Yugoslavia; The Tragedies of the Nineteen Nineties

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Fighting and never ending conflicts became normal for the people residing in the now former Yugoslavia with thousands upon thousands of lives lost from the conflicts there. Yugoslavia was a country that was thrown together and people of all different demographics, morals, and ethnic groups became one country with six different states, these included Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Conflicts that occurred in Yugoslavia should have been apparent from the beginning. The nineteen nineties in Yugoslavia had certainly some of the most notable tragedies to occur after World War Two. Not only did wars break out for independence, but the ethnic conflicts rose as well. Yugoslavia’s ethnic and political history was the groundwork for the tragedies in the 1990’s, this led to Internally Displaced Peoples, refugees and ultimately the separation of Yugoslavia.

What events lead to the conflicts in Yugoslavia?

Yugoslavia broke out into numerous wars for independence, and war within the countries themselves. This was from the demographics of the state and country, president Josip Broz Tito's death and Slovenia walking out of the communist conference and declaring their independence as they did so.

Understanding the people that reside in a given area allows everyone to understand the conflicts and ethnic tensions within the country. With an immense amount of diverse groups of people living in Yugoslavia and within each state, tensions were susceptible. Macedonia’s population includes 64% are Macedonians, 25% are Turkish, 4% are Roman, and 3% are Serbian. In regards to

1 “What Happened in Yugoslavia?”
religion in Macedonia, 65% are Orthodox and 33% are Muslim. Bosnia and Herzegovina population have three major ethnic groups Serbians, Croatians, and Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). In terms of religious diversity in Bosnia and Herzegovina 45% are Muslim, 33% are Orthodox, and 15% are Roman Catholic. In the state of Montenegro, 45% are Montenegrins, 29% are Serbians, and 9% are Bosniaks. Serbia’s population contains 83% serbians, largest concentration of this populations in Europe. Slovenia includes 83% are Slovenes, 2% are Serbians, 2% are Croatians and 2% are Bosniaks. This groups consists primarily Christian and Muslims. Croatia’s population is 90% Croatians and 4% Bosnians. As for religion, 86% are Roman Catholic and 4% Eastern Orthodox. Ethnic tensions arose differently in cohesion to each state due to the ethnic groups variations in each state and were the ethnic groups lived. The different demographics of the people within states made easy targets for ethnic tensions and conflicts. With many different groups of people practicing distinctive religions, languages and other ethnic identifiers. The tensions created a volatile environment for all residents.

Josip Broz Tito the former dictator in Yugoslavia attempted to successfully unify the country’s six states. Shortly after his death ethnic tensions returned that he had previously suppressed during his rule. In addition, he could not prevent the severe economic problems that

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2 “Macedonia Population 2018”

3 “Bosnia and Herzegovina Population 2018”

4 “Serbia Population 2018”

5 “Slovenia Population 2018”

6 “Croatia Population 2018”
transpired. Tito’s rule began in 1953. His dictatorship was deemed unlimited in 1963, his rule lasted until his death in 1980. Tito was always consumed with any opposition to his communist ideals. He was especially afraid of decentralization. To prevent decentralization, he suppressed internal opposition with any means necessary. In the beginning of his rule of Yugoslavia, the country had impeccable economic growth. Tito attempted to industrialize Yugoslavia by nationalizing large land holdings, adding industrial enterprises, and increasing public utilities.

Although eventually unemployment issues unfolded and economy began to move into a downhill direction. Thereafter people residing in Yugoslavia began to wonder if in fact the communist party was the right way to rule Yugoslavia. Tito was an intellect, who managed to hold together a country destined to break into pieces and made ethnic groups live in cohesion with one another. He temporarily held peace in Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, immediately after his death everything that Tito created was destroyed. All the effort of equalizing ethnic tensions and stabilizing the economy. It is important to be aware of the events leading up to the demise of the Yugoslavia involving the former leader Josip Broz Tito. This improves knowledge and the understanding of how Yugoslavia ended in pieces and increased ethnic tension. Ethnic tensions that were revived shortly after his death ultimately is great factors for the urge to be independent and conflicts to begin. The downfall in economics only pushed people in Yugoslavia to encourage independence among states.

Finally, the last major factor contributing to the fall of Yugoslavia and conflicts, was

7 "Tito's Last Secret: How Did He Keep the Yugoslavs Together?"

8 "Josip Broz Tito"
Slovenia and its representatives walking out of the communist conference and declaring independence.

This resulted after the voting for several important legislative measures went against their wishes. Specifically the vote to relinquish its 45 year old monopoly power. Slovenia explained it would take ideological approach to the national party. Delegates believed more autonomy should be granted. Adding to the tensions, elections of new political parties also caused the uncertainty and doubt of the ethnic parties involved. Croatia then declared independence shortly afterward. The independence declared by both Slovenia and Croatia allowed other states to follow in their footsteps. The Declaration of Independence in both Slovenia and Croatia led to the inevitable conflicts between and with the other states.

The Conflicts Themselves

A Catastrophe in Yugoslavia happened within each state, a substantial amount of the conflicts occurred. In most cases the Serbians or gaining the Independence from Yugoslavia were the main push for these conflicts.

Slovenia walking out of the Communist Conference, it was just the start to the events that would change the lives of people in Yugoslavia. Immediately after the declaration of the countries independence on July 25, 1991. The Yugoslavia’s People's Army, (JNA) was sent

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9 “URGENT Slovenia Walks out of Yugoslav Communist Congress, Reforms Thwarted”

10 “Slovenia”

11 “A Brief History of The War in Croatia – Background, Battlefields and Outcomes.”

12 “Ljubljana | Ten-Day War.”
immediately, although Slovenia expected this to occur. This sparked the Ten Day War between the JNA and the T.O (General People's Defense). The ten day war it started on June 27th, 1991. Few casualties occured in the Ten Day War. The JNA had advantage with weapons air flights, men and all the tactical aspects of war. On June 28th 1991, Slovenian representatives met with three ministers of Foreign Affairs and reached an agreement of the cessation of hostiles. July 7th Slovenia representatives and SFRY (Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia) established a three month moratorium on Slovenia Independence activities, and was independence was granted shortly afterward. Finally, July 8th SFRY presidency reached a decision to withdraw the JNA. Officially ending the Ten Day War.

Croatia, was the next to declare independence from Yugoslavia. The war was said to be one of the bloodiest wars since World War Two. Ethnic tension and hatred between the Serbian and Croatians increased. Croatia’s Serbs began moving out of Croatia as the conflicts escalated. On May 19th, 1991 Croatia successfully held a referendum on independence and dissolved association from Yugoslavia on June 25th, 1991. As the ethnic tensions continued to grow, the violence did as well. In November 1991, the Siege of Vukovar which destroyed most of the city and massacred 261 hospital workers. Peace negotiators were sent to resolve the conflicts, although were killed in Croatia by Serbian jets. The JNA was controlled by the Serbians. The Serbians and the JNA flooded Crotians and the Serbians ended up taking about

13“Slovenia's Ten-Day War.”

14“A Brief History of The War in Croatia – Background, Battlefields and Outcomes.”

15“Croatia Facing Military Defeat.”
one third of the land in Croatia. Meanwhile the war continued and lasted for approximately four years. In 1995, the tides began to turn in the Croatians favor after the Croatian army captured the Serbian enclave. This was a major bid to take back the Croatians land. The U.S. also got involved and within three days most Serbian occupied places was taken back.

Bosnia and Herzegovina became a horrible place for any of its residents. The 1990’s was an unfortunate time in the history Bosnia and Herzegovina. The referendum for independence in March was boycotted by Serbian minority. The Bosnian conflict was an ethnically rooted war (1992-1995) involving the Serbian’s, Croatia's, and Bosniaks (Bosnian muslims). The tensions began to grow after a new election of the three parties. In 1991, Serbian Autonomous Region was declared. JNA had sent weapons to Bosnian Serbians. In August the Serbians Democratic party began boycotting Bosnian presidency. The war that broke out in Croatia made the breakup of Bosnia and Herzegovina especially vulnerable.

Numerous places were harmed by Serbian forces. Bosnians were the primary target of the Serbians. The U.N (United Nations) refused to join forces but U.N.’s facilitated the delivery of some aid for Bosnia and Herzegovina by deeming safe areas. The events that occurred thereafter can only be described as horrible. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) decided to use force for the first time, NATO shot down four Serbian aircrafts that violated a no

16 “Bosnian Genocide.”
17 “Bosnian Conflict.”
18 “Withdraw of U.N Peacekeepers Could Create Danger.”
19 “Q&A On NATO.”
fly zone. NATO also launched more concentrated air strikes. With NATO’s involvement combined with the large scale land offensives by the Bosniaks and Croatian people, it transpired peace talks.

Peace accords called the Dayton Accords, sponsored talks held in Dayton, Ohio. Formally, the peace accords were signed in December of 1995. Dayton accords stated that 51% of the land was given to the Croatians and Bosnians and 49% of the land given to the Serbian republic. Bosnia and Herzegovina encountered many war crimes committed against the people of the in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Foca Rape Camps where over 20,000 women were raped by the Serbs and men sent to concentration camps. In addition the city was destroyed, notably the destruction of Bosnian property, cultural sites and mosques. The Serbencian massacre in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina July 1995. Here, 8,000 men and boys massacred, the worst massacre since World War Two. If one was not massacred they would be sent to concentration camps. Which had inhumane living conditions. Beating, torture and mass extinctions were a part of the daily lives of the concentration camps. In total 10,000 people were brutally murdered. The suffering did not end there. The representative during the signing of the Dayton Accords for Bosnian Serbs, Slobodan Milosevic the former president of Yugoslavia, was arrested in 2001 and charged with genocide. Unsurprisingly, the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina formed a deep

20“Bosnian Serbs Reject Dayton Accords.”
21“Happening in Yugoslavia .”
22“ Yugoslav War Crimes Tribunal Open Today .”
23“ International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.”
hatred towards him. Groups such as the Voices of Bosnian Genocide, a Facebook page shared
the stories of the victims of the war crimes committed this fueled understandable unacceptance
and hatred toward Milosevic’s behavior and actions.

The prosecution of Milosevic was watched by thousands of victims hoping for justice. 
During the beginning days of the trial Milosevic on October 29, 2001 stated “I have been
indicted because I defended my people legally and with legitimate means on the basis of the right
to self-defence that every nation has.” The evidence presented by the witnesses, included at the
highest-levels of power in the countries of the former Yugoslavia and the international
community. Dozens of victims shared their painful and tragic stories. In addition, many
documents, video tapes and intercepted telephone conversations made their debut in the
Tribunal’s courtroom. At the end of the Prosecution’s case, the Trial Chamber reviewed all of
this evidence and issued a decision that a reasonable judge could convict Slobodan Milošević on
all counts. The decision did not state that the judges would or should convict him. The trial
formally ended on March 14, 2006, following Slobodan Milošević’s death in the Tribunal’s
Detention Unit on March 11, 2006. Slobodan Milosevic’s death did not leave victims of the
crimes with which he was charged without justice. The Prosecution indicted a number of his
apprentices, who helped him to plan and execute the crimes that resulted in so much suffering.
This included the Croatian Serb leaders Milan Martić and Milan Babić, and Bosnian Serb leaders

24 “The Trial of Slobodan Milosevic.”

25 “Slobodan Milošević Trial - the Prosecution's Case.”
Momčilo Krajišnik and Biljana Plavšić, were convicted 25.

Serbia was involved in numerous wars. The Kosovo war involved conflicts with the Albanians, as they opposed ethnic Serbs and the government. The tensions increased but failed to be addressed by International Community 26. In 1996, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) emerged and attacked Serbian police and politicians 26. The actions of the KLA continued to increase and Serbs special police and Yugoslav armed forces attempted to reassert control over region 26. Montenegro joined the Serbs as member states of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to fight against the Kosovo in 1998-1999 26. The Contact Group involving U.S, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and Russia demanded to cease fire. The President of Serbia agreed but failed implement the agreement 26. Again diplomatic negotiation began although broke down a month later. March 24th NATO struck Serbian military targets 27. Serbs were drove out the Albanian displacing several hundred thousand people 27. NATO’s bombing lasted eleven weeks, and concluded after NATO and Yugoslavia signed peace treaty for the return of Albanians 27.

What does the former Yugoslavia look like now? Was it triumphant or tragic?

Yugoslavia conflicts had consequences for the actions that occurred. After the former Yugoslavia broke apart, several additional conflicts took place. The Insurgency in Presto Valley in Macedonia and Albania were a series of armed conflicts in 2001 28. It began when ethnic Albanian group attacked National Liberation Army (NLA) military group attacked security at the

26 “Tensions High as Serb Pressured to Resign.”

27 “Serbia in the Yugoslav Wars.”

28 “Insurgency in the Republic of Macedonia”
Republic of Macedonia. The conflict ended in an Agreement called the Ohrid Agreement. In 2003, Yugoslavia ceased to exist providing a pathway for independence to Serbia and Montenegro. In Kosovo in 2006 declared independence from Serbia. Kosovo wanted land distribution to be on ethnic borders. Although today talk for the land to be shaped on the ethnic borders is in the works between the Kosovo and Serbians. Serbia also had sporadic violence and Anti Serbian Riots. Finally, the refugees crisis. 2.3 million people fled from towns and villages a great percent of them from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. 400,000 fled to different countries and 1.8 million live within other states of the former Yugoslavia. The acts committed in Yugoslavia have had negatives consequences for the people living in the former Yugoslavia. The effects of the conflicts of Yugoslavia are present in the U.S. now that the former Yugoslavia is safe people have chosen to buy the property and build homes to live in, after all the tragedy in Yugoslavia, finally some good has come of it.

All in all, Yugoslavia was a thrown together country, states declaring independence and conflicts occurring. These conflict resulted in the tragedy in most of the former areas of Yugoslavia. Tragedies intertwined with the 1990’s included the wars and ethnic conflicts that resulted in the death innocent of people or harm of innocent people. Ultimately, the complete separation of Yugoslavia did not end the tragedies. Evidently there were less triumphs than tragedies. Finally, today, the goal of people should be to never allow a country recreate an environment even closely resembling Yugoslavia's again.

29 “Back to the ‘Wrangling World’ Of Europe .”
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This newspaper was written when the wars in Croatia were occurring and after the ten day war in Slovenia. I used this source to improve my overall understanding with the refugees in the country of Yugoslavia during that time.


This article written recently, the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia had been going on for a while. This source helped me understand what is happening right now after the conflicts accorded in Yugoslavia and included in the after the separation of Yugoslavia.
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**Secondary Sources**


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This gave needed insight about the demographics of Croatia to understand why conflict occurred in Croatia.

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“I used this source to understand what the International Criminal Tribunal did while Yugoslavia was still a country.


This source allowed me to understand the exact order of the events that occurred in Yugoslavia during the years of conflicts and issues.


I used this source to understand what Tilto did during his ruling of Yugoslavia and how he in some ways prevented war while his rule.

This source allowed me to understand the events that happened in the twentieth century in Yugoslavia.

This source gave me needed background information when I was first looking up the Yugoslavia and the events that transpired.


This source gave me insight to the demographic of Macedonia and helped me understand why and how the conflicts occured.


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