

On Historical Necessity and Contradictions between Sovereignty and Integration of European Nations*

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I have read with pleasure the subjects to be addressed during this *Round table of Europe* discussion.

If I say that I am in agreement with the suggested thesis on the emerging new European order—from the perspective of political and economic transformation, cultural values, and environmental protection—it is not due to conventional reasons, but because it is in accordance with my deepest convictions.

Nevertheless, allow me to suggest that we should focus more specifically on two issues during this round table. First, we should examine the right of nations to self-determination, and consider their membership in multi-national state communities and their impact on the future of Europe. Second, we should consider how to resolve the contradictions between national sovereignty and European integration.

In examining these two important and complex issues, please allow me to outline my personal views.

My interpretations are based on my understanding of general historical movements, including the nation to which I belong. A broader understanding of their importance can be obtained from a brief overview of the history of the Croatian nation, as well as from my books.

The Croatian nation is one of the oldest European nations. Croatia appeared as an independent state subject in Europe during the Frankish-Byzantine era, between the 9th and 12th centuries. Later, Croatia entered into a state entity with Hungary and

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Austria, retaining—though in limited form—its state and national individuality. The Hungarian emperors were also the rulers of the Croatian Kingdom (Slavonia and Dalmatia).

The Habsburg Monarchy no doubt lasted as long as it did because it was a natural, economic, and cultural whole, and, therefore, had an affinity toward Central European lands and nations. However, its dissolution was caused by the desire of its nations for national independence.

Within the Versailles Order of Europe, the Croatian nation found itself in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later known as Yugoslavia. As a result of Serbian hegemonistic efforts to denationalize the Croatian people, one segment of Croats opted for national independence during the Second World War, and declared an independent state within the framework of Hitler's New European Order. Another segment tried to resolve the Croatian problem by creating a Federal State of Croatia within the framework of Tito's Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, based on the principles of AVNOJ (Anti-fascist Council of Yugoslavia), which was envisaged as a community of equal nations.

The crisis in Yugoslavia today is partly due to the bankruptcy of the totalitarian "one-party political system," but primarily by tensions between the nations. The Serbians have had too many benefits from the federation, while the non-Serbian nations, especially the Croats and Slovenes, have had too few. As a result of their bitter experiences, they can hardly be satisfied with a confederation.

Croatia and Slovenia see their future in integration into the European Community.

Advocates of Serbian domination support a united Yugoslavia within Europe, as though its internal structure were non-existent.

The Baltic nations face a similar problem.

The Basque problem, along with Catalonia, Northern Ireland, Wales, Corsica, South Tyrol, etc., remind us that even in Western Europe, there are open issues requiring a response in a United Europe.

I examined the problem of self-determination and integration of nations more than twenty years ago in my book, **Great Ideas and Small Nations**. At that time, there was an effort in Yugoslavia to consolidate the idea of Yugoslav statehood based on socialist internationalism. This was promoted by Titoist federalists, on the one hand, who wished to preserve a Yugoslavia based on the AVNOJ principles and their own one-party monopoly. On the other hand, the centralists wished to strengthen and expand Serbian hegemony. The Serbian political position could never allow, from the very beginning of Yugoslavia until today, the idea of federal equality of the south Slavic nations.

Grand universal ideas have been used by the great powers, countries, and nations to extend their domination over the weak, but they have never reached their highest idealistic objectives.

Such ideas were, however, in contradiction with Marxist theories of a unique socialist world. Therefore, after my book **Great Ideas and Small Nations** was released, I was not able to publish anything for nineteen years (actually, until last year).

I was interested in the problem of European integration for many reasons. The contemporary world would not have its present form had it not been for the historical role of Europe. Can Europe, and her constitutive force in the world, make use of her experience? How and in which way can Europe participate in the world order? Is it possible to reconcile the contradictions of national sovereignty with the imperative of integration on the European continent?

I dealt with these questions in my book, **The National Question in Contemporary Europe**, which was published abroad more than ten years ago (in Croatian, German and English language editions).

I sent my manuscript abroad, foreseeing a new struggle between competing nationalisms in Yugoslavia. This was a period in which it was clear that the nations of Eastern and Central Europe could not escape Leonid Brezhnev's doctrine of limited sovereignty. It would be appropriate to note here that the idea of a unique Soviet nation was proclaimed in the Soviet Union, an entity which was created from a multitude of different nations and peoples. They also announced that they were looking forward to the creation of a unique socialist nation within the community of socialist states, i.e., the Soviet Bloc.

It is important to recall these theoretical constructions because, despite what has transpired since, there are people in Yugoslavia and elsewhere who continue to believe in the idea of creating a unique supra-national Europe.

Therefore, I would like to share with you my views about the idea of establishing a European Community, which I examined in my writings a decade ago.

No power in history has been capable of artificially creating a new nation from those already in existence. All such attempts have failed. Nations are not created by pseudo-scientific, voluntaristic theories, or ideological programs by Great Powers and blocs. They emerge in a natural manner, in an objective and complex historical process, as a result of the development of all the material and spiritual forces that in a given area shape the national being.

The drive for survival and the desire of a nation to live and retain its national identity, to assert itself and to be free and recognized in the world community are irrepressible. No nation can

abandon its own national being in the name of supra-national higher interest and goals, for this would mean abandoning life itself.

And in our age, we are witnesses to a contradictory and complex progression of events. As the civilization of man becomes more united, and the whole world more integrated, so have peoples' national characteristics become more diverse. Our contemporary experience shows clearly that the more technologically integrated the world becomes, the more pronounced are the national individualities of historic and new nations.

National movements among the unfree and dependent European nations are an expression of their national interests, and their individual demands and goals are determined primarily by their current position, not their achievements. More precisely, the fact that they do not all make the same demands is not because they do not wish national sovereignty and complete freedom, but due to the fact that these demands are dependent upon the internal structures of states and international realities. In some unitarian countries, there are movements for the recognition of national identity and the national rights of minorities; in others, for a national autonomous self-government; in others, for a federalist solution of the national question; and in still others with federal systems, there are demands for greater sovereignty within a confederation, or for complete independence.

In today's Europe - freed from imperialistic-hegemonistic burdens of the past and ideological exclusiveness - peaceful coexistence, the pluralism of ideas and the polycentrism of social and state systems, even within the already realized European Community, have become a reality, and the process of integration can only proceed on a voluntary basis, through the coordination of the free will and interests of the individual countries. The completion of the process of self-determination for European nations need not be a obstacle. On the contrary, it can be a stimulus for integration. Europe already possesses most of the ideological, political, and other preconditions for realizing the classical idea of unifying the European nations into the United States of Europe.

Throughout European history, we have seen that the perception of the historical need for self-determination and integration of European nations has ripened. Even though Europe is still encumbered by the difficult historical heritage of diverse national problems, there is not a single country in Europe today that is attempting to resolve them. There are grounds for assuming that the historical necessity for creating a united Europe will provide incentive and facilitate the resolution of this painful issue. By the same token, the historical need for nations to realize self-determination cannot be postponed without serious consequences. In fact, their self-determination will promote the speedier unification

of the countries of Europe into the **United States of Europe**. On an overall European scale, no nation loses or gains through the resolution of the open national questions of certain stateless nations. The imperative of the times requires that they be concerned both with their own and their neighbor's welfare, for the satisfaction of the national aspirations of all the European nations is an important prerequisite for stability in the new international order of a united Europe.

The ideas of self-determination and integration for the nations of Europe are not in opposition to each other. Rather, they should be viewed as complementary and as the embodiment of their individual and joint interests. The United States of Europe would provide the possibility of and framework for the inclusion of the other small "stateless" nations of Europe into the international community, and they would consolidate rather than destabilize the international order. In addition, a united Europe would accelerate the development of conditions enabling the great European nations to reassume their place in a changing world. The nations of Europe require a united Europe to realize their particular and the common interests of Europe as part of the global community. Finally, mankind requires a **United States of Europe** to promote greater harmony within the international order.

Resolution No. 4

Message from Croatian and Slovenian Opposition Parties to the "Round Table of Europe"

Vienna, January 11, 1990.

1. The opposition Slovenian and Croatian parties have founded their common program on two basic goals: the democratic reform of the political system, and the demand for sovereignty of the people of Yugoslavia. This demand is based on the inalienable and universal right of all nations for self-determination.
2. It is our firm belief that the promotion of these principles depends on a new political and economic arrangement between the Yugoslav nations. We believe that the first step towards the implementation of these goals would be the reorganization of Yugoslavia as a confederation of its nations. Such a confederation would greatly contribute to the security and stability of Southeastern Europe.
3. Such an arrangement corresponds to current developments leading toward European integration, and are being supported by the people and leaders of Eastern and Western Europe.

The interests of European nations, be they large or small, should be represented only by these nations themselves, without control or tutorship from nations with imperialistic tendencies or aspirations to privileged positions in the international community.