



WHAT'S IN A LANGUAGE NAME? THE CASE OF BOSNIAN, CROATIAN, MONTENEGRIN, AND SERBIAN

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MEMORANDUM OF THE SERBIAN ACADEMY OF THE SCIENCES AND ARTS

(Excerpts)

An objective examination of the situation in Yugoslavia suggests that the present crisis might well culminate in social upheavals with unforeseeable consequences, not even precluding such a catastrophic outcome as the break-up of the Yugoslav state.

The Serbian Academy of the Sciences and Arts feels called upon at this critical juncture to declare its views on the state of the society, in the conviction that it will thereby be making its contribution to efforts to find a way out of the present adversities.

THE CRISIS IN THE YUGOSLAV ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

1. The economic crisis has been going on for five years now, and there is no end to it in sight.

2. With the outbreak of the all-pervasive crisis in society, responsibility for Yugoslavia's future made it incumbent first to determine the true dimensions and real causes of the crisis and then to set about at once devising measures to remedy this state of recession and uncertainty. This, however, was not done. Three years had to go by before official reports started referring to an "economic crisis," and this acknowledgement was gradual and reluctant. In the first two years of the crisis it was referred to as "minor," "short-term," or "passing" troubles, but most popular of all was the phrase "difficulties of economic growth."

3. The disintegration of the Yugoslav economy into separate economic sectors and territories, which is an anachronistic trend, directly stems from an even more widespread and more significant anachronistic trend, which is the transforming of the federal state as constituted in the decisions taken at the Second Session of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia and during the first decades of postwar development into a kind of confederation, which became institutionalized in the most recent Constitution of 1974. There have been many cases in history of a confederation turning into a federation, but there is not one single example of the opposite occurring. The changing of a federal state into a federation of states is all the more unacceptable in that after relatively frequent changes in the years after the war, Yugoslavia now has an iron-clad constitution, which for all practical purposes is impossible to change.

4. In addition to the economic and political crisis there is a moral crisis, which is seriously eroding Yugoslav society.

5. This sweeping and profound crisis in Yugoslav society poses many questions, two of which are uppermost: What has become of the plan for building a new society for which so many lives were sacrificed? Where do we stand today in relation to modern European civilization?

THE STATUS OF SERBIA AND THE SERBIAN NATION

6. Many of the troubles bedeviling the Serbian nation stem from conditions which are common to all the Yugoslav nations. However, the Serbian people are being beset by yet other afflictions. The long-term lagging behind of Serbia's economic development, unregulated legal relations with Yugoslavia and the provinces, as well as the genocide in Kosovo have all appeared on the political scene with a combined force that is making the situation tense if not explosive.
7. The attitude taken to Serbia's economic stagnation shows that the vindictive policy towards this republic has not lost any of its edge with the passing of time. On the contrary, encouraged by its own success, it has grown ever stronger, to the point of genocide.
8. The expulsion of the Serbian people from Kosovo bears dramatic testimony to their historical defeat.
9. For more than half a century stigmatized as an oppressor of the other Yugoslav peoples, the Serbian nation was not able to return to its own historical roots.
10. After the dramatic inter-communal strife in the course of the Second World War, it seemed as though nationalism had run its course and was well on the way to disappearing completely. Such an impression has proven to be deceptive.

The establishment of the Serbian people's complete national and cultural integrity, regardless of which republic or province they might be living in, is their historical and democratic right.

By insisting on the federal system, Serbia would not only be furthering the equality of all the national groups in Yugoslavia but also facilitating resolution of the political and economic crisis.

