

Preface

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The idea behind this volume derives from a fairly straightforward observation: that much of the recent history of Yugoslavia has been written and rewritten by journalists and political analysts looking for the origins of the wars that have plagued the Balkans over the past decade. If history is a conversation between the past and the present—to use E. H. Carr's famous formulation in *What is History?*¹—then over the course of the 1990s the conversation became one-sided, with the present overwhelmingly dominant. The healthy balance between past and present was upset to the point where the past became almost unrecognizable. The notion of a Balkan world of perpetual violence, cultural marginality, and “ancient hatreds” dominated public discourse about the war and was legitimized by a raft of newly published histories. The most influential of these studies was Robert D. Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*,² which, according to numerous reports, had a profound impact on the Clinton administration's understanding of the war in Yugoslavia.³

In some ways, scholars can be grateful for the work done by journalists, writers, diplomats, and policy analysts.⁴ The shelves of bookstores, only fifteen years ago bereft—with few exceptions—of new, serious studies of the South Slavs and their history, are now bursting with fresh publications, so many that it has been hard to keep up with all of them.⁵ Moreover, human rights organizations, the United Nations, the European Union, and many other government and intergovernmental organizations, as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), sponsored (and continue to sponsor) the publications of books on the former Yugoslavia that analyze the origins of the war. Much like the Vietnam War, when Americans learned for the first time about Saigon and Hanoi, not to mention Haiphong and the Mekong Delta, the public has learned the geography of conflict in former Yugoslavia. Few students in the 1980s could identify on the map the locations of Vukovar, Sarajevo, or Priština. They now have some idea of the physical, cultural, religious, and linguistic landscape of the region.

Journalists also performed the invaluable service of bringing the war into American homes, through television, newspapers, and magazines. It is hard to imagine the crescendo of concern in the West about the bloody conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina independent of Christiane Amanpour's passionate CNN reports from the region.⁶ Roy Gutman's *Newsday* articles, which won a Pulitzer Prize, brought the term "ethnic cleansing" to the attention of the Western public and revealed the horrors of the detention camps, like Omarska, in Bosnia.⁷ A courageous young journalist by the name of David Rohde helped to break the story about the massacres in Srebrenica in the summer of 1995, and also wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning book on the subject.⁸ And journalists wrote articles and books that filled in the many shades of meaning to ethnic conflict by providing intimate portraits of the people involved.⁹ Sometimes, those portraits were of the main culprits, Milošević, Tudjman, and others; sometimes they were of the common folk caught up in the whirlwind of hatred.

Professional historians of Yugoslavia were strangely silent about the war and the breakup of the country, especially at the beginning. Some might think of Noel Malcolm as the exception that proves the rule. Though trained as an historian, Malcolm worked as a journalist and wrote for the *Spectator* and the *Daily Telegraph*. His readable and elegant, if still somewhat partisan, studies of Bosnia and Kosovo have provided a positive model for far-reaching insights into the histories of the peoples and locales of former Yugoslavia.¹⁰ Shocked both by the rapid disintegration of the country and the virulence of the fratricidal struggles, most historians of the region retreated from active commentary on events. Those with an interest in the history of Serbia, in particular, found it hard to understand the aggressiveness of Belgrade's policies. Former colleagues and friends in Serbia had become propagandists for Milošević's wars; it became much harder to carry on serious research in the Yugoslav archives. Those who worked on the history of Croatia were not anxious to be associated with the greater Croatian designs of the Tudjman regime. The few historians who knew something about Bosnia-Herzegovina published what they could, but the products were very desultory. Anyone who identified with Yugoslavia and the increasingly unpopular appellation "Yugoslav" tended to withdraw from the debate altogether. Although this silence gradually changed over the decade of the 1990s, individuals who knew the most about the history and culture of the peoples of the region still remained remarkably restrained about commenting on its past, present, and future.¹¹

The four wars of Milošević—against Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and finally against Kosovo—came to an end only with the bombing of Serbia, the removal of Milošević from power, and the development of a Serbian reform-oriented regime. NATO forces control the most unsettled areas of former Yugoslavia; UN, European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) officials manage the political and economic life of Bosnia and Kosovo. Attempts by Albanian insurgents to destabilize Macedonia and gain acceptance for their demands for autonomy within the Macedonian state were firmly rejected by the West. Despite occasional explosions and shooting incidents, the Macedonian government has proceeded to implement the Ohrid Agreement of August 2001, calling for a restructuring of Macedonian-Albanian ethnic relations. With Slobodan Milošević facing charges of crimes against humanity and genocide before the Hague Tribunal, Serbian politics has the chance to evolve in a more firmly democratic direction. The Montenegrin separatist movement has been relegated to an oppositionist role since the Belgrade Agreement of March 14, 2002, which fostered the maintenance of a Serbian and Montenegrin Union. Political developments in both Montenegro and Albania remain under the watchful eyes of European Union and NATO officials. There is a minimum of violent conflict in Bosnia and Kosovo, where the major problems continue to be corruption, poverty, unemployment, and ethnic discrimination. The shocking lesson of the War of Yugoslav Succession—that “it’s never over when you think it’s over”—still holds. With that said, the possibilities of peace in the Balkans are at their greatest now, the summer of 2002, than they have been since the spring of 1991. Confidence in the future has slowly returned to the region; a symbol for that process is the rebuilding of the elegant Turkish “Old Bridge” over the Neretva river in Mostar, a historical landmark that was wantonly destroyed during the war.

With the potential of a genuine peace in the Balkans, this appears to be a particularly good time to ask historians to reflect on the meaning of their own work for understanding the present and future of the lands of former Yugoslavia. At a symposium at Stanford in the spring of 2000, dozens of scholars from the United States and abroad gathered to share their work and their thoughts on the war. Many of the participants were former students and colleagues of Wayne S. Vucinich, the doyen of Balkan history in the United States. In his eighty-ninth year, Professor Vucinich continues to encourage his students, some themselves now close to retirement age, to write and rewrite the history of the South

Slavs. His life-long devotion to patient and conscientious scholarly inquiry remains an inspiration to generations of Balkanists.

The logic of this book follows from the flow of the symposium and its discussions. In the first chapter, Dušan Djordjevich from Stanford University reviews the recent historiography of Yugoslavia and its successor states, with special attention to the many ways in which the war itself has influenced scholarship and journalism about the region. In the next two chapters, Wendy Bracewell from the University of London and Larry Wolff from Boston College explore dimensions of the image of the Balkans that suffuse Western thinking about the peoples of the region. Bracewell looks at the myths and realities surrounding the *hajduks*, the infamous Balkan "bandits." Wolff, in a preview of his new book on Venice and Dalmatia, analyzes the encounters between the Venetians and the so-called "Morlacchi," in Venetian eyes wild and primitive Slavic inhabitants of the Dalmatian hinterlands. In Chapter 4, Bariša Krekić from UCLA draws from a long career of research on the history of Dubrovnik to construct a wistful portrait of the calculated and reasoned diplomatic practices of the Ragusan patricians of the ancient republic. In the final chapter of Part I, Wayne Vucinich contributes a piece on transhumance from his major anthropological and autobiographical study of his home region of Bileća Rudine. Here, Vucinich retraces the annual summer trek of villagers and their livestock from Bileća Rudine into the surrounding mountains and home again. Although the subject matter is quite personal, the backdrop to Vucinich's story is that of a region struggling with the legacies of war, ultra-nationalism, collectivization, and the demographic changes that accompany these phenomena, while attempting to preserve a traditional lifestyle.

Charles Jelavich from Indiana University leads off Part II, which deals more directly with politics and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, with a chapter on South Slav education and its historical inability to foster a Yugoslav identity. Arnold Suppan from the University of Vienna follows in Chapter 7 with an analysis of the complicated and troubled history of "Yugoslavism" in the twentieth century. Andrew Rossos (University of Toronto) presents us in Chapter 8 with a timely overview of the history of the Macedonian question and its critical linkages with stability in the Balkans. In Chapter 9, Thomas Emmert (Gustavus Adolphus College) looks at the problems of Serbian identity over the past decade, in the process helping us understand the future of a post-Milošević Serbia.

The book concludes with broad-ranging and speculative chapters by two of this country's leading historians of the South Slavs, John Fine

from the University of Michigan and Gale Stokes from Rice University. Fine's provocative contribution centers on the notion that if there were no Yugoslavia, one would have to invent one. He rejects the inevitability of the demise of the Yugoslav state; he places much of the onus for the wars in the region on the Slovenes and Croats, and he envisions the recreation of a Yugoslavia in the future. Stokes's chapter on the future of the region makes almost exactly the opposite point. Stokes sees no alternative to the remapping of former Yugoslavia along ethnic lines. Borders will have to be changed and populations will have to be transferred to create ethnically homogeneous states. Otherwise, he maintains, there will be endless friction and warfare. That two such distinguished historians of the Yugoslav past could come to such different conclusions about the future should be of no surprise to scholars of the region. Historians are not exempt from the passions and partisanship that have dominated discussions about the war. This book shows, however, that those passions can illuminate a still little-known past and, in turn, create a better understanding of the present and future.