## **PREFACE**

In the Western world the understanding of the former Yugoslavia and its 1990s wars was shaped by the pronouncements of Western politicians and the writing of Western journalists—of whom some to this day stick to their claim that the root of the conflagration lay in ancient Balkan hatreds. The authors of this revised and expanded edition of *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia* argue differently. Providing a historical analysis of a broad range of subjects—cultural, political, and economic—the contributors, most of whom live in the region, project a complex picture of the ethnic dynamics and the true causes of wars in their country.

The book begins with the sixth century, when the South Slavs settled the Balkan peninsula, and follows the origins, development, and fall of their medieval states, from the ninth century to the fourteenth. The partition of the Balkans between the Ottomans and the Hapsburgs that followed divided its population—peoples of the same language and origin—forcing them to fight against each other in the armies of their conquerors. Yet in the nineteenth century, despite the divisions imposed by the foreign powers, the movement for the unification of all South Slavs emerged, laying the ground for the twentieth-century creation of Yugoslavia.

The writers in this volume see the roots of ultranationalism that destroyed Yugoslavia not in some insidious historical pattern of ethnic hatreds, but rather in the quite specific set of circumstances that crystallized following the death of Marshal Tito in 1980. Among those, three were of utmost importance: the leadership vacuum; the deep economic crisis; and the absence of liberal political traditions, which had much to do with the historical waves of foreign conquest. To explain the particular character of the Yugoslavian crisis, the authors discuss Tito's legacy

and the experience the Yugoslavs had with socialism. Particular attention is paid to the 1980–90 decade of political and moral disillusionment and economic downfall. At the end of that period, Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tudjman, relying heavily on the use of television, carried out their fatal nationalistic programs, deeply destabilizing the ethnic balance and destroying the Titoist pledge to uphold "brotherhood and unity."

In the approaching war, the Yugoslav People's Army played a significant part. Its role is examined in a separate chapter. The authors argue that the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, presented in detail, did not start out as ethnic wars, and that the extreme brutality witnessed by the world was not inherent in the Balkan—or the Serbian—national character.

With the outbreak of the long-anticipated Kosovo war in 1999, the great powers openly engaged in what certainly seemed at the time to be yet another redrawing of borders in the Balkans. This subject is explored in detail by Jasminka Udovički in a newly added chapter on Kosovo in this edition. The NATO bombing campaign—resulting in the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees and serious damage to Serbia's basic infrastructure—appeared to bring the independence of Kosovo one step closer. Beyond any notion of independence loomed the coalescing of ethnic Albanians from the southern Balkans into a greater Albania. The formation of such a state would involve the prospect of yet more conflict, affecting Bulgaria and Macedonia, where substantial numbers of ethnic Albanians now reside. The Kosovo air campaign also revealed deep fissures within the postwar Atlantic alliance and emphasized the significance of Russian diplomacy in the area. At the same time, the war provided a glimpse of how NATO might expand into the east, including, in particular, a possible role in organizing and protecting the oil business in the Caspian Sea.

Finally, this book offers valuable insight into the activity since 1991 of the forces of the nonnationalist, extraparliamentary opposition and the independent media in Serbia and Croatia—an aspect of the war years that remained largely unreported in the United States. Without the commitment and the moral integrity of nonnationalist journalists working for the independent media in Belgrade, Split, Zagreb, and Sarajevo—journalists whose eyewitness reports and analysis supply a wealth of hard data for the story of Yugoslavia's ruin—a good part of this book could not have been written.

## **BURN THIS HOUSE**