
From Dissidents to Presidents: Dobrica Ćosić and Vojislav Koštunica Compared

AUDREY H. BUDDING

One of the most striking features of Serbia's political life in the 1990s was the prominence of intellectuals who had been dissidents under communism. From the first multi-party elections in 1990 (elections in which Slobodan Milošević himself was the only major party leader who had *not* emerged from the ranks of opposition intellectuals) to the revolution of October 2000 (when Milošević was toppled by a coalition led by a constitutional law expert and a political theorist), intellectuals played leading parts. This article compares the paths of two men – Dobrica Ćosić and Vojislav Koštunica – who epitomised this trajectory. Both gained prominence as dissident intellectuals in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and both became presidents of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).

Ćosić and Koštunica are both major figures in contemporary Serbian history, and a comprehensive comparison of either their intellectual lives or their political careers would be impossible in the space available here. This article has a more specific aim. It will first situate each man within the contemporary Serbian intellectual landscape and then show how one aspect of his thought – his conception of the Serbian national interest – evolved during his transition from intellectual to political engagement. Finally, using elements common to Ćosić's and Koštunica's national thought as a foundation, it will trace some of the parameters of contemporary Serbian nationalism.

Novelist Dobrica Ćosić became a prominent public intellectual soon after the Second World War, and maintained this status through Yugoslavia's collapse and beyond. Given the impossibility of doing justice here to fifty years of Ćosić's life, I shall offer a summary analysis of his dissident career under Tito, focus in more detail on his stance during the period of Yugoslavia's dissolution in 1989–91, and then consider some significant points of his 1992–93 presidential term.¹

Ćosić achieved fame with the publication of his first novel, *Daleko je sunce* (*The Distant Sun*), in 1951. This novel was the first of many in which Ćosić explored themes related to his own Partisan experience. Its somewhat critical examination of

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¹ Portions of this discussion of Ćosić's pre-1991 career are adapted from my dissertation ('Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 1961–1991,' Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1998) and from my 'Yugoslavs into Serbs: Serbian National Identity, 1961–71', *Nationalities Papers* 25,3 (1997), 407–26.

the Partisans, revolutionary for its time, epitomises Ćosić's position from the end of the Second World War to 1968. He was undoubtedly a Party intellectual – one who was elected to the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia in 1965 – but he was (as Nick Miller explains) also a 'nonconformist'.

Ćosić was also a writer preoccupied with the problems facing the Serbian village milieu from which he sprang. He initially defined this predicament in terms of incomplete modernisation. Thus, in *Koreni* (*Roots*, 1954) he emphasised the negative power of the past over the present: 'dead men have poisoned the land'.² In a 1967 speech Ćosić lamented that Serbia's cultural development had not kept pace with its rapid post-war urbanisation, resulting in 'high-rise villages'. In this period, Ćosić's examination of the Serbian predicament emphasised self-critical elements rather than the themes of victimisation that became prominent later.³

Initially, Ćosić's preoccupation with Serbian interests did not lead him towards any form of Serbian political particularism; rather, he supported the primacy of the Yugoslav state over the republics. This defined Ćosić's position in his highly publicized 1961–2 polemic with Slovene literary critic (and Party intellectual) Dušan Pirjevec, who insisted on the primacy of republican rights. Their exchange, which broke down in a morass of mutual accusations, was a classic dialogue of the deaf. Pirjevec insisted that republican rights were the indispensable expression of national rights, ignoring the difficulties of applying this principle to a federal state where national and republican borders rarely coincided (Slovenia, of course, being the exception). Ćosić, in his turn, ignored the flaws in his assumption that the Yugoslav state (in which Serbs were by far the largest nation, though not a majority of the population) was self-evidently the guardian of 'internationalism' against national interests. In many respects, their exchange prefigured the 1980s debates that soured relations between Serb and Slovene dissidents: the later polemics hinged on competing definitions of democracy (definitions that could be summarized as 'one-man, one-vote' versus 'one-republic, one-vote').⁴

In his polemic with Pirjevec, Ćosić was siding with one faction in the Yugoslav political establishment against another. Indeed, the evidence suggests that Ćosić and Pirjevec were both acting as public proxies for opposing Party factions.⁵ With his next public controversy, however, Ćosić moved into opposition to the Party. This occurred

² Dobrica Ćosić, *Koreni* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1966), 154 (all translations are by the author).

³ Cf. Nicholas J. Miller, 'The Nonconformists: Dobrica Ćosić and Mića Popović Envision Serbia', *Slavic Review*, 58,3 (1999), 515–36. For the 'high-rise villages', see 'Kako da stvaramo sebe?', in Dobrica Ćosić, *Stvarno i moguće* (Ljubljana and Zagreb: Cankarjeva založba, 1988), 8.

⁴ I examine the Ćosić–Pirjevec polemic in Budding, 'Yugoslavs into Serbs', 409–10 (from which this paragraph adapts some material), and issues arising from the conflation of 'nation' and 'republic' in Budding, 'Nation/People/Republic: Self-determination in Socialist Yugoslavia', in Lenard J. Cohen and Jasna Dragović-Soso, eds., *Rethinking Yugoslavia's Dissolution* (Chicago: Purdue University Press, forthcoming, 2004). For the 1980s Serb–Slovene debates see Jasna Dragović-Soso, 'Saviours of the Nation': *Serbia's Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism* (London: Hurst & Co., 2002), 195–205.

⁵ See Slavoljub Đukić, *Čovek u svom vremenu: razgovori sa Dobricom Ćosićem* (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 1989), 125–6 and Dimitrij Rupel, *Slovenski intelektualci: od vojaške do civilne družbe* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1989), 103.

at the May 1968 14th Plenum of the League of Communists of Serbia.⁶ This plenum is best remembered for Ćosić's critique of the Party's policy in Serbia's Albanian-majority Autonomous Province of Kosovo. Asserting that minority rights should be defined culturally, not territorially, Ćosić argued that Kosovo's increasing autonomy was contributing to Albanian irredentism. Although it was Ćosić's condemnation of the Party's policy in Kosovo that made his 14th Plenum speech famous, it should be noted that he objected just as strongly to the growing autonomy of Vojvodina (where Serbs were a majority). In Yugoslavia, Ćosić declared, a state-territorial conception of national interests could only lead to disaster. If statist conceptions prevailed, 'then the Serbian people also might be inflamed by an old historic goal and national ideal – the unification of the Serbian people in a single state. No political imagination is needed to foresee the consequences of such a process'.⁷

The Serbian Central Committee condemned Ćosić's speech, and he soon afterwards left the Party. Moving into opposition, he took on the role of champion of Serbdom that would define him through the collapse of the Yugoslav state. Initially, he found a pulpit in the Srpska književna zadruga (Serbian Literary Co-operative). Founded in 1892, the Zadruga was one of Serbia's oldest and most prestigious cultural institutions.⁸ As its president (from March 1969 to October 1972) Ćosić revealed an increasing preoccupation with the need for national unity coupled with a deep pessimism about attaining it. For instance, in a speech delivered at the Zadruga in June 1971 (at the height of the Croatian national movement) Ćosić defined the current situation as one in which Serbian and Yugoslav unity were *both* under attack, with the result that: 'we go backwards historically, again we cross artificial borders and concern ourselves with problems solved a century ago'.⁹

Ćosić and the rest of the Zadruga board resigned under pressure in October 1972, in the newly repressive atmosphere that followed the ouster of the 'Serbian liberals'. After losing this forum, Ćosić – *persona non grata* in the Party-controlled media – would until the end of the 1980s speak to the broader public mainly through his novels. During this period, his search for the roots of the Serbian predicament continued its evolution away from self-critical analyses stressing delayed and lopsided modernisation, and towards an emphasis on Serbs' political and cultural divisions (often seen as engineered by others). In particular, Ćosić lamented the political divisions imposed on Serbs in Titoist Yugoslavia and the prevalence among Serbs themselves of *srbijanstvo* ('Serbianism'), one aspect of which was a preoccupation with the state of Serbia rather than the community of all Serbs.¹⁰

⁶ See Budding, 'Yugoslavs into Serbs,' 409–15. Cf. the insightful treatment of the Plenum and its consequences in Jasna Dragović-Soso, 'Saviours of the Nation', 38–41.

⁷ 14. *sednica CK SK Srbije. Maj 1968* (Belgrade: Komunist, 1968), 111.

⁸ An excellent treatment of the Zadruga's history and significance is Ljubinka Trgovčević, *Istorija Srpske književne zadruge* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1992).

⁹ *Glasnik Srpske književne zadruge*, 26, 5 (20 June 1971), 4–9. For more on Ćosić's term as Zadruga president see Budding, 'Serb Intellectuals', ch. 3.

¹⁰ Cf. Nick Miller's 'The Children of Cain: Dobrica Ćosić's Serbia', *East European Politics and Societies*, 14–2 (2000), 268–87, and Jasna Dragović-Soso, 'Saviours of the Nation', 89–96.

While Ćosić was undoubtedly preoccupied with the Serbian question, it should be stressed that his dissident activities in this period had liberal and democratic as well as national aims. In 1984 Ćosić and other Belgrade dissidents – including Vojislav Koštunica – founded the Board for the Freedom of Thought and Expression. Although Belgrade-based, the Board petitioned on behalf of people charged with ‘verbal crimes’ throughout Yugoslavia. For example, in a 1987 petition the Board sought the release of the group of Muslim intellectuals tried in Sarajevo in 1983. The petition was particularly eloquent on behalf of the future Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović, describing the ‘Islamic Declaration’ for which he had been sentenced as an expression of ‘contemporary humanist and tolerant Islam’. (This is in sharp contrast to later claims by a number of Serb intellectuals that the Declaration was ‘fundamentalist’.) Besides such actions on behalf of its core freedom-of-speech agenda, the Board put forward other liberal-democratic initiatives. Most importantly, in proposals sent to the Yugoslav parliament in 1986 and 1987 it called for an end to the League of Communists’ political monopoly.¹¹

By the time that Yugoslavia began its slide from crisis toward dissolution in the crucial period between 1989 and 1991, Ćosić’s prestige and influence were unparalleled. (When Slovene poet Ciril Zlobec referred to an unnamed ‘great Serb intellectual’ in a 1989 open letter to Milošević, he felt obliged to add ‘not Dobrica Ćosić, to avoid any misunderstanding’.¹²) Rather like Milošević himself, Ćosić appealed to diverse Serb constituencies ranging from conservative Communist Partisans to anti-Communist dissidents. While Ćosić remained formally outside politics at this time, refusing to join any of the parties that courted him, his influence represented a great deal of political capital. He used that capital in three important ways. He gave his endorsement (only slightly weakened by some expressed reservations) to Slobodan Milošević at a few vital points, strengthening Milošević at the expense of the Serbian opposition parties.¹³ He participated in organising Serb parties outside Serbia (Radovan Karadžić’s party in Bosnia and Jovan Rašković’s in Croatia), and sometimes served as an intermediary between Karadžić and the Belgrade regime.¹⁴ (Indeed, at least one well-informed observer asserts that Ćosić chose both Karadžić and Rašković to lead their parties.¹⁵) Finally, as conflicts over the nature and future of the Yugoslav state reached their height Ćosić used his influence to argue that the Yugoslav state was doomed and, more than that, not worth preserving. It

¹¹ The petition for Izetbegović, signed on 8 Oct. 1987, was printed in the Slovene journal *Nova revija*, 6/67–8 (1987), 2069. For more on the Board’s activities, see the documents collected in Aleksa Đilas, *Srpsko pitanje* (Belgrade: Politika, 1991), 255–88.

¹² Ciril Zlobec, ‘Otvoreno pismo pre svega Slobodanu Miloševiću’, *Delo*, 11 Mar. 1989.

¹³ Cf. the discussions in Dragović-Soso, ‘Saviours of the Nation’, 240–1 and in Veljko Vujačić, ‘Communism and Nationalism in Russia and Serbia’, (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1995), 431–2.

¹⁴ See *Intervju*, 9 Nov. 1990 (for Ćosić’s speech at the Belgrade promotion of Karadžić’s SDS); and Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ: izvodi iz dnevnika* (Belgrade: Politika, 1995), 191–4 and 273–5 for Ćosić’s role as intermediary.

¹⁵ Slavoljub Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra: politička ispovest Dobrice Ćosica* (Belgrade: Samizdat B92, 2001), 167–8.

was from this standpoint that he attacked Prime Minister Ante Marković's last-ditch attempts to preserve a (post-communist) Yugoslav state.¹⁶

Ćosić's explicit support for dissolution evolved gradually from a stance he had expressed as early as 1986: that only a transformed, democratic Yugoslavia could be worth preserving.¹⁷ Over the next few years, Yugoslavia's continued existence came into question as Serbs and Slovenes responded to the state's deepening crisis with contradictory proposals for constitutional reform.¹⁸ In this context, Ćosić urged Serbs not to defend Yugoslavia at all costs but rather to acquiesce in its dissolution on the basis of national referenda. In June 1989, Ćosić set out this position in a speech delivered in Budva, Montenegro. He used this occasion – hailed as his return to the public stage and widely covered by the official media that had boycotted him for so long – to argue that Serbs had no special interest in preserving Yugoslavia. He said:

I do not see any reason for which we Serbs ought to be more for Yugoslavia than any other Yugoslav people. Once and for all, let us stop liberating, saving, and guarding others, convincing them that without us they will perish. If they do not want to live with us in a democratic federation, let us respect their wish to be alone and happy.¹⁹

As Yugoslavia's dissolution progressed, Ćosić developed his position in more detail. In a major speech of 19 January 1991 Ćosić argued that while preserving Yugoslavia by force was not in the Serbian national interest, the Serbian people 'has all historic, national and democratic reasons and rights to live in one state'. Whether that state would be Yugoslavia or a Serbian state depended on others. Croats and Slovenes could leave Yugoslavia, but if they tried to take 'Serb ethnic territories' with them they would bear responsibility for the resulting war.²⁰ Similarly, in a draft 'Declaration on Serbian National Unity' prepared in April 1991 Ćosić and other prominent intellectuals called for a restructured federal Yugoslavia but said that if this was not acceptable for other Yugoslav peoples then 'the unity of the Serb people will be the basis for a political demand that the Serb people live in one state'. The document further asserted that 'the Serb people, in those territories outside the republic of Serbia where they make up a majority, will decide on the basis of sovereignty in what state and what kind of state they will live'.²¹

¹⁶ See especially Ćosić's interview in *NIN* (3 Aug. 1990), given just after Marković formed his pro-Yugoslav Alliance of Reform Forces. Ćosić was not, of course, alone in contending that maintaining Yugoslavia was not in the Serbian interest. Olivera Milosavljević has analysed this concept of 'Yugoslavia as a mistake' in her 'Jugoslavija kao zabluda', in Nebojša Popov, ed., *Srpska strana rata* (Belgrade: Republika, 1996), 60–88.

¹⁷ See Ćosić's Nov. 1986 letter to Slovene dissident Spomenka Hribar in his *Srpsko pitanje – demokratsko pitanje* (Belgrade: Politika, 1992), 109.

¹⁸ For the constitutional debate, see ch. 4 of Dragović-Soso, 'Saviours of the Nation'. I thank Dr Dragović-Soso for her valuable comments on an earlier version of this section.

¹⁹ *Borba*, 12–13 June 1989, 15 June 1989, 16 June 1989, and 30 June 1989.

²⁰ See Ćosić, *Srpsko pitanje – demokratsko pitanje*, 219.

²¹ *Borba*, 10 Apr. 1991 and (for Ćosić's role) Đukić, *Lowljenje vetra*, 165.

In later years, Čosić frequently asserted that he had never subscribed to the ‘absurd idea’ of ‘all Serbs in one state’.²² This is true in that the more detailed statements of his position called for uniting areas with Serb majorities, rather than areas with *any* Serb inhabitants.²³ This conception of the Serbian national interest dominated Serbian politics in 1990–1: it was held by actors ranged along most of the political spectrum, including Slobodan Milošević and his ruling Socialist Party of Serbia. (It should be noted that Čosić was more consistent than Milošević in his espousal of the ethnic criterion, becoming an early advocate of the partition of Kosovo.²⁴)

Although national self-determination furnished a simple and appealing slogan, its application to Yugoslav ethnodemographic realities was complex, to say the least. Over 40 per cent of Yugoslavia’s territory was nationally mixed.²⁵ In particular, large numbers of Serbs lived intermingled with members of other nations and/or in non-contiguous areas. To give just one example: in 1991 Croatia had eleven Serb-majority municipalities, and these made up a relatively compact area. But only about one-quarter of Croatia’s 580,000 Serbs lived in that area; another quarter lived in Croatia’s four largest cities.²⁶ For members of the first group, invoking the principle of national self-determination did (temporarily) make them part of a self-proclaimed Serbian state. For members of the second group, it could only compound the difficulties they already faced as Serbs in the post-Yugoslav Croatian state. (Such consequences for people left on the ‘wrong’ side are of course a classic result of nationally grounded partition.²⁷)

As the war in Croatia unfolded and that in Bosnia began, Čosić continued his advocacy of national division. In a March 1992 open letter to the Congress of Serb Intellectuals meeting in Sarajevo – then on the very brink of war – Čosić urged Serbs, Muslims and Croats to ‘divide ourselves and draw borders between ourselves so as to remove reasons for us to hate and kill each other’ and so as to create the conditions for future co-operation. He presented this process of partition and national state-building as a peaceful one, urging Serbs to ‘do everything to avoid war’, to respect human rights, and to ‘help neighbouring peoples to realise their national goals’.²⁸ In appealing

²² See, e.g., Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, 169.

²³ Besides the statements quoted, see Dobrica Čosić, *Promene* (Novi Sad: Dnevnik, 1992), 200.

²⁴ See Slobodan Antonić, *Zarobljena zemlja: Srbija za vlade Slobodana Miloševića* (Belgrade: Otkrovenje, 2002), 135, and Čosić, *Promene*, 200–1. I summarise Milošević’s own position in Audrey Budding, ‘Serbian Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: Historical Background and Context’ (an expert report prepared in 2002 for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia), 65–7. The report is available online at <http://hague.bard.edu/icty-info.html>.

²⁵ Slobodan Samardžić, ‘Federalizam u Švajcarskoj i Jugoslaviji – ustavni koncepti i političke institucije’, in Tomas Flajner and Slobodan Samardžić, eds., *Federalizam i problem manjina u višetničkim zajednicama: uporedna analiza Švajcarske i Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Institut za evropske studije, 1995), 94.

²⁶ See Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia’s Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition*, 2nd edn (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 128–9 and Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia: A History* (London: Hurst & Co., 1999), 212–13.

²⁷ Ch. 4 of Sumantra Bose, *Bosnia After Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention* (London: Hurst & Co., 2002) offers a thought-provoking analysis of the issues involved in partition, comparing the Indian and Bosnian cases. I thank Jasna Dragović-Soso for bringing it to my attention.

²⁸ *Borba*, 31 Mar. 1992.

for a division of Bosnia, Ćosić ignored the consequences that the attempt to carve out Serb ethnic territories had already produced in Croatia. As Miladin Životić, a leading voice in Belgrade's anti-nationalist opposition, ironically noted: 'There was not a word about how these ideas about establishing Serbian borders have shown their beneficial results so far, and how they have made the Serb people in Croatia happy'.²⁹

The contrast between the position Ćosić expressed in his letter and the stance that had originally brought him into conflict with the Party is a striking one. In his 1968 speech at the 14th Plenum Ćosić had insisted that Yugoslav realities did not allow national questions to be solved in state/territorial terms. He had warned that reviving the idea of unifying the Serbian people in a single state would be disastrous: 'No political imagination is needed to foresee the consequences of such a process'. Twenty-plus years later, Ćosić presented this same idea as the only possible Serbian response to Yugoslavia's disintegration. At some point in the intervening years, Ćosić appeared to have lost his political imagination.

Ćosić was elected president of the newly constituted Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by the federal legislature on 15 June 1992. His elevation to the presidency – like his ouster just under a year later – was arranged by Slobodan Milošević, who seems to have hoped to use Ćosić as a bridge to both the opposition and the West while keeping political power concentrated in his own hands.³⁰ In the event, Ćosić was a less influential figure as president than in his previous role as 'father of the nation'. In evaluating his presidential term, Ćosić's supporters have emphasised his powerlessness in relation to Milošević. It is indicative that the two books about Ćosić's term written by members of his presidential team are called *Authority Without Power: Dobrica Ćosić as Head of State* and *Dobrica Ćosić or the President without Power*.³¹ Some more critical observers have contended that Ćosić's political weakness was not only the obverse of Milošević's strength but also the result of Ćosić's reluctance to descend into the political fray, and his ambivalent attitude towards the opposition.³²

As president, Ćosić played a more significant role on the international scene than on the domestic one.³³ Of special importance for the present argument are his talks with the Croatian president, Franjo Tuđman, during the Geneva negotiations of September 1992. These talks led to a joint declaration calling for a 'quadripartite mechanism' – including representatives of the government of Croatia, local Serbs, the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), and the office of the UN High Commissioner

²⁹ *Ibid.* Životić was responding both to Ćosić's letter and to a similar Declaration issued by the Congress itself.

³⁰ For the circumstances in which Ćosić assumed the presidency see Antonić, *Zarobljena zemlja*, 130–1, and Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, 192–5.

³¹ Svetozar Stojanović, *Autoritet bez vlasti: Dobrica Ćosić kao šef države* (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 1993), and Dragoslav Rančić, *Dobrica Ćosić ili predsednik bez vlasti* (Belgrade: Crno na belo, 1994).

³² Antonić, *Zarobljena zemlja*, 143–9; cf. Robert Thomas, *The Politics of Serbia in the 1990s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 126–8. For a defence of Ćosić see Stojanović, *Autoritet bez vlasti*, 31–3.

³³ For Ćosić's international profile see David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995), 56–60 and *passim*.

for Refugees (UNHCR) – to work towards the voluntary return of Serb and Croat refugees in the areas of Croatia under UNPROFOR control.³⁴ In recommending that the Krajina Serbs should seek an internationally mediated accommodation with Zagreb, Čosić was clearly proceeding from principles very different from those governing his earlier call for Serb-majority areas to become part of an expanded Serbian state.

Vehemently opposed by the Krajina Serb leadership, the Čosić–Tuđman initiative came to nothing.³⁵ A similar dynamic played out more dramatically in May 1993, when Čosić and Milošević (united in this endeavour though increasingly at odds in other respects) spoke before the Bosnian Serb assembly in a vain attempt to induce it to accept the Vance–Owen Plan for a peace settlement based on the cantonisation of Bosnia. Čosić’s speech was hardly a ringing endorsement of Vance–Owen, which he called ‘imperfect and unjust’. Nevertheless, he said, accepting it was preferable to continuing the war ‘until we commit suicide’. While lauding the Bosnian Serbs for their ‘heroism’, he appealed to them to remember that ‘today you are not deciding on your territories only. You are today deciding also on the F[ederal] R[epublic] of Yugoslavia, on the future of that country.’ (The assumption was that a peace settlement in Bosnia would mean the lifting of the international sanctions imposed against the FRY in May 1992.) The ideal of a Serb state in Bosnia was to be pursued through peaceful means but not relinquished: eventually ‘There will be a federation of peoples . . . [and] where there is a Serb house, where there is a Serb field and where Serb is spoken there will be a Serb state.’³⁶

Čosić’s engagement on behalf of Vance–Owen was his last major act as president: at the end of May 1993 Milošević engineered his dismissal.³⁷ How had his brief term as president been shaped by the intellectual content of his dissident past? Clearly, Čosić’s underlying commitment to the cause of Serbian unity had not changed. Nevertheless, as president Čosić espoused positions significantly different from those he had promoted during the crucial period of Yugoslavia’s dissolution. In 1991, Čosić had lent his prestige to those within Serbia who insisted, in essence, that in a post-Yugoslav situation Serbia could protect Serb communities elsewhere only by annexing them. In 1992–3 he confronted the results – including sanctions imposed on the state of which he was now president – of the war whose rationale he had supported. Čosić then became increasingly willing to sacrifice the pursuit of self-determination to that of peace. He supported political solutions and international guarantees to protect the interests of Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia–Herzegovina within new states based on the republican boundaries, rather than demanding a redrawing of borders at any price.

³⁴ *Borba*, 2 Oct. 1992.

³⁵ See Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, 208–10, and Rančić, *Dobrica Čosić*, 64–9.

³⁶ Cited according to ‘Integral Text of Yugoslav President Dobrica Čosić’s First Address at Bosnian Serb Parliament (unofficial translation of transcript)’ in *Focus*, 10, 93 (May 18, 1993), 21–3.

³⁷ Milošević’s motives for ousting Čosić at this time are disputed. See Thomas, *Politics of Serbia*, 156; Antonić, *Zarobljena zemlja*, 155–7; Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, 229–30; and Rančić, *Dobrica Čosić*, 242–53.

As Ćosić made clear in his very qualified support for the Vance–Owen Plan, he had not stopped believing that Serbs should ideally live in a ‘Serb state’ (whether one or several). He had become convinced, however, that, given the international balance of forces, making peace on other terms was the only realistic option. In urging Serbs outside Serbia to accept this – as he did in his negotiations with Tuđman and in his speech to the Bosnian Serb parliament – Ćosić was setting himself in conscious opposition to a certain strain in the Serbian national tradition: one that sees heroism in refusing to recognise that anything is impossible. Looking back at his presidency, Ćosić defined his role in precisely these terms. In his own estimation,

After many disastrous experiences, I was not a maximalist . . . When I recovered [from a severe illness in 1991], saw the beginning of the war and understood its consequences and results, I stood firmly on the position of compromise and realism in national policy. But in doing that I did not renounce the struggle for the rights of the Serbian people. Accordingly as president I both recommended accepting the Vance–Owen Plan to the Republika Srpska leadership and tried to persuade the maximalist Milošević of the necessity of revising the political demands of the Serbs in Krajina.³⁸

When Ćosić, and far more importantly Milošević, retreated from their earlier positions it became clear that it was easier to begin a war for a state uniting Serb ‘ethnic territories’ than to end it. Once set in motion (primarily) by the actions of politicians in Belgrade and Zagreb, the war to create national states out of the Yugoslav patchwork had its own momentum and its own cruel dynamic of fear and revenge. The Serbs of Serbia, however, could withdraw from it far more easily than those in Bosnia and Croatia. As opposition journalist Stojan Cerović said in a caustic commentary on the fiasco over Vance–Owen: ‘After they pushed them [Bosnian Serbs and Croats] into war, now in Belgrade and Zagreb they are amazed at how those Bosnians became so militant.’³⁹

The progress of the war exposed the hollowness of the assumption that Ćosić and so many others had taken for granted: that all Serbs shared one political interest or, to put it another way, that national identities trumped all others. In his March 1992 letter to the Congress of Serb Intellectuals Ćosić had asserted: ‘In these days we [Serbs] no longer divide ourselves into Serbians, Bosnians, inhabitants of Lika, Slavonians [and other regional groups] . . . in these times we are becoming one political people . . .’⁴⁰ As war took its toll, divisions – political, regional, urban/rural – which had been subordinated to the nationalist euphoria of 1989–90 re-emerged with full force. It was the great irony of Ćosić’s metamorphosis from dissident to president that he, who had made his name insisting on the unity of Serbdom and the narrowness of ‘Serbianism’, ended his presidential term appealing to the Bosnian Serb leaders to consider the interests of Serbia.

³⁸ Đukić, *Lovljenje vetra*, 202 (which also cites Ćosić’s conscious opposition to the heroic tradition), and Stojanović, *Autoritet bez vlasti*, 36–42.

³⁹ *Vreme*, 24 May 1993.

⁴⁰ *Borba*, 31 March 1992.

What of Koštunica? Any comparison of Ćosić and Koštunica should highlight some basic biographical differences. First, they belong to different generations. Ćosić, born in 1921, was a young adult during the Second World War; Koštunica was born in 1944. Ćosić's dissident career was far longer and more prominent, leading him directly to the presidency. Koštunica, while certainly important in dissident circles in the 1980s, achieved widespread public recognition only as an opposition politician in the 1990s. Ćosić was a Partisan and then a high-ranking Party insider who even after leaving the Party remained a socialist, while Koštunica was never a Party member, and was defined in large part by his consistent anti-communism. Last, but far from least, Ćosić was raised to and then removed from the presidency by Milošević, while Koštunica led the coalition that finally toppled Milošević in October 2000.

Ćosić had moved from Serbian Central Committee membership to dissident status when he spoke out against Yugoslavia's political decentralisation in 1968. The beginning of Koštunica's dissident career is also linked with Serbian protests against decentralisation but indirectly, through the prism of free speech. In March 1971 (during the officially mandated period of 'public discussion' that preceded the passage of that year's radically decentralising constitutional amendments) Professor Mihailo Đurić of the Belgrade Law Faculty said that the amendments were in effect creating new independent states within Yugoslavia. In these circumstances, Đurić hinted, the borders of Serbia should be expanded.⁴¹ In questioning republican borders, Đurić violated one of the Titoist regime's strongest taboos. He was charged with 'undermining the brotherhood and unity of the peoples of Yugoslavia' and sentenced to a two-year prison term. Koštunica (who was then teaching at the Law Faculty while completing his dissertation on 'Institutionalised Opposition in the Political System of Capitalism') signed a petition protesting against Đurić's sentence and as a result was dismissed from the Law Faculty in 1974.⁴²

Although Koštunica was removed from his original position, he was not debarred from pursuing an intellectual career. Along with other well-known Belgrade dissidents forced out of teaching positions by the repression of the 1970s, he found a place at the Institute for Social Sciences. At the centre of Koštunica's intellectual concerns were liberal democracy and its preconditions: above all, the nature of party competition and the problem of relations between (political) majorities and minorities. Representative works from this period of Koštunica's career include an elegant essay on 'The Problem of the Tyranny of the Majority in the Political Philosophy of Alexis de Tocqueville' and another on 'Rousseau and the Problem of the Rule of the General Will', both published in 1978.⁴³ Koštunica's intellectual focus

⁴¹ Cf. Dragović-Soso, 'Saviours of the Nation', 44–5.

⁴² *Vreme*, 10 Aug. 1996.

⁴³ Several of Koštunica's scholarly articles, including 'Problem tiranije većine u političkoj filozofiji Aleksisa de Tokvila' and 'Ruso i problem vladavine opšte volje', are collected in his *Ugrožena sloboda: političke i pravne rasprave* (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2002).

on Western history and political theory was in marked contrast to Ćosić's exclusive emphasis on Serbian themes. (This difference of content inevitably limits any attempt to compare Ćosić's and Koštunica's national thought during their dissident periods. As will be seen below, Koštunica publicly elaborated his own national platform only *after* entering politics.)

After Tito's death in 1980, the boundaries of public debate gradually and erratically expanded. Koštunica's support for the institutions of liberal democracy became more controversial as he turned his scholarly attention from Western systems to Yugoslavia itself. He did so most strikingly in the 1983 book *Party Pluralism or Monism* which he wrote with a fellow-dissident, Kosta Čavoški. As its authors state, the study 'compares the liberal concept of democracy and pluralism with the standpoint of the Communist Party'. Its scathing depiction of the communists' destruction of the multi-party system in post-1945 Serbia created a sensation. Attacking one of socialist Yugoslavia's founding myths, Koštunica and Čavoški asserted that the Partisans' victory meant the defeat of democracy rather than its triumph, because 'the later political development of Yugoslavia would gradually show that in the political thought of liberalism there is a democratic core, the validity of which is universal and the rejection of which represents a threat to freedom'.⁴⁴

By the end of the 1980s Koštunica's writings and his activities in the Board for the Freedom of Thought and Expression had earned him a prominent place in Belgrade dissident circles, though certainly not the mass recognition that Ćosić enjoyed. As the regime's political monopoly crumbled in 1989–90, Koštunica and other dissidents gained greater media access. In his interviews and public statements, Koštunica dealt mainly with the institutional prerequisites for multi-party democracy.⁴⁵ He gave much less space to Yugoslavia's national problems. When he did address them, he brought his Western constitutionalist framework with him. In the (mainly) Serb–Slovene debates over whether Yugoslavia's economic crisis and political stalemate should be resolved by some degree of re-centralisation or by carrying decentralisation even further than had the 1974 Constitution, Koštunica (like many other Serb intellectuals and politicians) argued for a stronger federation. His arguments against confederation have a curiously abstract quality. Thus, in a 1988 critique of Slovene intellectuals' proposals for a new and even more confederal constitution, Koštunica and his co-author Kosta Čavoški cited Western experience to prove the superiority of federalism over confederalism (in their view a historically outmoded system). They failed, however, to address specifically Yugoslav conditions, such as Slovenes' fear that

⁴⁴ These quotations are taken from the English version: Vojislav Koštunica and Kosta Čavoški, *Party Pluralism or Monism: Social Movements and the Political System* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1985), 98, 132 (both come from a chapter written by Koštunica; see the authors' statement on p. vii). For the book's reception see Dragović-Soso, 'Saviours of the Nation', 83–4.

⁴⁵ See Koštunica's July 1989 interview in Nadežda Gaće, *Jugoslavija: suočavanje sa sudbinom* (Belgrade, 1990), 172–7; his 'Za stvarni stranački pluralizam', in *Demokratija* (the party newspaper of the newly formed Democratic Party), 9 March 1990; and his preface, 'Milan Grol ili načelnost u politici', in Milan Grol, *Londonski dnevnik 1941–1945* (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 1990), x–xv.

majorizacija (outvoting) would make them a permanent minority in a more centralised Yugoslavia.⁴⁶

If one thing set Koštunica apart from his fellow-dissidents at this point, it was his uncompromising opposition to the Communist regime. One incident is indicative. In 1989, the scholars who had been expelled from the Belgrade Law Faculty for political reasons in the 1970s were invited to return. Mihailo Đurić and Kosta Čavoški both did so. Koštunica, however, refused, saying that he would not return at the bidding of the same people who had expelled him (the Communists).⁴⁷ Koštunica would maintain this stance through his ten years in opposition, with the result that by 2000 he was one of the few major party leaders uncompromised by any association with the Milošević regime.

At the end of 1989, Koštunica was finally able to put his understanding of multi-party systems into practice when he became one of the founders of the Democratic Party. The party's founders were Belgrade intellectuals, most of whom, like Koštunica, had suffered for their views under the Communist regime. The figures who came together in the Democratic Party, while united in their commitment to a modern and democratic system, were extremely varied in their national views.⁴⁸ Koštunica should be located somewhere on the party's more national wing. Other figures, such as Dragoljub Mićunović and also Zoran Đinđić, who would later lead the October 2000 revolution in partnership with Koštunica and become the first premier of post-Milošević Serbia, held distinctly anti-nationalist views. Indeed, in the nationally charged atmosphere of 1989–90 Đinđić was one of the relatively few Serbian intellectuals who pointed out the impossibility of solving Yugoslavia's national questions by redrawing borders, insisting instead on the need for effective guarantees of minority rights.⁴⁹ In so doing he displayed the ability to think outside national and other boxes that would shape his political activity until his tragic assassination in March 2003.

The Democratic Party's 1990 platform dealt with the national question by describing a stronger (federal) Yugoslavia as the best option, but said that if this failed then 'the Serb people as a whole or in its greatest part should live in one state' and this principle should be implemented through referenda in disputed areas. The views to which Koštunica's party subscribed at this time, in other words, were virtually identical to those being put forward by Čosić. For 1990, it should be noted, these were mainstream Serbian views. In contrast, Vuk Drašković's Serbian Renewal Movement asserted that plebiscites in Croatia and Bosnia could be valid

⁴⁶ See Koštunica and Kosta Čavoški, 'Komentar k Tezam za ustavo Republike Slovenije', *Nova revija*, 7, 78–79 (1988), 1538–44; and Vojislav Koštunica, 'The Constitution and the Federal States', in Dennison Rusinow, ed., *Yugoslavia: A Fractured Federalism* (Washington: The Wilson Centre Press, 1988), 78–92.

⁴⁷ *Intervju*, 8 Dec. 1989.

⁴⁸ For instance, compare the speeches made at early promotional events by two of the party's founders: Gojko Đogo, 'Kosovo je srpsko sudilište', *Demokratija*, 9 March 1990, and Slobodan Inić, 'Nacionalni smo na demokratski način', *Demokratija*, 31 March 1990.

⁴⁹ *Borba*, 30 Apr.–2 May 1990 and 1–2 Sept. 1990.

only if they counted Serbs killed by the Ustaša (Croatian fascists) during the Second World War.⁵⁰

For the opposition parties, defeat in the 1990 elections marked the beginning of a very long ten years of unsuccessful and increasingly frustrated attempts to win power from Milošević.⁵¹ Rather than attempting to trace Koštunica's path through these tortuous years of coalitions made and broken, this discussion will examine a few junctures that define him within the opposition. The first of these came in July 1992, when Koštunica and his supporters left the Democratic Party to form the Democratic Party of Serbia (*Demokratska stranka Srbije*, hereafter DSS). The immediate reason for the schism was Koštunica's wish to join DEPOS, the coalition led by Vuk Drašković. That decision situates Koštunica's summer 1992 position on a few political co-ordinates. In joining DEPOS, Koštunica sought the broadest possible anti-communist coalition. More leftist members of the Democratic Party were not willing to ally themselves with Drašković's monarchist and highly traditionalist party (nor was Ćosić, whose Partisan roots never ceased to influence his politics).⁵² Because DEPOS ran on a peace platform – Drašković having reversed his earlier bellicose stance after the war began – Koštunica's decision to join it also indicated that he was centring his party on Serbia, not seeking to become a spokesman for all Serbs. This was also evident in the DSS's first programme, adopted in December 1992. Faithfully reflecting the intellectual preoccupations of Koštunica's dissident years, the programme focused on transforming Serbia to annul the communist legacy and introduce liberal-democratic institutions. Serbs outside Serbia were not even mentioned.⁵³

In spring 1993 the DSS split with DEPOS. The split resulted from several factors, including personal rivalries between Drašković and Koštunica.⁵⁴ In policy terms, opposing attitudes to the Vance-Owen Plan were crucial. Drašković supported the plan, while Koštunica argued that it failed to safeguard the interests of Bosnian Serbs. This juncture marked a metamorphosis in the DSS's identity.⁵⁵ From 1993 on it would find its place on the national(ist) wing of the democratic opposition, its commitment to Serbia's anti-communist transformation matched by its emphasis on the fate of Serbs outside Serbia. Both elements were important in the party's fight against Milošević, whom Koštunica along with other opposition leaders (including Zoran Đinđić as leader of the Democratic Party) repeatedly accused of betraying the interests of Serbs outside Serbia. To give one example, after the Bosnian Serb leaders

⁵⁰ This paragraph is adapted from ch. 7 of my dissertation.

⁵¹ Insightful discussions of these years include Antonić, *Zarobljena zemlja*; Ognjen Pribičević, *Vlast i opozicija u Srbiji* (Belgrade: Radio B92, 1997); Dubravka Stojanović, 'Traumatični krug srpske opozicije', in Popov, *Srpska strana rata*, 501–30; and Thomas, *Politics of Serbia*.

⁵² See Thomas, *Politics of Serbia*, 124–8. Ćosić's deep suspicion of the anti-communist opposition parties is evident in *Promene*, 181–2 and 197–98.

⁵³ *Program i statut Demokratske stranke Srbije* (Belgrade: DSS, 1993).

⁵⁴ See, e.g., *Borba*, 13 Apr. 1993.

⁵⁵ Cf. Thomas, *Politics of Serbia*, 151, and Stojanović, 'Traumatični krug', 523.

rejected the Contact Group Plan in summer 1994 Koštunica denounced Milošević's decision to impose sanctions on them.⁵⁶

Koštunica's reaction to the 1995 Dayton Accords that ended the war in Bosnia was essentially one of grudging acceptance. In a 1997 interview he summed up his assessment of Dayton by saying: 'Dayton has in many ways replaced AVNOJ'. (In this context AVNOJ – the acronym of the Partisans' first governing body – stands for the division of Serbs inside Serbia from those outside it.) He went on to define the DSS national programme as trying to 'create a sort of Serbian political, cultural and spiritual space' within the framework of existing international agreements, and to 'strengthen the ties that were broken between Serbs in the second Yugoslavia'. Showing a one-sided emphasis on Serbian suffering, he also explained that the DSS considered the national question to be important in the current elections 'because of the responsibility of the ruling regime for everything that has happened to Serbs since the collapse of Yugoslavia'.⁵⁷

Koštunica's initial political activity, with its strong focus on Serbia's anti-communist transformation, had grown logically out of the liberal-democratic concerns that were most prominent in his pre-1989 writings. As leader of the post-1993 DSS, however, Koštunica also spoke the much more common language of Serbian national unity, a language that could more easily be linked with Ćosić's dissident writings than with his own. By the time that the Yugoslav presidential elections of September 2000 approached, Koštunica was the only major opposition leader completely uncompromised by association with either Milošević or the Western powers that had just bombed Serbia. His national views appealed to the broader electorate, while his dissident past and democratic convictions made him an acceptable coalition leader even for strongly anti-nationalist parties.⁵⁸ Thus he became the candidate of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), leading the eighteen-party coalition that won the September elections and then carried out the 'October Revolution' that forced Milošević to acknowledge his defeat.

During his term as president, Koštunica was frequently described in the Western press as a 'moderate nationalist'. This label reflects Koštunica's undeniably important commitment to legal means and respect for existing treaties. The centrality of the national question to Koštunica's world-view, however, suggests that 'principled nationalist' or (to borrow Koštunica's self-description) 'democratic nationalist' would be a more precise designation.⁵⁹ Given that the post-Yugoslav wars had ended before Koštunica came to office, the political importance of his national views lay chiefly in his influence on public attitudes. Had Koštunica so chosen, he could have used his presidential pulpit to advance the process of confronting the realities of Serbs' and

⁵⁶ *Borba*, 26 Aug. 1994. For more on the Belgrade–Pale split, see Thomas, *Politics of Serbia*, 199–209.

⁵⁷ *NIN*, 21 Mar. 1997.

⁵⁸ See Antonić, *Zarobljena zemlja*, 177–8 and 314–15.

⁵⁹ I have made the same argument in an opinion piece: Audrey Budding, "'The Man Who Overthrew Milošević': Vojislav Koštunica, One Year Later", *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 26, 1 (Winter/Spring 2002), 159–65.

Serbia's roles in the wars. Instead, he continued to display the same preoccupation with the suffering of Serbs (only) that had been evident in his opposition years.⁶⁰

The period of Koštunica's presidency was a turbulent one. Within months, the euphoria of the October 2000 revolution gave way to public disillusionment with the new government's inability to raise standards of living immediately, and with the political in-fighting within DOS. Both these factors contributed to the failure of the Serbian presidential elections held in September and December 2002. Koštunica won the most votes, but (only two years after many of Serbia's citizens had risked their lives to overthrow Milošević) widespread voter alienation resulted in a turnout below the constitutionally required 50 per cent. Having failed to win election as president of Serbia, Koštunica lost his position as federal president a few months later when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was transformed into the new state of Serbia and Montenegro. For now, Koštunica is again simply the president of the DSS – and it is unclear what role that party will play in a Serbian political landscape radically altered by Đinđić's assassination and more recently by DOS's final disintegration.

If the irony of Ćosić's presidency lay in his belated recognition of the reality of Serbian divisions, then the irony of Koštunica's lay in the contrast between his own beliefs on the national question – which helped DOS come to power – and the political results of the DOS victory. It is inconceivable that the anti-nationalist Civic Alliance of Serbia or the Muslim-based Sandžak Democratic Party could have toppled Milošević either at the polls or in the streets, but Koštunica did so at the head of a coalition that included both these parties. One result was the installation of a cabinet in which Goran Svilanović of the Civic Alliance became Foreign Minister and Rasim Ljajić of the Sandžak Democratic Party became Minister for National and Ethnic Communities. Both, in their different spheres, have contributed to the rebuilding of relations between national communities and both have so far (as of November 2003) retained their ministerial posts in the new state of Serbia and Montenegro and so outlasted Koštunica in the government.

Zoran Đinđić once asserted (in summer 2001, when he was still trying to surmount the growing rift between his party and Koštunica's) that Koštunica was 'indispensable as a bridge between traditional and reformist Serbia'.⁶¹ This comment might be taken to mean that Koštunica was traditional in his national goals, but reformist in his commitment to democratic norms and legal means. More pragmatically, it was a recognition that Koštunica could bring into the DOS fold some 'traditional' voters who would otherwise vote for Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia or for Vojislav Šešelj's Radicals. However one evaluates Koštunica's later political role, it is undeniable that he played this bridging role in the events leading up to the October 2000 revolution. Here lies a vital difference between Koštunica's political engagement and Ćosić's. At a similarly critical juncture – the Serbian presidential elections of December 1992 – Ćosić had insisted on staying above the political fray. Belgrade

⁶⁰ See, e.g. *Vreme*, 2 Aug. 2001, and Natasja Radović, 'Teška saradnja', (on co-operation with The Hague) *Republika*, 262 (1–15 June 2001).

⁶¹ *NIN*, 5 July 2001.

sociologist Slobodan Antonić has made the intriguing suggestion that if Ćosić had taken the other route he could have compensated for Milan Panić's electoral weaknesses – including the public's suspicion that Panić was overly Western and insufficiently nationally minded – in much the same way that Koštunica compensated for Đinđić's. In this scenario, Milošević would have been removed from power eight years earlier.⁶²

What insights can this brief study of Ćosić's and Koštunica's national thought and political engagement afford into the dynamic of contemporary Serbian nationalism? Notwithstanding important differences in their political careers, Ćosić and Koštunica share the same basic understanding of the Serbian national interest. According to this understanding, the best possible sequel to the dissolution of the Yugoslav state would have been the formation of a new Serbian state (or Serbian state federation) through the joining of Serb 'ethnic territories'. As has been emphasised, this conception of the Serbian national interest was scarcely particular to Ćosić and Koštunica. Rather, it dominated the Serbian response to Yugoslavia's dissolution. Serbs who argued that the preservation of existing nationally mixed communities should take precedence over the unification of the 'imagined community' (to cite Benedict Anderson's famous definition of the nation) were politically marginalised both inside and outside Serbia. Explaining the mass political appeal that national self-determination held for (many of) Yugoslavia's inhabitants in the circumstances of the state's collapse would go beyond the scope of this article. With regard to Serbs, any analysis would necessarily take into account both popular memories of the Second World War genocide experienced by Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia, and the manipulation of those memories by politicians struggling to survive the collapse of communism.⁶³

At the ideological level, it was also significant that the Yugoslav socialist regime put the right to national self-determination at the centre of its legitimating framework while defining it in vague and ambiguous terms. Thus, the preamble to the 1974 Constitution described Yugoslavia as a state founded on the right to self-determination but failed to explain how (if at all) that right could be exercised. (The Yugoslav constitution, unlike the Soviet one, contained no article specifying a republican right to secession.) With no agreed-upon standard for evaluating the conflicting claims of personal and territorial nationality, the meaning of self-determination became the subject first of scholarly disputes, and then of armed clashes.⁶⁴

If Ćosić and Koštunica are in some sense generic Serbian nationalists, Serbian nationalism was itself generic in important ways. As Jasna Dragović-Soso suggests in her contribution to this issue, the drive to include 'All Serbs in one state' reflects

⁶² Antonić's conclusion is that 'Ćosić was . . . a good dissident, but a bad politician.' Antonić, *Zarobljena zemlja*, 147. Thomas, *Politics of Serbia*, 130–5, offers a somewhat different analysis of the 1992 elections.

⁶³ Two illuminating comparative analyses are Veljko Vujčić, 'Historical Legacies, Nationalist Mobilisation, and Political Outcomes in Russia and Serbia: A Weberian View', *Theory and Society*, 25 (1996), 763–801; and Valerie Bunce, 'Peaceful versus Violent State Dismemberment: A Comparison of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia', *Politics & Society*, 27, 2 (1999), 217–37.

⁶⁴ I discuss the issues involved in Budding, 'Nation/People/Republic'.

Ernest Gellner's widely accepted definition of nationalism as a 'political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent'.⁶⁵ Both Ćosić and Koštunica subscribed to this principle; they are undoubtedly nationalists in Gellner's sense. Because the principle was so much at odds with Yugoslav social and ethnodemographic realities, its application helped to set Serbian nationalism on a course both destructive and profoundly self-destructive. The disjunction between principle and reality is nowhere more evident than in Ćosić's March 1992 letter to the Sarajevo Congress of Serb Intellectuals, the letter in which he urged Serbs, Muslims and Croats to 'divide ourselves and draw borders between ourselves so as to remove reasons for us to hate and kill each other . . .'. In Sarajevo (and not only there) such an appeal was an unacknowledged call for the national unmixing of streets, apartment buildings and even families. That Ćosić could send such a letter to such an address suggested that for him as for so many others the mirage-like vision of the 'imagined community' had blotted out existing physical communities and the people who lived in them.

⁶⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.