

**From Nationalist to Europeanist: the rise and fall of national movements in
Slovakia and Croatia**

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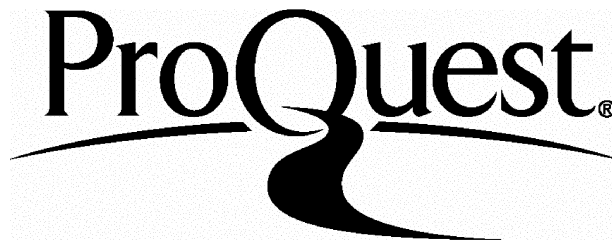
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Abstract

Using Slovakia and Croatia as case studies, this work looks at the formation, maintenance, and eventual defeat of national movements in new states. In doing so, it pays special attention to the development of the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) and Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) as national movements, examining what the two parties looked like at the time they were established and how they evolved throughout the decade as they responded to new threats and challenges. Because of the policies and rhetoric promoted by the two parties, many analysts have claimed that nationalism was a pivotal element in the establishment and development of the HDZ and HZDS and of Croatia and Slovakia as independent states. Although on the surface nationalism seems to have played a major role, in fact the approach of the ruling parties appeared as much authoritarian as it was nationalist, as everything was subordinated to the state, nation, and ruling parties. Evidence suggests that the ideology of nationalism was simply used by those parties as a tool to build influence and retain power, enabling them to justify the exclusion of unfriendly elements from society. The two parties' national credentials can be called into question because in certain areas — particularly the economy, culture, and foreign policy — the HZDS and HDZ in practice appeared more concerned with the personal gain of party representatives than with fulfilling their promise of promoting the national interest.

In the second half of the 1990s, the activities of the independent media, trade unions, and civic associations helped contribute to the development of a more democratically-oriented civil society in Slovakia and Croatia. Despite frequent attacks on them by the HZDS and HDZ, such groups actively pointed out the contradictions between the nationally-oriented rhetoric and self-serving practices of the ruling parties in an effort to bring political change. The political opposition, which was often disunited and ineffective earlier in the decade, finally managed to pull together by the time of the 1998 elections in Slovakia and the 2000 elections in Croatia. Its popularity benefited from the activities of civil society organizations, which helped to ensure that the populations' frustration was not channeled into radical parties or voter apathy, thereby contributing to the nationalists' defeat.

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Section One: The Rise of National Movements and the Political Mobilization of Populations

Chapter 1: The Discourse of Nationalism

The economic upheaval and general uncertainty associated with the fall of communism gave political elites throughout Central and Eastern Europe the opportunity to maneuver relatively freely, if only for a limited amount of time. The need to launch deep economic and political changes provided elites with the ability to devise new programs, legislation, and bureaucratic structures. At the same time, they were given the chance to forge a new public discourse for the post-communist era. Insecure and vulnerable during the first years of the transition period, the populations of the region were often swayed by politicians offering easy solutions to difficult problems, while those using rational arguments were frequently unpopular.

In many post-communist countries, the protection of the nation served as the main rallying point, as leaders tried to convince the populations that if the national question were resolved, all other problems would disappear. In cases such as Romania, where the focus on the nation was made in already existing nation-states, policies were implemented to promote the nation and limit the rights of ethnic minorities, bringing governments short-term rewards from the majority population. At the same time, however, those same governments often failed to satisfactorily address the fundamental economic and social problems facing their countries. Although corruption was prevalent throughout the region, it was often considerably more visible in countries that followed the Romanian model, sharply conflicting with the governments' claims that they were promoting and protecting national interests. An alternative model was put forward in the Czech Republic, where politicians promised riches through quick economic reforms, using the ideology of civic liberalism in persuading the population that there was only one path to prosperity. Nonetheless, there was also an element of nationalism in the Czechs,

who were encouraged to identify themselves as a nation of hard-working capitalists rather than as lazy socialists.¹

The national question played a key role in mobilizing populations in various republics of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union prior to the collapse of those multi-ethnic entities in the early 1990s. After the creation of independent states, some politicians considered their ultimate goal to be fulfilled, and they were anxious to advance their new country toward prosperity and democracy, which in many Central and East European states had become synonymous with the “return to Europe.” The three Baltic states and Slovenia largely followed that model. For others, however, the establishment of the new state was only the first step, and there was a subsequent effort to strengthen national identity, silence ethnic minorities, and protect the nation against outside influences. In such cases, a crucial question is whether such steps were taken out of a deeply held belief in the importance of the nation or whether they were simply taken out of a desire to hold onto power. The most obvious case of such an approach came in Slobodan Milošević’s Yugoslavia; however, elements of that model were utilized in other countries as well, including the two countries that are the focus of this study: Slovakia and Croatia.

Using Slovakia and Croatia as case studies, this work looks at the formation, maintenance, and eventual defeat of national movements in new states. In doing so, it pays special attention to the development of the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) and Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) as national movements, examining what the two parties looked like at the time they were established and how they evolved throughout the decade as they responded to new threats and challenges. Because of Croatia and Slovakia’s geographical position and historical and cultural influences, it may have appeared obvious that the two nations would eventually turn toward the West. However, Croats and Slovaks were pulled in another direction in the early 1990s. In parliamentary elections in 1990 and 1992, respectively, the Croats and Slovaks were influenced by nationalist rhetoric, and the HDZ and HZDS were voted into power as they played on

¹ For more on the Czech national identity, see Ladislav Holy, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: National identity and the post-communist social transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

people's insecurities. Although not calling for outright independence, both parties made the national question a priority, and the populations were affected in their voting decisions by their perceptions of HDZ Chairman Franjo Tudman and HZDS Chairman Vladimír Mečiar as strong leaders who would stand up for national interests.

When Croatia and Slovakia gained independence in June 1991 and January 1993, respectively, both could be considered middle-income reform states that began the post-communist transformation process in a "zone of choice." In such cases, "political elites and the prevailing political values can shape choices that decisively determine the nation's future evolution."² Thus, the countries could either launch a transition to democracy that would ostensibly lead to "a return to Europe," or they could shift toward populism and nationalism. Although the two alternatives were not completely black and white and could in fact be mixed, the use of elements of the second option — reflected in policies to strengthen national identity, silence ethnic minorities, and protect the nation against outside influences — often led to political pressure from the West and stigmatization that set countries back on their path toward European integration. Both the HDZ and the HZDS chose to concentrate more on the second alternative than the first.

The achievement of independent states had a significant effect on the development of the HDZ and HZDS. On the one hand, independence provided the two parties with the ability to establish new rules of the game, as they became the guiding force in the new states. On the other hand, however, the two parties were forced to find a new approach and to seek a stable constituency that would keep them in power. Because of the policies and rhetoric promoted by the two parties, many analysts have claimed that nationalism was a pivotal element in the establishment and development of the HDZ and HZDS and of Croatia and Slovakia as independent states. Upon independence, the HDZ and HZDS embarked on a mission to strengthen national identity and instill loyalty to the new state, using nationalist rhetoric to repeatedly win elections and remain in power, especially in the case of the HDZ. Although on the surface nationalism seems to have played a

²See Paul Lewis, "Theories of Democratization and Patterns of Regime Change in Eastern Europe," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* vol. 13, no. 1 (March 1997), p. 12.

major role, in fact the approach of the ruling parties appeared as much authoritarian as it was nationalist, as everything was subordinated to the state, nation, and ruling parties. Evidence suggests that nationalism was simply used by those parties as a tool to build influence and retain power. In certain areas — particularly the economy, culture, and foreign policy — the two parties were in practice not always fulfilling their promise of promoting the national interest but actually appeared more concerned with the personal gain of party representatives.

Although the leadership and populations of Slovakia and Croatia for the most part believed that their nations belonged to the West and supported their countries' integration into the European Union (EU) and NATO, both countries in 1997 failed to be included in the first group to begin accession talks with the EU and in the first wave of NATO enlargement, largely because of a perception that the ruling parties were insufficiently committed to democracy. Under the leadership of the late President Tudman, Croatia's international isolation was considerably more severe than that of Slovakia. That was mainly because of Croatian involvement in the war against the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina and subsequent tendency to treat that country as an extension of the Croatian state rather than as an independent entity, the slow progress in returning ethnic Serbian refugees who were expelled from Croatia during 1995 police and military operations, and Croatia's lack of cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. Unlike Slovakia, Croatia was prevented from joining NATO's Partnership for Peace program, from gaining an Association Agreement with the EU, from receiving assistance under the PHARE program,³ and even from becoming a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). Especially in the case of Slovaks, the decisions on NATO and EU enlargement were influential in convincing people that their leaders were failing them.

In the second half of the 1990s, a more democratically-oriented civil society was slowly evolving in Slovakia and Croatia thanks to the activities of the independent media, trade unions, and civic associations, which pointed to the contradictions between the nationally-oriented rhetoric and self-oriented practices of the ruling

parties. The political opposition, which was often disunited and ineffective earlier in the decade, finally managed to pull together by the time of the 1998 elections in Slovakia and the 2000 elections in Croatia, and its popularity benefited from the activities of civil society organizations, helping to ensure that the population's frustration was not channeled into radical parties or voter apathy.

The demographic factor was also important in the changing political tide; the new generation of voters that emerged was less likely to be swayed by nationalist rhetoric because of the different environment in which it was raised. Opinion polls in Slovakia showed that first-time voters were significantly more democratically orientated than the older generation, and their votes went overwhelmingly to the opposition parties.⁴ In Croatia, an opinion poll conducted shortly before the 2000 elections showed that just 12 percent of first-time voters supported the HDZ, compared with 29 percent of pensioners.⁵

With the emergence of popular political alternatives, ruling elites found it difficult to keep the populations mobilized in their favor particularly as growing portions of the populations were becoming increasingly concerned with economic problems and lack of democracy and were no longer willing to make the nation a priority. Although the HDZ and HZDS may have been successful if they had adjusted their discourse and policies to the new situation, instead their behavior and rhetoric became increasingly erratic as they chose to further radicalize their discourse in an attempt to frighten populations about possible threats to independence from within the nation. The parties' leaders often appeared to be fumbling as they took steps to block their competition and scrambled to latch on to issues that would resonate among the wider population in an attempt to reestablish the appeal they had had in the early 1990s. Rather than contributing to increased popularity at home, however, such moves only succeeded in increasing Croatia and Slovakia's international isolation and in discouraging the opposition parties from forming future alliances with the HDZ and HZDS.

³ Croatia's assistance under the PHARE program was halted after the 1995 military and police operations.

⁴ See Olga Gyárfášová et al, "First-time Voters and the 1998 Elections," in Martin Bútora et al (eds.), *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia* (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1999), pp. 233-243.

⁵ *Globus*, 12 and 19 November 1998.

As founders of the new Croatian and Slovak states, the HDZ and HZDS had the necessary means to promote their visions of society. However, the parties lost support as they adopted an increasingly nationalist stance, signaling that they were unable to find what resonated in modern national terms. While the HDZ and HZDS had been successful in feeling the pulse of the population in the early 1990s, by the end of the decade they appeared to have lost touch with ordinary voters. That was not reflected only in a decline in public support, which in the case of the HZDS was not so great between 1992 and 1998, but was manifested even more convincingly in the growing determination of non-HZDS and HDZ voters to see those parties defeated. Thus, an atmosphere prevailed in which many Slovaks and Croats voted against the ruling parties rather than for the opposition.

By the time of the 1998 elections in Slovakia and 2000 elections in Croatia — the first to be held after the 1997 decisions on NATO and EU enlargement — the electorate in both countries resolutely demonstrated that they no longer wanted to “protect the nation” at all costs through supporting their “founding fathers” but instead favored other politicians who promised improved economic well-being, greater adherence to rule of law, and a “return to Europe.” Thus, although the ruling parties’ rather haphazard mixture of sometimes conflicting policies and rhetoric was successful for much of the decade, the increased organizational ability of alternative actors and their closer connection with the desires and needs of the population eventually helped the opposition to remove the HZDS and HDZ from power. The national movements that dominated the Croatian and Slovak political scenes during much of the 1990s had failed to convince the countries’ electorates of their programs, signaling that Slovaks’ and Croats’ attachment to the nation was weaker than their desire for economic prosperity and integration into Western organizations.

Throughout this study, Miroslav Hroch’s definitions are used to distinguish between “national movements” and “nationalism.” While the former refers to “organized endeavors to achieve all the attributes of a fully-fledged nation,” the latter represents “that outlook which gives an absolute priority to the values of the

nation over all other values and interests.”⁶ National movements existed throughout Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union, but not all of the successor states chose to use nationalism as the defining ideology of the new country. The HDZ and HZDS are seen here first and foremost as national movements rather than nationalist movements, and although both did make use of nationalist rhetoric, one of the key questions to be investigated is how sincerely nationalist they really were.

It is important to note that while many scholars writing on nationalism use the term “ethnic group,” others prefer the word “nation.” Throughout this study, preference is generally given to the latter term, seeing the nation not as the equivalent of the state in the Anglo-American sense but rather in line with the Central European definition of a nation as a self-aware ethnic group.⁷ However, when another work is cited that refers to “ethnic group,” that term should be considered as interchangeable with “nation” since by late twentieth century Europe the groups in question could be considered self-aware. Along the same lines, while “ethnicity” refers to “identity with one’s ethnic group,”⁸ the term “nationality” means identification with one’s nation.

In providing the framework for an investigation of the ways in which Tudman’s HDZ and Meciar’s HZDS succeeded in winning, maintaining, and ultimately losing power, this chapter begins with a discussion of the theoretical debate. Given the importance of elites in promoting national mobilization, the chapter then proceeds to an examination of the fundamental division between elites during the 1990s — that between “Nationalists” and “Europeanists.” From there it moves to an investigation of the main elements of the “Nationalist” discourse, focusing on the definition of the nation and establishment of the Other. The chapter concludes with an overview of the entire study, looking at the breakdown of the various sections and chapters and presenting the main questions that will be addressed.

⁶See Miroslav Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe,” *New Left Review* no. 198 (March-April 1993), reprinted in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, *Becoming national: a reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 62.

⁷See Walker Connor, “A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1978). Reprinted in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 45-46.

⁸Connor, p. 43.

The rise and fall of national movements

Over the past several decades, the study of ethnicity, nations, and nationalism has experienced a renaissance. Writers from a variety of academic fields have developed theories on the subject, continually adding to the plethora of existing works. However, as Hroch points out, “all defensible conclusions still remain no more than partial findings;” we now have “an over-production of theories and a stagnation of comparative research on the topic.”⁹

Many of the works on nationalism are focused primarily on the development of national movements in nineteenth century Europe and in Europe’s twentieth century colonies, and they often have little relevance to the most recent wave of national movements: those in Central and Eastern Europe in the post-communist period. In fact, most of the scholars writing in the 1980s failed to recognize the possibility of the re-emergence of nationalism in that region. For example, John Breuilly wrote in 1981 that “in eastern Europe one could envisage sections of the political community in countries other than the USSR moving towards a nationalist position, though the degree of political control and the need to use other ideological justifications than those of nationalism make it highly unlikely.”¹⁰ Likewise, Benedict Anderson in 1983 described the Soviet Union as being “as much the legatee of the prenational dynastic states of the nineteenth century as the precursor of a twenty-first century internationalist order.”¹¹

Even those works published after 1989 deal mainly with the issue of how national movements develop in multi-ethnic countries, and they fail to address the issue of how those movements behave once they have a state of their own and under what conditions they lose importance in society. One exception is Rogers Brubaker’s *Nationalism Reframed*, which deals extensively with “nationalizing” states, where “the core nation is conceived as being in a weak cultural, economic, or demographic position within the state” and therefore tries to compensate by “using state power to promote the specific (and previously inadequately served) interests

⁹ Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation,” p. 60.

¹⁰ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, second edition, 1993), p. 340.

of the core nation.”¹² Nationalizing policies and programs — which may include “promoting the language, culture, demographic predominance, economic welfare, and political hegemony of the state-bearing nation” — are aimed at the core nation as distinct from the new state’s total population. Such policies are likely to be “politically profitable” and in some cases “politically irresistible,” partly because of the “institutionalized expectations of ‘ownership’” that the successor states inherited from the previous regime.¹³

This study goes beyond Brubaker’s book, which avoided a detailed examination of the new states of Central and Eastern Europe, instead using inter-war Poland as an example of a “nationalizing” state. Moreover, Brubaker’s work is focused not on the sincerity or effectiveness of the nationalizing policies themselves but rather on whether the state’s national minorities and their external “homeland” states perceive those policies as nationalizing.¹⁴ That point is essential to the book’s theoretical framework, which discusses the triadic relational interplay among the new “nationalizing” state, that country’s national minorities, and the external “homeland” state of the minorities. In contrast, this study concentrates more on the nationalizing processes in new states as they relate to the majority population rather than to minorities.

A crucial question for any study on post-communist nationalism is whether national consciousness existed under communism and how and why nationalism resurfaced as a political force after 1989. In a revised edition of his 1981 book, Breuilly claims that ethnic identity and national consciousness failed to disappear under communism and stresses that the twentieth century national movements were not simply the result of the reemergence of ethnic identities that were suppressed under communism and suddenly reappeared after its collapse. Breuilly makes three arguments to that effect. First of all, cultural identity gains importance as a society becomes increasingly urban and industrial; second, cultural differences are often tied to social inequalities, and policies such as those on official language

¹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, revised edition, 1991), p. xi.

¹² Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 5.

¹³ Brubaker, pp. 46-47.

¹⁴ Brubaker, pp. 60-69.

give one group an advantage over others; and third, since 1918 European states have represented themselves either as nation-states or, as in the Soviet model, “have built the nationality principle into their structures.” Breuilly writes that while those factors are frequently found in most urban-industrial societies and do not normally result in nationalist conflict, three other elements helped to translate ethnic identity and tension into nationalism: the collapse of communist state power, the dispersion of state power to the local or regional levels, and, in some cases, the existence of a “power vacuum” rather than the “politics of inheritance.” He asserts that “with the breakdown of power and with the absence of other extensive connections and identities, ethnic identity becomes not one element within a broader set of institutions, but becomes instead a *substitute* for any broader set of connections.”¹⁵

Hroch, like Breuilly, argues that with the collapse of communism in 1989-1990 the old order disappeared, leaving the countries in a political and social vacuum. New elites quickly obtained leading positions in society—both in political and economic life—without regard to “traditional usages.” Hroch states that with the dissolving of traditional ties after the fall of communism, the people experienced conditions of “acute stress,” leading to a tendency to “over-value the protective comfort of their own national group.”¹⁶ Neither Hroch nor Breuilly convincingly explain why many people turned to their nation rather than to their immediate family, their church, or to some other group for comfort. Moreover, their arguments also fail to uncover why nationalism emerged during the communist regime in Yugoslavia but significantly later in Czechoslovakia. Finally, neither author reveals why people who had lived together peacefully for years were quickly embroiled in hatred and war, as in the case of Yugoslavia.

It is clear that the breakdown of order associated with the fall of communism was a key factor in the development of national movements across Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, a deeper investigation is required to convincingly explain why national movements emerged, how they gained popular support, and why they had a nationalistic character — meaning the apparent support of nationalism — in some places but not in others. Shari Cohen offers an alternative framework that

¹⁵ See Breuilly, pp. 340-65.

more convincingly explains the emergence of nationalism in the post-communist era.¹⁷ Cohen asserts that because of the efforts by Leninist regimes to rewrite history and eliminate historical consciousness, countries emerging from communist rule lacked unifying national ideologies, retaining instead only family stories and ethnic stereotypes. The absence of national ideologies, which “keep individuals connected to state institutions” and “allow elites to cooperate to achieve common goals that stretch beyond personal enrichment,” meant that societies were comprised “only of the individual families within them.”¹⁸ Cohen argues that the 1989 revolutions were led by small groups of anti-communist “ideological elites,” who had preserved historical consciousness during communism. However, they were eventually replaced in many countries in the region by “mass-elites,” who had been “solely formed by the official Leninist socialization process” and were therefore lacking connection to alternative ideologies. With the absence of any integrating ideology, the “mass-elites” were motivated only “by short-term personal interest,” and they chose their orientations — whether democratic or nationalist — for purely opportunistic reasons.¹⁹ They were successful in mobilizing nationalism in populations not because the societies they represented were anti-democratic; the masses were simply “not equipped or inclined to try to assess the validity of politicians’ claims.”²⁰

While Cohen’s argument may constitute a somewhat unfair generalization about the egoism of post-communist societies, there is validity to her claims about the lack of unifying ideology and the opportunism of the “mass-elite.” Despite their frequent use of nationalist rhetoric, politicians in the HDZ and HZDS often appeared more opportunistic than genuinely nationalist and were more concerned about supporting their own families than working for the betterment of the nation as a whole. Neither the HDZ nor HZDS could be seen as purely nationalistic formations; they contained a broad mixture of personalities with different backgrounds and political orientations who appeared united mainly in their desire

¹⁶ Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully -Formed Nation,” p. 71.

¹⁷ See Shari Cohen, *Politics Without a Past: The absence of history in postcommunist nationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 1 -23.

¹⁸ Cohen, p. 3.

¹⁹ Cohen, pp. 5-6.

²⁰ Cohen, p. 21.

to remain in power. The sincerity of the nationalism of both the elites and the populations thus becomes a crucial factor.

Cohen's explanation provides insight into the conditions that contributed to national mobilization in the early 1990s; however, more attention must be devoted to the questions of how cohesion within national movements is formed and translated into political mobilization, how national mobilization is maintained, and how and why it eventually declines.²¹ Like Cohen, Paul Brass studies elites, focusing on their role in ethnic mobilization. In doing so, the key points in his analysis are that identity is dynamic rather than static and that the promotion or restriction of ethnic mobilization is largely the responsibility of elites, which are defined as "leadership segments with concrete characteristics and statuses, whose actions are critical in determining whether or not such categories of groups as classes and ethnic communities will be mobilized for political purposes."²² According to Brass, the importance of an individual's many identities — whether ethnic, geographical, gender, or professional — can change according to the situation, making ethnicity vulnerable to manipulation by elites. In competing for political power, elites utilize the cultural forms, values, and practices of ethnic groups to mobilize populations in their favor, and the battles for control among the elites of a particular ethnic group can be just as important as conflicts among elites of opposing ethnic groups. The study of ethnicity is largely a study of the process by which elites within an ethnic group choose characteristic features of the group's culture, provide them with new value and meaning, and use them as symbols in mobilizing the group, protecting its interests, and challenging others.²³ Such ideas can easily be applied to the Slovak and Croatian cases, where a battle emerged between two competing groups of elites.

There is a certain validity to the instrumentalist view that identities are not fixed for life but in fact rise or fall in importance relative to other kinds of identities and that some elements of an ethnic group's culture or language can be changed. The

²¹Paul Brass notes that such issues are frequently neglected. See Paul R. Brass, "Ethnic Groups and the State," in Brass (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and the State* (Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 2.

²²Brass, "Ethnic Groups and the State," p. 12.

importance of national identity can become especially strong in times when the nation appears to be endangered. During the war in Croatia in the early 1990s, for example, the majority of Croats were willing to relinquish certain freedoms for the benefit of the nation. Moreover, the Croatian language experienced substantial change under Tudman's leadership as words of foreign — especially Serbian — origin were replaced by Croatian ones.

Nonetheless, the implication of Brass's work that people are like flocks of sheep following their leaders is certainly exaggerated. It must also be recognized that identities are not always malleable and readily available for manipulation by elites. Individuals do have some sense of their origin, whether real or mythical, and pre-existing beliefs and cultural values affect the ability of elites to operate as they chose in manipulating national symbols, influencing ethnic identities, and mobilizing populations. According to Anthony Smith, "if nationalism is part of the 'spirit of the age,' it is equally dependent upon earlier motifs, visions and ideals."²⁴ Likewise, although Ernest Gellner argues that nationalism creates national identity and "invents nations where they do not exist," he admits that "it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if...these are purely negative."²⁵

Even assuming that Cohen is correct in asserting that unifying national ideologies were absent after the fall of communism, "mass-elites" were still limited in their ability to manipulate populations. Despite its focus on "brotherly internationalism," communism did not entirely wipe out national identity among Slovaks and Croats. Thus, in order to be successful, nationalist politicians had to be sensitive to traditions and to the prevailing public mood, making the interaction between the political elite and the popular political culture an important point of analysis. Elites in Slovakia and Croatia certainly did not have free reign to manipulate ethnic identities, as demonstrated by the failure of certain policies advocated by the HDZ and HZDS during the 1990s. While in Slovakia, efforts to make culture more "Slovak" led to wide protests, in Croatia many of the new "national traditions"

²³ Brass, "Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims of South Asia," in *Political Identity in South Asia*, David Taylor and Malcolm Yapp, eds. (Curzon Press: London, 1979), pp. 35-43.

²⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 71.

²⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964). Reprinted in Hutchinson and Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, p. 62.

invented by the HDZ were frowned upon and even ridiculed by the population. The existence of “ideological elites,” however weak they may have been, meant that another strand was in constant competition with the “mass-elites” for the right to define the nation. In studying elites, it is therefore important to examine the major points of conflict among competing political parties within the ethnic group and to determine the major issues and personalities that contributed to the party’s increase or drop in public support. Another crucial element in this study is the determination of the limits to which governments can go in promoting their ideas of the nation and in manipulating national symbols.

That still leaves us with the question of why the “mass-elites” used nationalism in Slovakia and Croatia as opposed to some other ideology. Breuilly argues that in order to function effectively as a popular political ideology, nationalism needs “simplification, concreteness and repetition,” and nationalist ideology can have wide popular appeal since it is especially malleable in such ways. Simplification is focused mainly on the construction of stereotypes, including both stereotypes of the nation’s history and cultural practices as well as stereotypes of the enemy, while repetition is carried out through such means as speeches, newspaper articles, rallies, and songs. Translating those simple and repeated ideas into concrete form is carried out mostly through symbols and ceremonies. “By seeming to abolish the distinctions between culture and politics, society and state, private and public, the nationalist has access to a whole range of sentiments, idioms and practices which hitherto had been regarded as irrelevant to politics but are now turned into the values underlying political action,” Breuilly writes.²⁶ Once it was demonstrated that nationalism worked successfully in mobilizing populations in certain parts of Central and Eastern Europe, it became increasingly tempting for use by opportunistic leaders who wished to gain power in other regions, particularly because of the lack of accompanying policy directives that needed to be followed. While Tudman likely learned a great deal about the use of nationalism by watching Slobodan Milošević in neighboring Serbia, Meciar had an even broader range of examples since he was a relative latecomer to such rhetoric.

²⁶ Breuilly, pp. 64, 69.

In the tradition of the theorists discussed above, this work focuses on the study of elites, looking at the major divisions between and among them and their methods of mobilizing populations. The focus on elites offers a way of looking at the construction of the nation “from above.” However, according to Eric Hobsbawm, although nations are “constructed essentially from above,” they “cannot be understood unless also analyzed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist.”²⁷ That is an extremely difficult point of analysis which can be determined partly, though not conclusively, through election results. Electoral support for a national movement such as the HDZ and HZDS cannot necessarily be equated with the support of nationalism among the population. Moreover, a person’s support for the political opposition did not necessarily mean his or her rejection of nationalism. Thus, the results of public opinion polls are also used as supporting evidence.

In an effort to understand how national mobilization occurred, was maintained, and eventually declined in Croatia and Slovakia during the past decade, this study looks at national movements and their competitors from several angles and different levels, while at the same time trying to capture the desires of ordinary people. Its focus is on the HDZ and HZDS as movements, looking at their rise to power and the nation-building policies they implemented in constructing a new, national ideology once independent states had been achieved. Key points of analysis include the divisions between “Nationalist” and “Europeanist” elites as well as the ways in which Meciar, Tudman and their associates defined the nation and created antagonisms between “friend” and “enemy.” Although Meciar and Tudman tried to push certain symbols, it was questionable whether people actually internalized them. Otherwise, it would have been more difficult for alternative forces to organize and to question the ruling parties’ credentials as the self-declared protectors of the nation. The increased organizational ability of the opposition, combined with the efforts to establish a new, positively-oriented national identity, helped at least temporarily to bring the defeat of the national movements as the dominant forces in Slovak and Croatian society.

²⁷E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge:

While many works have attempted to explain the rise of national movements in multi-ethnic countries, this study provides a new perspective by looking at how those movements function once they have achieved a state of their own, particularly in terms of efforts to maintain group cohesion by strengthening citizens' sense of national identity. Moreover, this work fills another gap by offering insight into the context and conditions that contribute to the eventual defeat of national movements. The third aspect is perhaps the most important because of its policy implications. Although this work focuses on the cases of Slovakia and Croatia, the conclusions brought forward here can be applied to a wider group of countries as well.

Croatia and Slovakia have been chosen for this study because of their manifold similarities, relating not only to historical characteristics but also to contemporary ones. Most importantly, they are the only states in Central and Eastern Europe with a largely Western religious and cultural tradition in which nationalism was a major political force during much of the 1990s.

There are also importance differences between Slovakia and Croatia that make the comparison a viable and interesting one. Most notable was the method of separation from the larger entity, through peaceful methods in the case of Czechoslovakia and through war in Yugoslavia. The violence in Yugoslavia served to increase Croats' feeling of national togetherness, meaning that the HDZ emerged in the early 1990s as a national movement with broad public backing. In Slovakia, in contrast, the peaceful split from the Czechs contributed to a lower degree of attachment to the nation, and support for the HZDS was more limited, particularly concerning the question of actual independence from the Czechs. That meant that the HZDS often had to be cautious in forging policies, meaning that it was more limited in its use of nationalism than the HDZ.

Another difference was that Croats generally had higher expectations from independence than the Slovaks, and the HDZ's failure to meet Croatian desires for economic prosperity and acceptance by the West meant that by the end of the decade the drop in support for the HDZ was much more pronounced than for the

HZDS. Nonetheless, the lower degree of national togetherness in Slovakia than in Croatia allowed for greater capacity for cooperation among Slovak opposition forces, both political and civic, and they had an easier time putting themselves forward as a positive alternative to the HZDS than did their Croatian counterparts. With HZDS support falling by only seven percent between the 1992 and 1998 elections, the unity of Slovakia's political opposition and the get-out-the-vote campaign run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were the main factors contributing to the fall of the HZDS in 1998.

Many observers doubted whether the Croats could achieve similar results in their 2000 elections given that the greater attachment to the nation had contributed to more limited opposition unity. Nonetheless, with a push from the international community, Croatian political parties and NGO activists adopted the "Slovak model" and were able to easily defeat the HDZ. That same model was later used successfully to defeat Milošević in Yugoslavia in the fall of 2000.

"Nationalists" versus "Europeanists"

In Slovakia and Croatia, the fundamental cleavage in the elite community during the 1990s was between the "Nationalists" and the "Europeanists," and the two groups were involved in a struggle over the redefinition of the central values and purposes of the nation. Those labels are used throughout this study as an analytical tool for differentiating between the main competing groups within the Slovak and Croatian elite as the tensions between the two sides are investigated. The terms always appear in quotations and should not be taken literally.

The "Nationalists" tended to put national interests first, at least in rhetoric, and they stressed the importance of national sovereignty, even at the risk of international isolation. They generally favored a backward-looking, closed conception of the nation and aimed to strengthen national identity and statehood through cultural, language, economic, and education policies, as well as through closer relations with the Catholic Church and nationally-oriented organizations. Proponents of the "Nationalist" view frequently tried to stress their respective nation's long linguistic and cultural traditions and to establish a thread linking the

modern states with those that existed in the past. “Nationalists” generally purported that national consciousness had existed among Croats and Slovaks for more than 1,000 years and argued that their nations were among the oldest in Europe.²⁸

The “Europeanists,” in contrast, believed that their country’s brightest future was in integration into Western structures, and they were more prepared than “Nationalists” to accept limitations on sovereignty for the aim of European integration. They were generally more inclined to support modern, open, and tolerant forms of expression and to see their country as a multi-cultural entity. Moreover, they tended to accept the view that the nation was a modern phenomenon, with national consciousness reaching the masses no earlier than the 19th or 20th centuries.²⁹ Although many “Europeanists” could be considered patriots, they generally did not put the nation before democracy itself. Those “Europeanists” who were patriotic tended to have a more positive definition of the nation than did the “Nationalists,” who often defined the nation based on a negative, exclusive principal.

Because of the stigma attached to nationalism by the communist regime, many “Nationalists” — especially those in Slovakia — did not like to see themselves as such, and they sometimes tried to produce rational arguments to defend their positions, linking national sovereignty with democracy by pointing to a nation’s right to self-determination in such documents as the United Nations Charter.³⁰ One observer noted the irony that the UN, “which was established to unite humankind, has ... spurred given peoples to define and defend separate pieces of territory with

²⁸ See, for example, Milan Ferko et al, *Starý národ — mladý štít* (Bratislava: Litera, 1994); Mária Ivanová-Šalingová et al, *Slovenčina bez chýb* (Bratislava: Samo, 1998), p. 5; “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” 24-25 February 1990, in D. Đuric et al, *Stranke u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: NIRO, 1990), p. 76; Eduard Kale, “The Cultural Identity of Croatia,” *Croatian Political Science Review*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1992), pp. 33-52..

²⁹ See Miroslav Kusý, “Skadial som stadial som, slovenského rodu som...,” *Eseje* (Bratislava: Archa, 1991), pp. 59-72. Some Croatian “Europeanists,” however, have insisted that Croatian national identity existed “long before the development of modern nationalism.” See Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 23.

³⁰ See statements by Milan Knažko in Monika Nemcoková, “Nech sa pán prezident neboj,” *Koridor*, 28 May 1992; Dušan Harnádek, “Koniec demokracie?” *Koridor*, 16 May 1992; and the HDZ document “Proglas građanima i Saboru SRH i cijelome hrvatskom narodu,” 29 November 1989, in D. Đuric et al, p. 70.

ever greater ferocity.”³¹ In this study, the “Nationalist” label is not necessarily meant in a negative sense; it refers to personalities ranging from patriots and defensive nationalists who supported state sovereignty and self-determination in the early 1990s to chauvinists and aggressive nationalists who continued to use nationalistic rhetoric even after the new state was secured. Some individuals are presented as “Nationalists” simply by association, even if they did not make statements supporting such ideas.

Despite the anti-national character of the communist regimes in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, some former communists in both countries switched to the “Nationalist” camp and became just as dogmatic in supporting the nationalist ideology as they had been in backing communism. Others were just plain opportunists who used nationalism as a tool to gain power. Although the existence of a political and social vacuum after the fall of communism allowed entirely new elites to come forward,³² in both Slovakia and Croatia there was also an element of continuity of political elites between the communist and the post-1989 regimes, as in many other countries in the region. The lustration process of the early 1990s in Czechoslovakia forced many former communists into the economic sphere. Nonetheless, lustration was halted after the HZDS came to power in 1992, and some ex-communists returned to important political positions. In Croatia there was also considerable continuity between the two regimes, and a number of former communist officials joined the HDZ.³³

It is important to point out that the line between “Nationalists” and “Europeanists” was often blurred. For example, Tudman and Meciar tended to combine the ideas of “protecting the nation” and “returning to Europe,” although they often leaned more toward the former, especially in Tudman’s case. Some of their associates — including the late Croatian Defense Minister Gojko Šušak and former Slovak National Party (SNS) Chairman Ján Slota — represented clearer examples of the “Nationalist” view, seeing “protecting the nation” and “returning to Europe” as two separate alternatives. Both the HDZ and HZDS could be considered “impure”

³¹ Tamara Dragadze, “Selfdetermination and the Politics of Exclusion,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* vol. 19, no. 2 (April 1996), p. 346.

³² Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation,” p. 73.

³³ See Milivoj Đilas, “CK HDZ,” *Feral Tribune*, 22 November 1999.

nationalist organizations that used other messages in addition to nationalism to attract more votes, while smaller, “purer” nationalist groups such as the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) and the SNS focused almost exclusively on the national question and thereby could expect weaker political support.

In any case, national activists are subject to constant change, not only in internal structure and mentality, but also in relation to governments. During the 1990s, a number of Slovaks and Croats crossed the line from one side to another, sometimes more than once. Some proponents of an independent state in Slovakia were satisfied once they had reached their goal in January 1993, and a number of HZDS and SNS representatives defected to the “Europeanist” camp in 1993-1994, seeing Slovakia’s future in European integration. Although a group of HDZ deputies switched to the “Europeanist” position along with Stipe Mesic in 1994, in Croatia there was also a marked tendency for the political elite to shift in the opposite direction, accompanied by allegations that they had been “bought” by the HDZ.

The line between the “Nationalists” and “Europeanists” sometimes divided people in unexpected ways, and in certain cases an individual’s choice of camps was apparently made for pragmatic, personal reasons rather than out of any sense of real allegiance to the ideology of a given side. Croatian philosopher Boris Buden wrote about his country: “People here have always rejected the old and overnight accepted new opinions, not because they quickly matured intellectually, not because they chose a new approach to the truth through mental efforts, but because they wanted to preserve an already acquired position in society or to capture a new, even better one. And that applies especially to our so-called intellectuals.”³⁴

Clearly, entry into one camp or the other or the use of rhetoric connected with one side or another should not be conflated with actual ideological commitment; many actors on both sides of the divide were simply opportunists. In that connection, Cohen distinguishes between idiom and ideology. While the ideology of democrats and nationalists is “an outgrowth of longstanding beliefs and constrains the actions of those who use it,” idiom refers to “words picked up and dropped — as

³⁴ Boris Buden, *Barikade2* (Zagreb: ARKzin, 1996/7), pp. 117-118.

ideological debris, plucked randomly out of the rubble of the collapse of communism or the atmosphere of postcommunist efforts to join the West.”³⁵

The Slovak “Nationalist” movement was formed in 1990-1992, partly in reaction to what were perceived as the “anti-national” policies of the “Europeanist” ruling parties that won the first multi-party elections in 1990. During that period, the “Europeanists” in government tended to label anyone calling for national sovereignty as nationalist, leftist, or even fascist, while the “Nationalists” argued that they simply wanted that which every other nation had. A number of “Europeanists” shifted to the “Nationalist” side, with an especially large group following Meciar when he created the HZDS in 1991. Although the “Europeanists” fared poorly in the 1992 elections, their forces were strengthened after Slovakia gained independence and a group of former “Nationalists” switched back to the “Europeanist” camp. The “Europeanists” briefly served in government in 1994, and with the help of the independent media and civic initiatives, they gradually reappeared as the dominant political force in Slovakia, winning a three-fifths constitutional majority in the 1998 parliamentary elections.

In Croatia, the “Nationalists” emerged in 1989-1990, largely in reaction to the rising nationalism in Serbia. National unity was an especially important theme for the HDZ, which called for reconciliation between communists and anti-communists, fascists and anti-fascists. Winning the first multi-party elections in 1990 and leading the country to independence, the position of Croatia’s “Nationalists” was strengthened by the war that tore apart Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s, during which time the “Europeanist” voice was silenced and society was united in the national interest. In fact, the war produced a wide consensus concerning the absolute priority of national unity both during and after the fight for independence, pushing the Croatian people into a situation where the nation came first and those who questioned or criticized official policy were sometimes excluded from society. Tudman’s grip on society was tighter than that of Meciar, and the rise of the “Europeanists” was considerably slower and more painful in Croatia than in Slovakia. In 1991-1992, “Europeanist” opposition parties served briefly in a HDZ-dominated government, seeing national unity as important

³⁵ Cohen, pp. 121-122.

during the years of the heaviest fighting with the Serbs. Although the consolidation of the “Europeanist” forces gathered momentum in 1994-1995, they failed to obtain an election victory until the 2000 parliamentary elections.

Defining the nation and establishing the Other

Although the Slovaks and the Croats were largely rural nations in the nineteenth century, during the twentieth century the social structure changed dramatically in both places. That was particularly true under the communist regime, when education levels rose and many people moved from the countryside to the cities, leading to a significant drop in the percentage of the population employed in agriculture. Nonetheless, at the end of the twentieth century, traditional folk customs continued to be evoked by political elites in both countries in mobilizing the people, particularly in the case of the “Nationalists.” For example, “good” Slovaks and Croats were recognizable in cartoons and party advertisements by their tendency to appear in national costume, and folklore groups and dancers were a common feature at party rallies and in advertisements, using such traditional musical instruments as the *tambura* in Croatia and the *fujara* in Slovakia. One Croatian writer commented that the HDZ used “a Catholic -folkloric variant of kitsch, ... mixing up ancient monuments and folk designs, Catholic saints and crosses, gingerbread hearts and national costumes.”³⁶ The use of folk customs to depict national identity was in certain respects simply a holdover of the communist regime, during which folklore was among the only permitted expressions of national identity.

In contrast, the “Europeanists” in both Slovakia and Croatia gradually replaced traditional forms of expression with more modern and Western variants, providing entertainment at rallies by rock bands, political satirists, and American-style cheerleaders in an effort to appeal to the younger generation. While the “Nationalists” tended to emphasize the past, calling attention in their campaigns to

³⁶ Dubravka Ugrešić, *Have a Nice Day: From the Balkan War to the American Dream* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), p. 173. For more on the use of folklore in Croatia, as well as elsewhere in former Yugoslavia, see Ivo Žanic, *Prevarena povijest* (Zagreb: Durieux, 1998).

those historical personalities who were important for the nation's development, the "Europeanists" generally placed more stress on the future.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the HDZ and HZDS attempted to instill pride in portions of the Croatian and Slovak population by reviving national symbols and ideas after years of communism, during which manifestations of national expression had been labeled "nationalist" or "fascist." In evoking images of the nation, the HDZ and HZDS party logos were remarkably similar; both featured the first letter of their republic — "H" for Croatia [*Hrvatska*] and "S" for Slovakia [*Slovensko*] — and used the national colors of red, white, and blue. In the case of the HDZ logo, the central part of the "H" was covered with lines stylized in the motif of the old Croatian *pleter* [wicker], an uncompromised visual symbol of Croatia that implied continuity with the nation's past. One journalist commented that by using the first initial of Croatia, together with the tri-colored *pleter*, the symbol stood as a "visual substitute for the patriotic-national party feeling."³⁷ In Slovakia, the SNS used the Slovak national emblem directly in its party symbol, featuring a double cross on top of three mountain peaks.

In defining the fundamental character traits of the nation, representatives of the Slovak elite tended to see the nation as hard-working, hospitable, modest, good-hearted, peaceful, temperate, and religious. On the negative side, they regarded Slovaks as complaisant, passive, lacking in self-confidence, and dependent.³⁸ Similarly, an opinion poll conducted in January 1992 showed that Slovaks as a whole saw themselves as hard-working, friendly, hospitable, sincere, and lacking in pride.³⁹ Slovaks frequently argued that they were unfairly labeled as nationalists in the early 1990s, with their lack of nationalism demonstrated in part by public opinion polls throughout the 1990s which repeatedly showed that the majority of Slovaks were against the establishment of an independent Slovakia. Many outsiders have claimed that Slovaks have an inferiority complex, mainly in relation

³⁷ Zlatko Gall, "Hrvatski stranacki pleter," *Start* 3 March 1990, p. 40.

³⁸ Personal interviews with SNS representative Eva Slavkovská, 12 May 1999; HZDS representative Rudolf Žiak, 1 June 1999; journalist Jerguš Ferko, 28 June 1999; and Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) representative František Mikloško, 30 June 1999.

³⁹ Half of the respondents did not answer the question, with one-fourth saying that there was no quality typical of Slovaks and another quarter saying that they did not know what was characteristic for Slovaks. See *Aktuálne problémy Česko-Slovenska január 1992* (Bratislava: Centrum pre sociálnu analýzu, January 1992), p. 74.

to the Czechs and the Hungarians, the two nations with whom they had shared a common state.

In the Croatian case, some elites were reluctant to generalize about their nation, instead placing stress on regional diversity and the fact that Croatian territory lies on the crossroads of different cultures and religions and has had a variety of historical influences from other nations.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the HDZ tried to centralize the state and unify the nation, attempting to eliminate regional differences.

According to one analyst, the basic values of Croats include patriotism, self-sacrifice, liberty, love of mother, solidarity, work, justice, intellectual curiosity, and rationalism.⁴¹ Not all of those values associated with Slovaks and Croats were used in mobilizing the populations. The HZDS and HDZ tended to focus on those qualities that they believed made Slovaks and Croats different from “the Other.”

Some Slovak “Nationalists” resented the fact that manifestations of patriotism that would be seen as normal or even admirable in other countries were presented as acts of nationalism or fascism in their country. For example, the linguist Ivan Masár commented that “every attempt at asserting the basic rights of the Slovak nation is very readily and vehemently condemned by certain strata of the Slovak intelligentsia and publicly branded at home and abroad as an expression of extreme nationalism and the backwardness of Slovaks.” He then asked whether those members of the Slovak intelligentsia would also accuse the French of extreme nationalism and backwardness since the French did not hesitate to implement a law on the protection of their language.⁴² Moreover, the Slovak journalist Jerguš Ferko complained that although in the United States it is common practice to hang a flag outside one’s home, he cannot do so in Slovakia.⁴³ “Nationalist” Croats generally demonstrated less sensitivity toward what was considered acceptable in the West, and they were often more open than Slovaks in displaying their patriotism. For

⁴⁰ Personal interviews with Croatian Party of Rights-1861 Chairman Dobroslav Paraga, 14 January 1999; Croatian People’s Party representatives Radimir Cacic, 21 December 1998 and Vesna Pusic, 20 January 1999; and artist Edo Murtic, 14 December 1998.

⁴¹ Kale, pp. 49-51.

⁴² Ivan Masár, “Aj slovenčina potrebuje zákonnú ochranu,” *Kultúra slova* vol. 28, no. 3 (1994), reprinted in *Štatný jazyk v súvislostiach* (Bratislava: Ministry of Culture, 1998), pp. 71-72.

⁴³ Personal interview with Jerguš Ferko, 28 June 1999. For a discussion of the different standards for patriotism versus nationalism in Western countries, see Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

example, t-shirts could be found for sale in Zagreb with such messages as “Proud to be Croat” and “Thank God I’m a Croat.”

In many respects, the Croatian and Slovak nations were defined in the 1990s more by what they were not rather than by what they actually were. Establishing the Other was a crucial aspect of the discourse of both Tudman and Meciar, who promoted a negatively-oriented national identity by using rhetoric critical of their nations’ external and internal “enemies.” Importantly, the establishment of an Other provided politicians with much needed competition without requiring any practical policy commitments. In the discourse of the HDZ and HZDS, the Other developed in three distinct phases; while the first period was marked by a focus on the external Other, in the second phase attention was turned to ethnic minorities, and the third period shifted to the internal “enemy” within the nation itself.

In the first phase, which occurred before the establishment of the Croatian and Slovak states, the antagonism was largely focused on the external “enemy.” The Croats and Slovaks were presented as victims of oppression by the Serbs and the Czechs, respectively, who were considered the major threat to national development and seen as preventing the Croats and Slovaks from attaining a full identity. In the parliamentary election campaigns of 1990 in Croatia and 1992 in Slovakia, “Nationalists” called for either state sovereignty within a broader confederation or full independence, and the external Other was generally sufficient in mobilizing the population and attracting support to the HDZ and HZDS. It must be stressed here that the Slovaks’ depictions of the Czechs were never as hateful and negative as the Croats’ stereotypes of the Serbs. Many Slovaks who supported the HZDS seemed to be spurred on more by the belief that they were standing up for their national rights rather than because they were dedicated nationalists or anti-Czechs.

Although Slovakia’s ethnic Hungarians played a key role in the national mobilization of the Slovaks in 1990, particularly regarding the language law, the HZDS did not exist at that time, and Meciar and most other HZDS representatives were on the “Europeanist” side of the dispute. In the party’s 1992 election campaign, the HZDS did not devote much space to anti-Hungarian rhetoric, despite

the fact that Hungarians represented the biggest minority in Slovakia. Likewise, although some anti-Serb rhetoric was used at HDZ party rallies prior to the 1990 elections, the Serbian minority in Croatia played only a minor role in other aspects of the HDZ campaign, as its members were largely differentiated from the “Greater Serb expansionism” that was associated with Milošević, partly because Croatian Serbs had frequently supported Croats against the centralization of Yugoslavia.

In the case of the Serbs and the Czechs, part of the Croats’ and Slovaks’ resentment was based on historical grievances connected with the creation of strongly centralized states during the interwar period. Croatian-Serb relations were further complicated by the fact that violence had erupted between the two nations during World War II, with ethnic Serbs killed in Croatian concentration camps along with Jews and anti-fascist Croats. Given the rising nationalism of Milošević in the late 1980s, the Serbian threat was seen in 1990 as immediate and real, with Croats concerned about “Greater Serbian expansionism” and possible war. Clearly, the Croatian fear was heightened by the fact that approximately 12 percent of the republic’s population was ethnic Serb, and large, Milošević-style protests had taken place on Croatian territory well before the 1990 elections that brought Tudman to power.

For the Slovaks, the Czech threat was never seriously presented as a military one, partly because of the clear division between the territories of the two republics but also due to the lack of any history of violent conflict between the two nations. For the Slovak “Nationalists,” one of the greatest threats was the “anti-national” ideology of Czech liberalism, and some feared that the Slovak nation would lose its significance and gradually disappear within a continued federation.⁴⁴ Many Slovaks had mixed feelings about the Czechs, combining admiration with resentment. Slovaks believed that the Czechs were paying insufficient attention to their economic woes, marked most notably by the sharp divergence in the unemployment rates of the two republics. Both Croats and Slovaks resented their underrepresentation in the state administration, and while for the Slovaks such claims referred mainly to the Prague -based federal administration, in Yugoslavia the disproportionate influence of ethnic Serbs was apparent both in Belgrade and

⁴⁴ See, for example, statement by the Congress of Slovak Intelligentsia, *Pravda*, 2 June 1992.

within the state apparatus of Croatia itself, particularly in the police, army, and the Communist Party.

In the second phase of the establishment of the “enemy,” which covered the first years of Croatian and Slovak independence, attention was largely shifted from the external Other to the ethnic minorities living within the new state, mainly the Serbs in Croatia and the Hungarians in Slovakia, both of whom were seen as endangering the countries’ territorial integrity. One study demonstrated that anti-Serb discourse in Croatia became increasingly stronger during 1991, largely as a result of Serbian violence against Croats.⁴⁵ The war with the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav army in 1991-1992 and the capture of one-third of Croatian territory by rebel Croatian Serbs served to unify the nation against the enemy, and the need for national unity was seen as especially important since a significant portion of the Croatian Serb population had shown that it was against the Croatian state. Although Croatia’s urban Serbs expressed their loyalty to the new state and their desire to find a peaceful solution, they were often equated in HDZ discourse with the rebel Serbs of the rural Krajina region. Moreover, the HDZ took some steps that made the Serbian community feel less comfortable, using certain symbols from the World War II state such as the *šahovnica* [checkerboard] and switching the status of the Croatian Serbs from a constituent nation to a national minority in the 1990 Croatian constitution. Strong anti-Serb discourse continued until 1995, when police and military operations retook control of Croatian territory and the majority of Croatian Serbs living in the Krajina region fled the country.

After Slovakia gained independence, the Hungarian question became much more sensitive than the Czech one since the two nations continued to live together in one state. In Slovak-Hungarian relations, the historical factor was important since the Slovaks saw themselves as victims of 1,000 years of oppression by the Hungarians, with the “Magyarization” policy being especially strong during the last 50 years before the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. For that reason, some Slovaks believed that limiting the rights of Hungarians in Slovakia would be a sort of historical justice, and Meciar’s post-independence government was reluctant to

⁴⁵ Nenad Zakošek, “The Legitimation of War: Political Construction of a New Reality,” in Nena Skopljanac Brunner et al (eds.), *Media and War* (Zagreb: Centre for transition and civil society research/Belgrade: Agency Argument, 2000), pp. 109-116.

approve more liberal policies on minorities despite urging from the international community. Although Hungarian minority representatives were opposed to the formation of an independent Slovak state, Hungarians in Slovakia never resorted to violent means, and in the absence of inter-ethnic conflict the Slovaks did not mobilize against the Hungarians in such a way as the Croats did against the Serbs. Nonetheless, given the lack of ways to establish a positive identification with the nation, anti-Hungarian discourse was especially prevalent in 1993 and early 1994, with Hungarians accused of wanting to create an autonomous unit in southern Slovakia in order to secede from the state and rejoin Hungary. Anti-Hungarian rhetoric in Slovakia was toned down after ethnic Hungarians backed down from their demands for territorial autonomy in early 1994 and following the victory in Hungary's May 1994 elections of Gyula Horn's Socialist Party, leading to the establishment of a government that was seen as more moderate than the previous one.

The third period in the establishment of the Other — marked by the search for “enemies” within the nation itself — took place after the Croatian and Slovak states were secure, when neither the internal ethnic minorities nor outside actors represented a real threat. In an apparently desperate effort to hang on to power, the HDZ and HZDS promoted an exclusive idea of the nation, separating “good” Croats and Slovaks from “bad” ones in an effort to stamp out dissent, with particular attention devoted to political rivals and the media. The two parties divided people between “friends” and “enemies” in an attempt to arouse fear that the independence of the state continued to be endangered.

In constructing their new national ideology, both the HDZ and HZDS closely intertwined the identity of their parties with that of the nation and the state.⁴⁶ Looking to the past for inspiration, both leaders portrayed themselves as “father of the nation.” In their attitudes and behavior, Meciar and Tudman in certain ways imitated the “hegemonic” regimes of their communist predecessors, with their

⁴⁶ In January 1995, HDZ representative Vice Vukojevic openly expressed such a connection, asking “what is the HDZ today? The HDZ is equivalent to the Croatian state!” See Boris Dežulovic and Predrag Lucic, *Greatest shifts: Antologija suvremene hrvatske gluposti* (Split: Feral Tribune, 1998), p. 91.

tendency to treat all opposition as dangerous or anti-state.⁴⁷ Seeing free and fair elections as the basic precondition for democracy, the HZDS and its coalition partners argued in 1994-1998 that as winners of the elections, they had the right to implement whatever policies they preferred. Meanwhile, Tudman argued that as the founders of the state, the HDZ had the right to mold Croatia as it chose.⁴⁸ Frequently using the nationalist card against their opponents, Tudman and Meciar encouraged the insinuation that the opposition was destabilizing the state and acting in the interest of the country's "foreign enemies."⁴⁹ Those who disagreed with their policies were labeled "enemies of the state," "anti-Croat" or "anti-Slovak," "pro-Serb" or "pro-Hungarian," "Czechoslovak federalists" or "Yugonostalgics," and the words of those "enemies" became "lies." Such discourse was especially polarizing for the societies of the two countries; if being "Croatian" or "Slovak" meant supporting Tudman or Meciar, citizens who did not support those leaders were placed in an awkward position.

One HZDS representative explained that when using the term "pro-Slovak," his party was referring to people who were in favor of an independent Slovakia and not necessarily to those who were pro-Meciar, while being "anti-Slovak" meant being against an independent Slovakia and not merely a HZDS critic. He excluded the possibility that the people who favored the continuation of a Czechoslovak state could also be considered pro-Slovak if they genuinely believed that Slovakia's most promising future was in a common state with the Czechs.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the majority of Slovaks — including most HZDS voters — did not favor the creation of an independent Slovakia, and Meciar himself preferred the establishment of a Czech-Slovak confederation over full Slovak independence. Perhaps the vigor of the campaign against "anti-Slovak" elements was the result of the bad conscience of those HZDS representatives who had been reluctant to back the idea of independence until Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus forced it upon them.

⁴⁷For a discussion of opposition in communist regimes, see H. Gordon Skilling, "Opposition in Communist East Europe," in Robert A. Dahl (ed.), *Regimes and Oppositions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 89-119.

⁴⁸Gordana Uzelak, "Franjo Tudjman's Nationalist Ideology," *East European Quarterly* vol. 31, no. 4 (January 1998), p. 458.

⁴⁹See Krsto Cviic, "Opozicija u lijevim i desnim diktaturama," *Politicka misao* vol. 33, no. 1 (1996), pp. 79-92.

⁵⁰Personal interview with HZDS representative who wishes to remain anonymous, summer 1999.

In Croatia, the real drive against the “internal enemy” began after the October 1995 parliamentary elections, when the HDZ failed to achieve its goal of winning a two-thirds constitutional majority. At that point, leading party representatives publicly stated that Croatia faced an internal enemy, and the party declared war on those who disagreed with its policies.⁵¹ Tudman was especially sensitive to the democratic left and to the regional autonomy movements, which he frequently referred to as “anti-Croatian.” On various occasions HDZ members accused opposition politicians of being traitors and of wanting to reestablish Yugoslavia, asserting that the HDZ was “the only guarantee of Croatian independence.”⁵² The government also launched an attack on the independent media.

In Slovakia, the third phase started after Meciar’s dismissal from the post of prime minister for the second time in March 1994 and gained momentum following the fall 1994 parliamentary elections, when the HZDS formed a cabinet with the far-right SNS and the far-left Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS). In representations of the “Other,” the HZDS tried to create fear that Slovakia’s “enemies” would bring an end to the country’s independence or at least make life more difficult or unpleasant for “good Slovaks.” Not limiting its attacks to the political opposition and the media, the HZDS also lashed out at the basic structures of the state that it had helped to establish just a few years earlier, including the president, the Constitutional Court, and the National Bank of Slovakia. The Meciar government took steps against the capital city of Bratislava as well, apparently because its citizens had chosen a mayor supported by a coalition of center-right opposition parties in the fall 1994 local elections.

Overview of the chapters

This study investigates the rise and fall of the HDZ and HZDS by examining the tensions between two key groups in Croatian and Slovak society in the 1990s: the “Nationalists” and the “Europeanists.” For that purpose, it looks at the development of Croatian and Slovak national identity, focusing on two sets of

⁵¹ Biljana Tatomir, “Croatian Government Calls Certain Media ‘Enemies of the State,’” *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 21 (18 October 1996), pp. 24-26.

⁵² See Zoran Daskalovic, “Tudjman Triumphs Over Divided Opposition,” *War Report* no. 51 (May 1997), p. 5.

elections in each country: the elections that first brought Meciar and Tudman to power (1992 in Slovakia⁵³ and 1990 in Croatia) and the first parliamentary elections following the decisions on EU and NATO enlargement (1998 in Slovakia and 2000 in Croatia).

In terms of methodology, this study is based on field work conducted in Slovakia and Croatia in 1998-2000. That research involved interviews with elite representatives in each country, focusing on their views of the nation and its history, European integration, civil society, as well as economic and cultural developments. Such interviews made it possible to better understand the approach of the various competing groups as well as to help determine how their discourses were produced. References to many of those interviews are dispersed throughout the study, while other interviews and discussions are used mainly as background material. Interviews and discussions were carried out with approximately 50 different personalities in each country, including politicians, government officials, journalists, civil society activists, cultural personalities, linguists, and academics.

Another significant aspect of field research involved analyzing the media, which served as the key means in determining how the views of elites were transmitted to the populations. Throughout this study, the main media sources used are the political weeklies *Globus* in Croatia and *Plus 7 dní* in Slovakia, both of which enjoyed a significant readership.⁵⁴ In particular, those two publications were studied for the two years prior to the elections that brought the downfall of the HZDS and HDZ. Other media sources are added whenever possible to present a fuller picture of the situation in each country. In particular, articles are chosen that feature the direct speech of party representatives through press conferences, party documents, and interviews. In addition to the media, a number of books published

⁵³ Although Meciar served as Slovak prime minister from June 1990 through April 1991, his appointment to that post was mostly accidental. He was never the leader of Public Against Violence (VPN), the anti-communist movement that won the 1990 elections in Slovakia.

⁵⁴ A November 1999 opinion poll showed that *Globus* was the country's most popular weekly, with 11 percent of respondents saying they had bought a copy in the past week, compared with just two percent who had purchased *Feral Tribune*. "Istraživanje javnog mnijenja" (International Republican Institute, November 1999), p. 20. Meanwhile, a November 1997 report showed that *Plus 7 dní* readership was about 15 percent in Slovakia. See Samuel Brecka, "Media in Slovakia" (Národné centrum mediálnej komunikácie, November 1997), p. 18.

during the 1990s about Croatian and Slovak politics and society are also used as source material.

In order to gain a general indication of the shifts in popular sentiment during the 1990s, this study examines the results of the two sets of elections in each country, viewing them in connection with the discursive orientation of the competing parties at the beginning and end of the decade. Public opinion poll data is also used to help demonstrate such arguments in a more convincing manner. This work relies to a large extent on opinion polls conducted by the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) in Bratislava and by the Political Science Department of the University of Zagreb that have been presented through various publications.

The first section, which investigates the rise of national movements and their success in mobilizing populations politically, consists of two chapters. While this chapter presents the overall approach used by the HDZ and HZDS and their competitors, Chapter 2 is devoted to a study of the rise of national movements in Croatia and Slovakia and the entry of the HDZ and HZDS into government through elections. After putting the elections in their historical contexts based on the political maneuverings and inter-ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, the chapter looks at the founding of the two parties and the discourse they used during the election campaigns, particularly concerning the concept of the nation and the nation's prospects for full development. Because of the difficulties in finding reliable information on election campaigns so long after they took place, the study of the first elections is focused on newspapers, magazines, and political party programs. In the case of Croatia's 1990 elections, discourse analysis of three major dailies — *Novi list*, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, and *Vecernji list* — has already been presented elsewhere,⁵⁵ and this study adds to that work by looking mainly at the liberal weeklies *Danas* and *Start*, as well as at the HDZ bulletin *Glasnik* (*Globus* had yet to be established). Slovakia's 1992 election campaign is examined through *Plus 7 dní* as well as through three dailies: the center-right *Smena*, left-leaning *Pravda*, and pro-HZDS *Koridor*.

⁵⁵ Dražen Lalic analyzes those dailies from 31 March-20 April 1990. See Lalic, "Pohod na glasace," in Srđan Vrcan et al, *Pohod na glasace: Izbori u Hrvatskoj 1990.-1993.* (Split: PULS, 1995), pp. 203-280.

The second section of the study consists of three chapters focusing on the attempts by the HDZ and HZDS to use nation-building as a way of maintaining national mobilization. The starting point for this analysis is the identification of leadership groups, their strategies, and the changes and conflicts among them. Thus, these chapters deal with the recognition of the interest groups that controlled the state structures and the specific policies and strategies they pursued, particularly in relation to the national question.⁵⁶ Each of the three chapters therefore begins with an analysis of the competing interests within and around the ruling parties and their competition, going beyond the narrow political elite that is presented in Chapter 2 and addressing a wider group of conflicting personalities.

After moving on to a brief discussion of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, Chapter 3 focuses on nation-building in the new Croatian and Slovak states. Resulting from Breuilly's arguments that nationalist ideology requires simplification and repetition and that it is translated into concrete form mainly through the symbolic and ceremonial,⁵⁷ the chapter investigates efforts to simplify national history through the creation of stereotypes and their reflection in new symbols and ceremonies. Building on Brubaker's work, chapters 4 and 5 investigate the ruling parties' "nationalizing" policies and programs in the spheres of economy and culture, respectively, where the governments tried to compensate for previous inadequacies by using state policies to promote the national interest.⁵⁸ While Brubaker focuses on how such policies are aimed at the core nation as distinct from the new state's total population, in Slovakia and Croatia nation-building policies in economy and culture often seemed to be aimed not at the core nation as a whole but actually at a small group of ruling party loyalists. After discussing the ruling parties' policies in the two areas, the chapters demonstrate the counterproductive effects of such measures by looking also at the reactions of the public, including trade unions, the independent media, and the cultural community.

The third and final section deals with the decline of national movements as the predominant force in society and the rise of alternatives in Slovakia and Croatia. Chapter 6 builds on the protest movements discussed in the chapters on economy

⁵⁶ Brass, "Ethnic Groups and the State."

⁵⁷ Breuilly, p. 64.

⁵⁸ Brubaker, p. 5.

and culture, presenting a broader picture of the growth of a more democratic civil society by examining the development of independent media and non-governmental organizations. That presentation creates the background for Chapter 7, which deals with the political aspects of the 1998 elections in Slovakia and the 2000 elections in Croatia. The chapter begins with an investigation of how and why the opposition parties finally managed to come together and form alliances aimed at defeating the HZDS and HDZ. It then looks at the election campaigns of the various competing parties, based mostly on first-hand observations of the parties' campaigns on television, billboards, and in the print media.

The final chapter offers general conclusions on the ideas presented in this work. Clearly, the lack of success of the HZDS and HDZ in the second set of elections indicates those parties' failure to promote their image of the nation and to build up a reliable, nationally-oriented electorate. Although the parties' approach was successful for much of the decade, the increased organizational ability of alternative actors and their closer connection with the desires and needs of the population eventually helped the opposition to remove the HZDS and HDZ from power by directing their attention away from the national issue, at least temporarily. Nevertheless, it is difficult to say whether the elections meant an end to nationalism, or even to the HZDS and HDZ as national movements, since that depends largely on the success of the new Slovak and Croatian leadership in maintaining the mobilization of the populations in favor of other ideas.

Chapter 2: The First Elections — 1990 in Croatia and 1992 in Slovakia

This chapter studies the emergence of national movements in Croatia and Slovakia and their entry into government through elections. In doing so, it focuses on three major questions: how elite groups arose, how certain policies and strategies affected the formation or persistence of such groups, and how elites mobilized the population based on national interests. Given that the victory of parties other than the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) and Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) in 1990 and 1992, respectively, could have drastically changed the Croatian and Slovak nations' future positions, it is especially important to examine the major points of conflict among competing political parties to determine the major issues and personalities that contributed to those parties' public support.

In order to be successful, politicians must be sensitive to national traditions and to the prevailing public mood, making the interaction between the political elite and the popular political culture an important point of analysis. With the understanding that elites are constrained in manipulating national attributes by existing beliefs and values, the masses are not automatically lured but must first interpret the inputs to determine their appropriateness.

This chapter studies the rise of national movements in Croatia and Slovakia and their entry into government through the Croatian parliamentary elections, held in two rounds on 22 April and 6 May 1990, and the Slovak parliamentary elections of 5-6 June 1992. Those were the first elections in which the HDZ and HZDS competed, and they resulted in a victory for the two movements. Nonetheless, it must be noted that the two sets of elections were held in widely divergent circumstances. In Croatia they were the first multi-party elections after more than 40 years of socialism, and the elections were affected by the general uncertainty within the Communist Party and within Yugoslavia as a whole. They took place in an increasingly tense atmosphere, as Slobodan Milošević used nationalist discourse to mobilize Serbs throughout Yugoslavia. Some market-oriented reforms had been implemented in Yugoslavia before 1990, and after several years of high inflation and currency devaluation, the economic situation was

finally stabilizing. Although the economy was an important issue for some voters, the national question was more crucial, and the Croatian elections were a referendum on sovereignty, socialism, and Milošević.

In Slovakia, the first multi-party elections had been held two years earlier, and because of the victory of anti-communist forces, the basic structures of democratic institutions and a market economy had already been built by the time of the 1992 elections. Growing tensions with the Czechs over the form of the Czechoslovak state arrangement and the severe effect that Prague-led economic reforms were continuing to have on Slovakia meant that the 1992 elections were considered by many to be a referendum on the future of Czechoslovakia and on economic reforms. The fact that they were held in the middle of the turbulent transformation process meant that the support for parties favoring quick economic reforms was low. Moreover, the anti-national approach of the pre-election Slovak leadership, which was influenced by Czech liberalism, frustrated those Slovaks who believed that their government was insufficiently representing national interests.

In both the Croatian and Slovak cases, the national movements were influenced by state policies and strategies as well as by the changing world order. While the national movement in Croatia emerged largely as a response to growing Serbian nationalism, in Slovakia it arose mainly as a reaction to Czech liberalism, both political and economic. The Croatian national movement arose as Croats sought to join other nascent democracies following the fall of communism across Central and Eastern Europe but were held back by the Serbs' reluctance to allow for democratization. In the Slovak case, the national movement strengthened after the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, as Slovaks watched smaller and poorer nations gain independence and wanted more international recognition for themselves as a result.

Despite the differences in background, the discourse used and the outcomes of the elections were largely similar in Croatia and Slovakia. In both countries, the elections brought to power a newly-established political movement that used the theme of national sovereignty to attract support. In discussing the Yugoslav situation, Renata Salecl writes that "an essential feature of the ideological

efficiency of the nationalist parties was their ability to subordinate all real (economic) problems to the problem of national identity: they succeeded in convincing the voters that a solution to the national question would solve all other questions as well.”⁵⁹ Those arguments apply to the Slovak case as well, as both the HDZ and HZDS used such an approach in the election campaigns that brought them to power. In Croatia and Slovakia, the elections contributed to the breakup of the larger, multi-ethnic states of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

After briefly presenting the historical contexts of the national question that contributed to the rise of the HDZ and HZDS, this chapter moves on to examine the establishment and growth of the Croatian and Slovak national movements, as a reflection of state policies and the general political atmosphere. It is important to note here that while the HDZ was largely responsible for the nationalist mobilization of the Croatian population, in Slovakia the population was mobilized by a range of other groups before the rise of the HZDS, and that party came to power at a time when nationalist sentiment was already declining. The third part of the chapter looks at the discourse of the various competitors in the election campaigns of 1990 in Croatia and of 1992 in Slovakia, showing how elites mobilized the populations based on national interests. While other parties are discussed only briefly because of lack of space, the focus is on the HDZ and HZDS as the election winners. The chapter concludes with a presentation and analysis of the election results.

Historical contexts

In certain respects, the historical position of the Croatian and Slovak nations was remarkably similar. For both Croats and Slovaks, the only modern experience with statehood prior to the 1990s was the Nazi puppet states of World War II; however, because that experience has been widely seen as an unfavorable foundation for the creation of new states, both nations have based their identity partly on distant historical factors, looking back 1,000 years to their previous statehood — the medieval Croatian state and the Great Moravian Empire.

⁵⁹ Renata Salecl, “The Crisis of Identity and the Struggle for New Hegemony in the Former Yugoslavia,” in Laclau (ed.), *The Making of Political Identities* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 225.

The statehood factor has been especially important in Croatia, where it was a basic rallying point for the 19th century national revival movement. Importantly, although the Croats fell under foreign — mainly Hungarian — rule until 1918, they had retained several important instruments of statehood: the Ban and the Sabor, or parliament.⁶⁰ The use of language or religion as integrating elements was more complicated since ethnic Croats spoke three different dialects, and people living on territory that was considered Croatian were of various religious affiliations. The idea of Illyrian or South Slav unity was prominent among Croatian patriots in the 19th century, and instead of creating a language that was exclusively Croatian, steps were taken by Serbian and Croatian linguists in the second half of the 19th century to forge a common literary language. A Croatian orthography published by Ivan Broz in 1892 and based on the work of Serbian language reformer Vuk Karadžić became the standard for modern Croatian.⁶¹ Concerning the question of religion, although ethnic Croats were predominantly Roman Catholic, Croatian territory also included significant numbers of members of the Orthodox faith. The question of religion was further complicated by the fact that many national revival leaders considered Bosnia-Herzegovina to be part of Croatia, with Bosnian Muslims widely thought of as “Islamicized” Croats.

While Slovaks were also under Hungarian control prior to World War I, they had no separate status and no state-forming institutions of their own. Like the Croats, the majority of Slovaks were Roman Catholic; however, ethnic Slovaks also included Protestants, Greek Catholics, and members of the Orthodox faith. As in the case of the Croatian language, the codification of the Slovak language was complicated by the number of different dialects that existed. The language was first codified by the Catholic Anton Bernolák in 1787 based on the west Slovak dialect that is close to Czech; however, that version did not attract broad appeal. Some leading personalities in the 19th century national revival movement preferred that Slovaks continue to use the Czech language — or rather a

⁶⁰ See Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*.

⁶¹ For more on the development of the Croatian literary language, see Keith Langston, “Linguistic cleansing: Language purism in Croatia after the Yugoslav break-up,” *International Politics* vol. 36 (June 1999); and Svetlana Đurković, “Language Purification and Language of Purification in Croatia,” paper presented at the Fourth Annual Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, New York, 15-17 April 1999.

“Slovakified” version of Czech — in writing and were critical of efforts to create a separate Slovak literary language, praising the Croats for “their willingness not to assert their own linguistic peculiarities in the interests of Illyrian unity.”⁶² Nevertheless, Ľudovít Štúr’s 1843 codification based on the central Slovak dialect, which was considered the purest version of Slovak, eventually gained prominence, making language a key aspect of national identity.⁶³ The importance of that step for Slovak nationhood cannot be underestimated; while serving as culture minister under Meciar’s third government, Ivan Hudec wrote that “without Štúr’s literary Slovak, the modern Slovak nation would most certainly not have arisen.”⁶⁴

At the end of World War I, Slovakia and Croatia became junior partners in new, multiethnic Slavic states — Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with the latter renamed Yugoslavia in 1929. The two states were highly centralized and were controlled by the senior partners, the Czechs and the Serbs, causing considerable resentment among Slovaks and Croats. In the Yugoslav case, this was especially true after King Aleksandar established his personal dictatorship in 1929. Although Czechoslovakia was the only state in the region to remain a democracy throughout the interwar period, the Czechs were reluctant to give Slovaks more control over their own affairs for fear of demands that they also relinquish more autonomy to the Sudeten Germans. Additional resentment was based on the fact that many Czechs had moved to Slovakia after 1918 to work as teachers, policemen, and other state officials, and they did not leave even after there were enough trained Slovaks to fill such positions.

By the late 1930s, Slovak and Croatian feelings of ill will toward Czechs and Serbs had intensified, making them easy targets of manipulation by Hitler before and during World War II. Both the Slovak and the Croatian nations experienced nominal independence as Nazi puppet states during that war, before being

⁶² David Short, “The Use and Abuse of the Language Argument in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century ‘Czechoslovakism’”: An Appraisal of a Propaganda Milestone,” in Robert B. Pynsent (ed.), *The Literature of Nationalism: Essays on East European Identity* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1996), pp. 40–65.

⁶³ Robert B. Pynsent, *Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality* (London: Central European University Press, 1994).

⁶⁴ Ivan Hudec, “Skvost jazyka— naše najvzácnejšie dedičstvo,” in *Preco mám rád slovincinú, preco mám rád Slovensko*, (Bratislava: Ministry of Education, 1998), p. 5.

reincorporated into Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in 1945. That experience with statehood has provided a negative stigma for both nations. For the Slovaks, the experience was damaging since approximately 70,000 Jews were deported to concentration camps abroad during the war, many with the full support of the ruling party, which was led by the Catholic priest Jozef Tiso. The Ustaša regime of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was in certain ways even more severe than Slovakia's wartime state, and many Serbs and Roma as well as anti-fascist Croats perished along with Jews in concentration camps. At the Croatian-based Jasenovac camp alone, an estimated 600,000 people lost their lives.⁶⁵

During World War II, Slovaks and Croats partially redeemed themselves through anti-fascist partisan movements. While the 1944 Slovak National Uprising was fought not only by communists but also by democrats, in Croatia and the rest of Yugoslavia, the partisans were mostly influenced by the communist ideology of their leader, Josip Broz Tito. The prominence of Tito, who was half Croat/half Slovene, made the transition to a communist regime almost inevitable following the war, and he ensured that Yugoslavia was reestablished as a federal state. In contrast, in Czechoslovakia's 1946 elections the Democratic Party won 62.00 percent of the vote in Slovakia, compared with just 30.37 percent for the communists. The communists took control of Czechoslovakia in 1948 partly thanks to their electoral victory in the Czech lands, where they had won 40.17 percent of the vote in 1946.⁶⁶ Although the 1945 Košice government program promised equal status for Slovaks and Czechs, the federal idea was soon forgotten.

After the war, many Serbs tried to present the Yugoslav partisan movement as a largely Serbian affair, while painting Croats as Ustaše, or fascists. The Czechs, who did not have an uprising against the German occupation of their territory that was comparable in size with the Slovak National Uprising, had more difficulty labeling Slovaks in such terms. Nonetheless, in the 1950s, a number of

⁶⁵ There has been considerable controversy over that figure, with Tudman arguing in a book published in the 1980s that only 60,000 were killed in all of Croatia. See Laura Silber and Allan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin and BBC, revised edition, 1996), p. 85.

⁶⁶ Josef Tomeš, *Slovník k politickým dějinám Československa 1918-1992* (Praha: Nakladatelství Budka, 1994), p. 273.

prominent Slovaks were accused of “bourgeois nationalism,” including personalities such as Gustáv Husák, who had joined the Communist Party in the 1930s and fought in the Uprising. Although those personalities were rehabilitated in the 1960s, the attack on Slovak “bourgeois nationalism” reemerged during the “normalization” period of the 1970s, despite the fact that Czechoslovakia was led at the time by Husák himself.⁶⁷

Both nations experienced reform movements during the communist regime, Slovaks as part of Czechoslovakia’s 1968 Prague Spring and Croats with their 1971 Croatian Spring, also known as Maspok, short for *masovni pokret* [mass movement]. Those movements had both liberal and national elements. In Czechoslovakia, the pre-1968 communist regime had been in many respects harder on the more traditional and religious Slovaks than on the Czechs, and Slovak writers and politicians provided the impetus for many of the changes that occurred throughout the 1960s, with the Slovak Alexander Dubcek becoming the symbol of the Prague Spring movement. Nonetheless, Czechs blamed the Slovaks for being more concerned about the federalization of the state — which was carried out in October 1968, shortly after the movement was crushed by Warsaw Pact troops — than about liberalizing the economy and providing for civic freedoms. Nonetheless, although the state was formally converted into a federation, federalism did not function in practice.⁶⁸

For the Croats, who were already part of a federal state (although again without true federalism), one of the main impetuses for Maspok came in 1967, when 130 leading intellectuals signed a petition demanding the recognition of Croatian and Serbian as separate languages and the teaching of the “Croatian” language in the republic’s schools.⁶⁹ An even greater concern to Croatia was economic since the republic’s inhabitants believed that too much of their wealth was being transferred to the poorer republics. The Croats demanded that more authority be given to the republics’ governments and party organizations and that banking and

⁶⁷ Ján Buncák, Valentína Harmadyová and Zuzana Kusá, *Politická zmena v spoločenskej rozprave* (Bratislava: Veda, 1996), pp. 80-81.

⁶⁸ See Jacques Rupnik, “Divorce à l’amiable ou guerre de sécession? (Tchécoslovaquie-Yougoslavie),” *Transeuropéennes* no. 19/20 (2001), pp. 81-91.

⁶⁹ See *Deklaracija o nazivu i položaju hrvatskog književnog jezika: 1967-1997* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1997).

currency regulations be reformed. At the same time, there was “a strong upsurge of Croatian national feelings.”⁷⁰ Although the Croatian Spring initially had Tito’s support, he crushed it in December 1971, comparing it to the situation in Croatia’s World War II state.

Wide-spread purges were carried out in the aftermath of the Prague Spring and Maspok, and both Slovak and Croatian societies were stifled throughout the 1970s and 1980s. During that period, commentators nicknamed Croatia “the silent republic,” explaining the weakness of opposition by the population’s memory of the 1971 purges and the general association of manifestations of national feeling with the Ustaša state.⁷¹ Others argued, however, that Croatian communists demonstrated their dogmatism in order to show that they were “better” communists than the Serbs.⁷² At the same time, Slovenia’s more liberal atmosphere contributed to shifting the centers of political dialogue from Belgrade and Zagreb to Belgrade and Ljubljana for the first time in Yugoslav history.⁷³

In Slovakia, the purges after 1968 meant that ordinary citizens were “less inclined to protest or join independent organizations than were citizens of certain other communist countries,” instead tending to “escape” into their private lives.⁷⁴ Others have argued that the post-1968 “normalization” process punished more Czechs than Slovaks and allowed for a relatively more moderate regime in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic.⁷⁵ That helps to explain why the communist regime was generally more accepted in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic after 1968 and why the Slovak dissident movement was comparatively weak and fragmented. In any case, public discussion of the Slovak national question was repressed and was the domain only of dissidents and émigrés. Communist propaganda gave the idea of “nationalism” a deeply pejorative meaning, and in

⁷⁰ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 396-97.

⁷¹ See Silber and Little, pp. 82-83.

⁷² Personal interview with Ivo Banac, 6 January 1999.

⁷³ Milan Andrejevich, “Croatia: The ‘Silent’ Republic Speaks Out,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Situation Report*, 26 May 1989.

⁷⁴ Darina Malová, “The Relationship Between the State, Political Parties and Civil Society in Postcommunist Czecho-Slovakia,” in Sona Szomolányi and Grigorij Mesežnikov (eds.), *The Slovak Path of Transition—To Democracy?* (Bratislava: Slovak Political Science Association & Interlingua, 1994), p. 116.

contrast to the situation in Poland and Hungary, in Czechoslovakia even the idea of “patriotism” was seen as dangerous. That was especially true after the Soviet occupation, when expressions of Czechoslovak patriotism had an anti-Soviet connotation and were therefore replaced by ideas such as “socialist internationalism” and “brotherly international assistance.”⁷⁶

It was not until the late 1980s that visible opposition activity emerged in Croatia and Slovakia. In Croatia it was centered largely in the area of environmental and women’s organizations, while Slovakia’s “nonconformist communities” consisted mainly of artists, scientists, environmentalists, and Catholic activists who had few contacts with one another and were united only in November 1989.⁷⁷ Certain media organizations made important contributions toward liberalization in Croatia, particularly the Zagreb weekly magazines *Danas* and *Start*, and 1989-1990 has been seen as the period in which the greatest media freedom and professionalism were exercised.⁷⁸ In Slovakia, where the regime was much stricter, anti-communist ideas were expressed mainly through *samizdat* publications.

After years of silence, the nationalist mobilization of the Serbian population in the late 1980s based on the rhetoric of Milošević eventually served as a wake-up call for Croats. An August 1988 article in *Danas* was the first in Croatia to denounce Milošević’s “anti-constitutional radicalism” as posing the greatest danger to the stability of Yugoslavia since 1945.⁷⁹ A schism soon began to develop within the League of Communists of Croatia (SKH), dividing conservative hard-liners from reformers, with the former generally supporting Milošević and the latter seeing him as a threat. Despite the growing conflict between Serbs and Croats, the pace of moving away from communist Yugoslavia was set not by the Croatian elite but by Slovenia. Reacting to Serbia’s steps to

⁷⁵ See Sona Szomolányi, “Old Elites in the New Slovak State and Their Current Transformations,” in Szomolányi and Mesežnikov, p. 65.

⁷⁶ Buncák et al pp. 80-81.

⁷⁷ Szomolányi, “Old Elites in the New Slovak State and Their Current Transformations,” p. 66.

⁷⁸ Zrinjka Peruško Culek, “The Frameworks of Freedom, or What’s Wrong with Croatian Media Policy” in David Paletz and Karol Jakubowicz, *Relapse into Communism? The Media and Socio-Political consciousness in Central and Eastern Europe*. (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1998).

⁷⁹ Andrejevich, “Croatia: The ‘Silent’ Republic Speaks Out.”

unilaterally strengthen its position within Yugoslavia by taking control of Kosovo and Vojvodina, Slovenia proposed its own package of constitutional amendments in September 1989 aimed at decentralizing the Yugoslav state and including the right to secession. That move led to a standoff between Slovenia and Serbia, and after a series of failed attempts at agreement, the Croats publicly sided with the Slovenes for the first time against the majority during a meeting of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Party in late September. Observers commented that given the atmosphere of intolerance within Yugoslavia, SKH chief Ivica Racan had little choice but to back the Slovenes. Slovenia proceeded to declare itself a sovereign state, adopting the constitutional amendments almost unanimously.⁸⁰

Responding to the Slovenes' steps toward political pluralism and the rapid fall of communism across Central and Eastern Europe, the SKH introduced changes at a meeting in December 1989 to allow for political and economic reforms and the introduction of political pluralism.⁸¹ Croatian multiparty parliamentary elections were scheduled for two weeks after the Slovenian ones, and the Croatian communists adopted a new name to demonstrate that they had reformed, adding the suffix Party of Democratic Change (SDP). Although not officially registered until shortly before the 1990 elections, the first three opposition political organizations were founded in Croatia in February and March 1989: the Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI), the HDZ, and the Croatian Social-Liberal Alliance, which later became the Croatian Social-Liberal Party (HSLs). While the UJDI was not a competitor in the 1990 elections, the HDZ and HSLs played important political roles throughout the 1990s.

At a January 1990 Communist Party congress in Belgrade, the conflict among the representatives of the various republics heightened further. With Slovenia and Croatia having already called multiparty elections, the gap between Serbia and the two western republics had grown considerably. Slovenian representatives proposed a number of amendments to transform the party, ranging from human rights matters to Yugoslavia's position within Europe; however, they failed to

⁸⁰ Silber and Little, pp. 73-79.

⁸¹ See Darko Hudelist, *Banket u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Centar za informacije i publicitet, 1991), pp. 217-223.

gain even half of the votes needed for approval. The Slovenes responded to their defeat by leaving the congress, and they were followed by the Croatian delegation, one-third of whom were ethnic Serbs. The congress was the last one that was attended by representatives of all six republics.⁸²

In contrast to the situation in Croatia, the first Slovak alternative political organization — the anti-communist umbrella movement Public Against Violence (VPN) — was founded on 20 November 1989, three days after the communist regime had started to fall in the “velvet revolution.” The VPN united cultural personalities, scientists and other dissidents, and it played a key role in forming the first post-communist governments and in implementing the initial political and economic reforms. “Dialogue” between the political elite and the masses was one of the main themes of the “velvet revolution,” and that dialogue was supposed to result in “national understanding.” Although the national idea had been retained in the Slovak historical consciousness, the period of political change in late 1989 and early 1990 did not differ in Slovakia from that in the Czech Republic, and prominent slogans included “the end of one-party government,” “return to Europe,” “truth and love wins over lies and hatred,” “free elections,” and “we are not like them.”⁸³ As a VPN representative, Meciar served as Slovak minister of interior and environment in the government that held office prior to the first free parliamentary elections in June 1990.

The rise of national movements in Croatia and Slovakia

The prominence of national over liberal ideas for some Croatian and Slovak leaders during the reform movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the subsequent weakness of civil society in both republics laid the ground for the reemergence of the focus on the national question during the first years of the post-communist period. In the early 1990s the national question — although not necessarily manifested in demands for outright independence — frequently took precedence over issues of democratization and economic liberalization. The continuity between the two periods was especially apparent in Croatia, and many

⁸² Silber and Little, pp. 79-81.

⁸³ Buncák et al, pp. 81-83.

Maspok activists participated in the formation of political parties, particularly the HSLS, HDZ, and the Croatian Peasants' Party (HSS).

As noted already, the national mobilization of the Croatian and Slovak populations took place in different ways. While the HDZ was the driving force in the Croatian case, Slovaks were mobilized before the establishment of the HZDS, and that party simply took over the work of others. The mobilization of Croats began with a petition campaign launched in October 1989 for the return of the statue of the 19th century Ban Josip Jelacic to Zagreb's central square. Although that campaign was initiated by the HSLS, it was the HDZ that closely connected the event with the national question.⁸⁴ While the mobilization of Croats behind the HDZ took place within a period of just six months, in Slovakia the national question had yet to gain real importance by the time of the first post-communist elections in June 1990, and it was not reflected in the republic's political leadership until two years later. Because of the longer amount of time needed for national mobilization in Slovakia, more attention is devoted to it in this section than to the Croatian case.

Both Tudman and Meciar headed broad movements that attracted people from a variety of backgrounds and from across the political spectrum, ranging from social democrats to Christian democrats to ex-communists to nationalists to conservatives, and the mixed personal backgrounds of the two party leaders was undoubtedly a factor in their ability to bring together such a broad following. Tudman was born in 1922 into a peasant family in the Zagorje region north of Zagreb, and his father was a supporter of the HSS, the most popular party in interwar Croatia. During World War II Tudman fought against the Ustaša regime through the partisan movement, joining the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1942. After the war, Tudman went to Belgrade, where he attended the military academy. In 1960, he became Tito's youngest general, but the following year Tudman left the military and returned to Zagreb to devote himself to studying Croatian history. In 1961 he became the founding director of the Institute for History of the Workers' Movement, and he finished his doctorate in history in 1965. Becoming involved in the Croatian nationalist cause, Tudman played a

prominent role in the Croatian Spring movement, and he was dismissed from the League of Communists in 1967. He published a series of books on Croatian history and the right of small nations to self-determination, making a number of controversial allegations that have been considered nationalistic and anti-Semitic. Although he was jailed twice in the 1970s and 1980s, Tudman was reportedly one of few dissidents in Yugoslavia who was permitted to hold a passport, which proved essential for his future political career. In 1987, he visited North America, where he made contacts with the Croatian émigré community in Canada and the US, who played a key role in providing financial support for his future party.⁸⁵

While Tudman transformed himself from an anti-fascist communist to a nationalist, Meciar's background was even more complicated, ranging from communist to anti-communist and from democrat to nationalist. Meciar was born in 1942 in the central Slovak town of Zvolen, although he spent most of his childhood in the countryside. He joined the Communist Party in 1962 and finished a course at the Komsomol college in Moscow in 1965. After his studies Meciar held various positions in the Czechoslovak Youth Union (CSM), but he was dismissed after giving a pro-reform speech at a 1970 CSM congress and subsequently lost his party membership. He then went to work in the heavy engineering firm ZTS in Dubnica nad Vahom, a typical job for post-1968 Czechoslovak dissidents. However, in a move that later led critics to claim that he must have reestablished communist ties, Meciar soon began attending evening law school classes at Comenius University in Bratislava. Upon completion of his studies in 1973, Meciar gained a job as a lawyer at the Skloobal glass factory in the western Slovak town of Nemšová, a position he held through early 1990, when he returned to politics as a VPN representative.⁸⁶

As personalities, Tudman and Meciar had widely divergent styles. Tudman carried himself "as a man who believed in his august destiny," and his demeanor

⁸⁴ Marko Mioc, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica u Koprivnici 1990.-1993*. (Koprivnica: HDZ, 1997), p. 18.

⁸⁵ See *Spomen knjiga: Deset godina Hrvatske demokratske zajednice* (Zagreb: HDZ, 1999), pp. 34-43; Patrick Moore, "The Awkward Patriot, *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 18 (6 September 1996), pp. 22-24; Silber and Little, p. 84.

⁸⁶ See Marián Leško, *Meciar a Meciarizmus: Politik bez škrupúl, politika bez zábran* (Bratislava: VMV, 1996), pp. 11-21; Karol Wolf, *Podruhé a naposled aneb Mírové delení Československa* (Prague: G plus G, 1998), pp. 127-128.

was partly influenced by his military background but also by “the strength of his personal conviction that he had a mission to rule.”⁸⁷ In contrast, Meciár preferred a more light-hearted approach, frequently using simple speech and humor in addressing his supporters. While Tudman presented himself as a serious, fatherly figure, Meciár appeared more like a son, especially to the numerous elderly peasant women who were known as his most loyal supporters.

Tudman’s belief in his historical importance for the nation led him to create a party when chances of success appeared unlikely. That has led many analysts to comment that Tudman was a true nationalist who strongly felt the need for Croatian emancipation. The push to establish the HDZ came in January 1989 at a small gathering of intellectuals. Although the initiators were of various opinions and approaches, a minimal common consensus existed among them on the need for national revival.⁸⁸ Approved at a session on 28 February 1989, the first HDZ document stated that the party’s goal was to become “the expression and meeting place of all democratically committed people... in the homeland and in the world,” stressing that its doors were open to all Croats and other people “who favor the democratic renewal of national, social-political and economic life, without consideration for their world view, ideological-political and religious beliefs.” The HDZ emphasized the need “to build a contemporary democratic Croatian national consciousness ... based on those components that essentially contributed to the formation of the Croatian historical and cultural entity,” including 19th century national revival leader Ante Starčević’s Croatian historical state right, interwar politician Stjepan Radić’s democratic republicanism, and the Croatian leftist tradition, which provided for the self-determination of nations.⁸⁹

Soon after the initial meeting, a conflict emerged between two groups within the HDZ: one centered around Tudman and the other without a distinct leader, and the latter criticized Tudman and his followers for their “authoritarian” methods and pointed to “differences in the comprehension of democracy.” The communist authorities banned the founding HDZ assembly in June 1989; however, the 48

⁸⁷ Silber and Little, p. 84.

⁸⁸ Zoran Oštrić, “HDZ i HDS: što dalje, to bliži,” *Start*, 11 November 1989, p. 55. See also Hudelist, *Banket u Hrvatskoj*, pp. 27-28.

⁸⁹ HDZ: “Prednacrt programske osnove,” Zagreb, 28 February 1989. In D. Đurić et al, pp. 59-62.

members of Tudman's group held a private meeting and elected Tudman as party chairman.⁹⁰ Although the HDZ founding documents repeatedly stressed the importance of democracy, the conflict surrounding the founding assembly was a signal of things to come once the party took office.

Some analysts present the Croatian Serbs' militancy as the result of Tudman's anti-Serbian policies; however, it must be noted that provocations by Croatia's ethnic Serb community occurred well before Tudman came to power. In February 1989 some 10,000 people — most of whom were Croatian Serbs — staged Milošević-style protests against their local leaders and against alleged support from the Zagreb communist leadership for Croatian and Albanian "nationalists."⁹¹ In July of that same year, a nationalist rally was held in Knin, with as many as 50,000 Serbs protesting against discriminatory Croatian cultural and social policies. The July demonstration took place several weeks after the Croatian National Assembly rejected demands from Croatia's Serbs that the republic's official language be changed from Croatian to either Croatian or Serbian.⁹²

At the outset, Croatia's HDZ used mainstream discourse, promoting democracy and rejecting separatism. However, the party gradually shifted to a more radical stance as the situation within Yugoslavia became increasingly tense as a result of Milošević's growing nationalism. The HDZ's February 1989 program proposal stressed that the party wanted to arrange relations within Yugoslavia in the spirit of the Anti-fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) and argued that "that spirit is betrayed by those who — whether with neo-hegemonic, socialist-integrationist, or ostensibly general democratic tendencies — desire centralism and unitarianism," as well as by those who "one-sidedly condemn a confederation as a pretense for separatism. Both are forgetting Tito's contemporary principles that Yugoslavia, restored as an autonomous and federal state of communities, can hold together only if the freedom and sovereign rights

⁹⁰ Zoran Oštric, "HDZ i HDS: što dalje, to bliži," *Start*, 11 November 1989, p. 55. For more on the establishment of the HDZ, see Željko Peratovic, "Velika tajna HDZ-a," *Globus*, 8 January 1999, pp. 26-30; interview with Điro Grubišić, *Globus*, 11 June 1999, pp. 82-87.

⁹¹ Andrejevich, "Croatia: The 'Silent' Republic Speaks Out."

⁹² Andrejevich, "The Yugoslav Crisis and the National Question," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Situation Report*, 17 August 1989.

of each individual nation are ensured.”⁹³ While in February 1989 the HDZ thus denied its aim of separatism, the program declaration adopted four months later at the founding session pointed to Croatia’s right to “self-determination and secession.” The declaration stressed that each state — including the Socialist Republic of Croatia as a part of Yugoslavia — “has the sovereign right to choose its economic, social, and cultural system in harmony with the will of the people and without any kind of interference, pressure or threat from the outside.”⁹⁴

The HDZ’s next document, approved on 29 November 1989 in reaction to the events in Slovenia, responded in an even stronger tone to the tensions within Yugoslavia. Although party documents from February and June 1989 did not mention the Serbs or Milošević specifically, in November 1989 the HDZ pointed to the dangers of “Greater Serb neo-expansionism,” which the party said was apparently aimed at creating a Greater Serbia that would include “three-fourths of Croatian territory” and would forge “a common border between Serbia and Slovenia.” The document demanded the “territorial integrity of the Croatian people within its historical and natural borders” and called for “the immediate creation of a democratic coalition government in Croatia that would be an expression of the confidence and genuine will and interests of the Croatian people and ... other inhabitants of Croatia.” The proclamation closed by calling on Croats to “wake up,” adding that “the historical moment demands decisiveness and common sense from all of us. ... Let’s finally take [Croatia] into our hands!”⁹⁵

As already mentioned, the HDZ’s mobilization of the Croatian population took place in a relatively short period. According to one analyst, just as Milošević and Milan Kucan had done before him with the Serbs and Slovenes, respectively, Tudman returned pride to Croats, giving them “faith in the actual usage of Croatian symbols and free expression of the Croatian question, building enthusiasm and inspiration through songs and words.” After almost 20 years of silence and the systemic passiveness of feeling for Croatia — during which time

⁹³ HDZ: “Prednacrt programske osnove,” pp. 59-62.

⁹⁴ “Programska deklaracija Osnivacke skupštine HDZ,” Zagreb, 17 June 1989. In D. Đurić et al, pp. 63-69.

“each picture, symbol and thought of one’s own home, native country and history was pronounced somehow conservative and nationalistic” — the HDZ gave Croats “real freedom of expression.” Although others tried to do the same, Tudman was “by far the most successful,” partly because of his belief in himself as the “most Croatian” politician, expressing “Croatian emotionality, inspiration, and pride.”⁹⁶

In Slovakia, as the population was mobilized in national terms during 1990-1991 — first against Hungarians and then against Czechs — Meciar stood on the side of the “Europeanists.” His anti-nationalist position during the early years of the transformation signaled that he was not a true nationalist as in the case of Tudman but was simply an opportunist. A gifted public speaker who was well attuned to the desires of ordinary people, Meciar and many of his colleagues in the HZDS appeared to latch onto the national idea simply as a way of winning power.

Before the fall of communism, little resentment of Hungarians was perceived among Slovaks; in a March 1989 interview published in *samizdat*, the Catholic dissident Ján Carnogurský commented that Slovaks did not have such poor relations with the Hungarians as did the Czechs with the Germans, adding that “Slovaks and Hungarians in small towns and villages know how to live together. ... I have not noticed fear of Hungarians in Slovakia.”⁹⁷ Nonetheless, the debate on national relations in Czechoslovakia began with a discussion of the Hungarian minority’s position within Slovakia, starting with a television discussion in January 1990 in which a representative of the state-sponsored cultural group for ethnic Hungarians, Csemadok, spoke about “the great injustices” committed against the Hungarian minority.⁹⁸ Although the VPN tried to resolve certain minority issues by forming an agreement with the Hungarian Independent Initiative (MNI), in February the Forum of Hungarian Citizens presented a list of

⁹⁵ HDZ: “Proglas građanima i Saboru SRH i cijelome hrvatskom narodu,” Zagreb, 29 November 1989. In D. Đurić et al, pp. 70-71.

⁹⁶ Zvonko Lerotic, “Tudman — Milošević — Kucan,” *Danas*, 27 March 1990, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁷ Ján Carnogurský, *Videné od Dunaja* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1997), pp. 115-116.

⁹⁸ Buncák et al, pp. 84, 88.

demands aimed at strengthening the national identity of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia.⁹⁹

Slovaks opposed the idea of granting autonomy to Hungarians since such a step could endanger Slovakia's integrity and rights as a "state-forming nation."¹⁰⁰ In a demonstration organized by the Štúr Society, the Association for the National Revival of Slovaks, and the Slovak National Party (SNS), some 200 Slovaks gathered in front of the Bratislava parliament on 1 March 1990 calling for national sovereignty. The demonstrators, who used slogans with nationalistic and chauvinistic undertones aimed against the Hungarian minority, were reportedly reacting to "anti-Slovak acts in southern Slovakia" and reports about increasing tensions between Slovaks and Hungarians.¹⁰¹ Two days later, the Slovak cultural organization Matica slovenská organized a gathering in the ethnically mixed southern Slovak town of Šurany. Participants produced the "Memorandum of Slovaks from Southern Slovakia," which asked for the resolution of Slovak educational and cultural problems in the region and demanded that the Slovak language be declared the state language.¹⁰²

Although Slovak Prime Minister Milan Čič asked for tolerance from both sides, tensions rose again when the Hungarian president's office sent a letter to Czechoslovak President Václav Havel in mid-March 1990, writing that "it is deplorable that the situation of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia is not improving."¹⁰³ The letter marked the official entrance of an outside actor into the discussion on Slovak-Hungarian relations, and it was followed in later months by a number of controversial statements and actions by politicians in Hungary, including Prime Minister József Antall's declaration that "I am the prime minister of 15 million Hungarians."¹⁰⁴ Subsequent meetings of Slovaks were held in

⁹⁹ Buncák et al, pp. 84-85.

¹⁰⁰ Buncák et al, p. 87.

¹⁰¹ Eduard Fašung, "Rošády na politickom nebi," *Hlas ľudu*, 2 March 1990, reprinted in Rudolf Schuster, *Ultimátum* (Košice: PressPrint, 1996).

¹⁰² Jerguš Ferko, *Hviezdna chvíľa Slovenska* (Bratislava: Merkury, 1998), p. 295; *Slovenský národ* no. 1, 1990, cited in Buncák et al, p. 88.

¹⁰³ *Pravda*, 15 March 1990, cited in Buncák et al, p. 88.

¹⁰⁴ Buncák et al, p. 88.

Šurany to protest against the growing Hungarian demands and calling for a referendum on the status of the Slovak language.¹⁰⁵

Already nervous from arguments with Hungarians, the Slovaks also soon became embroiled in a battle with the Czechs, and the first conflict occurred in early 1990 in connection with the new state name and symbols. The Slovak parliament proposed that the state's name be changed from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic to the Federation of Czecho-Slovakia, with the hyphen intended to demonstrate the existence of Slovakia as a separate nation.¹⁰⁶ The Association of Slovak Writers also challenged Slovak deputies in the Federal Assembly to support national interests in choosing the new name, pointing out the need to "tell the world" that Slovakia and the Slovak nation exist.¹⁰⁷

On 29 March 1990 the Federal Assembly approved the name of the state as the Czechoslovak Federative Republic, with the word "Czechoslovak" hyphenated in the Slovak version of the name but unhyphenated in the Czech version.¹⁰⁸ The following day several demonstrations were held, and the Slovak parliament and government sent an official protest to the Federal Assembly. The "hyphen war" was finally resolved on 20 April 1990 with the acceptance of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic as the official state name.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, the events contributed to a feeling that the VPN was insufficiently concerned with Slovak national interests, and on 30 March a group of artists and intellectuals established the "society of Slovak intelligentsia" Korene [Roots]. The group's goal was "the integration of the spiritual potential of Slovakia and its involvement in positively intended activities to realize the natural rights and interests of the Slovaks as a state-forming nation."¹¹⁰ Although the group supported Slovak sovereignty, one former Korene member later explained that sovereignty and independence are

¹⁰⁵ Jerguš Ferko, pp. 295-296.

¹⁰⁶ Buncák et al, p. 98.

¹⁰⁷ *Pravda*, 14 March 1990, cited in Buncák et al, p. 98.

¹⁰⁸ Czechs argued that the hyphen is not used in Czech orthography; however, Slobodník later pointed out that names like Austria-Hungary are written with a hyphen in Czech. Dušan Slobodník, *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi: Z dějin zápasu za Slovensko* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Spolku slovenských spisovateľov, 1998), p. 25.

¹⁰⁹ Buncák et al, p. 99. For more on the dispute and on Czech-Slovak relations in general, see Milan Šútovec, *Semioza ako politikum alebo "Pomlčková vojna"* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1999).

¹¹⁰ Slobodník, *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi*, pp. 26-28.

not equivalent and that Korene's aims could have been achieved within a Czech-Slovak confederation.¹¹¹

Aside from the hyphen war and disputes over minority policy, several other conflicts in early 1990 led some Slovaks to question the VPN's commitment to democracy and to the national idea. Those included the VPN's initial acceptance of a proposal by George Soros to use the newly-constructed Slovak parliament as the site of the Central European University, resulting in criticism that the VPN wanted to give a building of national importance to a "Hungarian-cosmopolitan institute."¹¹² A second dispute arose when VPN leader Ján Budaj tried unsuccessfully to replace communist representative Rudolf Schuster as Slovak parliament chairman during a session of the Slovak National Council on 1 March. The VPN, which had been associated with a changed approach to politics, was brought under public pressure for the first time for using "totalitarian" methods. At the demonstration held that same day in favor of national sovereignty, participants expressed support for Schuster.¹¹³

On the wave of criticism of the VPN, the SNS held its founding meeting in early March 1990, becoming the first important political party in Slovakia to focus on the national question. The emergence of a party that set itself in opposition to the VPN as the defender of national interests substantially altered Slovakia's political spectrum, and by April 1990 the VPN's popularity had sunk to 9.6 percent.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, support for the VPN rose again in early May, when politicians such as Havel, Dubcek and federal Prime Minister Marián Čalfa appeared at pre-election rallies. As the continued symbol of rejection of the communist regime, the VPN emerged as the strongest Slovak party in the June 1990 elections, winning 29.3 percent of the vote.¹¹⁵ Following the elections, the VPN formed a government with the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), the MNI, and the Democratic Party (DS), and Mečiar was named Slovak prime

¹¹¹ Personal interview with Jozef Magala, 22 June 1999.

¹¹² Buncák et al, p. 101.

¹¹³ *Pravda*, 2 March 1990, reprinted in Schuster. For a discussion of the incident from Schuster's perspective, see Schuster, pp. 104-148.

¹¹⁴ Buncák et al, pp. 100-103.

¹¹⁵ Buncák et al, p. 104.

minister, “simply because other viable candidates — mostly intellectuals — declined the position.”¹¹⁶

The biggest display of Slovak nationalism of the entire decade was aimed primarily against Hungarians rather than Czechs, and it occurred in October 1990 in connection with the Slovak language law. The issue came to the forefront when Matica slovenská, backed by the SNS, put forward a language bill that was intended as a constitutional law declaring that “the Slovak language is the state and official language and the language of public communication on the entire territory of the Slovak Republic without exception.”¹¹⁷ The Matica draft was submitted after the series of gatherings in Šurany, and the organization worked together with linguists as well as with several civic initiatives, particularly Korene.¹¹⁸

While the ethnic Hungarian parties in the parliament proposed a liberal version of the law, the Slovak government struggled to find a compromise, and its original draft fell somewhere between the Matica and Hungarian versions. When the government’s bill reached the parliament, however, political conflicts meant that some elements had to be changed, bringing it closer to the Matica version.¹¹⁹ In the end, the only real difference between the final approved law and the Matica version was that the former did not limit the use of minority languages in public, and it allowed ethnic minorities to use their mother tongue in official contexts when they represented at least 20 percent of the population.

In discussing the language law, Slovak “Europeanists” were influenced by Czech liberalism, and they associated Slovak nationalism with the practices of the

¹¹⁶See Samuel Abraham, “The Break-up of Czechoslovakia: a Threat to Democratization in Slovakia?” in Szomolányi and Mesežnikov, p. 30. One source notes that of the 25 members of the VPN leadership, only three expressed doubts about Meciar. See Wolf, p. 26.

¹¹⁷For the text of the Matica and government proposals, see Fedor Gál, *Z prvej ruky* (Bratislava: Archa, 1991), pp. 73-76.

¹¹⁸Ján Kacala, “Spisovná slovenčina po r. 1989 a po vzniku samostatnej Slovenskej republiky,” in *Štatný jazyk v súvislostiach* (Bratislava: Ministry of Culture, 1998), pp. 73-74. Jozef Magala said that because Korene did not want to get directly involved in politics, it allowed Matica slovenská to take credit for its work. Personal interview with Magala, 22 June 1999.

¹¹⁹Gál, *Z prvej ruky*, pp. 87-95. For a discussion of the parliamentary debate on the law, see František Mikloško, *Cas stretnutí* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1996), pp. 128-130.

World War II state. On 22 October 1990, a group of VPN representatives published its opinion on the language law debate, arguing that:

Our struggle over the language law is a struggle over the entrance to the 21st century. ... The differences between the Matica and coalition drafts are differences in the understanding of the word tolerance. The strength and freedom of a nation are not confirmed in a way so that the rights that are natural and irrevocable to it are affirmed through suppressing the rights of others. We have the feeling that a much wider conflict is being hidden under the cover of the struggle over the formulation of the language law ... [and] that behind the idea of the sovereignty of the Slovak National Council is hidden the idea of the independent Slovak state, which would have an authoritarian form. We are convinced that efforts for an independent Slovak state, inspired from those sources, are again only a step that would lead to the isolation of our nation and to its exclusion from the context of the modern democratic world.¹²⁰

At the same time, Havel warned that Czechoslovakia was being closely watched and that certain activities might complicate the country's "return to Europe."¹²¹

Slovak "Nationalists," on the other hand, were unrelenting in their dissatisfaction with the government's version of the law. One commentator from the SNS weekly *Slovenský národ* wrote that "Europe will wait. There is no reason to be afraid of missing it." He stressed that Slovaks should first deal with domestic issues, the "most precious" of which was the language law, adding that "those who try to postpone it will pay dearly."¹²² On 5 October 1990 Matica slovenská organized a mass rally in Bratislava in support of its version of the law, during which the organization's chairman Jozef Markuš pointed to the importance of the Slovak language for the nation.¹²³ VPN representative Fedor Gál later wrote that the whole meeting and the TV discussion afterward seemed to him as "a bad dream, mainly because one of the goals of the November [1989] revolution, 'the return to Europe,' had suddenly started to dwindle."¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Gál, *Z prvej ruky*, pp. 89-90. Meciar's name did not appear on the declaration.

¹²¹ Jan Obrman, "Language Law Stirs Controversy in Slovakia," *Report on Eastern Europe* (16 November 1990).

¹²² *Práca*, 10 October 1990, as cited in Obrman, p. 16.

¹²³ For a transcript of Markuš's speech, see Gál, *Z prvej ruky*, pp. 77-79.

¹²⁴ Gál, *Z prvej ruky*, p. 77.

Several thousand SNS supporters gathered in front of the Bratislava parliament during the days of the debate. According to Gál, parliamentary deputies were under “unprecedented psychological pressure,” as newspapers carried articles about “the entire nation’s support for the Matica version of the language law.” Gál added that:

On the radio and television the impression was evoked that the VPN was at that time some kind of anti-national political group with unheard of power to implement whatever it wanted against the will of the whole nation. ... We who then worked in the leadership of the VPN started again to feel like we were in the pre-November [1989] times — like a minority on the periphery of society. ... [T]he coalition’s draft language law was for Slovakia something like Charter ’77 had been in the Czech Republic — a model of behavior of a narrow group of intellectuals whom the wider public simply rejected.¹²⁵

Gál further commented that the demonstrations in front of the parliament were a repeat of the scenario of the November 1989 revolution, with the difference being that while November 1989 was “a revolt of citizens,” October 1990 was “a revolt of nationalists.”¹²⁶

After the Slovak National Council approved the coalition’s version of the language law, SNS Chairman Vítazoslav Moric demanded the parliament’s dissolution, calling for protests throughout Slovak territory, including acts of civil disobedience. A petition campaign “For our Slovak language” collected more than 300,000 signatures calling for the legalization of Slovak as the state and official language, and a group of young demonstrators went on a hunger strike, while bus and tram drivers staged a brief strike. Under pressure from within the SNS, Moric eventually softened his rhetoric, urged the hunger strikers to give up, and called for a “democratic solution to the problem”¹²⁷

In the language law debate, Meciar went against public opinion and came out on the side of the “Europeanists” by vehemently defending the government’s version of the law. Speaking on television on 21 October, Meciar emphasized the

¹²⁵ Gál, *Z prvej ruky*, p. 92.

¹²⁶ Gál, *Z prvej ruky*, p. 94.

¹²⁷ Obrman, p. 16.

need to give more space in the Czech media to representatives of the Slovak majority rather than those extremists who present “a false picture of Slovakia,” and he told Slovaks and Czechs “Let’s protect ourselves from separatists and extremists! Let’s protect our coexistence, let’s protect our common state!”¹²⁸ Four days afterwards, when the parliament approved the government’s more liberal version of the law, Meciar defended his views in a television debate against Markuš, arguing that the conflict over the language law was “a struggle for power” and labeling Markuš’s behavior as “demagogy of the coarsest grain, which is aimed at nothing but evoking passion in people.” Several days later Meciar commented that “Matica has ended up under the influence of several extremists,” and he questioned whether the state could continue financing “an organization that is fighting against it.” Meciar explained to journalists that Markuš had wanted a position in the federal government but was sent home from Prague empty-handed, implying that Markuš had not made it through lustration procedures.¹²⁹ Shortly after the language law debate, Meciar called attention to the existence of fascistic tendencies in Slovak society, adding that fears were not unfounded that extremist forces would fail to be halted and would continue with the declaration of Slovak sovereignty and then of an independent Slovakia. Thus, in October 1990, Meciar considered the declaration of a sovereign and independent Slovakia “as steps of extremist forces that elicit warranted fears.”¹³⁰

HZDS representative Dušan Slobodník later argued that Meciar took the approach that he did on the language law because he was aware that had the Matica variant been approved, Slovakia would have faced “a circular attack” from Czechs, Hungarians, as well as West European correspondents and politicians.¹³¹ However, given the extent of Meciar’s criticism, it appears that Meciar was at the time sincere in his support of the more liberal version and in his opposition to the idea of Slovak independence.

While the events surrounding the Slovak language law contributed to the VPN’s loss of contact with voters and to its eventual disintegration, they also

¹²⁸ Gál, *Z prvej ruky*, pp. 90-91; Leško, pp. 39-40.

¹²⁹ Leško, pp. 39-40.

¹³⁰ Leško, pp. 39-40.

¹³¹ Slobodník, *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi*, p. 45.

encouraged the radicalization of certain “pro-national” groups in Slovakia. Stanislav Bajaník of Matica slovenská later acknowledged that “the fight over language was also a fight over state sovereignty,” adding that shortly after the law’s approval Matica “openly announced its support for Slovak independence.”¹³² Moreover, on 23 October 1990, 13 Slovaks signed the memorandum of the initiative “A Sovereign Slovakia — 61 Steps to Slovak Identity.”¹³³

Some “Nationalists” have argued that the government’s unwillingness to take into consideration the population’s desires regarding the language law increased Slovaks’ feeling of helplessness, making people less willing to fight for their beliefs. Referring to the demonstrations, petition campaign, and hunger strike, one Matica representative later commented that “in the history of Slovakia I do not know a period that was marked by such initiative and willingness as the year 1990.”¹³⁴ The linguist Ján Kacala wrote that the defeat of the national movement that had backed the language law brought disenchantment in society that was multiplied by the “wide propaganda campaign aimed against the emphasis on the meaning of the Slovak language for the Slovak nation, against Matica slovenská as a national cultural institution that was committed to bringing the language law’s approval, and against the nationally oriented members of the Slovak nation.”¹³⁵ Elsewhere, Kacala alleged that the “strong anti-national and anti-Matica propaganda” after the law’s approval “dissuaded many people from further involvement in matters of the Slovak nation.”¹³⁶

Meanwhile, the Slovak-Czech debate continued throughout the period between the 1990 and 1992 elections, with a series of talks beginning in July 1990 on the competencies of the republics within the federation and on the drafting of a new constitution to replace the communist one. The hyphen battle had left the Czech public unsympathetic to Slovak efforts at making themselves more visible in the

¹³² Stanislav Bajaník, “Co predchádzalo schválenie zákona o štátnom jazyku?” in Cyril Žuffa and Ladislav Paška (eds.), *Tri roky Matice slovenskej 1993-1995* (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1996), p. 240.

¹³³ Jerguš Ferko, p. 297.

¹³⁴ Eva Garajová, “Zákon o štátnom jazyku nediskriminuje menšiny,” *Slovenská Republika*, 22 November 1995.

¹³⁵ Ján Kacala, *Slovenčina— vec politická?* (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1994), p. 54.

¹³⁶ Kacala, “Spisovná slovenčina po r. 1989 a po vzniku samostatnej Slovenskej republiky,” p. 73.

world, and the reactions of Czech politicians and media to Slovak demands tended to include generalizations about Slovaks as being nationalists or even fascists. The Slovak side favored a loose federation of equal partners, and the Czech reluctance to meet Slovak demands led to a gradual increase in feelings of resentment among Slovaks that were further exasperated by the growing perception that the Slovaks were suffering more from economic reforms than were the Czechs.¹³⁷

One study commented that instead of promoting the values of understanding and reciprocity, the Czech-Slovak controversy gave the impression of a conflict of national interests, adding that although by 1992 ordinary citizens could not understand what the problem was, they were “emotionally prepared for the conclusion that an agreement of Slovaks and Czechs was not possible.”¹³⁸ According to one opinion poll conducted shortly before the 1992 elections, 79 percent of HZDS supporters thought that Czechs did not have enough understanding for the Slovaks and were “forcing them to create an independent state.”¹³⁹ Former dissident Milan Šimecka, a VPN representative who was born in Moravia but lived in Bratislava, characterized the Czech-Slovak dispute in the following way: “In the majority of debates I stand on the Slovak side mainly because I have personal experiences not with ill will from the Czech side, but I sharply perceive a deep disinterest, a certain sort of ignorance, which angers me and which cannot be overcome.” Šimecka added that he mostly identified with the Slovak aspiration “to stand on its own feet,” arguing that if Slovakia had as much sovereignty as the states Minnesota or Iowa in the United States, “the national problem would have ceased to exist here long ago.”¹⁴⁰

Amidst increasing tensions between Slovaks and Czechs, in late 1990 and early 1991 serious conflicts emerged within the VPN. While the first group, the “Europeanists,” favored quick economic reforms and an anti-nationalist approach, the “Nationalists” in the second group had a more social-democratic

¹³⁷ See, for example, Slobodník, *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi*, pp. 35-36.

¹³⁸ Buncák et al, pp. 113-114.

¹³⁹ AISA poll, *Smena*, 20 May 1992.

¹⁴⁰ *Verejnost*, 20 June 1990, cited in Buncák et al, p. 102. For more Slovak-Czech relations in the early 1990s, see Frédéric Wehrlé, *Le Divorce Tchéco-Slovaque: Vie et mort de la*

outlook, favoring a “third way” and more autonomy to address the specifics of the Slovak situation, particularly in terms of economic reform. Meciar, who unlike other VPN politicians had somehow managed to emerge unscathed from the language law controversy, became the leader of the VPN “Nationalist” group.

At the same time, demands of nationalists were growing, and in early March 1991 a draft declaration on Slovak state sovereignty, conceptualized by various nationally-oriented associations and calling for the conclusion of a state treaty with the Czech Republic, was published in various newspapers and signed by 45 people.¹⁴¹ In response to such demands, a group of “Europeanist” artists and intellectuals published a statement emphasizing their belief that it was in Slovakia’s interest to remain part of the common state. Arguing that the aim of the declaration of sovereignty was apparently the creation of an independent Slovak state, the “Europeanists” stressed that although that goal might seem attractive, Slovak independent statehood could be “extraordinarily risky, and its results could be irreparable.” They argued that “the sovereignty of a nation is mainly a spiritual category. It has the best conditions in a plural democracy, open to the world. The idea of mystical national unity, embodied in a paternalistic national state, leads each society at the end of the 20th century to isolation.”¹⁴²

On 3 March 1991 Slovak Foreign Minister Milan Kňažko brought the conflict within the VPN to the public when he appeared on Slovak Television instead of Meciar and accused the VPN of being puppets of federal political representatives and of censuring Meciar’s appearance. Kňažko asked whether Slovak political life would “solve the problems of Slovakia and defend its interests or be, as in the past, ... only a reflection of foreign interests.”¹⁴³ Three days later, Meciar and his supporters formed the VPN platform For a Democratic Slovakia. On 11 March 1991 a large demonstration organized by Matica slovenská was held in

Tchécoslovaquie 1918-1992 (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1994); Buncák et al, pp. 97-131; Wolf, pp. 42-46, 54-55.

¹⁴¹ See *Smena*, 2 March 1991; Slobodník, *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi*, pp. 79-80.

¹⁴² *Kultúrny život*, 2 March 1991, cited in Milan Ferko, Jaroslav Chovanec, and Marián Tkáč (eds.), *Šestdesiatjeden krokov k slovenskej identite: Zvrchované Slovensko* (Bratislava: Kubko-Goral, 1996), pp. 51-52.

¹⁴³ *Národná obroda*, 4 March 1991, cited in Buncák et al, p. 115; Slobodník, *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi*, pp. 69-70.

Bratislava in support of Slovak sovereignty, and representatives of Meciar's newly-formed faction were included in such an event for the first time.

After some deliberation, the parliamentary presidium voted on 23 April 1991 by a margin of 12 to eight with two abstentions to dismiss Meciar from the post of prime minister. The step was allegedly based on his controversial visit to the Soviet Union the previous month and on allegations that he had misused communist secret police files gained while serving as interior minister to intimidate and blackmail his opponents.¹⁴⁴ Meciar's dismissal led to a wave of protests across Slovakia, with many Slovaks believing that the decision was made in Prague.¹⁴⁵ The VPN formally divided into two political subjects during an extraordinary congress in late April. With approximately one-half of all VPN deputies joining Meciar in opposition, the KDH became the largest government party, and its chairman, the former Catholic dissident Ján Carnogurský, was appointed prime minister.

Although the HZDS was created just two years after Croatia's HDZ, there were significant differences in the political atmosphere of the two republics. While HDZ representatives took great risks, founding their party under unfavorable circumstances for political pluralism, the HZDS was created under a democratic regime. Membership in the anti-communist VPN had given HZDS representatives a clean image, and the movement was almost guaranteed success because of Meciar's popularity and the fact that many HZDS representatives were already well-known to the public.

The HZDS soon became an active supporter of Slovak sovereignty, although there was considerable ambiguity as to what the word "sovereignty" actually meant, whether cultural autonomy or in terms of international legal status. In September 1991 the HZDS and SNS joined a group of "pro-national" civic associations to form the initiative For a Sovereign Slovakia.¹⁴⁶ HZDS representative Milan Secanský later explained that before the VPN's split, HZDS

¹⁴⁴ See Jiri Pehe, "Political Conflict in Slovakia," *Report on Eastern Europe*, no. 19 (10 May 1991).

¹⁴⁵ Jerguš Ferko, p. 29.

¹⁴⁶ See Vladimír Meciar, *Slovensko, dôveruj si!* (Bratislava: R-Press, 1998), p. 10.

supporters had favored a federation built from below, and he stressed that the situation in Slovakia would have calmed down long ago if the process that Meciár had started in transferring competencies from the federation to the republics had been completed. Secanský emphasized that because that did not happen, after its establishment the HZDS demanded the creation of a confederation or a similar free alliance with the Czechs that would fulfill “three internationally-acknowledged principles: volunteerism, mutual advantage, and equal rights.”¹⁴⁷

The HZDS’s creation was widely welcomed by “Nationalists.” By joining the national movement, the HZDS turned it from a relatively narrow force into a mainstream movement with broad popular support. One former Korene representative said that before the HZDS was founded, Korene had “all odds against it” since the only pro-independence force in the parliament was the SNS, which was seen as too radical for most Slovaks. Korene had struggled under pressure from the Czechs and from Slovak parliamentary parties, and it had had little media access since most Slovak newspapers were rather unfriendly to those who favored sovereignty.¹⁴⁸ The HZDS’s emergence encouraged some media to become more supportive of the idea of Slovak sovereignty, and in November 1991 40 journalists created a group called “For a True Picture of Slovakia.”¹⁴⁹

According to Hroch, after the dynamic of nationalist politics begins, “moralist or humanist appeals typically prove vain,” and once national movements have spread to the masses “they can neither be deflected by rational argument nor suppressed by political force.”¹⁵⁰ In Slovakia, following Meciár’s departure from the VPN the movement’s popularity plummeted and never recovered. Influenced by Havel’s “non-political” politics, VPN representatives tended to stress ideological commitments and values that did not correspond with the overriding

¹⁴⁷ Statements by Secanský in Ivana Bánová, “Do videnia, náš parlament!” *Plus 7 dní*, 7 April 1992, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ Personal interview with Jozef Magala, 22 June 1999. Magala acknowledged that the dailies *Smena* and *Práca* occasionally published Korene statements and articles.

¹⁴⁹ Jerguš Ferko, p. 299.

¹⁵⁰ Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation,” p. 74.

concerns of most Slovaks.¹⁵¹ Other reasons for the VPN's decline included the difficult economic situation, the party's apparent reluctance to defend national interests, the way that Meciar was dismissed from the position of prime minister, the decision to give the prime minister's post to the KDH, and allegations of government corruption.¹⁵² In an attempt to put forward a new image, the VPN changed its name to the Civic Democratic Union (ODÚ) in early 1992.

After months of negotiation, the Czechs and Slovaks finally forged an agreement in Mílovy in February 1992, designed to continue the federation as a "voluntary alliance of national states of the Czech and Slovak nations, based on the right of each of them to self-determination." However, when the agreement came before the Slovak parliamentary presidium, it failed to gain sufficient support, with the ratio of votes being 10 to 10.¹⁵³ By that time, the HZDS saw Slovakia's future in a confederation with the Czech Republic, and the party strongly rejected the agreement, probably in part because the HZDS realized it would likely be in a position to negotiate a new agreement on its own following the upcoming elections. Speaking at a party press conference, Meciar paraphrased the agreement's preamble in the following way:

We, the denationalized people of the Slovak Republic, a republic that is fully dependent, semi-autonomous and unsovereign, represented by deputies from the MNI, DS, VPN and part of the KDH, for whom we are not going to vote, sacrificed by the government of national sacrifice ... , are again deceived."¹⁵⁴

Knažko said he considered it "immoral" that ruling party representatives decided to express themselves in the name of the people, adding that the competencies were divided in such a way that "there is no reason for the existence of a Slovak or Czech government." He also argued that the content of the Mílovy proposal was to a large extent a paraphrasing of the 1968 constitution, stressing that since that document remained in effect, it was unnecessary to copy it and call it a new

¹⁵¹Fritz Plasser and Peter Ulram, "Measuring Political Culture in East Central Europe. Political Trust and System Support" in Fritz Plasser and Andreas Pribersky (eds.) *Political Culture in East Central Europe* (Aldershot, England: Avebury, 1996), p. 26.

¹⁵²Miloš Luknár's interview with Martin Porubjak, *Plus 7 dní*, 25 February 1992, p. 9-10; *Slobodník, Proti sedemhlavému drakovi*, pp. 37-38.

¹⁵³Luboš Kubín et al, *Dva roky politickej slobody— ex post* (Bratislava: RaPaMaN, 1993), pp. 79-95.

¹⁵⁴HZDS press conference, 12 February 1992, cited in Kubín et al, p. 43.

agreement. Even the ex-communist Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) had shifted from the communist position of “proletarian internationalism” toward a more nationalistic stance,¹⁵⁵ and party chairman Peter Weiss emphasized that only a federation that is “free” and “decentralized” would be acceptable. ODÚ representative Martin Porubjak, on the other hand, argued that the opposition had not produced “a single real argument as to why the text of the agreement endangered the equal position of the republics,” but instead was putting forward only “foggy reservations.” Porubjak emphasized that the Mílovy agreement represented a “success” for Slovaks and Czechs since “the majority of citizens of Czecho-Slovakia wants to live in a common state.”¹⁵⁶

With four of the KDH’s six representatives on the parliament’s presidium voting against the Mílovy agreement, a growing conflict within that party over the national question was finally brought to the forefront. The KDH split in March 1992, with approximately half of its parliamentary deputies joining the pro-sovereignty Slovak Christian Democratic Movement (SKDH). Ján Klepáč, who became SKDH chairman, referred to the Mílovy agreement as “the last drop that overflowed the glass full of concessions from the Slovak side.” Because an article providing for participant treaties was removed from the draft, Klepáč argued that it showed “the unwillingness of the Czech side to accept the Slovak Republic as a subject.”¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, some KDH representatives saw the SKDH’s exit as a positive development since it gave the party a clearer profile,¹⁵⁸ enabling the KDH to give the government full support on issues such as the federal state and economic reforms. In the following months, the SKDH put forward a declaration of Slovak sovereignty before the parliament several times, but it failed to gain the necessary support for approval. Arguing in favor of the common state, Carnogurský stressed that it granted Slovaks “a safe framework for our work and helps to carry the burdens that are too heavy for one.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Milan Lukáč, “Sluby nic nestoja...,” *Plus 7 dní*, 18 May 1992, p. 14.

¹⁵⁶ *Národná obroda*, 14 February 1992, cited in Kubín et al, pp. 93-95.

¹⁵⁷ *Národná obroda*, 14 February 1992, cited in Kubín et al, pp. 93-95.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, statements by Július Brocka in Bánová, “Do videnia, náš parlament!” *Plus 7 dní*, 7 April 1992, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ *Pravda*, 8 May 1992. See also Lukáč, “Sluby nic nestoja...,” *Plus 7 dní*, 18 May 1992, p. 14.

At the outset, the Croatian and Slovak elites were polarized between those who wanted sovereignty or independence and those who preferred to remain an integral part of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, respectively. In both Croatia and Slovakia, HDZ and HZDS opponents tried to limit the movements' popularity by attaching negative labels on them. After the announcement of the initiative to found the HDZ, journalists and politicians from across Yugoslavia accused party representatives of wanting to recreate the NDH, of being Ustaše and fascists, anti-communists and anti-Semites.¹⁶⁰ In Slovakia, even before Meciar had publicly supported Slovak sovereignty, the student newspaper *Echo* published an article in early March 1991 warning about a leftist conspiracy aimed at bringing Slovak independence, led by Meciar and combining nationalists, former communists, and agents of the communist era secret police (ŠtB).¹⁶¹ The article was unlikely to have reached a large audience; however, the idea of a leftist putsch in Slovakia was repeated by Havel's spokesman Michal Žantovský, who said that a new coalition had been formed in Slovakia between "1968 reform communists, present communists, separatists, 'and people who recall the Slovak State as the golden period of the Slovak nation.'"¹⁶² The negative labels did not deter the populations from supporting the HDZ and HZDS. One HDZ representative said that in attacking the HDZ, the media gave the party "the best propaganda" since it aroused "the strong interest of a large number of people who were accustomed to not trusting the press."¹⁶³ The harsh reaction to the HDZ and HZDS may have even helped to eventually push those parties away from the mainstream.

Main themes of the election campaigns

While Croatian candidates in 1990 competed for seats in the Socio-Political Chamber, the Chamber of Municipalities, and the Chamber of Associated Labor,¹⁶⁴ in Slovakia candidates ran in 1992 for representation in the Slovak

¹⁶⁰ Zdravko Gavran, *Kako su rušili Tudmana* (Zagreb: Domovina TT, 1992), p. 30.

¹⁶¹ Wolf, p. 50.

¹⁶² *Mladá fronta Dnes*, 6 March 1991, cited in Abby Innes, "The Breakup of Czechoslovakia: The Impact of Party Development on the Separation of the State" *East European Politics and Societies* vol. 11, no. 3 (Fall 1997), p. 410.

¹⁶³ See Oštric, "HDZ i HDS: što dalje, to bliži," *Start*, 11 November 1989, pp. 55-56.

¹⁶⁴ The elections to the Chamber of Associated Labor, which consisted of economic, enterprise, and labor organizations, were held on 23 April and 7 May.

National Council, the federal House of Nations, and the federal House of Peoples. Of those assemblies, the Croatian Socio-Political Chamber and the Slovak National Council were the most important. Slovakia used a proportional electoral system with four constituencies, while the Croatian electoral system was a majority one, with 80 separate constituencies for the Socio-Political Chamber. In Croatia, if no candidate managed to win more than 50 percent of the votes in the first round, all competitors who gained at least seven percent entered the second round.¹⁶⁵

Although a total of 33 political parties competed in Croatia's elections and 23 ran for seats in the Slovak parliament, this chapter deals only with the major players. While the HDZ and HZDS campaigns are analyzed in detail, the messages of the other parties are discussed mainly in relation to those two parties. In the Croatian case, the HDZ's two major competitors were the League of Communists of Croatia-Party of Democratic Change (SKH-SDP) and the Coalition of Popular Agreement (KNS), with the latter being a broad-ranging group of parties centered around the HSLS and represented by the political leaders of the 1971 Croatian Spring movement such as Savka Dabčević-Kučar and Miko Tripalo. In Slovakia, the key HZDS competitors included the SDL, KDH, SNS, and a coalition of two ethnic Hungarian parties, as well as three pro-federal parties that failed to surpass the five percent threshold needed to enter the parliament. Aside from the ODÚ, the unsuccessful federalists included the DS, which created the only major federal alliance by forming a pre-election coalition with Václav Klaus's Civic Democratic Party (ODS), and Dubček's Social Democratic Party of Slovakia (SDSS). Because they were competing for different groups of voters, the ethnic minority parties representing the Serbs in Croatia and the Hungarians in Slovakia are omitted from this analysis.

In both the Croatian and Slovak election campaigns, there was more emphasis on written materials and on meetings with citizens than on television, mainly because each of the competing political parties was provided a limited amount of television time and was unable to buy additional space. The Croatian campaign was considerably longer than that in Slovakia; while the Croatian campaign

¹⁶⁵ Ivan Grdešić, "1990 Elections in Croatia," *Croatian Political Science Review* no. 1, vol. 1

period kicked off on 24 February and continued until just before the second round on 6 May, the Slovak campaign started on 13 May and lasted approximately three weeks.

Personalities played an important role in the election campaigns in both republics. As mentioned already, the images of the HDZ and HZDS were closely associated with their chairmen, and their competitors also frequently relied on their leaders' popularity. The KNS's identity was based largely on the charisma of its five leaders from the Croatian Spring. While Croatia's SKH-SDP included on its candidate lists a number of well-known politicians and retired generals, it also demonstrated wide support from prominent writers, journalists, artists, and academics.¹⁶⁶ Although many SKH-SDP and KNS representatives were better-known than those of the HDZ, one journalist commented that because the HDZ was a mass party, created on the basis of national sentiment, it was not necessary that it put forward many strong and popular personalities. "Those who decide on the Croatian Democratic Community will not vote for names but for the HDZ. ... For HDZ sympathizers it is not so important who is on its list. For them it is most important that their candidate wins. That candidate will not collect votes through his popularity or personality but through his party membership."¹⁶⁷

In Slovakia, the SDL campaign was to a certain extent concentrated on Weiss, and the party attempted to use his good looks and popularity in appealing to women.¹⁶⁸ Carnogurský was the central figure of the KDH campaign, despite the fact that public support for him had deteriorated after he took over the prime minister post. One journalist commented that the KDH was suffering from "a chronic lack of capable, qualified and sufficiently well-informed staff," adding that Carnogurský was perhaps the movement's "only real political personality."¹⁶⁹ While the ODÚ put forward a broad range of personalities on billboards and party ads, the SDSS attempted to use Dubcek, who was Slovakia's second most popular politician after Meciar, to boost support for the party and

(1992), p. 96.

¹⁶⁶ Milan Jajcinovic, "Politicki trokut lijepe naše," *Danas*, 3 April 1990, p. 10; Mate Bašić, "Nijedno hrvatsko proljeće nije isto," *Start*, 28 April 1990, p. 63.

¹⁶⁷ Milan Jajcinovic, "Politicki trokut lijepe naše," *Danas*, 3 April 1990, p. 10.

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, SDL ad in *Pravda*, 3 June 1992.

¹⁶⁹ Juraj Handzo, "Komu fandi pápež," *Plus 7 dní*, 5 May 1992, p. 15.

for the federalist cause. A characteristic message of the SDSS campaign was a billboard reading: “The world believes in Dubcek. And you?”¹⁷⁰ The SNS relied partially on outside “witnesses” to encourage voters to back the party, and Matica slovenská representatives not only appeared in SNS ads and at party rallies but also ran as SNS candidates.¹⁷¹

There were numerous similarities in the campaign themes of the Croatian and Slovak elections, with the national question being the central idea, especially for the opposition.¹⁷² While the ruling parties in both countries were calling for a continuation of the federation, the opposition generally supported a confederation or independence. “Nationalists” in both countries often used arguments about a nation’s right to self-determination and thereby linked national sovereignty with the question of democracy, particularly in the context of the changing world following the collapse of communism. The HDZ justified its demands for Croatian sovereignty by pointing to changing international conditions, with superpower representatives Bush and Gorbachev declaring that the will of individual nations must be respected.¹⁷³ Many Slovak “Nationalists” were influenced by the independence movements in ex-Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union; they did not want to waste the chance to achieve independence for fear that such an opportunity may not reappear in the future. SNS representative Marián Anđel stressed that his party’s aim of gaining independence came not only from “nostalgia for the past”; because other former communist countries had realized the need for independence, it was time that “Slovakia tried it as well.”¹⁷⁴

Regarding the population’s preferences for the future state arrangement, Slovaks were largely divided in their views, while Croats clearly favored a confederation. In Slovakia, the breakdown was 15 percent for a single state with one government, 25 percent for a federation [*federácia*] of the Czech and Slovak Republics, eight percent for a federal republic [*spolková republika*], 28 percent

¹⁷⁰ *Smena*, 27 May 1992.

¹⁷¹ *Smena*, 25 May 1992; *Pravda*, 29 May 1992; Kubín et al, p. 40..

¹⁷² For an analysis of the importance of various themes and ideas in the Croatian election campaign, see Lalic, “Pohod na glasace,” pp. 229, 238-239.

¹⁷³ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” p. 76.

¹⁷⁴ See Anđel’s statements in Bánová, “Do videnia, náš parlament!” *Plus 7 dní*, 7 April 1992, p. 4.

for a confederation, and 19 percent for independent states.¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, six percent of ethnic Croats favored a unitary state, seven percent supported a federation with strong federal organs, eight percent preferred the existing federation, 64 percent backed the idea of a confederation of independent states, while 15 percent wanted Croatia to be outside of Yugoslavia.¹⁷⁶ The lack of a majority for any one option in the Slovak case complicated the positions of the various parties, which sometimes appeared afraid of adopting a clear approach for fear of alienating potential voters and future partners.

Although both the HDZ and HZDS called for national sovereignty, they usually stressed the option of confederation rather than outright independence. Nonetheless, the question of “independence” versus “sovereignty” was somewhat blurred. The HDZ was more open about its eventual aims than was the HZDS, with many HDZ documents pointing to the right of the nations within Yugoslavia to self-determination and secession. Croatia’s right to self-determination and possible secession from Yugoslavia was also mentioned in the campaigns of the KNS and the SKH-SDP, despite the former’s support for a confederation and the latter’s preference for a federation.¹⁷⁷

Emphasis on the continuation of the Yugoslav federation was a key aspect of the SKH-SDP campaign, and that aim was often connected with the ideas of peace, tolerance, and rationality. In a pre-election appearance, Racan emphasized that “the destabilization of Yugoslavia also means the destabilization of Croatia” and that “any kind of violence endangers that which we have created.”¹⁷⁸ The national theme was also important for the KNS, but the Coalition was generally more cautious in its use than was the HDZ, and the idea of the nation was often linked to the themes of democracy and tolerance. In one statement, the KNS stressed that “we are not against Yugoslavia at any price, nor are we at any price for Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia is not our fate.”¹⁷⁹ Tripalo later emphasized that the essential question was what kind of Yugoslavia would exist, adding that “if it is a

¹⁷⁵ Institute for the Research of Public Opinion (IVVM) poll, *Koridor*, 4 May 1992.

¹⁷⁶ Ethnic Serbs and “Yugoslavs” living in Croatia had quite different views. See Ivan Grdešić et al, *Hrvatska u izborima '90* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1991), p. 111.

¹⁷⁷ See KNS: “Prvo saopćenje za javnost,” 1 March 1990, D. Đurić et al, pp. 113-114; SKH-SDP pre-election appearance of Boris Malada, 14 March 1992, D. Đurić et al, p. 295.

¹⁷⁸ SKH-SDP pre-election appearance, 31 March 1990, D. Đurić et al, pp. 299-300.

Yugoslavia based on democracy, pluralism, a market [economy], and full equal rights, then we want to enter that Yugoslavia. If Yugoslavia is not like that, we will not enter it.”¹⁸⁰

In Slovakia, the parties ranged from those wanting full independence (the SNS) to a confederation (the HZDS) to gradual independence coinciding with Slovakia’s integration into the European Community (the KDH) to a “freer federation” (the SDL) to the continuation of the current federation (the ODÚ). Both the HZDS and the SNS called for a declaration of sovereignty and the approval of a constitution as a sovereign state under international law, promising that citizens would then be able to decide on the country’s future in a referendum. While the HZDS wanted to give voters five possibilities in the referendum (a federation, confederation, a real union, an arrangement of relations modeled on the Benelux countries, or the creation of independent states),¹⁸¹ the SNS argued that the referendum should ask only one question and allow voters to answer yes or no.¹⁸² In a multi-party discussion on the future state arrangement, HZDS candidate Jozef Moravčík stressed that for his party, the key problem was ensuring Slovakia’s economic development to allow the country to reach its main goal of direct membership in the European Community. In that sense, Moravčík said that the HZDS’s goal was similar to that of the KDH; however, the HZDS thought that the process should start immediately since it would be especially important to ensure that the Slovak government had the competencies to stop the economic decline. Moravčík argued that the main difference between the programs of the SNS and of his party was that the HZDS did not favor Slovakia’s full independence, and he emphasized that “it would be most optimal to create such a structure of relations between the Czech Republic and Slovakia so that at the time of entry to the European Community we could hand over the competencies of the common alliance to the central European authorities.” In the same discussion, SNS representative Anton Hrnko stressed that “it is not possible to secure equality between two unequal entities, such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia.” He added that “because the Czech side unequivocally confirmed its

¹⁷⁹ See KNS: “Prvo saopćenje za javnost,” p. 113.

¹⁸⁰ KNS press conference, 1 March 1990, D. Đuric et al, p. 131.

¹⁸¹ Meciar’s statements at the HZDS’s second congress, 21 March 1992, cited in Kubín et al, p. 44.

¹⁸² See Leško, p. 76; SNS press conference, 20 March 1992, cited in Kubín et al, p. 40.

lack of will to change the model of the state arrangement — it wants to preserve its superiority over Slovakia — we came to the conclusion that further coexistence in a common state is unfavorable for Slovakia.”¹⁸³

In contrast to the HZDS and SNS, Slovakia’s governing parties favored the continuation of the federation, at least in the medium term. Shortly before the elections, ruling coalition representatives stressed at a press conference that the declaration of Slovak sovereignty would not resolve anything and would only mean the start of new problems, adding that Yugoslavia should serve as “the main memento for us.”¹⁸⁴ Responding to such threats, SNS representative Hrnko said that he did not believe that relations between Czechs and Slovaks could develop in such a way as between Serbs and Croats. “If that could be possible, then we really do not have any business remaining in one state,” Hrnko emphasized.¹⁸⁵

The preservation of the Czechoslovak federation was one of the main themes of the ODÚ campaign, expressed through such slogans as “A common state is for us the correct and most advantageous path.”¹⁸⁶ Ivan Mikloš, who served as privatization minister in 1991-1992, later explained that ODÚ representatives opposed the division of Czechoslovakia not because they were “emotionally Czechoslovaks” but rather because as Slovaks they were simply convinced that remaining part of Czechoslovakia was a better solution for transition, particularly concerning the entrance into international structures.¹⁸⁷ Slovak Foreign Minister Pavol Demeš, an independent who ran on the ODÚ list, rejected the claims that it was now or never for Slovak independence and that Slovakia would lose its “historical chance” if it did not act immediately. Demeš argued that “Slovakia has its parliament and government, and they can make decisions of that sort whenever it is shown that the development of joint statehood with the Czech Republic will be unfavorable for us.”¹⁸⁸ In the case of the KDH, some Slovaks saw Carnogurský as a true patriot since he was one of the first politicians to

¹⁸³ *Pravda*, 6 May 1992.

¹⁸⁴ *Pravda*, 14 May 1992.

¹⁸⁵ *Pravda*, 6 May 1992.

¹⁸⁶ See *Koridor*, 5 May 1992.

¹⁸⁷ Personal interview with Mikloš, 10 September 1999.

¹⁸⁸ *Pravda*, 15 May 1992.

speak about Slovak independence, arguing that the Czech Republic and Slovakia should accede to the European Community as two autonomous states and therefore have separate stars on its flag. Nonetheless, by the time of the elections Carnogurský was firmly behind his coalition partners, and he made it clear that if parties that opposed the federation formed the next government, the KDH would go into opposition.¹⁸⁹ Speaking at a pre-election rally, Carnogurský explained that Slovakia had to first become a strong and stable country politically and economically, and then citizens could decide in a referendum on its future path.¹⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the SDL fell somewhere between the positions of Slovakia's ruling parties and the HZDS on the national question, and the SDL was sometimes criticized for its vagueness regarding its views on the future state arrangement.

National unity was a central theme for the HDZ but was considerably less important for the HZDS. That was likely because of Tudman's intensive study of Croatian history, during which the Croatian nation was always plagued by internal divisions. Inclusive discourse was also used by the HDZ's two major competitors, with all three parties calling for the acceptance of all citizens regardless of their current affiliation or past political activities.¹⁹¹ In Slovakia, discourse was more polarizing, with the opposition expressing little understanding for those Slovaks who favored a continued federation and the ruling parties having little sympathy for nationalists or for those Slovaks who had collaborated with the communist regime. ODÚ representatives in particular seemed unable to reconcile themselves with the fact that the majority of Slovaks did not think like they did, and many ordinary citizens found their statements offensive. The lustration law that barred communist collaborators from holding office was an important issue in the Slovak campaign, with the "Nationalist" opposition parties largely against it and the "Europeanist" ruling parties in favor. Meciar referred to lustration as "legalized illegality," claiming that it did not

¹⁸⁹ Carnogurský interview during a visit to Rome with *Il Messagero*, 3 April 1992. Cited in *Koridor*, 5 May 1992.

¹⁹⁰ *Pravda*, 1 June 1992.

¹⁹¹ See "Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ," p. 81; Lalic, pp. 249-250; SKH-SDP: "Izborni program," D. Đurić et al, p. 274.

purify society but rather caused its disintegration and deformation.¹⁹² During a HZDS rally, Meciar said that “we have to unify Slovakia, not divide it,” and he expressed willingness to cooperate politically with “everyone who ranks the interests of Slovakia in first place.”¹⁹³

The émigré community played a role in both countries’ campaigns, but in different ways. In Croatia, émigrés served as a key source of funding, particularly in the case of the HDZ, and their reintegration into society was an important campaign issue for both the HDZ and the KNS. Croatian émigrés had been seen by the communists as radical and as having associations with the Ustaša regime, but the HDZ called for their return to Croatia “regardless of their political conviction and affiliation.”¹⁹⁴ HDZ émigré organizations were founded in 1989 in a number of countries around the world, and one HDZ representative stressed that “we are the first informal organization through which émigrés can have contact with their homeland.”¹⁹⁵ By the time of the 1990 elections, the HDZ had an estimated membership of 250,000 in Yugoslavia and 30,000 abroad.¹⁹⁶ In the case of the KNS, Tripalo stressed that the émigré community was frequently unjustly branded by Yugoslav representatives, and he added that the Coalition would like all of them to return to the homeland, with the exception of proven war criminals and terrorists.¹⁹⁷

In Slovakia, the émigré community was active mainly in making public statements and publishing advertisements in favor of those parties that supported the idea of Slovak independence. Initially, Slovaks living abroad had supported the KDH, and that party’s founding meeting in early 1990 was attended by a number of people — particularly émigrés — who used slogans associated with the fascist state and called for Tiso’s rehabilitation.¹⁹⁸ However, the KDH eventually distanced itself from such elements, and émigrés turned their attention

¹⁹² CST K, 4 May 1992, cited in *Koridor*, 6 May 1992. See also debate on the lustration law in “Predvolebný sprievodca: Konfrontácie,” *Smena*, 4 May 1992.

¹⁹³ *Pravda*, 25 May 1992.

¹⁹⁴ “Proglas građanima i Saboru SRH i cijelome hrvatskom narodu,” p. 70.

¹⁹⁵ See Oštric, “HDZ i HDS: što dalje, to bliži,” pp. 55-56.

¹⁹⁶ Milan Andrejevich, “The Elections in Croatia: a preview,” *Radio Free Europe*, 20 April 1990.

¹⁹⁷ KNS pre-election appearance, 17 March 1990, D. Đuric et al, p. 134.

¹⁹⁸ See statements by the priest Albín Senaj in Jarmila Andrejčáková, “Proroctvo zatiaľ nenaplnené,” *Plus 7 dní*, 15 January 1992, pp. 10-13.

elsewhere, mostly toward the SNS. At an SNS pre-election rally in late May, party representatives were joined by leaders of both the Slovak League of America and the Canada-based World Congress of Slovaks.¹⁹⁹ Meanwhile, the Canadian Slovak League published a full-page pro-independence advertisement that featured the SNS name and election number.²⁰⁰ Approximately one month before the elections, the Slovak League of America published a statement calling for sovereignty and a confederation as “the minimal Slovak program.” The group added that it could not understand why the Slovak parliament had yet to declare sovereignty “when all the small and big nations of ... the USSR and Yugoslavia have already done so. Do the people who are blocking such a decision in the Slovak parliament think that our nation is less worthy, or less capable; less cultured than the Slovenes, Estonians, or the nations of Soviet Asia?” The Slovak League asked the top political representatives in Slovakia to look for a common path and program in the question of the state arrangement, encouraging a coalition of the HZDS, KDH, and SNS, which it said “would be able to attain national development and constitute Slovakia as an international subject.”²⁰¹ Meanwhile, an advertisement published by the First Slovakia Investment Trust asked Slovaks to support the HZDS and Meciar, falsely adding that “only with Prime Minister Meciar and a stable government will the West massively invest in Slovakia.”²⁰²

In representations of “the Other,” the Serbs and the Czechs were presented as the major threat to the national development of the Croats and Slovaks, respectively. For example, the Congress of Slovak Intelligentsia published a declaration shortly before the elections stating that Slovaks were endangered since they were ruled by other nations and stressing that Czechoslovakia had “already played its historical role in the positive and negative sense.” The organization warned that if Slovaks did not take fate into their own hands, the “intentional political, economic and cultural liquidation of Slovakia will continue until it is erased from

¹⁹⁹ *Pravda*, 29 May 1992.

²⁰⁰ *Koridor*, 3 June 1992.

²⁰¹ *Literárny týždenník*, 25 April 1992, cited in *Koridor*, 4 May 1992.

²⁰² Interior Minister Ladislav Pitter said that the FSIT was not registered in Slovakia, and the HZDS spokesman stressed that his party had “nothing in common” with the bank. See *Pravda*, 3 June 1992.

the map of Europe.”²⁰³ Other critics pointed to the Serbian and Czech aims of controlling the widest possible territory or complained about their overrepresentation in the state administration. Although HDZ discourse tended to be more inclusive than that of the HZDS in terms of the nation itself, the HDZ’s discourse toward the Serbs was harsher than that of the HZDS toward the Czechs, demonstrated most notably by Tudman’s statement at a Zagreb rally that “Thank God my wife is not a Jew or a Serb.”²⁰⁴ Slovak “Nationalists,” in contrast, tended not to condemn Czechs as people, but instead expressed opposition to the policies of certain Czech politicians, particularly Havel and Czechoslovak Finance Minister Klaus. While Klaus was criticized for his role in drafting the country’s economic reform program, Havel was denounced for his behavior toward Meciar and for his idealistic decision to halt Czechoslovak arms exports, a decision that caused problems for Slovak industry. Such a differentiation was also reflected among ordinary Slovaks, and a January 1992 public opinion poll showed that 64.6 percent of Slovaks considered Czech-Slovak relations “more good than bad.” The same poll ranked Havel and Klaus ninth and 27th, respectively, among Slovak and Czech politicians. Meanwhile, the Czech Valtr Komárek — a supporter of a “third-way” in economic reforms — was the third most popular politician among Slovaks, after Meciar and Dubcek.²⁰⁵

In addition to the Czech question, for the Slovaks the Hungarians were also a factor in the elections. Tension existed between Slovaks and Hungarians over the Hungarian government’s unilateral decision shortly before the elections to cancel the 1977 inter-state treaty on the construction of the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros dam complex, while discussions also continued on the Hungarian minority’s position within Slovakia. Most Slovak parties — both from the ruling coalition and the opposition — supported Gabčíkovo’s completion.²⁰⁶

Despite tensions, the HDZ and HZDS competitors often tried to demonstrate tolerance toward other nations. In Croatia, KNS representative Tripalo said that

²⁰³ *Pravda*, 2 June 1992.

²⁰⁴ Silber and Little, p. 86.

²⁰⁵ See *Aktuálne problémy Česko-Slovenska* (Bratislava: Centrum pre sociálnu analýzu, January 1992), pp. 45, 74; Appendix pp. 6, 17-18.

“Croats and Serbs have lived together in this area for a long time, and each has had good and bad experiences,” adding that policies “should not be implemented that would be to the detriment of the Serbs” and that “each Croatian leadership should have the support of the Serbian people in Croatia.”²⁰⁷ Racan emphasized the SKH-SDP’s tolerance at a pre-election rally, stressing that the party’s politics “do not provoke suspicion among Serbs and Yugoslavs” and that the party “does not rank people as non-Croats and small and big Croats, as can be heard from other groups.”²⁰⁸ In an attempt to appeal to ethnic Serbs, some SKH-SDP posters were printed in Cyrillic script, including one that featured the slogan “For a peaceful, happy life in a sovereign and democratic Croatia.”²⁰⁹ Likewise, in Slovakia the SDL tried to appeal to leftist voters from the Hungarian minority, and the party included the ethnic Hungarian Alžbeta Borzová as deputy chairwoman. The SDL produced radio spots for the Hungarian audience as well as Hungarian language campaign posters, including one with the slogan “An opportunity to the competent, certainty to the hard-working.”²¹⁰ In an apparent effort to demonstrate tolerance, even the SNS had two candidates representing national minorities, one German and another Ruthenian.²¹¹

Closely related to the national question was the economic one, which was an especially important theme in the Slovak campaign but a more minor one in Croatia. In Yugoslavia, the Croat Ante Markovic, who served as the last federal prime minister from January 1989 to December 1991, tried to implement free-market economic reforms in the hope that economic success would lead the people of Yugoslavia to forget about their nationalist concerns. However, his efforts were sometimes blocked by the various republics. Croatia, which was the second richest Yugoslav republic after Slovenia, believed that it was transferring too much money to support the poorer republics within the federation, and Croats were especially reluctant to relinquish control of the hard currency gained from tourism.²¹² Although distinguishing itself from the socialist-oriented Serbian

²⁰⁶ See *Pravda*, 8-22 May 1992.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Miko Tripalo, *Danas*, 13 March 1990, p. 11.

²⁰⁸ *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 18 April 1990. Cited in Lalic, p. 249.

²⁰⁹ Maja Razovic, “Zbogom, zvijezdo,” *Danas*, 29 May 1990, pp. 36-37.

²¹⁰ *Pravda*, 16 May 1992; *Koridor*, 2 June 1992.

²¹¹ Kubin et al, p. 40.

²¹² Silber and Little, pp. 70-71.

leadership by supporting those aspects of Markovic's reforms aimed at creating a free market economy, the HDZ opposed efforts at greater economic centralization. The approach of the SKH-SDP and KNS toward economic policy was close to that of the HDZ, and the former took credit for the results of the reforms that Markovic had implemented.²¹³

In contrast to Croatia, there was a big debate in Slovakia over economic policy questions. While the ruling parties favored speedy reforms, the HZDS and SDL demanded that the process be slowed down to take into account the specific situation in Slovakia, which was suffering from high unemployment as a result of the Prague-led economic reform program. A January 1992 opinion poll showed that unemployment was seen by 31.2 percent of Slovaks as the most crucial social problem, compared with just 8.8 percent of Czechs.²¹⁴ By the second quarter of 1992, the unemployment rate had reached 11.5 percent in Slovakia and just 2.9 percent in the Czech Republic.²¹⁵ Czech politicians were seen as being directly responsible for Slovak problems, partly because of their unwillingness to create special policies for Slovakia. Havel's pledge to halt weapons exports was thought to have had a significant impact on the growth of Slovak unemployment, and the SNS presented the attempts to convert Slovakia's arms industry as a Czech effort to weaken Slovakia.²¹⁶

The importance of the economic transformation process was the main theme of the ODÚ campaign, and the party repeatedly stressed that Slovakia must remain on its reform path through slogans such as "It is not possible to stop half-way" and "To not reach forward means being carried back."²¹⁷ One ad warned that if leftist parties won the elections, high inflation would ensue and foreign investors would go elsewhere.²¹⁸ While a DS advertisement asked Slovaks to "say no to socialism ... [and] upheaval,"²¹⁹ an ODS ad told citizens that "there exists only one path — direct, quick, and of course, exact. The way of the market

²¹³ See *Vecernji list*, 18 April 1990; Lalic, p. 249.

²¹⁴ *Aktuálne problémy Česko-Slovenska*, Appendix, p. 1.

²¹⁵ Jan Švejnar and Katherine Terrell, "Explaining Unemployment Dynamics in the Czech and Slovak Republics" (Prague: CERGE-EI Working Paper, April 1994).

²¹⁶ Buncák et al, p. 103.

²¹⁷ *Pravda*, 1 and 29 May 1992; *Smena*, 6 and 21 May 1992.

²¹⁸ *Smena*, 21 May 1992.

²¹⁹ *Smena*, 1 June 1992.

economy.”²²⁰ Although previously the KDH had had a more socially-oriented view on the economy than its coalition partners, by the time of the elections the KDH also stressed the completion of the economic reform process as one of its major goals.²²¹

Economic and social issues were also the main focus of the SDL campaign, and although the party strongly criticized the government’s policies, it repeatedly rejected allegations that it wanted to halt economic reforms altogether. Weiss called it a “miracle” that Slovaks had patiently suffered through rising prices and unemployment and the fall of a large group of inhabitants below the minimal living standard, adding that “the decline in production is comparable only with the crisis of the 1930s.”²²² One party advertisement criticized the allegation that there was only “one correct path” toward reform, arguing that “the ‘only’ correct path can lead straight to hell.”²²³ The SNS, which was primarily focused on the question of Slovak independence, devoted less attention to economic issues. Because the SNS was a strong critic of Klaus’s reforms, some Slovaks categorized the party as leftist.²²⁴ However, the SNS considered itself economically “conservative” and called for the speeding up of privatization and of economic reforms in general.²²⁵

Privatization was the key area of economic controversy in Slovakia, both during the 1992 election campaign and throughout the decade as a whole. The pre-election government made coupon privatization one of the cornerstones of its economic policy, and the parties hoped they would get support from the 2.5 million Slovaks who bought coupons in voucher privatization. Launched in February 1992, the program allowed all citizens aged 18 and over to participate by purchasing for a nominal sum a voucher booklet that could then be invested in investment funds or directly in Czech and Slovak companies. The primary goal of coupon privatization was to transfer property as quickly as possible in the capital-starved economy, and it was presented as a way of undoing the wrongs of

²²⁰ *Pravda*, 3 June 1992.

²²¹ “The Election Manifesto of the Christian Democratic Movement of Slovakia,” pp. 2-3, 6.

²²² SDL press conference, 31 March 1992, cited in Kubín et al, p. 54.

²²³ *Pravda*, 29 May 1992.

²²⁴ “Koho volíme?” *Plus 7 dní*, 2 June 1992, p. 15.

the previous regime and of garnering public support to continue market reforms.²²⁶ However, many Slovak state-owned firms were grossly overstaffed, and critics feared that quick privatization would lead to higher unemployment, which would be especially detrimental in those towns where a single factory was the main source of jobs. Others believed that privatization should rely solely on standard methods such as public auctions and direct sales, which would allow firms to be sold at market value and would bring in funds needed for restructuring.

Although it may have been logical for parties such as the SDL and HZDS to support coupon privatization since it was considered socially just, both parties criticized the program. The HZDS warned that coupon privatization could lead to the cheap sale of national property abroad or “the concentration of property in the hands of narrow group of owners,”²²⁷ and the party argued that although it would not stop the first wave, there was a need to conduct a careful analysis before deciding on the approach to the second wave.²²⁸ The SDL characterized coupon privatization as a political move aimed at creating the illusion that people could get rich quickly,²²⁹ while Weiss said his party was against the coupon program becoming “a tool for a part of the current state bureaucracy to seize economic power by using its monopoly on information.”²³⁰ Although the SNS program did not comment on coupon privatization, elsewhere party representatives criticized Privatization Minister Mikloš for giving direct sales priority over coupon privatization, “meaning that lucrative firms could be sold directly and leave [firms] that are on the rocks for coupon privatization.”²³¹

²²⁵ “Kto je kto, čo je čo v ekonomických programoch strán a hnutí kandidujúcich na Slovensku,” *Trend*, 3 June 1992.

²²⁶ See statements by Peter Tatár in Bánová, “Do videnia, náš parlament!” *Plus 7 dní*, 7 April 1992, p. 3; advertisement in *Smena*, 25 May 1992.

²²⁷ “Tézy volebného programu HZDS (4. cast),” *Koridor*, 24 April 1992.

²²⁸ “Kto je kto, čo je čo v ekonomických programoch strán a hnutí kandidujúcich na Slovensku,” *Trend*, 3 June 1992.

²²⁹ Kubín et al, p. 54.

²³⁰ Weiss interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 10 March 1992, p. 9.

²³¹ Kubín et al, pp. 40-41.

The Croatian Democratic Community

The HDZ campaign was among the most visible of all the parties running in Croatia's 1990 elections, and many Croats thought that the HDZ ran the best campaign.²³² Although the SKH-SDP published somewhat more advertisements in daily newspapers than did the HDZ,²³³ the HDZ put more effort into posters and billboards than the other parties. The HDZ competed in the elections as part of the six-party center-right Croatian Democratic Bloc; however, the party retained its own individual program and unique identity and only formed alliances with the others in certain districts.

An important outlet for the HDZ before and during the campaign was its monthly bulletin *Glasnik* [Herald], which included a variety of articles, cartoons, poems, as well as letters from supporters. The HDZ pre-election rallies often drew crowds numbering in the thousands, and entertainment was provided by actors, singers, folklore groups, opera stars from the Croatian National Theater, as well as soccer and basketball players.²³⁴ One rally featured girls dressed in national costume with musical accompaniment by *tambura* players in traditional attire, and supporters were asked to "honor the homeland" by singing the Croatian anthem "Lijepa naša domovino" [Our beautiful homeland].²³⁵ The HDZ also received free advertising at a soccer match in Split between Zagreb's Dinamo and Split's Hajduk, when Dinamo fans — commonly known as the Bad Blue Boys (BBB) — hung up a large, tri-colored sign with the words: "BBB for the HDZ."²³⁶ Later in the decade, that same group became one of the HDZ's fiercest critics.

The HDZ had the most variety in its campaign, using a total of 17 different slogans, compared with 12 for the SKH-SDP and seven for the Coalition.²³⁷ According to one study, the HDZ created a "somewhat mystical and elated pathos," producing a "crusade-like" election campaign, with slogans and poster

²³² Dejan Jovic, "Što ih je privuklo," *Danas*, 24 April 1990, p. 8.

²³³ Lalic, pp. 217-218.

²³⁴ *Vecernji list*, 17 and 19 April 1990; Bašić, "Nijedno hrvatsko proljece nije isto," *Start*, 28 April 1990, p. 63.

²³⁵ Zlatko Gall, "Hrvatski stranacki pleter," *Start*, 3 March 1990, p. 40.

²³⁶ Bašić, "Nijedno hrvatsko proljece nije isto," *Start*, 28 April 1990, p. 62.

messages communicating unity, trust, self-confidence, and victory.²³⁸ Self-confidence was presented through slogans such as “Zna se” [Of course] and “The HDZ will never let you down.”²³⁹ Another example of that approach was Tudman’s statement in an interview that “we do not have not a shadow of a doubt about [our] victory.”²⁴⁰ According to one analyst, the HDZ’s confidence in its success was connected to the party’s vision of itself as an entity expressing “that which has existed in the hearts of the Croatian people”; as the “most Croatian party,” the HDZ could not be circumvented by voters’ generosity.²⁴¹

The HDZ election campaign kicked off with the party’s first congress on 24-25 February 1990, during which its electoral program was approved. The program stated that the HDZ “appeared on the political stage during a time when Croatia, with incomprehensible stuttering, started to break through the armor of shameful silence in which it was bound after the brutal suffocation of the ‘Croatian Spring’ at the end of 1971.” At that time, “each progressive and national trend was ruthlessly removed or pushed aside,” with “thousands of people jailed and tens of thousands dismissed from their jobs.” The party added that “because of the creation of a spiritual climate of fear and helplessness, the establishment of the HDZ was met with incredulity and suspicion that it would provoke a new wave of violence,” and the party was labeled as a “neo-Ustaša” or “separatist-nationalist” organization.²⁴² The HDZ argued that although it had been attacked for calling for “the territorial integrity of the Croatian people within its historical and natural borders” and blamed for “bringing about a risk of civil war,” its demands were formulated only after plans were made for the creation of a Greater Serbia.²⁴³

The program expressed the HDZ’s desire to be at the “democratic center,” not only of the left-right spectrum but also of Croatian political life in general.²⁴⁴

²³⁷ Lalic, p. 217.

²³⁸ Grdešić, “1990 Elections in Croatia,” p. 95.

²³⁹ Lalic, p. 247.

²⁴⁰ Tudman interview in *Vecernji list*, cited in Lalic, p. 247.

²⁴¹ Jajcinovic, “Politicki trokut lijepe naše,” *Danas*, 3 April 1990, p. 10.

²⁴² “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” approved at the first general assembly of the HDZ, 24-25 February 1990. In D. Đuric et al, pp. 72-83.

²⁴³ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” p. 75.

²⁴⁴ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” p. 81.

Nonetheless, a number of radical and nationalistic ideas were presented at the congress that had previously been seen as taboo subjects. For example, the HDZ pledged that perceived historical imbalances would be redressed, including fixing the disproportional representation of the Serbs in the police and the media.²⁴⁵ One commentator wrote that it would be difficult for the HDZ to gain a majority of votes after the congress, where the HDZ made “several political moves that were damaging for the party and for Croatia, including the stress on the principle of the historical and ethnic borders of Croatia, down-playing the historical role of the NDH, pronouncing the political interest in secession, the cult of the leader, and the euphoric and intolerant atmosphere of the congress.” The writer added that “such an approach provoked anxiety and suspicion among a majority of the citizens of Croatia who are not used to the multi-party political folklore, because of which the HDZ probably cannot expect more than 20 percent of the voters. With the euphoria and pathos at the congress, the HDZ pushed itself more to the right than it probably wanted to go.”²⁴⁶

Throughout its campaign, the HDZ stressed the personality and charisma of Tudman as its main communicator, and there was a clear effort to present the party and Tudman as the guarantee of the fulfillment of Croatian desires. One analyst commented that for the HDZ, “the formula of success was Tudman=HDZ=Croatia.”²⁴⁷ Many HDZ ads included Tudman’s photograph, and his competitor Gorana Grbic commented that walking through Zagreb before the elections “I had the impression that my only opposing candidate was Franjo Tudman since I saw only his pictures.”²⁴⁸ Speaking at a party rally, the priest Ante Bakovic, who at the time was serving as HDZ deputy chairman, stated that “like the Messiah, Tudman also offers national salvation, calls for sovereignty, promises peace.”²⁴⁹

The link between Tudman and the Croatian nation was also demonstrated by showing both as endangered. While Croatia was threatened by “Greater Serbian

²⁴⁵ Silber and Little, p. 87.

²⁴⁶ “Prednost zvucnih imena,” *Danas*, 13 March 1990, p. 13.

²⁴⁷ Danko Plevnik, “Mesic i Manolic kao Vokic i Lorkovic,” *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 7 June 1994. Cited in Lalic, p. 230.

²⁴⁸ *Start*, 28 April 1990.

²⁴⁹ *Vecernji list*, 9 April 1990. Cited in Lalic, p. 247.

expansionism,” Tudman’s life was shown as being at risk, based on an attempted attack during a HDZ meeting in Benkovac on 18 March. One HDZ source claimed that a group of local Serbs expressing “Greater Serbian” and “anti-Croatian” ideas disturbed the meeting by whistling and shouting slogans such as “Benkovac is Serbia,” “Ustaše,” and “We will kill Tudman.”²⁵⁰ The young HDZ representative Drago Krpina tried to calm the crowds, asking if it were possible to imagine a group of Croats somewhere in Serbia behaving in such a way at a Serbian meeting and adding that “we did not come here to threaten anyone.”²⁵¹ After Tudman came to the podium, a man carrying a gun forced his way toward him before being stopped by bodyguards.

The HDZ got significant mileage out of the Benkovac events, releasing a video cassette showing footage from Tudman’s speech and the attack, entitled “Shot Against Croatia: 18 March 1990.”²⁵² The last issue of the HDZ’s *Glasnik* prior to the elections featured on its cover a picture of Tudman standing behind a podium with a HDZ sign, holding his right hand on his chest and with a target centered on his heart. A photograph of a hand holding a gun was inserted on top of the photo, while a checkerboard coat of arms and the words “Lijepa naša” were also added. Inside the publication, a cartoon showed a man speaking to a dismayed crowd, saying “Democracy has moved to Croatia! Formerly, Radic had to travel to Belgrade for them to shoot him, and now we have Benkovac.”²⁵³ An opinion poll conducted just after the attack showed that Benkovac had a significant influence on the public mood, leading many previously passive and uncommitted voters to back the HDZ.²⁵⁴

Efforts to connect the HDZ with the Croatian nation were marked by slogans such as “Our name is our program.”²⁵⁵ Speaking at the beginning of the campaign, the writer Neven Jurica said that his party wanted to take “serious

²⁵⁰ *Spomen knjiga: Deset godina Hrvatske demokratske zajednice*, p. 83.

²⁵¹ Drago Krpina, *Olujne godine* (Zagreb: Hrvatski informativni centar, 1996), pp. 21-23.

²⁵² Croatian Serb leaders claimed that the incident was staged by Tudman. See Andrejevich, “The Elections in Croatia: a preview.” For more on Benkovac, see Marinko Culic, “Birati ili pucati,” *Danas*, 27 March 1990, pp. 7-8.

²⁵³ See *Glasnik*, no. 9, April 1990, p. 35. The cartoon refers to Stjepan Radic, who died after being shot in the Belgrade parliament in 1928.

²⁵⁴ Dejan Jovic, “Kakvu Hrvatsku žele,” *Danas*, 3 April 1990, p. 6.

²⁵⁵ Bašić, “Nijedno hrvatsko prolece nije isto,” *Start*, 28 April 1990, p. 63.

responsibility for caring for the identity of the Croatian nation.”²⁵⁶ Arguing that the HDZ’s competitors were “too distanced from the true problems of the Croatian nation,” Jurica later stressed that the other parties represented a concept of culture that basically subordinated national cultural heritage to “supranational cultural strategies.”²⁵⁷ After the first round of the elections, Jurica commented that the HDZ offered to Croats “something that the nation until now did not have the possibility to articulate, and that is the free expression of Croatian national pride and Croatian national feeling.”²⁵⁸

Probably the best-known poster from the entire campaign featured a giant “H” on a starry background. The “H” was formed by colorful images to show that Croatia is “no longer one-colored,” and inside were the small letters “D” and “Z,” trimmed in gold as “the symbol of a good and solid firm.” According to the artist, the poster was meant to present the idea of the “political sky” with small stars signifying the various parties and the main star being the HDZ. At the top of the poster was the slogan “Listen to the voice of your heart and reason” and at the bottom was the HDZ symbol, together with the name of the party.²⁵⁹ Another HDZ poster showed a woman against a dark background holding a light bulb with the party’s “H” logo inside it, with the brightly lit bulb reflecting on her face.

Prior to the elections, numerous accusations were made against the HDZ, and in some respects the HDZ campaign was a defensive one, as the party tried to dispel myths about itself and about Croatian history in general. Speaking at the start of the campaign, Jurica said that official representatives called HDZ members “chauvinists,” alternative circles labeled them “bolsheviks,” and newspapers considered them “clericalists”; however, Jurica added that “I can responsibly say that we are neither the first, nor the second, nor the third. The attacks would not come if the HDZ did not speak from the spirit and heart of the Croatian population, if it did not see before itself the kind of Croatia that the teacher of the

²⁵⁶ HDZ pre-election appearance, 27 February 1990, D. Đurić et al, p. 83-84.

²⁵⁷ *Danas*, 3 April 1990, p. 39.

²⁵⁸ *Start*, 28 April 1990.

²⁵⁹ See *Glasnik*, no. 9, April 1990.

Croatian nation Stjepan Radić said each Croat carries and recognizes in his heart.”²⁶⁰

The most serious threats against the HDZ came from the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA). In early March, the army weekly *Narodna Armija* denounced the HDZ for accepting into its ranks “pro-fascists and chauvinists” and for “closely cooperating with Ustaša émigré groups,” and it called for the banning of the HDZ and of all parties in Yugoslavia of a similar orientation.²⁶¹ Although JNA representatives urged the Croatian communists to use their majority in the Sabor to outlaw the HDZ based on an electoral law provision that prohibited extremist parties, communist leader Racan refused to oblige. Just before Slovenia’s elections, federal representatives warned that the armed forces would retaliate against any political party that called into question Yugoslavia’s territorial integrity; however, threats against the HDZ only served to boost Tudman’s popularity.²⁶²

National sovereignty was the most prominent theme of the HDZ campaign, and that was connected to the party’s goal of wanting to “take care” of the Croatian nation as well as to fulfill the nation’s “centuries old aspirations.” In its program, the party pointed to a “fundamental difference between the HDZ and all other political parties in Croatia” since the HDZ was demanding “the right of the Croatian nation to self-determination and state sovereignty.”²⁶³ The HDZ used a number of campaign slogans relating to the aim of sovereignty, including “We’ll decide the fate of our Croatia by ourselves,” which appeared on posters and newspaper ads together with Tudman’s face.²⁶⁴ One HDZ slogan promised to create “instead of a somber — a sovereign and contemporary Croatia,” while advertisements in the press stressed “the sovereign right of Croatia to its own economic, political, social, and cultural system.”²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ HDZ pre-election appearance, 27 February 1990, D. Đurić et al, p. 83.

²⁶¹ *Narodna Armija*, 1 March 1990. Cited in Andrejevich, “The Elections in Croatia: a preview.”

²⁶² Silber and Little, pp. 88-89.

²⁶³ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” p. 74.

²⁶⁴ *Start*, 28 April 1990, p. 24.

²⁶⁵ Lalić, pp. 247-248.

In public speeches, HDZ representatives were sometimes more explicit about the party's demand for sovereignty, and right-wing members on several occasions openly called for Croatian independence. Just before the first round of the elections, HDZ Deputy Chairman Vladimir Šeks said that Yugoslavia did not have a future and that if the HDZ came to power, the party would move toward creating an independent Croatia. In response, Tudman explained that HDZ policy must be judged according to party documents and not by the statements of individuals, adding that Croatia would remain a part of Yugoslavia, although under different conditions.²⁶⁶ Nonetheless, at party rallies Tudman said that "we will not allow others to behave like masters in our Croatian home" and promised that the new government would consider "whether it is possible to live in a union that for 70 years has been to the detriment of Croatia."²⁶⁷ At one HDZ meeting, Tudman argued that "for Croatia to be free and sovereign, a Croatian gun must be on the Croatian shoulder and a Croatian wallet in the Croatian pocket."²⁶⁸

In linking the question of sovereignty with the historical desires of the Croatian nation, the HDZ used the slogans "In voting for the candidates of the HDZ you are voting for the realization of the historical aspirations of the Croatian nation" and "In voting best we are deciding not only about our future, but we are also expressing our opinion toward the past."²⁶⁹ Defending itself against accusations that it was nationalist-separatist, the party explained in its program that "the Croatian nation is among the oldest of European nations" and added that since Croatia lost its independent kingdom in the Middle Ages, "it never lost its national and state autonomy [*samobitnost*]." The HDZ asked how the Croatian nation could be expected to "reconcile itself with the violation of its sovereign rights in the current period," when "unhistoric nations that until yesterday were unknown" — such as the Slovenes — "are presenting themselves on the world stage as subjects of the international order?" Pointing out that although during World War I Slovenes in the Vienna parliament were forced to refer to the Croatian historical state right, the HDZ stressed that "today the Greater Serb

²⁶⁶ Marinko Culic, "Može li Hrvatska sama," *Danas*, 24 April 1990, p. 10.

²⁶⁷ *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 17 and 19 April 1990. Cited in Lalic, pp. 247-248.

²⁶⁸ *Vecernji list*, 2 April 1990. Cited in Lalic, p. 247. The latter half of the statement comes from a slogan of the interwar HSS, which characterized the aims of Croatian politics with the slogan "my gun on my shoulder and my wallet in my pocket." See D. Đurić et al, p. 76.

²⁶⁹ *Vecernji list*, 20 April 1990; Lalic, p. 247.

hegemony would accept their secession from Yugoslavia in the aspiration of governing Croatia more easily or including three-quarters of [Croatian] territory in Greater Serbia.²⁷⁰ Elsewhere, party representative Krpina stressed that “the Croatian nation is not some kind of half nation that should have less rights than other European nations. On the contrary, the Croatian nation is one of the oldest and most cultured nations on the European continent.”²⁷¹

In connection with the question of history, the HDZ argued that Croatia’s World War II state “was not only a mere ‘quisling’ creation and a ‘fascist crime’ but also an expression of the historic aspirations of the Croatian people for their own independent state and the awareness of international actors — in this case the government of Hitler’s Germany, which on the ruins of Versailles arranged the *New European order* — of those aspirations of Croatia and its geographical borders.”²⁷² That explanation, which was presented by Tudman in a speech at the February party congress, elicited strong reactions from the JNA and the Serbs, and the HDZ later stressed that Tudman was not rehabilitating the violence of the Ustaše but was separating out the good parts, which included the realization of Croatian statehood.²⁷³ In late March, Tudman stressed that at the time of the crumbling of Yugoslavia in 1941, “an absolutely huge majority of the Croatian people understood [the NDH] as a way out of the oppression it found itself under in monarchist Yugoslavia.”²⁷⁴ At the same time, the party also pointed to the legacy of the anti-fascist partisan movement and argued that the Croatian nation “ended World War II on the side of the victorious democratic forces.” Regarding the legacy of Tito, the party made it clear that Croats “do not have any reason to preserve the cult of his personality” and stressed that federalism was “one of the only historically positive aspects of Titoism”²⁷⁵

For the HDZ, the question of self-determination did not apply to the Serbian population living in Croatia. Nonetheless, the HDZ declared itself to be against “all national exclusivity, acknowledging all rights for the Serbian and all other

²⁷⁰ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” p. 76.

²⁷¹ Krpina, p. 23.

²⁷² “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” p. 75.

²⁷³ Silber and Little, p. 86.

²⁷⁴ *Vjesnik*, 25 March 1990, cited in Zvonko Ivankovic-Vonta, “Hazardne igre,” *Danas*, 3 April 1990, p. 32.

inhabitants of Croatia” and emphasizing its opposition to “any kind of revenge.”²⁷⁶ At the same time, HDZ documents frequently referred to Milošević’s policies with harsh language, using terms such as “Milošević’s Greater Serbia neo-expansionism” and “the hegemonic-unitaristic or Yugoslav great state understanding.”²⁷⁷

Regarding the question of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the HDZ program presented its aim of ensuring “the territorial integrity of the Croatian people within its historical and natural borders,”²⁷⁸ which presumably meant the inclusion of at least parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina in a Croatian state. The HDZ program pointed out that “according to its current constitution, Bosnia-Herzegovina is a national state also of the Croatian nation,” and it stressed that Croatian politicians of the 19th and 20th centuries — including “father of the homeland” Starcevic — had spoken about Bosnia-Herzegovina “from the standpoint of its geopolitical unity with Croatia and the West.”²⁷⁹ In a HDZ document published just before the elections, the party expressed its preference for “an economic-business and spiritual-civilizational union of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina that forms a natural, indivisible geopolitical whole.”²⁸⁰

As already mentioned, another key nationally-oriented theme for the HDZ was unity and reconciliation. In its program, the party stressed that it was “high time that a bridge is formed, especially between homeland and émigré Croats, but also between participants in the ruling establishment and the opposition..., so that in peace, freedom and democracy, coexistence on the model of contemporary civilized society can be built.” The HDZ emphasized that as a party, it was “open to all, without regard to one’s previous affiliation,” and it expressed opposition to “any kind of call for responsibility for past political activities, with the exception of for those who would in this transition period oppose the democratic reform of society.”²⁸¹

²⁷⁵ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” pp. 75-78.

²⁷⁶ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” p. 81.

²⁷⁷ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” pp. 72-83.

²⁷⁸ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” p. 75.

²⁷⁹ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” p. 76.

²⁸⁰ HDZ: “Stanovništvu Hrvatske i cijelomu hrvatskom narodu,” *Glasnik*, no. 9, April 1990.

²⁸¹ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” p. 81.

One explanation for the HDZ's push for reconciliation and its stress on the question of Bosnia-Herzegovina related to the fact that much of the estimated four million dollars that the HDZ spent on the campaign came from Croatian émigrés, many of whom were from Herzegovina. Tudman commented that by inviting émigrés to Zagreb for the HDZ congress in February 1990, he made his "most crucial political decision," even compared with the steps he took later while serving as president of a country that was torn apart by war.²⁸² The HDZ also stressed the need to bring Croat émigrés back home in an effort to bring capital into the Croatian economy and to help resolve the demographic problem of declining population. Jurica called for the riches of Croats abroad to "become one with the riches of our homeland" and emphasized the need for the return of Croatian émigrés to fill the "deserted" villages and islands.²⁸³ The HDZ presented the demographic problem as an issue of the utmost national importance, reflected also in its program for increasing the birthrate and decreasing the number of abortions.²⁸⁴

The economy was a less important issue of the HDZ campaign, although it was discussed in terms of the overall approach to reforms as well as in relation to the question of sovereignty and protection of national interests. The HDZ program expressed support for Markovic's reforms regarding the establishment of a free market and pluralist democracy, the convertibility of the dinar, rule of law, and openness toward the rest of the world.²⁸⁵ At the same time, however, the party argued against economic centralization, and HDZ ads called for "an end to the outflow of the national income of Croatia."²⁸⁶

A final important theme of the HDZ campaign was the "return to Europe." In contrast with Milošević's rhetoric, the HDZ frequently called for Croatia's membership in the European Community. Moreover, the party used "European" as a synonym for that which is democratic, civilized, and successful, or in other words, the kind of Croatia that it aimed to create. For example, one HDZ slogan

²⁸² Silber and Little, pp. 84-86.

²⁸³ HDZ pre-election appearance, 27 February 1990, D. Đurić et al., p. 84.

²⁸⁴ See "Programska deklaracija Osnivačke skupštine HDZ," pp. 63-69.

²⁸⁵ "Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ," p. 79.

was “Sovereignty, prosperity, Europe,”²⁸⁷ while Jurica stressed that the HDZ wanted a Croatia that was strong; secure; economically, politically and nationally stable; modern, civilized, and European.²⁸⁸ The HDZ also wanted to avoid the possibility of Croatia being left out of the democratization wave that was taking place throughout the region, emphasizing that the process of democratic reform that was started across the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe “cannot stop on the borders of Yugoslavia.”²⁸⁹

The HDZ saw the SKH-SDP as its main rival, and its criticism of the communist government was more specific and radical than that of the other opposition parties.²⁹⁰ The HDZ’s anti-communism was also reflected in calls by Šeks for the word “socialist” to be removed from the name of the republic and for the hammer, sickle and star to be replaced as symbols of Croatia.²⁹¹

The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia

In Slovakia, the HZDS ran its campaign primarily through rallies, posters, and the daily newspaper *Koridor*, which was published from late February 1992 with the political aim of declaring Slovak sovereignty.²⁹² Unlike some of its competitors — most notably the ODÚ — the HZDS did not place advertisements in newspapers. In the pre-election period, *Koridor* served as a mouthpiece for the party and included a full HZDS page each day with the name of the party at the top but without any indication that it was a paid advertisement. The articles on the HZDS page were written either by HZDS candidates or by journalists from the paper itself, and they served to boost the HZDS or to criticize the party’s opponents. The HZDS pages also announced party rallies and presented the party’s election program, in addition to including political cartoons and poems and other materials. In the weeks before the elections, the daily included a series of short interviews introducing HZDS candidates. The HZDS apparently got

²⁸⁶ Lalic, p. 247.

²⁸⁷ Bašić, “Nijedno hrvatsko proljeće nije isto,” *Start*, 28 April 1990, p. 63.

²⁸⁸ HDZ pre-election appearance, 27 February 1990, D. Đuric et al, p. 84.

²⁸⁹ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” pp. 72-83.

²⁹⁰ Lalic, p. 248.

²⁹¹ HDZ pre-election appearance, 27 February 1990, D. Đuric et al, p. 85.

²⁹² Jerguš Ferko, p. 174. According to a May 1992 Slovak Statistical Office poll, the paper was not among the ten most popular dailies in Slovakia. See *Pravda*, 27 May 1992.

most of its campaign funds through personal contributions, and in 1991 alone it received far more money in gifts than any other party.²⁹³

HZDS posters and billboards focused mainly on Meciar, who was clearly the central figure of the party's campaign. One HZDS billboard showed a smiling Meciar with open arms, as if ready to welcome a friend, while a party poster featured him with an outstretched hand. Another HZDS poster showed the Slovak symbol, with three mountain peaks and a giant double cross. One of the best-known HZDS posters presented the top HZDS leaders in dark shadows on a pale background.

Instead of producing TV advertisements, at the beginning of the campaign the HZDS announced that the funds the party would have devoted to producing the ads would instead be given to charitable aims, particularly healthcare, stipends for young people to go abroad, and cooperation with Slovaks living in other countries. During the party's allocated TV time, the HZDS displayed the account number of the recipient organization and the size of the contribution on a blue background.²⁹⁴ HZDS spokesman Jozef Šucha explained that such a use of funds was appropriate since the party preferred to get its message across through other means, particularly through direct meetings with citizens.²⁹⁵ In an obvious attack on the HZDS, the ODÚ expressed opposition to the "hypocritical" announcements by some political subjects that they were donating part of their election funds to charitable causes while at the same time hanging posters all over Slovakia.²⁹⁶

What the HZDS lacked in advertising, it made up for through party rallies. The party held its first big pre-election meeting in the Pasienky sports hall in Bratislava on 5 March 1992 to commemorate the anniversary of the HZDS's establishment, and scenes from that and other rallies were included on a

²⁹³ The HZDS still claimed that it had to borrow funds since the ODÚ failed to give it a share of the state election funds as a VPN successor party. See Martin Krno, "Plagáty nie sú zadarmo," *Pravda*, 14 May 1992.

²⁹⁴ Jan Jiráček and Otakar Šoltys, "Videoklipy," in Josef Alan et al, *Volby*, (Prague: EGEM, 1993), pp. 78-79.

²⁹⁵ *Koridor*, 21 May 1992.

²⁹⁶ *Pravda*, 26 May 1992.

videocassette.²⁹⁷ HZDS rallies included entertainment by various folk and country bands, and the party received support from well-known ice hockey and soccer players.²⁹⁸ The HZDS distributed packets of “Meciar coffee,” featuring a heart surrounded by stars that apparently symbolized the European flag, as well as plastic buttons with Meciar’s face and visors with his picture or the party’s acronym.²⁹⁹ Sometimes the HZDS announced that its rallies would provide refreshments such as gulash and coffee, while others offered special programs for children.

Throughout its campaign, the HZDS attempted to instill a feeling of affection for Meciar and to link him and the party with the Slovak nation itself. At a pre-election soccer game, HZDS candidates wore t-shirts reading “I love Meciar,”³⁰⁰ while the author of a poem published in *Koridor* vowed that as a Slovak he would vote “only for Meciar.” Expressing faith that Meciar “wants what is good for Slovaks” and “does not promise the impossible,” the poem concluded that “only a Czechoslovak” would sit in Prague and pointed out that “we in Bratislava also have a castle.”³⁰¹ In its program, the HZDS promised to “strengthen faith in the future in harmony with the ancient traditions of the Christian culture of our forefathers.”³⁰²

The link between the HZDS and the Slovak nation was also accomplished through presenting both the nation and Meciar as victims. While the Slovaks were victims of 1,000 years of oppression by other nations — particularly by the Hungarians and the Czechs — Meciar was depicted as the victim of a smear campaign launched by his political rivals and the media.³⁰³ Meciar’s image as a victim was influenced not only by his dismissal as prime minister in April 1991, but also by the Slovak parliament’s accusations in March 1992 that he had been an informer of the ŠtB and KGB under the codename “Doctor.” Instead of turning the population away from the HZDS, those accusations only enforced

²⁹⁷ *Koridor*, 28 May 1992.

²⁹⁸ *Smena*, 25 May 1992; *Koridor*, 27 May and 1 June 1992.

²⁹⁹ *Smena*, 21 and 25 May 1992.

³⁰⁰ Jerguš Ferko, p. 245.

³⁰¹ Rudolf Baluch ml., “(Predvolebná) Óda na Meciaru,” *Koridor*, 25 April 1992.

³⁰² “Tézy volebného programu HZDS (1. cast),” *Koridor*, 21 April 1992.

³⁰³ See, for example, “Meciar versus novinári,” *Smena*, 4 June 1992.

Meciar's image and apparently had favorable results for the party's popularity. Meciar claimed that after the "Doctor" affair, the HZDS registered "a massive inflow" of new members.³⁰⁴

The most important themes of the HZDS election campaign were national sovereignty and the need for socially-oriented economic reforms, and the HZDS program stated that the party wanted "to manage the transition to a social market economy and complete the emancipation process by making Slovakia a subject of international law."³⁰⁵ According to the HZDS electoral program, a treaty with the Czech Republic would secure the preservation of a common economic area, joint defense and coordination of foreign policy, as well as respect for the basic rights and freedoms of citizens.³⁰⁶ Although some HZDS critics argued that a referendum should precede the declaration of sovereignty, Knažko stressed that "sovereignty is not a question for a referendum. The right of a nation to self-determination is our national right, anchored in the UN Charter." Knažko also dismissed criticism that the declaration of sovereignty would violate the 1968 constitution, emphasizing that "our constitution comes from the time of totalitarianism. More important than the constitution is the political will of the people."³⁰⁷ In explaining the party's reasons for demanding sovereignty, HZDS candidate Augustín Marián Húska wrote that "in its history, Slovakia has thus far not been in such a favorable geopolitical situation." he pointed to seven past unsuccessful attempts to reach Slovak independence, adding that "we will not remain isolated from the European and world emancipation wave."³⁰⁸

For Meciar, the question of equality was especially important, and he explained that Slovakia wanted to join the European Community as "an equal among equals." Meciar added that "if we go as Czechoslovakia we might get there earlier, but in the framework of Europe we will be only a region, and the nation will have the importance of an ethnic group. If we go as a state it will take longer, complications will arise, but we will reach an equivalent position in

³⁰⁴ "Naša budúcnosť podľa Meciara," *Smena*, 14 May 1992.

³⁰⁵ "Tézy volebného programu HZDS (1. cast)," *Koridor*, 21 April 1992.

³⁰⁶ "Tézy volebného programu HZDS (9. cast)," *Koridor*, 30 April 1992.

³⁰⁷ Monika Nemcoková, "Nech sa pán prezident nebojí," *Koridor*, 28 May 1992.

³⁰⁸ Augustín Marián Húska, "A karavána ide ďalej," *Koridor*, 26 May 1992.

relation to other state formations in Europe.”³⁰⁹ Elsewhere, Meciar warned that “if we integrate into Europe through Czecho-Slovakia and do not build a system guaranteeing Slovakia’s participation at the negotiating table as an equal partner, we are sentencing ourselves to the role of a region and ethnic group that will gradually be assimilated.”³¹⁰ Along the same lines, the HZDS election program closed by telling citizens that “you have the possibility to decide whether you want to live in a sovereign democratic republic or in a dependent region with limited rights.”³¹¹ Elsewhere, Meciar stressed that “we are making coexistence a priority,” adding that although he considered a confederation to be the “most realistic” solution, it was not the only possibility.³¹² In 1992, as in later years, Meciar frequently contradicted himself and changed his rhetoric based on his audience at the time. Clearly, the ambiguity of the HZDS position on the future of Czechoslovakia was part of an effort to attract the largest possible following.

In relation to the Czechs, Meciar stressed at a party rally that “completing our statehood is not an act of enmity. It should be an act of understanding and cooperation.” Implying that the Slovaks’ desire for understanding was not mutual, however, Meciar alleged that Czech politicians were not concerned with preserving the common state but rather with “reaching its disintegration and putting the blame on the Slovaks.”³¹³ HZDS candidate Ján Cuper argued that during the 70 years of Czechoslovakia’s existence the state was only identified with “Czech historical, political and economic interests,” and he added that “in the hands of Czech political representatives, the common state was always an instrument through which the Czech nation could widen its territory to the detriment of its neighbors.”³¹⁴ One *Koridor* article discussed several cases of Czech “schizophrenia,” including attempts during the interwar state to create a “Czechoslovak language” and the Czechs’ tendency in the post-communist period to label Slovak public rallies as manifestations of Slovak nationalism while never saying the same about Czech demonstrations. The article also pointed to comments by then Czechoslovak Ambassador to the US Rita Klimová,

³⁰⁹ *Pravda*, 1 June 1992.

³¹⁰ Leško, p. 77.

³¹¹ “Tézy volebného programu HZDS (10. cast),” *Koridor*, 1 May 1992.

³¹² Leško, p. 77.

³¹³ *Smena*, 25 May 1992.

³¹⁴ Ján Cuper, “Integrovať či dezintegrovať,” *Koridor*, 15 May 1992.

who not only called Slovaks nationalists but also added the labels of fascist and anti-Semitic. The article's author explained that the differences in the Czech and Slovak mentalities could be seen in the state symbols: while the Czech symbol featured a proud lion, the Slovaks used three mountain peaks and a double cross, with the cross symbolizing "our past and current suffering and injustices."³¹⁵ Havel was a frequent subject of criticism, and the HZDS repeatedly made it clear that it would not support him as Czechoslovak president.³¹⁶

The economic question was another crucial element of the HZDS campaign, and it was often directly linked to the theme of national sovereignty. HZDS representative Sergej Kozlík stressed in an interview that "everywhere in the world, states accept weaker economic regions, and that is reflected in lower taxes. ... In approving new tax regulations, however, the Federal Assembly did not accept our requests for such an approach."³¹⁷ One *Koridor* cartoon presented folk hero Juraj Janošík, known as the Slovak Robin Hood, telling Slovaks dressed in national costume "Boys, we are dilettantes, we take from the rich and give to the poor! In Prague they do the opposite!"³¹⁸ HZDS representatives rejected allegations that the declaration of Slovak sovereignty would have disastrous effects on the economy and that the HZDS was "an extreme leftist party" aimed at bringing Slovakia toward socialism, and Meciar argued that the HZDS was a movement of the political center.³¹⁹

Although HZDS election promises led many Slovaks to believe that the economic and social transformation would be easier under HZDS leadership, some party representatives tried to approach the question more realistically. For example, Secanský explained that resolving the economic situation would be extremely complicated and stressed that people's expectations that Meciar's victory would turn Slovakia into a "paradise" were unfounded.³²⁰ Likewise, Meciar told journalists in mid-May that the economic situation would continue to

³¹⁵ Ondro Malenický, "na brehu Moravy," *Koridor*, 27 April 1992. For more criticism of the Czechs, see Tibor Bucha, "Polokoloniálna politika voci Slovensku," *Koridor*, 4 May 1992.

³¹⁶ See, for example, Meciar's comments in *Koridor*, 21 May 1992.

³¹⁷ *Koridor*, 3 June 1992.

³¹⁸ *Koridor*, 23 April 1992.

³¹⁹ Interview with Meciar, *Koridor*, 18 May 1992.

³²⁰ Statements by Secanský in Bánová, "Do videnia, náš parlament!" *Plus 7 dní*, 7 April 1992, p. 3.

be problematic and that Slovaks could expect “difficult and unpopular measures in the economic and social arenas.”³²¹

The Czechs played a much bigger role in the HZDS campaign than did the Hungarians, but the Hungarian question did produce some fear. Critics warned that Slovak sovereignty could call into question the international treaties signed by Czechoslovakia and therefore have an effect on Slovakia’s southern border with Hungary; however, historian Ladislav Deák claimed that the declaration of sovereignty would not have any influence on that problem.³²² Although in its program the HZDS guaranteed the development of national minorities and ethnic groups “in accordance with international conventions,” the party also stated that it was necessary “to create conditions for the teaching of the Slovak language as the state language on the entire territory of the Slovak Republic” and said that it would review the 1990 language law and provide for its possible amendment.³²³ At a pre-election rally in Galanta, where ethnic Hungarians constitute 40 percent of the district’s population, Meciar explained that “citizens of Hungarian nationality are first and foremost citizens of Slovakia, with the same rights and obligations as the others. Someone is always frightening us that if Slovakia will be sovereign, unrest will arise in the south, or conversely, that we will drive out the Hungarians.” In an effort to present the two nations as having the same fundamental concerns, Meciar added that “Slovakia is the common home for all citizens who live here, and if we will all be hungry, then each stomach will have the same gurgle, regardless of nationality.”³²⁴ The HZDS featured at least one ethnic Hungarian on its election lists: Otília Šabalicová, who was nominated by the Democratic Union of Women of Slovakia.³²⁵

The HZDS cultural program, which was formulated by Slobodník and art historian Igor Gazdík, appeared relatively open and tolerant. The program stated that “culture, art and science must contribute to preserving the continuity of the best national traditions, to creating space for the representation of the national community in the world, and to accepting positive impulses from the world.”

³²¹ “Naša budúcnosť podľa Meciara,” *Smena*, 14 May 1992.

³²² Ladislav Deák, “Nebojme sa zvrchovanosti,” *Koridor*, 28 May 1992.

³²³ “Tézy volebného programu HZDS (8. cast),” *Koridor*, 29 April 1992.

³²⁴ *Koridor*, 21 May 1992.

Such policy would allow art and culture to markedly contribute to defending the Slovak national identity, “placing it in the context of Central European historical development with its Christian and humanistic tradition.” The HZDS promised the pluralistic development of culture, “independent of any kind of ideology,” and it vowed to support independent and national-cultural institutions, artistic associations, talented young artists, as well as the culture of national minorities.³²⁶ Gazdík stressed that the program was based on “the freedom of artistic creation without state interference” and said that he had discussed the situation with Meciar and believed that HZDS politicians would not become involved in the sphere of art and culture.³²⁷

Although the question of Europe was not mentioned in the HZDS’s ten key points of its electoral program,³²⁸ European integration was the first foreign policy priority in the longer version of the party’s election program.³²⁹ Unlike the case of Croatia’s HDZ, Slovakia’s World War II state did not play a role in the HZDS election campaign, and there were no real efforts by party representatives to paint that state in a positive light.

During the electoral campaign, HZDS attacks were focused on the pre-election ruling parties, which were criticized for their approach to economic reform and Slovak sovereignty, as well as for their media policy.³³⁰ One HZDS candidate called attention to the 50 percent decline in the Slovak economy over the previous two years, adding that “the communists in 40 years devastated the economy, but the ruling coalition found a shortcut.”³³¹

³²⁵ *Koridor*, 2 June 1992.

³²⁶ “Tézy volebného programu HZDS (8. cast),” *Koridor*, 29 April 1992.

³²⁷ Interview with Gazdík in *Koridor*, 3 June 1992. Gazdík was one of the first deputies to leave the HZDS, joining Knažko in forming the Alliance of Democrats in March 1993.

³²⁸ See “Desatoro volebného programu Hnutia za demokratické Slovensko.”

³²⁹ “Tézy volebného programu HZDS,” *Koridor*, 1 May 1992.

³³⁰ See, for example, Milan Hodál, “Vďaka,” *Koridor*, 22 April 1992; Hodál, “Ludia,” *Koridor*, 23 May 1992; Bernard Šutovský, “Prečo neverím Dubčekovi?” *Koridor*, 1 June 1992. On media policy, see *Koridor*, 13 May 1992; HZDS press conference, *Pravda*, 28 May 1992; Monika Nemcoková, “Slovensku hrozí mediálny škandál,” *Koridor*, 29 May 1992; *Pravda*, 30 May 1992.

³³¹ *Koridor*, 27 May 1992.

The election results and their implications

In both Croatia and Slovakia, the parties running in the elections were hindered by the general uncertainty about how the populations would respond to their rhetoric. The party systems were still being formed, and no one knew what the constituencies were. That meant that some of the competing parties failed to understand which issues were important for the populations, while at the same time overestimating the ability of the people to see through the populism and opportunism of their competitors. Parties that tried to use rational arguments, such as the KNS in Croatia and the ODÚ in Slovakia, failed miserably.

In designing the Croatian electoral system, the communists had wanted to provide for a strong, stable government, giving the election winner considerably more seats in the parliament than its showing in the elections warranted. As a result, the HDZ won approximately 42 percent of the vote but 55 of the 80 parliamentary seats in the Socio-Political Chamber. The SKH-SDP came in second place with 34 percent of the vote but just 20 seats, while the Coalition won about 15 percent of the vote but only three seats, with the remaining two seats going to the Serbian Democratic Party and to an independent candidate.³³²

The HDZ apparently won because it “best felt the pulse of the masses.”³³³ Opinion polls conducted in 1986 and 1990 showed that in certain respects, national feeling had grown over the previous years. For example, the percentage of respondents who thought that economic interests had an important connection with the nation rose from 39 percent in 1986 to 59 percent in 1990, and the percentage who believed in a strong connection between religion and the nation grew from 29 percent in 1986 to 42 percent in 1990.³³⁴ While other parties considered the question of the nation “a secondary problem,” the HDZ won by putting it forward as a basic problem.³³⁵

³³² Grdešić, “1990 Elections in Croatia,” p. 96.

³³³ Jajcinovic, “Odgovornost pobjednika,” *Danas*, 15 May 1990, p. 8.

³³⁴ Grdešić et al, *Hrvatska u izborima '90*, p. 112.

³³⁵ Hudelist, “Izborna java između dva sna,” *Start*, 28 April 1990, p. 23.

In choosing the HDZ, Croatian voters expressed their desire for a kind of counterbalance to Milošević, the need for a change of government, a wish for Croatian independence, or a revival of Croatia.³³⁶ Analysts were surprised that the “relatively anonymous” candidates from the HDZ pulled off a series of defeats, especially in Zagreb, where many of the best-known candidates of the KNS were running. Many citizens voted for HDZ representatives on the basis of party membership, “without consideration of who they are and what they are, deeply believing that only the HDZ can completely fulfill the great and above all ominous historical mission: the dream of a free and independent Croatia.”³³⁷ One commentator wrote that the HDZ victory was undoubtedly a protest against the government but was also based on long-term Croatian frustrations, especially those that had flooded the republic over the previous two years, partly in terms of the economy but also in the outpouring of Serbian expansionism.³³⁸ An opinion poll showed that 41 percent of Croats chose a given party because of its program, 23 percent because the party put forward the best solutions to concrete problems, while 20 percent because of trust in the party leadership.³³⁹

The SKH-SDP tried hard to distance itself from its communist past and to convince voters that it had changed, eliminating symbols of the past such as the hammer and sickle and promising that “state socialism” was something that people would only read about in “dusty books.”³⁴⁰ Emphasizing that many former party members had already left their ranks and joined other political formations, Racan pointed out that “those who today build their political credibility on their renunciation of their communist pasts do not have the right to question whether we are also capable of changing.”³⁴¹ Despite the SKH-SDP’s efforts, one commentator speculated that “in contrast to the League of Communists of Slovenia, the SKH started its own reform transformation too late to absorb the best ideas of the opposition and to impose itself as the main force in the defense of sovereignty and democracy in Croatia.”³⁴² The majority of HDZ

³³⁶Jovic, “Što ih je privuklo,” *Danas*, 24 April 1990, pp. 7-8.

³³⁷Hudelist, “Izborna java između dva sna,” *Start*, 28 April 1990, pp. 23-24.

³³⁸Jajcinovic, “Kakav predznak demokraciji,” *Danas*, 1 May 1990, p. 8.

³³⁹Grdešić et al, *Hrvatska u izborima '90*, p. 58.

³⁴⁰SKH-SDP: “Izborni program,” pp. 273-274.

³⁴¹SKH-SDP pre-election appearance, 31 March 1990, D. Đurić et al, pp. 297-298.

³⁴²“Prednost zvucnih imena,” *Danas*, 13 March 1990, p. 13.

and KNS voters were against the communists because of the perceived responsibility of the SKH for the difficult situation the country was facing and the desire to give an opportunity to others.³⁴³ According to one study, those who supported the SKH-SDP were voting against the nationalist HDZ, and the communists were supported not only by non-Croats living in the republic but also by a part of the civil service and public administration, a portion of the intelligentsia, the army and police, business managers, war veterans, and all those who disagreed with Croatian national self-determination.³⁴⁴ An opinion poll showed that the communists received nearly one-half of their support from Serbs and “Yugoslavs,” while the HDZ was overwhelmingly backed by Croats.³⁴⁵

Analysts pointed to several reasons for the KNS’s defeat.³⁴⁶ First was the “elitist-intellectual image” of the HSLS and of the Coalition as a whole. Tripalo later commented that while intellectuals had failed in the elections, those who won were the ones who publicly said that “the Croatian intelligentsia had betrayed the nation.”³⁴⁷ The second reason was the Coalition’s lack of a detailed program, especially at a time when “very simple and combative messages” were needed.³⁴⁸ That deficiency led to the KNS’s “hypertrophic” dependence on Croatian Spring leader Dabčević-Kučar, a move that proved to be a shortcoming rather than an advantage since her return to high politics was apparently incompatible with the mood of the masses. In comparison with the Coalition, the HDZ was considerably more concrete and consistent about what it was offering, about its desires and promises. The third and probably most important reason for the Coalition’s defeat was that it often placed the question of human and individual rights above the issue of the Croatian national question, while Tudman approached the issue from the opposite perspective. The Croatian population was clearly not yet prepared for such a liberal approach. A fourth disadvantage for the KNS was the majority electoral system, especially since the differences of

³⁴³ Grdešić et al, *Hrvatska u izborima '90*, p. 65.

³⁴⁴ Grdešić, “1990 Elections in Croatia,” p. 93.

³⁴⁵ Grdešić et al, *Hrvatska u izborima '90*, pp. 99-100.

³⁴⁶ See Hudelist, “Izborna java između dva sna,” *Start*, 28 April 1990, p. 23.

³⁴⁷ Interview with Tripalo, *Danas*, 1 May 1990, p. 10.

³⁴⁸ Interview with Slavko Goldstein, *Danas*, 8 May 1990, p. 12.

opinion between the Coalition and the communists prevented the two from joining forces against the HDZ in the second round.

Despite the fact that Slovakia had a proportional electoral system, making it difficult for any one party to gain a majority of the seats, in June 1992 the system worked to Meciar's advantage because of the large number of votes that were lost on parties that narrowly failed to surpass the five percent threshold. The remaining seats were thus divided among the five groups that did enter the parliament, and the HZDS won 37.26 percent of the vote in the Slovak parliament but 74 of the 150 seats. The SDL came in second place with 14.70 percent of the vote and 29 seats, followed by the KDH with 8.88 percent and 18 seats, the SNS with 7.93 percent and 15 seats, and the Hungarian coalition with 7.42 percent and 14 seats.³⁴⁹ The ODÚ, DS, SDSS, and SKDH failed to pass the threshold required for entry into the parliament.

One commentator stressed the importance of personalities in the Slovak elections, adding that "if it were not for Vladimír Meciar, the HZDS would have had the same electoral chances as the other nationally oriented parties." Meciar played a key role in attracting popular support for the HZDS since people were interested in Meciar "as a leader, a symbol, and a victim of political intrigues"; by repeatedly laying dirt on Meciar's head, his rivals evoked "a kind of willfulness in the stubborn Slovak people." He was seen as someone who would finally succeed in creating order in Slovakia, "a fearless hero" who would be a rival for Klaus. The commentator added that a nation needs a leader and pointed out that historians had confirmed that the more difficult the times, the more people long for "a strong personality in whose hands they blindly attach their fate."³⁵⁰ In fact, a January 1992 opinion poll showed that 45.4 percent of Slovaks "fully agreed" that the country needed a strong leader, while 19.4 percent "rather agreed." That same poll demonstrated that for HZDS adherents, the unifying elements were support for Meciar and opposition to the ruling parties.³⁵¹ Interestingly, electoral support for the HZDS by district has been shown to

³⁴⁹ *Pravda*, 8 and 11 June 1992.

³⁵⁰ Miloš Luknár, "Veni, vidi, vici" *Plus 7 dní*, 16 June 1992, pp. 14-15.

³⁵¹ *Aktuálne problémy Česko-Slovenska január 1992*, p. 31; Appendix, p. 11.

correlate strongly with that of interwar Catholic priest and national leader Andrej Hlinka's movement, Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (HSLS).³⁵²

One journalist wrote that the weak results for the SNS and the debacle of the SKDH could be explained by the former's lack of emphasis on an economic program and absence of a larger number of popular personalities and the latter's long indecision over whether to leave the KDH.³⁵³ The lack of success of the SNS and SKDH also signaled the reluctance of most Slovaks to support outright independence.

As in the case of Croatia's SKH-SDP, the SDL was hindered by its image as the communist successor party, despite Weiss's repeated efforts to stress discontinuity with the ideology of the past and his arguments that "nine-tenths of former KSS members are [now] in other political parties and movements." Hinting that the HZDS had "many more former communists than the SDL," Weiss asked "who has the right to judge whether those in the SDL are worse than those in the HZDS?"³⁵⁴ One commentator pointed out that although Weiss and other SDL representatives repeatedly tried to argue that the party was "a modern, European-style leftist party" that did not have anything in common with the communists, Slovak citizens still accepted the SDL as the continuation of the Communist Party. He added that it was exactly that "nostalgic longing for the good old days" that helped the SDL to increase its popular support.³⁵⁵

Clearly, the Slovak elections were a great failure for the ruling coalition parties since the KDH was the only one to make it into the parliament. Even the KDH's results were surprisingly poor, particularly in comparison with that party's success in 1990. Although many had expected the emergence of Christian nationalists in the post-communist period along the same lines as in interwar Slovakia, KDH leader Carnogurský had been outplayed by Meciar. One pro-HZDS commentator wrote that the poor results for the KDH and especially for the ODÚ were the Slovak voters' answer to the ruling parties' anti-national

³⁵² Vladimír Krivý et al, *Slovensko a jeho regióny* (Bratislava: Nadácia Médiá, 1996), pp. 136-150.

³⁵³ Jerguš Ferko, "Triumfálne víťazstvo HZDS a V. Meciar," *Koridor*, 8 June 1992.

³⁵⁴ Weiss interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 10 March 1992, pp. 8-10.

³⁵⁵ Lukác, "Sluby nie nestoja...", *Plus 7 dní*, 18 May 1992, p. 14.

rhetoric, to the “chaotic” steps in legislation, and to the economic problems.³⁵⁶ The ODÚ’s poor performance was also due to its failure to unite with other parties that shared similar views, particularly the DS, and the two parties’ inability to forge a pre-election coalition was seen as a grave mistake. The ODÚ and DS won a combined total of 7.34 percent of the vote, meaning that together they would certainly have surpassed the five percent barrier or even the seven percent barrier needed for two and three party coalitions. In fact, the parties could have won even more than their combined total since some would-be voters either chose other parties or did not vote, knowing that their votes would likely be wasted because of the parties’ low showing in pre-election opinion polls. Meanwhile, the SDSS could in certain ways be compared with Croatia’s KNS, and despite Dubcek’s popularity, his return to high politics was apparently incompatible with the wishes of the population.

In terms of their implications for the development of party systems, the elections in Croatia and Slovakia produced somewhat different results. In Croatia, the HDZ established itself on the center-right, forcing the opposition mainly to the left. While the HSLS — the main party in the KNS — was seen as centrist/liberal, the SKH-SDP was further to the left. The HZDS, in contrast, presented itself as a centrist movement, allowing for opposition on both ends of the spectrum. The failure of the civic right in the 1992 elections meant that the KDH and the ethnic Hungarian parties were the only parliamentary opposition groups to situate themselves on the right of the HZDS. As was the case in Croatia, the left side of the spectrum was filled largely by the post-communist SDL. However, in both Croatia and Slovakia the tendency of the HDZ and HZDS to jump from one side to another depending on the issue limited the opposition’s room for maneuver.

The triumph of the HDZ and HZDS in the elections had a number of important implications for the Croatian and Slovak transitions, not just in terms of the development of the party systems. The strength of the parties’ victories created an unusual situation in a new democracy in which one party was able to rule on its own. That was even more pronounced in the Croatian case since the HDZ

³⁵⁶ Luboš Jurík, “Úspech,” *Koridor*, 8 June 1992.

created the first post-communist government and was therefore able to set the rules of the game. The HZDS, on the other hand, was more limited because democratic institutions had already been established in the first two and one-half years of the post-communist transition, and the HZDS narrowly lacked an absolutely majority in the parliament.

The rise of national movements to political power through the Croatian and Slovak elections did not necessarily mean that the populations were nationalistic in the negative sense. Many Slovaks and Croats apparently associated democracy with economic prosperity and the freedom to promote national interests, but not only in the form of outright independence. Although it is difficult to say exactly what it was about the HDZ and HZDS that attracted such broad support, there were definite signs that many ordinary Croats and Slovaks felt a need for national emancipation and for the protection and promotion of national interests, particularly in light of external threats. Concerned that their interests were not being sufficiently defended under the pre-election leadership, HDZ and HZDS voters saw Tudman and Meciar as strong personalities who would be able to stand up to the Serbs and Czechs, respectively. The next chapter addresses the ways that the HDZ and HZDS put the desires of their electorates into practice after the elections.

Section Two: Maintaining Power

Chapter 3: Structuring the Ideology of the New State

While Chapter 2 focused on the rise of national movements in Croatia and Slovakia, this chapter begins the examination of the second phase: the maintenance of national mobilization. As stated in Chapter 1, elites play a crucial role in mobilizing populations. The election victory of the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) in 1990 and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) in 1992 led to the creation of independent Croatian and Slovak states, and the two movements oversaw the process of state- and nation-building in their respective countries while simultaneously trying to maintain popular support.

Lacking an ideology that fit into the tradition left-right scale, the HDZ and HZDS frequently used the ideology of nationalism, particularly in the Croatian case. Both the HDZ and HZDS attempted to make the nation a central symbol in the new Croatian and Slovak states, luring the populations through their ideological discourse. Tudman and Meciar took advantage of their roles in bringing their countries independence, and in subsequent years they tried to dominate civil discourse, manipulate the populations' perceptions of national identity, and influence the way the state was structured in an effort to build a state centered around themselves and their parties. The ideological discourse of the HZDS and HDZ often did not appear as a solid or predictable one, and the parties often tended to contradict themselves, demonstrating a lack of actual ideological commitment. Thus, the ideology used by many "Nationalists" in Slovakia and Croatia appeared not to be "an outgrowth of longstanding beliefs" but rather, as Shari Cohen puts it, idiom, or "words picked up and dropped — as ideological debris."³⁵⁷

This chapter focuses on the question of nation-building, looking at the discursive construction of a new ideology — or idiom — in the Croatian and Slovak states and the efforts by the HDZ and HZDS to strengthen national identity and maintain power. In doing so, it examines various elements of the national movements in each country, looking at the role of personalities in bringing independence and

³⁵⁷ Cohen, pp. 121-122.

sustaining public support as well as at the symbolic dimensions such as the presentation of national history and its reflection in symbols and ceremonies. That follows Breuilly's argument that the symbolic and ceremonial are crucial in translating nationalist ideology into concrete form.³⁵⁸

In line with Brass, this chapter begins by identifying the leadership groups that controlled the state structures and investigating their strategies and policies and the changes and conflicts among them, particularly in relation to the national question. It then moves on to a discussion of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia and the influence of the split on the development of the HDZ and HZDS as parties. The remainder of the chapter focuses on the discursive construction of Croatian and Slovak national identities under HDZ and HZDS leadership and on those parties' efforts to ensure that the nation remain the central question in the new states. Along those lines, the chapter's third section outlines the two parties' roles in structuring the agenda and promoting the new ideology. The last two sections look at efforts to translate nationalism into concrete form as a popular political ideology by creating stereotypes of the nation and its history and their reflection in new symbols and ceremonies.

Competition within the ruling parties

As mentioned in Chapter 1, throughout the 1990s the main cleavage in Croatian and Slovak societies was between the "Nationalists" and the "Europeanists." Nonetheless, there were a number of competing groups within the "Nationalist" camp, and this section focuses on those divisions. In both Croatia and Slovakia, there were three basic categories of "Nationalists," and the one characteristic that they all shared was that they favored sovereignty for their respective nations, whether as an independent state or as part of a loose confederation. After independence was gained, however, the "Nationalists" diverged in three directions. Representatives of the first group appeared to sincerely believe in their mission of forging a new state, strengthening national identity, and protecting national heritage, and although they in certain respects moved toward Europe, they also insisted that the state's sovereignty should not be violated by outside forces. The

³⁵⁸ Breuilly, p. 64.

second category consisted mainly of careerists who generally were not involved in the national project because of a profound belief in national ideas, but rather because of the opportunities to gain power and material rewards. The third group consisted of those individuals who saw the independent state as the fulfillment of their national goals, and after it was achieved they wanted to focus on bringing their country into Europe. While it can be argued that the opportunist “Nationalists” tended to use Tudman and Meciár to mobilize the populations and win elections in order to remain in power, the sincere “Nationalists” within the HDZ and HZDS were inspired by the charisma of their leader. As an example of the latter approach, Obrad Kosovac, who made several propagandistic films in the 1990s about Tudman, commented that “today no one can really glorify President Tudman, nor is it necessary. ... Tudman is a historical giant, ... a statesman who restored the Croatian state, its founder. ... Without Tudman perhaps Croatia would not exist except for [the region] around Zagreb with some wretched quisling government.”³⁵⁹ Meanwhile, HZDS ideologue Augustín Marián Húska rejected arguments that a democratic movement constitutes a personality cult when it values the quality of its leader, asking “Should we be ashamed to realize the greatness of our people?”³⁶⁰

It must be noted that it was sometimes difficult to draw a line between the various groups, especially in the case of the first two. Some individuals who initially appeared sincere about the national project were eventually immersed in the battle for state property once they had achieved a position of power, signaling that they were more concerned with personal gain than with the betterment of the nation as a whole. While such a transformation might be a normal part of politics in many countries, in Croatia many of those who acquired state property and misused state funds did not try to hide it, believing that as founders of the state they deserved to have certain privileges and failing to see any conflict between their behavior and their nationalist discourse. For example, Tudman stated in 1993 that “those who are raising questions about the building of the presidential palace, the yacht or buying the presidential airplane, belong to the Yugo-unitarists ... who cannot

³⁵⁹ Slaven Letica, “Opet slucaj kardinala Stepinca,” *Globus*, 12 June 1998, pp. 39-40.

³⁶⁰ RFE/RL Slovak Service, 3 April 1996.

accept the fact that Croatia has become a sovereign state and has its own head of state.”³⁶¹

In Slovakia, it is difficult to point to many genuine “Nationalists” in the HZDS, particularly in light of the numerous privatization and corruption scandals that emerged through the media despite efforts by the National Property Fund to keep privatization decisions secret, signaling that many in the party were more concerned with their personal well-being than with that of the nation. Considering Meciar’s strongly pro-Czechoslovak discourse during his term as prime minister in 1990-1991, most observers did not consider him a true “Nationalist”; it appeared that he used nationalism mainly as a way of gaining and maintaining power. In Slovakia it was mainly the intelligentsia who seemed to represent the sincere “Nationalists,” grouped together in such organizations as *Matica slovenská*, *Korene*, and the Permanent Conference of the Slovak Intelligentsia/Slovakia Plus. One HZDS political representative who might be viewed as a genuine “Nationalist” was Dušan Slobodník, a prolific commentator who served as culture minister in 1992-1994 and as head of the parliament’s Foreign Policy Committee from 1994-1998. Slobodník, who was born in 1927 in the Bratislava suburb of Pezinok, was never implicated in any privatization scandal and was one of the party’s few representatives who spoke foreign languages and was willing throughout the 1990s to meet with Western journalists and explain his views, no matter how radical and illogical they sounded to foreign ears.³⁶²

Despite the fact that Tudman’s family accumulated significant property during the 1990s, many observers considered Tudman a sincere “Nationalist” who truly believed that he was doing the right thing for the Croatian nation. Another HDZ member who appeared genuine about the national project was Andrija Hebrang, the son of the World War II hero and Tito rival of the same name. Hebrang served in various key positions throughout the 1990s and was said to be “incorruptible and principled.”³⁶³ Although he rose to the post of defense minister after the death of

³⁶¹ Uzelak, p. 451.

³⁶² See statements by BBC journalist Ray Furlong in Miroslav Beblavý and Andrej Salner, *Tvorcovia obrazu a obraz tvorcov* (Bratislava: Centrum pre spoločenskú a mediálnu analýzu, 1999), p. 26.

³⁶³ Andrej Krickovic, “Recent Crisis Within HDZ May Point to Post-Tudjman Era,” *RFE/RL End Note*, 23 October 1998.

Gojko Šušak in May 1998, by that time Hebrang reportedly had only limited influence on Tudman, who devoted more of his attention to the powerful “Herzegovinian lobby.”

Many of the radical elements of the World War II Ustaša movement had come from western Herzegovina, whose inhabitants proudly considered themselves “more Croatian than the Croats.” Those Herzegovinians and their descendants who lived abroad during the communist era were responsible for keeping the Ustaša spirit alive, and many of them returned to serve the independent Croatia.³⁶⁴ North American émigrés — a large number of whom were from Herzegovina — helped fund the HDZ’s 1990 election campaign, and Tudman felt an apparent urge to repay them as well as to keep them from shifting their support to far-right parties such as the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP). In the early 1990s, the HDZ brought a number of Herzegovinians into the party structure, giving them control over such key areas as the army and secret services, as well as the economy.³⁶⁵ Defense Minister Šušak, a Herzegovinian émigré who was born in 1945 and ran a pizza parlor in Canada during the communist regime, was one of the most powerful figures in Tudman’s Croatia. Another Herzegovinian, Ivić Pašalić, emerged as one of Tudman’s top confidants in the second half of the 1990s. Born in 1960, Pašalić served as Tudman’s advisor on domestic affairs and was reportedly responsible for many of the scandals that emerged in the secret services.

Aside from providing strong support for Croatian independence, the Herzegovinian lobby also influenced Tudman’s policy of national reconciliation between fascists and anti-fascists as well as his goal of dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina with the Serbs. In contrast to 19th century revival leader Ante Starčević and his followers, who had considered Bosnian Muslims the “purest Croats,” these Herzegovinians distrusted the Muslims.³⁶⁶ Thus, Tudman was encouraged to fight the Muslims in 1993-1994, although that policy conflicted with the wishes of the vast majority of Croats — including the army and the Catholic Church — and helped to transform the Croats

³⁶⁴ Patrick Moore, “The Politics of Intolerance: Croatia,” *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol. 3, no. 16 (22 April 1994), pp. 80-81.

³⁶⁵ Slaven Letica, who served as a Tudman advisor in the early 1990s, said that a number of moderate Croats were invited to join the team, but many of them refused. Personal interview with Letica, 12 January 1999.

³⁶⁶ Moore, “The Politics of Intolerance: Croatia,” p. 80.

in the eyes of the international community from the victims of war into aggressors. For many Croats, the Croatian-Muslim pact signed in March 1994 represented a victory over the Herzegovinian lobby.³⁶⁷ Nonetheless, Tudman did not give up his plan to integrate parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina into Croatia, and large sums of money from the state budget were poured into Herzegovina each year. Many Croats resented the influence of the Herzegovinian lobby, and they were largely unreceptive to the thousands of refugees from Herzegovina who appeared in Croatia during the first half of the decade, perceiving them as greedy, radical, and uneducated and making them the subject of numerous jokes.³⁶⁸

Among the most colorful of the Herzegovinians was Vice Vukojevic. Born in 1936, Vukojevic was a strong supporter of the division of Bosnia -Herzegovina, and one journalist commented that “even within the HDZ he stood out with his irreconcilable and derisive anti-Muslim rhetoric,” adding that witnesses claimed that Vukojevic personally participated in the pogroms of the Muslim population.³⁶⁹ Vukojevic was the founder of the government’s Committee for the Identification of War and Postwar Victims, which produced a number of pro-Ustaše findings throughout the 1990s. In 1995 Vukojevic put two language bills before the parliament following a warning from Tudman about the dangers of an invasion of foreign words into the Croat language. The draft laws, which were eventually rejected, proposed the replacement of the phonetic orthography — based on the “write as you speak, speak as you write” principle established by the 19th century Serbian language reformer Vuk Karadžic — with an etymological approach, in which the root of the word is retained in all declensions. The bills provided for the elimination of foreign words and the establishment of a State Office for the Croatian Language, reminiscent of that which existed during the World War II state.³⁷⁰ In late 1999, Vukojevic was rewarded for his work through a seat on the Croatian Constitutional Court, an appointment that sparked considerable controversy.

³⁶⁷ Moore, “Changes in the Croatian Political Landscape,” *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol. 3, no. 22 (3 June 1994), pp. 10-15; Moore, “The Politics of Intolerance: Croatia,” pp. 80-82.

³⁶⁸ For public opinion on Herzegovinians, see *Globus*, 23 January 1998, pp. 34-37.

³⁶⁹ Marinko Culic, “Scandalous Cooperation of the Opposition with the Ruling Party,” AIM, 25 October 1999.

Some of the most influential Slovak “Nationalists” came from central Slovakia, which was considered the “purest” region, with its dialect chosen by Ludovít Štúr when he codified the literary language in the 19th century. People from central Slovakia tended to see themselves as the “backbone” of the nation, superior to the inhabitants of the more ethnically-mixed eastern and western regions.³⁷¹ Meciar himself was born in central Slovakia, and because much of his political support came from that region, its population was given special privileges after the 1994 elections. Several state institutions were transferred from Bratislava to the central Slovak town of Banská Bystrica, and there was even some discussion of moving the state capital to that city. That was also seen as punishment for the inhabitants of Bratislava, who had elected a representative of the civic right as their mayor in 1994.

One of the best-known central Slovak “Nationalists” was Ján Slota of the Slovak National Party (SNS), which was a HZDS coalition partner in 1993-1998. Having served as mayor of the town of Žilina from 1990, Slota was relatively unknown on the statewide level until February 1994, when he defeated the moderate Ludovít Černák in the race for SNS chairman and turned the SNS back into a far-right party. At around the same time, Slota, who was born in 1953, began attracting considerable attention for his highly publicized statements against Hungarians, Jews, Roma, and other Slovaks, prompting observers to label him “the Slovak Zhirinovsky.” Another radical SNS representative from central Slovakia was Vítazoslav Moric, who served as SNS chairman in the early 1990s. On one occasion, responding to statements by ethnic Hungarian representatives about plans for territorial autonomy in Slovakia, Moric said that he would not be opposed if that autonomous territory included Jager, Miskovec, half of Budapest, and Balaton — all of which are located in Hungary — since they would then become Slovak territories.³⁷² Aside from Meciar, other prominent HZDS members from central Slovakia included Húska, who was born in 1929.

³⁷⁰ Daria Sito Sutic, “The Fragmentation of Serbo-Croatian into Three New Languages,” *Transition* vol. 2, no. 24 (29 November 1996), p. 11.

³⁷¹ Vilam Schichman, “Two Types of Slovaks Divide the Country,” *The Slovak Spectator*, reprinted in *The New Presence*, February 1998.

³⁷² TASR, 5 January 1996.

The advisors who were said to have the biggest influence on Meciar were Ivan Lexa and Anna Nagyová, and Meciar's extreme reliance on those two individuals led some of his close allies to lose trust in him. In 1992 Michal Kováč and Milan Kňažko — both HZDS founding members who became the independent Slovakia's first president and first foreign minister, respectively — asked Meciar to dismiss Lexa and Nagyová; however, Meciar reportedly replied that he could not do so because “they would wipe him out within 24 hours.”³⁷³ The influence of Nagyová, who served as head of Meciar's office, was rarely publicly visible, although she frequently appeared by his side until their split in 1996 and the two were widely known to be lovers. Lexa, in contrast, was more of a public figure, rising to become “the second most powerful man in the state”³⁷⁴ and among the most unpopular political personalities. Lexa was born in 1961 in Bratislava, and his father, Vladimír, was a deputy prime minister in Slovakia's last communist cabinet. The young Lexa became one of Meciar's protégés in 1990-1991, and when Meciar became prime minister a second time he named Lexa head of the government office. In 1993 President Kováč rejected Meciar's nomination of Lexa as head of the Slovak Information Service (SIS) and twice refused to name him as privatization minister. Meciar took over the privatization post himself and chose Lexa as his state secretary, while Lexa launched a smear campaign against Kováč. In April 1995 Lexa was named SIS director after the parliament changed the law so that presidential approval was no longer required, and in that position, Lexa was accused of orchestrating the abduction of Kováč's son in August 1995, among other scandals.

Throughout the 1990s the HDZ had enough support to form a one-party government, and it rarely relied on parties such as the HSP. In contrast, the HZDS, which had a weaker radical right-wing faction than the HDZ, was forced to create a formal coalition with the SNS, and that party had considerable policy influence during the term of Meciar's 1994-1998 government. In certain respects, that government would likely have been more respectable if not for its partnership with the SNS. It was the SNS that was responsible for some of the most controversial laws that were debated during those years, particularly those relating to national issues. In April 1995 SNS representatives drafted a penal code amendment on the

³⁷³*Národná obroda*, 23 May 1996.

protection of the republic, and Slota said the party also wanted to reestablish the death penalty and prepare a state language law, with the controversial language law gaining parliamentary approval in November 1995. When Slovakia and Hungary signed a bilateral state treaty in March 1995 as a precondition for both countries' NATO membership, Slota vowed that the SNS would not vote in favor of the agreement. Although Slota eventually changed his mind, he conditioned his party's support for the treaty on the approval of the law on the protection of the republic, in addition to laws on the state of emergency, on local elections, and on education.³⁷⁵ Although the controversial bill on the protection of the republic had been proposed and drafted by SNS representatives, Meciar eventually latched on to the idea and adapted his discourse accordingly, stressing that the amendment was needed "to protect the foundations of Slovakia, its sovereignty, territorial integrity, security, and constitutional system." Meciar also argued that comparable laws were in effect in such countries as Germany, Austria, France, Sweden, Belgium, Holland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, "adding that "anyone who rejects the bill and considers it undemocratic is also attacking the legal arrangements of these other countries."³⁷⁶ The amendment was first passed in March 1996, the same day that the parliament approved the Slovak-Hungarian treaty; however, it was eventually vetoed by the president and discarded by the parliament. Meanwhile, the HZDS's third coalition partner from 1994-1998 — the far-left Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS) — had relatively little influence on policy, although it did occasionally block the passage of government-sponsored legislation such as the protection of the republic amendment. In any case, the SNS and ZRS presence in the government contributed to damaging the reputation of the HZDS and of Meciar himself by association, particularly in light of the SNS's openness toward rehabilitating Slovakia's World War II President Tiso.

Matica slovenská was also a strong pressure group when it came to nationally-oriented legislation, and in July 1995 the organization proposed to the Education Ministry that school children be required to learn the text of the declaration of sovereignty and the preamble of the constitution by heart.³⁷⁷ The Education

³⁷⁴ Statement by Democratic Party representative Ján Langoš, TASR, 22 May 1996.

³⁷⁵ *Národná obroda*, 15 January 1996.

³⁷⁶ Slovak Radio, 15 March 1996.

³⁷⁷ *Slovenská Republika*, 17 July 1995.

Ministry's spokesman welcomed the proposal, stressing the importance that students be educated in the spirit of "patriotism" and "national pride."³⁷⁸

While the SNS was responsible for the introduction of many nationally-oriented policies in Slovakia, in Croatia such proposals often emerged from within the HDZ itself. One important nationally-oriented issue for the HDZ throughout the 1990s was the resolution of the demographic problem. In 1995, the parliament approved a Program for Demographic Development, in which HDZ representatives warned that the nation could face extinction and blamed the communists for the "oppression" of the Croatian nation and for the low birthrate.³⁷⁹ The government tried in various ways to encourage more women to give births, and one proposal published by the Ministry of Development and Renewal suggested that "the beauty of family life must be promoted through the mass media."³⁸⁰ Campaigns to convince Croats to have more babies ranged from prizes for mothers with large families to telephone cards displaying a *šahovnica* [checkerboard] made up of children's faces with the caption "one more child."³⁸¹

Most of the strongly pro-European "Nationalists" left the Slovak and Croatian ruling parties in 1993 or 1994, and after their departure they had little or no influence on policy until after the HZDS and HDZ were removed from power. In Slovakia, the first HZDS split came in early 1993, almost immediately after independence had been reached. At that time, Foreign Minister Knažko, a former actor and leader of the "velvet revolution," clashed with Meciar over Slovakia's foreign policy orientation and left the HZDS along with seven other deputies. By December 1993, a fracture had also appeared within the SNS, and after Štota's election as party chairman in February 1994, Černák and five other deputies left the SNS. At the same time, another rebellious faction emerged within the HZDS, led by Foreign Minister Jozef Moravčík and Deputy Prime Minister Roman Kováč and consisting of nine HZDS deputies. As in the case of Knažko before him, Moravčík was clearly frustrated in his efforts to promote Slovakia abroad when the

³⁷⁸ *Pravda*, 18 July 1995.

³⁷⁹ Kristine Jenkins, "Fanning 'Family Fever' in Croatia," *Transition* vol. 2, no. 8 (19 April 1996), pp. 58-59.

³⁸⁰ *Nacionalni program demografskog razvitka Republike Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Ministarstvo razvitka i obnove Republike Hrvatske, December 1995), p. 38.

³⁸¹ Jenkins, "Fanning 'Family Fever' in Croatia," pp. 58-59.

government was not keeping its promises. Another important HZDS defection of 1993-1994 was that of President Kováč, who gradually turned against Meciar and inspired the strengthened parliamentary opposition to unite and dismiss Meciar's government in March 1994, with Moravčík taking over as prime minister. Those defections were crucial not only in taking some of the luster off of Meciar's public image, but also in creating conditions for the eventual defeat of the HZDS. A number of those personalities became leading figures in the political opposition.

Meciar was more careful in choosing candidates for the 1994 elections, and as a preemptive measure he allegedly forced HZDS deputies to sign a pledge promising that they would give up their seat if they left the party during the electoral term. František Gaulieder was the only deputy from the HZDS or SNS who opted to leave the ruling coalition during the 1994-1998 term, although several ZRS representatives abandoned their party as well. Nonetheless, following the trend started by Knažko and Moravčík, Meciar lost three foreign ministers: Juraj Schenk, Pavol Hamžík, and Zdenka Kramplová. Although Schenk returned quietly to his previous position at Comenius University's Sociology Department and Kramplová remained loyal to the HZDS and became ambassador to Canada, the career diplomat Hamžík eventually joined the opposition Party of Civic Understanding (SOP) and became deputy prime minister for European integration in the post-Meciar government.

In Croatia, the growth of opposition within the ruling HDZ was slowed by the war, and it was not until after the launching of the Croatian-Muslim federation in Bosnia-Herzegovina in March 1994 that a rebel faction emerged. Its two leaders, Stipe Mesic and Josip Manolic, were former communists who were part of the HDZ's left wing, and they were critical of the Croatian leadership's decision to wage war against the Bosnian Muslims, as well as of Tudman's authoritarianism. Although Defense Minister Šušak asked why they had questioned the war in Bosnia only after Croatia had made peace, one analyst suggested that Manolic and Mesic had considered national solidarity important during wartime.³⁸² When they left the HDZ in April 1994, Mesic and Manolic failed to take enough deputies with them for the party to lose its majority in the Lower House, and their new party's

³⁸² Moore, "Changes in the Croatian Political Landscape," p. 13.

failure to attract support in future elections served as a deterrent for other HDZ deputies who may have disagreed with Tudman. Mesic eventually switched to the Croatian People's Party (HNS), which helped propel him into the presidency in early 2000.

It was not until late 1998 that another wave of prominent personalities broke with Tudman's regime. At that time, the political moderates Hebrang, Hrvoje Šarinic, and Franjo Greguric decided to abandon their positions, although only Šarinic actually quit the party and none of them opted to join the opposition. While Šarinic and Greguric left their posts amid accusations that the secret service was being misused against them, Hebrang allegedly quit due to his inability to overcome the Herze govinian lobby within the Defense Ministry. In January 1999, Hebrang, Šarinic, and Greguric were followed by Miroslav Šeparovic, who had served as head of Croatia's central secret service organization.

The breakup of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia

In many respects, it was elites who were responsible for the breakup of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Croatia's 1990 elections and Slovakia's 1992 elections produced leaders who were very different in their policy aims than were the those of the main parties in Serbia and the Czech Republic, respectively. Although the HDZ nor the HZDS were by no means insistent on gaining full independence, the Serbs and the Czechs were unwilling to provide the Croats and Slovaks with more autonomy within the existing state structures. The Czechs had launched serious negotiations with the Slovaks prior to the 1992 elections aimed at reaching an amicable solution. However, with the election of Václav Klaus as Czech prime minister in June 1992, the Czech stance was basically that the Slovaks could either accept the existing federation or declare full independence. Although he did campaign in Slovakia before the 1992 elections, afterward Klaus appeared somewhat relieved to get rid of the Slovaks in the belief that the Czechs could move forward more quickly economically without them. In the Yugoslav case, Milošević's Serbia wanted to centralize rather than decentralize power, and Slovenian and Croatian proposals aimed at economic and political liberalization were resolutely rejected.

After all the promises made during the election campaigns and the strength of support for the HDZ and HZDS, it would have been politically risky for either party — particularly in the Croatian case — to back down from the idea of a confederation, especially given that federalism had been largely discredited because of the way it was manifested under the communist regime.³⁸³ Although the populations of Croatia and Slovakia did not initially favor independence, the elites themselves may have had an interest in such an outcome based on the increased importance they would have as leaders of an independent state. In the Croatian case, the threat of war eventually led most citizens to support independence. The new Slovak state, in contrast, was often accepted with resignation.

In line with HDZ and HZDS campaign promises, among the first steps of the post-election regimes in both Croatia and Slovakia was to declare state sovereignty and approve a constitution. Although that desire for sovereignty tended to be justified by United Nations documents on self-determination, both the Croats and the Slovaks refused to offer the same rights to those ethnic minorities that lived in their republics, most notably the Serbs in Croatia and the Hungarians in Slovakia. In justifying that position, one Slovak journalist explained that international law gives rights to the “nation” [národ] but not to the “nationality” [národnost].³⁸⁴

The main distinction that determined the nature of the splits of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia was the presence of a large Serbian minority in Croatia, compared with only a small percentage of Czechs living in Slovakia, while another crucial factor related to the nature of the federal army in Czechoslovakia versus Yugoslavia. The question of Slovakia’s Hungarians was different than that of Croatia’s Serbs since the Hungarians had already been separated from their “homeland” for more than 70 years. Although relations between Serbs and Croats had been largely friendly during communism, memories of the Ustaša regime’s treatment of Croatia’s Serbian minority remained powerful and proved to be a crucial element in the Serbs’ mobilization against Tudman’s leadership following his election as president during the first multi-party session of the Croatian parliament on 30 May 1990. Serbs’ nervousness at the HDZ’s overwhelming

³⁸³ Rupnik, p. 83.

victory was compounded when many Croatian Serbs were fired from positions in the state administration and police and were replaced by ethnic Croats. Moreover, although the HDZ had avoided the use of the red-and-white *šahovnica* in its 1990 election campaign because of its negative association with the Ustaša regime, after the party's victory its public display as a state symbol was widely encouraged, playing into the hands of those Serbs who depicted Tudman and his government as fascist.³⁸⁵ Mesic later wrote that although he had tried to convince Tudman to devote more attention to the antifascist portion of the Serbian population and offer them cooperation, Tudman did not distinguish between Serbian antifascists and nationalists, despite the fact that most ethnic Serbs had voted for Croatian communists rather than for Serbian nationalists in the 1990 elections.³⁸⁶ The Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), which strongly identified itself with the federal state and wanted to protect its position, was easily manipulated into fighting against secessionist movements throughout the 1990s. In contrast, it is difficult to imagine the Czechoslovak army behaving in a similar manner.³⁸⁷

Regardless of Tudman's alienating policies and rhetoric, some international observers have noted that he was ready to make some concessions to the Serbs, offering the post of vice president to SDS leader Jovan Raškovic and expressing his readiness to discuss cultural autonomy.³⁸⁸ Thus, Tudman appeared to realize the importance of maintaining good relations with Croatia's largest minority, while at the same time underestimating the extent of concessions that needed to be made to keep the Croatian Serbs satisfied. After consultation with Belgrade, Raškovic rejected Tudman's offer and demanded broader autonomy and the continuation of the Serbs' status as a "constituent nation" of Croatia. Arguing that Croatian Serbs were treated as second-class citizens and denied basic freedoms, Serbian political activists organized a referendum on Serbian autonomy within Croatia on 19-20 August, and organizers claimed that the referendum showed nearly 100 percent

³⁸⁴ Personal interview with Jerguš Ferko, Bratislava, 28 June 1999.

³⁸⁵ Stan Markotich, "Ethnic Serbs in Tudjman's Croatia," *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol. 2, no. 38 (24 September 1993), pp. 28-33.

³⁸⁶ Stipe Mesic, "Kratka bilanca moje suradnje s dr. Franjom Tudmanom," *Globus*, 19 November 1999, p. 68.

³⁸⁷ Rupnik, pp. 87-88.

³⁸⁸ See Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The disintegration of Yugoslavia from the death of Tito to the war for Kosovo* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Third edition, 1999), p. 56; Andrejevich, "Recent Developments in Croatia: Between Stability and Civil War," Parts one and two, *Radio Free Europe*, 4 and 10 September 1990.

support for autonomy.³⁸⁹ In response, the Croatian Sabor issued a resolution calling the referendum part of “a persistent, organized, antidemocratic, and anti-Croatian campaign in the country and abroad” that damaged the prospects for coexistence between Croats and Serbs in Croatia and Yugoslavia.³⁹⁰ Croatia’s Serbs declared autonomy in September 1990, a move that was ruled illegal by the Croatian Constitutional Court.

Although the Croatian parliament adopted constitutional amendments on 25 July 1990 to remove the word “socialist” from the republic’s name and to replace the red star on the flag with the *šahovnica*, it was not until the end of that year that the Serbs’ status within the republic changed. Approved on 22 December 1990, the new Croatian constitution stated the Croatian nation’s right to self-determination and state sovereignty, including the right to secession and association. It declared the Republic of Croatia as “the national state of the Croatian people and of the members of other nations and minorities who are its citizens.” The constitution further prescribed “the Croatian language and the Latin script” for official use, although it allowed for the use of other languages and of the Cyrillic alphabet in certain areas. The day the document was approved, Tudman said that by adopting the constitution, the Sabor did “what we have been entrusted with by the Croatian people and a large majority of Croatian citizens in the first multi-party elections.”³⁹¹ Nonetheless, the changes only served to further alienate the Croatian Serbs.

Despite its calls for sovereignty, the Croatian constitution left open the option of remaining part of Yugoslavia. In fact, it was not until December 1997 that Croatia approved constitutional amendments prohibiting the country from joining other states in such a way that could contribute to the reestablishment of Yugoslavia or of any other union of Balkan states. In October 1990, Croatia and Slovenia released a document calling for the reconstruction of Yugoslavia as a confederation, and through summer 1991 leaders of the various Yugoslav republics

³⁸⁹ Andrejevich, “Recent Developments in Croatia: Between Stability and Civil War (Part Two),” *Radio Free Europe*, 10 September 1990.

³⁹⁰ Andrejevich, “Recent Developments in Croatia: Between Stability and Civil War (Part Two).”

³⁹¹ Hina, 22 December 1998.

held a series of unsuccessful meetings aimed at resolving their differences.³⁹² Even the Croatian referendum held in May 1991 included vaguely-worded questions on the republic's position in the future Yugoslavia, signaling that the HDZ lacked the confidence to ask voters for full independence. Instead, Croatian citizens were asked to decide whether Croatia "as a sovereign and independent state guaranteeing cultural autonomy and all civil rights to Serbs and members of other nationalities in Croatia can enter into an alliance of sovereign states with other republics" and whether Croatia should remain in Yugoslavia as a "unitary federal state."³⁹³ The referendum showed that the population overwhelmingly supported Croatian sovereignty, which was hardly surprising given the growing tensions within Yugoslavia. However, given the vagueness of the question, it is unclear how many Croats actually supported full independence, particularly when presented with the threat of war.

As it became clear that the intra-state relations could not be resolved satisfactorily, Slovenia threatened to secede from Yugoslavia, and Croatia vowed to follow. Milošević, in turn, declared that if the federation collapsed, Serbia would annex Serb-dominated territories. In March 1991, Tudman and Milošević met in Karadordevo for secret talks, during which Milošević agreed that Croatia could annex up to one-third of Bosnia-Herzegovina.³⁹⁴ Although sporadic fighting between Serbs and Croats in Croatia began that same month, Tudman apparently believed that the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) would not launch a war in Croatia and that Milošević was not interested in Croatian territory. Croatia was largely unprepared for war, lacking a proper army or sufficient weapons.³⁹⁵

Slovenia promised to secede from Yugoslavia by 26 June 1991 if no progress had been made toward resolving the crisis, and Croatia believed that it had no choice but to follow. Although both republics unilaterally declared independence on 25 June, many European and American politicians favored the continuation of Yugoslavia, choosing to ignore the difficulties faced by Slovenian and Croatian leaders in remaining in the same state as Milošević. After a brief war in Slovenia in

³⁹² Silber and Little, pp. 147-153.

³⁹³ Milovan Baletić (ed.), *Hrvatska 1994* (Zagreb: INA-Konzalting, 1993), p. 325.

³⁹⁴ Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p. 62.

³⁹⁵ Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, pp. 57-59, 65.

June 1991, fighting was launched in Croatia, and by the end of October 1991 Serbs had gained control of about one-third of Croatian territory. Croatia thus began its independence in an extremely difficult position, with the international community unwelcoming of the new state and a large chunk of territory taken over by rebel Serbs. It was not until 19 December 1991 that Croatia was recognized by Germany, which forced other European Community countries to follow suit.

Slovakia, on the other hand, started off in a more favorable position since the split with the Czechs was negotiated and peaceful, and both new states were promptly recognized by the rest of the world. Meciar was named Slovak prime minister on 24 June 1992, and the parliament approved a declaration of sovereignty and constitution on 17 July and 1 September 1992, respectively. The Czech-Slovak split was largely the result of private talks between Meciar and his Czech counterpart Klaus, taking place in a relatively friendly atmosphere. It was widely known that Meciar went into the negotiations with the aim of creating a confederation of equal states;³⁹⁶ however, since Klaus called his bluff by rejecting such an arrangement, Meciar was forced to accept full independence. Repeated opinion polls showed that a minority of Slovaks and Czechs favored outright independence for their republics, and Czechoslovakia divided without a referendum. Although it was Klaus who in the end pushed Slovakia toward independence by refusing to accept a looser partnership, Slovakia was frequently seen by the world as the instigator of the split, and the new state lacked any real friends.

The split of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia had strong implications for the development of the HDZ and HZDS. Neither of the two movements had sufficiently prepared for independence and the responsibility that goes along with it, and they sometimes appeared to be fumbling as they jumped from one position to another. For example, Meciar was initially hesitant about Slovakia's interest in joining organizations such as the European Community and NATO and launching market-oriented reforms. He instead expressed his support for Slovakia to become

³⁹⁶ The HZDS confederation proposal provided for the coordination of foreign, economic and social policy (particularly concerning trade and a common currency) and a common defense. See "Zmluva medzi Českou republikou a Slovenskou republikou o spoločnom štátnom zväzku," (Bratislava, January 1992), p. 2.

a bridge between East and West, supporting a “third way” between capitalism and socialism. That position was a key factor behind the decision of Foreign Minister Knažko and other prominent HZDS members to quit the party in the first months of 1993 in the belief that the only option for Slovakia’s future was in the EC and NATO. Only later, after goading from Western representatives, did Meciar realize that Slovakia had little chance of success in the position he had advocated, and he became a supporter of integration, at least in rhetoric.

While it had been relatively easy for the HDZ and HZDS to gain popularity while in opposition, now the movements had to prove that they could be effective in power. Once the new states were achieved and the parties had taken responsibility for the development of their respective countries, the HDZ and HZDS had to find a new approach to gain public support and to redetermine their constituencies. That was difficult given that many of the promises made during the elections that brought the two movements to power could not be kept, particularly those relating to the economy. In Croatia, the population was more forgiving in light of the fact that the war launched by the Serbs was the major initially factor in the country’s economic collapse. In Slovakia, although most HZDS voters had apparently believed that their economic difficulties would subside after the party’s victory, the split from the Czechs made the situation worse rather than better. Many Slovaks soon became disillusioned with the HZDS ability to run the country, particularly after the departure of Knažko and his associates and the loss of SNS support led the party to lose its parliamentary majority. Many educated Croats and Slovaks saw little hope for their professional future by remaining at home, and they instead chose to emigrate, sometimes leading to a lack of qualified personnel needed for the establishment of new state institutions.

Although both the HDZ and HZDS initially claimed to be supporters of democracy — as indicated by their names — they became increasingly insecure and intolerant. The two movements often tried to silence media that were critical of them and to shift public discourse away from their mistakes and toward the need to protect and promote so-called national interests. During the years after independence, the development of both the HDZ and HZDS often appeared to be pushed primarily by the desire of its members for power and influence, particularly in the economic

sense. Thus, the two parties earned significant support from the newly created state bureaucracies and from the economic elite, as those structures became intertwined with the ruling parties themselves. Those who agreed with the parties' approach were able to reap the benefits as long as they remained silent about the negative aspects of policy, while those who criticized the leadership were often sidelined.

Promoting the new ideology

After Croatia and Slovakia gained independence, both the HDZ and HZDS worked to structure the agenda in a way favorable to the establishment of a new ideology and the strengthening of national identity. Both Tudman and Meciar took advantage of their roles in bringing their countries independence, and in subsequent years they tried to dominate civil discourse, manipulate the populations' perceptions of national identity, and influence the way the state was structured in an effort to build a state centered around themselves and their parties. On the surface, the regimes set up by the two movements were democratic, with the legislative structure and constitutions based largely on Western models. However, that was not always the case, as the parties sometimes violated the laws that they themselves had established, whether in spirit or in actual practice. The discourse used by the parties was often authoritarian in nature, as individual freedoms were frequently presented as subordinate to the state and nation itself while at the same time the leaders felt little accountability to the people who had elected them. The HDZ and HZDS often gave the impression that they believed their election victory had given them free reign to behave however they pleased.

Several differences between the two countries influenced the ability of their leaders to act, the most important of which was the population's general acceptance of the state itself. While the Yugoslav wars and Serbian nationalism served to increase Croats' attachment to their new state, Slovaks for the most part remained opposed to independence, even years after the Czech-Slovak split. Secondly, the timing and results of the elections that first brought the HDZ and HZDS to power were also important. While the HDZ's accession to power marked the official fall of the communist regime, giving the HDZ the ability to create the new rules of the game, in Slovakia many of the rules had already been put in place by the time the HZDS

came to power in 1992. Moreover, the HDZ's huge victory in the 1990 elections, in which it won almost 69 percent of the seats in the Socio-Political Chamber, gave the party the ability to approve the constitution on its own and control the way the state was constructed. Although Tudman established a 200-member commission to draft Croatia's new constitution, the final result was somewhat controversial, especially its provisions for a strong presidency. In contrast, the HZDS was two seats short of a parliamentary majority in the Slovak parliament, and in approving the constitution and declaration of sovereignty the HZDS had to rely on both the SNS and the post-communist Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) to gain the necessary three-fifths majority. Thus, the HZDS was not able to act purely to its own advantage, and many elements of the Czechoslovak system were retained in Slovakia's constitution, including a parliamentary system and a relatively weak presidency.

In Croatia, the war and the state-controlled media played an important role in legitimating the development of right-wing ideas, fomenting nationalism, and mobilizing the Croatian people in favor of their new state, its president and his party. Particularly during the war years of 1991-1992, it was difficult for any Croat to criticize the government or to express nostalgia for the former state without risking public condemnation. According to one analyst, the fulfillment at long last of the Croats' "one-thousand-year-old dream" of gaining independent statehood caused a kind of "fascination with the state," which was accepted as a kind of mystical entity to which citizens must sacrifice themselves.³⁹⁷ While the media serve as "political watchdogs" in a civil society that is conducive to liberal democracy,³⁹⁸ in Croatia many pro-government journalists placed their obligation to the state and the nation above their duty to inform the public. One pro-HDZ journalist was quoted as saying "When the homeland is at stake, I am prepared to lie."³⁹⁹

The war helped to create a wide consensus concerning the absolute priority of national unity among ethnic Croats both during and after the fight for

³⁹⁷Jovan Miric, "Fascinacija državom i (ne)mogućnost oporbe," *Politička misao* vol. 33, no. 1 (1996), pp. 93-109.

³⁹⁸ John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization: Post-Communist Europe in Comparative Perspective* (London: Sage, 1999), p. 79.

independence, especially with one-third of the state's territory remaining in the hands of rebel Serbs until 1995 and the last portions not being returned to full Croatian control until January 1998. In a 1992 poll, 34 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that "It is justified to limit individual rights in the interest of nation and state," compared with 39 percent who did not know and just 27 percent who disagreed.⁴⁰⁰ The idea of national reconciliation continued to be a strong theme for the HDZ as a prerequisite for the achievement of a fully independent state, and one HDZ representative later argued that in the early 1990s Tudman succeeded in uniting the Croatian people for the first time in history.⁴⁰¹

In Slovakia, although the Hungarian minority had opposed the formation of an independent state, in contrast to Croatian Serbs its representatives never resorted to violent means and thus did not trigger any unified reactions among Slovaks. In the absence of a real enemy and in light of the fact that economic reforms continued to be just as painful in the independent Slovakia as they had been under Czechoslovak rule, support for the HZDS deteriorated significantly after independence, and the party's popularity fell to just over ten percent by early 1994. Although the HZDS tried to mobilize Slovaks through anti-Hungarian rhetoric, the party was largely unsuccessful.

Both the HDZ and HZDS claimed to be of Christian orientation and to represent the political center, but in practice they lacked a consistent ideology on the traditional left-right scale, swaying from conservative to leftist depending on what was more convenient at the time and using populist rhetoric to attract voters of all persuasions. Such swings were also necessary because of the broad background of the groups' members; although they are often referred to as "parties," both the HDZ and HZDS were in fact broad movements that attracted people from a variety of backgrounds and from across the political spectrum, ranging from social to Christian democrats and from leftists to right-wing conservatives. Throughout much of the 1990s, the HDZ was more successful than the HZDS in developing strong connections with supporters across the country and from socially and

³⁹⁹ Dubravka Ugrešić, "The culture of lies," *Index on Censorship* vol. 1, no. 2 (1994), p. 31.

⁴⁰⁰ Ivan Šiber, "Structuring the Croatian Party Scene," *Politicka misao* vol. 30, no. 2 (1993), pp. 111-129.

⁴⁰¹ Personal interview with Drago Krpina, 26 May 2000.

economically diverse social strata. While the HDZ had backing from intelligentsia and city dwellers as well as from peasants and workers, the HZDS was known for having its greatest support in central Slovakia, particularly among older and less educated villagers.

Naturally, elections played a key role in the HDZ and HZDS efforts to capture power throughout the 1990s and demonstrated the parties' success in promoting their ideology. During that decade, the HDZ won an absolute majority in seven sets of popular elections: the parliamentary elections of 1990, the Lower House elections of 1992 and 1995, the Upper House elections of 1993 and 1997, and the presidential elections of 1992 and 1997.⁴⁰² In contrast, not including local elections, the HZDS won only twice, in parliamentary elections in 1992 and 1994, and in both cases the party lacked the necessary majority to rule alone.⁴⁰³

In Croatia, the HDZ used the electoral system as a tool, changing it frequently in an effort to maximize the party's results, sometimes as little as one month before the elections. HDZ representatives Smiljko Sokol and Vladimir Šeks were the main drafters of electoral legislation, and they calculated which methods would be most beneficial to the party, also taking into consideration the unity or disunity of the opposition. While the 1992 Lower House elections combined the proportional and single-round majority methods, in 1995 the number of majority seats was decreased and 12 slots were set aside for the "diaspora" Croats, mainly from Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the 1993 Upper House elections, the country was divided into 21 counties, and three deputies were elected from each county through a proportional system, serving to keep out small parties. The 1993 electoral law also provided for an "anchorperson" to top each party's lists. Because that person did not necessarily have to be a candidate, the HDZ was able to take advantage of Tudman's popularity and name recognition, and he anchored the party's list in 18 counties. Moreover, the constitution guaranteed the president's right to name five deputies to the Upper House. The timing of elections was another important measure of control by the HDZ, and the party was able to schedule elections at its

⁴⁰² The 1990 Croatian constitution provided for two houses of parliament, while the Slovaks opted to establish a unicameral parliament.

⁴⁰³ Although the HZDS technically won the 1998 parliamentary elections by a narrow margin, the party could not be considered the winner since it was unable to form a majority government.

will, sometimes taking everyone by surprise. This was most obvious in the case of the 1995 Lower House elections, which were called almost a year early to capitalize on Croatia's victories in the May and August 1995 "Flash" and "Storm" military and police operations that had led many Serbs to flee from Croatia and brought most Croatian territory under government control.⁴⁰⁴

Because the HZDS was in opposition prior to the 1994 elections, Meciar was unable to make such changes and could not take advantage of various other benefits. Nonetheless, although Moravčík's government took office at a time when support for the HZDS was at an all-time low, Meciar's second dismissal from the prime minister post strengthened his image as a victim, and he used his party's time in opposition to regroup and prepare for the elections, relying on his energy and ability to mobilize the people by playing on national pride. The HZDS campaign climaxed when Meciar was prevented from casting a ballot on the first day of the elections since his name did not appear on the list of voters in his polling station. Although he was able to return and vote the second day, the ordeal was highlighted on Slovak Television, contributing to the HZDS's success. Although the parties in the Moravčík government had striven to present a new approach to politics and to carry out serious economic reforms, they were somehow unable to attract wide support, partly because of the short period of time they were in office prior to the elections.

Controlling the media was the most important way of promoting the new ideology and ensuring support for the ruling parties, particularly around election time. In that sense, television was the key medium in both countries because of its ability to reach the widest possible audience. In Croatia, state television was tightly controlled throughout HDZ rule, particularly after the war began in 1991. During the 1990s, HRT controlled all three of Croatia's terrestrial channels, and the lack of a statewide private alternative meant that the opposition parties frequently found it difficult to get their views across.

⁴⁰⁴ For more on Croatian elections in 1992-1997, see Štefica Deren-Antoljak, "The Croatian Electoral Model—Its Most Important Elements (1992 Elections)," *Croatian Political Science Review* vol. 1, no. 1 (1992), pp. 100-24; Ivo Bicanic and Iva Dominis, "The Multiparty Elections in Croatia: Round Two," *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol. 2, no. 19 (7 May 1993); "Results of the Croatian Parliamentary Elections in October 1995," *Politicka*

The power of television in Slovakia was demonstrated before the fall 1994 parliamentary elections, when the Moravčík cabinet was reluctant to replace the head of Slovak Television (STV). That was said to have been one of the biggest tactical mistakes of the cabinet since it allowed for the coverage of such events as Meciar's voting fiasco. Although most major newspapers as well as Slovak Radio were critical of Meciar before and during the election campaign, STV was clearly biased in favor of the HZDS and contributed to that party's victory. STV's preference for the HZDS increased further following the 1994 elections, when the station's new chairman became Jozef Darmo, head of the pro-HZDS Association of Slovak Journalists (formerly called For a True Picture of Slovakia). Nonetheless, the opposition's access to television improved dramatically after August 1996, with the launching of the statewide private TV Markíza, which soon became the most popular media in the country. Although the HZDS tried to privatize STV's second channel, the party's junior coalition partners joined the opposition in rejecting the move in June 1997.

Promoting stereotypes of the nation and its history

Chapter 1 presented several defining personality traits of the Croatian and Slovak nations as well as images of the Other, both of which have been used by the HDZ and HZDS in promoting stereotypes of national history. This section looks at how such values and characteristics were put forward by the new elite in presentations of history, appearing in books, articles, interviews, and speeches. In both Croatia and Slovakia, attempts were made to present a continual historical thread from the time of the medieval Croatian state and the Great Moravian Empire to the new states. In certain senses, the existence of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia complicated such efforts, making 20th century history especially prone to revision. Therefore, the focus here is on 20th century history and on the Serbs and Czechs as the most significant Other for the Croats and Slovaks, respectively. Instead of trying to present a thorough content analysis of such sources,⁴⁰⁵ an attempt is made to address the general approaches of different competing groups.

misao vol. 32, no. 5 (1995), pp. 197-99; and Zoran Daskalovic, "Tudjman Triumphs Over Divided Opposition," *War Report* no. 51 (May 1997), pp. 3-5.

⁴⁰⁵ Such work has already been conducted by the following: Katarina Vanekova, "National Formation in Education" The Case of the Czech and Slovak Republics" (CEU Working Paper IRES, no. 98/7); Branislava Baranovic, "Udžbenici povijesti i nacionalni identitet

In Croatia, the new “symbolic universe” was gradually created starting in 1991, defining Croatia in opposition to Serbia/Yugoslavia and placing it within a Western-oriented cultural-geographical framework.⁴⁰⁶ In establishing a historical continuum, Croatian textbooks often presented a one-sided picture and showed a negative image of other nations, particularly Serbs, who were described as “barbarians,” “uncivilized,” and “cruel.” That approach caused problems with international organizations such as the OSCE, which was trying to promote peace and tolerance among the nations of former Yugoslavia.⁴⁰⁷ Some Croatian “Nationalists” went so far as to contend that Serbs and Croats had completely different origins, arguing that Croats were originally from Iran, based partly on the similarities between certain Croatian words and those found in ancient Persian wall inscriptions.⁴⁰⁸

Such theories were also discussed during interwar Croatia, and one Croatian author used Slovak geographical names to argue that Slovaks also had Iranian origins.⁴⁰⁹ Slovaks, however, accepted their Indo-European origins, and even most “Nationalists” admitted that the Czechs were the closest nation to the Slovaks. While Slovak émigré historians were especially active in presenting atavist forms of history,⁴¹⁰ some mainstream historians rejected efforts to reveal historical continuity, criticizing such an approach as ideological. Lubomír Lipták of the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences argued that the aim of historiography is “to describe the complexity of historical processes,” adding that

mladih,” in Jadranka Cacic-Kumpes (ed.), *Kultura, Etnicnost, Identitet* (Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk, 1999), pp. 153-170.

⁴⁰⁶ Zakošek, “The Legitimation of War.”

⁴⁰⁷ See Igor Alborghetti, “OESS optužuje hrvatsku vlast za sustavnu diskriminaciju Srba u školskim udžbenicima,” *Globus*, 17 April 1998, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁰⁸ See Kale, p. 40; Mijo N. Đuric, *Staroiransko podrijetlo Hrvata* (Zagreb: published by author, 1991); and Znanstveno društvo za proučavanje podrijetla Hrvata, *Tko su i odakle Hrvati: Revizija etnogeneze* (Zagreb: Znanstveno društvo za proučavanje podrijetla Hrvata, 1993). The third source, which includes a special section on the divergent origins of Croats and Serbs, begins with a letter of praise from Jure Radic, who at the time was serving as head of Tudman’s office.

⁴⁰⁹ The author was the Jesuit Stjepan Krizin Sakac, a professor from the Papal Institute of Eastern Sciences who put forward his theory in a 1924 publication. See Milan Ferko, “Slováci a Cesi nie sú bratia? (2 and 3),” *Extra S*, 24 and 31 July 1992. Republished in Ferko, *Pravé slovo v pravu čas* (Bratislava: Kubko-Goral, 1997), pp. 29-32.

⁴¹⁰ See Robert B. Pynsent, “Tinkering with the Ferkos: A Kind of Slovakness,” *Slavic and East European Review* vol. 76, no. 2 (April 1998), pp. 279-295.

the search for continuity would bring “the reduction of the complexity of historical events and ideological assemblage of otherwise unrelated historical periods.”⁴¹¹

After the fall of communism, a flood of new historical research was launched in Croatia and Slovakia, and the debate on the nations’ past was carried out through television documentaries, books, as well as journal and magazine articles.⁴¹² Much of that research was warranted since communist-era historiography was generally one-sided and ideologized. While communist Czechoslovakia had presented history as the “class struggle for social emancipation,”⁴¹³ in Yugoslavia the communist ideology insisted on “the values of Yugoslavism, wrapped up in the ‘magic’ formula of ‘brotherhood and unity.’”⁴¹⁴ In Czechoslovakia the founders of the first republic were dismissed as “bourgeois,” and in Yugoslavia the names of a number of historical figures important to Croatia’s national development were suppressed. Nonetheless, it sometimes appeared that the new post-communist works were biased in a completely different way. In an effort to strengthen national identity and create a more honorable and unified vision of national history, efforts were often made to rewrite history to brush over controversial subjects and present the Croatian and Slovak nations in a more favorable light.

A debate over the way history was presented surfaced under both the Tudman and Meciar regimes. In Croatia, there was no expulsion of communist-era professors and other experts holding important ideological positions in fields such as history and literature.⁴¹⁵ Instead, emphasis was placed on “alternative” centers with a more nationally-oriented approach such as the Institut za povijest [Institute for History], which was the successor of the institute where Tudman had worked in the 1960s, and Hrvatski studiji [Croatian Studies]. Founded in 1993 and attached to the University of Zagreb, Croatian Studies was involved in the fields of “Croatology,”

⁴¹¹ See Zuzana Kusá and Andrej Findor, “Frames of the Slovak National Identity Construction,” *Sociológia* vol. 31, no. 6 (1999), p. 612.

⁴¹² See, for example, Zorica Stipetić’s regular column “Istine i laži hrvatske povijesti” in *Globus* as well as Dušan Bilandžić’s three-part series on World War II in *Globus*, 10-24 April 1998. Articles on Slovakia’s World War II history also appeared sporadically in *Plus 7 dní*; see Stanislav Micev, “Konečné riešenie,” 28 April 1997, pp. 22-24 and 5 May 1997, pp. 22-24; Vladimír Hudák, “Politik bez škrupúl,” 11 August 1997, pp. 22-25; and Micev, “Durcanský — agent KGB?” 23 February 1998, pp. 32-34.

⁴¹³ Kusá and Findor, “Frames of the Slovak National Identity Construction,” p. 612.

⁴¹⁴ Tihomir Cipek, “Ideološka funkcija povijesti: Problem objektivnosti u historiografiji,” *Politička misao*, vol. 32, no. 3 (1995), p. 191.

history, sociology, religion, journalism, psychology, and philosophy. Throughout the 1990s, antagonism raged between the University of Zagreb on the one hand and Croatian Studies and the Institute for History on the other.⁴¹⁶ Some of those involved in Croatian Studies were said to have extremist views, and several lecturers reportedly had to leave Croatian Studies since they were not considered “sufficiently good Croats.”⁴¹⁷

In Slovakia a dispute emerged in 1995 between the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Matica slovenská over how history should be presented in textbooks. Viliam Kratochvíl, who led a team of well-known historians and teachers that won a competition to produce history textbooks for elementary schools, said that his group’s approach was to show a range of different perspectives on personalities and events to demonstrate that “one absolute truth does not exist in historiography.”⁴¹⁸ The textbook on 20th century history attracted criticism from Matica slovenská, which reportedly did not consider it sufficiently nationally-oriented, and the book’s publication was delayed until 1997. That book’s main author was Dušan Kováč, head of the Historical Institute and brother of the Slovak president. Kováč said that one of the main tasks of historians after 1989 was the de-ideologization of historiography and other disciplines, and he stressed the importance that textbooks take an objective rather than an ideological approach. Moreover, he argued that Matica had neither the legal right nor the competence to interfere.⁴¹⁹ Nonetheless, a government-sponsored law approved in February 1997 gave Matica slovenská the task of directing and overseeing the production of school textbooks in some humanities subjects. Although one of the justifications was that the current ones had a “Marxist-Leninist ideologized content” and that some were “non-nationally and anti-nationally oriented,” one journalist stressed that “Matica can easily become a guarantee of their ideologization in another way.”⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁵ Personal interview with Jure Krišto, 29 January 2000.

⁴¹⁶ See Slavica Lukic, “Skandal uoci I. kongresa hrvatskih povjesnicara,” *Globus*, 9 July 1999, pp. 10-13.

⁴¹⁷ Slavica Lukic, “Istine i laži o Hrvatskim studijima,” *Globus*, 4 September 1998, pp. 64-67.

⁴¹⁸ *Sme*, 15 May 1995.

⁴¹⁹ Dušan Kováč interview, *Sme*, 15 May 1995.

⁴²⁰ Ivan Samel, “Superustanovizen,” *Národná obroda*, 30 April 1996.

The first defining moment of Croatian and Slovak 20th century history was the founding of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in 1918. Both Croats and Slovaks have been critical of interwar Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia because of the centrist nature of those states, and Croatian historians have often presented entry into Yugoslavia as something that the Croats did reluctantly or even illegally, despite the fact that many Croatian national leaders had supported union with the Serbs. A textbook on 20th century history written by Ivo Peric for students in their fourth year of high school points out that the Croatian Sabor was not summoned when a unitary kingdom was pronounced in December 1918. The text further states that many Croats received the new kingdom's establishment with dissatisfaction, and protests began as early as the following day. The author stresses several times that Croats could not reconcile themselves with the fact that the creation of Yugoslavia meant that "Croatia lost its statehood, which until then it had had continuously for more than 1,000 years." Moreover, the book includes many pages detailing the problems Croatia experienced as part of Yugoslavia.⁴²¹ In terms of personalities from that period, Stjepan Radic, the founder of the interwar Croatian Peasants' Party (HSS), was revived as one of the most positive figures of Croatian history. His struggle for Croatian autonomy and his assassination in the Belgrade Parliament in 1928 made him a natural symbol in the Croats' struggle against the Serbs.

In Slovakia, the question of the interwar state was more complicated since Slovaks were grateful to the Czechs for "saving" them from the Hungarians and allowing for national development in many areas of life, but they were at the same time critical since the Czechs did not keep earlier agreements on Slovak autonomy. A characteristic view is represented by the Kováč textbook on 20th century history, which states that "the Slovak population welcomed the creation of the Czecho-Slovak state with enthusiasm. However, after a short period of time disenchantment began since the hopes that Slovaks connected with their new statehood were not fulfilled according to their ideas." The text continues by listing some advantages such as general suffrage, the right to association, and press freedom, while providing economic and social problems as the main disadvantages

⁴²¹ Ivo Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, fourth edition, 1996), pp. 44-45, 49-50, 58, 93-107, 116.

of the new state.⁴²² Concerning personalities of that period, Milan Rastislav Štefaník, a co-founder of Czechoslovakia whose name was taboo under the communist regime, was one of the most popular historical personalities of the 1990s. The fact that Štefaník was killed in a plane crash in 1919 meant that he never had to take sides in the dispute between Slovaks and Czechoslovaks, and he remained acceptable to all groups of Slovak society. There was more division over Andrej Hlinka, a priest and national activist who had supported the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 but later became an advocate of Slovak autonomy. Hlinka died in 1938, but his party — Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (HSLS) — led the wartime state.

The nature of the World War II states represented the most controversial aspect of Croatian and Slovak history, and in both countries the fall of communism was followed by a plethora of new publications seeking the “truth” about wartime events. While there were few attempts by mainstream historians and politicians to rehabilitate Ante Pavelic and Jozef Tiso, émigré historians often made such demands. In presentations of the World War II states, many Croats and Slovaks questioned or played down the number of Jewish and other victims of the war, blaming such crimes on the Germans and justifying their actions by arguing that Jews suffered the same fate in many other countries.⁴²³ There was also a tendency to focus on positive features of the states in such areas as cultural development and economic life, despite occasional criticism that any discussion of the merits of the regimes was irrelevant since it was impossible to polish the dark aspects.⁴²⁴ Some Croats and Slovaks tended to see the World War II states as important for national emancipation, believing that without them the current states might never have come into existence.

⁴²² Dušan Kováč, Ivan Kamenec, and Viliam Kratochvíl, *Slovensko v novom storočí* (Bratislava: Orbis Pictus Istropolitana, 1997), p. 20. A January 1992 opinion poll showed that 57.8 percent of Slovaks agreed that the first Czechoslovak republic meant above all “suppression and exploitation” for the Slovaks. See *Aktuálne problémy Česko-Slovenska* (Bratislava: Centrum pre sociálnu analýzu, January 1992), Appendix p. 22.

⁴²³ See, for example, Jakov Gumzej, “Prešucivani holokaust Židova u Srbiji,” *Vjesnik*, 20 September 1995; Slobodník, *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi*, p. 87. One interview conducted by HZDS deputy and journalist Ján Smolec with a wartime diplomat carried the title “Even Roosevelt considered relocating the Jews,” *Slovenská Republika*, 17 October 1995.

⁴²⁴ See *Feral Tribune*, 11 March 1996.

Tudman recognized that the promotion of Ustaše elements was harmful to Croatia in its international relations,⁴²⁵ and Croatia's 1990 constitution explicitly stated that Croatia was founded based on the anti-fascist movement rather than on the 1941 proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). Nonetheless, national reconciliation was very important for the HDZ, and the party tolerated and even became involved in efforts to glorify the Ustaša period, despite Tudman's anti-fascist past. Tudman himself welcomed the integration of some former Ustaše into the HDZ and the Croatian state apparatus. For example, he appointed the poet Vinko Nikolic, who had worked as a publicist and manager of several cultural institutions during World War II, to the Upper House. Nikolic was also chosen "man of the year" in 1995 by the Council of the Croatian Academic Association, which referred to him as "a man for reconciliation and dialogue."⁴²⁶ In November 1996, 13 veteran officers who had served in the Ustaša army were given ranks in the modern Croatian army. Although the ranks were officially presented by the Croatian Homeguard, the group's leader said that his organization only handed over the ranks and medals, while they were awarded by Tudman himself.⁴²⁷

In terms of personalities from the NDH period, Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac became a venerated figure in the new Croatian state. Although Croatian communists had produced a film about Stepinac in 1985 depicting him as an Ustaša war criminal and national traitor,⁴²⁸ after 1990 he was presented as an opponent of the regime who tried to save the lives of Jews.⁴²⁹ Croats' feeling of pride in Stepinac was only strengthened after the pope beatified him during a visit to Zagreb in October 1998. Nonetheless, some "Europeanists" argued that the beatification came too early, before the Croats had had time to objectively evaluate their history.⁴³⁰

In terms of the negative aspects of the NDH, Peric's textbook states that "many Croats who were not Ustaše but simply Croatian patriots and who were not actively involved in politics experienced the creation of the NDH as their long

⁴²⁵ Gojko Marinkovic, "Why Did Tudman Save Mesic?" AIM, 1 February 1994.

⁴²⁶ *Feral Tribune*, 11 March 1996.

⁴²⁷ Reuters, 4 November 1996.

⁴²⁸ Ines Sabalic, "Opet afera Alojzije Stepinac," *Globus*, 5 June 1998, pp. 12-16.

⁴²⁹ Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu*, pp. 181-182; Gumzej, "Prešucivani holokaust Židova u Srbiji."

⁴³⁰ Personal interview with Ivo Banac, 6 January 1999; Slobodan Šnajder, "Kardinalna greška," *Novi list*, 12 October 1998.

desired national state but were ... extremely disappointed" with Croatia's "vassal" position. Peric does not describe the NDH regime as "fascist" but instead uses the word "dictatorial." His textbook points out that the Ustaše established concentration camps, of which the biggest and best-known was Jasenovac, adding that "in following the racist policy of Nazi Germany, the Ustaše committed terrible crimes of genocide against Jews, Gypsies and Serbs," as well as anti-fascist Croats.⁴³¹ While going into considerable detail about the Croatian victims, the book fails to elaborate further on the crimes against Serbs and Roma. Only much later does it discuss the situation of Jews, stating that a total of 60,000 lost their lives in jails and camps in Yugoslavia as a whole.⁴³² The Peric textbook devotes more attention to the crimes of the Serbian Cetniks and communist partisans than it does to those of the Ustaše.⁴³³

During the 1990s, there were repeated attempts by the HDZ to play down Ustaša atrocities and to paint all war victims as equals. In October 1999 Vukojević's Committee for the Identification of War and Postwar Victims produced a report arguing that just a few thousand people had been executed at the Jasenovac concentration camp and that only about 300 Jews were killed in Croatia during World War II. Out of the 65 Committee members, the only one to protest against the data was the Jew Slavko Goldstein, who complained that there was not a single word in the report about the criminal aspects of the NDH.⁴³⁴ In an act of "national reconciliation," bodies of fascist soldiers were buried alongside those of the communist partisans in a Split cemetery in October 1996,⁴³⁵ and Tudman talked about creating a monument at Jasenovac to all the victims of World War II.

Although not stated in the constitution, Slovakia, like Croatia, was founded on the legacy of the anti-fascist partisan movement rather than on the World War II state. That was demonstrated by the fact that the anniversary of the start of the Slovak National Uprising was declared a national holiday, and annual celebrations were held in commemoration. Nonetheless, a drive to reassess and rehabilitate that state

⁴³¹ Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu*, pp. 134-136.

⁴³² Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu*, pp. 136, 191.

⁴³³ Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu*, pp. 135-136, 160-161, 163-164.

⁴³⁴ Ilica Đikić, "Redesigning Croatian History," AIM, 25 October 1999; Igor Lasić, "Evo Zore, Evo Dana, Evo Vice i Florijana," *Feral Tribune*, 11 October 1999.

⁴³⁵ Hina, 27 October 1996.

came not only from émigrés, but also from Matica slovenská, the SNS, as well as from some streams within the HZDS and the Catholic Church.⁴³⁶ Meciar was strongly critical of the wartime state, and speaking with Jewish groups in December 1995 he vowed that “as long as I am prime minister, fascism will not be rehabilitated in Slovakia.” He also stressed that although historians would continue to reevaluate it, “for me it was a fascist state.”⁴³⁷ Meanwhile, the “Europeanist” Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) had a more complicated position, although Catholic dissidents and future KDH leaders Ján Carnogurský and František Mikloško had signed a declaration in October 1987 condemning the deportation of Jews from Slovakia.⁴³⁸ The KDH’s ties with the Catholic Church, as well as the fact that Carnogurský’s father, Pavol, had played a role in the World War II state, made it difficult for the party to condemn the state as a whole. Mikloško later said that the deportation of Jews was the biggest tragedy of the Slovak state, but he stressed that the state could not be linked only with that event.⁴³⁹

While the Czechs had seen the creation of the World War II state as betrayal on the part of the Slovaks, many Slovaks — both “Nationalists” and “Europeanists” — believed that Slovakia had no choice but to declare its independence since it had no army to defend itself against Hitler, and the state would have been divided between Poland and Hungary.⁴⁴⁰ Moreover, Slovaks of all political persuasions often stressed that life in Slovakia’s World War II state was easier and more prosperous than in neighboring countries. At a HZDS congress, *Slovenská Republika* journalist Gabo Zelenay stressed that during World War II Slovakia was in third place in Europe economically, right behind Switzerland and Sweden.⁴⁴¹ Moreover, the Kovác textbook points out that citizens of other states came to Slovakia to buy various products and argues that Slovak culture reached higher levels through the creation of new schools and theaters and of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁶ Within the HZDS, Ján Smolec, a parliamentary deputy and editor in chief of *Slovenská Republika*, was perhaps the most active in that sense.

⁴³⁷ TASR, 13 December 1995.

⁴³⁸ Carnogurský, *Videné od Dunaja*, pp. 122-124.

⁴³⁹ Personal interview with František Mikloško, 30 June 1999.

⁴⁴⁰ Personal interview with František Mikloško, 30 June 1999.

⁴⁴¹ RFE/RL Slovak Service, 3 April 1996.

⁴⁴² Kovác et al, *Slovensko v novom storoci*, p. 44.

The Kováč textbook never uses the word “fascist” to describe the World War II state, and although it does label it “totalitarian,” the book adds that it was referred to as “hollow totalitarianism” since the regime was “more moderate than in neighboring states” and did not use “brutal forms of persecuting opponents.”⁴⁴³ Most Slovaks did not dispute the number of Slovak Jews killed during the war; however, they stressed that Tiso was not aware of the situation and that he put an end to their deportations once he found out about them. While some used that ignorance as an excuse, HZDS representative Slobodník acknowledged that the deportations remained a crime since the Jews were deprived of their rights and freedoms.⁴⁴⁴ The Kováč textbook points out that the limitation of civil and human rights during World War II was manifested most strongly toward Jews, who were stripped “not only of their property, but also of basic political, civil and finally also human rights.” The book adds that while “in 1942 the Slovak government forcefully deported 58,000 Slovak Jews to ‘death camps,’” an additional 13,000 Jews were sent away after the German occupation of Slovakia in fall 1944.⁴⁴⁵

The position of various Slovak actors toward the World War II state was demonstrated by their reactions to a 1996 history book entitled *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov* [The History of Slovakia and the Slovaks] that was written by Slovak émigré priest Milan Durica. At the instigation of Education Minister Eva Slavkovská,⁴⁴⁶ an SNS representative who had participated in events aimed at glorifying the World War II state, PHARE funds were used to publish approximately 90,000 copies of the book, which was printed and distributed as a teaching aid for primary school teachers. An international scandal emerged in 1997, after representatives of the Historical Institute sent a complaint to Slavkovská. Critics argued that the Durica book was anti-Semitic and revisionist and that it attempted to glorify the state and justify the deportation of Slovak Jews. In his book, Durica described labor camps established for Jews in Slovakia in an idyllic fashion and argued that Jewish dentists working in such camps made

⁴⁴³ Kováč et al, *Slovensko v novom storočí*, p. 42. See also Smolec’s interview with a wartime Swiss diplomat who argued that the Slovak state was not fascist and that Slovakia was “an island of peace” in warring Europe, *Slovenská Republika*, 14 October 1995.

⁴⁴⁴ Slobodník, *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi*, p. 87.

⁴⁴⁵ Kováč et al, *Slovensko v novom storočí*, p. 42.

⁴⁴⁶ Personal interview with Education Ministry official Eva Danišová, 3 September 1999.

fillings out of gold, which was unavailable to ordinary Slovaks.⁴⁴⁷ Both the Education Ministry and HZDS spokesman Vladimír Hagara defended the book against the European Commission's criticism. Nonetheless, Meciar acknowledged that some parts were "inaccurate or historically incorrect," and under EU pressure the government decided in June 1997 to withdraw the book.⁴⁴⁸ While most opposition parties condemned the Durica book, the KDH was silent, and Carnogurský later explained that he had made his views on the deportation of Jews known in 1987 and that he did not comment on the book since he did not consider it a "political issue."⁴⁴⁹

In connection with the Croatian and Slovak wartime states, there was also considerable controversy over the anti-fascist partisan movements. In Croatia, the partisan movement led to the reestablishment of Yugoslavia as a communist regime under Tito's leadership, and although the Peric textbook devotes considerable space to the movement, it stresses the importance of the HSS role in an attempt to demonstrate that it was not a purely communist affair.⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, Peric's book presents Andrija Hebrang, who was leader of the Communist Party of Croatia in 1941-1944, as a more "Croatian" alternative to Tito, feeling himself to be both communist and "Croatian." In contrast, the book states that although Tito was "a Croat from a pure Croatian region," he "never publicly stressed that he was a Croat," but rather a Yugoslav, encouraging others to do the same.⁴⁵¹

The HDZ's rejection of the anti-fascist legacy was also reflected in other ways. In Vukojevic's 1999 report there was an attempt to demonstrate that the partisans, Serbs, and communists were responsible for the crimes that took place during World War II.⁴⁵² Moreover, during the 1990s Croatian "patriots" destroyed thousands of monuments devoted to the communist partisan liberation movement

⁴⁴⁷ See Milan S. Durica, *Približit sa k pravde* (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1997), p. 58.

⁴⁴⁸ See CTK, 12 and 24-27 June 1997.

⁴⁴⁹ Statement by Carnogurský during a presentation at the International Republican Institute in Washington, D.C., 21 October 1997.

⁴⁵⁰ Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu*, pp. 153-155.

⁴⁵¹ Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu*, pp. 152, 186-187.

⁴⁵² Đikić, "Redesigning Croatian History," AIM, 25 October 1999.

that were erected after World War II.⁴⁵³ At the same time, communist-era partisan films were no longer shown, even though some of them ranked among the best of Croatian cinematography.⁴⁵⁴

In Slovakia, a dispute over the meaning of the Slovak National Uprising had begun under the communist regime, during which the Uprising was degraded and participants were viewed suspiciously by the state and accused of “bourgeois nationalism.”⁴⁵⁵ In the 1990s, “Nationalists” from the SNS and Matica slovenská saw the Slovak National Uprising as an anti-national event that was aimed against Slovak independence,⁴⁵⁶ while most “Europeanists” viewed it as a crucial step in Slovaks’ history that placed them squarely on the side of the antifascists and therefore of the victors of World War II.⁴⁵⁷ It was also considered important as the first democratically-oriented mass movement in Slovak history. As in the case of the World War II state, the HZDS was largely on the side of the “Europeanists,” seeing the uprising as a positive event.⁴⁵⁸ In fact, in August 1998 the HZDS even tried to use the Uprising’s official anniversary celebration as part of its election campaign, distributing only cups with the HZDS logo.

The HDZ often presented communism as the real enemy of the Croatian people, despite the fact that many HDZ representatives had been SKH members. Perić’s textbook states that although a federal system was implemented, the republics had “only formal independence,” while “all powers were located in Belgrade, in the party and state leadership.” It added that many elements of “Croatianness were suppressed.”⁴⁵⁹ Croats often emphasized the persecutions Croats suffered in the hands of Serbs, particularly during the first years of Tito’s Yugoslavia. The massacre at the end of World War II in the Austrian town of Bleiburg, where a number of fleeing Croatian Ustaše were killed by Yugoslav partisans, became an important symbol of Croatian suffering that was discussed in books, photography

⁴⁵³ Vjeran Katunaric, “Transition and Culture in Croatia: From Nationalistic Populism to Enlightened Democracy?” *Culturelink* (special issue), 1997, p. 19.

⁴⁵⁴ Ines Sabalic, “Partizanski filmovi u bunkeru,” *Globus*, 19 February 1999, pp. 58-61.

⁴⁵⁵ Personal interview with Pavol Števček, 13 September 1999.

⁴⁵⁶ Stanislav Bajaník of Matica slovenská stressed that the Uprising was aimed against the Slovak state and that it brought “a new holocaust” to Slovakia. Personal interview with Bajaník, 2 June 1999.

⁴⁵⁷ For the latter view, see Kováč et al, *Slovensko v novom storočí*, pp. 46-47, 50.

⁴⁵⁸ CTK, 27 August 1996.

exhibitions, and films.⁴⁶⁰ Also emphasized were the large number of Croats who were jailed during the communist period, and the Peric textbook states that Hebrang was among the victims of Tito's regime, jailed in 1948 and murdered the following year with Tito's knowledge.⁴⁶¹ The HSP was often even stronger in its anti-communism than the HDZ, which rejected the HSP's calls for the launching of lustration procedures. In 1994 the HSP published an "open letter to the Croatian people" in which it accused Tito of "falsifying history, killing priests, and the biological genocide of the Croatian people in favor of the Serbs."⁴⁶²

In Slovakia, the presentation of the communist regime was more ambivalent than in Croatia. The Kováč textbook showed both positive and negative aspects of Czechoslovak communism, with Slovakia's economic development generally seen favorably.⁴⁶³ Many Slovaks blamed the onset of communism in Czechoslovakia on the Czechs,⁴⁶⁴ and HZDS representative Roman Hofbauer wrote that "Slovakia is the only state in Europe to which a communist dictatorship came not from the east but from the west, from Prague."⁴⁶⁵ The Kováč textbook stated that while Czech and Slovak communists tried to limit the power of Slovakia's Democratic Party, which had won 62 percent of the Slovak vote in the 1946 elections, they were also joined in such efforts by non-communist Czech parties, which opposed Slovakia's equal position in the common state.⁴⁶⁶

Regarding the communist-era reform movements, the Croatian Spring was considered an important period of national awakening,⁴⁶⁷ especially because Tudman had taken part. One film made about Tudman during the 1990s presented him as the main actor of the Croatian Spring while depicting other participants — many of whom were opponents of the HDZ regime in the 1990s — in a negative

⁴⁵⁹ Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu*, pp. 180-181, 187.

⁴⁶⁰ See, for example, *Bleiburg 1945-1995*, based on the international symposium held in Zagreb on 12-13 May 1995 (Zagreb: Hrvatska matica iseljenika, 1997).

⁴⁶¹ Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu*, p. 186.

⁴⁶² Slavenka Drakulic, *Café Europe: Life after Communism* (London: Abacus, 1996), p. 151.

⁴⁶³ Kováč et al, *Slovensko v novom storoci*, pp. 56-57.

⁴⁶⁴ A January 1992 opinion poll showed that 55.3 percent of Slovaks thought that "the communists came to power in 1948 mainly thanks to the Czechs." See *Aktuálne problémy Česko-Slovenska* (Bratislava: Centrum pre sociálnu analýzu, January 1992), Appendix p. 22.

⁴⁶⁵ Hofbauer, "Nežiaduci český import na Slovensko," *Slovenská Republika*, 30 January 1997.

⁴⁶⁶ Kováč et al, *Slovensko v novom storoci*, p. 52.

⁴⁶⁷ See, for example, Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu*, pp. 187-189.

way.⁴⁶⁸ The Perić textbooks points to cases of Croatian political émigrés who were murdered by the Yugoslav secret service, including Bruno Bušić, an intellectual who left Yugoslavia after 1971 and was killed in Paris seven years later.⁴⁶⁹ Bušić also became the subject of a film on Croatian Television.⁴⁷⁰

In Slovakia, the 1968 Prague Spring reform movement was generally presented in a positive light,⁴⁷¹ although the HZDS was far from enthusiastic in commemorating the events. For ordinary Slovaks, Prague Spring leader Alexander Dubček was one of the most widely accepted historical personalities, and his “Slovakness” was also demonstrated by the fact that he was born in the same house as Ľudovít Štúr. Dubček’s death following a car accident in fall 1992 meant that he never had a chance to be involved in politics in the new Slovak state. As the best-known Slovak worldwide, Dubček would have been a natural choice for Slovak president; however, it remains unclear whether Mečiar would have allowed him to reach that position. One sign of Mečiar’s stance was that Dubček did not receive a state funeral.⁴⁷² Moreover, no former communist officials went to jail under the Mečiar regime, including Vasil Bilak, who had invited the Soviets to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968. While Gustáv Husák was commonly remembered as the main organizer of the post-1968 “normalization,” he was shown positively in a 1996 Slovak Television film by Andrej Ferko, who hailed from a family of journalists and writers aimed at making the state “more Slovak.” Husák was depicted as a “good” Slovak who was victimized by the Czechs, and the film focused on his contributions to the national cause, including the federalization of Czechoslovakia.⁴⁷³

Controversy over more recent history was especially strong in Croatia, particularly over the question of the 1991-1995 “Homeland War.” The HDZ generally presented veterans as national heroes and tried to halt discussion of war crimes committed by Croatian soldiers in the apparent belief that questioning the sanctity of Croatia’s war for independence and the dignity of its defenders would threaten

⁴⁶⁸ Sabalić, “Opet afera Alojzije Stepinac,” *Globus*, 5 June 1998, p. 16.

⁴⁶⁹ Perić, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljeću*, p. 190.

⁴⁷⁰ Đikić, “Redesigning Croatian History,” AIM, 25 October 1999.

⁴⁷¹ See, for example, Kováč et al, *Slovensko v novom storočí*, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁷² Buncák et al, pp. 129-131.

its own political monopoly. The Croatian state commissioned a series of new monuments to war heroes,⁴⁷⁴ and poetry written by general Ivan Tolj made it into Croatian literature textbooks.⁴⁷⁵ Throughout the 1990s, the HDZ presented Croatia as the “victim” of war, which although mostly true in the battle with the Serbs in 1991-1992, was not the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1993-1994 or during the 1995 police and military operations that reunited Croatian territory and freed the Krajina region of Serbian control. Even in the case of the war with the Serbs in the early 1990s, there were several instances of brutality that were never resolved during the Tudman era. Efforts by the media to address Croatian crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina frequently led to controversy and denial, and in late 1998 the national cultural organization Matica hrvatska refused to publish a book of diary entries from 1991-1993 entitled *Domovina je teško pitanje* [The Homeland is a Difficult Question] because of a picture on its cover of a Bosnian Muslim captive at the Croatian camp Dretelj in Herzegovina. The book’s author pointed out that aside from two Croatian writers from Bosnia, as well as Stipe Mesic and the historian Ivo Banac, the word “Dretelj” was rarely mentioned in Croatia.⁴⁷⁶ The Peric textbook did not mention any war crimes committed by Croats against other nations.⁴⁷⁷

In Slovakia, there were also attempts to rewrite recent history, most notably through deleting those former Meciar allies who abandoned him during 1993-1994. Although personalities such as Knažko and Michal Kováč played an important role in the creation of an independent Slovakia, they were virtually forgotten. For example, neither of them was featured in an exhibition of the busts of 25 Slovaks who had contributed to Slovakia’s independence that took place in Bratislava shortly before the 1998 elections. Although a bust of Meciar was also absent, the exhibition featured a number of HZDS and SNS parliamentary deputies, as well as writers and church representatives.⁴⁷⁸ One of the new Slovak “heroes” was Július Binder, who was in charge of the construction of the Gabčíkovo dam and who ran

⁴⁷³ CTK, 13 February 1996. For more on the Ferko family, see Pynsent, “Tinkering with the Ferkos,” pp. 279-295.

⁴⁷⁴ See Sabalic, “Domovinski rat: od kica do vjecnosti,” *Globus*, 9 October 1998, pp. 34-39.

⁴⁷⁵ Gordan Malic, “Hrvatske citanke: Novi klasici ili pakleni šund?,” *Globus*, 23 October 1998, pp. 58-61.

⁴⁷⁶ Branko Matan interview, *Globus*, 9 October 1998, pp. 66-69.

⁴⁷⁷ Peric, *Hrvatska i svijet u XX.stoljecu*, pp. 205-218.

⁴⁷⁸ Renáta Klacanská, “Panoptikum,” *Plus 7 dní*, 28 September 1998; *Profit*, 14 September 1998.

as a HZDS candidate in 1998. Binder was featured both in the bust exhibition as well as on a postcard that depicted 20 “important personalities of the Slovak nation” ranging from the 9th century to the present.⁴⁷⁹

Political ceremonies and symbols

While the debate raged among the Croatian and Slovak elite about the meaning of history, a crucial step in converting such national stereotypes into concrete form occurred through the creation of symbols and ceremonies, which were apparently meant to strengthen individuals’ attachment to the nation. This section looks at the symbols and ceremonies instituted by the Tudman and Meciar regimes, including the choice of images on currency and stamps, the names of streets, and state holidays.

Tudman once pointed out that “nations considered as sovereign states have had an unquenchable ... spiritual need to find a manifestation of their characters in external symbols that are comparable to those of others but at the same time as different as possible.”⁴⁸⁰ He therefore put considerable effort into creating ceremonies and symbols, which served to “invent” a sense of tradition and build up a more powerful idea of the state.⁴⁸¹ Former Tudman advisor Slaven Letica commented in 1999 that “aside from the hymn ‘Lijepa naša domovino,’ almost all the state symbols and rituals that exist today in Croatia are the fruit of the political and artistic conceptualization of the so-called high state officials of the HDZ and a series of architects, artists, designers and art historians who are close to the party.” Letica added that it was a “public secret that the bulk of the decisions on the state iconography, state symbols and rituals was realized by Franjo Tudman himself.”⁴⁸²

Some Croatian symbols and traditions were brought back from previous times, while others were created from scratch. Among the first of the old symbols to be restored was the *šahovnica*, and the 1990 constitution provided for its use in the

⁴⁷⁹ *Plus 7 dni*, 18 August 1997, p. 11.

⁴⁸⁰ See the Croatian decorations gallery Web site: <http://www.croatia.hr/decorations/gallery.html>.

⁴⁸¹ See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁴⁸² Slaven Letica, “Hoće li oporba nakon sljedećih izbora promijeniti hrvatski grb na zastavi?” *Globus*, 15 January 1999, p. 36.

coat of arms and on the flag, where it appeared centered on a tri-colored background.⁴⁸³ Before long, red-and-white checkerboard squares appeared everywhere, in the logos of state companies and symbols of various political parties. In an effort to make Croatia more “Croatian,” Tudman even decided to change the name of Zagreb’s soccer team from the communist-era “Dinamo” to “Croatia,” a move that made the president unpopular with the team’s fans, the Bad Blue Boys, despite their support for the HDZ during the party’s 1990 election campaign. Although many Bad Blue Boys representatives had served in the Croatian army during the war, because of their active disagreements with the regime they were labeled by Tudman as traitors who were seduced by the “enemy.” Another controversial decision made by the Tudman regime was the replacement of the Croatian currency, the dinar, with the kuna [marten], which had been used during the World War II state. Although Croats argued that the name kuna originated in ancient times, when the marten’s fur had been used as a trade unit,⁴⁸⁴ Serbs and international observers saw its use as a sign of intolerance. According to Letica, the decision was made by Tudman at the proposal of HDZ representative and linguist Dalibor Brozovic.⁴⁸⁵

In terms of new traditions, Tudman introduced such customs as the wearing of a tri-colored sash at ceremonies, a special presidential airplane, the renaming of the presidential office as “the presidential court,” the use of the word “vrhovnik” [leader] to describe the president in his role as supreme commander of the armed forces, the existence of a special presidential military adjutant [*vojni pobocnik*], the use of the names “visoki državni dužnosnici” [high state officials] and “uvaženi saborski zastupnik” [esteemed Sabor deputy], the holding of military parades at Zagreb’s Jarun lake to commemorate Statehood Day, the introduction of a presidential guard wearing gold-trimmed uniforms, the formal inspection of the presidential guard upon Tudman’s departure for and return from foreign visits, and the holding of one’s hand on the heart during the national anthem. In public

⁴⁸³ Even before the 1990 elections, an opinion poll conducted in Croatia’s three largest cities demonstrated that the *šahovnica* was not considered widely offensive by Croats. In fact, when asked whether they preferred the communist tri-colored flag with a star in the middle, the tri-colored flag without the star, or the tri-colored flag with the *šahovnica*, nearly half of Zagreb and Split residents and 35 percent of Rijeka inhabitants said they favored the *šahovnica*. Dejan Jovic, “Kakvu Hrvatsku žele,” *Danas*, 3 April 1990, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁴ See the Croatian currency Web site: <http://www.hr/hrvatska/money.hr.shtml>.

discourse during the 1990s, the “hand on one’s heart” became a symbol of HDZ behavior and was sometimes associated with hypocrisy.⁴⁸⁶

Although the HDZ’s 1990 party program had stated that federalism was “one of the only historically positive aspects of Titoism,”⁴⁸⁷ Tito’s legacy was manifested in various ways in the new Croatian state. That was especially true in Tudman’s behavior and his love of ceremonies, and his imitation of Tito was sometimes exaggerated to the point of appearing ridiculous. Croatian writer Dubravka Ugrešić commented that Tito had “suddenly come back to life as the Croatian president,” adding that Tudman “wears white jackets like Tito’s (convinced that he is wearing them as a European); hands children apricots from his garden (Tito used to send Yugoslav children baskets of mandarins from his gardens); kisses (in front of the television cameras, of course), lifts into the air and pinches the cheeks of any child who happens to find itself in his path (Tito used to like kissing kids too).” Ugrešić added that Tudman played a bigger role than Tito in state ceremonies; while Tito “used to sit calmly permitting the people to demonstrate its skills in front of him, the new president takes an active part in the performance himself. At the spectacle to mark the day of Croatian independence, surrounded by young girls in Croatian national costume, the president took part in a pantomime, tenderly placing a ducat in an empty peasant’s cradle,” thus repeating an old Croatian custom of putting a ducat in a newborn child’s cradle for good luck.⁴⁸⁸ Croatia also retained some Tito place names, most notably a square in Zagreb that Tudman apparently wanted to take his own name after his death. Moreover, after Tudman’s central Zagreb presidential office in the old Ban’s court was hit by Serbian bombs in 1991, Tudman and Šarinic⁴⁸⁹ decided to move the office to Tito’s former villa. In July 1999 Tudman, like Tito before him, opened his birthhouse in the village of Veliko Trgovišće as a museum. In order to make his origins seem grander, however, the house was renovated with brass finishings and antique furniture.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁵ Letica, “Hoće li oporba nakon sljedećih izbora promijeniti hrvatski grb na zastavi?” *Globus*, 15 January 1999, p. 38.

⁴⁸⁶ Letica, “Hoće li oporba nakon sljedećih izbora promijeniti hrvatski grb na zastavi?” *Globus*, 15 January 1999, p. 39; *Novi list* 8 January 1996.

⁴⁸⁷ “Programske zasade i ciljevi HDZ,” in Đurić et al, *Stranke u Hrvatskoj*, pp. 75-78.

⁴⁸⁸ Ugrešić, *Have a Nice Day*, pp. 173-174.

⁴⁸⁹ Letica, “Hoće li oporba nakon sljedećih izbora promijeniti hrvatski grb na zastavi?” *Globus*, 15 January 1999, p. 39.

⁴⁹⁰ *Novi list*, 2 July 1999; *Nacional*, 1 December 1999.

In contrast to Tudman, Meciar did not go to such lengths to “invent” tradition through new ceremonies and customs. This may have stemmed from the differing intellectual backgrounds and age of Meciar versus Tudman, as well as the varying perceptions of class and status in Slovakia and Croatia. As a historian, Tudman appeared consciously aware that all of his moves were being recorded for future generations, and he promoted an image of himself as untouchable and godly, attracting admiration from ordinary Croats. One journalist commented that Tudman saw himself as the synthesis of various historical personalities, with a mission to create an independent Croatian state.⁴⁹¹ Twenty years younger than Tudman and trained as a lawyer, Meciar did not possess Tudman’s attention to detail and appearances. Meciar seemed to prefer to give the impression that he was “one of the people,” which was an effective approach in the largely egalitarian Slovak society.

Like its Croatian counterpart, the Slovak flag featured the state coat of arms — a double cross on top of three mountain peaks — on a tri-colored background. Although that symbol had also been used in Slovakia’s World War II state, it did not have the same negative connotation as did the *šahovnica* in Croatia, partly because it was used in the Czechoslovak state coat of arms. In terms of the currency, Slovakia retained the Czechoslovak name *koruna* [crown], just as it had during the Second World War. While the crown was seen internationally as a respectable, stable currency, the Yugoslav dinar was not.

Religion was especially prominent in the symbolism of Croatia and Slovakia, both of which instituted a number of Catholic holidays and symbols after gaining independence. Such enthusiasm for Catholicism was both a reaction to the fall of communism and a way of differentiating themselves from the Orthodox Serbs and the Czechs, who although officially Catholic were far less religious than the Slovaks. Religious themes appeared on a number of Croatian and Slovak stamps issued in the 1990s, as well as on Slovak currency. For Slovaks, the saints Cyril and Methodius were particularly important, as missionaries who brought Christianity and written language to the Great Moravian Empire, and one 1997 book published by Matica slovenská even listed them as two of 100 famous

⁴⁹¹ Personal interview with Ines Sabalic, Brussels, 23 June 2000.

historical Slovaks.⁴⁹² The two saints were honored not only through a state holiday on 5 July but also on the 50 crown banknotes (which featured the Glagolitic script on the reverse side), on a 1993 stamp marking the 1130th anniversary of their arrival, and in Bratislava street names both during and after communism. While Croatian coins featured plants or animals, Slovak coins depicted scenes such as a statue of the Madonna and child (one crown) and a 10th century cross (10 crowns). Master Pavol's Madonna from the 16th century wooden altar at St. Jacob's Church in the east Slovak town of Levoca was depicted on Slovakia's 100 crown banknote.

In the absence of any recent positive experience with statehood, in establishing symbols the new countries sometimes referred back one thousand years to the medieval Croatian state and the Great Moravian Empire. While the Croatian constitution points to the "thousand-year old national identity and statehood of the Croatian nation," the Slovak constitution's preamble refers to "the historical legacy of the Great Moravian Empire." In the Slovak case, symbols of the ancient state appeared everywhere from stamps to currency to street names. Slovakia's 20 crown banknotes depicted ninth century Prince Pribina, who was said to be the first Slovak ruler. Pribina's successor Svätopluk, who contributed to the expansion of the empire, was featured on a Slovak stamp in 1994. While Svätopluk was honored by a Bratislava street name both during and after communism, a street was named after Pribina only after 1989. In Croatia, a monument to medieval King Tomislav was featured on the back of the 1000 kuna banknote, while his statue appeared on a stamp issued in 1992. A Zagreb square and street bore his name before and after 1990.

In the use of symbols, both countries sometimes highlighted ancient images, even if they were created before the arrival of the Slavs on the territory. For example, the back of the Croatian ten kuna banknote featured the first century amphitheater in the Istrian town of Pula, while the 20 kuna note depicted the Vucedol dove figurine from 2800-2500 B.C., and the 500 kuna note showed the Diocletian Palace in Split, which was built around 300 A.D. Slovakia's five crown pieces copied the

⁴⁹² See Milan Ferko (ed.), *Sto slavných Slovákov* (Martin, Matica slovenská, 1997).

Celtic biatec coins from the 1st century B.C., while the two crown coins featured a Venus statue from 3600 B.C.

As noted above, the most controversial aspect of Croatian and Slovak history related to the World War II fascist states. One Croat commented that instead of being celebrated openly, the ideology of the Croatian radical right tradition was generally expressed indirectly, through such acts as the naming of streets or of the Croatian currency, and by glorifying certain aspects of or personalities from the Ustaša regime.⁴⁹³ The most contentious change in either country was the renaming of Zagreb's Square of the Victims of Fascism [Trg žrtava fašizma] as the Square of the Great Croats [Trg hrvatskih velikana], a decision that Tudman reportedly defended, despite protests from around the world.⁴⁹⁴ In contrast, although there were efforts to rename Bratislava's Slovak National Uprising Square after Hlinka, the city retained the original name, and a 1994 stamp was issued to mark the Uprising's 50th anniversary. Both Slovakia and Croatia had state holidays to commemorate their antifascist experiences: the Slovak National Uprising day on 29 August and Croatia's Day of the Antifascist Struggle on 22 June. In Croatia, although a Croatian commission for the renaming of streets proposed in the early 1990s that Tito's Zagreb square be renamed after Pavelic, it was decided that such a step would harm Croatia's image.⁴⁹⁵ In 1993 a Zagreb street was nearly renamed after Mile Budak, a writer who served as minister of culture and education in Pavelic's government; however, the commission reversed its decision following protests from World War II partisans.⁴⁹⁶ Nonetheless, some streets and schools in other towns were named after Budak, including a street in Split, and his works were included in literature textbooks.⁴⁹⁷ Cardinal Stepinac appeared on stamps in 1993 and 1998, while Hebrang was honored through a stamp issued in 1999 and a Zagreb street. Meanwhile, the Bleiburg massacre was the subject of a 1995 stamp commemorating the event's 50th anniversary. In Bratislava, no streets were named after Tiso or Hlinka, but their names did appear in some provincial towns. Slovakia chose to feature Hlinka on its 1000 crown banknotes, but his image had already

⁴⁹³ Nenad Zakošek, "Extremism as Normality: Discursive Patterns of Right Radicalism in Contemporary Croatia," paper presented at a conference on right extremism organized by the Peace Institute, Ljubljana, March 1996.

⁴⁹⁴ *Feral Tribune*, 29 December 1997.

⁴⁹⁵ Drakulic, *Café Europe*, pp. 149-150.

⁴⁹⁶ *Feral Tribune*, 29 December 1997.

been cleaned to some extent since he had appeared on a Czechoslovak stamp in 1991.

In Croatia, the most frequently honored historical personalities during the 1990s were Ban Josip Jelacic, a viceroy who had tried to unite Croats and led a revolt against the Hungarians in 1848, and Starcevic, the 19th century nationalist ideologist and politician who founded the Croatian Party of Rights. Starcevic, who during the NDH had been presented as the forefather of Ustašism,⁴⁹⁸ was often portrayed in the new Croatian state as a liberal who was influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution.⁴⁹⁹ A petition launched in 1989 to bring Jelacic's statue back to Zagreb's central Square of the Republic helped to restore national pride to Croats, and in October 1990 the statue was returned and the square was restored to its pre-communist name as the Square of Ban Jelacic. One HDZ source commented that while the return of the statue was reduced to "a cultural action" for the Croatian Social Liberal Alliance (HSLA), which initiated the campaign, in its flyers the HDZ gave priority to the "historical-political significance" of the event since "the Ban's fate in socialist Croatia had indeed become 'a symbol of the extermination of Croatian national sentiment, a symbol of the political heartless hatred toward one's own nation, its history, culture, and heritage.'"⁵⁰⁰ Jelacic appeared on the 20 kuna banknote, and he was featured three times on stamps in the 1990s: on a 1991 issue marking the return of his statue, on a 1992 stamp, and in a 1998 series commemorating the 1848 events. Starcevic was depicted on the 1000 kuna banknote, and he was also honored three times on stamps: in a 1992 series, on a 1996 stamp marking the centenary of his death, and in a 1997 issue depicting his house.

Other frequently venerated Croatian subjects included Radic, as well as Petar Zrinski and Fran Krsto Frankopan, 17th century noblemen, statesmen, and writers who rebelled against Habsburg rule and were beheaded in 1671. Radic appeared on the 200 kuna banknote and was twice featured on stamps, in 1992 and in a 1996 issue commemorating the 125th anniversary of his birth. Meanwhile, Zrinski and

⁴⁹⁷ Malic, "Hrvatske citanke," *Globus*, 23 October 1998, pp. 58-61.

⁴⁹⁸ Cipek, "Ideološka funkcija povijesti," p. 191.

⁴⁹⁹ Personal interview with Jure Krišto, 29 January 2000.

Frankopan were depicted together on the five kuna banknote and on a 1993 stamp, as well as separately in a 1996 series featuring them and their family members. Other figures to appear on Croatian banknotes were Juraj Dobrila, a 19th century bishop who promoted Croatian cultural rights and language (ten kuna); Ivan Gundulic, a 17th century Baroque poet from Dubrovnik (50 kuna); Ivan Mažuranić, a 19th century poet and statesman and the first non-aristocrat to serve as Croatian Ban (100 kuna); and Marko Marulić, a 15th-16th poet and translator who is referred to as the “father of Croatian literature” (500 kuna).

In Croatia, images of historical figures who had promoted Yugoslavism were frequently suppressed, including the 19th century bishop and philanthropist Josip Juraj Strossmayer and Ljudevit Gaj, leader of the Illyrianist phase of the Croatian national revival in the 1830s and 1840s,⁵⁰¹ as well as the 19th-20th century sculptor Ivan Meštrović, who had created figures from Serbian history and folk epic. One analyst commented that while for some Croats Strossmayer and Meštrović are “symbols of wisdom and patriotism,” for others they symbolize “national and ideological treason, limitation and corruption.”⁵⁰² The only one of the three to appear on a stamp in the 1990s was Strossmayer, who was featured in a 1992 issue commemorating the 125th anniversary of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, which he had founded. Croatia’s enthusiasm for demonstrating that it was not part of South Eastern Europe was also manifested in the 1990 decision to change the name of a central Zagreb cinema from Balkan to Europa [Europe].⁵⁰³

A number of Croatian stamps in the 1990s dealt with the Yugoslav war, including a 1992 stamp calling for assistance for the renewal of Vukovar, as well as a 1992 series featuring towns that had been attacked and/or taken over by Serbs. A 1993 Croatian Red Cross stamp featured a boy in front of a ruined house with the slogan ‘Dignity,’ while another stamp issued that year showed a soldier on the battlefield next to a Christmas tree. An August 1995 stamp celebrated the liberation of Knin, and a set issued later that year marked the return of other towns to Croatian

⁵⁰⁰ Marko Mioc, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica u Koprivnici 1990.-1993.* (Koprivnica: HDZ, 1997), p. 18.

⁵⁰¹ Ivo Banac, “Hoće li se Predsjednik Franjo Tuđman uskoro ispricati zbog kune?” *Globus*, 27 May 1994, p. 8, cited in Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, p. 163.

⁵⁰² Slaven Letica, *Političko pleme 2* (Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk, 1999), p. 197.

⁵⁰³ Drakulić, *Café Europe*, pp. 10-11.

control. A 1996 stamp showed a soldier carrying a child in commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the National Guard, while another stamp issued that year featured a crucifix with the words “for Vukovar.” One of Zagreb’s main roads was renamed Vukovar Street.

In Slovakia, there was generally less disdain for historical personalities who were considered Czechoslovaks. Štefaník was honored on the 5000 crown banknote and on a 1993 stamp, while in 1990 the name of one of Bratislava’s main streets was changed to Štefaník Street, which was also its pre-communist name. Another symbol of Czechoslovakism to be venerated was Dubcek, who was depicted on a stamp issued in 1993, one year after his death. Although no Bratislava streets were named after Dubcek, streets in other towns and villages did bear his name.

As in the Croatian case, 19th century revival leaders who had promoted the Czechoslovak idea — most notably Ján Kollár and Pavol Jozef Šafárik — were infrequent symbols, although Kollár did appear on a 1993 stamp and both had Bratislava squares named after them during and after communism. Another obvious omission was Czechoslovakia’s first president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who although half-Slovak/half-Czech, was not honored in any Bratislava street names and was mentioned only briefly in the Kováč history textbook. Moreover, the Slovak parliament decided against making 28 October, the day of the founding of the first Czechoslovak republic, a national holiday, partly because it was not until two days later that Slovak leaders met in the town of Martin to declare their willingness to enter a state with the Czechs. Nonetheless, Bratislava streets named after the Czech general and statesman Ludvík Svoboda, Prague, and the Czechoslovak Parachutists were retained, although Czechoslovak Army Street reverted to its pre-1948 name. The name of the 17th century Czech educator Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius) was kept not only in a Bratislava street but also in the city’s main university.

Without a doubt, Slovakia’s most honored personality from the 19th century was Ľudovít Štúr, who codified the Slovak literary language in 1843 and participated in the 1848 revolutions. Štúr appeared on the 500 crown banknote and on a 1995 stamp. Meanwhile, Anton Bernolák, the first to codify the Slovak language in

1787, appeared on the 200 crown note. Both Štúr and Bernolák were generally uncontentious figures whose names had been featured on Bratislava streets and squares both before and after 1989.

Most of the changes in Bratislava street names occurred during 1990-1992 and consisted of reverting back to the old names from the pre-communist period. Street and square signs that were replaced included those named after Czechoslovakia's first communist-era president Klement Gottwald, Slovak communist-era writer Ladislav Novomeský, the Red Army, and the Soviet Army, among others. Nonetheless, Heroes of the Red Army Square as well as a street named after Slovak communist politician Vladimír Clementis, who was executed in the show trials of the early 1950s and was subsequently rehabilitated, were retained. Similar efforts were made in Zagreb to get rid of communist-era names, including the replacement of such streets as Proletarian Brigade.

While Meciar did not appear on any stamps during the 1990s, President Kováč was featured on two different stamps issued shortly after his election in 1993, thus adopting a Czechoslovak tradition that was followed by Masaryk and Havel. During his lifetime, Tudman appeared on only one stamp, a 1997 issue celebrating the fifth anniversary of Croatia's membership in the UN. However, just days after his death in December 1999, a second stamp was released.

Aside from historic personalities and religious themes, Croatian postage stamps focused largely on such subjects as sports, nature, health, and commemorations of historical events. Commemorative stamps celebrated the anniversary of the first multi-party session of the Croatian parliament, the Croatian Constitution, and the recognition of Croatian independence (all in 1991); the 150th anniversary of Matica hrvatska, the 25th anniversary of the 1967 Declaration on the Croatian language, and the centenary of Ivan Broz's Croatian orthography (1992); the 150th anniversary of the first speech in Croatian language before the Croatian parliament, the first anniversary of Croatia's membership in the United Nations (UN), and the 125th anniversary of the Croatian Militia (1993); the 500th anniversary of the printing of the first Croatian book, the 325th anniversary of the Croatian University in Zagreb, and the 150th anniversary of Croatian tourism (1994); the fifth

anniversary of Croatian statehood (1995); the fifth anniversary of the first Croatian postage stamps (1996); the 150th anniversary of the 1848 uprising (1998); and the fifth anniversary of the Croatian kuna (1999). One 1994 series highlighted Croatian inventions, including a 17th century drawing of a parachute by Faust Vrancic, as well as the technical pencil that was invented by Slavoljub Penkala in 1906, while a 1995 series depicted the tie. Croatian holidays associated with independence included Statehood Day on 30 May, which was the date of the first multi-party parliament session in 1990 and the election of Tudman as president, and Homeland Gratitude Day on 5 August, which was the anniversary of the liberation of much of occupied Croatian territory in the 1995 operation Storm.

Slovak stamps were characterized by efforts to highlight the country's historical events and personalities, landmarks and natural beauty, arts and sports, as well as folk themes and traditions. Commemorative stamp marked the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak literary language (1993); the 150th anniversary of the Slovak national anthem and the 75th anniversary of Bratislava's Comenius University (1994); the 75th anniversary of the Slovak National Theater and the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II and of the liberation of concentration camps (1995); the fifth anniversary of the Slovak constitution (1997); the fifth anniversary of the Slovak state and the 150th anniversary of the Slovak 1848-1849 uprising (1998). While a 1997 stamp highlighted the "World Year of Slovaks," a stamp issued in 1993 was dedicated to the Gabčíkovo dam. Slovak holidays associated with statehood include Constitution Day on 1 September and Independence Day on 1 January.⁵⁰⁴

In both Croatia and Slovakia, it appeared that those choosing the themes and symbols of the new states were sometimes grasping at straws. The selection of such seemingly trivial themes and anniversaries as the fifth anniversary of the Croatian postage stamp suggested a dearth of usable Croatian traditions. Some of the symbols were reminiscent of the communist era, while others were part of a

⁵⁰⁴ For stamps, see *Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue, Part 3: Balkans* (London: Stanley Gibbons Ltd., 1998), pp. 243-262 and the Web sites: <http://connexus.net.au/~mikuto/stamps> (Croatian stamps) and <http://www.slposta.sk/filatel.htm> (Slovak postal service). For maps, see *Turisticka zajednica grada Zagreba*, 1994; J.A. Cuddon, *Jugoslavia* (London: Collins, 1986), p. 359; *Slovenská kartografia*, 1983 and 1994; and *Vojenský kartografický ústav*, 1995.

clear effort to broaden national identity to a wider base. Nonetheless, in their attempt to construct a national identity through symbols, the authors often signaled the lack of a clear vision for the future that could draw in a wider population.

This chapter has attempted to present the general framework of the efforts by the HDZ and HZDS to maintain national mobilization through the construction of a new ideology in an effort to make the nation the central symbol of the new states. Various elements of the national movements in each country have been examined, including the role of conflicting elites in structuring the agenda, bringing independence, and sustaining public support as well as the symbolic dimensions such as the presentation of national history and its reflection in symbols and ceremonies.

In both countries, the new symbols and ceremonies helped to implicitly build a new image of the nations that their authors apparently believed would strengthen national identity and at the same time give new legitimacy to the ruling parties as the “founding fathers” of the new states. The use of nationalism as ideology was especially apparent in the Croatian case, where the Yugoslav wars provided for a strong attachment to the state and resulted in considerable efforts to distance the new state from the recent past. Although both Slovaks and Croats often tried to present a historical continuum in an effort to strengthen national identity, 20th century history was generally altered in a more significant way in Croatia than it was in Slovakia. In Croatia, the entire Yugoslav experience was called into question because of the conflict with the Serbs, while the crimes of the World War II state were often ignored or revised. In the translation of national stereotypes into concrete form, both nations put more emphasis on those historical personalities who were typically Croatian or Slovak rather than those who favored Yugoslav or Czechoslovak unity. As a historian, Tudman had a clearer sense of his mission than did Meciar, and he made conscious efforts to implement a number of new ceremonies that served to “invent” a sense of tradition. Naturally, it is important to determine to what extent such symbols were internalized by the populations, and that will be discussed in later chapters.

The next two chapters continue with the examination of the ruling parties' efforts to maintain national mobilization, focusing on two specific aspects of nation-building: the areas of economy and culture. Aside from investigating the ruling parties' policies in such fields and the debates among elites, those chapters also attempt to demonstrate the conflicts between the ruling parties' discourse and their concrete actions, as well as how they were perceived by the public.

Chapter 4: Economic Policies: using state property for political gain

This chapter continues the examination of the maintenance of national mobilization, focusing on the economy. It looks at the economic policy debates among elites as well as how the privatization process was used to build a new capitalist class and raise funds for the ruling parties. Additionally, the chapter begins to investigate the decline of national movements by demonstrating the conflicts between the ruling parties' discourse and their concrete actions and how the public perceived them. Economic policies are crucial to the study of the maintenance and fall of national movements in Croatia and Slovakia; not only did they play a key role in uniting the diverse members of the "Nationalist" elite and providing funding to help keep the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) afloat, but they also contributed significantly to the decline of nationalism since they eventually alienated the ruling parties from many ordinary citizens. Both the HDZ and HZDS made the nation a central symbol of their ideological discourse, and the economy was the area in which it appeared most obvious that the parties were concerned more with their own gain than with that of the nation itself. That was documented repeatedly in the Slovak and Croatian press, thereby placing increasingly distance — at least in terms of perceived wealth — between the political and economic elite associated with the ruling parties versus the rest of the population and contributing to a drop in support for the ruling parties.

According to Miroslav Hroch, leaders of new national movements have a very specific aim: "to complete the social structure of the nation by creating a capitalist class corresponding to that of Western states, in which they would come to enjoy a salient position themselves."⁵⁰⁵ During the 1990s, such efforts were visible in both Croatia and Slovakia, where the construction of a new politically-biased capitalist class and economic power cliques occurred mainly through the sale of state property at discount prices to allies of the ruling HDZ and HZDS, thereby fusing political power with economic and entrepreneurial activity and transforming the political elite into the economic elite. Similar practices have been adopted elsewhere in the world, but the temptation was especially great in countries that

⁵⁰⁵ Hroch, p. 70.

embarked on the transition from communism to a market economy, as a whole range of firms passed from state to private hands. Even in the Czech Republic, which had previously been seen as a “model” reform country, Prime Minister Václav Klaus was forced to leave office in late 1997 because of a privatization scandal. In fact, the sale of firms to families and political supporters may have been irresistible in post-communist transition countries, given the absence of national ideologies that “keep individuals connected to state institutions” and “allow elites to cooperate to achieve common goals that stretch beyond personal enrichment.”⁵⁰⁶ The urge to establish a “national” economic elite was especially prominent in the case of Slovaks, who had seen themselves in a weak economic position within Czechoslovakia and therefore tried to compensate in the independent Slovakia by “using state power to promote the specific (and previously inadequately served) interests of the core nation.”⁵⁰⁷ Nonetheless, instead of serving the interests of the core nation as a whole, the HZDS economic policies — like those of the HDZ — contributed to the wealth of a narrow group of elites with political connections, a phenomenon that can be described as clientelism.

Political scientist Nenad Zakošek defines two types of clientelism; while the first is aimed at forming and maintaining a mass clientele of the ruling political elite, the second constitutes a process of distributing privileges and special benefits to members of the political elite, their families and relatives.⁵⁰⁸ This chapter maps out the rise and maintenance of economic power cliques in Croatia and Slovakia, demonstrating that the second form of clientelism gradually took precedence in both Croatia and Slovakia.

Although the HDZ and HZDS frequently tried to justify their economic policies, there was a growing awareness in the second half of the 1990s of the contradiction between the economic activities of the ruling parties and the idea that they were the promoters and protectors of the national interest. Both Croatia and Slovakia showed significant economic growth and relatively low inflation in the second half of the decade; however, continued high unemployment signaled that the masses

⁵⁰⁶ Cohen, p. 3.

⁵⁰⁷ Brubaker, p. 5.

⁵⁰⁸ Nenad Zakošek, “Organizirani interesi u Hrvatskoj,” *Erasmus* no. 11 (May 1995), p. 31.

were not benefiting. As the ruling parties exchanged favors with big businessmen, there was a hostile environment for the development of small and medium enterprises, and the middle class in both countries suffered.

The difficult standard of living of ordinary citizens became especially clear when compared with the growing riches of ruling parties representatives, many of whom privatized firms for small sums and flaunted their wealth by buying fancy villas and cars. The effect of politically-motivated privatization on the ruling parties' public support was especially apparent in the cases where the new "tycoons" were incompetent in running businesses and led their empires to ruin. That was particularly true in Croatia, where many employees were left without salaries as their firms collapsed. As Croats and Slovaks began to question the ruling parties' rhetoric, there was an increasing tendency to put other priorities before the nation, particularly their own economic well-being. That shift eventually led voters to question the HZDS and HDZ as "founding fathers" and look toward other alternatives that might be more just in formulating economic policy.

Building on Brubaker's work, this chapter investigates the ruling parties' "nationalizing" policies and programs in the economic sphere, where governments intended to compensate for previous inadequacies by using state power to promote the national interest.⁵⁰⁹ While Brubaker focuses on how such policies are aimed at the core nation as distinct from the new state's total population, in Slovakia and Croatia they often seemed directed not at the core nation but actually at a small group of ruling party loyalists. The chapter begins with a presentation of the economic debate between and among "Nationalists" and "Europeanists" as the fundamental cleavage in society and of the discourse used by the ruling parties in justifying economic policies. It then moves to an examination of how the privatization process in Croatia and Slovakia became a tool of the ruling parties in maintaining power through the construction of a new domestic economic elite that was closely linked with the regime. The final section demonstrates the counterproductive effects of HDZ and HZDS economic policy by looking at public reactions as presented in the discourse of the independent media and trade unions.

⁵⁰⁹ Brubaker, p. 5.

“Nationalists” versus “Europeanists”

Throughout the 1990s, there were considerable differences in public discourse on economic policy in Croatia and Slovakia, and that discourse varied over time and from one group to another. In neither country was there a clear division between “Nationalists” and “Europeanists” over economic policy. Although there was significant bickering by the “Europeanist” opposition parties over corruption in the privatization process under the HDZ and HZDS, it sometimes appeared that the opposition simply resented its own exclusion from the privatization process and wanted some of the riches for itself.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, in Croatia, from as early as 1990 there was a general consensus among all major parties on the need to implement economic reforms, with the ultimate goal of bringing the country toward the West. At that time, the Croatian economy was much healthier and more Westernized than that of Slovakia, partly since the communist regime in Yugoslavia had been more liberal than that in Czechoslovakia, allowing for significant foreign investment and tourism. Moreover, some market-oriented reforms had been implemented prior to the 1990 elections that brought Tudman to power. Another major difference between the two republics’ economies was that while nearly 100 percent of the Czechoslovak economy was in state hands under communism, Yugoslavia had a system of self-management, whereby firms were basically owned by the workers.

Despite Croatia’s initial advantages, the war in the early 1990s meant that its economic transition process was much more difficult than that in Slovakia. War damage created production and employment problems and caused a sharp drop in the population’s standard of living and purchasing power. Another important factor in the decline of Croatian GDP in the early 1990s was the loss of markets in the republics of former Yugoslavia and other ex-socialist countries. Croatia had relied heavily on its partners in Yugoslavia for trade, receiving 60 percent of its raw materials and production components from other parts of the federation in 1990.⁵¹⁰ The situation was further complicated by the fact that parts of the new Croatian state were separated from the others until 1995 due to the existence of the rebel

⁵¹⁰ Interview with Đurde Pribicevic, *Danas*, 24 April 1990, p. 11.

Serb Krajina region. Writing in April 1992, one author estimated that if everything went smoothly, Croatia could be expected to reach its pre-war production levels by 1996, at the earliest.⁵¹¹ Nonetheless, the economic policies implemented by the HDZ during its nearly ten years of rule caused numerous imbalances, and by the late 1990s it appeared that Croatia would not achieve its 1990 level of GDP before the year 2004. While the Slovak economy surpassed its 1989 level of GDP in 1999, becoming the third country in the region to do so after Poland and Slovenia, Croatia's GDP in 1999 was still 21 percent lower than it had been 10 years earlier.⁵¹²

Despite Croatia's economic problems and the growing gap between citizens with special privileges and those without, it was not until the late 1990s that the "Europeanist" opposition politicians presented an alternative to the HDZ in the area of economic policy. As was the case in many other areas of public life, the economic situation was slow to move the political opposition into the traditional role of government critic. It was actually the church that was the first to take a strong stand against the HDZ. In his Christmas message in 1997, Croatian Archbishop Josip Bozanic pointed to the difficult social situation and criticized the fact that a few government officials were quickly growing rich at the public's expense while the great majority of the population was becoming poorer.⁵¹³ The strength of Bozanic's criticism shocked Croatian society, and his term "griješ struktura" [sin of the ruling elites] was frequently repeated in the media. One commentator wrote that Bozanic's statement revealed "the misery of the Croatian political reality," adding that the political opposition should have been the first to point out the country's social problems.⁵¹⁴ During 1998, as the HDZ regime was marred by a series of scandals and the economic situation deteriorated, the ex-communist Social Democratic Party (SDP) successfully managed to present itself as a real social alternative, promising to put an end to the corruption that characterized the HDZ regime and to spread the country's wealth more evenly. A

⁵¹¹ Dragomir Vojnic, "The Economic Dimension of Nationalism: the case study on comparative investments in Croatia," in Žarko Pukovski et al (eds.), *Politics and Economics of Transition* (Zagreb: Informator, 1993), p. 184.

⁵¹² Ratko Bošković, "U kandžama boljševizma," *Globus*, 16 July 1999, p. 27.

⁵¹³ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 17 December 1997.

⁵¹⁴ *ARKzin*, no. 5 (March 1998).

similar approach was adopted by the other five major opposition parties, regardless of where they fell on the political spectrum.

In contrast to the situation in Croatia, there was a clear division between Slovakia's "Nationalists" and "Europeanists" in the area of economic policy during the early 1990s. Prior to Slovakia's 1992 elections, the "Europeanists" generally favored quick economic reforms, while the "Nationalists" in the HZDS preferred a "third way" between socialism and capitalism, at least in rhetoric. In the early 1990s, anti-reform economists were grouped together in the Independent Association of Economists of Slovakia (NEZES), which included a number of prominent HZDS representatives. The Slovak National Party (SNS), in contrast, had more of a "Europeanist" approach in that it favored rapid reforms.

Although the HZDS had convinced voters that their economic well-being would significantly improve if the party were voted to power, following the 1992 elections Meciar's government implemented a number of policies that were not in line with previous promises of gentler reforms. In fact, with the exception of privatization, economic policy continued as it had before the Czech-Slovak split. Although high unemployment in Slovakia versus the Czech Republic had been a major impetus behind Slovakia's push for independence, Slovak unemployment rose even higher following the breakup of the federation. Meanwhile, the National Bank of Slovakia was forced to devalue the currency by 10 percent in July 1993, and GDP continued to fall, despite the fact that a Czech-Slovak customs union to some extent cushioned the impact of the separation.

Although in practice Meciar tended to favor policies aimed at economic reform in 1992-1993, his discourse continued to waver between a socialist and more Western approach. In April 1993 Meciar said that society should be built on foundations that were "neither socialist nor capitalist";⁵¹⁵ however, little more than a month later, he argued that there was only one path for Slovakia: "to accept the requirements of the West."⁵¹⁶ During Meciar's 1994-1998 government, reform efforts slowed down or were even reversed, but privatization sped up. At the same time, there remained a tendency within the HZDS to promote a whole range of

⁵¹⁵ Meciar interview, *Národná obroda*, 21 April 1993.

economic approaches, which were indicative not only of the party's conscious efforts to attract a following that was as wide as possible but also of the continued broad opinions of the movement's representatives. For example, as late as 1995, HZDS economic expert Sergej Kozlík argued that Slovaks should not be afraid of the word "socialism," adding that all countries, including the United States, were heading in that direction.⁵¹⁷

Throughout the 1990s, privatization was the main subject of controversy in Slovak economic policy, and disputes over methodology, speed, and transparency divided not only "Nationalists" from "Europeanists" but also "Europeanists" and "Nationalists" amongst themselves. Slovakia's "Europeanist" opposition forces grew and expanded in scope after the 1992 elections, and they became less united in their policy aims, as the right-wing parties that had ruled in 1990-1992 were joined by the ex-communist Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) as well as by a number of politicians who deserted the HZDS and the SNS in 1993-1994. When Meciar's second government was dismissed in March 1994 — partly because of a dispute over privatization — a new "Europeanist" cabinet was formed under the leadership of HZDS rebel Jozef Moravčík that included parties from across the political spectrum. Most of the ministers in Moravčík's short-lived government agreed on the need to speed up reforms and cooperate with international financial institutions. However, a conflict over privatization divided the government parties and split the SDL internally. While the SDL's leftist wing preferred public auctions, direct sales, and management buy-outs, the other ruling parties as well as the SDL's reformist group supported the coupon privatization program that had been launched in Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s.⁵¹⁸ Despite such controversy, the Moravčík cabinet launched a second wave of coupon privatization, which Meciar called "the most expensive election campaign in world history."⁵¹⁹ Although 90 percent of all eligible citizens eventually bought coupons, the program's popularity was not reflected in support for the governing parties, and the HZDS won 35 percent of the total vote in the fall 1994 parliamentary elections, compared with only 29 percent for the parties constituting the Moravčík cabinet.

⁵¹⁶ TASR, 26 May 1993.

⁵¹⁷ *Národná obroda*, 18 July 1995.

⁵¹⁸ *Sme*, 29 April 1994; *Journal of Commerce*, 8 November 1994.

⁵¹⁹ CTK, 12 July 1994.

During Meciar's 1994-1998 rule, Slovakia's "Europeanist" opposition parties were generally louder than their Croatian counterparts in criticizing the government's economic policies; however, they continued to be divided in their approach.

Until the mid-1990s, Slovak "Nationalists" were also split over the question of privatization. While the SNS had generally favored coupon privatization in its 1992 election campaign, the HZDS was opposed. After considerable wavering over whether to launch a second wave of voucher privatization, the 1992-1994 Meciar cabinet opted instead to switch to standard methods, and privatization stagnated. Only in early 1994, when it became clear that Meciar's government would soon be dismissed, did the HZDS change its approach and launch a month-long period of "wild privatization," during which approximately 40 firms were sold cheaply and without public tenders to employees and political allies. Following the elections, there was initial doubt over the future of privatization, particularly after the privatization minister post went to the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS), which expressed its fundamental opposition to the process and called it "the foundation of a speculative economy" that destroys industry, agriculture, and a country's entire economic base and leads the world to "barbarism."⁵²⁰ Before long, however, privatization moved quickly ahead, and critics alleged that ZRS representatives had been "bought."⁵²¹ Analysts have suggested that Slovak economic policy was also susceptible to capture by groups outside the ruling parties and that managers had a strong influence on the privatization process under Meciar.⁵²²

In Croatia, there was some debate over alternative privatization methods in the early 1990s. While the political opposition generally favored the launching of a coupon scheme, which would provide for speedy privatization and a small role for the state, the HDZ preferred a slower process with more state control. Anxious for revenue to help finance budget deficits, the HDZ was unwilling to allow for the free distribution of property, and the party instead favored management and

⁵²⁰ Joint statement issued by the ZRS and the Party of French Workers, *Sme*, 15 January 1995.

⁵²¹ See, for example, Ivan Mikloš, "Privatization," in Martin Bútora and Thomas W. Skladony (eds.), *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State of Society* (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1998), p. 124.

employee buyouts in which a maximum of 50 percent of the shares in each company was to be sold at a discount and on an installment basis to employees and retired workers.⁵²³ Despite the differences in opinion, one analyst commented that privatization legislation was “surprisingly little discussed” because of “the shadow of impending war” and the opposition’s weakness in the parliament and limited access to the media.⁵²⁴

Although the HDZ and HZDS began their terms in office in widely different circumstances, the way the privatization process was carried out by the two parties was remarkably similar. In neither case does it appear that the creation of a new capitalist class was part of a grand scheme, and both parties initially hoped for inflows of foreign investment.⁵²⁵ When that investment was slow in coming and given the insufficient domestic capital, privatization initially limped along in both countries. In delaying the privatization of large firms, it was unclear whether the governments did not want to lose control of those enterprises and thereby give up their dominant position in the economy, or whether they were reluctant to take responsibility for the expected social effects of privatization, particularly unemployment and bankruptcies.⁵²⁶ Even by the late 1990s, both the HDZ and HZDS were reluctant to sell off strategic firms in sectors such as energy, telecommunications, and armaments. In 1995 the Slovak parliament approved a law on strategic firms that prevented the privatization of a number of key companies, but in certain cases they were sold off anyway. Those that were not sold were often put in the hands of political allies, many of whom siphoned off funds and enriched themselves and the ruling parties in the process while at the same time causing enormous damage to the firms they controlled.

Privatization in Slovakia and Croatia picked up speed in 1994-1995, and while both the HDZ and HZDS rejected coupon privatization for the masses, there was

⁵²² Hilary Appel and John Gould, “Identity Politics and Economic Reform: Examining Industry-State Relations in the Czech and Slovak Republics,” *Europe-Asia Studies* vol. 52, no. 1 (January 2000), pp. 111-131.

⁵²³ Nevenka Cuckovic, “Privatization, Restructuring and Institutional Change: How Far Has Croatia Gone?” in Barbara Blaszyk and Richard Woodward (eds.), *Privatization in Post-communist Countries, Volume I* (Warsaw: Case, 1996), pp. 57-58.

⁵²⁴ Ivo Bicanic, “Privatization in Croatia” *East European Politics and Societies* vol. 7, no. 3 (Fall 93), pp. 428-429.

⁵²⁵ Personal interview with Ivo Bicanic, 30 May 2000.

⁵²⁶ Bicanic, “Privatization in Croatia,” p. 437.

an increased tendency for those with connections to the ruling parties to acquire firms cheaply. In Croatia measures were taken to increase public participation in privatization after the number of employee shareholders fell in 1993 due to the difficult economic situation, and victims of the “Homeland War” and political prisoners from the communist regime were provided with free shares.⁵²⁷ Although both the HZDS 1994 election platform and the 1995 government manifesto stated that the coupon privatization program launched by the Moravčík cabinet would continue, in 1995 the new Meciar cabinet cancelled the program, replacing it with a scheme that gave each coupon holder a bond issued by the National Property Fund (FNM) that was payable after five years. The Meciar government thus clearly preferred to transfer property to committed supporters rather than offer it to a populace that would be unlikely to remember the favor the next time elections came around.

Although the need to fill state coffers was often given in both countries as a justification for not launching mass coupon privatization, by selling firms cheaply the HDZ and HZDS not only failed to distribute shares of companies to the broader population but also cost the state potential revenues that could have been spent on infrastructure improvements or social programs for those who were suffering in the transition process. The existence of corruption and clientelism might be considered a somewhat normal part of politics in many countries; however, in Slovakia and Croatia there was an obvious conflict between the claims by “Nationalists” that they were “protecting the nation” and their actions in practice. Some representatives of the ruling parties argued that corruption in the privatization process is a normal phenomenon and that if the opposition were in power, they would behave in the same way.⁵²⁸

In Croatia, many of those who acquired property and misused state funds failed to see any conflict between their behavior and their nationalist discourse. In the first part of the decade, Tudman openly announced on several occasions his intention to

⁵²⁷ Cuckovic, “Privatization, Restructuring and Institutional Change,” pp. 59-60, 62. For more on Croatia’s 1998 coupon privatization program, see Drago Cenik, “Menadžeri i institucionalni vlasnici,” in Cenik and Ivan Rogic (eds.), *Privatizacija i javnost* (Zagreb: Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, 1999), pp. 217-254.

⁵²⁸ Personal interview with HDZ representative Predrag Haramija, 25 May 2000. For the Slovak case, see statements by HZDS and SNS representatives in Mikloš, “Privatization,” p. 124.

create a new capitalist class in Croatia consisting of 100-250 families.⁵²⁹ Some of the new tycoons did not try to hide their newly-found wealth, believing that as founders of the state they deserved to have certain privileges. One Croatian general reportedly justified the use of a helicopter for private purposes in such a way.⁵³⁰

As HDZ popularity declined at the end of the decade due to growing poverty and various scandals, Tudman altered his discourse, dismissing allegations about the “privileged position of only some individuals who became rich in the transformation process” and making it appear that the number of those benefiting from privatization was actually much greater. In a state of the nation address in January 1999, Tudman claimed that approximately two million workers and war victims had taken part in the privatization process, while more than 300,000 Croats had bought their apartments at a discount. He also argued that the growing strength of the middle class was demonstrated by data showing that tens of thousands of Croatian citizens were spending their summer or winter holidays abroad, not only in neighboring countries.⁵³¹ Many Croats questioned Tudman’s allegations and continued to see themselves as poor, particularly in comparison with the relatively high standard of living they had enjoyed in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵³²

In Slovakia, the situation was somewhat different from that in Croatia, partly because of the more egalitarian nature of society and the general perception that anyone who had attained wealth must have done so in an illegal way. Moreover, the absence of war in Slovakia and the lower level of personal attachment to the new state among the majority of Slovaks meant that unlike their Croatian counterparts, HZDS representatives had to be more careful and were unable to use arguments about their “natural right” to state property. Those who acquired wealth often tried to hide it, striving to keep privatization decisions secret. Because the parliament transferred responsibility for privatization from the cabinet to the FNM in late 1994, Meciar frequently used the formal absence of government control as an excuse whenever controversial decisions on privatization were reported to the public, despite the fact that the HZDS had a majority on the fund’s two boards.

⁵²⁹ See, for example, *Vjesnik*, 23 October 1995, cited in Letica, p. 37.

⁵³⁰ Andrija Hebrang, “Neugodne istine o hrvatskim dužnosnicima, *Globus*, 17 December 1999, p. 39.

⁵³¹ The Croatian president’s Web page (www.urpr.hr).

The HZDS tended to justify its privatization policies by pointing to the traditional poverty of the Slovak people and the need to create a new domestic upper class. The party's 1994 election program called for "orienting the privatization process in such a way that it would lead to the creation of a strong domestic entrepreneurial class that would be the guarantee of Slovakia's economic development."⁵³³

Defending the government's privatization policy against criticism from the opposition, Kozlík emphasized that the creation of domestic entrepreneurial classes allowed Slovakia to preserve its scientific-technical potential and prevent it from being a country only of cheap labor. He added that Slovak entrepreneurs would only be competitive on European markets if the state allowed for the relatively cheap sale of property, combined with long-term repayment plans and tax deductions for investments. If the firms were sold at their book value, the economy would be overburdened, which would be reflected in higher prices for consumers, Kozlík argued.⁵³⁴

Although the HZDS had actively sought foreign investment during Meciar's 1992-1993 government, in 1994-1998 the party was influenced by the SNS, which stressed in its 1994 election program that it opposed "the impoverishment [of Slovakia] by international capital."⁵³⁵ That approach corresponded well with the HZDS discourse about promoting the nation, and HZDS representatives often stressed their aim of constructing a domestic entrepreneurial class that would "save" the economy from foreign domination and allow Slovakia to compete internationally. HZDS officials frequently boasted that unlike its neighbors, Slovakia had achieved high GDP growth without significant levels of foreign investment. At a 1996 HZDS congress, Meciar pointed to the positive results of Slovakia's economic transformation process, which he said had been reached despite the fact that the country had rejected Jeffrey Sachs, shock therapy, Czechoslovakists, and "people who said we will get to Europe only by hanging on the Czechs' back."⁵³⁶ Although critics argued that many Slovak firms would have problems competing on world markets without foreign expertise, observers

⁵³² See Marinko Culic, "Lijepa naša ubožnica," *Feral Tribune*, 25 January 1999, pp. 6-7.

⁵³³ HZDS 1994 election program, "Slovensko do toho!"

⁵³⁴ "Kroky" discussion program on Slovak Television, reported in TASR and CTK, 18 February 1996.

⁵³⁵ TASR, 27 September 1994.

⁵³⁶ RFE/RL Slovak Service, 3 April 1996.

predicted that a “third wave” of privatization would take place, in which the new entrepreneurs would eventually sell their property to foreign investors, thereby gaining large profits. Kozlík himself admitted that foreign investment would come within the framework of the “third wave of privatization.”⁵³⁷

In the Croatian case, while the HDZ did not openly condemn foreign investment, it did encourage capital inflows from Croatian émigrés rather than from foreigners, probably as a way of ensuring support from that constituency. Nonetheless, the émigré community played only a minor role in Croatian privatization. In Slovakia, the only émigré who was a significant economic actor was Rudolf Mosný, who purchased the Šariš brewery in eastern Slovakia in the early 1990s and set up a pro-European political party called New Slovakia prior to the 1994 elections.

Promoting a “national” entrepreneurial class

In both Croatia and Slovakia the privatization process became a tool of the ruling parties in maintaining power through the construction of a new domestic economic elite that was closely connected to the ruling parties. The new business class was intended to be subordinate to the government, and the owners of privatized firms were often expected to hand over a share of their profits to the ruling parties, which in turn used the funds to increase public support, particularly during election campaigns.

The main distinction between economic developments in the two countries during the 1990s was that while the HDZ was solely responsible for the transformation process and controlled privatization for nearly 10 years without having to share the proceeds with any other party, the HZDS ruled for less than six years, and even then it was forced to spread the wealth to its coalition partners. Because basic economic reforms — including the first wave of privatization — took place under non-HZDS leadership, privatization in Slovakia was not nearly as one-sided as in Croatia. In Slovakia’s first privatization wave, 503 large firms were sold through

⁵³⁷ “Kroky” discussion program on Slovak Television, reported in TASR and CTK, 18 February 1996.

the coupon method and 330 through standard methods, in addition to nearly 10,000 small businesses.⁵³⁸

Throughout the decade, there existed a significant segment of economic actors in Slovakia that did not support Meciar, and that was particularly apparent in the investment funds that had gained two-thirds of the vouchers from the first wave of the coupon privatization. The lack of political jurisdiction over the funds worried the HZDS, and in 1995 the Finance Ministry removed the licenses of several large investment firms. In particular, the ministry's decision in March 1995 to revoke the license of Prvá Slovenská Investičná Spoločnosť (PSIS) appeared to be a purely political move, especially since the PSIS was a shareholder in the firm that published the opposition daily *Sme*. Although the second wave of coupon privatization planned by the Moravčík government had attracted participation from numerous investment funds, they were ineligible to participate in the new bond scheme that replaced it. Moreover, in September 1995 the parliament approved a law on investment funds and firms that prevented them from serving on the boards of the companies in which they held shares.⁵³⁹

In contrast, there were few Croats in opposition to the HDZ who were involved in big business. Although Croatia's privatization process was supposed to be based largely on employee and management buyouts, such methods were prevented in the case of certain media organizations so that the state could become the majority owner and thus control the content of the publications.⁵⁴⁰ Another example of apparent political interference in privatization occurred in the case of Coning Holding, which was run by Croatian People's Party Chairman Radimir Čačić, one of the only major opposition politicians who was successful at business. In 1995 the state Croatian Privatization Fund (HFP) cancelled the 1992 privatization of Coning by the firm's employees and reclaimed the firm.⁵⁴¹ It was not until October 1999 that the Constitutional Court overturned the 1992 regulation that had allowed the HFP to control and cancel the privatization of firms that had already been

⁵³⁸ See Sharon Fisher, "Privatization Stumbles Forward," *Transition*, vol. 1, no. 8 (26 May 1995), p. 45.

⁵³⁹ TASR, 7 September 1995.

⁵⁴⁰ Bicanic, "Privatization in Croatia," p. 436.

registered by a court, thereby allowing for the return of Coning and approximately 100 other firms that had been partially or completely taken over by the HFP.⁵⁴²

In Croatia, many managers were associated with the HDZ, and they used innovative ways to gain control of their firms as cheaply as possible.⁵⁴³ In certain instances, the HFP replaced a firm's management team with people connected to the HDZ, while some government ministers were appointed to the board of directors in state enterprises. The leading state banks often approved loans for management buyouts without proper guarantees that the loans would ever be repaid, and loans were frequently approved on the basis of political favoritism.⁵⁴⁴ In building their economic empires, Croatia's top economic elite often followed a similar path. Once they had established a position on the market through the purchase of an enterprise, they used its revenues to run other companies and to acquire new firms. The original firm served as collateral for loans from politically-biased banks, and those loans were used to finance other enterprises or to purchase new ones. Faced with huge debts, the original firm as well as subsequently purchased companies often eventually went bankrupt, and there was little consideration for the employees, who by the end of the 1990s were sometimes forced to work without salaries or were simply laid off.⁵⁴⁵

In Slovakia, the "wild" privatization of early 1994 served as a dress rehearsal for the process that took place under Meciar's 1994-1998 government. By transferring control over privatization from the government to the FNM, the regime allowed for the sale of property without cabinet approval and without revealing the price to the public. Observers believed that most of the privatization decisions were political ones, especially since the HZDS had a clear majority on both the FNM presidium

⁵⁴¹ Personal interview with Radimir Cacic, 21 December 1998. See also Nevenka Cuckovic, "Neslužbeno gospodarstvo i proces privatizacije," *Financijska praksa* vol. 21, nos. 1-2 (June 1997), p. 268.

⁵⁴² Dražen Rajkovic, "Kontroverzna presuda Ustavnog suda Hrvatske," *Globus*, 12 November 1999, pp. 30-32.

⁵⁴³ Bicanic, "Privatization in Croatia," pp. 435-436.

⁵⁴⁴ Cuckovic, "Privatization, Restructuring and Institutional Change," p. 67.

⁵⁴⁵ See, for example, the study of the decline of Miroslav Kutle's dairy Karlovacka industrija mlijeka (KIM) in Višnja Gotal, "Krah Kutlina poslovnog carstva," *Nacional*, 6 January 1999. For more on Croatian privatization see also Dražen Kalogjera, "Razvitak, inflacija i privatizacija," *Ekonomski pregled* vol. 44, nos. 9-10 (1993), pp. 559-587; Kalogjera, "Hrvatsko gospodarstvo i poduzeće u 21. stoljeću: dvojbe i stvarnost," *Hrvatska gospodarska revija* vol. 45, no. 6 (June 1996), pp. 799-815.

(six out of nine members) and executive council (nine out of 11 members). All other board members represented the HZDS's junior coalition partners, with the exception of a brief period before the 1998 elections when Ivan Mikloš, who had served as privatization minister in 1991-1992, was finally given a place on the executive council. During 1995-1998, the FNM was criticized for selling many attractive firms at a fraction of their value and offering limited information to the public. Its preferred methods were direct sales to domestic investors, including manager and employee buyouts. Payments were made in installments, with the first installment usually representing just 10-20 percent of the purchase price. It was widely known that in each district, a team of five representatives of the ruling coalition — referred to as the *akčná päťka* [action five] — was responsible for reviewing available property, and the FNM only acted on the decisions made in weekly discussions by the leaders of the three coalition partners.⁵⁴⁶ New owners in Slovakia were given tax breaks and other benefits, including a February 1996 income tax law that provided special privileges to owners of newly privatized firms by allowing them to write off investments, while ignoring those who had purchased their companies earlier. Nonetheless, in contrast to the situation in Croatia, where privatization was centered mainly on a small group of “tycoons,” in Slovakia the process appeared to be somewhat further reaching, and the distribution of property was used as a way of maintaining political support, partly because of the need for the HZDS to keep its coalition partners happy. Some analysts speculated that the HZDS-ZRS-SNS coalition would remain together until the last piece of property was privatized.⁵⁴⁷

In Croatia the construction of a new business class started first and foremost with Tudman's family itself; as “father of the nation,” Tudman apparently believed that his own family should be included in the group of top entrepreneurs. The Tudman family was provided for abundantly — with fancy cars, villas, and fur coats — and their personal wealth and influence was ensured through the distribution of property and important posts. Tudman's wife Ankica served as the director of the Humanitarian Foundation for the Children of Croatia, which was located in a

⁵⁴⁶ Ivan Mikloš interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 14 September 1998, p. 21.

⁵⁴⁷ For more on Slovak privatization, see the numerous studies by Anton Marcincin, including “The Family Circles Privatization,” in Marcincin et al, *Privatisation Methods and Development in Slovakia* (Bratislava: Centrum pre hospodársky rozvoj, 1997), pp. 6-39.

luxurious 20-room villa near the Presidential Office. While Tudman's eldest son Miroslav served for a number of years as head of Croatia's secret services, his younger son Stjepan was owner of the Domovina holding company, which from 1991 was the main contractor providing food for the Student Center of the University of Zagreb. Stjepan also owned several cafés and hotels, as well as the film production house Patria film, which was established in 1997 and which co-produced several projects with Croatian Television. Tudman's daughter Nevenka ran her own business empire, centered around the firm Netel, which was involved in tourism and other fields and whose offices were located in the Defense Ministry. According to one source, while Nevenka lobbied for the Austrian firm that won the tender for Croatia's second GSM network in 1998, the following year Stjepan played a significant role in the negotiations with Deutsche Telekom over the sale of shares in its Croatian counterpart, Hrvatske telekomunikacije (HT), and the \$850 million German investment was expected to be used in the HDZ election campaign.⁵⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Nevenka's oldest son, Dejan Košutic, was at the age of 28 the top manager and owner of Kaptol banka, which also ran the privatization investment fund Središnji nacionalni fond (SNF). Of the seven investment funds that participated in the 1998 coupon privatization program that was launched for war victims, the SNF obtained the third largest portion of shares and gained control of a chain of 15 Zagreb movie theaters. Nevenka's younger son, Siniša, was a racecar driver.⁵⁴⁹

In his family life, Meciar presented a sharp contrast to Tudman. Although Meciar had two sons and two daughters,⁵⁵⁰ they were rarely seen or discussed, and it was widely known that he was not living with his wife.⁵⁵¹ Meciar sometimes claimed that he gave his family just 10,000 crowns monthly, while the rest went to those in need of money. He was often seen in public with two women who were widely believed to be his lovers, first his assistant Anna Nagyová and after their split in 1996, his advisor Blažena Martinková, whose husband Karol Martinka was the

⁵⁴⁸ *Nacional*, 6 October 1999.

⁵⁴⁹ For more on the Tudman family, see Branka Stipic, "Trijumf hrvatskog kapitalizma," *Globus*, 10 April 1998, pp. 26-29; Slavica Lukic, "Zakon o imovini dužnosnika," *Globus*, 26 June 1998, pp. 22-25; Lukic, "Novi poslovni pothvat obitelji Tudmana!" *Globus*, 23 October 1998, pp. 14-16; and Đurđica Klancir and Lukic, "Pretvorbene afere koje su potresale Hrvatsku (2)," *Globus*, 19 November 1999, pp. 87-89.

⁵⁵⁰ One daughter was from a previous marriage.

⁵⁵¹ *Plus 7 dní*, 12 November 1996, pp. 12-13.

director of Devín banka and an owner of the Piešťany spa.⁵⁵² No privatization scandals were connected to Meciar during his rule, although in summer 1998 opposition representative Brigita Schmögnerová sparked a public discussion when she raised the possibility of whether Meciar might own shares in the Košice-based steel giant, VSŽ.⁵⁵³ After the 1998 elections considerable suspicion was aroused that Meciar had in fact been involved in shady privatization deals when he purchased a 30-bed pension in the spa town of Trenčianské Teplice, his children bought a restaurant and two hotels, and his 20 year-old daughter Magda gained ownership of the Bratislava-based Koliba film studio.⁵⁵⁴

In both Croatia and Slovakia, the *nouveaux riches* represented strong lobby groups. Slaven Letica pointed to a number of different “clans” of businessmen in Croatia, including the group around the oil company INA, the clan of the Zagreb mayor, the group involved in military imports and production, as well as clans involved in the dairy business, banking and insurance, shipping, retail trade, newspapers, textiles, hotels, among others.⁵⁵⁵ Croatia’s most infamous tycoon was Miroslav Kutle, who under communism was a lawyer and café owner. Hailing from Herzegovina, Kutle was a founding HDZ member and a key funder of the party in the 1990 elections. With HDZ support and the help of such financial institutions as Dubrovacka banka, Kutle’s business empire — called Globus group — grew quickly, with the two biggest firms being the Diona retail chain and Tisak, which was responsible for printing and distributing the majority of Croatian newspapers. At its height, Kutle’s empire comprised some 120 firms, including construction companies, hotels, the mining industry, and breweries, and it was said to service the interests of Croatian nationalists, including Croatian émigrés who had returned to the country.⁵⁵⁶ Throughout the 1990s, Kutle milked his companies until they were worthless, and although the HDZ tried to save its image in summer 1999 by expelling Kutle from the party,⁵⁵⁷ the damage had already been done.

⁵⁵² Palo Rýpal, “Poradkyna,” *Plus 7 dní*, 29 December 1997, pp. 17-19.

⁵⁵³ Miloš Luknár, “Je premiér Meciar spoluvlastníkom VSŽ?,” *Plus 7 dní*, 20 July 1998, p. 78.

⁵⁵⁴ See *Sme* and SITA, 11 May 2000.

⁵⁵⁵ Letica, *Politicko pleme 2*, pp. 220-225.

⁵⁵⁶ Roman Frydman et al, *Capitalism with a Comrade’s Face* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1998), p. 73.

See also Slaven Letica, “Sad ili nikad,” *Globus*, 11 June 1999, p. 11.

⁵⁵⁷ *Novi list*, 10 June 1999.

Croatia's second biggest tycoon was Josip Gucic, another key funder of the HDZ in the early years. Having lived in Germany under the communist regime and gained riches by trading gold and foreign currency, Gucic was the only one of the Croatian tycoons who paid for most of his firms in cash. Gucic's 30-firm empire was centered around the foreign trade company Ferimport and the textile industry, while his loans came mainly from Privredna and Zagrebacka banks.⁵⁵⁸ By early 1999, all of Gucic's firms were mortgaged and his business empire was near collapse, and Gucic admitted that he had made mistakes. Although he claimed that he had offered to return his 30 firms to the state at the price he had paid for them, the government responded that it no longer had the necessary money in its coffers.⁵⁵⁹

Another prominent Croatian tycoon was Ivica Todoric, whose empire was centered around the firm Agrokor and included the Konzum chain of shops, Zagreb's Hotel Intercontinental, among other companies. Todoric, who controlled a significant share of the production and trade of food products in Croatia, reportedly built his empire through credits from Zagrebacka banka, and his investments served the technocrat, ex-communist wing of the HDZ.⁵⁶⁰ One analyst commented that in contrast to other tycoons who created their empires in secrecy, Todoric enjoyed publicity, and he made an effort at good public relations through charity donations.⁵⁶¹ A fourth big businessman was Luka Rajic, who had worked as a truck driver delivering milk during the previous regime and was the only major tycoon who did not diversify, becoming the owner of Lura group, which controlled two-thirds of the country's dairy production. Referred to as "the Croatian king of milk," Rajic became one of the richest people in Croatia, and unlike many other tycoons, he ran his businesses successfully.⁵⁶²

Some HDZ politicians were also directly involved in business, and one of the most successful was Nikica Valentic, who was considered part of the technocrat group. After the HDZ came to power in 1990, Valentic was named director of INA, and

⁵⁵⁸ Gordan Malic, "Gucic: od međunarodnog krijumcara zlata do hrvatskog tajkuna," *Globus*, 19 February 1999, pp. 34-37.

⁵⁵⁹ Gucic interview, *Globus*, 19 February 1999, pp. 37-39.

⁵⁶⁰ Frydman et al, p. 73.

⁵⁶¹ Letica, *Politicko pleme* 2, pp. 221-222.

he became Croatian prime minister in March 1993, during which time he successfully implemented an economic stabilization plan. After leaving the prime minister's post in 1994, Valentic concentrated on his firm Niva, which dealt with gasoline, among other products, and he was a top HDZ candidate in the 2000 elections. Other HDZ representatives with alleged connections to privatization included Croatian ambassador to the U.S. Miomir Žužul, whose wife became the co-owner of the Sloboda sock factory in Samobor, as well as Zagreb mayor Marina Dropulic-Matulovic and Assistant Defense Minister Ivan Juras, among others.⁵⁶³

In Slovakia, probably the most influential group of big businessmen was centered around VSŽ. That firm controlled a huge empire in eastern Slovakia, ranging from companies connected with the steel industry at home and abroad to media organizations,⁵⁶⁴ travel agencies, and soccer teams, including the famous Czech team, Sparta Praha. While nearly two-thirds of VSŽ's shares were sold in the first wave of coupon privatization, VSŽ's association with the HZDS began during the "wild" privatization of March 1994, and from that time the remaining shares were gradually sold to HZDS loyalists. Top HZDS representatives associated with the VSŽ included Július Tóth, who served as finance minister in 1992-1994, Alexander Rezeš, who was transport and communications minister in 1994-1997, and Ján Smerek, who was fourth on the HZDS candidate list in the 1998 elections and was subsequently asked to try to form a new government. VSŽ's link to the HZDS was clearly demonstrated in December 1995, when it was revealed that the firm was building a new 120-room Bratislava headquarters for the party.⁵⁶⁵ In 1996, an alternative metal workers union was established that was close to the HZDS, with most of its members coming from VSŽ.⁵⁶⁶ In January 1997 the HZDS started a membership drive at VSŽ, reportedly focused on staff in "higher positions." The HZDS also favored VSŽ as a candidate for the privatization of Investičná a rozvojová banka (IRB), one of Slovakia's four largest financial institutions. Against the wishes of the National Bank of Slovakia (NBS), VSŽ and

⁵⁶² Klancir and Lukic, "Pretvorbene afere koje su potresale Hrvatsku (3)," *Globus*, 26 November 1999, pp. 85-86.

⁵⁶³ Lukic, "Zakon o imovini dužnosnika," *Globus*, 26 June 1998, p. 25; Cuckovic, "Neslužbeno gospodarstvo i proces privatizacije," p. 269.

⁵⁶⁴ For the VSŽ's influence on the opposition daily *Národná obroda*, see Tatiana Repkova, "Steely Grip on a Slovak Daily," *Transitions*, vol. 4, no. 1 (June 1997), pp. 86-89.

⁵⁶⁵ Radio Twist, 14 December 1995.

⁵⁶⁶ TASR, 25 November 1996.

its partner firms purchased an estimated 43 percent of IRB shares long before the decision to privatize the bank was approved by the parliament. The bank was apparently supposed to help boost the VSŽ's ability to expand its empire, and VSŽ managed to get a loan from IRB that was guaranteed with the bank's own shares. By December 1997 the bank was near collapse, and the NBS placed it under forced administration, using tax payers' money to protect it.⁵⁶⁷

While Tóth moved on in September 1995 to become head of the DMD holding company that coordinated the development strategies for a group of 26 firms in the armaments industry, Rezeš took over as the key link between the HZDS and VSŽ. Having previously served as a VSŽ vice president, Rezeš was said to have controlled as much as 50 percent of the firm. During his term as minister, Rezeš's son Július continued working his way up the company's ladder, and in 1996 at the age of 26 he became VSŽ's youngest-ever vice president and a member of its board of directors. Meanwhile, Július's wife and brother-in-law were also involved in the VSŽ empire.⁵⁶⁸ The Rezeš family led a lavish lifestyle, and after a scandal emerged in 1996 about private planes used by the minister's family, Rezeš said that he had paid for the flights with his own money, which he claimed he had received through long years of honest work. Rezeš left his cabinet post in March 1997 for health reasons, and he was subsequently elected president of VSŽ's five-member board of directors. Shortly before leaving his cabinet post, Rezeš said that he would publicly, economically and politically stay with Meciar, adding that Slovakia needed "ten Meciar."⁵⁶⁹ VSŽ gave the HZDS strong support during the 1998 election campaign, and at a June 1998 soccer game Sparta Praha players were required to wear HZDS jerseys.⁵⁷⁰

Outside of VSŽ, one of Slovakia's richest and most powerful entrepreneurs was Vladimír Poór, a former waiter who from 1993 served as a HZDS official in the western Slovak town of Trnava. Poór was said to be a member of the *akčná päťka* in the Trnava district, which almost guaranteed that he would play a role in

⁵⁶⁷*Sme*, 19 and 22 December 1997; Ivan Mikloš interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 14 September 1998, p. 21.

⁵⁶⁸Svjatoslav Dohovic, "Už môže odísť," *Pravda*, 31 January 1997.

⁵⁶⁹CTK, 19 February 1997.

⁵⁷⁰František Bouc, "Sparta stumps for Meciar," *The Prague Post*, 17-23 June 1998.

privatization.⁵⁷¹ In addition to owning other firms, Poór admitted that he was one of the owners of the profitable gas storage company Nafta Gbely,⁵⁷² the privatization of which was one of the biggest scandals of Meciar's third government because of the secrecy surrounding the case.⁵⁷³ Another major businessman with HZDS connections was Slavomir Hatina, director of the profitable Slovnaft oil refinery. Despite the interest of numerous foreign investors, in August 1995 a 39 percent stake of Slovnaft was sold at a fraction of its estimated value to Slovintegra, a firm that was owned by Slovnaft managers and employees and controlled by Hatina. Hatina, a key financial backer of the HZDS who had supported the party since its founding, had already purchased Slovnaft shares in earlier direct sales, and he thus gained near-majority control of the firm.⁵⁷⁴ In July 1997 the FNM sold another 15 percent of Slovnaft shares to Slovintegra at a fraction of the real price. In justifying the huge discount, FNM Presidium President Štefan Gavorník said that the fund had decided in such a way because employees were involved in the sale.⁵⁷⁵

Other HZDS representatives who were successful in privatization included Viliam Sobona, who served as healthcare minister in 1992-1993 and became an owner of the Sliac and Kováčová spas in 1995, paying a price that was reportedly equal to that of the statue and fountain in the park.⁵⁷⁶ Parliamentary deputies from the ruling coalition were said to have obtained lucrative hotels in the High Tatra mountains, while HZDS deputy Dušan Macuška was reportedly active in the Lucenec district and Kozlík was allegedly behind the glassworks Skláren Poltár. Meanwhile, relatives of Kozlík; parliament chairman Ivan Gašparovic; HZDS deputies Vlastimil Vicen, Milan Secánský, and Martin Oravec; as well as of Culture Minister Ivan Hudec were also said to have obtained property.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷¹ Daša Matejčíková, "Politik a veľkopodnikateľ," *Plus 7 dní*, 19 September 1997, pp. 14-16.

⁵⁷² Ivan Mikloš interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 14 September 1998, p. 20.

⁵⁷³ Zita Sujová, "Kde sídlili majitelia Nafty Gbely?" *Plus 7 dní*, 4 March 1997, pp. 14-16.

⁵⁷⁴ Frydman et al, p. 60.

⁵⁷⁵ Gavorník interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 14 July 1997, p. 14.

⁵⁷⁶ Mikloš interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 14 September 1998, p. 20.

⁵⁷⁷ Daša Matejčíková, "Podnikanie pani Gašparovicovej," *Plus 7 dní*, 19 March 1996, pp. 18-19; Zita Sujová, "Milionárom lacno a rýchlo," *Plus 7 dní*, 14 January 1997, pp. 12-13; *Plus 7 dní*, 14 July 1997, p. 15; Zita Sujová, "Otec a syn," *Plus 7 dní*, 20 April 1998, pp. 22-23; and Mikloš interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 14 September 1998, pp. 20-23.

The struggle was not limited to HZDS representatives. From the ZRS, relatives and friends of Gavorník and Construction Minister Mráz were reportedly involved in privatization,⁵⁷⁸ while the SNS was also accused of illegal privatization activities. In January 1995 Slota, who was serving as mayor of Žilina and as a parliamentary deputy, announced that he would donate his 1995 parliamentary salary to social groups in Žilina, adding that his family's needs would be financed by his mayoral salary.⁵⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the media highlighted the wealth of Slota's family, showing that he owned several Audis and a Jeep, as well as a couple of motorcycles, including a Harley Davidson.⁵⁸⁰ During a parliament session in November 1995, Mikuláš Dzurinda of the opposition Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) suggested that an investigative commission be established to look into Slota's large monthly income, as well as the privatization activities of SNS deputies and their relatives. Among the most active SNS families was that of Vítazoslav Moric, who headed the state-run arms exports organization Armex.⁵⁸¹ Naturally, the SNS rejected Dzurinda's allegations.

Tunneling also took place in state-owned firms, with one example being Slovakia's hugely profitable state-owned gas firm Slovenský plynárenský priemysel (SPP). Ján Ducký, a former communist official who served as economy minister in 1993-1994 and 1994-1996, opposed the privatization of strategic firms such as the SPP, and he became director of that firm in April 1997 while continuing to serve as a HZDS deputy. Just before the 1998 elections, the media published reports about apparent tunneling of SPP funds into private hands, and one source commented that "strange transactions with various shares and other financial operations lead to suspicion that the golden egg of our economy has already been plucked of hundreds of millions of crowns."⁵⁸² Mikloš accused Ducký of making deals that were disadvantageous for the firm but advantageous for private subjects, giving as an example the SPP's purchase of a hotel in the Tatra mountains at a price much higher than market value.⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁸ Mikloš interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 14 September 1998, pp. 20-23; *Plus 7 dní*, 14 July 1997, p. 15..

⁵⁷⁹ TASR, 6 January 1995.

⁵⁸⁰ Matejčíková, "Zbohatlík Ján Slota" *Plus 7 dní*, 16 June 1997, pp. 5-8. See also Vladimír Hudák, "Chcel Ján Slota kúpiť štvormiliónového Vipera" *Plus 7 dní*, 29 September 1997, p. 5.

⁵⁸¹ *Pravda*, 9 November 1995.

⁵⁸² *Plus 7 dní*, 14 September 1998, p. 15.

By the second half of the decade, it appeared that the situation in both Slovakia and Croatia had gotten out of control, and the ruling parties were often at the mercy of the powerful new tycoons rather than the other way around. The growing influence of the entrepreneurial groups was noted in Slovakia as early as September 1995, when the Slovak parliament reapproved three controversial economic laws that had been vetoed by the president. At that time, the opposition Democratic Party (DS) asserted that the state of privatization was the result of the “uncontrolled growth in influence of the so-called state-management lobby.”⁵⁸⁴ After a coalition crisis in summer 1996, such speculation only grew stronger, and some claimed that Meciar was only a puppet planted to win elections, while the economic lobby had the real power. Opposition representative and former Economy Minister Ludovít Cernák commented in September 1996 that Meciar needed Rezeš more than Rezeš needed him, pointing out that while Meciar was speaking about social equality, he was promoting the opposite since he had succumbed to the pressure of interest groups that had “grown over his head.” Cernák added that although Meciar could say “enough” to such people, nothing could prevent them from saying the same to him, which would mean that he would no longer be able to “feed his empire.”⁵⁸⁵ Even within the HZDS, parliamentary deputy Roman Hofbauer warned of the risks of privatizing banks by linking them with influential industrial concerns, pointing to the US example, where “military-financial groups ... are so powerful that they ... dictate to the government and president what will happen.”⁵⁸⁶

Both the HDZ and HZDS clearly hoped that the new business elite would remain loyal to them in the future. However, while some businessmen seemed to prefer the chaotic legal situation under the HDZ and HZDS, others favored a more stable framework so that they could protect their positions. Thus, in some cases, managers who wanted to ensure the maintenance of power and control were led to act independently of or even against the wishes of the ruling parties. As support for the ruling parties fell, some tycoons decided to play it safe by funding both sides of the political spectrum, while others abandoned the ruling parties altogether. Particularly in Slovakia, a number of businessmen pulled away from the

⁵⁸³ Mikloš interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 14 September 1998, p. 23.

⁵⁸⁴ *Národná obroda*, 12 September 1995.

⁵⁸⁵ CTK, 27 September 1996.

⁵⁸⁶ RFE/RL Slovak Service, 3 April 1996.

government as it became clear that Meciar would be unable to bring the country into the EU. That was especially true after the establishment in April 1998 of the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), a pro-European party that announced its aim to reconcile Slovakia's polarized society and therefore did not threaten the position of those HZDS businessmen who may have gained property illegally.

One example of a Slovak businessman who switched sides was Jozef Majský, the owner of Sipox holding, an empire with 36 daughter companies and 11,000 employees. Frequently referred to as Slovakia's richest man, Majský was a former HZDS supporter and friend of Meciar's, but by 1994 he had switched to backing the opposition. A professed supporter of democracy and of Slovakia's integration into European structures,⁵⁸⁷ in 1994-1998 Majský played an important role in financing such independent media outlets as Radio Twist. In the 1998 elections, Majský backed the SOP, and his partner Diana Dubovská became a parliamentary deputy for that party.

The emergence of alternatives

Throughout the 1990s, there was a growing tendency in both Slovakia and Croatia to criticize the ruling parties' approach to privatization, and the media focused on specific cases and created a "syndrome of scandals."⁵⁸⁸ That contributed to a negative public perception of the privatization process, while the ostentatious flaunting of wealth by some of the *nouveaux riches* reflected badly on the HDZ and HZDS, especially in those cases where the new economic elite proved to be incompetent managers. The HZDS managed to keep the economy more-or-less afloat until the 1998 elections, but Croatia experienced a spiraling liquidity problem in 1998-1999. As increasing numbers of Croatian workers failed to receive their salaries and firms went bankrupt, public support for the HDZ government declined significantly. Croatia's failed tycoons left behind destroyed firms and banks, lost jobs, and imposed huge costs on society. Because of Croatia's difficult economic situation, the HDZ was sometimes forced to admit its

⁵⁸⁷ See Eva Licková, "Impérium Jozefa Majského," *Plus 7 dní*, 11 March 1997, pp. 25-31.

⁵⁸⁸ Cuckovic, "Nes lužbeno gospodarstvo i proces privatizacije," p. 266.

mistakes. Even the strongly HDZ dailies *Vjesnik* and *Vecernji list* attacked Kutle and Gucic, holding them responsible for ruining the Croatian economy.⁵⁸⁹

In Slovakia, although the HZDS largely avoided self-criticism despite all the privatization and corruption scandals, party representatives were sometimes frank about political involvement. Michal Kováč, a founding HZDS member who suspended his party membership when he became Slovak president, accused Meciar in March 1994 of wanting a political ally in the post of privatization minister in order to secure funds for the party's election campaign.⁵⁹⁰ During a June 1996 coalition crisis centered around the insurance company Slovenská poisťovňa, ZRS Chairman Lupták expressed his belief that "some politicians or deputies are more interested in privatization than... in social and economic developments,"⁵⁹¹ while the pro-HZDS daily *Slovenská Republika* wrote that "not politics but privatization greediness is the reason for the current crisis."⁵⁹² Meciar himself said that the "national pride" of the SNS and the "workers' honor" of the ZRS "ended at Slovenská poisťovňa."⁵⁹³ In August 1996 Gavorník acknowledged that several ministers from the HZDS and ZRS were pressuring the FNM to move forward with privatization, and half a year later, he commented that if he ever decided to publish his memoirs, "I would not even make it to the end of the first chapter and I would be gone."⁵⁹⁴

In Croatia, the economic crisis became visible in 1998, and by the fourth quarter of that year the country was experiencing an economic recession. A major turning point in the public's opinion of the HDZ came with the Dubrovacka banka scandal, which emerged after the bank's director Neven Barac was replaced in February 1998. In an interview with the opposition weekly *Nacional*, Barac alleged that the reason for his dismissal was his decision to block Kutle's accounts and his insistence that Kutle's companies repay their debts. Barac also revealed that he had signed a secret partnership contract the previous year with Kutle, Dubrovnik-Neretva county Deputy Governor Vinko Brnadić, Dubrovnik secret police chief

⁵⁸⁹ *Globus*, 19 February 1999, p. 38.

⁵⁹⁰ *Republika*, 10 March 1994.

⁵⁹¹ Slovak Radio, 5 June 1996.

⁵⁹² *Slovenská Republika*, 20 June 1996.

⁵⁹³ Ondrej Dostál, "Koalická vláda proti vládnej koalícii," *Sme*, 21 June 1996.

⁵⁹⁴ *Národná obroda*, 2 August 1996; Gavorník interview, *Pravda*, 29 January 1997.

Petar Luburic, and HDZ deputy Ivic Pašalic, according to which they would take over the bank as well as other firms in Dubrovnik. Barac said that his announcement that he would leave the partnership contributed to his dismissal, and after speaking to the media he was arrested and held responsible for bringing the bank to the edge of collapse.⁵⁹⁵ After the Dubrovacka scandal was revealed, the HDZ was forced to admit its responsibility, and Pašalic offered his resignation to Tudman. Tudman's refusal to let Pašalic go was followed by the surprising resignation of Miroslav Tudman from the head of the secret services, signaling Miroslav's dissatisfaction with his father's affection for Pašalic.⁵⁹⁶

The media played an important role in changing the political tide in both countries, and the popular weekly magazines *Plus 7 dní* in Slovakia and *Globus* in Croatia are used here as examples, focusing on the two years prior to the elections that led to the fall of the HZDS and HDZ from power. Both magazines were active in digging up privatization scandals and displaying the wealth of the ruling elite, and their full-color glossy pages made them especially conducive to such presentations.

In Slovakia, two of the most powerful demonstrations of the conflicting discourse of the HZDS related to the Rezeš family. Shortly before the 1998 elections, *Plus 7 dní* reported that Alexander Rezeš had bought a number of buildings in Banská Štiavnica — a historic town that is on Unesco's list of protected areas — and completely altered the interior of one without asking permission, destroying its renaissance arches and ceilings and constructing an indoor swimming pool.⁵⁹⁷ Rezeš's apparently superficial love for Slovakia was also demonstrated through the publication on the front page of the influential *Pravda* daily of pictures of luxurious villas on the Spanish coast that had been purchased by Alexander and Július Rezeš and by Smerek, together with the headline "Where to after the elections."⁵⁹⁸ Aside from cases listed elsewhere in this chapter, other articles in *Plus 7 dní* highlighted the FNM's sale of luxurious apartments at discounted prices and favorable conditions to political allies, including several ministers and state

⁵⁹⁵ Dražen Rajkovic, "Afera Dubravacka banka banka," *Globus*, 3 April 1998, pp. 12-14. *Feral Tribune*, 6 April 1998.

⁵⁹⁶ Klancir and Lukic, "Pretvorbene afere koje su potresale Hrvatsku (3)," *Globus*, 26 November 1999, pp. 86-87.

⁵⁹⁷ "Barbarstvo bohatých," *Plus 7 dní*, 7 September 1998, pp. 20-25.

⁵⁹⁸ See *Pravda*, 19 September 1998.

secretaries;⁵⁹⁹ the privatization gains and luxurious villa of HZDS deputy Vlastimil Vicen;⁶⁰⁰ the expenditure of nearly half a million crowns to enable former Interior Minister Ludovít Hudek and several colleagues to attend a conference in Canada on natural disasters;⁶⁰¹ an interview with a ZRS parliamentary deputy criticizing the approach to privatization of his party's coalition partners;⁶⁰² a privatization scandal involving HZDS parliamentary deputy Pavol Halabrin;⁶⁰³ the sale of the Koliba film studio well below its real price;⁶⁰⁴ FNM Presidium President Gavorník's "castle";⁶⁰⁵ the riches of HZDS deputy Dušan Macuška;⁶⁰⁶ the Dallas-style ranch of SIS director Ivan Lexa;⁶⁰⁷ the villa of former Meciar advisor Nagyová;⁶⁰⁸ the homes of top politicians;⁶⁰⁹ and the fairytale villa of Meciar advisor Martinková.⁶¹⁰

In Croatia, although the Dubrovacka banka scandal harmed the HDZ's credibility, even more damaging to Tudman and his family was the decision of a clerk at Zagrebacka banka to turn over a bank statement of president Tudman's wife, Ankica, to the press in October 1998. Although Tudman had claimed that his wife owned virtually no property, the amount on the bank statement totaled more than 200,000 German Marks.⁶¹¹ After that ordeal, an increasing number of articles appeared in the press about the Tudman family's wealth, including President Tudman's unusually high salary and the huge honoraria that he had received from Matica hrvatska for his books.⁶¹² Also influential in tainting the HDZ's image were

⁵⁹⁹ Daša Matejčíková, "Potrebujete byt? Vstúpte do koalície!," *Plus 7 dní*, 12 November 1996, pp. 22-23; Zita Sujová, "A nič sa nedeje....," *Plus 7 dní*, 7 January 1997, pp. 14-16.

⁶⁰⁰ Matejčíková, "Vila poslanca Vicena," *Plus 7 dní*, 3 December 1996, pp. 24-26.

⁶⁰¹ Lubomír Chorvatovic, "Hrozia nám sopky a prílivové vlny?," *Plus 7 dní*, 28 January 1997, p. 13.

⁶⁰² Interview with Anton Poliak, *Plus 7 dní*, 25 March 1997, pp. 12-13.

⁶⁰³ Matejčíková, "Kto získal Banu Záhorie za korunu?," *Plus 7 dní*, 14 April 1997, pp. 14-16.

⁶⁰⁴ Renáta Klacanská, "Milionármí vďaka filmu," *Plus 7 dní*, 26 May 1997, pp. 22-23.

⁶⁰⁵ Zita Sujová, "Gavorník z ružovej vily," *Plus 7 dní*, 7 July 1997, pp. 5-8.

⁶⁰⁶ Sujová, "Podnikateľský expert Macuška," *Plus 7 dní*, 25 August 1997, pp. 20-23; "Právny expert Macuška," *Plus 7 dní*, 18 August 1997, pp. 20-23.

⁶⁰⁷ Sujová, "Meciarov tien," *Plus 7 dní*, 26 January 1998, pp. 8-11.

⁶⁰⁸ Martina Palovčíková, "Anna Nagyová stavia honosnú vilu," *Plus 7 dní*, 2 February 1998, pp. 16-19.

⁶⁰⁹ Livia Šulajová, "Ako bývajú poslanci," *Plus 7 dní*, 9 February 1998, pp. 20-23.

⁶¹⁰ Zita Sujová, "Vila pani Martinkovej," *Plus 7 dní*, 13 April 1998, pp. 18-21.

⁶¹¹ See *Globus*, 23 October 1998, pp. 8-9, p. 13, and p. 81.

⁶¹² Slaven Letica, "Sad ili nikad," *Globus*, 30 October 1998, p. 13; and Dražen Rajkovic, "Nezapamcena afera u Matici hrvatskoj," *Globus*, 30 October 1998, pp. 18-21.

allegations regarding the misuse of the secret services, including spying on journalists.

In criticizing the way the HDZ was running the economy, *Globus* published numerous articles and interviews discussing privatization scandals and the difficult economic situation, with one particularly eye-catching title being “The privatization model that was carried out did more damage to Croatia than did the Cetnik aggressor.”⁶¹³ Other interviews were conducted with economists who criticized the HDZ’s economic policy, including the creation of tycoons;⁶¹⁴ commented on the worsening payments crisis;⁶¹⁵ and criticized the government’s privatization and banking policies.⁶¹⁶ *Globus* articles highlighted the lack of worthwhile firms being allocated for the 1998 voucher privatization program for war victims;⁶¹⁷ a scandal within Glumina banka, with credits going to a number of well-known Croats;⁶¹⁸ Finance Minister Borislav Škegro’s faulty policies;⁶¹⁹ Croatia’s relative failure in its economic transformation;⁶²⁰ the lack of expertise in Croatia’s economic strategy team;⁶²¹ a privatization scandal involving the insurance firm Croatia osiguranje;⁶²² the HDZ’s role in the privatization of Hrvatske telekomunikacije;⁶²³ the villas and property owned by Croatia’s secret service elite, including Tudman’s son Miroslav;⁶²⁴ and the depth of the Croatian banking crisis.⁶²⁵ Shortly before the 2000 elections, *Globus* ran a three-part series on privatization, discussing the apartments and businesses acquired cheaply by HDZ members and allies, including Tudman’s own family members.⁶²⁶ *Globus*

⁶¹³ Interview with former Economy Minister Dražen Kalogjera, *Globus*, 11 December 1998, pp. 22-25.

⁶¹⁴ Interview with Branko Horvat, *Globus*, 23 October 1998, p. 26-29.

⁶¹⁵ Interview with Branimir Lokin, director of the Croatian Chamber of Commerce’s Section for Economic Strategy, *Globus*, 20 November 1998, pp. 26-29.

⁶¹⁶ Interview with SDP representative and economist Mato Crkvenac, *Globus*, 25 December 1998, pp. 26-29.

⁶¹⁷ Branka Stipic, “Kuponska privatizacija,” *Globus*, 20 February 1998, p. 21.

⁶¹⁸ Dražen Rajkovic, “Skandal u Glumina banci,” *Globus*, 28 August 1998, pp. 4-9.

⁶¹⁹ Letica, “Sad ili nikad,” *Globus*, 27 November 1998, p. 17.

⁶²⁰ Ratko Boškovic, “Je li Hrvatska doista najuspješnija zemlja u tranziciji?” *Globus*, 1 January 1999, p. 23.

⁶²¹ Lukic, “Hrvatska u 21. stoljecu,” *Globus*, 8 January 1999, pp. 4-5.

⁶²² Rajkovic, “Posljedna velika afeta u privatizaciji,” *Globus*, 22 January 1999, pp. 22-25.

⁶²³ Rajkovic, “Skandalozna tajna operacija HDZ-a,” *Globus*, 11 June 1999, pp. 12-15.

⁶²⁴ Ines Sabalic, “Život hrvatske obavještajne elite,” *Globus*, 16 July 1999, pp. 58-62.

⁶²⁵ Ratko Boškovic, “Dr. Ivic Pašalic u ‘Financial Timesu’: HDZ nije stvorio tajkune!” *Globus*, 16 July 1999, p. 27.

⁶²⁶ Klancir and Lukic, “Pretvorbene afere koje su potresale Hrvatsku,” *Globus*, 12-26 November 1999.

also published stories about the bankruptcy of the tycoon Mladen Jakopec's empire and its negative effect on the Zagorje economy,⁶²⁷ as well as about the mysterious disappearance of insurance tycoon and café owner Hrvoje Petrac, a friend and business partner of the Tudman family.⁶²⁸

In addition to the media, trade unions also played a crucial role in bringing about an alternative discourse on the economy. Early in the decade, both the HDZ and HZDS had relatively good relations with the unions. In the Croatian case, workers were reluctant to demonstrate before 1996 because of the war, while in Slovakia, many union members initially saw the HZDS as the protector of their rights, and KOZ Chairman Roman Kováč became HZDS deputy chairman prior to the 1992 elections.

After Croatia's 1990 elections, Prime Minister Josip Manolić refused to negotiate with the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Croatia [Savez samostalnih sindikata Hrvatske] (SSSH), which was the trade unions' largest and most powerful umbrella organization, choosing instead to hold talks with a new rival that was established with the HDZ's blessing. Other trade unions saw the new Croatian Association of Trade Unions [Hrvatska udruga sindikata] (HUS) as a means for the HDZ to impose laws and contracts that it found convenient.⁶²⁹ By 1993 the SSSH had approximately 500,000 members from 26 separate unions, while the HUS had grown into the country's second largest trade union, with 200,000 members.⁶³⁰ The government's 1997 Law on Associations represented another attack on the SSSH since it stipulated that if an agreement were not made within six months, the assets of former socialist unions — 50 percent of which were owned by the SSSH — would be transferred to state control in January 1998 and redistributed according to government criteria.⁶³¹ In Slovakia, it was not until 1997 that the HZDS tried to establish an alternative to the Confederation of Trade Unions (KOZ), which was Slovakia's largest and most powerful union

⁶²⁷ Renata Ivanović, "HDZ-ova sjeca zagorskih tajkuna," *Globus*, 3 December 1999, pp. 30-33.

⁶²⁸ Gordan Malic, "Tajanstveni nestanak poslovnog partnera obitelji Tudman," *Globus*, 24 December 1999, pp. 26-28.

⁶²⁹ Milivoj Đilas, "NGOs in Croatia," AIM, 22 September 1999.

⁶³⁰ Baletić (ed.), *Hrvatska 1994*, pp. 110-111.

⁶³¹ Igor Vukic, "State Control of Citizens' Associations," AIM, 24 January 1998.

organization. Nonetheless, the Trade Union Association (ZOZ) attracted only 48,000 employees, compared with 843,000 for the KOZ in 1998.⁶³²

During the second half of the 1990s, trade union activities in both Slovakia and Croatia started to take on a tone that was increasingly anti-governmental. In Slovakia, trade unions initially supported the privatization methods of Meciar's 1994-1998 cabinet, mainly because employee privatization was supposed to be one of the main elements. However, in May 1995 the changed attitude of the KOZ was reflected in a declaration criticizing the government's approach.⁶³³ The KOZ's negative stance toward the Meciar government became stronger after the independent-minded Ivan Saktor was elected KOZ chairman in October 1996.⁶³⁴ Nonetheless, Slovakia had a weak tradition of contentious politics, and despite general dissatisfaction Slovaks appeared reluctant to participate in protest movements,⁶³⁵ partly also because the labor law prohibited political strikes. It was not until the tripartite discussions between the government, the KOZ, and employers were suspended in 1997 that the KOZ became increasingly focused on protest rallies. As the 1998 elections approached, interest in such gatherings gradually grew.⁶³⁶

Trade union protests in Croatia were generally stronger than they were in Slovakia, apparently at least in part due to the increasingly desperate economic situation in Croatia. During the second half of the 1990s, trade unions in Croatia held frequent protests, beginning with a one-day strike at Croatian Post and Telecommunications in February 1996. Subsequently, demonstrations were launched by metal workers, pensioners, teachers and research workers, and railway employees, mainly relating to their weak economic and social positions. As the economic situation deteriorated in the late 1990s, the strength of the trade union movement grew, particularly as the riches of those with HDZ connections became increasingly

⁶³² Darina Malová, "Organizované záujmy," in Grigorij Mesežnikov and Michal Ivantyšin (eds), *Slovensko 1998-1999: Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 1999), pp. 218-220.

⁶³³ Mikloš, "Privatization," p. 117.

⁶³⁴ See, for example, Táňa Veselá, "Odbojný odborár Saktor," *Plus 7 dní*, 10 November 1997, pp. 5-8.

⁶³⁵ Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik, "Contentious Politics in New Democracies," *World Politics* vol. 50, no. 4 (July 1998), pp. 547-581.

⁶³⁶ Malová, "Organizované záujmy," pp. 223-224.

apparent. In January 1998, thousands of signatures were gathered for a petition to protest against the government's introduction of VAT at a flat rate of 22 percent. The next month, tens of thousands of trade unionists rallied against growing poverty and unemployment, but they were prevented from entering Zagreb's main square by as many as 1,000 policemen who were armed with riot gear. The demonstration was aimed against Tudman and his family's growing wealth, and the protesters were angry that many factories had been sold to HDZ allies for symbolic prices.⁶³⁷ In February 1999, 2,000 workers from the Diona chain of shops went to the streets of Zagreb in protest against the business policies of Kutle, who had brought financial ruin to the once profitable firm. Some 500 demonstrators managed to break through a police blockade in the Upper Town and reached the government offices, leading one journalist to comment that "after years of oppression and humiliation, Croatian workers have finally chosen a more radical form of resistance to Tudman's regime."⁶³⁸ A December 1998 opinion poll showed that Kutle was seen the most negatively of all Croats, while Gucic ranked 11th and Todoric was 16th.⁶³⁹

Prior to the 1998 elections, Slovakia's KOZ carefully planned its strategy, opting to run a campaign to increase its members' awareness of the programs of the various parties while at the same time retaining political independence. An analysis of parliamentary deputies' voting records showed that the opposition parties had been supportive of employees' interests while the ruling parties had acted against them. Prior to the elections, the KOZ participated in the meetings of the "democratic round table," which also included the four major opposition parties, the Union of Towns and Villages, the Council of Youth, and the Gremium of the Third Sector.⁶⁴⁰ During the election campaign, the KOZ put up billboards with the face of a clock, together with the slogan "It's high time to give your vote to labor and social justice."

Croatia's trade unions were also active in the pre-election period. Although SSSH Chairman Davor Juric stressed that his organization would remain non-partisan

⁶³⁷ BBC News, 21 February 1998; *Die Tageszeitung*, 24 February 1998; Gojko Marinkovic, "Trade Unions and Politics," AIM, 26 March 1998.

⁶³⁸ Ivica Zikic, "Protests of Workers," AIM, 27 February 1999.

⁶³⁹ *Globus*, 1 January 1999, pp. 34-35.

and independent,⁶⁴¹ the SSSH signed agreements with opposition parties, which promised to implement economic and social policies in line with the union's demands. Prior to the elections, the SSSH tried to motivate voters through newspaper ads calling on them to vote. The ads showed a strip of film with four pictures of police and protesting workers, together with the slogan "Do you want to watch a bad film a third time?" The text at the bottom read: "Take off your pajamas... wash up... comb your hair... put on your Sunday clothes... be the first at your polling station — workers are choosing nowadays... circle your future... start a new life."⁶⁴²

This chapter has continued the examination of the Croatian and Slovak ruling parties' efforts to maintain national mobilization, looking at the debates among elites relating to the economy and the building of new capitalist classes that were intended to offer support and funding to help prop up the regimes. Additionally, it began to investigate the decline of the HZDS and HDZ by demonstrating the conflicts between the ruling parties' discourse and their concrete actions and how the public perceived them.

It is clear that the HDZ had significantly more control over the Croatian economy than did the HZDS in Slovakia, and although privatization was highly politicized in both countries, pressures from other groups meant that the privatization process was somewhat broader-reaching in Slovakia. In Croatia, the economic influence of the new "tycoons" became so strong that they virtually controlled the fate of the country, contributing to an economic downturn that seriously affected the HDZ's popularity. In Slovakia, although the HZDS economic policies brought the country to the brink of recession, the 1998 elections were held before any significant economic deterioration occurred. The economic situation played a crucial role in turning Croats against the HDZ, and high unemployment was considered the single most important issue of the 2000 election campaign. In Slovakia, other factors were also crucial in influencing the HZDS's fall from power, and the economic question was considerably less prominent in Slovakia's 1998 elections than it was in Croatia two years later.

⁶⁴⁰ Malová, "Organized Interests," pp. 221-223.

⁶⁴¹ *Daily Bulletin*, Foreign Press Bureau Zagreb, 18 November 1999.

⁶⁴² See *Novi list*, 24 December 1999.

With the economic situation difficult for Slovaks and Croats throughout the 1990s, one might ask why the populations had continued to support parties that oversaw the rise in unemployment and decline in the standard of living. The HDZ in particular managed to rule Croatia throughout the 1990s and did not lose power until 2000. The HDZ and HZDS success in that realm during the 1990s was likely related to two factors: first of all, many of their supporters put the blame for the economic problems elsewhere (on the Serbs in the case of Croatia and on the first post-communist government in the case of Slovakia), and secondly, at least some citizens were willing to make sacrifices for the nation in the early years of the transition. As more and more scandals erupted in the press, however, the capacity for personal sacrifice diminished, particularly as it became clear that much of the blame for the economic difficulties lay squarely with the ruling parties and their allies.

Those who continued to support the HDZ and HZDS at the end of the 1990s often did not do so blindly. While a portion of them were getting something from the parties in return, others simply continued to believe in the sanctity of certain party leaders, while at the same time distrusting others. Still other HDZ and HZDS voters backed those parties not because of a deep belief in the virtues of those parties but rather due to a lack of faith that the opposition parties would behave any differently once in power.

The next chapter concludes the section on the maintenance of national mobilization, presenting an examination of cultural policy in Slovakia and Croatia. It looks not only at the HDZ and HZDS attempts to use culture in building up their idea of the nation and thus in garnering support for the ruling parties themselves, but also at how culture influenced the decline of national movements, particularly in the case of Slovakia.

Chapter 5: The Politics of Culture: promoting a national identity

This chapter concludes the examination of the maintenance of national mobilization, focusing on the area of culture. As in the case of the economy, while the “Nationalist” elite in Croatia and Slovakia used cultural policy in an alleged effort to strengthen national identity, it often appeared that they were misusing culture to promote their own interests through the direction of funds to politically-friendly artists. That was partly due to a certain intolerance toward opposing opinions in the area of culture, which is considered one of the most important elements of a nation’s identity. That intolerance led to a tendency to provide state funding and recognition to those cultural personalities who were sympathetic to the government rather than to those who were the most talented and who would best promote the country abroad,⁶⁴³ signaling that representatives of the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) were more often concerned with the well-being of themselves and their allies than with that of the nation as a whole. Rejecting global influences and promoting a vision of culture that was specifically “Croatian” or “Slovak,” the “Nationalists” served to alienate many ordinary citizens and to increase their country’s isolation from the rest of the world. Such policies sometimes sparked sharp reactions from the cultural community and the media and influenced the growth of opposition in the two countries.

In the study of cultural policy, a crucial element is the determination of the limits to which governments are able to go in promoting their ideas of the nation and in manipulating national symbols. Although one can agree with the instrumentalist position that identities are not fixed and eternal and that some elements of an ethnic group’s culture or language can be changed, it can also be argued that individuals do in fact have some sense of their origin, whether real or mythical. Because of an ethnic group’s pre-existing beliefs and values, there are limits to the types of appeals that elites can make in their efforts to manipulate national symbols, influence ethnic identities, and mobilize populations.⁶⁴⁴ Even popular

⁶⁴³ This was despite the Slovak Culture Ministry’s stated aim of devoting special attention to artists who were successful abroad and of “strengthening their alliances with their homeland.” See *Nová kvalita života v kultúrnej spoločnosti* (Bratislava: Ministerstvo kultúry, 1998), p. 29.

⁶⁴⁴ See, for example, Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 24.

governments can go too far in promoting their idea of the nation, and if they surpass those boundaries they may lose substantial support.

Those limits depend to some degree on the position of a given nation and the strength of national feeling within society. Although Slovakia and Croatia are grouped together by Brubaker as “nationalizing” states, key differences between the two countries influenced the ability of their leaders to act, with one of the most important being the population’s general acceptance of the state itself. The leaders of both new countries faced the problem of building a state and strengthening national identity, and in Slovakia that was in certain ways more difficult than in Croatia since Slovaks for the most part did not favor independence.

Slovaks’ lukewarm reception of statehood was also reflected in the cultural community’s attitudes. In Slovakia a majority of the well-known cultural personalities could be considered “Europeanist,”⁶⁴⁵ and they were influenced by Czech anti-national liberalism. In contrast, many of their Croatian counterparts willingly became warriors of the national spirit. According to one cultural specialist, Croatia’s cultural personalities lacked the European tradition of free intellectuals, and instead of taking the role of critics, they generally followed the nationally-oriented, old-fashioned, and romantic tradition, according to which artists take an active role in constructing the state and nation.⁶⁴⁶ The patriotism demonstrated by Croatian artists was especially apparent during the war of the early 1990s. One source wrote that by organizing exhibitions and donating thousands of works of art for worldwide humanitarian efforts to support the nation, artists not only made “a great contribution to the war for the homeland in Croatia” and to the “establishment of the new Croatian state,” but they also created “a new visual identity” for the country.⁶⁴⁷

While the implementation of “nationalizing” policies and the use of accompanying rhetoric may have been to a certain extent politically profitable in the first years of

⁶⁴⁵ One top SNS representative complained that 90% of cultural figures in Slovakia looked outward and did not care about national values. Personal interview with Eva Slavkovská, 12 May 1999.

⁶⁴⁶ Personal interview with Andrea Zlatar, 17 October 2000.

⁶⁴⁷ Biserka Cvjetanin and Vjeran Katunaric (eds.), *Cultural Policy of the Republic of Croatia: National Report* (Zagreb: Institute for International Relations, 1997), pp. 141-48, 273.

Croatian and Slovak statehood, such an approach became more difficult as the new states became more secure and the countries moved further from their communist past. In both Slovakia and Croatia, opposition to government cultural policies gradually grew stronger throughout the 1990s, partly in reaction to the radicalization of discourse by the ruling parties, which failed to modernize their rhetoric to fit the changing domestic and international conditions. In contrast to the situation in Croatia, however, in Slovakia such opposition led to large-scale protests and was supported by a broad spectrum of the population, including representatives of cultural organizations, academia, the independent media, the political opposition, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, and the church. Rather than uniting the population in a feeling of national identity, the Meciar government's interference in 1996-1998 in the functioning of theaters and other cultural institutions succeeded in alienating key groups of people. The situation reached such a point that many cultural figures actively joined forces against the government and were supported in their opposition by a majority of the Slovak population.

Building on Brubaker's work, this chapter examines the "nationalizing" policies and programs in the field of culture, where the HDZ and HZDS regimes aimed to compensate for previous inadequacies by using state policies to promote the "national" interest, or rather the interests of their loyal supporters. The chapter begins with a presentation of the debate between and among "Nationalists" and "Europeanists" over the meaning of Slovak and Croatian culture. The second section looks at the importance of the external and internal Other, which played a crucial role in building up the regimes' cultural image of the nation. The third part deals with the ruling parties' efforts to use culture as a tool in maintaining national mobilization through the promotion of a cultural idea that was close to the HDZ and HZDS and that would ostensibly be reflected in support for their regimes by making the states more "Croatian" or "Slovak." The last section demonstrates the counterproductive effects of HDZ and HZDS cultural policy by looking at the public reactions of the Slovak and Croatian cultural communities and their role in the elections that brought down the ruling parties.

“Nationalists” versus “Europeanists”

The battle over culture in Croatia and Slovakia in the 1990s was a symptom of a wider struggle for the redefinition of the central values and purposes of the nation. The “Nationalists” generally favored a backward-looking, closed conception of culture, and they consciously aimed to strengthen national identity and statehood through art.⁶⁴⁸ In that way, they often supported art that was typically “Slovak” or “Croatian,” while at the same time criticizing cultural expression that was seen as “anti-Slovak,” “anti-Croat,” or simply anti-government. Proponents of the “Nationalist” view also tried to stress their respective nation’s long cultural tradition, sometimes to the point of sounding contrived.

In contrast, the “Europeanists” were generally more inclined to support modern, open, and tolerant forms of cultural expression and to see their country as a multi-cultural entity. That approach was implemented in actual policy under the leadership of Slovakia’s first two post-communist culture ministers — the actor Ladislav Chudík, who served in that position from December 1989 through March 1990, and Ladislav Snopko, who held that office until the June 1992 elections. Under their leadership, reforms were implemented to decentralize and remove government interference from the cultural sphere, and there was an attempt to diversify financial support for culture through the establishment of the Pro-Slovakia cultural fund, the first of its kind in Central and Eastern Europe.⁶⁴⁹ Under that system, the funding of a wide range of cultural activities continued, even of those artists who were critical of the ruling parties.⁶⁵⁰ Although the approach to culture changed under subsequent governments, the experience under Chudík and Snopko gave Slovak “Europeanists” a framework for comparison. In Croatia, the “Europeanist” view of culture was not adopted in policy during the 1990s, and its proponents were forced to struggle in opposition.

The line between the “Nationalists” and “Europeanists” sometimes divided people in unexpected ways. In many cases, Slovak “Europeanists” and “Nationalists”

⁶⁴⁸ On Croatia, see Ivana Prijatelj Pavicic, “O državotvornoj umjetnosti u Hrvatskoj danas,” *Erasmus*, no. 17, July 1996, pp. 84-91.

⁶⁴⁹ Ladislav Snopko, “Culture,” in Bútora and Skladony (eds.), *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State of Society*, p. 201.

from the field of culture had been colleagues and friends during the communist regime, working together at such places as the Literary Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Nonetheless, the Slovak cultural community split almost immediately after the 1989 “Velvet revolution,” with a number of artists joining the world of politics on one side or the other.⁶⁵¹ Writers formed the biggest group of politically active cultural figures, either through direct involvement in politics or by giving support through their work. The “Europeanist” writers were generally affiliated with the Slovak PEN Center, while the “Nationalists” gathered in the Society of Slovak Writers [Spolok slovenských spisovateľov]. Slovak “Europeanist” scholars, actors, and writers were also represented in the Forum of Intelligentsia of Slovakia, which provided an alternative to such pro-HZDS groups as Korene and the Permanent Conference of the Slovak Intelligentsia/Slovakia Plus.⁶⁵²

After some delay, there also existed schisms among cultural figures in Croatia, and Croatian writers divided on the same lines as those in Slovakia, with the “Europeanists” in the PEN Center and the “Nationalists” in the Society of Croatian Writers [Društvo hrvatskih književnika]. In the early 1990s, however, even the Croatian PEN Center showed at least isolated cases of “Nationalist” tendencies. PEN Chairman Slobodan Prosperov Novak, who served briefly as deputy culture minister, was accused of playing a role in the “media lynch” in 1992 against five Croatian female writers who had protested against nationalist aggression. Novak denied his role in the incident, but PEN secretary Vera Cicin-Šain revealed her opinion of the women when she stated that she did not want to place Novak “on the same level as those who spoke against their country and people.”⁶⁵³ Nonetheless, Novak took a stand against the Tudman regime in October 1993 during a speech at an international musical performance in Munich, and after that he and the PEN club were declared “enemies.”⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵⁰ Interview with former Culture Ministry official Igor Otcenáš, *Národná obroda*, 21 July 1995.

⁶⁵¹ For a description of the process from the point of view of a “Nationalist” writer, see Slobodník, *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi*, pp. 13–37.

⁶⁵² Snopko, “Culture,” p. 203.

⁶⁵³ See Ivica Đikić, “Vještice iz Rija post festum,” *Feral Tribune*, 21 September 1998.

⁶⁵⁴ See Milan Ivkošić, “Koji pišcevi ,mi’?,” *Vecernji list*, 8 October 1993, republished in Ivkošić, *Nova rodoljubna zanovijetanja* (Zagreb, 1994), pp. 109–110.

The Croatian literary community formally divided during a world PEN conference in Prague in December 1994, when 27 writers signed a petition demanding the resignation of the PEN Center leadership because of a resolution signed by a group of Croatian and Serbian writers calling for dialogue and cooperation. The petition marked an intensification of the attack on the PEN Center and its leaders, and in 1995 the Society of Croatian Writers — which from 1994 was led by high-ranking HDZ official Ante Stamac — set up the weekly *Hrvatsko slovo* as a “pro-national” alternative to Matica hrvatska’s bi-weekly cultural journal *Vijenac*, of which Novak was editor in chief. The two journals became involved in a long-running polemic, and the battle between the two writers’ organizations culminated in the exit from the Society of a number of respected writers. Explaining the differences between the two writers’ organizations, Stamac emphasized that “the Society of Croatian Writers is a freedom-loving association of Croatian writers, those for whom the Croatian language is the meaning of life.” In contrast, he called PEN an association “for people who do not have any kind of connection with Croatian literature and language.”⁶⁵⁵

Hrvatsko slovo often took an aggressive approach, and its representatives frequently appeared in the media attacking their “enemies” in the PEN Center and *Vijenac*. The poet Dubravko Horvatic, a founding HDZ member who served as editor in chief of *Hrvatsko slovo*, once stressed that “our editorial concept does not allow us to promote opinions that are not in harmony with the interests of the Croatian nation and state.”⁶⁵⁶ One cultural specialist commented that *Hrvatsko slovo*, which in 1998 was accused of promoting anti-Semitism and xenophobia,⁶⁵⁷ was so radical in its discourse that many people who would normally not have found their place on the spectrum were forced to take a stand against it.⁶⁵⁸

In Slovakia, one of the most radical elements in the cultural sphere was the state-funded organization Matica slovenská, which sometimes demonstrated extreme nationalist and even fascist views. After the HZDS’s establishment in 1991

⁶⁵⁵ *Tjednik*, 29 August 1997.

⁶⁵⁶ *Globus*, July 1996. Quoted in Dežulovic and Lucic, *Greatest shifts*, p. 233.

⁶⁵⁷ *Globus*, 25 September 1998, pp. 66-69..

⁶⁵⁸ Personal interview with Andrea Zlatar, 17 October 2000. For more on disputes among writers, see Miljenko Jergovic, “Društvo mrtvih povjesnika,” *Feral Tribune*, 23 November 1998;

Meciar's clash with Jozef Markuš over the 1990 Slovak language law was forgotten, and the party formed a deep alliance with the organization. In 1993 Meciar's second government sold the Martin-based printing house Neografia to Matica slovenská for a symbolic price of one crown. In a famous speech at Zlatká Idka later that year, Meciar claimed that Matica slovenská "without a doubt gives its support to no one other than the HZDS." He stressed that although Neografia was valued at 600 million crowns, Matica representatives "cannot say that they got it for free," adding that the HZDS could expect something from the organization in return.⁶⁵⁹

The January 1995 program declaration of Meciar's third government called Matica slovenská "the most important cultural association in Slovakia,"⁶⁶⁰ and in 1997 the parliament approved a law on Matica that widened the organization's role in society despite vehement protests from the academic and scientific community, the independent press, and part of the political opposition.⁶⁶¹ One journalist commented that although Matica did play an important historical role in preserving the identity of the Slovak nation, after the fall of communism its leaders built the organization as "an ideological and political pressure group, anchored at best in the ideas of the 19th century national revival and at worst in the fascist Slovak state."⁶⁶²

The Croatian counterpart, Matica hrvatska, was in a different position since during the first years of Croatian independence it was led by the prominent writer and opposition politician Vlado Gotovac. One journalist commented that Gotovac refused to be manipulated by the HDZ and to lead the institution in the direction of "spiritual and demographic renewal."⁶⁶³ Andrea Zlatar, who worked for Matica's journal *Vijenac* and briefly served as its editor in chief after Novak's departure, admitted that Matica representatives were not prepared to discuss war crimes and other controversial issues that were covered in the opposition weekly *Feral*

Meri Stajduhar, "Writers in Dispute," AIM, 7 June 1995; and Branka Džebić, "Društvo hrvatskih književnika između vlastite mase i (ne)moci," *Vjesnik*, 1 March 2000

⁶⁵⁹ See "Lož —pracovná metóda?" *Slovenský denník*, 3 December 1993.

⁶⁶⁰ *Národná obroda*, 12 January 1995.

⁶⁶¹ For a history of the law, see Peter Zajac, "Kultúra," in Martin Bútora and Péter Huncík (eds.), *Slovensko 1995: súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti* (Bratislava: Nadácia Sándora Máraiho, 1996), pp. 181-182.

⁶⁶² Ivan Samel, "Superustanovizen," *Národná obroda*, 30 April 1996.

⁶⁶³ Jergović, "Društvo mrtvih povjesnika," *Feral Tribune*, 23 November 1998.

Tribune. Thus, *Vijenac* fell somewhere between the two poles of society, although it was critical of Croatia's 1993-1994 war with the Bosnian Muslims.⁶⁶⁴ Nonetheless, Matica hrvatska was condemned by the HDZ regime not only for publishing *Vijenac* but also for working "against the interests of the Croatian state" and even for "making a pact" with George Soros.⁶⁶⁵ Zlatar commented that "it is known that the HDZ experiences everything that is not directly under its control as an attack on it," but she added that the same way of thinking characterized those on the other side of the spectrum. She stressed that since Matica was not a political party, "it does not need to have a clear political position."⁶⁶⁶

Some feared that Matica hrvatska would finally fall under the influence of the HDZ once Gotovac left the organization in 1995, especially after Josip Bratulic — who according to one journalist had "neither the reputation nor the charisma" of his predecessor — became chairman.⁶⁶⁷ Zlatar said that the war had been the main excuse for not criticizing the government in the early 1990s; however, after Croatian territory was reunited in 1995, most intellectuals and cultural personalities wanted to start a normal life, which included the freedom to express themselves as they chose. Tudman, on the other hand, aimed to unify the cultural scene and take institutions such as Matica hrvatska to the right of the political spectrum, and from 1995 significant pressure was applied on *Vijenac*.⁶⁶⁸ One sign that the HDZ had finally managed to take over Matica hrvatska under Bratulic came in late 1998, when the organization refused to publish Branko Matan's book of diary entries because of the picture of the Dretelj camp for Bosnian Muslims in Herzegovina.⁶⁶⁹ In late 1998, Zlatar left *Vijenac* to establish the independent cultural journal *Zarez*.

The Other

Despite numerous similarities in the cultural policies of the Meciar and Tudman regimes, key differences emerged in the use of neighboring languages in

⁶⁶⁴ Personal interview with Zlatar, 17 October 2000.

⁶⁶⁵ Zlatar interview, *Globus*, 2 October 1998, p. 69.

⁶⁶⁶ Zlatar interview, *Globus*, 2 October 1998, pp. 67-69.

⁶⁶⁷ Jergovic, "Društvo mrtvih povjesnika," *Feral Tribune*, 23 November 1998.

⁶⁶⁸ Personal interview with Zlatar, 17 October 2000.

⁶⁶⁹ Matan interview, *Globus*, 9 October 1998, pp. 66-69.

publishing and cultural life, which could be seen as a reflection of the two nations' self-perception as well as history. For Croats the main Other was the Serbs, and there were serious attempts in the 1990s to maximize the differences between the Croatian and Serbian languages in an effort to promote a unique, Croatian language and identity.⁶⁷⁰ Moreover, the Croats generally saw themselves as more Western and developed than the Serbs, and the war in the early 1990s served to strengthen that feeling of superiority and to promote hatred of everything Serbian.

Although attempts at assimilating the Slovak language with Czech were made almost throughout the period of the common state, such efforts never went as far as they did in Yugoslavia, and the Slovak language had a more favorable position in the Czechoslovak state than did the Croatian language in Yugoslavia. That fact made a post-independence backlash against the Czech language unnecessary and even unacceptable. From 1993 the most threatening Other for Slovaks was not the Czechs but the Hungarians, who make up Slovakia's most populous minority. The biggest debates in the 1990s concerning language were not over the Slovak language as such but over the use of minority languages, particularly Hungarian. Because the Slovak and Hungarian languages come from completely different families, Slovaks did not have to go to any effort to alter or isolate their language, although there were efforts to eliminate certain anglicisms.

In Croatia, Serbian language books were removed from libraries and shops in the early 1990s, including those written in the Latin script but in the eastern variant. Almost all forms of cultural exchange were halted between the two nations, and Croats went as so far as to ban from state-run television films and series starring Serbian or Croatian Serb actors. In 1996 historian Nedeljko Mihanovic, who had served as chairman of the Croatian Sabor, stressed that he was not afraid of "Serbian cultural imperialism" or of the entry of Serbian films, books, music, and entertainment onto the Croatian market, adding that "new Serbian music cannot have a deeper impact on the Croatian public, and in terms of music of a higher style, of higher arts, they do not have anything today. They do not have national opera; they have only... folklore." Mihanovic said that some works by Serbian

⁶⁷⁰ See Langston, "Linguistic cleansing"; Miloš Okuka, *Eine Sprache viele Erben: Sprachpolitik als Nationalisierungsinstrument in Ex-Jugoslawien* (Klagenfurt: Wieser, 1998); and

writers might soon be published in Croatia, and he commented that it would be unnecessary to translate them into Croatian since “it can be said that for Croats, Serbian is the best-known foreign language.”⁶⁷¹

Although an independent record company in Croatia was offered exclusive rights to distribute albums of two of Serbia’s most prominent singers in late 1996, it had to reject the deal since most retailers considered it “still too early.”⁶⁷² Many Croats were said to listen to Serbian music furtively, but even by 1998 concerts of Serbian musicians were rare in Croatia, with Serbian artists preferring the more welcoming audience in Ljubljana, which throughout the 1990s remained open to all kinds of products from its former partners in Yugoslavia. One exception occurred on the 50th anniversary of the General Declaration on Human Rights in 1998, when a civic association in the Croatian town of Pula marked the anniversary by organizing a concert with bands from throughout former Yugoslavia, an event that was referred to by the local HDZ as “a parade of Yugo-nostalgics.”⁶⁷³ Nonetheless, young Croats reportedly attended concerts of Serbian artists in Slovenia in large numbers.⁶⁷⁴ In late 1998 Croatia Records director Miroslav Lilic said that his firm was considering releasing albums by Serbian musicians in Croatia, but he commented that “not for a million marks” would it release music by those who had “sinned against Croatia.”⁶⁷⁵

It was not until the end of 1998 that some independent publishers in Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia started discussions about reestablishing trade in books and magazines, and even then the move attracted some criticism in Croatia.⁶⁷⁶ Nenad Popovic, head of the independent publisher Durieux and one of the instigators of the idea, was accused of wanting to return Croatia to the Balkans. Popovic pointed out, however, that it was not politicians who reacted in that way but rather pro-government journalists. He added that the initiative “endangers their monopoly on

Durkovic, “Language Purification and Language of Purification in Croatia.”

⁶⁷¹ Mihanovic interview in *Globus*, cited in Beta, 26 September 1996.

⁶⁷² Zoran Radosavljevic, “Music pulls down walls between Serbia and Croatia,” Reuters, 14 January 1997.

⁶⁷³ *Jutarnji list* 15 December 1998.

⁶⁷⁴ See Igor Kolovrat, “Kolektivni orgazam Hrvata u Catežu,” *Globus*, 19 February 1999, pp. 69-71.

⁶⁷⁵ Lilic interview, *Globus*, 18 December 1998, pp. 76-79.

⁶⁷⁶ See, for example, *Vjesnik*, 16 October 1998.

ideas, which is imposed in various ways, through taxes, state subsidies, and the like.”⁶⁷⁷ One cultural specialist argued that many Croatian writers were afraid of competition from the Serbs.⁶⁷⁸

Only in early 1999 did distributors start releasing Serbian films on video in Croatia, and the first Serbian movie to have a regular release in Croatian cinemas came out in spring 1999. The film, Srđan Dragojević’s *Rane* [Wounds], was popular among Croats, but its release caused a commotion because of the inclusion of Croatian language subtitles.⁶⁷⁹ Some journalists and cultural figures thought it was still too early for cultural cooperation with Serbia. However, Dragojević argued that “perhaps what is at the heart of this issue is that this Serbian movie could be dramatically far superior to Croatian productions.” Although some “Nationalists” argued in favor of subtitles since they imply that “there are differences between the two languages,” subsequent Serbian films released in Croatia were not subtitled.⁶⁸⁰

Croatia’s isolation had a dramatic impact on cultural life in the 1990s. Book publishing, which once served a market of 15 million people, was aimed at a market one-third that size. Partly because of economies of scale but also because of the high rate of VAT and publishing costs, many books sold in Croatia were prohibitively expensive. Although the Croatian film industry continued to produce a substantial number of films,⁶⁸¹ the vast majority of them were considered weak, and very few gained popularity. One problem for Croatian cinematography was that many of the best films made in the past were off-limits. Some of them were being held in Belgrade’s film archives, while others were no longer shown since they were considered “politically incorrect,” either because the director had fallen out of political favor or because the subject of the film was considered incompatible with the ideology of the new Croatian regime.⁶⁸² This presented a problem for young Croatian directors, who had no opportunity to see the films and

⁶⁷⁷ See Popović interview, *Globus*, 11 December 1998, pp. 66-69.

⁶⁷⁸ Personal interview with Zlatar, 17 October 2000.

⁶⁷⁹ Sinan Gudžević, “Srpsko-hrvatske jezične rane,” AIM, 2 April 1999.

⁶⁸⁰ Zivana Moric, “Je li prvi srpski film stigao prerano u hrvatska kina?,” *Vjesnik*, 24 March 1999.

⁶⁸¹ In 1997, for example, the country produced six films. See interview with film director Krsto Papic, *Globus*, 16 October 1998, pp. 66-69.

⁶⁸² See Ines Sabalić, “Partizanski filmovi u bunkeru,” *Globus*, 19 February 1999, pp. 58-61.

therefore had no concept of or feeling for the Croatian film tradition.⁶⁸³ Film director Krsto Papic asserted that “we have too few authentic Croatian stories since the majority of the directors of the young generation refer to some other models... The majority, in reality, imitate Western films and cliches.”⁶⁸⁴

In Slovakia, no real efforts were made to break off the import of Czech language culture. The only attempt came with a 1995 language law and an accompanying audiovisual law, which would have required that all films shown in Slovakia would be subtitled or dubbed in the state language, rather than in Czech. However, after protests from film and video distributors, the government was forced to agree that the Czech language fulfilled the need for basic comprehensibility, making dubbing or subtitles unnecessary. Nonetheless, all programs aimed at children under the age of 12 had to be dubbed in Slovak, even in the case of classic Czech fairytales.⁶⁸⁵ Throughout the 1990s, Slovakia’s film industry was tiny, frequently with only one or two feature films produced annually. In book stores, the number of Czech-language publications remained large, and many Slovaks continued to read Czech as if it were their own language. Moreover, Czech television was widely viewed in Slovakia, particularly prior to the launching of Slovakia’s statewide private TV Markíza in August 1996. Before that time, the private Czech station TV Nova was the most popular channel in the areas where it was available, providing Slovaks with an important alternative to state-controlled Slovak Television.

In HDZ and HZDS discourse, the “Other” was also extended to members of the nation itself. That was especially true in Croatia, where the need to protect Croatia’s fragile statehood during the war meant that cultural figures and others who thought differently from the ruling party experienced difficulties. The writer Dubravka Ugrešić noted that surprisingly few people in the early 1990s were willing to defend the “enemies of the people,” a term that had been used under the socialist regime to describe those individuals who publicly expressed dissatisfaction with government policies. In fact, writers, journalists, intellectuals, as well as politicians and even ordinary citizens often joined the public campaigns

⁶⁸³ Personal interview with film director Vinko Brešan, 22 January 1999.

⁶⁸⁴ Papic interview, *Globus*, 16 October 1998, pp. 66-69.

⁶⁸⁵ Interview with Culture Ministry representative and writer Milan Ferko in *Pravda*, 12 March 1996.

against those “enemies.”⁶⁸⁶ Probably the best known case of “hate speech” in Croatia was an article entitled “Witches from Rio” that was published after the 1992 world PEN conference in Brazil. In the article, five Croatian women who had protested against war, nationalism and chauvinism, hatred, and the violation of human rights — including Ugrešić and Slavenka Drakulic, two of the country’s best-known writers internationally — were labeled “witches,” and an accompanying chart presented such details as the women’s marital status, nationality, number of children, and the “location abroad” where they supposedly lived during the war.⁶⁸⁷ The actress Mira Furlan was also a victim of public attacks as a result of her participation in a Belgrade international theater festival in September 1991 in the hope that cultural cooperation could survive despite the ongoing war.⁶⁸⁸

Partly because of the hate speech launched against them that resulted in public ostracization, a number of prominent cultural figures, including Ugrešić, Furlan, as well as the popular actor Rade Šerbedžija, left the country. Years later, the names of such cultural “dissidents” continued to evoke strong reactions. Six years after the publication of “Witches from Rio,” *Globus* columnist Slaven Letica said that he was not ashamed that he wrote the article, arguing that it gave the women “the status of victims” and allowed them to improve their positions.⁶⁸⁹ A 1998 interview given by Furlan,⁶⁹⁰ the first since she left Croatia in 1991, sparked some negative reactions, even from the writer Branko Matan.⁶⁹¹ One HDZ representative later commented that no one had forced people like Drakulic to leave Croatia or forbid them from coming back, adding that it was not easy to live in Croatia during the war and that they were much more comfortable abroad. He also argued that after 1990 Drakulic had lost the privileges that she had enjoyed under the communist regime as a member of a “political family.”⁶⁹² While pro-HDZ writers such as Horvatic were included in Croatian literature textbooks, works by

⁶⁸⁶ Dubravka Ugresic, “The culture of lies,” *Index on Censorship* vol. 1, no. 2 (1994), pp. 23-43.

⁶⁸⁷ “Vještice iz Ria: Hrvatske feministice siluju Hrvatsku,” *Globus*, 11 December 1992, pp. 41-42.

⁶⁸⁸ In January and February 1992, *Globus* published a series of articles attacking Furlan, entitled “Tragična sudbina velike hrvatske glumice.” In Furlan’s case, a group of actors signed a statement protesting the way she was attacked. See *Danas*, 18 February 1992.

⁶⁸⁹ Letica interview, *Feral Tribune*, 21 September 1998.

⁶⁹⁰ *Feral Tribune*, 14 December 1998.

⁶⁹¹ See *Feral Tribune*, 11 January 1999.

⁶⁹² Personal interview with Predrag Haramija, 25 May 2000.

internationally respected writers such as Drakulic, Ugrešić, Predrag Matvejevic, and Slobodan Šnajder were omitted since the Croatian literary establishment apparently did not consider them to be “patriotic writers.”⁶⁹³ During HDZ rule, Šnajder’s plays were not produced in Croatia, although he was one of the country’s most respected playwrights internationally.

There was also a certain degree of “hate speech” used against Slovak cultural figures. For example, one 1993 article attacked Slovak film director Fero Fenič because he was “voluntarily” living in the Czech Republic and had asked for Czech citizenship. The article also attacked the writer Martin Šimečka as being “anti-Slovak” and questioned the “Slovakness” of Július Satinský, one of the country’s most popular comic actors.⁶⁹⁴ As in Croatia, a number of cultural figures who opposed Meciar left Slovakia, mainly for the Czech Republic. Aside from Fenič, those included film director Juraj Jakubisko, photographer Tono Stano, and the poet Lubomír Feldek.⁶⁹⁵ Nonetheless, numerous cultural personalities remained in Slovakia and were among Meciar’s most active critics.

In both countries the regimes’ intolerance for opposing views was also reflected in more subtle ways, through the reluctance to provide state funding and recognition for cultural activities that were considered anti-governmental or “anti-national.” Such an approach was as much authoritarian as it was nationalist, as everything was presented as being subordinate to the state and nation itself. It was often difficult for independent artists and cultural institutions to exist, and some of them relied heavily on funding from international firms and organizations such as the Open Society Institute (OSI). The Croatian sociologist Vjeran Katunaric argued that international non-governmental organizations such as the OSI became the protectors of a cultural policy guided by the “principles of artistic freedom and cultural pluralism.”⁶⁹⁶ One Croatian opposition politician and cultural expert

⁶⁹³ Gordan Malic, “Hrvatske citanke: Novi klasici ili pakleni šund?,” *Globus*, 23 October 1998, pp. 58-61.

⁶⁹⁴ Emília Boldišová, “Ja nic, ty nic: fenič; Ja nic janiciar: Fenič,” *Republika*, 19 August 1993.

⁶⁹⁵ See Nada Vokušová and Vladimír Skalský, *30 Slováku v České republice* (Prague: Slovensko - český klub Korene, 1997).

⁶⁹⁶ Vjeran Katunaric, “Transition and Culture in Croatia: From Nationalistic Populism to Enlightened Democracy?” *Culturelink* (special issue, 1997), pp. 14-15.

commented that the HDZ simply did not realize the importance of art for the country's reputation.⁶⁹⁷

In the Slovak case, the politically-biased approach began during Meciar's second government, when state subsidies for opposition cultural periodicals were stopped amid accusations that they were promoting "cosmopolitan" and "anti-Slovak" views.⁶⁹⁸ Under Ivan Hudec, a writer who served as culture minister in 1994-1998, such policies only intensified and funding was directed at "so-called nationally-minded artists loyal to the government."⁶⁹⁹ For example, the alternative Bratislava theater Stoka failed in 1995 to get its promised state budget allocation despite its international achievements, and the theater survived that year thanks to support from such organizations as the OSI and the Czech Center in Bratislava.⁷⁰⁰ Similarly, film director Martin Šulík, whose movie *Záhrada* [The Garden] was the most successful Slovak film of the 1990s, had problems in 1997 with the funding of his subsequent project, *Orbis Pictus*, after Slovak Television (STV) withdrew from a contract. Šulík argued that STV's withdrawal was connected with the political opinions of himself and of the main producer, adding that "it is paradoxical that although the need to support Slovak film and television projects is stressed here, Czech Television has been the biggest supporter of Slovak cinematography in recent years."⁷⁰¹ Another Slovak film director complained that "when we look for funding [from the ministry] for our work, we are accused of Czechoslovakism."⁷⁰²

Promoting "national" culture

Although Slovakia and Croatia's newly acquired independence gave each country enhanced opportunities for the promotion of national culture and for more intense international cooperation, in many senses the situation of domestic culture deteriorated during the 1990s because of a lack of funding. Moreover, the general economic difficulties experienced by the populations meant that people were less

⁶⁹⁷ Personal interview with Ivo Škrabalo, 15 January 1999.

⁶⁹⁸ Slobodník, *Proti sedemhlavému drakovi*, p. 23.

⁶⁹⁹ Statement by Stoka theater director Blaho Uhlar, CTK, 5 September 1996.

⁷⁰⁰ Zajac, "Kultúra," p. 178.

⁷⁰¹ TASR, 20 March 1997.

⁷⁰² CTK, 22 October 1996.

likely to attend cultural events or buy books than they were 10 years earlier. Nonetheless, both the HDZ and HZDS tended to support megalomaniacal cultural projects that were somehow intended to establish a “myth” of the nation, strengthening national identity and pride and therefore ostensibly reflecting in higher support for the ruling parties themselves. At the same time, by focusing on cultural expression that looked backward rather than forward, the parties failed to present a vision of the nations’ cultural future.

In Slovakia, the Culture Ministry called for the reinstitution of big artistic competitions aimed at the creation of works with “a serious social theme,” including historical novels, family sagas, and historical films.⁷⁰³ While Šulík’s *Orbis Pictus* experienced funding problems, the Pro Slovakia cultural fund provided large amounts of money for the production of two “Nationalist” film mega-projects — the stories of folk hero Jánošík and Great Moravian Empire leader Pribina. Koliba film studio director Vladimír Ondruš argued that the young and middle generations of Slovaks lacked deeper knowledge of the nation’s early history, and he stressed that the Pribina film, which started production in August 1997, would contribute to “strengthening the awareness of the Slovak nation.”⁷⁰⁴ Nonetheless, the two films were never completed, and there were allegations of corruption and nepotism in connection with the projects.⁷⁰⁵

For Tudman, culture was an instrument to create the “myth of the nation,”⁷⁰⁶ and myth-making played an important role in the “new” Croatian art, which was aimed at “building national consciousness in harmony with the state-forming idea.”⁷⁰⁷ Tudman favored a representative culture, focused on such areas as theater, literature, film, and opera, as well as folklore and naïve art. One HDZ representative said that as a reaction to the “Yugoslavization” of culture under the communist regime, the independent Croatia was trying to show that it was different, that it was “a European country in the style of Bach and Beethoven, not

⁷⁰³ *Nová kvalita života v kultúrnej spoločnosti*, p. 38.

⁷⁰⁴ Ondruš interview, *Europa Vincet*, nos. 4-5, vol. 19 (1997).

⁷⁰⁵ See Daša Matejčíková, “Zlomí Hudeca neviditeľný film?,” *Domino fórum*, 17-23 February 2000; Renáta Klacanská, “Milionáři vďaka filmu,” *Plus 7 dní*, 26 May 1997.

⁷⁰⁶ Personal interview with Ines Sabalic, Brussels, 15 and 23 June 2000.

⁷⁰⁷ Prijatelj Pavicic, p. 88.

realizing that both had died long ago.”⁷⁰⁸ In certain respects, the Tudman regime oriented itself toward the history of Croatian culture, and instead of focusing on funding the publication of new literature, old books were reprinted.⁷⁰⁹ Moreover, there was an emphasis on those aspects of the national cultural heritage that revealed the nation’s “sacred origin” and demonstrated its historic continuity in line with the new political ideology.⁷¹⁰ “New” Croatian art often included religious scenes, with a typical theme during the war being the Lamentation of Christ, which for centuries had served as an allegory for suffering. Another theme, stressed in both the president’s speeches and in art, was the superiority of the nation, with Croatian heroes being “inspired by divine power and the magnitude of their historical mission.”⁷¹¹ The first example of cultural expression of that type was the return of Jelacic’s statue to Zagreb’s central square in 1990. Following the “Homeland war,” the Croatian state commissioned a series of new monuments to war heroes, although many were reportedly created by “amateur sculptors.”⁷¹² Moreover, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the General Declaration on Human Rights in 1998, the government organized an exhibition presenting art from the Croatian town of Vukovar, which was destroyed by the Yugoslav army during the early 1990s.

In promoting the national idea through film, the Croatian regime supported a number of “politically ‘agreeable’ film dilettantes” who produced what one journalist labeled “vulgar propaganda and nationalistic films.” Such projects often got more publicity than quality films, had bigger budgets at their disposal, and had the moral and financial support of the government, with their premiers frequently attended by top politicians, including the president himself.⁷¹³ The most infamous of those “dilettantes” was Jakov Sedlar, a prolific director whose films and television documentaries promoted Tudman and the HDZ. In an apparent effort to increase the films’ credibility domestically, some of Sedlar’s documentaries were even made in the English language, including one that portrayed Tudman as the Croatian George Washington and featured American actor Martin Sheen as the

⁷⁰⁸ Personal interview with Predrag Haramija, 25 May 2000.

⁷⁰⁹ Personal interview with Zlatar, 17 October 2000.

⁷¹⁰ Katunaric, “Transition and Culture in Croatia,” p. 19.

⁷¹¹ Prijatelj Pavicic, pp. 86-87.

⁷¹² See Ines Sabalic, “Domovinski rat: od kica do vjecnosti,” *Globus*, 9 October 1998, pp. 34-39.

⁷¹³ Jurica Pavicic, “Zloglasni bunar hrvatskog filma,” *Cicero*, November 1998, pp. 122-24.

narrator.⁷¹⁴ Tudman predicted that Sedlar's 1995 film *Gospa*, which chronicles Croatia's quest for independence, would "likely become the most viewed Croatian film in history."⁷¹⁵ Another propagandistic filmmaker for the Tudman regime was Obrad Kosovac, who served as director of Croatian Television in the late 1990s. Kosovac had also made films for the communist regime, and one analyst argued that "the ideological or value stencil" of the films he made in the 1990s was no different from Kosovac's 1985 production *Put izdaje* [The Path of Treason], in which he attacked Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac as an Ustaša war criminal and national traitor.⁷¹⁶ The "Europeanist" film director Rajko Grlic referred to the situation in Croatian film as a "circus in which one individual of exceptionally dubious taste in film decides more or less on everything," including financial questions, which films will be made, the organization of film festivals, selection of juries, and allocation of prizes.⁷¹⁷

Focusing on culture that was particularly "Croatian" or "Slovak," the HDZ and HZDS sometimes rejected cultural expression that was modern or universal. In Slovakia, although "Nationalists" allowed for the possibility that Slovak art could also be modern, they argued that it must be "ours," and not a copy of something foreign.⁷¹⁸ Moreover, there was a general fear among Slovak "Nationalists" of the effects of globalization on domestic culture, a phenomenon that organizations such as Matica slovenská aimed to halt.⁷¹⁹ The Culture Ministry warned that European integration could lead not only to the "commercialization and cosmopolitization" of Slovak culture, but also to "a weakening of national consciousness," and it stated that "the strengthening and development of a national and state identity is a top priority."⁷²⁰ In its January 1995 program declaration, Meciar's third government placed "culture" in a section entitled "Moral revival of society,"

⁷¹⁴ Miljenko Jergovic, "George Washington—americki Tudman," *Tjednik*, 8 August 1997; Predrag Lucic, "Dr. Tudman & Mr. George," *Feral Tribune*, 11 August 1997.

⁷¹⁵ *Transition*, vol. 1, no. 9 (9 June 1995), p. 54.

⁷¹⁶ Slaven Letica, "Opet slucaj kardinala Stepinca," *Globus*, 12 June 1998, pp. 38-40.

⁷¹⁷ Pavicic, p. 124.

⁷¹⁸ Hudec interview, *Slovenská Republika*, 9 June 1999. Also, personal interview with Rudolf Žiak, 1 June 1999.

⁷¹⁹ See *Národná obroda*, 23 September 1995.

⁷²⁰ *Nová kvalita života v kultúrnej spoločnosti*, p. 11.

stressing that one of the goals of cultural policy would be “strengthening statehood.”⁷²¹

In a certain sense, Meciar’s third government understood folklore as the most “Slovak” form of art, despite the fact that a substantial number of alternative artists had emerged in the postwar period, giving the nation a more modern cultural identity.⁷²² The HZDS approach was in some ways a holdover from the communist period, when folklore was one of the only forms of national expression that was officially allowed.⁷²³ A 1998 Culture Ministry document emphasized the need to “revitalize traditional folk art and handicraft production... as a way of preserving it in the memory of the nation and as a method involving the cultural consciousness of young people aimed at their moral and cultural cultivation.”⁷²⁴ Hudec argued that the situation of Slovak culture had improved since Slovakia gained independence, stressing that while under Czechoslovakia there was “no concept of Slovak culture,” in the 1990s a number of new institutes and activities were established, and traditional Slovak folk crafts such as wire sculpting, pottery, and textiles were rejuvenated.⁷²⁵

In Croatia, naïve art acquired a significance under the HDZ that was frequently deemed as excessive, and one source noted that naïve artists had almost become “the paradigm of the ‘national style’ in church and monumental art.”⁷²⁶ In 1996 a shop with naïve art was opened on Zagreb’s main square, and it was inaugurated by Tudman.⁷²⁷ Some Croats criticized the state’s promotion of naïve art, characterizing the art as “kitsch,” while one source wrote that “the presentation of Croatian artistic creativity to the world by emphasizing the importance of naïve art — as favored by the official cultural policy — can produce the wrong impression about Croatia as a rural country of uneducated people, a country not yet touched by

⁷²¹ *Národná obroda*, 12 January 1995.

⁷²² See “Modernizácia a slovenská kultúra po roku 1945,” in Peter Zajac, *Sen o krajine* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1996), pp. 160-171.

⁷²³ Buncák et al, pp. 80-81.

⁷²⁴ *Nová kvalita života v kultúrnej spoločnosti*, pp. 42.

⁷²⁵ Personal interview with Ivan Hudec, 7 June 1999. In the 1990s, the tinker’s tradition was also memorialized in numerous books. See, for example, Karol Guleja, *Svet drotárov* (Martin, Matica slovenská, 1992).

⁷²⁶ Prijatelj Pavicic, p. 90.

⁷²⁷ See Ines Sabalic, “Cudo hrvatske naive: nacionalna slava ili nacionalna sramota?,” *Globus*, 6 November 1998, pp. 82-87.

modern and post-modern tendencies.”⁷²⁸ One opposition cultural specialist explained that unlike the situation in other communist countries, in Yugoslavia abstract art was not forbidden but was in fact highly privileged. He commented that after the creation of the independent Croatian state, naïve art therefore emerged as a kind of reaction against the art of the previous regime.⁷²⁹ Meanwhile, a Culture Ministry official claimed that Croats were turned off to naïve art simply because it had had strong support under communism, although it was then called “Yugoslav” rather than “Croatian.”⁷³⁰

Although Tudman aimed to unite the nation in his idea of culture, his backward-looking and conservative approach made it difficult to attract certain groups in Croatian society, particularly the younger generation. The alienation of youth from the culture promoted by the HDZ was further exasperated by the government’s general lack of support for young artists, especially if they were working on projects that were not nationally-oriented.⁷³¹ In Slovakia, some “Nationalists” lamented that young people in particular were losing their taste for folk culture, preferring modern, mainly Western culture.⁷³²

The emphasis on promoting a “myth” of the nation was partially accomplished through television, and in both countries state television devoted considerable attention to nationally-oriented documentaries and cultural programs focused on such themes as folklore, national opera, little-known historical figures, the Catholic Church, as well as programs providing language guidance. Antun Vrdoljak, a HDZ representative and former film director who headed Croatian Radio and Television (HRT) in the early 1990s, said that the station should serve as “a cathedral of the Croatian spirit.”⁷³³ Similarly, STV director Jozef Darmo stressed that television should help “the spiritual renewal of the nation,” adding that it could not be used to offend the nation or “to attack and devalue national institutions.”⁷³⁴ Within two weeks of his appointment in late 1994, Darmo had canceled three political satires

⁷²⁸ Cvjeticanin and Katunaric, p. 142.

⁷²⁹ Personal interview with Ivo Škrabalo, 15 January 1999.

⁷³⁰ Personal interview with Seadata Midžić, 18 January 1999.

⁷³¹ Personal interview with Andrea Zlatar, 17 October 2000.

⁷³² Personal interviews with Rudolf Žiak, 1 June 1999; Stanislav Bajaník, 2 June 1999.

⁷³³ Patrick Moore, “Media Update: War as the Centerpiece in Bosnia and Croatia,” *Transition* vol. 1, no. 18 (6 October 1995), p. 32.

⁷³⁴ *RFE/RL Daily Report*, 20 December 1994.

that were among the most popular programs on STV. Moreover, in 1995 the director of STV's Bratislava studio was replaced after the station devoted limited attention devoted to a celebration of the country's first 1,000 days of sovereignty by a group of Slovaks who sailed down the Vah River on wooden rafts. Darmo called the coverage "insufficient" and said that any employee who "does not want STV to be Slovak will have to leave."⁷³⁵

In promoting their ideas of culture, both the HDZ and HZDS regimes were sometimes accused of outright political interference, with theater serving as a prime example. One Croatian source commented that like the previous communist authorities, the HDZ demonstrated a desire to "directly and indirectly intervene in all aspects of public life," a development that affected those theater institutions that relied heavily on state and local funding. The state and local authorities mostly chose theater management "not for their qualifications in the artistic or managerial field but those whom the ruling party considered reliable," and the fear of incurring political disfavor elicited "preventive self-censorship" on the part of theater staff.⁷³⁶ As the opposition gained control of various towns and regions in the late 1990s, some personalities were nominated for top theater posts who were not connected with the HDZ regime. When the politically independent Mani Gotovac was chosen as director of the Croatian National Theater in Split, it took Culture Minister Božo Biškupić 45 days to confirm her appointment.⁷³⁷ Meanwhile, Biškupić rejected the appointment of the internationally acclaimed playwright Slobodan Šnajder, who was selected by local authorities as manager of the Rijeka-based Croatian National Theater "Ivan Zajc." It appeared that Biškupić's rejection was based on Šnajder's leftist views, which were expressed through a regular column he published in the Rijeka-based daily *Novi list*. Shortly before Biškupić made his decision, Šnajder attracted especially strong criticism by questioning the pope's decision to beatify cardinal Štepinac.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁵ Andrej Školkay, "Slovak Government Tightens Its Grip on the Airwaves," *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 8 (19 April 1996), p. 19.

⁷³⁶ Cvjetanin and Katunaric, pp. 159-64, 275.

⁷³⁷ Gotovac interview, *Globus*, 18 December 1998, pp. 64-67. For the repertoire under Gotovac, see interview with actor and director Filip Šovagović, *Globus*, 11 December 1998, pp. 70-72.

⁷³⁸ Slobodan Šnajder, "Kardinalna greška," *Novi list*, 12 October 1998. For more on the Šnajder case, see *Novi list* 5 and 7 December 1998.

In Slovakia, Hudec planned to reorganize Slovakia's 24 theaters and other state-sponsored cultural institutions under the auspices of three regional cultural centers, which would allegedly make them less expensive to run.⁷³⁹ The reorganization, which began in January 1996, was accompanied by the replacement of a number of cultural officials with government loyalists, often without explanation. In July of that year, Hudec's assault shifted to the Bratislava-based Slovak National Theater, which during 1995 had been criticized by the Culture Ministry on the pages of the pro-HZDS daily *Slovenská Republika* for staging too few productions by Slovak authors.⁷⁴⁰ Hudec fired the National Theater's stage director, allegedly because he refused to accept the minister's plans to reorganize the institution. That move was followed by more changes, including the firing of the Culture Ministry's state secretary after she expressed support for the theater's employees and for the Slovak National Theater's director. The latter was replaced by a man who was sixth on the HZDS candidate list for Bratislava in the 1994 parliamentary elections.

The emergence of alternatives

While in Croatia the growing opposition to the regime's cultural policies was presented mainly through the media,⁷⁴¹ in Slovakia it emerged through public protests and strikes, signalling that the insistence of Meciar's 1994-1998 government on promoting its views of culture surpassed the line of acceptability. Protests against the Meciar government's cultural policy started almost immediately after the cabinet's appointment in December 1994, with the first signs of discontent coming as a reaction to STV's cancellation of the political satires. A petition campaign "against the violation of freedom of speech in Slovakia" was organized to protest the move, collecting more than 115,000 signatures by early March 1995. Moreover, a series of protest demonstrations was held in Bratislava that attracted as many as 10,000 people, including actors and journalists, with entertainment provided by leading comedians from the cancelled satires.⁷⁴² Opinion polls showed that the majority of Slovaks favored the demonstrators'

⁷³⁹ Personal interview with Pavol Števček, 13 September 1999.

⁷⁴⁰ *Tyden*, 7 October 1996.

⁷⁴¹ See, for example, the *Globus* articles featured in this chapter.

⁷⁴² *Sme*, 23 February and 24 March 1995; *Národná obroda*, 10 March 1995.

demands,⁷⁴³ but STV refused to reinstate the programs, complaining that they were too expensive.

In summer 1995 approximately 500 “Europeanist” cultural figures signed a declaration warning about the potential for limitations of cultural freedom following the publication of an anonymous document in *Slovenská Republika* entitled “A Concept for Slovak Culture.”⁷⁴⁴ Despite such expressions of protest, Snopko argued in March 1996 that “the majority of Slovak artists have their opinions but do not express them,” adding that the Slovak intelligentsia was “like a person suffering from a serious disease,” feeling it but being too afraid to go to the doctor.⁷⁴⁵

The relative silence of Slovakia’s cultural community ended with the launch of Hudec’s plans to reorganize cultural institutions, particularly with his attacks on the Slovak National Theater, which was home to many of the country’s best-loved actors and opera singers, some of whom had played key roles in the November 1989 “velvet revolution.” The artists’ frustration centered not only on Hudec’s interference in the affairs of culture institutions, but also on his refusal to negotiate with them, leading some actors to say that the situation was worse than under communism or fascism.⁷⁴⁶ Hudec’s interference in the National Theater’s affairs not only led some of the theater’s best-known actors and professionals to resign in protest, but it also triggered a number of demonstrations and two strikes, as well as the creation in September 1996 of the protest movement and petition drive called “Let’s Save Culture.” Those joining the strikes — the first at the theater since November 1989 — were not only top actors who could easily find jobs elsewhere, but also those who relied on their theater salaries as their only source of income. The most dramatic and surprising of exits came in October 1996 with the departure of tenor Peter Dvorský, who had served the theater’s opera for 24 years and ranked among Slovakia’s best-known cultural figures at home and abroad. Dvorský’s resignation was especially important because of his patriotic past; he had made no secret of his longing for an independent Slovak state and his sympathy for Meciar.

⁷⁴³ Školka, “Slovak Government Tightens Its Grip on the Airwaves,” p. 19.

⁷⁴⁴ *Sme*, 18 July 1995; Zajac, “Kultúra,” p. 177.

⁷⁴⁵ Snopko interview, *Národná obroda*, 4 March 1996.

⁷⁴⁶ See, for example, CTK, 5 September 1996.

One commentator wrote that Dvorský's exit was for Hudec "a more bitter pill than the entire rebellion at the theater's drama troop, more than 30,000 signatures on the petition 'Let's Save Culture,' and more than the full meeting on the square."⁷⁴⁷

The actors were joined in their protest by colleagues from other fields as well. Demonstrations, which drew up to 20,000 participants, included representatives of trade unions, student groups, opposition political parties, the religious community, cultural organizations such as the Slovak PEN Center, and NGOs. Although the first strike — held in October 1996 — was limited in nature, the second strike — in February-March 1997 — was the first statewide strike in Slovakia since 1989, and it was supported by the Confederation of Trade Unions and later by the academic community. The political opposition demonstrated strong support for the striking artists, and in March 1997 a group of approximately 100 theater employees and 20 opposition deputies held an overnight sit-in at the Culture Ministry in an effort to force Hudec to discuss their demands.⁷⁴⁸ The conflict between Hudec and the artists reached such a point that a number of prominent cultural figures refused to participate in officially-sponsored presentations of Slovak culture abroad.⁷⁴⁹

In its struggle to explain the departure of top personalities from the cultural field, the ruling coalition argued that they were ill, manipulated, and/or involved in financial machinations.⁷⁵⁰ Moreover, Hudec stressed that "it certainly is not by chance that among the biggest critics of the [transformation] process in culture are those who always belonged somewhere else... Most of them did not accept the declaration of Slovak sovereignty, were not in favor of an independent Slovak state, and were against the constitution."⁷⁵¹ During the first strike, Meciar joined Hudec in his attacks, indicating that the striking actors would be replaced by their colleagues from regional theaters.⁷⁵² In contrast to the discourse used by the ruling coalition, the opposition and the cultural community tried to conjure up images of democracy and the ideals of the "velvet revolution." Others turned the ruling

⁷⁴⁷ *Sme*, 19 October 1996.

⁷⁴⁸ Daša Matejčíková, "Noc na ministerstve," *Plus 7 dní*, 25 March 1997; CTK, 10 and 11 March 1997.

⁷⁴⁹ See Snopko interview, *Národná obroda*, 4 March 1996; CTK, 22 October 1996.

⁷⁵⁰ Valéria Koszoruová, "Kto nie je s nami, je chorý a manipulovaný," *Národná obroda*, 22 October 1996.

⁷⁵¹ Daša Matejčíková, "Vzbura v kultúre," *Plus 7 dní*, 15 October 1996.

⁷⁵² TASR, 3 October 1996; *Národná obroda*, 4 October 1996.

coalition's discourse around, and one "Europeanist" film director argued that "we know that the only anti-Slovak enemy of culture is Hudec."⁷⁵³

Although in Croatia the conflict between the government and the cultural community never reached such heights as it did in Slovakia, there were certain voices from the field of culture that were critical of the HDZ and its policies throughout the 1990s. For example, two well-known actresses, Alma Prica and Urša Raukar, participated in annual demonstrations aimed at returning Zagreb's Square of the Great Croats to its previous name, the Square of the Victims of Fascism.⁷⁵⁴ Moreover, one young artist caused a stir in 1998 when he presented voodoo dolls of five top Croatian politicians at a Zagreb exhibition.⁷⁵⁵

In Slovakia, the cultural community played a significant role in contributing to the opposition's victory in the September 1998 parliamentary elections, partly through participation in the campaigns of individual parties, but also through helping to change public discourse by bringing their concerns to a wider population. Although the Meciar government's controversial cultural policies were certainly not the only factor that influenced the HZDS's electoral defeat in 1998, they created an awkward and contradictory situation for the party. Before the elections, the HZDS tried to attract Slovak cultural figures to participate in its campaign; however, the vast majority refused, despite offers of large sums of money.⁷⁵⁶ The HZDS was thus forced to make use of less popular Slovak entertainers in its campaign. While continuing to present itself in rhetoric as the only way for Slovakia and labeling its critics as "anti-Slovak," the HZDS also turned to foreign stars, mainly from the Czech Republic, France, and Italy, paying them to visit Slovakia and appear at Meciar's side at such pre-election events as the opening of stretches of new highway, hospital visits, and even party rallies. Those visitors, who included top model Claudia Schiffer, French actor Gerard Depardieu, and Italian actresses Claudia Cardinale and Ornella Muti, were apparently supposed to show voters that although the Meciar government had failed to lead Slovakia into NATO and the EU, it was still acceptable to some Western circles. However, the

⁷⁵³ CTK, 5 September 1996.

⁷⁵⁴ Buden, *Barikade2*, p. 235.

⁷⁵⁵ See Srecko Strahinja interview, *Globus*, 23 October 1998, pp. 66-67.

⁷⁵⁶ See, for example, "Peter Nagy nebude vystupovat na mítingoch HZDS," *Sme* 10 August 1998.

visits proved counterproductive since they contradicted the “pro-Slovak” cultural policy that the government had advocated for the previous four years, and they appeared especially ostentatious since domestic culture had long been suffering from lack of funding. In addition to the story about the purchase of Spanish villas by top VSŽ representatives, just before the elections the media reported that Hudec had become the owner of a house valued at 215,000 German marks on the Croatian island of Hvar. Formerly the residence of the Slovak writer Martin Kukučín, the ministry reportedly planned to establish the house as a summer resort for the Society of Slovak Writers. However, it was unclear why the house was registered in Hudec’s name.⁷⁵⁷

Rejecting the HZDS, many well-known actors, comedians, and singers performed at the pre-election rallies of the opposition parties, sometimes even without pay. The majority of them campaigned for the center-right Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK), while some prominent artists such as Dvorský chose to support the opposition Party of Civic Understanding (SOP). Still others took part in the pre-election campaigns of non-governmental organizations that were organized to motivate the population to participate in the elections.⁷⁵⁸

In Croatia, cultural figures also played an important role in the campaign prior to the January 2000 parliamentary elections, some on the side of the HDZ and others on the side of the opposition or through participation in the non-governmental organizations’ get-out-the-vote campaign. Regarding the first category, a new film by Sedlar entitled “Četverored” [Row of four] was released in December 1999, telling the story of the Bleiburg tragedy. Sedlar claimed that the date of the release had nothing to do with the elections and insisted that the film did not have any kind of propagandistic function in the HDZ’s pre-election campaign;⁷⁵⁹ however, that was doubtful considering that Croatian TV initially planned to air the film on the eve of the elections.⁷⁶⁰ Meanwhile, many well-known cultural personalities supported the opposition Coalition of Two, which included the Social Democratic

⁷⁵⁷ TV Markiza news, 23 September 1998; *Sme*, 24 September 1998.

⁷⁵⁸ For more on culture and the Slovak elections, see Martin Porubjak, “I think Therefore I Vote: Cultural Figures in the 1998 Election Campaign,” in Martin Bútora et al (eds.), *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia* (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1999), pp. 179-185.

⁷⁵⁹ Arsen Oremovic, “Najviše se pljeskalo ubijanju partizana,” *Vecernji list*, 8 December 1999.

Party and the Croatian Social-Liberal Party. Artists such as Tito's granddaughter, theater director Saša Broz, played a role in creating the campaign,⁷⁶¹ while various musicians participated in Coalition rallies, including some who had previously supported Tudman.⁷⁶² A number of cultural figures were involved in the NGO campaign run by the group Glas 99, both in its support council and in its advertisements and other activities.⁷⁶³ Just before the elections, a group of well-known cultural personalities published an advertisement featuring a painting of a white dove by the artist Edo Murtic, together with the slogan "Change is victory."⁷⁶⁴

This chapter has completed the examination of the Croatian and Slovak ruling parties' efforts to maintain national mobilization, looking at the policies and debates among elites relating to culture. Additionally, it has continued to investigate the decline of national movements by demonstrating the conflicts between the ruling parties' discourse and their concrete actions and how they were perceived by the public.

Cultural policies were clearly among the most alienating of the nation-building attempts by Meciar's third government, causing irreparable damage to relations between the government and the cultural community and harming the cabinet's image among the population in general. In Croatia, tensions between the government and the cultural community never reached such heights as they did in Slovakia. That was due partly to the Croatian government's somewhat more subtle implementation of its policies, which were not as exclusive or far-reaching as those of Hudec. In contrast to the situation in Slovakia, the Croatian Culture Ministry's policy lacked a real strategy, and despite the HDZ's alienating discourse in other areas, Biškupic engaged in dialogue with experts and artists outside the party in an effort to avoid confrontation. Another reason for the different situation in Slovakia versus Croatia was the generally weaker opposition in Croatia, where many

⁷⁶⁰ Igor Mirkovic, "Najvažnija umjetnost u službi HDZ-a," *Globus*, 24 December 1999, pp. 82-85.

⁷⁶¹ Mare Bulic-Mrkobrad, "Troškovnik predizborne kampane," *Globus*, 17 December 1999, pp. 33-35.

⁷⁶² See interview with singer Hus Hasanefendic, *Jutarnji list*, 13 November 1999; Gordan Malic, "Predizborno prestrojavanje na estradi," *Globus*, 19 November 1999, pp. 78-80.

⁷⁶³ Personal interview with Glas director Tin Gazivoda, 10 December 1999. See also Dino Dvornik, "Borac za novo vrijeme," *Globus*, 31 December 1999, pp. 76-77.

⁷⁶⁴ See *Globus*, 31 December 1999, p. 74.

cultural personalities followed nationally-oriented traditions, particularly in the early 1990s.

The apparent failure of the Slovak and Croatian people to internalize the approach to culture put forward by the HZDS and HDZ demonstrates a lack of vision on the part of those elites involved. By promoting traditional forms of culture at the expense of modern ones, the parties were alienating a whole subset of the populations — particularly youth — who prefer other types of cultural expression. Moreover, by using authoritarian discourse and choosing not to give funding to those artists who were talented but not politically-friendly, the HZDS and HDZ managed to create a constituency of people who were solidly pro-opposition.

Continuing the presentation of the decline of national movements that was begun in this chapter and the previous one, the next section deals with that development in greater detail. While Chapter 6 focuses on the growth of civil society, Chapter 7 deals with the rise of political opposition parties and their victory in elections.

Section Three: The Defeat of National Movements

Chapter 6: The Growth of Democratic Civil Society

Building on the protest movements discussed in the chapters on economy and culture, this chapter continues the discussion of the rise of civic opposition in Slovakia and Croatia. While previous chapters dealt largely with how the nation was constructed “from above,” this chapter represents an attempt to look at how nationalist mobilization declined through an examination of the nation “from below,” in terms of the hopes and interests of ordinary people.⁷⁶⁵ Such a decline would presumably be accompanied by the strengthening of civil society, defined as the social subsystem “that is analytically and, to various degrees, empirically separated from the spheres of political, economic, and religious life” and as the “network of understandings that operates beneath and above explicit institutions and the self-conscious interests of elites.”⁷⁶⁶ As such, the nature of civil society is difficult to assess. According to Jeffrey Alexander, in order to capture the deeper consciousness of civil society it is necessary to focus on the “distinctive symbolic codes that are critically important in constituting the very sense of society for those who are within and without it.”⁷⁶⁷

In line with that approach, this chapter attempts to determine the fundamental desires and concerns of the Slovak and Croatian populations. In doing so, it examines the development of independent media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) during the 1990s, showing how they grew in size and demonstrating their increasingly anti-governmental stance. Looking at the media and NGOs is not a perfect measure of the nature of civil society, partly because both are in many respects elite-driven. However, the media is nonetheless a crucial unit of analysis since journalists can both capture broader public opinion and have a profound effect on it. NGOs are important in the Slovak and Croatian cases because of the wide public involvement in such groups, particularly during the pre-election campaigns. The message that the NGOs were sending appeared indicative of the mood a large segment of the populations.

⁷⁶⁵ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, p. 11.

⁷⁶⁶ Alexander, “Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification,” pp. 96-97.

⁷⁶⁷ Alexander, “Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification,” pp. 97-98.

In the early 1990s, the ruling HDZ and HZDS dominated public discourse and used it as a way of stamping out dissent. Many Croats and Slovaks saw the need for national togetherness in the early years of the post-communist transformation; however, as demonstrated in chapters 4 and 5, the population of both countries gradually began to focus on other issues and to question the rhetoric established by the ruling party. That was especially true during the second half of the decade, when the Slovak and Croatian states were not threatened by any outside force. The increasing focus by Slovak and Croatian societies on questions other than the nation was to a certain extent related to the public's disappointment with the ruling parties' inability to fulfill their promises that national sovereignty would bring prosperity and security. It was also achieved through the efforts by opposing groups to inform the populations about the mistakes of the ruling parties and gradually turn HZDS and HDZ discourse around, making the ruling parties themselves into the "enemy" of the nation. Such an endeavor was particularly apparent in the independent media and the work of NGOs.

Even in the second half of the 1990s, the magnitude of public protest was often disappointingly low in Slovakia and Croatia, as many citizens tended to be passive and distrustful. However, NGOs ran campaigns prior to Slovakia's 1998 parliamentary elections and Croatia's 2000 Lower House elections to help ensure that voters would participate, while the media continued to dig up scandals relating to the ruling parties. Thus, the actors of civil society — including the independent media, trade unions, and civic associations — proved crucial in laying the ground for the victory of the political opposition parties, whose campaigns are discussed in Chapter 7. In both countries, civil society organizations in certain ways appeared to have been more influential than the opposition parties in mobilizing people. That is likely because NGOs were often closer to ordinary people than were the opposition political representatives, who were sitting in the parliament and receiving many of the same privileges as the ruling parties themselves.

An especially important factor in the changing atmosphere of both countries was the demographic one. While both the HDZ and HZDS had significant backing

from youth in the elections that brought them to power,⁷⁶⁸ by the end of the decade they had largely lost the support of young voters. With education in the hands of the HDZ and HZDS, it would appear that youth in both countries would have become indoctrinated to believe in the national image that was promoted by those parties; however, the Tudman and Meciar regimes clearly failed in their attempts to promote their new ideology among young people. Many young voters were disinterested in politics and dissatisfied with their living conditions and poor job prospects, which was frequently reflected in their disappointment with the state itself.⁷⁶⁹ In explaining the ruling parties' failure to attract youth, "Nationalists" often pointed to the lack of a national orientation among parents, teachers, and journalists as a result of their communist education.⁷⁷⁰ In fact, one Slovak study that examined generational differences in voting patterns demonstrated that in no more than five percent of the cases did the oldest child of opposition parents vote for the SNS or HZDS.⁷⁷¹

For Slovaks and Croats, the key turning points in perceptions of the ruling parties occurred at different times and in different ways, influenced by the fundamental concerns of the two societies. In Slovakia, the Meciar government's lack of respect for democracy was probably the most important issue in swaying the population, as demonstrated most dramatically by the cabinet's interference in a May 1997 referendum that was supposed to ask three questions proposed by the ruling parties concerning NATO membership and a fourth question on direct presidential elections put forward by the opposition. Just before the vote, the HZDS interior minister ordered that the ballots be distributed without the fourth question, and only about 10 percent of the electorate participated.

In contrast, the change of attitude toward the HDZ in Croatia was influenced much more by economic than political factors, particularly as it became apparent that while ordinary people were suffering, top HDZ officials were living

⁷⁶⁸ See Dejan Jovic, "Kakvu Hrvatsku žele," *Danas*, 3 April 1990, p. 7; Slovak Statistical Office poll, *Pravda*, 28 May 1992.

⁷⁶⁹ For more on the attitudes of Slovak youth, see Gyárfášová et al, "First-time Voters and the 1998 Elections," pp. 233-243.

⁷⁷⁰ Personal interviews with Eva Slavkovská, 12 May 1999; Stanislav Bajaník, 2 June 1999; and Predrag Haramija, 25 May 2000.

comfortably, even flamboyantly. One of the key turning points in Croatia came in October 1998, when the Zagrebacka banka clerk leaked Ankica Tudman's bank statement to the press. The popularity of the bank employee soared, and the incident was especially important since it showed that even ordinary citizens could make a difference if they were willing to take risks.

Although it is impossible to quantify their role precisely, in both Slovakia and Croatia the pre-election campaigns of civil society organizations helped to guarantee a high turnout in elections, while at the same time ensuring that the population's frustration was not channeled into radical parties. In Slovakia's 1998 elections, the turnout was 84 percent, and the civic campaign was particularly important in mobilizing first-time voters, whose participation was far greater than in previous elections. The success of the Croatian NGO sector's pre-election get-out-the-vote campaign was demonstrated by the 75 percent election turnout, which was also high considering the fact that the elections were held just two days after New Year's Day. Achieving a high turnout was especially important because it was assumed that it was the undecided voters, particularly those in urban areas, would in the end likely choose to back the opposition rather than the ruling parties.

The previous two chapters have discussed the opposition activities of the trade unions and the cultural community, as well as the way the independent media dealt with economic and cultural questions. Focusing largely on the period after the 1994 parliamentary elections in Slovakia and the 1995 Lower House elections in Croatia, this chapter adds to that material, presenting an overall view of the development of media and of civil society in the two countries and their influence on the growing success of political alternatives.

The role of the media

Before discussing the situation of the media in Croatia and Slovakia, it is important to note the different ideological bias of opposition in the two countries since it had an impact on the media as well as on the development of political parties. In

⁷⁷¹ Zora Bútorová, "Development of Public Opinion: from Discontent to the Support of Political Change," in Bútorá et al (eds.), *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia*, p. 212.

Croatia, where the communist regime had been more liberal and more popular than in Czechoslovakia, the strongest post-independence opposition groups emerged on the left of the political spectrum, partly also in reaction to the perception of the HDZ as a party of mostly right-wing values. Such a view was especially apparent in the attitudes of Zagreb intellectuals, many of whom had a left-wing, anti-nationalist approach. The media organizations that most clearly represented that standpoint were the weekly *Feral Tribune* and the daily *Novi list*, as well as the journal *ARKzin*, which was published by the Anti-War Campaign.

In Slovakia, in contrast, opposition to Meciar emerged on both the right and the left of the political spectrum. The anti-nationalist right-wing opposition was largely an outgrowth of the civic and Christian right parties that had participated in the first post-communist government, and that approach was supported most passionately by the daily *Sme* and weekly *Domino efekt* (later called *Domino forum*) as well as by many Bratislava intellectuals, who established think-tanks aimed at disseminating their views. While that group saw the HZDS as a mostly leftist and nationalist phenomenon, the left-wing opposition viewed Meciar as being too far to the right and as paying insufficient attention to the economic and social needs of ordinary citizens. The leftist view was represented by the dailies *Pravda* and *Práca* (with the latter published by the Slovak trade unions) and by the weekly newspaper *Nové slovo*. In both Croatia and Slovakia, opposition media often did not aim for objectivity but had a clear agenda of their own, and journalists were often highly critical of any nationally-oriented policies implemented by the ruling parties.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, controlling the media was the most important way in which the ruling parties ensured public support. In that sense, television was especially crucial because its impact was stronger than that of the print media given the difficult economic situation and the limited purchasing power of ordinary citizens, especially in Croatia. An October 1997 poll in Slovakia asked the question “When some political events and problems are not entirely clear to you, who best explains them to you?” In response, 47 percent answered television, compared with 43 percent for newspapers and magazines, and 26 percent for

radio.⁷⁷² In Croatia, a November 1998 poll showed that while just 4 percent of Croats did not watch television and 13 percent did not listen to the radio regularly, 40 percent had not read a daily paper the previous day.⁷⁷³

While in Croatia, all three terrestrial stations remained in the hands of state-run Croatian TV (HTV) throughout the 1990s, in Slovakia, even before the launch of the statewide private TV Markíza in 1996, many Slovaks — especially those living in the western part of the country — could turn to Czech television for news. Although Markíza's criticism of the Meciar government was initially weak,⁷⁷⁴ within half a year the station had become clearly anti-HZDS, and it played a crucial role in the 1998 election campaign, both for opposition parties and for civic associations. In Croatia, the production house TV Mreža was established in 1997 to provide programs — including news — for local television stations, and one source noted that by mid-1998 10 local stations covering 90 percent of Croatian territory were included in that network.⁷⁷⁵ Nonetheless, a November 1999 opinion poll question asking respondents which television station they watched most frequently showed that no local station had a viewership of more than 3 percent, while that of the three HTV stations combined was 79 percent.⁷⁷⁶ In contrast, an October 1997 poll showed that 69 percent of Slovaks watched TV Markíza news at least three times weekly, compared with 55 percent who watched Slovak Television (STV) news.⁷⁷⁷

Radio was generally less controlled than television, but many private stations did not have the money or the interest to produce serious news programs. The exception in Croatia was the Zagreb-based Radio 101, which became a target of government attacks because of its independent editorial policy, particularly during the crisis in October 1995 when Tudman refused to allow the opposition parties to elect the mayor of its choice although they had won a majority in Zagreb's city

⁷⁷² Zora Bútorová et al, "Diváci, poslucháči, citatelia," in Bútorová (ed.), *Slovensko pred voľbami: Lúdia—Názory—Súvislosti* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 1998), p. 67.

⁷⁷³ "Istraživanje javnog mnijenja" (International Republican Institute, November 1999), pp. 19-20.

⁷⁷⁴ In early 1997, Markíza failed to broadcast footage of Meciar screaming at one of its reporters that he would "beat him so that even God would not recognize him"; however, the incident reached Slovak viewers through Czech TV Nova. See *Sme*, 28 January 1997.

⁷⁷⁵ Zrinjka Peruško Culek, *Demokracija i mediji* (Zagreb: Barbat, 1999), pp. 152-153.

⁷⁷⁶ "Istraživanje javnog mnijenja," p. 19.

⁷⁷⁷ Bútorová et al, "Diváci, poslucháči, citatelia," p. 74.

council. In Slovakia, Radio Twist was the first private radio station to have its own serious news program, which it launched in August 1995, becoming a real alternative to Slovak Radio. Unlike Radio 101, which was only available in Zagreb and its vicinity, by the time of the 1998 elections, Radio Twist was available throughout Slovakia. While 13 percent of Slovaks questioned in the October 1997 poll followed Radio Twist news at least three times weekly, only 7 percent of Croats said in November 1999 that Radio 101 was one of the two radio stations they listened to most frequently.⁷⁷⁸

In terms of newspapers, there was also a significant difference between the two countries. In Slovakia, only one daily newspaper — *Slovenská Republika* — was pro-governmental, and that paper had a readership of just 11 percent in October 1997, which placed it behind four other dailies that were oriented toward the opposition.⁷⁷⁹ In Croatia, the most influential daily was the pro-HDZ *Vecernji list*, which in November 1999 had a readership of 28 percent.⁷⁸⁰

During their time in office, both the HDZ and HZDS repeatedly displayed aversion to the independent media, and journalists who criticized the ruling parties were sometimes subjected to harsh verbal criticism and intimidation, including legal action. Although no journalists were jailed in either country, media organizations were sometimes faced with high fines for such crimes as “spreading false information,” “slandering and insulting” top officials, or offending their “honor” and “dignity.” In Croatia, *Feral Tribune* and the tabloid weeklies *Globus* and *Nacional* were the most frequent targets of libel cases, while in Slovakia *Sme* was often subjected to lawsuits. Many lawsuits in Slovakia also went in the other direction, and *Slovenská Republika* lost a number of cases brought on by opposition representatives.

Other forms of pressure on the media included the raising of taxes, which both the Slovak and Croatian governments threatened to do on several occasions but eventually backed down under pressure from the international community and from domestic media and publishers. In Croatia, many independent publications

⁷⁷⁸ Bútorová et al, “Diváci, poslucháči, citatelia,” p. 74; “Istraživanje javnog mnijenja,” p. 19.

⁷⁷⁹ Bútorová et al, “Diváci, poslucháči, citatelia,” p. 70.

⁷⁸⁰ “Istraživanje javnog mnijenja,” p. 21.

had serious financial problems in 1998-1999, when the newspaper distribution firm Tisak stopped paying them for the papers they sold at newsstands. Political manipulation was also threatened in Slovakia when the newspaper distribution monopoly PNS was privatized in early 1998.

In June 1995 *Feral Tribune* faced another kind of threat when copies of the paper were confiscated from Split kiosks and publicly burned. Numerous journalists in both countries were subjected to threats regarding their personal safety, and in several cases they were victims of physical attacks and smear campaigns.⁷⁸¹ In 1997, just before the launch in Slovakia of the alternative news agency, SITA, its offices were broken into and equipment was stolen. Later, the Slovak Culture Ministry sent out letters ordering state institutions not to use the new agency's services.⁷⁸²

In both countries, harsh discourse was used against the independent media. In Croatia, the pro-HDZ *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* published an article in January 1995 entitled "Fifth Columnists in the Media," listing more than 50 Croatian journalists as "enemies" simply because they were allegedly writing for foreign media organizations.⁷⁸³ After the 1995 parliamentary elections, the Croatian government launched a new attack on the independent media, and the authorities singled out a number of papers — including *Novi list*, *Feral Tribune*, *Globus*, *Nacional*, and *ARKzin*, among others — as "remnants of the old [communist] regime," referring to them as "Yugo-nostalgic and subversive enemies of the Croatian state."

Tudman argued that those who wrote for *Feral Tribune* were "ideologues of the former communist regime, the children of military personnel, and the children of mixed marriages with Serbs."⁷⁸⁴

HZDS representatives were quick to blame "anti-Slovak" journalists for damaging the country's "good reputation" at home and abroad. One of the most frequent

⁷⁸¹ See, for example, Palo Rýpal, "Kto žaluje na novinárov?" *Plus 7 dní*, 25 May 1998, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁸² CTK, 12 June 1997. For more on the regimes' media policies, see Vesna Alaburic, "Hazardous Games Without Borders," *Politicka misao* vol. 34, no. 5 (1997), pp. 80-87; and Sharon Fisher, "Slovak Media Under Pressure," *Transition*, vol. 1, no. 18 (8 September 1995), pp. 7-9.

⁷⁸³ *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, 6 January 1995.

⁷⁸⁴ Biljana Tatomir, "Croatian Government Calls Certain Media 'Enemies of the State,'" *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 21 (18 October 1996), p. 24.

critics of the opposition media was Dušan Slobodník, who had served as culture minister in Meciar's second government and in 1994-1998 was head of the Slovak parliament's Foreign Relations Committee. In one article, Slobodník claimed that the political opposition and journalists were harming Slovakia's integration efforts and argued that "a journalist is also a citizen of the state and should weigh all consequences of his actions. That does not mean that it is necessary to flatter the coalition, but there are certain borders beyond which all criticism, especially criticism that is treacherously placed abroad, is an effort to destruct Slovak statehood."⁷⁸⁵

Despite efforts by both the HDZ and HZDS to control the media, the main journalist organizations in each country — the Croatian Journalists' Society (HND) and the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists (SSN) — were led by opponents of the ruling parties. In Slovakia, the alternative pro-HZDS journalists' organization "For a True Picture of Slovakia," which was established in November 1991 and later renamed the Association of Slovak Journalists (ZSN), never had the same attraction and influence as the SSN.

Despite the difficult atmosphere, while the political opposition was sometimes slow to criticize the ruling parties, the independent media played an important role in bringing political change in the late 1990s and were often far more daring than politicians in questioning national myths and the use and misuse of national symbols. Sometimes the same journalists who had contributed to the popularity of Meciar and Tudman at the beginning of the decade were the strongest critics later on. Until its ownership change in 1996, the Slovak daily *Národná obroda* was a prime example of the path followed by many journalists and media organizations in the 1990s. First created in 1945 but later shut down by the communists, *Národná obroda* was re-established in 1990 as an "independent paper of the citizens of Slovakia" but soon shifted to a nationalistic, pro-Meciar publication. Later, the daily emerged as a right-of-center paper that opposed Meciar and his government, rivaling only *Sme* in the enthusiasm of its criticism. One Slovak journalist wrote that during the 1990s, many of his colleagues shifted their support

⁷⁸⁵ *Národná obroda*, 4 October 1996.

from the Public Against Violence to Meciar to the anti-Meciar opposition, although few of them later apologized.⁷⁸⁶

A similar transformation occurred in Croatia, especially in the case of television journalists. In the early 1990s, Croatian TV reporters played a crucial role in the nationalist mobilization of the population, particularly during the war, and most independently-thinking journalists were forced to leave the station.⁷⁸⁷ Later in the decade, many of those same journalists became Tudman critics and took part in the establishment in 1997 of Forum 21, an NGO consisting of dissatisfied journalists from Croatian state TV and various other television and radio stations who aimed to transform Croatian TV into a public service institution. Although some observers criticized Forum 21 representatives for remaining employed at Croatian TV, signaling that they were continuing to cooperate with the regime, the organization's president Damir Matkovic argued that they could influence the situation more from the inside than from the outside.⁷⁸⁸

Throughout the second half of the 1990s, the Croatian and Slovak media unearthed numerous scandals involving the ruling parties, thereby playing a critical role in promoting the image of the HDZ and HZDS as parties that were more interested in the personal gain than in the well-being of the nation. While publications such as *Feral Tribune* and *Domino* retained an anti-nationalist stance throughout the 1990s and were important in providing a sense of solidarity among those who disapproved of the HDZ and HZDS, the broader reaching tabloid-style weekly magazines *Globus* in Croatia and *Plus 7 dní* in Slovakia helped to bring such stories to the masses.

It must be noted that *Globus* was responsible for much of the sensationalist "hate speech" that was inflicted on Croatian dissidents and Bosnian Muslims in the early 1990s, even though the magazine presented anti-HDZ views during that period as well. By the second half of the decade, although *Globus* continued to be sensationalist and could not always be considered anti-nationalist, the magazine

⁷⁸⁶ Wolf, p. 60.

⁷⁸⁷ See Mark Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina* (London: Article 19, 1994), pp. 130-200.

⁷⁸⁸ Personal interview with Matkovic, 26 January 1999.

frequently published articles and interviews that were critical of the HDZ and the way that the Croatian state was built, questioning the traditions and myths that had been established by and about Tudman and his regime and thereby influencing a shift in the popular perception of the HDZ.⁷⁸⁹ One former *Globus* journalist said that a considerable amount of planning went into each article, and the magazine's editors consciously attempted to demonstrate the excesses of the Tudman regime whenever possible, frequently picturing the president's wife and daughter in fur coats and focusing on concrete cases of corruption in privatization.⁷⁹⁰ Denis Kuljiš, who was the founder of both *Globus* and *Nacional*, complained that neither publication was really independent and said that journalistic standards fell considerably during the 1990s because of competition for "explosive" political stories on subjects such as corruption. Kuljiš added that the magazines were eventually used as a weapon against the HDZ government, lowering their standards to serve political goals.⁷⁹¹ Thus, in certain ways, *Globus* journalists had simply turned their "hate speech" of the early 1990s against the HDZ.

Aside from those *Globus* articles and interviews that are referred to elsewhere, at the end of the decade the magazine dealt with such subjects as the opening of a center in Tudman's home town for studying Tudman and his works;⁷⁹² the decision in 1992 to secretly baptize as Catholics Tudman's two grandsons, whose father was a Serb;⁷⁹³ the possibility of Croatia's expulsion from the Council of Europe if recommendations on Croatian Television were not accepted;⁷⁹⁴ new views on Tudman's personal history;⁷⁹⁵ a scandal within the secret services;⁷⁹⁶ Tudman's alleged "purchase" of a team of experts to write his numerous books;⁷⁹⁷ the

⁷⁸⁹ The opposition orientation of *Globus* was questioned in late 2000, when Croatian media revealed that Nino Pavic, head of the group Europapress holding that owned *Globus*, apparently made a deal in 1997 with HDZ representatives to divide up the media scene. See Marinko Culic, "Politics and the Media War," AIM, 11 December 2000.

⁷⁹⁰ Personal discussion with Ines Sabalic, 19 July 2000.

⁷⁹¹ Personal interview with Kuljiš, 17 October 2000.

⁷⁹² Dubravko Grakalic, "Postaje li Veliko Trgovišće doista novi Kumrovec?" *Globus*, 12 June 1998, pp. 16-18.

⁷⁹³ Željko Peratovic, "Novi vjernici u obitelji predsjednika republike," *Globus*, 18 September 1998, pp. 24-26.

⁷⁹⁴ Interview with Council of Europe representative Christophe Poiriel, *Globus*, 25 September 1998, pp. 16-18.

⁷⁹⁵ Six-part series by Darko Hudelist, published in *Globus* in September-October 1998.

⁷⁹⁶ Đurdica Klancir, "Drama u hrvatskim obavještajnim službama," *Globus*, 2 October 1998, pp. 4-6.

⁷⁹⁷ Slavica Lukic, "Državna tajna na Pantovcaku," *Globus*, 6 November 1998, pp. 12-14.

government's "catastrophic decision" to choose an American lawyer specializing in natural gas to represent Croatia at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY);⁷⁹⁸ the large amount of budget funds being transferred to Herzegovina;⁷⁹⁹ the police's intrusion in cafés and nightclubs, attacking "the last oasis of urban culture";⁸⁰⁰ and the "enormous" salaries at the presidential office.⁸⁰¹

In the case of *Plus 7 dní*, articles questioning the Meciar government's policies covered such issues as the decision to move the Slovak Post headquarters from Bratislava to Banská Bystrica;⁸⁰² Meciar ally Ivan Lexa's controversial report on the secret service;⁸⁰³ the rejection by two *Slovenská Republika* journalists of a ZSN journalism prize;⁸⁰⁴ the ruling coalition's controversial draft law on the protection of the republic;⁸⁰⁵ the possible role of Slovak Television in intelligence games of the secret service;⁸⁰⁶ the bomb attack on the home of HZDS rebel František Gaulieder;⁸⁰⁷ a HZDS official's abandoning of her own children;⁸⁰⁸ the preparation of a law on the state of emergency;⁸⁰⁹ the collaboration of Slovak Television with the HZDS;⁸¹⁰ the demands by one citizen to determine the cost of former Meciar advisor Anna Nagyová's stay in London for English lessons;⁸¹¹ the death of a top secret service official's son after manipulation with explosives;⁸¹² SNS leader Ján Slota's Hungarian ex-wife;⁸¹³ and possible efforts by the HZDS to misuse the army for political purposes.⁸¹⁴

⁷⁹⁸ Slaven Letica, "Sad ili nikad!" *Globus*, 16 July 1999, p. 15.

⁷⁹⁹ Antun Masle and Goran Malic, "Koliko Hrvatsku stoji Herceg-Bosna" *Globus* 12 November 1999, pp. 34-36.

⁸⁰⁰ Ivan Vidic, "Urbana kultura na udaru represije" *Globus*, 12 November 1999, pp. 82-84.

⁸⁰¹ Đurđica Klancir, "Tudmanovi dvori bez Tudmana," *Globus*, 19 November 1999, pp. 14-15.

⁸⁰² Dušan Valko, "Nežiarlite na Bystricu!" *Plus 7 dní*, 5 March 1996, pp. 30-32.

⁸⁰³ Vladimír Hudák and Lubomír Chorvatovic, "Preco sa I. Lexa potil" *Plus 7 dní*, 4 June 1996, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁰⁴ Peter Kubínyi, "Ohrdnutý Štúr" *Plus 7 dní*, 3 September 1996, p. 12.

⁸⁰⁵ Daša Matejčíková, "Sporné paragrafy" *Plus 7 dní*, 5 November 1996, pp. 12-13.

⁸⁰⁶ Daša Matejčíková, "Co prezradili 'utajení svedkovia'" *Plus 7 dní*, 7 January 1997, pp. 22-23.

⁸⁰⁷ Zita Sojová, "Najprv samoučnosť, teraz samovražda?" *Plus 7 dní*, 28 January 1997, pp. 14-16.

⁸⁰⁸ Matejčíková, "Kto vychováva mládež HZDS v Senici?" *Plus 7 dní*, 4 February 1997, pp. 14-16.

⁸⁰⁹ Sojová, "Chystá si koalícia silový variant moci?" *Plus 7 dní*, 18 March 1997, pp. 12-13.

⁸¹⁰ Daša Matejčíková, "Skutocná náhoda?" *Plus 7 dní*, 8 April 1997, pp. 24-25.

⁸¹¹ Peter Chrenko, "Obcianska Múcková versus štátna moc" *Plus 7 dní*, 7 July 1997, pp. 16-18.

⁸¹² Livia Šulajová, "Tajná operácia tajnej služby?" *Plus 7 dní*, 18 August 1997, pp. 14-15.

⁸¹³ Slota interview, *Plus 7 dní*, 24 August 1998, pp. 20-24.

⁸¹⁴ Interview with former Defense Minister Pavol Kanis, *Plus 7 dní*, 21 September 1998, pp. 12-13.

The question of media freedom itself became a rallying point for both Croats and Slovaks in public protests. In Croatia, the largest anti-government demonstration of the 1990s took place in November 1996, when approximately 100,000 Croats gathered in Zagreb to protest against the cabinet's attempt to shut down Radio 101 following Tudman's refusal to name an opposition candidate as the city's mayor. Importantly, that was the only major protest in Croatia during the 1990s that focused on questions relating to democratization rather than to economic and social problems. What was especially remarkable was that people came on their own volition, rather than being organized in factories and schools.⁸¹⁵

Although protests relating to democratization in Slovakia tended to be frequent, no anti-HZDS demonstrations held during the 1990s were close to being as big in scale as the Radio 101 gathering in Croatia, signaling either a lack of sufficient conviction in the causes or fear of job loss or other negative consequences. The first protests against the HZDS media policy related to Slovak Television's cancellation in December 1994 of the three political satires and involved both public gatherings and a petition campaign. At approximately the same time, protest letters were sent by 52 radio journalists as well as by the student group *Slobodná Alternativa* [Free Alternative] in reaction to the firing of Slovak Radio's Washington correspondent.⁸¹⁶ By far the most important public demonstrations relating to media freedom took place shortly before the 1998 elections, when a mysterious ownership struggle emerged within TV Markíza. The station provided considerable support to the opposition parties throughout the pre-election period, and many Slovaks suspected that the HZDS was somehow involved when the alleged new owner's security guards attempted to take over the station just 10 days before the elections. Masses of people around the country took to the streets in support of Markíza, and opposition politicians took advantage of the situation and set up a platform outside the station's headquarters, where they received a significant amount of free airtime in which to present their opinions and to call for more media freedom.

Also during Slovakia's pre-election period, the *Sme* daily joined in the civic campaign, using its "election bus" to bring commentators from the paper to a

⁸¹⁵ *Feral Tribune*, 25 November 1996.

number of towns, where they held mock elections and responded to citizens' questions. The main slogan of the campaign was "Don't let them take your vote (voice)," and it featured a man's face with tape covering his mouth.

The growth of democratically-oriented civil society

Although Slovaks and Croats seemed willing to make sacrifices for the national cause in the early 1990s, mobilization eventually declined as citizens became frustrated with the ruling parties' policies. In Slovakia, the percentage of people who stressed the importance of national unity and togetherness, rather than pluralism of opinion and democracy, fell from 40 percent in 1993 to 29 percent in 1995.⁸¹⁷ In Croatia, economic questions started to take precedence over national ones, and in one 1998 opinion poll 32 percent of respondents listed the ruling elite's misuse of the privatization scheme as one of the most pressing political problems, while 30 percent complained that Tudman had too many powers and only 24 percent mentioned "the return of too many Serbian refugees" as being a crucial matter.⁸¹⁸ In another poll, released in January 1999, respondents were critical of a number of nation- and state-building policies that had been implemented by the Tudman regime.⁸¹⁹

Despite general dissatisfaction, both Croats and Slovaks appeared reluctant to participate in protest movements,⁸²⁰ and the populations grew increasingly cynical and apathetic. Clearly, the property of civic competence was slow to take hold, and the public mood was often characterized by a feeling of helplessness in the ability

⁸¹⁶ *Národná obroda*, 21 February 1995.

⁸¹⁷ Zora Bútorová, "Public Opinion," in Martin Bútora and Péter Huncík (eds.), *Global Report on Slovakia: Comprehensive Analyses From 1995 and Trends From 1996* (Bratislava: Sándor Márai Foundation, 1997), pp. 271-72.

⁸¹⁸ "Pregled rezultata istraživanja u postotcima po pojedinim pitanjima" (International Republican Institute, October 1998).

⁸¹⁹ Slaven Letica, "Hoće li oporba nakon sljedećih izbora promijeniti hrvatski grb na zastavi?" *Globus*, 15 January 1999, pp. 34-39.

⁸²⁰ This seems in line with the conclusions of Ekiert and Kubik, according to whom levels of discontent are unrelated to the magnitude of protest. Ekiert and Kubik, "Contentious Politics in New Democracies," pp. 547-81.

to affect government policies, thereby reinforcing the political culture of alienation that was inherited from the past.⁸²¹

It often appeared easier to leave the country than to try to change the situation, particularly in Croatia during the war years. In the early 1990s, a number of prominent Croatian and Slovak anti-nationalist personalities left the country, contributing to the weakness of opposition. However, emigration went much deeper than the top echelons of society. Alienation with the HDZ and HZDS regimes, combined with the limited opportunities for a financially secure future in certain fields, added to the “brain drain.”

The populations’ apathy represented a key problem for the development of civil society and of opposition politics. Nonetheless, the Croatian and Slovak governments were also partly responsible for the slow development of civil society since they were reluctant to relinquish influence over society to groups that were beyond their control, a development that was hardly surprising given the parties’ treatment of other independent-thinking groups. Together with their allies in the media, the HDZ and HZDS tried to promote a negative image of NGOs.

In the absence of a culture of corporate giving in post-communist society, many Croatian and Slovak civic associations and foundations relied heavily on international funding, and one of the most common complaints by “Nationalists” about NGOs was that they were controlled by the foreign “enemy.” With so much emphasis on the importance of the state and nation, in both countries NGOs were accused of aiming to “subvert the republic” through such cooperation.⁸²² For example, in an annual report presented before the Slovak parliament in May 1996, secret service director and close Meciar ally Ivan Lexa argued that “the growth of crime and the flood of guest workers into Slovakia that was supposed to happen after the elimination of visa obligations for Russian citizens...did not come true. A much more significant influence on life in Slovakia has come from various

⁸²¹ Pavle Novosel, “Croatian Political Culture in Times of Great Expectations,” in Fritz Plasser and Andreas Pribersky (eds.) *Political Culture in East Central Europe* (Aldershot, England: Avebury, 1996), pp. 109-110.

⁸²² Martin Bútora and Pavol Demeš, “Civil Society Organizations in the 1998 Elections,” in Bútora et al (eds.), *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia*, p. 156;

supranational and international institutions, foundations, foreign interest groups, and their lobbies.”⁸²³ Meanwhile, in 1996 Tudman accused Western foundations and embassies of supporting the Croatian opposition and vowed to crack down on “foundations, organizations and individuals” funded by foreign sources for “often illegal and subversive intentions.” He referred to such organizations as “tools in the hands of foreign powers” aimed at “undermining the government.”⁸²⁴

One international organization that was a subject of special criticism was George Soros’s Open Society Institute (OSI), and Soros’s Hungarian and Jewish background made him especially unpopular among Slovakia’s “Nationalists.” The Meciar government threatened to declare Soros “person non grata” after a July 1995 speech at an economic forum in Crans Montana, Switzerland in which Soros implicitly grouped Meciar together with Milošević and Tudman, who he said combined nationalist ideologies with business interests in a classic recipe for fascism.⁸²⁵

In Croatia, the OSI was also seen as an “enemy” of the state. In 1996 Tudman claimed that Soros and the OSI aimed to change the ownership structure of the Croatian media.⁸²⁶ In November 1997 a Zagreb court convicted two of the organization’s leading local employees of tax fraud. Moreover, the OSI was attacked in a textbook for Croatian schoolchildren and in a television program dealing with ecological issues.

Aside from the influence of foreign donors, another reason why NGOs were unpopular with the HDZ and HZDS related to the personalities associated with them. In Croatia, numerous women’s civic initiatives and peace-related organizations emerged from the feminist group Woman and Society, which was formed in 1979. In 1998, the pro-government journalist Milan Ivkošić wrote that “80 percent of the activists from women’s and similar marginal organizations are Serbs, and the rest are more or less Croats with political or family backgrounds in

interview with SDP representative Blaženka Gogić, *Zaposlena*, no. 50, November 1999, pp. 40-42.

⁸²³ TASR, 22 May 1996.

⁸²⁴ AP, 12 December 1996.

⁸²⁵ Juraj Alner, “Sorosove milióny neprekážajú iba SNS,” *Národná obroda*, 18 July 1995.

⁸²⁶ *OMRI Daily Digest*, 9 December 1996; Reuters, 9 December 1996.

the Yugoslav Secret Service, the Yugoslav Police, or Yugoslav Army officers.” He added that women in those NGOs “present in their personal lives a model that directly opposes that of the ideal and desirable Croatian family,” meaning that they are “married without children,” “old but unmarried,” or “lesbians.” Ivkošić concluded that the groups would be “quite insignificant” without the support they receive from abroad.⁸²⁷

In Slovakia, some of the major actors in the NGO sector were connected with the liberal, pro-federal parties that had run the country in 1990-1992, thus making it easy for the HZDS to transfer the “anti-Slovak” label to NGOs as a whole. The most important of such personalities was Pavol Demeš, who served as Slovak Foreign Minister in 1991-1992 and as head of President Kováč’s foreign policy department in 1993-1997. As spokesman of the Third Sector Association umbrella group, Demeš played a key role in mobilizing the NGO community in 1994-1998. Other prominent NGO actors included former Labor and Social Affairs Minister Helena Woleková, former Culture Minister Ladislav Snopko, and former Havel advisor Martin Bútora. In March 1996 HZDS parliamentary deputy Roman Hofbauer said that although the Association of Judges of Slovakia “calls itself a non-political organization,” it is actually a member of the Third Sector Association, adding that “if they are under Pavol Demeš, they cannot be independent.”⁸²⁸

Hofbauer was the most active media critic of NGOs, which he tried to present as part of an international conspiracy against Slovakia. For example, in early 1996, Hofbauer attacked the New York-based Foundation for a Civil Society, which was at the time administering USAID’s Democracy Network program for Slovakia. Confusing the term “intern” with “Internet” when looking over the foundation’s list of staff people, Hofbauer wrote that the organization had appointed in its Bratislava office “five workers who are informing the world about Slovakia day and night” through the Internet, more than in the foundation’s New York and Prague offices.⁸²⁹ At that time, the Bratislava office did not even have an Internet connection.

⁸²⁷ *Vecernji list*, 14 June 1998.

⁸²⁸ RFE/RL Slovak Service, 3 April 1996.

⁸²⁹ Hofbauer, “Informačná vojna o Slovensko,” *Slovenská Republika* 4 January 1996.

In both Croatia and Slovakia, the ruling parties tried to stifle the third sector through legislation. In Slovakia, a restrictive law on foundations was drafted in late 1995 by Justice Minister Jozef Liščák of the ZRS and approved by the parliament in June 1996. The law required that foundations register with the Interior Ministry rather than with independent courts, that they possess a minimum level of basic assets upon establishment, and that they refrain from political activities. Advocates of the law argued that the legislation was necessary since some foundations were essentially “money launderers” that used their funds for other purposes while claiming that they were going to publicly beneficial aims. Hofbauer said that the existing laws allowed for the flow of money coming from “questionable, hard to control sources,” adding that “under the noble veil of democracy,” something was growing that had nothing to do with democracy.⁸³⁰

In Croatia, the parliament approved a law on associations in July 1997, giving the state the authority to control the work of NGOs, impose hefty fines, and to ban a group if there was suspicion that it was acting illegally. Existing organizations were required to reregister by January 1998; however, only a small percentage actually did so by that deadline.⁸³¹ The alternative group Attack, for example, had problems with its registration since the law prohibited organizations from using foreign names.⁸³²

In Slovakia, the legislation on foundations served as a call to action, triggering unprecedented unity within the NGO community, which launched a Western-style “SOS” campaign against the law in January 1996. Although the NGOs lost their battle, the campaign served not only to unify the NGO community, thereby preparing it for future struggles, but it also gave the sector considerable publicity and contributed to raising public awareness about what non-profit organizations were doing for Slovakia. According to a February 1996 opinion poll, 78 percent of respondents said they were familiar with foundations and NGOs, of whom 93 percent associated them with “something positive and useful.”⁸³³ In Croatia, more

⁸³⁰ *Národná obroda*, 27 January 1996.

⁸³¹ *Feral Tribune*, 19 January 1998.

⁸³² Milivoj Đilas, “NGOs in Croatia,” AIM, 22 September 1999.

⁸³³ Martin Bútora et al, “Nonprofit Sector and Volunteerism in Slovakia,” in Bútora and Huncík (eds.), *Global Report on Slovakia: Comprehensive Analyses From 1995 and Trends From 1996*, p. 225.

than 100 NGOs came together in 1996 in an unsuccessful effort to amend the government's draft Law on Associations; however, the group's activities later faded.⁸³⁴

Although verbal and legislative attacks sometimes created a difficult working environment for NGO activists, a number of enthusiasts in both Slovakia and Croatia continued their efforts. During the early 1990s in Croatia, the emphasis on the nation meant that even the activities of the previously strong environmental NGOs dwindled. Nonetheless, a whole new set of NGOs sprouted up with activities relating to the war and its effects. One of the most important centers of activism was the Anti-War Campaign (ARK), which was founded in 1991. A number of other politically conscious organizations grew out of ARK, forming a network of NGOs in Zagreb and the countryside that was aimed at building peace, bringing reconciliation, strengthening human rights, and protecting the rights of women. Because those groups did not discriminate based on nationality, they gained significant funding and recognition from the international donor community.

In Slovakia, the environmental movement, which emerged under the communist regime with the 1987 "Bratislava Aloud" study, continued to be strong throughout the country during the 1990s. Other prominent NGOs tended to work mainly in Bratislava, dealing with such issues as education and minority and human rights. A number of Slovaks who were linked to the civic or Christian right in the early 1990s went to work at think-tanks, including the economic institute M.E.S.A. 10, which grouped together such personalities as Ivan Mikloš and Mikuláš Dzurinda; the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA), which was run by the former actress and ambassador Magda Vášáryová; and Bútor's Institute for Public Affairs (IVO). Demonstrating their leaders' commitment to bringing change to Slovakia, those think-tanks formed strong ties with the international community, analyzed the policies of the ruling parties, and helped to prepare Slovakia for the future.

⁸³⁴ "Assessing Nongovernmental Organizations In Croatia," <http://www.wf.org/Fitz1.htm>.

The Slovak Helsinki Committee (SHV) was founded in 1990 as a branch of the Czechoslovak organization, and its first chairman was the philosopher and former dissident Július Strinka. Strinka was replaced in 1997 by the scientist Štefan Markuš, who rose to the public spotlight when the Slovak Democratic Coalition nominated him for Slovak president in January 1998. In the years before the 1998 elections, the SHV published a number of statements criticizing the ruling parties' policies, serving as a steady voice of reason under the Meciar regime. SHV statements were critical of such developments as the government-sponsored penal code amendments on the protection of the republic, Meciar's controversial call for a possible population exchange between Slovakia and Hungary, an SNS representative's scathing comments about Roma, Meciar's granting of amnesties to those involved in the 1995 kidnapping of President Kováč's son and in the marring of the 1997 referendum, the ruling coalition's election law amendments, and the ownership struggle surrounding TV Markíza.

It was not until 1993 that the Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (HHO) was established, helping to make the question of human rights an important public issue in Croatia. That was especially true after the 1995 police and military operations that drove the majority of ethnic Serbs out of the country, when the HHO became one of the main defenders of the rights of Croatian Serbs. The HHO was among the most vocal critics of the ruling HDZ, and Ivan Zvonimir Cicak, who served as the organization's chairman from the time of its establishment until his replacement by Vjekoslav Vidovic in October 1998, became one of the most controversial personalities in Croatia. Through its regular statements, the HHO brought domestic and international attention to a number of problems in Croatia, including the atmosphere of intolerance and hatred against returning Serbs, the prohibition of domestic election observers in local by-elections in Dubrovnik, Croatian authorities' attacks on the ICTY, interference in an independent local TV station in Split, the media's use of "hate speech," the revitalization of the World War II Ustaša movement, and the rise in political violence. In October 1998, the HHO also protested against the efforts to remove the title of the winner of the Miss Croatia contest, allegedly because she was Muslim.⁸³⁵

⁸³⁵ *Novi list*, 17 and 25 October 1998.

As a sign of appreciation for the blossoming civil society in Slovakia and Croatia, three organizations from each country emerged as winners of a May 1998 EU and U.S. Prize for Democracy and Civil Society that was awarded to 50 organizations and individuals from 29 countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In Slovakia the groups were the Third Sector Association, the Košice-based environmental group *Ludia a voda* [People and Water], and *Jekhatane/Spolu* [Together] and the InfoRoma foundation as joint winners. In Croatia the recipients of the prize were the women's human rights group *Be active, Be emancipated* (B.a.B.e.), which was part of the ARK network, in addition to Forum 21 and the Serbian Democratic Forum's Legal Advice Centers.

It must be noted that not all NGOs in Croatia and Slovakia fit into the typical, Western view of civil society. In Slovakia, that was especially apparent in the early 1990s, when many civic associations were oriented toward nationalist aims,⁸³⁶ and the HZDS's colonization of such groups was demonstrated by Meciar's 1993 speech at Zlatka Idka.⁸³⁷ Another example of an "alternative" NGO emerged in July 1996, when a businessman announced the establishment of a foundation called *Kvietok* [Flower] that was aimed at forcing President Kováč out of office. When asked if *Kvietok* might be abolished since the new foundations law prevented such organizations from supporting political goals, the founder stressed that his group was aimed not at political aims but at "the protection of human rights."⁸³⁸

In Croatia, the entire spectrum of societal values existed within the NGO sector, and a whole stream of civic associations was formed that represented the "alternative" view. One borderline case was the Humanitarian Foundation for the Children of Croatia, of which Ankica Tudman served as director. The organization had special privileges, including the right to place collection boxes in public areas and to put its flyers in the seat pockets of Croatia Airlines flights. Another NGO with HDZ ties was the Foundation of the Croatian State Vow, whose director, Ivic

⁸³⁶ Darina Malová, "Slovakia's Contentious Politics in 1990-1994: revolting nation and quiet citizenry?" prepared for the workshop "Uncivil Society? Contentious Politics in Eastern Europe," 10-11 November 2000, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸³⁷ "Lož — pracovná metóda?" *Slovenský denník*, 3 December 1993.

⁸³⁸ CTK, 17 July 1996. See also Ladislav Babiak, "Hľadanie odpovedí na konkrétne otázky," *Slovenská Republika* 18 July 1996.

Pašalic, was one of President Tudman's closest advisors. The foundation offered student scholarships and published a journal entitled *Državnost* [Statehood] that in some articles attempted to build up a personality cult around Tudman.⁸³⁹ One of the most controversial aspects of Croatian civil society during the 1990s was represented by the numerous groups of veterans and other victims from the Homeland War, which received significant funding from the state budget and had a privileged position in society.⁸⁴⁰

Despite the HDZ's confrontational stance toward civil society organizations, in October 1998 the government set up an Office for Associations, which provided funds to NGOs to which government support would previously have been unimaginable. That same month, the Croatian government co-sponsored a three-day NGO fair in Zagreb together with the UNHCR, intended as a gathering of organizations focused on humanitarian questions and the protection of human rights. It is unclear why the government took such steps, although they could have been part of an attempt to appease the international community, which at that time was putting increasing emphasis on the development of NGOs within the region. One HDZ publication recognized the level of development of the non-governmental non-profit sector of an individual country as a "basic indicator" of its democracy, adding that "the role of Croatian non-governmental organizations in the development of Croatian democratic society has been large."⁸⁴¹ As demonstrated below, the HDZ's newfound affection for NGOs did not last long.

Discussions within Slovakia's NGO sector over whether and how to become involved in the political process started at the time of the thwarted 1997 referendum. Although some organizations were afraid of the politicization of NGO activities, in October of that same year at the Third Sector's annual Stupava Conference a declaration was adopted supporting programs aimed at informing citizens about conditions for holding free and fair elections in 1998. The pre-election activities began to take shape in January 1998, when 11 NGOs created the Civic Campaign (OK '98), and the campaign was officially launched two months

⁸³⁹ Tomislav Cadež, "Zaklada hrvatskog državnog zavjeta: kako se kultivira kult licnosti," *Globus*, 27 November 1998, pp. 32-35.

⁸⁴⁰ See *Globus*, 12 May 2000, p. 38.

⁸⁴¹ *Izborni pojmovnik HDZ-a* (Zagreb: HDZ, 1999), p. 250.

later at a meeting of 35 NGOs. The group's three-member executive committee included Demeš, Šarlota Pufflerová of the Citizen and Democracy Foundation, and Andrej Bartosiewicz of the Association for the Support of Local Democracy, with Pufflerová serving as OK '98 spokesperson.⁸⁴²

OK '98 had three main goals: making the public better informed about the 1998 parliamentary and local elections, raising turnout, and increasing the influence of citizens in preparing election laws and securing civic monitoring to ensure free and fair elections. Although opinion polls showed that the majority of Slovaks approved of OK '98 activities, the group was a frequent subject of criticism from government representatives and their media allies. Those attacks had a counterproductive effect by attracting the attention of increasing numbers of volunteers willing to work on the campaign. That was especially true after an STV debate in mid-August, during which Pufflerová stood up to ruling party representatives who accused OK '98 of being under the influence of foreigners.⁸⁴³

A side effect of OK '98 was the mobilization of hundreds of activists, particularly young people, which helped citizens to become more involved in political processes. Within the scope of the campaign, NGOs organized nearly 60 separate projects, including educational programs, cultural actions, concerts, publications, films, video-clips, more than 40 discussion forums with candidates, and meetings with citizens. Most projects were of a regional character or were aimed at a specific group of people, such as youth, pensioners, or the disabled, and many of the groups presented their campaigns on the Internet. Although OK '98 did not support any political party, some of its materials were inevitably critical of the Meciar government's policies. One of the first OK '98 activities was its campaign for a fair electoral law.

Among the largest and most visible of the OK '98 events was the "Road for Slovakia," which was organized by the GEMMA 93 civic association, based in the eastern Slovak town of Rimavská Sobota. During the 15-day march (lasting from

⁸⁴² The information on the Slovak campaign comes from Bútorá and Demeš, "Civil Society Organizations in the 1998 Elections," pp. 155-167; *NonProfit*, special issue, elections '98; as well as from NGO campaign materials.

⁸⁴³ Personal interview with Andrej Bartosiewicz, 17 June 1999. For more on the debate, see TASR, 16 August 1998.

19 August through 3 September), some 300 civic activists traveled through more than 1,000 towns and villages distributing approximately half a million 20-page booklets produced by IVO that informed citizens in simple language about the importance of participation in the Slovak electoral process and provided them with the basic principles of parliamentary democracy and voting procedures. The booklets also offered comparative data on the situation in Slovakia and neighboring countries in areas such as the food prices, European integration, education, local administration, healthcare, privatization, and crime, presenting an unfavorable picture of the Meciar government's policies.

Approximately 400,000 first-time voters were eligible to take part in the elections, and many prominent aspects of the civic campaign were aimed specifically at young people. For example, the civic association Hlava '98 organized a series of artistic video spots called "I vote, therefore I am." The series, which was shown at cinemas and on TV Markíza, focused on the issues of freedom and the importance of voting, and it featured musicians and sports stars. One video that included the African American rapper Coolio gave the message "if you don't vote, you don't count," and it even made it to European MTV, with the Vee-Jay explaining that Coolio had a message for the Slovaks, who were holding elections that weekend. Another video featured Czech hockey star Jaromír Jágr, who explained to young voters that elections were about their future.

One of the main pre-election NGO activities aimed at Slovak youth was the Foundation for a Civil Society's Rock the Vote, which was inspired by an MTV campaign that had been run in previous US elections. The symbol of the campaign was a white handprint on a black background, and the main slogan was "Don't let others decide your future." Rock the Vote included a bus that passed through 22 towns, a media campaign, as well as 13 free rock concerts ranging from eastern Slovakia to Bratislava. Information materials appealed to young people in language that they could understand, and one flyer asked:

Do you think it is useless to go and vote? Politicians are not interested in your graffiti. They do not listen to you when you insult them, they do not see you when you complain. However, there exists one form of expression that they have to hear: your vote in elections. Only 20 percent of young voters from the ages of 18-

25 participated in the 1994 elections. If you do not vote, you do not have the right to complain. This year you can choose!

Another flyer gave young people instructions on the electoral process and reminded them to ensure that their names were on the voting lists. It also recommended that undecided voters should look at the programs of the various parties on the Internet and provided the Web addresses of the main competitors. The Rock the Vote media campaign involved a series of videos that were broadcast on TV Markíza. While some were produced by Slovak film students, others were taken directly from the MTV campaign, including one showing drops of water falling down the screen with a voice saying that “my vote means nothing, I’m just another drop in the ocean.”

Other groups with campaigns aimed at youth included the Youth Council of Slovakia, the European Association of Student Rights (ELSA), and the Student Solidarity Forum (FOŠTUS). The Youth Council prepared a prize competition called “My Future,” calling on citizens aged 18-26 to offer three reasons why one should vote. A series of postcards announcing the competition featured scenes such as two old men drinking coffee, with the slogan “Will they decide on YOUR future?” ELSA organized visits to 30 high schools in 17 towns, holding discussions with students about voting rights, voter responsibility, and other matters. Meanwhile, FOŠTUS informed voters about the technical aspects of the elections and about the competing parties, and it also prepared an analysis of the voting of parliamentary deputies in matters concerning young people — including universities, student loans, and military and civil service — and listed those candidates from the various parties who were under the age of 30.

The group Obcianske oko ‘98 [Civic Eye] was founded in summer 1998 with the aim of organizing and training domestic election observers, and it stated in its brochures that it was looking for people who wanted to actively contribute to fair elections. In a relatively short time, Obcianske oko gathered 1,746 volunteers, who visited various polling stations wearing blue t-shirts with a green eye. Although the Central Election Committee refused to accredit Obcianske oko activists, the chairpersons of many polling station committees allowed them to observe.

Regional discussion forums and information campaigns organized by NGOs took place throughout Slovakia, including programs aimed at women, Roma, the elderly, and the handicapped. Meanwhile, the political cabaret “Zamatový mat” [A Velvet Checkmate], which was prepared by Košice’s Old Town Theater, toured various towns and communities. The group *Ludia a voda* carried out its campaign in several regions of eastern Slovakia, and it published a brochure focused on various issues, offering questions that citizens might ask candidates during discussion forums. *Ludia a voda* also published a special election issue of its journal *Modrá alternatíva* [Blue Alternative], providing information on discussion forums and other OK ‘98 programs and stating the importance of civic participation in the electoral process.

Other publication activities were carried out by IVO, which released books on subjects ranging from the principles of democratic electoral systems, public opinion, the parliamentary mandate, and an analysis of the electoral programs of the various parties. IVO activities also included the production of two documentary films about elections that were screened on regional TV channels. A number of other organizations evaluated the Meciar government’s performance in various fields, including labor and social policy, human rights, and the environment. NGOs were also involved in media monitoring during the months prior to the elections, presenting data on the breakdown of coverage for the various parties on television, radio, and in newspapers. Moreover, a number of civic activists volunteered to take part in polling station committees representing those political parties with insufficient staff to fill their slots in each committee.

In the months before the elections, the Third Sector Association took part in the “democratic round table,” which also included representatives of the four major opposition parties, the Confederation of Trade Unions, the Union of Towns and Municipalities, and the Youth Council of Slovakia. The third sector had thus gained the position of a non-partisan political actor, and according to one analysis, the round table “epitomized the most important achievement of pre-election efforts in Slovakia: the ability to create democratic alliances.”⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴⁴ Bútora and Demeš, “Civil Society Organizations in the 1998 Elections,” p. 163.

The ability of Slovakia's third sector to carry out such a widespread get-out-the-vote campaign was based on several factors. First of all, a number of the key personalities working in the NGO community were strongly committed to bringing political change and possessed the vision necessary to make it happen. The campaign also required broad unity among the NGOs, a development that was influenced largely by HZDS policies such as the 1996 foundation law and the marring of the 1997 referendum. Thus, in many ways, Meciar himself was responsible for the growth of Slovakia's third sector, particularly considering that if the regime had been different, personalities like Pavol Demeš or Martin Bútora may have worked in politics or in academia rather than in NGOs. In the case of Slovakia, the role of Western donors was secondary. While Western donors can be credited with providing essential funding, the ideas came largely from within Slovakia itself.

As Croatia's 2000 elections approached, the country's NGO community was far less unified than that of Slovakia due to personality conflicts as well as deeper ideological debates. A schism existed between the groups within the ARK network and those socially-oriented humanitarian NGOs that did not have their roots in the peace movement. The work of many of the latter NGOs was seen as being primarily aimed at helping ethnic Croats, demonstrating a fundamentally different view on basic questions such as the war and nationalism. Nonetheless, efforts at cooperation were launched by groups such as the umbrella organization CERANEO, which was founded in 1995 in an attempt at strengthening the sector through the organization of workshops and annual forums and the publication of a newsletter.

Just one year before the parliamentary elections, many representatives of the Croatian NGO community believed that the necessary unity to run a campaign like that in Slovakia would never be reached, while another perceived problem was the lack of a statewide private television station on which to broadcast the campaign.⁸⁴⁵ Nonetheless, Croatian NGOs learned from their Slovak counterparts through a number of seminars and exchanges sponsored by the international community. According to public opinion polls, the main issues facing the Croatian

⁸⁴⁵ *Novi list*, 15 February 1999.

population at the time of the elections included first and foremost social and economic concerns, including high unemployment, the low standard of living, and pensions.⁸⁴⁶ The task of NGOs was to ensure that people had not completely lost hope and to encourage them to come out and vote in the elections. Especially important were the estimated 200,000 first-time voters, representing more than five percent of the total electorate.

The HDZ was clearly afraid of the application of the “Slovak model” in Croatia. In his speech to the HDZ’s tenth party congress in June 1999, Tudman stressed that “despite the fact that Croatia has friendly partner relations with some European countries and the US,” it is faced with “intense efforts by so-called non-governmental organizations that desire some other Croatia.” He warned that such groups were trying “in any way possible” to use the elections to bring change.⁸⁴⁷ Shortly before Croatia’s elections, Meciar was interviewed by the pro-HDZ daily *Vecernji list*, discussing the “Slovak model” and the international community’s role in his 1998 electoral defeat.⁸⁴⁸ That interview triggered a smear campaign against several US organizations in the pro-HDZ media.⁸⁴⁹ Despite the tense situation, some Western organizations involved in funding Croatia’s NGO campaign did not hide their aim of sponsoring more civic activity to help alter the country’s political situation. The fact that the “Slovak model” was pushed on the Croats by the international community created a risk that the campaign’s message would not appear genuine since it was not a domestic, grass roots effort as it had been in Slovakia.

In April and May 1999, the Croatian NGO sector finally came together, with 35 groups uniting to create the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, commonly known as Glas [voice/vote] 99. One month before the elections, the number of organizations involved had reached 145 and was still growing.⁸⁵⁰ The main requirement of all organizations was that they be non-partisan, and the rest was up

⁸⁴⁶ “Istraživanje javnog mnijenja,” p. 8.

⁸⁴⁷ *Croatia Watch*, no. 6, 30 July 1999.

⁸⁴⁸ *Vecernji list*, 17 November 1999.

⁸⁴⁹ See, for example, Dunja Ujevic, “Slovacki izbori u Hrvatskoj,” *Vecernji list*, 18 November 1999; and “Americki obavještajci sjede u IRF-u i USAID-u koji financiraju šestoricu, a odgovaraju Montgomeryju!” *Vjesnik*, 1 December 1999. The former article referred to Meciar as “living proof” of how America decided who would win the Slovak elections.

⁸⁵⁰ Personal interview with Glas 99 director Tin Gazivoda, 10 December 1999.

to them. Member NGOs could either use the campaign materials created by the central office or create their own.

As in Slovakia, the first pre-election activities of the NGO community related to the electoral law. At the time the government's draft was put forward, Glas 99 ran a campaign inviting voters to call top politicians and present their opinions about the elections and the election law. Flyers and posters asked citizens to "be a part of the civic campaign for free and fair elections" and to contact top politicians. Glas 99 also distributed brochures on "how the new election law enables the cheating of voters." The campaign apparently helped to improve the NGO sector's image among the population, and in a November 1999 poll, 25 percent of respondents said they were "very interested" in the NGOs' thoughts about the elections and 35 percent said they were "somewhat interested."⁸⁵¹ Other Glas 99 pre-election activities included educating citizens about voter rights, following the campaigns of political parties, and motivating citizens to vote.

Aside from Glas 99, another group that was active throughout the pre-election period was GONG, which was concerned with domestic election observers. GONG was created for that aim in early 1997, and by the time of the elections it was widely respected as a professional and non-partisan organization. GONG had scored a key victory in October 1998, when the Constitutional Court recognized the right of NGOs to send domestic observers to elections.⁸⁵² GONG's activities were especially important in the 2000 elections since many citizens feared that the HDZ would try to manipulate the results.

Both Glas 99 and GONG began their pre-election campaigns well before those of the political parties, and even after the official campaign period for parties began those of the NGOs were often more visible and persuasive than the campaigns of the parties themselves. GONG's main symbol was an eye, and all of its materials and t-shirts used the color orange. GONG materials were aimed at attracting more

⁸⁵¹ "Istraživanje javnog mnijenja," p. 14.

⁸⁵² After police prohibited GONG observers from entering polling stations during the October 1998 by-elections in Dubrovnik, the HHO and GONG asked the interior minister to ensure that his staff "take more interest in uncovering and fighting crime rather than behaving toward NGOs as if we were members of criminal organizations or dangerous terrorists." See *Novi list*, 17 October 1998.

domestic election observers but also at generally increasing the interest of voters in the electoral process. The group's main leaflet showed a series of three pictures (Miss Croatia 1998, a football field, and an empty polling station), asking "Who would have been Miss Croatia 1998 if GONG observers had been there?," "Who would have been the champion of Croatia in 1999 if GONG observers had been there?,"⁸⁵³ and "Who will sit in the Sabor 2000? It depends on you!"

While GONG maintained a policy of strict non-partisanship throughout the campaign, Glas 99, although not openly supporting any political party or coalition, did criticize the government in some of its ads and materials. Glas 99 was made up of four separate groups, focusing on youth, women, environmental organizations, and pensioners. By far the two most active and visible were those dealing with youth and women. Glas 99 ran its campaign through posters and billboards, radio jingles, TV spots, as well as brochures and flyers, and it also organized rock concerts for young people. Some of the Glas 99 materials focused solely on voter education, informing citizens of who had the right to vote and why elections were important.

The main slogan of the overall Glas 99 campaign was "Circle and win" [Zaokruži i dobivaš], and the "o" in *zaokruži* was drawn to symbolize the circling of a party on an election ballot. That slogan was intended to play up on the prize competitions that had been launched in recent years by a number of newspapers. One magazine advertisement showed a pen, along with the "Circle and win" slogan and the election date, telling Croats that the elections were "the only essential prize competition."⁸⁵⁴ The group's main billboard had a similar design, featuring the words "the most popular prize competition" and "coming soon to Croatia!!!" at the top of the ad and telling voters at the bottom that there would be "more than 3,000,000 winners."

One of Glas 99's most eye-catching magazine and newspaper ads showed a black-and-white scene inside the Zagreb airport, with the signs for "International arrival" and "International departure" in yellow. The main slogan was "I want to live in a

⁸⁵³ The question refers to allegations that Croatia's 1999 football championships were rigged so that the president's favorite team, Zagreb Croatia, would win.

⁸⁵⁴ See *Globus*, 17 December 1999, p. 92.

normal country.”⁸⁵⁵ Groups such as the Croatian Legal Center, the Union of Serbs of Slavonia and Baranja, and the Office for Human Rights in Osijek organized their own campaign within the framework of Glas 99, aimed at educating citizens, analyzing the election law, and following the pre-election activities of political parties. In its final call to voters, Glas 99 published a full-page ad reading “Let’s get out to the elections. Our fate and that of our children and our homeland is again in our hands. Let’s vote seriously and responsibly.”⁸⁵⁶

Among the main TV spots of Glas 99 was a fast-moving, MTV-style presentation, showing well-known musicians and singers and featuring the song “Novo vrijeme” [A new age]. Although there was no reference to Glas 99, the ad showed people making a circle on the screen, thus repeating the group’s main symbol. Following attacks on Glas 99 by HDZ representatives, state-controlled Croatian Television prohibited the airing of two Glas 99 ads — including “Novo vrijeme” — claiming that they gave “indirect political messages.” At Croatian TV’s request, the Croatian Electoral Commission reviewed the advertisements and announced in mid-December that Glas 99 had “no right to any pre-election campaigning.” However, the Constitutional Court ruled later that month that the commercials could be aired.⁸⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the Constitutional Court’s decision was made just a few days before the elections were held, meaning that Croatian TV essentially won the battle against Glas.

The youth campaign’s main slogan was “Get out and fight” [Izadi i bori se], with a “z” added between “i” and “bori” to form the word “elections” [izbori]. One of the campaign’s main ads featured a turtle with its head and legs in its shell at the top of the page and with the same turtle at the bottom of the page, apparently walking with a purpose. Another ad showed three young people in black and white (but with brightly colored hair) standing facing a wall, with “Raid or Democracy” as the main slogan.⁸⁵⁸ One playful youth campaign pamphlet showed a man on its cover breaking a stack of concrete slabs with his head, together with the slogan “Think with your head!” Inside the brochure there was a series of pages featuring

⁸⁵⁵ See *Globus*, 31 December 1999, p. 72.

⁸⁵⁶ See *Globus*, 31 December 1999, p. 48.

⁸⁵⁷ *Daily Bulletin*, Foreign Press Bureau Zagreb, 22 and 29 December 1999.

⁸⁵⁸ See *Globus*, 31 December 1999, p. 72.

two photographs, and readers were asked to uncover the differences between the two pictures. One page featured a photo of three sexily dressed and casually happy blonde women and another of middle-aged demonstrators in central Zagreb, holding signs with slogans such as “Why did you lie to us?” Another contrast showed pictures of a rock musician and of Croatian folk dancers. Through various texts, the pamphlet tried to appeal to young voters by dealing with the issues that concerned them, using familiar language. Another pamphlet encouraged young voters to focus on the future of Croatia, with the words “Happy New 2000!” on the cover. Inside, it included quotations from a number of politicians and journalists connected with the HDZ regarding such questions as elections, opposition, democracy, and youth. A two-page spread featured a picture of handcuffs with the title “Raid” and the slogan “Novo vrijeme.” In one picture, showing the evolution of man, the most recent stage was referred to as “Homo croaticus,” which was said to have begun around the year 1995 when the people in elections “chose between a better life and false promises,” selecting the latter option. A third pamphlet designed for the youth campaign explained to voters the meaning of democracy. The Student Information Center also joined in the youth campaign, producing flyers that encouraged students to “take things into your hands” and vote.

The campaign run by the Women’s Ad Hoc Coalition grouped together 27 women’s organizations from around Croatia that had already run campaigns prior to the 1995 and 1997 elections. Referring to women’s share of the Croatian electorate, the campaign was marked by the slogan “51 percent.” The Coalition’s election platform listed the following demands: employment with regular pay; shared responsibility for the home and participation in power; an end to violence against women; legal, safe and free abortion and contraception; and education for tolerance and human rights in schools. The Coalition invited supporters to send in their names, addresses, and phone numbers, promising that some respondents would receive prizes.⁸⁵⁹

A Coalition ad showed the face of a smiling and pensive woman, with “partner and not subject” as the main slogan.⁸⁶⁰ Meanwhile, one Coalition poster featured a woman’s face with the slogan “Let’s change positions and vote for partners,” while

⁸⁵⁹ See *Novi list*, 22 December 1999.

another consisted of small pictures of various female NGO activists, together with the slogan “Women! Let’s show our strength!” The Coalition also produced a pre-election quiz for women, getting them focused on key issues. On the occasion of the International Day Against Violence Against Women in November, the Coalition distributed materials to citizens relating to the theme of elections. Shortly before the elections, the women’s human rights group B.a.B.e. produced analysis of the presentation of women and women’s issues in the media, and it also distributed posters with quotes about women. One quotation from a Japanese woman read: “If it is true that men are better than women because they are stronger, why aren’t sumo wrestlers sitting in the government?” In addition to B.a.B.e., the Women’s Information Center and the Split-based women’s organization Stop Nade also created their own materials on women and elections.

The youth campaign’s “Get out and fight” slogan was also used by the pensioners in their campaign. One brochure, produced by the Union of Associations of the Matrix of Pensioners of Croatia, asked: “Is there hope for us pensioners? There is. Get out and fight.” The brochure discussed important questions for pensioners regarding the elections, including the organization’s proposed program.

This chapter has presented an examination of the nation from below, looking at the development of a democratically-oriented civil society. It thus adds to the presentation of the rise of opposition to the HDZ and HZDS that was featured in chapters 3 and 4, which discussed the role of trade unions and the cultural community. In both Slovakia and Croatia, civil society organizations contributed significantly to mobilizing the populations against the ruling parties, despite frequent attacks on such groups by the HZDS and HDZ. The media in particular acted as a constant check on the governments by questioning their policies and bringing criticism of the ruling parties to a broader population. By organizing get-out-the vote campaigns, NGOs in both countries helped to ensure that most Slovaks and Croats participated in the electoral process. Moreover, the groups helped to create an atmosphere of civic activism that until that time had been largely absent in the two countries.

⁸⁶⁰ See *Globus*, 24 December 1999, p. 48.

Nevertheless, there were several important differences between the situation in Slovakia versus Croatia that could indicate a differing degree of depth of the changes. First of all, the war in Yugoslavia meant that the Croats were considerably more nationally oriented than the Slovaks, which affected the development of both the media and NGOs, partly by placing strong divisions within Croatian society that were still apparent at the end of the decade. That complicated attempts at cooperation among Croatian NGOs, which in the end were pushed together largely at the urging of the international community rather than because of a domestic effort at achieving unity. Moreover, because the HDZ's grip on the media in Croatia was considerably stronger than that of the HZDS in Slovakia, particularly in the case of television, those who were promoting oppositional views had more difficulties reaching the population than they did in Slovakia.

This study of civil society has laid the ground for the next chapter, which deals with the growth of political opposition and the campaigns of the various parties competing in the parliamentary elections in Slovakia in 1998 and in Croatia in 2000. It also analyses the election results and discusses their importance for the countries' future development.

Chapter 7: The Fall of National Movements: 1998 in Slovakia and 2000 in Croatia

This chapter addresses the political aspects of the elections that brought the decline of the national movements in Slovakia and Croatia. In doing so, it begins with an investigation of how and why the opposition parties managed to form alliances aimed at defeating the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ). It then examines the way the various political parties presented themselves and their respective nations to voters during the parliamentary elections in Slovakia on 25-26 September 1998 and in Croatia on 3 January 2000, based mostly on first-hand observations of the campaigns on television, billboards, and in the print media. The elections should be seen against the backdrop of the situation presented in previous chapters, including the governments' controversial approach to such questions as the economy and culture and the efforts by the media and NGOs at bringing political change. Moreover, the failure of the HZDS and HDZ in the area of European integration was also a crucial factor in the rise of the opposition, as the populations began to realize that the ruling parties would be unable to bring their country into the European Union and NATO.

With political opposition in both countries being largely weak and ineffective during much of the 1990s, it was largely the actors of civil society — including the independent media, trade unions, and civic associations — that managed to gradually turn HZDS and HDZ discourse around, transforming the ruling parties into the “enemy” of the nation and thereby laying the ground for an opposition victory. With the strengthening of opposition to their regimes, ruling elites found it difficult to keep the populations mobilized in their favor, especially since there was no longer any real external or internal threat to the existence of the two states. That was especially important in the case of Croatia; the threat in Slovakia had always been exaggerated or even imaginary. In the second half of the 1990s, growing portions of the populations were becoming increasingly concerned with economic problems and lack of democracy and were no longer willing to make the

nation their first priority.⁸⁶¹ The HZDS and HDZ thus had a choice of whether to alter their discourse and policies in an attempt to expand their constituencies or risk losing the forthcoming elections. While a democratic transformation would have been difficult for the HZDS given its partnership with the far-right Slovak National Party (SNS), there were various attempts by the HDZ to move toward the political center, particularly after the liberation of the Krajina region in 1995. Nonetheless, the HDZ's expected shift never occurred, and the exit of leading moderates in 1998 left the party with an even stronger right-wing slant. Instead of moderating their discourse, both the HZDS and HDZ tended to further radicalize their presentations in an apparent effort to frighten populations about threats to the nation, focusing on the internal "enemy" and the catastrophic scenarios that could arise in the case of an opposition victory, including the restoration of Yugoslavia/Czechoslovakia.⁸⁶² While the HDZ and HZDS had been successful in feeling the pulse of the population in the early 1990s, by the end of the decade they appeared to have lost touch with ordinary voters. That was not reflected only in a decline in public support, which in the case of the HZDS was not so great between 1992 and 1998, but even more convincingly in the growing determination of non-HZDS and HDZ voters to see those parties defeated. Thus, there was an atmosphere in which many Slovaks and Croats voted against the ruling parties rather than for the opposition.

The populations' disappointment with the ruling parties was often replaced by distrust and apathy, particularly due to the opposition's delay in presenting itself as a real political alternative. Eventually, however, the activities of civil society organizations made it easier for the political opposition to convince citizens that the ruling parties' "pro-Slovak" and "pro-Croat" discourse tended to conflict with reality and that the HZDS and HDZ were often more concerned with the well-being of their narrow party elite than with the nation as a whole. While the HZDS and HDZ increasingly appealed mainly to rural, less educated citizens, the opposition was able to attract the support of urban voters with higher education, as well as youth. In fact, the demographic factor was a crucial element in the defeat of

⁸⁶¹ In Croatia, by late 1998 opinion polls showed that the vast majority of Croats did not believe Tudman's discourse and was not afraid of the nation's future should the opposition come to power. See *Globus*, 16 October 1998, pp. 24-26 and 18 December 1998, pp. 16-17.

⁸⁶² See Ivo Žanic, "Tudmanov 'sovjetski' diskurs," *Jutarnji list*, 9 December 1998; Zoran Daskalovic, "Tudjman Triumphs Over Divided Opposition," *War Report* no. 51 (May 1997), pp. 3-5; Juraj Handzo, "Štátnost v ohrození?" *Pravda*, 3 March 1997.

the HZDS and HDZ; although the parties had had every opportunity to promote their ideology among youth, the new generation for the most part rejected nationalistic rhetoric in favor of a more international outlook. Importantly, while many young people had failed to take part in previous elections, the NGO campaigns managed to convince them that their vote was important.

This chapter deals with the steps toward opposition unity in Slovakia and Croatia and the election campaigns of the various parties. The first section briefly investigates the opposition parties' past failures and their attempts to come together prior to the 1998 elections in Slovakia and the 2000 elections in Croatia. The second part, which focuses on the election campaigns themselves, looks at the main themes of the Slovak and Croatian elections and how the various parties compared on such issues. Due to lack of space, it provides a detailed examination of only the campaigns of the HZDS and HDZ and of their major competitors, the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) and the Coalition of Two, respectively.⁸⁶³ The chapter ends with a presentation of the election results and their implications.

Uniting the political opposition

As in the case of the independent media and the NGO community, the opposition parties in both countries had difficulties because of the ruling parties' tendency to label them as "enemies." By placing so much emphasis on the national question in their discourse, the HDZ and HZDS limited the opposition's room for maneuvering without the risk that they would somehow offend the nation's newly-found statehood and thereby be labeled as "anti-Croatian" or "anti-Slovak." While the HDZ's attacks were focused mainly on ex-communists and regional autonomy movements, in Slovakia, significant criticism was aimed at the Christian and civic right.

⁸⁶³ For a more detailed discussion of the parties' campaigns, see Sharon Fisher, "Representations of the Nation in Slovakia's 1998 Parliamentary Elections," in Kieran Williams (ed.), *Slovakia after Communism and Meciarism* (London: SSEES, 2000), pp. 33-50; Sharon Fisher, "Civil Discourse in Croatia's 2000 Parliamentary Election Campaign," in Alex J. Bellamy and Vjeran Katunaric, *Croatia: Towards the Post-Tudjman Era* (forthcoming in English and Croatian).

Much of the blame for the opposition's failure to win public support lay with the parties themselves, however. One major mistake was the unwillingness of opposition parties to cooperate with each other due to personality conflicts and differences in programs. The opposition parties seemed to forget that their basic goal was to remove the ruling parties from power and that they could sort out programmatic differences later. The lack of cooperation among the opposition was especially damaging in Croatia, where the electoral system throughout the 1990s was disadvantageous for small parties. Despite that fact, the opposition was frequently reluctant to form coalitions or merge smaller parties of similar views, and instead of working together the parties sometimes launched attacks against one another.⁸⁶⁴ In Slovakia, which had a proportional electoral system, the formation of coalitions was not always necessary, except in the case of small parties that risked failing to surpass the five percent threshold needed for parliamentary entry. Because of its failure to form coalitions, the civic right was excluded from the parliament in both 1992 and 1994, thereby contributing to the strength of Meciar's position. Moreover, new opposition parties continued to pop up throughout the decade, bringing increasing disunity rather than accord. If the opposition had learned to cooperate earlier, the election results could have turned out considerably more favorable for them, leading to a quite different political scenario in both countries during the 1990s.

The Slovak and Croatian opposition frequently gave the impression of helplessness in the face of government policies. In Slovakia, many opposition representatives seemed to think that if they allowed Meciar to stay in power a full four years rather than dismissing him again before his term was over, citizens would suddenly realize that he had not fulfilled his promises, and they would opt to support the opposition. However, despite all the scandals of 1994-1998, support for the HZDS did not fall by much; the population was apparently waiting for a positive alternative rather than a lesser evil.

Given the HDZ's strong grip on the state, the Croatian opposition often appeared even more powerless in confronting the government. While in Slovakia the opposition parties organized a number of protest rallies in 1995-1998, some of

⁸⁶⁴ Daskalovic, "Tudjman Triumphs Over Divided Opposition," pp. 3-5.

which attracted as many as 30,000 people, when Croatian opposition politician Vlado Gotovac called in 1996 for a more active opposition approach he attracted criticism even from his own party, the Croatian Social-Liberal Party (HSLS).⁸⁶⁵ One of the central questions within Croatia's opposition was whether and to what extent to cooperate with the HDZ, and a number of opposition representatives suggested that the "Spanish model" of cohabitation would be appropriate for the transition to democratic rule. A controversy over whether to cooperate with the HDZ at the local level contributed in December 1997 to the split of the HSLS and the establishment by Gotovac and his followers of the Liberal Party (LS), thus further dividing the political spectrum.⁸⁶⁶

The Croatian and Slovak opposition's weak response to the HDZ and HZDS was most evident in questions relating to the nation, and instead of rejecting allegations that they were "anti-national," opposition representatives in both countries sometimes attempted to demonstrate their "national" credentials by using similar rhetoric or by supporting certain "pro-national" policies. That was despite the fact that the opposition parties' fear of being seen as "anti-Slovak" or "anti-Croat" often appeared to be more self-inflicted than in line with popular sentiment. In Slovakia, the national question often prevented more active cooperation with the ethnic Hungarian parties. For example, in September 1997, when the center-right SDK was forging an agreement on post-election cooperation with the Hungarian Coalition, Slovak Television alleged that the SDK had promised the Hungarians the posts of education and culture ministers, which were considered particularly sensitive.⁸⁶⁷ The signing of the agreement was delayed, and the Hungarians were required to sign a statement promising that they would not demand territorial autonomy based on the ethnic principle. Although the civic right parties that had governed in 1990-1992 continued to promote a more civic-oriented identity throughout the decade, their weakness meant that that voice was seldom heard in politics.

The Croatian opposition parties had even more difficulties than their Slovak counterparts in opposing the government on certain national issues, particularly

⁸⁶⁵ Jelena Lovric, "Who Will Lead the Mass Protests?" AIM, 20 September 1996.

⁸⁶⁶ AIM, 28 January 1998.

⁸⁶⁷ *Sme*, 4 September 1997.

because of the war. Of the six major opposition parties, the least nationalistic was the Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS), which was based on the ethnically mixed Istrian peninsula, the first part of Croatia to reject the HDZ line. Stipe Mesic, who in the late 1990s was a member of the tiny Croatian People's Party (HNS), was one of the only prominent opposition politicians who was not afraid to criticize Tudman on the national question, condemning not only Tudman's policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Herzegovinians' excessive influence in the Croatian regime, but also the human rights abuses against Serbs. Despite Mesic's open criticism of many of the nationalist views promoted by the HDZ, he was comfortably elected as Croatian president in early 2000, signaling that the electorate was not nearly as nationalistic as other opposition politicians had supposed.

As mentioned in previous chapters, during the months before the Slovak elections the four major opposition parties — the SDK, Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK), Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), and the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) — took part in a series of meetings with non-political actors that was referred to as the “democratic round table.” Those meetings were a significant achievement, especially considering the diverse backgrounds of the groups. That was particularly true in the case of the four opposition parties, which included ethnic Slovaks and Hungarians, ex-communists, former Catholic dissidents, Greens, representatives of the civic right, and former “Nationalists,” among others. Prior to mid-1998, two of the four parties — the SDK and SMK — had actually been coalitions, but they were forced to merge because of an electoral law devised by the HZDS that required each party within a coalition to surpass the five percent threshold. While the establishment of the SMK, which grouped together three center-right ethnic Hungarian parties that had a history of cooperation, was relatively painless, for the SDK the process was much more complicated.

The basis for the SDK was established in late 1996, when three center-right opposition parties — the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), the Democratic Union (DU), and the Democratic Party (DS) — created the “blue coalition” in an effort to coordinate policies. The DS was an outgrowth of the two civic right parties that had failed in the 1992 elections and which finally merged in 1995, and

its most natural partner was the KDH since the two groups had worked together in 1990-1992. The DU, on the other hand, was a self-proclaimed “liberal” party that consisted mostly of personalities who had abandoned the HZDS or SNS in 1993-1994 and had cooperated with the KDH in the 1994 cabinet of Jozef Moravčík. The coalition’s first act was the launching of a petition drive in January 1997 for a referendum on direct presidential elections, a move that was seen as a turning point in opposition activism and the first step in the 1998 election campaign. The justification was that President Kováč’s term was ending in March 1998, and there was fear that because the parliament would likely be unable to muster the three-fifths majority needed to elect a new president, the powers would be transferred to the government, which could misuse them in an attempt to stay in control. The successful cooperation of the “blue coalition” in the referendum campaign triggered more intense efforts to join forces, and DU deputy Ludovít Cernák argued that only through forming a pre-election coalition would the “blue coalition” parties present a real challenge to the HZDS and ensure that no opposition votes were lost. Moreover, Cernák called for talks on post-election cooperation to start as soon as possible with the leftist and Hungarian parties.⁸⁶⁸

The Meciar cabinet’s interference in the referendum in May helped to further boost opposition unity, and in June 1997 the three original parties were joined in a pre-election coalition by the Social Democratic Party (SDSS) and the Green Party (SZS), both of which had run in the 1994 elections in coalition with the ex-communist SDL. Soon renamed the SDK, the new coalition proposed a series of concrete policies that would differentiate its future government from Meciar’s, and its public support immediately surpassed that of the HZDS. The SDK was transformed into a party several months before the elections, and KDH representative Mikuláš Dzurinda became chairman. Importantly, Dzurinda was a relatively unfamiliar face in politics who was skilled in communicating with ordinary people, and he was neither an ex-communist nor an ex-Meciar supporter.

The referendum fiasco as well as Slovakia’s failure to get invitations to NATO or to EU negotiations also helped spark more cooperation between the SDK and other opposition parties, which despite considerable differences agreed on the need to

⁸⁶⁸ See *Sme*, 8 March 1997.

enforce rule of law and to bring Slovakia “back to Europe.” Although the SDL was often reluctant to cooperate with the center-right, its relations with the SDK warmed somewhat. Meanwhile, the agreement signed in late 1997 between the SMK and SDK was a significant step forward, although some tensions still remained.⁸⁶⁹ A new element of uncertainty emerged with the creation of the SOP in April 1998, disrupting months of stability in the opposition parties’ popularity and taking significant support from the SDK. With the stated aim of promoting “reconciliation” between government and opposition, SOP Chairman Rudolf Schuster initially provoked fear that his party would cooperate with the HZDS. However, by the time of the elections the SOP was firmly on the side of the opposition.

In Croatia, it took most of the decade for the opposition to emerge as a credible political force. As mentioned in Chapter 4, it was not until 1998 that the ex-communist Social Democratic Party (SDP) began to present itself as a real social alternative, helping it to become the most popular party. Disagreements within the Croatian opposition were deep, particularly since the parties had never cooperated in statewide government. The strongest controversies were those between the SDP and the conservative Croatian Peasants’ Party (HSS) and between the IDS on the one hand and the SDP and HSLS on the other. In the latter case, both the SDP and HSLS joined the HDZ in opposing the IDS’s plans for an autonomous Istria.⁸⁷⁰

While Croatia’s economic problems were important in triggering the HDZ’s drop in support, the secret service scandals of October 1998 not only contributed to the decision of several moderate HDZ representatives to leave the party, but also instigated more opposition unity. Nonetheless, it was the issue of election legislation that first brought together Croatia’s six main opposition parties. The “Opposition Six” — which included the SDP, HSLS, HSS, IDS, HNS, and LS — held its first meetings in September 1998 to work out a joint election law draft.⁸⁷¹ Two months later, those parties caused a stir when their representatives resigned from all parliamentary duties except for their deputy mandates following the

⁸⁶⁹ See statements by SMK representative Miklos Duray, *Národná obroda*, 25 March 1998.

⁸⁷⁰ See Stan Markotich, “Istria Seeks Autonomy,” *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol. 2, no. 36 (10 September 1993), pp. 22-26; *Globus*, 2 October 1998, p. 11.

⁸⁷¹ *Vjesnik*, 2 September 1998; *Vecernji list*, 22 and 23 September 1998.

Sabor's rejection of their electoral bill and their demands for the establishment of a parliamentary committee to investigate the HDZ's possible misuse of the secret services. That action was referred to as the biggest battle between the government and the opposition since Mesic and Manolic left the HDZ in 1994.⁸⁷²

Although the Opposition Six's establishment as an informal group was considered a significant achievement,⁸⁷³ some observers had doubts about its potential, especially after the group was almost torn apart in late January 1999 when SDP and HSLS chairmen Ivica Racan and Dražen Budiša, respectively, met with Tudman against the wishes of the other parties. As in the case of Croatia's NGOs, it sometimes appeared that the political opposition lacked the necessary unity to win elections and form a new government, and again some Croats looked to Slovakia, this time at the model of coalition-building. Approximately one year before Croatia's elections, the International Republic Institute (IRI) invited some Croatian politicians to Slovakia to learn about that country's political experiences.⁸⁷⁴ Eventually, the Opposition Six managed to come together, signing on 30 November 1999 the Declaration on the Fundamental Direction of Post-election Activity, in which the parties vowed to create a common government, promised not to form a coalition with the HDZ, and agreed on various policy issues. Because the electoral law was changed to a purely proportional system, the parties established two coalitions; while the Coalition of Two included the SDP and HSLS, the Coalition of Four grouped together the remaining parties.⁸⁷⁵

Main themes of the campaign

Although there were 19 parties running in the Slovak elections and 55 parties and coalitions competing in Croatia, this analysis focuses on those that surpassed the five percent threshold. In Slovakia, those included two pre-election ruling parties — the HZDS and SNS⁸⁷⁶ — and four pre-election opposition parties — the SDK, SDL, SMK, and SOP. Although the Hungarian parties' 1992 campaign was not

⁸⁷² *Globus*, 6 November 1998, p. 6.

⁸⁷³ Personal interview with Vesna Pusic, 20 January 1999.

⁸⁷⁴ Interview with HSLS Deputy Chairman Vilim Herman, *Novi list*, 19 January 1999.

⁸⁷⁵ The IDS ran only in the eighth constituency, and it was replaced in the others by the Action of Social Democrats of Croatia (ASH).

⁸⁷⁶ The third partner, the Association of Workers of Slovakia, failed to make it into the parliament.

discussed in Chapter 2, the SMK's 1998 campaign is presented here since it also appealed to some Slovaks and because the party entered the post-election cabinet. In Croatia, in addition to the ruling HDZ, three opposition coalitions made it into the parliament, including the Coalition of Two and Coalition of Four, as well as a coalition of the far-right Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) and Croatian Christian Democratic Union (HKDU).

This analysis focuses mainly on the information that was readily available to average Slovaks and Croats during the campaign, including the parties' presentations in the media and on billboards, posters, and flyers.⁸⁷⁷ In Slovakia free airtime was given to each competing party on state radio and television in which to present party advertisements, and the purchase of additional time was prohibited. Although in Croatia each party was given television airtime to present its candidates, those that wanted to place proper ads were forced to buy time, giving the financially privileged HDZ a distinct advantage.

The different approach to television advertising meant that the variety and length of ads was much richer during the Slovak campaign than the Croatian one, and the length and timing of the campaign period also affected the spirit and breadth of the campaigns. While the Slovak campaign ran from 26 August through 23 September 1998, in Croatia it was much shorter, lasting only from 14 December 1999 through 1 January 2000. Moreover, the Slovak campaign took place in an energetic late-summer atmosphere, but the Croatian campaign was dampened not only by the winter weather, but also by the Christmas and New Year's holidays and by Tudman's funeral on 13 December and the mourning period that preceded it. The HDZ vowed that it would not campaign at all on 24-26 December or 1 January, and the opposition was expected to follow suit or risk being labeled as atheists. Coalition of Two representative Jozo Radoš accused the HDZ of trying to "destroy" the campaign, "hiding itself behind the atmosphere of the president's

⁸⁷⁷ For an analysis of party programs, see Grigorij Mesežnikov (ed.), *Volby 1998: Analýza volebných programov politických strán a hnutí* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 1998); "Ključni gospodarski, socijalni i politicki problemi i njihova rješenja u predizbornim programima i platformama," report based on round table discussion (Zagreb: Institut za međunarodna odnose and Freedom House, 28 December 1999).

illness and death, and then the holidays, thereby preventing the question of responsibility for all that it did badly.”⁸⁷⁸

In both Slovakia and Croatia, there were considerable differences between the campaigns of the ruling parties and those of the opposition. In Slovakia, the four opposition parties presented mostly simple and straight-forward advertisements that appeared to be relatively inexpensively made. Whether or not that was intentional, it helped them to demonstrate that they too had been left out in the massive distribution of wealth in the privatization process over the previous four years. The ads of the ruling parties — especially those of the HZDS — were more grandiose. In Croatia, some opposition parties — particularly those in the Coalition of Four and the HSP/HKDU — clearly had limited funds, and their advertising was not very visible. The vast majority of the visual materials during the Croatian campaign came from either the HDZ or the Coalition of Two. While the Coalition of Two parties conducted their campaign together, the Coalition of Four often organized rallies and ran ads separately.

In Slovakia, the opposition’s TV ads focused mostly on the parties’ candidates discussing the main issues of the campaign, while both the HZDS and to a smaller extent the SNS concentrated more on images than on personalities. Only one of nearly 30 HZDS TV spots pictured a party candidate, showing scenes of HZDS Chairman Vladimír Mečiar shaking hands and dancing during a ceremony commemorating the opening of a new stretch of highway. Mečiar was also the only HZDS candidate to appear on the party’s billboards, but he was featured only toward the end of the campaign. Instead, Mečiar tried to reach voters through selected rallies and his weekly interviews on Slovak TV, meaning that he had considerably less personal contact with ordinary citizens than did many opposition candidates. SNS Chairman Ján Slota also played a minimal role in his party’s TV ads, although he was featured on billboards and posters. Other personalities to figure in the SNS campaign included deputy chairwoman Anna Malíková and representatives of two small parties that merged with the SNS shortly before the elections.

⁸⁷⁸ Mare Bulic-Mrkobrad, “Troškovník predizborne kampane,” *Globus*, 17 December 1999, p. 35.

For the Slovak opposition parties, personal contact with citizens was considered especially important, and crowds were often attracted through performances by popular cultural personalities. SDK pre-election events included a bicycle tour around Slovakia by Dzurinda and other party representatives as well as Dzurinda's trip on a stream train from Košice to Bratislava. SDL Chairman Jozef Migaš traveled around Slovakia in a "Migomobil" car, inspired by Czech Social Democratic Party Chairman Miloš Zeman's 1998 campaign, during which he toured the Czech Republic in a bus called "Zemák."⁸⁷⁹ In its ads, the SDK concentrated largely on party candidates, using also several outside personalities as "witnesses" to explain why Dzurinda and his party were the best choice.⁸⁸⁰ The SDL campaign was focused primarily on the party's eight election leaders, who appeared in advertisements wearing either red t-shirts or suits. While the SOP's ad campaign featured mainly its five election leaders — including opera singer Peter Dvorský — SMK ads emphasized both candidates and cultural personalities.

In Croatia, both the HDZ and the opposition campaigns contained a mixture of personalities and images. The HDZ and the Coalition of Two used images rather than politicians in their television spots, and their other advertisements presented simple slogans, sometimes with pictures of party leaders. While in its individual billboard campaign the HSS focused on images such as the sun and outstretched hands with a loaf of bread, most other Coalition of Four billboard and television ads stressed personalities and addressed key problems in society. HNS ads featured the party's top three personalities: Chairman Radimir Cacic, Mesic, and Vesna Pusic, a sociologist who was one of the few new faces among prominent opposition personalities. One billboard showed Pusic alone, together with the slogan "The new generation of Croatian politicians." LS ads also focused on party candidates, and one poster showed candidate Helena Štimac Radin with the slogan "Elect a woman to the Sabor." A HSP-HKDU poster depicted the two parties' chairmen, accompanied by the slogan "Together we are stronger." In Croatia there were comparably less rallies than during the Slovak campaign, and in an attempt to reach more people, the HSS used door-to-door campaigning, sending some 10,000

⁸⁷⁹ Andrej Školkay, "The Media and Political Communication in the Election Campaign," in Martin Bútora et al (eds.), *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia* (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1999), pp. 128-129.

volunteers to offer voters a container of wheat seeds, a Croatian Christmas tradition.⁸⁸¹ Because its campaign was concentrated on the Istrian peninsula, the IDS was able to reach people easily by serving refreshments at markets and sponsoring local events. Meanwhile, the HSP held approximately 300 public meetings, during which the atmosphere was described as “patriotic and nationalistic.”⁸⁸²

Although both the HZDS and the HDZ devoted considerable attention in their campaigns on the national question and their achievements in building a new state, the HDZ was more self-critical than the HZDS concerning other areas of life. In Slovakia, the HZDS tended to brush off or deny any criticism, despite numerous media reports about party-related privatization scandals and allegations that the economy was on the verge of collapse. In Croatia, the economic situation was so desperate that the HDZ could not deny responsibility, especially since the wealth of many HDZ representatives and the involvement of party members in such affairs as the Dubrovacka banka scandal was well-known.⁸⁸³ Nonetheless, the last issue of the HDZ’s bulletin *Glasnik* prior to the elections pointed out that while the SDP criticized the economic situation during HDZ rule, SDP leader Racan had given control of Croatia to Tudman at a time of hyperinflation and high unemployment.⁸⁸⁴

Regarding the presentation of the nation, there were considerable differences between the opposition and the ruling parties and among the parties of each camp themselves. In Slovakia, the HZDS and SNS used similar images, and one SNS TV ad even featured Meciar in reference to the approval of the Slovak constitution. Both the HZDS and SNS devoted considerable space to scenic views of the Slovak countryside, featuring mountains and waterfalls as well as famous sites such as the Devín castle. The eagle was a central image of the SNS campaign, and billboards featuring a spread eagle sitting atop Slovakia’s state symbol included the slogans

⁸⁸⁰ Osservatorio di Pavia, “Parliamentary Election ’98, Republic of Slovakia,” Final Report on Media Monitoring, 26 August-23 September 1998, p. 41.

⁸⁸¹ I. Vukic, “Nastupi SDP-a i HSLs-a u režiji Titove unuke,” *Novi list*, 7 December 1999; Bulic-Mrkobrad, “Troškovnik predizborne kampane,” *Globus*, 17 December 1999, p. 35.

⁸⁸² Anto Đapic interview, *Vecernji list*, 29 December 1999.

⁸⁸³ Edita Vlahovic, “Na HDZ-ovu izbornom programu slika pokojnog predsjednika Franje Tudmana,” *Jutarnji list*, 16 December 1999.

⁸⁸⁴ *Glasnik*, vol. 10, no. 225 (29 December 1999), p. 59.

“Our homeland, our nest” or “Every eagle protects its nest,” with the latter referring to SNS efforts to defend Slovakia from its “enemies.” The musical accompaniment of HZDS and SNS TV ads was mostly serious and sometimes had folk tones, using traditional instruments such as the *fujara*. Attempting to present itself as a national, Christian party, the SNS used the slogans “The family – the core of the nation” and “For God – for the nation” and based its campaign on such issues as the spiritual and moral renewal of society and the death penalty.

The HZDS and SNS campaigns both dealt with history, featuring Ludovít Štúr, Milan Rastislav Štefánik, and Andrej Hlinka in their ads and using the same Hlinka quote (“The Slovak nation was, is, and will be. Amen.”). One HZDS billboard series featured the words of Štúr, Štefánik, and Hlinka, and in an attempt to present Meciar as having a place in history alongside those figures, the fourth billboard featured a quotation from Meciar that “Slovakia has become the beautiful country of a free nation.” An SNS television ad showed an outline of Slovak history, starting in the year 868 with symbols of the Great Moravian Empire before moving on to 907 with the onset of Hungarian rule. It then skipped to the year 1848, featuring Štúr’s portrait, before continuing with 1938, with a map of World War II Slovakia. That was followed by the beginning of communism in 1948 and the 1968 Soviet invasion. The next events were the 1992 approval of the constitution and the launch of Slovak independence in 1993, and the ad ended with 1998, the year of elections. Interestingly, the SNS ad left out two key dates in Slovak history: the founding of the Czechoslovak state in 1918 and the 1989 “velvet revolution.”

In representations of the “Other,” both the HZDS and SNS tried to create fear that Slovakia’s “enemies” — both inside and out — would bring an end to the country’s independence or at least make life more difficult or unpleasant for “good Slovaks.” The most startling advertisements of that type were billboards and posters featuring a picture of SNS Chairman Ján Slota, together with the slogan “Let’s vote for a Slovakia without parasites.” Shortly before the ads were released, Slota said that the SNS considered Hungarian political representatives in Slovakia to be “first-class parasites” since they questioned Slovak sovereignty. He added that parasites also included people who could work but chose not to, which Slota

said applied to “quite a lot of Gypsies but also to whites.”⁸⁸⁵ In a TV ad, Malíková asked Slovaks to vote for the SNS “so that you will not be a 90 percent minority in your own state,” and the SNS repeatedly stressed that it was against the SMK’s inclusion in the government.

Although the HZDS had also readily played the Hungarian card in the past, during the campaign the party was not as blatant as the SNS in its depiction of the Hungarian “Other.” The HZDS placed two Romani representatives on its candidate list and cooperated with an “alternative” ethnic Hungarian party. Nonetheless, the HZDS did use negative advertising against the internal Other, both in TV cartoons and in postcards distributed at rallies. The objects of criticism included private Radio Twist and TV Markíza, both of which were presented as supporting the opposition, as well as the SDK and SOP. One such television ad showed an SOP representative trying in various ways to convince a voter dressed in national costume to support his party. Despite those efforts, when it came time to vote, the “good Slovak” voted for the HZDS. Meanwhile, one SNS TV ad showing the Gabčíkovo dam featured the words: “Slovaks, we cannot lose everything. Vote for those who stood in favor of this state.” In another SNS TV ad, Malíková stressed that those who did not vote for the state should not be running it.

Slovakia’s four opposition parties were much less likely than the ruling parties to use traditional representations of the nation, favoring instead more modern musical accompaniment in TV ads and untraditional forms of entertainment at party rallies. SDL and SOP rallies featured cheerleaders with pom-poms, while an SDK rally included dancing girls in red and white frilly costumes and round, red hats. Meanwhile, SOP ads featured an original and modern-sounding song performed by party Chairman Schuster. An important theme for all four opposition parties was “change,” which was generally understood as the building of a modern state that would find its place in international organizations such as the EU and NATO, that would enforce rule of law, and that would provide equal opportunities for all citizens and put an end to the artificial divisions within Slovakia that had been

⁸⁸⁵ *Sme*, 18 September 1998.

established by the Meciar government between ethnic Slovaks and Hungarians, between “good” and “bad” Slovaks, and between government and opposition.

Despite earlier hesitation on the national question, by the time of the elections Slovakia’s opposition parties were trying to turn HZDS discourse around. That was accomplished most successfully by the SMK, which repeatedly stressed that unlike the ruling parties, it had always respected the constitution. Responding to Slota’s accusations against Hungarians, SMK representative Kálmán Petocz said that “he who has caused Slovakia to be completely robbed over the past four years while several dozen people have enriched themselves... has no right to speak about parasites... Parasites are those who have been sitting in government and not those who have honestly been trying to observe Slovak laws and the constitution.”⁸⁸⁶ In an SMK television spot, *Sme* journalist Juraj Hrabko — the only ethnic Slovak running on the SMK list — emphasized that his candidacy was “a sign that there also exist Slovaks who reject the use of the so-called Hungarian card,” adding that “people must judge what is good and bad according to concrete tests rather than nationality.” Meanwhile, one SOP ad featured a personal history of Dvorský, discussing his career as a world-renowned opera singer and his devotion to family and children, as demonstrated by the work of his Harmony foundation. The ad pointed out that under Meciar, the Culture Ministry labeled many artists — including Dvorský — as “third-class” and ranked Dvorský among “the traitors of Slovakia.”⁸⁸⁷ The SDK was especially vocal on the national question during rallies, where party representatives stressed that they wanted to serve the nation and make people proud of their passports.

While Slovakia’s other opposition parties led a positive campaign, the SOP produced some advertisements that were critical of the ruling parties, featuring fake newspaper clippings with corresponding titles that criticized a particular policy and asking the question: “How did you vote last time?” For example, one ad discussed the increases in crime in recent years, with the description: “In 1997 the number of bomb attacks grew to 141! Organized crime, drugs, and money laundering have become a part of our lives.”⁸⁸⁸ Because the SOP continued during

⁸⁸⁶ CTK, 18 September 1998.

⁸⁸⁷ *Sme*, 5 September 1998.

⁸⁸⁸ *Plus 7 dní*, 21 September 1998, p. 17.

rallies to speak about the need to heal the divisions in society, its campaign appeared somewhat schizophrenic. Meanwhile, the Civic Democratic Youth, which supported the SDK, distributed stickers featuring a picture of Meciar's face with a line through it, together with the slogan "Thank you for not voting for Meciar."

In Croatia, the HDZ focused its campaign on the party's national achievements, while continuing to present itself as the protector of the nation. Party representatives argued that the HDZ would not run a negative campaign;⁸⁸⁹ however, it did try to arouse fear, with the target of most attacks being the SDP. Although many HDZ members were ex-communists,⁸⁹⁰ the party warned citizens in its electoral program about the return of the 'reds.'"⁸⁹¹ In one party publication, the HDZ alleged that the SDP was seeking material support from George Soros, who was using communists as a way to promote his open society, "in which there would be no nation, religion and other aspects of a person's identity."⁸⁹² One full-page anonymous advertisement warned that "An SDP electoral victory [is] in the interest of Slovenia," while the following page featured a full-page HDZ ad reading "Only for the interest and betterment of Croatia."⁸⁹³ Shortly before Tudman's death, during a mass in the chapel of the hospital where the president was staying, a prayer was distributed that bashed various opposition representatives and non-governmental organizations.⁸⁹⁴

The far-right HSP and HKDU were often more radical than the HDZ on the national question. Labeling HSP Chairman Anto Đapic as "Ante Pavelic with a human face," many analysts argued that the HDZ needed the HSP to stir up discussion of such controversial subjects as the rehabilitation of the Ustaša regime. Although many observers considered the HSP and HKDU as right-wing factions of the HDZ, the HSP and HKDU were stronger in their criticism of the communist regime. Arguing in favor of a draft lustration law put forward by the HSP shortly before the elections, one HKDU representative stressed that Croatia must not be

⁸⁸⁹ Bulic-Mrkobrad, "Troškovnik predizborne kampane," *Globus*, 17 December 1999, p. 35.

⁸⁹⁰ Milivoj Đilas, "CK HDZ," *Feral Tribune*, 22 November 1999.

⁸⁹¹ "Izborni program Hrvatske demokratske zajednice," *Novi list*, 16 December 1999.

⁸⁹² *Izborni pojmovnik HDZ-a* (Zagreb: HDZ, 1999), p. 26.

⁸⁹³ *Jutarnji list*, 22 December 1999.

⁸⁹⁴ "Kibidabija: Motlivena rugalica," *Jutarnji list*, 20 November 1999.

led “by those who did not want [the state].”⁸⁹⁵ HSP television spots featured an Ustaše-era song and showed a boy raising his left hand into the air.⁸⁹⁶

The HDZ’s repeated use of nationalist rhetoric before and during the Croatian campaign would seemingly have given the opposition parties an obvious niche, enabling them to redefine the nation and state as well as how the country was run. However, the opposition continued to show reluctance to challenge the HDZ on national questions. That might have been related to Tudman’s death and the outpouring of emotions by ordinary Croats, after which a number of opposition representatives made uncritical statements about their “founding father” in an apparent attempt to avoid offending his supporters. However, even before Tudman’s death many opposition representatives appeared not to have given much thought to the question of how the Croatian nation was presented and defined, and many of them did not dare to publicly question Tudman’s commitment to Croatia. Moreover, although Croatian society was gradually becoming more open to the influx of Serbian culture, the entire Croatian opposition seemed afraid to address the Serbian returnee problem for fear of losing votes, despite the fact that they would have to deal with the question eventually if they hoped to improve Croatia’s international position. Rather than focus on broader ideological questions, the opposition parties instead addressed mainly social and economic concerns. That emphasis was based on the results of several opinion polls commissioned by the IRI expressly for the purpose of determining election themes. One such poll showed that while 24 percent of Croats ranked unemployment as the most serious problem that they were facing, just one percent listed the lack of democracy and human rights and freedoms.⁸⁹⁷ While that poll certainly demonstrated the desperate economic situation that many Croats were facing, many opposition representatives interpreted that poll as an indication that Croats simply did not care about political issues, meaning that there was no need for them to establish an alternative ideology to that put forward by the HDZ.

⁸⁹⁵ *Vecernji list*, 1 December 1999.

⁸⁹⁶ Branimir Donat, “Đapic, Cabaret, Spis a slobodi i Puška puca, a top r ice,” *Globus*, 31 December 1999.

⁸⁹⁷ “Pregled rezultata istraživanja u postotcima po pojedinim pitanjima” (International Republican Institute, October 1998), p. 6.

The Coalition of Two did place some emphasis on the theme of change in general, pointing to problems other than economic and social ones, while the IDS was the most inventive party in fighting HDZ discourse. Kicking off its campaign on 1 December, the international day in the fight against AIDS, the IDS distributed packages of condoms with the slogan “No AIDS, Yes IDS,” combined with a clothes pin.⁸⁹⁸ That slogan served as a preemptive measure since the HDZ had in the past pointed out that if an “A” is added to IDS, it becomes AIDS. In its television ads, the IDS featured a marching band walking through the cobblestone streets of an old town, together with the slogan — written in both Croatian and Italian — “some play only for themselves, and others play for you.” Meanwhile, one Coalition of Four cartoon showed two screens with characters representing the HDZ, one of which was surrounded by money and wearing a sign reading “The party of all thieves,” while the other was doing magic tricks and wearing a sign stating “The party of all illusions.”⁸⁹⁹

In both Slovakia and Croatia, economic questions played a much bigger role in the campaign of the opposition than of the ruling parties, and the fairness of the privatization process and the issue of how to deal with the property that had been practically stolen from the state was a key campaign question. While in Croatia unemployment was probably the most crucial campaign issue, in Slovakia the question of wages and prices was more important. Of the Slovak parties, the SDL devoted the most attention to economic and social issues, and the party’s central slogan was “A better life,” which was sometimes accompanied by “for honest and diligent people.” Other party slogans included “Investment for young families” and “A higher standard of living.” One SDL ad pointed to the Confederation of Trade Unions’ analysis on the voting of parliamentary deputies, adding that the SDL “always voted for your social rights.” Emphasizing that unemployment was at its highest levels of the post-communist period and that wages were the lowest in Central Europe, Migaš asked: “How much longer can the notorious Slovak modesty be misused?” He added that his party “rejects the kind of society in which citizens are nothing but a cheap workforce.”⁹⁰⁰

⁸⁹⁸ Vukic, “Nastupi SDP-a i HSLS-a u režiji Titove unuke,” *Novi list* 7 December 1999.

⁸⁹⁹ *Novi list*, 28 December 1999.

⁹⁰⁰ *Práca*, 22 September 1998.

Aside from unemployment, other key economic issues in the Croatian campaign included the high cost of living and payment problems. HNS ads promised “200,000 new job openings,” while solving the country’s unemployment and economic problems was among the main themes of the LS campaign.⁹⁰¹ One series of LS posters featured various candidates and the slogan “Quick growth,” with a graph in the background showing GDP rising over the coming years.

The question of Europe was a key campaign theme of all four of Slovakia’s opposition parties, while it was less important in Croatia.⁹⁰² The successes of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary in NATO and EU integration triggered feelings of isolation and inferiority in Slovaks, particularly among educated urban dwellers. One SOP ad that was characteristic of opposition attitudes on European integration presented opinion polls showing the strength of popular support for EU and NATO integration and noted that:

Entry into [the EU and NATO] was a part of the program declaration of the current government. And the reality? ... None of the prominent world politicians have visited Slovakia in the last several years. Instead of advanced Europe we are moving closer to the unfathomable East. The will of the citizens is key for the SOP. That is why fulfilling the conditions of EU and NATO entry are among our main priorities. ... The future of the citizens of Slovakia is in a stable and prosperous Europe.⁹⁰³

While the HZDS basically ignored the question of Europe in its campaign, the SNS was the only party that made it into the parliament to use openly anti-Western rhetoric.

Although Croatia’s looming economic problems meant that the question of Europe was not a high priority for many citizens, the pariah status was nonetheless difficult to accept. That was especially true after such countries as Romania and Bulgaria were invited to EU accession talks during the December 1999 Helsinki summit, while Croatia remained relegated by the West to a group of Balkan states

⁹⁰¹ Personal interview with Helena Štimac Radin, 27 January 2000.

⁹⁰² For more on the importance of Europe for ex-communist countries, see Milada Anna Vachudová, “The Leverage of International Institutions on Democratizing States: Eastern Europe and the European Union,” (draft, 30 September 2000).

under the Stability Pact. Croatia's position was hotly debated during the months before the elections, and the HDZ repeatedly rejected Croatia's inclusion in any kind of union of Balkan states, forgetting that it was the party's own policies that brought Croatia into that group. While the HDZ frequently accused the opposition of accepting the position that the West had assigned to Croatia, Pusic argued that the Stability Pact represented "the failure of Croatian domestic policy" since instead of being grouped with Balkan countries, Croatia should have been in a position similar to Slovenia, which was a candidate for full EU membership.⁹⁰⁴

Europe was a more important issue for the Coalition of Four than for its competitors, and a year before the elections one SDP representative explained that although Croats had been strongly pro-European in the early 1990s, many changed their attitudes when the West did not step in to save them during the Yugoslav wars.⁹⁰⁵ Other Croats complained of Europe's lack of sympathy and solidarity with Croatia during the war, when many Western journalists wrote about the Serbs' attacks on Croatia in conjunction with a discussion of the World War II Ustaša state and the Jasenovac concentration camp. While European integration was among the main themes of the LS campaign,⁹⁰⁶ the Coalition of Four produced posters and flyers featuring its candidates, accompanied by the slogan "Together to Europe: let's choose the right people for the Sabor." Despite the HDZ's disastrous foreign policy, one poster tried to tie the party to Europe, featuring the slogan "A vote for Europe" centered on a blue background with the European flag in which one of the stars was replaced by an outline of Croatia.

The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia

The HZDS television ads and billboards were the most innovative and professional of all the parties running in Slovakia, and the HZDS appeared to have invested significantly more money than any other party in its campaign. The party produced by far the largest number of TV advertisements, posters and billboards. At HZDS rallies, a whole range of accessories was available, including postcards

⁹⁰³ *Slovenský Profit*, 31 August 1998, p. 19.

⁹⁰⁴ *Globus*, 23 July, p. 13.

⁹⁰⁵ Personal interview with Tonino Picula, 19 January 1999.

⁹⁰⁶ Personal interview with Helena Štimac Radin, Zagreb, 27 January 2000.

featuring politicians' pictures; plastic pens, lighters, and puzzles; as well as packets of "Meciar" coffee marked "The coffee of winners." HZDS pre-election rallies tried to lure parents with young children by featuring giant inflatable castles and electric cars. Moreover, at the start of the school year the party prepared special bags of goodies to welcome first-year pupils. That was an obvious abuse of state power that gave the HZDS an advantage over its competitors.

The HZDS used a few main themes in its campaign, and there was virtually no discussion of the party's program. Fedor Flašík, the director of the firm that created the campaign, said that the HZDS campaign was aimed at "convincing Slovak citizens that they have something to be proud of" and providing them with "a serious vision of [their] future."⁹⁰⁷ One poet who worked on the campaign professed that he was trying to create "a symbiosis of poetry and political advertising."⁹⁰⁸ The party's ads featured different versions of the HZDS acronym, including "We defend the interests of a democratic Slovakia," "Vote for long-term stability," and "Vote for a child's smile."

The central theme of the HZDS election campaign was the heart, which symbolized love for the country as well as for the HZDS and Meciar. The party produced billboards, magazine ads, and TV spots with slogans such as "the country of your heart," "vote with your heart," and "Slovakia—the free heart of Europe." One TV ad featured dramatic music and scenes of Slovak countryside and people, including folk dancers, a man in national costume, children running on water, a workman with a hardhat, an industrial scene, an outdoor icon of Jesus, a banker speaking on the telephone under a domed ceiling, and loving young couples. On the screen, words appeared one by one, reading: "the voice of your country says that Slovakia is the country of your heart." It ended with a waterfall with doves flying in the foreground.⁹⁰⁹ The most risqué HZDS ad featured a disco scene showing several girls dancing. A male narrator said "Everyone wants to know whom you really love. Tell them the truth." The camera then focused on one girl who stripped off her cardigan, and the ad ended with the girl saying "I love

⁹⁰⁷ *Sme*, 10 August 1998.

⁹⁰⁸ Vladimír Jancura, "Poludstovanie HZDS," *Pravda*, 6 August 1998.

⁹⁰⁹ All Slovak TV ads mentioned here were recorded by the Osservatorio di Pavia.

Slovakia,” revealing a tattoo on her upper arm with an arrow piercing a heart and the word “Slovakia.”

In terms of billboards and magazine ads with the heart theme, one advertisement showed a young couple in a swimming pool sporting tattoos like the one featured in the disco scene, together with the slogan “Come with us.” A temporary tattoo was stuck to the ad so that readers could wear it themselves.⁹¹⁰ A magazine ad with grass cut in the shape of a heart before a mountainous background told readers:

Slovakia—the free heart of Europe. Its pulse can be heard in all directions. Among the voices of all nations it is beating freely and with joy. Listen to the voice of your heart. Vote for its long-term stability. Vote for those who defend the interests of a democratic Slovakia.⁹¹¹

An embarrassing scandal erupted in August when someone recognized that the photograph in one of the “heart” billboards was actually not of Slovakia but had originally appeared in a Swiss calendar. After an initial denial, Flašík stressed that it was not the country that was important but rather “the method of visual communication.”⁹¹² In reaction, an SOP billboard appeared featuring a picture of a party candidate with the High Tatra mountains in the background, together with the slogan “The Real Country of your Heart.”

Another HZDS theme was the tree, which symbolized Slovakia and the protection the nation can provide. One TV ad showed several generations of people standing around a tree, with a voice saying:

It takes long years before a small seed grows into a mighty tree. Years of troubles and work that bring their fruits to our sons and grandsons. Under the mighty crown of this tree we live out our destinies, our loves. ... It is our tree, our country. Each of us can plant a new tree in the meaning of love, strength, and hope.

⁹¹⁰ Supplement to *Slovenská Republika*, 18 September 1998.

⁹¹¹ *Plus 7 dní*, 10 August 1998, p. 25.

⁹¹² *Sme*, 10 August 1998.

Meanwhile, a magazine ad featured Meciar with a tree in the background and the slogan “Let’s plant our tree together.”⁹¹³

Another group of ads called on Slovaks to have confidence and to reach higher. The slogan “Come with us... Don’t be afraid of heights” was used in TV ads and billboards showing a Slovak expedition to Mt. Everest, where the climbers planted the HZDS and Slovak flags. A magazine ad picturing a climber at the top of Mt. Everest holding a small Slovak flag featured the words:

Reaching the highest mountain in the world is not only a privilege of the big. A member of a small nation can also manage big things if he is not afraid. We demonstrated it. Slovaks humiliated the highest mountain in the world. So come with us, don’t be afraid of heights, and overcome your own Mount Everest.⁹¹⁴

Another TV ad featured a wedding scene, with a newly-married couple riding a bike in the countryside, followed by friends. They reach a hot air balloon, and the couple floats off, with a voice saying: “You have only one right choice. So, come with us. And don’t be afraid of heights.”

One series of billboards and TV spots featured the themes of family and respect for the elderly. A billboard showed a family standing together in the countryside, together with the slogan “The whole family votes,” while in the TV version family members stated why they were supporting the HZDS. Another TV ad showed a train passing through a small town. An elderly couple arrived a bit late and almost missed it, but the train conductor stopped to wait for them and even helped them to board. A voice stated: “We are not an express... We are an ordinary train that stops at each station. We will wait for you, grandma and grandpa.” A final TV ad with a similar theme showed an old woman climbing a hill to go to church. She dropped her bible, and a young girl picked it up. The ad featured the slogan: “Respect for the elderly and belief in a better life is something we have in common.”

⁹¹³*Plus 7 dní*, 21 September 1998, p. 35.

⁹¹⁴*Plus 7 dní*, 24 August 1998, p. 29.

While the heart and family themes were clearly aimed at rural and older voters, in other ads the HZDS tried to appeal to urban dwellers by presenting Slovakia as a modern, industrial country. In doing so, the party used images of the Mochovce nuclear power station, the Gabčíkovo dam, as well as new highways, making the campaign reminiscent of communist efforts to demonstrate industrial might. Billboards appeared with photographs of Mochovce or Gabčíkovo, with the slogan “Together we managed it” or “Together we will manage more,” sometimes with the words “I am also voting for Slovakia” at the bottom. Later in the campaign, Meciar appeared in the foreground of those ads, as if to say that he was personally responsible for such accomplishments. A billboard with a similar theme featured a modern train with the Bratislava castle in the background, together with the slogan “Slovakia of the new millennium.” Another group of similar ads featured the slogan “Made in Slovakia,” and the magazine version told readers:

...[W]e will manage to show the world our strengths, abilities, how many new possibilities we have. Each day we create quality of the highest level. Our products are sold under a label that is now known by the whole world. We managed what few people predicted. The world got to know the clever hands of our people. MADE IN SLOVAKIA—we have reached the highest level of quality.⁹¹⁵

One TV ad pointed to the government’s highway construction program, arguing that “the new highway network places us among the most advanced European countries.” A final TV ad related to the economy featured the work of a wine producer, together with the slogan “A good farmer never sells his land. And we will not sell Slovakia.” With that statement, the HZDS was vowing to keep foreign investment out of Slovakia.

The HZDS also had a series of TV ads and billboards aimed at young voters. In addition to the disco ad mentioned above, those included a TV spot showing a group of enthusiastic young people at Gabčíkovo painting a huge HZDS logo. Other billboards and TV ads featured a blonde basketball player, together with the slogan “shoot the basket” or “give your vote.” The TV advertisement showed that an attractive girl had caught the attention of the boy, who said “I thought that I didn’t have a chance.” In the end, the boy got both the basket and the girl.

⁹¹⁵ *Plus 7 dní*, 7 September 1998, p. 50.

Some TV ads were aimed at young children in an apparent effort to get them to encourage their parents to vote HZDS. One cartoon showed a group of children flying around in a “Slovakia” spaceship, accompanied by a catchy song. A constellation of stars intended to symbolize the EU turned into a lion and jumped after them, with the song stating that Slovaks would “accomplish great things.” In another TV spot, a young boy recited a children’s poem, and the ad closed with a cartoon squirrel dressed in national costume and playing the *fujara*, with hearts coming out of it.

The Slovak Democratic Coalition

The SDK advertising campaign was more low-key and less innovative than that of the HZDS, and it focused on concrete issues such as social problems, democratization, European integration, and privatization rather than on intangible images. Nonetheless, the party’s television ads and billboards were disappointing in their lack of substance and new ideas. They were often slow-moving and old-fashioned, contrasting with the more modern and energetic image that the group presented in its political rallies.

As with other Slovak opposition parties, one of the SDK’s main themes was the vague notion of “change,” and its central slogan was “The SDK: a real chance for change.” During the campaign, Dzurinda made a number of populist promises, including a vow to double real wages in four years. In one folksy TV ad taking place in his native village, Dzurinda recalled a conversation he had had the previous day with a driver concerning the SDK’s promised wage increases. In a longer version of that ad, Dzurinda talked about himself and his personal history, stressing that his parents had taught him responsibility and that now responsibility must be taken for the country and for the next generation. In the course of the ad, Dzurinda was depicted riding his bicycle as well as preparing to run a marathon, while he also demonstrated his “Slovakness” by shaking hands with ordinary people and folk dancing. A similar TV ad featured former Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan talking about his family house, and it showed pictures from his

childhood as well as photos of him shaking hands with world leaders to demonstrate his international acceptability.

Another important slogan appearing in SDK ads was “Slovakia back to the A group,” which referred not only to an improved standing for the national hockey team but also for European integration. In written form, it was accompanied by scenes of Dzurinda grasping hands with ice hockey star Peter Štastný, together with a quote from Štastný: “With Miki Dzurinda the SDK will return Slovakia on the right path.”⁹¹⁶ Another TV spot featured former President Kováč as a “witness,” stressing that Slovakia needed to return to democratic values and morality. Kováč added that he knew the people from the SDK and believed that they would master their leadership role.

An outside witness was also used in billboard ads with Ladislav Chudík, featuring the popular actor sitting next to Dzurinda together with the slogan “To serve people with respect.” A magazine version stated: “Just as an actor serves its viewers, a good politician should serve citizens. To listen, discuss, and create conditions so that people can peacefully work and live in a dignified way. If this principle of politics is not applied, it’s time for change. To a new government with humility and respect for citizens.”⁹¹⁷

One SDK TV spot, “The magic eight,” took advantage of the party’s randomly selected election number and pointed to the fact that the majority of important events in Slovak and Czechoslovak history occurred in years including the number eight. Because the elections took place in 1998, the SDK presented them as another major turning point in Slovak history. The ad included shots of Dubček from 1968 and demonstrations from November 1989, together with the words: “The magic eight: it always comes when we can take our fate into our own hands.”

One billboard series featured the slogan “A chance for all people,” together with a picture of a baby, an old lady, or a young couple. A magazine ad with that theme read:

⁹¹⁶ *Plus 7 dní*, 14 September 1998, p. 41.

⁹¹⁷ *Plus 7 dní*, 21 September 1998.

A chance for change. So that the law will apply for everyone equally. So that values such as justice, decency, peace and dignity will again be honored in society. So that the standard of living will increase. Only using this chance can bring change. Vote for the party that has the biggest chance of leading Slovakia on the right path.

The ad ended by asking voters to “Use the chance called SDK,” referring to the party as “A real chance for change.”⁹¹⁸

Another main billboard featured the slogan “Experience, expertise, cooperation” together with a photo of five SDK representatives. The magazine ad with that theme included the message:

Slovakia inevitably needs change. So that salaries and the standard of living will increase. So that young people will have a place to live. So that Slovakia will become a safe and peaceful country. So that we can enter Europe through open doors. So that Slovakia will be educated and wise. The SDK is a party of experts who are able to work together to fulfill these tasks.

The ad ended in the same way as the previous one.⁹¹⁹ In the final stage of the campaign, the SDK asked voters to support it as the only force with a real chance of getting more votes than the HZDS. On billboards, the SDK proclaimed: “Only the winner can bring CHANGE!” and called on the electorate to vote for “the strongest opposition party.”

In its campaign, the SDK got significant publicity from a preemptive attempt to prevent manipulation of voters following the publication of a secret HZDS document stating that the party planned to drop a “media bomb” in the last 48 hours before the elections, during which time the opposition would have no chance to respond because of the moratorium on campaigning. The SDK launched a competition allowing Slovaks to guess what that “bomb” could be, and possible scenarios included the arrest of SDK leaders for preparing an assassination attempt on Meciar and accusations that Dzurinda had an illegitimate child. The competition’s winner could enjoy a weekend in “the country of our heart” and was

⁹¹⁸ *Plus 7 dní*, 21 September 1998.

⁹¹⁹ *Plus 7 dní*, 24 August 1998.

able to choose between Slovakia and Switzerland.⁹²⁰ In the end, there was no “media bomb.”

The Croatian Democratic Community

Despite its immense advantages in terms of campaign financing, Croatia’s HDZ was in a difficult position at the start of the election campaign. Not only was the party unable to escape blame for the miserable economic situation, but it was also thrown off track by Tudman’s untimely death. Before Tudman passed away, the HDZ had intended to utilize the president’s popularity by making him the carrier of the party’s list in all constituencies, meaning that his name would appear on all ballot papers even though he would not have been an actual candidate. In the months before the elections, a battle raged among the various HDZ factions as they fought for control.

The HDZ based its campaign largely on its achievements of the previous nine years in the belief that that was the best response to the criticism and allegations that the party had failed. Those accomplishments included the establishment and liberation of the Croatian state and the reconstruction of approximately 100,000 houses.⁹²¹ The HDZ vowed to do its best to bring social justice, more job openings, more regular salaries, and better pensions, and one party representative argued that the HDZ could promise such things since it had fulfilled most of its previous pledges.⁹²² After Tudman fell ill, some HDZ representatives even questioned several of the policies he had promoted, calling for decreasing presidential powers and switching the name of Zagreb’s soccer team from “Croatia” back to its original “Dimano.”

The HDZ campaign was intentionally more modest than previous ones, and the party hoped to gain votes not so much by direct campaigning but rather in indirect ways. One of its key tools was Croatian TV (HTV), and the biased news reports and programs appealing to Croats’ feelings of patriotism often gave the impression

⁹²⁰ *Sme*, 27 August 1998.

⁹²¹ Vlahovic, “Na HDZ-ovu izbornom programu slika pokojnog predsjednika Franje Tudmana,” *Jutarnji list*, 16 December 1999.

⁹²² Bulic-Mrkobrad, “Troškovnik predizborne kampane,” *Globus*, 17 December 1999, p. 35.

that members of HTV staff were part of the HDZ election team. That was especially apparent during the days after Tudman's death on 10 December, when all three HTV channels were flooded with documentaries, videos of patriotic songs, footage of Tudman speeches, and scenes of visitors waiting to sign the book of condolences and pay their last respects to their "founding father" at the presidential palace. HTV unabashed backing of the HDZ prior to the elections was an indication of the regime's authoritarianism.

The nation was the main theme of the HDZ campaign, expressed in both direct and indirect ways. In the realization that Tudman had always been more popular than the party, throughout its campaign the HDZ made use of Tudman's legacy, equating him with the nation itself. One of the party's main advertisements was a picture of Tudman holding a young girl dressed in national costume, together with the slogan "All for Croatia."⁹²³

Children were also included in several HDZ television ads in an attempt to symbolize the country's future, rather than its past. Film director Zrinko Ogresta, who produced two TV spots for the HDZ, said that the party's ads aimed at simplicity and "the human dimension."⁹²⁴ One TV spot showed green grass covered with fruit in the shape of Croatia, with bunches of grapes representing the islands. A young girl was shown throwing a piece of fruit up into the air, and the ad ended with the slogan "Security and peace," with the party's name at the bottom of the screen. A second TV ad showed a series of children's drawings, including a house, a church, a sea filled with fish, the Croatian flag, and popular Croatian soccer stars. The last drawing featured a family, and the camera then focused on the artist himself, showing a smiling young boy. It also ended with the slogan "Security and peace," together with a drawing of a sun. Another HDZ theme was family, and one magazine ad featured a scene in front of a Christmas tree, with the slogan "Happy family — happy Croatia."⁹²⁵ Meanwhile, a HDZ holiday greeting card invited citizens to vote for the HDZ "for peace and the good of your family, for a stable Croatia and the benefit of each Croat."⁹²⁶

⁹²³ *Globus*, 24 December 1999, pp. 50-51.

⁹²⁴ Vukic, "Nastupi SDP-a i HSLS-a u režiji Titove unuke?" *Novi list*, 7 December 1999.

⁹²⁵ *Globus*, 31 December 1999, pp. 46-47.

⁹²⁶ Dražen Herljevic, "Odakle Pavleticu i Mateši adrese biraca?" *Novi list*, 29 December 1999.

The HDZ produced posters for each individual constituency picturing its candidates together with the slogan “For a stable Croatia and the betterment of each person.” Another series featured a picture of a top party candidate with slogans such as “1990 State, 1995 Freedom, 2000... Wellbeing”; “Remember! Recollect! Don’t forget! Trust!”; “Let’s seize the future today!”; “Stability is the basis of successful change”; “Vote for us so we can work for you”; and “Everyone makes promises, the HDZ realizes [them].” Another HDZ slogan was “The dignity of the state and the individual,” which appeared without an accompanying picture.

The party’s local committee in Zagreb ran a special ad campaign emphasizing the HDZ’s achievements in the city through the slogans “We revived Zagreb, and we are moving further together” and “for Zagreb, a city of content people.” Those slogans were explained in more detail in HDZ newspaper advertisements, and one such ad showed a view of a modern building and lit-up street, explaining “You can see for yourselves that Zagreb is more beautiful than it ever was, that things are being built, completed, restored and arranged, that the same attention is given to the center as to marginal parts of the city. If you love Zagreb, that certainly makes you happy.” The ad proceeded to connect that development directly to the HDZ, “a party that has the political will and creative energy to continue on the same successful path.”⁹²⁷ Another HDZ ad explained the party’s view of Zagreb by using a quotation from the 19th-20th century Croatian writer Antun Gustav Matoš: “Zagreb is the center of Croatia and Croats, and there is not a good Croat who is not a good Zagreber.” The party added that it was “transforming Zagreb into a modern, representative metropolis.”⁹²⁸ As in the case of Slovakia’s HZDS, the HDZ’s Zagreb campaign also used the heart theme, with ads featuring the slogan “Zagreb, the heart of Croatia,” with the word “heart” replaced by a red gingerbread heart with white icing and a picture of Zagreb in the middle.

The Coalition of Two

Like Slovakia’s opposition parties, a main campaign theme of the Coalition of Two was change, and “Choose change” was its key slogan. The coalition’s campaign

⁹²⁷ *Jutarnji list*, 22 December 1999.

was aimed at “simplicity” and “real life,” focusing on social problems, unemployment, and youth, and showing a different character of future government.⁹²⁹ The SDP/HSLs went after voters who were urban, young, female, and more educated.⁹³⁰ Coalition of Two billboards featured a series of simple messages in black letters on a white background with an orange stripe, including “Choose change,” “Choose security,” “Choose work,” “Choose a good life,” or “Choose honesty,” and the first billboards did not include any references to the parties themselves. Later in the campaign, posters and billboards went up showing the faces of Racan and Budiša, together with the slogan “Choose change.”

In newspapers, the SDP/HSLs published small ads with simple slogans and promises. Those included: “We will instigate a Constitutional Court ruling on the return of debts to pensioners”; “Culture, science and education: the development force of Croatia”; “We will invest in hospitals and not in stadiums”; “Those who stole will be held responsible! Revision [of privatization] without hesitation”; “The protection of workers. And not tycoons!”; “For economic development and new job openings!”; “Behind a successful Croatia stand successful women. 51.5% of them!”; “A satisfied farmer — a satiated Croatia!”; and “We know how to live from the sea!” In its final call, the coalition published full-page ads reading “Croatia is moving forward.”⁹³¹

The Coalition’s TV campaign aimed to show faces of real people rather than of politicians, and seven individuals were selected to tell their stories and explain why they would vote for the SDP-HSLs. The campaign’s creative director commented that “in the last months, and even years, on HTV there has not even been a trace of the real problems with which this country is living: unemployment, the social situation, the difficult crisis in healthcare, agriculture. Our job is to show that which until now has not been on television — real life.”⁹³² TV ads focused on people such as a pensioner who was not receiving her pension and a young man

⁹²⁸ *Jutarnji list*, 18 December 1999.

⁹²⁹ Vukic, “Nastupi SDP-a i HSLs-a u režiji Titove unuke,” *Novi list* 7 December 1999; Bulic-Mrkobrad, “Troškovnik predizborne kampane,” *Globus*, 17 December 1999, p. 34.

⁹³⁰ Personal interview with Tonino Picula, 2 December 1999.

⁹³¹ *Globus*, 31 December 1999, p. 38.

⁹³² Bulic-Mrkobrad, “Troškovnik predizborne kampane,” *Globus*, 17 December 1999, p. 34.

who was educated as a veterinarian but working as a stock boy, loading and unloading goods.

Coalition flyers used such slogans as “We will put an end to uncertainty and poverty” and “Let’s choose security and a good life.” One flyer featured a quiz for undecided voters, asking them what they would do if they received a pension that was too low to cover basic expenses, if they were fired from the job they had held for 20 years after HDZ tycoon Miroslav Kutle bought the firm, if police raided their café, or if they were prevented from demonstrating on Zagreb’s main square. Another flyer called on voters to support the Coalition if they were left without work because of “their tycoons” and could not find a new job, if they could no longer pay bills, if the police prevented them from assembling, if they were being thrown out of cafés, and if they were being shadowed. In an attempt to attract young people, a third flyer announcing a free concert in Zagreb on 22 December included the words of the well-known song “Budi ponosan” [Be proud].

The election results and their implications

Despite the continued efforts by the HZDS and HDZ to warn the populations about the possible dangers of an opposition victory, Slovaks and Croats demonstrated their desire for political change by giving the opposition parties in each country a three-fifths parliamentary majority. In Slovakia the HZDS still succeeded in winning the most votes; however, party representatives admitted that it was a Pyrrhic victory since it was unable to form a government. With 27.00 percent of the vote and 43 seats in the 150-member parliament, the HZDS won only one seat more than the opposition SDK. While the HZDS’s erstwhile coalition partner, the SNS, gained 9.07 percent and 14 seats, four opposition parties won a combined total of 93 seats. These included the SDK with 26.33 percent of the vote and 42 seats, the SDL with 14.66 percent and 23 seats, the SMK with 9.12 percent and 15 seats, and the SOP with 8.01 percent and 13 seats.

In Croatia, the “Opposition Six” won 95 seats in the 151-member parliament, with 40.84 percent of the vote and 71 of the seats going to the Coalition of Two

and 15.55 percent and 24 seats for the Coalition of Four. The HDZ managed to win 24.38 percent of the vote and 46 seats, which included all six seats designated for the diaspora. The HSP-HDKU gained just 5.28 percent and five seats, with an additional five seats going to ethnic minority representatives.⁹³³

Despite anxiety before the elections in both countries regarding possible manipulation of the results, the voting process went very smoothly. Although some cynics had insisted prior to the elections that the HZDS or HDZ would be able to “buy” the backing of some opposition parties, that did not happen. The responsibility of the HZDS and HDZ for their countries’ economic troubles could not be denied, and any party that joined them in a post-election government would have taken joint liability for any subsequent economic crises. Apparently fearing carrying the economic burden alone, Slovakia’s SDL even rejected a HZDS offer to form a minority government on its own with tacit support from the HZDS and SNS.

The failure of the HZDS and HDZ in elections demonstrated the decline of national mobilization. It appears that a more democratically-oriented civil society was slowly emerging during the late 1990s thanks to the activities of the independent media, trade unions, civic associations, which helped the political opposition to get its message across and gain support in the 1998 and 2000 elections in the respective countries. It was those groups that questioned the rhetoric of the HZDS and HDZ and managed to ensure that the population’s frustration was not channeled into radical parties or voter apathy.

Aside from the efforts of civil society organizations such as the media, NGOs, and trade unions, the unification of the opposition was also a crucial precondition for the defeat of the HZDS and HDZ. The open cooperation of the main opposition parties prior to the elections in both countries was essential in demonstrating to the populations that the political atmosphere could in fact be changed.

⁹³³ Nenad Zakošek, “Results of the January 3rd 2000 Elections to the House of Representatives of the Croatian Parliament,” presented at the “Croatian Studies Day” seminar, 24 March 2000, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London.

Naturally, the failure of the HZDS and HDZ in the parliamentary elections did not necessarily mean an end to Slovak or Croatian nationalism; however, it did signal that the populations had — at least temporarily — switched their focus to other concerns. In voting against the HZDS and HDZ, citizens not only protested against the parties' inability to successfully address the country's economic problems and provide for more democracy, but they also voted for parties that would have a better chance of bringing Slovakia and Croatia "back to Europe." The election results demonstrated the ruling parties' lack of success in promoting their image of the nation and in building up a reliable, nationally-oriented electorate.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Using Slovakia and Croatia as case studies, this work has looked at the formation, maintenance, and eventual defeat of national movements in new states. In doing so, it paid special attention to the development of the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) and Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) as national movements, examining what the two parties looked like at the time they were established and how they evolved throughout the decade as they responded to new threats and challenges. Because of the policies and rhetoric promoted by the two parties, many analysts have claimed that nationalism was a pivotal element in the establishment and development of the HDZ and HZDS and of Croatia and Slovakia as independent states. Although on the surface nationalism seems to have played a major role, in fact the approach of the ruling parties appeared as much authoritarian as it was nationalist, as everything was subordinated to the state, nation, and ruling parties. Evidence suggests that the ideology of nationalism was simply used by those parties as a tool to build influence and retain power, enabling them to justify the exclusion of unfriendly elements from society.

The two parties' national credentials can be called into question because in certain areas — particularly the economy, culture, and foreign policy — the HZDS and HDZ in practice appeared more concerned with the personal gain of party representatives than with fulfilling their promise of promoting the national interest. Such an approach not only caused severe damage to both countries economies and led to frustration and emigration, but it also contributed to international isolation, which was marked most notably by the failure of both Slovakia and Croatia to be included in 1997 in the first group of Central and East European countries to begin accession talks with the EU and to be invited to join in the first wave of NATO enlargement.

In the second half of the 1990s, the activities of the independent media, trade unions, and civic associations helped contribute to the development of a more democratically-oriented civil society in Slovakia and Croatia. Despite frequent attacks on them by the HZDS and HDZ, such groups actively pointed out the contradictions between the nationally-oriented rhetoric and self-serving practices

of the ruling parties in an effort to bring political change. The political opposition, which was often disunited and ineffective earlier in the decade, finally managed to pull together by the time of the 1998 elections in Slovakia and the 2000 elections in Croatia, and its popularity benefited from the activities of civil society organizations, which helped to ensure that the populations' frustration was not channeled into radical parties or voter apathy.

With the emergence of popular political alternatives, ruling elites found it difficult to keep the populations mobilized in their favor, particularly as the populations were becoming increasingly concerned with economic problems and lack of democracy and were no longer willing to make the nation a priority. Although the HDZ and HZDS may have been successful if they had adjusted their discourse and policies to the new situation, instead their behavior and rhetoric became increasingly erratic as they chose to further radicalize their discourse in an attempt to frighten populations about possible threats to independence from within the nation. The parties' leaders often appeared to be fumbling as they took steps to block their competition and scrambled to latch on to issues that would resonate among the wider population in an attempt to reestablish the appeal they had had in the early 1990s. Rather than contributing to increased popularity at home, however, such moves only succeeded in increasing Croatia and Slovakia's international isolation, and thus, people's frustration with the regimes. Perhaps most importantly, such behavior created consensus among the opposition parties that cooperation with the HZDS and HDZ after the elections was not an option.

As founders of the new Croatian and Slovak states, the HDZ and HZDS had the necessary means to promote their visions of society. However, the parties lost support as they adopted an increasingly nationalist stance, signaling that they were unable to find what resonated in modern national terms. While the HDZ and HZDS had been successful in understanding the desires of the population in the early 1990s, by the end of the decade they appeared to have lost touch with ordinary voters. That was not reflected only in a decline in public support, which in the case of the HZDS was not so great between 1992 and 1998, but was manifested even more convincingly in the growing determination of non-HZDS and HDZ voters to see those parties defeated. Thus, an atmosphere prevailed in which many Slovaks

and Croats voted against the ruling parties rather than necessarily for the opposition.

By the time of the 1998 elections in Slovakia and 2000 elections in Croatia — the first to be held after the 1997 decisions on NATO and EU enlargement — the electorate in both countries resolutely demonstrated that they no longer wanted to “protect the nation” at all costs through supporting their “founding fathers” but instead favored other politicians who promised improved economic well-being, greater adherence to rule of law, and a “return to Europe.” Thus, although the ruling parties’ rather haphazard mixture of sometimes conflicting policies and rhetoric was successful for much of the decade, the increased organizational ability of alternative actors and their closer connection with the desires and needs of the population eventually helped the opposition to remove the HZDS and HDZ from power. The national movements that dominated the Croatian and Slovak political scenes during much of the 1990s had failed to convince the countries’ electorates of their programs, signaling that Slovaks’ and Croats’ attachment to the nation was in the end weaker than their desire for economic prosperity and integration into Western organizations.

The rise of national movements

The rise of Croatian and Slovak national movements was influenced both by state policies and strategies and by the changing world order. While the national movement in Croatia emerged largely as a response to growing Serbian nationalism, in Slovakia it arose mainly as a reaction to Czech liberalism, both political and economic. The Croatian national movement arose as Croats sought to join other nascent democracies following the fall of communism across Central and Eastern Europe but were held back by the Serbs’ reluctance to allow for democratization. In the Slovak case, the national movement strengthened after the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, as Slovaks watched smaller and poorer nations gain independence and wanted more international recognition for themselves as a result.

The national mobilization of the Croatian and Slovak populations took place at different times and in different ways. The mobilization of the Croats occurred under the communist regime, beginning in October 1989. For the Slovaks, however, the period of political change in late 1989 and early 1990 did not differ from that in the Czech Republic; national concerns emerged only later. The HDZ was the driving force behind national mobilization in the Croatian case, while Slovaks were mobilized before the establishment of the HZDS, during which time Meciar positioned himself on the other side of the divide. The HZDS simply took over the work started by other groups, including mainly nationally-oriented civic associations and the Slovak National Party. While the mobilization of Croats behind the HDZ took place within a period of just six months, in Slovakia the national question had yet to gain real importance by the time of the first post-communist elections in June 1990, and it was not reflected in the republic's political leadership until two years later.

The rise to power of Croatian and Slovak national movements occurred in parliamentary elections in 1990 and 1992, respectively, when the HDZ and HZDS emerged as winners. The two parties were victorious because they best felt the pulse of the masses; while other parties had considered the national question a secondary problem, those two movements won by putting it forward as a basic problem. Although not calling for outright independence, both parties made the national question a priority, and the populations were affected in their voting decisions by their perceptions of HDZ Chairman Franjo Tudman and HZDS Chairman Vladimír Meciar as strong leaders who would stand up for national interests against the Serbs and Czechs, respectively.

Despite their similar outcomes, the two sets of elections were held in widely divergent circumstances. In Croatia they were the first multi-party elections after more than 40 years of socialism, and the elections were affected by the general uncertainty within the Communist Party and within Yugoslavia as a whole. They took place in an increasingly tense atmosphere, as Slobodan Milošević used nationalist discourse to mobilize Serbs throughout Yugoslavia. Some market-oriented reforms had been implemented in Yugoslavia before 1990, and after several years of high inflation and currency devaluation, the economic situation

was finally stabilizing. Although the economy was an important issue for some voters, the national question was more crucial, and the Croatian elections were considered a referendum on sovereignty, socialism, and Milošević.

In Slovakia, the first multi-party elections had been held two years earlier, and because of the victory of anti-communist forces, the basic structures of democratic institutions and a market economy had already been built by the time of the 1992 elections. Growing tensions with the Czechs over the form of the Czechoslovak state arrangement and the severe effect that Prague-led economic reforms were continuing to have on Slovakia meant that the 1992 elections were considered by many to be a referendum on the future of Czechoslovakia and on economic reforms. The fact that they were held in the middle of the turbulent transformation process meant that the support for parties favoring quick economic reforms was low. Moreover, the anti-national approach of the pre-election Slovak leadership, which was influenced by Czech liberalism, frustrated those Slovaks who believed that their government was insufficiently representing national interests.

The victory of the HDZ and HZDS did not necessarily mean that Croats and Slovaks were nationalistic in the negative sense. Nonetheless, there were definite signals that the populations felt a need for national emancipation and the protection and promotion of national interests. The influence of the communist regime meant that civil society in both republics was weak, and citizens were struggling with the uncertainties that accompanied the economic, social, and political changes. Many of them turned to national concerns largely because elites — represented most prominently by Tudman and Meciar — managed to convince them that a solution to the national question would solve other problems as well.

The triumph of the HDZ and HZDS in the elections had a number of important implications for the Croatian and Slovak transitions. The strength of the parties' victories created an unusual situation in a new democracy in which one party was able to rule on its own, creating an opportunity for the remonopolization of state power. That was even more pronounced in the Croatian case since the HDZ created the first post-communist government and was therefore able to set the rules of the game, meaning that the former one-party system was basically

replaced with another. The HZDS, on the other hand, was more limited because democratic institutions had already been established in the first two and one-half years of the post-communist transition, and the HZDS narrowly lacked an absolutely majority in the parliament, giving it much less room to maneuver. Both the HDZ and HZDS frequently imitated their communist predecessors in their distaste for dissenting opinion.

In terms of implications for the development of party systems, the elections in Croatia and Slovakia produced somewhat different results. In Croatia, the HDZ established itself on the center-right, forcing the opposition mainly to the left. The HZDS, in contrast, presented itself as a centrist movement, allowing for opposition on both ends of the spectrum. However, in both Croatia and Slovakia the tendency of the HDZ and HZDS to jump from one side to another depending on the issue limited the opposition's room for maneuver. As a result, the opposition often appeared helpless and ineffective. Strong egos and personality conflicts — partly over the question of the what degree of cooperation with the ruling parties was acceptable — contributed to frequent splits and regroupings. The party system in both Croatia and Slovakia was in flux throughout the 1990s, despite the fact that political science theory implies otherwise.

The maintenance of power

When Croatia and Slovakia gained independence in June 1991 and January 1993, respectively, their leaders were able to choose whether to launch a transition to democracy that would ostensibly lead to “a return to Europe” or shift toward populism and nationalism. Both the HDZ and the HZDS opted to concentrate more on the second alternative than the first, and for much of the 1990s the two parties embarked on a mission to strengthen national identity and instill loyalty to the new state, using nationalist rhetoric to repeatedly win elections and remain in power.

The use of the ideology of nationalism was especially apparent in the Croatian case, where the Yugoslav wars provided for a strong attachment to the state and resulted in considerable efforts to distance the new Croatia from Yugoslavia. Although both Slovaks and Croats often tried to present a historical continuum in

an effort to strengthen national identity, 20th century history was generally altered in a more significant way in Croatia than in Slovakia. In Croatia, the entire Yugoslav experience was called into question, while the crimes of Croatia's World War II fascist state were often ignored or revised. In the translation of national stereotypes into concrete form, both nations often put more emphasis on those historical personalities who were typically Croatian or Slovak rather than those who favored Yugoslav or Czechoslovak unity. As a historian, Tudman had a clearer sense of his mission than did Meciar, and he made conscious efforts to implement a number of new ceremonies that served to "invent" a sense of tradition.

In both cases, the ruling parties often appeared to be grasping at straws in their selection of historical personalities, themes, and traditions as symbols for the new states, suggesting a dearth of usable materials, at least in terms of those that coincided with the new ideology. Some of the symbols were reminiscent of the communist era, while others were part of a clear effort to broaden national identity to a wider base. Nonetheless, in their attempt to construct a national identity through symbols, the authors often signaled the lack of a clear vision for the future that could draw in a larger segment of the population.

Economic policies played a key role in uniting the diverse members of the "Nationalist" elite and in providing funding to help keep the ruling parties afloat. With the economic situation difficult for Slovaks and Croats throughout the 1990s, one might ask why the populations continued to support parties that oversaw the rise in unemployment and decline in the standard of living. The HDZ and HZDS success in attracting voters who were suffering economically during the 1990s was likely related to two factors: first of all, many of their supporters put the blame for the economic problems elsewhere (for example, on the Serbs in the case of Croatia and on the first post-communist government in the case of Slovakia), and secondly, at least some citizens were willing to make sacrifices for the nation in the early years of the transition. As more and more scandals erupted in the press, however, the capacity for personal sacrifice diminished, particularly as it became clear that much of the blame for the economic difficulties lay squarely with the ruling parties and their allies. Those who continued to support the HDZ and HZDS at the end of

the 1990s often did not do so blindly. A portion of the parties' supporters were getting something from the parties in return for their vote, sometimes through privatization and sometimes through jobs and other benefits. Others simply continued to believe in the sanctity of certain party leaders, even if they may have distrusted others. Still other HDZ and HZDS voters backed those parties not because of a deep belief in the virtues of those parties but rather due to a lack of faith that the opposition parties would behave any differently once in power. In such ways, both the HDZ and HZDS maintained a core group of supporters throughout the decade, some of whom appeared more loyal than others.

The HDZ and HZDS also attempted to use cultural policies to build up the new ideology, and there was a tendency in both countries to provide state funding and recognition to those cultural personalities who were sympathetic to the government. The support of typically "Croatian" and "Slovak" forms of culture such as folklore and naïve art may have garnered support from the producers of such forms of expression as well as from older and rural voters; however, that policy failed to attract a broader following to the national idea. Instead, the ruling parties' approach served to alienate many young and urban voters and to damage relations between the governments and the cultural communities.

The defeat of national movements

In Croatia, the democratic transformation process was slower and more painful than it was in Slovakia, and there were several explanations for that delay. While Slovaks continued to have lukewarm feelings about their country even years after Slovakia gained independence, the war played a big role in mobilizing the Croatian population in favor of their new state. That attachment was reflected on all levels of society, and while many Slovak cultural personalities and intellectuals were influenced by anti-national liberal ideology, in Croatia they often followed nationally-oriented traditions. Moreover, because the HDZ's grip on the Croatian media was considerably stronger than that of the HZDS in Slovakia, particularly in the case of television, there was less opportunity for the dissemination of oppositional views to the masses in Croatia and more opportunity for the dissemination of state-controlled propaganda. The national question created strong

divisions within Croatian society that were still apparent at the end of the decade, and many opposition elite appeared to be expending more energy fighting amongst themselves than working together to bring down the HDZ.

In an interesting turn of events, while Slovak “Nationalists” were motivated by the Croatian example prior to Slovakia’s 1992 elections, at the end of the decade many Croatian “Europeanists” were inspired by the Slovak model of political change, which eventually contributed to the unity of both the NGO community and political parties. Nonetheless, it was the international community that eventually brought those groups together, making that unity appear fragile and somewhat contrived.

Regardless of the struggles in Croatia, in both countries a more democratically-oriented civil society was slowly emerging during the late 1990s. That occurred largely thanks to the activities of the independent media, trade unions, and civic associations, which by questioning the discourse of the ruling parties helped pave the way for the political opposition to get its message across in elections and ensured that the population’s frustration was not channeled into radical parties or voter apathy. In Slovakia, the discourse used by much of the opposition in the 1998 election campaign was similar to that which was put forward by the civic right parties that were defeated in 1992; the population was simply unprepared for it at the beginning of the decade.

The defeat of national movements occurred in parliamentary elections in Slovakia in 1998 and in Croatia in 2000. Those elections showed that the electorate in both countries no longer wanted to “protect the nation” at all costs through supporting their “founding fathers” but instead favored other politicians who would likely be more successful in bringing their country “back to Europe.” Despite the continued efforts by the HZDS and HDZ to warn the populations about the possible dangers of an opposition victory, Slovaks and Croats demonstrated their desire for political change by giving the opposition parties in each country a three-fifths parliamentary majority. Thus, the national movements that had dominated the Croatian and Slovak political scenes during much of the 1990s had failed to promote their image of the nation and build up a reliable, nationally-oriented electorate. Although some

cynics had insisted prior to the elections that the HZDS or HDZ would be able to “buy” the backing of some opposition parties, that did not happen. The responsibility of the HZDS and HDZ for their countries’ economic troubles could not be denied, and any party that joined them in a post-election government would have taken joint liability for any subsequent economic crises.

The economic factor played a key role in turning Croats against the HDZ since by the time of the elections the influence of the HDZ “tycoons” had become so strong that they virtually controlled the fate of the country, contributing to an economic downturn that seriously affected the party’s popularity. In Slovakia, although the HZDS economic policies brought the country to the brink of recession, the 1998 elections were held before any significant economic deterioration occurred. Thus, while unemployment was considered the single most important issue of Croatia’s 2000 election campaign, in Slovakia other factors were also crucial in influencing the HZDS’s fall from power. For example, the HZDS interference in the cultural sphere in 1996-1998 showed that the Meciar cabinet was more concerned with promoting its allies than with supporting those cultural personalities who were the most talented and who would best promote the country abroad. Moreover, the thwarting of the May 1997 referendum demonstrated the Meciar government’s disrespect for the law and for democratic institutions such as the Constitutional Court. Finally, Slovakia’s omission in 1997 from the first group to begin accession talks with the EU and to join NATO was especially influential in convincing Slovaks that their leaders were failing them.

Demographic issues were a crucial factor in the changing political tide. The fact that the NGOs concentrated a portion of their campaigns on young voters meant that youth turned out at the polls in bigger numbers than before, which was especially significant given the large number of first-time voters in each country. Importantly, the new generation of voters was less likely to be swayed by nationalist rhetoric because of the different environment in which it was raised, particularly since the campaigns of the opposition parties were often more modern and relevant to everyday life than those of the ruling parties. In Slovakia, the 1998 elections were also marked by an increase in voter participation in towns in contrast to earlier elections. While in 1992 and 1994 a higher turnout in rural areas

meant that the wishes of those voters prevailed, in 1998 the urban setting was the winner of the elections.⁹³⁴ In the words of one writer, “cabaret” had thus prevailed over “vaudeville.”⁹³⁵

The failure of the HZDS and HDZ in the parliamentary elections did not necessarily mean an end to Slovak or Croatian nationalism; however, it did signal that the populations had at least temporarily switched their focus to other concerns. In voting against the HZDS and HDZ, citizens not only protested against the parties’ inability to successfully address the country’s economic problems and provide for more democracy, but they also voted for parties that would have a better chance of bringing Slovakia and Croatia “back to Europe.”

This study has offered a model for the rise, maintenance, and fall of national movements. In terms of more general applicability, the Slovak and Croatian cases provide an example for other countries that are experiencing nationalist or authoritarian rule. Continued economic hardship and problems with democracy may lead citizens to focus on issues other than the nation and thereby lead them to seek political alternatives. Political change may be more likely to occur if the international community offers real incentives to help push it forward. In both the Slovak and Croatian cases, potential membership in the EU ? which was seen as a real possibility in the medium-term for both countries ? offered populations an attractive alternative to nationalist rule and played a significant role in luring citizens away from the ruling HZDS and HDZ and toward parties that offered a better chance at achieving European integration.

⁹³⁴ Vladimír Krivý, *Co prezrádzajú volebné výsledky? Parlamentné volby 1992-1998* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 1999), pp. 58-59.

⁹³⁵ Peter Zajac, “The Language of the Time Ten Years After,” in Miro Kollar (ed.), *Skepticism and Hope: Sixteen Contemporary Slovak Essays* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1999), p. 300.

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(Croatian/Serbian) AIM, *ARKzin*, *Beta*, *Danas*, *Feral Tribune*, Foreign Press Bureau Zagreb's *Daily Bulletin*, HDZ's *Glasnik*, *Globus*, *Hina*, *Jutarnji list*, *Nacional*, *Novi list*, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, *Start*, *Tjednik*, *Vecernji list*, *Vjesnik*, *Zaposlena*

(Slovak/Czech) CTK, *Domino fórum*, *Europa Vincet*, *Hlas ludu*, *Koridor*, *Národná obroda*, *NonProfit*, *Plus 7 dní*, *Práca*, *The Prague Post*, *Pravda*, *Radio Twist*, *Republika*, *RFE/RL Slovak Service*, *SITA*, *Slovak Radio*, *Slovenská Republika*, *Slovenský denník*, *Slovenský Profit*, *Sme*, *Smena*, *TASR*, *Trend*, *Tyden*, *Zmena*

Personal interviews and discussions

(in Bratislava or Zagreb unless otherwise specified)

Slovakia (position prior to 1998 elections)

Stanislav Bajanič (Matica slovenská), 2 June 1999

Andrej Bartosiewicz (Association for the Support of Local Democracy), 26 February and 17 June 1999 (also on previous occasions)

Daniel Bútora (journalist, Radio Free Europe), Prague and Bratislava, various occasions

Martin Bútora (president, Institute for Public Affairs), various occasions

Zora Bútorová (sociologist, Institute for Public Affairs), various occasions

Eva Danišová (textbooks, Ministry of Education), 31 May and 3 September 1999

Pavol Demeš (Gremium of the Third Sector), various occasions

Alexander Duleba (political scientist, Slovak Foreign Policy Association), Prešov, 11 September 1998

Jerguš Ferko (journalist, *Koridor* and *Slovenská Republika*), 28 June 1999

Milan Ferko (writer and Culture Ministry official), 2 June 1999

Olga Gyárfášová (sociologist, Institute for Public Affairs), various occasions

Ivo Hlavacek (Foreign Ministry), various occasions

Štefan Hríb (journalist, Radio Free Europe and *Domino fórum*), various occasions
 Ivan Hudec (writer and culture minister; politician, SDL and HZDS), 7 June 1999
 Peter Javorčík (Foreign Ministry), 22 June 1999 (also previously)
 Dušan Kerný (journalist, *Slovenská Republika*), 14 September 1999
 Michal Kravčík (Ludia a voda), Košice, 10 September 1998
 Eduard Kukan (foreign minister, SDK), 9 September 1998 (also previously)
 Pavol Lukác (historian, Slovak Foreign Policy Association), various occasions
 Jozef Magala (founding member of Korene), 22 June 1999
 Darina Malová (political scientist), various occasions
 Anton Marcincin (economist, Center for Economic Development), various occasions
 Katarína Mathernová (lawyer), various occasions
 Grigorij Mesežnikov (political scientist, Institute for Public Affairs), various occasions
 Ivan Mikloš (privatization minister; politician, DS), 10 September 1999
 František Mikloško (Catholic dissident; politician, KDH), 30 June and 30 July 1999
 Štefan Markuš (former president, Slovak Helsinki Committee), 13 June 1999
 Milan Nic (journalist, Radio Free Europe), various occasions
 Kálmán Petocz (politician, SMK), 18 September 1998 (also previously)
 Juraj Podoba (Ethnographical Institute, Slovak Academy of Sciences), 7 September 1999
 Matej Považaj (linguist, Ludovít Štúr Linguistic Institute), 25 June 1998
 Rafael Rafaj (spokesman, SNS), 11 May 1999
 Tatiana Repková (editor in chief, *Trend* and *Národná obroda*), various occasions
 Andrej Školkay (political scientist), various occasions
 Eva Slavkovská (education minister, SNS), 12 May 1999
 Dušan Slobodník (writer and culture minister, HZDS), 21 June 1999 and 9 August 1999
 Igor Slobodník (diplomat), London, various occasions
 Pavol Števček (literary critic and politician, HZDS), 13 September 1999
 Daniela Števčeková (language department, Culture Ministry), various occasions
 Martina Sudová (Ludia a voda), various occasions
 Katarína Vajdová (Center for Independent Journalism), 2 June 1999 (also previously)
 Michal Vašecka (Open Society Institute), various occasions
 Miroslav Wlachovský (Slovak Foreign Policy Association), various occasions
 Judit Young (Sándor Márai Foundation), 7 May 1999 (also previously)
 Rudolf Žiak (HZDS official), 1 June 1999
 Michal Zöldy (journalist and HZDS official), 1 June 1999

Croatia (position prior to 2000 elections)

Igor Alborghetti (journalist, *Globus*), various occasions
 Maja Bakran (diplomat), Brussels, 8 March 2000
 Ivo Banac (historian, Yale University), 6 January 1999
 Ante Beljo (HDZ parliamentary deputy; director of the Croatian Information Center and Croatian Homeland Foundation), 18 May 1998
 Gojko Bežovan (president, CERANEO), 19 May 1998
 Ivo Bicanic (economist), 30 May 2000
 Biljana Bijelic (B.a.B.e.), various occasions

Haris Boko (LS), various occasions
 Vinko Brešan (film director), 22 January 1999
 Dalibor Brozovic (linguist, Miroslav Krleža Lexicographic Institute), 20 January 1999
 Boris Buden (philosopher), Vienna, 2 September 1999
 Nenad Bulat (sociologist, PULS), 17 December 1998
 Zdravka Bušić (HDZ parliamentary deputy), 26 May 2000
 Radimir Čačić (businessman; politician, KNS and HNS), 21 December 1998
 Ljubomir Ćurčić (president, European House), 16 December 1998
 Nevenka Čučković (economist, Institute for International Relations), various occasions
 Biserka Cvjetičanin (cultural specialist, Institute for International Relations), 19 May 1998
 Milivoj Đilas (journalist, *Feral Tribune*), various occasions
 Heni Erceg (editor in chief, *Feral Tribune*), Split, 30 January 1998
 Nikola Gamilec (media specialist, Open Society Institute), 22 May 1998
 Tin Gazivoda (director, Glas 99), 10 December 1999
 Ivan Grdešić (political scientist, University of Zagreb), 20 May 1998
 Damir Grubiša (executive director, Croatian Helsinki Committee), 10 December 1998
 Damir Hainiski (journalist, Hina), 14 December 1998
 Predrag Haramija (HDZ), 25 May 2000
 Vjeran Katunaric (sociologist, University of Zagreb), various occasions
 Jure Krišto (Institute for History), 29 January and 29 May 2000
 Drago Krpina (HDZ), 26 May 2000
 Denis Kuljiš (columnist, *Globus*), 17 October 2000
 Dražen Lalić (sociologist), Split, 28 January 1999
 Slaven Letica (former Tudman advisor; columnist, *Globus*), 12 January 1999
 Alemka Lisinski (UNHCR spokeswoman; journalist, *Cosmopolitan*), 18 October 2000
 Damir Matković (Forum 21; HRT journalist), various occasions
 Seadeta Midžić (Ministry of Culture), 18 May 1998 and 18 January 1999
 Žarko Miljenović (chief economist, Zatrebacka banka), 10 December 1999
 Zdravko Mršić (former Foreign Minister), 11 December 1998
 Edo Murtić (artist), 14 December 1998
 Dobroslav Paraga (politician, HSP-1861), 14 January 1999
 Zrinka Peruško Culek (media specialist, Institute for International Relations), various occasions
 Tonino Picula (politician, SDP), 19 January and 2 December 1999
 Žarko Puhovski (philosopher, Zagreb University), 12 January 1999
 Vesna Pusić (sociologist and politician, HNS), 20 January 1999
 Marija Raos (manager, CERANEKO), various occasions
 Ines Sabalić (journalist, *Globus*), Brussels, various occasions
 Seid Serdarević (journalist, *Cicero*), 21 December 1998
 Ivo Škrabalo (former deputy culture minister; politician, HSL), 21 December 1998 and 15 January 1999
 Ante Sorić (former director, Mimara museum), various occasions
 Branko Šredl (head of department for textbooks, Ministry of Education and Sport), 18 May 1998
 Helena Štimac Radin (sociologist and politician, LS), 12 June 1999 and 27 January 2000

Stipe Šuvar (politician), 12 and 18 January 1999
Nada Švob-Đokic (specialist on identity, Institute for International Relations), 19
May 1998
Marko Tarle (politician, HSS), 15 December 1999
Darko Till (student leader, HSS), 7 December 1998 and 15 December 1999
Srdan Vrcan (sociologist), Split, 28 January 1999
Nenad Zakošek (political scientist, University of Zagreb), various occasions
Andrea Zlatar (cultural specialist, *Zarez*), 17 October 2000