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## **In the Aftermath of Yugoslavia's Collapse: The Death of the Serbo-Croatian Language**

In recent years the saga of Yugoslavia's collapse has attracted much attention. Scholars have grappled with analysis of ethnic identity, the causes of conflict, and the political implications for Europe and the Balkans. The cataclysmic events have yielded works with dramatic titles, such as "Yugoslavia's Ethnic Nightmare" (Udovicki and Ridgeway 1995) or "National Suicide with Foreign Assistance" (Hayden 1992)<sup>1</sup> However, one striking consequence of Yugoslavia's violent disintegration--the dissolution of the Serbo-Croatian language--has thus far been of little interest to most scholars. Many linguists still speak of "Serbo-Croatian" as if the unified language has somehow endured despite the obvious evidence to the contrary. Other scholars merely have transformed their terminology, referring to Serbian/Croatian, rather than Serbo-Croatian.<sup>2</sup> Are these

linguists attempting to rise above politics in the belief that Serbo-Croatian--no matter what Serbs, Croats, Muslims, and Montenegrins might say--still exists? Can we continue to assume that somehow the language will be reunified, if and when the nationalists finally lose their grip on power? In this paper, I analyze the current status of the language-politics interface in the Yugoslav successor states and entities. By perusing the recently published literature on Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian, I attempt to discover the veracity of the thesis that linguistically Serbo-Croatian is one language, although politically it is "more" languages.<sup>3</sup> Language death is often understood in the context of "endangered languages" at risk of extinction; in this paper I use this term to refer to the demise of a unified language tradition, and the subsequent birth of new languages from the former supernational language. This process is linked with the evolution of new nation states and more narrowly-defined regional identities (e.g., Croatian Serbs, Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, Bosnian, etc.).<sup>4</sup>

#### 1. How Do Languages "Die"?

In his study of language, society and identity, Edwards

(1985) discusses the notion of "language death," which has become a popular topic among linguists. He elaborates upon Kloss' classification of three types of language death: (1) language death without language shift, i.e., the last living speaker of a given language dies; (2) language death as a result of language shift, whereby a language cannot survive because its speakers are not concentrated in a compact area, or the language has been dominated by another language; and (3) nominal language death, which constitutes "language death through a metamorphosis (e.g. a language is downgraded to dialect status when the speech community stops writing it and begins to use another, closely related variety or the language undergoes 'partition'" (p. 50).<sup>5</sup> It is this third type of "language death" which most closely corresponds to Serbo-Croatian. However, unlike the partition of Sorbian into two components, "Upper" and "lower," Serbo-Croatian, 3 successor languages have thus far made claims of legitimacy.

If we accept the notion of "language death" must we necessarily embrace the term "language birth"? Can a language reach a magical transformative moment in its development which can be construed as the "birth of a language"? Such a concept

overlaps with the concepts of linguistic and ethnic revival. Creators of new modern languages frequently are nostalgic for the glorious or forgotten past of their ethnic group. For instance, Edwards (1985:66) describes the efforts to revival of the Cornish language in Cornwall. Cornish had been a widely-spoken language before the Reformation. The last Cornish speaker died in 1777. In 1901 a society dedicated to the revival of the Cornish language and culture was founded. This movement gained limited political influence in the 1950's when a Cornish political party was established. The Slavic peoples engaged in similar linguistic revivals in the nineteenth century, especially within the Austro-Hungarian Empire (cf. Auty 1958). In this period several new literary languages were established (such as Slovak, Ukrainian, Upper Lusatian and Lower Lusatian), while others, such as Czech were reborn after long periods of Germanization. Perhaps Fishman's term (re)birth can apply to both the reinvigoration of a threatened language, and the awakening of national feeling among previously unnoticed or undeveloped ethnic identities (cf. Fishman 1972:55).

In order to make the claim that Serbo-Croatian has experienced "language death," I will first attempt to trace the

development of the unified Serbo-Croatian and determine whether Serbo-Croatian was truly a viable unified language. Thereafter, I will consider the emergence of the new successor languages in order to draw conclusions on the processes of linguistic (re)birth in the Yugoslav successor states.

## 2. Historical Overview: Precarious Unity

As any South Slavic linguist would admit, the boundaries among the South Slavic languages are not easily defined. Each of the transition areas between the languages can be considered to be "gray areas," i.e., dialects which could belong in the realm of one or another "national" language. Moreover, the process of language standardization in the region has been painstakingly slow. For instance, the Serbo-Croatian language was conceived as a unified language in 1850, but only in 1960 was an "official" orthographic manual published. Bulgarian emerged as a modern literary language in the late nineteenth century, but only in 1945 was the current orthography adopted. Bla\_e Koneski spearheaded the establishment of a standard Macedonian language in 1944;<sup>6</sup> nevertheless, some Macedonian linguists have recently advocated reforming the language in the

newly independent Republic of Macedonia. Unlike Macedonian, however, Serbo-Croatian served both as the native language of diverse Slavic ethnic groups (Serbs, Croats, Muslims, and Montenegrins), and as the primary language of communication for all citizens of the former Yugoslavia, including all nations and nationalities. Thus, Serbo-Croatian served as a linguistic "umbrella" attempting to encompass all, at times feuding, ethnic groups. This in itself accounts for the turbulent history of Serbo-Croatian linguistic unity. This history is described in detail in several studies (cf. Naylor 1980, Banac 1984 and Greenberg 1996). In contrast to the previous works, below I suggest that Serbo-Croatia unity was not only precarious, but never truly embraced by either side; there are only rare moments when a consensus is achieved between Serbs and Croats.

The "Literary Agreement" of 1850, which was signed in Vienna, brought together the chief reformer of the Serbian language, Vuk Stefanovi\_ Karad\_i\_ and the leaders of the Croatian Illyrian movement. This was a crucial turning point in the development of a single literary language for Croats and Serbs. Both sides were able to agree on the elevation of the Eastern Herzegovina-type (Neo-Štokavian/ijekavian) dialect for

the new literary language. This dialect was both prestigious for the Croats, since it was the dialect of Dubrovnik and its fabled sixteenth century vernacular literature; simultaneously, it was the dialect of many of Vuk's Serbian folk songs, and was considered to be a melodious dialect which best preserved a system of four distinctive tones and distinctive vowel quantity.

This desire to cooperate in the development of a joint literary language was part of a broader movement (the Illyrian movement) in Croatia to strengthen Croatia's position within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By linking with fellow oppressed Slavic peoples, ethnic "survival" (together with ethnic "revival") could be guaranteed. It is, therefore, not surprising that the initial efforts to codify the unified language took place in Zagreb under the tutelage of the Serb Djuro Dani\_i\_ and a group of Croat linguists. The Serbs of Vojvodina and Serbia proper had little influence on this initial process of standardization. they expressed opposition to some of Vuk's choices, including the introduction of the Latin *j* into the Serbian Cyrillic script, and the choice of the Ijekavian dialect, which ekavian-speaking Serbs of Vojvodina and most of Serbia considered to be foreign and non-sophisticated.<sup>7</sup> Many



Croat nationalists were similarly dissatisfied, since they considered the joint language to be tantamount to Croat capitulation to Vuk and the Serbs.<sup>8</sup> Despite the often virulent opposition, by the end of the nineteenth century, the joint language had several grammars (cf. Budmani 1867 and Mareti\_ 1899), an orthographic manual (cf. Broz 1892) dictionaries (Dani\_ic\_ 1880; Broz and Ivekovi\_ 1901). Most of these works were intended for the "Croatian or Serbian" language.

Whereas in the nineteenth century most efforts in codifying the unified language were concentrated in Croatia, in the twentieth century, the Serbs often aggressively pursued the unification agenda often in contradiction to the spirit of the "Literary Agreement." The Serbs asserted their political and linguistic domination over the Croats especially in the period of the interwar Yugoslav State. The Serbs intended to create a uniform literary language based on Serbian linguistic norms. The Croats fiercely objected to this Serb assault on the language codified by Dani\_i\_, Mareti\_ and others. The language conflict reflected the political tensions between Serbs and Croats in the 1930's. During the Second World War, the Croatian fascists formed a separate Croatian language replete with

puristic neologisms. Approximately ninety years after the "Literary Agreement" a true unification of the Serbo-Croatian language had eluded all sides.

Ultimately it is only in postwar socialist Yugoslavia that modern Serbo-Croatian emerged. In 1954 Serb and Croat linguists signed the Novi Sad Agreement, declaring

The national language of Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins is one language. Hence the literary language, which has developed on its basis around two main centers, Belgrade and Zagreb, is a single language with two pronunciations--ijekavian and ekavian.<sup>9</sup>

At this stage linguistic unity is consistent with Tito's ideology of "brotherhood and unity." The language would be called "Serbo-Croatian" among Serbs and Croato-Serbian among Croats. The Serbs and Croats, as the two chief Serbo-Croatian speaking ethnic groups, would employ their own "official" variant of the language. Dictionaries would therefore list Eastern (Serbian) and Western (Croatian) variant forms. This situation could be compared to that of American and British English (cf. Magner 1967:342),<sup>10</sup> and the norms found in the *American Heritage Dictionary* as opposed to those in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The publication of the joint Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian Orthographic manual simultaneously in

Zagreb (in the Latin script, ijekavian variant) and Novi Sad (in the Cyrillic script, ekavian variant) was heralded by both sides as an example of cooperation and compromise. Thereafter, work began on a joint dictionary. The "dream" of linguistic unity embodied in the "Literary Agreement" seemed to be on the verge of realization. This era of good will and cooperation lasted less than a decade. Dissatisfaction from the Croat side soon undermined the Novi Sad Agreement. While mildly supportive of the joint orthographic manual of 1960,<sup>11</sup> Croat linguists quarreled with their Serb counterparts on the issue of the dictionary, which began appearing in 1967.<sup>12</sup> Once again, they felt threatened by what they perceived as Serb linguistic hegemony, and the preferential treatment given to the Serbian variants in the joint Dictionary. To great extent they felt bullied into signing the Novi Sad Agreement, thereby relegating Croatian to the status of a second-class citizen in the new linguistic state of affairs. In March 1967, the Zagreb Linguistic Circle made its Declaration on the Name and Situation of the Croatian Literary Language ("Deklaracija o nazivu i polo\_aju hrvatskoga knji\_evnoga jezika"). They rejected the name "Croato-Serbian" and asserted that Croats have the right to

their own literary language.<sup>13</sup> This language rebellion was a precursor to the events of the Croatian Spring in 1971, when Croatia sought greater autonomy within Yugoslavia. Tito reacted harshly to these Croat deviations from the prescribed path. Between 1971 and 1987 many Croatian language books were banned, including the a Croatian orthographic manual (1971), a Croatian grammar (1973), and three school textbooks, among others.<sup>14</sup> Thus, against their will, the Croats were forced to remain in the linguistic union. They cooperated with their Serb colleagues in international seminars, meetings, and projects, but the two sides drifted apart; the Serbs published the last three volumes of the "joint" dictionary unilaterally. Linguistic disunity foreshadowed the political and social chaos of the late 1980's and early 1990's.

This brief survey draws several key conclusions: (1) there were two moments when Serbs and Croats seemed keen on achieving joint literary language: 1850 and 1954-1966. The principle of language union guided the Croat Vukovites in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when they published works on the "Croatian or Serbian" language.<sup>15</sup> These efforts received little support from the ekavian-speaking Serbs of Vojvodina and Serbia.

The Novi Sad Agreement of 1954 can be viewed as a manifestation of Tito's vision for Yugoslavia, a land in which all ethnic groups would enjoy equal rights based on Socialist principles.

(2) In the two Yugoslav states, the Serbs were strong proponents of the language union, while few Croats were inclined to support it. (3) The Muslim Slavs and Montenegrins played marginal roles in the Serb/Croat language controversies. Their influence becomes greater after 1974 when the last Yugoslav Constitution recognized the rights of nations and national minorities of Yugoslavia to use their own languages (cf. Naylor 1992 and Greenberg 1996).

### 3. Analyzing the Official Breakup of Language Unity

As the above discussion reveals, "language unity" in the Serbo-Croatian context can be viewed in relative terms. Many of the world's languages are spoken by more than one ethnic group or in more than one nation state. For instance, English, French, and German are "unified" world languages. This does not exclude the possibility of legitimate language variation within such global languages. The case of Yugoslavia is somewhat unique in that the language variation became formalized within a

single nation state. This would be equivalent to the elevation of Ebonics from a sociolinguistic dialect of American English to an accepted and distinct official "variant." To understand how the Yugoslav situation can be interpreted in relation to other "language variation" issues around the world, I propose to define three models of "language unity" as enforced by modern nation states:

(1) Centrally-monitored unity: the full implementation of unity, which involves the establishment of a single, mutually acceptable set of linguistic norms which would apply to the entire speech territory. This standard language is often enforced by an Academy or language commission, such as L'Académie Française in France or the Language Academy in Israel.

(2) Imposed Unity: such a unity is typical of totalitarian, authoritarian, and non-democratic regimes in which language is used as a means for asserting the control of a ruling party, elite, or ethnic group. This model could be applied to the Soviet Union, where Russian became the official language throughout the country, and the Cyrillic script became the single unifying script for all ethnic groups, no matter their

linguistic traditions.

(3) Tolerant Unity: a general consensus on the existence of a single language which officially or unofficially tolerates regional differences and local norms. This would most often apply to languages in federal states, such as Spain or Germany. The tolerant unity model may also be applied to nations in which language variation is frequent, despite the existence of a single "official" dialect (such as High German, Literary Czech, or Mandarin Chinese).

Serbs and Croats have experimented with all three models of unity. They attempted complete unity in the period following the "Literary Agreement" through the collaboration of Serb and Croat linguists in Zagreb. The proponents of unity prevailed in Croatia in the nineteenth century largely because they received political backing as embodied in the establishment of the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences in Zagreb in the 1880's. The Serb Djuro Dani\_i\_ (1825-1882), Vuk's primary disciple, promoted Vuk's notions of the phonetic orthography and the use of the vernacular as he supervised the production of the Dictionary of the Croatian or Serbian Language at the Yugoslav Academy.

The period of absolutism in the Yugoslav Kingdom (1929-1941) is an example of an "imposed unity" with the aim of abandoning the tradition established at the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences and the imposition of the Serbian ekavian norm throughout the Kingdom. This imposed unity was obviously unpopular among Croats, and ultimately poisoned any future attempts to return to the principles of centrally-monitored unity. The Communist regime attempted to rectify the situation by imposing "tolerant unity" in Tito's postwar Yugoslavia. The experiment in imposed tolerance, i.e., forcing Serbs and Croats to accept language variation in the context of a "unified language," had little precedence in the world. It sought to legitimize a situation which normally exists across national boundaries, as seen in the case of American vs. British English. The Western and Eastern variant were meant to function as equal, official, full-fledged variants of a single language. Such a policy constituted a de facto recognition that "true" or centrally-monitored unity was impossible. Initially this principle was applied to Serbs and Croats through the Novi Sad Agreement. Later this was extended to Muslim Slavs and Montenegrins through the revised Yugoslav Constitution of 1974.



Inadvertently the imposed tolerance can be viewed as a primary cause for the complete disintegration of Serbo-Croatian language unity in the 1990's and the emergence of several successor languages. Nevertheless, linguistic secession, like political secession, is no simple matter. In the following sections I will discuss some of the problems associated with each of the main contenders as successor languages to Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian: Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin.

#### 4. Croatia: Regional Identities Eclipsed

The official emergence of a separate and unified Croatian language is startling given the strength of regional identities and regional dialects within Croatia. Croats waved language as a "flag," to use Naylor's term, whenever they felt threatened by stronger or more numerous neighbors. In the nineteenth century the threat of Magyarization propelled Croat linguists into a pan-Slavic camp; in both Yugoslav states, the threat of Serb linguistic and political hegemony unified the Croats in their quest for distinct cultural, linguistic, and ultimately political identity.

The tension between regionalism and centralism in Croatia

can be illustrated in the controversies which arose as a result of the 1850 Literary Agreement in the emergence of the three anti-Vukovite approaches to language codification: the Zadar School, Rijeka School, and the Zagreb School. The Zadar School primarily sought to promote the Štokavian ikavian dialect as the new standard language. The ikavian dialect is typical mostly of Croat speakers in Western Bosnia, Western Herzegovina, Slavonia, Posavina and Central Dalmatia.<sup>16</sup> The Rijeka School had a strong pan-Slavic philosophy, and endeavored to bring Croatian closer to other Slavic languages (not only Serbian). Their proposals included etymological orthography, and the introduction of a set of morphological endings in the declension which would bring Croatian "in line" with other Slavic languages, as well as the more archaic Croatian dialects, \_akavian and Kajkavian. The Zagreb School advocated a super-dialect for all of Croatia. This dialect would be an amalgam of the three primary Croatian dialects: \_akavian, Kajkavian, and Štokavian. This approach resembles that taken by the Slovenes, who combined elements from the two central Slovene dialects (Upper and Lower Carniola) to form Contemporary Standard Slovene. These three Schools were united against the Croat Vukovites, and are distinguished by

their concern to forge a language nurtured and created exclusively on Croat territory.<sup>17</sup>

These various linguistic Schools are as much a reflection of dialect diversity issues within Croatia as they are a testament to the relatively recent emergence of a strong Croat identity . Modern Croatia represents the unification of Civil Croatia, the military borderland regions (including Kninska krajina, Baranja, Slavonia and Western Srem), Istria, and Dalmatia. In some regions, Croat identity has at times competed with other identities, such as a "Dalmatian" identity or an "Istrian" identity. The modern Croatian state, therefore, is a patchwork created by the postwar Tito regime, consisting of areas which had been under diverse jurisdictions in the past. In the latest manifestations of nationalism among the Croats, these regional identities have been superseded by a "Croat" identity, accompanied by an impassioned insistence on a distinct Croatian language for all the country's regions. Ironically, however, as Croatia declared its independence on June 25, 1991, the language chosen was precisely that which emerged out of the work conducted by the proponents of linguistic unity in the nineteenth century, Dani\_i\_ and the Serb-oriented "Croat

Vukovites." This language retains essentially the same phonological, morphological, and syntactic features as the unified language described by Mareti\_ in 1899. Since 1991, the primary means for infusing Croatian elements into the language is by means of native Slavic/Croat neologisms, many of which have been extracted from obscure nineteenth century dictionaries.<sup>18</sup> Other neologisms have been introduced in post-Yugoslav Croatia and have no antecedents in earlier Croatian linguistic history. Whenever "variant forms" were admissible in the former Western variant of Serbo-Croatian, there has been a clear trend for determining the "proper" Croatian form at the expense of the marginal Croatian or Serbian form. This is the focus of newspaper columns and handbooks designed to promote correct usage among Croatian speakers.

It follows, then, that the new Croatian constitutes a "language revival" or "language resuscitation." The Croatian language was not created in its entirety in 1991; it is the product of a long process of evolution, beginning with the unified language of the "Literary Agreement," through the Western variant of Serbo-Croatian and culminating with post-1991 Croatian.<sup>19</sup> This notion of language resuscitation would explain

the complex relationship that modern Croat linguists have vis-a-vis the other successor languages emerging from Serbo-Croatian. While making a concerted effort to distinguish Croatian from Serbian, Croat linguists still feel the need to justify the separateness of the Croatian language. Their arguments are framed by Dalibor Brozovi\_'s "Ten Theses of the Croatian Standard Language," a document circulated in 1971 which sparked controversy in Tito's Yugoslavia. In particular, point 9 asserts that the fact that Serbian and Croatian are so similar should not preclude the existence of a separate Croatian standard language, since

The rights of the Croatian standard language are determined by the functions it performs for the Croatian nation, and not by the degree of similarity or dissimilarity it may have with other languages. The fact that, after being adopted by the Croats, the New-Štokavian dialect . . . was adopted as the basis for a standard language also by other nations that speak the dialects of the Croat-Serbian diasystem, does not permit us to speak, not even from the strictly linguistic point of view, of a concrete Croato-Serbian standard language. Not only because the choices were made independently and at different times, and not only because their dialectal bases are not identical, but because for every standard language as such the culturo-linguistic superstructure is of essential importance. . . . The rights of a certain language cannot be determined by the fact that it is more or less similar, completely dissimilar or very similar to some other language. That would be just as senseless and unacceptable as if in human society we would deny civil rights to fraternal or identical twins.<sup>20</sup>

This concept of "twin" languages is reiterated in several prominent publications on the New Croatian. Baric et al. (1995:10), for instance, assert that

The Croatian and Serbian language genetically belong to a single linguistic diasystem (Croato-Serbian).<sup>21</sup>

They go on to suggest that

The Neo-Štokavian dialects (Western and Eastern Herzegovinian) are at the basis for contemporary literary or standard Croatian, although the other Croatian dialects (Kajkavian, Čakavian, and also Old Štokavian Slavonian and Eastern Bosnian) have also contributed to its development.<sup>22</sup>

These remarks reveal that the Croat linguists remain mired in the notions of a "Croatian and Serbian language" and frequently suggest that modern Croatian contains elements of all Croatian dialects, often ignoring the influence of the Vukovites, or the Serbian Eastern Herzegovinian dialects. In a striking passage in Gluhak's Croatian Etymological Dictionary, the author perpetuates the notion that Croatian and Serbian are still inextricably linked. In his division of the South Slavic languages he proposes the following:

The South Slavic languages are Bulgarian and Macedonian (forming the eastern subgroup) and Slovene and Croatian or Serbian (forming the western subgroup).<sup>23</sup>

Such statements reflect an ambivalence regarding the full

independent status of Croatian in the family of Slavic languages. On the one hand, Croatian is considered to be a sovereign and separate literary language which has elements of all Croatian dialects; on the other hand, it is still linked to Serbian either in the "diasystem" or in the numerous shared features. In Gluhak's dictionary the notion of "Croatian or Serbian" suggests that the two terms are still somehow interchangeable. For each Croatian entry, the author provides the corresponding words in a variety of Slavic languages, but never Serbian. In fact, Serbian is absent from the list of abbreviations (p. 750).<sup>24</sup> This ambivalence would suggest that despite all the official declarations, the numerous language campaigns, new grammars and dictionaries, the Croatian language is experiencing "growing pains," and has not yet fully separated from its past and its tradition of unity with Serbian.

##### 5. Serbian: The Language of a Federal State

For the Serbs, the "death" of Serbo-Croatian has had less dramatic consequences than for Croats or Muslim Slavs. The new "Serbian" language has attempted to be the legitimate "successor" language to the Serbo-Croatian language as described

by the Novi Sad Agreement. This Agreement formalized what many have viewed as Vuk Karad\_i\_'s motivations for a language union with the Croats in the first place, namely, a Serb nationalist agenda whereby a single standard language could unify all Serbs, including Catholic Serbs, Orthodox Serbs, and Muslim Serbs (cf. Banac 1984:230). Vuk Karad\_i\_ considered all Štokavian speakers to be "Serbs," and showed little sensitivity towards a "Croat" identity in the nineteenth century. This sparked a strong anti-Vukovite reaction in Croatia, and kindled Ante Star\_evi\_'s nationalist, anti-Serb agenda.

In Tito's Yugoslavia this perceived Serb intolerance of linguistic autonomy for the Croats was also manifested in the rising influence of the Serbian Eastern variant following the signing of the Novi Sad Agreement. This variant was the largest official speech variety in the country, and constituted a de facto preferred language for inter-republican, inter-ethnic, and inter-nationality communication in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. According to Naylor (1978:464), the idea of employing this variant of Serbo-Croatian, written in Latin script, as such a "lingua communis" for Serbs, Croats, Muslims, and Montenegrins, was proposed as early as 1913, and



that several Serb and Croat writers accepted this notion until the 1920's. He defines a "lingua communis" as the primary language of inter-ethnic communication in the context of the multi-ethnic, and multi-national Yugoslav states. Clearly, such an approach was widely accepted among the Serbs, who had long advocated that Serbs and Croats speak/spoke the same language. In Tito's Yugoslavia, the Eastern variant enjoyed a special status as the variant which all were expected to understand, especially in federal institutions, such as the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), and in diplomatic missions abroad. A simplistic explanation would be that the influence of the Eastern variant struck fear among Croats who suspected that the Serbs sought to impose linguistic hegemony as had been attempted in the Yugoslav Kingdom.

However, it is unclear whether Serbs truly sought to impose their ekavian dialect in Croatia within the Yugoslav Federation. Rather, they were keen to advocate the rights of Serb minorities within Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina who spoke an essentially "Western" (Croatian) variant of the language. This has been at the heart of Serb linguistic policy since 1945--the desire to preserve the status of the Serb ijekavian speakers; the sole

means for accommodating these speakers was through the unified Serbo-Croatian language as embodied in the Novi Sad Agreement. This is precisely the same policy which has endured following the breakup of Yugoslavia. In the newly-established Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, consisting of Serbia and Montenegro, the new "Serbian" language still consists of two equal variants, ekavian and ijekavian. The issue has sparked a high degree of controversy among Serbs, especially since the Bosnian Serbs rejected their native ijekavian in Republika Srpska in favor of the ekavian dialect of Serbia proper.<sup>25</sup> Despite this harsh nationalist-inspired policy, mainstream Serbian linguists have sought to perpetuate "tolerant unity" regarding the Ijekavian pronunciation. In effect, the former Eastern variant has become the ekavian variant, and the former Western variant has been transposed as the ijekavian variant, primarily used in Montenegro, parts of Western Serbia, and among Croatian and Bosnian Serbs.

Thus, the Serbs have shown the greatest reluctance in both abandoning the principles of unity as demonstrated by the Novi Sad Agreement, and in creating a new distinctly unitary Serbian standard. The admittance of two equal varieties--ekavian and

ijekavian--leaves the door open for possible, but unlikely, reunification of Serbo-Croatian. More importantly, it aims to unify all Serbs and Montenegrins, no matter what their native dialect. Conversely, this perpetuation of a linguistic confederation, i.e., of a language which exists in two "equal or sovereign" varieties has thus far proven to be largely unworkable. As with the Novi Sad Agreement, the less powerful, less numerous ijekavian speakers are likely to feel threatened by the more numerous ekavian speakers. Given the Bosnian Serb abandonment of ijekavian as an official dialect, the ijekavian flag has migrated to the sole possession of the Montenegrins, who in the past 2-3 years have become increasingly dissatisfied in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As seen below, at least some groups in Montenegro are openly advocating the establishment of a separate Montenegrin language.

## 6. Bosnian or Bosniac

While the term "Bosnian language" ("bosanski jezik") can be traced back several centuries,<sup>26</sup> an actual "codified" language has only just come into existence. As seen above, the Bosnian Muslims played a marginal role in the early history of the joint

Serb/Croat language. Nevertheless, Bosnian writers frequently employed local dialect features in their work, which would include frequent Turkish/Arabic borrowings. The modern "Bosnian" language has grown out of the "standard linguistic idiom" of the former Yugoslav Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This idiom received official recognition upon the adoption of the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution.

Since the outbreak of hostilities in Bosnia in 1992, the term "Bosnian" has been problematic. In the Western mass media the term has been frequently used interchangeably with "Bosnian Muslim." However, in the Serbo-Croatian successor languages, two distinct terms are employed: *bosanci* (Bosnians) and *bošnjaci* (Bosniacs). The former is used to refer to citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina without regard to religion or ethnic origin. The latter is used specifically to designate Bosnian Muslims. Thus, while the term "Bosnian language" is inclusive in that it would refer to members of the three main communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Croats, Serbs, Muslims), the term "Bosniac language" would refer solely to the Muslims. With the emergence of Serbian and Croatian as separate "ethnically pure" languages, it becomes apparent that Bosnian is increasingly becoming

identified with "Bosniac." This is corroborated by the introduction to the new orthographic manual of Bosnian, as seen in the opening lines of the introduction:

This is the first orthographic manual of the Bosnian language. It is intended for the Bosniacs, for whom the Bosnian language is native (it is precisely by this name of the language -- and not the term Bosniac -- that the Bosniacs define their entire cultural milieu; and this was confirmed in the census data from 1991: approximately 90% of the Bosniacs, i.e., about 38% of the inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina, claimed Bosnian to be their native language), as well as the other nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the world who accept the Bosnian language as their own.<sup>27</sup>

Hence, "Bosnian" is the preferred term, since in this schema the Bosnian Muslims consider their own language to be "Bosnian," rather than "Bosniac." However, in the following paragraph, the author of the manual suggests that it is not Bosnian, but Bosniac, elements which were missing from the former Serbo-Croatian language, since the Novi Sad Orthographic manual "did not highlight the peculiarities of the Bosniac linguistic reality" ("nisu uvalavali osobenosti bošnjackoga jezi\_koga bi\_a"). This suggests that the Bosnian language is increasingly identified as the language for the Bosnian Muslims, since Serbs would speak Serbian and Croats would speak Croatian. This language division would leave little room for a Bosnian language

for all citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and would prove a hindrance to the establishment of a truly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>28</sup>

Despite this overlap of Bosnian and Bosniac, the language presented in both Halilovi\_'s Orthographic manual and Isakovi\_'s Dictionary (1995) is tolerant of language variation, especially when compared to the new standard Croatian.<sup>29</sup> Both publications frequently list both the Croatian and Serbian word, often without additional commentary. For instance, both the Croatian and Serbian names for the months are listed in Halilovi\_'s *Pravopis*.<sup>30</sup> Other "doublets" include *pozoriste/kazaliste* 'theater', *hljeb/kruh* 'bread' and *centar/srediste* 'downtown'. However, on some occasions the preference for the Serbian word is demonstrated when the Croatian word is cross-referenced with the Serbian word, e.g., the entries for *vlak* 'train' and *to\_ka* 'period' (Croatian) refer the reader to *voz* and *ta\_ka* (Serbian).

In addition to the greater inventory of Turkish and Arabic borrowings, the Bosnian language is characterized by the preservation of the phoneme /x/, which is regularly lost in Serbian and less frequently lost in Croatian. For instance, in Halilovi\_'s *Pravopis* both *lahko* and *lako* 'easy' are listed, but

since only *lako* is cross-referenced ("see *lahko*"), there is a clear preference for *lahko*. This is not always predictable with all forms which had an original \*x. For instance, both *sat* and *sahat* 'hour' are listed without cross-references. In those cases where /x/ occurs in intervocalic position, Bosnian prefers to preserve the phoneme, as in Croatian, e.g., *duhan* 'tobacco' and *uho* 'ear' as opposed to the Serbian forms *duvan*, *uvo* which are listed in the manual with cross-references.

To summarize, the recent Bosnian language publications point to an increase in the Muslim cultural vocabulary, and preservation of the phoneme /x/, which has taken on the status of a speech "flag" for Bosnian Muslims. This phoneme brings the phonological system of Bosnian a small step closer to Arabic, and a step farther from Serbian. This is consistent with the efforts to design a language primarily for the consumption of Bosnian Muslims. With the infusion of Muslim cultural heritage into the language, the authorities in Sarajevo alienate non-Muslims who would subsequently opt for "Croatian" or "Serbian." Little progress has been made to alleviate this kind of language confusion within Bosnia-Herzegovina. This proliferation of ethnically "pure" languages mirrors the deep ethnic divisions

which currently thwart progress towards integration and cooperation both within the Croat-Muslim Federation and between the Federation and the Serb entity.

#### 7 Montenegrin: The Next Successor Language?

Writing at the time of the Serb/Croat disputes surrounding the implications of the Novi Sad Agreement, Magner (1967:341) wistfully mentions that "some innocents, unaware of the nationality issues at stake, have suggested the existence of . . . a Vojvodinian variant, a Bosnia-Herzegovinian variant, and a Montenegrin variant" of Serbo-Croatian. While a Vojvodinian language seems highly unlikely, and Bosnian has become a reality, Montenegrin remains an enigma. Within Montenegro some have strongly advocated a separate Montenegrin language, including the Montenegrin branch of the international writers' association ("Pen Center"), and is supported by at least some scholars of Nikšić's Faculty of the Humanities.<sup>31</sup> Montenegrin dissatisfaction with Serbian is primarily due to a perceived "threatened" status of the ijekavian pronunciation of Serbian.<sup>32</sup> This concern is shared by politicians of various parties, as is revealed in the following excerpt from a 1994 article in



*Politika* on a debate in the Montenegrin parliament regarding amendments to the Law for High Schools:

Dr. Radoslav Rotkovi\_ (Liberal Union) asked why in the revised law the Serbian language is mentioned, but ijekavian pronunciation is left out, and stressed that the Constitution mandates that the administrative language in Montenegro is the language with the ijekavian pronunciation. Rotkovi\_ characterized the omission found in this constitutional regulation as the intention to eliminate ijekavian "little by little." He brought photocopies of a book cover of an edition of Stjepan Mitrov Ljubisa's short stories and said that Ljubisa did not write "pripovetke" ['short stories'], but "Pripovijesti" of Montenegro and the coastal area. In his view the title "Pripovetke is tantamount to impudence and political imperialism. The representative of the Liberal Alliance Slavko Perovi\_ considers that "even a stupid person sees that ijekavian is threatened," and that because of that in the law in every place where the "Serbian language" is mentioned, it is necessary to add "of ijekavian pronunciation" . . .

Professor dr. Predrag Obradovi\_, the Minister of Education of Montenegro also considers that ijekavian is threatened and has to be defended. The legislators agreed that in all laws it is necessary to put an emphasis on "the Serbian language in the ijekavian pronunciation."<sup>33</sup>

This can be construed as a first step in official Montenegrin linguistic separatism. The fate of a separate Montenegrin language may be linked with Montenegro's political future: should Montenegro opt to secede from the Yugoslav Federation, or negotiate a looser confederation with Serbia, it is possible that the "Serbian ijekavian language" will evolve into a separate Montenegrin language.

The fervent desire to preserve ijekavian reflects a central premise of Montenegrin identity, namely Montenegrin pride in its glorious literary past especially with the writings of Njegos (1813-1851). The prestige of the Montenegrin language/pronunciation is further enhanced by an affinity for the work and mission of Vuk Stefanovi\_ Karad\_i\_. Ostoji\_ (1989:10-11) notes that the Montenegrin standard linguistic idiom is truly the product of Vuk's reforms, and is much closer to Vuk's language than the ekavian dialects of Novi Sad and Belgrade. This affinity is said to be reinforced by two additional factors: (1) Vuk's family was originally from Drobnjak in northwestern Montenegro, and therefore Vuk's native dialect is in fact the Drobnjak dialect and not the Trsic dialect of Western Serbia, and (2) Njegos, perhaps the most revered Montenegrin writer, was Vuk's kindred spirit in that both strongly advocated the use of the vernacular as a literary language.

Overall, Montenegro has a well developed standard linguistic idiom which in recent years has been moving further away from the Serbian ekavian standard. Given the Bosnian Serb rejection of ijekavian, the Montenegrins can now claim to be the

staunch defenders of a "threatened" dialect. While Montenegrin has not yet emerged as a separate language, some influential members of Montenegrin society advocate Montenegrin linguistic secessionism.

## 8. Conclusion

The linguistic instability in the Yugoslav successor states is a clear reflection of the political instability, rather than a cause of the political turmoil. While the breakup of a unified Serbo-Croatian language appears to be irreversible, it is possible that the successor languages will still undergo changes. The tumultuous events in the former Yugoslavia have been the direct cause for the death of the Serbo-Croatian unified language, and the emergence of three "official" successor languages. These new languages are by no means "instantly invented" languages which still need to be taught to their speakers. Croatian has emerged gradually, first as the "unified" language in the nineteenth century, and later as the vehicle for Croat nationalists after the 1954 Novi Sad Agreement. Bosnian emerged from an embryonic "standard linguistic idiom" in the Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and has added Islamic elements, much in the same

way that Islam has been revitalized in Bosnia after the Yugoslav breakup. Serbian has changed the least; it has officially adopted two "pronunciations" in an attempt to be a language that would include all Serbs in the former Yugoslavia. This solution of two "official" pronunciations may be as precarious as the Serbo-Croatian language union as prescribed by the Novi Sad Agreement. If it succeeds, it would be a striking example of tolerance of dialectal variation within a standard language. Its failure would most likely be associated with political changes within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The breakup of Serbo-Croatian is unprecedented in that it is an example of "language death" accompanied by intense "language birth." Bugarski (1995) compared the situation in Yugoslavia with that of Hindi and Urdu, which split along religious and political lines. Separatism is now openly discussed in Montenegro in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and in Istria in Croatia. The models of "tolerant unity" are being attempted in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, while Croatia is inclined toward the centrally-monitored model of unity. Time alone will tell which model, and indeed which languages, can ultimately survive the cataclysmic

and tragic disintegration of Yugoslavia.

### NOTES

1.Cf. also Hammel 1992 and Roberts 1992 for other stirring titles.

2.In a preliminary program to a conference with a significant concentration on South Slavic and Balkan linguistics, four of the papers include the name "Serbo-Croatian"; none of the titles refer to "Serbian and Croatian" and one title focuses only on "Serbian."

3.This is the thesis put forward by Ranko Bugarski in an interview in the Belgrade daily *Politika*, on the question: does Serbo-Croatian exist? ("Postoji li srpskohrvatski?" from November 22, 1996).

4.This is especially apparent in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the former Yugoslavia the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina self identified as Serbs, Croats, Muslims or Yugoslavs. The "new" identities (Bosnian Croat, Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Muslim became widely accepted once hostilities broke out in 1992. A discussion of how these "new" identities function goes beyond the scope of this paper. Clearly, some of these "identities" may be tagged on by the media or a befuddled public outside of ex-Yugoslavia attempting to understand the ethnic conflict in Bosnia. The applicability of these terms may vary according to region within Bosnia-Herzegovina. For instance, ethnic Croats in Mostar may self identify as "Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina, while outsiders consider them to be "Bosnian Croats." Similarly, some Bosnian Muslims may self identify as "Bosniacs" rather than "Muslims."

5.The other two types of language death refer to (1) the dying out of a speech community, and (2) the absence of a contiguous area where the language is spoken and/or the dispersal of the language's speakers in a region/country dominated by another language.

6.According to Koneski (1980:63) the "Macedonian literary language was declared the official medium in the Macedonian Republic toward the end of the war at the first session of the Antifascist

Assembly of Macedonia held on August 2, 1944 in the Proxor P\_injski Monastery.

7. Recently some virulent nationalists in Serbia have vilified Vuk, accusing him of participating in an alleged Catholic Austro-Hungarian plot to rob the Serbs of their language and literary tradition (cf. Samard\_i\_ 1995).

8. This notion has been repeated frequently in the most recent writings in Croatia.

9. This point is cited in Moguš (1995:201): "Narodni jezik srba, hrvata, i crnogoraca jedan je jezik. Stoga je i knji\_evni jezik, koji se razvio na njegovoj osnovi oko dva glavna središta, Beograda i Zagreba, jedinstven, sa dva izgovora, ijekavskim i ekavskim."

10. In Magner's view, the Serbian and Croatian lexical differences are "real enough though in number they seem rather minor when compared to the differences between British and American English."

11. Ljudevit Jonke, a prominent figure in the movement for a Croatian literary language in the 1960's considered the Orthographic manual to be well balanced (cf. Jonke 1967:233).

12. Cf. Greenberg 1996:402 on the Croat dissatisfaction with the first volume of the joint dictionary.

13. Croat disapproval of the Novi Sad Agreement can be seen in their refusal to adopt the term "Croato-Serbian," which most linguists avoided in their writings, opting instead for "Croatian or Serbian" or simply avoiding the name altogether. By contrast, the Serbs embraced the term "Serbo-Croatian" and used it widely until the outbreak of hostilities in 1991.

14. The Orthographic manual was smuggled out of Croatia and published in London. The banned grammar by Te\_ak and Babi\_ was published in post-Yugoslav Croatia. Cf. Moguš (1995:210) for details.

15. Petar Budmani's 1867 *Grammatica della lingua serbocroata* is

cited by Moguš as the first instance in which the term "Serbo-Croatian" is used. This term remained dormant until the first Yugoslav state (1918-1941), as most Croats favoring the linguistic union used the term "Croatian or Serbian."

16.Cf. Greenberg 1996:400-401 for details on the Štokavian subdialects and where and by whom they are spoken. A small number of Muslim Slavs speak this dialect. The Serbs are clearly non-ikavian speakers.

17.For more details on the agendas of these three Schools, cf. Moguš 1995:168ff.).

18.For instance, Tanocki (1994:30) discusses the use of the "new" Croatian word *zrakoplov* 'airplane' which he considers to be "better" than the Serbo-Croatian word *avion*, since it is always better to choose the local word, rather than the foreign one. He notes that *zrakoplav* entered the language in the nineteenth century and cites a German-Croatian dictionary from 1867 as his source.

19.By contrast, the Macedonian literary language which became a reality after 1944, or Eliezer Ben Yehuda's Modern Hebrew represent true instances of modern "language births" occurring during the past century.

20.This passage of Brozovi\_'s "Ten Theses" is taken from Spalatin (1975:15).

21."Hrvatski i srpski jezik genetski pripadaju jednom jezi\_nom diasistemu (hrvatsko-srpskom)."

22."Podloga suvremenom hrvatskom knji\_evnom odnosno standardnom jeziku su novoštokavski govori (zapadni i isto\_nohercegova\_ki), ali u njegovom su razvoju sudjelovala i ostala hrvatska narje\_je (kajkavsko i \_akavsko, te staroštokavski slavonski i isto\_nobosanski dijalekt)."

23."Ju\_noslavenski su jezici bugarski i makedonski (tvore isto\_nu podskupinu) i slovenski i hrvatski ili srpski (tvore zapadnu podskupinu)."



24.The list of abbreviations includes nearly all the other Slavic languages, and the term closest to Serbian is "slaveno-srpski." The abbreviation *štok.* is listed as "Štokavian (Croatian)" ("štokavski (hrvatski)"), completely ignoring the large number of "Štokavian (Serbian)" dialects.

25.The Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karad\_i\_, imposed ekavian in Republika Srpska in September of 1993. In 1994 the Bosnian Serb Parliament modified this decision, allowing for both ekavian and ijekavian to be in official use. Cf. Rosi\_ 1995.

26.Cf. the forthcoming volume of *Balkanistica* to be published in the spring of 1998, which includes an introduction on the history of the term "Bosnian language" followed by an extensive bibliography of works relating to Bosnian.

27.Halilovi\_ (1996:6): "Ovo je prvi pravopis bosanskoga jezika. Namijenjen je Bošnjacima, kojima je bosanski jezik maternji (upravo tim imenovanjem jezika - a ne imenom bošnja\_ki - Bošnjaci obuhvacaju svoju ukupnu kulturnu okomicu: na popisu stanovništva 1991. to se potvrdilo: oko 90% Bošnjaka, odnosno 38% \_itelja Bosne i Hercegovine izjasnilo se da im je bosanski jezik maternji), kao i pripadnicima drugih naroda u Bosni i Hercegovini i u svijetu koji bosanski jezik prihva\_aju kao svoj."

28.I have had numerous conversations with Bosnian citizens who are offspring from mixed marriages or disgusted with the overemphasis on ethnic origin. These people have defiantly declared that they still speak, and will always speak, "Serbo-Croatian."

29.Before the war, Bosnia-Herzegovina had been an example of "tolerant unity," attempting to accept elements from both of the Serbo-Croatian variants. It is generally accepted that the dialects of Bosnia-Herzegovina shared phonological features with the Western variant, and morphological and lexical features with the Eastern variant (cf. Magner 1967:344 and Naylor 1978:459)

30.Isakovi\_'s dictionary, however, lists only the Croatian names of the months.

31.I received this information from several colleagues both in Yugoslavia and the United States. I have not yet been able to examine any of the writings pertaining to the "Montenegrin language."

32.As opposed to the former scheme of Eastern and Western variants agreed upon in the Nov Sad Agreement, the current politically correct terminology is "ekavian pronunciation" and "ijekavian pronunciation" (ijekavski izgovor").

33."Dr. Radoslav Rotkovi\_ (Liberalni savez) pitao je zašto se u izmenjenom zakonu pominje srpski jezik, a izostavlja ijekavski izgovor i podsetio da je Ustavom regulisano da je u Crnoj Gori slu\_beni jezik ijekavskog izgovora. Rotkovi\_ je izostavljanje ove ustavne odredbe okarakterisao kao nameru da se "mic po mic" izbaci ijekavica. Doneo je fotokopije korica jednog izdanja pripovetki Stjepana Mitrova Ljubiše i rekao da Ljubiša nije pisao pripovetke, ve\_ propovijesti crnogorske i primorske. Po njemu, naslov "Pripovetke" je bezobrazluk i politi\_ki imperijalizam. Liberalni poslanik Slavko Perovi\_ smatra da "i glup \_ovek vidi da je ijekavica ugro\_ena", pa je zbog toga u zakonu na svakom mestu gde pominje "srpski jezik" potrebno dodati "ijekavskog izgovora" . . . Profesor dr Predrag Obradovi\_, ministar za prosvetu Crne Gore, takodje smatra da je ijekavica ugro\_ena i da je treba odbraniti. Poslanici su se slo\_ili da u svim zakonima treba naglašavati: "srpski jezik ijekavskog izgovora"."

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