "Former leaders cannot lead a reform force. The alliance must be formed from below and we do not accept things set up from above".⁷¹⁰ The "outsiders" line finally prevailed both among the base and the narrow circle of the most prominent members, who mainly came from the academic and cultural environments.

The conflict urged Ante Markovi to intervene. Realizing that this confusion was seriously compromising the organisational structuring process, in mid-August he made official that the SRSJ was an autonomous political force reserved to individual membership, hence practically rejecting the partnership with the Communists. Furthermore, he personally appointed a republican leadership for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian branch, primarily selected from the Sarajevo cultural and academic network of progressive intellectuals, quite ideologically heterogeneous but all of them with a strong pro-Yugoslav inclination.⁷¹¹ Such decisions forced to reshape, and in some cases reset from zero, many of the local branches which had been set up so far. That would in turn imply a further delay in arranging the electoral campaign and recruiting the

⁷⁰⁸ Nijaz Durakovi in "Magnetofonski snimak sa 11. Sjednice Centralnog Komiteta Saveza Komuniste BiH – SDP, održane 14.09.1990", SDP Archive, 9/3.

⁷⁰⁹ Neven Andjeli, interview by author. Sarajevo, June 21, 2014.

⁷¹⁰ Miroslav Peji in "Sarajevo: potpisi za Markovi evu stranku. I staro i mlado", *Veernje Novine*, August 2, 1990. In Tuzla, there were three committees: one formed by the SKBiH, one by the DSS, and one by "outsiders". "Tuzla. Nakon Markovi eve inicijative pravi haos na političkoj sceni. Plove niz vjetar", *Veernje Novine*, August 6, 1990.

⁷¹¹ "Jedinstven front SRSJ u BiH", *Osloboenje*, August 15, 1990.

candidates' list. Keeping in mind that there were only three months left to elections and that SRSJ was the last main party to enter into the Bosnian political arena, this “stop-and-go” would produce a significantly negative effect on the Reformists' performance *vis-à-vis* its opponents.

The head of the party appointed by Marković was a sort of diarchy formed by Nenad Kecmanović and Džemal Sokolović,⁷¹² two figures with a high academic profile and many common traits: both were professors at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo, which had been, since the late 1980s, a stronghold of liberal and critical thinkers and students' mobilisations; they were from the same post-war generation (both were born in 1947); both had been members of the SKBiH until shortly before the SRSJ's birth and had left the League in tumultuous circumstances. Kecmanović had been at the centre of a major and yet unresolved political scandal that had excluded him from the highest institutional ranks in April 1989,⁷¹³ while Sokolović was a typically stubborn

⁷¹² I call it “diarchy” since Sokolović was initially appointed as president and Kecmanović as vice-president, but they exchanged positions in September. Kecmanović claims that it was Marković who took this tactical decision, relying on the fact that Kecmanović was more known in the wider public because of his role as rector at the University of Sarajevo and his involvement in the 1989 affair (see the following note).

⁷¹³ In April 1989, Nenad Kecmanović, then the Rector at the University of Sarajevo and a Professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences, was the candidate (and absolute favourite) at the elections for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian seat at the Federal collective Presidency. For the first time in history, the chair was to be elected by the party base through a list of plural candidates; Kecmanović apparently enjoyed a widespread popularity since he was perceived a liberal “newcomer”, not involved in highest party ranks, who had somehow supported the students' democratic movements. His major opponent, Milan Škoro, came instead from the conservative old guard. Having secured a large majority of support from territorial organisations, a Kecmanović victory was practically certain.

At that point, the press leaked some documents of the Bosnian security services (SDB) alleging that Kecmanović had been an informer for the British Intelligence. The case immediately created public embarrassment and uproar, in a time in which there was a growing contempt against the old Communist establishment and lack of transparency. The party's top ranks urged Kecmanović to withdraw the candidacy, what he promptly did, though he has always (and still does today) denied the accusations. Following demands from the party base, the whole electoral process was postponed to July 1989, when Bogi Bogićević was elected.

The case aroused a widespread suspicion that accusations had been fabricated, or exaggerated, by security services on behalf of some top party officials in order to topple down the career of Kecmanović because he did not belong to the establishment. Certainly, the emerging of a new intra-elite scandal in the Bosnian political spectrum further carried the stigma of obscure intrigues, plots (the “*tamni vilajet*”), etc., which was commonly associated with the Sarajevo's government by Yugoslav political and press circles.

On the other hand, it must be recalled that Kecmanović had also been at the center of public controversy for taking some stances that were blamed as unitarianist and pro-Milošević by some Bosnian (Muslim) circles, in the columns he regularly wrote of the Belgrade-based magazine *NIN*. After 1992, once leaving the SRSJ and fleeing from Sarajevo to Belgrade, Kecmanović became closer to the SDS's stances and embraced Serb nationalist positions has fueled retrospective speculations (yet unproved, in absence of direct and concrete evidences) that his involvement in the 1989 affair could be related with his supposed privileged relations with the Belgrade's side.

In mid-1990, Kecmanović was proposed by Serb national circles as a desirable leader of the Bosnian SDS, but he refused, citing its liberal orientation, which led him to join the SRSJ. (see chapter 5.4). It is less known that even the SKBiH, at one point in early 1990, offered Kecmanović to be a candidate at the

and sophisticated left-wing intellectual who had been candidate for the SKBiH's presidency in the last Congress in December 1989, being outvoted by Durakovi . Shortly thereafter, he left the party for, as he said, ideological reasons.⁷¹⁴ The fact that Kecmanovi , Sokolovi (apart from Markovi himself) came from the League of Communists had a double-sided effect. On the one side, it reinforced a public perception of the SRSJ as a movement with a certain continuity with the past regime (although, paradoxically, in the rest of SRSJ's leadership few had an active political experience); but on the other side, the contempt of these members for their former party and personal and ideological shifts with their ex-fellows had an important effect in further discouraging an alliance between Reformists and Communists.

The diarchy was assisted by an Initiative Committee of about twenty members, renamed in September as Presidential Board. (See tables).

forthcoming elections, but this option was also dropped due to the consequences of the affair that had involved him and the party leadership (Kecmanovi confirmed this anecdote in an interview to Aleksandar Tijani in "Drugovi postali braća i sestre", *Oslobođenje*, October 6, 1990).

The circumstances of the Kecmanovi's affair remain, to this day, not entirely clear and there are varying interpretations in historiographic literature about the effective responsibilities and the consequences that it produced. See: Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 90-91; Veladžić, "Destabilizacija Bosne", 215-16; Virtuts Sambró i Melero, "Contextualització i anàlisi", 125-126; Ivica Lučić, *Uzroci rata*, 210-11; Goran Todorović, "Ima li demokratija izgleda. Bosanskohercegovački 'Watergate'", *Valter*, April 7, 1989.

⁷¹⁴ "I realised that the Party [SKBiH] is not capable of facing fundamental economic problems and finding any solution. My impression was that the members of Central Committee were a group of party apparatchiks who didn't know what to solve and how to solve it. I was simply disappointed. And, I am not sure if there was any 'reformist' option within the party, either a left oriented or liberal oriented. The party simply lost its ideological identity. Consequently, a force capable of fighting with problems had to be found outside the party". Džemal Sokolović, e-mail communication with the author. July 3, 2012.

**Table 8.3. The first SRSJ Initiative Committee in Bosnia-Herzegovina, named on August 14, 1990
(Renamed “Presidency of the Republican Committee” in September 1990).⁷¹⁵**

Name	Age	Living place	Profession	Nat.	Party engagement	Candidacy for SRSJ at the 1990 Bosnian elections
Nenad Kecmanovi	1947-	Sarajevo	Professor of Pol. Sciences	Serb	First SRSJ's vice-president, then president in September 1990	Presidency (Serbs' seat)
Džemal Sokolovi	1947-	Sarajevo	Professor of Sociology, former SKBiH cadre	Muslim	First SRSJ's president, then vice-president in September 1990	Presidency (Muslims' seat)
Tadej Mateljan	1946-	Sarajevo	Professor of Electrical Engineering	Croat	Appointed secretary	Presidency (Croats' list)
Abdulah Sidran	1944-	Sarajevo	Writer, poet	Muslim		Chamber of Municipalities (Grad Sarajevo)
Gajo Sekuli	1938-	Sarajevo	Professor of Philosophy	Yugoslav	Left the IO-SRSJ soon after its establishment. He was also a member of UJDI	
Ademir Kenovi	1950-	Sarajevo	Film director	Muslim		None
Dragan Kalini	1948-	Sarajevo	Politician, former SKBiH cadre	Serb		Chamber of Citizens (Sarajevo), elected
Josip Pejakovi	1948-	Sarajevo	Film actor	Yugoslav		Presidency (Yugoslavs' list)
Albert Musafija	1929-2012	Sarajevo	Doctor	Jew		None
Todor Dutina	1948-2007	Sarajevo	Editor of the Publishing House “Svijetlost“	Serb		Chamber of Citizens (Mostar)
Nada Ler Sofroni	1941-	Sarajevo	Professor of social psychology	Jew	Appointed spokesperson	Chamber of Citizens (Sarajevo)
Emir Kusturica	1954-	Sarajevo	Film Director	Yugoslav		None
Safet Zec	1943-	Sarajevo	Painter	Muslim		None

⁷¹⁵ Source: my elaboration from “Jedinstven front SRSJ u BiH”, in *Oslobo enje*, August 15, 1990; “Savez Reformskih Snaga. Autorsko pravo na program SIV-a”, in *Oslobo enje*, September 30, 1990. The biographic information and the national belonging have been recollected throughout the overall analysis of press sources and, in the case of candidates, of the party lists for the 1990 election.

Ivica Osim	1941-	Sarajevo	Coach of the Yugoslav Football Team	Yugoslav		None
Borivoje Pištalo	1934-2015	Sarajevo	Director of the National Library	Serb		Chamber of Citizens (Sarajevo)
Nijaz Ljubovi	1936-	Sarajevo	Lawyer	Muslim		Chamber of Citizens (Sarajevo)
Predrag Finci	1946-	Sarajevo	Professor of Philosophy	Jew		None

Table 8.4. Members added to the Presidency in September 1990.⁷¹⁶

Nikola Peri	?	Gradac	Businessman	Serb		Chamber of Citizens (Tuzla), elected
Osman Pirija	1925-2002	Mostar	Businessman, director of the agricultural firm "Hepok"	Yugoslav		Chamber of Citizens (Mostar), elected
Žarko Primorac	1937-	Sarajevo	Vice-director of the company "Energoinvest"	Croat		None
Dragoljub Stojanov	1946-	Sarajevo	Professor of economy	Croat		None
Sejfudin Toki	1959-	Sarajevo	Expert in pharmaceutical sciences	Muslim		Chamber of Citizens (Sarajevo), elected
Ejup Gani	1946-	Sarajevo	Engineer	Yugoslav	Left the SRSJ before the elections, to be a presidential candidate for the SDA	
Dževad Haznadar	1948-	B. Luka	Private businessman	Muslim		Presidency, Muslims' list
Zoran Paji	1949-	Sarajevo	Professor of Law	Yugoslav		Chamber of Citizens (Sarajevo)

⁷¹⁶ *Ibidem.*

In the Initiative Committee, there were two well-represented social categories: academics and artists. Among the latter, there were hugely popular characters such as writer Abdulah Sidran, the film directors Emir Kusturica and Ademir Kenovi , the actor Josip Pejakovi and the painter Safet Zec. One of the most prominent sportsmen ever born in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ivica Osim, then manager of the Yugoslavia national football team, was also a Board member.⁷¹⁷ Albeit not represented in the organs, the singer Goran Bregovi and the comic actor Nele Karajli from the TV show “Top Lista Nadrealista” were also prominent members of the party and later significantly contributed, through performances and donations to the campaign. The artists composed what, in intra-party jargon, was being defined as the “fun sector” [lit. *zabavni sektor*]. They undoubtedly brought enthusiasm and creativity within the movement, and an enormous popularity that significantly enriched the SRSJ’s public projection and prestige in public sphere.⁷¹⁸ At the same time, their lack of experience in political issues, propensity to individualism and weak disposition to accept internal hierarchies had somewhat negative consequences on the SRSJ’s internal cohesion.⁷¹⁹

Although the highest executive charges were assigned to members from the three national groups (the president Kecmanovi was a Serb, the vice-president Sokolovi a Muslim, and the secretary Mateljan a Croat), in the republican Committee there was no automatic “national key”. In the Initiative Committee there were 5 Muslims, 4 Yugoslavs, 4 Serbs, 3 Jews, 1 Croat. When it was enlarged and turned into the Presidency, there were 7 Yugoslavs, 7 Muslims, 4 Serbs, 3 Jews, 3 Croats. These data do not manifestly correspond to the national structure of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Indeed, this alone can blatantly contradict the retrospective claim that the SRSJ was a pro-Serb party, as exemplified by the insidious epithet of “Alliance of Reserve Serbs” [*Savez Rezervnih Srba*]. The approach of the SRSJ, in terms of stances, organisations and decision-making, was inarguably non-ethnic during the 1990 electoral campaign. Some Reformists’ cadres were uncomfortable with the national self-definition and reluctant to adapt it to political contingencies. Neven Andjeli , then a high-ranking member of the Sarajevo SRSJ, recalls

⁷¹⁷ “Jedinstven front SRSJ u BiH”, in *Oslobo enje*, August 15, 1990.

⁷¹⁸ Tadej Mateljan, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 15, 2012; Nenad Kecmanovi , interview by author. Belgrade, April 23, 2013; Neven Andjeli , interview by author. Sarajevo, June 21, 2014. The artists’ influential presence in the SRSJ has remained in collective memory. It is always a leading (and one of first mentioned) argument in interviews and chats not only with former members, but also with ordinary citizens about that party.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

that there was a considerable confusion when the party had to appoint his candidates for the Presidency who, following the electoral law, had to be divided by nationality: “Josip Pejaković was a Croat [...] and was initially appointed as Croat, but then he said: ‘I am not Croat’. There was Nine Polipović, a businessman, and was proposed as Serb. And he said: ‘OK, but I am not Serb’. All were now Yugoslavs! Therefore, some people did not want, formally and legally, to change their national allegiance in order to be candidates”.⁷²⁰ This fulfilled the premise of the SRSJ as a movement which “offers a project of state of free individuals – citizens”, regardless of their national and religious affiliation.⁷²¹

On the other hand, there was a vast imbalance in regional origin, given that all the 17 members of the Initiative Committee came from Sarajevo; this tendency was barely corrected in September, when the Committee came to include members from other towns, while regional coordinators corresponding with each electoral district were appointed.⁷²² On one side, this “Sarajevo-centred” feature could give the idea of a movement deeply-rooted in influential cultural, economic and power circles, but on the other side it rather contributed to the perception of the SRSJ as elitist and detached from the social reality of the whole republic, especially among the non-urban and less-educated strata of the population, in contexts where relations of kinship and personal connections were fundamental in all the aspects of social life, including political activism.⁷²³

When the Committee was converted into the Presidential Board in September 1990 the organ was now open primarily to personalities belonging to more “pragmatic”

⁷²⁰ Neven Anđelić, interview by author. Sarajevo, June 21, 2014.

⁷²¹ “Izvod iz programske izjave SRSJ”, in *Stranke u Jugoslaviji*, 29.

⁷²² Rajka Tomić (ed.), *BiH izbori '90. Izborni zakon s potrebnim tumačenjima*, Sarajevo: Oslobođenje Public, 1990, 88.

⁷²³ Another imbalance was in gender structure, as only one woman, Nada Ler Sofronić, was represented in the organ, apparently clashing with the SRSJ’s progressive orientation and declarative commitment against the “gender exclusivism”. Nada Ler Sofronić, who has been a very prominent scholar and women rights’ activist in former Yugoslavia (she was one of the organizers of the renowned International Conference “Comrade Woman” held in Belgrade in 1978, what marked a decisive turning point for feminism in Yugoslavia: see Chiara Bonfiglioli, “Socialist Equality is not enough. We want pleasure! Italian feminists in Belgrade for the 1978 ‘Comrade Woman’ Conference”, *ProFemina* Autumn 2011, 115-123), claims that the SRSJ was “androcentric”, like all the other parties: a higher participation of women in the public scene, in politics and in decision-making institutions would have been important. However, she also advocates that: “My opinion differs from those who insist only on the quantity, on the fact that there should be more women in the parties. The key question is, which women, what they represent, which stances, which ideologies. To be a woman in politics, in itself, does not mean anything. She can defend the most conservative political positions. It is hard for me to support merely that more women [get involved in politics]; of course, it would be much better that there are much more of them, but the good practice is to boost women and men with a civic option”. Nada Ler Sofronić, interview by author. Sarajevo, June 28, 2012.

domains, such as liberal professionals and managers. The businesspeople quickly became the other crucial social category in the SRSJ, embodying the “new class” who should benefit most from Markovič’s reforms, both in practical and ideological terms, and that should find in the rational and stability-oriented approach of the SRSJ (vis-à-vis the unpredictability of national parties and the dogmatism of the Communists) the most suitable option for their private interests. Their most prominent representative was Dževad Haznadar, whose personal story reflects the emergence and evolution of private sector in 1980s Yugoslavia and its confluence into politics. Since 1982, Haznadar was the owner of a small textile firm in Laktaši, a town near the native Banja Luka. At the end of the decade, his business considerably expanded not only thanks to the gradual reforms at state level that were loosening the restrictions on private initiative (culminating with the full liberalisation carried out Markovič’s government), but also for his good relations with the town’s government, who established a series of tax breaks and incentives for small enterprises, attracting a certain number of investors from the country.⁷²⁴ Laktaši was, in 1989, one of the leading municipalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina for ratio of employed in the then called “individual property sector”.⁷²⁵ The president of the Laktaši’s executive council and decisive supporter of this private-oriented policy was Milorad Dodik, himself a businessman involved in import-export activities.⁷²⁶ After the announcement of the formation of the SRSJ in Kozara, Dodik persuaded Haznadar that they should “together join this political option, since this is something we naturally belong to”.⁷²⁷ Despite being still few direct representatives at the republican top-level, the business people’s presence became very well-established at the local scale, particularly in regions where small industries and commercial activities were more developed, such as the urban districts, the Bosanska Krajina and the Tuzla region.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁴ Dževad Haznadar, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 7, 2014; “Dževad Haznadar, poslanik s ostavkom. SDS dirigira pravosuđe”, *Dani*, November 2, 2001.

⁷²⁵ The ratio employed in private sector / total employed was 10,6% (the Bosnian average was 2,25%), i.e. the sixth of 109 Bosnian municipalities, behind of the Herzegovinian quartet of Pošusje, Grude, Čitluk and Listica (see chapter 5.1 for further explanations) and Kreševo. *Statistički godišnjak SRBiH 1990*, 323.

⁷²⁶ Milorad Dodik (1959) will become one of the most prominent politicians in Bosnia-Herzegovina since the late 1990s, being prime minister of Republika Srpska since 1998 to 2001 and again from 2006 to 2010, and President of the same entity from 2010 to our days.

⁷²⁷ Dževad Haznadar, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 7, 2014.

⁷²⁸ “Savez Refomskih Snaga Jugoslavije. Inicijativni odbori. Bosna i Hercegovina”, *Borba*, August 20, 1990.

8.4. Political stances of the Bosnian SRSJ

After the penetration of business people, a more visible pro-market orientation gained force in the Bosnian SRSJ's programmatic discourse, being backed even by members who were not "*privatnici*" by profession, such as academics in technical subjects, more incline to less ideological and more rational, economic-centred arguments, as well as the artists who had developed an entrepreneurial attitude while reinvesting their own profits into private initiatives. A notable example of this is Josip Pejakovi , one of most prominent film actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As many of his fellow artists, Pejakovi owned a production firm since the mid-1980s. He recalls: "I liked very much this combination of art, academy and economy, what is unusual in the European context, they usually do not stay together: the art is full of illusion, unreality and optimism, while economy is full of pessimism and reality. [...] Still, my world view has always been capitalist. I never accepted to live in a poor society and that I should separate myself from my profit. Through my economic vision, I wanted profit, but not at any price, a profit corresponding to my investment for the creation of new value. Markovi 's project was based on these ideas".⁷²⁹ On September 5, when talking in front of the Bosnian SRSJ's founding Assembly in Sarajevo, Markovi said: "We will build a new society in which we shall not be weighted down by dogma, by old ideologies, a society that will fight for wealthy members [lit. *boriti za bogate lanove*] and in which nobody shall be ashamed because he has earned, through his own work, a wealth that s/he enjoys".⁷³⁰ It is unlikely that such words could have been heard in the partisan-dominated scenario of Kozara or in earlier occasions.

The Bosnian Reformists also emphasized their support to economic liberalism because they were trying to characterize their political offer vis-à-vis the Communists, who were logically associated with Statism and whose political narrative still somehow relied on the concepts of self-management and social property. Nonetheless, it must be recalled that the economic policy would remain a relatively minor cleavage in the 1990 Bosnian political spectrum. All the parties, including the national (SDA, HDZ, SDS) and even the SKBiH, advocated, though vaguely, a certain extent of liberalisations and began

⁷²⁹ Josip Pejakovi , interview by author. Sarajevo, May 5, 2014.

⁷³⁰ "Ante Markovi : pobjeda reforme – pobjeda naše stranke", *Oslobo enje*, September 6, 1990.

to criticize Markovič's programme only, for merely tactical reasons, once he had become a political opponent through the formation of the SRSJ. The Bosnian Communists, for instance, had so far enthusiastically supported the federal government's measures of stabilisation.

However, the SRSJ's discourse never came to adopt extreme neoliberalism, trying to flexibly harmonize its internal heterogeneity and to prevent the label of "anti-social" that was echoed by the opponents and was fomented by the counter-effects of the government's austerity and stabilisation measures. For instance, even the members of the Bosnian SRSJ's "diarchy" had initially taken some critical stances on the Markovič's reforms and its social costs. Nenad Kecmanović underlined the "shortcomings of the government's program, which especially in our own republic have a considerable weight".⁷³¹ Džemal Sokolović, who was well known for his leftist positions even when he had been a member of the League of Communists, recalls: "I remember we tried to discuss some of his [Markovič's] ideas and projects even at the first meeting [of the SRSJ]. Some of us had doubts about his extremely liberal – in terms of market and privatisation - ideas. He was obsessed by the idea of privatisation. As you know, the so-called 'social property' was a dominant form of property in Yugoslavia. I remember that he said that workers would simply become owners of shares of their enterprises. It looked fine for some of us. Yet, I had to ask: how about us, professors, for instance? If it was 'social property', shall we also become owners of profitable companies or those of universities? Now I see chaotic situation in terms of property, and am proud of my reserves towards Markovič's too fast and too liberal idea of privatisation. Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia etc. did not have developed forms of capitalist property. Now we live in an archaic 18th century forms of capitalist property".⁷³²

Hence one should conclude that the differentiation in economic policy's assessments between the SRSJ and the other parties was not wider than the one which existed within the same SRSJ among its own members. Nada Ler Sofroni, then spokesperson of the Bosnian Reformists, explained: "We were not either merely liberal-capitalist, nor was the SKBiH a communist party. First, the communism at that time did not exist in the form which is described in literature. [...] Although the market was at the

⁷³¹ Nenad Kecmanović interviewed in "Bosna kao sudbina", *Borba*, August 4-5, 1990.

⁷³² Džemal Sokolović, e-mail communication with the author. July 3, 2012.

centre of the reform, both the SKBiH-SDP and the SRSJ had, if you look the discourse, the stances... the same discourse on the market economy. And there was not so much ideology, in my opinion”.⁷³³

Besides economic liberalisation, the other programmatic milestone of the Bosnian SRSJ was the unity of Yugoslavia, both as a political project, as a promotion of the common, supra-national cultural background through the defence of civic values. As the programme advocated, “the political and economic objectives of the SRSJ are unachievable without Yugoslavia, and without a united Bosnia-Herzegovina, an economically sovereign and integral state of all the citizens who live in it, regardless of religion, nation, gender and social belonging”.⁷³⁴ The party embodied this feature even in its name, for it was the only party in the major political spectrum carrying the letter ‘J’ of *Jugoslavija* and presenting themselves as the only “pan-Yugoslav” party. In this respect, the SRSJ gained a comparative advantage over the Communists which, despite still having a firmly pro-unity program, were orphans of a Yugoslav organisational infrastructure and reference after the fall of the SKJ. This surely contributed to the SRSJ’s attractiveness, especially in those urban areas and specific regions where pro-Yugoslav feelings were higher.

Given that Markovi was struggling as prime minister for a measured recentralisation into the hands of the federal organs, one would assume that the SRSJ’s position on the institutional order of Yugoslavia was evidently pro-federal. Yet, exactly during a campaign when the cleavage between *federal* and *confederal* options was crucial, the SRSJ paradoxically opted to reject to take side on the issue, labelling this debate as a “false dilemma”, a “politicised” and “academic” problem. This “neither-nor” position was, first of all, explained by the tactical needs of Markovi’s cabinet. The prime minister sought to keep the issue open in order to not permanently damage the relations with the pro-confederalist élites of Slovenia and Croatia. At the same time, he was afraid that his recentralisation proposal could be equated to the “Unitarism” advocated by Serbia and Montenegro and could therefore become unacceptable for many political and social strata

⁷³³ Nada Ler Sofroni, interview by author. Sarajevo, June 28, 2012.

⁷³⁴ “Izvod iz programske izjave SRSJ”, in *Stranke u Jugoslaviji*, 29.

in the country. Markovi clearly explained his viewpoint on the issue in a meeting with the members of the Bosnian Presidency, on October 12, 1990:

“The relations in the country are politicized to a boiling point. The absolute proof of that is the question whether we are for federation or confederation. But in this phase of our transitional period from one system to another, this is absolutely inadequate, and at the same time counter-productive and dangerous to the extreme. [...] Without the designing of at least some basic framework of a new system, and at least a minimum of confidence into the new system which would guarantee such relations, it is inevitable that someone will manipulate those relations and establish its own power or monopoly in the country. [...] As long as we do not think about that, declaring whether we are for a federation or a confederation is a totally fictitious and politicized dilemma. On one side, [there are] those who say they want a federation, but what they really want is a unitary Yugoslavia and establish their own power. On the other side, [there are] those who struggle for a confederation, since in their piece of territory they have conquered, they want to reinforce and secure their power, and it is evident that they are already carrying out state building [lit. *etatizaciju*]. We think that, if we want to save Yugoslavia, we, as the federal government, and I personally, we will commit ourselves only for Yugoslavia”.⁷³⁵

Markovi’s high concern in keeping the support of the international community, and particularly in securing financial funds for his economic programme, could also account for this flexible stance. His formula was commonly defined as “any kind of Yugoslavia” [lit. *Bilo kakva Jugoslavija*]. As Nenad Kecmanovi recalls, “He was for Yugoslavia, but for a kind of Yugoslavia agreed by their republics and nations. [...] He said that any kind of Yugoslavia, either as a confederation or as a federation, whatever, would be a great capital. And he said that a market of twenty-five million people is an important capital, so we could attract the investors”.⁷³⁶ The flexible, “neither-nor” stance of Markovi sounded reasonable, when advocated by an institutional, “super-partes” cadre who was struggling to reach a compromise with mutually challenging republican actors. Yet, it appeared somewhat ambiguous and confusing when advocated by a political leader who was competing in a fragmented and polarized political arena. The

⁷³⁵ Ante Markovi in “Magnetofonski snimak. Razgovora sa predsjednikom SIV-a Antom Markovi em vo enih u predsjedništvu SRBiH, 12.10.1990”, T3/1 S/S, 3/2. I am grateful to Edin Omer i for providing me with this source.

⁷³⁶ Nenad Kecmanovi , interview by author. Banja Luka, June 26, 2012.

Bosnian SRSJ was facing opponents who generally adopted explicit positions on this issue, giving clear (although, most of them were demagogic) answers to a public severely hit by crisis and seeking concrete messages from public actors.⁷³⁷

Hence, such discourse was perceived as too *on the defensive* and was not easily accepted among the SRSJ's top-ranks, or among its militants, sympathizers and potential voters. Leaders obeyed to adopt the point, but some of them did it very reluctantly and directly questioned Markovič's authority on this issue, negatively affecting the cohesion of the movement. On this issue, Sejfudin Tokić recalls an episode that occurred in a SRSJ campaign event act in Vareš: "The hall was full. Zoran [Pajić] and I were explaining that it does not matter whether [we are for] a federation or a confederation, that what really matters is to secure peace, an economic space and the state framework, that the European Community has promised that we will be once accepted as members [*sic*]. This discourse was totally rational, but since the issue of federation or confederation was highly debated on the streets, it turned out that, when we were concluding and the others were satisfied with our intervention, a man stood up clapping slowly and said 'This was fantastic, the debate was interesting, all was clear, but please, tell me: are we for a confederation or for a federation?' (Laughs). [...] This question was crucial, and we had a weird stance on that. It could be accurate to say that it was not the essence of the content that we had to secure first a common market, an economic space etc. But once you were forced to explain the question in public, then our discourse was, how I would say... inappropriate for that campaign".⁷³⁸

⁷³⁷ SDS and SKBiH were pro-federal (though with different premises), while HDZ was pro-confederal. Only SDA maintained an ambiguous position until the elections (later, they would switch to Confederalism and, finally, to independentism since mid-1991). Reasons were mainly tactical: SDA feared to lose support from those Muslim sectors which still felt attached to Yugoslavia. Xavier Bougarel, "Bosnian Muslims and the Yugoslav Idea", in Djokić (ed.), *Yugoslavism*, 111.

⁷³⁸ Sejfudin Tokić, interview by author. Sarajevo, July 5, 2012.

8.5. Conclusions

The SRSJ entered into the Bosnian political scenario with a considerable electoral potential, due to its flexible and non-dogmatic approach, its inclusive Yugoslavism, which was still very attractive in large parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the undeniable popularity enjoyed by Ante Marković and some of its leading ranks. At the same time, however, various factors were also playing against a full development of the SRSJ and limited its chances for success: 1) its organisational delay, 2) the uncertainty in the strategic approach (especially about the eventual alliances' policy), 3) a discourse strongly centred on economic themes but somewhat more hesitant on the political issues, 4) the great hindrances to both the federal government and the SRSJ at the pan-Yugoslav level which, in turn, damaged the popular confidence into the real chances that “*Sveti Ante*” Marković and the Reformist option could play as the stabiliser of the country.

PART III - CHANGE

9. THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

9.1. Parties and cleavages

The electoral campaign in Bosnia-Herzegovina began *de facto* in early August, with the lifting of the ban on national parties and the definitive confirmation of the 18th of November as the date for the elections. These steps were immediately followed by the complete withdrawal of the League of Communists from the state organs, administration, justice and security,⁷³⁹ while the state-controlled media such as Radio and TV Sarajevo, the Bosnian-wide *Oslobo enje* and *Ve ernje Novine* and the local dailies guaranteed a relatively balanced coverage of the whole range of political parties. Moreover, the ruling party adopted the new name of “League of Communists - Socialist Democratic Party” (lit. *Savez Komunista - Socijalisti ka Demokratska Partija*, hereafter SK-SDP), in order to emphasize that they had abandoned the monopoly of power and communist orthodoxy.⁷⁴⁰ Forty-two parties presented candidacies for the parliamentary elections,⁷⁴¹ with only eight of them submitting candidates for the presidential elections. This chapter will exclusively focus on these eight parties, for they were the ones that finally got parliamentary representation⁷⁴² and coincided with the major Bosnian-wide parties.⁷⁴³ (See table).

⁷³⁹ “Territorijalno organizovanje SK u Bosni i Hercegovini. Depolitizacija državnih organa”, *Borba*, August 13, 1990.

⁷⁴⁰ “Zatvorena sjednica centralnog komiteta SK Bosne i Hercegovine. Komunisti sa soc prizvukom”, *Borba*, July 16, 1990.

⁷⁴¹ Sambró, “Contextualització i anàlisi”, 161.

⁷⁴² To be precise, there was a ninth party, the SPO (Serbian Renewal Movement), obtained one seat in the Chamber of Municipalities from the District of Nevesinje, yet he immediately lined up with the SDS.

⁷⁴³ There were several minor civic parties the Party of the Yugoslavs (*Stranka Jugoslovena*, SJ -, the Greens – *Zeleni* -). They relied on a certain public presence in the urban centres and coverage in media, but they remained completely marginal and obtained no seat in the parliament.

Table 9.1. Summary of main political parties and cleavages in the 1990 elections.

Party	Date of foundation	National/ Non-national	Government/Opposition	Federal/Confederal	Autonomy/ sovereignty of BiH	Left/Right (declaratively)
SKBiH-SDP	30/11/1948	Non-national	Government	Federal	Yes	Left
DSS	20/06/1990	Non-national	Government	Federal	Yes	Center-left
SSO-DS	19/04/1990	Non-national	Government (structurally), opposition (programmatically)	Variable (initially pro-federal, turns to unresponsive)	Yes	Center-left
SRSJ	29/07/1990	Non-national	Government (in Yugoslavia); From neutral to opposition (in Bosnia-H.)	Unresponsive (<i>de facto</i> closer to federal)	Yes	Center-left
SDA	26/05/1990	National Muslim	Opposition	Variable (<i>de facto</i> closer to confederal)	Yes	Center
HDZ	18/08/1990	National Croat	Opposition	Confederal	Yes	Center
SDS	12/07/1990	National Serb	Opposition	Federal	No (de facto); “Conditional yes” (declarative)	Center
MBO	06/10/1990	National Muslim	Opposition	Unresponsive	Yes	Center

Since the beginning of the campaign, the main cleavage did not emerge on socioeconomic grounds, out of the confrontation between a statist/progressive left and a neoliberal/conservative right, but rather on national grounds. There was a cleavage between *national* parties [*nacionalne partije*], which claimed to represent the cultural, political and economic interests and objectives of their own national group, and whose activists belonged only to their own national group, and *non-national* parties [*ne-nacionalne partije*], also defined in political and media parlance of the era as *civic* parties [*gra anske partije*], that catered a multi-ethnic militant and electoral bodies, and defended the interests of all citizens regardless of their ethnicity. The demarcation line, here, was very clear: SDA, MBO (Muslim), HDZ (Croat), SDS and SPO (Serb) were nationalist parties; SK-SDP, SRSJ, SSO and DSS were non-nationalist, civic parties. All the national parties insisted on the symmetric coincidence between national and religious collective belonging: Serbs and orthodox, Croats and catholic, Muslims – as a national group - and muslims – as a religious group, and called for a stronger participation of the respective religious communities in public life, whilst non-national parties defended a secularist principle. Therefore, the national vs. non-national cleavage coincided with the *religious-conservative* vs. *secular* parties cleavage (with religious-conservative meaning the respect of structures, values and practices of Islam, Christian Orthodoxy and Catholicism, respectively).

The second most important cleavage was the one dividing *government* and *opposition* parties. Here, the boundary was a bit less well defined. Certainly, all national parties were also opposition parties. Of course, the SK-SDP was the government party *par excellence*, having been the ruling force since 1945, while the DSS as heir of the Socialist Alliance (the umbrella-front of all the civic organisations recognised by the official government)⁷⁴⁴ and ally of the Communists in the presidential elections and in some districts, was also easily identified as part of the older ruling system. In the case of the two other non-nationalist parties, their character of “government parties” must be contextualised and nuanced. The SSO-DS was itself the heir of an official organisation (the youth branch of the League of Communists), but transformed itself into a party with a liberal-democratic platform, highly critical not only of nationalist parties but also of the policies of the SKBiH. Since 1988, the SSO-DS had been increasingly distancing itself

⁷⁴⁴ See chapter 6.1.

from the regime and by early 1990 was cooperating with the civic-liberal opposition networks together with the UJDI, providing support to the creation of the Democratic Forum, a platform with open anti-government narratives and objectives.⁷⁴⁵ However, the SSO-DS was historically and structurally considered as part of the government, since it had kept the infrastructure of the official organisation, a fact that still influenced public perception: many youngsters saw in the SSO an irreversibly bureaucratised and unattractive force. But, regarding its political-ideological location, the SSO-DS could be seen as neutral or even as a moderate opposition *vis-à-vis* the SK-SDP, when one considers its evolution since 1988.

The SRSJ case seems the most complex, and somewhat paradoxical, to categorize. Seen in the overall Yugoslav context, the SRSJ was a true “government party” inasmuch as it was the top-down emanation of the federal prime minister and his fellow cabinet members: the political programme of the Yugoslav government and that of the SRSJ were, in fact, the same. Yet, in the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the sharp rivalry with the Communists and the fact that the prominent Reformist members were either former SKBiH “dissident” members or personalities keenly critical of the older regime, relegated the SRSJ to a sort of limbo. The Reformists were quick to keep the distance with the so-called “old left” and rejected any cooperation with and support from the SK-SDP, striving to present themselves as an innovative third-way force fully emancipated from the “burden of the past” (lit. *hipoteka iz prošlosti*) in the Republic and, obviously, also from nationalism. But on the other hand, the SRSJ stubbornly refused to integrate anti-communism within its political narrative, aiming to become a “progressive catch-all” force embracing from left-wing to far-liberal Yugoslavists. In addition to that, many prominent Reformist members came from the SKBiH-SDP. These traits, again, led the Reformists to publicly appear as closer to the “establishment” rather than to the opposition.⁷⁴⁶ To sum it up, then, only national parties could be fully identified with the opposition to the old regime and in no way were to be associated with the socialist rule,

⁷⁴⁵ See chapter 6.3.

⁷⁴⁶ I here fully agree with the analysis of Nenad Stojanovi : “It is debatable whether, within the camp of ‘civic’ political forces, the SRSJ–BiH could be considered as an anti-communist party, because most of its leaders had been active communists. This implies that we should not underestimate the role of ideology (and not only ethnicity) in the Bosnian 1990 elections: citizens who, for ideological reasons, disliked the communists did not really have the option of voting for a civic and anti-communist party. (Contrary to Croatia, e.g. where such parties had run in the April/May 1990 elections.) The ethnic parties were the only anti-communist option available”. Stojanovi , “When non-nationalist voters...”, 9.

something that helped them to capitalize the social dissatisfaction with the socio-economic situation, the bureaucratized structures, etc. During the campaign, the national parties' candidates used to define both Communists and Reformists as "those who are sharing power".

The third most important cleavage was the positioning regarding the structure of Yugoslavia and the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina within it, which were mutually related. The first can be roughly represented along the *federal* (which was in turn a vague term, as it could mean either *status quo* or a certain recentralisation of the country) vs. *confederal* (implying a further decentralisation and the explicit recognition of the right to secede) axis. It is important to point out that no party, not even the minor ones (and if we except some exceptional allusions from the SDA to an unspecified "extreme solution") openly advocated for the *secession* of Bosnia-Herzegovina prior to the 1990 elections. Among the eight major parties, we can roughly distinguish three groups:

1) Only one party, the HDZ, explicitly supported the *confederal* model. This stance fully reflected that of the HDZ-led government of Croatia that on October 2, 1990 (that is, during the Bosnian electoral campaign), officially proposed, jointly with the Slovenian leadership, a confederal agreement that would have transformed Yugoslavia into an association of independent states.⁷⁴⁷

2) Four parties (two non-nationalist: SRSJ and SSO-DS; and the two Muslim nationalist forces: the SDA and MBO) were either unresponsive or changed their view in the course of the campaign. However, the reasons and the way in which their stance evolved were widely different.

The neutrality of the SRSJ on this issue was essentially a tactical move to protect the institutional role of Ante Marković as the Federal prime minister, for he was trying to mediate between the confederalist (Slovenia, Croatia) and the federalist/unitarist (Serbia, Montenegro). The Reformists' program advocating for a slight recentralisation of Yugoslavia (particularly of the government), should be viewed as implicitly much closer to the federal than to the confederal model. Moreover, in terms of political and cultural-

⁷⁴⁷ The text of the proposal can be found in "Model konfederacije u Jugoslaviji", *Borba*, October 8, 1990; for an in-depth analysis, see Dejan Jović, "The Slovenian-Croatian confederal proposal: a tactical move or an ultimate solution?", in Cohen and Dragović Soso (eds.), *State collapse in South-Eastern Europe*, 249-280.

symbolic references, the SRSJ's viewpoint was inherently pan-Yugoslav. Such ambiguity, however, severely damaged the Reformists' (and Marković's) ambitions to present a coherent and viable solution to the current *impasse*.⁷⁴⁸ The SSO-DS began the campaign with a pro-federal stance,⁷⁴⁹ but then adopted a more flexible position advocating for the "Reconstruction of Yugoslavia" under new consensual principles between their component republics and citizens, which potentially included a confederal model. Rasim Kadić, the president of the SSO-DS, declared to *Oslobođenje* in October: "We had initially opted for a federation, but times have changed since then. We must accept the reality of the relations within Yugoslavia today. Hence, we think that it is wiser, instead of breaking the discussion with a 'or-or', to state that we are in for a Yugoslav community, and that we will shall discuss its internal organisation at the negotiations table".⁷⁵⁰

The SDA was undoubtedly the one with the most ambiguous position: its leader Alija Izetbegović initially advocated for a "reasonable and rational federation with certain confederal elements";⁷⁵¹ but later he stated that all options would be acceptable (federation, confederation, or even independence as an extreme solution)⁷⁵². During the last days of the campaign he defended a formula that echoed the confederal view, his leader stating that "The SDA envisions Yugoslavia as a community of sovereign republics which transfer to the state a minimum of powers".⁷⁵³ The MBO, the minor Muslim party that was a splinter of the SDA, had almost the same ambivalent position.⁷⁵⁴ As Xavier Bougarel recalled, Izetbegović and the Bosnian Muslim leaders distinguished between "Yugoslavia as a *love-object*", implying the common belonging to a supranational cultural-symbolical sphere, and "Yugoslavia as an *interest*", limited to the mere institutional framework of the state. The SDA was manifestly hostile to the former and

⁷⁴⁸ See chapters 7 and 8. In particular, at the end of the chapter 8 I explained how much was this ambiguity detrimental to the SRSJ's ambitions.

⁷⁴⁹ SSO's initial programme, in *Stranke u Jugoslaviji*, 36-37; or e Latinović, interviewed in "Politička avantura", *Oslobođenje*, July 19, 1990.

⁷⁵⁰ Rasim Kadić interviewed in "Opstati po dogovoru", in *Izbori '90. Stranke, programi, ličnosti*, Sarajevo: Oslobođenje, 1990, 25. See also "SSO – DS BiH. Izbornog programa", in *Stranke, programi, ličnosti*, 120-121.

⁷⁵¹ Alija Izetbegović, interviewed in "Povod za sukob", *Oslobođenje*, June 27, 1990.

⁷⁵² "Predizborni skup SDA u Velikoj Kladuši. Abdić pristupio SDA", *Oslobođenje*, September 16, 1990; "Skupština SDA u Bosanskom Šamcu. Spasiti BiH od građanskog rata", *Oslobođenje*, September 23, 1990.

⁷⁵³ Alija Izetbegović reported in "Konferencija za štampu sa liderima stranaka. Nepotrebno plašenje naroda", *Oslobođenje*, November 20, 1990.

⁷⁵⁴ "MBO, uz programsku deklaraciju", *Stranke, programi, ličnosti*, 99.

elusively open to the latter. This stance was motivated, according to Bougarel, by the traditional position of the Bosnian Muslims' national party during the interwar period of 1919-1941, the JMO (which the SDA claimed to be the political heir) and by the need to not disappoint the strong allegiance that the Bosnian Muslim population still pledged to Yugoslavia.⁷⁵⁵ Such attitude marked a decisive difference *vis-à-vis* the non-nationalist parties, hence the aforementioned SRSJ and SSO, as well as the SK-SDP and the DSS, which still actively promoted Yugoslavism.

3) Three parties supported the *federal* model: two non-national (SK-SDP and DSS, mutually allied) and the SDS. The SK-SDP and the DSS maintained their traditional Yugoslav position which, for instance, was still visible during the campaign through the display of the socialist symbols and rituals, such as references to the historical role of anti-fascist resistance and of Tito, etc. They openly criticised the Slovenian-Croatian proposal for the confederalisation of Yugoslavia. But at the same time, SK-SDP and DSS kept on firmly defending their other traditional “red line”, namely the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an autonomous republic, that should be protected from the so-called “appetites” of the neighbouring republics of Serbia and Croatia. This was a key difference *vis-à-vis* the SDS, the other purely pro-federal party. To the former Communists, the unity of Yugoslavia and the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina were two unquestionable and mutually unnegotiable principles, whilst the SDS recognised the autonomy of Bosnia-Herzegovina *only* within a united Yugoslavia, hinting that if the federal framework was brought into question by the secession of other entities (i.e. Slovenia and, especially, Croatia), the sovereignty and unity of Bosnia-Herzegovina should be also disputed. The SDS was the only major party that used these terms to put into question the autonomy of the republic. Radovan Karadžić underlined this concept several times: “the Serb people in this republic will never accept unconditionally the sovereignty of BiH. It will do so only on the condition that Bosnia-Herzegovina remains a federal member of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but if Bosnia-Herzegovina will have no ties with Serbia and Yugoslavia, then we do not accept this sovereignty. And this must be made clear”.⁷⁵⁶ However, it is remarkable that Karadžić was very indulgent about

⁷⁵⁵ Bougarel, “Bosnian Muslims and the Yugoslav idea”, 111. To show the commitment of Bosnian Muslims for Yugoslavia, Bougarel cites the research of Ibrahim Baki (“O naciji, religiji”, 29; see also chapter 5.6 of the present work).

⁷⁵⁶ Radovan Karadžić, interviewed in “Nek poslije svega bude ‘mirna Bosna’”, *Borba*, November 12, 1990.

the eventual secession of Slovenia (a position that, interestingly enough, was practically identical to the one expressed by Slobodan Milošević during the late development of the crisis) and even also about the eventual independence of Croatia, on the condition that it should be limited only to the Croatian populated areas.⁷⁵⁷ Such stance clearly reveals that, even before the 1990 elections, the SDS leadership already conceived a rump Yugoslavia limited to the Serb-populated areas as a possible, acceptable (and perhaps desirable) alternative to the existing integrity of Yugoslavia advocated by the “civic” non-nationalist forces.

The division along socio-economic themes was the less visible. If one examines accurately each party’s discourse during the campaign, it could be noticed that the SK-SDP still privileged references to “the workers” and the social benefits inherited from socialism, while the SRSJ and, to a lesser extent, the nationalist parties stressed more often the role of the private initiative. Such differences, however, were nuanced in the official documents and platforms. The programmes of the main parties were barely distinguishable, for all of them, including that of the former Communists, advocated major reforms leading to the transition to market economy and a certain degree of privatisations, while maintaining a minimum of welfare state for all citizens.⁷⁵⁸ It is remarkable that, before Ante Marković founded the Alliance of Reformist Forces, and even during the very first period of the campaign, *all* the parties had expressed equally positive assessments about the reforms plan of the Federal Government. But once the prime minister entered the political arena, all the parties outside the SRSJ, including the former Communists, began to opportunistically criticize the agenda of reforms for their social costs (salary cuts, unemployment) and for their negative effects on the overall economic performance (fall of industrial production rates, clearance of public enterprises,

⁷⁵⁷ In end July 1990, Karadžić, interviewed by *Oslobođenje*, said: “With respect to Slovenia, their right to secede can be realised even today. It is only necessary to establish the criteria, the framework and the constitutional opportunities in order to realize it accomplishing the wish of Slovenia and the rest of Yugoslavia. With respect to Croatia, the thing is somewhat more complicated and difficult because of the mixed nature of the population. But we think that this can be solved in the framework of the constitution”. It is remarkable how Karadžić immediately denied to the Slovenian Serbs the same collective-territorial rights that the SDS claimed for their fellows in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina: “I think that for Serbs in Slovenia [the situation] is bad enough, so I do not think that in a seceded or confederal unity of Slovenia it would be worse (*sic*). If Slovenians find an interest to live outside Yugoslavia and if they find an agreement with the other peoples of Yugoslavia to secede, in my personal opinion, there is any more urgent and preemptive way than to do it”. Radovan Karadžić, interviewed in “Bez krvi do četvrte Jugoslavije”, *Oslobođenje*, July 22, 1990.

⁷⁵⁸ *Stranke u Jugoslaviji*, 29-77.

etc.). Furthermore, the Bosnian electoral campaign coincided with a new rise of prices, with a wave of social protests – often carried out by workers who had not received their salaries in the last months – and problems of the public pensions agency (PIOBiH) to pay its services on time. This gave momentum to those criticisms and vanished the (yet logical and motivated) effort of the SRSJ to present themselves as the only party with a solid and well-articulated economic agenda. Obviously, the nationalist parties, coming from the opposition, were entitled to capitalize this social discontent much more efficaciously than the former Communists which, as the ruling force in Bosnia-Herzegovina, were identified as co-responsible for the poor social performance. In other terms, the socioeconomic debate gained importance as a consequence of the government-opposition cleavage.

It is undeniable that the nationalist parties shifted the focus of the campaign onto national, religious, emotional and security-centred arguments deliberately, and in a successful way.⁷⁵⁹ However, another factor should be recalled to explain why the economic programmes were so downplayed. The point is that, although the republics had a large degree of self-government and owned major productive assets,⁷⁶⁰ Bosnia-Herzegovina did not fully exercise its autonomy as it was among the poorest republics and most dependent on an integrated economy and on budget transfers from the centre. Hence, the issues of the future of Yugoslavia and the positioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina within it were gaining importance, at the expense of the social and economic policies. For instance, it is remarkable that during the campaign, the SK-SDP constantly employed the argument of the so-called “neo-colonialism” that the economy of Bosnia-Herzegovina had suffered under the Yugoslav economic system. The program of the SK-SDP stated that “in the actual economic-systemic conditions, the economy of BiH is under a sort of neo-colonial position [*neokolonijskom položaju*] in the relationship with the developed federal republics, and therefore its natural resources had been devastated and its development delayed. SK-SDP will strive to obtain compensation for the economy of BiH and the regeneration of the natural resources for the period 1991-1995”.⁷⁶¹ The

⁷⁵⁹ An immediate proof of such focus can be traced in the programmatic documents that the parties submitted to the official guide of the Tanjug, then the state news agency in Yugoslavia: SDA, SDS and HDZ all introduced some very vague points on the economy in a final and marginal position. The emphasis was laid on the status of Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, national communities and religious organisations. (*Stranke u Jugoslaviji*, 40-46).

⁷⁶⁰ Woodward, *Balkan tragedy*, 39.

⁷⁶¹ *Stranke u Jugoslaviji*, 32. See also “SKBiH-SDP: o ekonomskom položaju BiH u Jugoslaviji. Nije ovo kolonija”, *Veernje Novine*, October 24, 1990.

Communists complained that Bosnia-Herzegovina had been forced to specialize in the production of raw materials (particularly coal, iron ore and bauxite, all having a high environmental impact). This allegedly benefited the northern republics with a more developed processing industry, so BiH should obtain some compensation and a revision of this model in the future. Through this argument in favour of a republican self-determination on economic grounds, the SK-SDP apparently sought to challenge the ethnic self-determination solution advocated by the nationalist parties. In other words, this was apparently an attempt of the Communists to re-elaborate and seize that general demand for sovereignty and for the self-control on resources which, within a context of deep economic impoverishment and widespread scepticism towards institutions, is usually captured by nationalist movements. Nonetheless, the Communists' discourse did not sound very convincing, as there was a lack of confidence in the republican institutions, which were perceived as too weak and unreliable following the economic downturn, firm bankruptcies and scandals, etc., of the 1980s.

Instead, the common efforts of SDA, SDS and HDZ for “ethnicizing” economics gained force. All three parties claimed that their own national group had experienced socio-economic disadvantages under socialist rule. Alija Izetbegović once stated that “the SDA defended the political and economic equality of BiH, which today the Muslim people do not have. It means that we shall be represented proportionally in the political and economic structures of power, for better and for worse. Thus, if in one municipality there is a fifty per cent of Muslims, there must be the corresponding number of employed and non-employed”.⁷⁶² The SDS went even further, announcing the creation of mono-national economic entities (a Serb national bank, a Serb association of businesspeople and a Serb solidarity fund) just prior to the elections.⁷⁶³ Hence, even the economic themes were growingly affected by ethnicisation.

⁷⁶² Alija Izetbegović, reported in “Osnivačka skupština Stranke Demokratske Akcije u Zvorniku. Borba za legitimna prava”, *Oslobođenje*, July 29, 1990.

⁷⁶³ “Novosti u Srpskoj Demokratskoj Stranci. Prva Srpska banka”, *Javnost*, November 3, 1990; “Predizborni skup SDS u Požarnici kod Tuzle. Vlada je morala pasti”, *Oslobođenje*, November 10, 1990.

9.2. Party building, élites and leaderships

All major parties entered the electoral campaign lacking a strong and charismatic leading personality. This can be generally seen as another effect of the long period of uncertainty about the structuration of the multi-party system, and the consequently late (if not incomplete) opening of a public space for the debate, organisation and appointment of leading cadres. In such volatile circumstances, prominent figures such as intellectuals, entrepreneurs, activists and any “outsiders” who could aspire to party cadres or candidacies, waited until the rules of the game were set. The lack of charismatic figures was particularly evident in the case of the two main non-nationalist parties. In the SK-SDP, the changes that had brought to the helm the new generation of 40 to 45-years-old leaders embodied by Nijaz Duraković were forced by the political scandals that wiped out the old guard from power. That relatively young and unexperienced leadership suffered a high amount of pressure from the military and political circles from Belgrade. This undermined their self-confidence and authority over the local cadres.

In the case of SRSJ, the overwhelming symbolical presence of Ante Marković significantly reduced the visibility of the republican branch's leaders, who had been appointed directly by Marković himself. The “diarchy” formed by Nenad Kecmanović and Džemal Sokolović, as well as the majority of the other leading ranks, came from intellectual-academic circles and displayed an elitist approach, lacking a broadly popular, mass-oriented line of action. The paradox, however, was that the Bosnian Reformists were not even able to exploit the charisma of Marković: due to his institutional obligation as Prime minister in Belgrade, he could barely participate in the campaign in Bosnia-Herzegovina and only attended a few Reformists' meetings in Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka. Although in mid-1990 all the polls showed him as the most popular politician in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Marković paradoxically became a sort of foreign body in the course of the electoral campaign. As Rastko Moćnik interpreted, “I guess that Marković was perceived in Bosnia like an outsider. He was coming from outside, from the Federation, he was not an authentic Bosnian”.⁷⁶⁴ Here Moćnik suggests an insightful interpretation of the concept of *authenticity* applied to a non-ethnic leader. As Nina Caspersen observed, authenticity often plays a central role in a competition between ethnic parties, as they

⁷⁶⁴ Rastko Moćnik, interview by author. Ljubljana, June 7, 2013.

always play with the concept of “who defines who is a real member of the ethnic group” and “who has the legitimate right to speak on behalf of the ethnic group”.⁷⁶⁵ Since nationalist parties were increasingly successful in presenting themselves as the *true*, *legitimate* and *exclusive* representatives of their own groups, non-national parties and leaders were now forced to display, in their turn, their authenticity through non-ethnic arguments, such as geographical origins, territorial presence and activism, social empathy, inter-ethnic memories and symbols which can be related with the everyday experience, needs and demands of the public. Yet, Markovi ’s distant approach (even though his family roots were in Bosnia-Herzegovina)⁷⁶⁶ and that of the Reformists' elitist leadership prevented them from establishing a relation based, at the same time, on the proximity and charisma of their activists, especially in rural social contexts marked by kinship ties, much more susceptible to be mobilised by ethnic and blood-related factors. Nada Ler Sofroni , then a member of the Bosnian SRSJ presidency, provides a further interpretation for Markovi ’s lack of participation in the campaign. In her opinion, he was reluctant to present himself as a party leader for a lack of confidence in the political project: “When the political system became a multi-party one, he noticed that his economic reforms would never go through without politics. Hence, I am deeply convinced, since the first time that I met him, that he did not want to create that party. He was not willing; he was not enthusiastic about it. But he felt that he had to do it. When Emir Kusturica and other members of the party’s executive board asked him to pose for the [electoral] posters next to him, he said. ‘No, for God’s sake, I don’t want to do it’. ‘Ante, you must do it’, [they replied]. He said ‘No’, until the very last moment, he loathed to be photographed. He did not like that kind of political marketing”.⁷⁶⁷

The lack of strong and charismatic personalities, however, also concerned the national parties, at least at the beginning of the campaign. The echo of post-election and, especially, of the war events which drew a considerable visibility and power to national leaders, could retrospectively mislead about the real popularity and prestige that those leaders enjoyed *before* the 1990 elections. Alija Izetbegovi , the president of the SDA, had gained a certain reputation after the 1983 “Sarajevo trial” that judged him and a group

⁷⁶⁵ Nina Caspersen, “Contingent Nationalist Dominance: Intra-Serb Challenges to the Serb Democratic Party”, *Nationalities Papers*, 34, 1, 2006, 52.

⁷⁶⁶ As I explained in chapter 7, Markovi was born in Konjic (northern Hercegovina) in 1924, but his family soon moved to Dubrovnik.

⁷⁶⁷ Nada Ler Sofroni , interview by author. Sarajevo, June 28, 2012.

of Muslim intellectuals. Serving a long time in jail created a sort of “martyrdom effect” around his person. By the mid-1980s, Izetbegović was not widely known to the public outside of the Muslim cultural-religious environment, but he soon entered the fight for internal leadership, first with the prominent members of the “liberal” wing of the SDA, Adil Zulfikarpašić and Muhamed Filipović, and then with the business-“offshore”-oriented approach of Fikret Abdić (who incidentally, as it will be detailed later, largely outvoted Izetbegović at the presidential elections)⁷⁶⁸ In the case of the SDS, Radovan Karadžić emerged as a “accidental leader”.⁷⁶⁹ He was a backbencher figure in the Serb nationalists’ circles and became the number one of the party only because of contingent circumstances, namely the withdrawal of other preferred candidates and Karadžić’s personal connections with Jovan Rašković and Dobrica Čosić who, in turn, were closely connected with Slobodan Milošević.⁷⁷⁰ The case of the Bosnian HDZ, a party that changed their leader three times between 1990 and 1992, is probably the most remarkable. Its first leader, the Sarajevan doctor Davor Perinović, had been appointed by the Zagreb circles in order to approach the urban strata which had remained marginal within the party. Yet, he completely lacked connections and charisma especially among the Herzegovinian base, which had played a central role in the mobilisation and structuring of the HDZ in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

SDA, SDS and HDZ all began the electoral race as “catch-all” parties, aspiring to represent a broad spectrum of ideas, particular interests and local patronage networks under the common label of ethnic homogenisation. Such “big tent”, however, soon led to the appearance of tight intra-elite competitions that ended up with traumatic breakups in each of the three nationalist parties. The first schism happened in the SDS. In mid-August, its first vice-president Vladimir Srebrov, the eccentric writer who was initially destined to be its leader before being replaced by Karadžić, was forced to leave the SDS. The official reason is that Karadžić decided to dissolve the *Mlada Bosna*, the youth branch of the party modelled and led by Srebrov himself, accusing it of being an extremist,

⁷⁶⁸ See chapter 5.3 of this work.

⁷⁶⁹ Toal and Maksić, “Serbs, you are allowed to be Serbs”, 4.

⁷⁷⁰ Delalić and Šabić account that, at the beginning of the campaign, Karadžić was perceived as an unpersuasive speaker. Rather than him, the crowd used to applaud Jovan Rašković, the leader of the Croatian SDS, who joined several public events in order to support the Bosnian branch of the party. SDS people used to carry pictures of Rašković, Milošević and of historical Serb figures such as Saint Sava, Karađorđević, Vuk Karadžić, Njegoš, Tesla... but not (yet) those of Radovan Karadžić. Delalić and Šabić, *Balkan Bluz*, 61.

“paramilitary” organisation which was “incompatible with the spirit of the Serb people and of the SDS”.⁷⁷¹ Although Srebrov had already lost influence after being defeated by Karadžić, his dismissal evidenced the efforts of the party élites to centralize the organisation while getting rid of an unpredictable and non-aligned character.⁷⁷² The removal of Srebrov proved to be completely harmless for the SDS, for Srebrov and the remnants of *Mlada Bosna* joined a minor Serb ultra-nationalist party, the SPO, which never came out of political marginality.⁷⁷³

Two months later, in mid-October, the SDS took a further recentralizing step, when that party’s central board decided to reorganize their cadres in Banja Luka, the second-largest city in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was strategically important since it was the most important centre of the mostly Serb-populated Bosnian Krajina. (Moreover, it bordered with Croatian Krajina, then a growing stronghold of the Croat SDS’s mobilisation and place of rising ethnic tensions between Croats and Serbs). The official reason for such turnover was never revealed, but one could suppose that it was related with the first public meeting between Slobodan Milošević and Radovan Karadžić, held in Belgrade on October 2nd. After the meeting, the SDS’s discourse suddenly became more radical. On October 13th, the SDS formed in Banja Luka the so-called “Serb National

⁷⁷¹ “Paljanski ogranak Srpske Demokratske Stranke: Mir i samo mir”, *Oslobo enje*, August 11, 1990; “Preskonferencija Raškovića i Karadžića. SDS BiH broji 250 hiljada članova”, *Oslobo enje*, August 12, 1990.

⁷⁷² Such explanation could sound paradoxical if one retrospectively analyses the later evolution of the Srebrov’s career. After being forced to leave the SDS for his radicalism and extremism, he shortly joined the far-right SPO, which he also left soon after the elections. Then, Srebrov became critical of the Serb nationalism and switched to civic-oriented stances, advocating the multi-ethnic character of Sarajevo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In March 1992 he took the word in the Congress of Serb intellectuals in Sarajevo denouncing the SDS’s project of a pure ethnic state as it would lead to war and genocide, and publicly accused Karadžić of corruption. When the war began, he remained in Sarajevo and began to collaborate with the institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina until September 1992, when he was arrested by the authorities of the Republika Srpska before a scheduled meeting with Karadžić. He spent in jail thirty-nine months and suffered heavy tortures, but never showed any remorse for his pro-civic and anti-SDS stances. After the war, he went back to Sarajevo and ran as an independent candidate in the 1996 elections. In the last interviews that he released, he spoke about the early formation of the SDS, alleging that Slobodan Milošević and circles related with the secret services and the Army had a crucial role in appointing Karadžić as a leader at his place. See: Adil Kulenović, “Interview with Vladimir Srebrov”, *Vreme*, October 30, 1995, translated and reported in *Ex-Yupress.com*. Accessed October 10, 2012. <http://www.ex-yupress.com/vreme/vreme7.html>; Vladimir Srebrov, interviewed in “Los servicios de seguridad y la mafia financiaron la rebelión serbia en Bosnia”, *ABC*, November 30, 1997; Sambró, “Contextualització i anàlisi”, 471.

⁷⁷³ “Dogovori u Šipovu. ‘Mlada Bosna’ bojkotuje izbore?”, *Oslobo enje*, October 5, 1990. The SPO was a far-right Serb nationalist party active whose central branch was in Serbia, led by Vuk Drašković, who emerged as the strongest leader of the anti-Milošević opposition in the Serbian 1990 elections. However, the SPO did not manage to establish itself in Bosnia-Herzegovina, except in some municipalities in Eastern Herzegovina (he obtained one seat in the Parliament from the municipality of Nevesinje).

Council” [lit. *Srpsko nacionalno Vijeće*, SNV], which Karadžić affirmed it to be the only *legitimate* and *sovereign* representative organ of the Serb people in Bosnia-Herzegovina: it was the first undisguised attempt to establish extra-institutional and extra-legal structures in the republic.⁷⁷⁴ A few days later, likely in order to push that radicalisation, the replacement of cadres was ordered from Sarajevo to the Banja Luka branch. The republican leadership of the SDS appointed as coordinator Velibor Ostojić, who was a member of the small party elite in Sarajevo.⁷⁷⁵ Recentralizing the party, securing the ties with the external, Belgrade-based circles of power and radicalizing its own agenda were parallel processes.

In the Bosnian HDZ there was another internal conflict in the party’s elite as well with more severe consequences, namely the dismissal of his president Davor Perinović. Despite of Tudjman’s personal approval for the nomination of Perinović, the Zagreb circles of the HDZ highly disapproved the increasing emphasis that the Sarajevo doctor put on the autonomy of the Bosnian branch. At the founding meeting of the Bosnian HDZ, on August 18th, 1990, at the Sarajevo Skenderija, Perinović mentioned several times that “the party is not a section of Zagreb” and that “the Croats in BiH do not have any reserve homeland”; this was an implicit but clear warning for the leaders of the Croatian HDZ, who claimed that Bosnia-Herzegovina “naturally belonged” to the Croatian cultural-political sphere.⁷⁷⁶ The strongest statements were those of two representatives of the Zagreb HDZ, who declared that “Croatia will be defended on the Drina” (the river which marks the border between Bosnia and Serbia) and that “the flag of Croatia will fly over Mount Romanija” (i.e. over Sarajevo). Such statements caused concern and sharp reactions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Some weeks later, in an interview given to the Sarajevo weekly *Nedjelja*, Perinović acknowledged that there were two wings within the Bosnian HDZ, a “pro-Bosnian wing” [*Bosanska struja*] led by him and advocating the full sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and a “branch-wing” [*filijalna struja*] which allegedly conceived both the party and the republic of Bosnia as subordinated to Zagreb, looking at the Croatian parliament as its legitimate institution. Perinović clearly hinted

⁷⁷⁴ “U Banjaluci – Srpsko Nacionalno Vijeće. ‘Ne ćemo priznati konfederaciju’”, *Borba*, October 15, 1990; “Konferencija za štampu u SDS. Strah od izbora”, *Oslobođenje*, October 19, 1990; Toal and Maksić, “Serbs, you are allowed to be Serbs”, 16.

⁷⁷⁵ “Banja Luka: Srpska Demokratska Stranka. Smijenjeno rukovodstvo”, *Veernje Novine*, October 18, 1990; “SDS Banja Luka. Savjeti javni, rukovodstvo tajno?!” , *Oslobođenje*, October 18, 1990.

⁷⁷⁶ Davor Perinović, reported in “Osnivačka skupština HDZ u BiH. Po mjeri hrvatskog identiteta”, *Oslobođenje*, August 19, 1990.

that the '*filjalna struja*' was mainly located in Herzegovina, the stronghold of the militant Croat nationalism.⁷⁷⁷ He completely lacked authority over the Herzegovinian sectors of the party, something that became patent in a meeting in Ljubuški when the public whistled him out of the stage.⁷⁷⁸

The conflict came to an end on September 7th, when an extraordinary session of the highest council of the Bosnian HDZ (which, incidentally, met at Zagreb, thus highlighting their subordinate position in relation to the central HDZ) dismissed Perinovi . His efforts to challenge the decision were in vain, for he immediately lost the support of the Sarajevo leadership, as well as those of other sectors of the catholic clergy who had formerly endorsed him.⁷⁷⁹ Some contemporary press reports, as well as some historians, attribute his removal with ethnic, not political, issues: it was discovered that Perinovi 's father was Serb, and that his grandfather had been an orthodox priest.⁷⁸⁰ Such circumstances, in a political environment increasingly marked by the obsession for purity of blood and religious observance, and by the suspicions against any personalities who did not belong to small kinship groups,⁷⁸¹ certainly fuelled the scepticism of the radical sectors in the Herzegovina and Zagreb circles, but it is questionable whether it was decisive. It must be pointed out that the Serb origins of Perinovi were first unveiled in June by Nijaz Durakovi , the president of the League of Communists, through a letter to *Oslobo enje* likely based on information coming from secret reports in the hands of the republican authorities.⁷⁸² Hence, the Zagreb branch of the HDZ dismissed Perinovi three months after his family origins were made public and not belied. Therefore, if this was the main reason, the dismissal should have happened much earlier. Another interpretation defends that Perinovi was sacked "because of his radicalism and extreme

⁷⁷⁷ Davor Perinovi , interviewed in "Bosna i Hrvatska nisu jedno", *Nedjelja*, September 9, 1990.

⁷⁷⁸ "Osniva ka skupština HDZ u Ljubuškom. Aplauzi i zvižduci", *Oslobo enje*, August 21, 1990.

⁷⁷⁹ "Saopštenje HDZBiH podovom smjenivanja dra. Perinovi a: sve je neregularno", *Oslobo enje*, September 10, 1990.

⁷⁸⁰ See, for example, Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 160; Sambró, "Contextualització i anàlisi", 174-175.

⁷⁸¹ Stjepan Kljui , the Perinovi 's successor, has repeatedly insinuated that Perinovi was infiltrated by the KOS, the Yugoslav secret service. (Interview by author. Sarajevo, July 16, 2012; Stjepan Kljui in ICTY Court Records, Transcripts, *Prosecutor vs. Dario Kordi and Mario Cerkez*, IT-95-14/2-T, October 19, 1999, 8831. Accessed January 7, 2014. http://icty.org/x/cases/kordic_cerkez/trans/en/991019it.htm .

⁷⁸² Nijaz Durakovi , "Zna se ko muti nacionalne odnose!", in *Oslobo enje*, June 21, 1990. it was a reply to a letter of the same Perinovi ("Neko muti me unacionalne odnose?", June 18, 1990), in which the HDZ leader blamed with harsh tones the "Communist regime" which was depicted as subjected to Belgrade and repressive against the Croats' rights since 1946. Ironically, Durakovi would later take the defence of Perinovi once he was removed, protesting against the "interference" of Zagreb in the political affairs of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 160).

nationalism”,⁷⁸³ which is debatable as well. Although it is true that Perinović expressed provocative and extremist views during the initial stages of the build-up of the party, in the course of his mandate he showed a far more moderate attitude, advocating for an agreement of the communities to respect the constitutional structure of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Perinović in the HDZ, like Srebrov in the SDS, did not represent an anomaly because he was radical or extremist, but rather because he was unpredictable and unreliable, unable to respect the hierarchy between local ruling sectors (the Herzegovinian sector in the HDZ, the Sarajevo intellectuals in the SDS) and the power centres in Zagreb and Belgrade. However, it is remarkable that Perinović was replaced by another Sarajevo cadre. His successor, again personally chosen by Tuđman,⁷⁸⁴ was Stjepan Kljuić, a sports journalist who had worked for the Zagreb daily *Vjesnik* and for the German *Deutsche Welle* radio station. Kljuić was appointed for several qualities: he had good connections with the emigrants’ circles, which was a crucial resource for the party’s funding and organisation; he was seen as a leader loyal to Zagreb; and, most of all, he was a urban personality that could gather support from the moderate, middle-class strata without displeasing the more militant and radical wing. The Herzegovinians were numerous within the party elite, but once more they did not claim the leadership for themselves: taking into account that the Herzegovinian Croats were estimated to be about the 20% of the total Croat population in the whole republic, they strove to secure good connections with the HDZ central branch in Zagreb rather than trying to saturate the leadership.

The conflict within the SDA, was, in a certain sense, the most predictable and obvious. Since its foundation, there have been two sectors within the élite of the SDA: the conservative-clerical, led by the party president Izetbegović and assisted by the “Young Muslims” circle, which had established privileged relations with the Islamic clergy, and a liberal-secular wing, whose prominent representatives were Adil Zulfikarpašić and Muhamed Filipović. Their strategically and ideologically different

⁷⁸³ Ivica Lučić, “The view from Bosnia and Herzegovina on Franjo Tuđman’s ‘Bosnian Policy’”, *Review of Croatian History*, 1, 6, 2010, 76. See also, from the same author, *Uzroci rata*, 267-269.

⁷⁸⁴ Kljuić himself acknowledges it in an interview to *Radio Slobodna Evropa*. “Stjepan Kljuić: Izetbegović je izdao Bosnu”, *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, February 27, 2008. Accessed April 15, 2014. <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/articleprintview/1045347.html>.

approaches were made patent since the very beginning of the campaign. However, the turning point in the breakup took place at a meeting in Velika Kladuša held on September 15th, which was, for instance, the largest political rally of that electoral campaign and likely in the whole recent history of Bosnia-Herzegovina with at least 200,000 people in attendance, according to the press reports. The meeting definitely displayed the religious traits of the SDA and a certain radicalisation in its aesthetic, narrative and slogans. The party's flag, which contained religious symbols (the crescent and the green colour, which the liberal wing had opposed) was presented during the rally, and some attendees displayed flags of Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Aggressive, radical slogans were chanted against political opponents.⁷⁸⁵ At the same time, the party's discourse significantly changed: for the first time, Izetbegović openly evoked the (albeit remote) possibility of a civil war, through the warning that "the Muslim people will defend Bosnia" if Yugoslavia breaks up and the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina is put into question.⁷⁸⁶

All these circumstances strongly displeased Zulfikarpašić who, in his dialogue with Milovan Đilas and Nadežda Gačić, recalled: "When people breathed it was like the roar of a tank, it was unbelievable. There were slogans, green flags, shouts, signs saying 'We'll kill Vuk!' [Dražković] and 'Long live Saddam Hussein'. Saddam Hussein? There were pictures of Saddam Hussein, people wearing Arab dress, hundreds of green flags. [...] I was supposed to be the last speaker – the meeting would end with my speech. I was discouraged by the crowd's mood. People were screaming, raving, falling into a delirium at the words of a crazy professor from Cazin. It became clear to me that this was not what I wanted. I could not end my life in such a party. [...] And that is when I made a decision: I would either change the SDA into a civil, democratic and liberal party, or leave it".⁷⁸⁷

Another crucial factor widened the gap between Izetbegović's conservatism and Zulfikarpašić's liberalism. During that same rally, Fikret Abdić, the former general manager of the large firm Agrokomerc, and one of the culprits of the well-known 1987 scandal which had upset the whole ruling system in Bosnia-Herzegovina, announced that he was joining the SDA and that he would be a candidate at the elections. Abdić was still

⁷⁸⁵ "Predizborni skup SDA u Velikoj Kladuši. Abdić pristupio SDA", *Oslobođenje*, September 16, 1990. Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 157. A video of the historical meeting in Velika Kladuša is available on Youtube at the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZMYHIY5xE>. Accessed on June 16, 2015.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁸⁷ Zulfikarpašić, *The Bosniak*, 141.

hugely popular in Western Krajina because he was associated with the times of high employment and good life standards before the bankruptcy of Agrokomerc. In Velika Kladuša, Abdi counted on the support of an active organisation: the ‘Coordinating Committee’ led by his brother-in-law Sead Kajtezovi and mainly composed by former Agrokomerc employees.⁷⁸⁸ However, Abdi’s reputation as a pragmatic businessman and leader (although with a strong dose of despotism and cult of personality), apparently went beyond the borders of Krajina, making him one of the “most charismatic Bosniak personalities in Yugoslavia”.⁷⁸⁹ Abdi’s irruption would cause a setback for the aspirations of Zulfikarpaši in the party hierarchies, as well as for his hopes of being the candidate for the presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, Zulfikarpaši’s distrust towards the entry of Abdi into the party should not be directly related to his frustrated individual ambition, although this could have been an additional factor. Instead, the question was that Zulfikarpaši, as a stubborn and eccentric liberal disapproved the automatic co-optation of masses who followed their “local lord” and were also mobilised through ethno-religious slogans and symbols. In other words, he was sincerely concerned by this association between uncritical populism and fanatical nationalism.

After some unsuccessful attempts to settle their differences and negotiate a solution that would keep united the SDA, Zulfikarpaši and his fellow circle of liberal-oriented members (Muhamed Filipovi, Salih Burek, Hamza Mujagi) left the party and announced the formation of the Muslim Bosniak Organisation (*Muslimanska Bošnjačka Organizacija*, MBO) that aspired to be a secular option for the Bosnian Muslims. Although the MBO counted on certain degree of support in urban environments, particularly in Sarajevo and Tuzla, it became quickly clear that the huge majority of the party stood behind Izetbegovi. Furthermore, immediately after the split, the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which until that point had remained officially neutral, explicitly endorsed the leadership of Izetbegovi and criticized the liberals’ behaviour.⁷⁹⁰ Such stance was decisive for the organisation and legitimisation of the SDA

⁷⁸⁸ See chapter 3.3.

⁷⁸⁹ Faruk Balijagi, reported in Delali and Sa i, *Balkan bluz*, 40.

⁷⁹⁰ “ elnici SDA u Islamskoj Vjerskoj Zajednici. Imami – slobodni građani”, *Oslobo enje*, September 22, 1990. It must be recalled that the relations between the Islamic Community and the SDA’s liberals were very tense because of the Salim Šabi’s case, which also contributed significantly to the split within the Bosnian Muslims’ political circle. Salim Šabi was a businessperson and an influential officer of the Islamic Community based in Zagreb; he was one of the SDA’s founders, a member of the vice-presidency and one of the closest collaborators of Izetbegovi in the party elite. Shortly before the split within the SDA,

as the representative of the interests of the Muslim community. On the other hand, the MBO, with barely a month and a half before the elections, did not have structures, resources or time to consolidate and become a valid opponent for the SDA. Zulfikarpaši , having lived abroad from 1946 to 1990 in a sort of self-exile from Communism, lacked the most basic connections with the social context and personal networks; his closest collaborator Muhamed Filipovi , who was a former prominent member of the SKBiH but had left it under acrimonious circumstances, was also politically isolated.

Fikret Abdi 's decision to join the SDA had a direct and crucial implication for the performance of non-nationalist forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Indeed, a barely known fact is that before the decisive meeting in Velika Kladuša, all the three main civic parties (the DSS, the SK-SDP, and the SRSJ) approached Abdi trying to enlist him in their ranks to be their candidate at the elections. Had he accepted one of these proposals, the outcome of the 1990 elections and of the transition in Bosnia-Herzegovina would have been completely different; therefore, these contacts deserve in-depth attention. In June 1990, the secretary of the DSS Ismet Grbo had several meetings with Abdi and invited him to join the organisation, hoping that his personal popularity and his connection with Agrokomerc as a symbol of economic regeneration could help the party to consolidate.⁷⁹¹ However, such attempts failed for many reasons. Firstly, there were resistances inside the same leadership of the DSS, who mistrusted Abdi due to his involvement in the collapse of Agrokomerc and his questionable management methods.⁷⁹² Secondly, that party was

Zulfikarpaši publicly denounced that Šabi was a spy of the Yugoslav secret service and, therefore, acted for the auspices of Belgrade.

The Islamic Community firmly defended Šabi and sharply blamed the behavior of Zulfikarpaši and Filipovi who, in a column issued in *Preporod* (the official organ of the Islamic Community) were respectively labelled as “a man of a suspicious ethic and a still more suspicious connections and business”, and a “communist ideologue [...] who was involved in the time of the biggest harassment against the Muslims” (“Povodom napada na imame i vjernike u SDA. Boljševizam propao – boljševici ostali”, *Preporod*, October 1, 1990). According to Zulfikarpaši, Izetbegovi defended Šabi on the argument that, as the leak about Šabi came from the Croatian government, it was a move from Zagreb in order to spread discord both within the SDA and among them, the SDS and Belgrade. (Zulfikarpaši, *The Bosniak*, 140). The case apparently did not affect too much the Šabi's status in the SDA. According to the prominent journalist Senad Avdi, since 1992 Šabi acted as the member of a so-called “informal government of the Bosniaks in Zagreb”, charged to lobby and raise funds for the Muslims' cause in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war, especially from Saudi Arabia and the Islamic countries. (Senad Avdi: “Imami huškaju vjernike da me likvidiraju”, *Nacional*, August 21, 2002. Accessed June 15, 2015.

<http://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/10335/senad-avdic-imami-huskaju-vjernike-da-me-likvidiraju> .

⁷⁹¹ “U koju se stranku Fikret Abdi ? U esnik osniva kog skupa SDS”, *Oslobo enje*, June 13, 1990; “Strana ka nadmetanja oko Fikreta Abdi a. Kome se se privoljeti?”, *Oslobo enje*, June 20, 1990; “Bosanska Krajina: strana ka trka. Kome se Abdi ?”, *Ve ernje Novine*, June 20, 1990.

⁷⁹² “Predsjedništvo SSRNBiH o aboliciji Fikreta Abdi a. Odbijena inicijativa”, *Ve ernje Novine*, June 28, 1990.

the heir of the SSRN and, therefore of the old regime which Abdi and his close circle considered that were behind the the alleged “conspiracy” against Agrokomerc. Thirdly, one can easily assume that the DSS was viewed as a too small and marginal party to suit Abdic's ambitions.

After rejecting the proposal of the DSS, Abdi was approached by the League of Communists. Nijaz Durakovi , then the president of the SK-SDP, recalled: “I met Abdi and I offered him to join us. This happened some months before the elections. I insisted that I was in no way involved in the ‘Agrokomerc’ affair [*i.e. in the imprisonment of Abdi , author’s note*]. And he knew it, for he knew that I was a great friend of the Pozderac brothers [*Abdi ’s patrons’ in the party’s top ranks at the time of the Agrokomerc affair, author’s note*]. When Abdi was released from prison, he was undoubtedly the most popular personality among the Bosniak people. I suggested that, since he was angry with the Communists, he could be a candidate of the DSS, and we would support him, if necessary, as the head of some kind of democratic bloc. He was enthusiastic, but perhaps he was acting. He said that he would think about it and that he would let me know later”.⁷⁹³ However, Abdi ’s reply never arrived. His real and only goal was not to develop a political career, but to recover the full control over Agrokomerc, and he had no confidence that the Communists’ organisation would guarantee the favourable conditions for it. It should be taken into account that, in the local Velika Kladuša context, there was a “Coordinating Committee” of former Agrokomerc workers which was mobilised around Abdi ’s loyals and had established a sort of parallel government, in serious conflict with the official Communist-ruled structures. This made impossible a rapprochement between Abdi and the SK-SDP.⁷⁹⁴

The offer coming from the SRSJ, instead, could possibly have more chances to be accepted by Fikret Abdi . None of the Reformists’ cadres could be related with the Agrokomerc affair and the imprisonment of his manager. They had no links with the old establishment and had a business-oriented vision that suited his ambitions to regain control over his former company. They also had a fresh and agile organisational structure

⁷⁹³ Nijaz Durakovi , interview by author. Sarajevo, October 7, 2011. To my knowledge, Durakovi had never revealed the details of the meeting with Abdi until this interview. The meeting took place on July 20, in the immediate aftermath of the Durakovi ’s visit to the SKBiH in Velika Kladuša, when he was prevented to make a public speech because of the sound protest of the pro-Abdi committee. (see chapter 3.3).

⁷⁹⁴ See Chapter 3.3.

(unlike the heavy and bureaucratised structures of the SK-SDP) that could permit the rapid promotion of his close circle of collaborators within the higher ranks of the party. On September 9th, a delegation of the SRSJ composed of Nenad Kecmanovi , Emir Kusturica and Dževad Haznadar met with Fikret Abdi at his summer house in Rijeka, Croatia. The meeting lasted five to six hours, and during that time the Reformists did their best to convince Abdi to join their ranks.⁷⁹⁵ Haznadar recalls: “They were six hours of monologue of Fikret Abdi , explaining how he survived Agrokomerc. In the last half hour he said he felt hurt because Markovi did not invited him personally after Kozara, and had never called him. Meanwhile, we offered him whatever he wanted, to be a candidate for the Presidency, to be Prime Minister, whatever. The Reformists were completely at his disposal”.⁷⁹⁶ Kecmanovi ’s account goes in the same direction: “Fikret was constantly preoccupied with Agrokomerc. [...] I was in good relations with Abdi , because I defended him at the press [at the time of the Agrokomerc affair]. My only argument (I was convinced of this, and still today I think that I was not wrong in my assumption) [...] I think that it is likely that he committed some frauds, not for his personal benefit, but rather for the benefit of his own factory, of his own birthplace [...] then he said that he would always come with me, but not with Markovi , because Markovi did something against him, because he did not do enough for the sake of Agrokomerc. I don’t know, but that was, [in his eyes], something inexcusable”.⁷⁹⁷

Hence, Abdi declined also the offer of the Reformists. There may be two reasons for that: the first is that Abdi had a cordial relationship with the leaders of the Bosnian Reformists, but did not feel much confidence in Ante Markovi . It was probably not a mere issue of mutual distrust or of some isolated episodes, but rather differences in their respective visions, strategy and interests. Abdi felt that, although he could obtain unlimited political offices from the Reformists, he would never get the expected “carte blanche” to recover the control of Agrokomerc, because that the prime minister was still committed to introduce measures of financial discipline and transparency into the privatisation process. While Abdi complained that the banks were not willing to supply credits to foster the relaunch of Agrokomerc, Ante Markovi chose to visit Bosnian

⁷⁹⁵ “Nezvani no saznajemo. Fikret Abdi u SDA?”, *Oslobo enje*, September 13, 1990; “Fikret Abdi o tome kojoj e se stranci prikloniti. Sve u re i danas”, *Oslobo enje*, September 14, 1990.

⁷⁹⁶ Dževad Haznadar, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 7, 2014.

⁷⁹⁷ Nenad Kecmanovi , interview by author. Banja Luka, June 26, 2012.

Krajina (perhaps not by coincidence, as it was the region where Agrokomerc was based) to warn their businesspeople that “our banks have suffered because of their own wrong standards, since they have generously granted credits to those who are not in the condition to return them”.⁷⁹⁸ Abdi ’s unscrupulous financial activism and Markovi ’s strive for discipline and stabilisation could not find a common ground.⁷⁹⁹

The second explanation for Abdi ’s refusal to the Reformists is related to his tactical estimations: Abdi did not trust in the chances of Markovi to win the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina and opted for the SDA simply because he realized that the mass support was significantly shifting towards the nationalist parties. What is undeniable, indeed, is that Abdi did not had any nationalist or religious-driven motivation on his own; he was a businessman sincerely obsessed with recovering the control of Agrokomerc. As recalled by the SRSJ’s cadre Josip Pejakovi , “Abdi was much closer to us than to the SDA. He was a person with only one interest”.⁸⁰⁰ Since that first meeting in Velika Kladuša, and during all the campaign, in his speeches Abdi always remained focused on the economic aspects and never mentioned political themes related with national-religious identity, the institutional framework of the republic and the federation, etc.

To summarise, the splits within the leadership of the three nationalist parties resulted in a consolidation of small leading cadres which centralised and disciplined the organisation. In the case of the Serb SDS and the Croat HDZ, the influence of non-Bosnian centres of power, respectively from Belgrade and Zagreb, was decisive for appointing a docile leadership. Only in the case of the SDA, which did not count on any

⁷⁹⁸ “Ante Markovi razgovarao s bosanskokrajiškim privrednicima. Nema povratka nazad”, *Oslobo enje*, July 29, 1990. It must recall that Agrokomerc had gone bankrupt since it had obtained enormous credits from more than sixty Yugoslav banks through the issuance of uncovered promissory notes. As the local bank was logically one of the most exposed, the whole economic system in western Bosnia practically went into bankrupt as a consequence (Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 59).

⁷⁹⁹ In a 2012 TV interview (one of the first released after the war) to the well-known Sarajevo journalist Senad Hadžifejzovi , Abdi gave some vague and ambiguous explanations about his choice in 1990. However, he hinted that there was some issue with Markovi : “I did not join the SRSJ because Markovi was persuaded that there is no need to do anything. At that time he was really popular in Yugoslavia and he was convinced that all will be resolved only through his name. I knew that he will not [succeed to do it]”. Abdi stated that, unlike the Reformists, the SDA promised to support the relaunch of Agrokomerc and that, since this party did not have an economic program, he could significantly contribute in it. Fikret Abdi , interviewed in “Intervju Fikreta Abdi a”, *Face TV*, August 2012, available on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBDehA8TcZo>. Accessed on June 17, 2015.

⁸⁰⁰ Josip Pejakovi , interview by author. Sarajevo, May 5, 2014.

external patronage, the struggle was exclusively on ideological terms, with the local conservative wing, with strong ties with the religious community, prevailing.

After the splits, the dissidents within each party set up or joined “alternative” national parties (Zulfikarpašić created the MBO; Srebrov joined the SPO, Perinović joined the HDS, a minor and completely marginal Croat party). These attempts were completely fruitless, since they lacked basic resources: very short time to establish a separate structure, few or no support from the clergy, no economic resources to consolidate. SDA, SDS and HDZ, instead, succeeded in reinforcing their structures and succeeded in presenting themselves as the only valid, legitimate and hegemonic force for each of the national communities: the SDA remained “the only option” in the sphere of Muslim-only parties, the SDS was the same for the Serb-only parties and the HDZ for the Croat-only parties.

9.3. The campaign. Narratives and structures of non-national parties

9.3.1. The Communists: echoes of Titoism and signs of innovation

In a democratic transition, as Damir Kapidžić observes, “[former] ‘regime parties’ play an important role in the first multiparty elections due to their institutional influence, monopoly of power, and political clout”. These parties “rely both on institutional and symbolic heritage, and on the influence of current office holders on party lists”.⁸⁰¹ This was also the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1990, since the League of Communists still had a far from negligible presence and control over the key positions in state enterprises, state administration and security organs.⁸⁰² The SK-SDP still maintained a solid party infrastructure throughout the whole territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although they were highly questioned because of political scandals, the declining attraction of socialist ideas and the concurring competition of national options, the Communists were able to regain a certain capacity of mobilisation in the course of the campaign. The president of the

⁸⁰¹ Damir Kapidžić, “Democratic transition and electoral design in plural societies: the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s 1990 elections, *Ethnopolitics*, 2015. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2015.1006975>, 6-7.

⁸⁰² *Ibidem*.

party, Nijaz Duraković, was the only leader who visited all the 109 municipalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the two months prior to the elections, and, in some of them, the Communists still managed to gather large crowds.⁸⁰³ The starting point for the relaunch of the SK-SDP was the big rally at the Skenderija hall in Sarajevo, on September 22nd, which was attended by about 10,000 people. National parties had already held several large public meetings both in the cities and in the provinces, demonstrating an impressive growth in popular support and euphoria, forcing the Communists to “come back to the streets” and to regain self-confidence, after a period in which they had been almost afraid of organising public rallies due to the possibility of protests. A columnist in the daily *Oslobođenje* commented: “The Communists have come back to the Bosnian political scene. After ‘a hundred year of silence’ that had confused and discouraged the remaining supporters of the leftist idea, and while the opposing camp has become so strong that it has almost stopped to shoot their most poisonous arrows against the SK, because they consider it an eliminated and dead body, the meeting [in Skenderija] announced a big ‘come back’. ‘We have not raised the white flag. We are still here’, said from the stage the president of the party”.⁸⁰⁴

The meeting was also significant because it defined the guidelines of the SK-SDP’s electoral discourse, mixing defense and criticism of the socialist heritage. On the one hand, the references to Titoism were still visible, both in the aesthetics (Tito’s posters and slogans, Yugoslav flags and chants, revolutionary songs, etc., were commonly present in Skenderija and in all the SK-SDP’s rallies) and in a rhetoric still relying on the central role of the working class and, above all, of the concept of common life shared by the different national groups.⁸⁰⁵ Again, the SK-SDP stood out as the “last bastion” of a Titoism which was either targeted or ignored by almost all the main parties, not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but rather in the whole of Yugoslavia. Some of them were doing it because of committed anti-communism, but others, which were heirs of the Leagues of Communists, used nationalism to try to capture the voters demanding political change.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰³ “Narodni zbor u Jajcu. Grad – symbol”, *Oslobođenje*, November 11, 1990; Pejanović, *Through Bosnian eyes*, 33.

⁸⁰⁴ Arina Šarac, “Veliki come back”, *Oslobođenje*, September 27, 1990.

⁸⁰⁵ “Juče u Sarajevu održana konvencija SKBiH-SDP. Danas druga iji nego juče”, *Oslobođenje*, September 22, 1990. I am also deeply grateful with mr. Mulo Hadži for providing me with the film recording of the SKBiH campaign rallies in Gradačac (November 6, 1990) and Banovići (undated).

⁸⁰⁶ I here refer to the former Communists of Serbia, Slovenia and Montenegro which, in 1990, practically disavowed any fundament of the Titoist framework both in their agenda and symbology. The branches of

Columnist Arina Šarac commented: “What has warmed the hearts of many people who attended Skenderija is the clear commitment of the SK-SDP to [the heritage of] Josip Broz-Tito and his action. But what really hurts the hearts of many Yugoslavs is the fact that in Yugoslavia, there are very few places except Skenderija where one can display the devotion to the idea of Yugoslavia embodied by Tito. In a time in which the majority of the Yugoslav politicians wash their hands of all what is related with Josip Broz and his legacy, Nijaz Duraković has – too bravely, according to someone – entered the electoral campaign with the slogan ‘In Bosnia people still love Tito’ [lit.: ‘*Tita u Bosni još vole*’]”.⁸⁰⁷ The main slogan of the SK-SDP in the campaign was “We will live together” (*Živije emo zajedno*), echoing the classical “Brotherhood and Unity” but projecting it into the future. It is undoubtable that this message was still perceived as powerful and attractive by many sectors of the Bosnian society. However, this message was stated in *negative* terms, as a reply to the boosting narrative of national parties in favour of homogenisation, self-sufficiency and self-organisation of each ethnic community. The Bosnian Communists were saying “what kind of Bosnia we do not want”,⁸⁰⁸ just as they had cheered “Bosnia says NO [to divisions]” in their previous demonstrations,⁸⁰⁹ but seemed unable to properly defend the achievements of their past regime, as well as to make concrete proposals beyond maintaining the *status quo*. In other words, the discourse of the Communists sounded too defensive and unassertive, as an implicit admission that they were not able to act as full agents of change, and as if they had already lost public influence and power, whereas national parties were taking the political struggle into their own preferred ground.

On the other hand, the party sought to take, much more evidently than during the earlier months, a convenient distance from the obscure aspects of his past, such as repression, corruption and misrule. In Skenderija, Duraković said: “We are different from yesterday, because we have dropped many troublemakers and hypocrites. In every crop there is weed. For our pleasure, our weed fell off alone. Without them, we are stronger and more prepared to run for elections”.⁸¹⁰ It must be recalled that none of the presidential

Croatia (at least until the elections in April 1990) and, especially, of Macedonia, maintained instead certain references to socialist Yugoslavism, yet not with the same devotion displayed by the Bosnian branch.

⁸⁰⁷ Arina Šarac, “Veliki come back”, *Oslobo enje*, September 27, 1990.

⁸⁰⁸ “Ju e u Sarajevu održana konvencija SKBiH-SDP. Danas druga iji nego ju e”, *Oslobo enje*, September 22, 1990; “Dr. Krstan Malešević : kakvu Bosnu ne emo”, *Oslobo enje*, September 22, 1990.

⁸⁰⁹ See chapter 3.3.

⁸¹⁰ “Spor(ed)ne stvari. Horde zla”, *Oslobo enje*, September 28, 1990.

candidates of the SK-SDP, and almost none of those in the list for the Parliament, were neither “old cadres” of the regime, nor belonged to the ruling organs. It is remarkable that the SK-SDP’s candidates for the presidency were the youngest among the major parties,⁸¹¹ something that looks paradoxical for a former regime party and testifies the effort to modernize their elite and to break with the past, as well as the extent of the changes which have taken place in the last years. On the other side, some of the candidates, apart from being completely unknown to the public, were not made visible enough by the party’s campaign. One hardly finds a trace of Fejsal Hrustanovi , Nikola Stojanovi and Zoran Perkovi , three of the candidates for the presidency respectively in the Muslim, Serb and Croat list, in the public acts of the SK-SDP during the campaign. The party’s strategy apparently consisted of focusing the campaign on the other, “strong” candidate from each national group. The four “strong” candidates (Nijaz Durakovi for Muslims, Mirko Pejanovi – from the ally DSS - for Serbs, Ivo Komši for Croats and Zlatko Lagumdžija for Yugoslavs) coincided with the four main protagonists of the “new course” of the Bosnian rule, namely the generation of leaders aged 35 to 45 years old who emerged after the political turnover of the late 1980s, caused basically by the Agrokomerc and Neum scandals. The three “minor” candidates came, instead, from the sectors of management, arts and youth activism.⁸¹² Such strategy, however, turned out to be unfortunate, whereas national parties presented stronger couples of candidates.⁸¹³

⁸¹¹ The average age of the SKBiH's presidential candidates was 40.42 years; SRSJ's average was 43.1; the SDA, 53.3; the SDS, 53; the HDZ, 57. Only the SSO-DS, namely the former youth wing of the League, had a lower average age (35.0 years).

⁸¹² It must keep in mind that each party could run with two candidates for the Muslims', Serbs' and Croats' list, and with one for the Yugoslavs/others (the 2+2+2+1 collective presidency).

While the four “main” candidates of the SKBiH were high officials of the party, the three “minor” candidates came from the “outsider”. Fejsal Hrustanovi (1946) was the general director of the “Jugobanka” bank in Sarajevo. Nikola Stojanovi (1942) was a film director; ironically, he was the homonym of a prominent member of the “old guard” who had been involved in the Neum scandal, what could bring to confusion. Zoran Perkovi (1961) was the former president of the youth wing of the party (the SSO BiH) during the 1980s. Following the press coverage from the various organs, they barely appeared in very few events the course of the campaign, and one would assume that not only they were little known to the large public, but even to their own party base. All the three finally obtained modest results at the elections: in Muslims' list, Hrustanovi got almost one fifth of the votes obtained by Durakovi (3,8% vs. 17,4%; Abdi and Izetbegovi were elected with 32 and 27% respectively); in Serbs' list, Stojanovi got 7,58%, whereas Pejanovi got 10,66%; in Croats' list, Perkovi obtained the 9,23%, whereas Komši obtained 11,24%.

⁸¹³ National parties run with more visible members of their élite. The SDA's Muslim candidates were Alija Izetbegovi and Fikret Abdi , respectively the party no. 1 and the so-called “most popular Bosnian Muslim” in the country. The SDS, although rejected to present its leader Karadži , appointed two visible and founding cadres of the party such as the academic professors Nikola Koljevi and Biljana Plavši . The HDZ ran with its leader Stjepan Kljui and another early and prominent member of the party élite, Franjo Boras. Moreover the fact that each national party only ran in “its own” national community (namely, SDA displayed candidates for Muslim seats, SDS for Serbs', HDZ for Croats'; SDA and SDS also run for the

Besides the difficulties in promoting its new elite, the party also floundered in the organisation of its bases prior to the elections. The party was late in completing the lists for the parliamentary and municipal elections and, due to the imminence of the vote, was forced to turn down the consultations with the local party sections.⁸¹⁴ The attempt to establish a new strategy for the SK-SDP apparently yielded modest results in the urban centres: the party's Sarajevo City Committee claimed that membership had increased from 80,000 to 83,000 from late September to late October, namely after the meeting in Skenderija. However, one should remark that from January to September it had collapsed from 94,000 to 80,000.⁸¹⁵ The biggest problems were located in non-urban environments, especially the most peripheral whose local delegates submitted highly alarming reports to the SK-SDP's central branch. A party representative from Gacko, in Eastern Herzegovina, warned about the growing mobilisation of nationalist parties and the spreading of rumours about the self-organisation of night patrols and traffic of weapons in the ethnically homogeneous villages of the municipality (either Serbs or Muslims). This, in turn, fuelled a sense of insecurity and of growing scepticism towards the former ruling party, which was now questioned not only as the main responsible for the economic crisis, corruption etc., but also because it appeared unable to ensure public security. His account reveals the extent of anguish and frustration of the local SK-SDP activists in small towns or rural areas:

“In Eastern Herzegovina the situation is that every side has their own journalists. Serbs have their own journalists from the Belgrade press. [The Muslims of] The SDA have their own journalists in Sarajevo, etc. [...] In political and security issues, no one does nothing. The situation is difficult; people organize some sort of night patrols. We are in a state of emergency, but no one makes a move, the municipality does not exist anymore. Last year I made a totally different forecast. Now, we do not have anybody there. In the entire

Yugoslav seat) was an implicit advantage, allowing them to restrict the choice to high-ranking cadres, whereas non-national parties SKBiH and SRSJ had to present 7 names for the 4 lists. Since one could not run for the Presidency and the Parliament at the same time, the civic parties had to carefully arrange their top-ranks in the various candidacies available. For example Krstan Malešević, who could have been a high-profile candidate for the Serbs' list, was instead appointed as a candidate in the Chamber of the Citizens (the SKBiH wished to elect him as the President of the Parliament in case of electoral victory: see Nijaz Duraković in “Magnetofonski snimak sa 12. sjednice Centralnog Komiteta Saveza Komuniste BiH – SDP, održane 7.10.1990”, SDP Archive, 3/3).

⁸¹⁴ Krsto Stjepanović, in “Magnetofonski snimak razgovora sa predsjednicima OK SK, održanog 27.8.1990 godine”, SDP Archive, 23/2.

⁸¹⁵ “GK SK-SDP: vraćaju se članovi”, *Veernje Novine*, October 27, 1990.

municipality we have a hundred party members, but only two of them should be in our electoral list tomorrow. I would not propose anybody else, as they could never win. [...] There, there is not local economic activity at all. There is so much thievery and smuggling, that I guess [it has reached] a level unheard of in the civilised world. I must add that one thermoelectric plant has been stolen [sic! Lit. *i termoelektrana jedna je ukradena*], I confirm it. We dismissed a hundred people, and all of them turned against us. They all want to gouge out my eyes. Hence, all of them joined nationalist parties. [...] What I want to say is that right-wing forces are getting strong, the SDS, the SPO... [...] there, the Chetniks [lit. *etništvo*] cannot be differentiated from the Serb people, nor the Ustashes [lit. *ustašvo*] from the Croat or the Muslim people”.⁸¹⁶

Another delegate from Trebinje recalled the great amount of pressure, and attributes the Communist problems to the worse socio-economic performance: “[We should be] aware of how many things are attributed to us, that they target us. It turns out that we are the only culprits when we show up, they say ‘you communists are guilty’, ‘workers do not get wages because of you, communists’. I think that the situation we have now is not [composed of] strikes, it is social unrest. You [the republican leaders of the SK-SDP] are asking us to address to workers, but I think that this is very difficult. Now, to say to workers that they must be patient that this [crisis] was unexpected, that it can be resolved, this does not work anymore. In Trebinje, if I want to speak with workers, I must say them that the Bosnian executive council has abused its position and has jeopardised the reforms and the program of the Yugoslav government. And I must say it to them because it is true. I do not have a single argument to explain that economy is bad and that wages are low because of that, whereas in sectors as electric plants, the post offices, health services and education, it is working and the wages are good. I know in which position we are, but I think that we should be more clear, stating that this is not a reform, and that this only leads to a worse political and economic situation”.⁸¹⁷

⁸¹⁶ Unnamed delegate from the SKBiH Gacko, in “Magnetofonski snimak razgovora sa predsjednicima OK SK, održanog 27.8.1990 godine”, 19/4-5.

⁸¹⁷ Unnamed delegate from the SKBiH Trebinje, *ibidem*, 20/1-3.

9.3.2. *The Reformists: the “voice of reason”*

“Some speak about coexistence [lit. suživot] in BiH.

But coexistence means apartheid.

And we do not want to live in coexistence.

We want life. [život]”⁸¹⁸

While the Communists drew upon a mixture of old symbols and innovation attempts, the Reformists sought to present themselves as “the voice of reason”, opposing both the remains of socialist dogmatism and the “feudal conscience” obsessively based on territory, nation and religion which emerged in the empty spaces left by the fall of the regime. The foundations of the SRSJ were “the *citizen* and the *capital* [italics mine, author’s note], which are not affected by any kind of territorial, national and religious border, something that belongs to the private sphere of the *citoyen*”.⁸¹⁹ A local candidate of the Reformists said: “We do not offer war, nor caves, nor knives, nor a rifle on the shoulder, but rather a computer in every school table and a peaceful and a calm childhood for our children, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia”.⁸²⁰ This kind of narrative, seeking to display calm and optimism, fully reflected the communicative strategy of Ante Marković, whose motto was: “We do not need enemies, we do not need hate, we do not need opponents to prove the correctness of our program. Our opponents need instead hate and enemies because, apart from that, what else can they offer?”⁸²¹ However, in the discourse of the SRSJ the economic dimension was still prominent over the political sphere: their approach was almost technocratic. Nenad Kecmanović, president of the Reformists, put it clearly: “Marković turns the relationship between the economy and the politics in favour of the economy. This is the orientation of his strategy, a concept where the economy rules through politics and where politics turn up as something secondary and derivative”.⁸²²

⁸¹⁸ Abdulah Sidran at the SRSJ’s convention in Zetra Hall, Sarajevo, November 12 1990. Reported in Ranko Zrili, *Dnevnik presjedni kog kandidata*, Travnik: Borac, 1991, 62.

⁸¹⁹ Emil Vlajki, “Antine bosanske šanse. Protiv svih zastava”, *Oslobo enje*, September 16, 1990.

⁸²⁰ “SRS Derventa. Odgovor – u kompjuterima”, *Oslobo enje*, September 17, 1990.

⁸²¹ Ante Marković interviewed in “Ekskuzivno. Ante Marković – intervju”, *Dar*, November 6, 1990.

⁸²² Nenad Kecmanović interviewed in “Drugovi postali braća i sestre”, *Oslobo enje*, October 6, 1990.

Although this discourse was still potentially attractive as a stabilizing and appeasing factor, the SRSJ was affected by the ups and downs of its leader and the downfall of his reform programme, both in the institutional and the economic domains. The political capital of Ante Marković and his agenda lost considerable momentum during the electoral campaign. In October, the Federal Parliament became almost definitely paralyzed due to the successive vetoes of the Slovene-Croat and Serbian-Montenegrin blocs to the proposed changes in the framework of the State and the succession to the Presidency. The stalemate definitely crushed the political reform at the federal level and, consequently, any chance of federal elections (which were a crucial element in Marković's project) and fuelled widespread popular scepticism on his real chances to overcome the crisis.⁸²³ The lack of authority of the federal government was becoming increasingly clear, in addition to its inability to take initiative in the Kosovo and Croatian Krajina crisis. A member of the cabinet retrospectively acknowledged that the attitude of the government was too hesitant and indecisive regarding the big issues of the Yugoslav crisis and the sharp criticisms against Marković coming particularly from Serbia and, to a lesser degree, from Slovenia and Croatia.⁸²⁴

In the economic domain, the convertibility of the dinar (one of the strongest points of the government's action, which provided Marković with a large consensus especially among the middle class)⁸²⁵ was in danger in late September: the banks, citing liquidity issues, began to deny or to limit to private citizens the withdrawal of foreign currency (whose sum had previously reached the level of 10 billion dollars). Neither the National Bank of Yugoslavia, nor the republican institutions took action to solve these restrictions. Meanwhile, since September there were speculations about the devaluation of the dinar and an abrupt resurgence of the inflation that would severely affect all basic goods (electricity, housing, transport, food), mainly due to the efforts of the republican governments in Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia to "buy votes", and to keep the social peace and consensus, promising higher salaries, pensions, subsidies, etc. and ignoring the monetary restrictions imposed by the federal government.⁸²⁶

⁸²³ "Kako ste doživeli po etak zasedanja skupštine SFRJ. Kako na javi, tako u sali", *Borba*, October 19, 1990; "Predah za sudbinu", *Borba*, October 20, 1990.

⁸²⁴ Predrag Taši, *Kako sam branio Antu Markovića*, 29-38.

⁸²⁵ See chapter 7.1.

⁸²⁶ Taši, *Kako sam branio Antu Markovića*, 32; Woodward, *Balkan tragedy*, 128-29; "Udar na septembar", *Borba*, September 5, 1990.

All these elements contributed to a sense of social insecurity and distrust, particularly noticeable in Bosnia-Herzegovina: various firms from the mining, heavy and engineering sectors (the most significant for the republic's economy), were becoming insolvent, because of the lack of liquidity from banks and of the international trends;⁸²⁷ hence, they either suspended or cut the wages, boosting social conflicts.⁸²⁸ In Sarajevo alone, according to trade unions' estimates, there were 53 strikes from January to September 1990, roughly one every five days, involving 21,620 (78.9%) of the 27,396 employees in the city.⁸²⁹ However, protests grew since the summer of 1990 because of the further socioeconomic deterioration. One of the most worrying actions was the strike of the miners coming from various cities of the country (Tuzla, Zenica, Breza) who occupied and paralyzed the Sarajevo city centre on August 21st, a fact that created a feeling of chaos in the city and almost led to the resignation of the Interior Minister.⁸³⁰ Multiple strikes were held in various towns of Bosnia-Herzegovina, strengthening the feeling of anxiety for further social turmoil.

Both the Communists, who were still the formal rulers of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Reformists, whose leader was the Yugoslav Prime Minister, were heavily targeted by the three nationalist parties who blamed them for the unemployment and lack of economic recovery. Such stance was evidently opportunist, as the SDA, HDZ and SDS did not have a detailed economic programme and had so far generally endorsed the stabilisation programme, that was indeed very profitable for them for they have capitalised the social discontent. It is remarkable that even the SK-SDP and the SRSJ, instead of cooperating due to their common progressive orientation, preferred to blame each other for the negative socioeconomic trend. While the Communists reproached the excesses of the Reformists' privatisation agenda and its supposedly negative effect on workers' living standards,⁸³¹ the Reformists heavily protested against the limitations in currency withdrawals, denouncing this as an "attempt to undermine, in a perfidious way, the chances of the SRSJ in the imminent elections". The SRSJ hinted that the commercial

⁸²⁷ The negative international trends were the war in Iraq and the credits owed by Eastern Bloc countries, especially Eastern Germany and Soviet Union; all these countries were crucial partners for those sectors.

⁸²⁸ Woodward, *Balkan tragedy*, 129.

⁸²⁹ "GV Saveza Samostalnih Sindikata. Generalni štrajk u rezervi", *Oslobo enje*, October 2, 1990.

⁸³⁰ "Završeni pregovori RIV-a i rudara štrajka a. Danas odluka o pove anju plata", *Oslobo enje*, August 22, 1990; Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 166.

⁸³¹ "Tribina SKBiH - SDP. Komunisti nisu zlo inci", *Oslobo enje*, August 31, 1990; "SKBiH-SDP: Odgovor na optužbe. SIV-u ne treba advokat", *Ve ernje Novine*, November 7, 1990.

banks and the republican institutions ruled by the SK-SDP were behind that plot.⁸³² These arguments widely deepened the rift between the two parties.

While the popular disillusionment with Markovi 's reforms was surely the main reason explaining the decline of the Bosnian Reformists in the course of the campaign, another factor was the considerable delay of the SRSJ in developing a solid territorial organisation throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. The SRSJ managed to develop a respectable infrastructure at the republican level, working on their organs and preparing documents, marketing initiatives, etc. Yet, they had problems in establishing their structure and communication in the small towns and villages. This was, first of all, the consequence of the initial hesitation about whether setting up an autonomous party or merging with the SK-SDP. In many towns, the first branches of the SRSJ had to be dissolved, as Communist activists or former officials reputed to be involved in corruption or mismanagement were dismissed, and then had to be re-established with a new leadership. In some cases, including that of the second largest city of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Banja Luka, this reorganisation took place in late September, that is, barely six weeks before the elections.⁸³³

This process caused considerable damage to the structuring process of the Reformists, particularly in small municipalities where there was a lower availability of influential and valuable activists or candidates to recruit. Moreover, the Reformists logically suffered from the competition of the nationalist parties, which had earned a slight, and yet significant temporal advantage in territorial organisation and mobilisation, thanks to the significant support provided by the respective clergies, circles of emigrants, familiar and informal networks, etc., which offered immediate and accessible incentives for those who sought to engage in politics.⁸³⁴ The Reformists had to play a double competition to attract new members: for those categories traditionally more loyal to the

⁸³² "Reformske snage BiH. Konferencija za štampu. Stalni napadi", *Ve ernje Novine*, October 29, 1990; "BH. reformisti konferencija za štampu u Sarajevu. Krive su banke", *Ve ernje Novine*, November 6, 1990; "SKBiH-SDP: Odgovor na optužbe. SIV-u ne treba advokat", *Ve ernje Novine*, November 7, 1990. A matter of discord was that Fejsal Hrustanovi , a presidential candidate of the SKBiH and the general director of Jugobanka, was allegedly involved in the shortage in withdrawals, what he vigorously denied.

⁸³³ "Sa osniva ke skupštine SRSJ za BiH Banjaluci. Reforma - snaga reformista", *Glas*, September 28, 1990.

⁸³⁴ Remarkable that in 24 of the 109 municipalities they did not get any representation in the local assembly. Meaning that either they did not present a list, or they obtained an extremely marginal result (even a low score was enough to be represented, provided that the electoral system was pure proportional).

regime or state-related (industrial workers, teachers, public administration employees) they principally competed with the Communists, whereas for social categories which were expected to support a more radical and anti-regime change (entrepreneurs, liberal professionals, technical cadres) the main struggle was with nationalist parties. In both spheres, such organisational delay undermined the Reformists' chances, which were overcome by the Communists' persistent territorial infrastructure and by the nationalist parties' higher mobilisation capacity.

It is remarkable that in the peripheral regions which were, or would soon become, crucial for the ethnic polarisation and that would be place of some of the most horrible massacres of the Bosnian war of 1992-95, the SRSJ had the most serious troubles to set up a party structure, bumping into a deep sense of social and existential insecurity, which was both the cause and the consequence of the consolidated mobilisation of the nationalist parties. In several towns in Bosnian Krajina, including the major centre of Prijedor, the SRSJ became almost ineffective due to a very low participation,⁸³⁵ despite the fact that the announcement of the foundation of the party had been made in that very region and had caused a great deal of euphoria in a region traditionally marked by a strong commitment to Yugoslavia and the Partisan struggle.⁸³⁶ Miro Bjeli, then a high level cadre at the Banja Luka SRSJ described the resistances that the activists met in Omarska, a town in the municipality of Prijedor, to establish the party: “[...] Things were very difficult there, it was impossible to set up a party there because there was the SDS and SDA parties who had divided up the population. They were equally strong, more or less. I was not able to accept that, and we decided that they [the local activists] should be more aggressive in their approach to set up the party, that they should try and find prominent figures, prominent public figures. I think they found [...] a lawyer by profession and a respected one, and then there was [...] the owner of a restaurant, and that they should report back to me. They didn’t contact me later. Timarac came on one occasion and he

⁸³⁵ “Srbac: Savez Reformskih Snaga. Formiran Inicijativni Odbor”, *Glas*, September 10, 1990; “Savez reformskih snaga u Prnjavoru. Start ponovljen”, *Glas*, September 27, 1990; “Savez Reformskih Snaga u Prijedoru. Zbunila ih kritika”, *Glas*, October 12, 1990; “Bosanska Gradiška. Startuju reformisti”, *Glas*, Oktober 12, 1990.

⁸³⁶ Kozara, where Marković announced the foundation of the SRSJ on July 29, is located near to the city of Prijedor.

said that he was not able to establish a party over there, that things were difficult, and so that's what happened".⁸³⁷

In Eastern Bosnia, the SRSJ suffered also severe setbacks. In Foča, the town which was experiencing probably the most important social conflict in pre-war Bosnia-Herzegovina (acquiring ethnic characteristics, pitting Serbs against Muslims) around the Foča trans company, the party remained marginal not only as an effect of the strong polarisation, but also because it was paradoxically the most affected by the state of emergency experienced by the town, which prevented its formal constitution.⁸³⁸ Also in Srebrenica, which had experienced some ethnic tensions since 1989, the SRSJ was a minor force and practically renounced to set up outside of the "aršija", i.e., the urban centre, with the SDA and the SDS monopolizing the mobilisation in the villages.⁸³⁹ The poor or null results that the Reformists would obtain at the municipal elections in the other main centres in Eastern Bosnia, such as Zvornik, Bratunac and Vlasenica, indicate

⁸³⁷ Miro Bijelić, in ICTY Court Records, Transcripts, *Prosecutor vs. Kvočka et al.*, IT-98-30/1, February 5, 2001, 7397. Accessed May 9, 2012. <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/kvočka/trans/en/010205it.htm>.

The background of this testimony must be clarified. It happens to be that one of the few activists aspiring to join the SRSJ in Omarska was a policeman called Miroslav Kvočka, who would later become one of the commanders of the (in)famous Omarska concentration camp in 1992. (Kvočka has been sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment by the ICTY in 2001). At the trial, Bijelić was invited as witness by the Defence team of Kvočka. The involvement in a civic, non-national and moderate party of a person who would be later sentenced for crimes against humanity can be surprising at a first glance, but far from being an isolated case in that context. One must keep in mind that the volatility of individual political preferences (and of their related moral-driven implications) was extremely high in 1990 Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even some prominent members of the SRSJ's élite, soon after the elections, joined national parties. Dragan Kalinić and Todor Dutina, for example, joined the SDS and the Republika Srpska's institutional bodies.

The profile of Miro Bijelić is also remarkable. Bijelić had been a prominent handball player in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s for the Borac Banja Luka, then joined the managerial board of the same club. In 1990, many members of the club supported and directly engaged themselves with the SRSJ. As the same Bijelić recalled, "at that time, there was a big change within my club. We knew – I mean we at the club - that nothing would happen with these nationalist parties. And when Ante Marković appeared and when he announced that he was about to create his own party called the Alliance of Reformist Forces, we gave him our support, and I personally declared publicly that the members of Borac would become members of his party because it was a reformist party, and we identified ourselves as members of this local sports club with the policy of the Reformist Party". (*ibidem*, 7389). According to Bijelić, it was also a matter of defending the multi-ethnicity of the club.

This is, to my knowledge, the only case of a "collective affiliation" of an entire sports club into the SRSJ, and probably into any party in the 1990 Bosnian elections, although other prominent sport characters such as the manager of the Yugoslav football national team Ivica Osim and the boxeurs Marijan Beneš and Anton Josipović, had also joined the party.

Aside that of the artists, the presence of sport champions publicly committed with the unity of Yugoslavia (for instance, both Osim and Beneš have been claiming, as still do in our present days, their allegiance to a Yugoslav identity) and associated with an idea of both individual, collective and patriotic success, was extremely important for the SRSJ's social legitimation.

⁸³⁸ "Predizborna dovijanja u Foči. Aktivnosti u kuloarima", *Oslobođenje*, October 5, 1990; "SRSJ u Foči. Evropska umjesto feudalne ekonomije", *Oslobođenje*, October 12, 1990.

⁸³⁹ Besim Ibišević, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, Amsterdam: author's edition, 1999, 73-74; "Srebrenica. Izabrano rukovodstvo", *Oslobođenje*, October 10, 1990.

that the party either failed to set up their organisation or was completely insignificant. The same can be said about the non-urban areas in Herzegovina, another area which had already been concerned by nationalist radicalisation in the previous months.⁸⁴⁰ During the whole campaign, the SRSJ held rallies in only 40 of the 109 Bosnian-Herzegovinian municipalities,⁸⁴¹ a quite modest figure when compared to the Communists' structures (as we said before, their president, Durakovi, claimed he had visited all the 109 municipalities) or when compared with the strong organisational networks established by nationalist parties throughout the territory, particularly in the rural areas.

The cosmopolitan and liberal concept of the SRSJ logically arose far more interest in the urban centres. A crucial moment in the SRSJ's campaign, and the biggest mass event ever organised by that party, was the big rally in Mostar held in October 28 and attended by about 20,000 people in the Velež city stadium. It was conceived as a celebration rather than a classical political meeting: besides Markovi (in one of his rare personal appearances in the Bosnian campaign) and all the main politicians, there was the so-called "fun sector" of the party composed by renowned artists and intellectuals, which played a leading role in that occasion. Film director Emir Kusturica, actor Josip Pejakovi, and writer Abdulah Sidran took the stage and, through emotional and ironical references called upon the common, inter-ethnic life in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia. Emir Kusturica's speech, in particular, was very impassioned and heated towards their opponents, both the nationalist parties and the Communists: "They want from us to be more Muslims than we are, and the same from the Croats and from the Serbs. Why? Because this excess of national feeling is the only propelling fuel that the donkeys are using in order to seat in the same place as the scoundrels who have destroyed our lives for 45 years. [...] I vote for a party which will allow us to believe in God in the intimate spiritual sphere, without bargaining with the religion, and where the social life will be regulated without priests and hodžas, and of course, without bolshevik despots". Kusturica addressed especially harsh words to the Communist rule, arguing that "Branko,

⁸⁴⁰ See the figures about the municipal parliaments in Arnautovi, *Izbori u Bosni*, 118-120. In the press accounts, there is almost no trace of the SRSJ's activity in the region. The SRSJ obtained barely 3 of 51 seats in the Čapljina's municipal parliament, 4 of 61 in Metković, 1 of 60 in Ljubuški, and none in Grude, Neum, Nevesinje, Gacko, Posušje, Stolac, Tomislavgrad, and Trebinje.

⁸⁴¹ "Konferencija za štampu SRS za BiH. Necivilizacijski izbori", *Oslobodjenje*, November 17, 1990.

Milenko and their current protégés”⁸⁴² were allegedly responsible for stealing 11 million dollars from the state budget to their own benefit and for bringing “terror and corruption” into the lowest strata of society for decades, placing the citizens “in a house without windows, helplessly waiting for the bearded [chetniks] and ustaša to come”. (For instance, In this allegorical image, one can easily identify the concept of socialist Bosnia – and Yugoslavia - as a “prison of people” deceptively locked through a forced fear for nationalism and hate, what Kusturica would later articulate in his famous 1995 film *Underground*). Kusturica went on mentioning the “*elan vital*” of his aunt, former partisan fighter Biba Kusturica, as the archetype of the genuine “original anti-fascism” versus the corrupted communism of avid bureaucrats and politicians who vanished the Partisan struggle and made possible that Biba’s red star would again be under threat. The image of Biba Kusturica, which was particularly appreciated and remembered by the SRSJ circles and by the public, represents a further example of the Reformists’ attempt to retrieve the Partisan antifascist struggle as a founding element while differentiating it from the Communist ideology and, most of all, from Socialist rule.⁸⁴³ This was an adequate attempt to provide the Reformists with a narrative, normally charged with an economic and rational-centred approach, with some more popular, sympathetic and sentimental involvement in favour of a civic and reformist option. And, at the same time, it would be a way to distinguish themselves from the pompous solemnity of the Communists, and from the identity-centred zeal of the nationalist parties.⁸⁴⁴

Massive SRSJ’s rallies were held in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica and Banja Luka.⁸⁴⁵ The party was apparently recruiting large numbers of new members in Tuzla, claiming to count on about 25,000 in a city of 130,000 inhabitants.⁸⁴⁶ This was so because the

⁸⁴² Here Kusturica refers to Branko Mikulić and Milenko Renovica, two of the most influential leaders in 1970s and 1980s Bosnia-Herzegovina, and interpreting the young leadership of the SK-SDP as their mere successors because they had started their political careers as their collaborators.

⁸⁴³ Sources: “Život bez popa, hodže i boljševika”, *Borba*, October 30, 1990 quoted in Zrilić, *Dnevnik*, 84-85; “Mostarska konvencija SRS. Udarati znaju, igrati ne!”, *Oslobođenje*, October 29, 1990; “Savez Reformskih Snaga: konvencija na stadionu ‘Veleza’ u Mostaru. Pljusak i pljesak”, *Veernje Novine*, October 29, 1990; Neven Andjelić, interview by author. Sarajevo, June 21, 2014.

⁸⁴⁴ “Mostarska konvencija SRS. Udarati znaju, igrati ne!”, *Oslobođenje*, October 29, 1990.

Almost all the members of the SRSJ I interviewed have recalled the rally in Mostar (which, for instance, was normally held despite an intense and steady rain) as a pivotal moment in the campaign and a display of popular enthusiasm. Sejfudin Tokić recalls that the large part of the public arrived late in the stadium, perceiving it as a concert or a show rather than a political meeting.

⁸⁴⁵ “Konvencija SRSJ za severoistočnu Bosnu. Revolucija s mnogo znoja”, *Oslobođenje*, October 22, 1990; “Konvencija SRSJ u Zenici. Podmetnuta izdaja”, *Oslobođenje*, November 6, 1990; “Strana ke konvencije SRS. Razbija i magle”, *Veernje Novine*, November 14, 1990.

⁸⁴⁶ “Konvencija SRSJ za severoistočnu Bosnu. Revolucija s mnogo znoja”, *Oslobođenje*, October 22, 1990.

coexistence of peculiarly strong associational civic bonds, a high rate of “unionized” and mobilised workers and a significant presence of businesspeople committed with a reform, civic-oriented profile, which granted the local SRSJ an enthusiastic social base.⁸⁴⁷ In Sarajevo, a pre-electoral poll estimated that the Reformists were by far the first party (25.9%), followed by the SDA (11.9%) and the Communists (8.6%).⁸⁴⁸

Such enthusiasm, however, was misleading and soon came to be eroded also in the urban areas, due to the same factors which have been detailed so far: negative socioeconomic trends affecting Markovič's image, social pressures in order to line up with nationalist forces, rivalry with the communists. Moreover, there were important obstacles within the party itself. Ranko Zrilič, a university professor in Banja Luka and SRSJ presidential candidate in the Serb list, wrote a diary on his electoral campaign. This was likely the only such detailed first-hand account written from within, displaying a scenario where eagerness was soon destroyed by the impotence felt towards the course of the events, as well as a certain amount of unpreparedness and improvisation. Zrilič himself acknowledges that, although he was a complete outsider in the circle of influential leaders (professionals, businesspeople and intellectuals...), he almost immediately climbed the hierarchy of the Banja Luka SRSJ, to the point that he was appointed as presidential candidate without him knowing.⁸⁴⁹ He recalls the sharp internal suspicions and struggles against the so-called “party Bolsheviks”, i.e. those who had already filled some institutional posts and were allegedly seeking mere privileges in the SRSJ.⁸⁵⁰ He describes the frustration that he felt when learning that prominent professionals in the town, who had previously sympathised with the Reformists' programme, were leaving the SRSJ and in some cases joined nationalist parties.⁸⁵¹ The atmosphere of hostility in bars and *kafanas*, where national Serb and SDS symbols were proudly exhibited, is well

⁸⁴⁷ Selim Bešliagić, interview by author. Tuzla, June 30, 2012; Ioannis Armakolas, “The ‘Paradox’ of Tuzla City: explaining non-nationalist local politics during the Bosnian War”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 63, 2, 2011, 235-236. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2011.547697>.

⁸⁴⁸ “Antina stranka – favorit”, *Oslobođenje*, September 21, 1990.

⁸⁴⁹ Zrilič admits that it was “the first time in his life” that he saw many of the Reformists' members in Banja Luka (*ibidem*, 8-9). He claims that he was appointed as presidential candidate by surprise, barely five weeks before the elections, although he had already been indicated as the no.1 of the Reformists' municipal list in Banja Luka and had even rejected a post in the Parliament list. Zrilič seems to hint that this move had been favoured by the other leaders of the SRSJ in Banja Luka in order to isolate him, provided that the presidential post was considered as hardly achievable for the SRSJ' capacities. Zrilič, *Dnevnik*, 27.

⁸⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 11; 17.

⁸⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 13; 25. Also the Ranko Zrilič's brother, Tomislav, who was a renowned doctor in the city, joined the SDS (*ibidem*, 20).

present in the diary,⁸⁵² which ends with the sudden resignation of Zrili from the SRSJ immediately after the elections, allegedly because he felt annoyed by intra-party rumours that he had had an overly “anti-communist” discourse.⁸⁵³ Other members’ accounts have confirmed this feeling of internal disarray within the SRSJ, both on organisational and ideological terms.⁸⁵⁴ Moreover, the Reformists, just like the Communists, had a leadership problem, with their most prominent members lacking public visibility. Some of their seven presidential candidates were obscure and marginal characters vis-à-vis their opponents from national parties. While Ante Marković was overexposed in political marketing and political discourse, many of the Reformists’ candidates and members of local élite went almost unnoticed in the campaign.

9.3.3. Civic rivalries: the divisions in the non-national camp

The rivalry between the civic, non-nationalist parties, and especially the rift between the SRSJ and the SK-SDP, was a crucial element in the Bosnian transition and deserves in-depth analysis. As explained so far, Reformists and Communists had analogous policies: first, they advocated a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina opposed to any nationalist-religious particularism; second, they relied on a Yugoslav, non-particularist framework both in political and cultural-symbolical terms; third, they had a similar (though not identical) commitment for economic reforms and partial liberalisation inspired by social democrat principles. Yet, despite such affinities, and despite various attempts at establishing some kind of coalition or cooperation, no agreement was reached. The relationship had grown tense since the foundation of the SRSJ: as explained before, the Bosnian Communists had initially provided them infrastructure and offered a full partnership to the Reformists who, after some hesitation, decided to reject cooperation.⁸⁵⁵ Various motives can explain this refusal. The first is related to political opportunity. The SRSJ tried to distance itself from the “weight of the past” (*“hipoteka iz prošlosti”*),

⁸⁵² *Ibidem*, 51-54; 59; 68-69.

⁸⁵³ *Ibidem*, 60; 73-75; see also “Konferencija za štampu SRS u Banjaluci. Zamjerke Zrili u”, *Glas*, November 16, 1990. On the other hand, some members of the Reformists’ elite (in interviews released to the author) recalled that Zrili’s attitude was highly questioned inside the party due to his political inexperience.

⁸⁵⁴ Nenad Kecmanović, interview by author. Belgrade, April 23, 2013; Neven Andjelić, interview by author. Sarajevo, June 21, 2014.

⁸⁵⁵ See chapter 8.3.

namely the negative reputation of Bosnian Communists of authoritarianism, corruption, clientelism and mismanagement.⁸⁵⁶ The second is strategic: Ante Marković and the Bosnian party leaders were sincerely persuaded that they would be able to win the elections alone, although by doing so they were blatantly overrating the popular support for the prime minister and his project for Yugoslavia. The third reason concerns the positioning of the élites: some of the Reformists' elite came from the Communists' ranks and, exactly for that, were completely hostile to any reconciliation with the SK-SDP due to personal grudges. Hence, the relations grew tense since the very beginning of the campaign and even became worse: the two parties mutually criticised each other in public with almost the same amount of vehemence that they typically reserved for nationalist parties, as the Communists complaining of the Reformists' supposed "anti-communist hysteria" and remarking some negative effects of the Marković's reforms on the socio-economic situation, whereas the Reformists insisted on the Communists' dogmatism, the "weight of the past", etc. At the local level, too, there was a certain rivalry, which is (paradoxically) logical if one considers that having similar programmes, narrative, as well as almost the same identical social base and potential electoral bodies.

The extent of these mutual attacks, which were simultaneous to the growing tactical convergence of the three national parties, SDA-SDS-HDZ, went so far and was potentially so detrimental for both parties that they tried again a rapprochement. By the end of the campaign, the leaderships of the two parties re-established contacts and sought a minimum cooperation or, at least, a sort of "truce" to suspend the mutual attacks. One of the proposals put forward was to present common candidates for the Presidency, but it was discarded.⁸⁵⁷ Another initiative came in late October, when a secret meeting was held between the leaders of the two parties, Kecmanović and Duraković, held in the flat of Zlatko Lagumdžija, the young emerging cadre of the SK-SDP who played, during all the campaign, the role of mediator between the two parties. The deal consisted of sending reciprocal letters inviting the other party to other party's big rally. Duraković would

⁸⁵⁶ The expression "*Hipoteka iz prošlosti*" (literally, "mortgage of the past") was very commonly used during the Bosnian electoral campaign in 1990 and attributed to the uncomfortable heritage of SKBiH. It was usually used by opponents of SKBiH, but soon turned to be used by the Communists themselves with a self-critical meaning.

⁸⁵⁷ Both Dževad Haznadar and Josip Pejaković recalled me this circumstance, although they differ about how the proposal fell. Haznadar claims that the reject came from the SKBiH; Pejaković says instead that the presidents of the two parties, Kecmanović and Duraković, equally refused the deal because "they could not speak to each other".

address a message to the Reformists' meeting in Mostar, and Kecmanovi to the Communists' rally at the Sarajevo Skenderija hall. This would be the first step for a rapprochement and, potentially, for further cooperation. Nevertheless, things went soon bad as the message of the Communists, once read at the rally in Mostar, was coldly received by the Reformists and led to a bitter internal dispute between those who favoured and those who opposed the rapprochement. The latter finally prevailed and definitely blocked any potential agreement.⁸⁵⁸ Both parties went back to compete between each other, and attacked each other basically on economic themes, although it must be restated that neither the economy, nor any other point of their respective agendas was the core of the problem at all. The separation was caused by different strategic approaches and practices, divergent interpretations of the past, and some matter of principle between individuals or élite groups. These factors, not the programs themselves, made the rift insurmountable. Hence, the SK-SDP and the SRSJ ran separately at all the elections, excepting a handful of alliances at the local level.⁸⁵⁹

The division between civic parties also concerned the Alliance of Socialist Youth (SSO-DS). The former youth wing of the League of Communists had definitely broken ties with the SK-SDP, as the culmination of a process that had lasted since the late 1980s, and had adopted an explicitly liberal stance. The members of the SSO, like the Reformists, looked at the Communists as “the old system” carrying a permanent stigma of dogmatism and corruption.⁸⁶⁰ Therefore, a broad rapprochement with the Communists looked out of question. One of the main mottos in the SSO-DS's campaign was “Our hands are clean”

⁸⁵⁸ The salient points about this deal come from the recall of Neven Andjeli (Interview by author. Sarajevo, June 21, 2014; see also Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 172) and have been corroborated by Kecmanovi (Interview by author. Belgrade, April 10, 2013) and Nada Ler Sofroni (Interview by author. Sarajevo, June 28, 2012). See also: “Mostarska konvencija SRS. Udarati znaju, igrati ne!”, *Oslobođenje*, October 29, 1990; “Savez Reformskih Snaga. Protest zbog zloupotreba”, *Borba*, October 30, 1990; “Polemika me u prirodnim saveznicima”, *Borba*, October 31, 1990; “Bosanskohercegova ka strana ka scena. Sukob komunista i reformista”, *Borba*, November 5, 1990.

From the various sources, it turns out that those who were strongly against the rapprochement were the so-called “fun sector”, hence the artists and intellectuals (Emir Kusturica, Abdulah Sidran) plus those party cadres who were strongly committed to the so-called “true reformism” [lit. *pravi reformizam*] completely emancipated from the influence of the old rule (Tadej Mateljan, Nada Ler Sofroni). The no. 1 of the party Kecmanovi was instead, in that occasion, in favour of a pragmatic agreement, as was the same Ante Markovi. They claimed that the Communists could be helpful providing their own solid territorial structure which the Reformists had failed to set up.

⁸⁵⁹ According to the well detailed study of Virtuts Sambró, they barely secured an alliance in 11 of the 109 municipalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina for the Chamber of Municipalities. Sambró, “Contextualització i anàlisi”, 211-13.

⁸⁶⁰ See chapter 6.2.

[lit. *‘Naše ruke su iste’*], emphasizing their distance from the regime and its mismanagement. It can be more problematic to explain, though, why the SSO-DS did not struck some deal with the SRSJ, provided that they shared an adequate distance from the ruling party and its “burden of the past”, as well as a program mixing social-democracy with liberalism in socio-economic issues and, of course, a citizen-centred conception of citizenship. There were some attempts to bring the two parties either together or as close as possible. The SSO-DS had initially showed interest and willingness to join Marković’s platform, but only on the condition that it should not merge with the SRSJ. The core of the issue was that the SSO-DS wanted to preserve its autonomy, trusting that the political capital earned as a vector for democratisation and youth activism since the late 1980s would provide them with a good electoral support; in the Reformists’ eyes, instead, the SSO-DS was simply marginal and irrelevant. Therefore, each of them preferred to keep its own infrastructure, list of candidates and political image.⁸⁶¹

The SSO ran their own candidates for the Presidency and for the Chamber of Citizens, and in about a half of the districts for the Chamber of Municipalities (in the other half, it supported the candidates of other civic parties).⁸⁶² Keeping the control on infrastructure (local sections, access to public funds, properties and human resources). As the then leader of the SSO, Rasim Kadić, recalled, “We had an excellent campaign for those times, very modern, because we had the money allocated to us by the [state] budget. And we spent that budget in the best way for those times, through the organisation of media events, and by recruiting excellent candidates”.⁸⁶³ But, on the other side, it soon became clear that the SSO-DS would be much less visible and influential in a multi-party context rather than when it played the “double role” of official organisation and, at the same time, of critical voice within the regime, as it had done between 1987 and June 1990.

⁸⁶¹ Rasim Kadić explained me that the proposal of a coalition discussed, and definitely discarded, in a secret meeting he had with Nenad Kecmanović from the SRSJ. Rasim Kadić, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 23, 2012.

In this interview, Kadić retrospectively claims that Ante Marković made an “historical mistake” and caused a damage, both to Yugoslavia and to Bosnia-Herzegovina; in Belgrade, because he was gradually co-opted by Milošević in his functions of federal prime minister; in Sarajevo, because he founded the SRSJ which, in Kadić’s opinion, was mainly directed by masked Bosnian Serb nationalists and ended up to split the civic-oriented electoral body to the benefit of ethnic parties. As I have already explained before, though, interpreting the SRSJ as a mere “Party of the Reserve Serbs” does not accurately keep into account the process of formation of the party, its composition and policy making which, as this work pretends to interpret, remained committedly multi-ethnic.

⁸⁶² Sambró, “Contextualització i anàlisi”, 211-13.

⁸⁶³ Rasim Kadić, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 23, 2012.

Kadi recalls: “We were very popular, a poll in March 1990 pointed us as the most popular party in BiH. But meanwhile, the SDA, the HDZ, the SDS and the SRSJ were formed. We are, in fact, like a dream which did not come true”.⁸⁶⁴ He also explains how, despite the organisational structure, they almost disappeared in the non-urban areas, as well as in the peripheral regions of Herzegovina and Eastern Bosnia, and only managed to campaign in the major urban centres.⁸⁶⁵ In her detailed study, Virtuts Sambró observed that the chances of a movement relying almost exclusively on the youth factor were “practically null, in a country where age and experience had, and still have, a high social value”.⁸⁶⁶ Moreover, even within “its” own youth sector, the SSO BiH had serious problems in attracting the mobilisation and the vote, since bureaucratised structure and internal fractions discouraged participation.

The only alliance within the citizen-parties spectrum with a minimum of stability was the one between the Communists and the Democratic Socialist Alliance (DSS). The latter, heir of the Socialist Alliance, actively joined the Communists' campaign and established with them a coalition for the presidential elections and in the majority of the municipalities (roughly 70 out of 109), acting as a typical “minor satellite party”; however, the DSS ran alone in the Chamber of Citizens, in 6 of its 7 electoral districts.⁸⁶⁷ This party attracted a modest support for two reasons: first, because one of the pivotal cleavages for that campaign was “government/opposition”, and the peculiar status of the DSS seemed confusing and uncomfortable: the DSS was formerly a component member of the Communist regime (even though they gathered all the civic associations and individuals which were out of the ruling party's direct influence); now they were allies of the SK-SDP, but with more moderate and self-critical stance than the Communists. Second, the programme of the DSS, based on social-democratic and pro-Yugoslav principles, occupied a political space which was overfilled by the SK-SDP itself and,

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁶⁶ Sambró, “Contextualització i anàlisi”, 236.

⁸⁶⁷ DSS leaders likely considered that the pure proportional system through the “D’Hondt method” without an established threshold, would not affect that much the separation between the two parties. However, the fact that those districts were relatively small (four of them having 15 representatives elected or less) implied a “hidden threshold” from approx. 2 to 5-6%. It is possible that, even so, they saw this result as if it was within their compass. Nonetheless, the DSS would obtain a mere 1.4% of votes and only a seat in the Sarajevo district (the biggest), entailing that the votes they got in the other districts were null, whereas they could have helped the SKBiH to improve their performance in case of a joint list (provided that the SKBiH always passed the “hidden threshold”).

especially, by the SRSJ. Hence, the huge infrastructure and participation enjoyed by the former SSRN quickly vanished in the course of 1990. Rather than the public campaign, the main role of the DSS during that phase consisted, as Mirko Pejanovi recalls, of “representing civic interests on the broadest possible basis”, holding several pre-election consultations in the summer of 1990 with the leaders of nationalist parties. The DSS supported them in resolving concrete issues such as finding accommodation for their headquarters; it also sought a mediation between nationalists and communists about the reform of the collective Presidency and encouraged support for a Declaration setting the basic principles of sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, life in common and equality between its component nations.⁸⁶⁸ However, the public influence of the DSS remained limited.

9.4. The ethnification of the campaign: national parties, between mutual radicalisation and tacit convergence

“These are more than evident indicators of the radical changes taking place in the social-political scene of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Their promoters and actors promise better days and a brighter perspective.

They guarantee the entrance into Europe and the 21st century.

The euphoria that originates from their activities, however, provokes strong elements of the nationalist [sphere].

The homogenisation of one nation implies the homogenisation in the other.

*Just because of that, there are a lot of dilemmas and unknowns in front of us”.*⁸⁶⁹

Although their full legalisation came relatively late, the three main nationalist parties, the SDA, HDZ and SDS, quickly filled the organisational gap they had vis-à-vis the Communists and spread their structure throughout the Bosnian territory. They showed an increasing ability to mobilize the social base, arousing a degree of popular interest and participation that the nostalgic approach of the Communists and the cold and rational-based approach of the Reformists seemed unable to match. Unlike the bureaucratised

⁸⁶⁸ Pejanovi, *Through Bosnian eyes*, 21-22.

⁸⁶⁹ Šemso Tucakovi, “Simbolika promjena”, *Oslobo enje*, August 27, 1990.

structure of the SK-SDP and the elitist one of the SRSJ, the nationalist parties relied, at least in the grassroots levels, on a more agile organizing model, where citizens could automatically become a member by merely attending a rally, without further commitment,⁸⁷⁰ and whose political slogans were extremely minimalist and immediate. The HDZ's main slogan was "It is known [lit. *Zna se*], HDZ" and "Our name, our program [lit. *Naše ime, naš program*];"⁸⁷¹ the SDS's one was "Serbs, you are allowed to be Serbs [lit. *Srbi, vi smijete da budete Srbi*];"⁸⁷² and the SDA's, "Muslim party" [lit. *Muslimanska partija*].⁸⁷³ These expressions merely recalled the ethnic belonging as the only, and yet very powerful, common principle that resets the ideological shifts and the socio-economical differences, gathering and representing the whole national community. They had an immediacy and did not require a direct engagement of the individual beyond his/her ethnicity, marking a difference from the mottos of citizenship parties, the moral appeal "We will live together" of the Communists and the programme-oriented "This is the time of changes" of the Reformists, which required a personal commitment from the individual. The nationalist parties had a growingly similar approach towards the big issues, with a variable degree of importance according to regions and the various moments of the electoral campaign:

1) Nationalist parties were able to capture the general *demand for change* in the political sphere, asking for a prompt detachment from both the Socialist ideology, rituals, social implications, etc. (which was obviously coherent with the 1989-90 overall context in Central-Eastern Europe) as well as demanding a renewal of the political class because of corruption, mismanagement, etc. attributed to the Communist rule (which was a particularly strong factor in Bosnia-Herzegovina, due to the numerous scandals of the late 1980s). It is remarkable that all the three national parties included the word "democratic" in their name while, for instance, citizen parties had either omitted or set it aside. As Zdravko Grebo commented to me, "SDA, HDZ, SDS [emphasizing the D, author's note]: all the three of them had the D standing for democracy. Nobody openly said, 'We are

⁸⁷⁰ There is a remarkable anecdote concerning the journalists invited to the HDZ's founding rally in Sarajevo on August 18 in Sarajevo; due to their mere attendance, they were registered as members of the party. See "Osniva ka skupština HDZ u BiH. Po mjeri hrvatskog identiteta", *Oslobo enje*, August 19, 1990.

⁸⁷¹ For an insightful analysis of the slogan "*Zna se*" in the context of Croatia (indeed, it was borrowed by the Croatian HDZ, which had already profitably used it in the campaign in spring 1990), see Orli , "Od postkomunizma do postjugoslavenstva", 109-110.

⁸⁷² Toal and Maksi , "Serbs, you are allowed to be Serbs", 8-9.

⁸⁷³ Sambró, "Contextualització i anàlisi", 237.

radical, we are right-wing' or whatever. They tried to define themselves as European democratic parties, not even as nationalist movements, which they were at the time: their agenda was ethnic identity, which in Bosnia is almost equal as religious identity".⁸⁷⁴ Nationalist parties also capitalised on the wide discontent caused by the economic crisis, for which Communists and Reformists were to be equally blamed, and successfully presented themselves as the only openly anti-communist option.⁸⁷⁵

2) Nationalist parties benefited from, and further encouraged, the *religious revival* in society which was filling the empty space left by Communist-encouraged secularism. Although the official religious organisations (the Islamic Community, the Serb Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church) formally remained neutral, priests, *hodžas* and local officials attended the meetings and provided active logistical support to the parties' local setting up.⁸⁷⁶ The support from the respective clergies was crucial, especially in little towns and in rural areas. Ivan Cvitkovi , a sociologist of religion and former cadre of the SKBiH, recalls: "The Communists did not have what they [nationalist parties] had. Through churches and mosques, they reached every house. The SK-SDP relied on massive meetings, rallies, which caused a false image. They [the nationalist parties] had

⁸⁷⁴ Zdravko Grebo, interview by author. Sarajevo, July 8, 2012.

⁸⁷⁵ The "militant anti-communist" feature was perfectly embodied by the anti-regime reputation in the biographies of the three respective leaders, Alija Izetbegovi (SDA), Radovan Karadži (SDS) and Stjepan Kljui (HDZ). Izetbegovi and Karadži had passed time in jail in the 1980s, the former for the 'Young Muslims' political trial, the latter for a case of economic bribery. (see chapters 5.3 and 5.4), while Stjepan Kljui , a journalist by profession, claimed that he had been sacked from the Sarajevo diary *Oslobo enje* for writing articles in Croatian instead of the standard Serbo-Croatian ("Stjepan Kljuji : Izetbegovi je izdao Bosnu", *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, February 27, 2008).

Three other leading candidates of the presidential or parliamentary lists had experiences with Communist prisons: Fikret Abdi (SDA, for mismanagement of the company Agrokomerc in 1987), Momcilo Krajšnik (SDS, for financial bribery in the early 1980s), Franjo Boras (HDZ, in 1948 for unclear reasons. Some sources allege complicity with Croatian nationalists).

⁸⁷⁶ Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 142.

On the case of the SDA, Adil Zulfikarpaši claims: "I was against the *hodžas* taking a part from the very beginning, but Alija Izetbegovi said to me 'Careful, Adil, Behmen with his five hundred imams has direct contact with people, so they'll play an important role in organizing our party. They'll be of great help to us'" (Zulfikarpaši , *The Bosniak*, 136).

The Islamic Community (IVZ) had repeatedly announced its neutrality (see the articles in *Preporod*, the official organ of the Community, June 15 and August 15, 1990), but the SDA representative Haris Silajdži affirmed, from the pages of the same *Preporod*, that "there is a natural relation between the Islamic Community and the SDA, but their functions are different. Hence, the IVZ cannot be identified with the SDA, yet cannot disavow it, because [the SDA] is the only political organisation which promises that it will deal with the vital issues for the Islamic Community". (Haris Silajdži in "Muslimani nisu plijen za podjelu", *Preporod*, September 15, 1990).

The organ of the Catholic Church, *Glas Koncila*, was more explicit in endorsing the HDZ; some priests attended the HDZ's meeting or directly joined the party ranks ("Katoli ki i pravoslavni elnici o izborima u BiH. Dva glasa za vjeru i naciju", *Borba*, November 14, 1990). Orthodox priests, too, used to attend the SDS' meetings.

more influence, since they did not rely on that: they entered the homes. Priests went visiting every believer and said, ‘You must vote for our own [people]’ [lit.: *Treba glasati za naše*].⁸⁷⁷ In turn, the construction of new religious buildings or the reassignment of formerly confiscated public properties to religious communities was a main point in the nationalist parties’ programmes and speeches. Although a study related that only about one third of Bosnians-Herzegovinians declared themselves believers, they also identified that religion was largely correlated with national affiliation.⁸⁷⁸ It seems that the Communists realised too late how strongly the religious revival would mobilise against them. Until the first months of 1990, party membership was strictly forbidden to believers. As Adil Kulenovi recalls, “One cannot say that religion was like in Albania, of course it was not. But there was a certain political distance that was unnecessary towards religious people, and towards believers. This gave strength to the nationalists, as the Communists were not able to give an answer [...] to the most elementary questions of the people, the meaning of life, existence, concrete questions of the people, we avoided that”.⁸⁷⁹ Esad Zgodi, a prominent political scientist at the University of Sarajevo and himself a SK-SDP cadre in 1990, argues that the rigidity towards the religious issues was, together with the lack of liberalizing measures in the economic system, a fundamental mistake made by the SKBiH during the Bosnian transition. According to Zgodi, the reticence to accept believers, because religion was seen as belonging to *private life*, made the SKBiH lose thousands of members and votes.⁸⁸⁰ The SKBiH’s president Durakovi, who only one year earlier had released sharp interventions about the “smell of incense spreading with shocking speed, that could suffocate all of us together”, in the course of the campaign repeatedly acknowledged that the party had sometimes deployed a “brutal and primitive sectarianism” towards believers, with a certain tendency to adopt a “fighting

⁸⁷⁷ Ivan Cvitkovi, interview by author. Sarajevo, June 11, 2014.

⁸⁷⁸ In the Ibrahim Baki’s study *Nacija i religija*, relying on a poll held in 1988 for the Institute for the Study of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Sarajevo, only 32.12% of Bosnians-Herzegovinians expressed themselves as believers (*vjernici*), though with considerable variations among the communities: 55.78% of Croats, 37.32% of Muslims by nation, 18.6% of Serbs, 2.28% of Yugoslavs. When asked about their “nationality and religion”, though, 82.28% of Muslims answered “Islamic” and only 17.09% answered “none”; similarly, 88.87 of Croats answered “Catholic”, 10.12 “none”. The correlation was relatively lower, but still largely evident, among Serbs: 72.62% of them answered “Orthodox”, 25.29% “none”. The only (logical) exception was among Yugoslavs: 77.07% replied “none”, 10.77% Islamic, 9.4% Orthodox, 5.7% Catholic. Source: Ibrahim Baki, *Nacija i religija*, Sarajevo: Bosna Public, 1994, 38; 72.

⁸⁷⁹ Adil Kulenovi, interview by author. Sarajevo, July 27, 2014.

⁸⁸⁰ Esad Zgodi, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 20, 2014.

atheism”.⁸⁸¹ Still, such confession seemed to arrive too late, while the politicisation of the clergy through its *de facto* alliance with the nationalist parties was already under way.

3) The evocation of the *divided memories* of the past, notably the crimes against civil population committed during the Second World War and the threats allegedly coming from other communities, with warnings for potential “genocides” (the Muslims from the “Chetnik” Serbs, the Serbs from the “Ustaša” Croats, the Croats from the “Yugo-communist” Serbs and Muslims, etc.) are considered by some authors a leading factor in the dissolution of Yugoslavia, especially regarding the Croatian-Serbian conflict.⁸⁸² It also played a certain role in the “ethnification” of Bosnia-Herzegovina politics in 1990, although its importance must be cautiously examined and should not be overvalued or overlapped with the use that political actors would make of it later, immediately prior or during the 1992-1995 war. In the republican-wide debate those issues, though not completely absent, were more sporadic for a simple reason: the three parties, as it will be detailed hereafter, were practicing a policy of non-aggression, seeking some sort of convergence and pointing at Communists and the Reformists as their primary opponents. Hence, they did not insist too much on recalling the crimes of “the other” communities, what would have instead jeopardised their strategy. It was in those areas which had been the place of famous atrocities and in which the grief was still deep among families and communities, where the rallies of SDA, HDZ and SDS used to make references to the martyrdom suffered by “their own” people in the past, suggesting that the actual threats could make it happen again. This was particularly the case in the areas of Bosnian Krajina (for Serbs and Muslims), Eastern Bosnia (for Muslims) and Herzegovina (for Croats and Serbs), where a general fear of a “new 1941-45” was somewhat spreading for the echo of the events in overall Yugoslavia (i.e., clashes in Croatia, Kosovo, etc.). The amplification of these perceptions by the nationalist parties further contributed to the mobilisation along ethnic lines. The most remarkable reference to the revival of historical crimes was undoubtedly the meeting held by the SDA in Foča, Eastern Bosnia, on August 25, commemorating the anniversary of a mass killing carried out by Serb Chetniks against

⁸⁸¹ Nijaz Duraković, interviewed in Senad Avdić, *Nijaz izbliza*, Ljubljana: Škuc Forum, 1990, 69-70.

In those same pages, though, Duraković also enumerated the religious buildings owned by the communities (285 Orthodox churches and 153 chapels; 261 Catholic churches and 470 chapels; 951 Islamic mosques and 551 *mesdžid*, he argued). He recalled as well that new buildings were authorised and planned, as to point out that despite some mistakes and excesses in the past, the most recent Communist rule was fully guaranteeing the freedom of worship.

⁸⁸² See Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 50-54; Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 169.

Muslim civilians in 1942.⁸⁸³ It was the first non-official (namely, not held by the Communists) mass event dealing with Second World War-related events in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was attended by about 150,000 people, an impressive and unprecedented figure in that context. Although the character of the commemoration was apparently mono-nationalist and could logically fuel some mutual communitarian resentment, the SDA sought to provide a sign of reconciliation through some gestures, such as asking a minute of silence for the innocent victims, both Serb and Muslim. Moreover, a representative from the HDZ, Anto Bakovi (a Catholic priest) and one from the SDS, Velibor Ostoji, were invited to speak. According to the press reports, they were applauded by the crowd and released somewhat tolerant messages advocating the peaceful and “neighbourly” [lit. *komšijski*] life among the national communities.⁸⁸⁴ Some sources, however, recall that there were some small misunderstandings and incidents among the parties.⁸⁸⁵ Tensions were somewhat higher in those localities of Herzegovina and Southern Bosnia where, in the second half of 1990, some mass graves in natural pits (lit. *jame*) containing the remains of Serb victims of the Ustasha terror of 1941-42 were finally dug up, on the initiative of self-organised groups, with the decisive support of the Orthodox Church, of some SDS branches, as well as from media and experts from Belgrade. In the past decades, the communist government had prohibited the exhumations in order to prevent inter-ethnic tensions.⁸⁸⁶ In the same region, the resentment among

⁸⁸³ About 2.000 Muslims were killed by the Chetnik forces under the command of Zaharija Ostoji (Malcolm, *Bosnia: a short history*, 188).

⁸⁸⁴ “Na manifestaciji SDA u Fo i 150.000 građana. Pijetet žrtvama genocida”, *Oslobođenje*, August 26, 1990; “Osnivačka skupština SDA u Fo i. Da li su mogući golubovi mira nad Drinom”, *Politika*, August 26, 1990; “Foča: Osnivačka skupština SDA. Ruka pomirenja”, *Večernje Novine*, August 26, 1990; “Foča, mjesto umiranja i buđenja Muslimana”, *Preporod*, September 1, 1990. There is a video of the meeting on Youtube, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5m51FyAaez0>. Accessed on July 18, 2015.

⁸⁸⁵ Adil Zulfikarpašić, then a top-rank of the SDA and a native of Foča, claims in his memoirs that Anto Bakovi took profit of the stage to “speak very unpleasantly about the Serbs” and cited the case of the Drina Martyrs (namely five nuns, four committing suicide and one killed after a Chetniks’ attack in Goražde, in 1941), what was interpreted as out of context and “not in spirit of reconciliation”, stirring up passions and hatred. (Zulfikarpašić, *The Bosniak*, 138). However, it is bizarre that Zulfikarpašić complains about the “sensationalism” of the media at that time, which allegedly reported only “the aggressive speeches”; indeed, in the *Oslobođenje*’s and *Večernje Novine*’s articles about the event there is no mention about the excesses of Bakovi, whereas the conciliatory messages are fully reported.

Besim Ibišević, a cadre of the SDA in Srebrenica who attended the meeting in Foča, alleges that a discord took place among the SDA and the SDS about the symbolic gesture of throwing flowers from a bridge into the river Drina as an homage to the victims; the delegation of the SDS did not take part to this action despite having allegedly agreed it earlier. Ibišević also relates that, on both the trips from and to Foča, their vehicles were provoked and assaulted by Serb nationalists. Ibišević, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, 50-51.

⁸⁸⁶ The exhumations here documented, concerned the municipalities of Čaplina, Ljubinje, Trebinje, Kupres, Livno and Duvno. “Povodom jedne inicijative. Šta krije Šurmanova jama?”, *Oslobođenje*, April 3, 1990; “Otkopano stratište na Borovom Polju. Vukovljanske žrtve konačno sahranjene”, *Javnost*, October 19, 1990; “Jama puna dječijih glava”, *Oslobođenje*, November 16, 1990; “Dužnost nam je da se borimo za

Croats for the retaliations suffered by Yugoslav partisans in 1945 was gaining momentum, following the growing influence of the militant Catholic environment around the Medjugorje shrine and, of course, of the local HDZ.⁸⁸⁷ This juxtaposition of reviving (and re-elaborating) memories led to some minor incidents in Livno, where a memorial of the Serb victims was vandalised with Ustaša-like symbols and slogans, while the press reported tensions caused by the display and the burning of Croatian and Yugoslav flags in public places, which caused the angry reaction of the local HDZ on one side and the SDS and the SK-SDP, on the other.⁸⁸⁸ It should not be forgotten, however, that the struggle for the historical memory was not only a mere inter-ethnic issue. It was also, and perhaps principally, an anti-regime, anti-socialist feature. For example, the exhumation of Serb victims in Borovo Polje (Duvno) in October 1990, the first of such kind to be ever celebrated in the whole Yugoslavia according to the SDS's official organ *Javnost*, was justified first of all with the need to provide the victims with a "respectable burial, following the Orthodox ritual, without any state or party symbol or political speeches".⁸⁸⁹ During the ceremony, some Partisan veterans who sought to place a five-pointed star on the memorial were promptly halted.⁸⁹⁰ In this way, the struggle in the political-electoral ground between civic and nationalist movements was thus preceded, and prepared, by the struggle for historical memory, rituals, monuments and commemorations. National parties and religious organisations were doing their best to challenge the monopoly of the Antifascist, Partisan-centred discourse, which was still advocated by all the civic actors (Communists, Reformists, and liberal-oriented movements), which had been a major resource of social legitimisation and mobilisation in the Titoist system.

4) The overall destabilisation of Yugoslavia decisively fuelled ethnification. During the electoral campaign, the social atmosphere was influenced by some crucial events occurring elsewhere in Yugoslavia. The riots in Serb-populated regions of Croatia (the

mir", *Politika*, July 23, 1990; "Ustaše su dolazile pevaju i", *Politika*, October 20, 1990; "Kapavica bila pretijesna", *Oslobo enje*, November 11, 1990; Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 120-121.

⁸⁸⁷ Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 145-159.

⁸⁸⁸ "Nakon ispisivanja ustaških simbola na stratištu kod Livna. Poziv na zajedni ki protest", *Oslobo enje*, October 19, 1990; "Livno: Nakon uništavanja spomenika žrtvama ustaškog terora. Oštre osude", *Ve ernje Novine*, October 22, 1990; "Livno; protest SK-SDP", *Glas*, November 2, 1990.

⁸⁸⁹ Actually, such observation sounds ironic: due to their hegemonic character of self-proclaimed exclusive and legitimate representatives of their national communities, the national parties, already in that campaign were destined to set a monopoly on the historical memory, commemoration etc. in the same way which was imputed to the Communist rule.

⁸⁹⁰ "Otkopano stratište na Borovom Polju. Vukovljanske žrtve kona no sahranjene", *Javnost*, October 19, 1990.

so-called “Log Revolution”, lit. *Balvan revolucija*) escalated in mid-August and launched a period of low-intensity clashes between the Croatian Serb militants of the SDS and the Croatian government, leading to growing local tensions. This, in turn, had deep psychological and social consequences in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Collective fears and resentments hailing from the unrest in Croatia grew particularly strong in the Serb-populated areas of Bosnian Krajina, which bordered with the affected regions in Croatia and where popular support seemed to be quickly shifting to the SDS despite it being an historically Partisan and anti-fascist stronghold, and in Western Herzegovina, where the HDZ had achieved a high degree of mobilisation and was clearly penetrating the local institutions. Other crucial moments in the Yugoslav context were the proposal of confederalisation advocated by the governments of Slovenia and Croatia, presented on October 2, and the definitive paralisation of the sessions of the Yugoslav Parliament in mid-October, due to the confrontation between Slovenia-Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro. Following the institutional chaos and the public affirmation of options which would radically change the constitutional order of Yugoslavia, national parties felt legitimated to put forth extreme, plebiscitary and unilateral solutions, challenging the “taboo” of the 1974 Constitution, the existing borders, etc. In turn, the downfall of the federal structure was decisively hindering the pro-Yugoslav stance of Communists and Reformists.

The events in Croatia and the atmosphere of constitutional breakup had a direct influence on one of the tense situations of the 1990 Bosnian campaign, namely, the formation of a “Serb National Council” (lit. *Srpsko Nacionalno Vijeće*, SNV) by the Banja Luka branch of the SDS. The SNV was expected to be the legitimate and sovereign representative organ of the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina: this went one step beyond the constitutional order of the republic. Actually, the SNV was exactly reproducing the organ that the SDS in Croatia had established three months earlier in Serb-populated Krajina.⁸⁹¹ The SNV, whose three branches were established (one in Banja Luka – Krajina, one in Šekovići - Eastern Bosnia, one in Trebinje - Herzegovina)⁸⁹², proudly stated that “the role of the Serb people in BiH cannot be changed through any decision of the Parliament, but rather, only through referendum” and that it “will not recognize any law or decision of

⁸⁹¹ Toal and Maksić, “Serbs, you are allowed to be Serbs”, 13. As I explained before (chapter 9.2), the SNV was established nine days after the public meeting Milošević-Karadžić in Belgrade, which seems to have provoked a certain radical shift in the Bosnian SDS’s policy.

⁸⁹² “Javna tribina SDS u Šekovići ima. Palba po komunistima”, *Oslobođenje*, November 10, 1990; “Srpski sabor za Hercegovinu. Rješavanje svoje sudbine”, *Oslobođenje*, October 26, 1990.

the Parliament and state organs that will in any way harm the Serb people in BiH”.⁸⁹³ In Karadžić’s terms, the SNV was presented as a “democratic response” to the lack of a “Chamber of Peoples” in Bosnia-Herzegovina, namely an upper chamber of the Parliament composed by three “clubs” corresponding to each constituent people, each one with a veto power, hence a fully consociational model. The SDS had repeatedly and in vain advocated for this solution in the past, with the support of the SDA.⁸⁹⁴ Another goal of the SDS in establishing the Serb Council was, apparently, to provoke a similar move from the SDA and HDZ, leading them to advocate extra-institutional agreements and further accelerate ethnification: Karadžić said that “in the event that, within the Chamber of Citizens, [the lower Chamber, NdA] three national councils [lit. *nacionalna vijeća*] are established and guarantee national equality, the need for an SNV will disappear”.⁸⁹⁵ Nonetheless, this failed, because SDA and HDZ not only rejected to follow the SDS’s move, but strongly opposed its proposal. Alija Izetbegović expressed a vigorous (and yet, exceptional in that context, as nationalist parties rarely criticised each other in the 1990 electoral campaign) attack against the SDS, claiming that theirs was an illegal and anti-democratic move that was destabilizing Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁸⁹⁶ Logically, the non-nationalist parties strongly opposed the SNV. The president of the SK-SDP, Nijaz Duraković, said that it was “the worst thing in the post-war, a blow to our republic and the introduction of chaos, this leads us to a state of emergency”.⁸⁹⁷ State institutions sharply intervened: the Constitutional Court formally proclaimed the SNV out of the constitutional and legal order.⁸⁹⁸

Although the SDS temporarily set aside the SNV in order to avoid political isolation from the other nationalist parties, it gave a proof of self-creation of a self-legitimated framework respecting the principle of ethno-national sovereignty. As Toal observes, “Bosnian politics had now entered the realm of self-produced performative declarations, actions designed to produce the legitimacy they claimed to possess”.⁸⁹⁹ It is remarkable that the SDS was the only main party that rejected to sign two documents

⁸⁹³ “Prvu odluku SNV BiH”, *Javnost*, October 19, 1990; “Deklaracija”, *Javnost*, November 10, 1990.

⁸⁹⁴ Toal and Maksić, “Serbs, you are allowed to be Serbs”, 15; “Konferencija za štampu u SDA. Zastava BiH previše crvena”, *Oslobođenje*, October 11, 1990.

⁸⁹⁵ “Konferencija za štampu u SDS. Strah od izbora”, *Oslobođenje*, October 19, 1990.

⁸⁹⁶ “Konferencija za novinare u SDA BiH. Javno izvinjenje za pomirenje”, *Oslobođenje*, October 18, 1990.

⁸⁹⁷ “Udar na državu”, *Veernje Novine*, October 16, 1990.

⁸⁹⁸ “SNV mimo ustava”, *Veernje Novine*, November 1, 1990.

⁸⁹⁹ Toal and Maksić, “Serbs, you are allowed to be Serbs”, 16.

establishing some very basic principles for the democratic institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The first was the “Declaration for the sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, life in common and equality of its component nations”, presented by the DSS and readily agreed by the Communists, the SDA and HDZ, that the SDS turned down alleging that it had “not developed a position on the issue of Bosnia’s sovereignty”.⁹⁰⁰ The second was a document committing the parties to call for early elections by the end of 1992, which was envisaged as a step to complete the multi-party transformation and the constitutional reform and was signed by all the parties (DSS, SK-SDP, SSO, SRSJ, HDZ, SDA), with the exception, once again, of the SDS.⁹⁰¹ Karadžić’s party confirmed its complete indifference, if not hostility, for such acts which denoted the existence of a minimal culture of agreement with the rest of the political spectrum, something that could somewhat reinforce the legitimacy of the constitutional order and of the Bosnian sovereignty.

The ethnification of Bosnia-Herzegovina politics in late 1990 was, at the same time, a relentless and an irregular process, in which it is hard to recognise a clear pattern of *moderation-radicalisation*. Nationalist parties constantly interchanged an apparently measured perspective (pleas for mutual dialogue and life in common; initial respect of the democratic rules of the game and of the constitutional order) and a more radical feature (evocation of non-consensual, “extreme” solutions, such as unilateral independence or mono-national districts; the potential recourse to arms). The initially relative moderate position of the three national parties, as Nina Caspersen recalled, “paradoxically facilitated ethnification: they recognised each other as legitimate representatives and reinforced each other’s message of an ethnic definition of politics”.⁹⁰² Indeed, as the campaign moved forward, inter-party tensions and positive gestures were displayed together. It was common practice for a nationalist party to invite the members of the other two national parties to give a speech at their rallies; with civic parties, such fair-play gestures happened much less often. In November, by the end of the campaign, the three national parties even held joint mass rallies in Konjic and Sarajevo.⁹⁰³ In one of

⁹⁰⁰ Pejanović, *Through Bosnian eyes*, 22-23.

⁹⁰¹ “Stranke BiH: može i dogovorom. Izbori 1992?”, *Veernje Novine*, October 9, 1990.

⁹⁰² Caspersen, “Contingent nationalist dominance”, 54.

⁹⁰³ “Zajedni ki zbor SDS, SDA I HDZ u Konjicu. Dobre komšije”, *Osloboenje*, November 5, 1990; “Sarajevo: SDA, SDS i HDZ. Danas zajedno”, *Veernje Novine*, November 16, 1990. Muhamed Ćengić, a vice-president of the SDA, presented the initiative saying that “the three parties want to show voters that they cooperated even before the elections, and will go on cooperating after the vote”. *Ibidem*.

its most massive rallies in Sarajevo, the SDA displayed the three national flags (the Muslim, the Serb and the Croat) tied together, as to symbolise “the togetherness and the peace between the people of BiH”,⁹⁰⁴ while both the SDS and the HDZ issued posters with the crescent and the Christian cross.⁹⁰⁵

Actually, the three national parties were either reluctant or openly rejected the term *coalition*; they talked, instead, of *cooperation* and only hinted at a post-electoral agreement. Any written platform or agreement would have appeared contradictory with their irreconcilable agendas about crucial issues such as the framework of Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, there was an undeniable convergence about them, which was, certainly, partially motivated by opportunist factors such as marketing, in order to secure the moderate non-ethnically-militant vote, and the tactical operations based on the assumption “Let’s throw out the Communists first, then we will see”.⁹⁰⁶ But reducing the nationalists’ synergy to mere convenience would be misleading: SDA, SDS and HDZ sincerely shared the same conception of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a country formed of three separate communities and presented a political programme focused on the re-traditionalisation of cultural and public life and a *de facto* alliance with their reciprocal religious communities. In order to put forward this vision, it was inevitable to legitimate and reinforce each other, as the self-proclaimed sole executors of the “ethno-democracy”. As the SDS’ presidential candidate Nikola Koljević summarised, “We think that a clear and open articulation of the national interests can bring us out of the vicious circle of national bargaining. Now, we can speak clearly about these interests and not under the mask of the a-nationalist ideology”.⁹⁰⁷

However, the substantial difference between their respective political agendas, the open display of controversial symbols and memories, and the pre-existence of social tensions with an ethnic-related implication in some regions, inevitably led to episodes of inter-party conflicts. The following tables are an attempt to systematise the main incidents and excesses along political and/or ethnic veins that occurred in the key period of the

⁹⁰⁴ “Predizborni skup SDA na stadionu ‘Koševo’ u Sarajevu. Moramo da živimo zajedno”, *Oslobo enje*, October 7, 1990.

⁹⁰⁵ “Koalicija krst – polumjesec?”, *Borba*, October 26, 1990. Significantly, Karadžić presented the posters in the same press conference in which was justifying the formation of the Serb National Council.

⁹⁰⁶ National parties’ representatives sometimes openly admitted this merely anti-Communist feature (see Stjepan Kljuić, reported in “Najprije nam valja oboriti komunizam”, *Borba*, November 14, 1990).

⁹⁰⁷ “Dr. Nikola Koljević o savjetu za me ustrana ku saradnju pri SDS. Federacija nacionalni interes”, *Oslobo enje*, October 4, 1990.

campaign (from August to November), and which were reported on the Bosnian press publications consulted for this research, or on the main secondary sources describing those events. They are divided into three categories, “national vs. national” (when they engaged national parties one against the other) “national vs. civic” (when they concerned activists or sympathizers of nationalist parties against those of non-nationalist parties) and “other” (when it was not possible to identify the culprits through the available source). Notwithstanding that such a work is far from being fully complete for various reasons (non-uniform criteria in press coverage due to unequal presence of correspondents from the different municipalities, accuracy, etc.; dispersion of information in the media analysed, partial or biased reconstructions), the collected information provides insightful interpretations on the polarisation in the campaign.

Table 9.2. Inter-ethnic confrontations concerning national activists or sympathizers, during the 1990 electoral campaign in BiH.

Municipality	Date	Description	Source
Foča	March-October	Conflict between workers of the “Foča trans” company became an ethnic conflict (Muslims vs. Serbs); clashes against the police; SDA and SDS endorse the reciprocal factions; state of emergency is declared in September-October	908
Bijeljina	August-September	Conflict between workers of the “Mesud Mujki” company becomes a supposedly ethnic conflict (Muslims vs. Serbs); clashes against the police	909
Bratunac, Srebrenica	August	Constant tensions, provocations, bus stoned and barricades between SDA and SDS’ supporters	910
Goražde	End August	SDA members report provocations along ethnic veins from Serb citizens	911

⁹⁰⁸ See text hereafter.

⁹⁰⁹ “Zbivanja u bijeljinskoj fabrici ‘Mesud Mujki’, *Politika*, July 11, 1990; “Opasnosti iz fabrike prenete u grad”, *Politika*, August 23, 1990; “Haos u Foči i Bijeljini”, *Politika*, August 25, 1990.

⁹¹⁰ “Srebrenica: incidenti nakon skupova SDS-a i SDA. Meci i kamenje”, *Veernje Novine*, August 22, 1990; “Nakon incidenata prilikom osnivanja skupština SDA i SDS u Srebrenici i Kravici. Pljušte prijave i demanti”, *Oslobodjenje*, September 2, 1990; Ibišević, *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, 46-53; Lučić, *Uzroci rata*, 280.

⁹¹¹ “Informisanje na goraždanski način. Grafiti – treći put”, *Oslobodjenje*, September 8, 1990.

Prijedor	Early September	Serb citizens report threats from youth members of the SDA	912
Mostar	September	Local SDS advocates boycott of elementary schools, following HDZ's campaign for the exclusive use of Latin alphabet, what causes a certain degree of tension in the whole region of Herzegovina	913
Nevesinje	September-October	Constant tensions and provocations between SDA and SDS' supporters; provocations in Muslim and Serb wedding processions; discontent and withdrawals in local police due to the worsening security situation	914
Banja Luka	November 4	Clash between HDZ activists and supporters of Borac Football Club (allegedly Serbs)	915

Table 9.3. Confrontations concerning national vs. non-national activists or sympathizers, during the 1990 electoral campaign in BiH.

Municipality	Date	Description	source
Bijeljina	August 10	SDS rally is interrupted by a group of pro-communist youngsters (allegedly prominently Muslims) carrying Tito's posters and singing "Yugoslavia, Yugoslavia"	916
Srebrenica	August 19	The mayor of Srebrenica (SK-SDP) is not allowed to talk at a SDA local rally due to the strong protests of SDA party activists	917
Olovo	Late September	Alleged physical threats from SDA to SRSJ's members; harsh verbal attacks from	918

⁹¹² "Prijedor: zona sumraka na naš na in. Prijetnje džihadom", *Ve ernje Novine*, September 8-9, 1990.

⁹¹³ "SDS iz Mostara. Uvla enje djece u politi ke igre", *Oslobo enje*, September 8, 1990.

⁹¹⁴ "Politi ko-bezbjednosna situacija u Nevesinju. Oglasili se i komunisti", *Oslobo enje*, September 6, 1990; "Nevesinje. Nakon nedjeljnih doga aja. Zvani na verzija", *Ve ernje Novine*, September 7, 1990.

⁹¹⁵ "Predizborno nasilje. arke s okusom politike", *Oslobo enje*, November 14, 1990.

⁹¹⁶ "Region Bijeljine, Ugljevika i Lopara. I aplauz, i incident", *Oslobo enje*, August 11, 1990.

⁹¹⁷ Ibiševi , *Srebrenica (1987-1992)*, 49.

⁹¹⁸ "Odgovor SRS u Olovu na optužbe iz SDA. Sra unate laži", *Oslobo enje*, October 1, 1990.

		SDA about the alleged clientelism of SRSJ in the town	
Tuzla	October-November	SK-SDP and nationalist (HDZ, SDA) activists report various mutual provocations, threats and physical aggressions	919
Nevesinje	October 4	Verbal incidents and threats between the president of the municipality (SK-SDP) and the president of the local SDS	920
Kalesija	October 9	Tensions between SK-SDP and SDA supporters, following an SK-SDP's rally	921
Livno	October 12	Youth groups of SK-SDP and HDZ in a disco-club get confronted each other displaying flags and slogans ("This is Bosnia, Yugoslavia" vs. "Franjo, Franjo, this is Croatia"), being separated by police	922
Vareš	October 13	Mutual provocations between SK-SDP and HDZ activists who displayed their flags and symbols in public places	923
Tešanj	October 15	HDZ's local branch denounces attacks on their personal security and on national symbols by SSO activists	924
Ilidža	November 9	Two SRSJ activists denounce a physical aggression from SDA members	925
Titov Drvar	November 14	Local SDS hints that the "other side" (namely the civic parties SK-SDP and DSS) is responsible for some acts of vandalism against the cars of SDS' activists	926

⁹¹⁹ "Strana ka (ne)tolerancija u Tuzli. Demokratija preko uniforme!", *Oslobo enje*, October 20, 1990; "Saopštenje koalicije lijevih snaga Tuzla. Obmane Alije Izetbegovi a", *Oslobo enje*, November 13, 1990; "Tuzla. Pucanje na provjeri", *Oslobo enje*, November 15, 1990; "Obra un kamenicama", *Oslobo enje*, November 15, 1990.

⁹²⁰ "Incident na protestnom skupu SDS. Jurili predsjednika", *Oslobo enje*, October 4, 1990.

⁹²¹ "Kalesija. Klicanje i incidenti", *Oslobo enje*, October 10, 1990.

⁹²² "Livno: tokom nastupa Željka Bebeka. Incident u disco-klubu", *Ve ernje Novine*, November 12-13, 1990.

⁹²³ "Nikakva 'provokacija jugoslovenskom zastavom'", *Oslobo enje*, October 17, 1990; "Zabilježeno na konvenciji SKBiH-SDP", *Oslobo enje*, October 20, 1990.

⁹²⁴ "Šamar demokraciji", *Ve ernje Novine*, November 15, 1990.

⁹²⁵ "Kad strana ki plakati zaigraju pred o ima. Demokratska tu a", *Ve ernje Novine*, November 10-11, 1990.

⁹²⁶ "Nemirna no u Titovom Drvaru. Stradaju automobili", *Oslobo enje*, November 15, 1990.

Table 9.4. Other confrontations (responsible unknown).

Mostar, Sarajevo	August 18	Bus of HDZ activists coming from the founding assembly in Sarajevo is stoned	927
Mostar	September 17	A group of Croat youth sing nationalist songs and violent anti-Serb slogans at the railway station, ending in clash with police	928
Zenica	October	Headquarters of the HDZ and SDA are repeatedly vandalised and damaged	929
Prijedor	November 4	Headquarters of the SDA are vandalised	930
Bosanski Šamac	November 5	SSO activists are assaulted in the village of Kruškovo Polje	931
Pucarevo	November 8	Tensions between HDZ supporters and a group of youngsters carrying a Yugoslav flag	932

The most significant case, hence deserving a special attention in these lines, is the one of Foča, the town in Eastern Bosnia at the border with Serbia. About 300 employees of the local transport company Foča Trans were involved, since March 1990, in a non-stop mobilisation along (predominantly) national lines. The Serb workers went on strike demanding the dismissal of the director Mirsad Čulimanić, who was defended and supported mainly by Muslim workers.⁹³³ The causes of the unrest were not connected to the national question, but to issues of mismanagement, non-ethnic kinships, patronages and envies, uncovered debts and consequent fear for the loss of jobs. Even so, a polarisation between Serb and Muslim employees occurred. Towards the end of summer, the separate mobilisations escalated into everyday demonstrations, barricaded streets, violent intimidations, clashes with police and even reports of gunfire in the villages.

⁹²⁷ Lučić, *Uzroci rata*, 267.

⁹²⁸ “Mostar: služba bezbjednosti o incidentu na željezničkoj stanici 17. septembra. Šakama na miliciju”, *Veernje Novine*, September 25, 1990.

⁹²⁹ “Zenica: vandalizam. HDZ na meti”, *Veernje Novine*, October 9, 1990; “Zenica: opet incident. HDZ bez prozora”, *Veernje Novine*, October 12, 1990.

⁹³⁰ “Prijedor: Abdić na regionalnom skupu SDA. Mostovi zajedništva”, *Veernje Novine*, November 5, 1990.

⁹³¹ “Bosanski Šamac: predstavnici SSO-DS istjerani iz Kruškovog Polja. Orgije besposlićara”, *Veernje Novine*, November 6, 1990.

⁹³² “Predizborno nasilje. Parke s okusom politike”, *Oslobodjenje*, November 14, 1990.

⁹³³ For the starting causes and characteristics of the mobilisation, see chapter 5.5.

Instability had severe consequences on the economic and social life of Foča and the whole region, being constantly followed by the media of all Yugoslavia. On September 11th, six months after the beginning of the unrest, republican authorities finally declared the state of emergency in the town, what implied the ban on all public demonstrations and rallies for 30 days, which finally succeeded in calming down the situation. In late October, just prior to the elections, the *status quo ante* was re-established in the company, allowing the strikers to regain their workplace.⁹³⁴

The two nationalist parties involved in the conflict, the SDA and the SDS, took advantage of the Foča events. Although both parties used Foča to mobilise their supporters, they also showed themselves capable of managing the tensions surrounding it in a responsible manner. They openly supported the respective committees and aiding homogenisation along ethnic veins, but without assuming a leading agitation role. The two parties were even invited in the negotiations between institutions and workers' committees, showing that they were recognised as legitimate representatives, even before competing at the elections. On the other hand, the institutions' response (both municipal and republican) to the Foča events still under Communist rule appeared slow, uncoordinated and ineffective, casting a further shadow on the SK-SDP and, indirectly, on the other civic parties which were identified with "the ruling power" (SRSJ, DSS). Before the electoral campaign, the opposition blamed the Communists for the *lack of democracy and transparency*; during the campaign, marked by strikes, protests for social-economic reasons and some tensions on national grounds, Communists were now mainly reproached for the *inability to impose the rule of law* that increased the feeling of insecurity of the citizens. Hence, social or "ethnic" incidents were assessed as the effect of a power vacuum caused by the Communists' dereliction, rather than as the result of political polarisation provoked by nationalist parties. Even within the SK-SDP, there was concern for such weakness. In a session of the presidency of the SK-SDP, a territorial delegate commented with anxiety that: "We must take the offensive, because we have lost [the control of] the current situation. [...] The people feels insecure [lit.: *narod je postao nesiguran*], people, we are going to have night patrols in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We

⁹³⁴ "Služaj 'Fočatrans' pred rješenjem. Suspendovani otkazi", *Oslobođenje*, October 19, 1990; "Foča: stižava se služaj 'Fočatrans'. Opština-opštini", *Veernje Novine*, October 27-28, 1990.

must say openly to the people in every possible way what we are for and what we are against. So much political finesse is killing us”.⁹³⁵

To conclude, the analysis of the episodes of inter-party confrontation during the campaign shows that:

1) The effects of political radicalisation practically affected the whole range of actors, ethnic (SDA, SDS, HDZ) and civic (SK-SDP, SRSJ, SSO, DSS); not only the nationalist, but also the non-nationalist parties have been, in some way, either targets or agents of the growing social animosity and have been active protagonists in the physical disputes about the use of historical symbols, monuments, public spaces and political resources. Hence, one would hesitate to define the strains surfacing during the campaign as merely “inter-ethnic”;

2) The extent of the incidents denotes a certain level of social tension, which created a certain apprehension in society. The case of Fo a, in particular, was frequently debated in media and political discourse as the paradigm of “what the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina could become” in the future. But at the same time, the whole context was far from presenting a generalised escalation of political tension, let alone violence. Once more, the problem relied on the perceptions, suspicions and projections of the potential consequences in the future, rather than in the immediate circumstances. After all, most of the incidents concerned party activists, spontaneous and radical sympathizers, but did not apparently target wide communities yet (once more, with the valuable exception of Fo a where, however, the destabilisation had begun *before* the electoral campaign and the appearance of national parties).

It is remarkable, though, that the same parties assessed the electoral campaign as generally peaceful and correct. In an *Oslobo enje* article issued three days before the elections, where members of all parties were asked to evaluate the “normality” of the campaign, the majority of them acknowledged that it had been “fair”. Both Izetbegovi (SDA) and Kecmanovi (SRSJ) came to say that the context had been more peaceful than expected; the representatives of the SSO and the DSS, too, stated that the context was generally “correct”, keeping in mind the lack of experience in multi-party politics of the

⁹³⁵ Unnamed delegate, in “Magnetofonski snimak razgovora sa predsjednicima OK SK, održanog 27.8.1990 godine”, SDP Archive, tr. 22/2.

country. Only the representatives of the SDS and the HDZ made open complaints, significantly regarding the hostility deriving from the attitude of (Communist) institutions and of the behaviour of activists from civic parties (particularly the Reformists), but they made no mention about inter-ethnic tensions or tensions between nationalist parties, what is another proof of the “non-aggression” attitude displayed by them.⁹³⁶

⁹³⁶ “Je li predizborna kampanja bila korektna? Od nadmudrivanja do etiketiranja”, *Oslobo enje*, November 15, 1990.

10. AFTER THE ELECTIONS: NATIONAL POWER-SPLITTING

10.1. The results

The elections held in Bosnia-Herzegovina on November 18, then completed on December 2 by a second round to elect the members of the Chamber of Municipalities, resulted in a crushing defeat for the non-nationalist parties, and marked a serious blow for a civic option in Bosnia-Herzegovina. SDA, SDS and HDZ were by far the three most voted lists, with the 69% of the vote at the upper house (the Chamber of Municipalities) and 73% at the lower house (the Chamber of Citizens). Thanks to the two-round majority system applied in the upper house, which favoured the strongest parties, the three parties even reinforced their hegemony, securing 84% of seats in the whole Parliament, thus relegating civic parties to an almost completely marginal status. This result completely overturned the figures indicated by pre-electoral surveys, almost all of which pointed to the Communists as favourites and predicted good results for the Reformists, usually expected to be the runners-up.⁹³⁷ The three nationalist parties also secured all the seven seats of the collective Presidency. Here, however, due to the peculiar feature of that vote system,⁹³⁸ civic parties suffered a less heavy defeat and could even have contested the victory of their nationalist opponents, had they united their forces around common candidates before the elections. (See tables below). All the political parties immediately accepted the results as legitimate and pledged not to question their validity.⁹³⁹ In the immediate aftermath, the press reported complains, coming from all the political forces,

⁹³⁷ Arnautovi , *Izbori u Bosni*, 52-66. However, some factors must be considered in order to nuance expectations for non-nationalist parties. First, as the same Arnautovi points out, those polls were not well-balanced, strongly overweighing the urban, mixed and more-educated strata of the population, which were the social categories more inclined to vote for non-nationalist parties (*ibidem*, 59). A certain fear for state apparatus and control and, then, to freely express a preference for national parties in a public survey could also have played a role (Andjeli , *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 174); moreover, almost all the polls indicated a tendency of gradual increase of nationalist parties in the course of the campaign.

⁹³⁸ The presidential election consisted of four separate ethnic lists (Muslims' list, to elect two members; Serbs' list, to elect two members; Croats' list, to elect two members; Yugoslavs'/Others' list, to elect one member: hence a 2+2+2+1 formula). Every voter, regardless of her/his ethnicity, could express a maximum of seven (namely 2+2+2+1) votes. This system, as Damir Kapidži observes, was supposed to stimulate a cross-ethnic voting and to promote non-ethnic preferences. Damir Kapidži , "Ethnic practice in electoral politics: Bosnia and Herzegovina's 1990 Presidency elections", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2014. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2014.974371> , 6.

⁹³⁹ "Stranke priznaju legitimitet izbora", *Oslobo enje*, November 20, 1990.

mainly about incomplete electoral lists and the alteration of ballot boxes.⁹⁴⁰ Actually, the vote counting of the first round went very slowly, and some of them were published more than one week later, which gave rise to unproven accusations of manipulation,⁹⁴¹ but the lack of solid evidence and the extent of the gap between national and non-nationalist parties suggest that irregularities were not crucial in determining the outcome.

Table 10.1. 1990 election results, Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁹⁴²

Party	Chamber of Citizens				Chamber of Municipalities				Total	
	Votes	%	Seats	%	Votes ⁹⁴³	%	Seats	%	Seats	%
SDA	700.729	31.3	43	33.1	676.479	30.6	43	39.1	86	35.8
SDS	585.784	26.1	34	26.1	544.008	24.6	38	34.6	72	30.0
HDZ	360.517	16.1	21	16.1	322.651	14.6	23	20.9	44	18.3
SK-SDP	277.661	12.4	15	11.5	207.437	9.4	4	2.7	19	7.9
SRSJ	189.765	8,5	12	9.2	156.374	7.1	1	0.9	13	5.4
DSS	31.526	1.4	1	0.8	N/A	N/A	-	N/A	1	0.4
SSO-DS	30.505	1.4	2	1.5	N/A	N/A	-	N/A	2	0.8
Other	64.096	2.9	2	1.5	302.712	13.7	1	0.9	3	1.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>2.321.887</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>2.209.661</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>100</i>

⁹⁴⁰ “Povremeni rezultati bosanskohercegova kih izbora. Redoslijed bez promjene”, *Oslobo enje*, November 21, 1990; “Konferencija za štampu u Stranci Demokratske Akcije. Prigovori iz 80 opština”, *Oslobo enje*, November 22, 1990; “Izbori u BiH. Parlament do Boži a”, *Oslobo enje*, November 23, 1990. Also Arnautovi recalls a series of supposed irregularities, mainly denounced by civic parties: incomplete electoral lists, violation of electoral boxes, violation of secret ballot due to the inadequate spaces where elections were held and to the presence of supposed “facilitators” indicating to voters how to vote for national parties, existence of “mono-national” and even “mono-party” local electoral commissions, pressures from the respective clergies, etc. However, Arnautovi acknowledges that these episodes could not have affected the whole result. (*Izbori u Bosni*, 141-151).

⁹⁴¹ Various former members of non-national parties, during the interviews for the scope of this research, have suggested that some electoral frauds have been carried out by national parties, through the complicity of members of the Republican Electoral Commission. *Oslobo enje* had reported, few days before the elections, that the president of the Commission was surrendering to pressures of SDA, SDS and HDZ, having meeting with their leaders and agreeing to simplify the voting procedure for the non-residents in Bosnia-Herzegovina, what allegedly favoured national parties: see “Dan prije odluke. Strah od pometnje”, *Oslobo enje*, November 17, 1990). A former prominent member of the SKBiH (whose name will be kept secret by the author. Interview released in Sarajevo, 2012) claims that a massive fraud had been held in Mostar to the benefit of the HDZ's presidential candidates, being decisive for the final result. However, all these allegations are and remain indemonstrable.

⁹⁴² Source: Kapidži , “Democratic transition”, 10; Arnautovi , 108. Non-national parties are indicated in bold.

⁹⁴³ Here, the votes expressed in the first round are taken into account.

Table 10.2. 1990 election results, Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina. (* = elected)⁹⁴⁴

<i>Muslims' list</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Fikret Abdi *	SDA	1.027.898	32.5
Alija Izetbegovi *	SDA	862.338	27.3
Nijaz Durakovi	SK-SDP	555.635	17.6
Džemal Sokolovi	SRSJ	184.621	5.8
Nazif Gljiva	SSO-DS	133.263	4.2
Fejsal Hrustanovi	SK-SDP	122.118	3.9
Dževad Haznadar	SRSJ	119.547	3.8
Bejrudin Bjedi	Indep.	103.953	3.3
Adil Zulfikarpaši	MBO	51.683	1.6
<i>Total</i>		<i>3.161.056</i>	<i>100</i>

<i>Serbs' list</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Biljana Plavši *	SDS	567.074	22.0
Nikola Koljevi *	SDS	550.715	21.4
Nenad Kecmanovi	SRSJ	498.630	19.4
Mirko Pejanovi	SK-SDP	334.816	13.0
Nikola Stojanovi	SK-SDP	237.442	9,2
or e Latinovi	SSO-DS	222.728	8.7
Ranko Zrili	SRSJ	160.304	6.2
<i>Total</i>		<i>2.571.709</i>	<i>100</i>

<i>Croats' list</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Stijepan Kljui *	HDZ	469.113	22.2
Franjo Boras *	HDZ	414.144	19.6
Ivo Komši	SK-SDP	352.313	16.6
Zoran Perkovi	SK-SDP	288.867	13.6
Franjo Boškovi	SRSJ	249.265	11.8
Tadej Mateljan	SRSJ	213.099	10.1
Martin Raguž	SSO-DS	130.198	6.2
<i>Total</i>		<i>2.116.998</i>	<i>100</i>

<i>Yugoslavs', others list</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Ejup Gani *	SDA	694.854	42.7
Ivan erešnješ	SDS	359.195	22.1
Josip Pejakovi	SRSJ	316.148	19.4
Zlatko Lagumdžija	SK-SDP	194.497	11.9
Azemina Vukovi	SSO-DS	61.373	3.8
<i>Total</i>		<i>1.626.067</i>	<i>100</i>

⁹⁴⁴ Kapidži , “Democratic transition”, 12. One can notice that, had SKBiH and SRSJ submitted joint candidates (as it had been proposed: see chapter 9.3.3), they could have disputed one or even both seats of the Presidency in the Serbs' and Croats' list. The margin of SDA's victory in the Muslims' and Yugoslavs' list appears instead unbridgeable.

Table 10.3. Candidates from non-national parties elected in Parliament.⁹⁴⁵

<i>Chamber of Citizens</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Chamber of Municipalities</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Municipality</i>
Goran Popovi	DSS	B. Luka	Milenko Panti	SK-SDP	Bosanski Brod
Ratko Borkovi	SK-SDP	B. Luka	Stanko Blagojevi	SK-SDP,DSS	Modri a
Krstan Maleševi	SK-SDP	B. Luka	Boro Bjelobrk	SK-SDP	Novo Sarajevo
Adem Ibrahimpaši	SK-SDP	Biha	Petar Ravlja	SK-SDP	Vareš
Uroš Gosti	SK-SDP	Doboj	Mirjan Petek	SRSJ	Tuzla
Mustafa Šaškinovi	SK-SDP	Doboj			
Roko Markovina	SK-SDP	Mostar			
Kasim Begi	SK-SDP	Sarajevo			
Tatjana Ljujji -Mijatovi	SK-SDP	Sarajevo			
Miro Lazovi	SK-SDP	Sarajevo			
Mirsad apo	SK-SDP,DSS	Tuzla			
Stefica Nurki	SK-SDP,DSS	Tuzla			
Mustafa Sehovi	SK-SDP,DSS	Tuzla			
Milan Spasojevi	SK-SDP,DSS	Tuzla			
Rusmir Aga evi	SK-SDP	Zenica			
Faik Uzunovi	SK-SDP	Zenica			
Milorad Dodik	SRSJ	B. Luka			
Ibro Tabakovi	SRSJ	B. Luka			
Franjo Basta	SRSJ	Doboj			
Ekrem Turali	SRSJ	Doboj			
Osman Pirija	SRSJ	Mostar			
Dragan Kalini	SRSJ	Sarajevo			
Mirko Prskalo	SRSJ	Sarajevo			
Sejfudin Toki	SRSJ	Sarajevo			

⁹⁴⁵ Arnautovi , *Izbiri u Bosni*, 109-110; 115-117.

Hasan Beširovi	SRSJ	Tuzla
Momilo Milić	SRSJ	Tuzla
Nikola Perić	SRSJ	Tuzla
Luka Radoš	SRSJ	Zenica
Rasim Kadić	SSO-DS	Sarajevo
Dragica Stojanović	SSO-DS	Tuzla

These results, however, should not be read as a unanimous plebiscite in favour of nationalist divisions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and as an exclusive result of the successful mobilisation of nationalist parties (although, logically, “ethnification” played an important role by itself), which would lead to a merely ethnic-centred interpretation. Following an examination of the voting data, as well as the analysis provided in the previous chapters and some contributions from the literature dealing with Bosnian 1990 elections, two crucial aspects must be taken into account:

1) It was a *vote against* the corruption, authoritarianism, mismanagement and inefficiency associated with the previous regime (the so-called *hipoteka iz prošlosti*, “burden of the past”). The SK-SDP, and its close ally the DSS, were obviously the most damaged by that punishing vote. Despite their attempts at innovation, the Communists still relied on traditional structures, symbols, values and discourse of standard Yugoslavism, whose potential for mobilisation was overrated and whose popular interpretation as a scapegoat for frustrations was, instead, overlooked by the ruling party. On the other hand, even the SRSJ, despite being a potential “alternative”, could not liberate itself from the “*hipoteka*”, due to the presence of former Communist cadres within their ranks, as well as the hesitation in party structuring and in the elaboration of the programme, and a popular stance towards Ante Marković turning from widespread enthusiasm to indifference or even hostility. Furthermore, the belated and weak territorial organisation explains why the Reformists’ result was even worse than that of the Communists. The nationalist parties, instead, catalysed the opposition and discontent, regardless of their extremely vague socio-economic programme and their mutually conflicting agendas about the Yugoslav crisis.

The iconic image of the *vote against* was the impressive triumph of Fikret Abdi , who was, by large, the most voted candidate at the presidential elections, despite various hindrances: he had belatedly joined the campaign, he was not the main candidate of the SDA, (whose undisputed leader was Izetbegovi), and he did not benefit from the complete support of their party's structure. Abdi was *the least nationalist* of all the national parties' candidates, having absolutely no personal commitment with the Islamic clergy or with the Muslims' national cause, and showing patent disinterest for ethnic-religious issues during the campaign. The voting trend in the 109 municipalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina suggests that Abdi gained a certain support even from non-SDA and, likely, from non-Muslim voters.⁹⁴⁶ The profile of a supposedly enterprising, wealth-creating individual who fell victim to the intra-regime intrigues and suffered the "repression of the bolshevik authorities" (though, on the other hand, he had emerged as an autocratic protégée of the highest-rank Communist officers) granted to Abdi a success greater than that of his party colleague Izetbegovi , who was in his turn a self-proclaimed victim of Communism, albeit for ideological and religious-related issues. Prominent columnist and analyst Goran Mili commented: "[Abdi 's] convincing victory confirms how much distrust among the people about the legal, security, administrative and political system in BiH. [...] In the case of Fikret Abdi it is clear that the people, and not only the Muslims, trusted in a man who dared to defy them all, judges, policemen, political potentates and the press, ergo, the system!"⁹⁴⁷

2) The vote can be configured as a classical *prisoners' dilemma*, as some authors have already pointed out.⁹⁴⁸ A single voter, even though s/he was not necessarily lined up with ethno-nationalist ideology (let alone with explicit hatreds) would give up support for civic

⁹⁴⁶ Abdi constantly received more votes than the SDA had in the parliamentary elections, as well as than Izetbegovi . Kapidži 's accurate analysis ("Ethnic practice", 9) shows that the Muslim ethnic candidates were able to cast some cross-ethnic preferences, unlike the Serb and Croat candidates.

For instance, the study of Kapidži and the disaggregated data about presidential elections in each municipality published in the Sambró's work ("Contextualització i anàlisi", 261-293) contradict a common claim made by some observers and activists (particularly from civic parties, including many of those who have been interviewed for this research), namely the fact that the electoral base of national parties obeyed to the request coming from local leaderships to vote for the candidates of the "other" national parties (hence, the SDA for SDS and HDZ, etc.). Although such kinds of agreements and pressures possibly existed, they produced scarce valuable effects, except, as said before, some cross-ethnic support for Muslim candidates. This was particularly strong in Western Herzegovina, where likely the local HDZ made a strong pressure on its highly mobilised base in favour of the SDA's candidates.

⁹⁴⁷ Goran Mili , "Osveta malog kineza", *Oslobo enje*, November 25, 1990.

⁹⁴⁸ Vesna Peši , "Serbian nationalism and the origins of the Yugoslav crisis", *Peaceworks*, 8, 1996, 24; Stojanovi , "When non-nationalist voters...", 10-11; Asim Mujki and John Hulsey, "Explaining the Success of Nationalist Parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Politi ka misao*, 2, 2010, 143-158.

parties after guessing that the voters of the “other” national groups would massively vote for their nationalist parties, something that would allegedly endanger the status and the security of his/her own group. What must be added to these explanations, though, is that besides this prisoners’ dilemma at the *Bosnian-Herzegovinian, republican* level (“I vote for ‘my own’ nationalist party because voters from the *other ethnic groups in Bosnia* would do so”), there was also a sort of prisoners’ dilemma at the *Yugoslav, federal* level (“I vote for ‘my own’ national party because voters from the *other republics in Yugoslavia* would do so”). To be more precise, here the dilemma was partially resolved as the elections in Slovenia and Croatia, held some months earlier (April-May), had already given massive support to nationalist parties. This outcome (and its direct consequences on the campaign in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as documented in earlier chapters) was already conditioning the preferences of Bosnian voters. But on the other hand, the second round of the still uncertain vote in Macedonia (November 25) and the elections in Serbia, Montenegro (where a victory of nationalist-oriented socialists led by Milošević and Bulatović was largely expected) would be held after the first round in Bosnia-Herzegovina, scheduled for the November 18. The scenario at the Yugoslavian level was expected to be dominated by nationalist-oriented politicians, advocating unilateral solutions for the framework of the State and of its own republics, so a Bosnian-Herzegovinian voter preferred to be represented by ‘her/his’ own nationalist party, rather than by a civic option that would probably end up isolated and irrelevant.

The electoral performance of non-nationalist parties was not geographically uniform; the following table presents an overview of the results in all the municipalities, together with data about the membership of the League of Communists in mid-1990:

*Table 10.4. Analysis of SKBiH-SDP membership and vote for civic parties in the municipalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1990.*⁹⁴⁹

Municipality	% SKBiH members Jun.1990 / electoral census nov.1990	SKBiH members Jun.1990	SK-SDP votes Nov.1990	% Variation SKBiH members /votes	% Votes SK-SDP	% votes SRSJ	% votes Civic parties	% votes Best national party
<i>Banja Luka</i>	16.2	21,462	10,004	-53.3	9.8	16.2	32.1	SDS 46.9
Bosanska Dubica	14.4	3,426	1,672	-51.1	11.9	7.0	24.0	SDS 58.9
Bosanska Gradiška	10.3	4,194	1,841	-56.1	5.9	5.1	14.5	SDS 59.7
Bosanski Novi	14.6	4,296	1,590	-62.9	6.6	4.4	14.3	SDS 58.5
elinac	8.0	1,016	690	-32.0	7.6	2.8	15.0	SDS 78.9
Glamo	11.9	1,160	562	-51.5	6.9	1.5	9.9	SDS 75.7
Jajce	10.5	3,067	4,011	+30.7	17.4	6.4	29.0	SDA 30.9 HDZ 30.6
Klju	11.6	3,018	1,982	-34.3	9.0	3.2	17.6	SDS 46.6

⁹⁴⁹ My elaboration; data on SKBiH memberships and votes sourced in “Prijedlog broja delegata za 11. Kongres SKBiH-SDP iz opštinskih organizacija SK”, Documents from the 11. Congress of the SK-SDP, 1991, SDP Archive, 1-5. Data on the votes of the civic parties and national parties are sourced from Sambró, “Contextualització i anàlisi”, Annex II, 70-426.

I take into account the votes for the Chamber of Citizens (Lower Chamber) as they guarantee the most uniform criterion for such a comparison, provided that: 1) all the main parties were present in all the seven districts, whereas none of them submitted candidates in all the 109 districts of the Chamber of Municipalities (Upper Chamber); 2) the vote for the Chamber of Citizens was surely the less influenced by local-level factors, as it was based upon huge regional districts, closed lists with no individual preference and a proportional system of vote, hence it is where the preference for a party rather than for a single candidate is highly more recognizable. This is why the percentages of “civic parties” differ from those employed by Bougarel (“Anatomie d’une poudrière”, 130), who took into account the Chamber of Municipalities’ results.

Kotor Varoš	6.2	1,509	950	-37.0	5.4	3.5	13.3	SDS 35.6
Laktaši	7.0	1,380	869	-37.0	5.7	10.5	20.1	SDS 72.3
Mrkonji Grad	9.5	1,852	1,060	-42.7	6.8	1.9	11.0	SDS 75.9
Prijedor	13.5	10,320	7,498	-27.3	13.5	11.1	30.9	SDA 34.8
Prnjavor	6.8	2,242	3,819	+70.3	15.7	8.5	28.2	SDS 61.6
Sanski Most	9.5	4,027	2,719	-32.5	8.4	6.1	20.2	SDA 37.1 SDS 36.2
Srbac	14.2	2,088	1,061	-49.1	10.3	7.7	25.7	SDS 69.4
Skender Vakuf	14.8	1,573	504	-67.9	7.3	3.7	15.3	SDS 52.7
Šipovo	14.5	1,350	549	-59.3	7.1	1.8	16.2	SDS 67.5
Banja Luka district	12.3	68,160	41,292	-39.4	9.9	8.7	23.8	SDS 48.5
<i>Biha</i>	<i>14.1</i>	<i>6,532</i>	<i>6,274</i>	<i>-3.9</i>	<i>19.4</i>	<i>5.0</i>	<i>25.5</i>	<i>SDA 53.2</i>
Bosansko Grahovo	17.0	1,020	241	-76.3	4.8	1.6	9.9	SDS 89.1
Bosanska Krupa	9.5	3,586	1,572	-56.1	5.4	2.9	9.6	SDA 63.6
Bosanski Petrovac	15.5	1,823	450	-75.3	5.1	3.3	12.0	SDS 69.3
Cazin	5.9	1,724	834	-51.6	4.0	3.0	7.8	SDA 89.4
Titov Drvar	21.3	2,716	1,220	-55.1	12.6	1.4	16.7	SDS 83.2

Velika Kladuša	10.6	3,218	868	-73.0	4.0	2.5	7.4	SDA 85.7
Biha district	11.8	20,619	11,459	-44.4	9.0	3.2	14.0	SDA 58.3
<i>Doboj</i>	<i>9.0</i>	<i>6,432</i>	<i>5,870</i>	<i>-8.7</i>	<i>11.5</i>	<i>13.9</i>	<i>29.7</i>	<i>SDS 31.3</i>
Bosanski Brod	9.9	2,449	3,545	+44.7	18.4	13.3	35.1	HDZ 33.7
Bosanski Šamac	8.9	2,181	2,247	+3.0	11.4	6.9	19.4	HDZ 40.3
Derventa	9.5	3,751	4,465	+19.0	14.9	10.5	27.7	HDZ 37.2
Maglaj	6.6	1,974	2,065	+4.6	10.5	7.0	20.9	SDA 32.5
Modri a	9.5	2,326	3,126	+34.3	18.5	9.1	33.0	SDS 25.9 HDZ 25.6
Odžak	8.2	1,705	1,576	-7.5	11.8	4.9	19.1	HDZ 55.3
Tesli	7.5	3,095	2,139	-30.9	8.7	12.0	25.8	SDS 48.0
Tešanj	5.6	1,718	2,433	+41.6	10.7	13.3	27.3	SDA 53.8
Doboj district	8.3	25,631	27,646	+7.8	12.6	10.8	27.2	SDS 27.2
<i>Sarajevo–Centar</i>	<i>44.3</i>	<i>25,,900</i>	<i>9,066</i>	<i>-64.9</i>	<i>20.0</i>	<i>21.6</i>	<i>48.2</i>	<i>SDA 31.1</i>
<i>Sarajevo–Novi Grad</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>11,072</i>	<i>11,041</i>	<i>-0.2</i>	<i>16.2</i>	<i>16.5</i>	<i>40.1</i>	<i>SDA 32.8</i>
<i>Sarajevo–Novo SA.</i>	<i>30.4</i>	<i>20,369</i>	<i>11,709</i>	<i>-42.5</i>	<i>20.7</i>	<i>22.3</i>	<i>49.1</i>	<i>SDS 22.8</i>
<i>Sarajevo–Stari Grad</i>	<i>18.0</i>	<i>6,888</i>	<i>3,573</i>	<i>-48.1</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>10.9</i>	<i>30.4</i>	<i>SDA 55.8</i>

Breza	7.9	956	1,800	+88.2	18.2	8.8	34.6	SDA 54.2
ajni e	12.8	859	246	-71.3	4.5	1.0	8.7	SDS 53.1
Fo a	14.1	4,147	831	-79.9	3.5	1.8	9.1	SDA 44.3 SDS 44.2
Fojnica	6.5	714	525	-26.4	6.6	6.7	15.2	SDA 48.9
Goražde	14.8	3,985	1,743	-56.2	8.3	2.8	15.0	SDA 58.4
Hadži i	10.8	1,794	2,679	+49.3	19.1	5.9	32.0	SDA 44.5
Han Pijesak	14.1	657	413	-37.1	10.4	1.0	14.6	SDS 57.1
Ilidža	20.0	9,455	3,600	-61.9	10.5	12.7	29.1	SDA 30.5
Ilijaš	9.6	1,813	1,810	-0.1	12.9	10.0	29.2	SDS 37.4
Kalinovnik	18.0	680	370	-45.5	11.7	1.4	17.9	SDS 52.8
Kiseljak	4.4	743	463	-37.6	3.9	6.9	13.4	HDZ 44.7
Kreševo	4.9	233	195	-16.3	5.1	16.6	25.9	HDZ 57.6
Olovo	9.7	1,086	1,024	-5.7	11.2	5.4	21.4	SDA 58.4
Pale	14.7	1,695	813	-52.0	9.4	2.8	17.0	SDS 64.8
Rogatica ⁹⁵⁰	14.3	2,214	1,731	-21.8	16.1	6.4	25.8	SDA 43.0

⁹⁵⁰ Since for Rogatica data about the vote for the Chamber of Citizens are not available in the Sambró's documentation, I here used the vote for the Chamber of Municipalities.

Rudo	6.5	566	390	-31.0	6.3	1.9	13.3	SDS 62.2
Sokolac	14.7	1,549	732	-52.7	9.7	2.6	16.7	SDS 57.1
Trnovo	12.9	702	527	-24.9	12.0	2.5	21.8	SDA 58.2
Vareš	9.8	1,786	3,131	+75.3	27.6	14.8	50.1	HDZ 24.9
Visoko	9.0	2,794	2,726	-2.4	10.6	4.4	21.7	SDA 62.2
Višegrad	11.3	1,666	875	-47.4	7.0	3.2	15.6	SDA 51.6
Vogoš a	20.7	3,620	2,141	-40.8	16.2	12.9	35.3	SDA 34.0
Sarajevo district	18.1	107,433	64,162	-40.2	13.9	11.6	31.4	SDA 37.4
<i>Tuzla</i>	<i>17.7</i>	<i>16,185</i>	<i>18,573</i>	<i>+14.7</i>	<i>30.1</i>	<i>32.8</i>	<i>67.1</i>	<i>SDA 17.6</i>
Banovi i	16.3	2,851	1,596	-44.0	10.7	26.3	41.1	SDA 47.2
Bijeljina	8.4	5,936	6,148	+3.5	15.1	6.3	24.6	SDS 56.4
Bratunac	5.7	1,175	1,243	+5.7	7.8	1.4	11.0	SDA 49.1
Br ko	11.9	7,387	10,728	+45.2	22.9	8.1	34.1	SDA 27.2
Gra anica	7.8	3,160	4,233	+33.9	15.5	9.3	29.0	SDA 51.1
Grada ac	7.0	2,666	4,582	+71.8	16.2	5.1	23.9	SDA 41.4
Kalesija	3.6	961	1,432	+49.1	7.6	3.5	13.5	SDA 69.1

Kladanj	10.9	1,199	2,924	+143.8	32.9	6.5	41.5	SDA 50.3
Lopare	7.6	1,748	2,619	+49.8	17.0	4.4	26.4	SDS 40.4
Lukavac	9.4	3,772	5,474	+45.1	19.4	15.1	38.6	SDA 40.2
Orašje	6.1	1,273	847	-33.4	4.8	4.2	10.4	HDZ 69.3
Srebrenica	8.4	2,000	1,137	-43.1	6.1	2.4	10.1	SDA 66.1
Srebrenik	7.5	2,065	3,950	+91.2	20.0	14.3	42.2	SDA 40.9
Šekovi i	9.2	582	975	+67.5	22.5	3.9	34.3	SDS 60.6
Ugljevik	8.2	1,513	1,200	-20.6	8.8	1.4	13.0	SDS 53.1
Vlasenica	8.8	1,863	858	-53.9	4.8	3.0	9.4	SDA 45.4
Zvornik	6.9	3,654	2,593	-29.0	6.3	2.5	10.9	SDA 50.3
Živinice	8.5	2,638	2,252	-14.6	11.0	11.6	24.7	SDA 66.7
Tuzla district	9.7	62,729	73,418	+17.0	16.0	10.7	30.0	SDA 37.5
<i>Mostar</i>	<i>16.4</i>	<i>15,242</i>	<i>9,943</i>	<i>-34.7</i>	<i>14.2</i>	<i>18.9</i>	<i>35.3</i>	<i>HDZ 30.1</i>
Bile a	21.4	1,957	947	-51.6	12.2	3.5	16.9	SDS 72.6
apljina	11.4	2,313	1,165	-49.6	6.9	6.7	14.6	HDZ 53.0
itluk	6.7	751	21	-97.2	0.2	0.7	1.0	HDZ 98.0

Duvno/Tomislavgrad	3.3	708	290	-59.0	1.5	0.6	2.4	HDZ 87.4
Gacko	19.1	1,504	266	-82.3	4.4	2.0	7.4	SDS 62.1
Grude	5.8	723	36	-95.0	0.3	0.4	0.8	HDZ 99.1
Jablanica	10.7	917	1,248	+36.0	17.3	16.8	36.0	SDA 42.1
Konjic	11.6	3,461	1,651	-52.2	7.0	8.9	16.8	SDA 44.9
Lištica	4.6	912	57	-93.7	0.3	0.8	1.3	HDZ 98.4
Livno	8.6	2,437	1,741	-28.5	7.2	4.1	12.1	HDZ 71.9
Ljubinje	23.5	720	139	-80.6	5.3	2.3	11.3	SDS 83.2
Ljubuški	4.7	977	267	-72.6	1.5	1.9	3.8	HDZ 91.1
Neum	11.2	333	34	-89.7	1.3	2.7	4.4	HDZ 87.3
Nevesinje	12.8	1,357	739	-45.5	8.6	2.9	13.9	SDS 63.6
Posušje	4.8	565	91	-83.8	0.9	0.8	1.9	HDZ 97.9
Prozor	6.1	811	452	-44.2	3.9	2.5	6.9	HDZ 63.5
Stolac	13.5	1,863	1,119	-39.9	9.9	4.2	14.9	HDZ 34.0
Trebinje	22.1	4,790	1,663	-65.2	9.7	7.2	20.1	SDS 63.4
Mostar district	11.8	42,341	21,869	-48.3	7.4	7.5	16.2	HDZ 50.7

Zenica	11.7	11,524	14,319	+24.2	19.9	5.9	34.2	SDA 44.1
Bugojno	14.9	3,746	3,121	-16.6	11.4	2.4	15.8	SDA 37.9
Busova a	4.3	566	1,107	+95.5	12.1	4.2	21.9	HDZ 40.2
Donji Vakuf	12.2	1,997	1,567	-21.5	12.2	2.4	17.6	SDA 46.2
Gornji Vakuf	7.0	1,202	739	-38.5	5.2	0.5	6.2	SDA 49.8
Kakanj	6.0	2,097	3,315	+58.1	13.4	8.0	24.3	SDA 45.6
Kupres	11.6	827	252	-69.5	4.1	0.2	4.7	SDS 50.5
Pucarevo/Novi Travnik	11.1	2,285	2,992	+30.9	18.7	4.7	26.1	HDZ 34.6
Travnik	8.4	3,863	5,523	+42.9	16.0	3.1	21.7	SDA 37.6
Vitez	7.0	1,271	2,664	+109.6	18.2	3.9	24.5	HDZ 40.2
Zavidovi i	8.5	3,227	2,239	-30.6	7.5	3.2	13.6	SDA 54.5
Žep e	4.6	683	977	+43.0	8.0	2.8	14.7	HDZ 39.0
Zenica district	9.5	33,108	37,815	+14.2	14.3	4.2	22.8	SDA 41.3
TOTAL BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	11.4	360,021	277,661	-22.8	12.4	8.4	23.6	SDA 31.2

At first glance, the SK-SDP, SRSJ and the other minor civic parties obtained relatively higher results in the bigger urban and industrial centres, variable scores in mid-sized towns and generally lower in the smallest towns. However, interpreting these results as a mere consequence of the *selo / grad* (village / city, hence rurality/urbanity) dichotomy, envisaging the first as conservative and nationalist-oriented, and the second as progressive, multi-ethnic and more sensitive to the principles of Yugoslavism, would be misleading. Hereafter, some interpretations can be suggested:

1) Civic parties were defeated *also* in the main cities, with the only exception of Tuzla, where they secured an overall 67.1% and the SRSJ was the leading party, obtaining the seat at the Chamber of Municipalities and the majority at the Municipal Assembly which would grant the seat of mayor to one of the SRSJ candidates. In Sarajevo, instead, the civic vote remained under 50% in all the four urban municipalities (49% in Novo Sarajevo, 48 in Centar, 40 in Novi Grad, 30 in Stari Grad); moreover, the split among SK-SDP and SRSJ prevented each of them from challenging the first place of nationalist parties, since the SDA came first in Stari Grad, Novi Grad and Centar, and the SDS in Novo Sarajevo. Civic score was even lower in the suburban municipalities of Sarajevo (35.1 in Vogošća, 29% in Ilidža and Ilijaš, 17.4% in Pale).

2) In the other three main urban centres, the civic parties barely got one third of the votes; in Banja Luka, the second city in Bosnia-Herzegovina by number of inhabitants, the SDS obtained a comfortable majority, as was the case of the SDA in Zenica, the fourth largest city and, besides Tuzla, the most prominent industrial centre. One could notice that the national structure, namely the absolute majority of Serbs in Banja Luka (54.6% according to the 1991 census) and Muslims in Zenica (55%) would have influenced stronger ethnification; yet, even in Mostar, with an extremely balanced ethnic structure (34.6% Muslims, 34% of Croats, 18.8% Serbs, 10.8 of Yugoslavs) non-national parties only conquered 35% of vote and did not endanger the hegemony of SDA and HDZ.

3) In mid-sized towns, support for civic parties was relatively higher in nationally heterogeneous centres such as Brčko (34.1%), Prijedor (30.9), Doboj (29.7), and lower in Bihać (25.5) and Bijeljina (24.6), which had an absolute majority of one community, respectively the Muslim and the Serb.

4) In the small towns, the score is generally much lower, usually ranging from 7% to 20%, but there were striking exceptions. In three small municipalities, Bosanski Brod, Modri a and Vareš, the civic parties won a seat at the Chamber of Municipalities (the only municipalities where they did so, besides Tuzla and Novo Sarajevo) and obtained extraordinarily high percentage of the vote in the Chamber of Citizens (30%, 33% and 50%, respectively). Vareš, whose municipality had just 22,000 inhabitants and the town 8,500, is also the only municipality besides Tuzla where a civic party was the most voted at the Chamber of the Citizens (in this case the SK-SDP; in Tuzla the SRSJ). Common characteristics in these three municipalities are a nationally heterogeneous population and a strongly developed industrial activity based on the oil refinery in the case of Bosanski Brod and Modri a, and on the mining and iron industry in the case of Vareš. In municipalities with a tendency to mono-national structure and with a less industrial or rural-based economy, the score of civic parties declined considerably.

5) There are, however, regional patterns: non-nationalist vote was higher in the region of Tuzla (mostly Muslim-led municipalities) and in the Posavina, north-east Bosnia (mostly heterogeneous municipalities), whereas it was lower in Eastern Bosnia (containing heterogeneous and Muslim-led municipalities: Srebrenica, Bratunac, Foča...), Western Krajina around Bihać, and extremely low and almost close to zero in the homogeneously Croat municipalities of Western Herzegovina.

The combined analysis of the voting trends with the ratio between membership of the League of the Communists and population in June 1990 (five months before the elections) suggests some remarkable findings:

1) the SK-SDP membership / population ratio was somewhat higher in the urban centres: in Novo Sarajevo, 44% of the population entitled to vote were members of the SK-SDP; in Sarajevo Centar, 30%; Tuzla 17%, Mostar 16.4%, Banja Luka 16%, while the average for Bosnia-Herzegovina was 11% (Zenica, with 11.4%, was an exception); hence, the better “urban” performance of civic parties in the elections is not new, but rather a continuity with the SK-SDP's traditionally stronger urban presence.

2) However, there are other regional, national-historical and socio-economic factors. Membership seemed to be generally higher in municipalities with medium-large industrial activities, whereas it dropped in rural municipalities. On the other hand,

Communist membership was visibly higher in municipalities in Bosnian Krajina and north-western Bosnia with a Partisan tradition and (mainly) Serb population (Drvar 21%, Petrovac 15%), whereas the lowest scores were located in the Croat-led municipalities of Western Herzegovina with a markedly anti-communist heritage (Duvno 3%, Posušje 4,7%, etc.)

3) In the November 1990 elections, the SK-SDP obtained less votes than party members registered in June 1990 (-22,8%), which testifies to the great degree to which the consensus for the ruling party had been eroded and, likely, how much the leadership was unaware and unable to anticipate the extent of the collapse. The collapse was particularly severe in some urban centres: -64% in Sarajevo Center, -42% in Novo Sarajevo (the two municipalities which had the highest rates in party membership, due to the strong presence of workers, state and military administration); -53% in Banja Luka; -34% in Mostar. Although this collapse may have been compensated by some votes flowing to the SRSJ, it surely indicates the inability of the “reformed” communist party as well as of the broader civic option, to keeping its own traditional social base. Once more, the exception was Tuzla where the votes in November 1990 were higher (+14.2%) than the membership in June 1990. Also in Zenica there was an increase (+24%) but, seen from the perspective of the whole civic option, these gains were wiped out by the extremely modest overall results obtained by the SRSJ.

4) Outside of the main urban centres, the SK-SDP’s loss of support shows high regional variations. The losses were particularly high in the (mainly Serb) municipalities in Krajina and Eastern Herzegovina, where the SK-SDP used to have a high membership, which likely shifted massively to a vote for the SDS. It also fell in the Muslim-Serb municipalities of Eastern Bosnia, where it previously had an average-low membership, and practically disappeared in the traditionally anti-communist region, mostly Croatian, of Western Herzegovina. On the other hand, the SK-SDP gained some support in the regions of Tuzla (central-northern Bosnia), Posavina (north-east) and Zenica (central).

5) With regard to the correlation SRSJ-SK, in the non-urban regions and municipalities where the SK-SDP experienced a bigger fail (Krajina, Herzegovina) the SRSJ generally obtained very poor results, which brings one to the conclusion that the former Communists membership went en masse to nationalist parties or, in small part, to

abstention. In the regions where support for SK-SDP grew, the repercussions for the SRSJ varied: in the Tuzla area and Posavina, the SRSJ has good results too; in the Zenica area, the SRSJ was instead very weak. On the other hand, the SRSJ obtained better results in the five biggest cities (higher than the SK-SDP in Tuzla, Banja Luka, Mostar and in 3 of the 4 Sarajevo's urban municipalities) and average-high results in the middle-sized towns.

Such analysis brings two conclusions. *First*, the vote for the SRSJ looks more volatile than the one for the SK-SDP, showing a somewhat higher concentration in mid-sized and big towns and a more patent weakness in the rural municipalities: this can be seen as a consequence of the SK-SDP's best territorial structure vis-à-vis the SRSJ's fragile and improvised organisation. It can be viewed as well as a consequence of the SRSJ's somewhat stronger ability to spark the interest, and seize the vote, of the urban classes when compared with that of the Communists. *Second*, in the majority of municipalities the vote for the SRSJ seemed to be more a reflection than a complementary alternative of the SK-SDP. In other words, where the SK-SDP's score is relatively high, the SRSJ's score is also high; where the Communists' results are low, the same generally goes for the Reformists' ones. Hence, it seems that the performance of the two main non-nationalist parties was affected by similar or identical factors. The only exception was observed in the districts of Zenica and Biha , where the SRSJ obtained much poorer results than the SK-SDP, likely attributable to defects of organisational capacity in those regions, and in small, peripheral and non-urban municipalities. Hence, it seems that the Reformists not only did not gain much of an advantage from the crisis of the Communists, but also that they were affected by the same “*vote against*” attitude as the SK-SDP.

10.2. National power splitting and the strategy of non-national parties

*“In this moment, we don’t have a Parliament, but an ethno-park.
We don’t have democracy, but ethnocracy”.*⁹⁵¹

In the aftermath of the elections, the three national parties, SDA, SDS and HDZ, having secured a comfortable majority, agreed to the formation of a common government and symbolically apportioned the three main institutional positions: the Parliament Presidency went to Momilo Krajšnik, from the SDS; the government premiership to Jure Pelivan, from the HDZ; the President of the Presidency went to Alija Izetbegović, from the SDA. However, the atmosphere of tacit convergence of interests that the three parties had during the electoral campaign quickly vanished, as mutually incompatible agendas surfaced, both “from above” at the republican level and “from below” in the local territories. In the first debates held in the republican Parliament, strong disagreements emerged about sensitive and symbolical issues related to national and cultural identity, as well as with the (mutually incompatible) institutional concepts for Bosnia-Herzegovina. The strongest matter of contention was the text of the oath for MPs. The definition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a ‘state’ (*država*) irritated the SDS’ members, whereas the mention of Yugoslavia annoyed those of the HDZ; these two parties also complained about, respectively, the lack of transcription into the Cyrillic alphabet and Croat version of the text and official documents.⁹⁵² However, public discrepancies soon arose about more specific issues such as the designation of ministers, members of commissions and state officials, the tax for the Yugoslav Army (opposed by SDA and HDZ), or opposite views about the crisis in Yugoslavia.⁹⁵³ At the local level, there were a number of municipalities where national parties failed to establish joint governments, usually because the winning force and its runner(s)-up disagreed the terms for appointing the institutional cadres and functionaries, leading to mutual vetoes, boycotts and to power

⁹⁵¹ Tarik Haveri, reported in “SSO-DS. Predstavljen nacrt Ustava BiH. Republika Srpska”, *Veernje Novine*, February 26, 1991.

⁹⁵² “Vijeće opština. Kirilica i ‘hrvatski prevod’”, *Oslobodjenje*, December 21, 1990.

⁹⁵³ “Vijeće Srpska i vijeće opština skupštine SRBiH. Porez za JNA do aprila”, *Oslobodjenje*, December 28, 1990.

vacuums that, in some cases, lasted for several months.⁹⁵⁴ As Tatjana Sekuli explains, “the real battlefield was now transferred to the municipal level”, since the key officers in the administration were generally assigned only to the leading party, “often from the former communist ranks” and, logically, following ethnic belongings criteria.⁹⁵⁵

The unwillingness to reach agreements was further reinforced by the peculiar model of “*party-ethnocracy*”, that the three forces established as the criterion for the new political system. The process of decision-making was left to the leaderships of SDA, SDS and HDZ; the government ministers were directly appointed by them, not by the Prime Minister, Jure Pelivan. Indeed, the government assumed a sort of techno-administrative character, being mainly composed of obscure or non-party personalities who lacked their own political initiative and practically acted as mere rubber-stamps of the party leaderships. In a context in which the institutional framework was poorly defined, this technocratic approach paradoxically made the executive organs even more subject to the control of the elites of the national parties.⁹⁵⁶

The approaches of the two party leaders, Alija Izetbegović (SDA) and Radovan Karadžić (SDS) towards the institutional sphere, albeit completely opposite from one another and followed competing strategies, are symptomatic of the party-ethnocracy. Izetbegović, who had been the second most voted candidate at the presidency elections behind his fellow party member Fikret Abdić and, according to the usual norms, should have left to him the seat of “President of Presidency” (i.e. the President in charge, a *primus inter pares*). Nonetheless, thanks to the support of the SDA élite and the complicity of the other members, Izetbegović forced the withdrawal of Abdić and obtained the mandate, in addition to staying as a leader of the SDA.⁹⁵⁷ His double role and the common practices he adopted once in office, such as his reticence to inform partners and institutional organs

⁹⁵⁴ The press reported the cases of Bugojno, Jablanica (SDA, first party, vs. HDZ runner-up), Lukavac, Višegrad (SDA vs. SDS), Bosanski Novi and Trebinje (SDS vs. SDA), Srebrenik (SDA vs. an internal split, HDZ and SDS), Pucarevo (HDZ vs. SDS and SDA), where governments would be only formed between February and April 1991, as well as a number of other municipalities where hostilities between the (often single) party in power and the opposition led to institutional paralysis. See also Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 185-187.

⁹⁵⁵ Sekulić, *Violenza etnica*, 110.

⁹⁵⁶ Milan Trivić, “Prvi aplauz premijeru”, *Oslobođenje*, January 7, 1990; Emir Habul, “Doma in u praznoj kući”, *Oslobođenje*, February 1, 1990. Habul observed that the only then high political cadres in the government were Muhamed Ćengi (vice-premier, from the SDA), and Velibor Ostojić (the minister of information, from the SDS).

⁹⁵⁷ On the other hand, it must be recalled that Abdić was not interested at all in the presidency, limiting himself to accept the SDA’s promise that they would find funding for Agrokomerc.

about his agenda, the meetings with Yugoslav and international leaders, were severely criticised by the civic parties. The most famous episode, frequently cited in the literature about the breakup of Yugoslavia, was the unexpected request made in the name of Bosnia-Herzegovina to join the Organisation of Islamic Countries during his visit to Turkey in July 1991 that upset all the political forces except the SDA. Civic representatives expressed frequent criticisms against Izetbegović's attitude in the meetings held with the republican presidents about the future of Yugoslavia (the so-called "YU-summits") and with the allies from the Bosnian nationalist parties, claiming that he did not inform anyone about his steps.⁹⁵⁸ Sejfudin Tokić, then a member of the SRSJ who had a good relationship with Izetbegović, told me: "We [the Reformists] defended that the debate on the future of Bosnia should be held in the institutions. However, Izetbegović never understood that it should not be a matter of the three leaders, Karadžić, Kljuić and himself, to hold the debate. The Presidency and the Parliament should be the place for the debate. Izetbegović had not sense of statemanship; he was a good man but a bad politician. He did not realize the difference between the institutional and the non-institutional. He once told me, very angry - he never got angry but that time he really was -: 'Tokić, for God's sake, do you think that Koljević and Plavšić [the two Serb-SDS members of collective presidency] would act differently from Karadžić's instructions?' I replied: 'Different or not, they are the members of the Presidency. And the Presidency decides'".⁹⁵⁹

On the other hand, Radovan Karadžić, being the leader of the second main party and crucial partner for government, remained out of any institutional office, having not run for the Presidency or the Parliamentary elections, and having not claimed any post in the executive. Such positioning is a further proof of the para-institutional strategy of the SDS, which was focused in reinforcing its own legitimation as the exclusive representative of the overall Bosnian Serbs' interests over (and regardless of) the legal framework of the republic. This is why both Izetbegović's "occupation" of the institutional space and Karadžić's escape from it were, in some way, two sides of the same party-ethnocracy coin.

⁹⁵⁸ "SSO-DSBiH: Jugoslavija je trenutno suspendovana. Nema više skrivanja", *Veernje Novine*, March 19, 1991; "SDP o događajima u zemlji. Vlast na daljinsko upravljanje", *Oslobodjenje*, July 12, 1991; "Konferencija za štampu u SRS za BiH. Javni sastanci i tajni dogovori", *Oslobodjenje*, July 20, 1991.

⁹⁵⁹ Sejfudin Tokić, interview by author. Sarajevo, July 5, 2012.

In such a stalemate, the non-nationalist parties had in the Parliament a mere 15% of the seats (SK-SDP, SRSJ, SSO-LSBiH⁹⁶⁰). As civic forces committed to a united and non-ethnic conception of the country, they were condemned to play a role which was doubly contradictory and uncomfortable. First, they had to *preserve the state institutions* (although they were excluded or very marginal in them, being an opposition with very modest numbers) from the coercive and non-cooperative actions of the nationalist parties which were in power. Second, they were forced to act as *mediators between their opponents*, hence the nationalist parties themselves; in other terms, they had to convince nationalist parties to mutually agree among themselves, at the same moment when those same nationalist parties were excluding and marginalizing them. The intrinsically moderate nature of civic parties in a context of ethnic parties' complete overruling can explain why they opted for negotiation and dialogue rather than for a more radical opposition in the institutions, let alone social mobilisation (organisation of street protests, meetings, etc.) that could only stir up instability and polarisation. Rasim Kadić, the SSO's leader and one of the most critical voices against the party-ethnocracy, explained well this undesired commitment to a moderate and negotiating attitude of the civic forces:

“The basic problem is that we, the others, are trapped by the concept of the rule of the three parties that consider themselves as the representatives of ‘their’ people. In this wrong thesis, we are in such a situation that they must always agree about everything, otherwise the breakdown of BiH would happen. This is a blackmail situation for all of us and their clever attempt to proclaim their rule for centuries and centuries through the consolidation of this situation. The disentanglement will not be easy. The breaking of that partnership, which is unavoidable although they will do the possible to postpone it, can bring about the definitive partition of BiH”.⁹⁶¹

Hence, civic parties initially expressed a responsible opposition and a negotiating approach, both at the local and at the republican level. In Banja Luka, the civic parties

⁹⁶⁰ The SSO switched its name from SSO-DS to LSBiH (Liberal Party of Bosnia-Herzegovina) in the mid-1991. Hence, in this chapter I will use the double denomination. I do not take into account the DSS because it was de facto integrated into the SDP since early 1991 in the Parliament's activities.

⁹⁶¹ Rasim Kadić, reported in “Spas u trulim kompromisima”, *Oslobo enje*, May 24, 1991.

In the rest of that interview, though, Kadić optimistically predicted that once the partnership would be over, national parties would face internal splits. Such fragmentation would overthrow the logic of tri-national rule and bring the conditions for a “stable and democratic BiH”. Such prediction was wrong. The intrinsic logic of “representatives of their own people”, combined with the definitive radicalisation of the Yugoslav scenario after the war in Slovenia and Croatia, only led to a further homogenisation of national parties.

supported the agreement of the SDA, SDS and HDZ for a joint constitution of the city government;⁹⁶² in various municipalities, among them Mostar, some elected councillors from civic parties voluntarily renounced to their post in order to allow the fulfilment of the ethno-national proportionality and, then, to avoid the repetition of the election because of the paralysis of local government.⁹⁶³ In the spring of 1991, the SDP's leaders sought talks with each of the nationalist parties in order to establish some common minimal principles about the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina; nonetheless, apart from not obtaining particularly fruitful results with the SDA and the HDZ, they learned a part of the, up to that time, hidden agenda of the SDS. According to Ivo Komši's detailed account, Milorad Ekmeđi, a prominent philosopher and one of the main ideologues of the Serb party, openly depicted to a terrified SDP's leadership the "new Yugoslavia" that they were planning, obviously hinting a full synergy with the Serbian rule in Belgrade: the secession of Slovenia would be allowed, whereas the so-called "Serb areas" in the other republics would form the future state. Komši recalled: "We said to him: 'Do you realise what you are saying? Do you realise that your idea leads directly to war?' Ekmeđi said they knew that. He said: 'Of course we know, but this cannot be avoided. No European state was made without bayonets, so this one too will be made with bayonets.' We said: 'Do you know how many lives will be lost?' He laughed: 'Of course we know, but it is not much to sacrifice a hundred or two hundred lives for a state. A mere nothing.' Those were Ekmeđi's words. So far as I know this was the first time that this plan was made public. The SDS' task was to implant this idea into the minds of the Bosnian Serbs". According to Komši, both Karadžić and Ekmeđi insisted that the SDP, being a pro-federal party, should support the SDS in preserving Yugoslavia.⁹⁶⁴ Of course, this would never happen, since the two concepts of Yugoslavia on the table were instead completely opposite.

Logically, civic parties were severely affected by the extent of their electoral defeat. All of them suffered high losses in membership and splits in the leadership, due to ideological and practical disenchantment, as political engagement with them did not provide any valuable social advantage. The SK-SDP held its 11th Congress on February

⁹⁶² "Nesporazumi oko konstituisanja nove vlasti u Banjaluci. Pobjednici komuniciraju saopštenjima", *Oslobo enje*, January 31, 1991.

⁹⁶³ "Mostar bez ponavljanja", *Oslobo enje*, November 24, 1990; "Poništavanja ne e biti", *Oslobo enje*, November 28, 1990.

⁹⁶⁴ Ivo Komši in Dušan Bilandžić et al., "Debate on the wars in Croatia and Bosnia – Part II".

The details on the Ekmeđi's discourse were confirmed to me by Adil Kulenović, who also attended that meeting with the SDP's delegation. Adil Kulenović, interview by author. Sarajevo, July 27, 2014.

23, 1991, what was the occasion to seek a re-elaboration of its political platform. The party ratified its definitive transition to social-democracy, definitely removing the SK (“League of Communists”) from its name and the references to Communist ideology from its program. President Nijaz Duraković and the former leadership were confirmed in charge. The SDP still relied on a relatively good territorial infrastructure, receiving delegates from 105 of the 109 Bosnian municipalities,⁹⁶⁵ but the drop in membership had been massive: in mid-1991 the SDP claimed to have about 90,000 affiliates, barely a quarter of the figure registered one year earlier.⁹⁶⁶ In the aftermath of the elections, and even in the Congress debate, the party was concerned by its structural reshaping as much as political-ideological issues, provided that the gigantic bureaucratic body employing about 1,600 people in January 1990, should be reduced to 150 one year later.⁹⁶⁷

Moreover, it must be recalled that immediately after the elections, the SDP was disturbed by the appearance of another party that reclaimed the left-wing Communist legacy, named “League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia” (*Savez Komunističara – Pokret za Jugoslaviju*, hereafter SK-PJ). The party was created by dogmatic officials of the Yugoslav Army (JNA) in Belgrade, in November 1990, and sought to establish an organisation in all the republics, originally inheriting the structure of the former JNA's party branch and mainly including retired generals and some leading ranks. The platform of this party was hard-line conservative, with nominal references to Marxism and the legacy of the SKJ, and with practical synergy with the Serbian interests and hegemonic policy.⁹⁶⁸ It was the attempt of military ultra-conservative circles to recover some direct political influence, which generally failed, as the SK-PJ remained politically marginal in all the Yugoslav republics, Serbia included, despite of the close (and familiar) ties with Slobodan Milošević;⁹⁶⁹ however, it still succeeded in interfering with the Bosnian SDP, exploiting the supposed myth of the JNA as the last stronghold of authentic Yugoslavism, anti-nationalism and social stability. The SK-PJ exerted heavy pressure on the SDP's

⁹⁶⁵ “Konferencija za novinare u CK-SK-SDPBiH. Afere do kraja osvijetliti”, *Oslobo enje*, February 22, 1991.

⁹⁶⁶ “Lutanja starih dogmata”, *Oslobo enje*, August 4, 1991.

⁹⁶⁷ “SKBiH-SDP: konferencija za štampu. Zbogom, bez dinara”, *Veernje Novine*, January 22, 1991.

⁹⁶⁸ SK-PJ, “Savez Komunističara – Pokret za Jugoslaviju. Status”, Belgrade, December 1990, SDP Archive, 1-13; Letter of Filip Vuković to Nijaz Duraković, November 22, 1990, uncatalogued document from the SDP Archive; “Prva konferencija SK-PJ. Jugoslavija sudbonosno pitanje”, *Oslobo enje*, December 26, 1990; “SK-Pokret za Jugoslaviju ide dalje. Formula starih ešalona”, *Oslobo enje*, December 30, 1990; Bieber, “The role of the Yugoslav People's Army”, 320-321.

⁹⁶⁹ Mira Marković, the Milošević's wife, was a member of the SK-PJ.

leadership and party base, apparently seeking either to co-opt it or to provoke its split.⁹⁷⁰ Only very few of the SDP's top ranks effectively moved to the SK-PJ, but even so, such situation created anxiety and irritation among the social-democrats who, it must be recalled, had already been the object of Army's interferences in the spring of 1990, when the JNA threatened with a *coup d'etat*.⁹⁷¹ In early 1991, the SK-PJ succeeded to establish a not negligible organisation throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, opening branches even in small and rural towns and absorbing a part of the SDP membership, particularly in mainly Serb populated areas. Though not exclusively, the SK-PJ's verbal rethoric was principally focused against the SDP for having allegedly abandoned their stance in favour of Yugoslavia, the working class, etc.⁹⁷² All these elements suggest the thesis that a SK-PJ's leading goal was either to absorb the SDP or to hinder its remaining political operability in view of a possible military intervention of the Yugoslav Army.⁹⁷³ Such disturbing presence was a further and significant obstacle for a party in search of stability and identity.

The SRSJ was in a still weaker position; unlike the SDP, it did not rely on a solid infrastructure, and neither did it have a clear ideological platform, leading even more members to leave the organisation. Moreover, the social appeal of the Reformists largely depended on the charisma of its leader Ante Markovi , and vice versa. Actually, the SRSJ's poor results in the elections of the Autumn of 1990 (see table below) further contributed to the decline of the Prime Minister's authority in the Yugoslav sphere, provided that his main opponents, namely the Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian rules, had now a further pretext to ignore the institution, claiming its lack of democratic legitimation. It was in December 1990 when the Republic of Serbia carried out what Markovi himself called the "robbery of the century", namely an unilaterally and secretly arranged emission

⁹⁷⁰ Letter of Filip Vukovi to Nijaz Durakovi , November 22, 1990, uncatalogued document from the SDP Archive; "Predsjedništvo CK SKBiH-SDP o SK-PJ. Kolektivni pristup neregularan", *Oslobo enje*, December 28, 1990.

⁹⁷¹ See chapter 3.2.

⁹⁷² Mi o Carevi , "Lutanja 'novih socijalista'", *Oslobo enje*, August 2, 1991. Mi o Carevi , then a SK-PJ cadre, came from the SKBiH leadership.

⁹⁷³ However, the fact that the SK-PJ closely cooperated with Miloševi and included principally Serbs among its ranks does not imply a transitive convergence between the SK-PJ and the SDS. The SK-PJ opposed the regionalisation advocated by the Karadži 's party ("Nepoželjni Šešelji i regionalizacija", *Oslobo enje*, May 18, 1991) and organised anti-nationalist meetings with the other civic parties ("Miting u Tuzli. Sa uvajmo Jugoslaviju", *Oslobo enje*, July 13, 1991).

Nijaz Durakovi states that the SDS was "annoyed by the ideological orientation of the SK-PJ", though recalling that "it ended up as a directed farce, because they would later work off together" (Durakovi and Filipovi , *Tragedija Bosne*, 148).

of 18 billion dinars, about 1.4 billion dollars, in order to cover the debt of Serbian enterprises and the funds for pensioners and farmers; the robbery was a deathblow to the economic recovery of Yugoslavia and Markovič's reform attempts, as well as of his political authority.⁹⁷⁴ The Slovenian and Croatian governments immediately took advantage of the situation, announcing that they would not recognize any further financial obligation of the federation, which led Predrag Tašić to observe that this event "was not only the burial of Markovič's dinar, but also of his vision of a new Yugoslavia as a common country of equal people, citizens and sovereign republics".⁹⁷⁵

On December 28, 1990, Markovič proposed to the Federal Parliament what can be seen as his last attempt to recover the political initiative, a platform for a minimum functioning of the Yugoslav State also called "Plan 11+3", essentially proposing again the traditional strong points of the government's (mainly economic) line of action since 1989.⁹⁷⁶ However, it only met the full agreement of the governments of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.⁹⁷⁷ Markovič's relation with the only other exclusively federal institution, the Yugoslav Army, quickly deteriorated, apparently both for strategic (the JNA was aligning itself, in a non-linear and yet inexorable way, with the Serbian position) and material reasons (budgetary cuts were affecting the social assets and subsidies destined to JNA officers).⁹⁷⁸ The next institutional move to seek a resolution of the crisis already fell in the hands of the republics, which held a series of meetings among the six presidents, then called the "YU-summits". As Carlos González Villa explained,

⁹⁷⁴ Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 55; Tašić, *Kako sam branio Antu Markoviča*, 57-64.

Tašić explains into detail the "robbery", recalling that the sum was a half of the total credit from primary emission planned for the whole 1991. He also recalls that Markovič was questioned, and almost mocked, by both the press and the politicians from Slovenia and Serbia as he was informed of the robbery only ten days later, a further argument for his lack of effective control and power.

⁹⁷⁵ Tašić, *Kako sam branio Antu Markoviča*, 60.

⁹⁷⁶ The 11 functions that should guarantee the Federation's minimum operativity were: convertibility of the dinar, monetary policy controlled by the National Bank, national reserves, unobstructed payments, integral market of capitals, workforces and goods, observance of obligations to the federation, agreement on consumption policies, re-structuration of property relationships, recovery of the banking system, realisation of social programmes, defense and foreign policy. It can be observed that 10 of the 11 "minimal functions" deal with economic issues.

The three further demands ("+3") were: the amendments on the Constitution already proposed in 1989, the functioning of all the federal organs (Parliament, Presidency, Government), and a free information guaranteed in all Yugoslavia. Tašić, *Kako sam branio Antu Markoviča*, 54.

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 73.

⁹⁷⁸ Woodward, *Balkan tragedy*, 136; Bieber, "The role of the Yugoslav People's Army", 315-320.

since then, “the possible solutions, as well as the related problems, fully depended on the agreements and disagreements among the republics”.⁹⁷⁹

Table 10.5. SRSJ score in the 1990 elections.

Republic	Parl. elections % votes	Parl. Elections % seats, seats/tot.	% votes Presidential elections
Bosnia-Herzegovina	7,8	5,4 (13/240)	10,9 ⁹⁸⁰
Macedonia	13,3	9,2 (11/120)	-
Montenegro	14,1	13,6 (17/125)	16,4
Serbia	1,5	0,8 (2/250)	5,5

In the course of 1991, the SRSJ in Bosnia-Herzegovina was still highly focused on raising support for, or, at least, to increase the public visibility of its leader, but his growing institutional marginalisation only accelerated the party’s decline. In exchange, the party seemed to lack a proper political initiative on the issues related to the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Reformist representatives were eager to speak about Yugoslav issues and to support Markovič’s positions, whereas statements about the “domestic” issues were more sporadic. This element can be explained, once more, by the ideological and organisational flexibility (or, we can say better here, heterogeneity and fragility) of the SRSJ. Its members had in common an enthusiastic consensus for the programme of the federal government, but they did not necessarily share the same ideas about the institutional engineering of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or about religion and identity-related issues, in a context which had radically changed since the electoral campaign and every day got more polarised, where each individual began to face strong social pressures about “how to position her/himself”, should extreme solutions finally prevail. Hence, the SRSJ appeared cautious in its public statements in order to contain such heterogeneity. As the then Reformists’ secretary Tadej Mateljan acknowledged, “A bit of nationalist [element]

⁹⁷⁹ González Villa, “Un nuevo estado”, 292.

⁹⁸⁰ This is the average score of the seven presidential candidates.

came in, as some sort of nationalist disagreement about some issues. It was clear that some people looked differently at the others. And this was because we were a new party, we were not the SDP. The SDP was an organisation that existed since 45 years. We had existed only for a few months”.⁹⁸¹

10.3. Sovereignty, regionalisation, security

At the beginning of 1991, all the civic parties were committed to what could be defined as a “return to ordinary politics”: they strived to bring the institutional discourse and the public debate to non-identity and non-ethnic-related issues such as social policies, employment, infrastructures, etc. The purpose was both to soften the inter-party conflicts, to move the frame of the discourse about the existential insecurity and threat of the people onto the socio-economic instead of the ethnic-identity related issues, and to seek a rapprochement with the social sectors which had not supported them at the elections, in a context where the collapse of the economy and the institutional chaos, both in Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, boosted social emergency and anger. However, such efforts were in vain as the focus of the ruling nationalist parties was immediately placed on the two most sensitive themes directly concerning the institutional framework and, most of all, the symbolic-national sphere: the principle of *sovereignty* of Bosnia-Herzegovina, advocated by the SDA and supported by the HDZ, vs. the principle of (*ethno*)- *regionalisation* brought forward by the SDS. The conflict between these proposals actually compromised the cohabitation between the national parties and decisively fuelled political polarisation and instability.

The declaration submitted by the SDA reiterated that Bosnia-Herzegovina was a sovereign and indivisible republic of the citizens (and) of the Serb, Muslim and Croat peoples as well as the other nationalities, sometimes reiterating the concepts of the existing constitutional framework (which, after all, already defined BiH as a “sovereign country” of equal citizens and people), sometimes suggesting a considerable enlargement of the republican jurisdiction, apparently envisaging a confederal vision. Yugoslavia was recalled only in vague terms of “association” and “cooperation” of the republics.

⁹⁸¹ Tadej Mateljan, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 15, 2012.

Actually, there was not a reference to Yugoslavia as the framework of the Bosnian sovereignty in the first version of the document; it was added in the article 1 of the second version as “the Yugoslavian state community”. Finally, the declaration recommended these principles as the core of the new Constitution which shall be eventually adopted within six months.⁹⁸² To sum it up: the Declaration presented some ambiguity in its content and in its procedure. It proposed some hardly disputable principles (such as a BiH having the same rights as the other republics) and other more contentious (such as the strong insistence on an almost integral economic autonomy, what seemed to go against the spirit of the “11+3 platform” designed by Ante Marković which, for instance, had been approved by Izetbegović); it ambiguously merged a civic and a consociational understanding of the Bosnian citizenship, what Neven Andjelić blames as an attempt “to use the concept of civil society in order to achieve its own aims”, namely creating the conditions for granting Bosnian Muslims a “stronger position for negotiations than Serbs and Croats” and a comfortable majority in a preferably independent BiH.⁹⁸³ There were also criticisms against a proposal with such constitutional pretensions came from only one (and, for instance, mono-national) party without prior discussion with the other political forces.

While the HDZ openly supported the declaration of sovereignty,⁹⁸⁴ the SDS saw in it a move towards the secession of BiH from Yugoslavia and vigorously opposed it.⁹⁸⁵ On the other side, the response of the civic parties was varying, revealing some nuanced, yet crucial differences in terms of the broader viewpoints about the crisis and its solutions. The SDP endorsed the Declaration; his secretary Krsto Stjepanović recalled that the struggle for the sovereignty and the indivisibility of BiH has always had the support of the (former) Communists and, therefore, the stance of the SDA and of the SDP on this point were “identical”.⁹⁸⁶ During a joint meeting, the SDP guaranteed full support also to the HDZ on the issue of sovereignty.⁹⁸⁷ The SSO-LSBiH supported the principle of sovereignty, which is logical given the traditional pro-Bosnian stance of the organisation,

⁹⁸² “Nakon razgovora SDA i SDS o suverenitetu BiH. Sporna i druga verzija”, *Oslobo enje*, February 22, 1991.

⁹⁸³ Andjelić, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 197.

⁹⁸⁴ “Skupština HDZ u Lištici. Suverena BiH, bilo kako”, *Oslobo enje*, February 17, 1991.

⁹⁸⁵ “Saopštenje savjeta SDSBiH. Deklaracija neprihvatljiva”, *Oslobo enje*, February 21, 1991.

⁹⁸⁶ “Tribina SK-SDP u Biha u. Partija budu nosti?”, *Oslobo enje*, February 10, 1991.

⁹⁸⁷ Krsto Stjepanović, reported in “Razgovori izme u HDZBiH i SDPBiH. Realni interesi i isti ra uni”, *Oslobo enje*, March 17, 1991.

but raised doubts on the SDA's "usurpation" of that concept, labelling the Declaration as an example of the "absolutisation of national interests".⁹⁸⁸ The SRSJ, instead, did not take a clear stance on the Declaration. Initially, it expressed a rather negative assessment on the issue. SRSJ's member Zoran Pajić complained that there were inadequate references to Yugoslavia and that only constitutional changes, and not mere declarations, should be submitted to institutions;⁹⁸⁹ a party statement affirmed that despite some acceptable principles, the Declaration could not be supported as it "only came from one or two peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina" and was used as a political tool.⁹⁹⁰ Later on, the SRSJ was available to support a declaration on the sovereignty, should it define BiH as a citizens' republic in the frame of Yugoslavia, and should the document be signed by all three nationalist parties.⁹⁹¹

These different stances reflect the dilemmas existing in the civic camp on how to combine a pro-Yugoslav commitment with a pragmatic approach in a scenario where the federal option was being dismantled; it also shows strategic and organisational differences. The SDP and the SSO-LSBiH were republican-based parties; they still maintained an emotional, rational and ideological commitment to Yugoslavia, but lacked any connection and immediate, tangible interests outside the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina; hence, the emphasis on sovereignty is understandable. On the other hand, the SRSJ was still a pan-Yugoslav party and its leader was still the highest Federal authority in the State, which explains their higher concern for reaffirming that they belonged to Yugoslavia and for protesting against the supposedly unilateral move of "one party and one nation" (hence, the SDA and the Muslims). It is remarkable that, as the Declaration was kept frozen for months by the SDA-SDS conflict, each of the three civic parties separately submitted its own alternative document in order to seek a negotiated solution for the impasse. The SDP issued a "statement on sovereignty", basically echoing the principles announced by the SDA but with a more emphasised reference to the unity of Yugoslavia as "a rational and integral democratic state", as well as a civic-integrative conception of citizenship (Bosnia-Herzegovina as "a democratic country of equal

⁹⁸⁸ Rasim Kadić, reported in "Konferencija za štampu u SSO-DS BiH. I anketari po ključu", *Oslobođenje*, April 12, 1991.

⁹⁸⁹ Zoran Pajić reported in "Komisija za ustavna pitanja SRBiH. Ustavno ili neustavno, pitanje je sad", *Oslobođenje*, February 9, 1991.

⁹⁹⁰ "SRS BiH. Vladajuća koalicija", *Oslobođenje*, March 9, 1991; "Konferencija za novinare u SRSJ BiH. Protiv tripartitne udruživanja u politici", *Oslobođenje*, April 27, 1991.

⁹⁹¹ "Konferencija za štampu SRSJ za BiH. Ante neke stvari", *Oslobođenje*, May 18, 1991.

citizens” without mentioning the sovereignty of the three constituent people, as the SDA Declaration did).⁹⁹² The SRSJ proposed a similar statement, though adding a further reference to the Yugoslav unity (“The guaranteeing holder of the common interests about which the corresponding representatives of the republics, citizens and people, will be Yugoslavia”) and reinserting the sovereignty of the constituent peoples.⁹⁹³

The most articulated proposal came from the SSO, which submitted a draft of the new Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina, drawn up by the renowned and independent academics Zdravko Grebo and Tarik Haveri, which relied on a radically non-ethnic, civic-integrative conception. In its article 1, the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was defined “a democratic country of its citizens, based on the human rights, the civil freedom, the rights of property and social justice. The power stems from the people and belongs to the people, as a community of free and equal citizens”.⁹⁹⁴ It is remarkable here the use of the term *narod*, which in Serbo-Croatian assumes the meaning of both “people” and “nation”. *Narod* was therefore commonly employed in the latter conception and in ethno-exclusivist terms, as a core concept in the nationalist parties’ narrative at that time. What Grebo and Haveri implied, on the contrary, was an all-inclusive and integrative concept of a properly Bosnian-Herzegovinian collective of individuals enjoying a unique political identity.

None of these proposals was approved by the Parliament, due to the indifference of the ruling nationalist parties, and they did not manage to obtain significant visibility in the public space either. Some more space for cooperative attitudes, joint discussions and proposals among the civic parties would have been necessary. In late October 1991 a Forum of the Parliamentary Civic Parties of BiH (lit. *Forum Parlamentarnih Građanskih Partija BiH*), gathering SDP, SSO-LSBiH and SRSJ, was formed, definitely too late for putting forward an active and concrete solution for the crisis.⁹⁹⁵ On the other hand, the debate on sovereignty remained at the top of the political agenda for various months, as the Muslim party sought a compromise agreement with the SDS, but the Serb party remained adamant in rejecting it. Therefore, the issue was frozen until the famous and

⁹⁹² “SDP-ova izjava o suverenosti. Aneks vladinom programu”, *Oslobođenje*, April 23, 1991.

⁹⁹³ “SRSJ za BiH. Suvereni narodi i građani”, *Oslobođenje*, June 13, 1991.

⁹⁹⁴ (Lit.: “*Vlast proističe iz naroda i pripada narodu kao zajednici slobodnih i ravnopravnih građana*”). “SSO-DS. Predstavljen nacrt ustava BiH. Republika građana”, *Veernje Novine*, February 26, 1991.

⁹⁹⁵ “Konferencija za štampu Foruma parlamentarnih građanskih partija BiH. Optužnica protiv aktuelne vlasti”, *Oslobođenje*, October 29, 1991.

dramatic overnight session on October 14-15, 1991, when the Parliament adopted a “Platform on sovereignty” promoted by the SDA with the endorsement of the HDZ and a part of the civic opposition. The vote for the platform was preceded by the famously heated debate between Radovan Karadžić and Alija Izetbegović and the walkout of the SDS’s deputies from the Parliament. That episode marked the definitive break-up of the pact among the three nationalist parties and was a crucial moment in the path to war.⁹⁹⁶

The other major controversy in 1991 in Bosnia-Herzegovina was about the so-called *regionalisation*, a campaign moved forward by the SDS, consisting in the creation of regional communities of municipalities (“*zajednice opština*”) where the Serbs enjoyed a majority and where para-legal institutional bodies would be established, relying upon ethno-national criteria and dominated by the same SDS. This campaign actually was the continuation of the creation of the Serb National Councils (SNV) which had been first announced and then suspended in the three regions of Bosnian Krajina, Eastern Bosnia and Eastern Herzegovina in October-November 1990, shortly before the elections.⁹⁹⁷ All these steps replicated those taken by the SDS branch in Croatian Krajina.⁹⁹⁸ The first community of municipalities was created in late April 1991 in Bosnian Krajina; it initially gathered 14 municipalities, all ruled by the SDS, whose main centre was Banja Luka, and proclaimed itself compatible with the Bosnian constitution.⁹⁹⁹ Supporters of “regionalisation” sought to justify the creation of the autonomous communities on economic and administrative grounds, rather than political or ethno-nationalist. Actually, there was a debate in scientific and media circles at Banja Luka and in Krajina about the supposed relative backwardness of the region and the consequent need for a

⁹⁹⁶ “Glasanjem do suvereniteta”, *Oslobo enje*, October 15, 1991. The platform was approved with 136 of 250 votes in favour. Karadžić’s defiant words, openly envisaging the armed conflict, were: “You want to take Bosnia-Herzegovina down to the same highway of hell and suffering that Slovenia and Croatia are travelling. Do not think that you will not lead Bosnia-Herzegovina into hell, and do not think that you will not perhaps make the Muslim people disappear, because the Muslims cannot defend themselves if there is war. How will you prevent everyone from being killed in Bosnia-Herzegovina?”. Izetbegović replied: “His words and manners illustrate why others refuse to stay in this Yugoslavia. Nobody else wants the kind of Yugoslavia that Mr. Karadžić wants anymore. Nobody except perhaps the Serbs. This Yugoslavia and the manners of Karadžić are simply hated by the peoples of Yugoslavia”. Silber and Little, *The death of Yugoslavia*, 215.

⁹⁹⁷ See chapter 9.3.4.

⁹⁹⁸ Two well-detailed studies about the SDS’s “regionalisation” in Bosnia-Herzegovina are: Robert Donia, “The origins of Republika Srpska, 1990-1992. A background report”, ICTY Exhibit P934, *Prosecutor vs. Krajšnik, IT-00-39*, 2002, 1-45; Edin Omerić, “Banja Luka – politički centar AR Krajine (Smrtonosni bal ljeptice sa Vrbasa i zvijeri sa Romanije), 1990 – 1992”, in “Projekat Bosna i Hercegovina u političkoj projekciji intelektualnih krugova od 1991. do 1996”, Sarajevo: IIS-UNSA, 2013, 1-19.

⁹⁹⁹ “Konstituisana zajednica opština Bosanske Krajine Banja Luka”, *Oslobo enje*, April 27, 1991.

decentralizing policy from Sarajevo.¹⁰⁰⁰ Following the path of Bosnian Krajina, by September 1991 other SDS-led communities had been proclaimed in Eastern Herzegovina, Romanija, and Semberija / North-Eastern Bosnia.¹⁰⁰¹

Nonetheless, the real purposes of the operation could already be recognised. The campaign was being realised through an urgent, unilateral and secretive procedure, given that the preparation had come three months earlier, accurately picking the municipalities with a SDS majority (and aiming to annex Serb-led territories from municipalities not ruled by the SDS)¹⁰⁰² with no information or debate neither in the republican, nor in the local institutions. Most of all, the SDS's action was introducing the first open territorial dispute in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian crisis, which was inevitably doomed to lead to highly dangerous situations. As Istvan Bibò wrote, "if a territorial dispute becomes the major problem for a nation, a society which is still non-democratic can be halted on the path of the democratic development. But besides this, even a democratic society can be affected in its democratic spirit".¹⁰⁰³ This was particularly true for Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose national-demographic map resembled a leopard's skin in the majority of its municipalities and practically all its geographical regions, including the Bosnian Krajina.¹⁰⁰⁴ Every unilateral territorial claims inspired by ethnic principles, more or less

¹⁰⁰⁰ "Novo regionalno organizovanje opština Bosanske Krajine. Prirodni ili politički proces", *Oslobođenje*, April 13, 1991; "Reagovanja na ideju i poteze u vezi sa regionalizacijom u BiH. Zna se šta je Krajina", *Oslobođenje*, April 17, 1991.

¹⁰⁰¹ "Konstituisana zajednica opština Istočne i Stare Hercegovine. Tvrdnje o ugroženosti srpskog naroda", *Oslobođenje*, May 28, 1991; Donia, "The origins of Republika Srpska", 25; Omerić, "Banja Luka", 11.

¹⁰⁰² Donia, "The origins of Republika Srpska", 23-24.

¹⁰⁰³ Istvan Bibò, *Regije Evropske povijesti*, Zagreb: Naprijed, 1995, quoted in Sekulić, *Violenza etnica*, 30.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Actually, the big dilemma of Bosnia-Herzegovina's national composition resides in the contrast between the "global" leopard's skin (hence the high heterogeneity at the republican scale) and local patterns of ethno-national homogeneity or absolute majority of one national group over the others. Florian Bieber, *Post-war Bosnia. Ethnicity, inequality and Public Sector Governance*, London: Palgrave, 2006, 14; Bougarel, "Anatomie d'une poudrière", 92-110; Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 59.

The Bougarel's study on the BiH national structure in 1991 recalls that in 60 of the 109 Bosnian municipalities were either "homogeneous" or "majoritarian", hence a group represented more than 60% of the population or more than the double than the second group.

Such pattern was more evident at the rural villages' scale. A mere observation of the figures of the 1991 census at the scale of the "mjesne zajednice" (the "local communities", then the smallest local administrative unity, roughly corresponding with single villages or associations of few in the rural domain, and with urban districts in middle towns and cities) reveals that homogeneous patterns were ordinary in rural contexts; for instance, they could be noticed even in urban contexts, particularly in suburbs (for example, an homogeneous structure in some local communities in Ilidža, Vogošća, Ilijaš and Stari Grad, suburbs of Sarajevo, can be observed). These homogeneous villages, though, were often side by side with homogeneous villages of other groups.

camouflaged with economic-administrative arguments, would raise mutual existential threats and fears, encouraging further ethnic self-segregation among the population.

Already at the end of 1991, the narrative of the SDS's elite would eventually shift to the concept of "vital space and territory" where the Serb people lived and that they should defend from the potential immigration of the Bosnian Muslims.¹⁰⁰⁵ Not by chance, the communities would eventually change their name in autumn to "Serb Autonomous Regions" (*Srpska Autonomna Oblast*, or SAO); after that, their ethnic nature was made clear. Furthermore, the mobilisation of Bosnian Serbs was strictly connected with that of the Croatian Serbs, as testified by the cooperation Agreement between the self-proclaimed regions of Croatian Krajina and Bosnian Krajina signed on June 24, 1991. Such agreement provided a perspective of a unification of the Krajinas as a base for a brand new and Serb-led Yugoslav state which would rely upon ethno-regional units rather than the republics.¹⁰⁰⁶ This, in turn, grew the appetites of SDS' members for establishing new institutional patterns (hence, new opportunities for political power and resources' control) as well as stirred up concerns and fear for all those who were committed with the existing order of Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁰⁰⁷

The "regionalisation" campaign was rejected and condemned outright by all the non-Serb parties represented in Parliament. The SDA refused even to discuss any chance for decentralisation, maintaining a firmly unitarist stance ("the whole Bosnia-Herzegovina is one canton, one region").¹⁰⁰⁸ The HDZ, too, opposed the SDS's move although with less emphasis, likely in order to not preclude the recourse to the same expedient in the Croat-led areas (something that eventually happened in 1992). On the other side, all civic parties harshly criticized the SDS's initiatives, emphasizing its illegal and illegitimate character. However, it is remarkable that they displayed variable stances on the issue of the regionalisation itself that, even in this occasion, reveal some different

¹⁰⁰⁵ Omerić, "Banja Luka", 12.

¹⁰⁰⁶ "Zajednička skupština SAO Krajine i zajednice opština Bosanske Krajine. Deklaracija o ujedinjenju", *Oslobođenje*, June 28, 1991.

¹⁰⁰⁷ However, Donia ("The origins of Republika Srpska", 26-27) explains that the leadership of the Bosnian SDS was rather cautious, and somewhat concerned, on the possible unification of the two Krajinas, mostly for tactical reasons: Karadžić did not want to provoke yet the Bosnian government into hostile measures. Moreover, the SDS's policy was focused to defer "extreme actions" waiting the other actors (Slovenia, Croatia, HDZ-SDA in BiH) to violate the Yugoslav constitutional order first. Local members of the SDS in the Bosnian Krajina were, instead, generally favourable to the unification.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ejup Ganić, "BiH – jedan kanton", *Oslobođenje*, June 21, 1991.

viewpoints existing in the non-nationalist camp about the framework of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The SDP, similarly to the SDA, had a rigid attitude towards the decentralisation of the republic, even in the case that it relied on non-ethnic principles, since regions would inexorably lead to the dissolution of BiH. Its president Nijaz Duraković decidedly rejected any option of “cantonisation” or “regionalisation” stating that “it does not have any historical or theoretical base, neither economic reasons, nor political sense. This is only an indirect way to break the territorial integrity of BiH and its state-political identity”. Duraković sharply blamed those who evoked a Belgian and a Swiss model, arguing that Bosnia-Herzegovina did not have the minimal pre-conditions to apply it (consolidated historical tradition, civil society and market economy that would made the national belonging “irrelevant”); finally, Duraković complained that cantonisation, as a universal principle, was only advocated for Bosnia-Herzegovina but not for all the other Yugoslav republics, “which are not at all less complex, less culturally variegated, less economically and historically heterogeneous than Bosnia-Herzegovina”.¹⁰⁰⁹

The SRSJ and SSO-LSBiH, instead, developed a more flexible approach on the issue. The Reformists advocated a regionalisation of BiH based on economic principles and respecting the “European criteria”.¹⁰¹⁰ The Mostar branch of the SRSJ, for instance, supported a “regional initiative” for Herzegovina, given its “comparative advantages and historical connections”.¹⁰¹¹ The SRSJ advocated the same model for all the federal republics (a “three-level Yugoslavia”).¹⁰¹² The SSO-LS was initially cautious on the subject,¹⁰¹³ but throughout the year 1991, shifted to an open endorsement of the regionalisation as a compromise solution. Its president Rasim Kadić argued that “the efficacious solution to the question of nations and minorities is to replace the current tendency of republic centralisation with the trend of regionalisation, what is actually the acceptance of the liberal viewpoint on the organisation of the state. [...] It is a model of

¹⁰⁰⁹ Nijaz Duraković, reported in “Pokušajte drugdje”, *Oslobo enje*, June 19, 1991.

¹⁰¹⁰ Tadej Mateljan, Dragan Kalinić, reported in “Konferencija za štampu SRS za BiH. Bosna će opstati”, *Oslobo enje*, June 13, 1991. In that occasion, Kalinić said sharp words than can be interpreted as an implicit criticism against the SDP’s negative stance on regionalisation (“We must be aware that in Europe the trend of economic integration and political regionalisation go together and the Reformists will support it. The Reformists, therefore, are not willing to discredit in advance, on the model of the bolshevik logic”).

¹⁰¹¹ “Mostarski reformisti stupaju u akciju. Hljeba, a ne političkih igara”, *Oslobo enje*, May 19, 1991; “Regionalni odbor SRSBiH za Hercegovinu. Ekonomija, pa politika”, *Oslobo enje*, July 13, 1991.

¹⁰¹² “SRSJ za BiH. Tužna zbilja”, *Oslobo enje*, September 7, 1991.

¹⁰¹³ “Konferencija za novinare SSO-DSBiH. Novo ime liberalna stranka”, *Oslobo enje*, April 23, 1991.

resolution of conflictive situation on all the grounds (political, economic, national, cultural, communications, ecologic)".¹⁰¹⁴

Discrepancies among civic parties about the territorial framework of Bosnia-Herzegovina apparently deepened by the end of 1991, while the crisis was escalating. The SDP maintained its staunch and principled opposition on the subject. SSO-LSBiH and SRSJ, instead, accepted to discuss plans about a regionalisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina that would *also* (though not chiefly) take into account the national criteria as a negotiating tool. The SSO-LS issued a proposal for constitutional reform that included a bicameral Parliament, a "Chamber of Citizens" and a "Chamber of Regions". Kadi commented to me: "We proposed that, because regions are natural and not [based] on ethnic composition, [...] they are a logical alternative of the representation of interests. We proposed that to soften the ethnic element and, at the same time, to satisfy ethnic interests. We were even ready to accept a voluntary change of the borders of the municipality in BiH which would take into account the ethnic criteria, so that some villages would join the municipality of the corresponding ethnic community, but just let us do it peacefully... These were some principles in order to not go to war".¹⁰¹⁵

There was open friction between the SRSJ and the SDP about this issue. Sejfidin Toki, then a Reformists' cadre, recalls: "We advocated regionalisation as a constituent principle of the future constitutional arrangement of BiH. [...] We stated that the cantons, or regions, would be organised according to economic, cultural, national [*with emphasis, author's note*] and geographic criteria, but we were criticised by the SDP for this. Nonetheless, even today I am proud about that stance".¹⁰¹⁶ On the other side, Ivo Komši explains his stance as a SDP's member: "I later supported cantonalisation, but at that time, in 1991, it was a different concept. At that time, even the Reformists advocated that concept, but [...] those regions would be formed nationally, nothing else. The regionalisation would bring about the division of BiH, immediately after the formation of the regions. They would become national regions, that is, Serb regions, Muslim regions, Croat regions, and they would go wherever they want. We did not support that. We supported a united state, at least to defend Bosnia as a state. And after that, we would

¹⁰¹⁴ "Iz centra ili iz kornera", *Oslobo enje*, September 21, 1991.

¹⁰¹⁵ Rasim Kadi, interview by author. Sarajevo, May 23, 2012.

¹⁰¹⁶ Sejfidin Toki, interview by author. Sarajevo, July 5, 2012.

see”.¹⁰¹⁷ This dispute hailed essentially from the different political cultures existing in the civic camp: the SDP kept the traditional stance of Bosnian Communists based on republican centralism, whereas the SRSJ and the SSO-LSBiH were respectively a recent and a highly renovated political organisation, both showing more readiness to devise alternative solutions to overcome the impasse. Given that civic parties had, in any case, an extremely narrow space for political manoeuvre due to their scarce numbers in Parliament, their fragmentation and their inability to elaborate and advocate shared solutions can be considered as another lost opportunity for a civic-based solution to the crisis.

In the course of 1991, the most challenging issue for civic parties was how to tackle the issue of the citizens’ insecurity. Besides the socio-economic crisis and the internal political polarisation, the overall path to the dissolution of Yugoslavia had obviously major repercussions on Bosnia-Herzegovina, both in the strategies of the institutional actors and in the perceptions of the citizens. The unstoppable route to the secession of Slovenia and, most of all, the first armed clashes in Croatia in March-April 1991 between Croatian units and the Serb militias of the so-called Serb autonomous regions, brought into question the status and the behaviour of the actors dealing with security, i.e., the police and the Army, once the Yugoslav state would definitely collapse or completely change its nature. If we follow the press reports of the time, since May-June 1991 tensions or mobilisations along ethno-national veins seemed to escalate and began to appear also outside the chronic foci of national strains of 1989-90 (namely Nevesinje, Bratunac-Srebrenica, Foča, Western Herzegovina). In various cases, as Zvornik, Pale, Derвента, Rogatica and Višegrad, it was the change of local police’s head officers for alleged nationalist interests that triggered collective concerns, mobilisations and political speculations from all the sides.¹⁰¹⁸

The other crucial themes of political debate and mobilisation were the Yugoslav Army and its stance in regard to the Bosnian and Yugoslav crisis. The JNA was fully supported by the SDS as the protector of Serb interests, ambivalently approached by the

¹⁰¹⁷ Ivo Komši, interview by author. Sarajevo, July 13, 2012.

¹⁰¹⁸ “Barikade pred skupštinom opštine. Sve zbog komandira”, *Oslobo enje*, May 17, 1991; “Slobodan Kovačević, predsjednik SO Pale: Ne emo specijalce”, *Oslobo enje*, May 17, 1991; “Šta se događa u Zvorniku. Spisak ubijenih Srba”, *Oslobo enje*, June 8, 1991; “Križa u skupštini opštine Derвента. Nema strana kog dogovora”, *Oslobo enje*, May 22, 1991; “Protesti. Blokirana zgrada milicije”, *Oslobo enje*, June 15, 1991.

SDA¹⁰¹⁹ and staunchly opposed by the HDZ as an occupying force. Until mid-1991, civic parties still respected the formal role of the JNA as a protector of the interests of Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, what reflected again their staunch pro-Yugoslav stance and their commitment with the legal framework. Still in late August, the SDP asked the JNA to return to its pan-Yugoslav nature.¹⁰²⁰ Of course, in that moment the social-democrats did not know yet that the JNA had begun to arm the Serb militias as early as the spring of 1991, and that one of its main task was, as his commander-in-chief Veliko Kadijević acknowledged, “the full control of Bosnia-Herzegovina with the ultimate goal of defending the Serb nation”,¹⁰²¹ in accordance to the so-called “RAM plan” devised by Army highest generals in agreement with Slobodan Milošević. For instance, both the SDP and the SRSJ sharply condemned the secession of Slovenia and Croatia in end June 1991, in vain claiming the respect of the federal institutions. “The death certificate for Yugoslavia, which had been signed by Greater Serbia hegemonists, has been finally confirmed by the Slovenian and Croatian potentates”, said Nijaz Duraković on the day after the declaration of independence of Ljubljana and Zagreb,¹⁰²² a sentence that symbolically reveals the extreme historical frustration suffered by the actors who were excluded by the arrangements between Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.

¹⁰¹⁹ During 1991 Izetbegović “still sought to cooperate” with the Army, calling it to safeguard the Bosnian borders, but at the same time preparing its own military unit under the Patriotic League. Marco Attila Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed*, London: Saqi Books, 2004, 22.

¹⁰²⁰ “SDPBiH. JNA mora opet biti opštejugoslovenska”, *Oslobođenje*, August 29, 1991.

¹⁰²¹ Hoare, *How Bosnia armed*, 31-37; Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada*, 93.

¹⁰²² “Konferencija za štampu SDPBiH. BiH hegemonisti ki polygon”, *Oslobođenje*, June 27, 1991.

10.4. Conclusions

In the end of 1991 civic parties had no political space for action, given the recourse to extra-institutional means by the actors in power and the changes in the Yugoslav framework, which would inevitably have consequence in BiH provided that there was no chance for an agreement among nationalist parties. Civic parties were forced either to change abruptly their discourse, either to definitely disappear from the scene. The SDP turned pro-confederal and later, at the beginning of 1992, pro-independence *only as a last-resort option*. Actually, still in September 1991, social-democrats were sceptical about a possible referendum for independence since it would be “counterproductive” and would destabilise Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁰²³ They surrendered to pro-independence stances only after it became definitely clear that the breakup of the Second Yugoslavia was irreversible and accepted by the international actors. The SSO-LSBiH, too, switched to a pro-confederal, and later pro-independence, stance. The SRSJ itself experienced its own secession after the autumn of 1991, when the majority of its Serb deputies gradually left the party and later abandoned also the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Parliament in order to join the institutions of the self-proclaimed Republika Srpska.¹⁰²⁴ The SRSJ, one of the main actors of the civic option, and probably the one which had raised the highest social expectations for heading a democratic, non-ethnic and pacific transition, fell victim of the partition along the ethnic lines. The end of the SRSJ is an illustrative example of the immense amount of pressure, ideological and existential twists, and sudden changes in political and moral categories that affected the individual and collective actors in a context of a broad social disintegration. In any case, the crucial defeat for the SRSJ and the other civic parties had already happened one year earlier in the ballot boxes.

¹⁰²³ “Iz SDP. Konzensus ili prijevremeni izbori”, *Oslobo enje*, September 2, 1991.

¹⁰²⁴ The remaining Reformists turned into the Union of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Social Democrats (*Unija bosanskohercegova kih socijaldemokrata*, UBSD) in 1992. It merged with the SDP in 1999.

CONCLUSIONS

The factors that led to the defeat of the non-nationalist political actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the short democratic transition (1989-1991) can be summarized as follows:

1) The civic option in Bosnia-Herzegovina remained politically fragmented, and in some occasions (such as the electoral campaign in 1990 or some crucial points of the 1991 crisis) was polarized. These divisions decisively contributed to undermine its chances. The (post)-Communist sector, represented by the SKBiH-SDP and by its ally, the DSS, switched to social-democracy in the course of 1990, but its public narrative and symbolic references were still deeply contaminated by the traditional strongholds of the old Titoism. The post-communists were haunted by a stigma of dogmatism, authoritarianism, mismanagement and corruption (“*hipoteka iz prošlosti*”) that was attributed to them and would duly exploited by the narratives of both nationalist and other Bosnian civic parties prior to the 1990 elections. On the other side, out of a social-liberal or liberal-democratic *milieu* emerged various actors and various strategies, either seeking to reform the structures of the past regime from within (the dissidents of the “Bosnian Initiative”, the youth wing SSO), or from the intellectual domain and from the latent civil society (UJDI), or through élite-driven movements seeking to mobilize a social base around a combination of pro-market reform and a Yugoslavist approach (SRSJ). These organizations were somewhat more willing than the SKBiH to develop alternative forms of social participation, as well as to advocate innovative solutions for the institutional framework of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia. Those social actors kept a distance from the post-Communists more for strategic than for ideological reasons. Any chance of non-national coalition, or at least cooperation, was excluded, whereas nationalist parties paradoxically followed a pragmatic convergence, as they needed to legitimize and reinforce each other in order to impose ethnification as something deeply-rooted, persistent and inescapable in the society of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Once the formal transition to multi-party system was completed, the substantial ideological discrepancies between post-Communists and liberal-socialist progressively diminished but certain difference in practices, language and strategies remained. Some

kind of cooperation among the various civic actors or, at least, a common agreement on minimal platforms inspired by democratic and non-ethnic principles would have been a necessary, though not at all sufficient, pre-condition to re-legitimize a civic option for Bosnia-Herzegovina, particularly in crucial moments such as the 1990 electoral campaign, when ethnic-based mobilization was on the rise, or the 1991 crisis, when the republic was already on the brink of dissolution.

2) The transition to multi-party system in Bosnia-Herzegovina was completed in a slow and unsteady basis. At the beginning of 1990, there were still strong resistances within the SKBiH against democratization, relying on the argument that nationalist parties would automatically appear and destabilize the country, which was a remarkable self-fulfilling prophecy. A proof of such reluctance is the attempt of the Communists to call for “supposedly” multi-party elections in March 1990, under the old institutional and electoral rules, without a political reform. Although this move was finally aborted, the definitive constitutional changes establishing the rules for multi-party system would be completed only in July-August 1990. The conservative attitude of the Communists damaged the non-national and liberal opposition, which would have needed more stable conditions to organize itself and articulate its own political proposals.

On the other hand, the removal of the ban on nationalist parties, in July 1990, was a turning point in the Bosnian transition. It seemed to provoke a counter-productive effect: 1) in the first half of 1990, the nationalist parties were *de facto* operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina, either exploiting socio-economic frustrations in the rural territories, or setting up from élite-driven organized circles; they successfully presented themselves as the supposed “victims of repression” and the expression of a sort of authentic democracy grounding on collective-national interests. 2) The same parties were active in the neighbouring republics, and particularly in Croatia, where they had already been fully legalized. Hence, applying the ban only in Bosnia-Herzegovina would require a further deployment of authoritarian means that the Sarajevo government was not able, and probably not willing, to use anymore. 3) The crucial initiative for the removal of the ban came from the judicial power (the Constitutional Tribunal of Bosnia-Herzegovina), not from the political power. The SKBiH hesitantly attempted to oppose the decision and then suddenly changed their stance, accepting the removal. It only served as proof of its political vulnerability. 4) While keeping the ban on nationalist parties, the SKBiH

fostered the illusion that it could still keep maintain the power and *status quo*, and significantly delayed to tackle the broad social changes occurring in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as within the same party.

While the actors of the civic-liberal opposition only depended on their own resources, for the SDA, HDZ and SDS nationalist parties it was less difficult to set up their territorial networks in short time and hostile circumstances. This was so because they benefited from their links with the three clergies (Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim) and, in the case of the HDZ and of the SDS, from the active support of the Belgrade and Zagreb centres of power. The ethno-national principle offered an immediate resource for mobilization, with its reference to existential aspects such as individual and collective security, religious affiliation, social traditions, and control of “our own resources”. Therefore we can find, in the 1990 electoral campaign, the preliminary stage of the “politics as a form of biological obligation” that would definitely take shape in wartime and post-wartime Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁰²⁵ National-based ideas did not require many arguments or debates, whereas civic-based ideas, relying on complex political principles (reformed socialism, social-democracy, liberalism, models combining changes in welfare and market integration...) should have needed further elaboration and diffusion in order to develop themselves and to reach broad segments of society.

The enormous difficulties that the Alliance of Reformist Forces (SRSJ) encountered in spreading its organization and discourse in the 1990 campaign is a remarkable example of the complexities that a civic party must overcome to pierce into a political arena affected by the ethno-national reinterpretation of economic frustrations, divisive memories and religious revivals. Actually, the Reformists attempted to launch an emotional and patriotic vision connected to Yugoslavism. The involvement of popular characters from TV, music, cinema and sport was directly aimed to retrieve a pan-Yugoslav and an inclusive pattern of cultural and symbolic references opposing the particularistic approaches of nationalist parties. Even the strong personalization of the leader Ante Markovi , presented as the country’s saviour who would resolve the crisis through knowledge and expertise instead of fear and improvisation of ethnic or republican autocrats, could be paradoxically interpreted as an effort to convey an emotional

¹⁰²⁵ Asim Mujki , *We, the citizens of ethnopolis*, Sarajevo: Centar za Ljudska Prava, 2008, 22-23.

Yugoslavism, although this irrational dimension was overwhelmed by Markovi 's extremely technocratic and calm approach. However, Reformists did not succeed in mobilizing a broader social base, especially outside the urban and cosmopolitan *milieu*, where the traditional social channels (religious organizations, kinship and familiar relations) were rather favourable to nationalist parties.

3) The political system established in 1990 basically adopted consociational traits, that is, with a *proportional representation* in the Parliament (each of the three main national groups, plus the others, had to be represented according to the quotas of the 1981 census, with a 15 percent margin allowed) and an almost completely *equal representation* in the collective Presidency (2 Muslims, 2 Serbs, 2 Croats, 1 other). In other words, the “national key” (*nacionalni klju*) which was unofficially applied in the Communist political system, was now adapted and institutionalised. The consociational approach was symbolically affirmed in the article 1 of the amended Constitution, defining BiH as a country of citizens, nations and nationalities. **The Communists’ denial to advocate an integrative option**, based exclusively or chiefly on a Bosnian-Herzegovinian citizenship, **was a lost chance that further contributed to the legitimization and the success of nationalist parties**. This model reinforced the idea that electoral bodies and social interests were separated along ethnic lines. It is remarkable that in November 1990, in the parties’ electoral lists for the republican and for the municipal assemblies published in the press organs, the national belonging of each candidate was indicated alongside his/her name,¹⁰²⁶ as to reiterate that every *voted* citizen relied on a double affinity and a double representation of interests, the party and the nation. Consequently, each *voting* citizen should take into account both the party and the nation when expressing his/her preference. Ethno-national belonging affirmed in itself a basic criterion for electoral preference, political representation and social legitimacy.

¹⁰²⁶ Among the hundreds of candidates for the Parliament, the only completely implausible national identity seems to be the one of a certain Dražen Petrovi , the no.2 in the list of the SSO-DS for the Chamber of Citizens in the district of Sarajevo. He was listed as an “Eskimo”.

Given that the SSO-DS was a youth movement and one of the most committed to a non-ethnic conception of citizenship, it is easy to assume that it was a voluntarily provocative gesture against the obligation of national self-declaration (actually, this circumstance is confirmed in “Naša Stranka, sve što ste željeli da pitate a niste imali ko”, *Klix.ba*. Accessed September 9, 2015. <http://forum.klix.ba/nasa-stranka-sve-sto-ste-zeljeli-da-pitate-a-niste-imali-ko-p8279802.html>).

In recent years, the self-definition of “Eskimo”, together with those of “Jedis” and “Martians”, has arisen in the national census of ex-Yugoslav countries as a symbolical and provocative gesture, either for consciously political or for simply jeering purposes.

On the other hand, it must be remarked that shifting to an integrative approach would not have been simple at all for the Bosnian Communists. First, in a context of deep transitional uncertainty about the fate of Yugoslavia, it was hazardous to bring into question the *nacionalni ključ*, a relevant (though not formally recognized) principle regulating the political and administrative system that was believed to have guaranteed equality, enhanced good inter-ethnic relations and prevented nationalism in the last decades. Second, it would have been difficult to promote an integrative principle of Bosnian-Herzegovinian citizenship when a specific supra-national Bosnian-Herzegovinian historical-political identity had never been fully promoted by the Communist rule. The SKBiH's official discourse still connected the origins of the "statehood" of Bosnia-Herzegovina to its foundation during the anti-fascist struggle of the Second World War, rather than with a centuries-old continuum. It is true that in the 1970s and 80s a sort of united Bosnian-Herzegovinian political identity had consolidated at the very top of the political system, an identity which was embodied by politicians committed with the pan-republican interests.¹⁰²⁷ However, at lower levels, national interests began to gain prominence as local government functionaries and managers of small firms began to use nationalism (often cynically) as a means of reinforcing their power and control. Changing the consociational paradigm in 1989-90 was a too difficult and audacious challenge for the inexperienced and weak leadership of the Communist party. It would have been even more difficult for its social base, which was mainly committed to old analytical frameworks and conditioned by pressures and prejudices, particularly diffused in conservative-oriented sectors and in the Serb-led or Croat-led regions, about an eventual domination of the Muslim community – demographically the strongest – should an integrative option prevail.

4) A strong and widespread social dissatisfaction towards the ending communist rule is a relevant factor in the **de-legitimization of the whole non-nationalist option**. During the 1980s, discontent grew in large sectors of society, even in those sectors which were traditionally more involved in the official structures and in the party, such as industry workers and public administration workers, as they were affected by rising unemployment or by the erosion of salaries and savings due to the skyrocketing inflation. On the other hand, categories who were already relatively marginal in the party, such as

¹⁰²⁷ Andjeli, *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 35-38.

liberal professions, farmers, youth, and the emerging sector of private owners, were seeking new forms of representation with which to pursue their interests. The material interests, connected with social advantages and status prestige that the membership into the party formerly guaranteed, were also decaying. Besides the economic crisis, the public perception of the cases of mismanagement, nepotism and corruption that had embroiled the SKBiH in the late 1980s considerably fuelled the social frustration and discontent, which was also logically amplified by the gradual and drastic decline of the ideological fundamentals of socialism, culminating with the fall of the Berlin wall and the breakup of SKJ.

On the other side, the three national parties appeared in 1990 as the only coherent “opposition force” in Bosnia-Herzegovina and succeeded in capitalizing the *vote against* the government. Furthermore, they relied on ethnicity, which encompasses familiar, kinship and religious networks of social relations, intra-group proximity, solidarity and protection. In the context of the economic crisis of the late 1980s, these elements that in a certain way worked as replacements of the welfare state were decisive in re-legitimizing the ethnic option as an efficacious alternative both to the reformed socialism advocated by the post-Communists and to the market-oriented social liberalism embodied by Reformists and liberal-oriented movements.

Social dissatisfaction affected not only the League of Communists, but also the other non-nationalist actors. The reforms programme of Ante Marković reached its peak in popular consensus in the first half of 1990, when the initially positive effects of its anti-inflationary and stabilization measures on Yugoslav economy clashed with the deliberate indiscipline of the Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian governments. The Prime Minister and his movement, the SRSJ, failed to mobilize a broad social base around its programme. Moreover, Marković’s reforms were already implying, and were believed that would imply in the middle- and long-term, high social costs in terms of salaries’ reductions and jobs losses, especially in highly subsidized or technologically obsolete sectors. Nationalist parties were able to take advantage of these fears to the effects of the transition to a market economy.

5) In any case, it would be highly misleading to restrict the factors of the non nationalist parties' defeat to the sole context of Bosnia-Herzegovina. **The influence of the overall polarization and dissolution of Yugoslavia, and in some cases the direct interference of external actors (from Serbia and from Croatia) on the destabilization of Bosnia-Herzegovina,** played a crucial role in hampering a peaceful political transition and the chances of a civic option in the republic. In the late 1980s, the institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the leadership of the SKBiH received enormous pressures from Belgrade's military and political circles; after the political change of 1990, interferences also came from Zagreb. Warnings of Army intervention, threats of social mobilizations in order to overturn the Bosnian government, intervention of security services and territorial claims from the neighbour republics left confused the generally young and inexperienced leadership of the SKBiH. The Bosnian Communists resisted these pressures and managed to keep the unity of the party; they never "split along ethnic lines". But, on the other hand, this accumulation of interferences only increased the Communists' hesitancy on the crucial issues of political transition. The direct intervention of Croatian and Serbian actors is also noticeable in the setting up of the two respective nationalist parties, the HDZ and the SDS, in the course of 1990. The Zagreb and Belgrade nationalist centres of power decisively assisted in the composition of the leading cadres, the organization and the strategy of the two parties as a tool to favour their own broad political purposes.

In addition to those deliberate interferences, the general repercussions of the events in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia were inevitably enormous. As Burg and Shoup argued, "It was, in fact, unrealistic to expect the Bosnians to resist on their own the whirlwind of nationalist emotions that was sweeping over the entire country".¹⁰²⁸ This research has showed how the various turning points in the Yugoslav crisis brought immediate shifts in the narratives and agendas of the Bosnian actors. It must be recalled that *all the three* national parties came into the political arena with a somewhat cautious and moderate discourse. Since the Yugoslav-wide crisis was escalating and the perception of existential security, though, they quickly felt legitimized to adopt radical stances. By consequence, they growingly advocated "ultimate" and "extreme" solutions that would have appeared unacceptable only weeks earlier. The whirling acceleration of the SDS's

¹⁰²⁸ Burg and Shoup, *The war in Bosnia*, 58.

ethno-regionalization following the clashes in Croatian Krajina (first in August-October 1990, then, decisively, after March-April 1991) and the innumerable changing views of SDA on the sovereignty and independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina, ensuing from the steps of Croatia and Slovenia towards secession between mid-1990 and mid-1991, are two remarkable examples.

The outcome of the Bosnian political transition cannot be, in any case, solely attributed to the social or national conflicts within the republic. Bosnia-Herzegovina was not generally “divided along ethnic lines” before the 1990 elections. Certainly, this research has retraced some relevant local episodes of homogenisation and even incidents on national grounds in 1989-1990, which found fertile ground on socio-economic frustrations in certain areas (Nevesinje, Gacko, Bratunac/Srebrenica, Western Herzegovina, Foča). However, those mobilizations were heavily conditioned by the changing overall context of Yugoslavia. First, also in these cases, there were political movements, institutions and media of the neighbour republics which directly helped in ethnic homogenisation. Second, the emergence of polarizing leaders, aggressive symbols and extreme options for the future of Yugoslavia had immediate repercussions on the individual sphere of the citizens. Namely, people perceived that extreme uncertainty in the state-wide political relations among the republics (hence, among national groups) would automatically imply shifts in the relations of power at a local level and, therefore, for their personal experience in the workplace, social activities, personal relations, etc., even where the inter-ethnic relations were perceived as positive. This intersection of “natural, actual, daily” “global, political, deduced” and dimensions of inter-ethnic relations¹⁰²⁹ is evidenced, for what concerns the result of the 1990 elections in BiH, in the scheme of “double prisoners’ dilemma” that the present research has introduced. The majority of voters in Bosnia-Herzegovina chose nationalist parties not because of pro-ethnic mobilization, but because of a double security-related dilemma: at the Bosnian, republican-level, “I vote for ‘my own’ nationalist party because voters from the *other ethnic groups in Bosnia* would do so”; at the Yugoslav, federal level, “I vote for ‘my own’ national party because voters from the *other republics in Yugoslavia* have already done so, or would do so”.

¹⁰²⁹ Baki, “O naciji, religiji”, 31-32; Bougarel, “Anatomie d’une poudrière”, 120.

6) During the transition, all the Bosnian non-nationalist parties had a firm pro-Yugoslav stance, both in terms of political viewpoint and of cultural-symbolical references. It is remarkable that they still supported the unity of Federation in the course of 1991, and even for some time after the secession of Slovenia and Croatia had marked the definitive breakup of Second Yugoslavia. Therefore, **the defeat of the civic option in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the overall decline of Yugoslavism are strictly connected.** Two key issues must be considered here.

The first issue lays in the misrepresentation and exploitation of the Yugoslavist concept by Slobodan Milošević's regime in Serbia and the Army circles: in 1989-1991, Yugoslavism became growingly identified with the centralist, unitarist and hegemonist option sought by Belgrade. Actually, the Bosnian non-nationalist parties initially resisted to this assimilation: the post-Communists maintained their classical stance, acting as the "Last Mohicans" of the framework established by the 1974 Constitution, vigorously defending the old model even when it was heavily targeted by all the main political actors of the "Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian" axis. Reformists and liberal-oriented actors, instead, elaborated more innovative, detailed and concrete proposals for a new institutional scheme, always within the frame of a united Federation. But on the other hand, the overall polarization between Slovenian-Croatian secessionism and Serbian unitarism pushed the civic actors on the defensive. A remarkable example of such dilemmas is the Reformists' failure to take sides on the debate between the "federal" (i.e. *status quo* or slight recentralization) and the "confederal" (i.e. complete decentralization) option for Yugoslavia during the 1990 electoral campaign. This stance was adopted in order to support the mediating role of Ante Marković in the Yugoslav crisis, but was largely interpreted as a sign of political hesitancy that decisively weakened the Reformists' electoral chances.

The second issue resides in the peculiar republican-centred feature of the Yugoslav transition. Namely, the first multi-party elections in Yugoslavia were celebrated at the republican, sub-state level *before* than (or, better said, *instead of*) the federal, pan-Yugoslav level. We must remember here Linz and Stepan's famous theory: such sequence of electoral processes would decisively contribute to "state-disintegrating dynamics" because it would incite nationalist republican-based forces to "make a stronger claim to democratic legitimacy via elections", feeling authorized to disobey central authority and

pursue their separatist or hegemonist purposes after the electoral victory, whereas union-wide and non-national parties would hardly emerge in a context of “narrow, compounding, exclusive” political identities. This was the opposite of what happened in the Spanish transition, where the first all-union legislative multi-party elections in 1977 preceded the regional sub-state elections.¹⁰³⁰

Actually, this research has showed that the Prime Minister Ante Markovi sought to advance a broad plan of reform of the Federal institutions which would have implied the calling of all-union elections by the end of 1990. Such event has been overlooked in the literature about the Yugoslav crisis and brings some new perspective on the analysis of the Markovi’s role in the transition, usually depicted as exclusively focused on economic restructuring but lacking a political programme. Yet, while it is true that Markovi’s project of “Third Yugoslavia” had a strong economic component, *it did include a political agenda of reforms*. The problem is that it was ill-timed and devoid of institutional authority, being strenuously blocked by the Serbian and Slovenian parliamentary groups, which exploited the veto powers granted by the 1974 Constitution. Provided that it would be improper to open a mere “what-if scenario”, this work suggests that the lack of federal elections was a trap for the Bosnian (and Yugoslav) non-national actors. Their organizational and electoral potential would have been definitely higher in a state-wide multi-party framework, which would offer more incentives for mutual cooperation and re-legitimize a Yugoslav sphere of political identity and operability. Therefore, the absence of federal elections was one of the spectres that haunted the political transition in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

¹⁰³⁰ Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Political Identities and Electoral Sequences: Spain, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia”, *Daedalus*, 121, 2, 1992, 123-139.

This article is very frequently quoted in the literature about the Yugoslav crisis. However, it goes into detail about the URSS and especially the Spain context, but lacks a deeper historical framework and some more precise references to the Yugoslav case. Furthermore, there are very few studies about Yugoslavia that have tried to expand the Linz’s and Stepan’s theory. For a critical analysis, see Palacios, “Democratización y estatalidad”, 5; 580-581. Palacios claims that the potential federal elections would have produced, in all cases, “a parliament fragmented in national blocks” where no majority could have been possible without the agreement of the different republican elites.

Final remarks

The ethno-national principle in Bosnia-Herzegovina emerged as a *reaction to the complex challenges* of social and political transition: the legacy of socialist self-management, the doubts about its substitution with market economy, the expectations about changes of the political regime which could alter societal and national relations. The socialist self-management in Yugoslavia, whose purpose was to democratize economy and society through the direct participation of workers in decision-making processes, had accomplished modest achievements. The conjunction of a strongly hierarchized and elite-restricted political system at the state level, of a growing centralization of power at the sub-state republican level, and of a multiplication of structures at the local municipal level, created a highly distorted institutional framework. The political rule was highly dispersed and fluid, leaving huge empty spaces for local potentates. Such degree of mobility of the real power made the political authority to appear “permanently out of reach”,¹⁰³¹ leading to social frustration and a crisis of representation. Moreover, the adaptation of the remnants of the self-management system to a market economy appeared problematic: there were significant technological delays and legal voids, such as the enigma of social property, an artefact which was “everybody’s and nobody’s” since it did not belong neither to the State, nor to the managing sector.¹⁰³² The main civic actors were either blamed for the impasse left (the Communists), or were perceived as politically impotent to implement credible solutions (the Reformists and liberals). Nationalist movements surfaced as a response to uncertainty and to crisis of representation, managing to present themselves as the true voice of the wide masses.

The effectiveness of the nationalist option in the Bosnia-Herzegovina of 1990 stems from multiple self-attributed characteristics. Nationalism was *immediate*, because it was solidly grounded on well-established social assets (religious organizations, kinship solidarity networks) and on simple and instant themes for mobilization, such as the social and existential security. Nationalism presented itself as *natural*: ethno-national belonging, unlike ideological-political belonging, imposes itself as a social attribution

¹⁰³¹ Sekuli , *Violenza etnica*, 55.

¹⁰³² Veiga, *La trampa balcánica*, 328.

that cannot be chosen or rationally debated;¹⁰³³ something, therefore, non-rational, perennial, essential, substantial; in other words, a social reality that must be institutionalized.

Nationalism was *adaptable*, encompassing broad social sectors and political beliefs, and meeting the expectancies that everyone created in his/her own sphere of political beliefs or individual aspirations. Those who sought a change saw in nationalist parties a double chance: first, they expressed a vote against the system; second, they sought a new social order for his/her own social mobility. Those who sought continuity and stability, indeed, saw in nationalism an intrinsically conservative force; in the public sphere, it would defend (and promote) social traditions and religious principles; in the individual sphere, it would protect his/her status gained as member of the superior collective interest. In other words, nationalism was able to present itself as a two-faced model: a protection from external threats and uncertainties (*pro- status quo*) and a tool to subvert the existing order (*against status quo*). Such ambivalence of ethnic parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina matches the characteristics attributed by Anthony Smith's to nationalism: a "chameleon-like ability to transmute itself according to the perceptions and needs of different communities and competing strata, factions and individuals within them".¹⁰³⁴ Smith identified another ambivalence in how nationalism saw the "values of modernity": "on the one hand, the technological, economic and military power associated with Western modernity commands respect, even emulation; on the other hand, there is a deep revulsion against what appears to be the social and moral breakdown endangered by unregulated rationalism and unbridled progress".¹⁰³⁵ This dual attitude towards modernity was understandably crucial in 1990, in a country that had just turned post-Communist, where the Western market-oriented paradigm sparked euphoria for the prospect of individual wealth as well as fears for the possible loss of social protection and uncertainties about the consequences in lifestyles, hierarchies, and social statuses.

As a consequence of such flexibility, nationalism became *acceptable* and *credible* for broad segments of the Bosnian society. The chapters dedicated to nationalist parties showed how, at least until the 1990 elections, they skilfully mixed moderate and radical

¹⁰³³ Mujki , *We, the citizens of ethnopolis*, 86; Nenad Kecmanovi , interview by author. Banja Luka, June 26, 2012.

¹⁰³⁴ Anthony Smith, *Nazioni e nazionalismo nell'era globale*, Trieste: Asterios editore, 2000, 30.

¹⁰³⁵ *Ibidem*, 96.

discourses and managed to attract various social sectors. On the one side, they not only displayed a stance of mutual non-aggression, but developed an (apparently) convergent attitude, showing willingness to negotiate the terms of a new Bosnia-Herzegovina depurated of the “regime” while actually reproducing the spirit of the “good neighbourhood” (the “*komsšiluk*”), that is, the co-existence of three compartmented and almost completely self-ruling social bodies. This “reassuring” attitude secured the support of the more moderate social sectors who sought guarantees for their own status. Simultaneously, the occasionally more aggressive stances, envisaging the most extreme and exclusivist solutions, were a source of mobilization and hope for the most frustrated and marginalized social segments.

The non-nationalist actors could not count on such social and symbolical resources. The Bosnian Communists still controlled a relatively large infrastructure, but they had suffered an overwhelming fall in popular support, being deeply and inevitably affected by the post-1989 disillusionment (the “fall-of-the-wall” atmosphere) and the dissolution of the SKJ. The global circumstances, as well as those related with the Bosnian and Yugoslav context, made the post-Communist option hardly acceptable and natural to the eyes of Bosnian voters. The stigma of dogmatism, mismanagement and corruption (“burden of the past”) attracted widespread public rejection and only fostered the ability of nationalism to bring the “moral regeneration of the community into a close relationship, if not harmony, with the political mobilization and self-determination of its members”.¹⁰³⁶ Bosnian Reformists and liberals, on the other hand, lacked organizational networks and had very few time and resources in order to build them. The “latent civil society” that had emerged in the 1970s and 1980s thanks to the tolerance of self-managing socialism,¹⁰³⁷ and that had advocated an alternative Yugoslavism, was trapped within the republican borders of the political system. Reformists and liberals would have definitely needed a pan-federal sphere of action to articulate their options; the sub-state scale of transition, instead, only incited particularism and fragmentation.

The outcome of the 1990 election was decisive in marginalizing the civic option, not only because of small numbers in Parliament, but also in terms of historical-symbolical projection. The triumph of nationalist parties in the 1990 elections has been

¹⁰³⁶ *Ibidem*, 30.

¹⁰³⁷ Tatjana Sekuli , *Violenza etnica*, 54.

widely interpreted as a *definitive and permanent plebiscite* in favour of the tri-ethnic compartmentation of the country. This research considers, on the contrary, that it was a *contingent result* marked by *ordinary political factors* (vote against the ruling government, security issues...), albeit under *extraordinary historical circumstances* at both the global and pan-Yugoslav levels. Moreover, nationalist parties won the elections on the implicit indication that they were willing to reach some sort of mutual agreement after reaching the political power, but they blatantly violated this principle since the immediate aftermath of the vote. International actors also fell into this trap. The first initiative of the European Community, the Cutileiro Plan in February-March 1992, just prior to the outbreak of the conflict, actually took for granted a partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ethno-national units, although vaguely softened through the creation of small-sized cantons.

The legacy of the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, besides the immense human, physical, ethical and social destruction, resides in the persistence of an institutional system fully based on ethnic representation. The framework established by the Dayton Peace Agreement is based on national quotas, huge veto powers for each of the three national “clubs” at the state-level, and on ethnic-only or ethnic-led territorial organs (the two Entities, namely the Republika Srpska - Serb-led -, and the Federation of BiH - Bosniak and Croat-led - the Federation of BiH is, in turn, divided into ten Cantons). Such system, apart from being immensely dysfunctional, further “essentialises” and reinforces ethnic identification, while completely discouraging non-national political organization. Actually, pro-civic actors have not disappeared at all, but their performance in the ethnopolitic arena remains entangled in electoral rules designed for ethnic bodies and in social dynamics (namely, extended networks of clientelism and narratives of existential danger for the community) that permit the reproduction of ethnocracy.¹⁰³⁸

¹⁰³⁸ The SDP has remained a crucial actor in the politics of Bosnia-Herzegovina and even succeeded to be the most voted party in the state-wide parliamentary elections twice (2000, 15.8% of votes; 2010, 17.3%); yet, in both cases it needed to form a coalition with nationalist parties and did not achieve any substantial political change. In recent years the SDP itself has become *de facto* an only-Bosniak party, almost disappearing from Serb-populated and Croat-populated areas; furthermore, it has been heavily affected by cases of clientelism and intra-élite tensions that caused its split and to the formation of a separate party, the Democratic Front, in 2013. Another non-nationalist party with a social-liberal and secular program, *Naša Stranka* (Our party) appeared on the political scene in 2008 but obtained marginal results at state-wide elections.

Twenty-five years of ethnocracy did not bring to the “moral and cultural regeneration”, let alone the country’s socio-economic recovery. Nationalist parties had won the 1990 elections, among other things, by attributing the “burden of the past” to the Communists. After 25 years, they have already accumulated their own burden of the past made of ethnic-based dogmatism, oppression, mismanagement and clientelism. The issues at stake for civic movements in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina have been, and to this day remain, the same: 1) how to de-ethnicise the general political discourse in BiH, shifting the focus to socio-economic issues; 2) how to tackle the “*hic et nunc*” dilemma of the division of the country, namely the consociational, ethnic-based institutional model, and elaborate a solution which could be acceptable also for the most centripetal communities, logically Bosnian Serbs and Croats; 3) how to reconstruct a united *political* identity for Bosnia-Herzegovina, inspired on a “constitutional patriotism”¹⁰³⁹ which would not bring into question the *cultural* pluralism of the different nations, and therefore would not allow ethnic parties to denounce any “biological danger” for collective and individual survival.

¹⁰³⁹ Sekuli , *Violenza etnica*, 34; Cvitkovi , *Hrvatski identitet*, 30.

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ANNEX




Image 1. The three national flags (Serb, Muslim, Croat), tied together in a national party's rally during the 1990 electoral campaign. Though it is not specified, the picture was probably taken at the SDA's rally in Koševo stadium, Sarajevo, on October 6. The SDA wanted to represent a sign of "togetherness and peace between the people of BiH". Source: *Oslobo enje*, November 25, 1990. Photo by Danilo Krstanovi .



Image 2. Photos from the SKBiH's rally "Bosnia says no" (Bosna kaže ne) in front of the Eternal Flame in Sarajevo, on May 25, 1990 (Ve ernje Novine, May 26).


GRADANKE I GRADANI BOSNE I HERCEGOVINE !
STRANKA REFORMSKIH SNAGA
 PITA :
KO JE VAŠA POUZDANA VEZA
SA SVIJETOM ?

Osoba A/



Ili neka od osoba

b/ **c/** **d/** **e/** **f/**



NAGRADA :
Sedmodnevni boravak u Njujorku – za dvije osobe !
Odgovore slati do 18. 11. 1990. na adresu: SRS BiH,
JNA 28, Sarajevo. Telefon: 213-

Image 3. Reformists' propaganda style. "Citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina! The Party [sic] of Reformist Forces ask you: who is your [most] reliable connection with the world?" [A is Emir Kusturica, film director and a Reformists' member, while the others are prominent members of nationalist parties: Muhamed Filipovi , Adil Zulfikarpaši , Fuad Muhi , Davor Perinovi , Vojislav Maksimovi]. Prize: a 7-day trip to New York for two people! Send your answer to this address: SRSJ BiH, JNA, 28 [the party's headquarters]". Source: *Oslobo enje*, August 18, 1990.

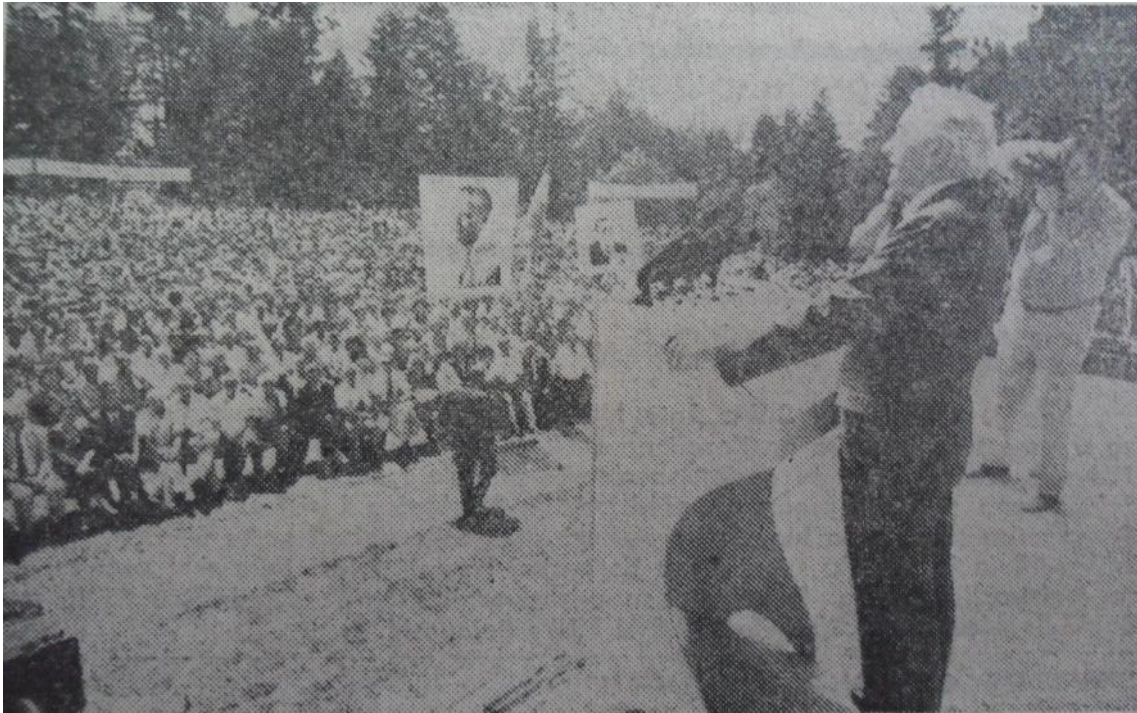


Image 4. Ante Marković at the Kozara ceremony, on July 29, 1990, announcing the creation of the Alliance of Reformist Forces. (*Veernje Novine*, July 30, 1990).

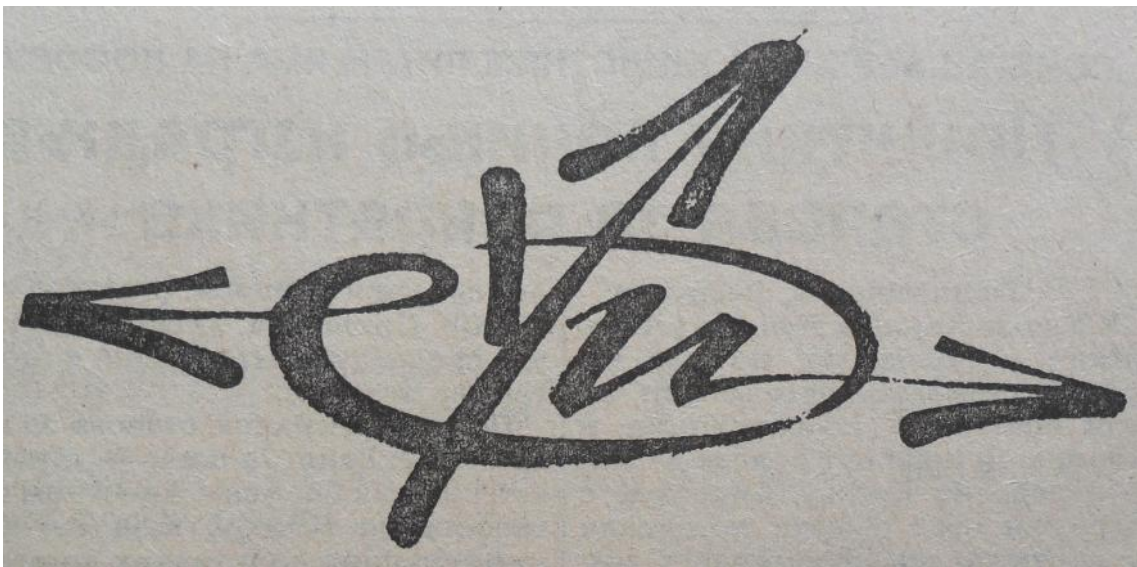


Image 5. The institutional logo of the Ante Marković's Federal Government, designed by Miodrag Nedeljković and presented in February 1990, aiming to portray dynamism and modernisation. It can be considered as the most prominent graphic symbol of the Marković's project of a "Third Yugoslavia".