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THE UNITED STATES AND SLOVENIA, 1990-1992

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ABSTRACT

An examination of the Congressional Record and of the record of State Department briefings reveals that the policy-making establishment was seriously divided concerning the recognition of Slovenia during the months preceding eventual recognition. While both houses of the Congress were, with one exception (Congresswoman Helen Bentley) broadly sympathetic to both Slovenia and Croatia and increasingly supportive of diplomatic recognition for both countries, the State Department held fast to a policy of nonrecognition. In the event, the U.S. was the last major Western power to recognize Slovenia. Britain, France, and Germany all recognized Slovenia before the U.S. did so, as did also Japan and Russia.

Key words: International politics, independence of Slovenia, disintegration of Yugoslavia, foreign US policy, American Congress, sovereignty

GLI STATI UNITI E SLOVENIA, 1990-1992

SINTESI

Consultando gli appunti redatti dal Congresso Americano e i "briefings" del Ministero degli Esteri Americano, si può constatare che nei mesi prima del riconoscimento, le istituzioni politiche di più alto livello erano molto divise per quanto riguarda il riconoscimento della Slovenia. Il Senato così come pure la Camera del Congresso erano favorevoli ai tentativi della Slovenia e della Croazia (eccetto l'onorevole Helen Bentley) per ottenere il riconoscimento diplomatico, mentre il Ministero degli Esteri insistiva ostinatamente per il non riconoscimento. Così gli Stati Uniti sono state tra le ultime potenze occidentali che hanno riconosciuto la Slovenia. Il Regno Unito, la Francia e la Germania hanno riconosciuto la Slovenia prima degli Stati Uniti, così come l'hanno fatto pure il Giappone e la Russia.

Parole chiave: politica internazionale, indipendenza della Slovenia, sfaldamento della Jugoslavia, politica estera statunitense, Congresso Americano, indipendenza

"Yugoslavia is like humpty-dumpty – all the king's horses and all the king's men are just not going to put it together again."

Senator Bob Dole (R-Kansas), on 23 January 1992, on the floor of the U.S. Senate

I

On 29 January 1991, as tensions in the SFRY reached a new height, Congressman Dennis Eckart from Ohio declared, on the floor of the House of Representatives, "It is my hope that the threat of violence being exercised by those in Yugoslavia will not thwart the free hopes and aspirations of the brave Republics of Croatia and Slovenia. We will not tolerate the use of force against innocent people ..." (Eckart, 1991a). Congressman Eckart was no doubt sincere in his expression of sympathy for the people of Slovenia and Croatia, but as a congressman he did not have the authority to make promises binding on either the U.S. State Department or the Pentagon.

Indeed, the record shows, first, that the Office of the Presidency and the U.S. State Department were singularly unprepared for the growing crisis in the SFRY, had no thought-out vision (nothing, in fact, beyond not wanting to be bothered), and generally preferred to ignore the growing crisis as far as possible. Viktor Meier, Duško Doder and Louise Branson have documented the resulting U.S. tendency toward a "head-in-the-sand response" in regard to the Yugoslav crisis, to use a phrase from Doder and Branson (Meier, 1999; Doder, Branson, 1999, 110). The record shows, in the second place, that the U.S. Congress was, for the most part, at loggerheads with the executive branch over the correct response to the disintegration of the SFRY. Indeed, aside from that indefatigable champion of Serb interests, Congresswoman Helen Delich Bentley, the members of both houses of Congress overwhelmingly sympathized with Slovenia and Croatia from early on.

Among American senators, Senator Bob Dole (R-Kansas) was among the best informed. As early as February 1990, Senator Dole announced, on the floor of the Senate, that "the formation of democratic parties in the Republics of Slovenia and Croatia, as well as in the Province of Kosovo" gave "cause for hope" (Dole, 1990). Urging the State Department to adopt a policy supportive of the development of pluralism, Senator Dole sounded what is obviously a standard call in the halls of American power: "As Americans, so fortunate to live in a country that represents the light of freedom, we need to continue to support democracy throughout the world." This phraseology effectively combined self-congratulation with an appeal to special American obligations.

In October 1990, even as Borisav Jović, president of the SFRY presidential council, illegally scuttled a Slovene-Croat proposal to transform the SFRY into a confederation and Slovenia and Croatia, increasingly frustrated at the subversion of the collective presidential council by Serbian President Milošević, froze their payments

to the federal treasury. Congress entertained House Concurrent Resolution 385 (originally numbered 352), condemning human rights violations in Kosovo and urging the governments of Slovenia and Croatia "to meet their financial commitments" (Hamilton, 1990, 4). At that time, the House Foreign Affairs Committee was still uncertain as to what Slovenia and Croatia ultimately preferred, i.e., independence or confederation, and Raymond Seitz, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, advised the committee that "I don't find any responsible leader in Yugoslavia [who] is suggesting the breakup of the federation." (Hamilton, 1990, 5) Seitz did not say if he had identified any "irresponsible" leaders in the SFRY. He also did not mention that, insofar as the constitution of the Republic of Serbia, adopted on 28 September 1990, empowered the Serbian president, i.e., Milošević, to "command the armed forces in peace and in war, [and to] order general and limited mobilization" (Mamula, 2000, 178), Serbia had already placed itself above the federation in the key sphere of military-security affairs. In this respect, the Serbian constitution went at least as far as the controversial Slovenian constitutional amendments of September 1989.

Within the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (HCFA) there was considerable sympathy for the Slovene-Croat initiative. As Marty Sletzinger, at the time a staff consultant on the HCFA, put it later, "The Slovene desire to rewrite the rules of the system did not seem unreasonable."[1]

Although Resolution 385 criticized both sides in the SFRY – Serbia for its treatment of ethnic Albanians, Slovenia and Croatia for not paying their contributions to the federation – Congresswoman Bentley took umbrage at what she considered a "discriminatory, inappropriate, and extremely ill-timed" resolution, faulting it for singling out "some human rights violations" in Serbia, while "ignoring the rest of the human rights violations in that and other Republics and in neighboring Balkan countries" (Beutley, 1990). On this as on other occasions, Beutley found herself largely isolated.

As 1991 opened, SFRY Minister of Defense Veljko Kadijević revealed that he had been monitoring and filming Croatian discussions concerning the smuggling of weapons from Hungary but had not taken any steps to attempt to seize the contraband. Instead, in January 1991, the SFRY presidency called for the disarming of all paramilitary forces – a call aimed, in the first place, at Croatia. When the deadline for the disarming of the so-called irregular units ran out, Senator Dole took the floor to note Slovenian and Croatian concerns that Belgrade was looking for any "excuse for armed intervention in both republics in order to topple the non-communist regimes elected last year [in 1990]." Although Senator Dole's phraseology appeared to conflate the federal organs with Milošević's government – a conflation in any event al-

1 Marty Sletzinger, in interview with SPR, Washington D.C., 13 March 2001.

ready existing as a fantasy in Milošević's mind – he was on the mark in noting that "... Belgrade is clearly not committed to peaceful change and democratization. Rather, the Belgrade government is committed to the use of force to destabilize the democratic governments and spread police state conditions throughout the country." (Dole, 1991a) Two days later, Senator Dole again took the floor to warn that the situation in the SFRY was "rapidly deteriorating" and that Slovenia and Croatia were being subjected to threats and intimidation by the JNA, and to express his "confiden[ce] that, in the event of a military crackdown or takeover, the Congress will react immediately and decisively." (Dole, 1991b)

That same month, Senator DeConcini inserted a statement into the Congressional Record, to the effect that the Helsinki principles should also be seen as valid within states; this signified an extension to the domestic sphere of the proscription of the use of force to change existing borders. DeConcini's insertion was aimed at Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav government immediately protested, saying that principles of international law could not be incorporated into a domestic setting.[2]

By this point, socialist Yugoslavia was being characterized as a "fragile, ethnically diverse country" (Eckart, 1991a) and by Howard Phillips, chairman of the Conservative Caucus, an organization by then working actively to promote U.S. support for Slovene and Croatian self-determination, as "an artificial country." Phillips thought that it was an "... indication of how artificial it is [that]" – in his view – "they couldn't even think of a name for it originally and [therefore] called it 'the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.'" (Phillips, 1991)

Slovenia was already being praised for its democratic and market-oriented aspirations, while Milošević's repressive response to the anti-government demonstrations of 9 March 1991 confirmed the growing sentiment in the Congress that "Milošević himself is to blame" for the waxing political problems affecting the country and that "Milošević and his supporters who advocate hardline communism are the real enemies of Serbia." (Dole, 1991c)

U.S. Ambassador Warren Zimmermann, who had been sending dispatches about the rising tensions in the country to the State Department, had flown to Washington D.C. in October 1989 to meet with Secretary of State James Baker, in order to impress on the latter that the U.S. would eventually have to get involved with Yugoslav problems and that it would be smarter to get involved sooner rather than later. But, as Doder and Branson note, "Baker had no time for Zimmermann" as the administration was focusing all of its attention at the time on Operation Storm (against Iraq). (Doder, Branson, 1999, 108) Later, when Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Marković flew to Washington D.C. on an official visit organized by Zimmerman, he found himself largely ignored and, to his great surprise, found no one interested even in hosting a

2 Robert A. Hand, Staff Adviser, in interview with SPR, Washington D.C., 2 April 2001.

lunch or dinner in his honor. (Zimmermann, 1999) The only significant step taken by either the Congress or the executive branch in the crucial first six months of 1991 was to pass the so-called Nickles Amendment, co-sponsored by Senator Don Nickles (R-Oklahoma) and Senator Dole, in May 1991. This amendment prohibited further economic assistance to Yugoslavia as long as the oppression of Albanians in Kosovo continued. What the U.S. did not do was to make any effort to assure the success of the last-ditch efforts among the SFRY's six constituent republics to reach some sort of compromise, whether by expressing an opinion or by offering to broker any agreement. Nor did either U.S. President George Bush or Secretary Baker assimilate the fact that whatever one might make of the Slovenian government's careful preparations for eventual independence,[3] those preparations signified that the Slovenes had concluded that the SFRY was in its death throes and that the time to find a compromise was running out.

Instead of coming in on the side of Slovenia and Croatia, as the Congress was urging, however, President Bush dispatched Secretary of State Baker to Belgrade at the eleventh hour. Arriving on 21 June, just five days before the expiration of a well-known deadline set by the Slovenian and Croatian governments, and surely aware that Milošević and his understudy, Montenegrin President Momir Bulatović, were not negotiating in good faith and that Milošević and Jović had already attempted to engineer a coup in March,[4] Baker confined himself to vacuous platitudes about the advantages of negotiating and, by stressing America's evidently unqualified support for the unity and territorial integrity of the SFRY, encouraged the JNA to undertake military action against Slovenia. (see Tomac, 1993, 126; Doder, Branson, 1999, 110) But as Baker put it to a Virginia audience upon his return to the U.S.,

> *We do not intend to reward unilateral actions that preempt dialogue or that preempt the possibility of negotiated solutions, and we will strongly oppose intimidation or the use of force. We continue to recognize and to support the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, including the borders of its member republics. At the same time, we do – we can and we do support greater autonomy, greater sovereignty, for the republics. In other words, we support a new basis for unity in Yugoslavia, but only through peaceful means such as dialogue and negotiation.* (Baker, 1991)

Given the low priority being assigned to Yugoslavia by the Bush administration, however, it seemed clear that American support for the sovereignty of the Yugoslav republics was purely verbal.

Ambassador Zimmermann was obviously impressed by Janez Drnovšek, Slovenia's representative in the collective presidency. Zimmermann told me that Drnovšek

3 For a sympathetic reading of the Slovenes' preparations, see Meier (1999, 175-177); for an unsympathetic portrayal of the Slovenes as self-centered, see Zimmermann (1999).

4 For details, see Doder, Branson (1999, 116-117) and Meier (1999, 165-167).

"really wanted to avoid a war; he wanted" – in Zimmermann's words – "to keep Yugoslavia together somehow and he was constantly trying to negotiate with the Army on one side and with Kucan on the other."[5] But the Bush administration had no policy vis-à-vis the SFRY beyond benign neglect, and benign neglect in conditions of rapid disintegration risked being anything but benign in its effects.

On 25 June 1991, Croatia and Slovenia declared their disassociation from the already dysfunctional SFRY. Just hours before their disassociation was announced, Congresswoman Bentley made a lengthy statement before the House, declaring, inter alia,

> *... I cannot emphasize enough how important it is that Yugoslavia remain united during these very difficult and unstable times in Eastern Europe ... I credit all those who have been working feverishly over the past several hours and days to impress on the leaders of Slovenia and Croatia just how important a unified Yugoslavia is at this time. Certainly President Bush and the administration are to be commended for the very firm position that they have taken on this issue and their valuable contribution to those voices which are calling for Yugoslavia to remain united for the benefit of all of the citizens of that nation.* (Bentley, 1991)

The following day, Margaret Tutwiler, the State Department spokesperson, told journalists gathered for the regular briefing,

> *These unilateral steps by Croatia and Slovenia will not alter the way the United States deals with the two republics as constituent parts of Yugoslavia ... The United States continues to recognize and support the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, including Croatia and Slovenia ... Following Secretary Baker's visit to Yugoslavia, the United States still believes that there are opportunities for compromise within Yugoslavia acceptable to all six republics ... We therefore urge Croatia, Slovenia, and all Yugoslavs to continue dialogue toward a new and democratic basis for a common Yugoslav state.* (Tutwiler, 1991a)

Where the State Department saw a receptivity to compromise or the possibility of a solution "acceptable to all six republics" is not clear. It seems apparent that neither Tutwiler nor her immediate supervisors had much idea as to the character of the Milošević regime, the nature of Slovene (and Croat) fears, or the particulars of recent developments in the now-defunct SFRY.

At the State Department briefing on 27 June, Tutwiler carefully refused to single out the JNA for criticism and answered three questions with the same blanket formula, asking all parties to refrain from force and to resume dialogue (Tutwiler, 1991b). By the following day, however, Tutwiler was stressing the JNA's responsibility for the escalation of violence in Slovenia (Tutwiler, 1991c). In the meantime, the Senate had adopted a resolution at 1 a.m., the night of 27/28 June. Co-sponsored

5 Warren Zimmermann, former U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia, in interview with SPR, Washington D.C., 23 March 2001.

by Senators Dole, Pell, Pressler, Byrd, Helms, Nickles, and Riegle, the resolution condemned the use of force against Slovenia, called on Serbia to stop blocking the rotation within the collective presidency, and demanded that the JNA desist from further operations in response to the later developments. (Senate, 1991a)

Belgrade now accommodatingly called for an end to the violence it had initiated[6] and suggested a three-month moratorium on the declarations of independence (Tutwiler, 1991c). Belgrade subsequently requested that an arms embargo be imposed against the constituent republics of the SFRY. Under international law, a government could request such an embargo against the territory over which it had authority. Given that the U.S. and other Western powers immediately embraced the three-month moratorium, Slovenia and Croatia could be construed during this period as still under the authority of the federal government; the fact that Slovenia's Janez Drnovšek and Croatia's Stipe Mesić continued to work briefly within the collective presidency lent that interpretation a certain superficial plausibility. But, under international law, once Slovenia and Croatia were recognized as independent states, an arms embargo against them could be legally maintained only at the request of the governments of Ljubljana and Zagreb. (see Boyle, 1996) There may have been some confusion in the U.S. Congress concerning Belgrade's intentions in requesting the arms embargo. For example, on 16 July, Representative George E. Sangmeister congratulated President Bush and the EC states on imposing an arms embargo, interpreting this as a message "to the Yugoslav Government that [its] behavior is totally unacceptable." (Sangemaister, 1991)

II

One of the earliest voices in support of the recognition of Slovenian (and Croatian) independence was that of Congressman William O. Lipinski of Illinois. Already on 15 July 1991, Congressman Lipinski declared his unqualified support for the two new republics, expressing his surprise and disappointment that the major powers had given them such a "chilly" reception. "We should praise Croatia and Slovenia for their unwillingness to sit idly by while their freedoms are crushed by Serbia, not lecture them," said Lipinski (1991). He was seconded two weeks later by Congressman "Dick" Swett of New Hampshire, who characterized Slovenia's resistance as a fight between "the forces of freedom and democracy" and "the forces of repressive totalitarianism." Congressman Swett predicted (accurately) that President Bush's policy of trying to veto "the democratic will of the people" would fail and urged support for Slovenia and Croatia (Swett, 1991).

The Congress was already broadly inclined to favor Slovenian aspirations, if not

6 The prime minister's office had been involved in the decision to use force against Slovenia, and now called for an end to the violence.

also those of Croatia. But the battle for the minds of the members of Congress was still raging. Congresswoman Bentley, in particular, advocated Belgrade's view. In a statement before the House on 1 August, Congresswoman Bentley charged that the Milošević government was being victimized by "an ill-informed media bias in the Western press." She also submitted, for inclusion in the Congressional Record, an anti-Slovene (and anti-Croat) diatribe written by Simon Freeman and appearing in The European on 19 July. In Freeman's sarcastic prose,

The Slovenes cleverly portrayed themselves as clean-limbed, tanned church-goers who only wanted to live peacefully and democratically in their Alpine idyll of mountains, lakes and meadows. The Serbs, on the other hand, the Slovenes suggested, were ruthless communists. They were dirty, unshaven brutes who dropped cluster bombs on innocent civilians. They came from the east, which had always sought to inflict its intolerance, religious fanaticism, and alphabet of squiggly lines on Europe.

These were grotesque caricatures, of course, but, thanks to the brilliant propaganda campaign in Ljubljana, they have taken hold of the public imagination in the West, turning a complex struggle into a straightforward battle between the forces of light (Slovenes and Croats) and darkness (Serbs). The nerve-centre of this propaganda operation was an underground conference complex deep below the streets of Ljubljana ... The Slovenes needed a bloody dramatic conflict to ensure [that] the world did not lose interest. So they showered the media with details of battles that had often never taken place. (The European, 1991)

On this reading, then, Western journalists were exonerated for any simplistic caricatures which flowed from their pens, since, in Freeman's view, this was but the result of the "brilliant propaganda campaign" orchestrated by the Slovene leadership, characteristically described as ensconced in an underground bunker.

Nor was Bentley content with this. Subsequently, on 26 November, she submitted for inclusion in the Record, two articles by Nora Beloff, a retired journalist well known for her sympathies for Chetnik causes. In Beloff's mind, the politicians of DEMOS were not so much democrats as nationalists and the Slovenes "... deliberately provoked federal intervention by defiantly hauling down the Yugoslav flag on the Austrian frontier." (Washington Post, 1991b) Missing from Beloff's account were any references to Slovene outrage over the trial of "the Four" in 1988[7] or over the atrocities being perpetrated against Kosovar Albanians by the Milošević regime, or to Milošević's attempt to destabilize Slovenia by trying to hold a "meeting for truth" in Ljubljana, or to Serbia's declaration of an economic boycott of Slovene goods, or to Milošević's subsequent declaration that the Serbs would not try to hold the Slovenes in the federation (which, in combination with the boycott, suggested a kind of im-

7 See the account in Janez Jansa (1993), chapters 1-2.

plicit "expulsion" of the Slovenes from the SFRY), or to the Belgrade government's confiscation of Slovene-owned enterprises and other facilities within Serbia.[8]

But Bentley's was, from the beginning, an isolated voice. Among those members of Congress who took the floor to speak about the breakup of the SFRY and the combat on the ground, the overwhelming majority were sympathetic to the Slovenes. A striking statement, in this regard, came from Congressman Joe Kolter of Pennsylvania, who quoted from the U.S. Declaration of Independence to make his point that Slovenia and Croatia had a right to separate themselves from a state being overtaken by "repression, aggression, destruction, and terror." In Kolter's view, Belgrade was the last citadel of "Bolshevism" in Europe, while the Slovenes, Croats, and Kosovar Albanians wanted "freedom, a free-market society, democracy, and self-determination." Given this understanding, it was clear to Congressman Kolter on which side Americans found their cherished ideals espoused. (Kolter, 1991) Kolter was not the only person to cite the American Declaration of Independence to justify recognition of Slovenia and Croatia: so too did Jeane Kirkpatrick in an article for the Washington Post inserted into the Congressional Record (Washington Post, 1991a).

During the early months after 25 June, the American administration tried hard to hold onto its original formula, even to the extent of denying that the JNA's actions in Slovenia and Croatia had rendered that formula obsolete. The formula, as stated by Tutwiler on 2 July, was that "The United States supports the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia as the Yugoslavian people themselves determine what that is through peaceful means ... We firmly believe that Yugoslavia's external or internal borders should not be changed unless by peaceful, consensual means." (Tutwiler, 1991d) That Belgrade's unilateral abrogation of the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina had been anything but consensual was well known in the Congress,[9] but ignored by President Bush and the State Department. Even as late as 4 October, on the eve of the expiration of the "negotiating phase" during which Slovenian and Croatian independence was put on hold, the State Department held back from any hint of acceptance of the new states, restricting itself to a restatement of the formula and to declaring that the U.S. did not accept as legitimate a declaration by Branko Kostić, vice president of the collective presidency, that a simple majority of those presidency members present could make authoritative decisions (thus scuttling the established procedure requiring an absolute majority of all members whether present or not). (Boucher, 1991a)

During the three-month "negotiating phase", leading representatives of the Slove-

8 In the same article for the *Washington Post*, Beloff wrote that in World War Two "all the Serbs were pro-allied." One wonders if she had ever heard of Milan Nedić or Dimitrije Ljotić, or if she knew anything about Draža Mihailović apart from wartime reports published in the London *Times*, or if, somehow, she managed to construe them all as having been pro-Allied. For a corrective, see Cohen (1996).

9 See, for example, Broomfield (1991).

nian government, including Prime Minister Lojze Peterle, Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, and "Representative" (Acting Ambassador) Peter Millonig were able to make their case before the American people. The last mentioned used the occasion of a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington D.C. to make a telling point: "It is not true," he said on that occasion, "if officials, American officials claim that a unilateral secession as it was stated somehow preempted a negotiated settlement in Yugoslavia, because we always sought a negotiated settlement." (Millonig, 1991) Later, during a visit to Washington D.C. in early September, Prime Minister Peterle pointed out that Yugoslavia was beyond repair and that Slovenia was no longer open to any solution other than independence; but after discussions with Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, Prime Minister Peterle admitted that he was pessimistic about the prospects for U.S. recognition of Slovenia in the foreseeable future (Peterle, 1991a).

But by then the ranks of those favoring U.S. recognition of Slovenia (and Croatia) included Senators Dole, Metzenbaum, Pell, Helms, Pressler, Nickles, and D'Amato and Congressmen Bonior and Eckart (Senate, 1991b; Bonior, 1991; Pell, 1991; Eckart, 1991b). Indeed, on 3 October, a bipartisan group of Senators introduced legislation to impose a strict trade embargo on Serbia, while criticizing the Bush administration for having "reacted passively to the violence in the Balkans" (Riegle, 1991).

In the wake of 7 October (expiration of the "negotiating phase") Congressional outrage at Serbian depredations in Croatia, and perhaps especially at the Serbian siege of Dubrovnik, was accompanied by ever stronger Congressional support for the diplomatic recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, if not also of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. In a statement on the floor of the Senate on 25 October, U.S. Senator Al Gore (D-Tennessee) noted that the SFRY had been useful, in the Cold War era, "as a barrier to Soviet aggression," but noted that

> *It no longer serves any geostrategic purpose for us. On the contrary, it is now the breeding ground for troubles that will plague the United States of America for another generation, unless we take measures now to deal with the situation.*

Pleading that it was high time to "have done with the fiction that Yugoslavia [still] exists," Senator Gore continued:

> *Let us recognize and establish relations with the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia. Let us provide Croatia, along with our European allies, with emergency medical and humanitarian assistance. Let us put on the table a direct threat to supply them with antiaircraft and antiarmor equipment if cease-fire agreements now in place are not honored by Serbian authorities. Let us strongly urge our friends in the European Communit[y] to join us in this cooperative set of steps ... [W]e are not going to like what will happen in the Balkans if we simply stand by, if Europe simply stands by and if the Republic of Serbia has its way. It*

will be a cauldron of hatred. It will become a pit of regional rivalry among regional powers. It will light the way, by the fires it sets, to violent conflict among other Slavic nations driven by ethnic tensions. It will sit in the gut of Europe like a gallstone. It will threaten the long-term vital interests of the United States of America. (Gore, 1991)

Senatorial outrage was compounded by growing impatience and frustration with the Bush administration's continued refusal to accord diplomatic recognition. Indeed, the pressures for recognition emanating from the U.S. Congress were at least as strong as those emanating from the German Bundestag. The difference was that the American president is in a better position than the German chancellor to simply ignore what is being said in the legislative chambers.

An op/ed piece for the New York Times (4 November 1991), written by Anthony Lewis, made an impression on legislators and, at the request of Congressman Christopher Smith of New Jersey, was entered into the Congressional Record. Although Lewis' article was focused on the army's siege of Croatia, its arguments had clear implications for the recognition of Slovenia. "There is no Yugoslavia anymore," Lewis pointed out. "There are republics as independent in their feelings as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania." (NYT, 1991) Two days later, Senators D'Amato and Pressler submitted resolution 216 calling on President Bush to confer diplomatic recognition on, and establish diplomatic relations with, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo (Senate, 1991c). Senators Gore and Dixon offered a parallel resolution (#213) criticizing the Serbian government and the JNA for their continued aggression (Senate, 1991d).

Arguments for recognition stressed the pluralist character of the Slovenian and Croatian systems, by contrast with that of Serbia, which was repeatedly described as "Stalinist".[10] The Slovenian and Croatian right of self-determination was also seen as nullifying any notion of Yugoslav sovereignty, both because the SFRY had palpably ceased to exist (which would have been quite sufficient an argument) and, for some, because Yugoslavia was allegedly "an artificial creation from the start." (Senate, 1991d) Senator Dixon added the further argument:

The Republics which constitute the [Socialist] Federal Republic [of Yugoslavia] have a history of conflict with each other. The Republics have distinct cultural and religious backgrounds as well. The late dictator Jozef [i.e., Josip Broz] Tito held these conflicting Republics together for decades, but even he could not hold them together forever. (Senate, 1991d)

Senator DeConcini warned, in the course of a lengthy statement on the subject of recognition, that an American failure to recognize Slovenian and Croatian independence would signify that the U.S. was "abandon[ing] our principles." (DeConcini, 1991)

10 For example, by Congressman Christopher H. Smith (1991).

Were the Senators and Congressmen guilty of fanciful self-delusion, believing, perhaps, that all Slovenian and Croatian politicians were candidates for sainthood or that diplomatic recognition would, by itself, result in a complete cessation of all hostilities? Again, Senator DeConcini's statement is worth citing. "I am under no illusion, however," said the senator, "about what recognition means. Like sanctions, it is unlikely to bring a sudden and complete halt to the fighting, since the fighting is really over territory and not [about the] maintenance of a federation. Recognition will not mean foreign intervention or military assistance to the independent republics, and it would be foolhardy, if not dangerous, to interpret it as such.

Recognition also does not mean approval of the policies of the republican governments, most of which have espoused nationalism, sometimes at the expense of democratic development, economic reform and respect for the rights of all people on their territories. None of the republics, including Croatia, can claim to be fully democratic... While independence may now be a precondition for further democratic development, I wish to make clear that, to the United States, democracy is far more important than either the unity of Yugoslavia or the independence of its republics ..." (DeConcini, 1991)

III

In mid-December 1991, when the EU voted belatedly to accord diplomatic recognition to Slovenia and Croatia – in a move promoted by Germany as a matter of principle[11] – President Bush continued to sit on his hands. Congressional frustration now turned to anger, especially among the Democrats. "Germany's action in [accelerating its own formal move] recognizing Croatia was hardly precipitous," Congressman William S. Broomfield of Michgan told his colleagues on 24 January. "The war began last June ... The fact is that Yugoslavia no longer exists." (Broomfield, 1992) A day earlier, noting that some 38 states had undertaken to recognize Slovenia and Croatia, the influential Senator Dole suggested that "It seems that our [own] struggle for independence and the lack of outside support [for American independence] are only a dim memory, a very dim memory." Dole urged that "Americans ... must be catalysts for freedom, and for peace and stability in that region," once more reaffirming his support for diplomatic recognition (Dole, 1992).

Senator Claiborne Pell (Rhode Island) placed some of the blame for the continuation of the fighting in Croatia on the Bush administration, for its long refusal to accept the fact that the SFRY was no more (Pell, 1992). Meanwhile, in the House of Representatives, Congressman Tom Lantos of California played on American shame and called it a matter of principle that the U.S. follow the EU in extending full dip-

11 On the German engagement in this issue, see Ramet, Coffin (2001), esp. pp. 48-52 and 62.

lomatic recognition to Slovenia and Croatia (Lantos, 1992a). Senator Arlen Specter (R-Pennsylvania) submitted a resolution (#254) on 31 January 1992, calling on the Bush administration to recognize the two new republics "immediately" (Specter, 1992), but three weeks later neither the Bush administration nor the State Department had given any recognizable signal that it intended to recognize either republic. An obviously completely disgusted Senator Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina) took the floor on 20 February to point out that the United States was, by then, "the only leading Western nation which has failed to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia" (Helms, 1992) Noting that Bentley was the only person he had interviewed to have expressed "complete satisfaction" with U.S. policy, Senator Helms speculated that the Bush administration's 18-month delay in recognizing Lithuanian independence had encouraged the Milošević regime to do as it pleased in Croatia. For Helms, the central error committed by President Bush was to subordinate "democratic values and human rights" to misguided notions about Realpolitik (Helms, 1992).

But the Bush administration appeared to be impervious to appeals to shame or principle or even common sense. Congresswoman Jan Meyers of Kansas tried a different tack, appealing to the alleged desire of American enterprises to make money in Slovenia and Croatia; by that point, 45 nations had recognized Slovenian and Croatian independence (Meyers, 1992a). In mid-March, three months after the EU had decided to recognize Slovenia and Croatia, the Bush administration finally accepted the inevitable and followed the European lead. Congressman Lantos, while welcoming the decision, called the administration's long delay "shocking" and "wrongheaded", suggesting that the Bush administration "... preferred a negative peace, which is the absence of tension, to a positive peace, which is the presence of justice" (Lantos, 1992b).

Even so, the Bush administration waited another three weeks to convert its stated intention to recognize Slovenia and Croatia into a formal recognition of the two republics, becoming the last major Western power to do so, having been preceded also by Russia (Lipinski, 1992).

Later that year, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel offered some reflections relevant to the protracted struggle for recognition in an interview published in several American newspapers. Inserted into the Congressional Record by Congressman Mervyn M. Dymally of California, the interview includes the following telling remarks:

> *Morality as a basis for political action is often invoked as an afterthought, too rarely as a forethought... It was a moral cause – constitutional democracy – that gave my nation, Slovenia, authority to declare its independence from centralized communist rule. Our actions would have been justified even in the absence of the European community's Badinter Commission, which recognized that Yugoslavia*

was in a state of genuine dissolution and that its constituent republics were not merely in pursuit of rogue secession. (Rupel, 1992)

IV

Why did the Bush administration wait so long to recognize Slovenian and Croatian independence, given the strength in both houses of Congress of bipartisan pressure for recognition? An answer must begin by acknowledging that the Bush administration considered the views expressed in the two houses of Congress and even the resolutions adopted there to be largely irrelevant. Nor was President Bush concerned about what the West European powers thought. As late as 16 December 1991, State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher answered a question at the regular press briefing by noting:

I will basically stick with what the President said. Of course, we're aware of reports [that] Germany and possibly others may take some steps to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia this week. Our position has not changed. (Boucher, 1991b)

The diplomatic situation had changed (with the expiration of the three-month "negotiating phase", with emerging European support for Slovenia and Croatia, and the final breakup of the collective presidency), and the military situation had changed (with the conquest by the Serbian side of about 30% of Croatia's territory), but through all of this, the position of the Bush administration had not changed.

To be sure, the administration did offer some reasons why it did not want to recognize Slovenia and Croatia, but these reasons are hardly believable. The first was that the Europeans allegedly wanted the U.S. "to stand back" as they handled the situation on their own; as a summary of Lord Carrington's views, this might be adequate, but it will scarcely suffice as a summary of Europeans' attitudes vis-à-vis the American role.

Second, the Bush administration claimed that diplomatic recognition would mean a "bloodier" war, which is to say that the Bush administration believed that one or both sides might well have been exercising self-restraint and that recognition alone might energize an intensification of fighting. In the face of the Serb destruction of Vukovar, siege of Dubrovnik, Osijek, and Vinkovci, and expulsion of more than 600,000 Croatian citizens from their homes (by the end of December) (Broomfield, 1992), one wonders where President Bush might have thought he could identify evidence of self-restraint on either side and what might have been his explanation for such restraint. The only allusion to restraint (not self-restraint, however) in this phase I have seen is to be found in the memoirs of Zdravko Tomac, where he relates that Milošević was allegedly restrained from throwing his whole military might against Croatia by the personal intervention of Mikhail Gorbachev.

And third, as of December 1991, the Bush administration offered yet a third rea-

son for its own "self-restraint" in the matter of recognition, viz., that "American recognition would interfere with the deployment of the U.N. peacekeepers." With some 49 countries, including the major West European states and Japan announcing recognition by 16 December, and with peacekeepers already arriving, it is once again difficult to see the logic of the administration's position.[12]

In fact, the real reasons for the Bush adminsitration's long delay were completely different. I would suggest that there were four principal reasons why the Bush administration did not want to recognize the new states of Slovenia and Croatia. First, as many commentators have noted, President Bush worried that American acknowledgment that the SFRY had collapsed might send the "wrong message" to Moscow. What then was the "right message"? That the U.S. would hold onto the past long after it made any sense to do so? Or that the U.S. could not accept political change?

Second, President Bush was already looking ahead to his bid for reelection in 1992 and wanted the Yugoslav problem to go away. He did not want to be dragged into a foreign war in which no oil was involved or have to explain to the American people, on the campaign trail, why the U.S. was getting involved.

Third, as documented by Viktor Meier, Western diplomatic reports from Belgrade in 1990-91 were "such a colossal jumble of political error, lazy thinking, and superficiality" (Meier, 1999, 217) that Western capitals, Meier suggests, were being led astray by their own chief informants, albeit inadvertently. Moreover, the advice relayed by Secretary of State Baker to the quarreling republics in June 1991 – to negotiate and reach a compromise – reflected a failure to grasp the fact that the republics had been trying for more than three years to do just that, and had reached a deadend, in which Slovenia felt extremely threatened by changes in Serbia.

And fourth, as I have suggested elsewhere, the U.S. government was, more for accidental or contingent reasons than from any premeditated strategy, looking for advice primarily to scholars who were nostalgic for the defunct SFRY or who were hostile to the Slovenes and Croats and sympathetic to the Serb expansionist program.

And hence, the Bush administration, which liked to trumpet its notion of a "New World Order,"[13] found itself trying to hold back the tide of democratization in not only the Soviet Union but also the Yugoslav area, and ended up trying to hold onto the political deadwood of the recent past. Perhaps the "New World Order" should ideally be inhabited only by older, established political entities. As for the effects of this delay, in the long run the delay had little impact one way or the other on Slovenia; where Croatia was concerned, the delay impeded the Croats' ability to obtain heavy armaments (only light arms were readily obtainable from Hungary at that time), while the delay directly encouraged Milošević and Karadžić, in my view, to make plans for their attack on non-Serb communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina the following spring.

12 These three reasons are summarized by Congresswoman Meyers (1992b).

13 For discussion, see Hutchings (1997).

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ZDRUŽENE DRŽAVE IN SLOVENIJA, 1990-1992

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POVZETEK

Vpogled v zapise ameriškega kongresa in v brifinge ameriškega zunanjega ministrstva razkriva, da so bile najvišje politične institucije močno razdeljene glede priznanja Slovenije v mesecih pred njenim dokončnim priznanjem. Medtem ko sta bila tako senat kot predstavniški dom v glavnem naklonjena želji Slovenije in Hrvaške (z izjemo poslanke Helen Bentley) po njunem diplomatskem priznanju, je zunanje ministrstvo trmasto vztrajalo pri politiki nepriznanja. Pri tem je vnovič in vnovič navajalo nespremenjeno formulo, po kateri naj bi ZDA priznale le odločitve, sprejete na osnovi mirnih pogajanj in konsenza, in to še dolgo potem, ko je bilo že vsem opazovalcem jasno, da za mir ali konsenz med republikami rajnke Jugoslavije ni prav nobene možnosti. Medtem ko so člani kongresa govorili o moralnih načelih, pri čemer so tu in tam celo navajali ameriško Deklaracijo o neodvisnosti, primerjali demokracijo Slovenije in Hrvaške in njune želje po samoodločbi z domnevnim srbskim "stalinizmom" in "boljševizmom", je zunanje ministrstvo nenehno poudarjalo zaskrbljenost zaradi vzdrževanja miru v Jugoslaviji, učinkov, ki naj bi jih priznanje imelo na razhajanja v državi, in zaradi "sporočila", ki bi ga priznanje Slovenije in Hrvaške poslalo Sovjetski zvezi in njenim sestavnim republikam. Tako so bile Združene države zadnja zahodna sila, ki je priznala Slovenijo. Velika Britanija, Francija in Nemčija so to naredile pred ZDA, tako kot tudi Japonska in Rusija.

Ključne besede: mednarodna politika, osamosvojitev Slovenije, razpad Jugoslavije, zunanja politika ZDA, ameriški kongres, neodvisnost

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