

place there, often confounding transitory political differences with ethno-nationalism.

As soon as the World War II fratricide was over, Tito insisted that his people adopt (or at least feign) a spirit of brotherhood and unity. As Konstanty Gebert noted, the lingering hostilities were covered up, not healed. There was no Croat leader comparable to Willy Brandt to kneel and apologize for the atrocities Ustasha Croats had inflicted on Serbs, and indeed it became impermissible even to discuss who had perpetrated war crimes against whom.<sup>19</sup>

While acknowledging the significance of these long-term historical factors, several speakers insisted that there is nothing uniquely acrimonious about ethnic relations in the Balkans. Those who had been Yugoslav nationals agreed on that point, noting that in many areas Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks had lived together harmoniously for generations, frequently intermarrying; this would not have been possible, had their conflicts been over-determined by cultural history. Instead, the speakers agreed that politicians had recently stirred up nationalistic hatred for their own malevolent ends, using the press in a purposeful way. It worked. For example, in the few parts of Serbia where there was continuous access to the free media, support for Milosevic never became as complete as where the state-controlled media were the only source of information.

However problematic it may be, nationalism is so widespread as to be considered a normal phenomenon. That in Yugoslavia it led to such extraordinary violations of human rights must be explained, not just in terms of nationalism itself, but by its combination with the political legacy of totalitarianism. Formerly communist politicians in Yugoslavia, unfamiliar with pluralism, evidently could not assimilate the idea of democratic compromise. As their party, the League of Communists, lost its monopoly on power, they simply sought an alternative basis for monopolizing power and reached out for ethnicity. The creation of a state with only one ethnic group seemed to be a natural substitute for the previous state with its one party. Each

<sup>19</sup>Noting the parallel, most speakers saw little prospect that the crimes of the current war will be fully exposed, despite the tribunal taking place in The Hague. Some participants went further, asserting that they would not be satisfied by having a man here or there charged with war crimes; every Yugoslav who did not oppose the war is guilty, and especially all the Yugoslav presidents (except Kiro Gligorov of Macedonia) should be taken to The Hague for the crime of starting a war against one's own people.

ethnic group and its leader wanted its own state. "Ethnic cleansing" was not just an incidental side effect of the break-up of Yugoslavia; it was the *whole point* of breaking up the country. As Bogdan Denitch put it, "Any society that defines the ethnic group as the political nation cannot, by definition, be a democratic state because that creates two classes of citizens. It is anti-democratic even if it has majority support; majority support does not make it democratic. There are moments when the majority in a community is in favor of violence."

#### Lessons about Nationalism

It is probably impossible to formulate a general recommendation that offers much prospect of preventing the spread of nationalism. However, it should be possible to keep politicians from successfully whipping up nationalistic hatred for their own purposes. Bogdan Denitch suggested an approach that should have been taken seriously. He complained that the West had treated "those bandits" as legitimate political leaders, whereas the whole world should have refused to have any dealings with the republics' nationalist leaders (e.g. Tudjman and Milosevic, but others as well) or the war criminals who served them (e.g. Mladic and Karadzic, but others as well). Some other participants stated that only the prime ministers of the federal state (e.g. Markovic) should have been treated as the legitimate leaders of the country. The elections and referendums that were held in the republics were not fair, and the international community should not have treated them as valid.

#### Weakness of Civil Society

Totalitarianism begins when a government takes control of many aspects of social relations — not only dispensing jobs and access to food and social services, but even regulating private clubs, churches, and charitable organizations. As Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out in his early analysis of democracy in America, political pluralism depends on the flourishing of such independent institutions. Accordingly, those who are now trying to establish democracy in the formerly communist countries are placing great emphasis on supporting the non-governmental realm, designating it as "civil society."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>The main private source of such support comes from the financier George Soros, whose money one of our speakers, Sonja Licht, is in charge of disbursing in Belgrade for a wide array of private humanitarian and cultural initiatives and to projects promoting a free press. Soros spends more money