While Yugoslavs continued to enjoy the “golden years,” doubt intensified within leadership circles about the hitherto fairly unquestioned faith in progress that had dominated since the immediate postwar era. It was all too clear that the self-management system suffered from structural problems that were being camouflaged by apparent prosperity, if only rather poorly. The rate of economic growth was sinking; increasing regional disparities and rising unemployment put pressure on the political system to act in the second half of the 1960s. Furthermore, the dynamics of modernization had produced new social constellations. Competition within the market economy aggravated national sensitivities and intensified ethnopolitical rivalries. Politicians and intellectuals in all of the republics were expressing their concerns that the leveling politics of “brotherhood and unity” threatened their own republic’s interests. Nationalist rhetoric resurfaced that was thought to be long gone, accompanied by new problems pushed to the forefront by the economic downturn.

Modernization and the National Question
Despite all the efforts made by the communists, nationalism had never completely vanished from Yugoslavia. During the Second World War, nearly 350,000 men had not fought with the partisans, but against them as members of the collaboration troops. Many of them were later sentenced to prison terms or even liquidated. These men, together with their family members, represented a sizeable number of people who were perhaps able to live with the new regime but never fully identified with it or even opposed it in their hearts. The lines were blurred between forbidden nationalism and an encouraged patriotic love of one’s homeland. The patriotic nineteenth-century art song “Our Beautiful Homeland” (Lijepa naša) had been usurped by the Ustasha regime as their hymn. For this reason, certain versions of the song were banned after the war. Many Croats loved the melody, to which more or less politically
offensive texts could be sung. In order to avoid suspicion by their neighbors, people simply closed their windows at family celebrations when they sang. Clearly ambiguous were the old national symbols like the Croatian tricolor and the white-and-red chessboard crest, which the communists had adapted by adding a red star. When the older version of the flag appeared occasionally at private parties, sports events, and in church, the practice then fell into the tolerated gray zone of celebrating folklore. However, anyone who attached a political message to this was seen as violating “brotherhood and unity” and was punished.\(^2\)

The regime also tolerated social niches in which national leanings (even in an undesirable form) could be expressed within certain limitations. This was also true for the churches, in which hardline critics of the regime were even able to rise to the position of bishop. The anti-Western, lay preacher movement of the Bogomoljci also remained intact.\(^3\)

Although schools, universities, and research institutes had been purged of collaborators after 1945, they remained bastions of the old bourgeoisie, particularly the academies of science. Most professors and academy members retained their positions following the regime change. As long as they acted loyally, they were permitted to pursue their research interests with relatively few restrictions. Older traditions and schools of thought were maintained, particularly in the fields of philosophy, literary studies, and history, and these disciplines became conclaves for cultivating national identity. During the 1960s, blatantly nationalistic discourses crept in. One contemporary at the time suspected that at the academies, “a generation of historians were being trained, who were worse [more nationalistic] than their teachers.”\(^4\)

Intellectuals were the first to break the taboo of “brotherhood and unity” in the 1960s. The Slovene literary critic Dušan Pirjevec conducted a bitter controversy in 1961/1962 with the Serb writer Dobrica Ćosić over the relationship of internationalism, Yugoslavism, and the rights of nations and nationalities. Shouldn’t the peoples of Yugoslavia exert their sovereignty first and foremost in and through the republics (Pirjevec), or didn’t a “vampire-like nationalism” lurk behind this demand (Ćosić)? Such cultural controversies constituted the intellectual discourse accompanying the political debate over constitutional reform.\(^5\)

Velimir Terzić, a Serb historian and director of the Military History Institute in Belgrade, sparked a debate involving Franjo Tudjman over Croatia’s guilt in the fall of the first Yugoslavia. Tudjman had fought in the Second World War on the side of the partisans and made a military career for himself afterward. In 1961, he was appointed director and later became president of the Institute for the History of the Workers’ Movement of Croatia in Zagreb. Tudjman felt provoked by Terzić and sought to prove that the Croats were the
chief victim of Greater Serbian efforts to establish hegemony in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. However, he considered it his most important mission to lower the official numbers on Serb victims of Ustasha crimes. He maintained that, in fascist Croatia, the total number of all those killed in camps and deported amounted to little more than 59,000 people of all nationalities, not just Serbs. He suspected that the intent behind the official statistic listing 700,000 murdered prisoners in the Jasenovac concentration camp alone was to stigmatize the Croat people collectively. As a matter of fact, there were 83,000 to 90,000 people killed in Jasenovac, so that the data originally given do indeed appear exaggerated. Still, Tudjman’s actions reeked of revisionism and denial.

The rapid modernization of Yugoslav society also produced a thoroughly new dynamic in ethnic relations. Wholly contrary to its original intent, the socialist politics of development acted as a catalyst for national consciousness-raising. Granted, industrialization, urban culture, higher education, regional mobility, and modern mass communication did indeed further the spread of ethnic tolerance, cosmopolitan attitudes, and supranational identities, as had been predicted by both Western theories of modernization and by Marxism. However, simultaneously these same processes created new competitiveness between peoples, particularly when institutions and power were being distributed according to the “national key,” namely criteria of ethnic proportionality.

The communists propagated rationality and efficiency in daily socialist life, so that ethnicity and religion appeared only to be archaic relics of a dark past. Because this jarred old certainties, social networks, and constructions of identity, some people felt they had to react in defense of national culture. Within certain media, clubs, and educational facilities linguistic and cultural cohesion was cultivated, whereby a feeling of alienation toward Yugoslavia as a multinational state also then took hold.

In addition, the government’s forceful policy of modernization and development accelerated social differentiation within society. Education, mobility, and high expectations of growing income and a better life helped intensify different kinds of conflict of interest, such as those between rich and poor republics and between majority and minority populations. Among the Bosnian Muslims and the Macedonians, as well as among Kosovo Albanians, a large class of people emerged for the first time who were geared to advancement and made a career in the party, bureaucracy, enterprises, and educational institutions. Before 1945, there had been but a very small bourgeois and intellectual class in these societies that would have been able to propagate the national idea.

Demographic changes also played a role. In light of the varying rates of population growth among the peoples of Yugoslavia, the ethnic composition
shifted. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the share of Muslims in the population rose from 31.3 to 39.5 percent between 1953 and 1981.\(^{10}\) In Kosovo, the Albanian share rose from 67 to 74 percent between 1961 and 1971, a fact that caused Serbs there to fear that they would eventually be crowded out.\(^{11}\) The situation was also aggravated by the increase in competition for an ever-dwindling number of jobs.

For all these reasons, socialist modernization and its emerging crisis in the 1960s raised fundamental questions concerning ethnic coexistence and the distribution of political power and prosperity. The party watched these developments with growing concern and produced hundreds of pages of secret reports on the deteriorating national relations. Not only was the competition between peoples for advancement, status, power, and resources becoming more clearly visible, but emerging economic problems also caused insecurity and irrational fears of the future. Social and economic interests were being discussed more and more in categories of ethnic differences, clothed in typical discourses on discrimination, and reminted into ethnopolitical demands. The dogma that socialism had solved the national question to the satisfaction of all could no longer be maintained. In 1964, Tito concluded: “If we do not want to be confronted with serious problems further down the road, then we have to keep our eyes open when examining the problems in ethnic relations that still exist.”\(^{12}\) From this point forward, there was no more talk of the healing impact of socialism. What was emphasized instead was the right of each group to freely develop its own cultural identity and economic evolution. The ranking in the tandem of “brotherhood and unity” was switched. No longer was the greater emphasis placed on commonalities (unity) but diversity (brotherhood), and that, in turn, required a change in direction in constitutional politics.

**Recognition of Bosnian Muslims**

An important step in rebalancing ethnopolitical relations was the recognition of Bosnian Muslims as the sixth constituent people (or “nation”) of Yugoslavia. This concluded a process that had been underway for decades, meaning the transformation of this traditional religious community into a modern nation. By this time, to be Muslim meant especially to follow certain cultural practices and harbor certain forms of ethnic consciousness; it was less a profession of faith.

Although the communists had actually acknowledged the individuality of the Bosnian Muslims during the people’s liberation struggle, this specific group was not given the status of a nation after 1945. Instead, they were classified in 1948 according to the categories “undetermined nationality” or “Muslim Serb” or “Muslim Croat,” a state of affairs that was deemed unsatisfactory. The rubric “Muslim (ethnic affiliation)” slipped into the national
census taken in 1961, before the Bosnian Communist Party decided in 1965 to upgrade Muslims officially to the sixth constituent people of Yugoslavia. In 1971, the national census included for the first time the category “Muslim in an ethnic sense.” Muslim with a capital “M” referred to national affiliation, as opposed to a lowercase “m” when just religious affiliation was meant. This represented an enormous success for Bosniak national politics, which had been pushing for greater influence for years. The only reason why the sixth official nation in Yugoslavia went by a name with a religious connotation was that its members themselves used no other name. “Bosnian” referred to regional origins that included other nationalities. Not until 1993 was the historical term “Bosniak” officially reintroduced as the name given exclusively to the people of Bosnian Muslims and—contrary to the nineteenth century—no longer to a specific citizenship regardless of ethnic origin. “In Europe, if you do not have a national name, you cannot have a state,” explained a politician.

The Muslim nation was not an artificial product devised by the communists, as opponents to the reform argued. Likewise, it is clear that the valuation of Muslims to a nation did indeed serve a strategic interest in neutralizing the growing ambitions of Croatia and Serbia by strengthening Bosnia-Herzegovina as a buffer. The “heart of Yugoslavia” played a key role for the internal stability of the multiethnic state. In 1971, about four million people lived there, of whom 39.6 percent were Muslims, 37.2 percent Serbs, and 20.6 percent Croats. At the time, both Zagreb and Belgrade had begun to exert more influence in the republic. In reaction to these hegemonic tendencies and the threat of being usurped as Islamicized Croats or Serbs, the new Muslim elites strove for full recognition and a greater say, not only in their home republic but also in Yugoslavia as a whole. Apart from this, they were still citizens of a republic that had fallen far behind the national level of development, and more lobbying was needed to correct this situation.

However, the wish to be recognized as one of Yugoslavia’s constituent peoples did not emerge primarily out of a perceived need to defend oneself; instead it reflected a widespread, deeply felt, and distinct ethnic consciousness. Back in the interwar period, there had been no consensus about the existence of a Bosnian Muslim nation among the elites, not to speak of the populace in general. In the meantime, this had changed, thanks in no small measure to the secular state and its strategy for socialist modernization. Just as the Serb national identity shed its ties to Christian Orthodoxy back in the nineteenth century, the identity of Bosnian Muslims increasingly emancipated itself from Islam after 1945.

Muslim identity was no longer identical with religious affiliation but still remained connected to it in different ways. This identity was constituted within a sociocultural sphere and lifestyle influenced by Islam into which one was
born and in which one was socialized via the family. It included old traditions and belief systems, religious practices and daily customs, and even symbols and values, all of which shaped community consciousness, regardless if a person was religious or not. Fewer and fewer people were religious, and all were socialized in secular institutions. Still, it was not possible to completely define away the Ottoman cultural heritage for these people. The old customs, songs, special food dishes, and visits to the mosque had important sociocultural functions, even if Allah had little to do with it all. Even communists often gave their children Muslim names and tolerated old customs like circumcision, which was outlawed. To the horror of the public health agencies, for example, they shied away from prohibiting outdated burial rituals, in which the dead were laid out in front of the mosque in the heart of the city. Religious practices were associated with national identity, which was permitted to be freely articulated. Apart from this, efforts were made to strengthen the nonreligious characteristics of Muslim national identity by concentrating more intensively on objective criteria of demarcation, such as language, literature, and history. Magazines like Odjek (Echo), Život (Life), and Pregled (Review) reflected various dimensions of Bosnian Muslim identity with the aim of shaping and standardizing it further.

The political and constitutional upgrade gave Muslims more influence in the various bodies of the republic and the federal government, more visibility in the public realm, and a significant increase in national self-confidence. The share of Muslims in the Bosnian Central Committee rose from 19 to 33 percent between 1965 and 1974. While only 15.8 percent of the assemblymen in the republic’s parliament were Muslim in 1969, by 1974 the figure had risen to 33.4 percent. However, a greater voice in the leadership cadres also encouraged more targeted interest-driven politics, from which systemic problems arose. Were the Muslims to be treated as one of the three equal nations of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or did they deserve a privileged status because Serbs and Croats each already had their own republics? How could the Muslim identity be protected from assimilation in a multicultural milieu? In 1971, the intellectual Salim Ćerić called for a Muslim cultural institute (Matica) and a flag and anthem of their own. The Communist Party rejected this immediately with the argument that this would lead to national segmentation, polarization, and finally civil war. While the tectonics of power strengthened the new Muslim nation, the “national key” felt threatening and prompted a fear of future discrimination among the Serbs and Croats of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Contrary to the Bosnian Muslims, the Macedonians were recognized as a nation with their own republic even before the war ended. The Communist Party was conducting deliberate nation building “from above” in order to protect this numerically small people from Serb, Bulgarian, and Greek efforts to assimilate them. Soon afterward, a standard Macedonian language and
orthography was established that differed from the Bulgarian, with its own grammar books, dictionaries, and literature. As the other republics had done, Macedonia set up institutes dedicated to the study of its own history. Schools and media helped popularize the new idea of identity, which rapidly took root because it was being planted in a terrain where the people already cultivated a collective awareness of themselves. Therefore, it did not take long before the formation of a Macedonian nation was completed. After the separation of the Macedonian Orthodox Church from its historic archbishopric of Skopje-Ohrid in 1958, it took until 1967 and a period of tough negotiations before the Serbian Orthodox Church finally recognized the Macedonian metropolitan. Macedonia now had its own national church.²²

Islam and Pan-Islamism

In addition to the nearly 1.5 million Bosnian Muslims, other Islamic groups lived in Yugoslavia. In Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Kosovo lived a total of a quarter million so-called ethnic (meaning Slavic) Muslims. There were also another 1.4 million Albanians, Turks, and Roma who adhered to Islam.²³ Yugoslav Muslims enjoyed particular state protection for political reasons: they represented an important link to the Islamic countries within the nonaligned movement.

Therefore, the state tolerated and even supported the Islamic religious community and other activities connected to the faith. In Sarajevo, the renowned Oriental Institute and a chair for Oriental Studies at the university were established to study the Ottoman heritage. Between 1955 and 1972, the number of mosques doubled, and special magazines appeared like *Preporod* (Renaissance) and *Islamska misao* (Islamic thought). In Bosnia-Herzegovina alone there were 1,092 mosques, 569 prayer houses (*mesdžid*), and another 394 smaller shrines. Around 1,000 more were to be found in Kosovo and Macedonia.²⁴

Unlike the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches, the religious leader of the Muslims, the *Reis-ul-ulema*, was unconditionally pro-Yugoslav in his views, not least because of gratitude for the public support given to his own culture. In 1969, the Islamic Religious Community dropped the adjective “religious” from its name—an important signal that it saw itself not only as a representative of spiritual matters but also of ethnopolitical interests.²⁵

However, the liberal atmosphere of the 1960s also encouraged followers of a politicized Islam to resume their activities. Under various pseudonyms, Islamists began to publish their views. In certain circles, such as among the students of the theological madrassa (*Gazi Husrev-beg medrese*) and of the Islamic Theological Faculty, such politicized ideas about religion fell on fertile soil. Led by the young imam Hasan Čengić, a loyal circle of *tabački mesdžid*
formed. It condemned discotheques and ethnically mixed marriages and called for the veiling of women and the prohibition of alcohol. Similar to the 1930s, the demands for an Islamization of society were linked to a comprehensive political and ideological reform project.\footnote{26}

This form of Islamism advocated the unification of religion and social order; it rejected the separation of Islam, the state, and society. Therefore, its followers were also against anything that limited the religious community to strictly religious functions. They attacked both the self-contented conservative theologians and imams, whom they claimed were unable to solve the current problems, and the nonreligious modernists of the new Muslim generation of politicians.\footnote{27}

In 1970, the year in which Tito’s political ally and friend, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, died and the Ayatollah Khomeini published his book *Islamic Government*, Alija Izetbegović, the future president of Bosnia-Herzegovina, wrote his *Islamic Declaration*. As a member of the secret anticommunist organization Young Muslims, he had been sentenced to imprisonment in 1946 with several of his fellow fighters, because the group called for the unification of the Muslim world under one single Islamic state and demanded of its members an “iron will” and “surliness and fanaticism” for the psychological, political, and military struggle. Izetbegović, who was born in 1925, sat in prison until 1949 and afterward retreated into a private life of practicing law. Several of his fellow travelers, however, went into exile.\footnote{28}

The *Islamic Declaration* reiterated earlier demands calling for an “Islamic order and way of life” and a pan-Islamic state stretching “from Morocco to Indonesia, from Africa to Central Asia.” The distant aim was to develop an Islamic order, although what this would be was never exactly defined. The key demand was the “Islamization of [secularized] Muslims” as based on the Pakistan model. It was argued that religious and political awakening went hand in hand, that Western culture and its concepts of societal order were to be rejected, and therefore public life and media should be controlled. Once again, this point was not to propagate crude antimodernism, but to safeguard identity: “Hence, the question is not whether we will or will not accept science and technology . . . but rather whether we will do this creatively or mechanically, with dignity or with inferiority. The question is thus whether in this inevitable development we will get lost, or whether we will preserve our individuality, our culture and our values.” The struggle for an Islamic order would be carried forward by a select elite with clear ideological visions and moral criteria. Unlike many movements outside of Europe, the Declaration explicitly called for the creation of a pan-Islamic state, not a federation. Muslims should merge into a single community, in which Islam was the ideology and pan-Islamism
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the politics. “OUR GOAL: Islamization of Moslems. OUR MOTTO: Believe and Fight.”

The upswing of political Islam was linked to global developments. Everywhere in the Islamic world, and therefore also in Bosnia-Herzegovina, modernization had brought forth an urban class of intellectuals who oriented themselves on foreign Muslim brotherhoods and relevant authors like the Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb or the Pakistani Muhammad Iqbal. Unlike in Egypt, Pakistan, and Malaysia, Islamism in Yugoslavia only addressed a minority of the population. Bosnia-Herzegovina lacked both a pious bourgeoisie and an impoverished urban lower class among whom Islamism resonated so strongly in the Arab world. For this reason, Islamism was at first nothing more than intellectual wishful thinking.

Unrest in Kosovo

All of the newly emerging problems intersected in Kosovo. In the 1960s, more than two-thirds of the roughly 1.3 million inhabitants were Albanians. The rate of population growth reached 27.6 percent annually, about three times as much as in the whole of Yugoslavia. Every second person was under the age of 20. This dynamic birth development caused many Serbs to fear that they would be completely pushed out of Kosovo in a few years’ time. They considered this region to be the “cradle of the Serb nation,” because Kosovo had been the heartland of the medieval Serbian kingdom and the setting of the myth-laden Battle of Kosovo, and the most important Orthodox cultural landmarks were located there. At the same time, Kosovo also held important national significance for the Albanians, whose majority status prompted them to insist on having a greater say in politics. In 1878, the League of Prizren, the modern-age Albanian national movement, had been formed here.

The predominantly Orthodox Serbs and the overwhelmingly Muslim Albanians essentially remained strangers to one another, even during the era of “brotherhood and unity.” No two peoples mistrusted each other as deeply as these two; rarely did marriages between members of these communities occur. Until Aleksandar Ranković fell from power, Albanians were greatly underrepresented in leadership positions within the party, the administration, the police, and the military. The Serb establishment thought of Albanians as chronically disloyal and separatist and arrogantly looked down on them. Kosovo did indeed suffer from a structural deficit of educated classes. It took a while for Albanians to gradually catch up. The Yugoslav state invested a great deal in the development of their province. Whereas only a third of all Albanian children attended school prior to the Second World War, by the mid-1960s, the figure had risen by 85 percent. The number of students also multiplied.
Kosovo suffered from serious socioeconomic problems that painfully came to light with the challenges of the 1960s. The national income per capita was only 38 percent of that of Yugoslavia, and economic growth lagged far behind the annual influx of jobseekers. All other indicators also pointed to glaring underdevelopment: in 1968 there were 60 percent fewer medical doctors, 70 percent fewer radios and television sets, and 75 percent fewer private automobiles per 1,000 inhabitants than in Yugoslavia as a whole.\(^{32}\)

Liberalization opened the door in Kosovo for the far-reaching Albanization of the province. Šiptari, until then the official yet pejorative label for their people, was replaced with what they called themselves, namely Albanian. Enver Hoxha, the Albanian head of state, sent schoolbooks and more than 200 teachers to Kosovo to accelerate instruction in their native language. Close collaboration on national policy developed in other areas. In March 1968, Kosovo adopted the Tosk version of the written language that had been developed in its neighboring state. New interpretations of history were embraced, especially on the autochthonous and Illyric origins of Albanians and the cult of the national hero Skanderbeg. All of this underscored the cross-border unity of the Albanian people that even the government sanctioned. New newspapers and magazines appeared and hundreds of books were published in Albanian. Radio and television spread rapidly. Even the Albanian flag was permitted to be flown in front of official buildings in Kosovo. In other words, Tito’s attempt to construct a distinct Kosovar national identity had failed.\(^{33}\)

For nationalist-oriented Albanians in Kosovo, the concessions made since 1966 did not go far enough. Their country still did not have the status of a republic, which would have included the right to secession. Growing tensions over this finally erupted into violent riots in October and November 1968 in Kosovo and western Macedonia. Demonstrators demanded a republic and a constitution; some went as far as to call for the unification of all regions settled by Albanians into one nation state. Students celebrated Albania’s head of state, Enver Hoxha. Tito did not want to concede to demands for a republic because he feared the direction such separatist sentiments might take. The uprising was crushed.

In the 1960s, an elite evolved that was being socialized to adopt an aggressively nationalist stance. These people were found at the university, the Albanological Institute, and the Academy of Sciences, where they eloquently presented their political demands at home and abroad. In 1969, the first Albanian university was opened in Prishtina and quickly became the center for nationalist activities. Within a short span of time, an upwardly mobile and autochthonous class of intellectuals emerged who advanced to key positions and emphatically demanded a fairer distribution of opportunities, even at the national level. Thanks to quotas and positive discrimination, this generation
made its way in the 1970s into important jobs and key positions in bureaucracy, the party, and the economy. An atmosphere of euphoria and triumph prevailed, which they increasingly rubbed in the face of local Serbs. Since the Serb language had been degraded to an elective subject in the schools, the two ethnic communities of Kosovo found that they literally no longer shared a common language. Thus, the consequent Albanization of Kosovo also caused deep-seated alienation and polarization between members of the two peoples.

In Serbia the new course of greater federal and national rights was not met with absolute approval. In May 1968, the writer Dobrica Ćosić addressed the party in a passionate speech, using harsh words to uncover decentralization as a masquerade for nationalist machinations and to warn that the systematic discrimination of Serbs and Montenegrins could evoke a reaction of Greater Serbian irredentism. This speech by one of Yugoslavia’s most prominent and respected intellectuals hit like a bombshell. The party quickly condemned Ćosić’s stance. Two months later, he resigned his membership in the party and then took over the Serbian Literary Society. The chief focus of this circle of intellectuals was to defend the historic, national, and cultural unity of the Serb people with greater determination in the future.

Meanwhile, the communist leadership was convinced that the situation in Kosovo could only be stabilized by giving the Albanians even more rights. Petar Stambolić, one of the most prominent Serb communists, called critics to task: “How can anyone today maintain that it is in the interests of the Serb people that . . . other peoples are not treated equally with us? I truly do not know how someone could be threatened by the nationalities. . . . It is in our own interest to decide in favor of [the rights of] Kosovo and Metohija.” Tito decided that Kosovo should not be granted the status of a republic. Instead, it remained a province, although it was allowed to exercise all the rights of a republic except the right to secession. It was simultaneously a federal component of Serbia and a constituent entity of Yugoslavia, and as long as Tito was alive, nothing would change.

*Linguistic Nationalism*

The insidious process of alienation and politicizing ethnic identity can be followed best in the area of culture. In the 1960s, the language question advanced prominently to the fore and served as a type of seismograph for the national sensitivities in the multiethnic state.

The question of whether Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins, and Bosnians can be said to speak the same or different languages is one that dates back to the nineteenth century. It is actually not a linguistic problem but a political one, because three-fourths of Yugoslavs—the population speaking
Serbo-Croatian—communicate in language variations that differ from one another to a degree not much greater than the English spoken in Great Britain, the United States, and Australia. In 1954, the cultural institutions had agreed in Novi Sad that the language referred to as Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian was to be understood as one language with two variants, one western and one eastern. Intellectuals in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina now questioned this. In Slovenia, there was an awakening of linguistic purism, and a semiofficial language tribunal was formed to guard the “purity” and the equal standing of the Slovenian language. The cultural ambitions in Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia were closely and mutually interrelated, radicalized each other through ever more far-reaching demands, and eventually drew the remaining republics into the vortex of their struggles. However, what was decisive for the evolving controversy was not the communicative function of language, but its role as a marker of identity. Language disputes symbolized a deeper need for national recognition, appreciation, and distinction, and this was not least a reaction to the injury that socialism had inflicted on the national pride of its peoples.38

The catalyst for a deepening alienation among the republics was the “Declaration on the Status and Name of the Croatian Literary Language” of March 1967. More than 140 intellectuals from eighteen cultural organizations in Croatia severely criticized what they saw as trends toward Serbification. They were explicit in their rejection of the compromise of Novi Sad and demanded instead that Croatian be recognized as one of four independent literary languages in the constitution, next to Serbian, Slovenian, and Macedonian. The fact that linguistic characteristics could also be found specific to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro interested the Croat experts little.

In reaction to the Croatian declaration, Serbian writers composed that same month a document signed by forty-two fellow writers entitled “A Proposal to Ponder,” in which they supported the idea that the Croatian and Serbian languages be officially separated. It was argued that Serbs and Croats should have the right to develop their national languages and culture independently from one another. Starting in 1969, the Belgrade literary magazine Književne novine was no longer published using the Latin alphabet, but the Cyrillic one—over the protest of at least twelve Belgrade intellectuals.39

Croat communists were very concerned about such nationalist demands. Many renowned scientists and organizations had signed the language declaration, and just as many had voiced their opposition to it. Rallies to save “brotherhood and unity” were held in many institutions and businesses.40 The communists decided to halt nationalistic machinations and expelled nine signers of the declaration from the party. In addition, they forced Franjo Tudjman, one of the key protagonists of Croat nationalism, into retirement as the director of the Historical Institute in Zagreb. Yet, in line with Yugoslav tradition, he
was allowed to continue researching and publishing his work. At the same time in Belgrade, the communist leadership also cracked down on Serb nationalist intellectuals.

Nevertheless, the Croats ended their participation in the common dictionary in 1970 and declared the Novi Sad agreement to be obsolete. The language question had now become a political affair. The long-standing Zagreb cultural society Matica hrvatska and its Belgrade counterpart Matica srpska embroiled themselves in an endless and unpleasant dispute. Essentially this was a proxy conflict between Croatia and Serbia that was emblematic for the domestic struggle over identity and alterity, over distinction and openness, over self-assertion and hegemony—and the desire for more autonomy by some of the republics.41

In 1971, Muslim linguists in Bosnia-Herzegovina started an initiative to document the particularities of the regional “forms of literary expression,” meaning a Bosnian Muslim language. Even before the Second World War, Bosnian Muslim intellectuals were divided over this question. The magazine Gajret had appeared then in the Ekavian (Serbian) variant of the Serbo-Croatian language and in the Cyrillic alphabet, while in other places Muslim authors published in the Ijekavian (Croatian) variant and in Latin alphabet. If the Muslims formed a separate people, argued those more nationally conscious intellectuals, then didn’t they also have the right to a distinct standardized Muslim language and literature? The three most famous Bosnian writers, Meša Selimović, Mak Dizdar, and Skender Kulenović, became the victims of a disconcerting cultural war over their affiliation with Serb, Croat, or Bosnian Muslim literature. Suddenly people wanted to sort out and divide up everything that had constituted a unified entity for centuries. Selimović, who did not want to subordinate himself to the new cultural dictate, no longer felt welcome and moved to Belgrade.

During the 1970s, a “cultural rebirth among Muslims” (Mustafa Imamović) took place in many areas, supported by the work of philosophers, literary scholars, and historians, including Alija Iseković, Atif Purivatra, and Muhamed Filipović. The historian Mustafa Imamović advocated the inclusion of “Muslim history and literature” in the curricula of the schools and universities in his republic, which the communists interpreted as an attack on the multiethnic nature of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In order to calm the waters, a compromise was reached and the subject “history of the nations and nationalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina” was introduced in the history department at Sarajevo’s university. However, emphasis was being placed ever more rarely on the historical unity of cultures in Bosnia-Herzegovina and ever more often on the ethnic individuality of its peoples.42 When the demand for a Muslim cultural organization was expressed in 1971 in order to check “intellectual
colonization,” the communists sensed the coming of a reactionary relapse into the nationalism of the interwar period. Their antidote was simple: they made the point that each of the three peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina was to kindly live out their cultural identity within the framework of the shared, supranational institutions. The three bodies responsible for language policy decided that both variants and alphabets were of equal standing and that the down-to-earth, everyday vocabulary was to be particularly esteemed.

Even at the time this sounded like whistling in the dark, because nationally conscious intellectuals and often religious communities were competing for visibility and influence. As a republic in which four religions were practiced, Bosnia-Herzegovina became the place where rivalries were played out in disputes such as those over the construction of churches and mosques. The century-old contestations of “whose Bosnia” reemerged with the rise of nationalist discourse and disputes. Each side solicited donations specifically from the generous guest-worker “diaspora” in order to outdo the other in building their respective places of worship, as the party publication Borba reported with some concern in 1972.

The “Croatian Spring”

Resentments threatened to flare up again in early April 1971 when the Croatian Central Committee raised serious accusations against “unitarian-centralistic forces” in the League of Communists. The Zagreb leadership had already decided in early 1970 to pursue a course that would make it more independent of Belgrade, even though the Croatian party was itself deeply divided over the issue. Tito called together the heads of party and state in order, as he said, to tackle unsolved problems. Essentially what was discussed was further constitutional reform. The Croatians demanded autonomy in financial affairs and a fundamental restructuring of the currency and foreign-trade system. Serbia criticized the rights of the autonomous provinces. For their part, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia expressed their concern particularly over the critical state of inner-Yugoslav relations. Each side felt discriminated in its own way.

Starting in the spring of 1971, the mass movement MASPOK spearheaded what it intended as a very public debate over constitutional reform in Croatia. A choir of voices called for more independence for their republic, including the top party leaders led by Savka Dabčević-Kučar, the cultural organization Matica hrvatska and its weekly magazine Hrvatski tjednik (Croatian weekly), student representatives, and the media. Some wanted Croatia to have its own army and foreign policy, even redraw the borders with Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Croats complained about a loss of culture and political status, discrimination, and economic exploitation—in other words, very typical grievances that
had already marked the national discourse in the first Yugoslavia. However, it would be too simple to explain the “Croatian Spring” as having evolved solely from a new nationalism; in reality, it was born out of a broad spectrum of political orientations and motivations.

The first issue on the agenda was the language question, accompanied by the complaint that the nation was bleeding to death because 224,000 men and women had left the country to work elsewhere in Europe. Franjo Tudjman announced in Krapina that assimilation “under the banner of socialism” threatened the Croats since it placed into question “the very existence of the Croat people.” The Hrvatski tjednik heated up the debate further by claiming that the Yugoslav government was conducting a “genocidal type of denationalization.”

Additional topics were discrimination and outside infiltration. Already in 1970, party leader Savka Dabčević-Kučar expressed her “major concern that Croatia is becoming more the home of Serbs and other nationalities than the home of Croats themselves.” Therefore, the constitution needed to be changed in a way that defined the republic in the future as a “sovereign nation state of the Croat nation” (and no longer as a republic of peoples with equal standing). Moreover, Croats were said to be underrepresented among the police, officer corps, and higher administrative positions, a claim that was often made but was very hard to substantiate, because only in the case of the People’s Army and the news agency Tanjug does reliable evidence exist proving that Serbs and Montenegrins were overrepresented.

Likewise the prominent theme of betrayal surfaced, as it did in all discourses on threat, as the economist Marko Veselica explained: “The main enemy of the Croat people is its own Croatian bureaucracy, which had to be non-national in order to cooperate with the centralistic forces of Greater Serbia.”

Other core demands were focused on the topic of economic exploitation. Using all forms of media, Marko Veselica propagated the idea that Yugoslavia prospered at Croatia’s expense because the federation exploited his homeland and Serb dominance created colonial dependence. For this reason he demanded a radical revision of the currency system, an autonomous management of taxation and banking, and fewer contributions to the structural fund. In this line of argument, the fact was simply swept under the rug that Croatia profited from the common Yugoslav market and even developed faster than others.

It was at this point that calls were first heard for more sovereignty, sometimes even for the republic’s independence. The purpose was to “complete the mental and territorial integrity” and “statehood.” If Yugoslavia wanted to survive, then only one path remained: to transform it into “a community of truly sovereign and thoroughly equal peoples.” Thus, the “Croatian question” became the overall dominant obsession during the summer and autumn.
of 1971, complained the British ambassador, and the centralists in Belgrade were being blamed for every little thing that went astray in Croatia, even the previous year’s poor potato harvest.59

In early July, Tito summoned the Croatian leadership: “I am very angry. . . . Croatia is the key problem in our country when it comes to the frenzy of nationalism. It exists in all of the republics, but is now the worst in yours. . . . I expect from you . . . decisive action [against nationalism]. Anyone who cannot decide to do this, for whatever reason, should resign their position,” he ranted.60 The crisis came to a head when Zagreb students under the leadership of Dražen Budiša occupied the university in November 1971 and called for a general strike. At the demonstrations, thousands of people yelled “Long live the independent state of Croatia!”

A highly enraged Tito ordered the Croatian leadership to Karadjordjevo in December 1971, where he made it absolutely clear that valid demands would indeed be discussed but that he would not tolerate any mobilization of nationalism to extort from him acceptance of these demands. He decided to strip the party leadership in Zagreb and Belgrade of power. The first people to be forced to resign were Šavka Dabčević-Kučar and two other Croatian functionaries. The Croatian party expelled 741 members, 511 lost their positions, and 189 people were arrested. The “Zagreb Eleven,” primarily members of the cultural institution Matica hrvatska, were tried in court, including Franjo Tudjman, who was charged with propagating Croatian independence, working to establish an illegal counterrevolutionary organization, and cooperating with fascist exile groups.

The second round of expulsions was directed against the liberal economic leadership in Belgrade, headed by Marko Nikezić and Latinka Perović, because they had criticized the dominant role played by the Communist Party. They also backed calls for a greater degree of federalization in Yugoslavia as demanded by Croatia, which they believed would strengthen Serbia by benefiting it economically. Their motto was “a modern Serbia”—by which they meant a strong state free from all Yugoslav ballast. The liberals in Belgrade were also forced to resign following Tito’s intervention.61 Last but not least, the “liberalistic” head of Slovenia’s government, Stane Kavčič, was forced to resign in 1972. Kavčič had been a protagonist for more Slovenian autonomy and a spokesperson in the previously mentioned “road affair.” Similar events occurred within the parties in Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where people alleged to be nationalists were expelled from the party ranks.62

All this left the ideology of Yugoslavism quite tarnished by the early 1970s. Not only was it suspected of disregarding the national interests of its peoples at the expense of an abstract supranational community or of cloaking
Serb hegemonic ambitions, but it was also being criticized in national-oriented circles in Serbia. The communist leadership made painstaking efforts to avert any suspicion of this type. Everyone should and had to identify themselves with a nation, nationality, or ethnic group, and whoever refused to do this appeared shamefacedly in the 1971 national census in the very last category of “Yugoslav,” placed in quotation marks. More sovereignty was now transferred to the constituent entities, which revealed a new problem: the incongruence of ethnic and political boundaries. Only in Slovenia did they overlap for the most part. Otherwise pluralism hampered the simple equation of “nation = republic.” If people were to be given more latitude to express their national identity, then this also had to be true in the republics where they constituted a minority. This, in turn, programmed ethnic segregation within a multicultural society. Moreover, radical souls even questioned the territorial order. Mihailo Djurić, a philosophy professor and member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, was an adamant opponent of confederalization and criticized at a public event in March 1971 that the borders of socialist Serbia were “neither national nor historical.” If the reform process made it necessary to create one’s own nation state, then the fate of fellow countrymen in neighboring republics had to play a role as well, he argued. Djurić was sentenced to prison but was later permitted to return to the university.