

It was only with great difficulty that a few institutions remained which spread information and interpretations contrary to that of the state. These included Radio Zid in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Radio B92, and papers such as Vreme, Nasa Borba and Republika of Belgrade, Serbia; and, papers such as Novi List of Rijeka and Feral Tribune of Split, Croatia.

Lessons Regarding Freedom of the Press

Without free media, it is impossible to have free elections. All too little was done by the international community to strengthen the autonomous press. This is the lesson: Whenever a state is seen to be manipulating the press, democratic states and non-governmental organizations should organize to assure the diversity of news sources and political debates throughout the country, especially to opposition parties. This can be accomplished, for example, by funding powerful short-wave broadcasting stations of the kind that penetrated the Eastern bloc during the cold war, and by using diplomatic and economic pressures to protect freedom of speech and the rights of journalists. Another less expensive way of providing information in repressive states is to provide funding and technical assistance to independent organizations who wish internet access.

Militarism and the Celebration of Violence

Another significant factor, pointed out by Schaeffer, was the regime's prolonged celebration of the Partisans' victory in the civil war of the 1940s. This glorification of war not only legitimized violence, but perpetuated the bitterness of those citizens who had been defeated, as well as of those victims whose suffering was never recognized. Moreover, the country continued to rely on a military system that kept the populace armed and ready to wage war on their own initiative in defence of their own local areas. The army, which comprised many Serbs who had been targets of Croatian, Muslim, and Albanian fascists, remained loyal to the central government in Belgrade. As communists they had followed Tito because they were communists and Partisans, opposing ethnic conflict and directing their struggle against the Nazi-fascists instead. This loyalty enabled Tito's successors in Belgrade to resist any dissolution of their authority, even while various factions remained in a state of readiness for civil war. The price was that the Yugoslav army became a Serbo-Montenegrin armed force, and thus part and parcel of an ethnic civil war, instead of being a barrier against it, as the Partisans had been half a century before.

Yugoslavia maintained one of the ten largest armies in Europe, a military-industrial complex, and a political culture to support it. The memory of the Partisan guerrillas remained vivid and the new generation was ready for a similar war. The United States had been a major supplier of weapons since Tito's break with Stalin; some of those howitzers and fighter planes would be used in the wars in Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992-95

During the 1980s, the notion of "non-provocative defence" became popular among peace researchers, who argued in favor of short-range weapons that could be disseminated quickly throughout the countryside. Such weapons were supposed to make it difficult for an invading force to conquer the country. Yugoslavia's armed forces were mainly of this type. Unfortunately, the disadvantage is that such a military structure can easily be appropriated by factions and used for fighting an internal war.

Lessons About Militarism

Possible lesson: More effort should go into teaching reconciliation, conflict resolution, and civic cooperation than into glorifying warfare or preparing for it. Possible lesson for foreign countries: Beware of expressing favor or appreciation to another country by supplying it with weapons; you may not have any influence over the uses to which these weapons will be put.

Nationalism

There was much discussion in the conference of the resurgence of ethno-nationalism — hostile rivalries between the various populations of South Slavs inhabiting the region. It is well-known that there are culture "fault lines" in the area where several old lines of cleavage coincide, piling one basis for social differentiation upon another: distinction on the basis of religion (Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic), of dialect (but not of language, for the Slavic languages are mutually intelligible, especially the Serbo-Croatian linguistic variants¹⁸), of script (Cyrillic or Latin), and of history (boundaries between the old Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian Empires). These fault lines have sometimes been described as the place where the "tectonic plates" of three civilizations meet. Whether or not that is accurate, it is true that some of the bloodiest fighting of World Wars I and II took

¹⁸Non-Slavic minority languages (notably Albanian and Hungarian) are not mutually intelligible.