

**The Minnesota Plan:
Recommendations for Preventing
Gross Human Rights Violations in Kosovo**

**Prepared by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
and presented by Barbara Frey,* Executive Director
February, 1993**

Occasional Paper #8

* Executive Director, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights.
B.A. 1978, University of Notre Dame; J.D. 1982, University of
Wisconsin.

**THE MINNESOTA PLAN:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING
GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN KOSOVO**

A Discussion Paper

by

MINNESOTA ADVOCATES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

FEBRUARY 1993

Telephone: 612-341-3302

Fax: 612-341-2971

**THE MINNESOTA PLAN:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING
GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN KOSOVO**

A Discussion Paper

I. INTRODUCTION

The international community has been shocked and horrified at the violence and complexity of the conflict throughout the former Yugoslavia. While conditions in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have deservedly received extensive media and public attention, there has been less focus on the volatile situation in Kosovo where the repression of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo is severe and the potential for widespread conflict is great. Any armed conflict in Kosovo could quickly escalate into international violence, potentially involving Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and other nations. It is critical that the international community move beyond a defensive and reactive posture and begin to act affirmatively not only to end the current conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also to prevent further conflict and grave violations of human rights in Kosovo.

Both the causes and the potential solutions of the conflicts in Kosovo and in Bosnia-Herzegovina are fundamentally interconnected. The Serbian program for a "Greater Serbia" underlies both conflicts. This policy is manifest in the "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the escalating persecution of ethnic Albanian Kosovars. The response of the international community to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina will directly affect the situation in Kosovo. Thus far, the world's response has failed to deter Serbian aggression. Should this continue to be the case, ethnic cleansing will succeed horribly not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina but in Kosovo as well. If, however, the world community stiffens its resolve to confront the aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina, then it may well spare Kosovo a similar fate.

Using the authority of the federal government, the Serbs have suspended local government, imposed a military state and flagrantly violate basic human rights with impunity in Kosovo. Kosovo, an "autonomous" province of Serbia from 1974 until the 1989 revocation of that status, has long been the site of ethnic conflict between the 90% ethnic Albanian majority and the minority Serbs. Serbs consider Kosovo to contain the "soul" of Serbia and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic began his climb to power by arousing Serbian sentiment against the Albanian Kosovars. Milosevic provoked mass demonstrations by ethnic Albanians when he revoked Kosovo's autonomous status after he came to power. Serbian authorities responded with violent crackdowns and a pattern of increasing discrimination and violence against the Albanian Kosovars.

Ethnic Albanian leaders have been illegally detained, beaten, tortured and killed; the ethnic Albanian population is regularly subjected to police harassment, discrimination and abuse. Serbian officials have effectively denied education to the ethnic Albanian population by closing Albanian language primary and secondary schools and firing professors and other professionals at Pristina University. Over 100,000 ethnic Albanians in government, business, the media, education and medicine have been summarily dismissed from their positions and replaced with Serbs. A "shadow" society -- including an elected government and basic medical and educational services -- has emerged as the result of the Serbs' deliberate campaign to marginalize the ethnic Albanian population. Tensions are high and widespread violence has thus far been avoided largely due to the ethnic Albanian leadership's insistence on non-violence.

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights is working to call public attention to the situation in Kosovo and to provide policymakers with information, analysis and recommendations on preventive strategies at this critical time. In addition to addressing the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there are specific actions that can be taken now relative to Kosovo. Minnesota Advocates recommends that the international community, particularly the United Nations, implement a progression of steps to prevent an escalation of the conflict in Kosovo. While efforts should be made to obtain Serbia's cooperation and compliance with the actions recommended, all indications suggest that Serbia is unlikely to comply voluntarily with recommendations from the international community. Thus, the international community must be prepared to act decisively with or without Serbia's compliance.

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights recommends that the international community take the following steps to address the situation in Kosovo. First, there should be increased monitoring of the human rights situation and immediate attention should be given to achieving a peaceful resolution of the ethnic violence in Kosovo. Minnesota Advocates recommends convening an All-Party Conference specifically to address the situation in Kosovo. Next, the international community, through the United Nations Security Council, should work for the return of Kosovo's status as an autonomous province. If the Serbian government will not restore Kosovo's autonomy, the Security Council should request that Serbia voluntarily place Kosovo under the United Nations trusteeship system. If Serbia refuses take either of these actions, the Security Council should declare Kosovo a safe haven and protect the Kosovars by all necessary measures. In any case, the ethnic Albanian leadership must agree to guarantee minority rights for non-Albanians in Kosovo. Finally, the international community should work to deter further Serbian aggression through the disruption of internal Serbian propaganda, increased public attention on the situation in Kosovo and the aggressive prosecution of war crimes committed elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Human Rights Monitoring

1. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights should bring increased attention and resources to the situation in Kosovo. The Commission should appoint a Special Rapporteur for Kosovo or, alternatively, the current Special Rapporteur on former Yugoslavia should be directed to focus greater attention on Kosovo. The Commission should ensure that in Kosovo there are adequate numbers of human rights fact-finders with the qualifications and resources necessary to document and report on human rights abuses and to act as a deterrent to further violations. The Commission should coordinate these efforts with the monitors from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) who are stationed in Kosovo. Local credible human rights monitors should be supported.

All-Party Conference

2. An All-Party Conference should be convened as soon as possible to discuss a peaceful resolution of the ethnic violence and massive human rights violations taking place in Kosovo. The Conference could be convened by the European Community, the CSCE, the United Nations, or any combination of member states of those organizations. Suggested participants at the conference include representatives of the governments of Albania, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, representatives of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and institutional representatives of the EC, the CSCE and the U.N. In the alternative, an All-Party Conference could be convened to address violence in the former Yugoslavia more generally. In that case, the suggested participants would also include the other former republics of Yugoslavia.

Comments: This Conference should be held irrespective of the progress of the peace process in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There is precedent in Cambodia for such a conference although the efforts there did not wholly succeed. The attempt to draw the parties into direct negotiation in a neutral forum is critical to clarifying the parties' diplomatic positions regarding Kosovo.

It may also be advisable to include as parties to the Conference the United States and Russia, in particular the Russian military because of its historic and current relationship with Serbia.

Restore Kosovo's Status as an Autonomous Province

3. The United Nations Security Council should declare its intent to refuse to recognize the Serbian Government as the successor to Yugoslavia in the United Nations and should urge Member States to withhold recognition of the Serbian Government until the province of Kosovo is restored to its previous status as an autonomous province of Yugoslavia. Restoration of autonomy requires the Serbian government to: (1) stop human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, inhuman treatment and arbitrary killings; (2) remove all Serbian and Yugoslav military forces, including paramilitary forces, from Kosovo; (3) restore Albanian Kosovars to their former professional and public positions and remove from those positions the Serbians who replaced them; (4) stop resettling Serbs into Kosovo; and (5) reopen all educational opportunities for Albanian Kosovars.

As a condition of autonomy, the Kosovo provincial government must agree to: (1) abide by international norms regarding minority rights, including provision of proportional representation for ethnic Serbs in the Kosovo municipal government; and (2) hold free and fair elections within one year of the withdrawal of Serbian and Yugoslav National forces from Kosovo.

The United Nations should provide peacekeepers to police Kosovo until elections are held. There should be no arming of Kosovars during this interim period.

Comments: Additional conditions may be added as part of the negotiation process. For example, economic incentives might be offered to Serbia or the Kosovo provincial government could agree to forego prosecution of members of the Yugoslav National Army (excluding paramilitary or terrorist groups) for violations of derogable rights in Kosovo which occur prior to the Security Council's declaration on recognition of the Serbian government as the successor to Yugoslavia in the United Nations. However, at a minimum, the conditions listed above should be agreed to by the parties.

Trusteeship

4. If the Serbian government does not agree to return Kosovo by June 1993 to the status of an autonomous province as described above, or in the event of an escalating pattern of gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the United Nations Security Council should call for the Serbian government to voluntarily place Kosovo under the Trusteeship system governed by Articles 75-91 of the United Nations Charter. Under the trust agreement, Kosovo would

function as an autonomous province until negotiations concerning self-determination of the region were concluded.

Comments: Alternatively, a trusteeship agreement could be the outcome of the All-Party Conference recommended above. In either case, the recommendations envision a new use of the trusteeship system. The trusteeship system, established first as the League of Nations mandate system and later modified and embodied in Articles 75-91 of the United Nations Charter, gives temporary control of territory to the trustee for the benefit of the people in the territory. The objectives of the system as described in the Charter are to further international peace and security, to promote progressive development toward self-government or independence, to encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to ensure equal treatment in social, economic, and commercial matters for U.N. member states and their nationals. The system has been used only for colonies and territories which as a consequence of World War I had ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States that formerly governed them and which were not yet prepared for self-government. Only one territory, Palau, remains under trusteeship.

Under the system recommended above, the trusteeship system of the United Nations would be used in a new, but not inconsistent, manner. The trust territory of Kosovo would be administered by the United Nations acting through the Trusteeship Council in a manner agreed to by the concerned parties. In addition, Kosovo could be designated a "strategic area" under the trusteeship agreement which would place the region under the direct jurisdiction of the Security Council. Kosovo's status at the termination of the trusteeship would be the focus of negotiations and planning under the oversight of the Security Council and the Trusteeship Council. Designation of Kosovo as a trust territory would not predetermine a particular legal status for the region in the future.

5. The Security Council should further resolve that if the Serbian government refuses to place Kosovo under Trusteeship after failing to restore its autonomous status and/or escalating the pattern of gross human rights violations, the situation in Kosovo will be deemed a "threat to international peace and security." In this event, the Security Council should declare Kosovo a safe haven and provide protection for residents of the province by all necessary measures.

Comments: Chapter VII of the UN Charter authorizes the Security Council.

to determine the existence of a threat to international peace and security. The Security Council may then decide what measures the UN and its member governments should take to prevent aggravation of the situation. Actions may include, for example, diplomatic measures, economic sanctions, and the use of force.

The Security Council has begun to acknowledge that massive human rights abuses and the displacement of large numbers of people may constitute threats to international peace and security. In the post-Cold War period, the Security Council has begun to use its powers under Chapter VII in regard to Iraqi attacks on the Kurds in northern Iraq, the refusal of the Khmer Rouge to cooperate with the peace settlement in Cambodia, and the difficult situations in Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Actions have included economic sanctions, military embargoes, protective zones, and the sending of military forces.

The use of force should be a last resort after other measures fail or clearly would fail. The track record of Slobodan Milosevic and the Serbian government suggests that measures other than a credible threat of force are likely to fail. Any use of force should be through the collective decision-making process of the Security Council and should be necessary, proportionate and limited to the humanitarian purposes of protecting the vulnerable population. Any forcible and nonforcible enforcement measures undertaken should be regularly assessed by the Security Council for continued appropriateness.

Minority Rights

6. Any recognition of Kosovo as an autonomous province, or in any other independent status, must be conditioned upon guarantees of minority rights for non-Albanians in the province as set forth by the United Nations, CSCE and the Council of Europe. Each minority must be allowed effective participation in government and equal access to public services as guaranteed in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Intervention through Communications Systems

7. The United Nations should seek to disrupt internal Serbian communication of propaganda in order to undermine Serbian public support for the policy of repression and aggression in Kosovo. The international community should use radio, television and written communications to provide accurate information to the Serbian population.

Comments: It appears that Serbian popular support for the policy of aggression and ethnic cleansing generally and the specific forms of repression in Kosovo is based in large part on Serbian propaganda, which broadcasts repeated and detailed claims of atrocities against Serbs but fails to document atrocities committed by Serbs. Because the Serbian war effort requires at least some measure of Serbian public support, it is important that the general Serbian public be informed of atrocities committed by Serbs against other ethnic groups. Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibits any propaganda for war and any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. The Special Rapporteur for the former Yugoslavia has urged the establishment of an independent information agency "to counteract the dissemination of hatred among the population . . . disseminate objective information and . . . encourage the creation of mutual confidence between national and religious communities."

The disruption of Serbian propaganda and the substitution of truthful reporting concerning human rights abuses could serve as an aggressive but non-violent way to begin to turn the tide of public opinion and resolve the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter, which authorizes the Security Council to direct members of the U.N. to apply nonforcible measures including interruption of telegraph and radio communications, may support such action.

8. Every effort must be made to increase world attention to the situation in Kosovo and to maximize the opportunity for Kosovars to communicate with the outside world. The international community should support and consult locally based fact-finders and fact-finding organizations.

War Crimes

9. The United Nations should aggressively pursue the investigation and prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes against the peace in all regions of former Yugoslavia and the compensation for victims of those crimes. Such prosecution can serve as a deterrent to the commission of similar atrocities in Kosovo.

Comments: The investigation and prosecution of war crimes in all regions of the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, should have a deterrent effect on the perpetration of war crimes

in Kosovo. It should be noted, however, that the threat of prosecution of war crimes could impede the current negotiation process regarding Bosnia-Herzegovina.

BACKGROUND

An "autonomous" province of Serbia from 1974 until the revocation of that status in 1989, Kosovo has long been the site of ethnic conflict between the 90% ethnic Albanian majority and the minority Serbs who, along with the majority Serbs throughout the rest of Serbia, consider Kosovo to contain the "soul" of Serbia. Serbs and Albanians hotly dispute who occupied the Balkan peninsula first. Albanians claim their descent from the ancient Illyrians and argue that they occupied the territory of present Kosovo long before the Slavic tribes migrated south from the northern territories that are now Russia and the Ukraine. However, Kosovo was the heartland of the medieval Serbian kingdom -- where Serbian kings were crowned and where many of the greatest monuments of the Serbian Orthodox Church were built and still stand. In 1389, the medieval Serbian kingdom lost its independence when it fell to the Turkish Ottoman Empire in the legendary Battle of Kosovo Polje. This disastrous battle, after which the province takes its name, resulted in the migration north of Serbs, and eventually of the Christian religion. Over the centuries, they were replaced by Albanians who largely converted to Islam under the Ottoman rule. The Battle of Kosovo is a seminal event in Serbian national consciousness -- it marks the beginning of literary and oral tradition for the Serbian people.

After the defeat of the Serbs in 1389, the Turkish Ottoman Empire ruled the region for five centuries until they were ultimately forced to retreat to Constantinople after severe losses in the Balkan Wars in 1912-13. The power vacuum after the Ottoman defeat led to a renewed struggle over claims to the region. Between 1878, when the Serbs gained independence, and 1913 the Serbs almost doubled their territory and made known their desire both to retake the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of Serbia and to gain access to the Adriatic through attachment of the region of present day Albania. Austria-Hungary had annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 and was not pleased with Serbia's intentions to expand into that province. Russia sought to contain Serbian expansion but, as Serbia's Slavic ally, insisted that Serbia have access to the Adriatic. Meanwhile, the Albanians, jolted into action by the receding protection of the Ottoman Empire, created the League of Prizren, a nationalist movement seeking to unify the four Turkish vilayets which were the European part of the Ottoman Empire into an autonomous Albanian state. One of the vilayets was Kosovo. These competing claims in the Balkans led to a now famous assassination of the Hapsburg heir, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, by a young Bosnian Serb in Sarajevo in 1914.

The Great Powers intervened in the region in 1912 after the Serbian army overran the province of Kosovo, which at that time was primarily Albanian. At an international conference in London, the Great Powers "solved" the Adriatic problem by creating an independent Albania and compensating Serbia with territory in the interior. As result, the ethnic Albanian population was divided -- a million or so in Albania and about a

million remaining in Yugoslavia, most of whom were in Kosovo.

Between World War I and World War II, the new Yugoslav state attempted to recolonize Kosovo with Serb settlers. Despite fierce ethnic Albanian opposition, over 40,000 Orthodox slav peasants moved into Kosovo and half a million ethnic Albanians were forced to emigrate, mainly to Albania, Macedonia and Turkey. The new settlers received good land and benefits. The result was reminiscent of the West Bank and Gaza -- a small relatively prosperous Serb and Montenegrin settler community and a mass of poorer Albanians.

During World War II, the Albanian Kosovars supported the Italians who occupied the Kingdom of Albania. Enver Hoxha's partisans in Albania fought with Tito's Yugoslav forces to drive out the Italians, but most of the Albanian Kosovars fought with the Italians, preferring Italian rule to Serb rule. These territories once again reverted to Yugoslavia after the War.

Under Tito's rule after World War II there were major improvements in the status of ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia: Albanians were recognized as a distinct national group; the Albanian language was recognized as one of Yugoslavia's official languages; and Albanians gained the right to education in their own language. A period of great growth in Albanian national pride and intelligentsia ensued, including the establishment of the first Albanian University in Pristina in 1968. Also in 1968, a constitutional amendment granted some autonomy to Kosovo. Full autonomous status was conferred in the 1974 constitution which granted Kosovo and Vojvodina almost all of the rights of sovereign republics with the exception of the right to secede from the federation.

Nonetheless, economic disparities and ethnic conflicts continued to exist in the region. The high birth rate of the ethnic Albanians and the emigration of 30,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians led to a continuing imbalance in demographics throughout the 1970s. In addition, Serbs and Montenegrins made constant claims of "discrimination" and human rights abuses by the majority Albanians against the minority Serbs and Montenegrins. The complaints and emigration continued throughout the 1980s and in 1987, 60,000 Serbs living in Kosovo signed a petition alleging genocide. Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic began his climb to power arousing Serbian sentiment against the Albanian Kosovars and kept his promises by revoking Kosovo's autonomous status two years after he came to power. The 1989 revocation resulted in mass demonstrations by ethnic Albanians and violent crackdowns by Serbian police.

In July 1990, the primarily ethnic Albanian Kosovo Assembly issued a proclamation declaring Kosovo an independent republic within the Yugoslav federation. The Serbian Assembly responded by suspending the Kosovo Assembly and other organs of provincial government. The Kosovo Assembly met secretly and adopted a new constitution for Kosovo as a sovereign republic. A year later a secret referendum on

independent statehood was held over a four-day period. The support was almost unanimous.

In June 1991, war broke out pitting the Serbs against the Slovenes and the Croats. In response to the unraveling of Yugoslavia, the Albanian Kosovars held elections in May 1992 for their clandestine government. Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, the leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo, the strongest Albanian political party, was elected President of the Republic of Kosovo. In the last year, there have been increasing reports of discrimination against ethnic Albanians in employment, social services and education. There have also been an escalation of violence against ethnic Albanians and increased arming of Serbs along with confiscation of weapons from Albanians. Many speculate that Kosovo will become the next front for "ethnic cleansing."

APPENDIX I

YUGOSLAVIA TIMETABLE

[Work in Progress]

395 A.D

Death of Theodosa the First divides the Roman Empire into East and West. Byzantium gains northern Albania, Montenegro and Serbia; Rome controls Dalmatia, Slovenia, Croatia and the larger part of Bosnia.

1054

Formal split between Catholics of Rome and the Orthodox of Byzantium.

1389

The Battle of Kosovo is won at the Champ de Merles by the Sultan Murad I, defeating Serbia's Prince Lazare. Serbia does not regain its independence for five centuries, but asserts that Kosovo is the heart of Serbia.

1878

Serbia gains its independence.

1912-13 Turkish Ottoman Empire is finally forced to retreat back to Constantinople after severe losses in the Balkan Wars. Power vacuum leads to renewed struggle for claims to the region. The Serbs had almost doubled their territory between 1878, when they gained their independence, and 1913. They made known their desire to retake the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of Serbia, as well as gaining access to the Adriatic through attachment of the region of present Albania.

Austria-Hungary had annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 and was not pleased with Serbia's intentions. While it sought to contain Serbian expansion, Russia, Serbia's Slavic ally, insisted that Serbia have access to the Adriatic. The Great Powers intervened in the region in 1912 after the Serbian army overran the province of Kosovo, which at that time was primarily ethnic Albanian. At an international conference in London, the Great Powers solved the Adriatic problem by creating an independent Albania and compensating Serbia with territory in the interior. The result was a cutting up of the ethnic Albanian population: 3 million were residents of tiny Albania and almost 2 million remained in Yugoslavia, most of whom were in Kosovo.

1914

The competing claims in the Balkans led to a now famous assassination of the Hapsburg heir, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, by a young Bosnian Serb in Sarajevo.

1918-41

Following World War I, the "Southern Slavs" are joined as the "Kingdom of the

Serbs, the Croats, and the Slovenians." The territory has three linguistic groups (Slovenian, Serbo-Croatian, and Bulgaro-Macedonian) and three main religions (Catholic, Orthodox Christian, and Islam). The new Yugoslav state attempted to recolonize Kosovo with Serb settlers. Despite fierce ethnic Albanian opposition, over 40,000 Orthodox slav peasants moved into Kosovo and half a million ethnic Albanians were forced to emigrate. The new settlers received good land and benefits resulting in a small, relatively prosperous Serb/Montenegrin settler community and a mass of poorer Albanians.

1941-45

After Yugoslavia's disintegration in World War II the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo supported the Italian puppet-government of the Kingdom of Albania. These territories once again reverted to Yugoslavia after the War.

31 January 1946

Tito becomes President of the Popular Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Tito maintains a policy of non-alignment, rejecting Moscow but also the Capitalist West. Yugoslavia is held together as a federal system as Tito keeps Serbia weak. Within Serbia, the territories of Vojvodina and Kosovo were granted a degree of autonomy, allowing both provinces to send representatives to a chamber of the federal legislature. However, internal matters, such as the education system and the specific rights and degree of autonomy, were to be defined by the Republic of Serbia, rather than the federal government.

1946-1963

In the 1950's, Yugoslav secret police increased persecution of the Albanian population in Kosovo. Serbs began to leave Kosovo for economic reasons and because of alleged Albanian persecution and harassment. In 1963 new Yugoslav and Serbian constitutions were adopted, resulting in increased control over the provinces by Serbia. Representatives from the provinces were now part of the Serbian delegation, rather than separate provincial delegations.

1968-1974

Demonstrations demanding that Kosovo be recognized as a separate republic in 1968 resulted in the establishment of the first Albanian University at Pristina. Period of great growth in Albanian national pride and intelligentsia.

1974

Constitution was adopted which granted Kosovo and Vojvodina almost all of the rights of sovereign republics, with the exception of the right to secede from the federation. They were also given seats on the federal parliament and the federal constitutional court.

1980

Death of Tito.

1981

Eleven people are killed and several hundred wounded in violent clashes with federal security forces at student and other demonstrations in Kosovo. State of Emergency declared, 2,000 arrests and hundreds convicted of "crimes endangering territorial integrity of Yugoslavia." The local Serbian population begins to complain of increased attacks and intimidation by the ethnic Albanians. Emigration of Serbs from Kosovo commences.

1984

Over 72 Albanian nationalist organizations uncovered by Yugoslav authorities. The nature of the groups varied between those seeking republic status for Kosovo within the Yugoslav federation to those seeking an independent state of Kosovo, to those seeking to rejoin Albania. All of these options were seen as unacceptable and treasonous for Yugoslavia, particularly by Serbian authorities. Even minor crimes such as writing slogans were punished by six years or more in prison.

1986

Sixty thousand Serbs living in Kosovo sign a petition alleging genocide of the Serbs by the Albanian majority. These allegations, combined with the historical significance of Kosovo to the Serbians, lead to a great concern among Serbians about the future status of Kosovo within their republic. Rising Serbian nationalist leader Slobodan Milosevic led a protest rally of 15,000 Serbs to Kosovo Polje, the site of the Ottoman defeat of the Serbs in 1389.

1987

Milosevic is elected President of Serbia.

1988

Milosevic rallies support for changes to the Serbian Constitution to revoke the autonomous status of Kosovo.

1989

Croatia and Slovenia break away to form their own country; Serbia and Montenegro follow suit. Hostilities commence. One million Serbs make a national pilgrimage to Pristina to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Polje.

Yugoslavia's collective presidency imposes "special measures" in Kosovo and assigns responsibility for public security to the federal government. Federal militia sent to Kosovo.