

Instead, most of them seemed to see Western Europe and the United States as constructive influences, though less effective or interventionist than they should have been. Mihailo Crnobrnja, who was Yugoslavia's ambassador to the European Community during those difficult days, explained that the EC (now EU) had accepted the obligation of solving Yugoslavia's crisis, but had chosen the wrong instruments. "The EU," he said, "is an economic giant and a political pygmy. It tried to build up its political strength. Its economic strength probably would have been more effective as an instrument to pacify." In 1990 Prime Minister Markovic went to Brussels and talked with the EU chief, Jacques Delors, requesting economic support. Although Yugoslavia had passed all its economic conditions with ease, Markovic returned home empty-handed, having failed to meet the political conditions imposed by the European Union, which was itself divided and immobilized by the conflict between Germany versus Britain and France.

The two main political problems in 1990 to which the EU had objections were Kosovo and the need for federal elections. Serbia was accused of violating the human rights of Albanians in Kosovo.<sup>7</sup> Everywhere there was a rising ethno-nationalism which the European Union expected the Yugoslav leaders to reduce somehow. This daunting political obligation was further complicated by the fact that it was already impossible to hold free multi-party federal elections: Slovenia was on the road to secession and would no longer accept any central Yugoslav government stronger than a confederation, to which there could be no direct election of government officials.

The EU expected to reward Yugoslavia economically *after* it had handled this array of political problems, whereas Markovic was doomed unless he *first* secured the EU's aid for use as leverage against ethno-nationalist leaders. Eleven months later, said Crnobrnja, the EU officials realized they had made a mistake. They came to Yugoslavia offering economic aid, stipulating as a condition only that the factions settle their issues in a democratic way. By then it was too late.

Still, Crnobrnja stated, the EU attempted to stop the mounting violence and hold Yugoslavia together by political means. This effort was welcomed by Markovic and also by the Serbs who were led by Milosevic because they too wanted to maintain the "territorial integrity of Yugoslavia." The Slovenes and Croats had to accept the EU's

<sup>7</sup>The allegations have been well-documented, showing, for example, that the Albanian majority were and are denied equal access to education and health services.

belated involvement (grudgingly so, because they wanted outright recognition) which for about six months included a military embargo, suspension of trade agreements to Yugoslavia, economic concessions to the republics that were seceding, diplomatic peace missions and conferences, and the monitoring of cease-fires.

The first free multi-party elections in all the republics were held between April (in Slovenia and Croatia) and December 1990 (in Serbia) in a country that was already politically divided. Though they were not fair, the West accepted them, and even if they had been fair, Tadjman and Milosevic would have been elected. Anti-Communist coalitions won everywhere except in Serbia, though everywhere (including Serbia) the winners were nationalistic parties only masquerading as anti-communist. Since elections on the federal level were not held (hardly anyone wanted them), these results were seen as a vote for the break-up of the country and legitimized the demand for secession by the new leaders in Slovenia and Croatia.

Although there were varying opinions in different countries and some leaders were ambivalent, for a long time there was little overt pressure from the international community either to encourage or discourage the break-up of the country. Quietly, however, Austria and Germany had been supporting Croatian separatists during the eighties. Finally U.S. Secretary of State James Baker visited Belgrade for one day, June 21, 1991, meeting representatives of all sides. Darko Silovic claims that Baker could not understand the problem, and left everyone there confused by appearing to agree with them all. He was against independence and secession, but also against the use of force. He said the United States would not intervene. The Federal government and Presidency of Yugoslavia concluded that federal army could intervene because the U.S. did not want the country to break up.

Western diplomats, including Baker, evidently believed that it might be possible to find a mutually acceptable solution to the problem through mediation. They did not comprehend that some Yugoslav leaders wanted war and were preparing for it throughout all negotiations.

On June 25 1991, four days after Baker's visit, these two republics declared independence and at last the West began to take the situation seriously and respond. Against the wishes of the Serbians, the European foreign ministers forced the election of the Croatian representative, Stipe Mesic, as president of the Federal Presidency and brokered a three month suspension of independence of Slovenia and